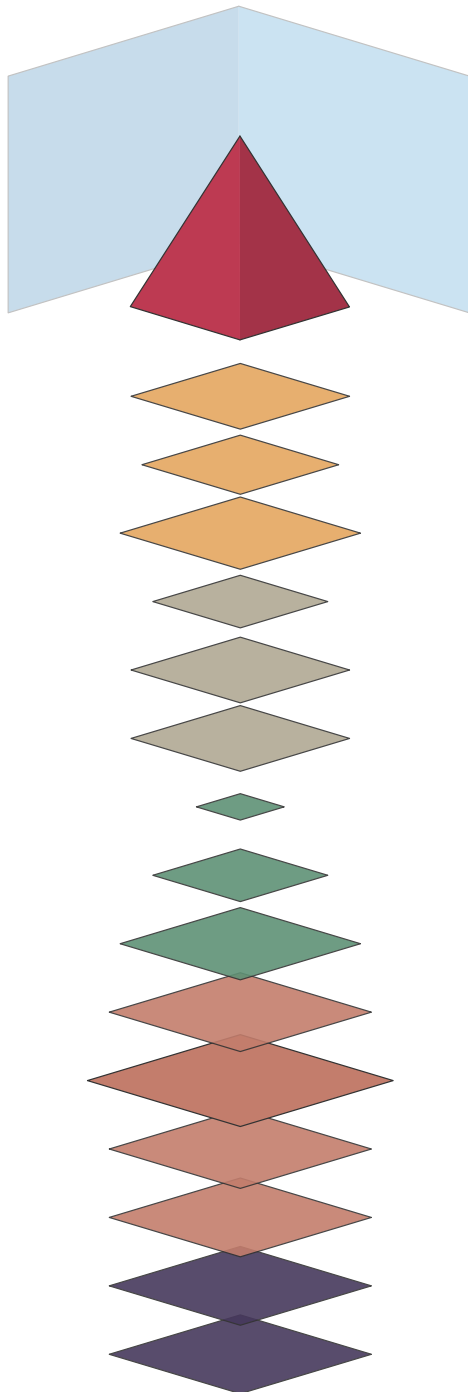


IRELAND



5.08 CRIMINALITY SCORE

91st of 193 countries
17th of 44 European countries
4th of 11 Western European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **5.17**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.50
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	5.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	5.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	5.00
FLORA CRIMES	2.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.50
HEROIN TRADE	6.00
COCAINE TRADE	7.00
CANNABIS TRADE	6.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.00



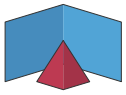
CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.00**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	6.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	4.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	2.00

