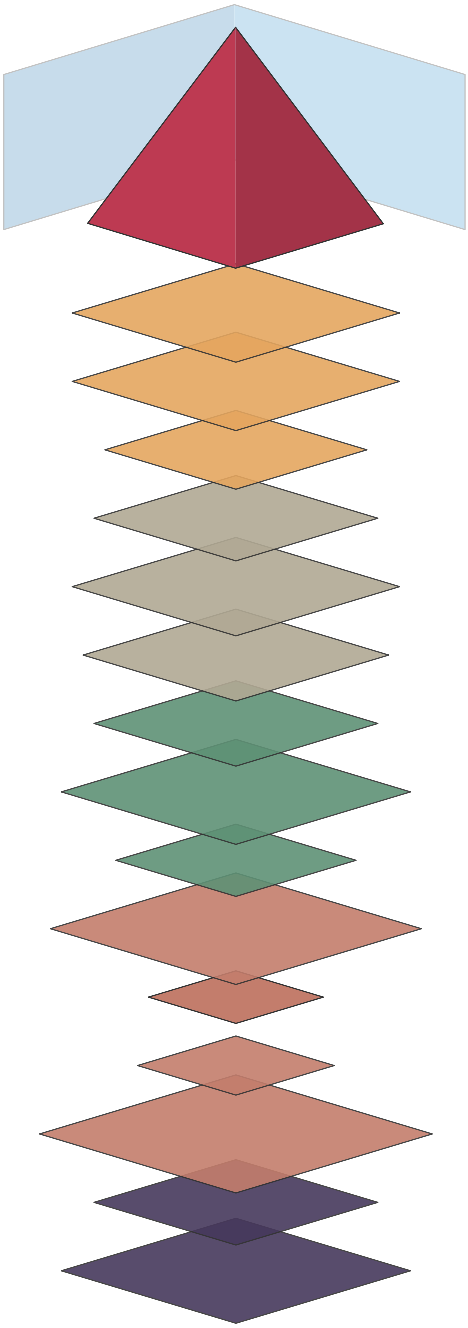
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

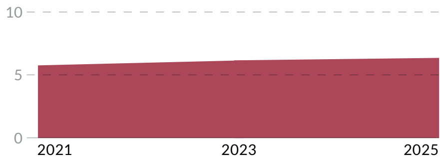
THAILAND



6.37 ↗0.18

CRIMINALITY SCORE

39th of 193 countries ↗5
15th of 46 Asian countries ↗3
7th of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	6.83	↗0.07
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.50	↗0.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	6.00	↘0.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.50	↘0.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	7.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	6.50	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	8.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.50	↘0.50
HEROIN TRADE	8.50	↗0.50
COCAINE TRADE	4.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	9.00	↗0.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.50	↗0.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.00	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.90	↗0.30
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	2.00	↗0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00	↗0.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.50	↗0.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	7.00	0.00

This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.

Funded by the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

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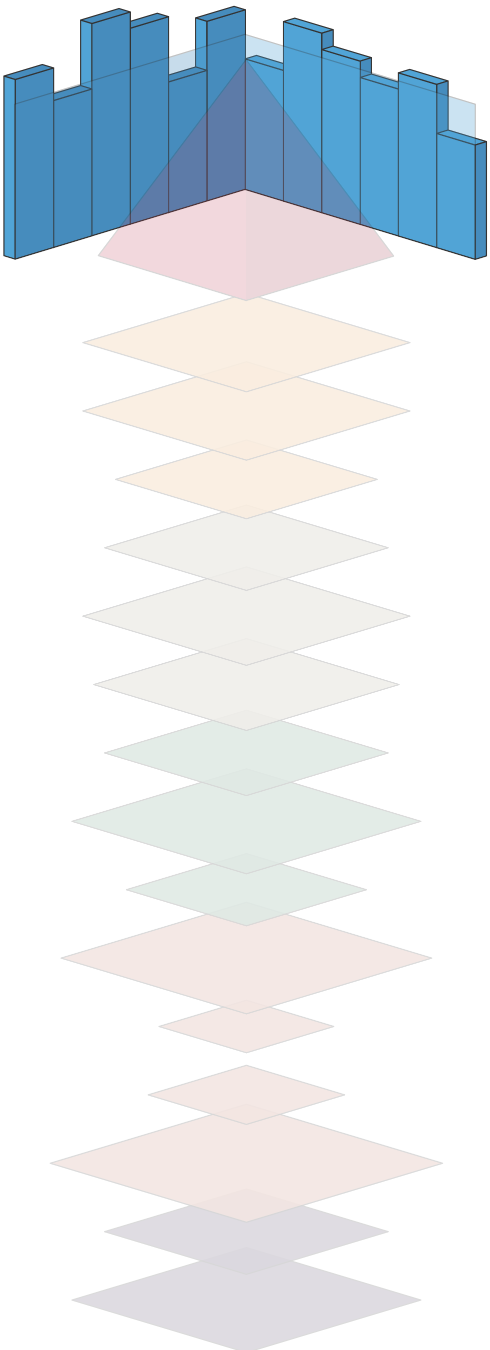
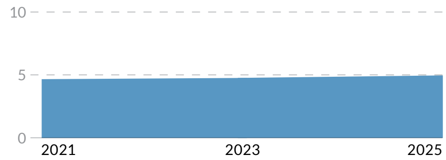


