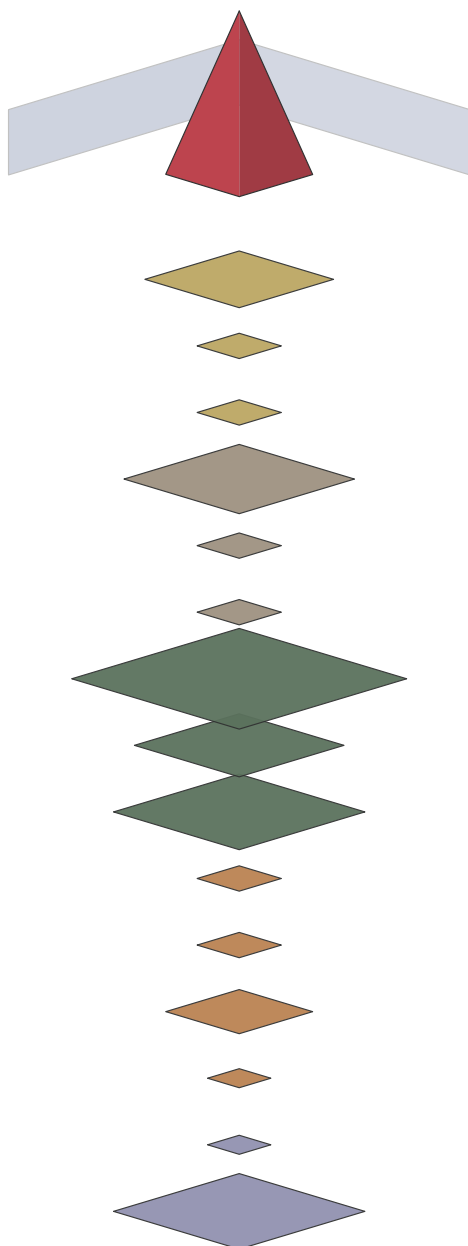




# EQUATORIAL GUINEA



**4.38**  
**CRIMINALITY SCORE**

42<sup>nd</sup> of 54 African countries  
9<sup>th</sup> of 11 Central African countries



**CRIMINAL MARKETS** **3.57**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4.5
HUMAN SMUGGLING	2
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	2
ARMS TRAFFICKING	5.5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2
FLORA CRIMES	8
FAUNA CRIMES	5
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	6
HEROIN TRADE	2
COCAINE TRADE	2
CANNABIS TRADE	3.5
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.5
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1.5
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6



**CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.2**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	2
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.5
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.5

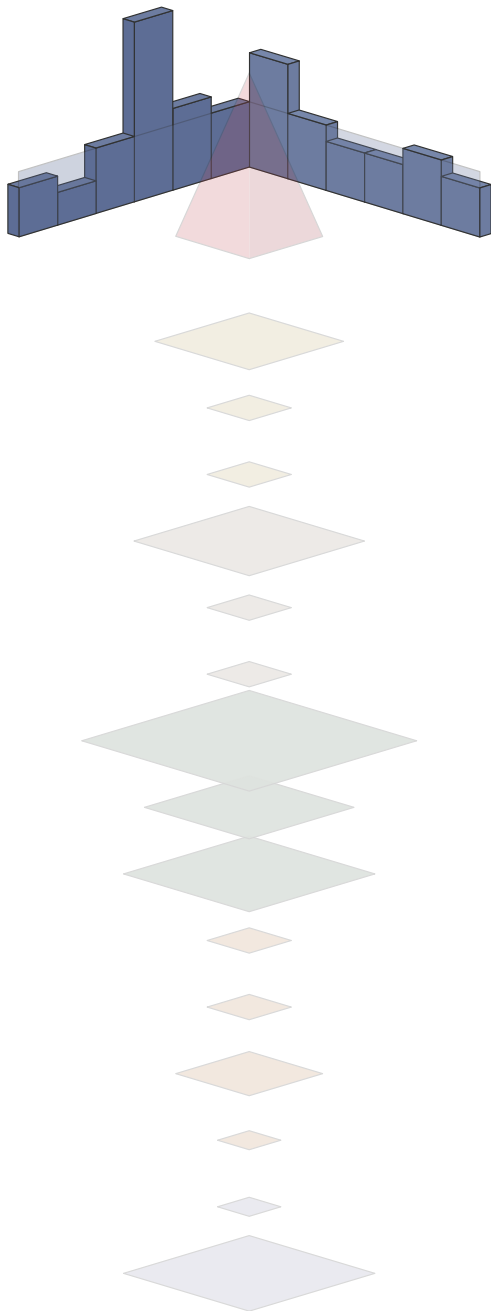


**2.21**  
**RESILIENCE SCORE**





# EQUATORIAL GUINEA



## 2.21 RESILIENCE SCORE

49<sup>th</sup> of 54 African countries  
9<sup>th</sup> of 11 Central African countries