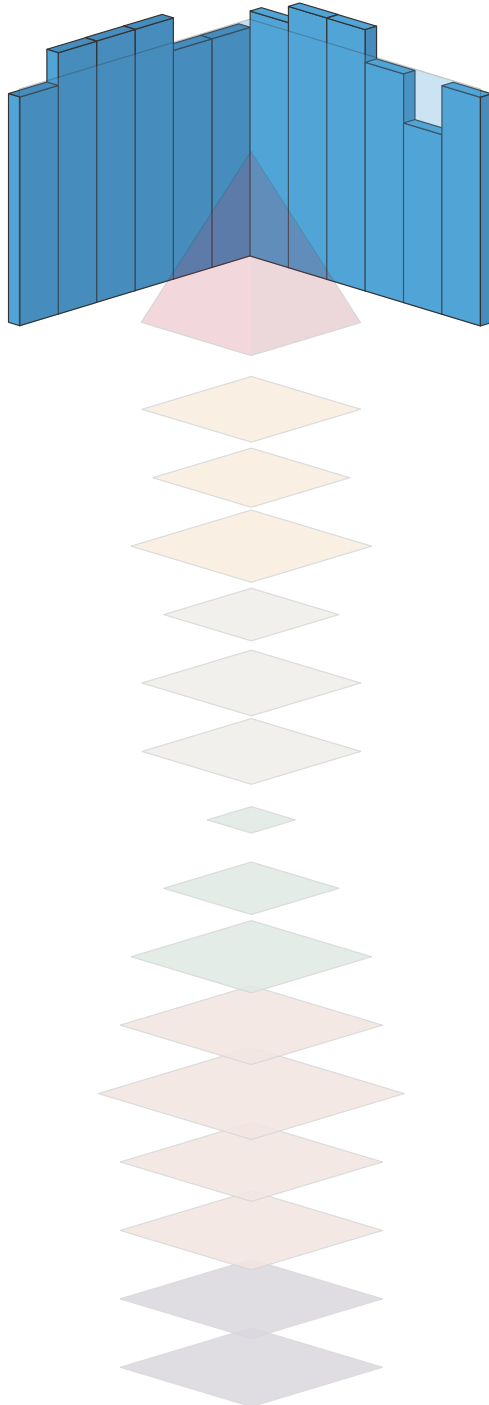


7.33 RESILIENCE SCORE





IRELAND



7.33

RESILIENCE SCORE

21st of 193 countries

15th of 44 European countries

8th of 11 Western European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	8.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	8.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	8.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	7.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	8.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	8.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.00
PREVENTION	5.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.00



5.08

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.17



CRIMINAL ACTORS 5.00



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Ireland serves as both a transit and destination point for human trafficking. Flows involve a diverse group of countries of origin, from Africa, Asia and other European countries, but a prominence of victims from West Africa, Nigeria in particular, has been recorded in recent years. Victims are often controlled through debt bondage and are exploited for both sexual and labour purposes. Sex work is a prevalent form of sexual exploitation, with traffickers advertising their services on online marketplaces. Both foreign and domestic victims are affected, with those working in the fishing industry, agriculture, construction, domestic service, food production, garment manufacturing, and hospitality sectors being particularly vulnerable. Human trafficking is primarily conducted by foreign criminal networks, often with the help of corrupt employees at transit hubs such as ports or airports. Ireland has also seen an increase in human smuggling, with groups from Albania and Georgia smuggling people into the country for eventual transport to the UK. This increase is due to the post-Brexit tightening of free travel between the EU and the UK, as well as the exploitation of the Irish/UK common travel area by these groups. To enter Ireland from Northern Ireland, some individuals use forged Italian and Slovakian identity documents, as well as forged British passports.

Extortion and protection racketeering are major concerns in Irish drug markets. Recent reports of direct and systemic cases involving such crimes, however, are limited in the country. Nevertheless, there are sporadic reports involving extortion activities carried out by mafia-style groups and paramilitary groups that have a history of involvement in the extortion of legitimate businesses in the country. The impact of these practices on the daily operations of such businesses might be significant.

TRADE

Firearms are heavily regulated in Ireland due to the country's history of paramilitaries and the tradition of unarmed police. However, organized crime gangs still manage to smuggle firearms into and out of Ireland. There is a strong link between drug trafficking and firearms, with some drug dealers even renting firearms for intimidation purposes. Moreover, firearms are sometimes imported with drug consignments. Firearms for the Irish criminal market are primarily sourced from East European organized crime groups, with Moldova being a significant source.

The trade of counterfeit goods is also prevalent in Ireland, with textile goods and pharmaceutical products being the most commonly counterfeited items. In addition, the illicit trade of excise goods, such as cigarettes, loose tobacco, and alcohol, has become increasingly common in Ireland due to continually rising taxes. Irish citizens residing in China have acted as brokers between manufacturers and wholesalers of counterfeit cigarettes and enterprises smuggling them into Ireland. Paramilitary groups in the country have also been identified as involved in tobacco and alcohol smuggling.

ENVIRONMENT

Although Ireland is not considered a significant market for illegal timber, it is still a destination for such products. The illegal timber trade appears to be carried out individually rather than being linked to organized crime. Conversely, fauna crimes are increasingly becoming a significant problem in Ireland, especially in the form of persecution of certain birds such as falcons, to protect commercial pheasant stocks and racing pigeons. The illegal poaching of other bird species as well as otters is also prevalent in the country, especially for their fur. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is also a serious problem in Ireland, with the wild Atlantic salmon being the most poached fish in the country. The authorities have warned that the country is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, and freshwater fish are particularly at risk from IUU fishing activity.

Fuel laundering, where the fuel is adulterated to be sold on the black market, is both a criminal and an environmental issue in Ireland and has been a source of financing for illegal paramilitary organizations. Diesel laundering creates sludge, which local authorities are left to dispose of, resulting in significant costs. Due to the rising fuel costs resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the illicit fuel trade has become much more lucrative. There are concerns that criminals will exploit this opportunity if fuel prices remain high. Additionally, there have been reports of gold smuggling involving Irish nationals.

