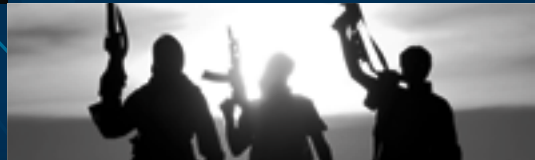




INTERPOL

# 2022 INTERPOL GLOBAL CRIME TREND SUMMARY REPORT



OCTOBER 2022

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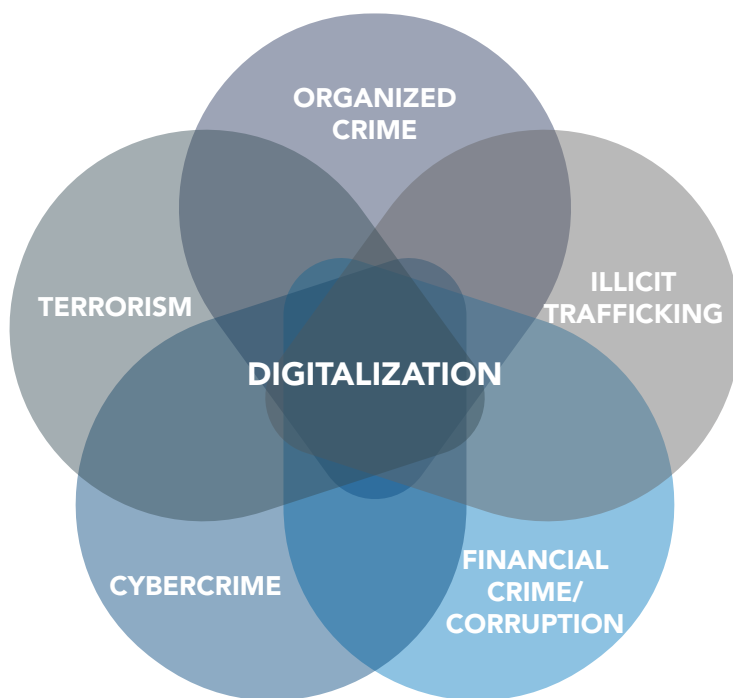
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© INTERPOL 2022  
INTERPOL General Secretariat  
200, quai Charles de Gaulle  
69006 Lyon  
France  
Telephone + 33 4 72 44 70 00  
Fax + 33 4 72 44 71 63  
Web: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)  
E-mail: [info@interpol.int](mailto:info@interpol.int)

## 2022 INTERPOL GLOBAL CRIME TREND REPORT KEY FINDINGS

In a rapidly evolving operating environment, threat actors, both individually and collectively, have proven their agility in overcoming obstacles and seeking out opportunities to pursue illicit activities. In this context, law enforcement must be able to quickly detect and decipher the complex dynamics of continuously evolving criminal markets and networks in order to design and implement the most effective crime prevention and counter-crime strategies. Access to timely and accurate criminal intelligence analysis is a critical part of acquiring these insights. To support the development of this knowledge, INTERPOL has produced the first INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Report 2022 (IGCTR) highlighting current and emerging crime and terrorism trends, which, due to their scope, volume, frequency, and/or harmful impact pose a significant threat to transnational security. The present report provides a summary of the key findings from the 2022 IGCTR. The full report will be sent to all member countries through the NCBs.

In an unprecedented effort by the Organization, the IGCTR has collectively assessed data, inter alia, from online Global Crime Trend Surveys sent to all INTERPOL member countries<sup>i</sup>, national crime statistics and reports, INTERPOL's data holdings (approximately 60,000 Red Notices and Diffusions by offence codes<sup>ii</sup>), insight from the INTERPOL Global Horizon Scan, unparalleled research from academic institutions and think tanks, and information from INTERPOL partners, notably from the information technology security industry. The resulting analysis points to five broad crime areas, which dominate the global crime threat landscape. These crime trends include organized crime, illicit trafficking (highlighting drug trafficking, human trafficking and migrant smuggling), financial crime (noting money laundering, financial fraud, and corruption as a critical crime-enabler), cybercrime (particularly, ransomware, phishing, and online scams) and terrorism.



