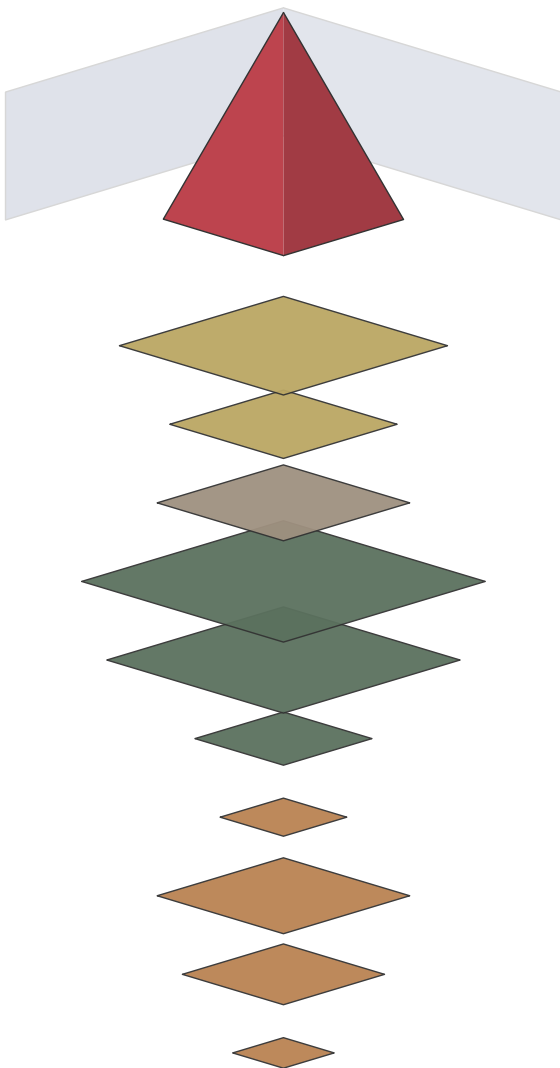




 **CONGO, REP.**



 **5.03**
CRIMINALITY SCORE
30th of 54 African countries
6th of 11 Central African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.80**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.00
FLORA CRIMES	8.00
FAUNA CRIMES	7.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50
HEROIN TRADE	2.50
COCAINE TRADE	5.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	2.00

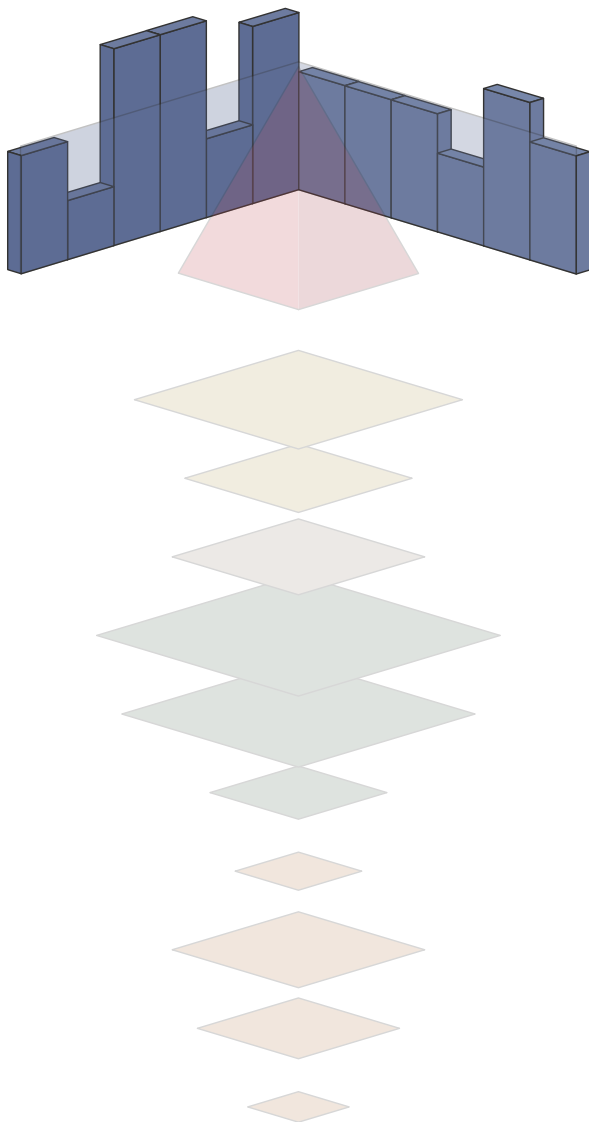
 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.25**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00

