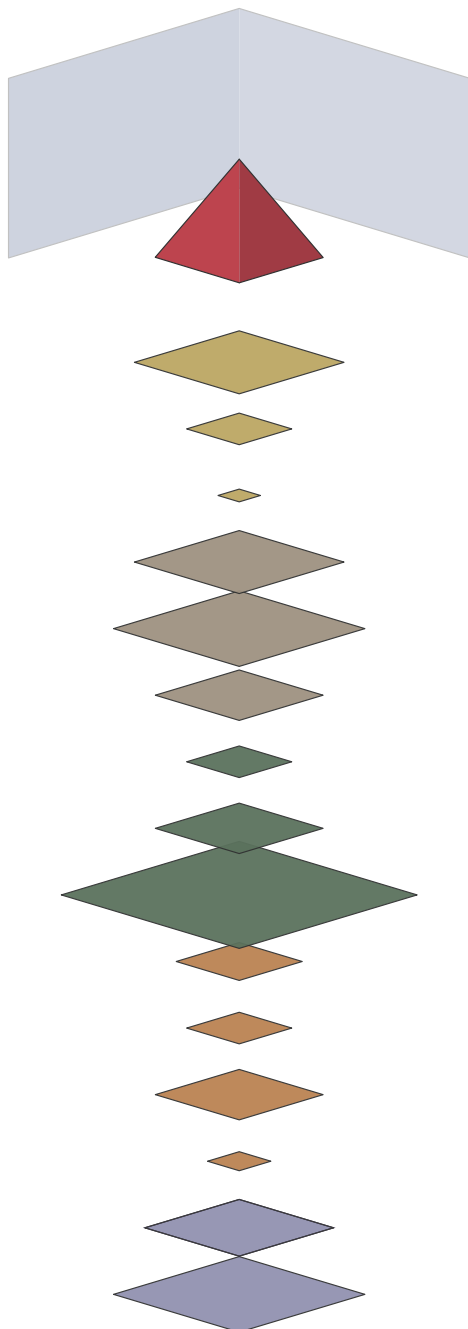




# RWANDA




## 3.6 CRIMINALITY SCORE

53<sup>rd</sup> of 54 African countries  
10<sup>th</sup> of 11 Central African countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS **4**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.5
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4
FLORA CRIMES	2.5
FAUNA CRIMES	4
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.5
HEROIN TRADE	3
COCAINE TRADE	2.5
CANNABIS TRADE	4
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.5
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.5
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6



### CRIMINAL ACTORS **3.2**

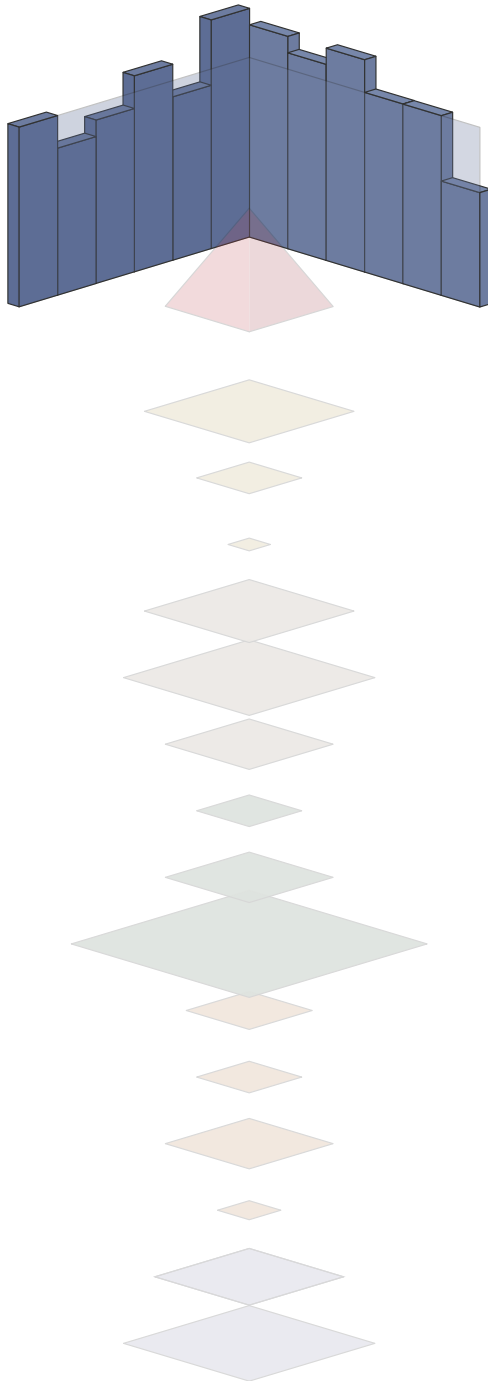
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5
FOREIGN ACTORS	4
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4