The specific motivations and manifestations of these trends vary from region to region. Nevertheless, the IGCTR findings assert that each of these five crime types has endured or escalated, notably through the global pandemic, and continues to pose a serious threat to the security and well-being of public and private entities and actors, from government agencies and corporate businesses to individual citizens.

For each of the five broad crime areas, which emerged from the data analysis for the IGCTR, a number of trends and key observations<sup>iii</sup> can be highlighted at the global level.

## GLOBAL CRIME TRENDS KEY FINDINGS



### Organized Crime

- Organized crime was among the top ten crime trends most frequently perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat by all member countries.
- Organized crime groups and criminal networks appear to be as resourceful and resilient as ever, having proven their ability to rapidly adapt and seize new opportunities.



### Illicit Trafficking

- The illicit production and distribution of synthetic drugs and cannabis trafficking were the drug-related offences most frequently perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling, which affect every region of the world, are likely the most pervasive global criminal markets.
- As geopolitical instability, climate change, and the post-pandemic recession continue to impact migration flows, demands for smuggling services are likely to increase, leaving many more at risk of falling victim to trafficking.



### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Member countries most frequently indicated money laundering and financial fraud among financial crime trends as representing a 'high' or 'very high' threat.
- As rates of digitalization have rapidly accelerated, particularly during the pandemic, online social engineering for the purpose of financial fraud, victim manipulation and impersonation scams are increasing significantly.
- While complex to investigate, corruption is one of the most significant enablers of organized crimes in all regions of the world.



### Cybercrimes

- Ransomware, phishing, online scams, and computer intrusion (i.e. hacking) are the cybercrime trends which member countries most frequently perceive as posing 'high' or 'very high' threats globally.
- Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) was ranked among the top ten crime trends perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries and 62 per cent of member countries strongly expected these crime to 'increase' or 'significantly increase' in the future.



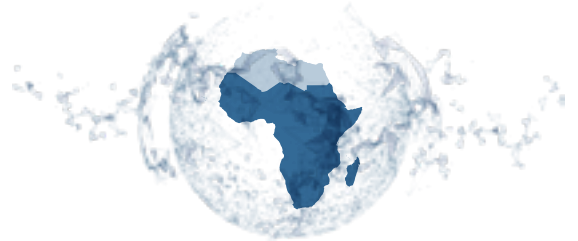
### Terrorism

- Jihadist terrorism continues to pose the greatest terrorist threat at the global level. Islamic State-affiliate groups continue gain influence and conduct attacks in sub-Saharan Africa.
- During the last decade politically-motivated, specifically extreme far-right terrorism, has increased 50 fold in North American, European and Asia-Pacific member countries<sup>iv</sup>.
- Terrorists are using more advanced technologies including drones, GPS systems and encrypted messaging services.

In addition to examining each global crime trend independently, the IGCTR also found that the five priority crime areas converge and sustain each other in critical ways. Each crime trend has also been greatly transformed and empowered by technological innovation and, perhaps most importantly, the use of digital technologies. Understanding how criminal convergences, digitalization and new technologies enable crime and terrorism and empower threat actors requires continuous and concerted efforts, and these activities need to be an integral part of crime prevention and disruption strategies.

## REGIONAL CRIME TRENDS KEY FINDINGS

The 2022 IGCTR also analyzed the available data to better ascertain regional crime trends. Following are some of the key findings when looking at the five global crime areas through a regional lens.



### AFRICAN REGION TRENDS



#### Illicit Trafficking

- The illicit trafficking of cannabis and synthetic drugs, counterfeit medicines and consumable goods, as well as illicit firearms are the criminal commodity markets, which member countries from the region most frequently indicated as representing a 'high' or 'very high' threat.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling were also crime trends which member countries in the region frequently indicated as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat, with high expectations of these crimes escalating in the future.



#### Organized Crime

- Organized crime ranked fourth among the crime trends most frequently perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries in the region.
- Organized crime in the region is likely fueled by vulnerabilities linked to conflict, instability, and corruption, in conjunction with ample criminal opportunities (i.e. the presence of natural resources, minerals, timber, wildlife, etc.).



