



Pakistan 2020 Crime & Safety Report: Lahore



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore. OSAC encourages travelers to [use this report](#) to gain baseline knowledge of security conditions in Punjab, Pakistan. For more in-depth information, review OSAC’s [Pakistan country page](#) for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#), at the date of this report’s publication, assesses most of Pakistan at Level 3, indicating travelers should reconsider travel due to terrorism. Do not travel to Balochistan Province and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province, including the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), due to terrorism and kidnapping; or to immediate vicinity of the Line of Control due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict. Review OSAC’s report, [Understanding the Consular Travel Advisory System](#).

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Threats

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lahore as being a **HIGH**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. Carjacking, assaults, armed robberies, home/shop invasions, and other violent crimes are prevalent in many major urban areas; petty crime, such as theft of personal property, is also widespread.

In 2019, the overall reports of criminal activity in Lahore increased by approximately 2%. There were approximately 84,000 crimes of all kinds reported to or cited by the police in 2019, compared to approximately 82,400 in 2018. According to the official statistics provided by the Capital City Police of Lahore, the following is a breakdown of the major crimes by category:

(NOTE: These figures represent Lahore City’s major crimes only. Totals for the crimes below do not equal the years’ totals mentioned above, which include traffic violations, white-collar crimes, and crimes that would be misdemeanors in the United States.)

	2018	2019	% Change
Violent Crimes Against Persons- Lahore City Figures			
Murder	400	379	-5.25 %
Rape	54	55	+1.85%
Gang Rape	6	4	-33.33%
Hurt (Assault)	1,165	1,220	+4.72%

Attempted Murder	471	500	+6.15%
Kidnapping/Abduction	2,753	2,650	-3.74%
Property Crimes- Lahore City Figures			
Total Property Crime	29,301	29,900	+2.04%
Burglary	3,429	3,230	-5.57 %
Robbery	3,099	3,115	+0.51%
Dacoity (Banditry) (robbery by more than three armed people)	57	60	+5.26%
Vehicle Theft	4,252	4,300	+1.12%
Motor Bike Snatching (jacking)	289	300	+3.80 %
Car Snatching (jacking)	12	10	-16.66
Motor Bike Theft	3,618	3,700	+2.26%

Review OSAC's reports, [All That You Should Leave Behind, Hotels: The Inns and Outs](#), and [Considerations for Hotel Security](#).

Cybersecurity Issues

As in any location, maintain good cybersecurity awareness and take precautions with personal devices to keep them secure from hacking and physical tampering.

Review OSAC's reports, [Cybersecurity Basics, Best Practices for Maximizing Security on Public Wi-Fi, Traveling with Mobile Devices: Trends & Best Practices](#), and [Satellite Phones: Critical or Contraband?](#)

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The quality of roads in Punjab is not uniform. For example, the toll road between Lahore and Islamabad is notably well maintained and patrolled by the Motorway Police. However, in outlying rural areas, the roads may be narrow, unpaved, and dangerous to navigate. Traffic is a significant issue in all the major cities of Punjab, including Lahore, Multan, and Faisalabad. Efforts to improve infrastructure are plagued by funding and construction setbacks.

Traffic in Pakistan moves on the left side of the road. Roads are usually very congested; cars, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, and animal-drawn carts vie for slivers of space, often disregarding traffic laws and moving against traffic. While people generally drive defensively, patience and consideration are not common courtesies experienced while driving in Lahore. There are frequent vehicle collisions, and most drivers are uninsured. Expect drivers to ignore road signs and traffic lights, as well as to cross over and/or drift into other lanes without warning or signaling. Proceed through intersections with caution. Traffic signals are frequently inoperative, and roads lack adequate illumination at night. Pedestrians, animal-drawn carts, and livestock along the roads add additional challenges.

