Zambia ranks 28th in the Index, falling just below the continental average for criminality.

The major criminal markets in Zambia are in flora, fauna and non-renewable resources, with scores of 8, 6 and 5.5 respectively, suggesting a significant to severe influence. Poaching of wild animals and animal products, illegal logging, and illicit trade in copper ore and fuel are all reported as major issues. Illicit narcotics markets are deemed as moderate. The cannabis trade is the most established, scoring 5, with production and consumption reported to be widespread.

Although all four types of criminal actors exert some form of influence in the country, foreign and state-embedded actors are the most pervasive, due to their involvement in multiple illegal networks.

In terms of resilience, Zambia ranks 24th in Africa. Experts judge some areas in the fight against organised crime as somewhat effective, in particular the robust legislative framework. But widespread corruption, weak anti-money laundering capacity and porous borders contribute to poor scores below 5.
**Criminal Markets**

Flora crimes are the most pervasive in terms of the criminal markets in Zambia, scoring 8, which makes it one of the highest-scoring countries for this market. Criminal economies exist at each stage of the value chain, from extraction to milling, transport, sale and the laundering of criminal proceeds. The country is home to high-value wood species and destruction of hardwood tree species is severe. Zambia also plays an important role as a transit country for illegally logged products, with illicit timber often trafficked from the DRC, through Zambia and the Caprivi Strip into Namibia, before being shipped to Asian markets.

As with many other African nations, the prevalence of the illicit flora market is often associated with a high prevalence of fauna crimes, for which Zambia scores 6, reflecting the significant negative influence the market has in the country. Zambia is particularly vulnerable to the illicit wildlife trade due to its largely unprotected borders with countries that are sources of ivory. These include Angola, DRC, Mozambique and Tanzania; as well as Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, three countries with substantial elephant populations. Zambia is also a source country for ivory, but evidence suggests that elephant
Poaching in the country is on the decline. Stock theft is a particular concern.

The criminal market with the third-highest score in Zambia is in non-renewable resources, as a result of the extensive mining of copper and gold, particularly in the country’s eastern region. Local actors and foreign actors, notably from East Asia, are involved in criminal activity surrounding the mining industry in Zambia. The illegal smuggling of fuel into the country from neighbouring states has also been noted as a concern in Zambia.

Other criminal markets are present but far less pervasive. The drugs markets – for example, for cocaine and synthetic drugs – have only a limited influence on society in Zambia, but their impact has been manageable. The cannabis trade is slightly more prevalent, with a score of 5, given the cultivation of cannabis crops that provide a safety net for poorer populations living in rural areas. The sale and distribution of cannabis in the country and across the region is an important component of the informal economy in Zambia.

Finally, human trafficking affects significant proportions of the population in Zambia, given its role as a source, transit and destination country. Forced labour and sexual exploitation are among the most prevalent forms of human trafficking in Zambia. Significant numbers of women and children from rural areas are exploited in cities. They are often forced to work in agriculture, textile production, mining, construction and small businesses such as bakeries. Forced begging is also a common occurrence in Zambia. Foreign nationals are trafficked into the country and often forced to work either in the construction and mining industries or coerced into sexual exploitation.

Criminal Actors

Given Zambia’s role as a transit country in many criminal markets, foreign actors are the most pervasive type of criminal actor in the country. Foreign nationals are heavily involved in the trafficking of people into Zambia, in particular from China. Chinese nationals are increasingly exploited for forced labour in Chinese-owned companies in the mining and construction sectors. Increasingly, the main actors in the illicit timber industry in Zambia are also foreign nationals.

State-embedded actors have a significant influence when it comes to organised crime in Zambia. The corruption of law enforcement officials is a concern, facilitating illicit trafficking markets and hampering investigations into organised criminal activity.
Zambia’s resilience ranking of 24th in Africa reflects the moderate efforts the government is making to tackle organised crime. By far the highest-scoring resilience indicator in Zambia is for national policies and laws, thanks to a robust legislative framework. Zambia has as many as 11 separate laws on organised crime, covering a range of organised crime types. The government has also established numerous national strategies specifically to tackle organised crime, including one on human trafficking. Penalties are harsh for anyone convicted of involvement in organised crime surrounding the trafficking of animal products.

The judicial system, economic regulatory environment and non-state actors all receive fairly high scores in Zambia. Prosecutions and convictions for organised criminal acts have increased, but lack of a witness protection programme provides little incentive for witnesses to give evidence in court. While civil society groups in the country are active in the fight against organised crime, limited media freedom and changes in legislation on non-governmental organisations have led to a shrinking of civil society overall.

While moderately effective in numerous areas of resilience to organised crime, Zambia has serious deficiencies in a number of the social protection measures needed to tackle the issue. Corruption in the government and law enforcement bodies is a considerable concern in Zambia. The government has failed to effectively implement anti-money laundering measures. It has introduced very few prevention measures against organised crime more generally and offers very little support to victims and witnesses of organised crime.