 **3.25**
RESILIENCE SCORE
33rd of 54 African countries
4th of 11 Central African countries



 **CONGO, REP.**





 **3.25
RESILIENCE SCORE**

33rd of 54 African countries
4th of 11 Central African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	3.00
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	1.50
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	5.00
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	5.00
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	2.00
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	4.50
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	3.00
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	3.00
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	3.00
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	2.00
<u>PREVENTION</u>	4.00
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	3.00

 **5.03
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

30th of 54 African countries
6th of 11 Central African countries

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.80
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.25



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

The Republic of the Congo (Congo) is both a country of origin and destination market for children, women and men subjected to sexual exploitation and forced labour. Sex trafficking primarily occurs domestically, with victims being moved from rural areas to urban cities, while Beninese women and girls make up the majority of identified foreign trafficking victims, along with victims from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There are about 40 000 people living in modern slavery in the country and Congo was identified as one of the countries to take the least action to prevent the practice.

Amidst conflict, violence and high levels of displacement, human smuggling is a means of aiding vulnerable individuals to move within the country and beyond. Nevertheless, in many cases migrants travel to or through Congo without the assistance of professional smugglers. While human smuggling is not considered to be a particularly lucrative or high-profile crime in Congo, the practice is known to have been taxed by local territorial actors. Many irregular migrants in Congo also become vulnerable to human trafficking.

TRADE

Arms trafficking played a large part in Congo's civil war and the conflicts in the DRC and Angola, but it is now residual. Arms are still trafficked and supplied to local militias, but the 2018 Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme resulted in the collection of 8 000 weapons. The domestic market for military-style weapons for use by poachers has grown in recent years, though these are supplied by private arms dealers rather than trafficking networks. Weapons made by the company Manufacture d'Armes et de Cartouches Congolaises (MACC) in Pointe-Noire are smuggled out of Congo to be used by poachers and in the Central African Republic's civil war.

ENVIRONMENT

An estimated 70% of timber production in the country is illicit, including both small-scale domestic logging and large-scale exports. Illicit logging in Congo is primarily carried out by commercial enterprises, rather than

explicit criminal networks, with investigations revealing alleged illegal obtaining of forest concessions in Lebama, the routine over-harvesting of timber and corporate tax avoidance. Poaching is another significant issue in protected regions of Congo and is primarily driven by bushmeat consumption and ivory trafficking. Park officials estimate that 40 000 tonnes of bushmeat were poached in 2018 alone. In particular, pangolins, parrots and other protected species are trafficked from Congo to neighbouring countries by organized regional trafficking networks. Given rising rates of poverty, an economic crisis and demographic growth, local villagers are increasingly involved in poaching and foreign trawlers also engage in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing off Congo's Atlantic coast.

Despite being historically highly active, the extent of diamond smuggling between Congo and the DRC today is stymied by the fact that the tax regimes have removed any benefit of tax disparities that drive smuggling. Congo is one of Africa's largest oil-producing countries, and while there is little evidence to suggest a consolidated criminal economy, recent investigations have shown major indicators of corruption involving a number of foreign oil companies.

DRUGS

Congo recently became involved in the global cocaine trade due to a direct air traffic line between Brazil and Pointe-Noire. The country primarily serves as a waypoint for South American cocaine trafficked to Europe, Angola or the DRC. In 2017, the Drug Enforcement Administration intercepted a ship destined for Pointe-Noire, the country's only harbour, carrying cocaine worth hundreds of millions of dollars trafficked out of Venezuela. The seizure revealed business connections between the Mexican Sinaloa cartel and Congolese criminal actors, including high-ranking state officials.

The production of cannabis occurs in the country's Pool, Plateau and Likouala regions. Domestic cannabis consumption is very common, and most drug traffickers arrested by Congolese police are involved in cannabis trafficking. Conversely, no more than a few synthetic-drug seizures have been reported in Congo and as such, no evidence points to the existence of a significant synthetic-drug trade in the country. There are no indications of a significant heroin market in Congo either.



Criminal Actors

Corruption runs rampant in the Congolese public sector, especially in the oil and timber industries. Many perceive the Congolese regime to be criminal, alleging that the president's family and ministers are involved in various economic crimes. The minister of forestry is, for instance, reportedly involved in facilitating the illicit logging industry, while members of the Congolese security forces have been accused of involvement in drug and wildlife trafficking. Criminal networks such as the Ninja and Cobra militiamen underwent disarmament processes after Congo's civil war ended in 2003. However, after reforming, and disbanding again in 2018, the groups allegedly kept most of their weapons, and many militiamen are suspected to be involved in, or responsible for, the so-called *bébés noirs* gangs. Criminal networks

involved in bushmeat poaching and ivory trafficking are active in Congo's northern parks and protected areas.

