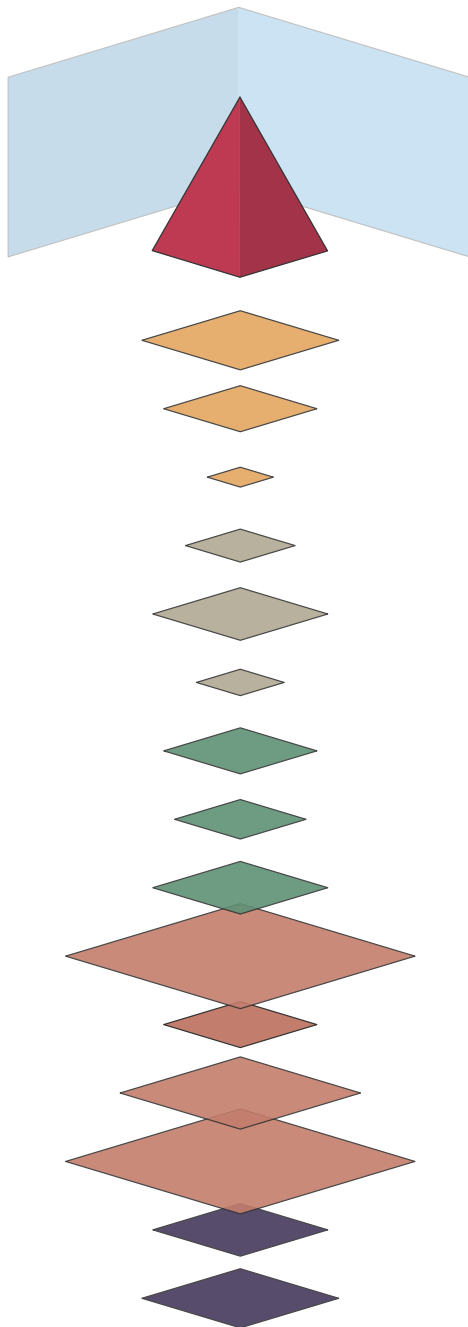




# MAURITIUS



## 4.37

### CRIMINALITY SCORE

138<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

45<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries

8<sup>th</sup> of 13 Southern African countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS

