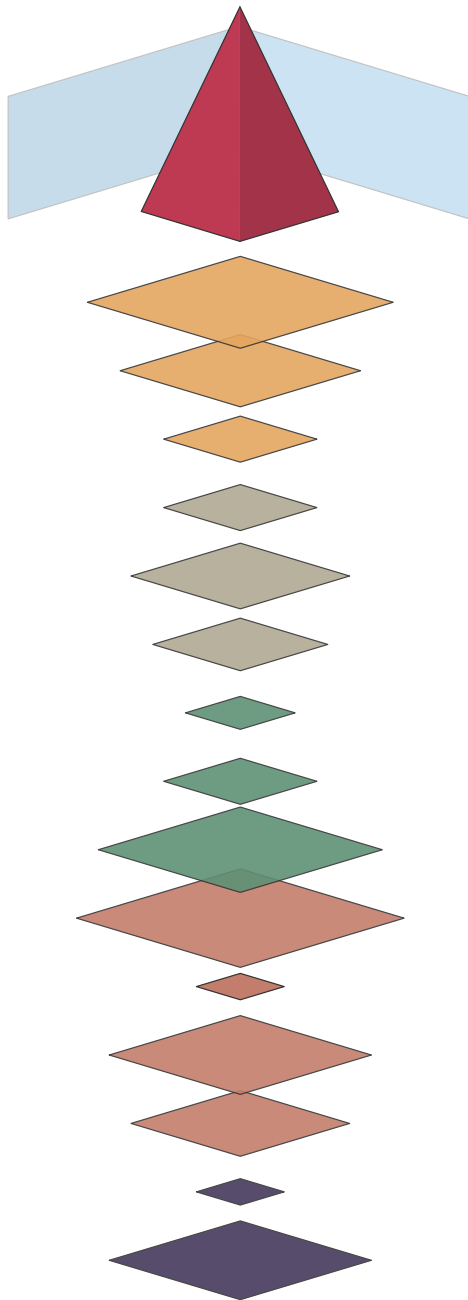


 **KYRGYZSTAN**



 **5.32**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

81st of 193 countries
24th of 46 Asian countries
2nd of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.63**

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING | 7.00 |
| HUMAN SMUGGLING | 5.50 |
| EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING | 3.50 |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING | 3.50 |
| TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS | 5.00 |
| ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS | 4.00 |
| FLORA CRIMES | 2.50 |
| FAUNA CRIMES | 3.50 |
| NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES | 6.50 |
| HEROIN TRADE | 7.50 |
| COCAINE TRADE | 2.00 |
| CANNABIS TRADE | 6.00 |
| SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE | 5.00 |
| CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES | 2.00 |
| FINANCIAL CRIMES | 6.00 |

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **6.00**

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS | 6.50 |
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS | 6.00 |
| STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS | 8.50 |
| FOREIGN ACTORS | 4.50 |
| PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS | 4.50 |

 **3.83**
RESILIENCE SCORE



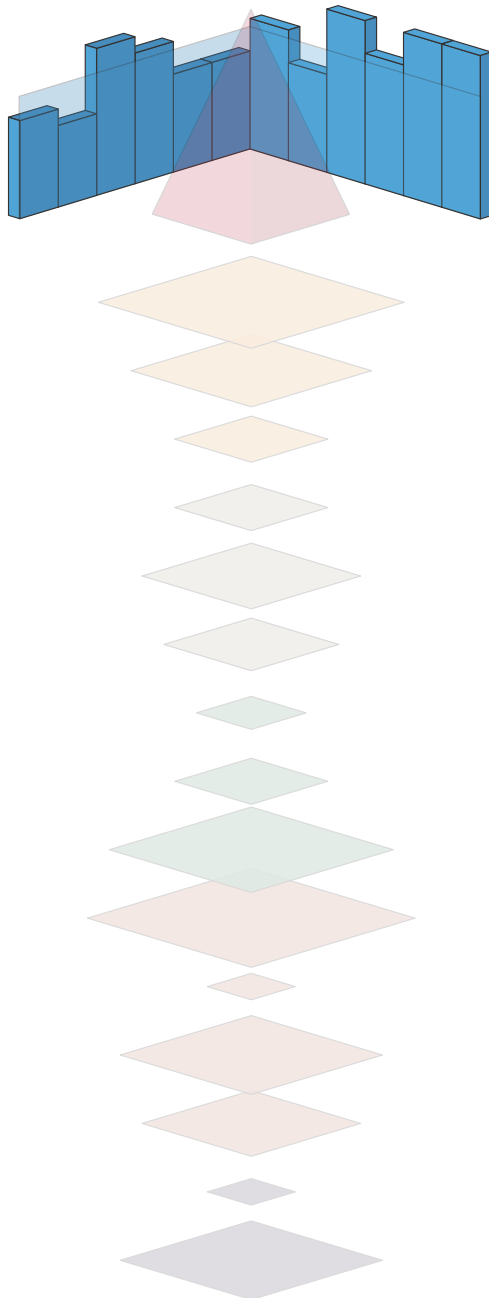
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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.

