Gabon has lower levels of criminality than most countries in Africa, ranking 33rd in the Index.

The country’s score is driven by a handful of particularly established criminal markets, namely flora crimes and fauna crimes, as well as human trafficking and human smuggling, and the influence of state-embedded actors. High levels of illegality in the timber industry and the trade in elephant ivory, in addition to forced labour, sexual exploitation and irregular migration into the country, are the defining features of organised crime in Gabon.

With regard to resilience, Gabon ranks 41st in Africa, reflecting fairly low levels of resilience to organised crime. Although law enforcement and territorial integrity are moderately effective in the country, significant deficiencies remain. These include: high levels of corruption; lack of government legitimacy in the eyes of the population; weak economic and financial institutional and regulatory frameworks; and extremely ineffective social protection measures.

4.68
CRIMINALITY SCORE
33rd of 54 African countries
6th of 11 Central countries

2.71
STATE RESILIENCE SCORE
41st of 54 African countries
6th of 11 Central countries

This project is funded by the European Union
Criminal Markets

Flora crimes are the most pervasive criminal market in Gabon, with a score of B, reflecting high levels of criminality surrounding the timber sector in the country. A multitude of crimes are committed in the forests of the West African state, many of which are facilitated, if not perpetrated, by an entrenched network of corrupt state officials. A key pattern is the provision of concessions—often involving bribery—to foreign companies, which may then engage in further illegal activity, including the export of high-value protected species, such as rosewood.

Fauna crimes are similarly pervasive in Gabon, in particular the illegal trade in elephant ivory. In the past decade, elephant populations have declined significantly as a result of poaching. In January 2018, officials in Gabon arrested the country’s biggest so-called ivory kingpin and his eight-member criminal syndicate, who were suspected of having trafficked over 600 elephant tusks in 2017 alone. The ivory network stretched across Gabon’s nine provinces and beyond its borders. Foreign
actors play an important role in poaching in Gabon, but corruption continues to curtail efforts to hold poachers and traffickers to account.

**Human trafficking** is also a problem in the country and the government is not assessed as making significant efforts to tackle it. Gabon is a transit and destination country for human trafficking, with victims subjected predominantly to forced labour and sexual exploitation. Children – primarily boys – are mainly used as street vendors, mechanics and in the transport and fishing sectors; girls are used as domestic workers, traders in markets and labour in roadside restaurants. Also, **human trafficking** and **human smuggling** in Gabon are becoming increasingly intertwined. The country is a key destination market for migrants from West and Central Africa seeking to access the labour market. Having arrived in the country, many migrants find themselves vulnerable to exploitation and what begins as human smuggling, often leads to human trafficking.

**Criminal Actors**

**State-embedded actors** and **foreign actors** dominate organised crime in Gabon, scoring 7.5 and 6, respectively, compared to markedly lower scores of 1 and 3.5 for **mafia-style groups** and **criminal networks**. Corruption within the state apparatus in Gabon is fundamental to the proliferation of criminal markets, not least environmental crimes. An established network of corrupt state officials facilitates organised crime in the timber sector, by granting concessions – often to foreign companies – in exchange for bribes. The oil industry in the country is controlled almost in its entirety by one family, suggesting collusion with the state.
Gabon has very low levels of resilience to organised crime, ranking 41st in Africa. The country has been experiencing a political crisis since the presidential election in 2016, which led to the attempted overthrow of the government in 2018. Citizens of Gabon perceive the country to be controlled by the Bongo family, who have been in power for the past five decades, and view the government as corrupt and mafia-like. Corruption is rife in Gabon and public officials are heavily involved in facilitating organised criminal activity.

With respect to human trafficking, there are no government-run initiatives that provide support for victims of trafficking. However, two state-funded NGO shelters (with unknown funding) offer medical, legal, housing and other services to orphans and street children who are vulnerable to trafficking. There is no evidence of government support for victims of drug abuse.

Although Gabon has taken preventive measures against certain criminal activities, such as wildlife trafficking, prevention efforts are lacking in other areas. In 2018, GPS tracking collars were introduced in a bid to stop elephant poachers and rangers patrol the country’s national parks. In relation to other crimes, however, such as human trafficking, the US State Department downgraded the country to Tier 3 in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report, due in part to a lack of campaigning to raise public awareness. Lastly, press freedom in Gabon is severely limited and civil society suffers as a result.