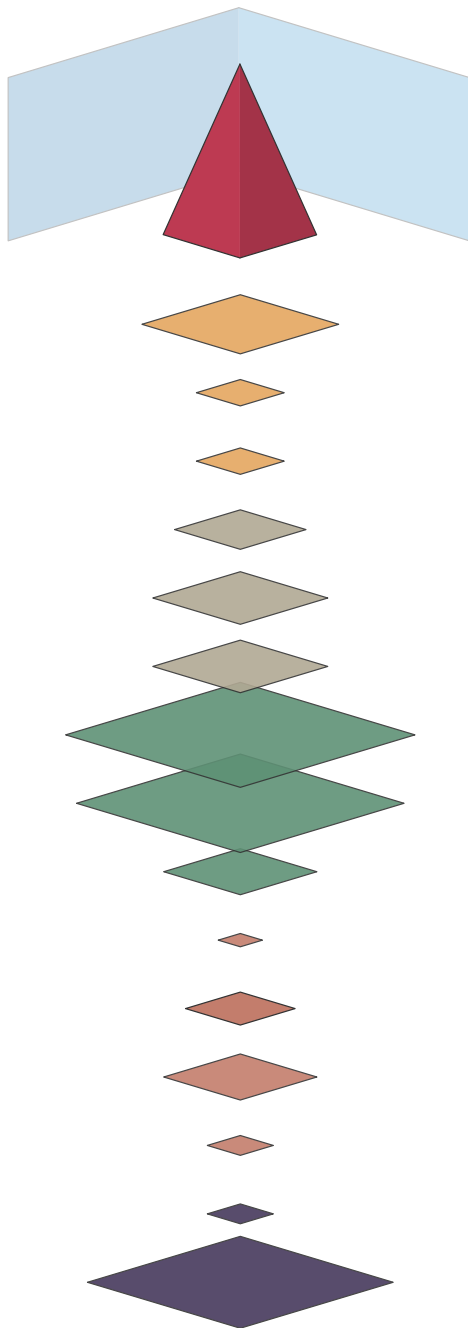




# SOLOMON ISLANDS



4.40

## CRIMINALITY SCORE

132<sup>nd</sup> of 193 countries

2<sup>nd</sup> of 14 Oceanian countries

2<sup>nd</sup> of 4 Melanesian countries



### CRIMINAL MARKETS

3.70

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	4.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	4.00
FLORA CRIMES	8.00
FAUNA CRIMES	7.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50
HEROIN TRADE	1.00
COCAINE TRADE	2.50
CANNABIS TRADE	3.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1.50
FINANCIAL CRIMES	7.00



### CRIMINAL ACTORS

5.10

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	6.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	6.50



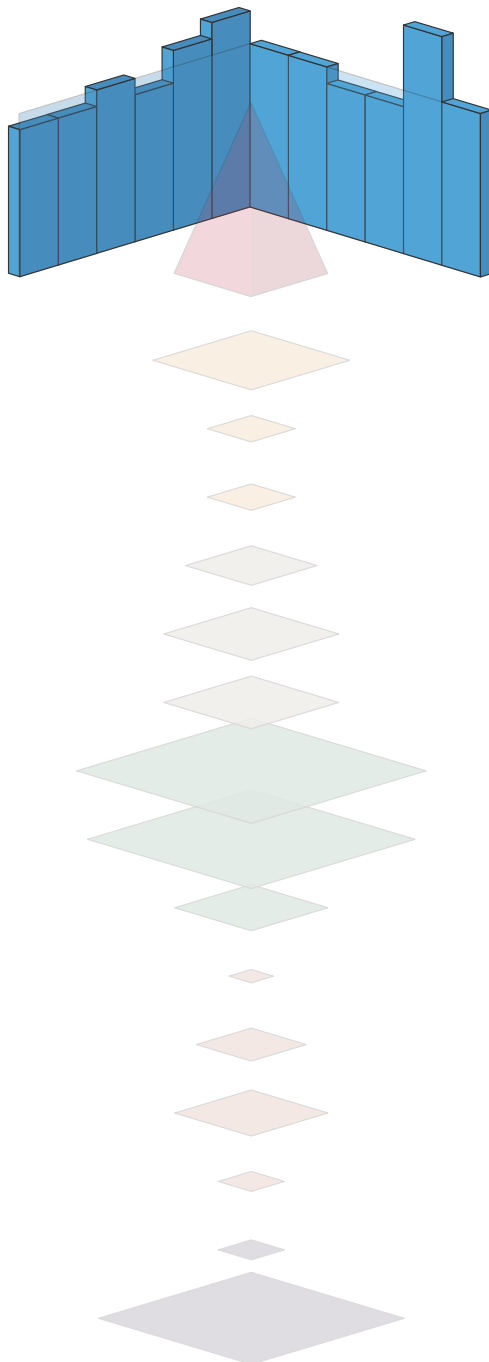
5.08

## RESILIENCE SCORE





# SOLOMON ISLANDS



5.08

## RESILIENCE SCORE

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

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

3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 Melanesian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	5.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	4.50
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	5.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	6.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	5.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	4.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4.50
PREVENTION	7.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00