 **KYRGYZSTAN**





 **3.83**
RESILIENCE SCORE

141st of 193 countries
31st of 46 Asian countries
6th of 8 Central Asian and Caucasian countries

| | |
|---|-------------|
| <u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u> | 3.00 |
| <u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u> | 2.50 |
| <u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u> | 4.50 |
| <u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u> | 4.00 |
| <u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u> | 3.00 |
| <u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u> | 3.00 |
| <u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u> | 4.00 |
| <u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u> | 3.00 |
| <u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u> | 5.00 |
| <u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u> | 4.00 |
| <u>PREVENTION</u> | 5.00 |
| <u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u> | 5.00 |

 **5.32**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

| | |
|---|-------------|
|  CRIMINAL MARKETS | 4.63 |
|  CRIMINAL ACTORS | 6.00 |



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking remains a considerable issue in Kyrgyzstan, which is a source, transit and destination country for this criminal market. High levels of poverty, alongside other gender practices, continue to exacerbate the local population's vulnerability to exploitation, both locally and abroad. Women, men and children are forced into labour domestically or in neighbouring countries – or elsewhere in Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe – in sectors like agriculture, construction, textile, domestic service and childcare. Male labour migrants are the most vulnerable to trafficking. Russian policies towards migrant workers and the threat of deportation have also made Kyrgyz migrants vulnerable to exploitation in forced labour and sex trafficking. In addition, children in Kyrgyzstan continued to be forced to participate in the drug trade, both locally and in neighbouring countries, as well as to engage in domestic servitude and begging. Kyrgyz women and girls are victims of sexual exploitation domestically and throughout the Middle East and Asia. There has been an increase in human trafficking incidents that target migrants from across Central Asia who transit through Kyrgyzstan towards other countries in the region, the Middle East and Europe. Growing numbers of bride kidnappings have also raised concerns in recent years – such practices may subsequently lead to sex trafficking and forced labour. Given that Kyrgyzstan is a transit, source and destination country for human trafficking, criminal actors involved in the domestic illicit market are linked to transnational criminal networks. Corrupt government officials facilitate Kyrgyzstan's human trafficking market, enabling traffickers to operate with relative impunity.

Human smuggling is a consolidated criminal market with domestic and foreign actors operating together. In this respect, Kyrgyzstan is considered a source, transit and (to a limited extent) destination country for human smuggling. In a bid to improve their living conditions, Kyrgyz nationals irregularly travel to other Central Asian, European and Middle Eastern countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. Despite the visa-free regime with Kazakhstan and Russia, migrants seek out human smugglers to protect themselves from exploitation. Also, irregular migrants originating from South and South East Asia use the country as a transit point with an aim to reach Russia and Western Europe, although the scale of this flow is negligible. Despite limited official data pertaining to extortion and protection racketeering in Kyrgyzstan, there has been a reported increase in the volume of incidents involving racketeering of small businesses and street shops. There are also reports suggesting that criminal networks have assumed the role

of mediator in disputes between business owners in areas controlled by the networks.

TRADE

Even though the arms trafficking market in Kyrgyzstan remains negligible, there has been a surge in the illegal circulation of firearms within the country, evidenced by the increased number of confiscations carried out by law enforcement. Rising rates of possession of illegal firearms within the population is linked to the illegal trade through the country and within its borders, and the regulatory loopholes pertaining to the registration of firearms. There are reports suggesting that Kyrgyzstan is a transit country for arms trafficked from Iran towards Afghanistan, demonstrating the transnational nature of this market. A further expansion in the arms trafficking market is expected following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, as Kyrgyzstan is on one of the major arms trafficking routes from Afghanistan into Russia.

