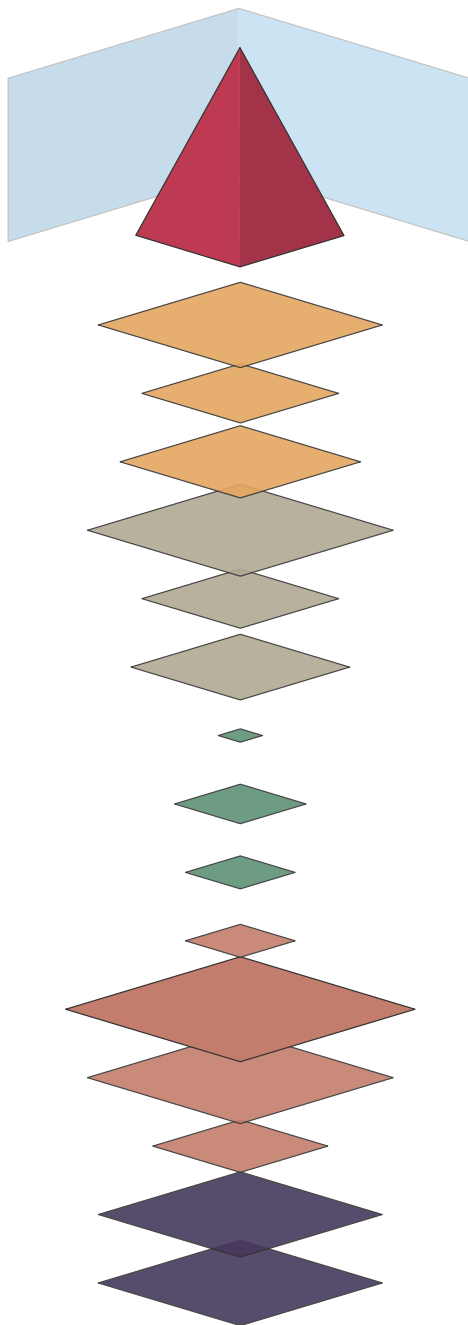
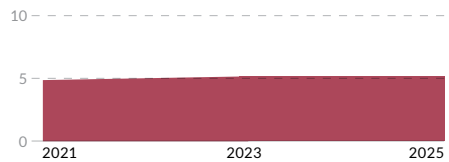


TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



5.22 $\nearrow 0.02$ CRIMINALITY SCORE

87th of 193 countries $\searrow 2$
20th of 35 American countries $\searrow 2$
3rd of 13 Caribbean countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.93** $\nearrow 0.13$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	7.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.50	0.00
ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
HEROIN TRADE	2.50	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	8.00	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.50	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.50** $\searrow 0.10$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00	$\searrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00	0.00



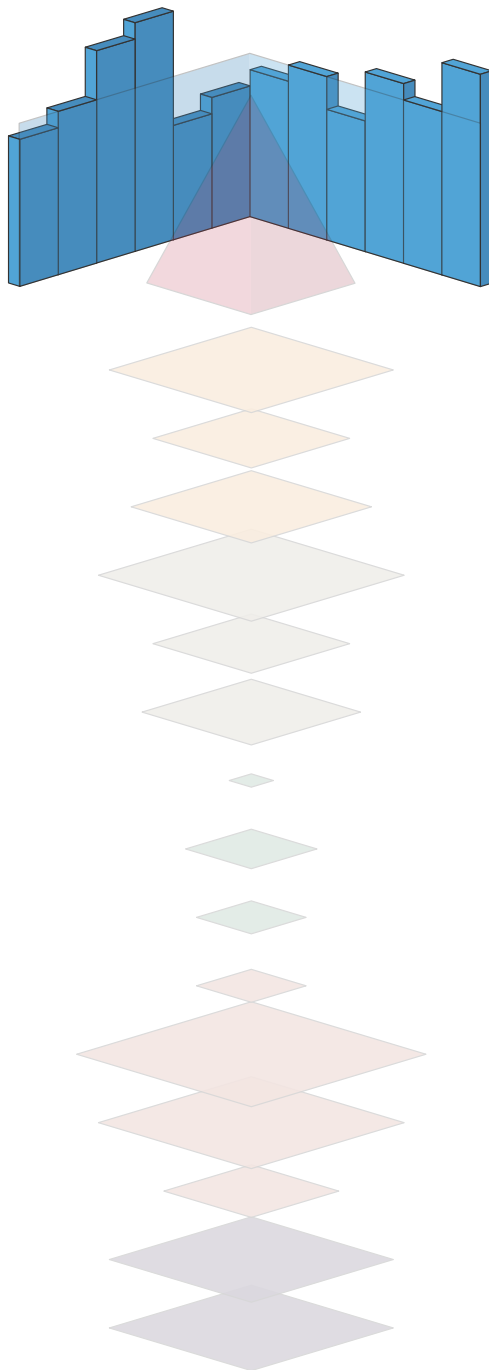
This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.



