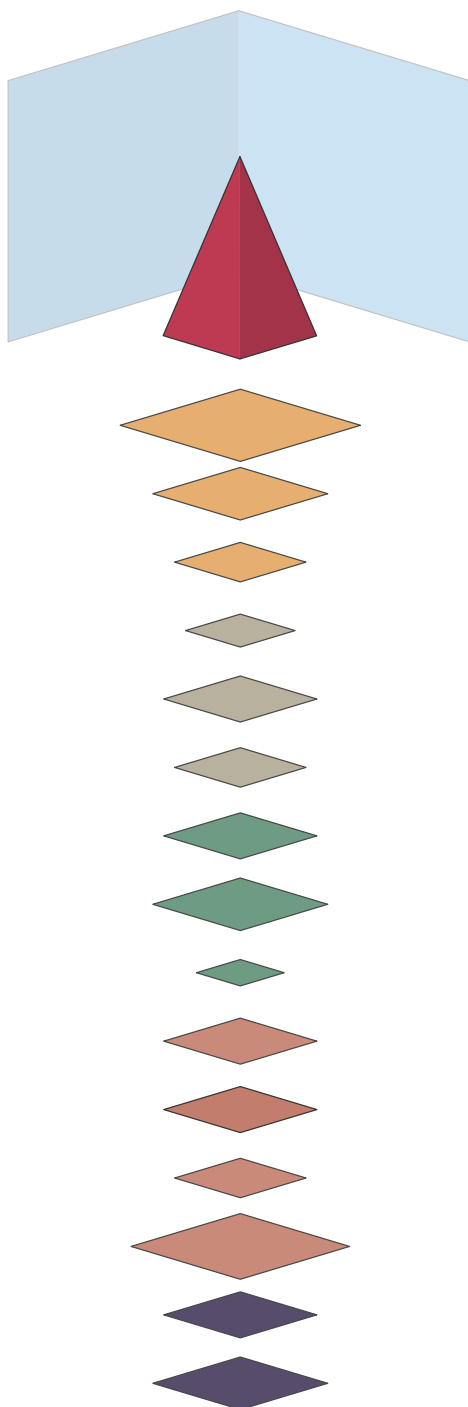


KOREA, REP.



4.43

CRIMINALITY SCORE

129th of 193 countries

35th of 46 Asian countries

3rd of 5 Eastern Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS

3.57

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 5.50

HUMAN SMUGGLING 4.00

EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING 3.00

ARMS TRAFFICKING 2.50

TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS 3.50

ILLCIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS 3.00

FLORA CRIMES 3.50

FAUNA CRIMES 4.00

NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES 2.00

HEROIN TRADE 3.50

COCAINE TRADE 3.50

CANNABIS TRADE 3.00

SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE 5.00

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES 3.50

FINANCIAL CRIMES 4.00



CRIMINAL ACTORS

5.30

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS 5.50

CRIMINAL NETWORKS 5.00

STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS 4.50

FOREIGN ACTORS 6.50

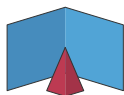
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS 5.00



