



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**

An illustration of a group of diverse people walking across a crosswalk. The crosswalk consists of alternating red and blue stripes. The people are shown from a top-down perspective, walking in various directions. The background is a dark purple with large, light purple geometric shapes.

Global Organized Crime Index 2025

Crime at a crossroads

Oceania



© 2026 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form
or by any means without permission in writing from the Global Initiative.

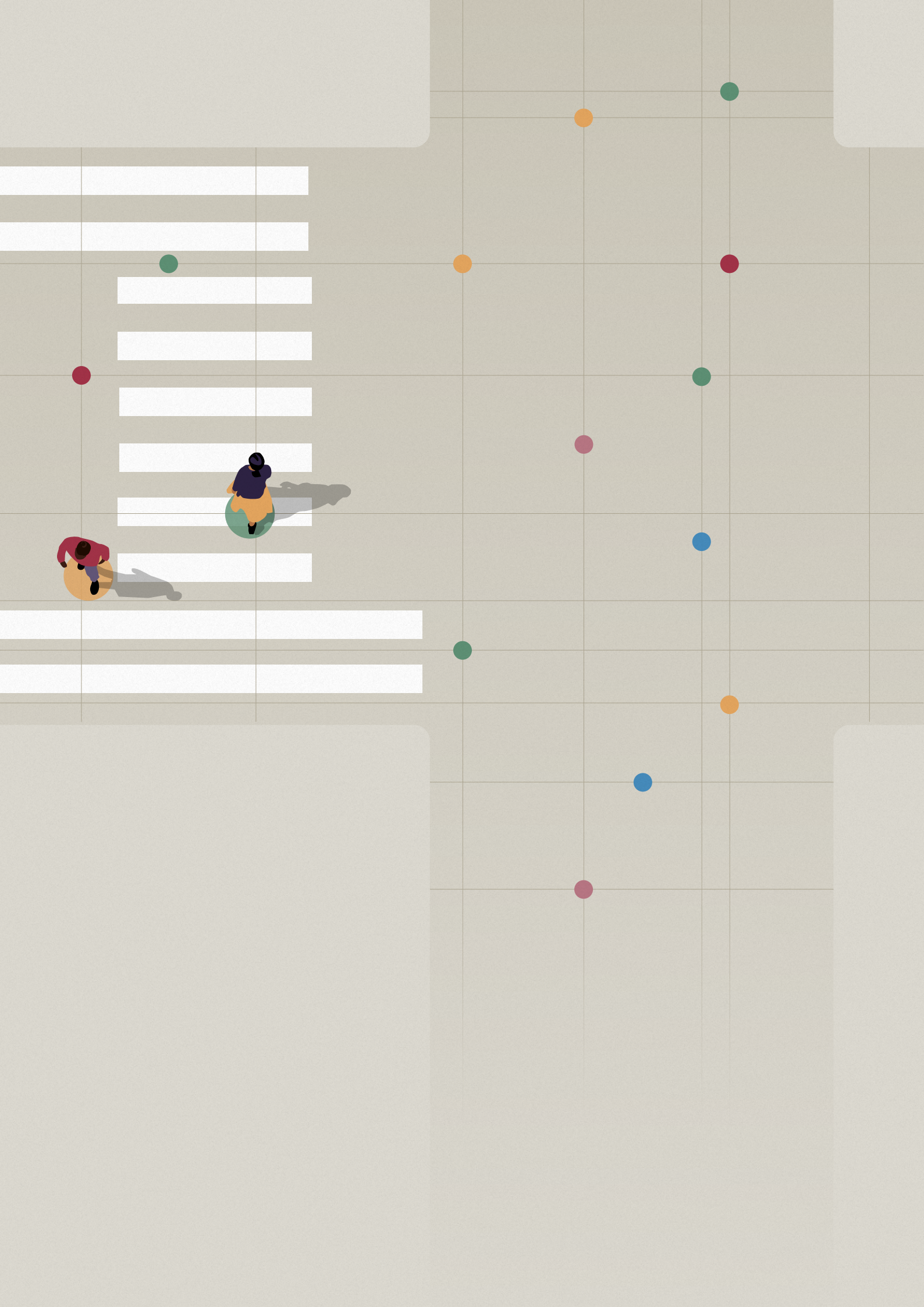
Please direct inquiries to:
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
Avenue de France 23
Geneva

www.globalinitiative.net

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Oceania compared to the rest of the world	3
Criminal markets.....	6
Criminal actors.....	10
Resilience.....	14
Notes	18





INTRODUCTION

Oceania has vast maritime zones and limited enforcement capacity, coupled with weak regulatory oversight and vulnerable economies that are highly dependent on natural resources. These conditions have created fertile ground for illicit markets. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing thrives; drug trafficking exploits the challenges of policing expansive maritime areas; and financial crimes and human trafficking are fuelled by economic fragility and regulatory gaps.

In addition, foreign actors such as Asian syndicates, Latin American cartels and outlaw motorcycle gangs have established themselves in local networks that connect Oceania to illicit activities globally. The Global Organized Crime Index's assessment of criminality and resilience dynamics in Oceania over five years illustrates the convergence of persistent vulnerabilities, external pressures and internal governance gaps that threaten resilience, security and continental stability.

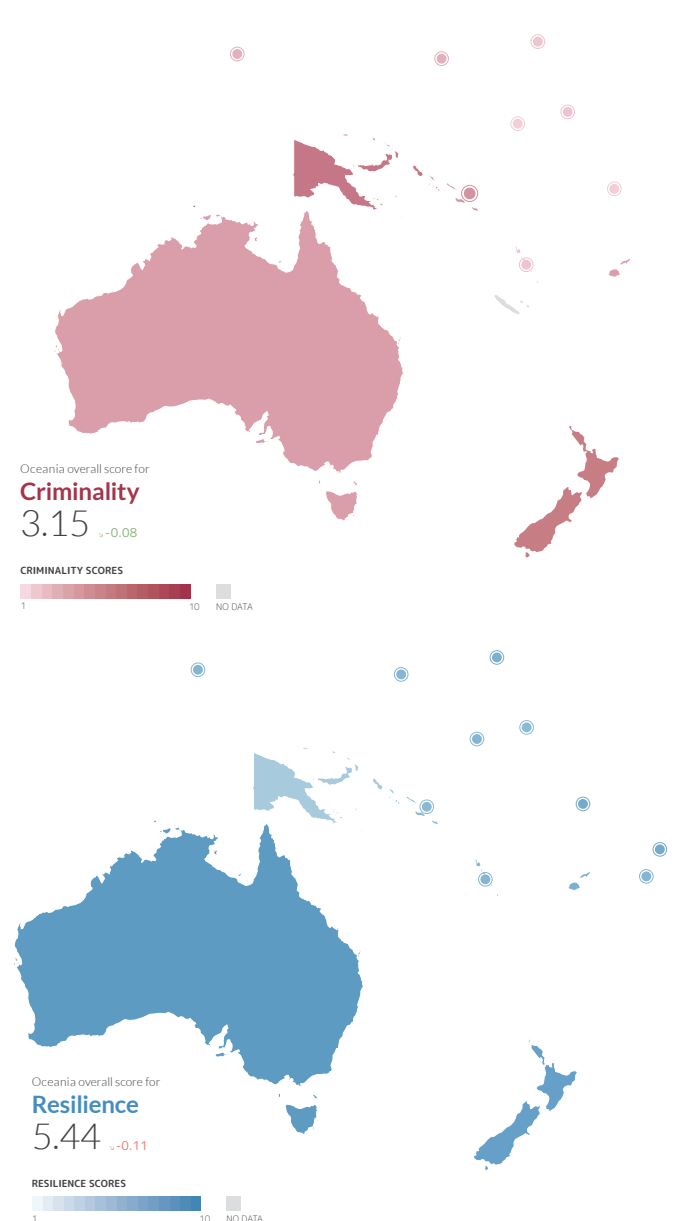


FIGURE 1 Criminality and resilience, Oceania, 2025.

Oceania: main findings

- Oceania's criminality average stands at 3.15, the lowest globally. Indeed, it is striking that all countries in the region, with the exception of Papua New Guinea, are characterized by low levels of criminality. At the same time, some, such as Australia and New Zealand, have recorded significant increases in criminality since 2021.
- Oceania's biggest criminal markets include fauna crimes, financial crimes, human trafficking, the synthetic drugs trade and the cannabis trade. Cyber-dependent crimes are becoming increasingly prominent, particularly in Australia and New Zealand.
- The pervasiveness of criminal actors in Oceania is below the global average, at 3.24. In contrast to global trends, where state-embedded actors are the most prevalent criminal actor group, foreign actors dominate in Oceania.
- Oceania's resilience average is 5.44, the second highest globally, but there are significant disparities among countries on the continent.

