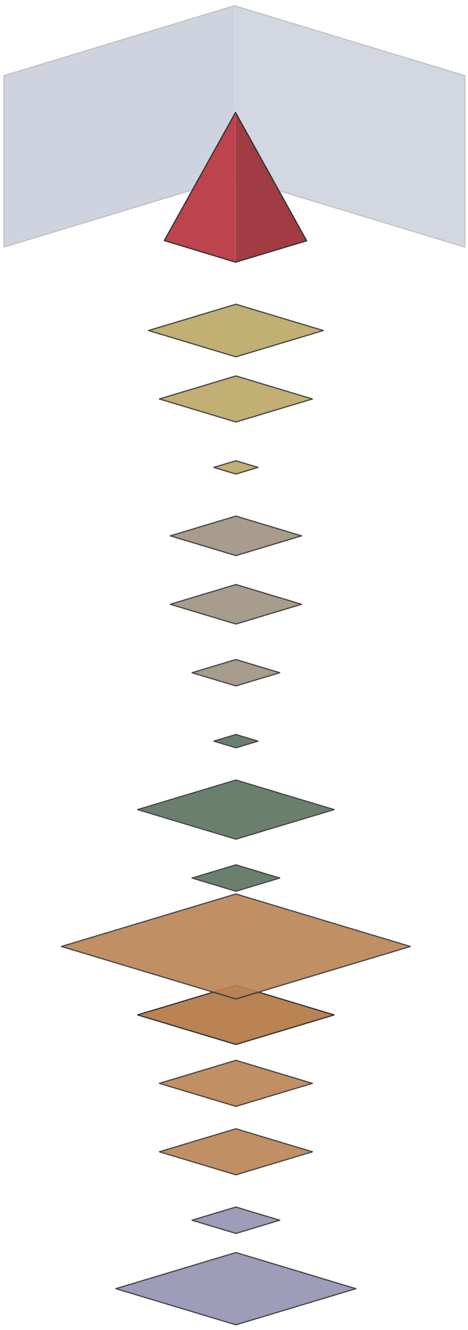
Africa ORGANISED CRIME INDEX 2025

enact
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

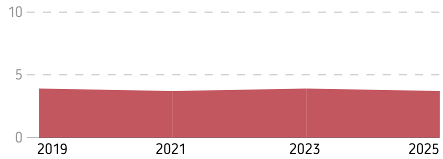
This project is funded by the European Union

SEYCHELLES



3.65 ↘0.25
CRIMINALITY SCORE

53rd of 54 African countries ↘1
13th of 13 Southern African countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	3.40	↘0.10
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.00	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	3.50	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00	↘0.50
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	3.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.00	↘3.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00	↗1.00
HEROIN TRADE	8.00	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	4.50	0.00
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.50	↗0.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.00	↘0.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	5.50	↗1.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	3.90	↘0.40
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50	↘0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	4.00	↘1.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	4.00	0.00

ISS INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES
INTERPOL
GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

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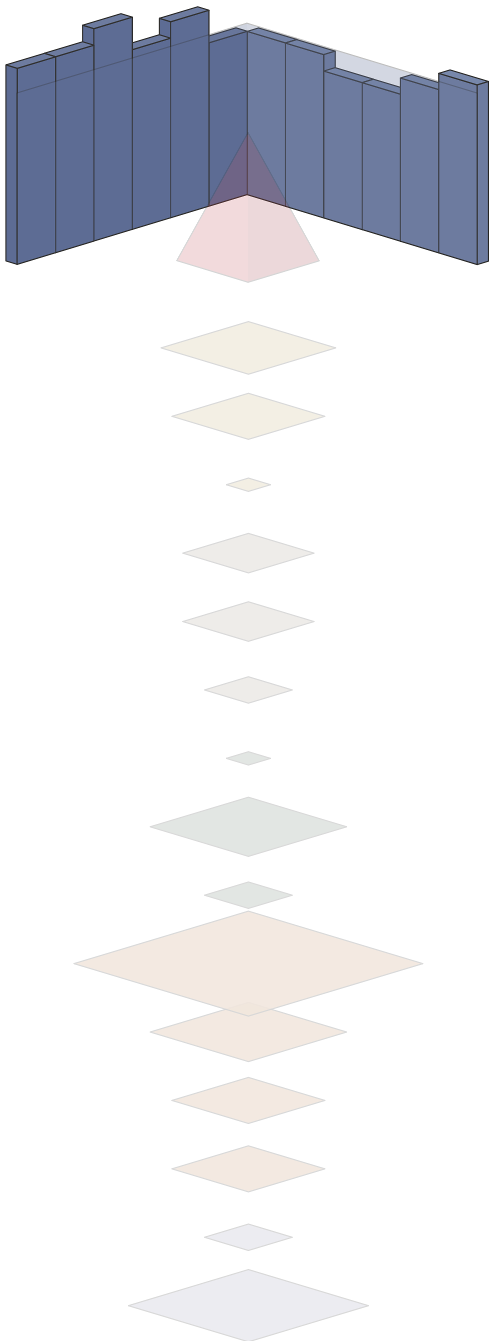
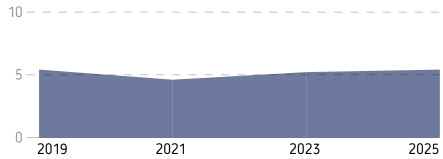