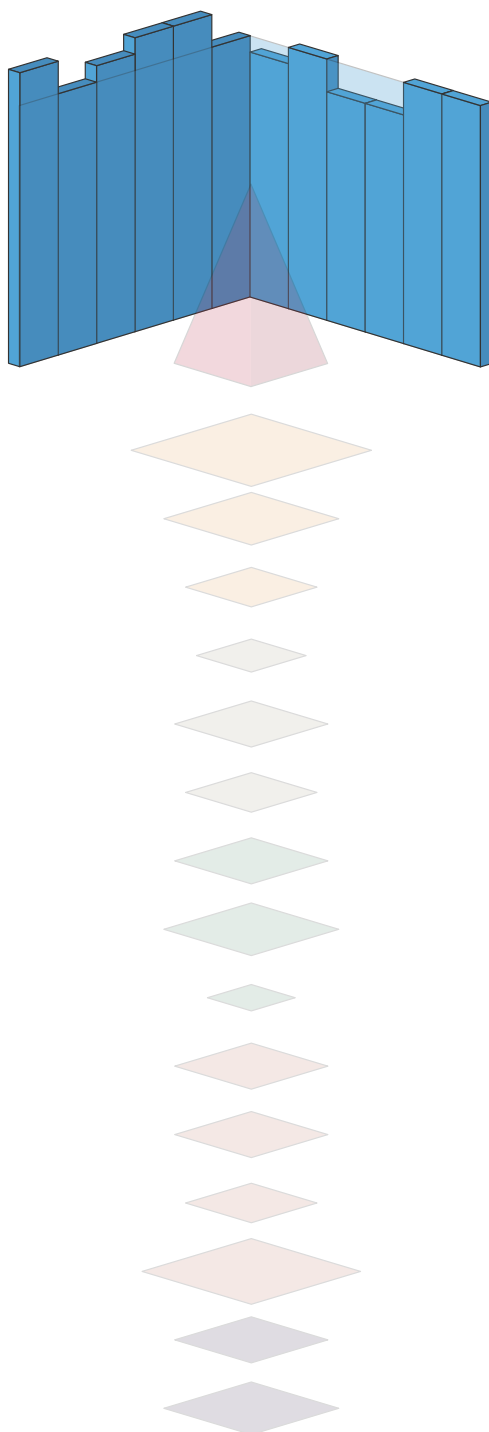
8.08

RESILIENCE SCORE





KOREA, REP.



8.08

RESILIENCE SCORE

5th of 193 countries

1st of 46 Asian countries

1st of 5 Eastern Asian countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE **9.00**

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY **8.00**

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION **8.50**

NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS **9.00**

JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION **9.00**

LAW ENFORCEMENT **8.00**

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY **7.50**

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING **8.00**

ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY **7.00**

VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT **7.00**

PREVENTION **8.00**

NON-STATE ACTORS **8.00**



4.43

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS **3.57**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **5.30**



CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a widespread criminal market in the Republic of Korea (South Korea), with national and foreign victims being exploited. Forced labour is the most common form of exploitation, with men from Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Mongolia being the most vulnerable. They are forced to work on fishing vessels, farms, and salt mines. Sex work is also prevalent, with more than a million South Korean women working in red-light districts. Women are lured into sex work with advance payments, but the contracts involve hidden costs and heavy penalties that make them indebted to procurers. There has been an increase in South Korean entertainment-promotion agencies and Russian recruitment agencies in regions close to the Republic of Korea, where falsified documents are used to traffic women into the country. However, increased prosecutions of trafficking offenders and stricter guidelines on the protection of fishermen vulnerable to trafficking have slightly scaled down the illicit market.

The Republic of Korea is a source and destination country for human smuggling, with people from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) fleeing to the country with the help of organized smuggling networks in the Republic of Korea and China. North Korean defectors are not considered to be smuggled when they arrive in the Republic of Korea, but brokers in China help smuggle North Koreans out of the country in exchange for payment, while many volunteers do the same for free. Human smuggling between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea generates millions annually, with immigration authorities in China and the DPRK accepting bribes from smugglers or victims. The country is a destination for people smuggled from South Asia and South East Asia. South Koreans attempt to enter the US, Japan, and France through irregular means, though the extent of organized crime networks involved in these flows is unclear.

Extortion and protection racketeering are not widespread in the country as victims of such crimes can report to the police and inform media outlets. Recent cases of extortion have been linked to sex work establishments.

TRADE

The Republic of Korea experiences limited arms trafficking. However, the country is increasingly becoming a prominent international arms exporter, particularly in the ammunition field. This could pose a risk of leakage from state armouries,

and fuel insurgencies and transnational criminal organizations. To mitigate this risk, the Republic of Korea has implemented firearm surrender schemes and weapon seizure programmes, contributing to the reduction of illicit firearms. Violence related to firearms in the Republic of Korea is minimal because of the country's strict laws and regulations on arms trafficking. Even the criminal groups, if any, do not possess and use guns, which could be deterring illicit trade in firearms into the country.

The Republic of Korea has a problem with counterfeit goods, especially in the luxury market, with most of the fake products originating in China. Although the Republic of Korea's strict law enforcement has limited its expansion, there is still a significant and growing market for counterfeit goods. In recent years, authorities have noticed an increasing variety of counterfeit products, including low-end essentials, drugs, processed meats, electronics, and vehicle and train engine parts. The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred sales of counterfeit goods online.

Despite the Republic of Korea being considered a high-performing country in terms of trade and transparency, excise goods still avoid controls at the country's ports. The country serves as a transit point for illicit cigarettes purchased in Vietnam and Thailand, shipped to Cambodia, hidden in luxury travel bags, and then transported to China via the Republic of Korea.

