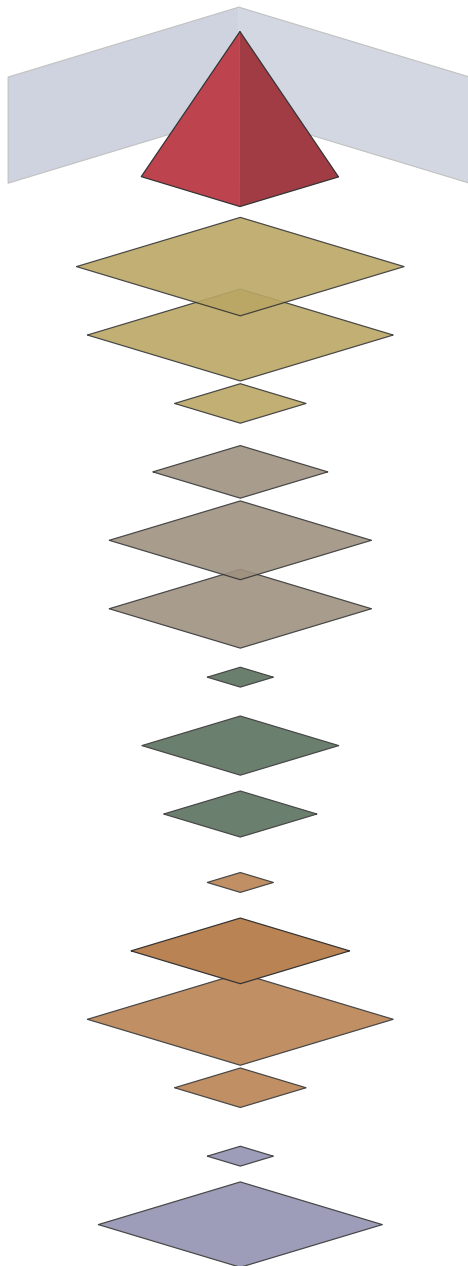




MAURITANIA

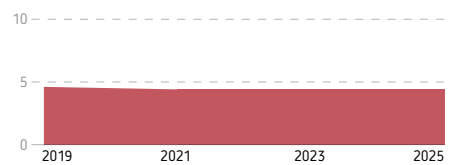


4.40 $\nearrow 0.02$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

43rd of 54 African countries $\nearrow 1$

6th of 6 North African countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

4.50 $\nearrow 0.23$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
ARMS TRAFFICKING	4.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	6.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	0.00
FLORA CRIMES	1.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
FAUNA CRIMES	4.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	3.50	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	1.50	0.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	3.00	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1.50	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.50	$\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS

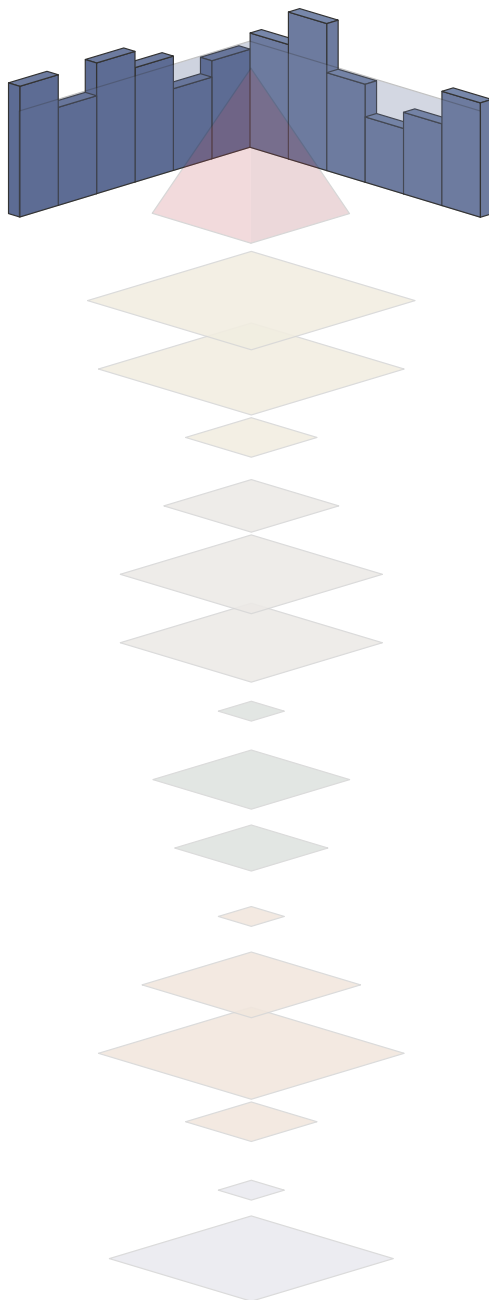
4.30 $\nearrow 0.20$

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	5.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	6.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00	$\nearrow 1.00$
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	3.50	0.00





