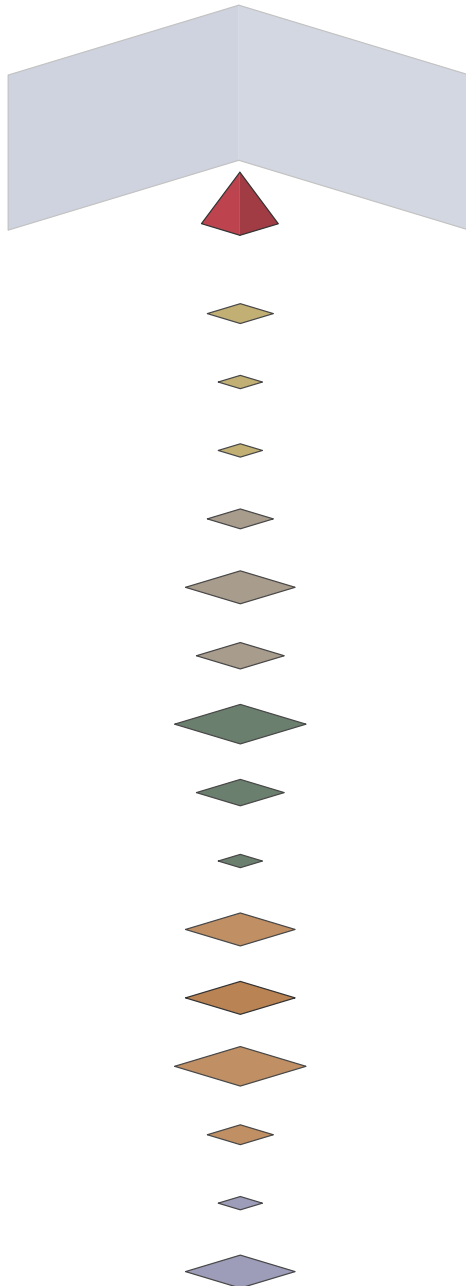




SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

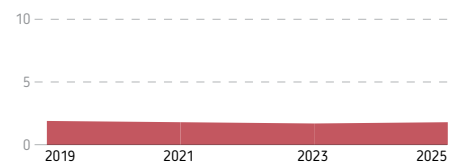


1.80 $\nearrow 0.10$

CRIMINALITY SCORE

54th of 54 African countries -

11th of 11 Central African countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS

1.90 $\nearrow 0.20$

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	1.50	0.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	1.00	0.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1.00	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	1.50	0.00
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	2.50	$\nearrow 1.00$
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	2.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
FLORA CRIMES	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
FAUNA CRIMES	2.00	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
COCAINE TRADE	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$
CANNABIS TRADE	3.00	$\nearrow 0.50$
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.50	0.00
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1.00	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	2.50	$\nearrow 0.50$



CRIMINAL ACTORS

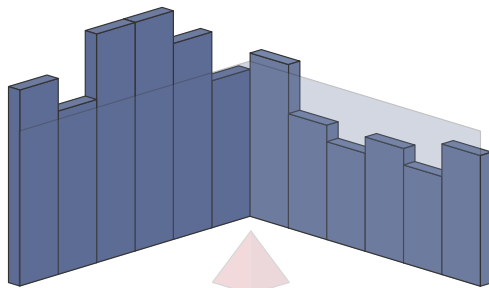
1.70 0.00

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.00	0.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	1.50	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.00	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	2.00	0.00
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	1.00	0.00





SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

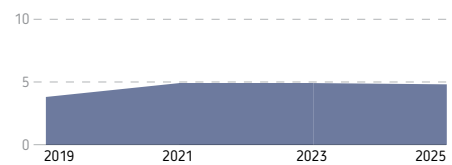


4.79 $\downarrow 0.13$

RESILIENCE SCORE

13th of 54 African countries -

2nd of 11 Central African countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6.00	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5.00	0.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7.00	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6.00	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5.00	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.50	$\uparrow 0.50$
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.00	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.50	$\downarrow 0.50$
PREVENTION	3.00	0.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.00	$\downarrow 1.00$