ENVIRONMENT

The Republic of Korea is a major importer of timber and wood-based products and is one of the top five consumers of illegal wood globally. The country's high per-capita demand for illegal wood is met by large volumes of tropical wood from South East Asia and the Russian Far East, as well as plywood from China. Although illegal timber imports have decreased over the past decade, illegal trade in timber from Indonesia to the Republic of Korea persists. There is evidence of South Korean conglomerates causing deforestation in the Papua province of Indonesia by converting rainforests into palm oil plantations. In addition to illegal timber, there have been cases of traffickers attempting to smuggle other protected flora species into the Republic of Korea, leading to arrests and fines.

The Republic of Korea has been identified as a destination country for wildlife trafficking, particularly for products like elephant tusks, rhino horns, and ivory that are smuggled from Africa, albeit with decreasing demand in recent years. The country also serves as a transit point for trafficking of such wildlife products into China. Although pangolins and ivory are not primary goods in the South Korean market, smugglers use the country as a transit point to evade

controls and seizures. International organizations have urged that the Republic of Korea-China shipping route should be labelled a high-risk route for wildlife trafficking because of organized crime groups' involvement in the trade. The recent prohibition of bear-bile farming in the Republic of Korea is expected to significantly reduce bear trafficking into the country, which has been an important market. However, there is still high demand for tiger parts in the Republic of Korea, and the country faces significant issues regarding illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

The Republic of Korea is a transit country for non-renewable resource smuggling because of its developed infrastructure. Cases of illegally-imported coal and organized gold smuggling have been reported. South Korean gold mining companies have been found operating in Central Africa, which may enable illicit trade between Africa and the Republic of Korea. Although the Republic of Korea has imposed strict sanctions prohibiting any trade with the DPRK, smugglers have previously exported natural resources, such as coal, into the Republic of Korea, violating international sanctions. Although there is a lack of data on the matter, it appears that there is no major criminal market for non-renewable resources in the Republic of Korea.

DRUGS

The Republic of Korea is not a significant consumer or producer of illegal drugs, but there has been a steady increase in drug use among the youth in recent years. Heroin is not commonly used in the Republic of Korea, however, there seems to be a stable heroin market in the country with unchanged retail prices despite an increase in the seizures of poppy plants and heroin in recent years. The country serves primarily as a transit point for cocaine coming from countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras and heading to other parts of Asia and Oceania, including Australia, China, Hong Kong, and Macau. Although cocaine use is not popular, local criminal networks are involved in its trafficking. The amount of cocaine seized by authorities in the Republic of Korea has increased in recent years, and drug traffickers are using messenger services, the dark web, and international mail to smuggle and trade drugs into the country, making it difficult for law enforcement to discover such activities.

The Republic of Korea has strict regulations on the sale and consumption of recreational cannabis, resulting in a relatively small cannabis market. Despite being the first East Asian country to legalize medical cannabis, the Republic of Korea still classifies cannabis as an illicit substance. Attempts to smuggle liquid cannabis and cannabis-infused foods have increased in recent years, and cannabis is being sold on overseas-based websites with direct delivery services in major cities like Seoul. Seizures of cannabis by national authorities and cannabis-related crimes have been increasing in recent years due to the growing addiction rates among users.

The Republic of Korea is a source, transit, and destination country for synthetic drug trafficking. Synthetic cannabinoids are the most common new psychoactive substances seized in the country. Other synthetic drugs, such as LSD analogues and Ecstasy, have seen an increase in seizures and consumption. Methamphetamine is a favoured drug in the Republic of Korea, often produced in the DPRK, China, and Myanmar. The use of crystalline methamphetamine is increasing in the country, and precursor chemicals are being smuggled from the Republic of Korea to the Golden Triangle area of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar for the production of synthetic drugs. Similar to other illicit substances, drug traffickers have been increasingly using international delivery services for the smuggling of synthetic drugs into the country.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