MAURITANIA

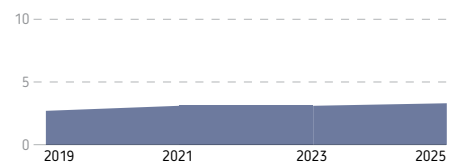


3.25 $\nearrow 0.13$

RESILIENCE SCORE

32nd of 54 African countries $\nearrow 7$

5th of 6 North African countries -



**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
AND GOVERNANCE** 4.00 0.00

**GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY** 3.00 $\nearrow 0.50$

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION 4.00 $\nearrow 0.50$

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS 3.50 0.00

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION 2.50 0.00

LAW ENFORCEMENT 3.00 $\nearrow 0.50$

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY 3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING 4.50 0.00

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY 3.00 0.00

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT 2.00 $\nearrow 0.50$

PREVENTION 2.50 $\nearrow 0.50$

NON-STATE ACTORS 3.50 $\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

Human trafficking in Mauritania is widespread, with modern slavery the most prevalent form. While some legal progress has been noted, weak law enforcement, corruption and entrenched social hierarchies continue to enable exploitation. Hereditary slavery among Haratine communities persists, though evidence indicates a shift toward other forms of modern slavery. Mauritania is both a source and destination country, with victims including domestic populations and migrants from West Africa. Women and children are particularly at risk of forced labour, domestic servitude and sex trafficking, both locally and in Gulf countries. Increased migration controls and the use of the Atlantic route have intensified trafficking, which now generates more revenue than domestic slavery.

The migrant smuggling market in Mauritania has expanded notably in recent years, driven by increased flows of West African migrants, particularly from Mali and Senegal. Mauritania now serves both as a transit hub to Europe and a destination country. Smuggling activity has intensified, especially along routes to the Canary Islands, with recent data indicating a sharp rise in maritime crossings and fatalities. Networks operating across Mauritania, Mali, Western Sahara and Morocco have become more integrated and clandestine. Demand for smuggling services has surged, pushing up costs and risks. Recent international agreements to curb migration may inadvertently fuel this market by making more migrants more dependent on smuggling and increasing operational expenses for smugglers.

Although large-scale organized extortion is not widespread in Mauritania, low-level racketeering at border crossings is common. Individuals often act as intermediaries between travellers and officials, soliciting payments to expedite visa or entry procedures. These informal arrangements sometimes result in prolonged detention if payments are not made. While not a dominant criminal enterprise, this form of localized extortion has a measurable influence on social interactions and administrative processes in border areas.

TRADE

Arms trafficking in Mauritania remains limited in scale but documented, with consistent flows reported between Mali and Mauritania. Weapons from coastal West Africa and Western Sahara converge through transit routes, particularly around Fôita. Concerns are increasing over arms flows in urban areas such as Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. The

black-market trade in ammunition has raised doubts about security at military depots. Although the overall market is smaller compared than other criminal economies, regional instability has contributed to increased arms trafficking into and through Mauritania.

The counterfeit goods market in Mauritania is active and far-reaching, with the country remaining a key importer of counterfeit food, cosmetics and toys. Counterfeit medical products, including diverted and expired medicines, are also widespread, enabled in part by regulatory gaps in the pharmaceutical sector. Seizures of illicit medicines have occurred in Nouadhibou and along the Senegalese border. In response, authorities have introduced measures such as bans on certain products and consumer reporting channels. Despite these interventions, the market remains resilient, generating significant value and maintaining a notable presence across sectors, particularly affecting public health and consumer safety.

