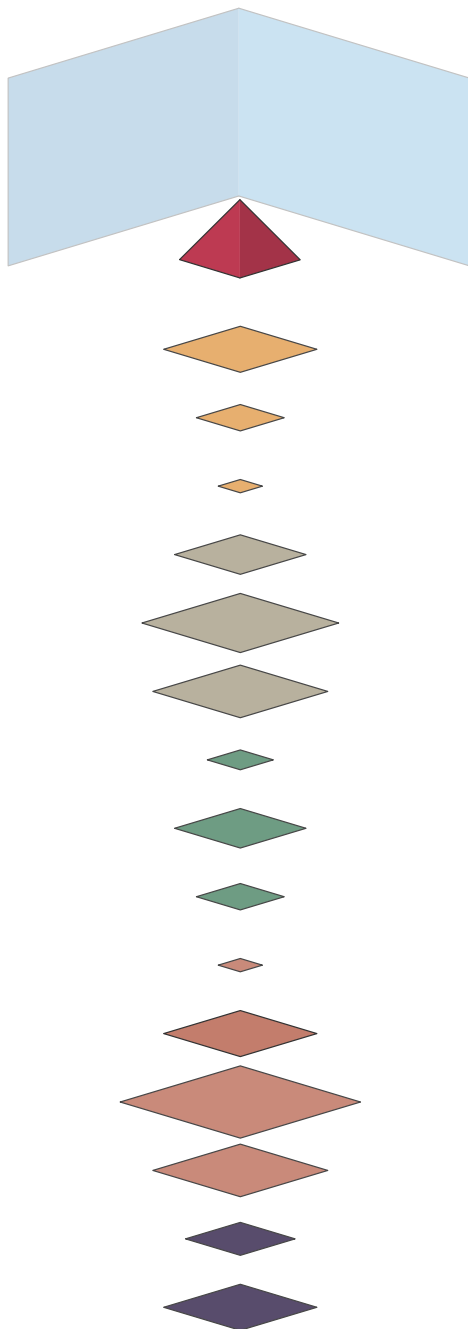


# SAMOA



2.43

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

188<sup>th</sup> of 193 countries  
11<sup>th</sup> of 14 Oceanian countries  
2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 Polynesian countries



## CRIMINAL MARKETS

2.97

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	3.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.50
FAUNA CRIMES	3.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	2.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.00
COCAINE TRADE	3.50
CANNABIS TRADE	5.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	4.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	2.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	3.50



## CRIMINAL ACTORS

1.90

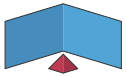
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	2.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	2.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	1.00