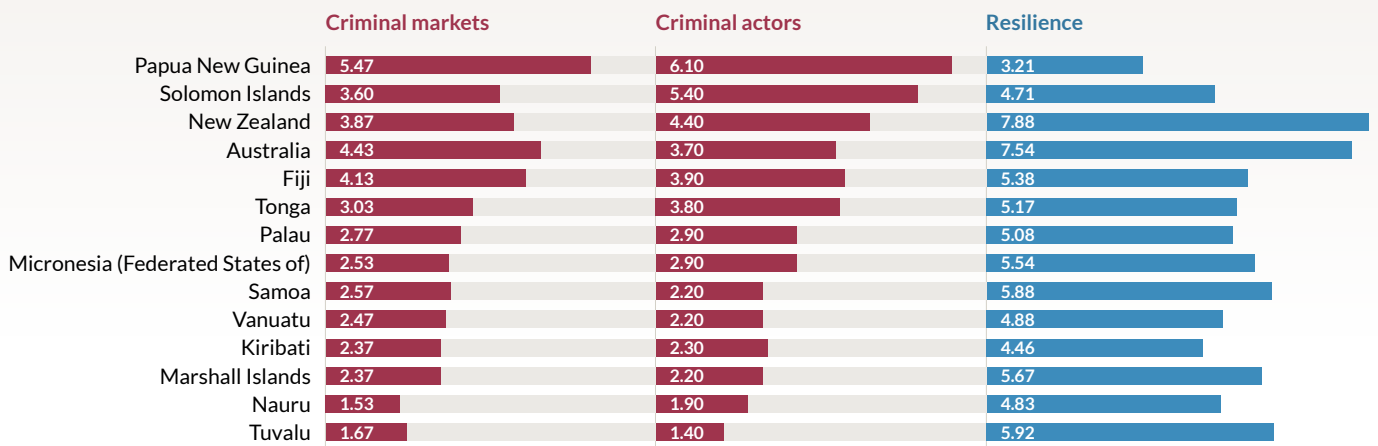


FIGURE 2 Index scores by Oceanian country, 2025.

NOTE: Countries are ranked from highest to lowest based on their overall criminality average, calculated as the mean of the two components: criminal markets and criminal actors.

OCEANIA COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

Across all three iterations of the Index, Oceania has consistently recorded the lowest global criminality average, standing at 3.15 in 2025. While this may suggest relatively low levels of organized crime, the continent's low scores largely reflect the limited diversity of criminal markets and mask significant disparities between countries and markets.

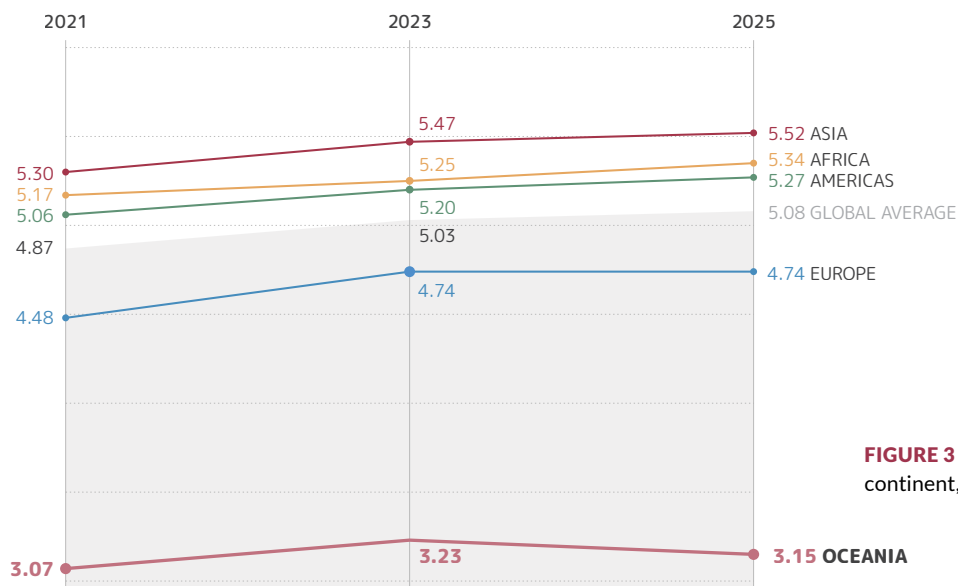


FIGURE 3 Criminality shifts by continent, 2021–2025.

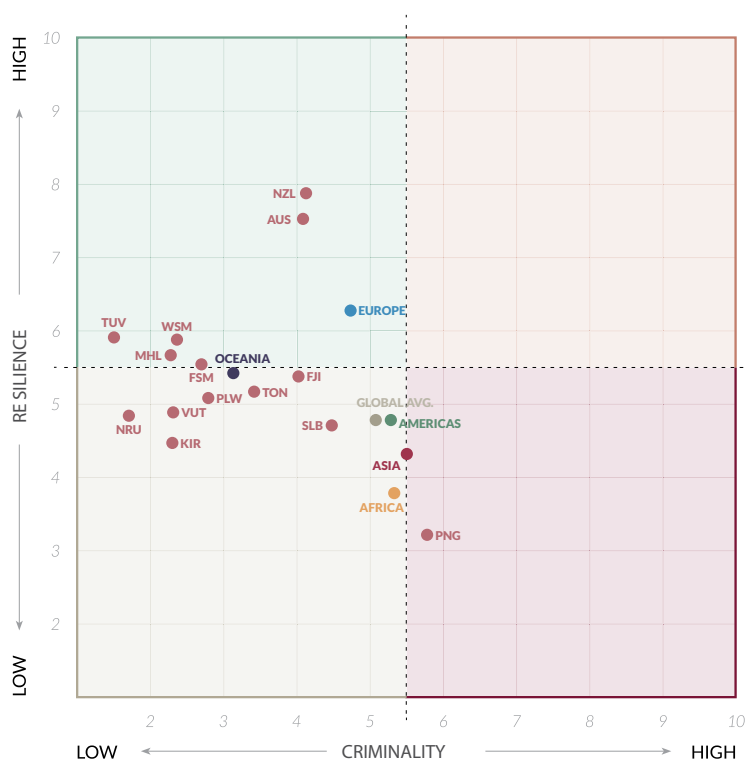
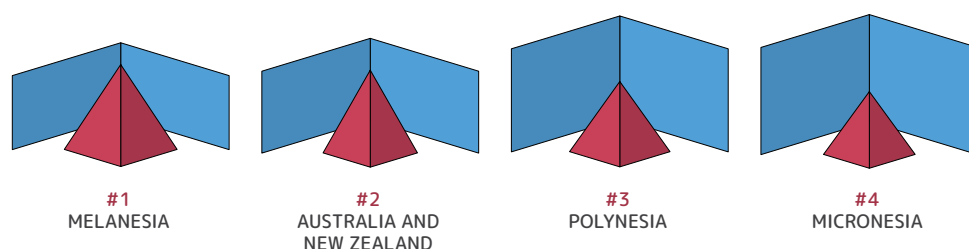


FIGURE 4 Vulnerability classifications, 2025.

Notably, fauna crimes in Oceania reached one of the highest global averages in 2025, at 5.61, just behind Africa. This is in contrast to much lower scores for flora and non-renewable resource crimes. A similar imbalance appears in the 'people' markets, where human trafficking remains significantly higher (averaging 4.07) than human smuggling (1.96) and extortion and protection racketeering (1.71). Such divergences, uncommon in other continents where related markets tend to correlate, reveal that Oceania's low overall criminality obscures the concentrated and severe effects of a handful of high-impact markets.



REGION	CRIMINALITY	CRIMINAL MARKETS	CRIMINAL ACTORS	RESILIENCE
MELANESIA	4.16 -0.02	3.92 -0.08	4.40 +0.05	4.55 -0.18
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND	4.10 +0.06	4.15 +0.11	4.05 0.00	7.71 +0.08
POLYNESIA	2.44 -0.14	2.42 -0.38	2.47 +0.10	5.66 -0.07
MICRONESIA	2.38 -0.16	2.31 -0.38	2.44 +0.04	5.12 -0.15
OCEANIA AVERAGE	3.15 -0.08	3.06 -0.22	3.24 +0.05	5.44 -0.11

FIGURE 5 Criminality and resilience by region, Oceania, 2025.