Funded by the European Union

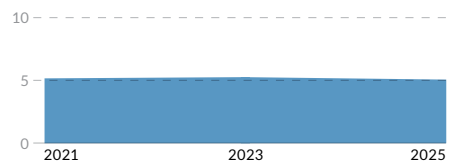
ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



5.08 $\downarrow 0.25$
RESILIENCE SCORE

83rd of 193 countries $\downarrow 14$
16th of 35 American countries $\downarrow 2$
9th of 13 Caribbean countries $\downarrow 2$



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.50	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.00	$\downarrow 1.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00	$\downarrow 1.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50	0.00
PREVENTION	5.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.50	$\uparrow 0.50$



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago remains a significant issue, particularly affecting women and girls from Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Colombia. Many are coerced into sex work through deceptive recruitment and immigration vulnerabilities. In addition to sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labour occur in sectors such as roadside vending, gas stations, domestic work, guesthouses, modelling agencies, massage parlors, spas, restaurants, farms and casinos. Male victims are often exploited in the construction sector. Chinese-owned establishments frequently exploit Chinese and Venezuelan workers. Social media has facilitated human trafficking, with online job offers luring victims. Corruption, resource constraints and slow judicial processes hinder efforts to curb this market. While public concern exists, the profitability of trafficking drives the trade.

Meanwhile, the market for human smuggling remains small yet stable. The country's proximity to Venezuela makes it a key transit point, though it is not always migrants' final destination. Many Venezuelans cross irregularly, often via small-scale smuggling operations, which sometimes involve maritime authorities. Migrants who are unable to pay smuggling fees risk forced labour or sexual exploitation. As with human trafficking, social media has facilitated smuggling networks, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extortion and racketeering remain notable issues. They typically occur in prisons, where seasoned inmates manipulate new prisoners into facilitating payments from their families, and in businesses, where gangs impose a 'tax' on contractors and small- to medium-sized enterprises. Reports indicate a steady rise in the country's extortion cases.

TRADE

Arms trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago is fuelled by gang proliferation, porous borders and corruption, with most firearms originating from North America. Smuggling methods include cargo concealment, air transport and the use of routes from Venezuela and Haiti. The arms market in the country is substantial relative to other Caribbean nations, with declining firearm prices suggesting oversupply. Gang-on-gang violence involving high-powered weapons has escalated, particularly in urban areas. Firearm seizures have fluctuated, with concerns over possible organized destabilization efforts. Reports indicate rising demand for adaptable firearms, with recent incidents highlighting the

presence of 3D-printed guns and international trafficking networks. Authorities, meanwhile, continue to conduct large-scale raids, with arms seizures linked to narcotics trafficking and significant criminal profits.

The trade in counterfeit goods has primarily targeted the retail sector, with significant quantities destroyed in recent years. While experts indicate that the market has remained stable, consumer demand for low-cost alternatives suggests its potential for expansion. Common counterfeit products include pharmaceuticals, designer apparel and intellectual property. Reports highlight the broader effects of this trade, linking smuggled goods to economic instability and rising violence – particularly through the illegal importation of firearms in addition to counterfeit and excisable commodities. The presence of illegally traded excisable goods, including tobacco, alcohol and cleaning agents, is also a concern. Authorities estimate that contraband cigarettes account for up to 10% of the local market and smuggled spirits for over a fifth of total imports. These activities undermine legitimate businesses, reduce tax revenue and pose risks to consumers.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora-related crime remains limited in Trinidad and Tobago, with no significant increase in recent years. Deforestation is primarily linked to unauthorized quarrying, mining, slash-and-burn farming and squatting, though these activities are not directly connected to organized criminal markets. In contrast, fauna-related crimes have risen, driven by Venezuela's economic crisis. Wildlife smuggling of animals such as parrots, monkeys and reptiles – often by sea – is on the rise, with these animals exported to Europe and other destinations. The wildlife trade has been partly fuelled by increased demand from pet shops and the public, and has broader economic and societal consequences, often related to money laundering.

