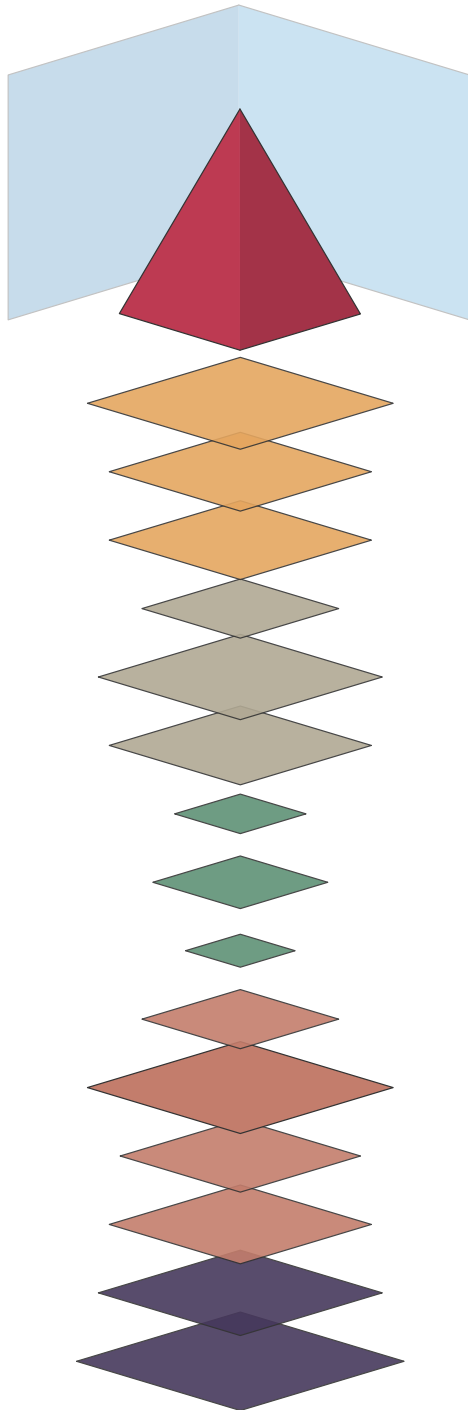


UNITED KINGDOM



5.75

CRIMINALITY SCORE

61st of 193 countries

10th of 44 European countries

2nd of 11 Western European countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

5.50

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 7.00

HUMAN SMUGGLING 6.00

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 6.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 4.50

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 6.50

ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 6.00

FLORA CRIMES 3.00

FAUNA CRIMES 4.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 2.50

HEROIN TRADE 4.50

COCAINE TRADE 7.00

CANNABIS TRADE 5.50

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 6.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 6.50

FINANCIAL CRIMES 7.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS

6.00

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 4.50

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 7.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 3.50

FOREIGN ACTORS 7.50

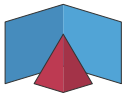
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 7.50