DRUGS

Ireland has the second highest number of opiate users in the EU, with heroin being the drug of choice for many. Half of the estimated users are males over 35 years old, and most are concentrated in Dublin's poorer areas. The heroin market in Ireland is linked to the market for synthetic drugs, such as benzodiazepines, with some users switching between drugs or using more than one. Cocaine use in Ireland has increased in recent years, and the country has become a transit point or destination for the drug, with significant seizures suggesting that Ireland is rapidly becoming part

of the South American-European cocaine pipeline and a supply route to the UK, as well as supplying the internal markets north and south. The distribution networks are financed and enabled by transnational organized crime groups. In recent years, the number of young people treated for cocaine use more than doubled, highlighting that the cocaine problem worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the increased availability and consumption of crack cocaine have led to an increase in street violence in Dublin.

Cannabis remains the most commonly used illegal drug in the country. While there has been a shift towards homegrown cannabis, significant amounts of cannabis products are still seized by authorities, including cannabis oil, plants, and processed forms. The cannabis market is less profitable than other drugs and has a wider range of actors, including home growers. There is a growing link between this market and human trafficking, as labour exploitation has become prevalent in the illicit cannabis production sector. Despite the market being less violent than other drug markets, it still poses societal impacts, and efforts are being made to address these issues.

The use of MDMA (Ecstasy), LSD, and amphetamines has also increased in Ireland. The use of synthetic cathinones, a new class of synthetic drugs, has been a concern, and recent seizures by Revenue and Customs of a cathinone class synthetic have been reported by Irish news media. In addition to synthetics, synthetic cannabinoids have been found in hash/weed, low THC products, vape/liquid, and edible sweets, which have been linked to poisonings and deaths.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybercrime is a significant issue in Ireland, with over half of these crimes being committed by organized groups. Companies experience cyber-dependent crimes at more than double the reported global average, which may be attributed to the country's status as a hub for big tech companies. In addition to private sector actors, essential public infrastructure has been increasingly targeted in recent years by cybercriminals. Perpetrators carrying out such illegal activities range from individuals acting alone or in small groups engaged in nuisance type attacks to state-sponsored groups carrying out advanced and persistent attacks targeting critical infrastructure.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

The prevalence of cyber-enabled financial crimes in Ireland has been increasing. In fact, over half of Irish companies reported being affected by these crimes in recent years. Local criminal groups with links to foreign actors have been identified as the perpetrators of business email compromise crimes and invoice redirection fraud. Victims are often lured in through methods commonly used in romantic fraud and

then exploited through fictitious investment schemes or money mule operations. Authorities have also reported a significant increase in phishing efforts, which may be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the distribution of stimulus packages in Ireland. These fraudulent activities not only affect businesses but also individuals.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

In Ireland, several mafia-style groups engage in various illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, extortion, arms trafficking, wildlife crimes, and money laundering. These groups have identifiable leaders, and some have international links. The Kinahan gang, for instance, is the biggest wholesaler of drugs to Irish criminal gangs and is involved in importation and distribution in Ireland, the UK, and mainland Europe. Although gang-related murders have decreased in recent years, feuds over territory among these groups occur and sometimes result in assassinations. Paramilitary groups operating in Ireland have also been involved in criminal activities, including smuggling of drugs, oil, alcohol, and high-value goods, counterfeiting, and bank robbery. Some have engaged in vigilantism against drug dealers and petty criminals, while others seek to control communities and markets. The Irish forces' efforts have resulted in the dismantling of established national and transnational organizations, with many key players leaving Ireland and directing operations from abroad.

Foreign actors, including gangs from Eastern Europe, have significant involvement in the criminal markets in the Republic of Ireland. They work closely with local criminal actors to facilitate human trafficking and human smuggling. Moreover, various diasporas, including Asian and Eastern European, are involved in the drug markets. Vietnamese criminal groups have a long history of involvement in cannabis cultivation in Ireland. Regarding smaller local criminal networks, there seem to be several drug feuds between rival groups in multiple cities, with an increase in violence between them. Some evidence suggests their involvement in the wildlife market, especially rhino horn smuggling, and non-renewables like marked fuel.