Even though Kyrgyzstan is not considered to be a major producer of counterfeit goods, illegal trade in such goods has increased over recent years and the country seems to have become an intermediary between China and Russia. The Dordoi Bazaar, located in Bishkek, is the largest counterfeit market in Central Asia and a hub for the re-exportation of Chinese counterfeit goods to Europe and Russia. The country is also considered to be a transit point for the smuggling of tobacco products and alcohol within the Eurasian Economic Union; most of the products enter from Middle Eastern and European countries, and other Central Asian countries like Tajikistan.

ENVIRONMENT

The country's rare and protected trees and flowers are threatened by livestock grazing, traditional harvesting, firewood collection, construction and tree felling. Even though poor flora management enables criminal activity to occur, the market remains limited and there is scant evidence that organized criminal groups are involved. However, there is evidence of illegal poaching and wildlife trafficking. There is a steady flow of wildlife products through Kyrgyzstan, especially from China, Afghanistan and Pakistan; Kyrgyzstan also serves as a source country for illicitly traded animals including Marco Polo sheep (a subspecies of the argali sheep) and saker falcons. Trophy hunting is prevalent in Kyrgyzstan: hunted species include CITES-listed argali, brown bear and wolf. This market is assumed to be driven by external demand since wildlife trafficking is mainly transboundary, involving foreign criminal groups collaborating with local actors.

Since Kyrgyzstan has substantial deposits of gold, coal and rare-earth metals, among others, illegal mining is widespread. Coal is illegally mined in the south of the country, from where it is shipped to Uzbekistan. Illegal gold mining has been increasing due to high rates of unemployment in the country, specifically in the Naryn region. Due to the country's geographical location, it is also a transit point for illegal minerals trafficked from Afghanistan and Tajikistan, as well as oil smuggled from Kazakhstan en route to Tajikistan.

DRUGS

Kyrgyzstan plays a notable role as a transit country on the Northern Route for heroin trafficking – the drugs originate in Afghanistan and are destined for Russia and European countries. Heroin trafficking is facilitated by weak border controls and rampant corruption involving bureaucrats and law enforcement officials. Due to the transnational nature of the market, heroin trafficking is mainly controlled by foreign actors from transnational organized crime groups. The growth of the market in Kyrgyzstan has been attributed to the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, a group which is known to be heavily involved in the market. An uptick in heroin seizures during the same period confirms the existence of a steady drug trafficking network in the country. Despite this, however, official statistics show that domestic consumption continues to decrease, although the accuracy of these statistics is questionable. The cocaine trade remains insignificant in the country, mainly as a result of low income levels and an abundance of other types of drugs that are substantially less expensive.

Regarding the cannabis trade, Kyrgyzstan is a source and transit country. There has been a significant surge in the illegal cultivation and trafficking of cannabis out of financial need, especially in the districts of Talas Oblast and other rural areas. Cannabis trade in the country is controlled by foreign actors who are members of transnational criminal groups, while local actors are involved in small-scale production. As a transit country for cannabis, the southern borders are prone to the trafficking of hashish from Afghanistan and Pakistan, which travels through Tajikistan.

Kyrgyzstan is mainly a transit country for the trade of synthetic drugs that originate in countries like the Netherlands, Iran, Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan and China. However, recent dismantling of clandestine laboratories producing synthetic drugs suggests a rising local production of such substances too, using precursors imported from China. Kyrgyzstan has not been immune to the rapid spread of synthetic drugs in the world, evidenced by increased seizures of synthetic drugs by Kyrgyz law enforcement during the last few years. Despite the growing production and transit of synthetic drugs, local demand for these substances remains low: amphetamine use in Kyrgyzstan is lower than use of opioids, cannabis and hallucinogens, among others.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cyber-dependent crimes are relatively common in Kyrgyzstan. Attacks range from ransomware to cyber-espionage, targeting individuals, corporations and even the country's national security. Kyrgyzstan, among other Central Asian countries, has also become an attractive location for crypto-hackers who use software to take control of vulnerable computers and use their resources to mine cryptocurrency without permission. Despite all this, the effect of cybercrimes is modest, mostly due to a relatively low level of internet coverage in the country.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes – in the form of phone call frauds, phishing and charity scams – are widespread in the country and cause substantial losses to citizens. Criminal networks are using more and more cyber-enabled methods, the most common of which is phishing. Official statistics also indicate an increase in the number of Ponzi schemes targeting financially illiterate citizens in need of quick money. Tax evasion – with the collaboration of corrupt state officials – is also commonplace in Kyrgyzstan.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

State-embedded actors are heavily involved in organized crime and criminal organizations, and the apparatus of the state is intricately intertwined with both. State officials not only facilitate but also engage in criminal markets, especially in the drug trade. There have been major arrests of high-level politicians in recent years, with the aim of eradicating corruption within the state, though the underlying goal of these arrests has been questioned by observers.

