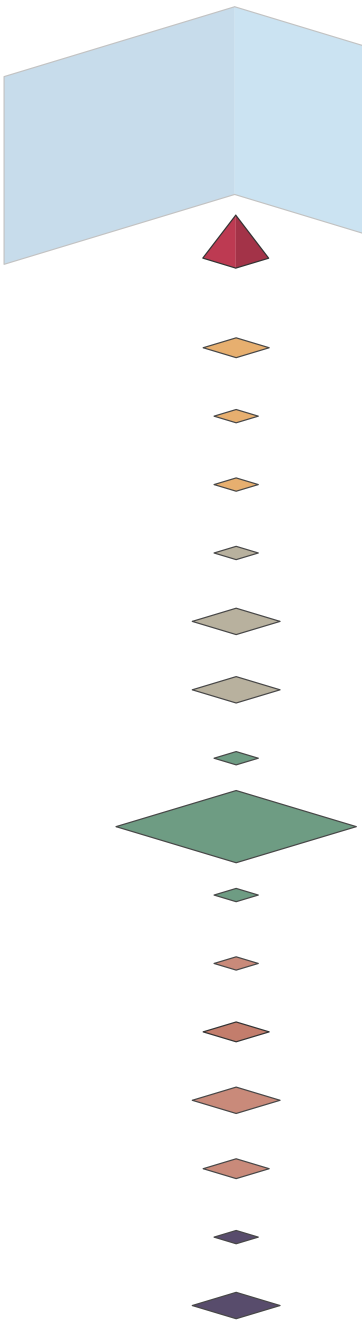
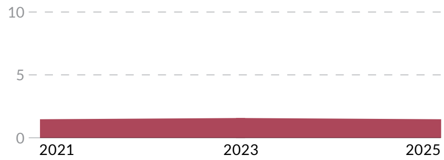
TUVALU



1.53 ↘0.08

CRIMINALITY SCORE

193rd of 193 countries -
14th of 14 Oceanian countries -
3rd of 3 Polynesian countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS 1.67 ↘0.27

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	1.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	1.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	1.00	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.00	↘2.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.00	↘1.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.50	↗0.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	1.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	2.00	↘0.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1.00	↘0.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	2.00	↘0.50

CRIMINAL ACTORS 1.40 ↗0.10

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	1.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	1.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.50	↗1.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	1.00	↘0.50

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

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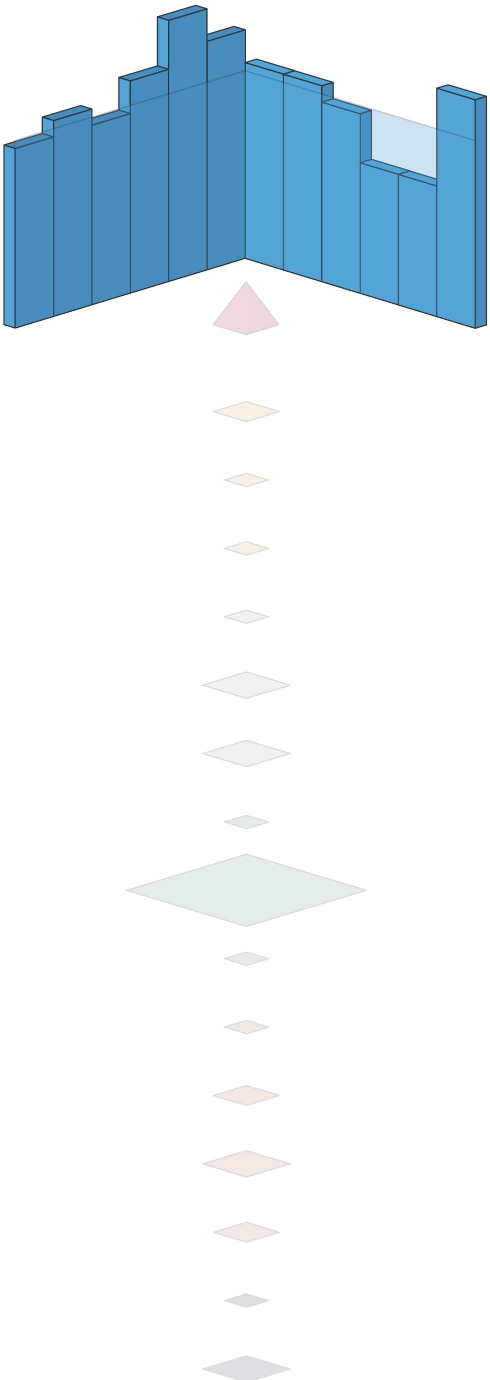
Funded by the European Union

