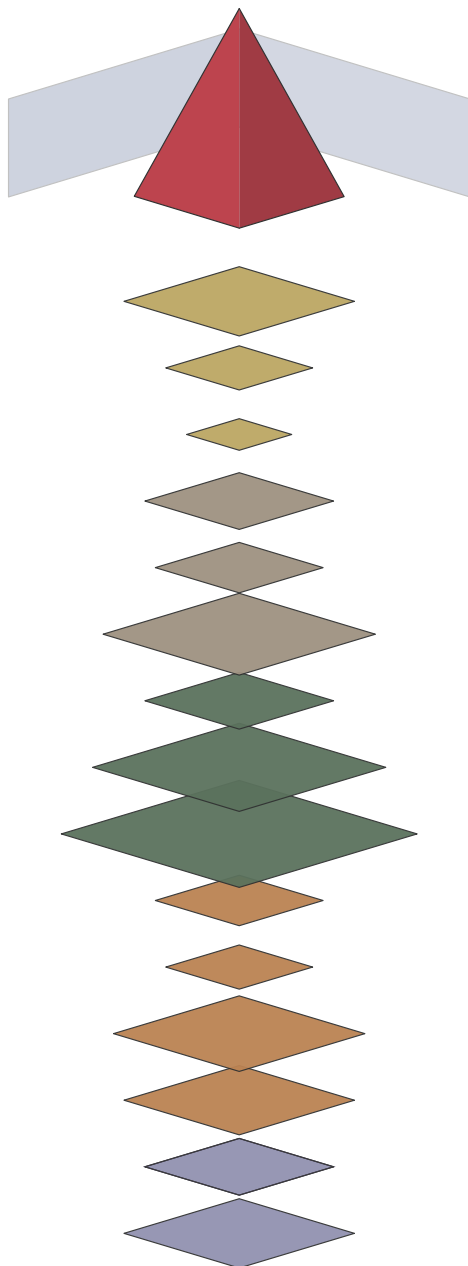


 **ZIMBABWE**



 **5.47**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

25th of 54 African countries
4th of 13 Southern African countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.03**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.5
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.5
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.5
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.5
FLORA CRIMES	4.5
FAUNA CRIMES	7
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.5
HEROIN TRADE	4
COCAINE TRADE	3.5
CANNABIS TRADE	6
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.5
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.5
FINANCIAL CRIMES	5.5

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.9**

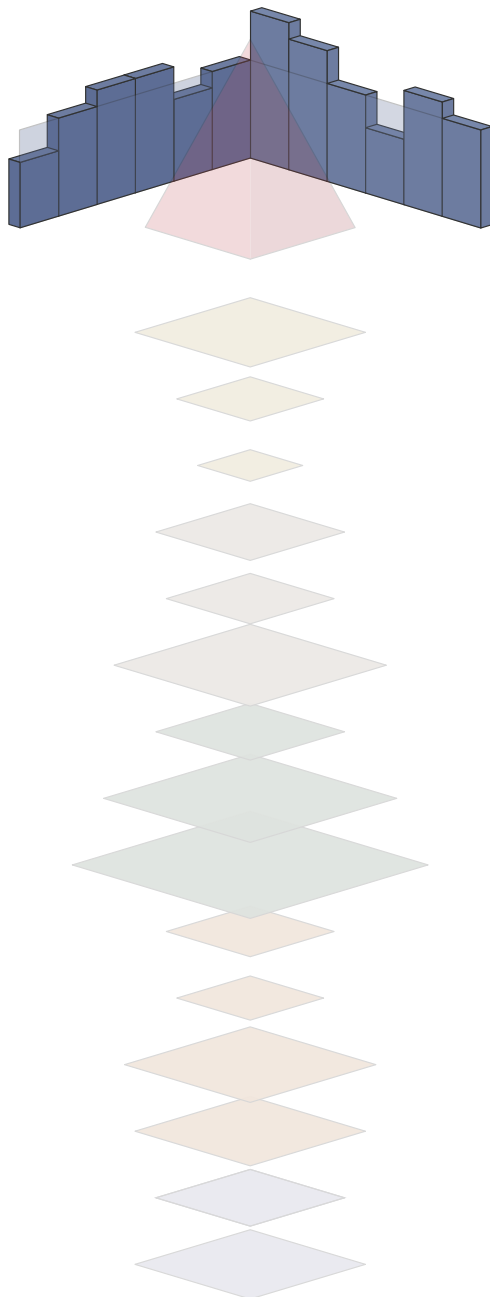
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.5
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.5
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8
FOREIGN ACTORS	6
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6