5.38 ↗0.17

RESILIENCE SCORE

6th of 54 African countries ↗4
3rd of 13 Southern African countries ↗1



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00	↗1.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00	↗0.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	5.50	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00	↗0.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50	0.00
PREVENTION	5.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.50	0.00

CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a concern in Seychelles, which is a source, transit point and destination for victims, primarily for sexual exploitation and forced labour. The main island of Mahé is a key hub and established trafficking routes connect it to Madagascar and western Asia. Recruitment methods include deceptive job offers, particularly in fraudulent modelling schemes, targeting young women from Mahé and Praslin. Migrant workers, especially those from India and Bangladesh employed in retail, construction, fishing and domestic labour, are vulnerable to labour trafficking, often finding themselves in exploitative conditions due to passport confiscation and contract misrepresentation. Migrant workers on foreign-flagged fishing vessels in the Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) might encounter conditions resembling human trafficking, such as physical mistreatment and non-payment of wages. Foreign tourists contribute to the demand for sexual exploitation, exacerbating the issue. Human traffickers in the Seychelles are increasingly leveraging technology to locate and exploit their victims, using online job portals, social media platforms, messaging apps and illegal online banking transactions to facilitate their activities.

Human smuggling is facilitated by labour agencies and involves criminal networks, foreign actors and state-embedded actors. Migrants from south and east Asia, as well as east Africa, are drawn to the Seychelles for work in fishing, farming and construction. This market is closely linked to human trafficking, as migrants often face exploitation, including withheld passports, restricted movement and inadequate inspections. Despite the transnational nature of this activity, the country is only a minor location for this market.

There is no evidence of organized extortion or protection racketeering in Seychelles. Isolated incidents exist but they are largely associated with opportunistic individuals rather than organized criminal groups.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is not a well-established criminal market in Seychelles. Although firearm possession is low, law enforcement has reported an increase in firearm-related offences in recent years. There have been seizures of military-grade arms and ammunition, but knives and machetes are the most common weapons used in violent incidents. Concerns persist about potential arms trafficking in the EEZ, particularly given its vast maritime territory and limited enforcement capacity.

Seychelles is primarily a destination market for counterfeit goods. Common counterfeit items include clothing and pharmaceuticals. There are legal frameworks to regulate this market but enforcement is inconsistent and authorities primarily focus on counterfeit medicines. The affordability of these goods fuels local demand, and while their impact on organized crime is unclear, the illicit trade undermines legitimate businesses.

Seychelles is a transit point for illicit excisable goods, although limited in scope and scale, moving between Africa and Asia. Due to the challenges of policing the island's extensive maritime territory and monitoring cargo shipments, the true scale of this criminal market is unclear. There are indications of customs officials being involved in facilitating contraband smuggling, complicating enforcement efforts. Regulations on alcohol and tobacco imports for tourists are strictly applied but inconsistencies persist in monitoring other entry points, allowing for gaps in enforcement.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes in Seychelles primarily involve the illegal trade of coco de mer, an endangered plant species highly valued on the black market. Demand for illegally harvested specimens comes from tourists and international buyers. Illicit timber harvesting and logging are largely concentrated on Mahé, driven by economic development and charcoal production. However, there is no evidence to suggest that organized criminal groups are directly involved in these activities.