#### Terrorism

- The threat of terrorism has increased considerably, particularly in the Sahel sub-region where terrorism-related deaths accounted for 35 per cent of the global total in 2021. The Islamic State in West Africa is the terrorist network responsible for the majority of these attacks.<sup>9</sup>



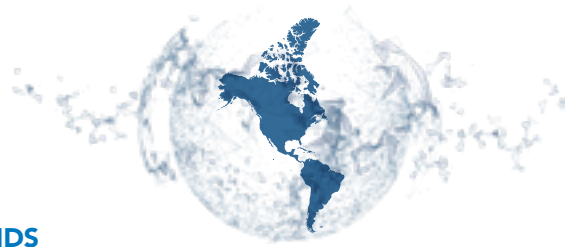
#### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Member countries from the region most frequently indicated financial fraud as the financial crime trend perceived to represent a 'high' or 'very high' threat in the region.
- Having rapidly emerged as a global leader in mobile banking, this sector is a particularly vulnerable target for financial crime.



#### Cybercrime

- Digitalization has quickly advanced in the financial sector in the region with sharp increases in the number of online banking scams, including banking and credit card fraud. Subsequently, phishing and online scams were the crime trends most frequently perceived by member countries in the region as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat.
- Digital extortion (i.e. blackmailing), BEC, ransomware and botnets also represent major cybercrime trends in the region.



## AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL TRENDS



### Organized Crime

- Organized crime ranked fifth among the crime trends most frequently perceived to represent a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat to member countries from the region.
- Criminal networks and mafia-style criminal groups are present and represent an important driving force of organized crime in the region, with state actors and corruption likely playing a fundamental role in facilitating organized crime.



### Illicit Trafficking

- Member countries in the region most frequently indicated illicit firearms trafficking as the crime trend perceived to pose a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat.
- The illicit production and distribution of cocaine was the drug-related trend most frequently perceived to pose a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat by member countries from the region.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling also represent pervasive criminal markets throughout the entire region.



### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Member countries from the region most frequently indicated money laundering as the financial crime trend perceived to represent a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat.
- Money laundering, although a crime unto itself, is a critical crime-enabler, and financial institutions in the region have likely played a central role in laundering illicit proceeds which sustain and empower organized crime.



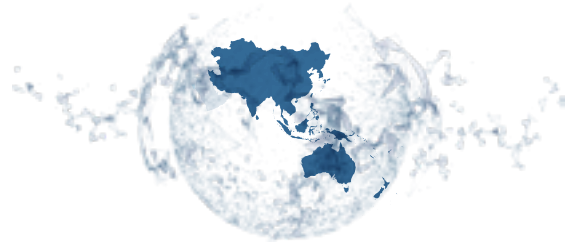
### Cybercrime

- Ransomware was the cybercrime trend most commonly perceived by member countries to represent a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ cybercrime threat. Member countries also indicated high expectations for most cybercrime trends to escalate in the next three to five years.
- OCSEA ranked third among the top ten crime trends which member countries from the region perceived as posing a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat.



### Terrorism

- Politically motivated terrorism, in particular extreme far-right terrorism, has increased substantially in Western countries, and most notably in North America. While only one far-right terrorist attack was recorded in 2010, the number of such attacks peaked at 49 in 2019. Of the total deaths resulting from terrorism in North America in 2019, 87 per cent can be attributed to extreme far-right terrorism.<sup>vi</sup>



## ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL TRENDS



### Illicit Trafficking

- Synthetic drugs and heroin were the drug-related trends most commonly perceived to represent a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat by member countries in the region. The production and trafficking of these illicit substances dominates illicit markets particularly in the East and Southeast Asian sub-regions.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling both represent pervasive criminal markets throughout the region.
- Environmental crimes, including trafficking in wildlife, fisheries, and forestry crimes represent important illicit economies in some sub-regions, particularly in South and Southeast Asia.



### Organized Crime

- The dynamics of organized crime vary greatly from one part of the region to another. Organized crime groups appear to be more pervasive and active on the Asian continent than in Oceania.
- Organized crime groups based in the region have a global reach, notably, collaborating with criminal networks throughout the Middle East and Africa to traffic, inter alia, drugs, illicit goods, and wildlife derivatives.