In recent years, the Republic of Korea has seen a sharp rise in cybercrime attacks, including ransomware attacks and cyber-fraud. Despite law enforcement efforts, these attacks have persisted, with ransomware groups targeting private and public organizations. With the Republic of Korea having one of the highest cryptocurrency adoption rates in the world, several crypto fraud schemes have been detected in the country, resulting in millions of dollars lost to these operations. In 2021, South Korean authorities conducted the largest tax seizure relating to cryptocurrency in history.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes have been on the rise in the Republic of Korea, with embezzlement being a recurring issue. Various companies have reported cases of employees embezzling funds, resulting in arrests and detentions. Politicians have also been involved in fraud scandals related to corruption and bribery in land development.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Foreign criminal actors play a major role in South Korean criminal markets and cooperate with local organizations in major South Korean cities such as Seoul, Incheon, and Busan. Mainland Chinese Triads, Japanese Yakuza, and Russian mafia gangs are reportedly involved in various criminal activities in the country, including drug and human trafficking, real estate purchases, and tax evasion in the fishing industry. The Republic of Korea has become an important transit and destination country for drug and wildlife trafficking, with organized criminal networks from China, Mexico, and Africa using the country as a hub for smuggling methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs. Law enforcement agencies have found that several organized crime groups are operating in the Republic of Korea, primarily related to drug crimes and the operation of illegal businesses, with many of these operations carried out by foreign nationals.

Since the 1990s, the Republic of Korea has embarked on a campaign to eradicate almost all mafia-style groups in the country. The few remaining organizations are small and do not exert control over territories or engage in intensive violence. However, they still dominate entertainment, drug-smuggling, extortion, real estate, and sex trade businesses, with a focus on targeting small and medium-size enterprises in specific neighbourhoods. Extortion was the traditional means of income generation for these groups, but it appears to be declining as they diversify their operations.

Criminal networks operate in the entertainment industry, drug trafficking, sex trafficking, and illegal moneylending/loansharking. Organized crime is mainly found in Seoul, Incheon, and Busan, with linkages to criminal networks or organizations in the US, Japan, Russia, China, and Taiwan. The use of guns and violent crime are low in the Republic of Korea, so these criminal groups have expanded into China, South East Asia, and the US, where they operate gambling

businesses and engage in extortion of members of the South Korean community. The sex trafficking business is well-organized in the Republic of Korea.

The private sector in the Republic of Korea has seen several high-profile cases of corruption and illegal activities involving prominent private and political figures. Losses from tax evasion, embezzlement, bribery, and concealment of criminal proceeds have been estimated in the millions of dollars. There are a limited number of cases of state-embedded actors' involvement in illicit activities, however there have been instances of their involvement in human trafficking operations. Criminal actors aim to gain influence among decision-makers by investing in relationships with legitimate businesses, the police, and politicians. Elected politicians have been involved in scandals linking them to criminal syndicates, and corruption remains a significant issue in the country.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The South Korean government is committed to fighting organized crime with an efficient system to tackle criminal markets, which involves gathering and distributing information to law enforcement agencies. The ongoing conflict on the Korean Peninsula may be an obstacle to countering organized crime activity, including human smuggling, and may be having an impact on the country's international security cooperation. However, the government is determined to cooperate with other countries in its battle against criminality and it is open to new practical solutions to address the country's situation.

Even though the democratic process is considered to be independent, corruption remains a challenge. The Republic of Korea has made significant strides in its fight against corruption, with the government establishing an anti-corruption investigation agency that has proven effective in its first months of operation. The current government is committed to improving transparency at the state level and the situation is expected to evolve in a positive way in the coming years. Despite that, cases of high-ranking officials or CEOs of large companies found to be corrupt continue to hinder the progress.

The Republic of Korea is actively involved in international cooperation to combat organized crime, including people smuggling, trafficking, cyber-enabled financial crimes, and drug cartels. The country is a member of various conventions and protocols, and it works closely with organizations like INTERPOL and Europol to share information and coordinate

operations. Overall, the Republic of Korea's proactive efforts to strengthen knowledge in international police cooperation and mutual assistance against transnational crimes suggest a constructive present and future of fighting the roots of organized crime issues. The Republic of Korea has a strict legal framework in place to prevent and combat various forms of crime, and the mere formation of or participation in a criminal organization is penalized, which enables an effective response against organized crime. The country consistently updates its regulatory framework to effectively address emerging forms of criminal activities that pose risks.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

The Republic of Korea's judicial system is generally considered independent, reliable and efficient in handling cases. Criminal proceedings are usually fair. A few cases of corruption involving senior judges have raised concerns about political interference, but government's recent efforts have sought to fight any potential politicization of the criminal justice system. Prison conditions meet international standards and there are no reports of severe abuse such as torture or overcrowded prisons with unsanitary conditions. Law enforcement is a key source of resilience in the country. The Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) is watched by the media, and any corrupt activities tend to be reported. The KNPA has a high clearance rate for serious crimes, far above those of countries like the US, UK, and Japan. The Republic of Korea has one law enforcement unit dedicated solely to organized crime, and the Seoul Central District

Court's prosecuting office has been a key instrument in convicting important leaders of criminal organizations.