## 5.54 RESILIENCE SCORE



# RWANDA



## 5.54 RESILIENCE SCORE

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

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



## 3.6 CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS **4**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **3.2**



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Rwanda continues to be a source, transit, and, to a lesser extent, destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. While human traffickers in Rwanda exploit domestic and foreign victims, specifically refugees fleeing conflict and political violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi, a lot of Rwandan citizens have been exploited in countries such as China, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Zambia and parts of East Asia. There are reports of Rwandan trafficking victims who have been lured out of their country by false job opportunities. Moreover, following a trilateral agreement among the governments of Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya, victims can be trafficked more easily across borders by using a national identification document instead of a passport, for example. Rwandan men, women and children are exposed to sex trafficking and forced labour in industries such as agricultural and industrial for men, and domestic and service work for women. The most vulnerable individuals remain homeless youth, orphans, children with disabilities, young women, unemployed adults and internally displaced people, as well as children who are sent to live with their relatives. There are also allegations of female, and child refugees being subjected to sex trafficking in Congolese refugee camps, and of children being drafted into militias fighting in Burundi and the DRC. Greater access to the internet and social media platforms is creating new and easier opportunities for traffickers to access and exploit victims. Increased police and military surveillance along Rwanda's porous borders have helped reduce incidents of human trafficking, particularly of young girls from either side of the country, to work as domestic servants or as prostitutes. Despite the reduction of outward trafficking, domestic exploitation of victims has increased in the country, particularly in the form of street begging.

Rwanda is a destination country for people fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries, therefore the country hosts thousands of refugees in camps and urban areas. Though most accounts describe Rwandan migrants travelling on their own rather than with the help of local smugglers, reports suggest the existence of limited smuggling networks supporting the migrant flows. Regional conflicts and Rwanda's conflict legacy mean that smuggling networks are active and established

but operate with minimal violence or state attention. Incidents of extortion and protection racketeering as well as kidnappings continue to be carried out by armed rebel and militia groups in the DRC provinces bordering Rwanda. However, there is no evidence to suggest the existence and prevalence of an extortion and protection racketeering market in Rwanda itself.

### TRADE

As a result of armed conflict within the country in the past, instability in neighbouring countries, and weak borders, reports suggest a high number of unregulated weapons circulating in Rwanda. While these weapons are allegedly used in local robberies and grenade attacks, violence rates are low. However, instability in the Great Lakes region of Africa poses a threat of small arms and light weapons proliferation into the country. Rebel groups in Burundi and Tanzania are one of the major sources of illegal arms that enter Rwanda, where they have given rise to a large black market of undetected and extremely cheap weapons. The former Rwandan Army and the militia Interahamwe also constitute a source of illegal weapons trafficked through the Rwanda-DRC border to destabilize the country. Dissident groups also contribute to illicit arms trafficking and proliferation in Rwanda. Moreover, there is outward arms trafficking sourced from Rwanda into the DRC following the regroup of M23 militia in the DRC. Rwanda has been accused of supporting M23 with logistics and weapons despite the embargo.