### Terrorism

- The terrorism threat varies greatly throughout the region. South Asia is the sub-region most impacted by terrorism in the world with the deadliest attack of 2021, perpetrated by the Islamic State, having occurred in Afghanistan.<sup>vii</sup>



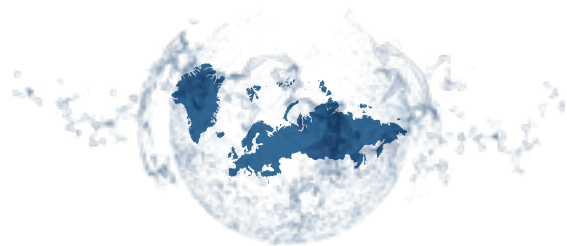
### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Financial fraud was the crime trend most frequently indicated as posing a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat by member countries in the region, while money laundering ranked third among all crime trends.
- The COVID19 pandemic accelerated the digitalization of the services and behaviors of private citizens, governments and businesses in the region. As a consequence, financial crime and fraud, largely cyber-enabled, have escalated and are expected to continue to escalate.



### Cybercrime

- Among the top ten crime trends most frequently perceived to represent a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ threat by member countries in the region were ransomware, phishing, online scams, computer intrusion, and business email compromise (BEC). Ransomware was also the crime trend that most countries in the region expect to ‘increase’ or ‘increase significantly’ in the future.
- Available information suggests that the production of OCSEA materials targeting children from the region is on the rise, particularly in response to demand for these materials outside the region.



## EUROPEAN REGIONAL TRENDS



### Organized Crime

- Organized crime was among the top ten crime trends most frequently perceived as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries in the region.
- Organized crime in Europe is likely growing more violent. Corruption, the use of legitimate businesses, and technology are also critical facilitators of organized crime across the European region.<sup>viii</sup>



### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Money laundering ranked second among the crime trends most frequently indicated by member countries in the region as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat, with financial fraud also ranking very high.
- The use of online tools by criminals to perpetrate financial fraud schemes has also rapidly expanded, particularly during the pandemic.



### Cybercrime

- Phishing, online scams and ransomware ranked very high among the crime trends perceived to pose a 'high' and 'very high' threat to member countries in the region.
- OCSEA also ranked among the top five crime trends most frequently perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat in the region with very high expectations of future escalation.



### Illicit Trafficking

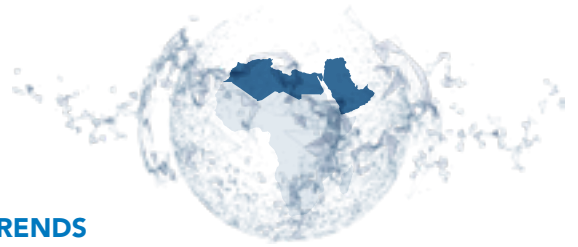
- The illicit production and distribution of synthetic drugs, cannabis and cocaine trafficking were the drug-related offences most frequently perceived as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries in the region.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling continue to represent serious concerns to countries in Europe, with expectations for these crime trends to increase in the next 3 to 5 years.
- Information also indicates that smugglers and traffickers are increasingly relying on online tools to facilitate recruitment and target vulnerable persons.



### Terrorism

- Jihadist-motivated terrorism, affiliated with either the Islamic State or al-Qaeda, continues to pose the greatest threat to the region, with self-initiated (lone) actors having carried out the majority of attacks in the region.
- Similar to North America, extreme far-right terrorism and violent extremism is also on the rise in Europe.<sup>ix</sup>





## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN REGIONAL TRENDS



### Financial Crime and Corruption

- Financial fraud and money laundering ranked highly among the crime trends most frequently indicated as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries in the region.
- Financial crimes are also by far the offences most frequently indicated on the Red Notices and Diffusions published by member countries from the region.
- As a global financial hub, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are likely more vulnerable to money laundering offences by threats actors from all over the world.



### Cybercrime

- Computer intrusion, phishing, online scams, and ransomware were the cybercrime trends which member countries from the region most frequently perceived to represent 'high' or 'very high' cybercrime threats.
- Information indicates that cyberattacks, notably ransomware and distributed denial of service attacks, are escalating particularly in the GCC countries against the business sector, both locally-owned and international enterprises, resulting in disruption, data breaches, and financial loss.