Mauritania plays a growing role as both a hub and transit country for illicit tobacco, with smuggled cigarettes often destined for markets in Senegal, Morocco and Algeria. These routes connect to shipments from Asia and West Africa to Mauritania, which are largely facilitated by weak border controls, poverty and limited enforcement capacity. Reports indicate a sharp increase in Mauritania's involvement in cigarette smuggling over recent years. Unregulated alcohol production and consumption also remain widespread, driven by restrictions on legal sales. While public health regulations such as graphic warnings have been introduced, their effectiveness in reducing demand for illicit tobacco remains unclear given sustained market growth.

ENVIRONMENT

Mauritania has intermittently served as a transit hub for Mali's illicit rosewood trade. In 2023, after Senegalese authorities cracked down on illegal timber flows, traffickers reportedly redirected timber flows through Mauritania, including routes to Nouakchott. But recent reports indicate a resurgence of the original route from southern Mali to Dakar. Despite being a signatory to CITES and having introduced flora trade regulations in 2019, limited data on enforcement hampers assessments of the country's role in environmental crime.

Overfishing and illegal fishing are persistent challenges in Mauritania, particularly affecting octopus stocks, which are harvested at levels significantly above sustainable limits. Fishmeal and fish-oil production – largely for export – exacerbates the over-exploitation of small pelagic species such as sardines and sardinella. Many fishmeal and fish oil



plants are foreign owned, with systemic corruption enabling regulatory circumvention. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is becoming increasingly widespread, with vessels often disabling their tracking systems to avoid detection. Mauritania is part of a broader regional hotspot for illegal fishing off the West African coast. Wildlife trafficking and poaching also pose threats, driven by demand for exotic animal products, contributing to the depletion of species such as cheetahs, ostriches and hippos.

Although Mauritania is a producer of gold (along with iron ore and oil), illicit gold mining is at a limited level due to regulatory efforts. Reports suggest that artisanal gold contributes to smuggling flows, often destined for Dubai, resulting in state revenue losses. Although previously noted, current evidence of oil smuggling activity remains inconclusive, as major fuel routes bypass Mauritania.

DRUGS

There is limited evidence to suggest that heroin trafficking or consumption constitutes a prevalent market in Mauritania. No recent data has emerged to indicate an increase in activity, and past reports similarly noted minimal presence. By comparison with other substances such as cannabis, heroin appears to play a relatively minor role in the country's illicit drug economy.

Cocaine trafficking through Mauritania appears to be increasing, with the country serving as a key transit point along Sahelian routes connecting Senegal and Guinea to Morocco. In recent years, authorities have recorded significant seizures either intercepted by the navy and customs, or by inland law enforcement. Broader counter-narcotics operations have dismantled trafficking cells, with hundreds arrested, suggesting growing law enforcement engagement with the trade.

Cannabis remains the most widely consumed illicit drug in Mauritania, with use reportedly increasing. The country also plays a key role as a transit zone for cannabis resin trafficked from Morocco, both within the region and beyond. Regular seizures, including cannabis shipments from Mali and hashish interceptions at border crossings, point to consistent activity in this market. These patterns reflect Mauritania's position within broader Sahelian drug trafficking routes, which are exacerbated by limited oversight, rising local demand and weak governance.

Tramadol misuse remains present in Mauritania, where it is the most commonly abused opioid for non-medical use. It is frequently sought by women for self-medication and primarily trafficked via land routes through the Sahel, with most imports originating from India. A significant share of imported stocks exceed medically approved dosage thresholds. Alongside opioids, synthetic drugs such as crystal meth and rivotril are also present. In recent years,

authorities dismantled some moderately consolidated transnational trafficking networks. These developments suggest an active synthetic drug market in the country, though its scale has not been quantified.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

While cyber-dependent crimes are currently limited, the growing incidence of offences in the digital space highlights emerging cybersecurity vulnerabilities, driven by the increasing use of the internet across the country.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes are prevalent, with corruption and embezzlement of public resources identified as primary offences. Recent cases revealed the extent to which financial crimes have penetrated the upper levels of Mauritania's political and economic elite. Domestic reports also indicate a gradual rise in cyber-enabled offences, attributed to growing internet use. Commonly reported incidents include data breaches involving personal information and various forms of online fraud.

