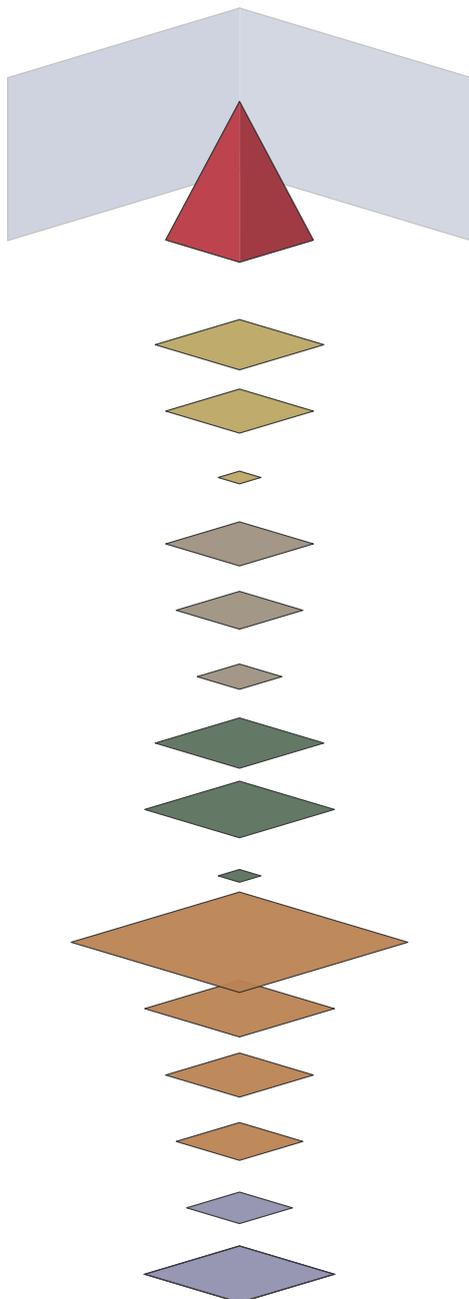




# SEYCHELLES




## 3.9 CRIMINALITY SCORE

52<sup>nd</sup> of 54 African countries  
13<sup>th</sup> of 13 Southern African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS	3.5
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.5
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	3
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2
FLORA CRIMES	4
FAUNA CRIMES	4.5
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1
HEROIN TRADE	8
COCAINE TRADE	4.5
CANNABIS TRADE	3.5
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.5
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.5



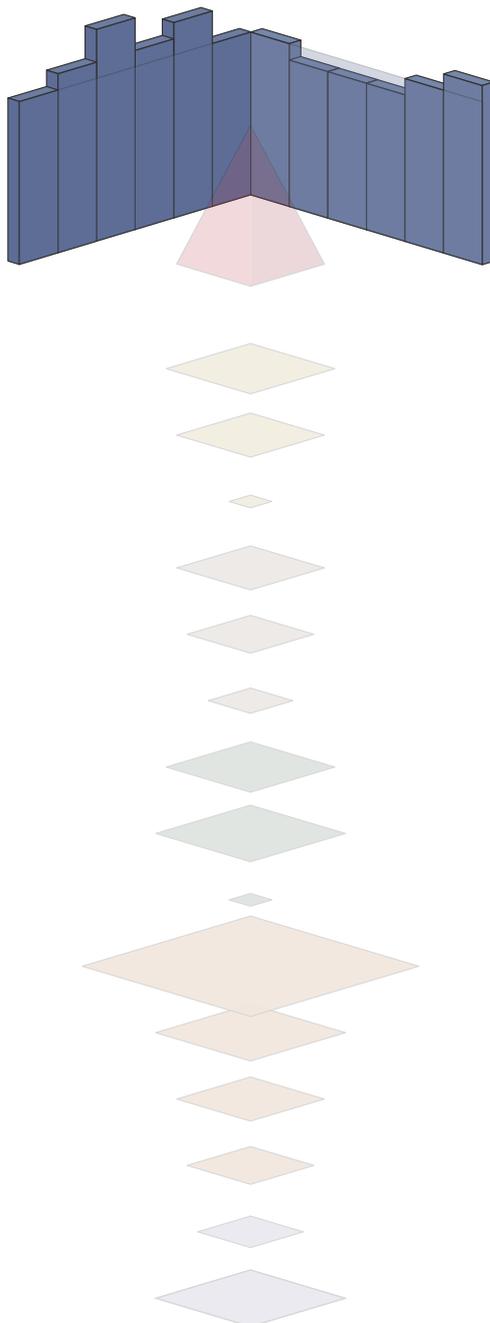
CRIMINAL ACTORS	4.3
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	2
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	5.5
FOREIGN ACTORS	5
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5



