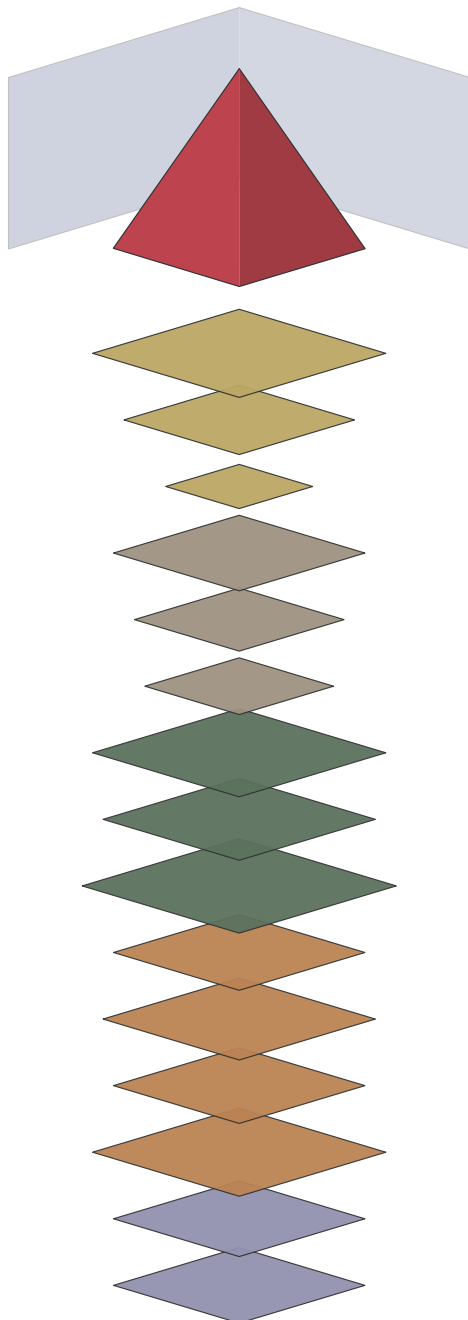




GHANA



5.8 CRIMINALITY SCORE

17th of 54 African countries
5th of 15 West African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **6**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7
HUMAN SMUGGLING	5.5
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.5
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.5
FLORA CRIMES	7
FAUNA CRIMES	6.5
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.5
HEROIN TRADE	6
COCAINE TRADE	6.5
CANNABIS TRADE	6
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	7
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.6**

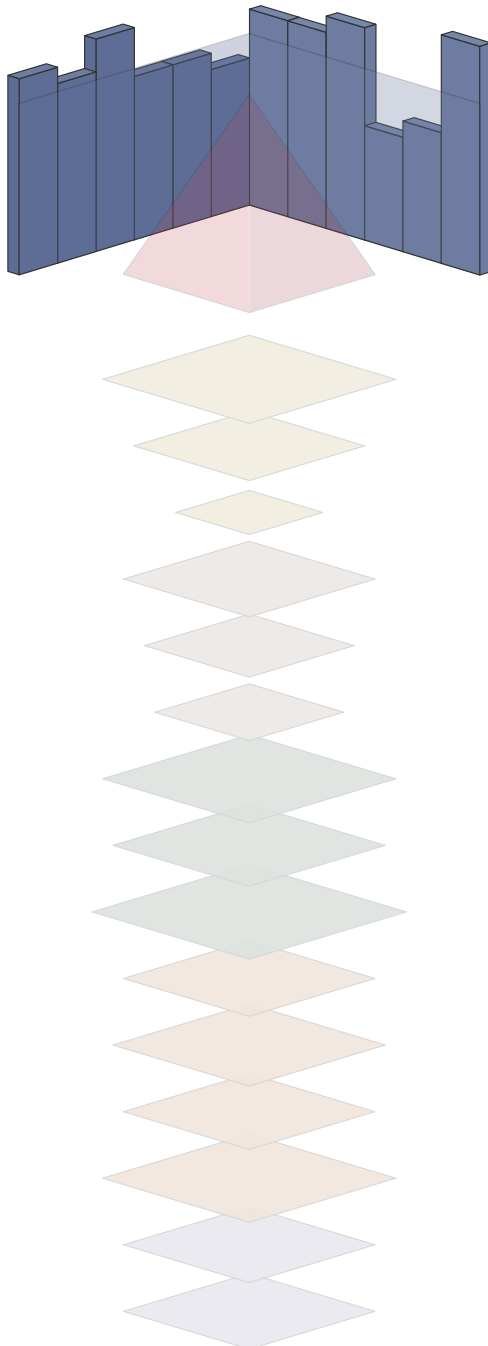
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.5
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.5
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.5
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.5



