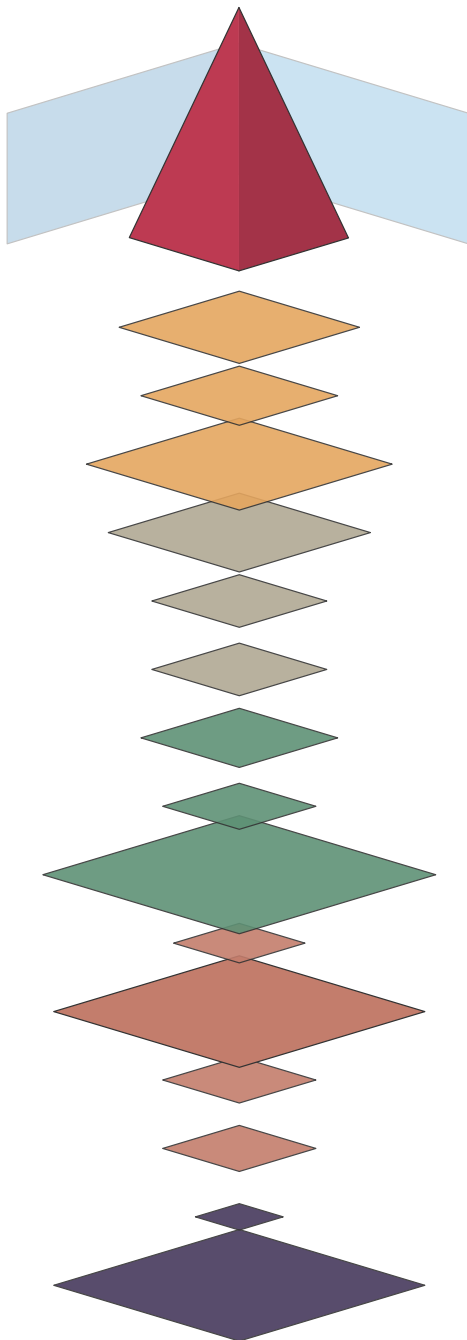


 **GUYANA**



 **5.97**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

49<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
11<sup>th</sup> of 35 American countries  
7<sup>th</sup> of 12 South American countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **5.13**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	7.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00
FLORA CRIMES	4.50
FAUNA CRIMES	3.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	9.00
HEROIN TRADE	3.00
COCAINE TRADE	8.50
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	8.50

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **6.80**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	8.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	8.00

 **4.04**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**



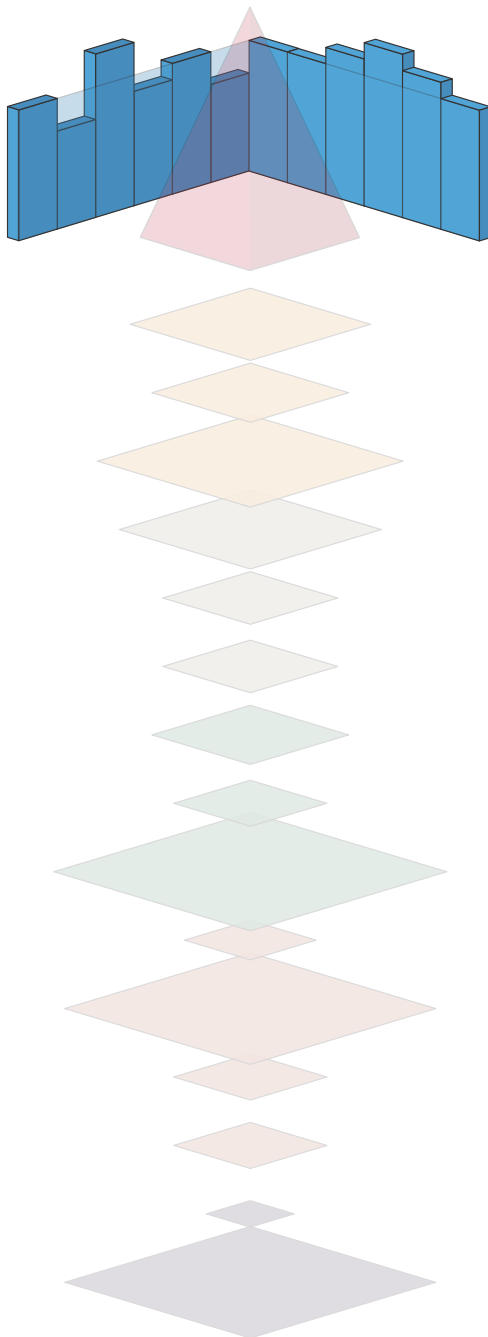
Funding provided by the United States Government.