 **3.13**
RESILIENCE SCORE





ZIMBABWE






3.13 RESILIENCE SCORE

39th of 54 African countries
12th of 13 Southern African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	2
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	3
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	3.5
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	3.5
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	2.5
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	3
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	4.5
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	4
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	3
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	2
<u>PREVENTION</u>	3.5
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	3



5.47 CRIMINALITY SCORE

 <u>CRIMINAL MARKETS</u>	5.03
 <u>CRIMINAL ACTORS</u>	5.9



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

Zimbabwe serves as a source, destination and transit point for human trafficking perpetrated by criminal networks along the route to South Africa from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia. In terms of local trafficking, Zimbabweans subjected to sex labour are particularly common in border towns, while those forced into labour appear to be prevalent in agriculture, construction, hospitality and domestic servitude. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in forced child labour, child sex trafficking and child marriage. Due to the worsening socio-economic conditions, human trafficking and irregular migration from Zimbabwe are facilitated by complicit cross-border transporters and corrupt border management officials, especially on the borders with South Africa and Botswana.

Over the past few decades, Zimbabwe has shifted from being a destination country to one of emigration and transit in the region due to growing insecurity. Irregular migration is widespread, with many people originating from the Horn of Africa, in addition to skilled Zimbabwean workers. Although the use of smugglers' services is common, the porosity of regional borders makes them of little necessity. In fact, most people move out of Zimbabwe with their own resources.

Extortion racketeering occurs within Zimbabwe, with victims being forced by criminal actors to pay money under duress in exchange for avoiding damage to their businesses or property, or to prevent being killed. Small business owners and private citizens are often targeted, but extortion is particularly prevalent in the informal sector, mainly in illegal artisanal mining.

TRADE

There is little evidence of a significant arms market in Zimbabwe, with the proliferation of weapons in the country linked to political challenges and cross-border smuggling from neighbouring countries, especially from the remnants of arms used in South Africa's apartheid regime. Recent arrests suggest an inflow of weapons from South Africa and Mozambique, with both military personnel and civilians involved in multiple unrelated incidents, and apparent evidence of bribery of border soldiers.

Zimbabwe's efforts to adhere to international patent and trademark conventions have been hindered by a lack of expertise, and corruption and bureaucracy. As a result, the illegal trade in counterfeit products has become a threat to local markets and consumers, causing the country to lose money in unpaid taxes. The most affected products are foodstuffs, medical equipment and devices, pharmaceutical products and dietary supplements, with most of the counterfeit commodities sourced from outside the country. Illicit trade in excise goods, particularly cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, has been a long-standing issue in Zimbabwe, exacerbated by poor governance, tax loopholes, corruption and porous borders. The trade is dominated by contraband cigarettes manufactured by legally recognized companies and registered brands, with profits also derived from tax evasion. Cigarette manufacturers in Zimbabwe have been exporting cigarettes to claim excise duty rebates, only to re-import them back into the country to sell them on the informal market or smuggle them into South Africa. The illicit cigarette market is controlled by small-scale smugglers and politicians at the highest levels of government, who use official and illegal crossing points along the Limpopo River to smuggle cigarettes into South Africa, taking advantage of the extremely porous border between the two countries. The ban on cigarette sales during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa has further increased the market and prices for smuggled cigarettes from Zimbabwe. Similarly, vehicles are smuggled into Zimbabwe using fake documents, and falsified engine and chassis numbers.

