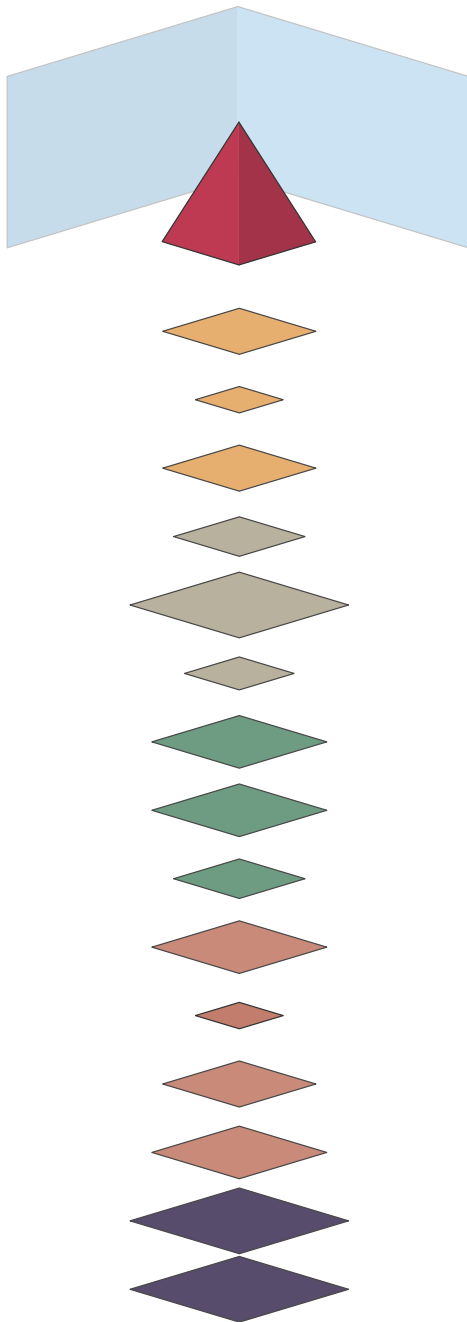




GEORGIA



3.60

CRIMINALITY SCORE

164th of 193 countries

43rd of 46 Asian countries

7th of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

3.60

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	3.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.50
FLORA CRIMES	4.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.00
HEROIN TRADE	4.00
COCAINE TRADE	2.00
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	5.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	5.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

3.60

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	3.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	3.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.50