Fauna crimes include poaching of endemic species such as bronze geckos, black parrots and sea turtles. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and lobster catching also contribute to these issues. Chinese and Sri Lankan trawlers are frequently reported fishing in Seychelles' waters, exacerbating concerns over resource depletion.

Non-renewable resource crimes are minimal in Seychelles, as the country lacks significant natural reserves. However, the archipelago's geographic position makes it a transit point for smuggled non-renewable resources moving between Africa and Asia.

DRUGS

The heroin trade in Seychelles is well established and the country is a transit point and a destination market. The nation has one of the highest per capita heroin use rates globally and a significant portion of the population are affected by heroin dependency. Criminal networks, foreign actors and state-embedded actors play a role in the distribution of heroin and prisons are a notable site for trafficking activities. Seychelles' geographic location along key trafficking routes from Afghanistan and Iran to east Africa and Europe contributes to the prevalence of the drug trade. Heroin is typically transported through Madagascar, as well as southern and eastern Africa, before reaching the island. Shipments originating from Sri Lanka further emphasize the transnational nature of this market. Despite government interventions, heroin is widely accessible, posing broader concerns for law enforcement and public health.

Cocaine trade in Seychelles has grown in recent years, primarily driven by trafficking routes from Brazil. Cocaine is mainly transported by air and there are frequent seizures at airports. Criminal networks and foreign actors dominate this trade, laundering profits through businesses such as rental properties and hospitality ventures. Local consumption is lower than that of heroin but the increasing availability of cocaine among younger demographics raises concerns.

Seychelles is a minor destination for cannabis, imports primarily coming from Madagascar via Comoros with other illicit substances. However, most cannabis consumed is cultivated locally for domestic use. Cannabis is the most widely used drug in Seychelles, and despite its illegal status it is culturally accepted. Discussions on potential legalization have surfaced but enforcement measures continue to focus on users and police crackdowns are a common response.

Synthetic drug trade is an emerging issue, and seizures of methamphetamine and other synthetic substances have increased. Party drugs such as flakka, MDMA and K2 are gaining popularity, particularly among younger demographics. The government has acknowledged this trend and is working to monitor local production, but enforcement measures remain limited.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

There is limited data on cyber-dependent crimes in Seychelles. However, the government has established specialized units to address cyber threats, focusing primarily on foreign hackers.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial and cyber-enabled financial crimes are a persistent issue and fraud is becoming increasingly widespread. Cyber-enabled schemes such as phishing, romance scams and lottery fraud are commonly carried out by international cybercriminals, and some cases are linked to the use of Seychelles as an offshore front for foreign business ventures. The country's status as a tax haven provides opportunities not only for foreign tax-related offences but also for other financial crimes. Misuse of funds and embezzlement are recurring concerns. These crimes are primarily committed by foreign criminals and a mix of criminal networks, state-embedded actors, and to a lesser extent private sector participants. Tax evasion and fraud, in particular, are a substantial economic burden on the government.

Criminal actors

There is no confirmed presence of mafia-style groups in Seychelles. Concerns have been raised about a gang known as the Syndicate, but its operational motives, internal leadership, structure and influence over criminal markets are unknown.

Criminal networks are loosely structured, often operating through family connections. They are primarily engaged in human trafficking, human smuggling, drug trafficking and financial crimes. Due to the country's small population and close-knit communities, these activities frequently go unchecked, even with an increased law enforcement presence. Links between criminal networks and state actors in the drug trade have been identified, with economic factors such as low salaries and high living costs being cited as potential incentives for corruption. Despite their engagement in transnational criminal activities, there is no evidence that these groups attempt to exert influence over political institutions.

There is limited evidence suggesting direct state control over criminal markets. However, there are indications of low-level involvement, particularly in the drug trade. Prison officers have reportedly engaged in drug-related activities with inmates, a practice that continues despite the implementation of stricter regulations. Public perceptions often associate government officials with corruption and embezzlement but there is little evidence to substantiate these links.

Foreign criminal actors play a notable role in Seychelles, particularly in maritime-based crimes such as illegal fishing, human trafficking and drug smuggling. These actors do not exert centralized control over criminal markets but maintain moderate interactions with local networks. Foreign groups primarily operate in territorial waters, engaging in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Chinese and Sri Lankan vessels are frequently implicated in such activities. Foreign actors from east Africa, South Africa, Brazil and Western Asia have been linked to drug trafficking routes that pass through Seychelles. In the financial sector, Russian actors have been identified as key players in illicit financial activities. Indian business owners have also been implicated in labour trafficking, particularly in cases where migrant workers from India and Bangladesh are subjected to exploitative conditions, including wage withholding and passport confiscation. Despite their significant economic involvement in illicit markets, foreign actors do not appear to be leveraging their position to influence Seychelles' governance or democratic institutions.