The diversity of criminal markets, despite relatively low scores at the continental level, comes into sharper focus when looking at regional and national scores. For example, Melanesia and Micronesia are the second- and third-highest scoring regions in the world for fauna crimes, largely because of IUU fishing. Kiribati, in Micronesia, is 186th overall in the world for criminality but 23rd for fauna crimes, while Solomon Islands is 15th in the world for fauna crimes, on par with large countries such as Nigeria.

The discrepancies are less noticeable when it comes to criminal actor types. Although Oceania has consistently recorded the lowest average scores globally across all perpetrator categories assessed by the Index, most remain moderately influential on the continent. Notably diverging from global patterns, foreign actors emerge as the dominant force in Oceania's criminal landscape, with loose local groups and state-embedded actors tending to operate mainly in a facilitator capacity. Papua New Guinea is an outlier, with a relatively high score for criminal actors, the highest score in the region for criminality, and the lowest score for resilience.

As for resilience, Oceania performs significantly above the global average of 4.78, with a score of 5.44. This positions it as the second most resilient continent after Europe and well ahead of the Americas. Although the score has fallen slightly since 2021, reflecting a gradual weakening of institutional, legal and social safeguards, Oceania maintains a comparatively strong standing.

Differences in resilience are primarily regional, stemming from uneven institutional capacity and governance strength across the continent. Australia and New Zealand's advanced systems largely sustain the continental average, while many Pacific Island states (including three that are classified as 'least developed

countries¹⁾ face structural constraints to effective resilience measures. It is important to consider regional contexts and national diversity when assessing the continent's overall stability.

Over the three Index iterations, Oceania's criminality score rose from 3.07 to 3.23 before dropping slightly to its current level. At first glance, this might suggest stability. In reality, it reflects dynamics specific to Oceania: in larger countries such as Australia and New Zealand, entrenched criminal markets have steadily worsened in recent years, while in Pacific Island states deeply rooted vulnerabilities manifest differently, with phases of escalation followed by contractions in certain forms of criminality.

The most striking shift has been the sharp rise in criminality in Australia and New Zealand (as a region of Oceania), which together recorded an increase of 0.47 points since 2021 – one of the steepest global jumps – to reach 4.10 in 2025. The underlying drivers include expanding drug markets – particularly cocaine and synthetic drugs, which mirror global trends – and the rapid escalation of cyber-dependent crimes. These markets have converged to transform both countries into major nodes within global illicit economies. Despite the notable rise in criminality in Australia and New Zealand, Melanesia continues to record the highest criminality levels in Oceania. While drug markets stand out on the continent, with above-moderate scores (5.50 and higher) in Australia and New Zealand, in Melanesia environmental crimes are among the most pervasive, with financial crimes a common feature across both regions.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Micronesia and Polynesia are the regions least affected by criminality on the continent, and are the lowest scoring globally. Only three markets – human trafficking and fauna crimes in Micronesia and fauna crimes and the synthetic drug trade in Polynesia – record moderate levels (above 3.50), reflecting broader continental patterns of criminality. Moreover, both regions experienced further declines from their already low 2023 levels.

Across the Pacific Islands, however, low average criminality scores belie the severe impact of environmental crimes, particularly those affecting marine life through IUU fishing in Melanesia and Micronesia. These activities rob ecosystems of their vitality, threaten food security, fuel corruption and feed into international illicit markets, especially in Asia. The geographic isolation of the Pacific lends them little security; instead, porous marine borders and weak regulatory capacity mean many island states are particularly exposed and vulnerable.

Oceania's resilience profile tells two contrasting stories about its criminal actors. In Australia and New Zealand, resilience scores above 7.0 reflect strong courts and police forces that make it difficult for corruption alone to sustain illicit markets. Criminal actors – most visibly outlaw motorcycle gangs – operate as structured organizations, adapting through transnational networks and diversification into cybercrime and money laundering. Increasingly, they are adopting 'crime as a service' as a model, where individuals who are not members of organized crime groups are contracted for specific tasks and have no visibility into wider operations. Across the Pacific Islands, however, relatively low resilience scores leave space for different types of criminal actors to thrive. Collusion between political elites, foreign companies and local power brokers often replaces visible gangs, embedding criminality directly into governance and resource sectors.

When viewed from a global perspective, Oceania's profile can be interpreted as a paradox of moderate averages that obscure considerably extreme highs and lows. It is not an epicentre of organized crime like Asia, nor as systematically fragile as parts of Africa, yet it houses some of the highest-scoring illicit markets worldwide – fauna crimes in the Pacific and cyber-dependent crimes in Australia and New Zealand – and some of the strongest resilience scores globally. This juxtaposition underlines a key point: while Oceania's aggregate numbers may appear modest, its internal contrasts make it an increasingly critical frontier in the international landscape of organized crime.

CRIMINAL MARKETS

Oceania's criminal markets present an inconsistent profile. At the continental level, the average of 3.06 is the world's lowest. A similar pattern emerges across the 15 individual criminal markets, where Oceania consistently records the lowest continental averages, with only a few exceptions. For instance, it received the second-lowest global score for the cocaine trade (3.29) – surpassing only Asia, where demand is limited due to the dominance of other drugs – and for the synthetic drug trade (3.89), surpassing the Americas for similar reasons. Even these exceptions remain relatively minor, as the averages indicate limited impact. The continent does, however, harbour criminal markets that carry genuine weight on the global stage. Collectively, these trends emphasize that Oceania is not a centre of mass criminality but a complex frontier of criminal economies, where a handful of markets exert disproportionate influence through global flows and local vulnerabilities.

Fauna crimes are a particular concern. Oceania has the world's second most pervasive fauna crimes market, just behind Africa. It is also the market that has experienced the sharpest increase since the inception of the Index, growing by 0.68 points since 2021.

These activities predominantly take the form of IUU fishing, driven by a rich marine biodiversity that also fuels the trafficking of exotic species. This is compounded by weak governance, high levels of corruption, expansive exclusive economic zones and limited surveillance capacity, leaving the continent – particularly the Pacific Island countries – vulnerable to exploitation by industrial fleets that face few, if any, consequences.

Melanesia and Micronesia are particularly affected, recording the second- and third-highest regional averages for fauna crimes globally in 2025 (just behind South-Eastern Asia), underlining the pervasiveness of this market. According to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Ocean has become a hotspot for IUU fishing, with estimated losses of about US\$600 million annually to Pacific Island countries.² Industrial fishing vessels – particularly Asian distant-water fleets targeting tuna and,

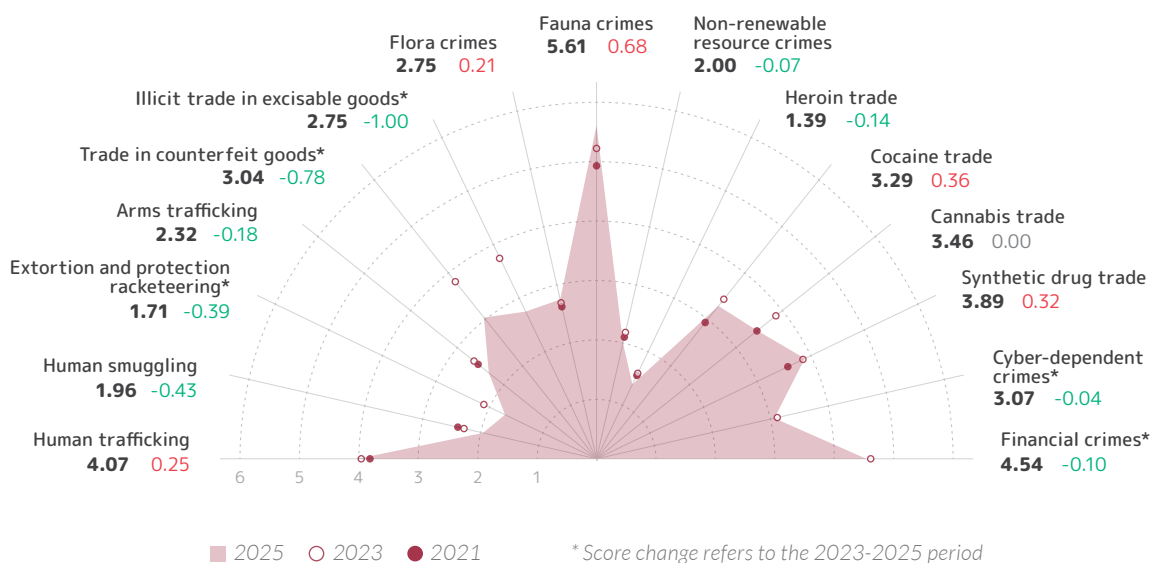


FIGURE 6 Criminal markets, Oceania, 2021–2025.