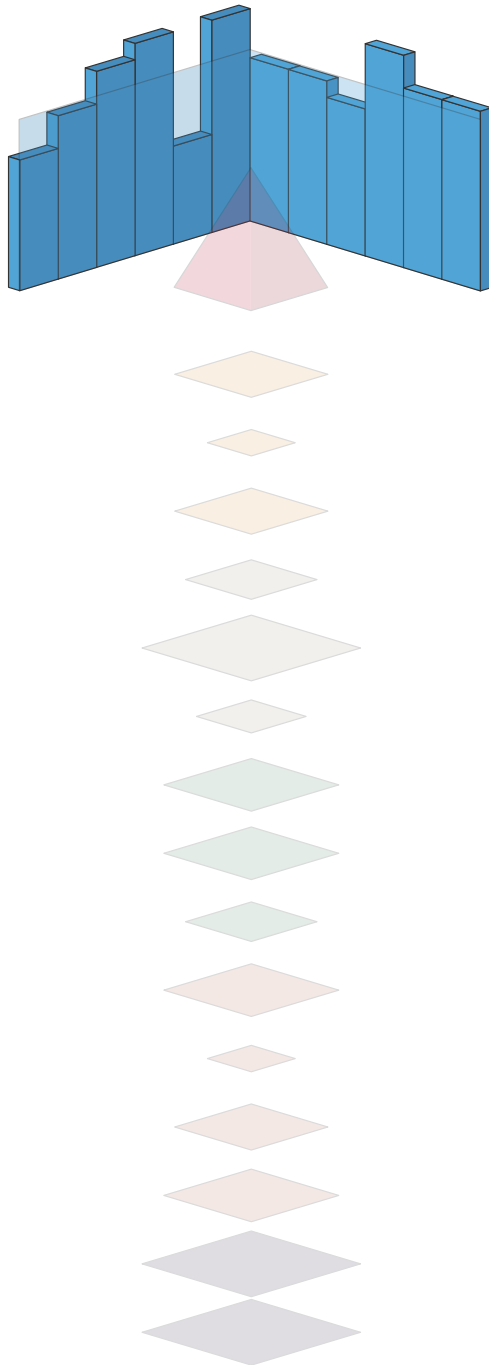
5.25

RESILIENCE SCORE





GEORGIA



5.25

RESILIENCE SCORE

76th of 193 countries

13th of 46 Asian countries

2nd of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	3.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	6.50
PREVENTION	5.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.50



3.60

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 3.60



CRIMINAL ACTORS 3.60



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Georgia is a source and transit country for human trafficking, especially sexual exploitation and forced labour. For instance, women from former Soviet republics are trafficked through Georgia on their way to Turkey. Forced labour is also observed in the country: Georgian men and women are trafficked domestically and abroad. The primary trafficking destinations for forced labour are Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Cyprus. There are also reports of increased vulnerability to sex trafficking and forced labour among South East Asian women working in massage parlours.

Despite the country's role as a transit point for human smuggling from Asia and Africa to Turkey and the rest of Europe, and the increased targeting of the country by organized criminals for these activities, the human smuggling market remains minimal compared to other criminal markets in the country.

When it comes to extortion and racketeering, there has been a notable increase that seems to be related to the increasing activities of so-called 'thieves in law', specifically in Tbilisi and border towns. Extortion and racketeering have traditionally been the most common activities among thieves in law, who provide alternative protection to businesses. It has been reported that organized criminal groups have taken advantage of overstretched security forces (due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) to carry out extortion activities targeting business owners and high net worth individuals.

TRADE

Tensions in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in Nagorno-Karabakh and other conflict regions in the Caucasus, together with the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, have left Georgia vulnerable to arms trafficking. The illegal and unaccounted movement of arms and ammunition within the region has increased concerns over the proliferation of such weapons.

Georgia is a transit country for counterfeit goods like garments, toys and footwear originating from Turkey and China. There are also concerns over a potential increase of counterfeit pharmaceutical products in the country following the decision to allow imports of all pharmaceutical products approved by Turkey. Even though illicit trade of excise goods (mainly tobacco products) is prevalent in the country, the market remains limited and stable. There are reports suggesting smuggling of tobacco products around

the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but further information about this matter is limited. Recent reports also indicate that Georgia is becoming a source country for illicit tobacco products destined for neighbouring countries, specifically Azerbaijan.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora crimes are moderately problematic for Georgian authorities. The most significant threats are illegal logging, wood harvesting for fuel and overgrazing. The traditional harvesting and sale of wild plants is also a commonplace practice, which is placing many species under threat. While corruption is deemed to be one of the main facilitating factors, the market does not appear to be associated with any violence.

Increased rural dependence on natural resources has led to unsustainable hunting of endangered wildlife. Poaching incidents are also recorded in limited numbers, but there is no indication that organized criminal groups are involved. The hunting of falcons in Georgia has increased – the captured birds are exported to Gulf countries. Since it borders Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia is one of the most prominent countries for smuggling through the Caucasus. Overfishing in the Black Sea is also considerable: fishermen exceed their legal quotas tenfold. Smuggling of non-renewable resources remains limited, with sporadic incidents of oil theft documented in the country.