4.96 ↗0.17

RESILIENCE SCORE

89th of 193 countries ↗10
17th of 46 Asian countries -
3rd of 11 South-Eastern Asian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	5.50	↗0.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.50	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00	↗0.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00	↗0.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50	0.00
PREVENTION	5.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	3.50	0.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Thailand functions as a key origin, transit and destination country for human trafficking, including sex trafficking and forced labour. Both domestic and foreign criminal networks exploit weak enforcement and vulnerable populations, particularly migrants and stateless persons. Recruitment occurs through online platforms and social networks, with victims trafficked within the region and beyond. Exploitation has been documented in sectors such as fishing, entertainment and agriculture. While authorities have increased victim identification and arrests – especially in the fishing sector – challenges persist, including corruption, victim misidentification and delays in prosecutions. Thailand also remains a key transit country for people trafficked into scam centres in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, with victims typically arriving by air before being transported into a neighbouring country by road.

Thailand is a major regional hub for human smuggling, serving as a source, transit and destination country. It is a key destination for people from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, India and China. Thailand also acts as a transit country for those heading to Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as a departure point for people travelling onward to East Asia, Europe and North America. Social networking platforms play a critical role in connecting migrants with smuggling services. Criminal networks and foreign actors dominate human smuggling, often relying on state-embedded and private-sector actors to facilitate the illegal entry, transit and residence of migrants through the use of fraudulent documents. In recent years, a surge in human smuggling has been reported along Thailand's western border, particularly in Tak province, where Myanmar citizens are fleeing conflict and military conscription.

Although Thailand lacks entrenched organized crime groups that exert territorial control– contributing to the overall low number of reported extortion cases – recent critical developments have brought renewed attention to these crimes. Notably, a major extortion ring in Bangkok was dismantled for coercing local businesses into paying protection money. The 'Bangkok Five' case, which targeted the restaurant and entertainment sectors, further highlighted the presence of protection rackets, especially in urban centres. In response, the Thai government introduced stricter anti-extortion legislation and expanded support for victims. However, enforcement challenges and persistent corruption – particularly involving police officials – have limited the effectiveness of reforms. Extortion remains a concern, particularly in areas with weak oversight.

TRADE

Thailand is a major hub for arms trafficking, serving as a source, transit and destination country. The trade is fuelled by lax firearm regulations, legal loopholes and a sizeable civilian gun market – almost half of which is estimated to be illegal. Both domestic and foreign criminal networks drive the trade, with involvement from corrupt officials and military-linked actors. Firearms are trafficked domestically and across borders, particularly to Myanmar, where Thai 'welfare guns' and military-grade weapons from official stockpiles are smuggled to various criminal actors. Despite increased enforcement, illegal firearms remain widely available and are often linked to serious crimes and gun violence. The arms trade intersects with other illicit markets, while corruption and diversion from official stockpiles remain persistent challenges.