The proximity of the Republic of Korea to the DPRK, which is a major source of organized crime, has raised concerns about negative impacts and spill-over effects. The DPRK is allegedly involved in various illegal activities, including the manufacture and trade of illegal drugs and counterfeit goods, human trafficking, arms trafficking, wildlife trafficking, counterfeiting currency, and terrorism. The most concerning crime is the smuggling of methamphetamine, which is manufactured in the DPRK. However, the border between the Koreas is highly controlled and monitored, unauthorized crossings and trafficking are rare, and the border is not porous to organized crime. Despite recent agreements to end the war between the Koreas, the border between the countries remains one of the most fortified in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the border even stricter, leading to a reduction in human smuggling cases of people trying to escape the DPRK. However, there are concerns about the country becoming a major trafficking route in East Asia, with criminal networks from countries like China and Mexico using it as a transit point to avoid law enforcement controls in other countries.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The Republic of Korea has robust anti-money laundering regulations in place, with the Korea Financial Intelligence Unit playing a crucial role in international efforts to combat money laundering. However, money laundering using cryptocurrencies has emerged as an issue in the Republic of Korea, prompting the government to introduce sanctions against companies that fail to report suspicious transactions. In anticipation of upcoming domestic and global anti-money laundering regulations, major cryptocurrency exchanges in the country have formed a joint venture to develop a system that will enable them to comply with these standards.

The Republic of Korea's economy is one of the fastest growing in the world, primarily driven by education and human resources. However, the country is facing challenges posed by criminal organizations involved in illegal activities, including human trafficking, which have infiltrated industries such as entertainment and nightclubs. Although there are laws in place to address unlawful debt collection, there have been no significant changes to national legislation to regulate the involvement of criminal groups in the country's economy. These groups have diversified their activities to include construction, real estate, gambling, and loan and stock markets.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Republic of Korea has established laws and institutions to protect and support victims of crime, with NGOs providing legal advice and representation to those without financial resources or legal knowledge. Support centres

are available throughout the country, and the government has increased the number of officials working to support victims of digital sex crimes. However, despite government efforts to protect sex trafficking victims, there is a lack of protection for labour trafficking victims, and the government does not have formal procedures to refer victims to care. Law enforcement officials are not adequately trained to identify and refer trafficking victims to support services. Along these lines, the government has made several efforts to address shortcomings which include the introduction of training programmes for prosecutors and labour inspectors as well as the initiation of the drafting process for new victim identification guidelines. Additionally, foreign trafficking victims are not encouraged to participate as witnesses during investigations because they cannot obtain long-term or permanent residency permits. Civil society organizations are aiding drug addicts and helping official institutions to tackle drug addiction in the country.

The Republic of Korea has implemented various measures to prevent different types of crimes, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, timber trafficking, and cyber-attacks. The government has amended laws, established task forces, and conducted policy-relevant research to prevent crime. Municipal governments have successfully used crime prevention through environmental design programmes to reduce crime opportunities and citizens' anxiety about crime. The government has developed several awareness campaigns and set up hotlines to prevent and combat human trafficking, although NGOs have criticized the effectiveness of these measures.

The Republic of Korea generally allows human rights groups and NGOs to operate freely, but these groups have faced political pressure when criticizing the government or powerful stakeholders. Multiple NGOs actively fight organized crime activities like human trafficking, with some being funded by the government. Overall, NGOs and civil society organizations in the Republic of Korea do not fear government persecution, and likewise these organizations are not considered a significant threat to national or international security. The media are free and competitive, but a defamation law encourages self-censorship, and journalists at major news outlets often face political interference. The South Korean government launched a new corruption investigative body which requested phone records from telecommunications companies without a warrant, and many journalists had their phone data accessed with no explanation. Despite this, the Republic of Korea has shown significant improvement in press freedom in recent years.

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