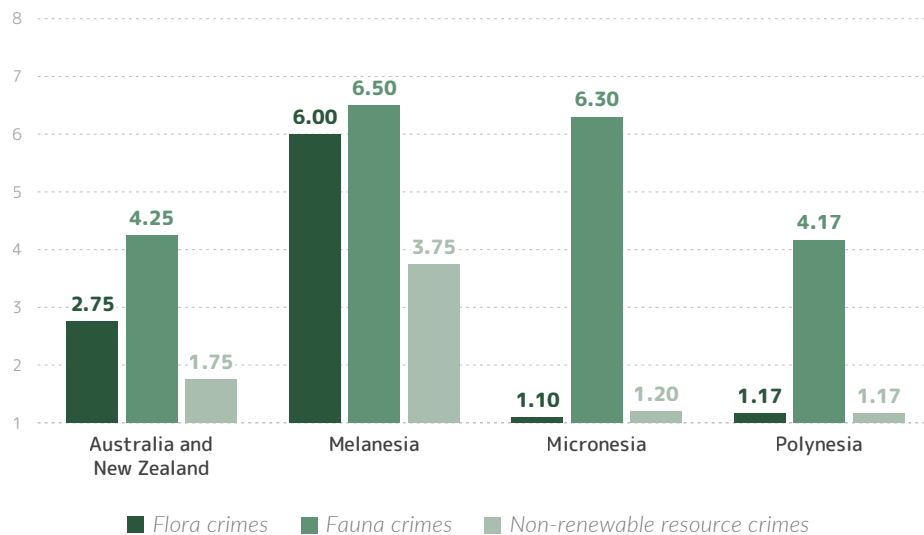


FIGURE 7 Environmental crime scores by region, Oceania, 2025.

to a lesser extent, sharks and sea cucumbers for global markets – often operate without licences and employ destructive practices that devastate marine habitats. Wildlife trafficking adds another layer of complexity, as animals such as birds, reptiles and marine species are smuggled to markets in Asia.

Low regional scores for flora crimes and non-renewable resource crimes underline fauna as the resource most in need of protection. However, the exploitation of flora and non-renewable resources stands out in Melanesia. The region recorded the highest score for non-renewable resource crimes on the continent, despite the relatively limited global market. Papua New Guinea is the main driver of this, registering a high score of 7.0, a notable increase of 1.5 points since the first iteration of the Index. The influence of flora crimes in Melanesia, meanwhile, is most pronounced from a global standpoint. Its average of 6.0 makes it the second most affected region globally, after South-Eastern Asia.

Informal gold mining fuels violence

Illegal mining and the violence it fuels have grown significantly in recent years, particularly around the Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea, which accounts for about 10% of the country's export revenue. Illicit alluvial mining has been taking place in the area for decades, contributing to severe environmental degradation through waste dumping. More recently, illegal miners have become increasingly violent, terrorizing communities and traditional landowners.³ The growing use of firearms among rival tribal groups has led to deadly clashes, with more than 50 fatalities

reported in 2024, largely driven by disputes over access to mining areas and resource benefits.⁴

The escalation of violence has contributed to the rise in Papua New Guinea's non-renewable resource crimes score. The situation prompted the government to declare a state of emergency in September 2024 and deploy security forces to affected areas.⁵ A peace agreement committed rival groups to end illicit exploitation of resources, but implementation of the accord has reportedly been uneven and the long-term stability of the situation is uncertain.⁶

Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands stand out globally as hubs for the illicit timber trade, recording scores of 8.50 and 8.0, respectively, in 2025 – the second- and third-highest scores for flora crimes worldwide. The countries are the largest suppliers of tropical logs to China,⁷ and the combination of high demand, high profit margins and weak regulatory frameworks has driven extensive exploitation of forest resources.⁸ Foreign companies, including from China and Malaysia, are reportedly involved in illicit practices within the industry, such as operating beyond their licensed logging boundaries, under-reporting harvest volumes, engaging in tax evasion and money laundering, and participating in corrupt activities.⁹

Overall, the impact of these environmental crimes is substantial, with livelihoods eroded, public revenues drained, food insecurity exacerbated and long-term resilience weakened in a society already vulnerable to climate shocks. Moreover, these crimes directly feed Asian demand markets – primarily China and South-Eastern Asia, and in some cases Western Asia. This involves Oceania in global illicit supply chains that connect environmental resource exploitation, corruption, money laundering and financial crimes.

Despite a slight decline since 2023, financial crimes are the second most pervasive criminal market on the continent. Overall, Oceania does not host a globally significant financial crimes market, largely due to the predominance of developing economies with limited financial infrastructure, low financial literacy and modest income levels. Only five countries on the continent recorded a significant impact from financial crimes, scoring 5.50 or above. Among them, Australia and New Zealand stand out, each scoring 7.0 for the second consecutive iteration of the Index – a figure largely driven by the proliferation of cyber-enabled fraud and scam centres. This phenomenon is no longer confined to South-Eastern Asia, but is spreading worldwide,¹⁰ targeting millions of victims through increasingly sophisticated forms of digital deception.¹¹

Australia and New Zealand also lead the continent when it comes to cyber-dependent crimes, and are among the highest scorers globally. The regional average for cyber-dependent crimes rose sharply, from 6.75 in 2023 to 7.50 in 2025, surpassing financial crimes as the region's most pervasive form of criminal activity.

Although significantly less widespread than fauna and financial crimes, human trafficking is one of the continent's most harmful criminal markets, ranking as the third most pervasive. The market has shown steady growth since 2021. Despite the upward trend, Oceania still has the lowest human trafficking levels globally.

Across many Pacific Island states, trafficking commonly takes the form of forced labour, particularly affecting migrant workers from Southern and South-Eastern Asia who are exploited in sectors such as fishing and hospitality. Sexual exploitation also persists, especially in urban and tourist centres and illegal logging and mining sites, where both local and foreign victims are targeted.¹²

Melanesia registers the continent's highest regional average for human trafficking, having experienced some of the most pronounced increases worldwide since 2021. In Papua New Guinea and Fiji, foreign and local people are subjected to diverse forms of exploitation, including forced labour, domestic servitude, street vending and sexual exploitation. These dynamics are compounded by persistent vulnerabilities such as economic hardship, financial instability and recurring natural disasters. Climate-induced events, including droughts and floods, have displaced communities, destroyed livelihoods and heightened exposure to trafficking risks across the region.¹³

Despite the relative prevalence of human trafficking and the increasing risks associated with it, the scores for other people-related markets, such as human smuggling, extortion and protection racketeering, fell below 2.0. Typically, these markets show some degree of correlation, reflecting their interconnected nature, but in Oceania this pattern does not hold. This contrast reveals how the continent's overall low criminality score can obscure the disproportionate impact of specific markets that place significant strain on communities and governance systems. As climate-induced vulnerabilities intensify, these other markets may also begin to expand.

Drug markets are a persistent concern across Oceania, with synthetic drugs and cannabis ranking among the continent's five most significant criminal markets. Synthetic drugs dominate, standing out as the only one of these markets to have expanded consistently across all three Index iterations. Reflecting global trends, Oceania's synthetic drug economy is undergoing a profound transformation, with methamphetamines, in particular, becoming available in several Pacific Island countries.

In Australia and New Zealand, wastewater analysis has repeatedly identified methamphetamine as the most commonly used drug, with its market value rising year after year.¹⁴ Reflecting this trend, the region has registered a 0.25-point annual increase since 2021, reaching an average score of 6.75, among the highest globally. The ongoing demand for synthetic drugs in these two countries has transformed the Pacific Islands into a strategic transit and emerging production hub. In recent years, several Melanesian states, notably Fiji, have developed consumption markets and small-scale domestic production, particularly of methamphetamines.¹⁵ This has driven an increase in Melanesia's synthetic drug average since 2021, although with a score of 4.25 it remains below the global average of 5.14. Large-scale methamphetamine seizures in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, coupled with growing evidence of foreign criminal infiltration, highlight the region's rising vulnerability. This trade is increasingly being shaped by transnational networks linking Asian syndicates, Mexican cartels and other global criminal actors. Chinese precursors and Latin American cocaine are also feeding Oceania's shifting and interconnected drug markets.¹⁶ Cannabis, though still one of the continent's most dominant criminal markets, experienced a contraction in 2025, returning to its 2021 level.

In contrast, the heroin trade is almost non-existent in Oceania. As for cocaine, according to the 2025 UN Office on Drugs and Crime World Drug Report, while more people used cocaine in the Americas than in any other region, Oceania had the highest per capita prevalence of cocaine use globally in 2024.¹⁷ This trend is primarily driven by Australia and New Zealand, where demand has risen steadily since 2021.