The role of private sector actors in organized crime in Seychelles is primarily tied to financial crimes and labour exploitation. The financial sector plays a role in facilitating illicit financial flows, including through the creation of shell companies that support offshore money laundering schemes. In the labour sector, employers in the Seychelles International Trade Zone have been reported to impose severe movement restrictions on migrant workers, increasing their vulnerability to labour trafficking.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The democratic process in Seychelles is independent and there are no significant indications of organized crime influencing the political system. Public confidence in the government has remained relatively stable. The country's leadership has expressed a commitment to addressing organized crime and strengthening governance structures. Political stability has been maintained but challenges persist in fully addressing organized crime due to capacity limitations, fragmented interagency coordination, and reliance on external assistance for law enforcement and judicial functions. The extent to which political commitments have translated into policy implementation is unclear, and financial constraints affect enforcement efforts. While oversight institutions exist, enforcement gaps and bureaucratic inefficiencies affect their overall effectiveness. Reports of corruption in state institutions contribute to public scepticism about the government's ability to combat organized crime impartially. Patronage politics is a notable issue in Seychelles, where nepotism and the close-knit nature of the small island nation contribute to a high degree of personalization in politics. Efforts have been made to enhance financial transparency, including initiatives to improve inclusivity and participatory decision-making from independent institutions. Transparency measures, such as budget allocations and procurement contracts, are regularly implemented by the government. However, the regulatory framework has limitations, including exceptions to the public interest override and the need for a broader provision to supersede other conflicting laws.

Seychelles has consistently aligned with international standards through its participation in global treaties and conventions aimed at combating organized crime, including extradition agreements with international counterparts. The country is engaged in numerous international cooperation initiatives, particularly in addressing drug trafficking and maritime security. However, there has been limited activity in the extradition of individuals involved in organized crime, and no reported cases in the past five years. Similarly, there have been no recorded instances of transborder asset seizures, indicating limited implementation in these areas within the existing legal and operational frameworks. Seychelles has an established legal framework covering various aspects of the criminal justice process related to organized crime. It includes provisions for detention, prosecution, trial and imprisonment of individuals involved in illicit activities. Legislation addressing crimes such as arms and wildlife trafficking is relatively strong but gaps remain in effectively combating offences such as human trafficking and counterfeiting. A national cybersecurity strategy (2019–2024) has been the framework for implementing cybersecurity policies and managing cybersecurity efforts. A new act to regulate virtual assets and service providers, aiming to address financial crime risks linked to their misuse, was introduced in 2024.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Seychelles' judiciary does not have specialized units dedicated to organized crime, but the courts adjudicate such cases as part of their broader legal functions. The judiciary receives state support, ensuring it has the resources to operate. Despite advancements in the legal system, public perception of judicial integrity is mixed and there are concerns about the conduct of judges and judicial staff. Some judicial figures have expressed apprehension about potential conflicts of interest, citing instances of judiciary members engaging in events associated with the State House. Corruption has been reported among prison personnel, including instances of contraband smuggling and bribery. Some prisons do not fully meet international standards, particularly in the provision of healthcare services, though fundamental needs are generally met. These shortcomings do not appear to significantly facilitate organized crime in correctional institutions, but illicit networks exert a degree of control over activities inside prisons, posing challenges for law enforcement and security agencies.

Law enforcement agencies responsible for addressing organized crime operate in the Seychelles Police, though there are few specialized units dedicated to these efforts. Law enforcement bodies benefit from international support, which includes training programmes aimed at strengthening their capacity to combat crimes such as human trafficking and drug-related offences. Corruption in law enforcement, particularly concerning drug trafficking investigations, is noted as a significant barrier to countering organized crime. Reports indicate that corruption permeates various levels of law enforcement, hindering efforts to dismantle high-level trafficking networks. Despite this, there is no strong indication of widespread public mistrust in law enforcement, nor is there substantial evidence of active community policing initiatives. On the intelligence front, Seychelles has developed mechanisms for gathering information through non-state actors and engages in international intelligence-sharing initiatives. These collaborations help mitigate the lack of specialized domestic units by leveraging external expertise and resources to address organized crime more effectively.