4.40

## CRIMINALITY SCORE



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** 3.70



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** 5.10



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.

# CRIMINALITY

## CRIMINAL MARKETS

### PEOPLE

Solomon Islands is as a source, transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking, including men, women and children from South East Asia and from local communities. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims: many people are promised a better life but end up being forced into labour on fishing vessels or forced into sex work. Male victims are often forced into physical labour, while women are mainly forced into prostitution around logging camps. Solomon Islander children are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour within the country, particularly near foreign or local logging camps, commercial fishing vessels, hotels, casinos, nightclubs and other entertainment establishments. Parents frequently receive payments for sending young women and girls into forced marriages with foreign workers at logging and mining companies, under informal or traditional justice practices. Children, especially girls aged 15 to 17, are at a high risk of being trafficked. The decline of the logging industry has led to an increase in internal economic migration, which may put displaced communities at a higher risk of sex trafficking and forced labour.

Human smuggling often overlaps with human trafficking, as victims first arrive as smuggled individuals and are then subjected to forced labour or sex exploitation. Due to the porous borders of the country, it is difficult to gather information and estimate the size of the smuggling market. The COVID-19 pandemic did not appear to lead to a visible change in human smuggling rates. There is little evidence of widespread extortion and protection racketeering in Solomon Islands. Other than historical mentions, there are no further reports of this crime.

### TRADE

Arms trafficking is relatively small in Solomon Islands. There have been instances of minor trade in a southerly direction, but it was not profitable enough to be sustainable. Firearm legislation in the Pacific region is some of the most restrictive in the world: civilian firearm ownership is not allowed under many circumstances in the country. Authorities have implemented voluntary firearm surrender schemes and weapon seizure programmes to reduce the number of illicit firearms in circulation. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), and its associated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, have contributed to the reduction in the number of small arms and light weapons. Leakage, rather

than gun trafficking, is the most significant source of illicit small arms.

There is little evidence of widespread counterfeiting or contraband of excise goods in Solomon Islands, but the trade has been increasing in the region. Solomon Islands officials have recently uncovered a growing number of counterfeit and illicit excise goods related to food, cigarettes and vehicles.

### ENVIRONMENT

Illegal logging is a major issue in Solomon Islands. Much of the billion-dollar timber industry is conducted criminally. Despite being the second-biggest supplier of timber to China, benefits have not trickled down to the population and instead have been siphoned off by state-embedded actors and foreign companies. Illegal logging is widespread due to a lack of capacity to enforce forest laws, poor protection of land rights, and collusion between logging companies and government officials. Solomon Islands has been classified as a medium-high risk country for roundwood exports, including protected species. The impact of the illicit logging market has wide-ranging effects on the economy and governance and may serve as a hub for other forms of criminal activities such as human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Solomon Islands has 1.6 million km<sup>2</sup> of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – a huge area, which makes it difficult to monitor illegal fishing, particularly by Asian fleets. The islands' dependence on coastal fishing has increased due to deforestation, which has depleted subsistence agriculture. At the same time, international demand for tuna has incentivized industrial levels of illegal fishing. Vietnamese 'blue boats' have entered the country's waters to illegally harvest sea cucumbers and sharks. Weak enforcement, inadequate penalties and corrupt officials make countering illegal fishing difficult. The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in the withdrawal of observers from foreign fishing vessels, exacerbating the issue. Illegal poaching of sea turtles is also a concern – Solomon Islands has been identified as a hotspot for this crime.

Illegal mining and the exploitation of natural resources are significant environmental crimes in Solomon Islands. The challenge lies in separating legal and illegal activities. The opaque management of natural resources is seen as detrimental to the interests of Solomon Islanders, with the mining sector vulnerable to fraud, bribery and corruption. The country has limited capacity to manage natural resource wealth. As such, the extraction of minerals, oil and gas is causing environmental devastation, damaging food security and causing significant social and health impacts.

