EAST AFRICA

The East African region has the highest average criminality score of all five regions on the continent, with an average score of 5.51.

Indeed, six of the nine countries in the region appear in the top 20 highest-scoring countries for criminality, with Somalia and South Sudan leading the way in joint-fourth position, followed closely by Sudan, with the sixth highest criminality score in Africa. In the region, strong trends were identified in both criminal markets and criminal actors, as well as resilience. The region averages higher in terms of criminality (5.51) than the rest of the continent (4.97), with criminal markets at 4.96 (compared to Africa’s overall score of 4.68) and actors at 6.06 (where Africa averages 5.25).

In line with other regions, criminal actors in East Africa drive up the overall criminality score. The most prevalent criminal markets in East Africa as a whole are for human trafficking, human smuggling and arms trafficking, each with average scores considerably higher than in the rest of Africa. While East Africa’s average criminal market score is actually lower than West Africa’s, its average criminal actor score of 6.06 is the highest of the five regions on the continent by a notable margin, driven predominantly by the influence of both criminal networks and state-embedded actors.

In terms of resilience, East Africa is overall the second least resilient region (after Central Africa), with an average resilience score of 3.50, compared to the African average of 3.86. As is the case with many countries across the continent, resilience measures in this region are focused primarily on heavy security frameworks, at the expense of ‘softer’ response mechanisms.
In terms of criminal markets, arms trafficking was identified as the most prominent illicit economy, at 6.78, a marked contrast with the least prominent market in the region, cocaine, which has an average score of 2.61. Somalia and Sudan both score 9.00 for arms trafficking – the highest score in Africa. Following arms, human trafficking (6.61) and human smuggling (6.22) were found to be the second and third most prevalent criminal markets, primarily due to the region’s position as a transit zone for the movement of people to the Gulf states, as well as through Egypt en route to Europe. Indeed, countries such as Sudan and Eritrea score among the highest in Africa, with 8.50 for human trafficking and 8.00 for human smuggling, driving up scores for the exploitative markets in the region.

As with other regions, cannabis is by far the most prevalent drug market, with an average of 5.61 (above the continental average of 5.17); this value is high compared to higher-value drugs, including heroin (3.89), synthetic drugs (2.94) and cocaine (2.61). While the drugs markets in general do not appear to be a severe problem in East
Africa as a whole, the average scores obscure certain noteworthy dynamics. Sudan and Tanzania, for example, have among the highest scores on the continent for the cannabis trade, while Tanzania and Kenya play significant roles in the heroin trade together with other countries along the south-eastern coast of Africa.

In terms of environmental crimes, fauna crimes (5.17), non-renewable resource crimes (5.17) – driven predominantly by the illegal regional trade in charcoal – and flora crimes (4.56) have similar averages for East Africa. An interesting feature of these criminal markets in the region is the vast range of scores across the nine countries. While there are some countries in which these markets are almost non-existent, such as non-renewable resource crimes in Djibouti or flora crimes in Eritrea, some countries receive very high scores for the same markets. Indeed, Sudan scores 8.5 for non-renewable resource crimes due to the significant levels of illegal gold activity in the country.

Criminal Actors

State-embedded actors (7.00) and criminal networks (6.56) dominate the region’s criminal landscape. Foreign actors (6.33) come in third, with Sudan (7.5), South Sudan (8.00) and Uganda (7.5) driving up scores, in part due to the involvement of foreign nationals (often from within the region) involved in weapons sales and procurement, human trafficking and wildlife crimes. Mafia-style actors average 4.33 in the region, as experts identified several militia groups engaged in organised-crime activities.
In terms of resilience, East Africa is overall the second least resilient region (after Central Africa), with an average resilience score of 3.50, which compares with the African average of 3.86. As is the case with North Africa and Central Africa, resilience measures in countries in this region are focused primarily on heavy security frameworks, at the expense of softer response mechanisms. National policies and laws were noted as the strongest among resilience measures (averaging regionally at 4.56), though experts identified consistency issues in implementation. Likewise, territorial integrity (4.39) and international cooperation (4.17) score among the highest in terms of existing measures and efficacy. Notably, however, countries in the region differ markedly from one another in their commitment to international engagement. For example, while Djibouti scores 7.5 (the highest in the region) for its ratification of eight organised-crime-related international conventions and for its involvement in regional networks to combat wildlife trafficking, Somalia scores just 1.00, having yet to ratify UNTOC and its protocols.

Prevention, and government transparency and accountability were described as weak throughout the region (averaging 2.44 and 2.61, respectively), with the notable exception of Ethiopia, which scores 6.5 for government transparency and accountability. Support for victims of organised crime and protection for witnesses are virtually non-existent in the region, with an average of 1.78.