CRIMINALITY

Criminal markets

PEOPLE

São Tomé and Príncipe faces challenges related to human trafficking, though official statistics are unavailable. Anecdotal evidence points to the country being an origin and destination for trafficked individuals. Cases are linked to child labour, forced labour in agriculture and maritime piracy. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing involving trafficked individuals – often foreign nationals – further complicates enforcement due to vessel movements. There are no recent reports of organized criminal involvement in human smuggling. Extortion and protection racketeering are largely undocumented and there is no evidence of organized criminal involvement.

TRADE

Arms trafficking is not a major concern, though past incidents suggest some circulation of illicit weapons. Small arms were previously seized en route to Cape Verde. Weapons disappeared after the 2003 coup and 2007 police insurrection, and some are suspected of reaching Nigeria, Cape Verde and Gabon. The country's location in the Gulf of Guinea, a hub for arms and other illicit trafficking, heightens risks. While few trafficking cases have been recorded in recent years, illegal possession, often linked to theft or diversion from security forces, remains an issue. The trade in counterfeit goods is minimal, though local markets commonly feature counterfeit clothing and footwear. Most imported manufactured goods come from national, Nigerian, Lebanese and Chinese traders, and there are concerns about counterfeit products traded among them. Smuggling activities include distribution of counterfeit medicine and production of counterfeit alcohol, which is linked to rising youth consumption and related social issues. There is no evidence of systematic illegal smuggling of excisable goods, though small-scale illicit trade exists, including tobacco smuggling from the African coast. Recent seizures by the Judiciary Police indicate the presence of a small illicit excisable goods market.

ENVIRONMENT

Deforestation is primarily driven by commercial agro-industrial activities and urban expansion, and there is little indication of organized crime involvement. However, recent reports suggest an increase in illegal logging, particularly in southern São Tomé. Authorities have faced resistance while enforcing regulations and there are allegations that political figures sponsor illicit logging operations. While São Tomé experiences illegal logging, Príncipe appears less affected,

probably due to its 2012 designation as a biosphere reserve, which has stimulated conservation efforts. About 20 per cent of the population are employed in the fishing industry, which faces risks from industrial accidents and IUU fishing practices. The likelihood of IUU fishing underscores growing concerns about fishing-related crimes. Awareness efforts focusing on the risks posed by fauna crimes have notably reduced the trafficking of endangered species such as the hawksbill sea turtle in Príncipe, but São Tomé is also home to many endemic bird species, which are valuable but threatened by individual hunting. While the operation of organized crime groups in respect to fauna is unproven, the illegal hunting of these species is a significant concern for local biodiversity.

São Tomé and Príncipe has a limited supply of non-renewable resources and there are no significant reports of illegal trade. Unlike neighbouring West African nations, São Tomé and Príncipe does not appear to be a focal point for criminal organizations engaged in such activities.

DRUGS

São Tomé and Príncipe is a transit point for heroin trafficking, primarily routed through Nigeria, Brazil and Portugal. Authorities have arrested locals and foreign nationals involved in the trade but limited technical capabilities hinder full detection, suggesting the scale of trafficking may be larger than reported. Recent years have seen a decrease in seizures as traffickers adopt more sophisticated methods to avoid detection. Heroin shipments are often accompanied by cocaine, with drugs mainly destined for foreign markets. Indeed, São Tomé and Príncipe is a transit point and destination for cocaine, primarily trafficked by Nigerian and Brazilian organizations. Most of the cocaine entering the country is destined for foreign markets and only a small percentage circulates locally. Corruption and institutional weaknesses hinder effective control and some seized drugs have disappeared from police and court facilities, raising suspicions of internal involvement. Recent years have seen an increase in arrests of foreign drug mules.

