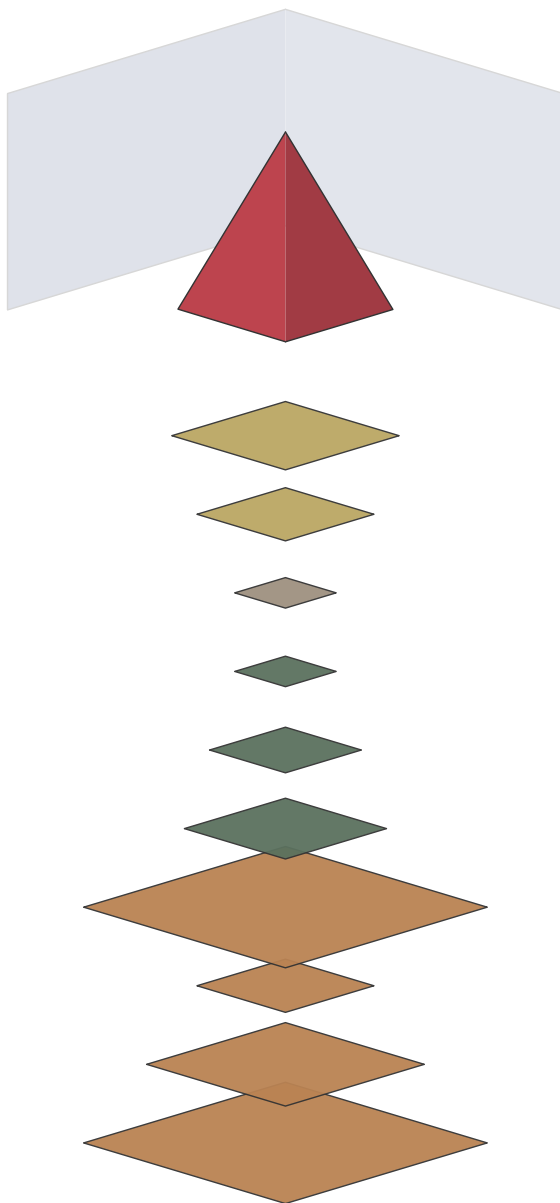


# MAURITIUS



## 4.51 CRIMINALITY SCORE

37<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
6<sup>th</sup> of 13 Southern African countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS **4.40**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	2.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00
FAUNA CRIMES	3.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	4.00
HEROIN TRADE	8.00
COCAINE TRADE	3.50
CANNABIS TRADE	5.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	8.00



### CRIMINAL ACTORS **4.63**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	2.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.50



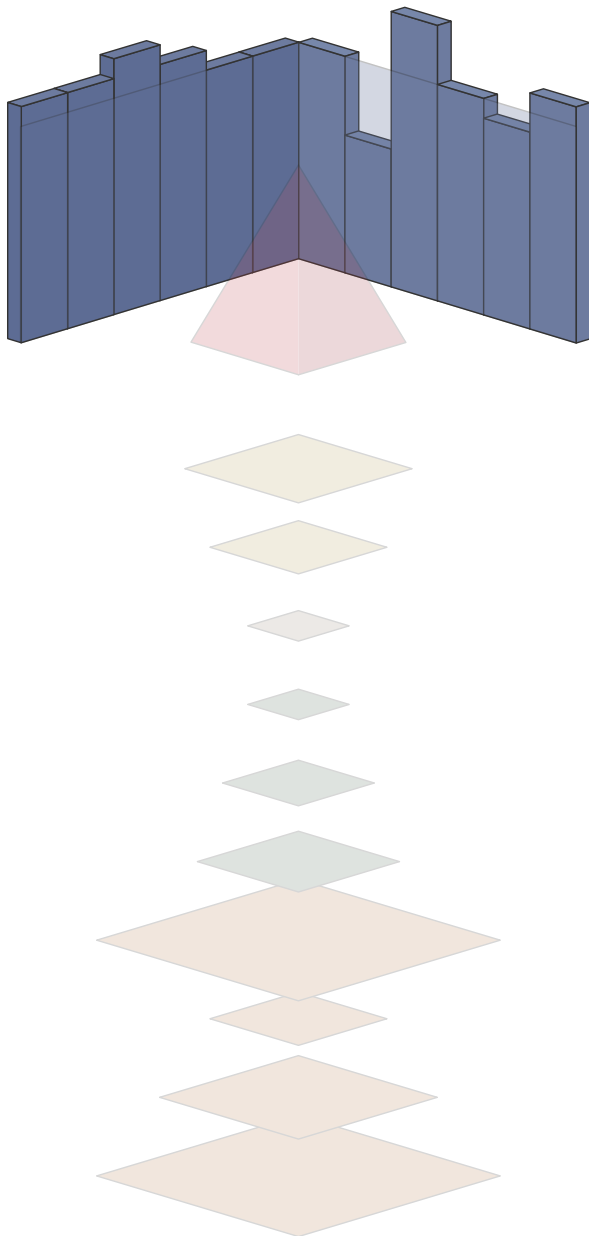
## 5.67 RESILIENCE SCORE

3<sup>rd</sup> of 54 African countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 13 Southern African countries