<u>POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</u>	<b>1.5</b>
<u>GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u>	<b>1</b>
<u>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS</u>	<b>5.5</b>
<u>JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION</u>	<b>2.5</b>
<u>LAW ENFORCEMENT</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY</u>	<b>3.5</b>
<u>ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY</u>	<b>1.5</b>
<u>VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT</u>	<b>1.5</b>
<u>PREVENTION</u>	<b>2</b>
<u>NON-STATE ACTORS</u>	<b>1.5</b>



## 4.38 CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS **3.57**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.2**



# CRIMINALITY

## Criminal Markets

### PEOPLE

Equatorial Guinea remains a source country for women and girls subjected to sex trafficking and a destination for men, women, and children exploited in forced labour. Individuals from the region coming to Equatorial Guinea to seek employment are also vulnerable to labour exploitation, forced labour, or forced prostitution with most victims exploited in the cities of Malabo, Bata, and Mongomo. Children from the country's rural areas and from neighbouring countries are also subjected to forced labour. Moreover, local women, as well as those entering from other countries, such as Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, Paraguay, Ethiopia, Benin and Cameroon, are also exploited by traffickers in the form of forced prostitution and domestic servitude. There are also reports suggesting the involvement of security force officials as well as business elites in this criminal market.

Although Equatorial Guinea is an attractive destination for Central and West African workers, there is no substantial evidence of human smuggling instigated and maintained by criminal groups in the country. Moreover, irregular migrants are usually victims of extortion, raids, and physical abuse by law enforcement officials. Apart from cases of extortion committed by state security officials against refugees and other foreign citizens, in the form of bribes, reports are limited.

### TRADE

While Equatorial Guinea is not known to have arms trafficking groups, the smuggling of small guns to neighbouring countries occurs. Piracy and maritime crimes are rampant in the Gulf of Guinea, in which Malabo is located. Gun crime is a major component of piracy and most weapons that enter West Africa illegally are smuggled through Equatorial Guinea. There are also concerns over increased arms trafficking from Chad and the Central African Republic. Additionally, political instability and corruption are rife and create favourable conditions for small-arms and light-weapon trafficking, which has been linked to other crimes, including drug and human trafficking. Additionally, arms trafficking in Equatorial Guinea can be traced to the ruling elite and their international ties.

Information on illicit trade in excise goods as well as counterfeit goods in Equatorial Guinea is scarce and does not point to developed criminal markets with substantial reach within the country. For instance, reports of more relevant trades, such as tobacco, date back to 2012 when a large tobacco company was engaged in smuggling and facilitating networks to dispose of its products illegally.

### ENVIRONMENT

Much of the continental portion of Equatorial Guinea is covered by dense tropical rainforests that have long been exploited to source illegal flora and fauna. Illegal logging is still common for national consumption and for export, making Equatorial Guinea one of the major source countries, with the export of logs to China in particular increasing to record levels over the past decade. Given its scale, however, much of the illicit timber may originate in Gabon and Cameroon. Corruption in the sector is rampant, with state officials reportedly awarding concessions to firms that do not adhere to felling or export restrictions. However, unsustainable exploitation of timber has been decreasing since the country's recent oil boom. This made the economy and the criminal markets shift away from logging activities. Nevertheless, operators in the timber sector have continued to systematically cut prohibited species and to export logs, despite a decree which regulated the logging of certain species. Unsustainable hunting is the greatest threat to fauna, and primates are particularly threatened. Illegal hunting, the sale and consumption of bushmeat, and possession of great apes occur especially on Bioko Island, which is home to seven species of threatened monkeys. There is also illegal trade in pangolin meat, which is mostly trafficked towards Asia. Due to the declining population, there has been a reported increase in elephant poaching in recent years. Moreover, Equatorial Guinean territorial waters are a hotspot for illegal fishing, often carried out by European and Asian vessels. Despite anecdotal evidence, there are no reports available publicly exposing criminal groups in charge of the illegal wildlife trade.

Equatorial Guinea is among the largest oil producers in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the oil and mineral-related profits are largely diverted to a corrupt and unaccountable elite. Despite the increase in government revenue, improvements in living standards have been slow to develop.