Gold trafficking from Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago remains a concern, with the capital, Port of Spain, acting as a transit point for illicit gold from several South American countries. This has raised alarms about gold laundering and Trinidad and Tobago's role in global smuggling networks. Additionally, while illegal fuel smuggling occurs, it does not significantly affect domestic consumption. Illegal quarrying, particularly of sand and gravel, continues, despite the country having only eight licensed operations.

DRUGS

Heroin use and trade remain limited, with Trinidad and Tobago acting primarily as a destination point. However, the country's role as a transit point is increasing, partly due to the growing Venezuelan population, some of whom are reportedly involved in the drug trade. While heroin-related violence and corruption are prevalent, data on the market is scarce. Although it operates on a smaller scale, the trade is profitable enough to attract individuals seeking personal gain.

In contrast, Trinidad and Tobago serves as both a transit and destination country for cocaine, largely due to its proximity to drug-producing regions in South America. The trade, which is facilitated through the country's porous maritime borders, is primarily linked to disjointed mafia-style groups, especially in the north-west area of Chaguaramas. While cocaine consumption remains high, it is also a significant source of violent gang conflict. Market profits largely benefit foreign actors, with domestic involvement focused on transit operations amid ongoing corruption concerns within law enforcement.

The cannabis trade is also a major criminal market, with Trinidad and Tobago serving as both a source and transit hub for cannabis destined for international markets. The trade involves significant organized crime groups and has prompted enhanced law enforcement efforts, reflected in increased seizures. Cannabis is imported primarily from Colombia, Guyana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with local cultivation supported by international supplies. Although decriminalization has led to a decrease in cannabis-related arrests, cannabis trafficking continues to fuel violence.

Trinidad and Tobago is primarily a destination for synthetic drugs, with emerging concerns about rising use among students. Although the market for drugs is smaller compared to that for cocaine and cannabis, the variety of drugs – such as MDMA, ketamine and methamphetamine – has increased in recent years. The trade is controlled by criminal gangs, and drugs are often found alongside other illicit substances during raids. Recent concerns highlight the growing use of drugs like molly, particularly among young people. Despite law enforcement efforts, the synthetic drug market remains active, driven by both domestic and foreign actors.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Trinidad and Tobago's cybercrime market has grown rapidly, with significant increases in cyberattacks, including ransomware incidents targeting both public and private entities. Notable cyber-related incidents include government website defacements and data leaks. However, these crimes frequently go unreported. Government and private sectors, especially finance and manufacturing, remain frequent targets, with foreign hacker groups such as Nickel and Vanda da God implicated in recent attacks.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are primarily characterized by fraud and corruption. Financial fraud, including Ponzi schemes, saw a notable rise during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be prevalent in the country. Corruption among law enforcement and public officials has also been linked to various fraud schemes, exacerbating broader governance challenges. Despite some countermeasures, issues such as public fund mismanagement persist, while incidents involving fraudulent checks and the improper allocation of grants continue to expose vulnerabilities in oversight and financial accountability.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Gangs continue to engage in activities such as extortion, murder for hire and turf wars, often driven by identity conflicts and competition for control of drug trafficking territories. A shift in gang leadership has been observed, with younger, more violent figures replacing previous leaders who have been incarcerated or killed. These gangs collaborate with Venezuelan criminal networks and increasingly profit from engaging in kidnapping and extortion alongside drug and arms trafficking. Historical divisions, such as those originating from the country's 1990 attempted coup, contribute to tensions, while newer, younger gang leaders are emerging.

While gang membership decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has rebounded in recent years, with gangs fragmenting and experiencing heightened internal rivalries. Many operate with relative impunity, bolstered by successful extortion schemes and control over drug territories. Limited links to transnational organizations suggest that most activities remain locally focused. Small, loosely structured criminal networks – primarily concentrated in Port of Spain and other impoverished urban areas – also wield significant influence, involving themselves in local and regional drug trafficking. These networks are diversifying into arms trafficking, fraud and corruption.