Cannabis is a commonly used drug and local cultivation is linked to gangs, particularly in the Mé-Zóchi, Cantagalo and Lobata districts. The city of São Tomé is the main market for cannabis, consumed primarily by young people. Cannabis use, often combined with locally brewed alcohol, has contributed to rising violent crime among youth. While the volume of cannabis imports is unclear due to weak government control and possible illegal involvement by officials, the increase in local cultivation and commercial production has been noted. There is no evidence of international cannabis trade as all production seems to be domestic. There is limited information on synthetic drug-related crimes and



no significant media coverage or public discourse on the issue. International observers report the presence of potent synthetic opioids, including nitazenes, in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, which pose some risk of spillover.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

São Tomé and Príncipe is not considered a target or sponsor of cyber-attacks. While there have been occasional reports of cybercrime, these incidents are unconfirmed officially.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial scams and fraud, especially targeting business travellers, occasionally occur but details are scarce. Despite national efforts to curb this market, financial crimes persist at a low level, highlighting challenges in effective enforcement.

Criminal actors

While there are no confirmed mafia-style organizations, the weakness of state institutions and increasing corruption have fostered the emergence of local criminal groups

engaged primarily in petty crimes. While engagement in serious organized crime is rare, there have been reports of financial fraud cases.

While far less pervasive than in other countries on the continent, state corruption, particularly in the judicial system, exacerbates São Tomé and Príncipe's vulnerabilities to criminal activity. Surveys in 2024 indicated a growing sense of corruption, particularly among the police. These factors contribute to a weakened state capacity to control organized crime.

There is little evidence suggesting systematic foreign involvement in criminal activities. Nigerian and Brazilian traffickers mainly supply the market and local authorities lead efforts against trafficking and consumption. São Tomé and Príncipe faces limited threats from terrorism but has experienced recent incidents of maritime piracy in its territorial waters. Private sector involvement in organized crime is limited, primarily centred on smuggling and counterfeiting, though these activities are infrequent and small-scale.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

São Tomé and Príncipe recognizes the threat of organized crime, though resource limitations and political fragmentation hamper responses. While the government has periodically denounced criminal activities, efforts to address them are often disjointed, lacking sustained campaigns. Crime, including petty theft and occasional political violence, sometimes becomes a focus during elections. Organized crime is under-discussed in official policy and has limited integration into broader governance frameworks. International concerns have been voiced about governance and crime but there has been little external pressure for action. Efforts to combat cybercrime face obstacles due to financial constraints and insufficient expertise. Nevertheless, responses can sufficiently address the present threats.

In matters of transparency, São Tomé and Príncipe has enacted various anti-corruption laws over the past decade, including measures to improve financial transparency, such as requiring payments to government agencies to be made through the Central Bank. Despite these efforts, corruption is widespread and over half the population believes it has worsened in recent years. The country is a member of international organizations such as the Inter Governmental Action Group

against Money Laundering in West Africa and has ratified the UN Convention against Corruption, demonstrating commitment to regional and international anti-corruption efforts. While some measures, such as modernizing customs tracking, have reduced corruption, concerns about political clientelism, impunity and inadequate government openness persist, highlighting the challenges of effective oversight.

São Tomé and Príncipe has ratified several international treaties to combat transnational organized crime, including conventions on human trafficking, narcotics and corruption. It has strengthened regional cooperation and engages in capacity-building initiatives through partnerships with international organizations such as the World Bank. These efforts are designed to stop the flow of illegal funds and improve the security, accessibility and transparency of its financial system. Although its constitution prohibits the extradition of nationals, São Tomé and Príncipe is involved in global anti-crime efforts, especially in human trafficking, where it is a transit country. Key collaborations include agreements with Brazil and the EU supporting initiatives on criminal justice, animal smuggling and cybercrime. It has various laws to combat organized crime, supported by a robust legal framework that aligns with international