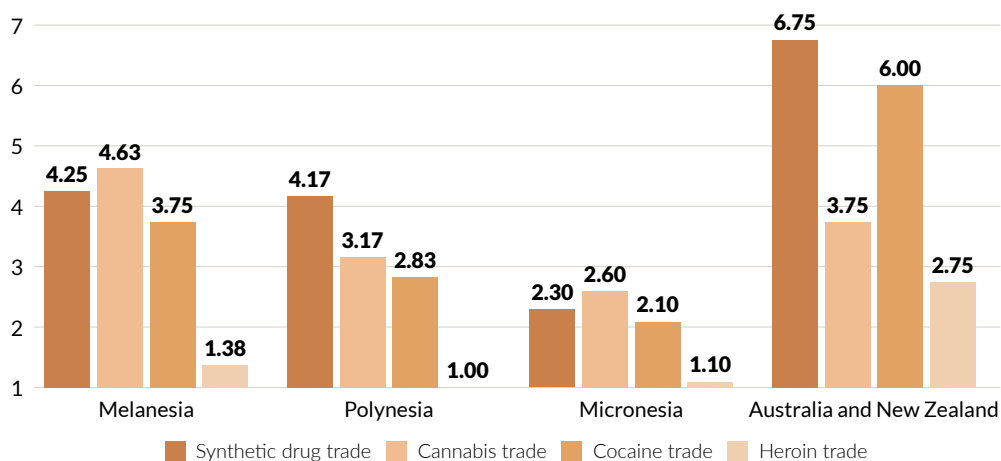


FIGURE 8 Drug market scores by region, Oceania, 2025.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Organized crime in Oceania is shaped less by entrenched mafia-style organizations and more by a patchwork of actors whose influence varies sharply across regions. In Australia and New Zealand, organized groups are structured, visible and often violent. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and drug syndicates dominate domestic markets while maintaining extensive transnational ties. In the Pacific Islands, organized crime is less about street presence and more about high-level collusion, foreign exploitation and private sector complicity, with criminality embedded in resource sectors and facilitated by corruption. The result is an active but fragmented criminal landscape in which various players dominate in different contexts, yet remain tied together through global flows of drugs, money and natural resources.

With an average score of 3.24, Oceania's criminal actor landscape exerts limited influence compared to global standards, yet it is characterized by several peculiarities. Mafia-style groups are generally absent or minimally present in most countries, with this actor type scoring an average of 1.46 across the continent, the lowest worldwide. The main exceptions are Australia and New Zealand, where outlaw motorcycle gangs dominate many criminal markets.

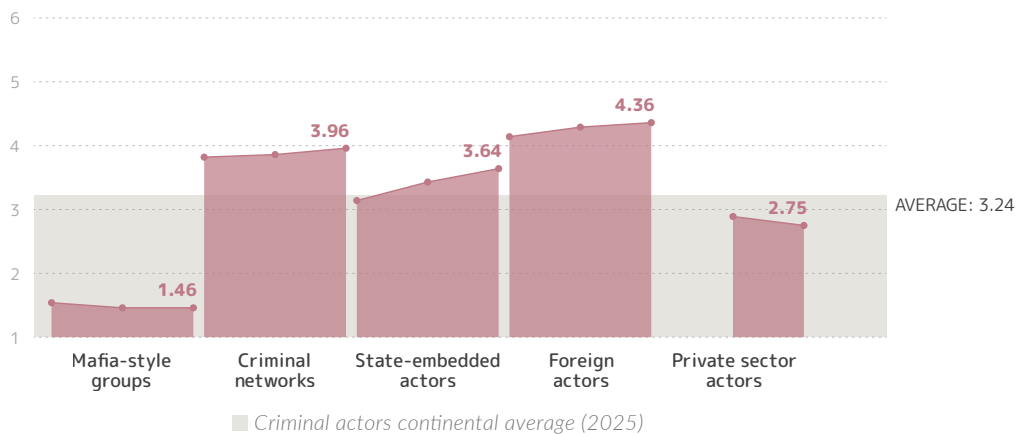


FIGURE 9 Criminal actors, Oceania, 2021-2025.

Riding the underworld

Outlaw motorcycle gangs are central to organized crime in Australia and New Zealand. They dominate much of the methamphetamine and cannabis trades, maintain violent reputations, and have diversified into areas such as fraud and money laundering. Despite repeated crackdowns – including those carried

out by the Morpheus task force, a joint initiative targeting the most significant outlaw motorcycle gang threats in Australia – their influence persists.¹⁸

Historically, these groups expanded across the Pacific, establishing smaller chapters comprising

a variety of nationalities, as well as in North America and Europe.¹⁹ As of 2026, anecdotal evidence suggests their influence may have diminished significantly. However, during the 2025 Index reporting period, Fiji, Tonga and French Polynesia confirmed the presence of chapters, while intelligence indicated broader interest from groups such as the Comancheros, the Rebels and the Mongrel Mob across the continent. These gangs are involved in drug trafficking and exploit criminal returnees (deportees) to facilitate this

and other activities, including money laundering and extortion.²⁰

These returnees – typically men under the age of 35 – are sent back from Australia, New Zealand or the US to their countries of origin, including Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia. Many have served prison sentences for drug offences and gang membership, often involving outlaw motorcycle gangs (though not all deportees are affiliated with such groups).²¹ ■

Foreign actors exert the strongest influence on the continent, extending their reach from major economies to fragile states. Their impact has grown steadily since 2021. In smaller Pacific countries with low visibility, the involvement of Asian syndicates, Central and South American cartels, and foreign businesses has consistently sustained activities such as the drug trade, human trafficking and IUU fishing.²² The presence of a variety of foreign criminal actors in the Pacific Islands suggests that the continent has changed from being a transit point for illicit flows to a significant hub for transnational criminal activity.

Melanesia is the region with the highest presence of foreign criminal actors in Oceania, with an average score of 5.88. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, in particular, are affected by foreign criminal organizations, which are increasingly integrated into global criminal supply chains and capable of shaping markets as far away as Asia.

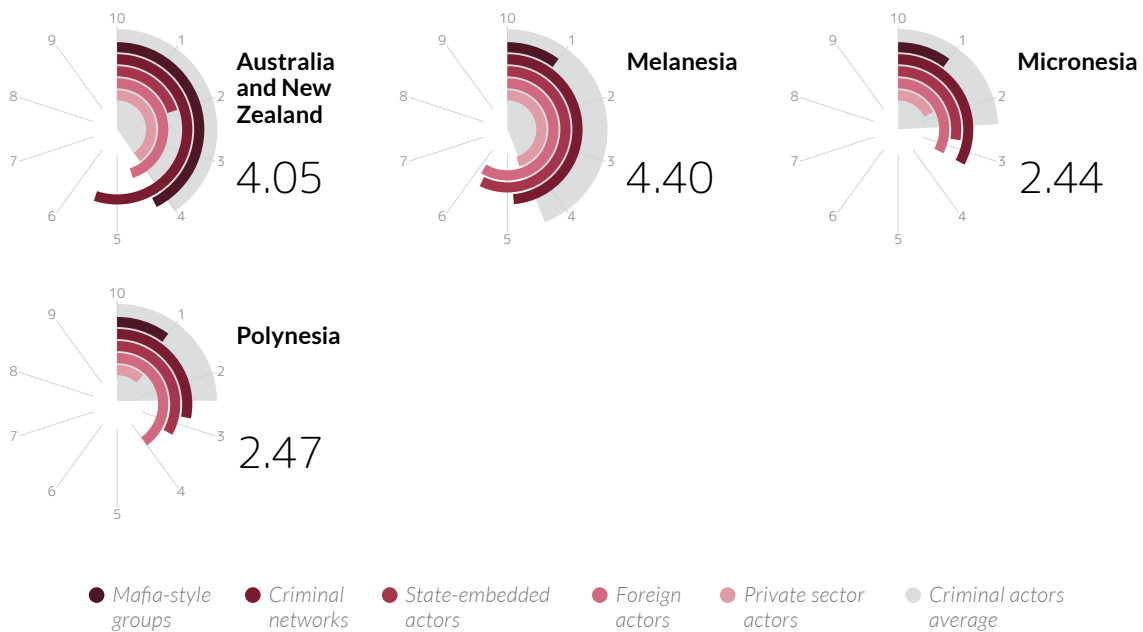


FIGURE 10 Criminal actors by region, Oceania, 2025.