ENVIRONMENT

Deforestation and forest degradation continue to be major issues in Zimbabwe, driven by factors such as agricultural expansion, illegal logging and the demand for wood fuel, which has threatened the existence of the country's indigenous forests. This has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest annually, which is currently the highest rate of deforestation in southern Africa and one of the highest in the world. Illegal timber extraction and illegal trade of timber products are carried out by organized crime groups with complicity of corrupt police officers and officials. Even though the ban on the exportation of hardwood timber and the landlocked position of the country minimizes this market, the illicit trade continues to occur, as illegal logging is a main source of income for many in impoverished communities.



Wildlife crime and trafficking are prevalent in Zimbabwe, particularly for ivory and rhino horns. Poaching of big cats is also a concern. Chinese transnational organized criminal groups are involved in this crime in the country. While the COVID-19 pandemic's travel restrictions helped boost black rhino conservation, poaching has resumed since the restrictions were lifted. Poaching and the connection with illegal markets in neighbouring countries remain ongoing concerns. Zimbabwe is now advocating for the worldwide ban on the trade in ivory and rhino horn to be lifted, as it has a stockpile of 70 tonnes of ivory worth millions of dollars that it would like to sell.

Illegal mining of non-renewable resources such as gold and diamonds has become a widespread alternative income-generating market for Zimbabweans due to high unemployment and droughts affecting farms in the country. However, this market's irregularity has led to its criminalization as well as political manipulation. Although the government encourages artisanal and small-scale mining for precious minerals for its economic benefits, it is largely illegal and conducted by unlicensed, unregulated miners with links to political and military elites. Senior politicians and state agencies are also believed to be involved in illegal mining activities, with politicians suspected of leading the syndicates that procure gold for smuggling or selling through official channels. Criminal gangs, sponsored by politicians, use machetes and other weapons to rob miners of their ore, gold or money. Corruption is a significant factor in the development of this market, with bribery being a common phenomenon to gain access to profitable mining claims. Organized criminal groups also use their leverage of state power to export diamonds, with the diamond industry dominated by them.

DRUGS

Zimbabwe has become a transit country for the trade of heroin, primarily to markets in South Africa and Europe. Although the purchasing power of Zimbabweans is low, there is still a market for heroin, which is mostly consumed by wealthy individuals, while poor users in rural areas consume heavily adulterated versions. The heroin supply chain in Zimbabwe is dominated by public figures, government officials, party officials and military officials. Despite the local market being subdued, Zimbabwe has emerged as a significant inland transit country for heroin, with smugglers transporting the drug overland from Tanzania and Mozambique to West and southern African markets, trans-shipment points for European markets and back into Zimbabwe. Heroin is imported in wholesale quantities, cut and repackaged in Zimbabwe, then smuggled overland across the borders

with South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique and Botswana. Security services are likely to be involved in facilitating the movement of transit cargoes.

Zimbabwe is also emerging as a transit hub for cocaine, with significant seizures being reported. Although domestic consumption is limited due to low purchasing power, cocaine is being diluted with cheaper substances to create a more lucrative market. Zimbabwe also serves as a significant transit and destination country for cannabis, but the links to organized crime are weak, and the government lacks the capacity to interdict the trade effectively. There is a growing movement for the legalization of cannabis in Zimbabwe, particularly for medical purposes and to establish a cannabis industry. The use of synthetic drugs, particularly crystal methamphetamine, is increasing significantly, especially among young people during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The low prices and availability of precursors in the lawful market have contributed to the growth of the market, and Zimbabwe is now a transit point for methamphetamines en route to South Africa. This has resulted in a rise in mental health issues and hospital admissions compared to other conditions, due to methamphetamine use among adolescents and young adults.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Zimbabwe is witnessing a surge in cyber-dependent crimes, including unauthorized access and server hacking, which are the most common offences. These crimes often lead to personal information theft, financial losses and the loss of valuable data. However, victims of such cyber-attacks find it challenging to report these crimes due to the lack of a cybercrime unit in law enforcement agencies, inadequate technological equipment and investigation skills. Cyber-attackers have targeted government departments, educational institutions and businesses in Zimbabwe. Although critical infrastructure such as hospitals, medical facilities, banks, food supply chains and electricity providers in Zimbabwe are not digitized, these attacks can still lead to the procurement of the personal information of consumers, which can then be found on the dark web. This can be used to target the increasing number of consumers who shop and bank online, driven by the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are widespread in Zimbabwe, with these taking various forms, such as tax evasion through over-pricing of imports, and under-valuation of exports



as well as embezzlement and misappropriation of company and public funds. Additional contributing factors include violations of exchange control rules and underground banking, Corruption is deeply ingrained in Zimbabwe, and political patronage reinforces it at all levels. Further, Zimbabweans are frequently caught or convicted of credit card fraud, identity theft or cyber-enabled fraud in other countries, making Zimbabwe a significant player in international fraud scams.