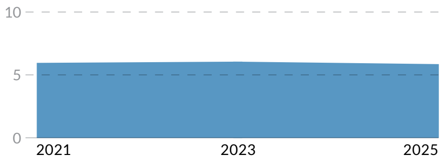
ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

TUVALU



5.92 ↘0.17
RESILIENCE SCORE

37th of 193 countries ↘2
3rd of 14 Oceanian countries -
1st of 3 Polynesian countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**5.50**	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**6.00**	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**5.50**	↗0.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**6.50**	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**8.00**	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**7.00**	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**6.00**	↘0.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**6.00**	↘0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**5.50**	↘0.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**4.00**	↘0.50
PREVENTION	**4.00**	↘0.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	**7.00**	0.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

There is no evidence of human trafficking in Tuvalu, although reports suggest some instances of forced labour in the informal sector, particularly in small-scale fishing and agriculture, and child labour within the fishing industry and among domestic workers. However, rising sea levels and extreme weather events increase the vulnerability of Tuvaluans, making those who lose their livelihoods, shelter or community support systems susceptible to trafficking risks. Tuvalu has no reported cases of human smuggling. Despite being a low-income country with around a quarter of the population living below the poverty line, access to free education and strong community networks reduce the need for people to seek irregular migration routes. Tuvalu's geographical isolation further limits its role in human smuggling. Existing legal migration pathways, such as the Falepili Treaty with Australia and the New Zealand Pacific Access Quota, mitigate the likelihood of people smuggling networks emerging. No evidence is available of extortion or protection racketeering in Tuvalu. Given its small population and lack of organized criminal groups, this form of crime is not currently a concern.

TRADE

Tuvalu has no recorded evidence of arms trafficking and does not possess the strategic or economic characteristics that would attract transnational criminal groups involved in the arms trade. No illicit firearms are known to be in circulation, and even the National Police do not carry firearms. The low crime rate and economic conditions further contribute to the improbability of this market emerging in the near future.

In the previous reporting period, counterfeit goods were observed in Tuvalu, with some evidence of seasonal trafficking in counterfeit luxury watches. However, there is no recent data to confirm if this trade remains active. Demand for replica products exists within the country, but the extent of the trade in counterfeit goods remains unclear.

Illicit trade in excisable goods has not been widely documented in Tuvalu, though increasing excise duties on products such as tobacco and sugar may create conditions conducive to smuggling. Tuvalu's limited resources make it difficult to comprehensively regulate imports, leaving gaps that could be exploited by illicit traders.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes are not evident in Tuvalu, and the illicit timber trade is insignificant due to the country's small size and limited forests. In contrast, fauna crimes are prevalent, in particular illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. IUU fishing is the primary environmental crime, threatening marine ecosystems, which are vital to Tuvalu's economy and food security – over 50% of Tuvalu's economy relies on fishing, making it one of the most fishery-dependent countries in the world. The presence of 'dark vessels' operating in Tuvalu's waters indicates ongoing IUU activity, which is exacerbated by challenges in monitoring and enforcement.

There is no documented evidence of non-renewable resource crimes in Tuvalu. Land erosion and aggregate mining have had environmental impacts but are not linked to organized criminal activity.

DRUGS

Information about the cannabis trade in Tuvalu is limited, but a small illicit market probably exists, as cannabis consumption is common across the Pacific region. However, cultivation within the country is unlikely due to unsuitable soil conditions. Some cannabis may be smuggled from Fiji, although enhanced border controls, including drug-detecting dogs, have reduced this risk. The cannabis trade in Tuvalu appears to be small-scale and not linked to organized criminal groups.

No evidence links Tuvalu to the synthetic drug trade. Demand for ecstasy and methamphetamine exists across the broader Oceania region, but Tuvalu does not appear to be involved in trafficking or consumption. However, this could change, given that the South Pacific is increasingly being used as a transit corridor for synthetic drugs destined for Australia and New Zealand.