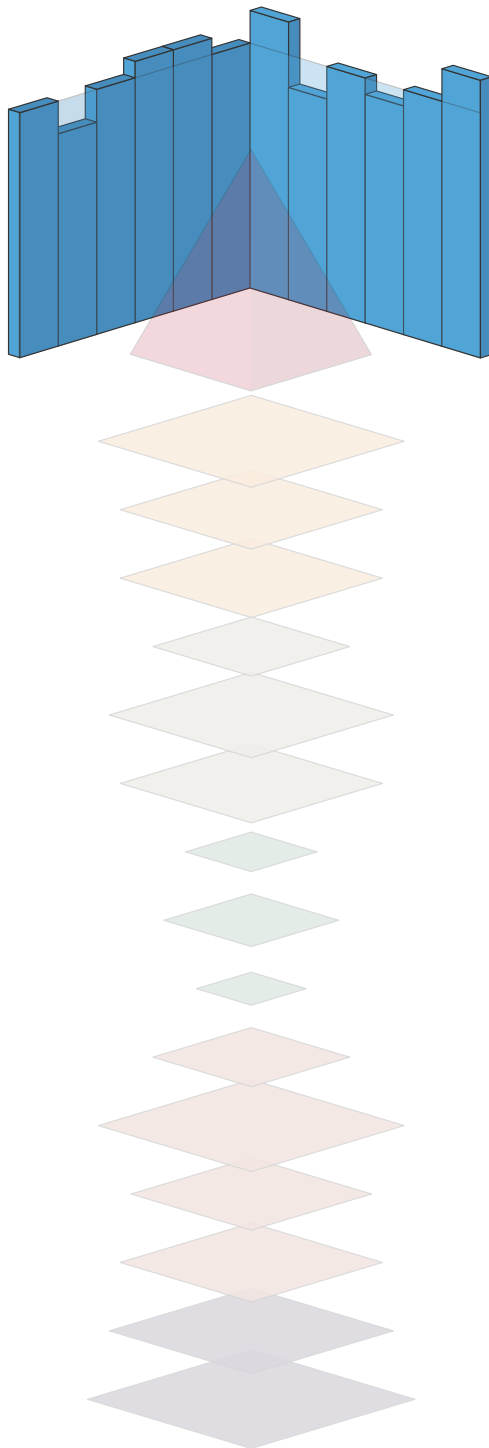
7.54

RESILIENCE SCORE





UNITED KINGDOM



7.54

RESILIENCE SCORE

12th of 193 countries

9th of 44 European countries

3rd of 11 Western European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	6.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	8.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	8.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.50
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	8.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	7.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.00
PREVENTION	7.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	8.50



5.75

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 5.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS 6.00



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

The UK is a major destination for human trafficking victims, mostly from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Exploitation in the form of forced labour and sexual trafficking is common for both domestic and foreign victims. Victims who are subject to forced labour are mostly exploited in sectors such as agriculture, construction and domestic service. Trafficking victims are also forced to take part in criminal activities such as cannabis cultivation and the drug trade. Children and vulnerable adults are also trafficked, primarily for sexual exploitation, with children comprising one-fourth to one-third of reported victims. Irregular migrants, specifically unaccompanied children, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking in the country. Traffickers use various methods to exploit their victims, including debt bondage, confiscation of documents and threats of violence. Online platforms are also increasingly used for human trafficking.

The UK is also facing a significant challenge due to irregular migration and human smuggling, primarily caused by visa overstaying and document fraud. Thousands of undocumented individuals are camping in the UK border region, vulnerable to exploitation by organized crime groups. These groups, especially those active in France, are heavily involved in smuggling and charge large sums of money for their illegal services. The most common way for smuggled individuals to enter the UK is in lorries or other commercial vehicles transported by rail or ferry, subjecting them to significant personal risk. Recently, there has been a surge in the use of small boats for irregular crossings of the English Channel, which has gained popularity as a more affordable and swifter smuggling method compared to the aforementioned means of transportation. Although some limited law enforcement operations have been carried out, the response has not been systematically focused on interdiction and action against the organizers. UK-based networks have links with countries such as Albania, Ukraine and Romania, and are highly adaptable.

Extortion and protection racketeering are persistent issues in the UK, with foreign groups, particularly from Asia, often engaging in protection rackets within their ethnic communities. National organized criminal groups also engage in extortion practices, victimizing individuals and businesses. Northern Ireland has a long history of extortion to maintain paramilitary control, generating millions of pounds per year for paramilitary organizations. However, due to underreporting, the full scope of the issue is challenging to assess. In recent years, cyber-affiliated extortion and blackmail have been increasing. While less

than a tenth of extortion attempts are likely to be reported to the police due to victims' fears of reputational damage or retaliation, extortion are still prevalent crimes and more likely to be linked to organized crime.