5.46 RESILIENCE SCORE



 **GHANA**



 **5.46
RESILIENCE SCORE**

7th of 54 African countries
4th of 15 West African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.5
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.5
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.5
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	6
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.5
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.5
PREVENTION	4
NON-STATE ACTORS	7

 **5.8
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	6
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.6



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

Human trafficking poses a serious problem in Ghana, encompassing forced labour, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking. The country is used as a transit point for West Africans, who are often destined for sex trafficking in Europe. Major cities such as Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi, as well as border areas of Elubo, Aflao, Bawku and Bolgatanga, are hotspots for this crime. The issue permeates Ghanaian society, with traffickers embedded within various sectors of the economy. The exploitation of Ghanaian children is prevalent in fishing, domestic service, street hawking, mining, agriculture, and other industries, with children often being offered to traffickers by family members. Foreign nationals also experience forced labour. Cuban medical professionals are reportedly compelled to work in Ghana by their government, while Chinese nationals are subjected to bonded labour in mining and fishing, in formal and informal sectors. Ghanaians working on Chinese-owned industrial vessels are allegedly exploited, enduring forced labour, abuse, underpayment, limited medical care, and poor living conditions.

Transnational Ghanaian smugglers are reported to play a pivotal role in the development of West Africa's human smuggling industry. Ghana, being one of the more stable and economically attractive countries in the region, acts as an important transit and destination country for irregular migrants. This is allegedly facilitated by local knowledge of clandestine routes into the country, especially from neighbouring Burkina Faso. The Free Movement Protocol within the Economic Community of West African States zone means the vast majority of intra-regional movement does not require the services of smugglers. However, once in Ghana, many irregular migrants are then smuggled beyond the ECOWAS zone, mainly to Europe and the Middle East, when smuggling services become necessary. Ghana is also known as a regional hub for the production of fake travel documents and counterfeit American and European visas, largely due to corruption and the presence of many foreign consulates in Accra. Human smugglers are integrated into Ghanaian society and are often perceived as facilitators of movement rather than criminals.

Extortion and protection racketeering in Ghana have been observed more as individual acts rather than organized crime group activities. The introduction of

an anti-LGBTQ+ bill by Ghana's parliament has led to an increase in targeted attacks against the LGBTQ+ community, including incidents of blackmail and extortion, where individuals are threatened to be reported to the authorities. Ghana also experiences sporadic incidents of kidnapping and threats of kidnapping for ransom in the northern regions of the Upper East and Upper West. Armed bandits are active in remote border areas and may target foreign nationals.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is a significant and growing problem in Ghana, with Kumasi and Accra serving as key markets for illegal weapons. Kumasi, renowned for its gun-manufacturing centres, boasts skilled craftsmen who contribute to the proliferation of quality weapons. The availability of affordable raw materials and attractive retail prices make gun manufacturing a highly profitable venture. The demand for illicit arms extends beyond traditional communities participating in hunting and poaching to urban and rural areas where rising crime rates jeopardize safety and livelihoods. Criminal networks are involved in this illicit trade within Ghana and across borders, targeting international traders and local purchasers. Additionally, Ghana plays a critical role as a source of commercial explosives used in sub-regional conflicts, particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso.