## DRUGS

Authorities have shown concern over the level of drug trafficking of heroin, cocaine, cannabis and synthetic drugs in the country. However, from the data available, there is little evidence to suggest that drug markets are pervasive in Equatorial Guinea. There is little evidence that heroin trafficking occurs in Equatorial Guinea. There were previous accounts of diplomats from the country being involved in heroin smuggling, and given regional transit flows, it seems likely that some heroin may be trafficked through Equatorial Guinea, though the evidence is insubstantial. There is an indication of some presence of cocaine in the domestic market, with small quantities trafficked into the country by air. There are also concerns over increased consumption of cocaine in recent years, however, it is not possible to identify any organized group involved in cocaine trafficking.

Cannabis is consumed at all levels of society and is the most prevalent drug in the country. Cannabis plants are grown nationwide and the final product is sold on almost every street. Given that the production, sale and consumption of cannabis are effectively tolerated by society and the government, involvement by criminal organizations is limited. However, a campaign launched by the authorities and conducted in 2022 against cannabis production and consumption resulted in the detention of traffickers and consumers all over the country. The country remains a source country of cannabis, with some trafficking towards Gabon. Though crystal methamphetamine is reportedly consumed in Equatorial Guinea, there is no information on the production and trafficking flows of this and other synthetic drugs in the country.

## CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

With the exception of attack campaigns targeting financial institutions in Equatorial Guinea in the past, there is no relevant information on the existence and extent of a cyber-dependent crime market in the country.

## FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are widespread in Equatorial Guinea, particularly among the ruling class close to the president, including his son who was convicted by the French and British judiciary for embezzlement of state funds in 2021. Assets in France belonging to the president's family with an estimated value of €150 million were frozen and seized. Funds are commonly embezzled from the exploitation of oil resources in Equatorial Guinea as well as control of almost all significant economic sectors by the ruling elite.

## Criminal Actors

The concentration of all economic processes by the country's ruling elite, with President Obiang as the central figure since 1979 is the root cause of a system built to serve the elite. For this reason, state-embedded criminal actors in Equatorial Guinea remain ubiquitous. There are substantial allegations that high-level officials profit from corrupt practices. Mismanagement of public funds, credible allegations of high-level corruption, and repression of civil society groups and opposition politicians, as well as unfair trials, persist in the country. Foreign authorities have conducted investigations into the presidential family and its alleged network for laundering embezzled funds, filing cases to recover millions of dollars in assets. Cases brought to trial in the US, France, Switzerland and Spain demonstrate repeated embezzlement by high-level officials. Corruption in the logging sector involves state-embedded actors awarding concessions fraudulently, and failing to provide proper oversight or penalties for firms not observing felling or export limits. Private sector actors, often with close ties to the ruling elite primarily because of the Obiang family's tight control over the country's major sources of economic revenues, particularly in timber and oil industries, are also prevalent in the country. Private sector actors in the oil extraction industry are known to be involved in human trafficking activities, specifically forced labour, as these actors have unchecked power over the territory in matters of labour and labour rights. Private companies colluding with public agencies allow for the spread of forced labour and exploitation in the country.

Publicly available data pertaining to criminal networks active in Equatorial Guinea is limited. However, foreign actors are active in the criminal market of the country. While Spanish, Chinese and North Korean criminal actors are involved in sex trafficking and forced labour activities, Russian actors are engaged in arms trafficking with Equatoguinean officials. Conversely, there is no evidence to suggest the presence of mafia-like structures in the country.



# RESILIENCE

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

President Obiang has been in power since 1979 making him the world's longest-serving president. He has been described as one of Africa's most brutal dictators and worst abusers of human rights on the continent. While the political leadership has expressed their will to counter drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other organized crime-related issues, these statements are generally not followed up by actions. Notably, the government has never prosecuted nor convicted any human trafficking suspects. Moreover, it is believed that some of the leadership benefits from organized crime schemes, rendering them unreliable with respect to fighting organized crime and corruption. Diversion of public funds and corruption are widespread in commerce and government, particularly with regard to the use of proceeds from extractive industries, including oil, gas, and timber, the most likely sources of laundered funds. The government uses various actors, not just the security forces, to intimidate political opponents and even members of the dominant political party into following government lines. Corruption in Equatorial Guinea is still widely spread among authorities and in the family of the president, as Equatorial Guinea is described as a kleptocracy and a country whose corrupt leaders use their powers to exploit people and natural resources, embezzling funds at the expense of the population. Corruption carried out by such political elite, including the sons of the president, has been the subject of several trials in different jurisdictions, including the US, UK and France. Despite the existence of a legal framework and mechanisms pertaining to anti-corruption, these are largely not enforced or implemented.

