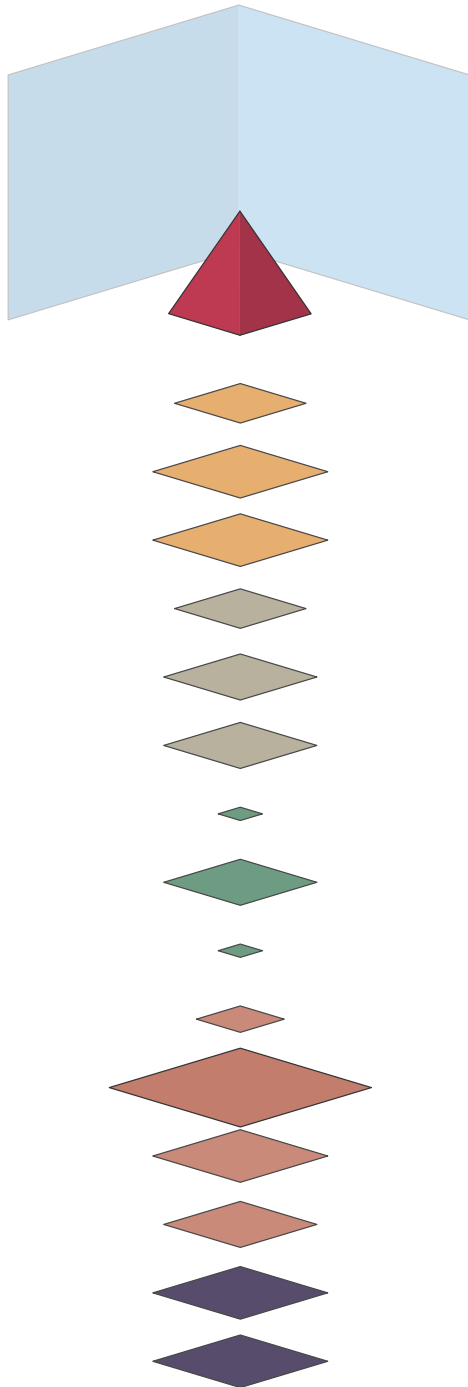


URUGUAY



3.22 CRIMINALITY SCORE

172nd of 193 countries
30th of 35 American countries
12th of 12 South American countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS **3.33**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	3.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	3.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	3.50
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	3.50
FLORA CRIMES	1.00
FAUNA CRIMES	3.50
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.00
COCAINE TRADE	6.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	4.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	4.00



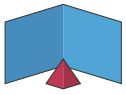
CRIMINAL ACTORS **3.10**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	2.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	4.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.00