Thailand serves as a significant source, transit and destination country for counterfeit goods, with both domestic and foreign actors involved in their production and distribution. Organized criminal groups facilitate the trade, which undermines legitimate businesses by reducing their market share. Although much of the counterfeit production occurs outside Thailand, local demand – especially through online marketplaces – drives a domestic market. Despite ongoing enforcement efforts, the market remains well-consolidated. Digital platforms continue to enable distribution, and seizures have revealed high volumes of counterfeit products. Authorities have implemented various countermeasures, but systemic challenges, such as persistent demand and the adaptability of criminal networks, continue to hinder effective eradication efforts.

The illicit trade in excisable goods, such as alcohol and tobacco, persists in Thailand, with enforcement efforts yielding minimal success. Over the past two years, authorities have consistently reported high case volumes and launched sporadic crackdowns, including arrests and seizures. The trade is partially transnational, with most illegal excisable goods smuggled into Thailand from neighbouring countries. Domestic demand remains high, and social networking platforms are key marketplaces. Despite enforcement efforts, transnational smuggling continues, driven by strong domestic demand. Alcohol, tobacco and motorcycles remain the most commonly seized commodities.

ENVIRONMENT

Thailand remains a major hub in the illicit flora trade, particularly for rosewood and ornamental plants. The trade is driven in part by high demand from China, although a niche domestic market exists. Illegal rosewood seizures are frequent in north-eastern Thailand, especially in provinces bordering Cambodia and Laos. The criminal networks involved include both domestic and foreign actors, with indications of the presence of state-embedded actors. Despite Thailand having stronger governance than neighbouring countries, enforcement efforts are under-resourced, and corruption within state agencies facilitates illegal activities. While social media is used to advertise ornamental plants, its use in the illegal timber trade appears limited. Despite introducing initiatives to combat the trade, it persists due to high profits, low local demand and the complicity of state-embedded actors in smuggling and logging operations.

Thailand is a major international hub for the illegal wildlife trade due to its natural resources, growing middle class and domestic infrastructure. The market is highly structured and facilitated by both domestic and foreign criminal networks. Thailand's strategic location in South East Asia, along with its connections to East Asia and Africa, has positioned it as a key source, transit and destination point in the illegal wildlife trade. Demand comes from both local and international consumers, with online platforms used for advertisement and distribution. Thailand's exotic pet trade has expanded, with trafficked species originating from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although the government has taken steps to combat fauna-related crimes and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, enforcement remains inconsistent.

While Thailand has significant mineral deposits – including of gypsum, feldspar and rare earths – criminal actors are most involved in the smuggling of fuel and precious stones. Fuel smuggling is driven by persistent price differences between petrol and diesel in Malaysia and Thailand, leading to cross-border trafficking. There is also a trade in precious and semi-precious stones, notably jade and gemstones, from Myanmar into Thailand. Criminal networks are the primary actors involved in this illicit trade, but private-sector actors have also been implicated in illegal mining. In 2023, a major gold mining company faced charges for land encroachment. Although information regarding small-scale illegal mining in Thailand is limited, such activity is presumed to exist. The related environmental consequences – such as soil and water contamination from mining and pollution from the use of low-quality fuel – are often overlooked. Profits largely benefit domestic actors, with corruption likely enabling smuggling, particularly through bribes to border and regulatory officials.

DRUGS

Thailand functions as a key transit and destination country in the regional heroin trade. Heroin is produced in north-eastern Myanmar near the Thai border and trafficked into Thailand for domestic consumption or for onward transportation to other markets in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Amid ongoing conflict in Myanmar, farmers have reverted to opium cultivation, leading to a suspected increase in heroin being trafficked into and through Thailand. In response, the Thai government has enhanced its enforcement measures and expanded public health initiatives targeting drug abuse. However, these efforts are undermined by the country's extensive and porous borders. In recent years, Thai authorities have seized large quantities of heroin and arrested several key figures, disrupting a major trafficking network operating between Thailand and Myanmar. Despite these efforts, the Thai government's responses have been reactive and sporadic. While heroin availability has increased, local demand remains relatively low.

Thailand serves as a transit hub for the regional cocaine trade. Domestic use is low but rising, mostly among affluent locals and foreign nationals. Cocaine is mainly smuggled into the country from Africa and South America, often through airports and seaports. West African groups, particularly Nigerians, play a prominent role in trafficking and laundering proceeds through commodity exports. Other foreign actors include Kenyan, Peruvian and British nationals. Enforcement actions have been sporadic and reactive. While cocaine-related arrests and treatment admissions have increased, demand remains limited. Profits benefit both local and foreign networks, sometimes through corrupt facilitation of trafficking activities.