### Terrorism

- Since the defeat of the Islamic State 'caliphate' in Iraq and Syria, deaths related to terrorism have decreased considerably in the region. However, numerous terrorist networks, including the Islamic State and its affiliate groups, continue to operate, in a largely clandestine manner, in the region. Terrorist groups acting in the region were responsible for approximately 16 per cent of global terrorism-related deaths in 2021.<sup>x</sup>



### Illicit Trafficking

- The production and distribution of precursor drugs was the crime trend most frequently indicated as representing a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries in the region, with cannabis trafficking also ranking among the top ten trends.
- Human trafficking and migrant smuggling represent pervasive criminal markets across the region, with important flows of vulnerable persons through both North Africa and the Middle East on their way to Europe. The Gulf Countries are also an important destination for smuggled migrants and victims of trafficking.



### Organized Crime

- Organized crime was among the top ten crime trends most frequently indicated as posing a 'high' or 'very high' threat in the region.
- Organized crime varies greatly across the region due, inter alia, to vast differences in economic stability, efficacy of state institutions, history of armed conflict, etc. Countries in the region having experienced or currently experiencing challenges, such as armed conflict, are very likely more vulnerable to organized crime and corruption.

### Supporting Law Enforcement to Counter Global and Regional Crime Trends

INTERPOL, as the only global law enforcement organization with its membership of 195 member countries, is strategically positioned to monitor and assess transnational crime trends, both globally and regionally. INTERPOL understands that the trends highlighted in this report, although they may be globally pervasive, also vary significantly in how they manifest from one region to another. While regional police organizations focus solely on regional criminal landscapes, INTERPOL endeavours to comprehend both global crime trends as well as the different ways in which they manifest at the regional level.

As transnational crimes and criminal networks evolve at an unprecedented pace, law enforcement are often left playing “catch up,” with tools, processes, and procedures that may be outdated OR inefficient. As there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution, INTERPOL is in a unique position to federate as well as support member countries to tackle contemporary crimes by adapting its unique policing capabilities to meet the specific needs of national law enforcement agencies and frontline officers. Indeed, whether global or regional, effectively countering crime will require commitment from and close collaboration with all member countries, regional police organisations and other critical public and private sector partners working collectively with INTERPOL in coalitions against transnational criminality.

This new level of multilateral cooperation is particularly essential when faced with the often clandestine threat of organized crime as complex, mafia-style criminal networks increasingly infiltrate legal economies and corrupt state institutions. INTERPOL's Project I-CAN brings together stakeholders from around the globe to disrupt a powerful, transnational organized crime group, the 'Ndrangheta, inter alia, by leveraging INTERPOL's capabilities and analytical tools to share intelligence and expertise, and by promoting increased operational actions.

Dismantling organized crime groups is also fundamental to impeding illicit trafficking flows. Cross-border operations, both regional and global, can be coordinated by INTERPOL, through which drugs, arms and human traffickers, among others, can be identified and apprehended. Member countries are strongly encouraged to call for and engage in INTERPOL-coordinated operations bringing together critical intelligence and resources to disrupt these crimes as well as rescue and repatriate victims of trafficking.

A more concerted approach is also called for to combat financial crime and corruption, particularly money laundering, which ultimately sustains and empowers organized crime. It has been estimated that countries intercept and/or recover less than one per cent of global illicit financial flows. The proceeds of crime are often rapidly moved beyond borders through multiple jurisdictions, rendering the process of asset recovery complex and highly dependent on effective international cooperation. Member countries need therefore to promote the development and implementation of better national policies, including through consultations with experts from policy bodies such as the Financial Action Task Force and the Egmont Group, in order to improve the tracing, seizure and confiscation of criminal assets. Operational cooperation must also be prioritized at the national, regional and global levels and the timely sharing of information between public authorities and private sector actors must be increased.

Collective efforts between law enforcement and relevant public and private sector actors are also imperative to prevent, detect, investigate and disrupt cybercrime. INTERPOL's strategy and capabilities to support member countries to counter cybercrime are truly multilateral and intelligence-oriented. INTERPOL strives to build trust and alignment between member countries and its private-sector partners to foster the exchange and aggregation of actionable intelligence and insights to disrupt cyber threat actors. Member countries are called upon to engage with INTERPOL, its partners, and other affected member countries, regionally and globally, through the utilization of INTERPOL's tools, platforms and regional operational desks as well as to support INTERPOL capacity-building initiatives and projects to reduce gaps in capabilities between member countries to effectively counter cybercrime.