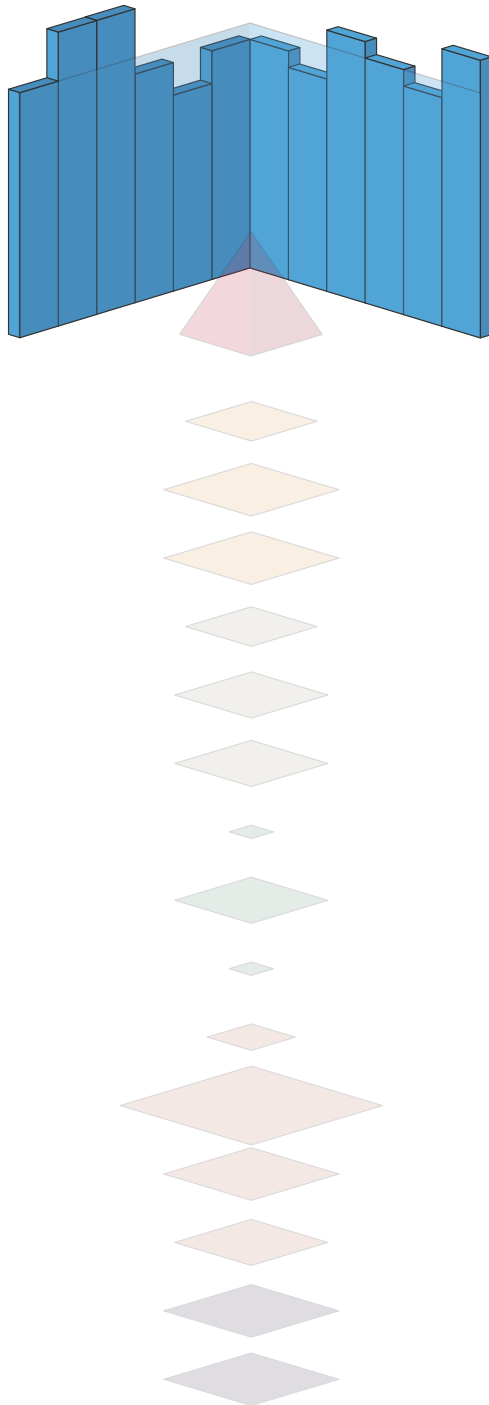


7.50 RESILIENCE SCORE





URUGUAY



7.50

RESILIENCE SCORE

13th of 193 countries

1st of 35 American countries

1st of 12 South American countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	7.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	9.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	9.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	7.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	7.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	6.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	8.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.50
PREVENTION	7.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	8.50



3.22

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS 3.33



CRIMINAL ACTORS 3.10



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Uruguay is considered a small source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. Women and girls are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation domestically, with victims mainly from Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and other South American countries. Although prostitution houses are legal in Uruguay, at least a quarter of the women in them are reportedly victims of human trafficking. Impoverished families in Uruguay are also known to exploit their children in prostitution, while foreign workers from neighbouring countries are subjected to forced labour in various industries. Uruguay is also a source country for women who travel to Europe, mainly Spain and Italy, for domestic and sex work and are often subjected to labour exploitation due to their lack of immigration status.

Uruguay is also a transit country for human smuggling. Some Cuban nationals are recruited in Havana and transported to Uruguay, where they apply for refugee status, while others pay thousands of dollars to continue their journey north to the US. Criminal networks use fraudulent documentation to facilitate the transit of smuggled individuals, and these networks have contacts in different countries in the region, such as Ecuador and Peru. In addition, there has been a rise in the number of Venezuelans who have come to Uruguay, applying for asylum upon their arrival.

There is evidence that extortion exists in the country. Organized crime groups have developed sophisticated strategies, including sending voice notes impersonating police officers and prosecutors, and even sending letters with the Paraguayan police seal to intimidate victims. However, these crimes do not have a notable impact on Uruguayan society. There is no evidence of protection racketeering activities in Uruguay.

TRADE

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, arms trafficking within and outside Uruguay continues to occur. Cases include the trafficking of weapons from Argentina to Uruguay and the online sale of these arms by Uruguayan nationals, as well as the trafficking of arms from Uruguay to Brazil, involving local police officers. The inconsistency in gun regulations between different countries in the region is identified as a contributing factor to the illegal trade, with Brazil's demand for pistols that are legal in Uruguay but illegal in Brazil being a prime example. The increasing frequency of the killing of Uruguayan police agents, who are robbed

or killed to acquire their firearms for the black market, is a severe consequence of the illegal market.

Counterfeit goods are also present in the Uruguayan market. Replicas of famous brands, including electronics, clothing and streaming equipment, are among the counterfeit items sold. In recent years, the online sale of counterfeit products has increased, with some of these products arriving from Paraguay and China. While Uruguay has a market for counterfeit goods, it is not a regional hub for counterfeit items, and the size of this market is much smaller compared to those of neighbouring Argentina and Brazil. Furthermore, no evidence suggests that the market is connected to organized crime actors or associated with any acts of violence. Border smuggling of general and excise goods has become ingrained in the local economies and cultures of many regions in Uruguay. This phenomenon has persisted over time, with governments often turning a blind eye. There is a wide variation in the type of products sold, from food to beverages.

ENVIRONMENT

Uruguay is considered to be one of the least biodiverse countries on the continent. As a result, the illicit trade of flora is low. In terms of fauna crimes, the country has seen a rise in the illegal trade of fish, particularly those coming from Argentina. The presence of Chinese vessels in the port of Montevideo has alarmed environmentalists due to the ongoing issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by foreign fleets. The port of Montevideo serves as a favoured destination for foreign fishing fleets carrying out illegal fishing activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, criminals also expanded their use of e-commerce to sell wildlife. While there is no evidence of the involvement of international criminal groups, as is often the case in other parts of the continent, dozens of animal species are seized from traffickers every month, with birds being the most affected. However, compared to neighbouring countries, wildlife trafficking in Uruguay appears to be small.