**4.13**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING **4.50**

HUMAN SMUGGLING **3.50**

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING **1.50**

ARMS TRAFFICKING **2.50**

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS **4.00**

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS **2.00**

FLORA CRIMES **3.50**

FAUNA CRIMES **3.00**

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES **4.00**

HEROIN TRADE **8.00**

COCAINE TRADE **3.50**

CANNABIS TRADE **5.50**

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE **8.00**

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES **4.00**

FINANCIAL CRIMES **4.50**



### CRIMINAL ACTORS

**4.60**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS **2.00**

CRIMINAL NETWORKS **6.50**

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS **6.00**

FOREIGN ACTORS **4.50**

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS **4.00**



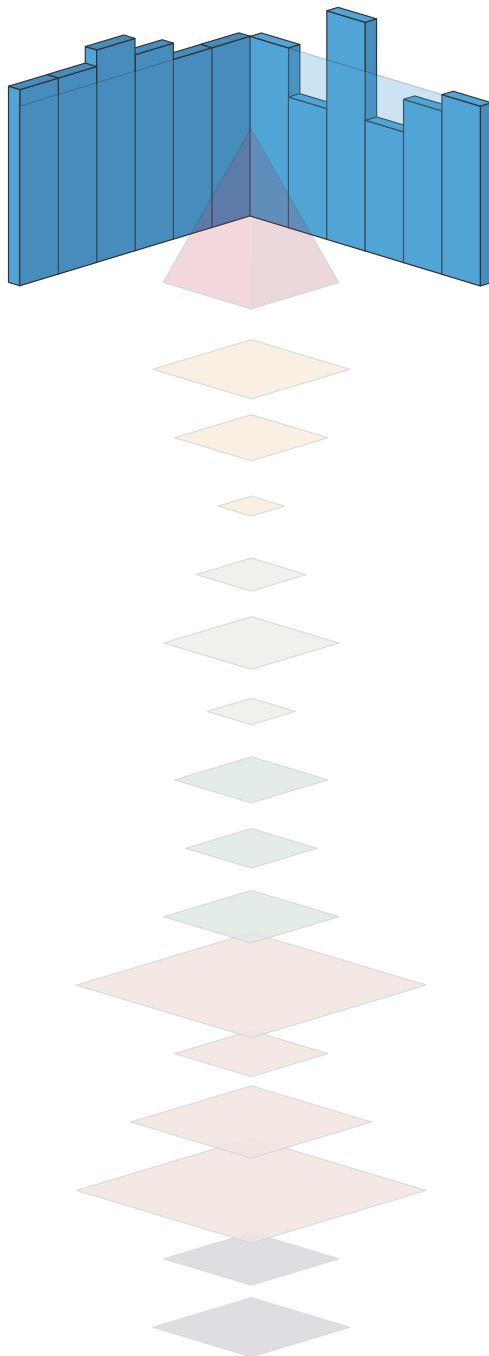
## 5.54

### RESILIENCE SCORE





# MAURITIUS



## 5.54

### RESILIENCE SCORE

56<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries

5<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries

2<sup>nd</sup> of 13 Southern African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	7.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.00
PREVENTION	5.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.50



## 4.37

### CRIMINALITY SCORE



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 4.13



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 4.60



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a persistent issue in Mauritius, with the country serving as a source, transit point and destination for trafficked persons. Victims of trafficking are often wrongly equated with criminals and there are still cases of victims being criminalized. Despite Mauritian law prohibiting forced labour, employers and traffickers sometimes withhold peoples' passports to keep them in conditions of modern slavery. Although trafficking is highly organized, the number of people being trafficked in Mauritius remains relatively low. Traffickers include family members, peers, significant others and businesspeople, with girls often being used for child sex trafficking. The textile industry in Mauritius employs a significant number of foreign workers, mainly from Bangladesh, India, Madagascar, Sri Lanka and Nepal, who are vulnerable to forced labour. Exploitation is common, but underreported, and employers have the right to deport workers who make complaints.

Smuggling domestic workers, mainly from Madagascar, to the Arabian Peninsula via Mauritius is a common way to circumvent bans on workers in certain Arab states. However, there are relatively few cases of human smuggling overall, as the islands are difficult to enter compared to other countries on the continent. Although this phenomenon is known, the police have not investigated whether Mauritius is a country of transit for these workers. Extortion cases are not prevalent in the country and such criminal activities mostly occur at individual levels.

### TRADE

Mauritius has a long-standing tradition of strict firearms control, which has proven effective in limiting the influx of illegal weapons into the country. However, there are reports of drug kingpins and 'bouncers' who use firearms for protection, and these illicit weapons are often smuggled to the island along with illegal drug consignments.

Counterfeit goods pose a challenge in Mauritius, with a wide range of products, including clothing, technology and pharmaceuticals, being counterfeited or imported illegally. The local demand for low-priced goods drives the market for counterfeit products. While clothing items have historically been the most seized counterfeit products, in recent years, pharmaceuticals have taken the lead with the majority of seized counterfeit goods originating from China. The COVID-19 pandemic further fuelled the illegal market for medicines and vaccines. Currently, there is no substantial evidence of a widespread illicit market

for excisable consumer goods in Mauritius, with historic incidents reported concerning smuggled tobacco products.

### ENVIRONMENT

It is difficult to accurately assess the current extent of flora-related crimes in Mauritius, but they seem to be still limited in scope. While smuggling and illegal tree-cutting for firewood are present in the country, there is no significant criminal economy around flora. Sandalwood, however, is a special case, as its illegal logging, theft and trafficking have increased since it was declared a protected species and its export was banned. In relation to fauna crimes, Mauritius is known to be a transit country for turtle trafficking to other nations. The country has banned certain goods from trade, such as ivory and turtle shells. Traditional forms of fauna crimes in Mauritius include bird trafficking and the trafficking of endangered sea turtles. There is also demand for local 'serin' from the neighbouring French department of Reunion Island. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a significant problem due to the country's reliance on fishing for both nutrition and export. While it is forbidden to pick up sea cucumbers at all or capture octopuses outside the fishing season, fishermen and locals often disregard these prohibitions. Criminal activity related to non-renewable resources is relatively low in Mauritius, with some reported cases of illegal trafficking of precious stones. Mauritius is, nevertheless, known to facilitate illegality by providing banking secrecy and opaque beneficial ownership of companies involved in gold and diamond smuggling in other jurisdictions, particularly India.

### DRUGS

Mauritius has a pervasive heroin market. Traffickers, mostly from South Africa, import large quantities of the drug from Madagascar and distribute it using planes, fast boats and commercial ships. The expansion of the trade is a major concern, as the police have reportedly failed to stop these activities in some areas and corruption within law enforcement has been alleged. On the other hand, the cocaine market in Mauritius is not as prevalent as the heroin one and is mainly consumed by expats and social elites. Trafficking in cocaine connects West African import locations with East Asian and Middle Eastern markets by sea, with large seizures occurring every few months. Hundreds of kilograms of hard drugs are transported by planes or 'go fast' speedboats.

