Tanzania ranks 17th in the Index for criminality, with a broad range of established criminal markets, but an absence of any particularly dominant criminal actor-types.

No criminal market scores below 4.5, which suggests that of the ten markets studied, all have at least a moderate to high negative influence on society. However, with regards to criminal actors, no single actor type appears to dominate organised crime, with scores for criminal networks, state-embedded actors and foreign actors ranging between 5.5 and 6.

Overall, Tanzania has become a strategic and important player in a number of regional illicit economies. These include growing drugs markets for cannabis and heroin, where the prevalence of users is high and Tanzanians play an instrumental role in trafficking networks.

While resilience is deemed as moderate, ranking 22nd, with the government prioritising the fight against organised crime, evidence of tangible implementation is lacking. Experts note the shrinking space for civil society, and state targeting of lower-level drug users and trafficking victims, as being of significant concern.
Criminal Markets

Two criminal market categories stand out from the broad-based and diverse criminal markets present in Tanzania: drugs and environmental crimes.

Tanzania is a major trans-shipment country for illicit narcotics. Despite declaring a ‘war on drugs’, the interdiction capacity of government forces is weak, marked by corruption and porous borders. The country is at the nexus of a number of inland and coastal trafficking routes.

Notably, cannabis is the highest-scoring market at 8, which indicates a severe negative influence on society, followed by heroin at 7.5, where a very large user population is noted. Tanzania has become a major landing point for Afghan heroin entering Africa by maritime and air routes. Tanzanian actors play a role in regional distribution networks for markets along the eastern and southern littoral. Synthetic drugs and cocaine also pass through this hub.

Tanzania scores poorly on environmental markets, particularly flora and fauna. Illegal logging is of particular...
concern, scoring 7, where it is estimated that more than 70% of the total timber harvested is unaccounted for, including high-value protected species. This causes huge losses in government revenue and biodiversity. Wildlife trafficking, particularly in elephant ivory and pangolins, is of major concern as there are high levels of violence related to the trade.

Extensive mineral reserves, including tanzanite, rubies, gold, silver, diamonds, coal and uranium, make the country very susceptible to non-renewable-resource crimes, including both resource extraction and smuggling. The government has taken significant and effective steps to curtail these, but there is room for improvement. This market has a significant negative impact on society, scoring 6.

Experts judge that human trafficking and human smuggling are equally detrimental, giving both 6 because of the number of illegal migrants who pass through the country, and the number of victims exposed to labour and sexual exploitation. These flows often overlap with other criminal markets, and form part of a regional migratory ecosystem characterised by low regulation and high mobility.

Criminal Actors

Analysis of Tanzania’s scores on criminal actor typologies suggests that criminal networks, foreign actors and state-embedded actors play an important role in a range of illicit markets, moving commodities from and through the country. Corruption notably protects and enables higher-value trade. Asian actors and networks from neighbouring countries are noted as being particularly rooted in certain criminal markets.
Tanzania performs better than most countries in Africa with regards to resilience, ranking 22nd on the continent. Experts deem Tanzania’s national policies and laws and political leadership and governance to be sufficiently effective in addressing organised crime in the country.

However, no other resilience category scores 6 or above, contributing to a moderate score overall. A decline in press freedom, government officials’ alleged involvement in criminal networks, and a business environment likely to provide incentives for citizens to engage in illicit activities are among the reasons for the low scores experts attribute to most categories.

Organised crime has a prominent place in government rhetoric, and people generally seem to support taking action against criminal networks. But lack of wide-reaching, effective implementation of policy and action has led to little evidence of impact on the ground.