Uruguay has effective state control over non-renewable resource crimes, and there is no evidence to suggest that this criminal market exists in Uruguay.

DRUGS

Uruguay has limited heroin and opioid consumption. However, a market for heroin is closely linked to the cocaine trade and controlled mainly by Mexican and Italian organizations. While Uruguay is a small player in the cocaine market compared to its neighbours, it still serves as a transit country for drugs destined for Europe. Criminal organizations from Colombia, Mexico, Brazil and Russia

are reportedly operating in the country. Meanwhile, local demand for cocaine exists, particularly for 'pasta base', a crack-like derivative.

Uruguay allows individuals aged 18 or older to legally obtain cannabis by purchasing it from authorized pharmacies, becoming members of a club or cultivating cannabis domestically. However, the implementation of regulations around the legal marijuana trade has been slow, leaving room for illegal actors to fulfil the demand for the drug. Although the illicit market is shrinking, the majority of marijuana users in Uruguay still rely on the grey market to obtain it. Authorities are taking steps to make the legal market more appealing, such as releasing a new strain of state-produced commercial cannabis with a higher THC content. Legally produced cannabis is already being trafficked to neighbouring countries, but it is unlikely to become a major problem since the Uruguayan market is small.

Uruguay is a destination country for synthetic drugs, with local demand generating profits for criminal organizations. The use of synthetic drugs is on the rise, with ecstasy being the most popular. This is mainly consumed by the middle to high-income sectors of society. Authorities have reported that criminal groups are altering synthetic drugs with substances that increase the risk of intoxication, especially in young adults, who are the main consumers of these drugs in techno parties. While Uruguay is not a significant transit country for synthetic drugs, laboratories have been discovered, mainly to meet local demand.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

Ransomware attacks are increasingly common in the country, with state institutions being targeted, resulting in unauthorized access to databases containing biometric data of individuals, including photographs, fingerprints, names and identity document numbers. However, the market for cyber-dependent crimes does not appear to be substantial in value, nor does it appear to be related to organized crime groups.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

The most prevalent types of financial crimes encountered in Uruguay include identity fraud, Ponzi schemes and phishing. In recent years, there has been an increase in phishing scams. Although financial fraud does exist in the

country, it is not considered a common crime. Tax evasion, embezzlement and misuse of funds also occur, but there is no evidence to suggest that organized crime groups commit these crimes for financial gain or professional advantage.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mafia-style groups in Uruguay are small, and mainly focused on drug trafficking and money laundering. These groups are known for their links to the prison system and their use of violence. Some of these groups have gained visibility in Uruguay after members threatened prosecutors and police officers investigating their activities. In contrast, smaller criminal networks in Uruguay are considered family clans operating in poor neighbourhoods on the outskirts of major cities. These groups engage in criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, robbery and cattle rustling. While extortion and kidnappings are still rare, some small groups have ventured into these criminal areas in recent years. It is suggested that the increase in these criminal activities is due to clashes between groups vying for control of territories, with some leaders of these groups reportedly conducting criminal activities from within jail.

Foreign criminal organizations from Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Peru also operate in Uruguay, engaging in activities related to smuggling, drug trafficking and cattle rustling. Brazilian criminal groups are particularly active in border towns and have been involved in violent disputes over the control of drug trafficking in the region. The Italian mafia has a presence in the country, and drug trafficking networks linked to Paraguay have been present historically. Although there is corruption at the ground level of the police force and customs, there is no evidence of state-embedded actors controlling criminal markets or cooperating widely with criminal organizations. The police force is considered one of the most trustworthy institutions in the country, and the Uruguayan judicial system is one of the strongest in the region. Perpetrators of criminal activity are generally punished. However, private sector actors are involved in money laundering activities in the country. In recent years, law firms, corporations and some bank accounts have been implicated in money laundering cases. Nevertheless, reports of suspicious money laundering operations are decreasing.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Uruguay is a constitutional republic with a strong state, established political parties and a high degree of institutionalization. It boasts a robust rule of law and holds the top rank in the region for trust in political parties and parliament. Although there is no evidence of organized crime infiltrating the government, recent incidents involving drug traffickers and security forces have garnered criticism. While the country has made strides in combatting corruption, there is still a lack of adequate regulations on political party financing. Uruguay has a Law on Access to Public Information, which promotes transparency and ensures the right to access government information. Moreover, Uruguay has several institutions dedicated to ensuring accountability and transparency.