## 5.21 RESILIENCE SCORE



 **SEYCHELLES**



 **5.21  
RESILIENCE SCORE**

10<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
4<sup>th</sup> of 13 Southern African countries

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

 **3.9  
CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>3.5</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>4.3</b>



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Seychelles functions as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. The most vulnerable victims are young Seychellois children and foreign women who are often subjected to sex trafficking. Seychellois nationals are also trafficked for forced labour in the Middle East. Foreign workers, particularly those in domestic labour, fishing, agriculture and construction sectors, are also at risk of labour trafficking. The demand for sex work is driven by foreign tourists, sailors, workers and nationals from countries such as Bangladesh, China and Cuba. Trafficking routes passing through Seychelles facilitate the transportation of victims from Madagascar to Asia, utilizing labour recruitment agencies and false tourist visas. Traffickers exploit vulnerabilities in labour conditions, especially in trade zones, while the lack of coordination among institutions hampers efforts to combat human trafficking. Some recent cases in the Seychelles have indicated a new worrying trend in the human trafficking market involving the use of local men as 'drug guarantees'. These are people trafficked to stand as hostages to ensure payment of money owed to drug suppliers.

Seychelles serves as a destination for labourers from various countries, including South and East Asia, East Africa and the Middle East. With more than a quarter of Seychelles' labour force comprising foreign workers, concerns have been raised regarding the smuggling of people from Comoros, Reunion and Syria. International organizations have also identified a smuggling route from Madagascar to Seychelles and Mauritius, with India, Madagascar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Mauritius being common source countries for smuggled individuals into Seychelles. Reports suggest that labour recruitment agents, often aided by Seychellois accomplices, exploit these foreign workers.

Regarding extortion and protection racketeering, there is no evidence of involvement by criminal organizations. Instances of these practices appear to be more closely associated with private individuals seeking personal advantages rather than organized criminal operations.

### TRADE

Seychelles has a low prevalence of firearm ownership and a relatively small number of illicit firearms. Instead, knives and machetes are often associated with violence in the drug market, indicating limited firearm ownership even among those involved in the drug trade. However, reports suggest that Seychellois shell companies have facilitated arms trafficking between countries, including the transfer of weapons from North Korea to other parts of the world. This makes Seychelles an important hub in global arms trafficking networks. The country faces challenges related to piracy and the illicit brokering of arms in its territorial waters, but significant strides have been made in curbing these illicit activities through law enforcement initiatives targeting terrorism and piracy. Policing this issue is complicated by the country's unique geography of numerous small islands and inlets. Reports of arms smuggling along African sea routes, including those passing through Seychelles, underscore the potential for illicit activities.

While Seychelles has implemented regulations to combat intellectual property infringement and the trade in counterfeit goods, enforcement is limited due to the absence of representatives from international brands in the country. Customs authorities primarily focus on goods that pose health risks, such as counterfeit medicines, but counterfeit apparel and various other counterfeit items remain widely available in local markets. Counterfeiting appears to be culturally perceived as a minor offence that is rarely reported or enforced. There is no evidence suggesting the presence of criminal networks or organizations involved in counterfeit shipments; rather, it appears to be driven by local market dynamics. Regarding the illicit trade of excise goods, there are indications that Seychelles may serve as a transit point for such activities between African and Asian markets. While specific evidence or data on this issue within Seychelles is lacking, regional dynamics and the challenges of policing the island territory suggest the possibility of an underreported problem. Enforcement of limits on alcohol and tobacco for tourists and individuals entering the country is also a concern, particularly at airports.

### ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in Seychelles, such as illegal logging and the unauthorized harvesting of the coco de mer, are not extensively reported but still raise concerns, prompting efforts by locals and government officials to address



illegal exports. Poachers target these plants for the black market, and high prices offered by tourists further exacerbate the threat to the species. To preserve the coco de mer and combat its exploitation, conservation organizations and other stakeholders are promoting legal plantations and funding protection measures. This is driven, in part, by the demand for the coco de mer kernel in Asian markets, where it is believed to possess aphrodisiac properties. The demand for timber also surpasses local production, resulting in illegal logging primarily on Mahé. While there is no evidence of organized crime involvement, reports suggest the persistence of an illicit timber market, albeit with minimal illicit proceeds.