Triads and Asian syndicates operate across legal and illegal spheres on the continent – from drug and human trafficking to cyber scams and financial crimes – and in some cases maintain ties with political figures, potentially enabling influence at higher levels. In Australia and New Zealand, East Asian and South-Eastern Asian syndicates are key suppliers of methamphetamine and heroin, and are also expanding into money laundering through casinos and real estate.²³

South and Central American cartels, notably Mexico's Sinaloa syndicate, are major players in cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking, leveraging North American networks in the absence of a permanent local presence. Actors from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Western Asia and elsewhere are involved in activities such as ATM fraud and drug shipments, often cooperating with established networks.²⁴

Foreign criminals, especially foreign companies, have been attracted to Pacific Island countries by favourable tax regimes and weak monitoring and enforcement capabilities.²⁵ Foreign logging companies and fishing fleets dominate environmental crime markets, often through opaque arrangements with local elites. In Solomon Islands, similar patterns of foreign-controlled logging persist, with most tropical timber exports channelled to China despite formal restrictions. In Vanuatu and Micronesia, foreign fishing fleets have been repeatedly implicated in IUU fishing and human trafficking – particularly through forced labour – illustrating how licit industries are vectors for illicit activities.

Although smaller in scale, domestic private sector actors also participate in criminal markets in Oceania. These actors typically engage in tax evasion, money laundering and corruption, undermining the rule of law and the economic regulatory system. In sectors such as fishing and logging, collusion between illegal operators, companies and organized crime groups fuels environmental degradation and entrenches poverty and instability in coastal communities. The gold industry in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands also exemplifies these dynamics, with these countries scoring 6.50 and 7.0, respectively, for private sector actors, and 7.0 and 4.0 for non-renewable resource crimes. As a key export sector, the gold industry attracts several illicit activities, including private sector corruption and money laundering, often concealed through front companies, shell corporations and complex financial networks. Although there are stronger regulatory frameworks in New Zealand, domestic property, casinos and the financial system in general remain susceptible to economic fraud and money laundering, with the country scoring 5.0 for private sector actors.²⁶

As the second-highest scoring criminal actor type, after foreign actors, domestic criminal networks have recorded a gradual increase since 2021. These loosely structured groups – including youth gangs and online fraud operators – have gained importance in Australia and New Zealand, particularly in cyber-enabled crimes and financial fraud. The region is identified as the most affected by criminal networks in Oceania in 2025, with a score of 5.50, marking the largest increase (+0.75) since the first edition of the Index. Their expansion reflects a broader global trend, with networks becoming a common and influential actor type across diverse locations and criminal markets. Within Oceania, criminal networks are also significant in Melanesia, where local groups have been mainly involved in the drug trade in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, including the operation of small-scale clandestine methamphetamine laboratories in recent years. However, their influence remains much lower in Micronesia and Polynesia, where criminal markets – including the drug trade – operate on a relatively small scale.

At the same time, state-embedded actors, while still relatively limited in overall influence, have expanded their presence across the continent more visibly than any other actor type since 2021. The Pacific

Islands have increasingly become the focal point of a trend in which political and business leaders are becoming intertwined, facilitating illegal logging, mining and IUU fishing. Melanesia stands out, with a score of 5.75, driven by deeply entrenched state-embedded actors in countries such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. State officials, particularly within the police, are heavily implicated in organized crime, including drug smuggling, human trafficking and environmental crimes.²⁷ Polynesia ranks as the second-highest scoring region on the continent, though at a significantly lower level, with Tonga raising the regional average. The pattern is consistent across affected countries: elites exploit regulatory gaps and wield political influence to facilitate illicit activities. Corruption within customs further undermines border controls, with officials frequently reporting that they feel powerless in the face of criminal intimidation and familial pressure.

RESILIENCE

For the third consecutive iteration of the Index, Oceania was the second-highest scoring continent for resilience, after Europe. Unlike continents such as Africa and the Americas, where resilience is tested across a wide spectrum of entrenched and diverse criminal markets, Oceania's challenges are narrower, concentrated primarily on environmental crimes, drugs and, increasingly, cyber-related offences. Over time, certain countries on the continent have honed their resilience mechanisms towards some criminal threats, explaining the comparatively high score. Yet this does not imply that Oceania is safe: cybercrime is rising faster than state capacity in several of the Pacific Island countries, and governance weaknesses in countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji continue to expose markets to corruption and foreign exploitation. The high continental average for resilience appears to be less a reflection of uniformly strong institutions and more the product of Australia and New Zealand's advanced systems, combined with Oceania's narrower criminal landscape.

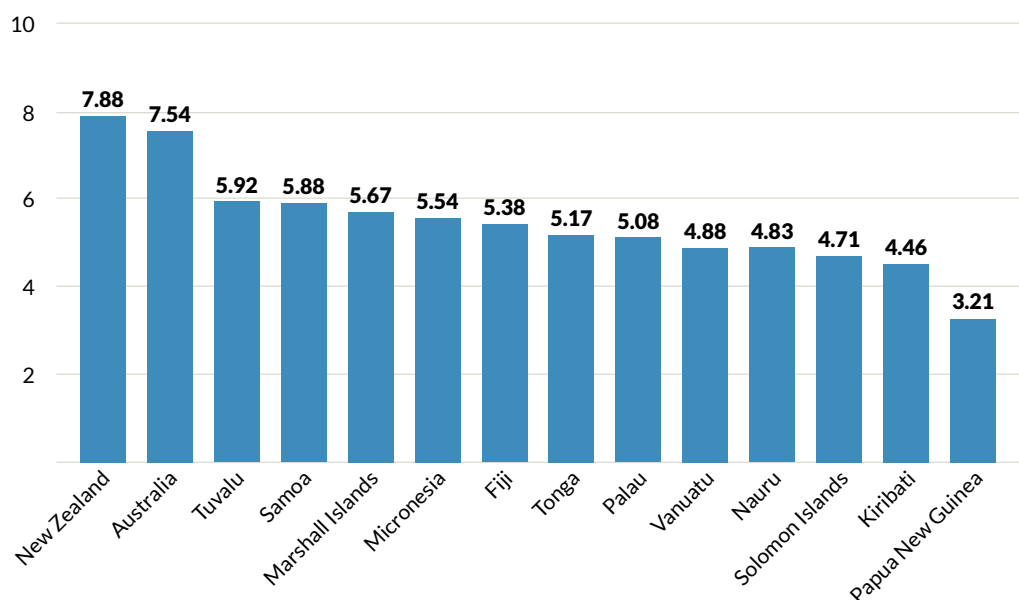


FIGURE 11 National resilience scores, Oceania, 2025.

Five out of the 14 countries in Oceania have a resilience score of below 5.0, while seven have mid-range scores clustering between 5.0 and 6.0. Australia and New Zealand stand out. Their high scores in 'judicial system and detention', 'law enforcement' and 'territorial integrity' demonstrate the strength of their institutions, continued prioritization of the criminal justice sector, and active engagement in continental and international cooperation mechanisms, especially in areas of anti-money laundering and legislation related to cybercrime. Although indicators such as 'political leadership and governance' and 'national policies and laws' have declined slightly since 2021, Australia and New Zealand continue to show consolidated resilience.

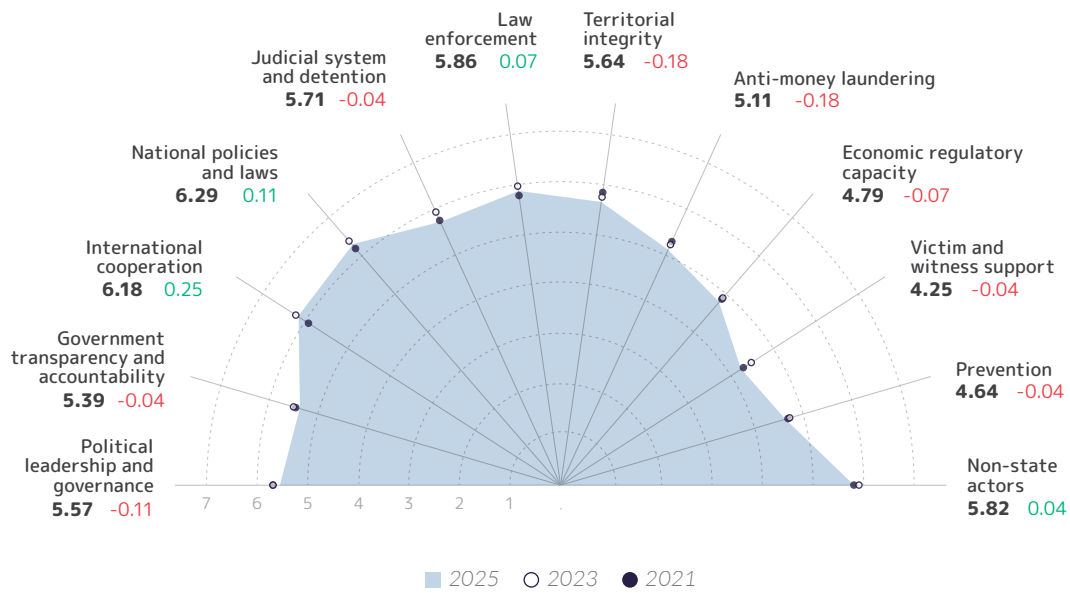


FIGURE 12 Resilience indicators, Oceania, 2021–2025.