Uruguay is a committed signatory to multiple UN conventions, including those pertaining to corruption, drug trafficking and the preservation of endangered species. Uruguay's legalization of cannabis goes against the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, but the country still maintains strong cooperation with international law enforcement agencies and has extradition agreements with several nations. The National Central Bureau in Montevideo is a critical player in international efforts to combat trafficking and maintain regional security. Additionally, Uruguay has enhanced its collaboration with the Brazilian Air Force to better control irregular flights, deterring organized crime. Uruguay's legal framework against organized crime is comprehensive and covers all forms of illicit activity, including human trafficking and arms trafficking. However, it does not have specific provisions addressing vehicle crimes, such as the trafficking of motor vehicles or their parts, which is a considerable issue in the country.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Uruguay has specialized bodies within its judicial system to oversee organized crime cases, and there is a current policy to increase the use of videoconferencing for hearings to avoid logistical problems. Although several prosecutor offices are specialized in organized crime and appear to be effective, they lack sufficient resources. The country's prison system is struggling with chronic overcrowding and poor living conditions, with a high homicide rate, reports of torture and malnutrition, and a significant share of all prisoners in pre-trial detention. International organizations have raised concerns about torture, impunity and high levels of recidivism in the Uruguayan penitentiary system. While organized crime groups have low control in the country's prisons, some criminal operations related to drug trafficking take place from within them.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for public security and has institutions, such as the Republican Guard, a militarized police force, dedicated to fighting organized crime. However, a recent passport scandal, through which a prominent mafia boss was able to escape the country, has shown the lack of coordination among law enforcement and diplomatic officials. The Ministry of Interior has created a specialized cybercrime unit and a virtual platform to collect complaints or reports of crimes received by other law enforcement authorities.

Uruguay's porous borders with Argentina and Brazil make it a transit point for Europe-bound cocaine smuggled through land and river routes. The country has seen a rise in drug trafficking, possibly due to Brazil's militarization and zero-tolerance approach, which may have pushed some trafficking towards Uruguay. However, there is little evidence to suggest that criminal organizations control any part of the border, although Brazilian criminal organizations have recently increased their presence in these areas. Uruguay's territorial integrity is also compromised by ongoing structural challenges within the Air Force and Navy, which have inoperable planes, and a lack of radars and vessels. Despite these challenges, Uruguay is leading in cybersecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Uruguay has a comprehensive legal framework and mechanism pertaining to money laundering and terrorism financing. These regulations force banks to identify the final beneficiaries of funds and enable traceability for financial transactions. While Uruguay is considered to be one of the most resilient countries in South America regarding money laundering, it still needs to further strengthen its efforts in regulating online gambling.

The economic regulatory environment in Uruguay remains stable, with no major changes. The state is capable of regulating legitimate businesses and preventing organized crime from taking over any sector of the economy. Land and property rights are protected, and the country offers opportunities for business expansion. However, high taxes remain a challenge for businesses operating in Uruguay.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Uruguayan government has provided support and protection to trafficking victims through the Ministry of Social Development and its affiliated agencies. These agencies have played a crucial role in providing immediate response care, counselling, vocational training and housing to these victims of trafficking. However, there is a need for specialized long-term services for these victims as

government-funded services mainly focus on providing psycho-social and legal assistance. Victims are temporarily housed in hotels or referred to shelters intended for use by other populations, such as domestic violence victims, as there are no dedicated shelters for trafficking victims. Additionally, drug treatment services are scarce in the country and are generally run by civil society, and services aimed at preventing adverse health consequences among people who use drugs are limited.

Uruguay's efforts to prevent human trafficking include awareness-raising activities, training courses for diplomats and telephone hotlines for reporting crimes. However, the government has not implemented a new National Action Plan or allocated funding for such a plan. The Uruguayan National Police has made only sporadic efforts to improve the police-community relationship without leading to significant cultural changes in the institution.

Uruguay's civil society is very active in the debate over law enforcement, as seen in responses to proposed changes to the constitution. The country has a favourable media environment, with a high level of press freedom and civil liberties. While rare instances of threats, intimidation, political pressure on journalists, judicial harassment and attempted murder have occurred, they are relatively uncommon.

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.