# MAURITIUS




## 5.67 RESILIENCE SCORE



3<sup>rd</sup> of 54 African countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 13 Southern African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	7.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50
PREVENTION	5.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	6.00



## 4.51 CRIMINALITY SCORE

37<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
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 CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.40
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.63



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Mauritius is primarily a transit point for human trafficking victims originating from East Africa and Madagascar. Despite its highly organized nature, the market is not prominent in Mauritius. There are an estimated 1 000 people living as modern slaves in the country, with many more exploited in the textile industry and evidence of labour-broking arrangements involving migrants from India and Bangladesh. Criminalization of victims remains common and exploitation is widespread. Mauritius has been successful in preventing instances of human trafficking in which women from Madagascar are brought into the country for sex work.

Although there are relatively few cases of human smuggling due to the difficulty of entering the island, the smuggling of domestic workers from Madagascar to the Arabian Peninsula via Mauritius is a means of circumnavigating a ban on domestic workers in certain Arab states.

### TRADE

In 2012, an international arms-trafficking network was uncovered with Mauritius, but since then its laws on firearms have been tightened and the flow of arms into and out of the country is thought to be minimal. Drug kingpins and private-security firms reportedly use firearms for protection, but incidents of shootings or armed crime are rare.

### ENVIRONMENT

There is a very limited illicit flora market in Mauritius, although illegal logging for firewood is reported. There are stringent controls around the importation of flora, aimed at avoiding the introduction of unwanted pests and protecting the country's sugar cane. Mauritius has a small illegal fauna market centred on the trafficking of different species of birds and turtles. The country is reportedly a transit point for the trafficking of large megafauna from Southern Africa. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a problem because Mauritius is reliant on the industry for local consumption as well as for export purposes. Mauritius has relatively few cases of non-renewable-resource crimes, most of which are limited to the trafficking of precious stones. However, the country plays a critical role not just as a tax haven

but also in facilitating money laundering for companies involved in mineral smuggling. An example of this is Mbada, a company at the centre of the looting of Marange diamonds in Zimbabwe.

### DRUGS

Drug markets are by far the largest criminal economy in Mauritius, enjoying significant protection from the political elite in the country and driving widespread corruption across state institutions. Mauritius is a destination country for heroin, with one of the highest consumption rates of the drug in the region. As heroin flows from Afghanistan continues to travel down the east and southern coast of Africa, domestic heroin markets have become deeply entrenched in Mauritius, as well as in other island states in the western Indian Ocean. The use of synthetic drugs, primarily synthetic cannabinoids, known as 'chimique', is also high and growing, due to their affordability and easy availability. These drugs are trafficked into Mauritius predominantly for the local market rather than for further transit, and almost all synthetic cannabinoids sold on the Mauritian market are trafficked into the country from China. They are used mostly by students and the youth in general, as well as in poor communities.

The cannabis trade in Mauritius is moderate and stable. Cannabis is the most popular drug in the country, but its use is illegal and carries severe punishment. While Mauritius is not a major global producer of cannabis, most seizures to date have been of locally cultivated products – and recent reports suggest that Mauritius appears to be turning into more of a destination market. Law enforcement efforts targeting cannabis cultivation have caused the price of cannabis to increase significantly over the past five years, which is thought to be one driver of the shift toward synthetic drug use in the country. Mauritius does not have a significant cocaine market. The drug is trafficked into the country from West Africa and then onto East Asian and Middle Eastern markets, largely by sea. Local usage is limited mostly to expats, the social elite and those who have studied in Europe.

## Criminal Actors

State-embedded criminal actors are active in Mauritius, with a commission of inquiry linking state officials – including politicians and law-enforcement personnel – to drug traffickers. The minister of gender equality and the deputy speaker stepped down in 2018 following



allegations of their involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering. Middle- to lower-level state actors are involved in all criminal markets, as are corrupt senior officials.

Criminal networks operating in country are made up mostly of Mauritian nationals, who work with suppliers based predominantly in South Africa, East Africa and Madagascar. These networks are generally not violent, but levels of corruption in law enforcement remain high. The emergence of synthetic drugs in Mauritius in 2015 prompted a dramatic increase in the number of drug-trafficking networks operating in the country. Because synthetics can be ordered online, these new networks

are less reliant on overseas suppliers and have a less hierarchical structure than is the case in the heroin trade.