## DRUGS

There is limited evidence of an illicit market for heroin or cocaine in Solomon Islands, and there are low levels of local demand for both due to their high cost. However, the country remains vulnerable to exploitation by organized criminal groups for large-scale trafficking of drugs and the laundering of proceeds from drug-related crimes. The country's porous borders make it vulnerable to spill-over from other countries in the region that have bigger drug markets. There is some evidence that Solomon Islands might be developing into a transit country for cocaine trafficking.

In contrast, there is local demand and trafficking of cannabis due to its availability and low cost. Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug and there is a strong gender bias: significantly more males use cannabis than females. Most cannabis users are young, aged between 15 and 20 years. Cannabis is also used in the expatriate community and by tourists. Cannabis farms inside the country imply the involvement of domestic actors in satisfying demand.

There is currently no evidence of a synthetic drug market in Solomon Islands. As with heroin and cocaine, however, there are concerns about increased trafficking of methamphetamines across the Pacific region, which could lead to spill-over effects. The COVID-19 pandemic has not disrupted the trafficking and production of drugs in Asia, and transnational organized crime syndicates have adapted and sought new ways to profit from the pandemic.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Although there is some sporadic evidence of cyber-dependent crimes in the country, detailed information is scarce, suggesting that this criminal market is relatively small. It has been reported that there is at least some small-scale crime taking place in the country using social media platforms, but there is little to no data available on this. Given that the country still faces infrastructure challenges, it is likely that cyber-dependent crimes will become a more substantial issue in the future.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes have been reported in Solomon Islands, but they do not seem to be indicative of systematic organized criminal activity. The most common financial crimes consist of cyber-enabled financial scams, where perpetrators use impersonations to gather the personal and financial information of their victims; and pyramid schemes that often target lower-income individuals. Lately, there have also been increasing concerns about corruption and the embezzlement or misuse of public funds.

## CRIMINAL ACTORS

Solomon Islands is plagued by corrupt state-embedded actors who enable foreign companies to engage in illicit activities in the logging, fishing and gambling sectors. These criminal actors are in close cooperation with national and foreign private entities, and their corrupt practices remain a significant obstacle to the country's governance and development. The forms of crime prevalent in the country include conflict of interest, abuse of discretion, embezzlement, bribery, extortion and fraud. Moreover, foreign companies, mainly from East Asia and South East Asia, have a strong presence in the country and engage in illegal logging and fishing without regulation, thanks to their links to corrupt elements in the state. Also concerning is the involvement of transnational corporations that deliver campaign financing to patron-politicians to influence the democratic process for operational privileges. These political governance arrangements are largely shaped by relationships between local community leaders and foreign loggers, miners and businesses, who make and approve deals while colluding with foreign companies.

Although the existence of mafia-style groups in Solomon Islands has not been confirmed, Papua New Guinea's so-called 'raskol' gangs operate along the country's borders. The presence of loose and opportunistic networks is more probable, facilitating various crimes including trafficking, smuggling, environmental crimes and drug contraband. These networks likely operate around hubs such as logging camps, cities and the border area with Bougainville (an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea). Drug trafficking through the Pacific Islands has evolved significantly, with an increase of local actors in transnational criminal networks. The private sector plays a major role in corruption: local businesses are used for money laundering and import/export businesses are used for drug trafficking. Sometimes, businesses receive seed capital from donations linked to foreign criminal actors.

# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Solomon Islands faces numerous challenges when it comes to political leadership and governance. The country is a post-conflict state with weak institutions, limited government influence beyond the capital city, and immense gender and social-inclusion disparities. Additionally, political centralization has contributed to divisions between rural and urban areas and has shaped rural perceptions of the legitimacy of chiefs as national leaders. MPs are often elected with a small number of votes, and political leaders have used government resources to reward their voters. The absence of strong parties has made politics intensely factional. Local MPs are seen as the personification of government, both in terms of national-level representation and district-level service delivery. Despite a reduction in group grievances after the civil conflict, occasional flare-ups of civil unrest still occur. Solomon Islands is considered a free country, but corruption and abuse of office remain serious problems. Although recent governments have taken steps to address the issue, politicians accused of corruption have seldom been prosecuted. State dealings with foreign logging and mining companies are not open to scrutiny, and efforts to improve accountability for funds spent by MPs in their constituencies have been unsuccessful. Corruption issues are particularly endemic in the natural resources sector: mining companies frequently offer kickbacks to politicians in exchange for allowing those companies to avoid regulation and engage in illegal practices.