Given that the country's protected regions are located primarily in transborder regions, poaching networks often consist of foreign actors originating in neighbouring countries such as Cameroon and Gabon. Chinese companies are also reportedly involved in IUU fishing, illicit logging and ivory trafficking, and are suspected of being involved in money laundering operations. West and Central African foreign actors are also allegedly involved in human trafficking networks operating in Congo. Mafia-style structures are also present in Congo in the form of local youth gangs referred to as *bébés noirs*, or black babies. The latter operate in the Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire slums. These gangs are involved in petty crime and low-level drug trafficking, including cannabis and synthetic drugs.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The government has failed to address any form of organized crime, and the areas where it has legislated – human trafficking and wildlife crimes – are reported to be merely cosmetic efforts aimed at garnering Western support. Under pressure from the US, the government passed a law against human trafficking, and many believe the environmental concern expressed is not sincere. International conferences are hosted and national parks established, but the issue is not tackled seriously. The government's management of the country's natural wealth, primarily consisting of oil and timber, lacks transparency and accountability with exploration and exploitation rights being allocated opaquely. Under pressure from donors, the government recently established an independent anti-corruption observatory, however, it is reportedly regarded as a political tool to discard disgraced politicians. Notably, Congo has one of the highest corruption perception levels worldwide.

Congo has a legal and regulatory framework aimed at combating various types of organized crime. International support has aided the development of a comprehensive legislative framework against wildlife crime in particular, including laws around ivory, poaching and fauna protection. The government also recently implemented a human

trafficking law, which criminalizes sex as well as labour trafficking.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Congo's judiciary lacks independence and suffers from both widespread corruption and political interference. Prosecutions in human-trafficking cases are often delayed for years, and reports indicate that anti-trafficking activists are often harassed by government officials and police officers. Since 2010, the country's courts have failed to either prosecute or convict suspected traffickers. Although criminals have been sentenced for wildlife crimes, they often receive amnesty later, which means that many poachers are not first-time offenders and continue to engage in poaching with impunity. Congo's law enforcement is also plagued by widespread corruption but, with the support of international organizations, the government has boosted its training for law enforcement officials. Through cooperation with international organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the establishment of the anti-poaching police and better information-sharing mechanisms among law-enforcement agencies have increased the number of convictions for wildlife crimes. Despite recent improvements under pressure from the US, Congo's law enforcement is failing to meet the set standards for the elimination of human trafficking.



Congo's capacity to monitor both its land and sea borders is low, largely due to rampant corruption in state security agencies. Smuggling of contraband and wildlife between Congo and the DRC is commonplace, particularly between Brazzaville and Kinshasa. Due to the regional nature of the bushmeat market, wildlife poached in Congo is also trafficked out of the country to the DRC, Gabon and Cameroon. Moreover, the Angolan army is known to have infiltrated southern regions of Congo in its efforts to attack Cabinda rebels.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

While few banks operate in Congo, the country is a member of the anti-money laundering Task Force on Money Laundering in Central Africa, or GABAC. Money laundering through both domestic and foreign real estate investments is reportedly on the rise. Files of the US government's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network also reveal suspicious bank transfers between Congo, the UK and Switzerland. As a result, the president's nephew has been indicted in France on money laundering charges. Congo is also facing a severe economic crisis with dropping oil prices, which are significantly limiting the government's spending ability. The lack of regular pay for civil servants – teachers, nurses and doctors among other, has led to a number of strikes. Despite restructured debts with China and an International Monetary Fund bailout of US\$449 million, Congo's debt remains unsustainable. The country's weak economic regulatory protections and the severe economic crisis puts Congo among the worst countries worldwide in which to do business.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The government's efforts to aid trafficking victims is focused solely on West African children subjected to forced labour in Pointe-Noire. There have been no efforts to identify or assist victims in other cities or of any forms of exploitation other than forced labour. The government lacks systematic identification and referral procedures and fails to provide any residency status to trafficking victims. With the exception of prevention efforts aimed at curbing wildlife trafficking, organized-crime prevention remains extremely limited in Congo. Wildlife trafficking prevention activities are implemented by both government entities and international conservation organizations, and while government efforts to prevent human trafficking have improved in recent years, they remain inadequate. Nevertheless, an anti-trafficking coordination committee in Pointe-Noire has been established and the government has conducted public awareness campaigns on human

trafficking. Regardless, the Congo government lacks a comprehensive and adequate national action plan against human trafficking. Civil-society organizations in Congo are extremely weak and focus solely on public-sector corruption. As such, civil-society activists often face intimidation and threats, and some have died under mysterious circumstances. Several activists from the Ras-le-bol citizen movement were either arrested or intimidated, and journalists investigating corruption, the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, or oil corruption were sanctioned. During both the Pool Insurgency and the last election, the Congo government visibly cracked down on civil-society organizations and its opposition. Moreover, the media environment is highly censored, as many media outlets are owned by government allies.