Although Equatorial Guinea has ratified international legal instruments pertaining to organized crime, it is not a party to key international agreements regarding corruption and bribery. Even though the government committed to strengthening anticorruption efforts, after ratifying the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the AU's Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption in order to receive a loan from the International Monetary Fund, it has not yet fully implemented any of those measures. As a member of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, however, Equatorial Guinea has agreed to regulations to suppress terror financing as well as regional cooperation on criminal police matters. The government also claims to actively participate in all initiatives seeking to normalize

the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea. For instance, in the past two years, Equatoguinean border authorities increased cooperation with their counterpart officials from Gabon and Cameroon to screen for possible trafficking in victims, but they did not identify any despite some cases being considered illegal adoption. Due to its geostrategic position and resources, Equatorial Guinea has been benefitting from international ties with democratic and authoritarian countries, establishing strategic partnerships with different allies, and enabling the survival of the regime. On the national level, even though there is regulatory framework pertaining to corruption and organized crime, including human, arms and drug trafficking, human smuggling, and fauna- and flora-related crimes, these are not adequately enforced, allowing state-embedded actors to operate with impunity.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judicial system is still not independent, as the president is the chief magistrate and no specialized judicial units exist to counter organized crime. Since the implementation of the law addressing human trafficking and smuggling, neither convictions of traffickers nor prosecution of trafficking cases have been reported. The scarce judicial capacity is attributed to the pervasiveness of corruption involving all levels of institutions. As for the penitentiary system in the country, prisons are reportedly overcrowded and have bad conditions, which include poor sanitation, denial of medical care, visits and food, and physical abuse. Law enforcement has limited presence in major cities and rural areas and often engages in extortion. Moreover, there are minimal law enforcement efforts to counter trafficking in the country. National security forces are accused of engaging in torture (despite a 2006 law banning it), as well as other violent acts during interrogations with impunity. Even though the situation regarding territorial integrity has remained steady, the localization of the country makes it vulnerable to organized crime. While the state receives vast financial resources to control its borders, there is no strong political will to protect the territory and infrastructures against organized criminal activities.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The implementation and enforcement of anti-money laundering laws are weak, and officials have often been investigated by foreign authorities for money



laundering and corruption while no successful money laundering prosecution carried out by Equatoguinean people was reported. Proceeds from the extractive industries, including oil, gas, and timber are the most likely sources of laundered money in the country. Cross-border currency transactions and illegal international money transfers by companies or corrupt individuals are the most significant methods used to launder funds. International law enforcement cooperation in relation to money laundering is weak.

Equatorial Guinea is one of the worst countries to conduct business in the world owing to the difficulties in setting up the business, such as pervasive corruption, risks of extortion and onerous bureaucratic procedures. Despite the regulatory reform to attract legitimate businesses into the country, most of these measures, such as public procurement processes, are disregarded. The discovery and exploitation of large oil and gas reserves have contributed to dramatic economic growth, but fluctuating oil prices and slowing or declining oil production have resulted in much lower GDP growth in recent years. The government is actively soliciting foreign investment. However, foreign assistance programmes by the World Bank and the IMF have been cut since 1993 because of corruption and mismanagement, indicating weak economic regulatory capacity by the government.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Although the government of Equatorial Guinea has been trying to develop formal victim screening and referral procedures through funding more anti-trafficking measures, identification and referrals to protective services remain low. The anti-trafficking law mandates the government to provide legal assistance, psychological and medical care, lodging, food, access to education, training, and employment opportunities to trafficking victims, but it does not provide these services to any trafficking victims, as none have been formally identified.

And despite the statement pertaining to the increase in the budget for NGOs involved in supporting trafficking victims, no particular improvements are noted because of the lack of coordination as well as the absence of independent NGOs in the country. There are also no witness protection mechanisms in Equatorial Guinea. Conversely, the government has been trying to prevent human trafficking, specifically by conducting awareness campaigns through radio and television and training for security forces, even though the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions resulted in the postponement of some planned training events.

There is no independent media in the country and censorship is deeply implemented, as journalists can be fired and arrested, and their equipment confiscated. Domestic broadcast media is restricted, and any outlets that do operate are almost entirely controlled by the Obiang regime. Foreign journalists who wish to visit the country also face heavy restrictions. For instance, visas of foreign journalists willing to monitor the November 2022 elections were denied. The government is accused of constant human rights violations and the persecution of political opposition by various civil society organizations. Freedom of association and assembly is also severely curtailed, with the government imposing restrictive conditions on the registration and operation of NGOs. Protests are not permitted, and police and law enforcement officials disperse any such crowds, including by force. The few civil society activists who work on human rights-related issues often face intimidation, harassment and reprisals. The existing non-state actors mostly consist of private elites who are intimately linked to the government and have often been implicated in trials for misappropriation of state funds. Most of the population does not use the internet, which is also heavily controlled by official authorities with internet blackouts occurring during specific events, such as elections. The government is also known to use cyberspace surveillance systems to monitor political opponents and human rights activists.