Illicit trade of counterfeit goods is prevalent in the country, including foodstuffs and traditional medicine, which offer alternatives that citizens would otherwise not have access to. They are locally manufactured, and to a lesser extent, smuggled into Rwanda through permeable borders. Widespread counterfeit goods of daily products are a result of lengthy closure and tight patrolling of borders with Uganda, which is arguably the main corridor for imports. This has been compounded by the economic impact of the pandemic, leaving the population poorer and unable to access legitimate goods. Illicit trade in excise goods also remains present and includes mostly alcoholic beverages such as crude gin and other illegal brews. Despite the control measures and increased seizures, cases of intoxications caused by illegal crude brew, which are difficult for consumers to detect, are rampant in the country, and a public health risk.



## ENVIRONMENT

All natural forests of the country are protected areas and are not used for wood production. There is an effective forest governance in Rwanda and its natural forests and protected areas are successfully protected, making Rwanda one of the few countries in Africa where deforestation is under control. The low level of deforestation in Rwanda is mainly driven by small actors logging bamboo or firewood for fuel, which does not appear to be part of organized criminal activity. Wood and charcoal are reportedly trafficked from the DRC to Rwanda, albeit only to a limited extent.

While it does not occur on a large scale, wildlife trafficking, including that of ivory and rhino horn, remains a concern. Illicit wildlife products such as ivory, rhino horn, and other endangered species have been recorded as transiting through Rwanda in recent years, primarily to and from DRC and Burundi in increasing amounts. Proximity to the war economy in the DRC makes the country vulnerable to poaching and threatens the ecosystem shared with the neighbouring DRC and Uganda. Further, Rwanda is a source and transit country for birds traded on the exotic pet market such as the Grey crowned crane, which has had a notable reduction in population. While there are still no reports of an organized fauna criminal market in Rwanda, cases of illegal poaching, including buffalo, gorillas, elephants, antelopes and duikers, among others, continue to be recorded in the country, which is usually driven by poverty. Considerable efforts were made by law enforcement as well as government to fight against fauna crimes, such as the amendment of the law on biodiversity and wildlife and the introduction of a revenue-sharing scheme which resulted in a reduction in illegal poaching cases.

Rwanda is a key player in the illegal exploitation of mineral resources, particularly gold, tin and tantalum from the DRC, which are smuggled into Rwanda to be exported into global supply chains. A surge in illegal mining activities has recently been observed following the decrease caused by the pandemic. The illicit trade and laundering of illegally mined non-renewables are significant for Rwanda, and believed to be one of the drivers of the country's growth. It is reported that 90% of the coltan exported from Rwanda originates from the DRC, making it one of the biggest coltan exporters in the world despite having few producing mines in its territory. Lack of disclosure requirements makes it easier to conceal the alleged smuggling activities of coltan from the DRC, which fuels armed clashes, instability, money laundering and human rights abuses at these mining sites in the DRC. The Rwandan government has

repeatedly denied the allegations of its involvement in the trade of DRC minerals.

## DRUGS

Rwanda's role in global drug markets is minor. However, as the country becomes a regional hub, the country's role in the transnational drug trade is expected to increase. Even though consumption remains low, the country is becoming an overland trans-shipment point for heroin landing in east Africa, specifically from Kenya and Tanzania, and destined for markets and trans-shipment points elsewhere in southern and central Africa. Similarly, the criminal market for cocaine is also believed to be limited in size, but there is evidence of trafficking and local use in Rwanda, with cocaine-related interceptions taking place at Kigali Airport. Cocaine is believed to arrive mainly via west and central African airports.

Cannabis is the most consumed and trafficked illegal drug in the country, and Rwanda is a trans-shipment point for regionally produced cannabis, as well as a minor destination market. Even though the consumption of cannabis products for recreational purposes remains illegal, legislation legalizing medical use of cannabis entered into force in 2021. This triggered concerns over the increase of cannabis consumption in the country because of the lack of infrastructure and protocols to realize controlled domestic use of cannabis for medical purposes. Conversely, synthetic drug trade is almost non-existent with little information about the production, consumption and transportation of synthetic drugs in the country.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Rwanda is experiencing a surge in cybercrimes, including computer viruses being used by hackers to disrupt the operations of various institutions, such as banks, and to enter different systems. This is attributed to the rapid spread of information technology infrastructure as well as the changed habits of citizens as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions. However, cases of cyber-dependent crime are still sporadic, and the criminal market is not consolidated given that the country initiated skills-building programmes in network-monitoring, which has heightened cybercrime awareness among many internet users.