TRADE

The UK's strict policy and law enforcement measures have helped maintain a low rate of gun crime. However, the smuggling of military-grade firearms into the country by organized crime groups and urban gangs is a priority threat. The increasing use of firearms in connection with organized crime has resulted in high-profile incidents where innocent members of the public have been killed. Firearms are often trafficked into the UK from Central and Eastern Europe, concealed in vehicles on channel ferry and tunnel routes. The online trade, particularly on the dark web, is also a distribution route for illegal firearms. The rise of 3D printing has altered the market and supply for firearms people sought to purchase or produce firearms domestically as an alternative to weapons smuggled from abroad.

Counterfeiting and piracy are costly problems for the British economy. While luxury goods and apparel remain prime targets for counterfeiters, criminals are increasingly turning to more dangerous items, such as medicines, medical equipment, car parts, toys, food, cosmetics and household electrical goods. Brexit changes have made the UK more vulnerable to the trade of counterfeit goods, as the UK no longer has direct access to the EU-wide intelligence database used to alert authorities to intercept shipments and routes used by counterfeiters. The revenue and customs authority has implemented an equivalent UK system known as the Intellectual Property Office intelligence hub since Britain left the EU, but its efficacy remains to be seen. Counterfeiting is also linked to other criminal activities such as the narcotics trade, money laundering and terrorism, which raises concerns.

The illicit trade of excise goods, such as tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, is a significant issue, with criminal networks using a range of tactics to smuggle and trade these products. The UK's exit from the EU has presented challenges for authorities seeking to combat the illicit trade of excisable goods due to limited intelligence-sharing and cooperation with EU countries. However, the UK government has responded by revising laws and implementing measures to increase enforcement, such as deploying overseas intelligence officers, adding customs officers and increasing the use of x-ray scanners.

ENVIRONMENT

Illegal flora trafficking is an issue in the UK, with Heathrow airport being the primary point of seizure. The illegal harvest of protected plants, including rare orchid species, is also a concern, and enforcement is challenging due to difficulties in identifying protected species. Although there is limited data available on wild plant-related crimes domestically, reports of illegal uprooting of bluebell bulbs have emerged. Additionally, the UK serves as a crucial transit route for illegal flora trafficking in Europe. Wildlife trafficking is also a severe problem, with the UK serving as a transit and destination point for illegally-traded species such as live birds, reptile parts and products made from tigers, rhinos and elephants. In fact, the UK ranks among the top global wildlife importers. Fauna crimes in the UK include hare coursing, fish and deer poaching, and the persecution of badgers, birds of prey and bats.

Non-renewable resource crimes in the UK are generally limited in influence and value, with only a few isolated cases of gold theft and illicit export of precious metals. Criminal activity related to the oil trade, primarily in Northern Ireland, is mainly in the form of excise fraud. Fuel theft has increased following rising fuel prices due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Although non-renewable resource crimes have a limited impact on society, excise fraud related to oil remains a concern. The illicit outbound movement of precious metals appears to have increased, with gold being used to launder criminal funds.

DRUGS

The UK's heroin trade is controlled by organized crime groups which primarily import it from Afghanistan via Pakistan. The majority of these groups are poly-drug distributors, making it difficult to separate their activities into individual commodities. Heroin is imported by various methods, but public transport is frequently used in heroin imports from Dublin. The decrease in interdiction at the UK border as a result of the border force focusing more on human smuggling, has led to increased heroin on British streets. Heroin and opiates account for almost half of all drug-related deaths.

The UK is a large and profitable market for cocaine. The drug is typically smuggled via maritime container ships arriving at European hub ports such as Antwerp and Rotterdam, and subsequently transported to the UK. Albanian criminal organizations are major players in the cocaine market, and UK-based groups involved in the trade are also increasing. Evidence suggests that crack cocaine use is rising in England and Wales. The county lines drug distribution model is characterized by the exploitation of children and young individuals, the creation and takeover of rural drug markets, and violence and intimidation tactics used to enforce discipline.