By contrast, the Pacific Islands have weaker and more uneven resilience frameworks. In 2025, regional averages stood at 4.55 in Melanesia, 5.12 in Micronesia and 5.66 in Polynesia. While these scores are above the global average of 4.78, they are significantly lower than those of Australia and New Zealand. Law enforcement agencies in Pacific countries face funding challenges and are limited in their ability to police wide maritime domains. Judicial systems are often under-resourced, resulting in significant case backlogs. For instance, in Solomon Islands, detainees can spend up to two years in pretrial detention, and nearly half of the prison population consists of people awaiting trial,²⁸ while in Fiji, politics limit impartiality in the justice system.²⁹

Continently, Oceania’s resilience is primarily underpinned by a strong reliance on institutional measures, multilateral cooperation and security-driven initiatives. ‘National policies and laws’, ‘international cooperation’ and ‘law enforcement’ remain the leading pillars of the response to organized crime. The national legal framework of most Oceanian countries is generally sufficiently effective, with the continent showing improvements since 2021 despite recent stagnation and underlying systemic vulnerabilities. Oceania’s geographic isolation, coupled with the scarcity and fragmentation of reliable information, institutional knowledge and comprehensive data on the scope and nature of organized crime (particularly in some Pacific Island countries), continues to impede the sustained implementation and regular updating of legislation.³⁰

Reducing vulnerability to climate displacement

Climate change is increasingly shaping patterns of displacement across the Pacific, with direct implications for vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking. Pacific Island states face both sudden onset disasters, such as cyclones affecting Vanuatu and Solomon Islands or flooding in Fiji, which have displaced tens of thousands of people in recent years.³¹ This is coupled with slow-onset processes, including rising sea levels in the Pacific – occurring at rates well above the global average – and persistent droughts in countries such as Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Kiribati. These phenomena are eroding coastlines, threatening food and water security, and forcing repeated relocations.³² The result is deepening inequality and economic hardship, leaving affected communities increasingly vulnerable as traditional livelihoods collapse.³³

As a result, many Pacific Islanders are left with little choice but to migrate, as their homes become uninhabitable. Tuvalu and Kiribati, where most land lies only 2–3 metres above sea level, face particularly acute existential threats.

Members of the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility in 2023, committing to explore new migration opportunities for those affected by the climate crisis.³⁴ To date, only one dedicated opportunity for climate-affected people – a world first – has been created. The Falepili Mobility Pathway, under the Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union treaty, entered into force in August 2024.³⁵

Beyond Tuvalu, those who cannot meet existing requirements are left without legal options and may resort to irregular migration. Such circumstances frequently lead people to overstay their visas, exposing them to the threat of detection, detention and deportation.

Living without legal status pushes migrants into the shadows, barring them from the formal labour market and often forcing them into low-paid, informal work where oversight is weak. These conditions significantly increase exposure to trafficking, discrimination and abuse, while fear of deportation deters victims from reporting abuses or seeking justice.³⁶

The scale of displacement is already significant. According to the World Meteorological Organization, at least 50 000 Pacific Islanders are at risk of displacement each year due to sea-level rise and extreme weather. More than half of the continent's population lives within 500 metres of the coast, where sea levels are rising faster than the global average, intensifying pressures for climate-induced migration.³⁷ Experts on climate and migration are increasingly calling for urgent action, including the creation of clear and humane legal pathways for people displaced by the climate crisis. Without such mechanisms, vulnerable populations will continue to be forced into precarious and exploitative conditions, undermining human rights protections and continental stability. ■

Despite sustained continental cooperation, structural vulnerabilities – particularly those stemming from the inherent challenges of patrolling a vast and fragmented geography – continue to make 'territorial integrity' a critical dimension of Oceania's resilience framework. In 2025, five states – Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Palau – scored at or below 4.50 for 'territorial integrity', meaning more than a third of the continent struggled to maintain effective control in this area. Tuvalu, without an operational patrol boat, relies entirely on Australian support to monitor its vast

maritime zone,³⁸ while Kiribati faces repeated incursions by foreign fishing fleets.³⁹ Micronesia, bound by the Compact of Free Association with the US,⁴⁰ depends largely on external defence arrangements rather than domestic enforcement. Even where scores were higher – such as in Samoa or Nauru – the ability to deter illegal logging, trafficking and IUU fishing remains limited.

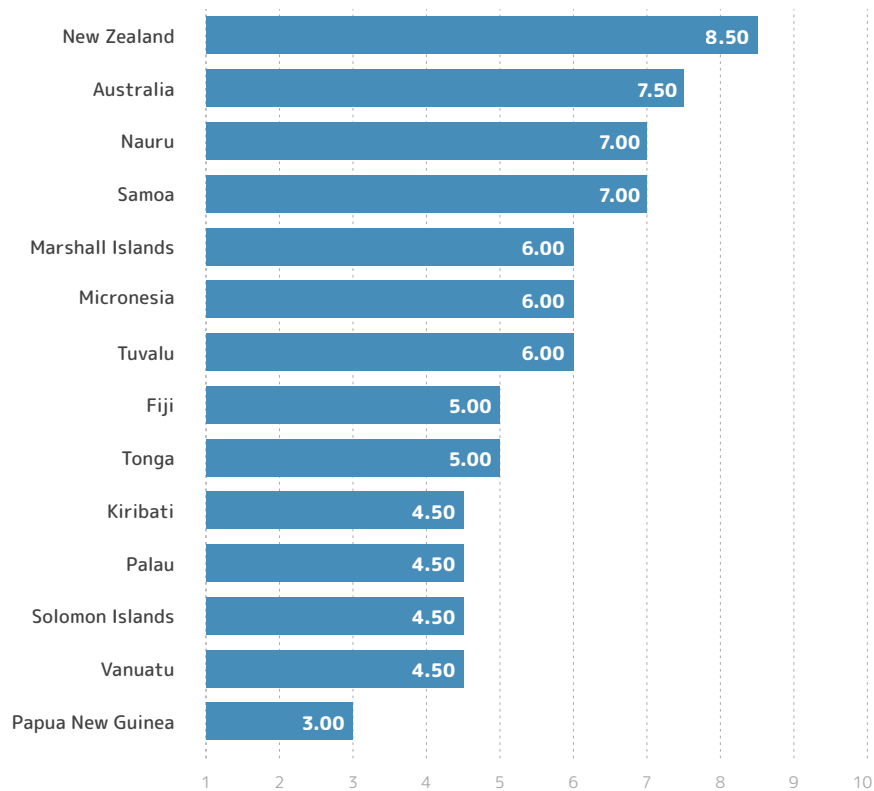


FIGURE 13 Territorial integrity scores by country, Oceania, 2025.

Another area of concern lies in socially oriented resilience measures, with ‘victim and witness support’ and ‘prevention’ registering the lowest scores among all continental resilience indicators. This highlights a persistent preference for security-focused responses over protective and preventative approaches, and once again reflects the entrenched divide that characterizes Oceania. In Australia and New Zealand, both indicators score above 6.0, supported by sustained investment in public awareness campaigns, more comprehensive prevention strategies and active engagement from civil society.⁴¹ In contrast, scores across much of the Pacific rarely exceed 4.0, underlining significant resource constraints, limited protections for victims of organized crime and a reduced space for independent oversight. Such weaknesses in prevention and protection systems leave states vulnerable to threats such as human trafficking and environmental crime, where external demand exploits local frailties.⁴²

Taken together, Oceania’s resilience trajectory from 2021 to 2025 is best described as stable, with averages again concealing widening disparities. Australia and New Zealand have consolidated already strong systems, while many Pacific states have stagnated or declined in crucial areas. This imbalance is significant, with organized crime exploiting weak points where resilience is lowest.