Funded by the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

 **GUYANA**





 **4.04**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**

**130<sup>th</sup>** of 193 countries  
**28<sup>th</sup>** of 35 American countries  
**9<sup>th</sup>** of 12 South American countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	<b>4.00</b>
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	<b>3.00</b>
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	<b>5.00</b>
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	<b>3.50</b>
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	<b>4.00</b>
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<b>3.00</b>
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	<b>4.00</b>
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	<b>4.00</b>
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	<b>4.50</b>
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	<b>5.00</b>
<u>PREVENTION</u>	<b>4.50</b>
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	<b>4.00</b>

 **5.97**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

 <b>CRIMINAL MARKETS</b>	<b>5.13</b>
 <b>CRIMINAL ACTORS</b>	<b>6.80</b>



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# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Guyana is recognized as one of the best-performing countries in the Anglophone Caribbean when it comes to combatting human trafficking, with serious and sustained efforts to fight this crime. However, the country still struggles to identify and investigate the crime in remote regions, where the state lacks capacity. Human trafficking is common in mining sites, with women, especially Venezuelan, being trafficked to work in the sex trade. Child labour is also prevalent, particularly in Amerindian households. Guyana is both a source and destination country for victims of human trafficking, and vulnerable groups, such as victims of human smuggling, young people from rural and indigenous communities and those without education, are at higher risk. Organized crime networks operating across Guyana and Venezuela recruit women in need of money for sexual slavery in brothels located in gold mining regions, and nightclubs in other areas of the country. The human trafficking trade is sustained by activities related to the mining, oil and forestry sectors, as well as domestic service and shops.

Guyana also serves as a source and transit country for Guyanese and foreign nationals travelling north to the US and Canada. Porous borders and low law enforcement efforts allow smuggled individuals from other Caribbean countries, most recently Venezuela, to enter the country illegally, exposing vulnerable populations to trafficking, abuse and exploitation. The demand for smuggling mainly comes from Venezuelans looking for a livelihood, with profits made by Guyanese and/or Caribbean actors, as well as corrupt officials along the border.

Armed gangs, known as *sindicatos*, have been extorting Guyanese vessels and authorities along the Cuyuni River. Those who refuse to pay a 'tax' are attacked and threatened. These gangs, armed with rifles and handguns, are involved in illicit activities stemming from Venezuela's mining regions. The Cuyuni River, which borders the disputed Essequibo region subject to a territorial controversy between Venezuela and Guyana, is a major migration route from Venezuela into Guyana and takes only three days by boat. Recently, not only *sindicatos* but guerrilla groups are also involved in these crimes, demanding that miners and businesspeople transporting fuel on the river pay a tax for every barrel of oil, using gold as currency.

### TRADE

Guyana is a transit and destination country for arms trafficking, with evidence of members of the country's security forces facilitating this trade. A considerable proportion of these arms comes from Venezuela and Brazil, and there is little transparency about the extent of this illicit activity. The gains from the illegal arms trade are believed to be accrued to Brazilian gangs, who have filled the power vacuum left by the arrest of a major drug kingpin. Despite these challenges, Guyana's authorities have recognized the issue of arms trafficking as a serious problem and have committed to developing state capacities and a regional strategy to tackle it.

Counterfeit goods are prevalent in Guyana, particularly in electronic merchandise, medical products, pesticides, cosmetics and other products. There have also been reports of counterfeit HIV test kits being seized in Jamaica while being exported to Guyana, and a resurgence of illegal trade in counterfeit pesticides and toxic chemicals from neighbouring countries. Counterfeit goods are also sold online, with a decrease in sales of counterfeit CDs, DVDs, games and software due to the availability of streaming and downloading options. However, there is no evidence linking criminal organizations to the trade of counterfeit products in the country. Illicit trade of excise goods, specifically liquor and cigarettes, has been reported in Guyana. No criminal organizations have been identified in the illicit trade of excise goods. However, the lack of information on this market could be due to underreporting and the lack of or lax controls on borders for these types of goods.