Cannabis is the most commonly seized and used drug in the UK. While recreational use of cannabis is illegal, there has been growing interest in its use for medicinal purposes. Law enforcement is increasingly tolerating personal use of cannabis, but organized crime groups still supply a large chunk of the cannabis market. COVID-19 has led to an increase in domestic cannabis cultivation, but most cannabis is still imported by land, sea and air transport from countries like Afghanistan, Morocco and the Netherlands. Albanian gangs have overtaken Vietnamese gangs in dominating the cannabis farm market in the country. Albanian gangs are known to recruit migrant workers for these illicit cannabis farms, and are reportedly exploiting loopholes in the Modern Slavery Act to avoid prosecution.

The synthetic drug trade in the UK is controlled by organized criminal gangs, and consumption of synthetic drugs has led to an increase in the number of deaths related to drug abuse in the country. The UK drug market has diversified with the emergence of a variety of new psychoactive substances, commonly referred to as legal highs. The drugs most commonly trafficked to the UK are stimulants such as amphetamine, methylamphetamine and ecstasy (MDMA). The chemicals necessary for amphetamine production continue to enter the country; street prices of amphetamine have dropped, indicating rising availability of the drug.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

In the field of cybercrime, the distinction between nation-states and criminal groups is increasingly blurred, making it difficult for UK enforcement agencies to attribute responsibility. Home-grown cybercriminals are becoming more sophisticated and pose a rising threat. As the country moves towards becoming a cashless society and the public's knowledge of technology increases, the threat of cybercrime continues to grow. The most frequent cyber-threat is that of low-sophistication malware attacks targeting businesses and the public. Social media and email hacking have also increased significantly, with ransomware and distributed denial-of-service attacks posing a significant threat to UK businesses and organizations. The majority of ransomware criminal groups that target the UK are based in and around Russia. While it is unclear to what extent these groups are directed by the Kremlin, they are known to benefit from the tacit consent of the Russian state. The evolving technical capabilities of malware have also facilitated new crimes such as crypto-mining malware that targets digital currencies like Bitcoin. These digital currencies also pose a significant risk of facilitating illegal activity on the dark web, including the illegal drug market, weapons trading and child exploitation.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes, including fraud, constitute the largest stand-alone crime type in England and Wales, where the majority of reported cases of fraud is cyber-enabled. Digital fraud has risen substantially in the UK, with account takeovers and payment transfer frauds increasing exponentially. Organized UK cybercrime groups are motivated by profit, and new and innovative fraud types continue to emerge. The British economy's openness to foreign capital and investment, its integration into the global financial system and business-friendly regulatory frameworks make it vulnerable to criminal exploitation. Limited liability partnerships (LLPs) in the UK are linked to a range of corruption cases, including embezzlement, misuse of public resources and tax and sanctions evasion, as well as weapons and goods smuggling. The scale of corruption schemes in the UK is enormous, worth billions of pounds over the past decade. The abuse of UK companies in these schemes can be attributed, in large part, to the permissive environment that enables the formation of secretive UK legal entities en masse. Weak checks on information, quick and easy formation, transparency loopholes and ineffective supervision and enforcement contribute to these deficiencies. Financial crime is a significant threat to the security and prosperity of the UK, impacting citizens, private sector businesses and the government. The lack of law enforcement response and separation of fraud and identity theft, even when stolen identities are used to commit fraud, has increased public anxiety.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Foreign criminal groups, including Asian, Russian and Balkan organized crime syndicates, continue to operate in the UK. Albanian gangs are believed to be consolidating power in the UK criminal underworld, particularly in the cocaine market. Russian organized crime groups are also increasing their hold and influence in the UK, involved in money laundering, cyber-attacks and targeted assassinations. There is growing evidence of significant relationships between oligarchs connected to Russia and businesses connected to members of parliament and the political establishment. Chinese state-owned enterprises also pose a significant challenge to the UK's national security due to their penetration of critical national infrastructure,

particularly communication networks. They also control much of the precursor chemical market, necessary for drug production, and the market in production and distribution of counterfeit goods. However, the extent of foreign actors' participation in some of the criminal activities carried out in the country is sometimes inflated by the media and the government's rhetoric.