## FINANCIAL CRIMES

The most prevalent financial crimes causing the most financial loss in Rwanda are tax evasion, embezzlement, and misuse of public funds. Despite government efforts, corruption and embezzlement top the list of serious financial crimes in Rwanda. Cases are still widespread with those in public office and in the private sector, where instances of mismanagement and flouting of contractual terms result in financial losses. Financial fraud, including Ponzi schemes, are also prevalent. The loss of stable sources of income induced by the pandemic has increased the number of Rwandans who fall victim to false promises of higher returns. Mobile money fraud is the most common type of cyber-enabled financial crime, with people being manipulated via phone calls or SMS to give up confidential information such as passwords, bank codes and credit card numbers.

## Criminal Actors

There is evidence of state-embedded actors involved in several criminal markets, including but not limited to arms trafficking. And there are reports suggesting the existence of corrupt officials facilitating illegal

wildlife and drug trade in the country as well as support allegedly provided by the Rwandan government to M23, a rebel group in the eastern part of the DRC, despite the embargoes. Politically motivated, armed, non-state actors and militias, such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, which includes former soldiers and support of the regime that orchestrated the 1994 genocide, continue to operate in the eastern DRC. The Allied Democratic Forces proxies also play primary roles in criminal markets and war economies in the region and constitute a major threat to national security.

Though there is a lack of recent information, foreign criminal actors continue to be active in Rwanda. The country's porous borders allow for militias from the DRC and Burundi to pass into Rwanda, facilitating the smuggling of illicit goods such as weapons and drugs, among others. In general, reports refer to smuggling activities in border regions as often being perpetrated by foreign nationals. Conversely, there is no evidence to suggest the existence of domestic mafia-style groups in the country. And while private sector actors have been accused of involvement in different illicit markets, there is no substantial evidence of the extent of their role.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Rwanda is considered among the safest and most stable states on the continent, which is achieved through the exertion of tight control over the entire territory and domination of the country with autocracy established by the Rwandan ruling party. The government has prioritized the fight against crime, and crime prevention has become an important part of the national strategy for public safety and security. However, Rwanda faces some fragility with pervasive group grievance and deep involvement in larger geopolitical struggles affecting the region. There is also impunity regarding major crimes such as murders or disappearances of prominent persons or political critics, which are never given satisfactory investigations, despite the prioritization of the fight against criminal activities. Government accountability and transparency are limited, with several cases of public funds embezzlement, fraudulent procurement practice, and judicial dishonesty despite the existence of legal frameworks and institutions pertaining to anti-corruption.

Safeguards against government corruption are not sufficiently strong and effective as only a few independent organizations or media outlets dare investigate cases of public corruption, for fear of retribution. There is limited public access to government information and documents, however, levels of perceived corruption continue to be moderate. There has been an uptick in the government's fight against corruption and abuse of office, with investigations and arrests of several cabinet ministers for misconduct. But it is believed that high-ranking officials and cabinet members who are considered dangerous to the regime are sometimes prosecuted on fabricated charges of corruption by the judiciary, the tool by which the government preserves its authoritarian rule.

Rwanda has shown a relatively high level of commitment to international cooperation against organized crime. The country has ratified the most relevant international treaties pertaining to organized crime with the exceptions of the Arms Trade Treaty as well as the 1961 Single Convention



on Narcotic Drugs. It has been an active member of the East African Community and AU, often supporting institutional reforms and regional instruments to help meet security challenges and threats. In addition, Interpol's National Central Bureau for Rwanda is located at the Kigali national police headquarters. Still, Rwanda generally lacks cooperation mechanisms with other countries on matters such as human rights. At a national level, the Rwandan government has put in place laws and policies to sufficiently combat organized crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrimes and corruption. The country is also taking measures to counter illegal logging and poaching of wildlife species in its national parks, through the enactment of legislation, such as the Law on Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation, to foster conservation efforts. However, their enforcement remains problematic as most of the laws are unenforced or partly enforced because of lack of capacity.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Despite the positive efforts made to strengthen and modernize the judicial system in recent years, Rwanda's judiciary continues to be susceptible to political influence and used to target political dissent, evidenced by selective detentions depending on the political status of the detainees. The top judicial officials are usually appointed by the president and confirmed by the ruling party-dominated senate. Aside from corruption-related units, there are no specialized judiciary-related units in force to counter organized crime.