conventions. However, there are gaps, particularly in addressing cybercrime due to the absence of comprehensive legislation. Environmental protection is a priority and laws safeguard critical ecosystems such as the Malanza Mangroves. The government unveiled a strategic plan for the pelagic fishing sector in late 2023, although it is incomplete. The 2007 Law on the State Financial Administration System strengthened financial governance and e-governance, and in 2021 it was integrated into a broader financial inclusion strategy.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The judiciary faces challenges including limited resources, corruption and external influence. Specialized departments for organized crime are lacking but existing institutions probably have measures in place to handle such cases. Nevertheless, corruption might affect the courts' ability to convict criminals. Even though the judicial system has received support from international partners, concerns persist about its effectiveness. The prison system is overcrowded and suffers from inadequate healthcare and hygiene, and corruption among officials.

São Tomé and Príncipe encounters considerable difficulties in law enforcement. It lacks specialized units for organized crime and resources are limited, partly due to inadequate infrastructure and uncertain funding. Despite the enactment of laws establishing frameworks for criminal investigations, such as joint investigation teams, implementation is limited. Public trust in law enforcement is undermined by corruption and inefficiency, hampering crime prevention efforts. While political stability prevails, the lack of strong intelligence capabilities weakens the effectiveness of law enforcement in combating organized crime.

The country struggles to maintain effective border control due to its location in the Gulf of Guinea, a region prone to trafficking and organized crime. Its lengthy maritime borders and limited enforcement capacity, combined with corruption, make border security vulnerable. The government is addressing these issues through legal reforms, such as revising the penal code to better tackle maritime piracy and strengthening international cooperation, including with Portugal. Despite limited resources and infrastructure, São Tomé and Príncipe has made progress in digital governance, enacting laws on cybercrime and data protection and advancing initiatives such as digital signatures and e-governance to improve security and efficiency.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

São Tomé and Príncipe has a national plan to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, aligning with international standards through updated legislation. The Financial Intelligence Unit plays a central role in investigating suspicious financial activities, though its effectiveness is hindered by

limited funding and expertise. As a member of the Inter Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, the country works to adhere to regional and international standards. While not on any money laundering blacklist, challenges remain in areas such as online gambling and crowdfunding platforms, where regulatory gaps may pose risks. Despite a strong legislative framework, resource constraints and implementation issues could reduce the effectiveness of anti-money laundering efforts.

São Tomé and Príncipe faces economic instability exacerbated by external shocks. High unemployment and low incomes, coupled with a regulatory framework that discourages entrepreneurship, increase the appeal of organized crime. While the government has undertaken measures to strengthen its legal business frameworks, corruption and bureaucratic barriers still hinder enforcement of property rights. Despite lower levels of illicit activity compared with neighbouring countries, money laundering, smuggling and informal trade are concerns due to weak infrastructure and resources.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

São Tomé and Príncipe lacks formal programmes for victims of organized crime. Police, health professionals and magistrates have been trained to assist victims but mistrust in the justice system and fear of retaliation deter many from pursuing legal action. Despite some progress, such as increased public denunciations of violence, challenges such as judicial independence, government corruption and gender-based violence are significant issues.

More generally, São Tomé and Príncipe lacks national policies to prevent organized crime, though efforts to improve crime prevention and the penal code are ongoing. The National Police is in the early stages of implementing proximity policing strategies. Specific crime prevention measures, such as addressing crimes against flora, have been implemented, including training programmes since 2022 on hunting regulation and biodiversity protection. Key national plans such as the National Development Plan and the National Police Strategic Plan focus on improving governance, strengthening judicial institutions and enhancing crime prevention. Initiatives include reinforcing the Judiciary Police, creating a forensic medicine centre and expanding community policing. NGOs face challenges related to funding, independence and effectiveness, despite collaborating with the government on issues such as child labour. The Federation of NGOs, established in 2001, represents civil society but has limited influence on government policies. There is no regulatory framework for NGO-state relations and civil society's participation in policy definition is minimal. While freedom of the press is generally respected, media is underdeveloped, with limited private outlets and internet access. The government is making efforts to improve media coverage and civil society engagement.

