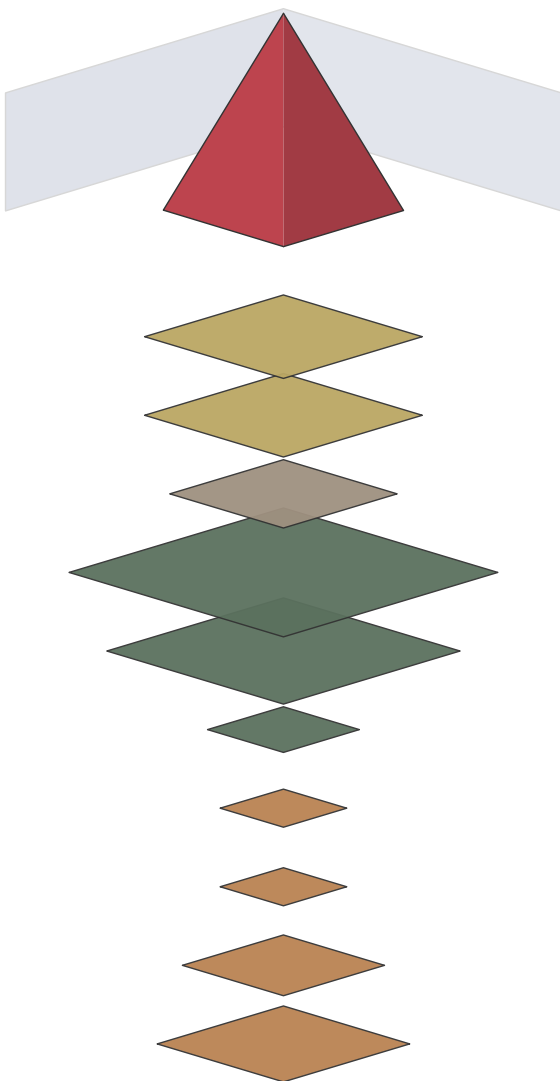


 **GABON**



 **4.90  
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

**32<sup>nd</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**7<sup>th</sup>** of 11 Central African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS 4.80**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.50
FLORA CRIMES	8.50
FAUNA CRIMES	7.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.50
COCAINE TRADE	2.50
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.00**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.00

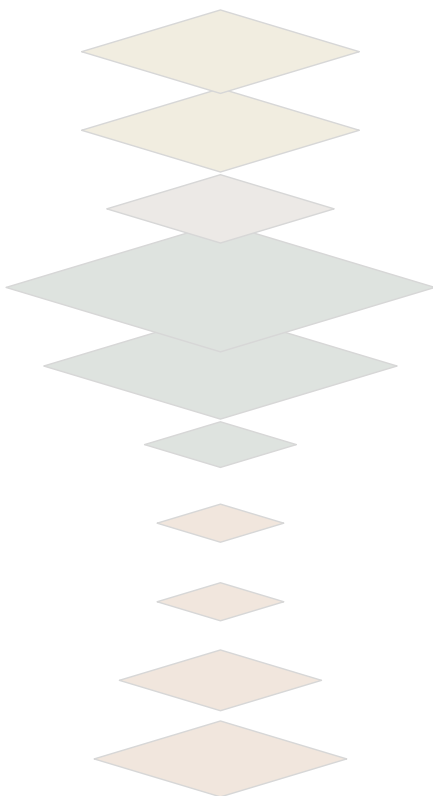
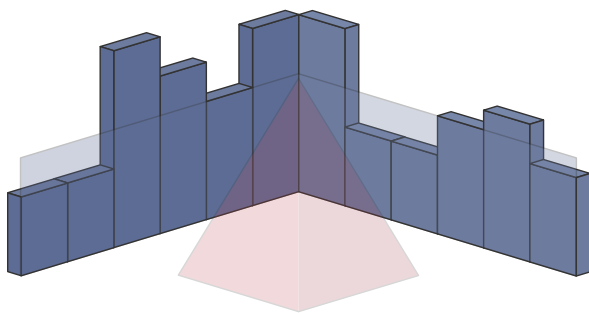
 **3.17  
RESILIENCE SCORE**

**36<sup>th</sup>** of 54 African countries  
**5<sup>th</sup>** of 11 Central African countries





# GABON



## 3.17 RESILIENCE SCORE

36<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
5<sup>th</sup> of 11 Central African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	2.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	4.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	2.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	2.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.00
PREVENTION	3.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	2.50



## 4.90 CRIMINALITY SCORE

32<sup>nd</sup> of 54 African countries  
7<sup>th</sup> of 11 Central African countries



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 4.80



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 5.00



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Gabon is mainly a destination market and a waypoint for trafficked persons from Central and West Africa, who are forced into sexual and labour exploitation. Boys are mainly exploited as street merchants, in the transport and fishing sectors. Girls, on the other hand, are forced into domestic work, markets and roadside restaurants. Shopkeepers also exploit Gabonese children in markets in the eastern provinces. Many are brought in by traffickers who have been reported to procure falsified documents identifying their child victims to be over the age of 18. Additionally, women from West Africa are used in domestic servitude and as prostitutes. There are also reports of brothel owners sexually exploiting children.

Gabon serves as the final stop for migrants from West and Central Africa seeking to access the labor market, though human smuggling itself is not a very significant problem in the country. There are overlaps between human trafficking and human smuggling, whereby smugglers assist individuals in entering the country with fake documents by air or by boat, before subjecting them to forced labour and sexual exploitation.

### TRADE

Overall, Gabon is not a high-risk arms trafficking market. However, recent instability in the country has led to arms brokers seeking to sell weapons. Gabon is at risk given its proximity to Cameroon, although the southern border of Cameroon is not particularly prone to arms trafficking.