### ENVIRONMENT

Guyana's legal forestry industry has been used by local and foreign criminal groups for money laundering and as a front for cocaine trafficking. Although the country has one of the best track records for Amazon rainforest protection and relatively low deforestation rates, gold mining, infrastructure building, logging and agriculture are key drivers of deforestation. The demand for timber mainly comes from foreign actors, with profits being accrued externally. Verification systems are crucial to prevent illegal logging and ensure that trees from illegally deforested land are not easily exported or sold domestically.

Even though the illegal wildlife trade is not a pervasive criminal market in Guyana, the country remains a source and transit point for animals illegally moved to markets in Mexico, Singapore and the US. The pet trade and wild meat consumption also contribute to the threats facing the country's wildlife, including jaguars and various bird species. The Rupununi region, near the Venezuelan border, is a major focus for this trade. While the illicit economies

around fauna crimes are not as sophisticated as in other criminal markets, foreign intermediaries benefit from the high prices that these products can yield in destination markets. Corruption may also play a role in facilitating this illicit market.

The trafficking of non-renewable resources, particularly gold and mercury, is a significant problem in Guyana. Much of the illegal gold is trafficked from Venezuela, and there are suspicions of money laundering ties with terrorist groups, and involvement in cocaine and weapon trafficking. Illegal mining and logging within several protected areas have been reported despite warnings and legal action. Hundreds of kilograms of gold are trafficked into Guyana from Venezuela each month, and some of the country's biggest gold export license holders are involved in trafficking gold into Guyana, which ends up in the licit supply chain. Mercury is still used in small-scale mining and is smuggled from Guyana to neighbouring countries where it has been outlawed. The metal enters Guyana illegally from China, with customs officials often turning a blind eye to this activity. Guyana's diamond industry has also been on the rise, and the country is used for transit for diamonds coming from Venezuela, which are illegally exported to Europe using fake Guyanese documents.

## DRUGS

The heroin trade in Guyana is steadily increasing, with the drug being primarily trafficked through the country to the US and Europe. The market is controlled by foreign Mexican and Italian criminal actors, which use the same routes for cocaine trafficking to smuggle heroin. Although the market for heroin in Guyana is small, signs of increasing local consumption are evident. However, most of the demand for heroin comes from external sources.

Guyana remains a key transit country for the cocaine trade, with traffickers utilizing the country's poorly monitored ports, remote airstrips, intricate river networks, porous land borders and the permissive environment resulting from corruption and the under-resourced security sector. Cocaine originating from Colombia enters the country by air, land and water from neighbouring countries, and traffickers use different concealment methods such as submersible vessels, low-flying aircraft and even human mules. Brazilian crime syndicates also use Guyana as transit point for shipments to other continents. Although the domestic demand for cocaine is also increasing, foreign actors are believed to be making the largest profits from the market.

Cannabis is the second most consumed drug in Guyana after cocaine. Local gangs control the sale of cannabis, and the country is also used as a trans-shipment point for drugs destined for lucrative markets such as North America, Europe and Africa. Despite the low price of cannabis, which suggests that the trade may not be as big as other

illicit economies, the apparent production surplus could indicate that the country is exporting the plant. There is also a developing trend of individuals trafficking high-concentration THC marijuana into the country from the US and Canada for internal consumption.