With regards to counterfeit goods, it is estimated that most of the electrical products sold in Accra are counterfeit and fail to meet the required standards. Moreover, the illegal trade of counterfeit medicines has been a long-standing issue. Civil society organizations have initiated awareness campaigns to address the proliferation of counterfeits, illegal pesticides, and fertilizers, which adversely affect farmers, food security, and the environment. Ports and major border crossings serve as main points for the trade of counterfeit medicines and other illicit goods. The illicit trade of excise goods is not as widespread as that of counterfeits. However, with regard to the tobacco market, it is estimated that more than a quarter of cigarette packs sold in Ghana are illicit. This trade is mainly facilitated by the presence of porous borders and the low awareness of stakeholders.



ENVIRONMENT

Over the past two decades, Ghana has experienced a notable loss of tree cover. Illicit logging poses a huge threat to the country's forest reserves, particularly in the Bono, Ahafo, and Western North regions. Reports indicate an increase in criminal networks engaged in illicit logging, with Ghana serving as a major supplier of illicit rosewood trafficked to Asia. Despite intermittent bans on rosewood harvesting and exports, illegal activities continue due to bribery and corruption. The involvement of Ghanaian and Chinese criminal loggers in the illicit redwood trafficking market has also been observed. Illicit logging is prevalent in the Savannah Region, where corrupt officials are exploited, and rosewood is exported through land borders and ports. This issue is also connected to other illegal activities, such as opaque cocoa and mineral mining operations.

In terms of wildlife crimes, the illegal trade of pangolins, elephants, and birds poses a threat to the country's fauna. Despite legislation prohibiting the hunting and possession of pangolins, poaching persists for bushmeat consumption and use in traditional medicine. The decline in Ghana's elephant population has led poachers to target large-bodied birds such as hornbills, resulting in their dwindling numbers due to uncontrolled hunting. And Ghana's marine fish stocks have been severely affected by illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, with Chinese distant water fishing vessels being the primary culprits in Ghana's waters. The country's failure to comply with international regulations in this regard reflects a paucity of political will to address the issue.

Nonrenewable resource crimes in Ghana mainly revolve around the illicit gold trade, as the country is a large global supplier. The participation of political elites has fuelled the artisanal gold mining economy in the Western Region, leading to significant exports. Licensed gold buyers based in Accra purchase gold from agents at artisanal, small-scale mining sites, transporting it to Accra for export. Ghana also serves as a transit route for smuggled gold from Mali and Burkina Faso, with routes passing through towns such as Wa into Burkina Faso and Dorimon into Cote d'Ivoire. Illicit gold flows within Ghana are substantial, with the country being a key supplier of semi-pure gold to refineries in India and the UAE. Other nonrenewable resource crimes in Ghana include oil and fuel smuggling.

DRUGS

Ghana works as a transit and destination country for heroin trafficking, mostly originating from Afghanistan. Ghanaian drug trafficking groups, along with their Nigerian counterparts, have played an influential role in expanding the global heroin trade and illicit drug markets across West Africa. Inbound heroin seizures primarily involve East African nationals, some of which is consumed domestically while the majority is repackaged and exported to the US. Outbound heroin seizures mainly involve Ghanaian nationals. Additionally, corrupt officials are centrally involved in facilitating heroin trafficking through Ghanaian seaports and airports. While heroin distribution and consumption were historically concentrated in Accra and Tema, Ghana's domestic market for heroin is believed to have expanded throughout the country, including rural northern regions.