Solomon Islands is ambivalent in terms of international cooperation and has not signed key organized crime treaties. This creates gaps in legislation and limits the country's ability to tackle drug trafficking challenges. In August 2021, government and non-government counterparts met in high-level consultation in Honiara to support the process of acceding to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. This will help update the national legislation to meet international standards. Despite this positive development, there are still many key laws that need reinforcement, especially those related to human smuggling, fishing, anti-money laundering and drug trafficking.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The justice system in Solomon Islands is a combination of formal and informal institutions. Formal justice services are mostly concentrated in Honiara and provincial centres, whereas community-based mechanisms involving local chiefs or church leaders are the most accessible forms of justice for rural citizens. As such, there are significant variations across the country. Access to formal justice is

often difficult for those outside of the capital, expensive and time-consuming, and traditional methods disproportionately impact women and people with disabilities. Prosecution services still lack capacity and often have a backlog of cases. In terms of detention conditions, there are no significant reports of human rights concerns, and authorities have historically permitted monitoring by independent human rights observers. However, delays in adjudication have resulted in lengthy pre-trial detention for some detainees; such detainees comprise half of the prisoner population.

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) is the main law enforcement agency in Solomon Islands, but it is under-funded and under-resourced. Law enforcement is effectively limited to the capital city, Honiara. The force is a member of the Pacific Transnational Crime Network, which combats transnational crime in the region. In addition to standard policing duties, the RSIPF also has the additional responsibility of clearing munitions left from previous conflict periods, which has cascading effects throughout the country; and it is responsible for fire service, disaster relief and maritime surveillance. With more than 900 islands and vast maritime borders, the country's borders can be difficult to police, but there has been minimal exploitation to date, especially when compared to neighbouring countries.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Solomon Islands faces money laundering risks from illegal logging, corruption and illegal fishing. However, authorities have a limited understanding of these risks and an inadequate policy framework to address them. While the country is not considered to have strategic anti-money laundering (AML) deficiencies, it needs to improve its regulatory framework and implementation, as well as the preventative measures established by its reporting institutions. Despite having a financial intelligence unit, money laundering offences are seldom investigated.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a contraction in the country's economy. Nevertheless, there are signs of a fragile recovery, driven by opportunities in mining, agriculture, fishing and tourism. Labour market conditions have worsened, however, and progress in poverty reduction and human development has been disrupted. The fiscal balance is estimated to have increased, reflecting revenue loss and additional spending in response to COVID-19. Central government debt remains low but is estimated to have increased in 2021. Inflation remains low but is also expected to increase, partly due to higher commodity prices. A large part of the population lives in rural areas, relying on a subsistence economy with supplementary income from agriculture, forestry, fishing and remittances. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors account for

almost a half of Solomon Islands' GDP; these sectors also provide employment for most of the population. Solomon Islands' growing population is one of the youngest in the world, but also suffers from high unemployment, making youth vulnerable to crime and violence.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The government has made some efforts to protect trafficking victims, including updating victim identification and referral procedures, but full implementation is lacking. Limited funds have been allocated to investigations, public awareness and victim protection and assistance programmes, which may discourage victims from testifying in court proceedings. Victim protection is further hindered by a lack of trafficking-specific services, including shelters for adult males and victims of labour trafficking. Foreign victims are not provided with temporary residence permits or other services. There is evidence that some unidentified victims returned to their home countries due to lengthy legal processes, fear of retaliation and lack of incentives to remain and participate in cases. The government reported that trafficking victims could seek compensation from their employers through civil lawsuits, but to date, no victims have filed such lawsuits.

The government had taken some steps in crime prevention including through the adoption of the national action plan against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling 2020-2025 and the delivery of community level crime prevention and awareness programmes.

Solomon Islands has experienced a significant reduction in crime and violence over the last decade, thanks in part to local civil society-led interventions such as increased sports events without alcohol. However, the negative consequences of the global pandemic could lead to a rise in crime rates. Civil society in Solomon Islands encompasses various groups such as church groups, women's organizations, trade unions and environmental groups, among others. Press freedom is generally respected, but there are some threats to public debate, like the country's defamation law and Indonesian diplomatic pressure for an end to any form of support for West Papuan separatism. In the past, there have been restrictions on media freedom, access to information and the right to protest, leading to a downgrade in civic rights. Freedom of expression is a particular concern – the cabinet threatened to ban Facebook over inflammatory remarks made about the government. Infringements on the right to freedom of assembly have also been documented.

---

*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.*