Cannabis consumption has a long history in Mauritius and remains illegal, with severe punishment for those caught using it. However, there has been a growing push for its legalization. Cannabis seizures mostly involve locally grown products, but there appears to be a shift, with Mauritius now

becoming an importation market. The import of cannabis on the Mauritius-Reunion axis continues, with skippers allegedly buying cannabis from neighbouring Reunion Island or even going to Madagascar to pick up the drug. The use of synthetic drugs in Mauritius is also a growing problem – due, in part, to their low price – especially among lower income and middle class groups. These drugs are primarily trafficked into the country as well as being produced locally to increase profits. There are reports pertaining to the use of toxic ingredients by local producers, resulting in an increased health risk for consumers. Methamphetamines are a cheaper alternative to heroin and there has been an increased consumption observed in Mauritius. The use of synthetic cannabis is also a growing concern.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Despite Mauritius' success in dealing with cybercrime, there has been an uptick in cyber-dependent crimes as hackers become more audacious and companies become more complacent. The most common types of cybercrime include malware and threats to infrastructure, with these incidents having increased during the COVID-19 crisis due to increased digitalization in the country. Recently, there have been reports of distributed denial-of-service attacks on telecommunications networks, as well as instances of hacking and cyber espionage, with both the government and large corporations being the primary targets.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Mauritius is not immune to various financial crimes, including advance fee, bank guarantee and cheque fraud, phishing, wire transfer fraud, identity theft, lottery fraud, Ponzi schemes, social media scams and cyber-enabled crimes. The island has also long been considered a tax haven by the international community, despite having changed its tax laws and responded to international pressure for greater scrutiny of its offshore centres. Currently, Mauritius is no longer on the lists of non-compliant jurisdictions of any international supervisory body. However, instances of embezzlement, public procurement fraud and corruption

on the island still occur, with cases of corruption and fraud linking high-ranking government officials having been increasingly reported in Mauritius.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal networks primarily composed of nationals coordinate the importation of illicit substances and other commodities from South Africa, East Africa and Madagascar. Locally produced cannabis is thought to be under the control of local actors, and there is a growing number of criminal networks involved in trafficking other drugs relying on the structure of the drug market originally built around heroin. The emergence of synthetic drugs has led to a democratization of the drug trafficking trade with less reliance on longstanding connections with suppliers overseas. Criminal networks are also linked to the horseracing industry in Mauritius, involved in fixing races, money laundering and illegal betting. The presence of foreign criminal actors in Mauritius is limited; however, they are particularly involved in drug trafficking, especially Western Africans, Indians and Bangladeshis. Some are suspected of negotiating directly with local gangs to provide them with drugs, predominantly heroin.

Regarding state-embedded actors, there have been allegations of their involvement in drug trafficking and the embezzlement of public funds during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also suspicions of corruption at various levels of government, with some councils suspected of helping kingpins launder their money. In Mauritius' private sector, involvement in organized crime is restricted to facilitating illicit financial flows through the island, mainly coming from drug trafficking. These actors take advantage of the loopholes in the financial regulations of the country, which is considered an offshore jurisdiction, establishing subsidiaries to enable tax evasion. The most vulnerable sectors for this crime are gambling, real estate and jewellery. Even though there are local gangs in Mauritius that resemble mafia-style groups, their level of influence and organization remains low.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Mauritius is considered a full democracy and it performs well in terms of governance, partly due to its small population. The government has taken proactive measures to combat its reputation as a tax haven and has strengthened its anti-money laundering and anti-financial crimes framework in response to international pressure. It is also committed

to fighting cybercrime and making cyber security a key priority. Despite claims of drug money infiltrating the political system, there is little evidence to support direct involvement of politicians in the drug trade. While Mauritius has made progress in combatting corruption in recent years, legislation suggests the government may be moving away from promoting transparency and accountability. The government

has been criticized for opaque hiring processes that may be affected by nepotism and cronyism. Although the media is influenced by politicians and businessmen, Mauritius is still considered an exemplary country on the African continent in terms of respect for human rights. Moderate levels of corruption exist, but Mauritius continues to be a leading example in terms of transparency in the region.