Thailand's cannabis market has undergone major shifts since decriminalization in 2022, leading to a surge in unlicensed vendors and continuation of the illicit trade. Although cannabis shops expanded rapidly following decriminalization – driven by high demand and weak enforcement – political moves towards re-criminalization have subdued investment in the market, causing the number of cannabis shops to fall. Low-grade cannabis smuggled from North America is often misrepresented as Thai-grown, making Thailand an unintended destination for surplus exports and creating an illicit 'backdoor trade' that supplies cannabis vendors. Legal ambiguity has enabled both legal and illegal trade to coexist, with domestic and foreign criminal networks active in distribution. Enforcement has been hindered by limited resources and inconsistent oversight, resulting in fragmented crackdowns and a regulatory landscape marked by uncertainty.

Thailand remains a major destination and transit point for synthetic drug trafficking, especially methamphetamine manufactured in Myanmar's border regions. Most of these drugs enter Thailand via its land borders with Myanmar, though there have been indications that traffickers are also now using maritime routes. An estimated more than 50% of methamphetamine tablets seized across East and South East Asia have been trafficked through Thailand. There is a strong domestic demand for synthetic drugs. Methamphetamine is trafficked into the country in powder form before being pressed into tablets; a limited amount is synthesized within Thailand. Synthetic drugs account for the largest number of drug treatment admissions in Thailand, followed by heroin, cannabis and cocaine. In 2024, a joint Sino-Thai operation seized chemical precursors used in the production of Etomidate, a drug abused in e-cigarettes. However, authorities face persistent enforcement gaps, and responses rely heavily on crackdowns.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Thailand's cybercrime market is consolidated and complex, involving distributed denial-of-service attacks, ransomware, hacking and data theft – primarily targeting sectors such as finance, healthcare and education. Cyber-dependent crimes have caused significant economic losses, with high daily damages reported. Cloud-based attacks surged in late 2023, particularly affecting the gaming, e-commerce and cryptocurrency sectors. Ransomware and data breaches rose sharply in early 2024. Cybercrimes often intersect with other illicit markets, including identity theft. Both domestic and foreign actors are involved, with transnational networks selling stolen data on dark web platforms. Government responses remain limited and primarily reactive.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in Thailand – particularly financial fraud, tax evasion and embezzlement – are consolidated and frequently involve foreign actors, including networks based in nearby countries. Common schemes include online shopping and investment scams, many of which involve impersonation of institutions to deceive victims. Authorities have made notable arrests, including in large-scale lottery scam cases, with some operations causing significant financial damage. However, enforcement remains inconsistent. These crimes are highly profitable and can result in severe harm to victims. Tax evasion is widespread, prompting regulatory changes in 2024 aimed at addressing gaps in foreign income taxation, as previously many residents and non-residents exploited remittance loopholes.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of mafia-style groups operating in Thailand.

In contrast, criminal networks are deeply entrenched in the country, with operations primarily focused on human, drug and wildlife trafficking, as well as smuggling. These groups are most active in urban centres and border provinces, where proximity to infrastructure and neighbouring countries enables transnational illicit flows. Thai networks frequently collaborate with foreign counterparts, strengthening cross-border trafficking capabilities from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. While these groups maintain some ties to the political sphere, their direct influence on democratic governance remains limited. The interplay between domestic and international actors reinforces Thailand's role as a strategic hub in regional organized crime networks.

State-embedded actors maintain a consistent and concerning presence in Thailand's criminal landscape. They are present throughout state structures – from low-level officers who enable the movement of illicit goods through corrupt payments, to senior members of state institutions and political elites who provide protection to criminal actors and may also have financial stakes in criminal enterprises. Some political families and local power structures operate as criminal organizations, commonly through roles like Kamnan (subdistrict chief) or Phu Yai Ban (village head). Known as Chao Pho, these figures exert territorial control, have business interests in both the licit and illicit economies and often hold considerable influence over the military, police and political institutions – particularly in the provinces.