Ghana remains a big player in the global cocaine trade, with organized criminal groups from the country at the forefront of drug trafficking. While cocaine seizures have declined and media coverage of the drug trade has decreased, law enforcement officials and civil society stakeholders point to the presence of political protection for illicit markets, particularly the cocaine trade, within the government, as the main reason for a drop in visible trafficking. Brazil remains the primary source country for cocaine imported by sea, often concealed in sugar and transported through trans-shipment points such as Spain or Turkey before reaching Ghana's ports in Tema, and to a lesser extent Takoradi. Ghana has also emerged as one of the prominent cannabis cultivation areas in Africa, alongside Nigeria, Eswatini, and Mozambique. The Volta Region, particularly Brong Ahafo, is the primary hotspot for cannabis cultivation, supporting more than a hundred farmers who rely on cannabis as their main source of income. Cannabis cultivation expanded after Ghana published laws decriminalizing its use for health and industrial purposes, to a significant extent based on misunderstanding of the new legal regime. Cannabis seizures have also risen, accounting for the bulk of drug seizures in Ghana. The UK is the primary destination for cannabis exports from Ghana.

The synthetic drug trade is also very prevalent in Ghana, with Tramadol being a prominent drug in the market. The abuse of Tramadol, mainly imported from India, has become a problem in the country. Despite the reported decrease in Tramadol use in recent years, its illegal trade has been associated with increased violence. Precursor chemicals intended for legal purposes are also being diverted to criminal networks in Ghana. Synthetic drug use and trafficking are prevalent in northern and



western regions, as well as in Volta. Ghana is a transit point for trafficking methamphetamines from Nigeria to South Africa, a major consumption hub. While there have been repeated suspicions of methamphetamine manufacture within Ghana, these remain unconfirmed. Ghana also operated as a transit point for ephedrine, a methamphetamine precursor, trafficked to production points predominantly in Nigeria. However, ephedrine flows appear to have decreased, likely linked to changes in manufacturing techniques in Nigeria.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

In recent years, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana has suffered significant losses due to cybercrime, negatively affecting both businesses and individuals. Criminals exploit victims' fears, insecurities, and vulnerabilities using various tactics. Sophisticated organized crime groups employ customized malware tools to unlawfully obtain financial gains from unsuspecting individuals. Ghanaian businesses have experienced an above-average rate of botnet attacks and crypto-miner attacks, further hampering economic growth and raising concerns for Ghanaian businesses operating globally. Recently, a massive database misconfiguration in a government programme responsible for managing public services for graduates resulted in the exposure of data belonging to hundreds of thousands of citizens. This incident has put individuals at risk of fraud, hacking, and identity theft.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, including various types of fraud and tax evasion, have been pervasive in Ghana, affecting various sectors such as banking, imports and exports, real estate, and industries such as fishing, gold, and cocoa. Cases of online Ponzi schemes and banking fraud have also been reported, and high-profile individuals have faced charges of breach of trust and bribery. Cases of tax evasion have also emerged, involving companies engaged in economic crimes against the state, resulting in substantial losses. The misuse of funds designated for Ghana's COVID-19 efforts has prompted collaboration between different agencies to prosecute implicated officials and private actors. Meanwhile, the rise of cyber-enabled financial crimes, particularly online romance scams, remains a concern, highlighting the limitations of traditional policing strategies in effectively controlling such activities.

Criminal Actors

Corruption is entrenched within various sectors of Ghana's public administration and this is believed to significantly affect the country's legislative capacity and processes. State-embedded actors within security and intelligence services, including immigration, tax, and customs administrations, and some elements of the Ghana Police Service, are reportedly implicated in facilitating drug and arms trafficking, illicit mining, and other organized criminal activities. There are allegations that politicians have amassed wealth through their involvement in drug trafficking, that political parties have benefitted from financing from backers involved in the drug markets, and that elite drug money has financed the country's housing boom. While Ghanaian officials have historically turned a blind eye to organized criminal activities, the penetration of drug money into public spheres has reportedly led to a tougher stance.

Foreign criminal actors, particularly individuals from China and Nigeria, also play a sizable role in various illicit activities in Ghana. Chinese criminals are entrenched in illicit gold mining operations, exerting substantial economic influence over the nonrenewable resource crimes market in the country. They exploit connections embedded within the state to bypass certification requirements for fishing, logging, and other activities. Nigerian criminals are prominent in drug trafficking, especially in the southern regions around Accra, and are involved in smuggling methamphetamine. Criminal actors from Mali, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Niger are believed to be active in Ghana's illicit gold mining and logging sectors, predominantly in areas such as Tinga, Bole, and the country's northern regions. Foreign criminal networks have allegedly infiltrated the highest levels of power in Ghana.