Domestic criminal organizations, including mafia-style groups, have been expanding their influence in certain areas of the UK, especially in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Glasgow. These organizations are primarily involved in drug cartels and money laundering. Some of them maintain a family-based structure and have small-level units disbursed across the country. However, this actor-type has expanded only moderately in recent years, allowing more organized crime groups that operate as loose networks to proliferate. These groups work with different nationalities, blend legal and illegal activities, and collaborate with major money launderers. In the UK, criminal networks have a significant presence, with thousands of groups operating and a considerable portion of the country's GDP consisting of laundered criminal money. Modern criminal networks are defined as self-formed associations that engage in serious and continuous crime for mutual profit and power, primarily focusing on the illegal drug market, firearms, modern slavery and immigration crimes.

The British government has updated its plans to tackle economic crime and fraud in the private sector, which has been linked to money laundering and tax evasion. However, the existence of a network of enablers based in the UK, who facilitate large-scale money laundering, poses a significant reputational risk to the country's integrity. These enablers include accountants, lawyers, investment managers, notaries and company formation agents who assist in moving, cleaning, spending and defending ill-gotten gains within the legitimate economy. In fact, a significant number of all LLPs ever incorporated in the UK show major red flags for their use in high-end financial crimes.

The state, for its part, denies any active involvement in organized crime, though isolated cases of state-embedded criminal actors have been reported. Concerns have been raised about corruption in the judicial system and connections between members of the UK establishment and Russian oligarchs.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The UK is considered to be a stable country. The government's commitment to tackling organized crime is evident in its transparent approach to crime levels. This includes sharing accurate data on firearm use, drug seizures and imports, and deaths caused by illegal substances. However, years of cuts to the police service have resulted in the lowest number of officers for decades, and the country's reliance on the private sector to raise funds and tackle crime as 'first line defenders' has increased. Leadership in the UK has been problematic, with scandals leading to frequent changes in prime ministers. As a result, the public has lost faith in the current government, particularly with the increase in inflation and interest rates. There are also concerns about corruption, nepotism and an overall lack of transparency which particularly attracted attention in recent years following the awarding of public contracts. Such deals between the government and private companies have been deemed unlawful, sparking public concern and a renewed debate on banning second jobs for members of parliament to protect democracy. Even though the government claims that transparency and accountability are at the forefront of its policies, there has been an increasing lack of trust among the citizens towards the government due to the recent scandals and corruption cases.

The UK has ratified all relevant international treaties against organized crime, except the UN Firearms Protocol. The country actively engages in mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and asset recovery, but cooperation with neighbouring countries is complicated due to the uncertain nature of the future relationship with the EU. Brexit negotiations and the influx of foreign nationals have placed pressure on UK relations with France, and there is a question of whether UK-EU foreign policy cooperation will become much more reactive rather than strategic and long-term. The UK has yet to conclude cooperation treaties or bilateral agreements with EU member states in the areas of judicial and law enforcement cooperation. As of today, Brexit appears to have had a tangible negative effect on the UK's ability to tackle the trade in counterfeit goods. The UK has implemented a range of policies and laws to combat organized crime, including human, arms and drug trafficking, as well as environmental crime. Nonetheless, concerns have been raised over the Nationality and Borders Bill, which undermines the 1951 Refugee Convention, and plans to send smuggled individuals and asylum seekers to Rwanda while their claims are considered.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The legal system in the UK is not unified, with separate systems in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. While the judiciary is independent, the prosecution services have been criticized for being weak, as the number of cases prosecuted has declined despite an increase in fraud. The prison system has faced challenges, including a growing backlog of court cases that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about corruption and drug availability, and reports of increased use of force against prisoners. The use of mobile phones remains a problem across prisons, as it enables contact between inmates and outside gangs.