There is no recorded evidence of heroin trade in Tuvalu, and local demand remains absent. Limited data suggests that organized criminal networks are not involved in this trade within Tuvalu.

Similarly, Tuvalu does not appear to have a local market for cocaine or to be a major transit point. However, given Tuvalu's location near major trafficking routes that connect Latin America to Asia and Australasia, it is possible that occasional cocaine trans-shipments occur. As seen in neighbouring Pacific Island countries, cocaine shipments may inadvertently arrive in Tuvalu via maritime routes, but local awareness of the drug is minimal.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crime is largely absent, with no cybercrime cases reported and no evidence of organized criminal groups operating. Economic constraints make Tuvalu a low-value target for cybercriminals.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Tuvalu's financial crimes market is limited in both scope and scale. While its financial sector is vulnerable to exploitation due to limited institutional capacity, no large-scale operations have been identified. Nevertheless, the potential for foreign actors to use Tuvalu as a financial conduit remains a concern, while unregulated financial flows associated with Chinese businesses operating in Tuvalu may pose tax evasion risks.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There is no evidence of mafia-style groups or loosely organized criminal networks in Tuvalu. The country is less attractive than other locations due to its small population, geographic isolation and limited economic opportunities.

No major instances of corruption or collusion between government officials and criminal organizations have been reported in Tuvalu. However, concerns exist regarding the country's practice of selling flags of convenience for ships, which could potentially facilitate illicit activities. Although no state actor has been found to be complicit in criminal ventures, the regulatory oversight of maritime standards is a concern.

Foreign actors, in particular commercial companies from China and other Asian nations, engage in IUU fishing in the country's vast but weakly monitored exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This poses long-term economic and ecological threats to Tuvalu whose economy relies on fishing revenues. Foreign actors are not linked to other criminal enterprises, such as drug trafficking or financial crimes, but the potential for such activities cannot be entirely ruled out.

Given Tuvalu's small-scale economy, lack of major industries and limited financial infrastructure, it is unlikely that private-sector actors are actively engaged in criminal activities, such as money laundering, tax evasion or other financial misconduct.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Tuvalu's government is relatively disengaged from anti-organized crime efforts, prioritizing instead economic challenges and climate change impacts. Political leaders have acknowledged the importance of fisheries to the national economies and the need to combat IUU fishing. Since 2013, Tuvalu has gradually strengthened its stance against child labour and human trafficking, although enforcement remains inconsistent. The country has also expressed a commitment to addressing human smuggling through its participation in the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference. Tuvalu is classified as a free democracy, with regular and fair elections. The public perception of government transparency is difficult to assess due to the lack of data, but criminal influence on governance or political campaigns has not been raised as a concern. However, frequent votes of no confidence against the Prime Minister, often linked to corruption allegations, suggest some political instability. These concerns do not appear to be connected to organized crime but do reflect broader governance challenges. Tuvalu has several anti-corruption mechanisms, such as the Penal Code and the Leadership Code Act, that criminalize corruption offences, but enforcement is inconsistent and coordinated measures specifically targeting corruption are limited. In 2023, the country revised its Constitution to improve parliamentary procedures, ensuring that Parliament meets at least twice a year.

Tuvalu actively participates in regional and international cooperation efforts, including the Pacific Islands Forum and the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering, and shares information through its membership of the Commonwealth and bilateral agreements with the US and Australia. Tuvalu is a signatory to the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty and, in 2024, signed a security agreement with Australia, reinforcing its commitment to international security cooperation. However, the country has not ratified or acceded to several key international treaties on transnational organized crime, including the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols, the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Tuvalu has been included in capacity-building programmes related to human smuggling organized by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and is part of an anti-corruption initiatives led by New Zealand in partnership with the UN. The country also receives support through the Japan–UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime) agreement to counter maritime crime, including fishery crime and human trafficking, as well as from New Zealand

and Australia, which provide patrols and technical support to combat IUU fishing.