Criminal actors

There is no evidence to suggest that mafia-style groups exist in Mauritania. However, criminal networks in the country are notably active across multiple illicit economies, particularly in migrant smuggling and human trafficking, due to Mauritania's strategic location as a transit corridor from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Nouakchott and Nouadhibou serve as key operational hubs for such transnational flows. These networks also engage in drug trafficking and various forms of contraband trade, reinforcing Mauritania's role as both a conduit and a marketplace for illicit activities. The presence of these networks reflects a complex interplay between local actors and broader regional dynamics, and illustrates the country's vulnerability to transnational organized crime.

Corruption and state complicity significantly undermine efforts to combat human trafficking in Mauritania. Low-level extortion by state officials and border intermediaries is widespread, creating an enabling environment for trafficking networks. While criminal actors are not deeply embedded within state institutions, upper levels of the political elite appear to participate directly in financial crimes. This dynamic indicates that criminal markets benefit from passive or active facilitation by parts of the state apparatus, particularly in contexts where oversight is particularly weak and accountability mechanisms are limited.

Foreign actors in Mauritania's criminal markets generally operate at subordinate levels, exerting moderate influence. Some individuals, such as a Malian national tied to trafficking routes through Timbuktu and Taoudenni, have played



coordinating roles with alleged militia support. Regional criminal groups from Morocco, Algeria and Mali have been linked to drug trafficking, while Malian and Senegalese actors collaborate with Mauritanian networks in migrant smuggling. However, these foreign participants typically rely on local actors and state cooperation to operate effectively. Persistent but unverified claims of past non-aggression pacts between Mauritanian authorities and jihadist groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, contribute to lingering concerns about tacit arrangements that may hinder counter-crime efforts.

The largely informal character of Mauritania's economy heightens its exposure to criminal infiltration, particularly in the realms of money laundering and terrorist financing. International risk assessments indicate that the private sector may be exploited for these illicit financial flows. Also, some formal fishing entities are involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, contributing to the unsustainable exploitation of marine resources in national waters.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Mauritania's governance is marred by corruption, restricted civic freedoms and weak institutional performance. During the reporting period, the government made some efforts to combat these problems, including a national strategy to curb organized crime. Despite progress toward political pluralism through electoral reforms and increased minority representation, electoral processes are contested. Independence of government institutions is limited, and state collusion with criminal actors persists. Regional insecurity, particularly due to the spillover of armed conflict in Mali and the growing refugee population in eastern areas, poses a clear risk of greater instability. The country experienced a peaceful presidential election, though opposition allegations of fraud triggered unrest.

Corruption remains widespread in Mauritania, with laws targeting money laundering, bribery and terrorist financing often poorly enforced. The government does not operate transparently, particularly in mining and fishing licences, land distribution, government contracts and tax payments; all these processes are vulnerable to patronage and bribery. During the reporting period, the government introduced a national anti-bribery strategy extending through 2030, alongside claims of broader anti-corruption reforms. Despite a modest improvement in international corruption perceptions, there remain concerns about selective law enforcement against political opponents. The Court of Accounts highlighted major deficiencies in public financial oversight, based on audits of previous years. A specialized court established in 2023 has reportedly secured numerous corruption convictions.

Mauritania is a signatory to several international treaties to combat organized crime, and partners with entities such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the G5 Sahel to combat transnational threats. During the reporting period, it engaged in various bilateral and multilateral initiatives,

including border security cooperation with Morocco, Algeria and Senegal. EU-backed programmes supported narcotics screening training and a migration agreement aimed at reducing irregular migration and enhancing border management. Domestically, the country pursued partnerships with the US to strengthen maritime security. These initiatives align with broader efforts to improve regional governance and resilience in the face of rising instability across the Sahel.

Mauritania has passed several laws addressing organized crime, such as one that criminalizes human trafficking and aligns anti-smuggling provisions with international standards. Despite these steps, implementation has been inadequate. A cybercrime law was introduced recently to regulate electronic communications and subscriber identification, complementing existing legal frameworks. These reforms reflect an official effort to align legal tools with emerging criminal threats, including migrant smuggling, trafficking and digital crime. But both enforcement performance and institutional capacity lag these legislative developments.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Judicial independence in Mauritania remains weak, with executive influence evident in key judicial appointments and reported reprisals against judges. During the reporting period, prosecutions for trafficking increased, with more investigations and convictions under both anti-trafficking and anti-slavery laws. Notably, the first convictions for forcing children to beg were recorded. But enforcement inconsistencies persist, including an out-of-court settlement in one case. Mauritania also cooperated with neighbouring countries on cross-border trafficking cases. Prison conditions remain harsh, marked by overcrowding, poor sanitation and food shortages, with children occasionally detained alongside adults. Torture and ill-treatment in detention continue to be reported, including at least one suspicious death in custody.