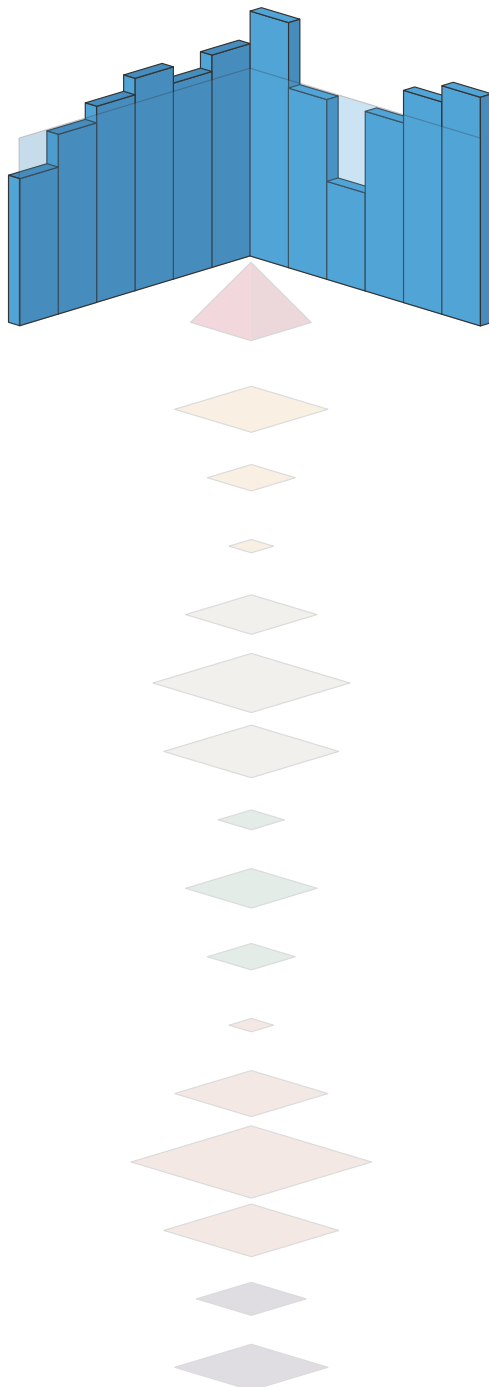
5.83

## RESILIENCE SCORE





# SAMOA



## 5.83

### RESILIENCE SCORE

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

5<sup>th</sup> of 14 Oceanian countries

2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 Polynesian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	6.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	5.50
PREVENTION	6.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	7.00



## 2.43

### CRIMINALITY SCORE



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 2.97



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 1.90



# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Samoa is an origin and destination country for human trafficking. While the exact number of victims is unknown, the size of this market is considered to be small. According to the government, human trafficking is increasing in Samoa due to its proximity to Australia and New Zealand, which allows criminal actors from the latter countries to coordinate and commit this crime on the islands. Trafficked individuals in Samoa are commonly exploited in the logging, fishing and mining industries, indicating parallel criminal markets. Additionally, there have been reports of forced marriages between Samoan women and girls and foreign businessmen residing in the country. Foreign nationals are allegedly exploited for domestic servitude by Samoan families, and some are sexually exploited. Sexual and gender-based violence has been on the rise in recent years.

Currently, Samoa is not part of any relevant transnational human smuggling route. As a result, this crime occurs on a small scale in an opportunistic manner. However, since borders reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of human smuggling in the Pacific region has increased. There is no evidence of extortion or protection racketeering in Samoa.

### TRADE

The scale of arms trafficking in Samoa is limited and has a negligible influence on society. Firearms are typically associated with gang activity and the illicit drug trade, rather than more common offences like assault and burglary. However, authorities in the region have recently expressed concerns about the increasing incidence of firearms trafficking.

Even though evidence of counterfeit products in Samoa is limited, there has been an increase in the trade of counterfeited goods in the Oceania region as well as in the country, with growing demand. Counterfeit items such as clothes, pharmaceutical products, pesticides and electronic gadgets are becoming more prevalent in both commercial and e-commerce trade. Similarly, there has been an increase in the illicit trade of excise goods in Samoa, specifically tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, despite efforts made by the government to curb this illicit market. In 2018, excise tax on tobacco products and alcoholic beverages was increased in an attempt to reduce consumption, but the increase instead led to a shift towards less expensive, locally-made cigarettes and local substitutes for alcoholic beverages.

### ENVIRONMENT

More than half of Samoa's territory is covered by forests and a significant number of citizens are involved in logging. While there have been some incidents of illegal logging, there is no evidence that these activities are systemic or backed by organized crime groups. The lower duty applied to imported timber helps to discourage overharvesting.

Illegal fishing in Samoa is a rare occurrence, and there is no evidence of organized crime groups engaging in this activity. Most of the fishing business is legal and under relatively good supervision, but foreign vessels with improved fishing capabilities may pose a threat and create competition for locals. Recently, Samoa has seen a rise in the catch and sale of undersized marine species such as crabs, lobsters and fish. The Samoa Conservation Society warned that marine resources in Samoa are under more pressure than ever before.

The Pacific Ocean surrounding Samoa's islands has trace amounts of mineral deposits, including cobalt, nickel and copper, but there are no reports of extraction – legal or illegal. NGOs have warned against deep-sea mining. Sand is increasingly being mined in Samoa for road and other infrastructure construction. While there is no evidence of organized criminal involvement, authorities continue to receive reports about illegal and unregulated sand mining.