Corruption is pervasive, with state-embedded actors often facilitating organized crime activities. Gangs profit from government contracts, particularly in public works programmes, with competition for these contracts leading to violence and corruption. There have been multiple instances of police and immigration officials involved in extortion, bribery and money laundering, sometimes in connection with transnational criminal organizations. There are ongoing investigations and charges against public officials for various misconducts, including alleged ties to human trafficking and criminal syndicates.

Transnational organized crime groups, often connected with local gangs, are increasingly involved in smuggling drugs, firearms and people across Trinidad and Tobago, leveraging the country's strategic location to access North

America and Europe. These groups, such as Venezuela's Tren de Aragua, often collaborate with local gangs and exploit the country's porous borders for smuggling operations, with undocumented migrants often serving as shields. Chinese syndicates also have some influence, particularly in the trafficking of drugs and metals, and have ties to Venezuelan gangs.

Lastly, the private sector operates under unclear rules, with larger entities allegedly benefiting from corrupt ties to the government. High-risk sectors for money laundering include legal associations, jewelers, private members' clubs, credit unions, motor vehicle sales and real estate. Lawyers are identified as key facilitators in the movement of illicit funds. These factors highlight systemic vulnerabilities, with both private and legal sectors playing significant roles in enabling illicit financial flows.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Despite some improvements in governance, Trinidad and Tobago faces ongoing challenges with organized crime, corruption and violence. Gangs often act as de facto service providers in impoverished communities, increasing corruption and violence. Gang leaders in Trinidad and Tobago are often portrayed in the media as 'community leaders' and frequently interact with members of Parliament. This creates a duality where gangs, despite being responsible for violence in their communities, also provide resources and employment, thereby enhancing their legitimacy. In 2024, the government declared a state of emergency following a significant rise in gang violence. Political instability also persists, with parties criticizing the government's handling of the crime crisis, which has resulted in a record number of murders.

The country also faces significant challenges in addressing corruption, despite legal frameworks and public commitments to reform. Corruption is particularly prevalent in public procurement, with substantial losses from mismanagement in publicly funded projects. High-profile cases, such as allegations of political interference in police appointments and mismanagement within key agencies, have further exposed systemic issues. Investigations into fraud during COVID-19 relief efforts and the misuse of firearm licenses have also highlighted weaknesses in accountability. Although the country has regulations for public accountability, gaps remain – particularly in political financing – creating opportunities for organized crime groups to exert their influence.

Trinidad and Tobago has actively engaged in international cooperation to combat organized crime, participating in various conventions and treaties related to drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and mutual legal assistance. The country collaborates with local, regional and international partners, including agencies like the Transnational Organized Crime Unit within the Ministry of National Security; INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in the capital, Port of Spain; and the Trinidad and Tobago Police

Service, including its Criminal Investigation Department and Criminal Records Office. Bilateral ties with countries like the UK, US, France and Canada have strengthened operational efforts, especially in drug and serious crime investigations. Programmes such as the Seaport Cooperation Project and the Gang Reduction and Community Empowerment programme have supported law enforcement, intelligence gathering and community policing efforts.

Domestically, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a strong legal framework addressing organized crime, including by passing laws on firearms, trafficking, drugs and gangs. However, weaknesses in policy implementation continue to hinder effective enforcement. Recent efforts include the development and implementation of a national action plan to combat human trafficking and amendments to strengthen intellectual property laws. However, gaps remain in addressing cybercrime, as existing legislation is outdated and comprehensive laws are still pending. While steps are being taken to improve enforcement, the country's slow legislative process continues to hamper the fight against organized crime.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Trinidad and Tobago's judicial system is considered weak and inefficient, hindered by corruption, political pressure and resource shortages. Delays, witness intimidation and slow trials exacerbate this issue, with many cases delayed for years. Recent reforms have sought to expedite cases by eliminating preliminary inquiries and increasing judicial capacity, including by appointing judges for specialized courts. Additionally, the country's prison system struggles with overcrowding, corruption and staff misconduct, with reports of drug trafficking by prison officers. Local gang leaders also exert influence within prisons, further undermining the legitimacy of the justice system. Additionally, a law to address repeat offenders under anti-gang and other crimes failed to gain Senate support, limiting its extension.