Mafia-style groups in Ghana maintain a low-profile presence, keeping their activities obscured from the public eye. However, clashes between rival gangs have led to the arrest of their leaders and several members, with the seizure of ammunition. On the other hand, smaller informal criminal networks in Ghana engage in a range of illicit activities, including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, human smuggling, internet crimes, and vehicle theft. These networks operate through various routes, such as sea borders, airports, and land borders, often utilizing internal waterways. Some criminal networks in Ghana have affiliations with larger African criminal networks, including to criminal groups in Burkina Faso and Nigeria, particularly in Accra. Bound by ethnic, religious, or familial ties, these networks have a profound impact on Ghanaian society, undermining



public institutions and exerting influence on democratic elections primarily through financial involvement rather than violence. The intertwining of criminal and legitimate networks has become widespread, making it challenging to distinguish between them.

Private sector actors, including companies and individuals, have been implicated in facilitating organized crime and trafficking. Ghanaian-owned front companies have

enabled Chinese-owned vessels to evade fishing laws, despite the often-complex corporate structures at play. There are also concerns about suspicious transactions and corporate ethics in gold-related transfers involving various companies. Numerous high-level corporate individuals have been arrested for bribery, fraud, and money laundering.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Ghana has made progress in addressing governance malfeasance. However, it is believed that there is limited political will to combat some forms of organized crime and tackle the challenges posed by criminal profits infiltrating legitimate markets. Cooperation between official and traditional Ghanaian leaders is poor, and there are widespread allegations of drug money's influence on politics affecting legislation on illicit financial flows and the government's stance on drugs. While Ghana has attempted to combat human trafficking and regulate the logging sector, the effectiveness of some institutions, such as the Office of the Special Prosecutor and the Auditor General, is still dependent on various factors, including government support, resource allocation, and public pressure. Despite the challenges, however, the work of these entities has proven to be critical in exposing corruption cases and financial improprieties over the years.

Endemic corruption across many state institutions continues to be a challenge for Ghana, with the incumbent government implicated in the misappropriation of COVID-19 funds provided by international organizations. Although Ghana has a strong anti-corruption legal framework, enforcement challenges persist, and anti-corruption bodies face concerns regarding their independence and limited resources. Political parties are required to publish financial reports but often fail to do so, leading to a perception of opacity and high levels of corruption among the public. Police corruption is also widespread, eroding public trust. Efforts to enhance transparency in oil revenues have not been fully addressed.

Ghana has ratified various international treaties related to organized crime, but the implementation of these measures remains a challenge. The country participates in regional and international initiatives to combat

transnational organized crime and cooperates with international organizations. Ghana has successfully dismantled criminal syndicates and seized sizable amounts of illegal substances through joint operations with international partners. There is a legal framework in place to address organized crime in Ghana, but the fragmented nature of these laws and limited synergy between agencies hinder their effective implementation. Attempts are being made to consolidate sanctions into cohesive legal frameworks, but delays have impeded progress. The country still relies on outdated laws to combat human smuggling, despite the need for alignment with international standards.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Corruption is a challenge within Ghana's judicial system, and it has a shortage of specialized units to combat organized crime. A high percentage of Ghanaians perceive judges and magistrates to be engaged in corrupt practices, which has led to a distrust of the court system and even instances of attempted mob justice. While some reports suggest a decrease in judicial corruption in recent years, the dearth of judicial authorities makes it difficult to prosecute organized criminal actors. Ghana's prisons are severely overcrowded due to underfunding. The inadequate budget allocated for inmates' meals exacerbates the situation.