Seychelles faces challenges in combatting wildlife trafficking, particularly in the illegal reptile pet trade. The highly sought-after giant bronze gecko, found only on one island, is a prime target for wildlife traffickers. Additionally, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including lobster catching, poses a significant problem. Chinese and Sri Lankan trawlers dominate the IUU fishing scene, depleting the shellfish population and forcing local fishermen to venture into illegal waters. Although the Seychelles has implemented measures to combat IUU fishing, it remains an ongoing problem. However, the Coast Guard, supported by local fishermen, actively intercepts foreign fishing vessels.

Given the limited presence of non-renewable resources in Seychelles, the islands are not a source for illicit markets in such resources. However, due to its strategic location, Seychelles serves as a transit hub for non-renewable resources between African nations, the Middle East and Asia. The challenging geography and nature of the islands means that there are no non-renewable resources lucrative enough to fund significant illegal activities.

## DRUGS

The heroin trade in the Seychelles continues unabated. It is estimated that the country has the highest per capita rate of heroin use in the world due to the drug's abundance and affordability. Around 10% of the Seychellois population is in fact dependent on heroin. The drug is trafficked to East and southern Africa, as well as Madagascar, before reaching the Seychelles for consumption. Shipments are often imported from Sri Lanka. The country also serves as a minor destination along the transit route to Europe and the US. Recent drug seizures in the Indian Ocean and near Seychellois waters raise concerns about the growing drug trafficking dynamics in the region, especially given potential impacts from developments in Afghanistan. Local drug mules from African nations

and Iranians attempting to smuggle heroin into the Seychelles contribute to the local market.

As for the cocaine market, Brazil is reported as the primary point of origin for the drug entering the Seychelles. Most seizures occur at the airport, involving mules of various nationalities. Although the Seychelles does not have a large domestic cocaine market or serve as a significant regional transit hub, the country is vulnerable to the expanding cocaine trade due to prevalent institutional corruption and the availability of drugs. The increasing trade flows of cocaine in the region, with Kenya and Tanzania acting as transit hubs, have an impact on the Seychelles. The rise in cocaine consumption in the Seychelles, particularly among the younger population at parties and in conjunction with other drugs, is a concerning trend.

The cannabis trade in the Seychelles is characterized by the country being a minor destination market with moderate to large domestic cultivation. Seychelles serves as a destination for the cannabis trade, primarily from Madagascar through the Comoros. Although cannabis cultivation and consumption are illegal, the regime has adopted a more lenient approach focused on harm reduction. The use and trade of synthetic drugs in the Seychelles have historically been limited, but recent evidence indicates a potential shift in the drug landscape. Young people on the islands have been increasingly using a drug called 'flakka' or 'K2', while ecstasy is also available as a party drug, although its prevalence is not widespread. The consumption and trade of synthetic drugs appear relatively manageable, with no confirmed major organized crime activity in the market. The demand for these drugs seems to be primarily driven by tourists.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Seychelles has set a goal to transform into a fully digital and cashless society by 2023. This transition, however, brings with it challenges concerning cybercrime and fraud. Although up-to-date statistics on cybercrimes specific to Seychelles are lacking, the police acknowledge the potential increase in such activities and offer tips to individuals to safeguard themselves. It seems that the majority of cyber-attacks targeting Seychellois are perpetrated by foreign hackers. Moreover, fraudulent activities involving cryptocurrencies have been on the rise in the country.



## FINANCIAL CRIMES

The increased use of digital platforms and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Seychelles have heightened the vulnerability of the public to financial scams and fraud. Older individuals, in particular, with limited technological knowledge and skills, are often targeted with cyber-enabled financial crimes, resulting in substantial financial losses. Fraudulent schemes, including romance and lottery scams as well as Ponzi schemes, are also increasingly reported in the country. Efforts are underway through ongoing public awareness campaigns to empower people to recognize and protect themselves against scams. However, experts still express concerns regarding potential liabilities and risks associated with such activities. Financial crimes also extend to embezzlement at higher levels, including among the country's elite and government officials. Tax evasion is another major concern, as Seychelles promotes itself as a tax haven to attract investments. The government has faced revelations of businesses, including multinational companies, evading tax payments, resulting in substantial revenue losses.

## Criminal Actors

Corruption in Seychelles is considered moderate, with allegations of state officials being involved in criminal activities and facilitating crime. In the drug market, reports of bribery and collusion involving high-ranking politicians have emerged. Corruption practices have become increasingly audacious and normalized, with instances of police officers allegedly accepting bribes in broad daylight, even in front of colleagues and the public. Corruption is perceived as endemic within the system, including within the prison system and among high-ranking officials. However, there have been no high-profile corruption cases or investigations, and police practices have become more aggressive towards drug users.