Mauritius has ratified numerous international treaties related to organized crime and has adopted comprehensive laws enabling it to provide a wide range of measures at the request of a foreign state. The country has established standards and systems for international cooperation, including extradition treaties with different countries in the region and around the world. Mauritius has strong relationships with India, which has loaned large amounts of money for infrastructure projects and with whom military training and intelligence are shared. Mauritius' legal framework is designed to counter organized crime activities such as human trafficking, drug offences, terrorism, cybercrime, human smuggling, trafficking in cultural property and falsified medical products. However, there are areas that need to be addressed, such as money laundering, trafficking in firearms, counterfeiting, corruption, piracy and maritime crime, crimes that affect the environment and participation in organized criminal groups. The country has an anti-human trafficking law in place, but there are notable weaknesses, such as restrictions on the freedom of movement of victims and the lengthy amount of time needed to complete a civil suit. In recent years, Mauritius has taken steps to improve its legal framework to tackle cybercrime and is considered one of the most resilient countries in Africa when it comes to combatting cybercrime.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judiciary in Mauritius is widely regarded as independent and has successfully prosecuted cases involving drug and human trafficking. However, there have been instances where individuals charged with drug trafficking were actually victims of exploitation, and human trafficking victims were not treated as such. Moreover, prison and detention centre conditions in Mauritius do not always meet international standards, with hygiene being a concern. The country has several specialized units within the police department; however, the criminal investigation department is perceived as a 'political police' force that promptly responds to allegations made against the prime minister or his family. Despite the existence of specialized units, the fight against drug trafficking is believed to be largely cosmetic due to widespread corruption and inefficiencies in law enforcement bodies. Although the government has made efforts to combat human trafficking, coordination between authorities continues to be ineffective. In recent years, there have been reports of beatings and torture carried out by law enforcement officials, highlighting the issue of police brutality in the country.

Law enforcement in Mauritius is well-supported by foreign governments – particularly India – in enhancing maritime security. However, Mauritius faces challenges in policing its extensive coastline and ports, with drug smuggling being a major concern. The country's geography, with its sea-locked position and proximity to major drug trafficking routes, makes it a favourable location for the smuggling of illicit goods in general. The lack of prior knowledge of the sea among many recruits in the coast guard service and the suspected involvement of local fishermen in drug transportation exacerbate this issue. Mauritius is also involved in a territorial dispute with the Maldives over an Exclusive Economic Zone near Chagos.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mauritius has implemented significant changes to its anti-money laundering laws and regulations, aimed at preventing financial abuse. The country has put in place effective policies, such as regular reviews and a strict licensing framework, to give effect to the provisions set forth under the legal framework on financial services and money laundering. Although the European Commission had previously blacklisted Mauritius for its lack of control over money laundering and terrorist financing, the country has been removed from both the European Union list of high-risk third countries and the Financial Action Task Force grey list due to the government's political will and efforts to comply with international standards. However, there are still concerns about some financial companies using the island to benefit from double-tax agreements. Despite Mauritius' efforts to foster transparency of beneficial ownership of legal entities, some global businesses may not be deterred from committing financial crimes by the maximum fines determined under the regulations, which are found to be too low.

Mauritius' economy is considered one of the strongest in Africa and is known for its entrepreneur-friendly environment. Because of being a gateway for tax avoidance, the country has responded to international pressure by undergoing tax reforms. The government's commitment to improving its legal, regulatory and enforcement practices to counter financial crimes has resulted in a reduction in incentives for criminal activity. Overall, Mauritius has made notable efforts to improve its economic regulatory environment.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Although efforts have been made in Mauritius to support victims of certain forms of organized crime, such as human trafficking and drug abuse, through services provided by the government and NGOs, there is still much to be done when it comes to identifying victims of trafficking and providing them with adequate care. The lack of a policy for dealing with adult victims of trafficking has led to ad hoc assistance and a lack of victim-centred approaches. Furthermore, witness protection programmes are not in

place. Mauritius has a user-friendly national system for reporting cybercrime, but resources are limited and have not been expanded to cover other forms of crime. The government has made efforts to prevent human trafficking, but confusion persists among institutions regarding the distribution of roles in combatting this crime, especially with regard to adult sex trafficking. Concerning human smuggling, the Mauritian authorities have officially opened a Migrant Resource Centre to combat modern slavery and promote decent working conditions for foreign nationals in garment factories.

Mauritius is known for its strong respect for human rights and democracy, but press freedom has slightly worsened in recent years. The media is highly polarized and influenced by politicians and businessmen who fund and promote it. National broadcasting and pro-government media are often guilty of propagating propaganda, and the law does not protect journalists, who can be sentenced to prison for disturbing public order. Civil society is strong and supported by the government, but recent crackdowns on protests have raised concerns about its commitment to freedom of expression.

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