Rwanda has at least two law enforcement units within the national police force tasked with countering organized crime, specifically financial and economic crime, and narcotics. However, Rwandan law enforcement's resources remain limited. The Rwandan government uses the police force and security services to tightly control the territory, thus enjoying low violent crime rates. Following the pandemic, which had restricted law enforcement's ability to investigate potential transnational trafficking cases, efforts of anti-trafficking units persisted in the country.

Rwanda has strong territorial integrity, with a marked degree of control over its borders. However, because of Rwanda's weak borders, it is easy for traffickers and smugglers to create and sustain routes in and out of the country before they are detected. Moreover, while the Rwandan army actively patrols and secures borders, incursions by armed groups occur. Reports of rebel groups at the borders of the DRC and Burundi persist, and evidence suggests these groups may cross over into Rwanda. In 2022, there were multiple reports of territorial integrity violations carried out by the DRC as a warning

sign to Rwanda to stop alleged support provided to the M23 rebels. As for Rwandan cyberspace, there has been more investment in establishing agencies to secure and increase its capacity to resist cybercrimes.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Rwanda's financial sector is small and mainly dominated by banks. The country has taken considerable steps to establish a national anti-money laundering framework through the implementation of the anti-money laundering law as well as the establishment of the Financial Intelligence Centre. The risks of money laundering and terrorist financing do not appear to be particularly noteworthy in Rwanda. Authorities competent in the analysis and investigation of money laundering and financing of terrorism have been established, but their functions and operational independence are questioned. And though there are no serious anti-money laundering deficiencies in the country, the laundering of proceeds of the smuggling of minerals from the DRC is a concern.

Subsistence agriculture and increasing tourism underpin the country's economy, with tea and coffee being some of Rwanda's biggest exports, as well as some manufacturing. Rwanda demonstrates an economic regulatory environment that is conducive to doing business, which is a key driver in the reduction of incentives to engage in the informal sector and organized criminal activity. Rwanda is making progress in the regulatory environment for private business. However, energy shortages, lack of adequate transportation linkages and instability in neighbouring states remain the main obstacles to private sector growth. Political influence usually affects Rwanda's economy with investors hampered by requirements to pay allegiance to the ruling party. Despite these obstacles, the Rwandan government continues to make an effort to transform the country into a regional trade and investment hub.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Rwandan government has demonstrated increasing attempts in providing treatment and victim support, including opening short-term care facilities and implementing anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. But because of the pandemic, the government of Rwanda has reduced the funds destined for victim care. Moreover, short-term care facilities reportedly offer assistance only to female victims for a limited period of time, making them vulnerable to re-victimization. With regard to drug users, the government promotes anti-drug awareness campaigns by investing resources in activities related



to the prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of delinquents. There are also two safe houses active in the country for witnesses of criminal cases.

The government of Rwanda has reportedly improved its efforts to prevent human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrimes and environmental crime, with numerous national and local awareness campaigns and trainings. There are also more efforts to combat cross-border trafficking, specifically to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country. Community policing has proved effective in reducing crime throughout Rwanda.

Many civil society organizations are emerging to help address social needs in Rwanda. However, their reach remains restricted because of a variety of constraints imposed by the government, especially for civil society

organizations that are not collaborating with the government. Independent organizations exist only at the national level and with little innovative impact. In terms of the Rwandan media landscape, there are significant limitations within the media environment in the country, as the government of Rwanda uses many methods to suppress the freedom of journalists, including surveillance, espionage, and enforced detention or disappearance. As a result, most media outlets practice self-censorship in fear of retorsion. There are also attempts of blocking access to international news websites. Although freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution, it is not safeguarded in practice as public gatherings and protests are rare because of fear of police violence.