Foreign actors play a significant role in certain illicit activities in Seychelles. While drug trafficking networks within the country are mainly controlled by Seychellois individuals, foreign networks are involved in transporting and arranging drug shipments to the islands. The drug market in neighbouring Mauritius is believed to influence the drug trade in Seychelles, with evidence of criminal activity being coordinated from the islands. Many apprehended individuals involved in drug trafficking are foreign nationals acting as couriers. Further, IUU fishing activities in Seychelles' waters are primarily carried out by foreign vessels, particularly those from China and, more recently, Sri Lanka. Foreign nationals residing in Seychelles are also likely to be involved in human trafficking, particularly for forced labour.

Domestic criminal networks, often tied by family connections, are also prevalent in Seychelles, primarily in the drug trade. These traffickers recruit fishermen and bribe officials to ensure the undetected transport of shipments. The activities of these criminal networks remain uncertain in terms of growth or decline. Private sector actors in Seychelles play a significant role in financial crimes, particularly in illicit financial flows and the establishment of shell companies. Recent scandals involving entrepreneurs and investors have exposed how political elites misuse government funds and engage in high-level financial crimes. These incidents have led to increased anti-corruption efforts and public awareness campaigns. While it remains unclear if organized criminal networks are behind these operations, private individuals exploit their privileged positions and networks for personal gain. Reports of abuses against workers, including foreign workers in International Trade Zones, further highlight the potential involvement of private individuals in various illicit activities. Underreporting occurs due to the unfair advantage and limited oversight enjoyed by these individuals.

According to reports, the presence of mafia-style groups in Seychelles cannot be substantiated. While drug trafficking networks with hierarchical structures may exist, they do not fit the criteria of traditional mafia-style organizations. These networks typically involve a small number of importers who coordinate with overseas counterparts to distribute drugs through domestic channels. At the top of these networks are influential individuals, often referred to as 'big fish', who evade prosecution due to the extensive surveillance required to apprehend them. In contrast, the government focuses on capturing lower-level criminals involved in drug smuggling, while the elusive big fish serve as financial backers.



# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Despite ongoing efforts to improve governance, there continues to be a lack of research and evidence-based policy interventions in Seychelles. The recent change in political leadership was driven by public sentiment against corruption, but the new administration has not made investigating corruption or financial fraud a priority. Additionally, the government has involved the military in policing duties, raising concerns about potential abuses, particularly against drug users. Critics doubt the government's ability to address corruption and police misconduct effectively. While Seychelles boasts a high GDP per capita, inequality and poverty levels remain high, particularly among vulnerable populations such as drug users. The abolition of welfare systems has further impacted those living in poverty. Government transparency and accountability in Seychelles face significant challenges, particularly regarding corruption and drug trafficking. Reports suggest widespread corruption within law enforcement, with officials collaborating with drug networks at various levels. However, high-level government and law enforcement corruption receive limited coverage in the Seychelles press, largely due to perceived limitations on media freedom. While laws exist to combat corruption and promote transparency, their inconsistent enforcement raises concerns. Retaliations against individuals who criticize powerful figures, such as police harassment or job loss, further highlight the protective measures in place at higher levels.

Seychelles actively participates in international cooperation to address security challenges, particularly in the areas of organized crime, maritime security and counter-drug trafficking. The country has ratified relevant international treaties and is involved in regional organizations. The Seychelles government has implemented policies and laws to tackle various criminal activities. However, inconsistencies and contradictions can be observed in some of these measures. Although anti-human trafficking legislation is in place, comprehensive policies and substantial efforts by agencies to develop and enforce policy in line with the law are lacking. Similarly, policies addressing labour exploitation are inadequate, with limited support for workers. Despite increased public awareness campaigns on issues such as human trafficking and sex crimes, concerns persist about the implementation of laws.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Seychelles faces significant challenges, with a slow court process that often leads to cases taking years to complete. The judiciary's dependence on the executive for budgeting raises questions about its independence, and the shortage of local justice professionals requires the hiring of foreign law practitioners. Corruption is a major problem within the judicial system, with close ties to political elites and limited reporting and information on cases and sanctions. Despite having one of the highest rates of incarceration per capita in the world, there are concerns that the number of convicted individuals may be disproportionate, resulting in harsh penalties for minor offences. Foreign workers face barriers to accessing the justice system, such as passport confiscation by employers, and additional fees. The Seychelles prison system is plagued by overcrowding, and efforts to expand prison capacity have been met with skepticism.