Foreign criminal actors have long maintained a significant presence in Thailand's illicit economy. These actors come from prominent diasporas within Thailand, including Chinese, Russian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Burmese and Indian communities. They operate across various illicit markets and closely collaborate with Thai nationals, domestic criminal networks and state-embedded actors to facilitate their crimes. While no single group holds exclusive market control, Chinese syndicates are especially influential. Myanmar and Laotian groups are heavily involved in drug trafficking, while Cambodian actors are active in rosewood smuggling. Despite their influence, foreign criminal actors show low engagement in political interference, instead focusing on cross-border illicit enterprises. Their activities are primarily concentrated in border provinces to facilitate transnational crimes. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have garnered special attention for organized criminal activity.

The role of private-sector actors in enabling organized crime in Thailand has become increasingly evident. Although the country has strict regulations on real estate and business ownership, as well as robust financial regulations, private-sector actors – namely financial institutions, real estate agencies and legal firms – play a role in circumventing these controls. Companies in the logistics, hospitality and transportation sectors have also been involved in human trafficking and human smuggling activities, as well as the trade of illicit commodities such as protected wildlife. One of the largest illicit business systems in Thailand is the 'gambling kickback' network, which is estimated to generate more than US$30 billion annually.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Thai government has publicly positioned itself against organized crime but challenges persist due to resource constraints, the country's porous borders and its limited technical capacity, particularly in addressing cyber-dependent and financial crimes. Authorities have prioritized combating cybercrime, establishing a Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau in 2020 and engaging in regional cooperation to address cross-border cyber scams. Despite these efforts, organized criminal activity continues in areas along the borders with Myanmar and Laos. Human trafficking and the drug trade through the Golden Triangle SEZ remain key concerns. Domestic governance issues, especially public distrust and corruption, further undermine state efforts. Although internal conflict in the south has historically intersected with organized crime, recent reports indicate that this link has weakened.

Government transparency in Thailand remains a persistent challenge, with oversight mechanisms failing to curb high-level corruption. Institutions have been established to address misconduct, but enforcement is weak, particularly among political and military elites. While parliamentary oversight has marginally improved transparency since 2019, military influence continues to obscure decision-making. Allegations of cronyism, systemic corruption and state collusion in crimes such as money laundering persist. Though anti-corruption legislation is in place, its impact is limited by institutional capacity constraints. Recent technical reforms, including digital payment mandates and public budget disclosures, reflect efforts to achieve greater accountability. However, public perception of transparency and accountability remains largely negative.

Thailand remains engaged in international efforts to combat organized crime, participating in both bilateral and multilateral partnerships and maintaining extradition treaties with 16 countries. The government collaborates with regional neighbours and international agencies, including increased coordination with Cambodia and China and engagement with UN Office on Drugs and Crime through its 2022–2026 South East Asia Regional Programme. Thailand has ratified major international conventions on transnational crime, drug trafficking, corruption and wildlife trafficking. However, cross-border criminal activity, particularly along the Myanmar border, remains difficult to address due to weak governance in adjacent territories. Recent extraditions highlight Thailand's willingness to act on international criminal cooperation requests.

Thailand has taken steps to strengthen its legal framework against organized crime, focusing on drug markets, firearms, wildlife crime and cybercrime. The government has reiterated its intention to relist cannabis as a narcotic, restricting its use to research and medicinal purposes. However, progress on the new legislation through parliament has been slow. The government approved stricter regulations on methamphetamine, with individuals found in possession of more than one tablet now liable to prosecution. In 2023, the government enacted a decree on cybercrime prevention and suppression in response to the growing threat of online scams and financial fraud.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Thailand's judicial system faces both structural and integrity-related challenges, including allegations of corruption and political bias, particularly within the Constitutional Court. Although the constitution guarantees judicial independence, the courts are perceived as favouring the military and wield broad powers over political affairs. The Court of Justice, which handles organized crime cases, includes specialized divisions for crimes such as narcotics and human trafficking as part of its three-tiered structure. The prison system remains below international standards, with persistent issues including overcrowding, poor hygiene and inadequate healthcare. These conditions have contributed to the rise of organized criminal activity within correctional facilities. However, efforts are under way to support the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals through rehabilitation programmes and job placement schemes.