### DRUGS

There is no evidence of an illegal market for heroin. Demand in Samoa is low but might increase as the Australian drug market grows. Samoa is slowly becoming a transit point for cocaine trafficked from Latin America to Australia and New Zealand; American groups seem to be involved in the shipment of the drug into the Pacific region. Increased trade has resulted in increased domestic use, but considering the high price of the drug, quantities and consumption are small due to the low purchasing power in the country.

Cannabis is the most popular drug and the demand is high, despite cannabis use for any purpose being illegal and severely punished. Locally-grown cannabis dominates the market and with cultivation on the rise, law enforcement agencies are using drones to locate plantations. According to the police, the increase in possession cases is due to tightened controls.

Synthetic drugs are the second most popular drugs in the country. Authorities have reported an increase in domestic consumption and availability of crystal methamphetamine in recent years, although generally in small quantities for personal use. This seems to be the drug of choice for the small Samoan upper class. Synthetic drugs are brought into

Samoa from Asia, the United States and Latin America, en route to Australia and New Zealand. The recent increase in methamphetamine seizures in Samoa is likely a result of the economic downturns and exacerbated inequalities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Cybersecurity incidents in Samoa are infrequent and only a few isolated cases have been reported. Among these incidents, the government has been targeted by ransomware attacks that have affected customs, health and financial agencies. Given the limited capacity of the country to respond to such threats, it has relied on Australian authorities for assistance.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Samoa is known as a tax haven. Most financial crimes are committed by foreign actors through shell companies established in the country for the purposes of tax evasion and evasion of sanctions. The country remains on the European Union's list of non-cooperative jurisdictions due to a harmful preferential tax regime. Samoa also lags behind on certain financial indicators like company ownership, legal entity transparency, consistent personal income tax, and tax court secrecy. Other common forms of financial crimes include embezzlement of funds and banking fraud.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Criminal activity in Samoa lacks a clearly defined structure and leadership hierarchy. It does not exhibit the typical

characteristics of mafia-style groups. Instead, the primary actors in illicit economies are loose criminal networks comprising opportunistic entrepreneurs who operate primarily in the cannabis market. Although there have been criminal gangs in the past, even at their strongest they did not conduct their operations with violence or extort businesses. One of the challenges Samoa faces is the presence of citizens who have been deported from other countries and who perpetrate criminal activity upon their return. The government has identified outlaw motorcycle gangs as an emerging threat in the country, as they have links to organized crime across the Pacific region. These gangs are mostly involved in drug trafficking but there is no evidence that they control territory. While Samoa has disrupted criminal gangs in the past, the links to expatriate Samoan communities in the USA and Australia provide ongoing opportunities for criminal networks to continue operating.

Foreign organized crime groups with connections to Samoa have been involved in the trafficking of drugs into and through the country, primarily cocaine and crystal methamphetamine. However, criminal gangs are not the only challenge to Samoa's economy. Owners of large foreign business corporations looking for offshore locations for their firms have also had a negative influence on Samoa's legitimate economy, with their involvement in financial crimes. Domestic private-sector actors, on the other hand, do not appear to be a prominent. While corruption persists within the state apparatus, there is limited evidence of state-embedded actors involved in organized crime. Some high-level officials have been complicit in drug trafficking, and investigations are ongoing into suspected involvement of police officers in this crime.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Samoa is generally considered to be a politically stable country, with relatively low levels of organized crime. The constitutional and legal framework is largely democratic, even though only chiefs or family heads are allowed to stand as candidates. While corruption is by no means endemic, it is a cause of public discontent. Even though there are bodies tasked with pursuing allegations of corruption, there is no dedicated anti-corruption tribunal. The government operates with transparency for the most part, but the effectiveness of Samoa's state auditing system remains under question. Work is currently underway to develop an access to information law.

Samoa is an active participant in international cooperation and regional initiatives aimed at combatting transnational organized crime. While the country is party to several relevant treaties and conventions, it has not signed or ratified any of the UNTOC's three Palermo protocols related to the smuggling of people, trafficking in persons, or the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms and ammunition. Nevertheless, international cooperation is strong, particularly with Pacific neighbours via the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC). Although Samoa has an extradition act in place, extradition is only allowed with a bilateral treaty – there are concerns about how efficient the government is at executing requests for mutual legal assistance in a timely manner. Samoa has a robust legal framework to deal with organized crime, but

its drug laws are considered outdated. Additionally, Samoa's commitments to cybersecurity are insufficient, although, cyber-dependent criminality does not constitute a major threat at the moment.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Samoa's judiciary is widely regarded as independent and relatively free from corruption. However, recent legislation that allows executive powers to dismiss and discipline judicial officers may pose a threat to the judiciary's independence. The prison system suffers from a lack of resources, which results in overcrowding, undertrained staff and security vulnerabilities that have led to multiple prison escapes. There have also been reports of corrupt practices within the prison service.