The Ghana Police Service has taken steps to address personnel shortages by employing additional officers in 2021, although the police-to-population ratio still falls well below the UN's recommended standard. Efforts to establish community policing units across the country with international cooperation have been initiated to strengthen police-public partnerships. However, reports of Ghanaian police officers engaging in robberies of bullion vans have



raised concerns about the involvement of law enforcement in organized crime, blurring the line between the police service and criminal networks. Ghana's law enforcement capacity against organized crime is hampered by corruption permeating all levels of the police infrastructure, with the police being perceived as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country. Capacity limitations, particularly surrounding investigative techniques, also pose a challenge to effective law enforcement operations. Corruption investigations are often hindered by the involvement of officials in the entities responsible for probing such cases. Missing police evidence, procedural violations, and a shortage of investigative capabilities obstruct the effectiveness of law enforcement.

Like many countries in the ECOWAS region, Ghana's land borders are porous, partly due to their geographical proximity to the Sahel and to the high levels of corruption among border officials. This facilitates various cross-border illicit activities such as human smuggling, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking. The country's coastline and airports have also been notable entry and exit points for the trafficking of illicit commodities. The seaports, in particular, serve as major transit hubs for illicit commodities. Initiatives have been undertaken to address the porosity of maritime, air and land entry points, including increased security measures such as employing more guards and building military camps at designated points, especially in response to illegal logging. However, border checkpoints in Ghana, apart from a few locations, are short of advanced technology and databases to monitor the entry and exit of individuals and goods.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

While the government has tried to strengthen anti-money laundering (AML) laws, there are substantial gaps in their enforcement. Non-profit organizations and cash-based operations from designated non-financial businesses and professions pose risks for money laundering and terrorist financing. In Ghana, the most prevalent money laundering crimes are linked to narcotics trafficking, arms trafficking, human trafficking, environmental crimes, fraud, corruption, and romance scams. Criminals are increasingly using digital currencies such as bitcoin, gift cards, and digital exchanges for money laundering. However, Ghana faces challenges such as a low number of investigators and prosecutors trained in AML, as well as the absence of certified financial crime investigators specialized in asset forfeiture.

The economic regulatory environment in Ghana presents both opportunities and challenges. While the country

has a strong formal banking system, a large portion of the population remains unbanked, relying on informal financial services due to mistrust and previous experiences of losing savings through Ponzi schemes. The government's efforts to promote private sector development are hindered by widespread corruption and the presence of a sizable informal economy. And concerns have been raised by companies about employee theft, which has resulted in the collapse of some local businesses. In light of high inflation rates, Ghana has secured a bailout deal, indicating the need for debt relief negotiations.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Victim and witness support programmes in Ghana encounter significant limitations and challenges. Efforts have been made to expand the provision of trauma-informed care to rescued victims of human trafficking through the refurbishment of a new secretariat. Progress has been observed in supporting human trafficking victims, but assistance for drug users remains scarce, with only a few state-funded facilities offering rehabilitation and treatment. Witness and victim support primarily relies on private rehabilitation institutions, often funded by religious organizations. However, the absence of shelters for victims of other crimes raises doubts about the impartiality, independence, and professionalism of the support efforts for victims and witnesses in Ghana.

The implementation of preventative policies and plans remains limited, and a lack of resources has restricted the operational capacities of government agencies. Nonetheless, the government has implemented regulations for labour safeguards, including oversight of international labour recruitment and pre-departure training for foreign workers. Ghana has also introduced local community policing in 2022, which is also expected to contribute to the prevention of criminal activities in the country.

Ghana's civil society sector is active and engaged in addressing various issues, despite occasionally facing government criticism and other obstacles, notably in drug rehabilitation and treatment. Ghana is generally considered to be a country that respects CSOs and press freedom. However, there have been some concerns about recent incidents related to media suppression. Some journalists covering sensitive topics, such as drugs, political vigilantism, and corruption, have reported instances of threats and intimidation. Despite isolated cases, however, journalists in Ghana are able to carry out their work without facing extreme risks and the media landscape in the country has historically been quite open and accommodating.