Public trust in law enforcement is low in Mauritania, with widespread perceptions of corruption and discrimination, especially in the wake of high-profile cases of killings by police and crackdowns on protests. Law enforcement is often seen as complicit in organized crime, particularly in relation to human smuggling and failures to enforce anti-slavery laws. During the reporting period, concerns persisted over police involvement in smuggling networks, especially in Nouadhibou. In response, the government expanded training programmes in collaboration with civil society to improve law enforcement compliance with anti-trafficking legislation. Mauritania also participated in a regional EU-funded initiative aimed at enhancing cross-border coordination among West African law enforcement agencies.

Escalating militant violence in the Sahel continues to threaten Mauritania's security and stability. Several incidents along the Malian border during the reporting period resulted in civilian casualties and prompted diplomatic tensions, particularly after Malian forces and allied paramilitary groups were accused of cross-border attacks. Although Mali and Mauritania had agreed to joint patrols, the security situation remains uneven. Mauritania currently hosts over 100 000 refugees fleeing regional conflict. Violence has also erupted on the border with Morocco, prompting bilateral military coordination efforts. While these measures aim to enhance border security, no direct links to organized crime were identified in recent operations with either neighbouring country.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mauritania has undertaken notable efforts to combat money laundering, earning recognition within the MENA region. The Financial Investigation Unit, established under national legislation, coordinates relevant agencies and is supported by international donors. Despite these initiatives, the country remains classified as high risk for money laundering and terrorist financing in global assessments. Measures against financial crime are largely driven by the Central Bank, and include transparency reforms. Money laundering was among the charges that led to the conviction of a former head of state, which indicated the centrality of financial crimes to the country's broader governance challenges.

Mauritania's economy remains vulnerable and largely undiversified, with high dependence on extractive industries and cereal imports. Despite the state's acknowledgement of structural problems such as rural poverty and slavery, economic transformation has been limited. Regulatory enforcement is weak, property rights are inconsistently upheld, and poor governance hampers private sector development. Nouadhibou's designation as a special economic zone has attracted foreign investment, but it also raises concerns about reduced oversight in the zone. While no direct links were found between economic sectors

and organized crime, the country's fragile institutional environment continues to constrain general economic improvement and resilience.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Mauritania made limited progress in identifying and assisting trafficking victims during the reporting period. Authorities reported victims, including children, who were subjected to forced begging, domestic servitude, and other forms of coercion and exploitation. Six government-run centres for vulnerable children including trafficking victims are in operation, and two hotlines were established. While some victims of hereditary slavery have received state assistance, support for victims was largely left to civil society. Victim identification efforts were flawed, with reports indicating that some unidentified victims may have been detained or deported, and female victims of hereditary slavery were sometimes prosecuted under morality-related charges. In the area of drug use, Mauritania offers little state-supported treatment, with only one official facility in Nouakchott. Most drug-related care is provided by religious and civil society organizations.

During the reporting period, Mauritania expanded its efforts to prevent human trafficking via its national anti-trafficking body and human rights commission, which has conducted significant awareness campaigns and workshops engaging local and civil society leaders to increase public awareness of the anti-slavery and anti-trafficking laws. Increased screening was introduced to identify cases of hereditary slavery. Despite these measures, oversight weaknesses persisted. The government did not monitor Quranic schools linked to child forced begging, and some officials denied the existence of hereditary slavery. Labour abuses in high-risk sectors such as fisheries and boat factories were rarely investigated, limiting the scope and effectiveness of anti-trafficking enforcement.

Mauritania continues to make modest improvements in civil liberties and press conditions. Despite legal reforms easing NGO registration, authorities retain powers to suspend organizations and target activists for critical speech, particularly on social media. Civil society organizations, especially anti-slavery groups, continue to face intimidation. High-profile cases, such as the arrest and incommunicado detention of a well-known activist, have sparked alarm about due process and freedom of expression. While some sectors improved significantly, restrictive laws and censorship persist. Journalists risk reprisals for reporting on sensitive topics. However, regulatory reforms have modestly expanded oversight and representation in the media sector.