### ENVIRONMENT

In Gabon, forest crimes are widespread and closely linked to the inner workings of the industrial logging industry. It has been reported that the majority of companies operating in the industrial logging sector in Gabon routinely bribe ministers in order to get timber concessions and avoid punishment for their continuous breaking of forest laws and the diversion of millions in unpaid taxes. Gabon is one of the top timber-exporting countries to China, which suggests a considerable volume of rosewood being illegally traded. Though most evidence is anecdotal, there may be potential convergence between timber and minerals (gold) trafficking by Cameroonian military officials. In Gabon,

wildlife crimes are also problematic, particularly the poaching of forest elephant in areas such as Minkébé National Park. The illegal trade in other species, including great apes, is also an issue in the country with poachers often coming from neighboring Cameroon and Congo. Corruption facilitates poaching and wildlife trafficking. In regard to non-renewable resource crimes, while gold-producing countries surround Gabon, there is no evidence to suggest that the latter serves as a transit or destination point. There is, however, some indication of gold originating in Gabon being exported illegally, primarily towards The Republic of the Congo.

### DRUGS

Cannabis is the most commonly used drug in Gabon and is brought into the country primarily from Cameroon. Meanwhile, Gabon is an intra-continental trans-shipment point for cocaine that generally enters the continent through other West African and Central African entry points. It is repackaged and shipped through sea routes, as well as air routes that include Gabon, before making its way to destination markets in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Trans-shipment of heroin is likely, given that the transit of cocaine exists. However, heroin use is limited in Gabon. Gabon is primarily a destination country for synthetic drugs. As in other Central African countries, there are reports of widespread use of tramadol.

## Criminal Actors

Regular arrests of wildlife traffickers and seizures of ivory by Gabonese authorities suggest that criminal networks are active in the country with cross-border operations across parts of Central and West Africa. There are also reports of foreign actors from Asia being involved in forest crimes. In terms of human trafficking, operations in the country involve loose, ethnically based criminal networks that recruit victims across West and Central Africa. These span multiple nationalities, which vary with the stage of the trafficking process.

State-embedded actors play a role in facilitating a range of crime types. In the case of forest crimes, systematic corruption and routine bribery involving multiple layers of public servants and decision-makers, including ministers, allow logging companies to engage in forestry crime while avoiding punishment. In relation to human trafficking, there is widespread complicity in trafficking crimes, including judicial staff, with judges allegedly taking



bribes from traffickers to delay or dismiss trafficking

cases. Meanwhile, there is no evidence of mafia-style groups operating in Gabon.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Gabon experienced a political crisis after the 2016 election, which resulted in a failed coup attempt and growing mistrust in the government. The latter is mostly considered corrupt. Moreover, there is growing public dissatisfaction over controversial constitutional amendments and the highly unequal distribution of natural resource wealth, which among other issues has contributed to the overall instability in the country. Gabon currently does not have any legislation on open contracting or access to information.

On the international level, Gabon has ratified many relevant international treaties pertaining to organized crime. The country has entered into bilateral engagements to address forest and wildlife crimes. Gabon also signed bilateral cooperation agreements with Togo and Benin, with the aim of strengthening law enforcement coordination against international trafficking networks. On the domestic level, Gabon generally adopts relevant laws with respect to combatting organized crime but is weak with compliance and implementation.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

There are no specialized judiciary units with the specific aim of countering organized crime in Gabon. In general, because of the country's governance and leadership framework, the judiciary is not trusted and is seen as a tool for the ruling party and the elite. There have been reports of complicity among judicial staff, with judges allegedly taking bribes from traffickers to delay or dismiss cases. In addition, limited professional capacity often results in prosecutorial judges not always investigating cases of human trafficking brought to their attention. Similarly, Gabon lacks specialized law enforcement units tasked with countering organized crime.

As far as territorial integrity is concerned, there is statutory free movement of persons and goods between Gabon and its three neighboring countries under the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa free movement regulations. However, the country has often closed

its borders in times of trouble, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also closed its borders with Cameroon to curb alleged illegal immigration. The border with Cameroon, while well policed, is also highly vulnerable to corruption by custom officers on both sides. Furthermore, Gabon's unguarded beaches and porous borders in some locations allow traffickers to move people and commodities by car or boat.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Gabon's economic environment is not conducive to setting up and operating a legitimate business. Moreover, ongoing perceptions of weak governance and high levels of corruption continue to deter private sector investment and constrain economic growth. Meanwhile, money laundering is a criminal offence in Gabon, as in other countries in Central Africa, however, there have not been any money laundering cases prosecuted. Gabon shares the same anti-money laundering strategy under the Central Africa Monetary Union. At the national level, Gabon's Financial Intelligence Unit investigates instances of money laundering and corruption and cooperates with its counterparts in the region. Although being operational, the unit is not properly staffed, which limits its effectiveness. In addition, the prosecution of money-laundering cases in Gabon is not effective because of certain shortcomings of its legal system.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Gabon has few mechanisms to help victims exit modern slavery. With respect to human trafficking, there are two state-funded NGO shelters offering medical, legal, housing and other services to homeless and orphaned children who are most at risk of trafficking. For those wishing to report corruption as witnesses, there are strong concerns about retaliation. Meanwhile, Gabon has taken some preventive measures for certain criminal activities, including GPS real-time tracking collars to deter ivory trafficking and eco-guards patrolling the country's national parks. Since 2018, authorities have strengthened their efforts to better prevent human



trafficking. Also, in 2019, the government partnered with NGOs to organize a campaign to raise awareness against human trafficking as well as other forms of violence against children. In terms of the media space, Gabon's press freedom is extremely limited.