Notes

- 1 They are Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. See UN Trade and Development, UN list of least developed countries, 2024, <https://unctad.org/topic/least-developed-countries/list>.
- 2 Sea Shepherd, Sea Shepherd and Tuvalu police confiscate over 9.5 kilometres of illegal fishing gear, 17 July 2024, <https://www.seashepherdglobal.org/latest-news/tuvalu-longline>.
- 3 Belinda Kora and Tim Swanston, Papua New Guinea government to send military and police in crack down on illegal mining and 'squatters' at Porgera gold mine, ABC News, 10 April 2024, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-10/Papua-New-Guinea-porgera-mine-police-military-illegal-mining/103686590>.
- 4 Hannah Tabara, What fuels the violence at Papua New Guinea's Porgera gold mine, and what lies ahead?, ACLED, April 2025, <https://acleddata.com/qa/qa-what-fuels-violence-papua-new-guineas-porgera-gold-mine-and-what-lies-ahead>.
- 5 Nick Marsh, Shootouts over gold mine kill 30 in Papua New Guinea, BBC News, September 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c7811zjdmk5o>.
- 6 Hannah Tabara, What fuels the violence at Papua New Guinea's Porgera gold mine, and what lies ahead?, ACLED, April 2025, <https://acleddata.com/qa/qa-what-fuels-violence-papua-new-guineas-porgera-gold-mine-and-what-lies-ahead>.
- 7 Chinese demand fuels Solomon Islands mass deforestation, Al Jazeera, 18 October 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/18/chinese-demand-fuels-solomon-islands-mass-deforestation>.
- 8 James Cutmore, Top 10 largest rainforests in the world 2025, BBC Science Focus, 11 December 2024, <https://www.sciencefocus.com/planet-earth/largest-rainforests-in-the-world>.
- 9 GI-TOC Organized Crime Dispatch, Papua New Guinea and illegal logging, The Index Podcast, YouTube, 19 February 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkFVkab7bSg>; Don Wiseman, Marape's forest promised dismissed as 'empty gesture' by Papua New Guinea advocacy group, Radio New Zealand, 10 July 2025, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/pacific/566538/marape-s-forest-promised-dismissed-as-empty-gesture-by-png-advocacy-group>.
- 10 Kristina Amerhauser and Alex Goodwin, A world of deceit: Mapping the landscape of the global scam centre phenomenon, GI-TOC, March 2026, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/mapping-global-scam-center-phenomenon/>.
- 11 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (New Zealand), New Zealand's Cyber Security Strategy 2026–2030, 27 February 2026, <https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/news/new-zealands-cyber-security-strategy-2026-2030-published>; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1 in 7 Australians experienced personal fraud, 12 March 2026, <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/1-7-australians-experienced-personal-fraud>.
- 12 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Regional report on the existing capacities to measure trafficking in persons in the Pacific Islands, 2023, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2023/UNODC_RegionalReport_PacificIslands_2023.pdf.
- 13 US Department of State, 2025 Trafficking in persons report: Papua New Guinea, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2025-trafficking-in-persons-report/papua-new-guinea>; US Department of State, 2025 Trafficking in persons report: Fiji, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2025-trafficking-in-persons-report/fiji>.
- 14 Virginia Comolli, Oceania's spike in synthetic drug markets, GI-TOC, 21 June 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/oceania-spike-in-synthetic-drug-markets>.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 UNODC, 2025 World Drug Report: Key findings, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2025/WDR25_B1_Key_findings.pdf.
- 18 Virginia Comolli and Martin Thorley, A crowded space: Foreign organized crime groups in the Pacific Islands, GI-TOC, May 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/>

- uploads/2024/04/Virginia-Comolli-Martin-Thorley-A-crowded-space-Foreign-organized-crime-groups-in-the-Pacific-islands-GI-TOC-May-2024.pdf.
- 19 Depending on the nationalities of their members, these groups may be categorized by the Index either as foreign actors or mafia-style groups.
 - 20 UNODC, Organised motorcycle gangs, The Pacific region: Actors, impact and implications, 2025, https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/pacific/2025/Organised_Motorcycle_Gang_Activities_-_Actors_Impact_and_Implications.pdf.
 - 21 Ibid.
 - 22 Virginia Comolli and Martin Thorley, Transnational organized crime and the Pacific Islands: A paper series, GI-TOC, 2024-2025, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/transnational-organized-crime-and-the-pacific-islands>.
 - 23 Virginia Comolli and Martin Thorley, A crowded space: Foreign organized crime groups in the Pacific Islands, GI-TOC, May 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Virginia-Comolli-Martin-Thorley-A-crowded-space-Foreign-organized-crime-groups-in-the-Pacific-islands-GI-TOC-May-2024.pdf>.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 Virginia Comolli, An industry of crime: Foreign businesses and illicit practices in the Pacific, GI-TOC, April 2024, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Virginia-Comolli-An-industry-of-crime-Foreign-businesses-and-illicit-practices-in-the-Pacific-GI-TOC-April-2024.pdf>.
 - 26 UNODC, Transnational organized crime in the Pacific: Expansion, challenges and impact, October 2024, https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/2024/TOCTA_Pacific_2024.pdf.
 - 27 Virginia Comolli, Criminal currents: Climate change and organized crime threats in the Pacific Islands, GI-TOC, December 2025, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/climate-change-and-organized-crime-threats-in-the-pacific-islands/>.
 - 28 US Department of State, 2024 country reports on human rights practices: Solomon Islands, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/solomon-islands>.
 - 29 UN Development Programme Pacific Office in Fiji, Justice needs and satisfaction in Fiji, October 2019, <https://www.undp.org/pacific/publications/justice-needs-and-satisfaction-fiji-report>.
 - 30 Andreas Schloenhardt, Legal frameworks to combat organised crime in the Pacific Islands, University of the South Pacific, December 2021, https://www.usp.ac.fj/wp-content/uploads/sites/128/2021/12/4_Andreas-S_JSPL_Special-Edition.pdf.
 - 31 ReliefWeb, Tropical Cyclone Lola – Oct 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/tc-2023-000207-vut>; Fiji floods on Christmas Day 2024: A season of adversity, *Australian Indian Times*, 11 January 2025, <https://indiantimes.com.au/fiji-floods-on-christmas-day-2024-a-season-of-adversity>.
 - 32 World Meteorological Organization, Climate change transforms Pacific Islands, 27 August 2024, <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/climate-change-transforms-pacific-islands>.
 - 33 Human Rights Watch, There's just no more land, 17 March 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/03/17/theres-just-no-more-land/community-led-planned-relocation-last-resort-adaptation>; Amnesty International, Navigating injustice: Climate displacement from the Pacific Islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati to Aotearoa New Zealand, 8 October 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/10/aotearoa-new-zealand-discriminatory-migration-system-fails-climate-affected-pacific-people>.
 - 34 Pacific Islands Forum, Pacific regional framework on climate mobility, 10 November 2023, <https://forumsec.org/publications/pacific-regional-framework-climate-mobility>.
 - 35 Australian Government, Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union treaty, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/tuvalu/australia-tuvalu-falepili-union-treaty>.
 - 36 Amnesty International, Aotearoa New Zealand: Discriminatory migration system fails climate-affected Pacific people, 8 October 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/10/aotearoa-new-zealand-discriminatory-migration-system-fails-climate-affected-pacific-people>.
 - 37 World Meteorological Organization, Ocean heat and sea-level rise threaten communities in the south-west Pacific, 5 June 2025, <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/ocean-heat-and-sea-level-rise-threaten-communities-south-west-pacific>.
 - 38 Asia Pacific Defence Reporter, Australia hands over new patrol boat to Tuvalu, 20 October 2024, <https://asiapacificdefencereporter.com/australia-hands-over-new-patrol-boat-to-tuvalu>.
 - 39 Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Strengthening Kiribati's frontline against illegal fishing, 14 June 2024, <https://www.ffa.int/2024/06/strengthening-kiribatis-frontline-against-illegal-fishing>.
 - 40 National Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, The Compact of Free Association between the United States of America and the Federated States of Micronesia, 19 July 2024, <https://gov.fm/the-compact-of-free-association-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-federated-states-of-micronesia-as-amended>.
 - 41 Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Senior Officers' Group and Australian Institute of Criminology, National Crime Prevention Framework, May 2020, <https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/national-crime-prevention-framework.pdf>; New Zealand Ministry of Justice, What works to reduce crime, <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/what-works-to-reduce-crime>.
 - 42 Virginia Comolli, Building resilience: How to counter organized crime in the Pacific Islands, GI-TOC, February 2025, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Virginia-Comolli-Building-resilience-How-to-counter-organized-crime-in-the-Pacific-Islands-GI-TOC-February-2025.pdf>.



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with over 800 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.



This report was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.



The Organized Crime Index design and development was supported by the ENACT Programme.

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



Contributions also received from the Government of Norway

www.globalinitiative.net