Organized crime in Kyrgyzstan is at a stage of fluid development. It mainly consists of networks of small groups engaged in localized criminal activities, servicing specific markets. There are also large organized criminal groups operating in the country. Mafia-style groups continue to exert influence on local populations and prisons, and operate in multiple criminal markets. Members of these groups have also infiltrated the Kyrgyz parliament and important public authorities. There are reports suggesting an increase in the activities of some mafia-style groups, specifically those involved in heroin trafficking.

Numerous loose criminal networks and dozens of criminal gangs also operate in Kyrgyzstan – they primarily engage in the smuggling of illicit goods. While gangs in the southern region are mainly involved in drug trafficking, criminal networks in the north concentrate on racketeering and embezzlement of state assets, as well as the illicit smuggling of Chinese goods. Similar to mafia-style groups, criminal networks in Kyrgyzstan also have influence over the democratic process, although to a lesser extent.

There is a strong collaboration between local criminal networks and foreign actors, especially in human trafficking, drug trafficking and non-renewable resource crimes, due to the transnational nature of these markets. Some local criminal groups also organize on the basis of foreign ethnicity: Uzbek, Tajik, Azeri, Chechen and Russian, for

example. The drug trade is mostly controlled by foreign criminal actors. An increase in the influence of Chinese criminal actors in Kyrgyzstan has been noted. Private-sector actors are mainly involved in financial crimes like embezzlement, tax evasion and corruption.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Kyrgyzstan's governmental system changed in the aftermath of presidential elections that were held with a referendum. Major amendments to the Kyrgyz constitution followed. Through these constitutional amendments, the president and high-ranking officials were granted extensive executive authority, which has given them immense political power. Fighting organized crime was one of the main promises made by the political leadership, and even though the promise has been kept to a certain extent following arrests of various members of organized criminal groups, most perpetrators were released or fined, placing the legitimacy of the government's actions under question. Since the elections (and following the concentration of power within the executive branch), reports indicate that the efficiency of the state has decreased in general – including the fight against corruption and organized crime. The Kyrgyz government's anti-drug trafficking policies have also been hampered by ongoing political changes and continued competition among political groups and law enforcement agencies. Overall, the Kyrgyz government remains vulnerable to criminal influence; the political system has been penetrated by organized crime; and corruption is pervasive in the executive branch. And even though the scope of anti-corruption actions continues to grow, such actions remain ineffective. Likewise, the work of organizations tasked with combating corruption is limited due to political influence.

Kyrgyzstan has ratified most relevant conventions and treaties related to organized crime and has several extradition treaties in place. The Kyrgyz government participates in international and regional cooperation efforts against various forms of organized crime, which are also reflected under Kyrgyzstan's legislative framework. However, laws are ineffective and their implementation is lacking. Due to frequent political turmoil, Kyrgyzstan policy development has stalled and remains a major weakness.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The Kyrgyz judicial system lacks a specialized unit focusing on issues related to organized crime. Additionally, the country's judicial system is deemed to be one of the most corrupt state bodies in the country, with widespread corruption and bribery among judges. The right to fair trial remains severely compromised, and coerced confessions through torture are commonplace, as are other practices like arbitrary convictions and withholding the right to an attorney. There are reports showing evidence of intimidation, threats and violence against defendants, attorneys and judges. The Kyrgyz judiciary is heavily influenced by organized crime. Many leaders of organized criminal groups have been released in recent years and politicians have prevented convictions against others. Concerns surrounding the independence of the judiciary have grown following the constitutional amendments made after the elections, which granting extensive executive authority to the presidential office, including the power to appoint almost all judges. Judgements made in recent political cases have largely involved fines instead of incarceration, which is thought to be a result of the subservience of the judiciary to the executive branch. Nevertheless, some efforts have been made to make the justice system more responsive, accountable and transparent. The most important needs have been identified and systems have been digitized. Conditions in prisons and detention centres in Kyrgyzstan are harsh, with overcrowding, limited access to food and medicine, and serious allegations of mistreatment. Organized criminal groups wield significant control in these spaces.