Guyana has also become a transit and destination country for synthetic drugs such as ecstasy and amphetamines, which are mostly smuggled into the country through shared ports with Suriname. The growing availability of synthetic drugs in Guyana suggests a rising domestic demand among youths and young adults, and indicates trafficking to other countries like Brazil. However, the amount of drugs seized in Guyana remains relatively low.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

The Guyanese government ministries and agencies are frequently targeted by cyber-attacks, especially through ransomware, but incidents are often not reported or made public. Authorities and analysts believe that cyber-attacks pose a considerable risk to the country's security operations, particularly considering the Guyana's anticipated oil wealth. However, no specific criminal organization or group has been identified as responsible for the attacks.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Although Guyana has improved its scores in terms of anti-corruption perceptions, implying that the country's efforts to combat corruption and promote transparency are acknowledged and reflected in corruption perception scores, there are still relevant forms of financial crime being committed in the country by both public and private actors. In recent years, instances of procurement fraud, Ponzi and pyramid schemes have increased, but there are other financial crimes to consider. These include tax evasion and wire transfer fraud using compromised email accounts. These cases often go underreported and receive little attention.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

After the arrest of Guyana's most prominent drug kingpin and the detention of other key criminals, gang leaders have largely operated under the radar, although their influence remains strong. While it is unclear if the arrested leaders are still involved in criminal activities, recent assassination attempts raise serious concerns about the direction of criminality in Guyana. The largest groups tend to dominate both legal and illegal economies, from drug and arms trafficking to construction. Although these groups do not seek public support, there are reports of collusion between criminal actors and the state at different levels. The involvement of Guyanese crime bosses in politics underscores the deep penetration of organized crime in the country.

Criminal networks in Guyana operate with the help of corrupt officials, high-level political and corporate actors, and foreign organizations. They engage in various criminal activities, including drug trafficking and human smuggling, and have established international contraband routes with neighbouring countries such as Venezuela, Suriname and Brazil. Although they tend not to attract much attention or use violence, there are some exceptions. Due to the wide borders with Venezuela and Brazil and the lack of state presence in these areas, local and international criminal groups have taken control of illegal activities, including arms trafficking, drug trafficking, and the illegal gold and mercury trade. Attacks by Venezuelan gangs on Guyanese miners plying their trade on the Cuyuni River have increased, and sindicatos and other guerrilla gangs have attacked vessels of the Guyanese Police Force along this river. Venezuelan networks dominate human trafficking and human smuggling activities in the country, particularly offering forced labour and prostitution to the towns where illegal mining is rampant. Foreign criminal actors from Mexico, Italy and Colombia play a major role in the criminal

economies of Guyana, including the cocaine, fauna, arms trafficking and heroin markets.

The presence of state-embedded actors within criminal markets in Guyana is a serious issue. Evidence shows that officials from the highest levels of the state apparatus are involved in illicit economies, with state actors facilitating the functioning of criminal markets. Corporate actors have complained about favouritism towards their competitors, who are accused of providing favours to government officials. Law enforcement officers are highly corrupt, with reports of them extorting refugees and smugglers. Furthermore, Guyanese political parties and leaders have a history of using criminal gangs to foster upheavals and even ethnic conflicts. Within the human smuggling and human trafficking criminal markets, mining, forestry and, to some extent, agricultural companies play a role in the demand side of the business, requiring miners, sex workers and even indigenous men in what can be identified as forced labour. Logging, rice, fish and seafood companies are used to smuggle drugs in and out of Guyana.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Political power in Guyana is heavily centralized in the executive branch of government, which is dominated by a single ethnic group. This has led to a political divide between the predominantly Indo-Guyanese party, the People's Progressive Party and the predominantly Afro-Guyanese party, A Partnership for National Unity. This division has resulted in a general distrust of the government, weak institutions that are not affiliated with the executive branch, and poor accountability. The discovery of offshore oil has the potential to increase wealth transfer from the state to a small ethnic elite, further exacerbating ethnic and social conflict, as has been seen in other oil-rich countries. Corruption scandals and a lack of transparency during the COVID-19 pandemic have further damaged the government's credibility, while illegal gold mining, increasing criminal activity, and organized crime networks are reported to heavily influence the political and governing sectors. Corruption remains a significant problem in Guyana. While there have been some improvements, clientelism and lack of accountability are still prevalent. Corruption in law enforcement and the judicial system allows gangs and organized crime elements to operate with impunity. The country's legal framework for access to information is poor, and the limited effectiveness of the public sector undermines its ability to achieve its development objectives.