Member countries must also come together to take immediate action where cyber technology is being used to facilitate particularly appalling crimes like OCSEA. Where they do not already exist, national specialized units dedicated to combatting OCSEA must be established and properly equipped. In this regard, INTERPOL's international network of specialists on crimes against children stands ready to support capacity building in this crime area. Once connected to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation database, these units will be empowered to analyse child abuse material and progress the identification of victims and offenders both nationally and as part of joint international operations.

Increased cooperation must also be prioritized by member countries to counter terrorism in all its forms. The global response to this complex and often clandestine threat must be built upon effective data and intelligence sharing, multilateral cooperation, inter-agency coordination, and the exchange of good practices among law enforcement partners. As the terrorism threat varies greatly from one region to another, so too must the response be tailored to the dynamics and driving factors at the local level. Given the degree of potential harm, national authorities must remain vigilant, united, and committed to transforming counter-terrorism policies into operational actions. Through its diverse capabilities and initiatives, INTERPOL stands ready to do its part in support of its membership.

### The INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Report – The Way Forward

The 2022 IGCTR is the Organization's first assessment to greatly rely upon INTERPOL's data holdings and contributions from its global network of 195 member countries as well as private sector partners to identify priority crime trends at the global and regional levels. Efforts to collect information from member countries for the report revealed important challenges where data and intelligence systems were ineffective or unavailable. The ability to properly assess crime trends and threats is indispensable in effectively preventing and combatting crimes, both nationally and transnationally. Member countries are strongly encouraged to invest in or seek support for adequate intelligence and analytical infrastructure. INTERPOL can assist in these efforts through initiatives such as the Project ENACT, which has successfully established and now supports several criminal analysis units across Africa.

It should also be noted that the 2022 IGCTR is not intended to be an exhaustive assessment of all transnational crime threats and trends. Despite the challenges encountered, valuable insights have resulted from this first global report. For future iterations of the IGCTR, INTERPOL is committed to working with its member countries and partners to improve upon the analytical methodology and data collection strategy, including more in-depth assessment of INTERPOL's vast data holdings. Technological solutions such as the new INSIGHT analytical platform will be key to these improvements, enabling INTERPOL to generate more accurate analysis in support of global and regional police cooperation and joint operational activities for a safer world.

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- i. A total of 18 online surveys for various transnational crime trends were sent to all INTERPOL member countries in June 2022. Globally, an average of 46 per cent of member countries responded to the surveys. Regionally, response rates respectively averaged 30 per cent for Africa, 30 per cent for Asia and the Pacific, 46 per cent for the Americas and the Caribbean, 70 per cent for Europe, and 42 per cent for the Middle East and North Africa.
  - ii. It should be noted that not all valid Red Notices and Diffusions in the INTERPOL Criminal Information System were assessed for the 2022 IGCTR. Only those Red Notices and Diffusions with offence codes considered to be relevant to the assessment were taken into account (i.e. those most likely related to transnational crime and terrorism trends).
  - iii. Where reference is made, both in the global and regional key findings, to crime trends most frequently perceived to pose a 'high' or 'very high' threat by member countries or crime trends most frequently expected to 'increase' or 'significantly increase' in the next three to five years by member countries, these findings have been derived from the responses to the INTERPOL Global Crime Trend Surveys.
  - iv. Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP). Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, March 2022. Available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed 21 September 2022)
  - v. Ibid.
  - vi. IEP, Op. Cit.
  - vii. Ibid.
  - viii. Europol (2021), European Union serious and organised crime threat assessment (SOCTA), A corrupting influence: the infiltration and undermining of Europe's economy and society by organised crime, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: [https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/socta2021\\_1.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/socta2021_1.pdf)
  - ix. Europol (2022), European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: [https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Tesat\\_Report\\_2022\\_0.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Tesat_Report_2022_0.pdf) (accessed 21 September 2022)
  - x. Ibid.



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