Tuvalu's national legislation criminalizes several transnational organized crimes, in particular IUU fishing that is criminalized under the Fisheries (Foreign Fishing Vessel) Regulations and a Fisheries Ordinance. Given Tuvalu's size and relative isolation, and strong community-based approach to governance, its laws and policies are considered appropriate for addressing current threats. However, gaps remain in the legal framework and include the lack of comprehensive cybercrime legislation, which leaves the country exposed to potential future threats.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The government generally respects Tuvalu's independent judiciary. The judicial system consists of island courts, magistrates' courts, a High Court, a Court of Appeal, and the UK-based Privy Council as the highest appellate body. Communal mediation and restorative justice practices, often facilitated by traditional leaders or religious institutions, complement the formal judicial system, particularly in resolving minor disputes. Tuvalu has one prison in Funafuti, which operates under the 1985 Prisons Act, and typically houses between eight and 12 inmates at any given time. No concerns about physical conditions or inmate treatment have been reported.

Tuvalu has a National Police Force that includes units for maritime surveillance, customs, prisons and immigration. The country does not have a military but relies on regional partnerships to enhance security, such as patrol vessels from Australia to bolster capacity for combatting IUU fishing and smuggling. The country is a member of the Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network, the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, and the Pacific Transnational Crime Network, which collectively provide intelligence-sharing and law enforcement training. However, Tuvalu lacks a dedicated unit for transnational organized crime investigations beyond its maritime surveillance capabilities.

Maintaining territorial integrity is challenging for Tuvalu. The country's vast EEZ is difficult to patrol, leading to vulnerabilities in maritime security. In 2023, the Vanuatu cyclones destroyed Tuvalu's patrol boat, further weakening the country's ability to patrol its waters. A new vessel has been commissioned but is not expected to be operational until 2026. In the meantime, Tuvalu relies on bilateral agreements with Australia, New Zealand and the US Coast Guard to assist in monitoring its EEZ. In response to climate change, Tuvalu has taken measures to ensure the continued recognition of its maritime boundaries despite rising sea levels.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In Tuvalu, money laundering does not significantly affect the financial system, and anti-money laundering (AML) measures are limited. The country complies with the Financial Action Task Force's recommendations but has not yet undergone a Mutual Evaluation Report. In 2023, after years of observer status, Tuvalu became a full member of the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering. Recent efforts to strengthen AML measures include establishing a Transaction Tracking Unit within the Tuvalu Police Force. Despite these improvements, Tuvalu does not have a financial intelligence unit and has yet to implement comprehensive supervision of its banking sector. Concerns have been raised over financial institutions being able to detect suspicious transactions and regulatory authorities having insufficient resources for tax compliance and auditing. The country has no measures to prevent online gambling and crowdfunding from becoming potential avenues for illicit financial activity. In addition, the absence of a central bank and reliance on the Australian dollar limit Tuvalu's ability to regulate financial transactions effectively.

Tuvalu's economy is characterized by a narrow revenue base, reliance on external aid and a public sector-dominated structure. The country has historically generated revenue through fishing licences, remittances and the resale of international telephone codes. Although there is no evidence of criminal infiltration into economic sectors, Tuvalu's status as a tax haven raises regulatory concerns. The sale of flags of convenience and domain names highlights the government's need for alternative revenue streams but also underscores challenges in maintaining oversight.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Tuvalu provides limited support services for victims and witnesses of crime. Legislation covers victim compensation and legal representation, and child protection services have been established, but few resources are available for adult victims, particularly women. No proportion of the national budget is allocated towards counter-trafficking and the protection of victims, and there is no data on witness protection programmes.

Organized crime prevention efforts are minimal in Tuvalu, with no national frameworks or action plans that specifically target criminal activities. However, given the low levels of organized crime, prevention programmes have not been a government priority. Child labour prevention measures are not in place, and data collection for oversight is inconsistent. In recent years, government has paid more attention to cybercrime, launching awareness campaigns in 2019 to educate the public about online sexual harassment and cyberstalking. The Tuvalu Police Service has also provided training on cybercrime prevention to youth groups. In terms of IUU fishing, the country has partnered with its neighbours to allow for satellite scans of its EEZ to chart the extent of fishing activity by non-authorized or non-reporting vessels.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a role in promoting governance, environmental conservation and social issues. The Tuvalu Association of NGOs includes 47 registered civil society organizations that focus on good governance, conservation and public health, but no NGOs specifically address transnational organized crime. Tuvalu maintains a high level of political rights and civil liberties. The government controls the country's sole radio and television station, but independent media is generally free from interference. However, economic constraints and cultural factors pose challenges to media freedom.

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.