Thailand's law enforcement structure includes specialized units under the Royal Thai Police and the Department of Special Investigation to combat organized crime, though no agency is solely dedicated to this purpose. New units, such as the Wildlife Crime Intelligence Unit, have been established, though reporting on their effectiveness remains limited. Between 2023 and 2024, Thailand conducted several high-profile operations targeting human trafficking and extortion networks, international wildlife crime and drug-related asset seizures. However, corruption within police ranks continues to erode public trust. Intelligence-sharing mechanisms have been enhanced with recent efforts, including participation in international cooperation dialogues. Police report high case-resolution rates, particularly in drug and cybercrime.

Thailand faces persistent vulnerabilities at its borders due to their length, terrain and proximity to countries with extensive criminal markets. The western border with Myanmar is especially difficult to police, as it serves as a major route for human, arms, wildlife and drug trafficking. Despite efforts to strengthen security, enforcement remains undermined by corruption within border control agencies and porous borders. Authorities have sought closer cooperation with neighbouring countries, but progress has been limited. Cybersecurity is also a concern. Although the Personal Data Protection Act was introduced in 2022, enforcement remains weak. Notable breaches, including student data theft, highlight ongoing cyber vulnerabilities.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Thailand has taken steps to strengthen its anti-money laundering (AML) framework in recent years. The Anti-Money Laundering Office has worked to align national legislation with international standards, including proposed amendments aimed at enhancing regulatory oversight and investigative capacity. Special attention has been paid to preventing the misuse of crowdfunding platforms and online gambling for money laundering. These efforts form part of Thailand's 2022–2027 AML/Countering the Financing of Terrorism national strategy. The country's progress has received international recognition, reflected in improved rankings.

Thailand continues to promote economic growth through investment incentives and modernization initiatives like Thailand 4.0. However, corruption and political uncertainty hinder regulatory effectiveness. While mechanisms exist to protect legitimate businesses, enforcement remains inconsistent. The banking sector has taken proactive measures to enhance cybersecurity. No economic sectors are under the direct control of organized crime, but loan sharking is prevalent in certain regions. Despite ongoing challenges to its economic freedom, Thailand remains an attractive destination for foreign investment.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Thailand has taken action to support victims of human trafficking, including by providing financial assistance through the Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons Fund and implementing legal reforms to improve victim services and increase penalties for traffickers. Efforts to align with international standards involve collaboration with NGOs and capacity-building initiatives. However, challenges remain, including limited personnel, inconsistent implementation of identification procedures and the occasional wrongful prosecution of trafficking victims for trafficking-linked crimes – contrary to international principles. Frequent staff turnover further disrupts victim support efforts. To combat growing online fraud, Thailand launched the Anti-Online Scam Operation Centre in 2023 to support victims and strengthen responses to cyber scams. The country has also shifted towards harm-reduction and treatment-based responses, diverting individuals from imprisonment to community-based counselling and peer-led drop-in centres in Bangkok that offer open, supportive care. However, methamphetamine restrictions introduced in 2024 have tightened enforcement. Furthermore, the Office of the Attorney General has launched a Witness Assistance Service to provide legal and emotional support to victims and witnesses during trials.

Thailand continues to implement a range of anti-crime initiatives targeting human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, financial crime and counterfeit goods. Prevention efforts include public awareness campaigns, particularly around online child sexual exploitation, and training programmes for students, parents and community leaders. In the environmental crime sector, the government has pledged to end the legal wildlife trade and strengthen enforcement against the illegal trafficking of wild species. Thailand is also taking steps to tackle financial crimes through public awareness campaigns and improved regulatory frameworks. While the government has launched several targeted prevention initiatives and strengthened regional cooperation, systemic challenges – such as limited enforcement capacity and gaps in inter-agency collaboration – continue to undermine the effectiveness of these efforts.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) help combat organized crime, particularly in areas such as human trafficking and wildlife protection. While the government collaborates with CSOs on training and victim support, broader cooperation remains limited. At the same time, civil liberties are restricted, with human rights and pro-democracy groups frequently targeted under sedition and lèse-majesté laws. Press and academic freedoms also face restrictions. The dissolution of the Move Forward Party in 2024 has narrowed the political space. Activists and journalists report harassment and surveillance, including the state's use of spyware. During the reporting period, multiple attacks or threats were reported against journalists, with more than one-third linked to state actors.

This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.