Seychelles faces ongoing challenges in border monitoring and security due to its expansive geography, comprising 115 islands and extensive territorial waters. The country relies primarily on its coast guard to safeguard its territory, counter piracy and combat illicit activities such as drug smuggling and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. After years of contention, the long-standing territorial dispute over the Chagos Islands appears to be resolved, with the UK committing to transfer the territory to Mauritius. Seychelles' geographical positioning along a major trafficking corridor linking Afghanistan and Iran to southern and eastern Africa and Europe contributes to vulnerabilities in border security. In response, the state has sought international support to enhance surveillance infrastructure and operational capacity for monitoring territorial waters. Border control personnel at official entry points are generally equipped to intercept illicit substances but there are concerns about corruption in these ranks, which could affect the effectiveness of enforcement measures.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Seychelles has established a regulatory framework and competent authorities to address money laundering. However, the effectiveness of these institutions is unclear, as no significant financial investigations have been explicitly linked to organized crime. Efforts to strengthen institutional capacity have included collaboration with international and regional partners through workshops and training initiatives focused on money laundering and terrorist financing. Despite these developments, uncertainties persist about the adequacy of measures to prevent emerging financial channels, such as crowdfunding and online gambling, from being exploited for illicit activities. This raises concerns about potential vulnerabilities in Seychelles' financial regulatory framework. In recent years, Seychelles was placed on the EU blacklist due to concerns about its anti-money laundering policies. However, efforts to strengthen legal frameworks against financial crimes have shown progress, as evidenced by the EU Council's decision to remove Seychelles from the blacklist of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions, effective from February 2024.

The government has introduced measures to facilitate the operation of legitimate businesses while minimizing exposure to criminal influence. Efforts have been made to support economic growth, with a focus on strengthening local enterprises. There is limited evidence of direct private sector involvement in combating organized crime. Nevertheless, there are no clear regulatory mechanisms aimed at disincentivizing participation in illicit markets. Government subsidies provide some support to entrepreneurs but challenges remain, particularly in land acquisition, where corruption has been reported. Regulatory complexities and labour conditions in special financial zones present obstacles for businesses operating in these areas.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Seychelles government has prioritized support for victims of organized crime by implementing comprehensive assistance measures, including medical care, shelter and repatriation where necessary. To further protect victims, particularly those affected by labour trafficking, the state provides witness protection and, in some cases, grants work permits to allow them to remain and work legally in the country. These efforts, made in collaboration with religious organizations and NGOs, have been largely effective in preventing revictimization. However, the support system for drug users is inadequate. The closure of state-run rehabilitation facilities has left a significant gap since no alternative support mechanisms are in place. The government's 'war on drugs' has introduced harsh penalties for drug users, potentially worsening their vulnerabilities. The lack of sufficient rehabilitation and treatment programmes compounds the issue, while the effectiveness of the methadone treatment programme is a subject of debate. However, progress has been made with the framework to protect whistle-blowers, and the cabinet recently approved comprehensive legislation. This initiative aims to encourage individuals to report wrongdoing in professional settings while ensuring a robust protection framework aligned with international standards.

Prevention measures to combat organized crime are in place but face significant implementation challenges. The absence of formal community policing initiatives limits local engagement, and there are no dedicated awareness programmes. These gaps highlight key areas for improvement in strengthening the national response to organized crime through enhanced community involvement and support mechanisms. The primary barriers to effectively implementing existing laws and policies are a shortage of human resources and a lack of interventions tailored to the local context.

Civil society organizations and other non-state actors play a vital role in combating organized crime, complementing and reinforcing state efforts. The government has fostered a supportive environment for these organizations by upholding constitutional freedoms of expression and the press, allowing for a strong and independent civil society sector. Collaboration between state and non-state actors has been effective, and both parties work together and share resources to address organized crime. The media also plays a crucial role, providing a platform for discussions on organized crime without facing overt suppression or attacks from criminal groups or government entities. This open media environment helps ensure that organized crime-related issues are reported and that civil activists can operate without severe retaliation. However, concerns about press freedom remain. Allegations of frequent journalist harassment have surfaced, and the media is often perceived as being influenced by political interests. As a result, a culture of self-censorship has emerged in some newsrooms, journalists avoiding critical reporting to mitigate potential backlash.