Research indicates that foreign criminal actors are involved in Mauritius, particularly in drug trafficking. Members of a community of Nigerian students have been arrested in recent years with large quantities of heroin. Bangladesh and Indian workers have also been arrested for engaging in drug trafficking, but human trafficking appears to be primarily the domain of local actors. There are certain gangs in Mauritius that resemble mafia-style groups, their level of power, organization and sophistication remains very low, although with the potential to develop into more influential actors in the future.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Mauritius is reportedly the only country in Africa to meet the requirements of a full democracy. However, the government's credibility has been undermined by recent financial, corruption and collusion scandals, which culminated in the president stepping down in 2018. State involvement in drug trafficking is hard to gauge, but drug money is rumoured to have infiltrated political and electoral financing. The enrichment of the political elite and nepotism are both problems that need attention, and the integrity of some government officials has been questioned due to scandals involving the misappropriation of funds. The prime minister has close ties to a gambling mogul who is reported to have financed his campaign during the last elections. Such links and high-profile scandals demonstrate a level of state capture by criminal interests. In spite of these issues, Mauritius is regarded as a highly stable state and a leading example for Africa.

Mauritius has signed a number of international treaties on organized crime, and is a party to the Palermo Convention, Rome Statute and Sua Act. It has signed an extradition treaty with the US and ratified the SADC protocol on extradition as well as other international anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism pacts. Mauritius has entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements with other countries and has strong relationships with Madagascar and nearby South Asian countries, especially India, with which it shares military training and intelligence. While its legislation is generally strong, in 2020 Mauritius was placed on

the European Union's blacklist for high-risk countries in terms of its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist-financing frameworks. Its anti-human trafficking and child protection acts work well in tandem, but there are nonetheless still weaknesses in the system – such as restrictions on victims' freedom of movement and the length of time it takes to complete a civil suit. Although there are strategies in place against drug trafficking, there is no clear national strategy against organized crime in Mauritius.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Mauritius's judiciary is considered to be independent. Although there are no specialized departments within the judiciary to counter organized crime, the authorities have prosecuted a number of cases successfully, particularly with regard to drug and human trafficking. Prison conditions can sometimes be poor – and according to the latest available data, close to half of the country's prison population is in pre-trial detention or remand imprisonment.

There are a number of specialized units within Mauritius's police service, such as the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID) and an anti-drug smuggling unit. The national police force is generally regarded as well trained and reasonably efficient, and is well supported by foreign governments. The CCID is perceived as a so-called political unit that reacts promptly if allegations are levelled against the prime minister. While there is a commonly held sense that Mauritius's fight against



drugs has been largely cosmetic, this is attributed mainly to widespread corruption and incompetence in its law-enforcement bodies rather than to direct political collusion in the drug trade.

Subpar checks at Mauritius's airports mean it is relatively easy to bring drugs into the country via its air routes. And with its multiple islands and lack of maritime security, Mauritius struggles to police its borders, while under-resourcing and poor training facilitate corruption in the national coastguard. However, because the country is sea-locked with few ports, it is difficult for criminal networks to smuggle contraband into the country via sea routes. In spite of this, there have been some incidents of smuggling through Mauritian ports, allegedly involving a degree of state-embedded protection.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mauritius has made significant improvements to its anti-money laundering laws to prevent abuse of its global business and financial sectors. However, being placed on the EU's blacklist in 2020 is likely to have hugely negative consequences for the country's economy. Among the risks which prompted this move were a lack of risk-based supervision of the global business sector, a failure to demonstrate that law enforcement has the capacity to conduct money laundering investigations, and opacity surrounding beneficial ownership.

Conversely, Mauritius' economy is one of the strongest and freest in Africa, and in 2020 the World Bank classified Mauritius as a high-income country. Recent reforms aimed at facilitating entrepreneurship have been successful and have stimulated an already solid economy. As a result, the incentive to engage in criminal activity is lower than in other parts of Africa.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Mauritius has a fairly robust framework for supporting victims of organized crime, especially human trafficking. However, victims of drug trafficking are still often processed as criminals rather than victims, and improvements need to be made in providing them with adequate care. Treatment for drug users is funded by the government, with further support coming from non-profit organizations. There is no formal witness protection programme in place in Mauritius, and positive steps have been taken to counter most criminal markets; however, resources and implementation capacity are limited. Arrests of human traffickers have increased, alongside drug-trafficking arrests, which have grown significantly since 2018. There are various prevention strategies in place within law

enforcement, including community-oriented policing – and every year, Mauritius participates in Cutlass Express, a multinational operation sponsored by the US Africa Command, to facilitate cooperation and collaborative activities to prevent maritime crime in the region.

Civil society is strong in Mauritius and supported by the government. It has good engagement in social, economic and cultural spheres and benefits from EU funding. However, the government has been accused of undermining media freedom by banning certain journalists from press conferences, delivering licenses to government-friendly media companies only, and using its state-run television station to undermine protests. On the whole, the media environment is relatively fair, but journalists have been imprisoned and stories on corruption in the tourism sector are almost entirely censored.