Despite the presence of law enforcement units dedicated to fighting various forms of organized crime, performance has been poor due to high levels of corruption and political influence, a constant lack of resources and professionalism, and nepotism. Police officers reportedly engage in arbitrary arrests, politically motivated arrests, and they extort people by threatening prosecution. There are similar reports suggesting serious human rights issues including the use of torture by law enforcement officers and security services. As a result, there is limited public trust in law enforcement bodies. However, public trust has been bolstered somewhat by community-based policing systems, which enhance

cooperation between police, local government, civil society and the media.

Due to its mountainous topography and rough landscape, Kyrgyzstan's borders are challenging to monitor, rendering the country vulnerable to organized crime. A lack of infrastructure also prevents the use of vehicles in border regions, making the borders highly porous, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan where high rates of organized crime occur. The Kyrgyz-Uzbek and Kyrgyz-Tajik borders, in particular, are difficult to monitor due to widespread criminality and long-standing ethnic tensions in those areas. Border-control personnel are poorly paid and under-resourced, making them vulnerable to corruption. Kyrgyzstan's territorial integrity has been weakened by a flare up of the border conflict with Tajikistan – many clashes have occurred in recent years. In addition, cyber-espionage attacks threaten Kyrgyzstan's national security.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Kyrgyzstan has an extremely high risk of money laundering and terrorist financing, exacerbated by its proximity to terrorist groups in neighbouring countries and its position along major drug-trafficking routes. The country's shadow economy is largely cash-based, making it more difficult for authorities to identify instances of money laundering and tax evasion. The existence of anti-money laundering legislation (AML) and a dedicated financial intelligence unit resulted in Kyrgyzstan being identified as not having any strategic AML deficiencies, but there are still major shortcomings in identifying risks and coordinating intelligence-sharing among law enforcement units.

Investment legislation is liberal, without significant limits and prohibitions for national and foreign investors willing to do business, even though competition in the market has been weak due to the instability of institutions, inadequate rules and omnipresent corruption. This liberal approach has been changing following the 2021 presidential elections: regulatory legislation has been introduced banning foreign companies from future large mining projects in the country. Another major legislative reform is the implementation of a tax code aimed at bolstering the stability of the tax system, creating equal conditions for doing business, and reducing the shadow economy.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Despite measures taken by the government to support victims of organized crime, Kyrgyzstan continues to lack sufficient victim protection and treatment services. The limited services available were decreased even further in recent years due to a lack of funding exacerbated by the post-COVID-19 financial crisis. Gaps in identification procedures and the lack of a national referral mechanism impede the identification and assistance of victims. Despite cooperation between the country's competent authorities

with international organizations and NGOs to identify and assist trafficking victims, major shortcomings persist. For example, protective orders requested by victims of bride kidnappings are not enforced. Reports also suggest threats, extortion and even rape of child sex-trafficking victims by law enforcement officials. There is a legal framework pertaining to proper treatment of witnesses, but the implementation of this framework is rare. Government action related to victims of drug trafficking is better: the government continues to promote programmes aimed at reducing the harm caused by drugs, as well as victim-support measures and drug-awareness campaigns aimed at the youth. These programmes are supported by international funding and partnerships.

The government carries out prevention efforts related to organized crime, mostly through collaboration with civil society organizations. Overall, Kyrgyzstan's approach to crime prevention revolves around awareness campaigns and training about the legal consequences of crime, especially in at-risk communities. Most of these prevention programmes have been significantly reduced due to a lack of funding.

Civil society organizations are active and effective, although they tend to focus on issues related to human and civil rights rather than organized crime. Although numerous NGOs work to combat high-level corruption and engage in legislative reform campaigns, civil society is hindered by inter-ethnic conflict and legal restrictions on the freedom of assembly and association – all of which have been exacerbated under the current regime. Although freedom of speech and freedom of the press are both provided for in law, these rights are severely restricted in practice. Self-censorship due to political pressure is common. Some journalists have been intimidated and harassed by political figures and subjected to arbitrary raids, arrests and cyber-attacks. Moreover, there are growing concerns about an attack on freedom of expression and association resulting from regulatory changes in recent years. These changes include the introduction of a false information law and a financial reporting scheme that has potential to be used as a tool for censorship and interference. Kyrgyzstan's media landscape also lacks diversity: Uzbek- and Russian-language media outlets are limited.

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