While there is currently no evidence of collusion between the state and criminal markets, individuals linked to a main political party in Ireland are widely seen as moving into organized crime during and after the peace process. The involvement of private sector actors in criminal activities is rare in the country with only occasional and isolated incidents occurring historically.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Irish government has taken a strong stance against organized crime, with law enforcement institutions proactively investigating and prosecuting top-tier organized crime groups involved in murder, drug trafficking, and money laundering. Political parties in the country prioritize tackling gangland shootings, but local communities in affected areas fear for their safety and feel unprotected by the state, especially in financially constrained rural communities. To prevent, investigate, and prosecute corruption, the Irish government has established several institutions. However, the newly established anti-corruption unit has few staff members, and its prevention mandate is unclear. Public perceptions of corruption remain high, influenced by past and recent cases of government corruption, such as in the provision of personal protective equipment during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ireland is committed to multilateralism and has signed and ratified several organized crime treaties. The country cooperates with Interpol and Europol to combat human trafficking and allows extradition for investigation if the charged offence is punishable by at least a year's imprisonment. The Irish state has implemented a strong legislative package to tackle organized crime. However, definitional issues surrounding organized crime have led to criminals being prosecuted for specific crimes rather than for organized crime itself. Still, the legislation has proven to be constitutional, strong, and viable.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Ireland's Special Criminal Court, which presides over organized crime cases, lacks transparency in the appointment process and has no formal code of conduct for judges. Currently, the new justice plan seeks to improve processing and efficiency in managing mutual assistance requests, European arrest warrants, and extradition. In addition, the prison system is facing a significant surge in the prison population, resulting in overcrowding. Despite education and rehabilitation programmes in Irish prisons, the continual sentencing of men and women to short-term custody is undermining the Irish Prison Service's ability to meet fundamental standards. Ireland has specialist law enforcement units that focus on organized crime-related issues. Public trust in the police remains high despite some recent high-profile scandals. To address concerns of organized crime infiltration, anti-corruption measures were introduced, including a hotline to report corruption. Overall, the policing ability to effectively respond to organized crime is effective. However, there is a lack of a coordinated national approach based on government

awareness and analysis to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement to remain ahead of organized crime activities.

Ireland faces challenges in policing its long coastline and border with the UK, which is used by international criminal groups. Illicit trade mainly occurs through ports and airports, with historical and ongoing smuggling problems along the porous border with Northern Ireland. The smuggling threat has increased with Brexit and the debate surrounding a hard border. Additionally, Ireland's status as a destination country for human smuggling/trafficking has expanded to making it a transit country post-Brexit, with human smugglers/traffickers exploiting the free border crossing between the Republic and Northern Ireland.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Ireland's policy in preventing money laundering is fairly robust and involves a risk-based approach that establishes different levels of due diligence. Although Ireland has upgraded its anti-money laundering framework by focusing on gatekeepers, experts fear that the cases of money laundering that have been discovered may represent only the tip of the iceberg. The use of crypto-assets for money laundering is also an increasing concern for Ireland. Nevertheless, Ireland is overall considered a low-risk country for financial crimes.

In terms of its economic environment, Ireland is considered a wealthy country with low taxes, making it a supportive regime for start-up businesses. However, companies express insufficient confidence in the efficiency of the legal framework concerning the settling of disputes and challenging of regulations. Yet, the overall economic environment is considered effective in mitigating organized crime.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In Ireland, victims of human trafficking can access a range of services provided by the government and NGOs, including health services, legal aid, and access to education. However, few identified trafficking victims enter the National Referral Mechanism for assistance. NGOs often must use the legal system to protect victims' rights, but access to legal services is limited. While the government provides funding to NGOs for victim assistance, the services available from the government's Legal Aid Board are inadequate for victims' needs. The witness support programme operates in secrecy to avoid interference that could jeopardize the witnesses' security.

The Irish government has implemented multiple units and strategies to prevent various crimes, including human trafficking, financial crime, organized crime, and drug and

alcohol use. Regarding drug use, Ireland takes a health-led, person-centred, whole-of-government approach that aims to promote health and well-being and minimize the harms caused by addiction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, opioid users were provided with individual accommodation for shielding, which facilitated access to medication and other forms of therapy. Moreover, the Gardai community policing strategy aims to prevent crime by focusing on problem-solving, law enforcement, and building trust within the community. However, lack of funding has hindered the full implementation of this strategy.

Ireland has a free press with increased media pluralism. Nevertheless, defamation reform delays continue to restrict press freedom. While some Irish journalists conducting investigative journalism on organized crime have reported threats to their safety, no significant cases have been reported in recent years. Although the fight against organized crime in Ireland is primarily the responsibility of the state, civil society actors and NGOs are actively involved in national efforts.

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