Criminal Actors

State-embedded actors in Zimbabwe are heavily involved in criminal markets and contribute to the growth of organized crime. These actors abuse their power to engage in criminal activities such as the illicit trade of tobacco, gold, diamonds, wildlife and drugs. The military has been involved in the exploitation of resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through corporate entities and senior officers engaging in cartel behaviour. Corruption within the Zimbabwean state has eroded trust in the government and key regulatory institutions, leading to a chaotic management of public finances.

Regarding mafia-style groups in Zimbabwe, while there are armed groups with political affiliations, there is no evidence of their involvement in illicit activities or protection networks. However, smaller violent gangs are engaging in illicit mining activities. As to criminal networks, drug trafficking and underground syndicates of drug barons are on the rise in Zimbabwe, with high-level government officials reportedly involved. These syndicates operate in major cities and strategic border towns, giving them access to neighbouring countries. Foreign criminal actors are also involved in local criminal activities in Zimbabwe, often through joint ventures with local criminal entrepreneurs. Chinese, Russian, South African and Lebanese investors partner with local entities in the diamond and gold mining industry, facilitating access to foreign markets. Chinese mining and construction companies are reported to be involved in human trafficking, and Chinese small arms have been implicated in the suppression of democratic progress in Zimbabwe. Private actors also contribute to organized crime through cybercrime, money laundering, illicit trade in excise goods and counterfeiting, and diamond smuggling, among other illicit activities. Numerous case studies indicate the collusive relationships between state actors and criminal entrepreneurs in private entities that facilitate and obscure organized crime.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The high-level involvement of the Zimbabwean state in criminal markets is the result of a combination of social, economic and political abuses. The state dominates and controls the economy, with political elites at the centre of all economic activity. Instead of curbing organized crime, the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the political leadership is complicit in its perpetuation. Corruption and weak rule of law remain major challenges for Zimbabwe's government, which has fragile political pluralism, democratic process and legal frameworks. State functionaries manage public institutions subservient to the interests of criminals rather than the public, leading to a widening trade deficit and inflation. Despite the government's political discourse on the need to curb corruption and establish anti-corruption courts, the level of transparency remains low and corruption is rampant. The autonomy and professional independence of transparent and accountable institutions are limited, allowing some

government officials, including law enforcement agencies, to engage in extortion and blackmail crimes. Criminal entrepreneurs who benefit from the collusion of state actors are opposed to transparent and accountable public governance and actively oppose the political change that might bring it about.

Although Zimbabwe has ratified several international conventions related to organized crime, it lacks the institutional capacity and competence to consistently play its part in international law enforcement, particularly in the police, asset forfeiture unit and anti-corruption commission. However, procedures and processes to provide mutual legal assistance and/or extradition have existed for a long time. At the national level, the legislative framework on organized crime in Zimbabwe is weak and does not meet international standards. The lack of a comprehensive strategy against organized crime hinders pressure on policymakers to adopt supportive legislative measures. The adoption of the



first anti-corruption strategy in the country, for the period 2020–2024, has showed increased political will, especially in terms of coordinating anti-corruption efforts by different stakeholders, but serious gaps still exist in the implementation of these frameworks.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Zimbabwe has been a source of conflict between human rights and governmental authority. There is ample evidence of corruption and political appointments of judges, which has led to decreased trust in the justice system. Criminals with political ties are often not held accountable in court, and organized criminal activity is widespread. Further, the judiciary is still being used to prosecute and detain whistleblowers, journalists and activists. Political influence on the justice system remains significant, with judges rarely seen ruling against the government. Judicial independence continues to be eroded due to factors such as patronage of the judiciary through land allocation schemes, opaque appointment procedures for higher judiciary, and underfunding, which makes the judiciary heavily reliant on government support.