The country has several specialized law enforcement units to address organized crime, including the Transnational Organized Crime Unit and the Special Investigations Unit. However, the police and other law enforcement agencies face notable challenges, including accusations of excessive force, corruption and links to criminal activities such as drug trafficking. Oversight bodies like the Police Complaints Authority exist, but their effectiveness is limited due to slow disciplinary processes. The country struggles with a high crime rate, especially for crimes involving firearms and drugs. Additionally, some communities rely on gang leaders to mediate crime. Nevertheless, international support, including US funding and training, aims to strengthen law enforcement.

Trinidad and Tobago's porous borders, strategic location and proximity to Venezuela make it highly susceptible to organized crime, especially drug trafficking, human smuggling and the arms trade. The country's border security is managed by various agencies, including the Customs Enforcement Unit, the Coast Guard and the Police Coastal & Air Support Unit. However, resource shortages, corruption and inefficient coordination between agencies undermine their effectiveness. The Venezuelan crisis has further exacerbated the situation, with gangs exploiting Trinidad and Tobago's vulnerabilities. Additionally, cyberattacks are a growing concern, with government email accounts being frequently breached. Despite attempts to draft a National Border Security Policy, progress has stalled.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The country's financial system and strategic geographic location make it vulnerable to illicit financial flows and money laundering activities. Despite efforts to strengthen anti-money laundering (AML) legislation and enforcement – including the establishment of a Financial Intelligence Unit and the passage of a Gambling Control Bill – enforcement remains weak and prosecutions are rare. Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago remains on the EU's blacklist for non-cooperation on tax and AML issues.

Organized crime also poses a challenge in the gaming sector, where casinos facilitate money laundering and terrorism financing. The country's economy has contracted over the past five years, with declining economic freedom and concerns about governance and corruption. Criminal organizations engage in extortion, targeting contractors on public projects. A leaked police report implicated business owners in various illicit activities. Transparency also remains an issue, especially in the private sector. Meanwhile, increasing criminal activity – including gangs' use of advanced technology like drones – has raised concerns among business leaders, particularly regarding the effect on small- and medium-sized businesses and economic stability.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Trinidad and Tobago has various victim and witness support programmes, managed by both government entities and NGOs. NGOs play a vital role, offering support to victims of domestic violence, drug abuse and those at risk of criminal behaviour, such as children and ex-offenders. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service operates units like the Victim and Witness Support Unit and the Justice Protection Unit, which offer protection and psycho-social support. Victims of human trafficking benefit from legal assistance, relocation and shelter, with the government opening its first trafficking-specific shelters in 2023. However, issues including lengthy judicial processes and inadequate living conditions persist.

The country has implemented several crime prevention strategies, including whistle-blower protection, anti-human trafficking initiatives, drug demand reduction programmes and gang-related crime efforts. In 2024, the government increased efforts to combat trafficking by expanding prosecutions, personnel and victim services, although challenges such as corruption and weak coordination persist. That same year, the Whistleblower Protection Bill – which encourages and protects disclosures of improper conduct in both the public and private sectors – was finally approved in Parliament and is now awaiting proclamation. Meanwhile, drug prevention programmes have had limited visibility, and the Gang Reduction and Community Empowerment Programme, launched in 2022, has faced management issues. The country also struggles with weak enforcement of intellectual property rights, prompting the creation of a multi-agency task force to strengthen control.

Non-state actors, including various NGOs, play a critical role in addressing organized crime by supplementing government efforts and supporting vulnerable populations. Organizations assist on a variety of issues including prisoner reintegration, support for victims of sex crimes and domestic violence, and drug rehabilitation efforts. NGOs also collaborate with state agencies on human trafficking, though there have been challenges with victim identification and coordination. Regarding wildlife trafficking, NGOs lead efforts in public education and wildlife rehabilitation. The media also plays a crucial role in combating organized crime, with privately-owned, pluralistic outlets operating in a generally safe environment, although state advertising tends to favour government-friendly media. Civil society, NGOs and private individuals supplement state efforts to address organized crime.

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.