The UK has an independent and well-resourced law enforcement system, with the National Crime Agency leading the fight against serious and organized crime, economic crime, fraud, corruption, cybercrime and child exploitation. However, individual cases of fraud and economic crime are considered low priority, and UK law enforcement still lacks the capability to deal with the full range of threats from organized crime, such as wildlife trafficking, money laundering and foreign-based human trafficking gangs. The Metropolitan Police is the largest police force in the UK, but recent failures have led to public distrust and concerns over recruitment standards. The UK government has also been criticized for measures that broaden police powers and restrict protest and assembly rights in England and Wales, which led to mass protests. Additionally, UK police have been accused of using stop-and-search powers disproportionately, with black people being seven times more likely to be searched than white people.

Since leaving the EU, the UK has maintained strict border controls, with increased restrictions on EU nationals and visitors requiring visas for extended travel to EU member states. One area of contention remains the future border arrangements between Ireland and Northern Ireland, with concerns over regulatory divergence and the potential for increased smuggling. The UK faces a small but complex and unpredictable terrorist threat, with the threat level having been raised to 'severe' in previous years.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The UK is estimated to be one of the world's most prominent hubs for money laundering, with criminals laundering billions of pounds every year. Although it is not identified as having any significant strategic anti-money laundering shortcomings, the UK is categorized as a major concern for financial crime. Despite this, the country has a strong and effective system to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as to recover illicit funds. The

ease of money laundering, particularly in London, has been widely criticized, as well as the fact that the UK has several tax haven jurisdictions. Several large-scale money-laundering operations have been discovered that run through banks in the Baltic and Nordic regions to the UK. The main source of these funds appears to be countries within the former Soviet Union, particularly Russia and Azerbaijan, with many linked to significant corruption cases. A frequent characteristic of these 'laundromats' is the widespread use of legal entities established in the UK as channels for funds with questionable origins. LLPs and Scottish limited partnerships were commonly employed in these schemes. Known criminal activities facilitated by British LLPs include Russian tax fraud; large-scale bank thefts in Moldova, Kazakhstan and Ukraine; bribery and money laundering by Mexican drug cartels; and corruption in the Nigerian defence sector.

The UK has one of the freest economies globally, with a highly effective and transparent regulatory environment that places a strong emphasis on independent economic regulation. The private sector is dominated by small- and medium-sized enterprises, which account for the majority of businesses. However, the impact of Brexit may threaten investment and limit trade flows with the EU, the UK's largest economic partner. As part of its post-Brexit commercial strategy, the UK has secured trade deals with Australia, Japan and other countries.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The UK has a witness protection scheme in place to safeguard those who have provided evidence against a crime and are at risk. In addition, support teams are available across England and Wales to help victims and witnesses recover after a crime. Local support is free even if the crime has not been reported to the police. The government has invested heavily in research and has introduced minimum standards of care in all future contracts for support services to adult trafficking victims. However, the government's efforts to combat human trafficking have been mixed. Concerns have

been raised over the treatment of foreign victims and the vulnerability of workers from the European Economic Area. Furthermore, plans to send migrants and asylum seekers to Rwanda while their claims are considered have raised fears over the human rights record in the receiving country, and the potential for exploitation by organized crime groups.

The UK government is committed to preventing various forms of organized crime, such as drug trafficking, human smuggling and fraud, and has implemented numerous campaigns and prevention programmes to achieve this goal. The government has published a 10-year plan to reduce the supply and demand for drugs and deliver a high-quality treatment and recovery system. Strategies for achieving these goals include restricting upstream flow, securing the border and targeting the middle market.

The UK is considered a stable democracy with a strong record of protecting political rights and civil liberties. However, recent years have seen concerns over increased government surveillance, rising Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. While the country has an independent media, concerns have been raised about impartiality and freedom of information restrictions. The government's commitment to defending global media freedom has been called into question due to domestic restrictions, such as blacklisting critical media outlets and threats of libel action. The concentration of power and influence in the hands of a few media companies has also threatened pluralism in the British media landscape. Despite these issues, the UK has an active civil society and academic sector, as well as a large number of NGOs and charities. It also has a high level of social cohesion and many community-run initiatives, suggesting a strong sense of social support and generosity within society.

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.