The Zimbabwe Republic Police, the primary law enforcement agency in the country, faces significant challenges due to underfunding and poor training. The police also lack appropriate transport facilities to ensure swift mobility, making it difficult for them to respond to calls for assistance. Moreover, the police force is plagued with corruption, as officers often supplement their salaries with bribes from criminals. Additionally, security forces continue to commit arbitrary arrests, violent assaults, abductions, torture and other abuses against opposition politicians, dissidents and activists. Zimbabwe lacks specialized law enforcement units to counter organized crimes. Moreover, the lack of integrity and competence within law enforcement structures creates an obstacle to preventing cyber-dependent crimes.

While Zimbabwe's territorial integrity is not under threat, corruption among border control personnel remains a problem, and the country has vulnerable points that facilitate smuggling and other illicit activities. To manage its borders, Zimbabwe has increasingly turned to private-public partnerships to administer and maintain border crossing infrastructure for a fee. However, corruption, weak legal and institutional frameworks, porous border controls, and collusion between border management officials and smugglers erode the country's effective territorial integrity. The challenges of managing outgoing passengers using airports further compound these problems.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Zimbabwe has been removed from the grey list of countries that are deemed insufficiently compliant with anti-money laundering standards. However, the country remains high-risk for money laundering and terrorism financing. The current money laundering framework's effectiveness is negated by various weaknesses, particularly that the Financial Intelligence Unit does not share a common case management system with the respective law enforcement agencies it relies on. More positively, Zimbabwe has made progress in enforcing the transparency of the beneficial ownership of legal entities. The country requires companies to maintain accurate and up-to-date information and to file it with the Registrar of Companies. Despite institutional improvements, Zimbabwe's capacity to undertake financial crimes investigations and cross-border recovery of proceeds of crime is limited.

Zimbabwe is facing significant economic challenges due to poor governance standards, lack of government policies and regulations, and high government wage expenses. International financial institutions have called for the implementation of significant fiscal and structural reforms before granting new loans. Zimbabwe's economic freedom is among the lowest in the world, and urgent reforms are necessary to reduce state intervention in the economy, enhance good governance and anti-corruption efforts, lower barriers to regional trade integration and remove forex retention requirements. Although the economy slightly recovered in recent years, the situation is expected to remain problematic in the future, with reduced competitiveness, low commodity prices and disruptive interruptions in the electricity supply. Debt distress and arrears, as well as low international reserves, exacerbate the problems. International financial institutions are unlikely to resume lending until the debt arrears are cleared.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Although there are support programmes organized by civil society organizations and foreign governments, the Zimbabwean state offers very little in terms of treatment and victim support. Currently, there is no evidence of a functioning and comprehensive witness protection programme in the country. Instead, an ad hoc system for protecting witnesses is employed by police investigators on a case-by-case basis, as resources permit. However, this system is unsuited to and inadequate for dealing with networked crime. Zimbabwe has intensified its efforts to prevent organized crime across the Limpopo border with South Africa, particularly incidences of smuggling



in that area. But, despite this progress, the government's lack of intensive measures to combat corruption and bribery has led to an increase in the illicit trade in excise and counterfeit goods flooding the local market.

The Zimbabwean government views civil society actors who promote democratic governance or economic reform as supporters of regime change by opposition political parties and international actors. As a result, dissent is usually suppressed, and the government has unfettered powers to regulate and interfere in the governance and operations of NGOs. Civil society organizations appear to be under significant pressure from the state and they

no longer play the watchdog role they once did. Press freedom in Zimbabwe has also deteriorated, with no free and independent media in the country as all media outlets are controlled by the state. Journalists have been detained, arrested or assaulted by the police in recent years, and the government continues to show hostility toward human rights defenders, protesters, political activists and journalists. Several institutions have warned that Zimbabwe is weaponizing the criminal justice system to stifle dissent and suppress the activities of human rights defenders.