Guyana has ratified various international treaties and conventions to combat organized crime, drug and people

trafficking, and the illicit arms trade, but the country is not very active in the international organizations that oversee their implementation. In addition, its enforcement and application of international standards in human rights, such as education, gender violence prevention, indigenous people's rights and child protection, are weak. While Guyana has several laws to combat organized crime, the country lacks effective policies to address the needs of refugees and victims of sex trafficking, as well as to combat financial crimes and transnational criminal activities.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system in Guyana faces multiple challenges that impede its ability to deliver effective justice. For instance, the country has one of the lowest numbers of judges and magistrates in the Caribbean, leading to a low conviction rate. Additionally, political disputes, staff shortages and a lack of resources have adversely affected the courts. The adjudication of justice is often influenced by social and economic standing, and political affiliations or alliances, rather than the rule of law. Corruption among prison officials is another issue, with pre-trial detention periods exceeding the maximum possible sentence, and high prison overpopulation. Non-custodial measures are seldom used, and magistrates lack the incentive to use them. Furthermore, the judiciary has low confidence in the effectiveness of probation services.

Corruption is also a major concern throughout all law enforcement institutions in Guyana, resulting from a lack of resources, weak law enforcement institutions and an ineffective judicial system. As a result, trust in institutions and the rule of law remains low, with the Guyanese Police Force among the least trusted bodies in the country due to alleged corruption and the dishonesty of some members. There are significant challenges for the police to improve their approval and effectiveness rates, such as repeat offenders being granted bail, and a shortage of investigators and officers leaving the job for other employment opportunities. Reports of police violence, detainee abuse and harsh prison conditions persist, with instances of some officers found to be involved in criminal activities.

The poorly monitored borders of Guyana with Venezuela, Suriname and Brazil have enabled international criminal groups to dominate various criminal markets such as human trafficking, smuggling, illegal gold mining, and arms and drug trafficking. Criminal groups from Venezuela and Brazil, for instance, dominate the smuggling of Venezuelan women into Guyanese mining towns and human smuggling out of Guyana. The porous borders have also facilitated the traffic of mercury to neighbouring countries, fostering illicit gold mining in the Amazon Rainforest. There have been violent encounters between Venezuelan guerrillas and Guyanese police along the Cuyuni River, reigniting the border controversy between Venezuela and Guyana.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Money laundering activities are prevalent in Guyana, including in the form of large cash deposits using fake agreements and cross-border transport of concealed precious metals. Unregulated foreign exchange offices and dealers in precious metals and stones also pose a risk to Guyana's anti-money laundering system. There are reports of the Italian mafia using the country's financial system to launder hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Although the government has made progress in strengthening controls, the discovery of rich oil and natural gas reserves presents a new challenge for Guyana in continuing to improve its capabilities against money laundering.

Guyana's informal sector is a considerable part of its economy. Despite being one of the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere, Guyana has experienced substantial growth in recent years due to the income generated by newly discovered oil and offshore gas reserves. The government

aims to diversify the economy and overhaul the regulatory framework governing its sovereign wealth fund. However, investors report conflicting messages from officials, and it is challenging to determine where decision-making authority lies due to cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that foster corruption. Inefficiencies and corruption in awarding government contracts remain widespread concerns, with reports of overpayments and procurement breaches. Despite attempts to reform bureaucratic procedures, red tape continues to be a challenge.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The situation of refugees in Guyana, particularly victims of gender-based violence and sex trafficking, is not being addressed adequately. There have been reports of migration officials extorting refugees and migrants. NGOs and the government do refer identified human trafficking victims to available social welfare and assistance programmes, including counselling, medical services, legal aid and shelter, and education and training opportunities. The government of Guyana has reported repatriating sex trafficking victims from other countries and has made efforts to prevent human trafficking through the coordination of anti-trafficking initiatives by the task force and awareness campaigns. However, there is an inadequate presence of trafficking shelters for male or child trafficking victims, and few staff members are trained in trauma counselling.

Civil society organizations provide drug rehabilitation services, and advocate for police reform and against human rights abuses. NGOs are free to operate in Guyana, and the government consults with them on policy initiatives. However, Guyana's low levels of governance and human development have resulted in low levels of participation and activism. While freedom of the press is generally respected, there have been instances of government officials filing defamation cases and threatening journalists, which has led to a climate of fear among media workers. State-run media outlets display bias in favour of the ruling party, and there are concerns about the government's use of spyware to monitor journalists.

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*This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.*