DRUGS

Georgia functions as a transit country for opiates produced in the so-called 'Golden Crescent': Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The country has also emerged as an additional supply route for the European and (to a lesser extent) Russian markets. The Georgian opiate trade route has become more popular due to effective control measures imposed on heroin trafficking in neighbouring Turkey. Georgia is also a destination country for heroin – it has been identified as one of the most prevalent drugs used. Even though this market is mainly controlled by foreign actors, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that local criminal organizations are also involved. Conversely, the cocaine market in the country seems to be small, evidenced by limited and occasional seizures of the drug.

Georgia is not a major cannabis-producing country. Local indoor and outdoor cultivation has been recorded but it takes place on a small scale and mostly for personal use. The country is a transit point for synthetic drugs, but judging by seized quantities, Georgia is not a major corridor for smuggling operations in these drugs.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are still an emerging criminal market in Georgia. This is mainly due to a lack of understanding of the economic and other damages that these crimes can cause, plus a degree of under-reporting. Cyber-dependent crimes are expected to increase in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and due to poor bilateral relations with Russia and continuing tensions between the central government and Georgia's two breakaway regions.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, specifically tax-related crimes and embezzlement are prevalent in Georgia. Additionally, there are reports of fraudulent investment schemes carried out by criminal groups through the use of call centres, which target citizens in various European countries.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Most criminal networks in Georgia consist of poorly organized young people trying to gain control over a specific territory in competition with similar groups. Such groups are usually involved in petty crime – mainly robbing cars and small shops. Reports of bank robberies by better-organized and more violent groups have also emerged. In addition, criminal networks (in cooperation with foreign actors) are likely involved in heroin trafficking. Turkish groups mostly control this criminal market and information suggests that these groups have established their presence in the legal economies of key countries along the trafficking route. It is therefore possible that

such groups control legal businesses in Georgia. Foreign actors might also collaborate with individual facilitators in the country, or have Georgian nationals in their ranks. There is a growing concern over the increased influence of foreign actors in the country since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, and since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Despite the diminished prominence of state-embedded actors in criminal markets, nepotism and corruption persist in Georgia. State-embedded actors are often involved in the embezzlement of public funds through public procurement contracts and tenders. Mafia-style groups known as 'thieves in law' or *kanonieri qurdebi* locally were prominent in Georgia in the 1990s. The groups were highly hierarchical and leaders of different clans were equal in status. However, they were largely dismantled following the adoption of an anti-mafia strategy by authorities, which implemented laws targeting these groups. Authorities believe that mafia-style groups are no longer an issue in Georgia, but certain elements that survived the crackdown continue to operate abroad – in Russia and Western Europe. Additionally, information suggests that a criminal subculture may have taken hold again in remote regions, and in certain prisons in the country. Groups are believed to be involved in multiple criminal markets including drug trafficking and extortion, as well as politics and business. In the Georgian political and business context, it is often difficult to disentangle private-sector actors and state-embedded actors due to the concentration of power in these sectors. The state apparatus is reported to be compromised by these actors with heavy influences over key institutions. It is also difficult to assess the involvement of private-sector actors in organized crime due to a lack of data.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Oligarchs continue to hold influence over policy, political interests hinder rule of law, and tenders remain a challenge for policymakers. While the government continues to make efforts to fight corruption and organized crime, public trust remains low due to persisting corruption and nepotism. Despite a legal framework that allows scrutiny of government operations by auditing bodies, as well as access to public information aimed at fighting corruption in the country, corruption in Georgia remains rampant. Agencies responsible for corruption prevention and investigation are reportedly unresponsive to corruption cases involving high-ranking public officials or people with close ties to the ruling party. In addition, even though elections are deemed to be fair, issues have been observed by third

parties suggesting undue influence over the process by the ruling party.