Samoa's national police force is relatively small and there is no domestic law enforcement unit specifically dedicated to combating organized crime. However, a unit has been established through the Pacific Transnational Crime Network (PTCN) to address transnational crime in the Pacific region. The country also hosts the PTCCC. Generally, there is a high level of public trust in Samoan law enforcement; isolated incidents of bribery, corruption and police brutality have been condemned by senior officials.

Samoa's cyber infrastructure is relatively weak and prone to cyberattacks. The country's maritime borders are better policed and monitored by a specialized maritime unit. The United States supports Samoa's efforts to enforce maritime law through Operation Aiga (the Samoan word for 'family'), which aims to combat illegal fishing and promote resource security and maritime governance.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Samoa's small economy and banking sector have prevented it from becoming a hub for money laundering. However, the island nation is an offshore financial jurisdiction where registered entities have no currency or exchange controls, nor income tax obligations. While legal structures are in place, limited resources hinder investigative and prosecutorial capacity, making the country vulnerable to financial crimes. No cases of money laundering have been prosecuted and the penalty for money laundering is lower compared to other serious crimes. Samoa remains on the European Union's list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes, with little progress made in implementing anti-money laundering policies.

The Samoan economy relies heavily on agriculture and tourism; the latter suffered greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, judged as a whole, the economy has proven resilient in recent years. The banking sector is healthy, but there is a large segment of the population that does not have access to financial services. Financial exclusion

is greatest for individuals employed in the agricultural sector, which results in a significant urban-rural divide. The government encourages foreign investment and trade with Asian countries, particularly with China. Compared to other global tax havens, Samoa's impact is limited due to its small jurisdiction, but it is estimated that the country loses hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes each year.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Samoa has limited support groups and services for victims of organized crime. However, the New Zealand Salvation Army is running programmes for victims of substance abuse and addiction. Samoa's drug-related legislation is weak on issues related to rehabilitation and drug treatment. The country has inadequate personnel for administering drug abuse treatment, and poor facilities for the treatment of drug abusers. While witnesses are afforded protection and certain measures are in place (such as providing evidence via video link), the government provides little support to victims of sexual abuse and harassment. Reporting levels remain low since instances of sexual harassment could jeopardize victims' careers or family life.

Samoa participates in regional training and operations aimed at combatting and preventing various crimes such as drug and human trafficking, and human smuggling. The national strategy to prevent crime in general focuses on community policing and enhancing partnerships with NGOs. As a primary prevention mechanism, the police conduct routine awareness programs in schools, villages and churches. The government has taken steps to raise awareness about the growing problem of gender-based violence in the country, and NGOs receive government funding to implement advocacy programs in an effort to reduce incidents. In addition, the government allocated funds to improve its IT systems in sectors like education, health, business and development.

Samoa welcomes civil society organizations (CSOs) and provides support to strengthen their work. While there are very few CSOs focused on organized crime, civil society actors play a crucial role in social and economic development. The traditional power structures, such as village authorities and the church, are also involved in preventive measures as well as in the fight against drug trafficking. Freedom of the press is generally respected in the country, but there have been reported cases of harassment and intimidation against lawyers who speak out on law reforms. Attacks on press freedom, politicization of the media landscape, and lack of access to state-held information have blemished the image of the government in past years. CSOs such as Greenpeace have a strong influence on environmental crimes, as they advocate for the preservation of the ocean and the curbing of extractive industries. However, the work of CSOs is often hindered by a lack of resources and skills. The government does not restrict internet access nor

cancel online content, but the prime minister did threaten to ban social media after critical commentary was posted about the government.

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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.*