Seychellois law enforcement has achieved notable successes in apprehending drug traffickers and perpetrators carrying out IUU fishing. However, the drug trade continues to thrive, indicating the need for an alternative approach to reducing the supply and targeting higher-level syndicate leaders. The coastguard is overstretched, with limited personnel resources to cover Seychelles' expansive territorial area. Corruption is identified as a significant obstacle to countering drug trafficking, permeating law enforcement at various levels and hindering investigations into high-level traffickers. In this respect, the anti-narcotics agency has been disbanded following the allegations of corruption. Seychelles relies on international cooperation and assistance from international organizations to combat drug trafficking within its borders. Calls for reform and adherence to international standards persist, particularly in relation to the use of firearms and addressing allegations of police abuse.

Seychelles faces significant challenges in maintaining territorial integrity due to its geographical location and complex maritime borders. The country depends heavily on its Coast Guard to protect its territory, combat piracy and address issues such as drug smuggling and IUU fishing. However, Seychelles' geography, situated between major heroin source locations and large destination markets, makes it challenging to monitor and police its vast territorial waters effectively. The limited mobilization of human resources and the impact of drug use on the working population further impede the state's ability to



secure its borders. Efforts to combat piracy have been successful, resulting in a decline in piracy incidents and the imprisonment of many pirates within Seychelles. The recent territorial dispute over the Chagos Islands with Mauritius, as well as the presence of British and American naval interests, further complicate the territorial dynamics in the region.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Seychelles, known as a tax haven, has faced scrutiny regarding its role in money laundering activities. The country is suspected of hosting numerous offshore accounts involved in illicit activities, and it has been deemed non-cooperative on issues related to beneficial ownership. Despite commitments to address these concerns, Seychelles missed deadlines for taking remedial actions, resulting in some countries including it on their own list of tax havens. In fact, the country has faced criticism for its financial secrecy, making it an attractive destination for illicit funds. Seychellois shell companies have been linked to investigations into illegal financial flows and international corruption, highlighting the country's vulnerability to illicit financial activities. Challenges for the national anti-money laundering regime include limited human resources and technical capacity, necessitating reliance on overseas expertise. With an aim to address these challenges and shortcomings in combatting money laundering, the government has implemented amendments under the anti-money laundering legislation, particularly focusing on strengthening the legal framework regarding illicit asset recovery.

The Seychelles economy faces limitations on economic freedom, with an inefficient public sector and exploitative practices affecting foreign workers. Despite government subsidies, entrepreneurs often struggle, and corruption related to land acquisition remains a contentious issue. The country's heavy focus on tourism, however, has contributed to relative stability. The government also prioritizes the protection of tourism and fisheries, including combatting IUU fishing. Land rights and corruption allegations persist, but efforts are being made to address these issues. The financial regulatory environment and worker conditions in special financial zones pose challenges. Recent credit rating upgrades and disbursements from international organizations demonstrate the government's efforts and its control over the economy.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Seychelles government has implemented policy shifts to address the rising use of heroin in the country, acknowledging the risks it poses to public health and social cohesion. One of the positive outcomes has been the introduction of a methadone substitution programme, which has led to a reduction in drug-related violent crime and street-level heroin prices. However, despite efforts to combat human trafficking, the protection and support provided to victims remain insufficient. There is a lack of allocated funds for victims and no significant improvements to shelters. While the government has increased protection measures for trafficking victims, there is still a gap between reported cases and actual convictions or investigations.

Seychelles has implemented various measures for the prevention of organized crime, including joint training exercises with foreign police and militaries, the use of drones for detecting illegal activities, and enhanced screening measures at airports. While efforts to counter drug trafficking have been intensified, human trafficking remains a significant challenge, with minimal cases opened and few convictions secured. Prevention efforts mainly focus on high-tech solutions and law enforcement actions, but concerns have been raised about the lack of comprehensive strategies addressing the root causes of crime and drug abuse. The government's reduced support for the agency for the prevention of drug addiction has raised concerns among NGOs and experts who worry about a potential increase in crime and drug abuse. The lack of investment in social services and limited efforts to educate the population about financial resources and digital tools have also fuelled worries about cybercrimes and fraud schemes.

Civil society in Seychelles is robust, with various organizations actively addressing social issues and holding the government accountable. NGOs play a crucial role in assisting victims of human trafficking and providing support in cases of drug abuse. Self-censorship, influenced by past political pressures, is gradually giving way to greater editorial freedoms. However, the government still maintains influence over state-owned TV channels and radio stations, and sensitive topics that could potentially harm the country's tourism reputation receive limited coverage. Media freedom and pluralism in Seychelles has made progress, with no reported attacks against journalists, and an environment that supports journalistic practices. However, budget constraints and heavy fines imposed on media organizations remain challenges. Although the media criticizes the government, there are concerns about its alignment with private interests.