Georgia is party to all treaties and conventions pertaining to organized crime, except the UN Firearms Protocol, which is supplemental to the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). International cooperation on matters of justice and law enforcement is well established in both law and practice. Moreover, the government has taken steps to improve international cooperation to curb certain organized criminal markets, including illegal logging, wildlife trade, flora and fauna crimes, arms trafficking and cybercrime. However, cooperation between Georgia and European countries and the US has been in decline in recent years. On a national level, the Georgian legislative framework

covers all criminal markets including arms trafficking, human trafficking and human smuggling, among others.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Executive and legislative interference in the courts remains a substantial challenge, despite ongoing efforts towards judicial reform. The independence of the judicial system is further affected by secrecy and by informal negotiations that take place behind closed doors, which altogether create a lack of transparency. Cronyism and the suppression of dissent by dominant judicial groups (evident in political cases) are additional challenges. The judiciary is also understaffed, with a backlog of cases. Despite decriminalizing cannabis and making efforts to regulate consumption, drug laws are aggressively enforced, which reportedly causes severe and unjustifiable harm. There are also concerns over arbitrary arrests without the right to an effective defence.

There are special units within the Georgian central criminal police department to tackle organized crime, especially human trafficking and drug-related offences. Georgia's state security service is tasked with fighting terrorism and organized crime. The prosecutor's office conducts its operative, administrative and investigative responsibilities in an effective and independent manner. Even though local policing agencies lack the necessary investigative and digital forensic skills and capacities, especially outside the main cities, police corruption lower down the hierarchy is not a major issue due to anti-corruption reforms. Civilian authorities have effective control over the security forces and over internal mechanisms to investigate corruption. However, as with the judicial system, law enforcement bodies suffer from political interference and therefore lack independence. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies (including special units) are often understaffed and lack the ability and experience to effectively respond to organized crime threats. Georgia's vulnerability to trafficking and illicit flows is further exacerbated by territorial disputes, poor bilateral relations with Russia, and lax border governance with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Georgia continues to improve its anti-money laundering (AML) framework, through the implementation of an anti-money laundering action plan and anti-money laundering training. In addition to traditional money laundering techniques, such as using gambling businesses, cryptocurrency has become widespread in this market. No investigations into crypto-based money laundering cases have been initiated, however, and despite training efforts, the effectiveness of the financial intelligence unit continues to be undermined by technical deficiencies, poor implementation and limited resources. Reform measures have taken aim at organised crime and corruption, but despite efforts to curb illicit financial flows, concerns have been raised over the provision

of services by Georgian banks and other businesses to Russian civilians and entities to avoid sanctions.

The legal framework and government policies are generally supportive of private business. Nevertheless, the protection of property rights remains a weak point, and deficiencies in judicial independence and government transparency hinder economic freedom. Loan sharks have proliferated in the country due to the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Georgian government continues to maintain its victim and witness support mechanisms through government-run anti-trafficking shelters that offer medical, psychological and legal assistance. There are also government-backed NGOs that offer support to human trafficking victims during the investigation process by providing initial psychological care, medical assistance, legal support and temporary shelter. There is a state fund dedicated to trafficking victims, which provides protection, assistance and rehabilitation support. However, there have been concerns in recent years over the circumvention of witnesses' rights by law enforcement.

The government has maintained prevention efforts pertaining to certain criminal markets, including drug and human trafficking. For example, Georgia has been coordinating with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) to launch a drug-use survey specifically for the country, which will highlight trends and help inform prevention attempts, as well as improve treatment and guide future drug policies. Overall, Georgia's drug policies create a favourable legal environment for treatment, rehabilitation and drug reduction, but there still seems to be a lack of coherent drug-use prevention mechanisms. With regards to human trafficking, the government has taken preventative measures by disseminating leaflets and other information to raise awareness, and by funding anti-trafficking hotlines. Issues still remain due to a lack of transparency and insufficient resources and training.

Civil society organizations have been involved in several issues in Georgia, including human trafficking. While some of these organizations operate freely and are part of policy discussion, others report external pressures and defamation campaigns against them. Concerns over press freedom have been raised after recent imprisonments and physical attacks against journalists who were critical of the ruling party.

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.