Lack of proper vehicle maintenance, poor driver training, and the general absence of safety awareness by vehicle operators leads to a large number of vehicle accidents. In 2019, approximately 200 people died in road accidents in Lahore. Defensive driving is imperative. Review OSAC's reports, [Road Safety Abroad](#), [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#), and [Evasive Driving Techniques](#); and read the State Department's webpage on [driving and road safety abroad](#).

Public Transportation Conditions

Avoid using non-dispatched taxis and other forms of public transportation. Public transportation can be extremely treacherous. Ask members of your host organization or family to meet you at the airport. Hotels are often able to arrange for airport transfers. Review OSAC's report, [Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public Transport, and Overnights](#).

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority is a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization. In the past, there have been risks to U.S. civil aviation operating in the territory and airspace of Pakistan, particularly at low altitude, during the arrival/departure phases of flight, and when on the ground, due to extremist/militant activity. Threats to civil aviation in Pakistan are not limited to attacks in which militants target airports. The U.S. Government is aware of narcotics smuggled onto flights from Pakistan, which may indicate broader security vulnerabilities at Pakistani airports.

The U.S. Embassy restricts U.S. Government personnel from traveling on certain Pakistan military aircraft due to issues with safety and maintenance. Travelers should verify airworthiness or avoid this means of conveyance.

Terrorism Threat

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lahore as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. Foreign and indigenous terrorist groups pose a danger to U.S. travelers throughout Pakistan. Various separatist groups and ISIS members have claimed responsibility for recent deadly attacks. In May 2019, a member of Jamaat Ul Ahrar targeted an Elite Police Truck in a suicide vest bombing attack in front of the Data Darbar shrine in Lahore. The explosion killed ten people, including five police officers. An additional 27 people sustained injuries from the blast.

Terrorists have targeted U.S. diplomats and diplomatic facilities in the past. U.S. government personnel may not stay overnight in local hotels anywhere in the country, except in exceptional circumstances. Depending on ongoing security assessments, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates sometimes place areas such as tourist attractions, hotels, markets, shopping malls, and restaurants off-limits to official personnel.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lahore as being a **HIGH**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. Review OSAC's report, [Surviving a Protest](#).

During demonstrations or periods of civil unrest, the Pakistani government has in the past disabled cellular telephone and internet service, making it difficult for individuals to contact each other or the U.S. Embassy or Consulates.

Political violence is common in Lahore and rural Punjab. Examples from 2019 include:

- In January, the Young Doctors Association staged several protests and demonstrations against the government, demanding a higher starting salary. The protests occurred in various parts of the city and turned violent at least twice, when doctors stopped commuters on the roads. Authorities suspended the flow of traffic on major arteries of the city for several hours.
- For several days in January, Kisan Ittehad Council conducted a protest sit-in at Faisal Chowk/Mall Road. The sit-in kept Mall Road partially shut down for several days. The protest was connected to the Kisan (farmers) demanding better prices for their products and government subsidies.
- In October, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl anti-government "Azadi March" blocked all transportation on N-5 (National Highway). Upon reaching the Lahore city limits, the marchers blocked the entry/exit at the city outskirts and restricted traffic for one night.
- In December, a violent group of lawyers assaulted a major hospital in Lahore in response to alleged disparaging social media remarks made by doctors about lawyers. They attacked doctors, the public, patients, media, and a parliamentarian. The group set a police truck on fire. Police ultimately deployed tear gas and anti-riot police in a baton charge against the lawyers to bring the situation under control. District administration officials requested the deployment of Pakistani Rangers to maintain law and order throughout the capital city.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

In November, Jamaat Islami (JI) and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Islam staged a protest against the Norwegian government due to an incident of the desecration of the Holy Quran. This non-violent protest attracted many members of the public and JI supporters. It caused a major traffic jam on Multan Road for several hours.

Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Lahore's air is highly polluted, particularly during winter months. Dozens of roads and bridges are under construction or repair around the city, adding to ambient dust and pollution. Poor-quality fuels and lack of catalytic converters on the city's motor bikes and other vehicles causes much of the city's pollution.

Dense smog/fog closed major motorways to vehicle traffic and/or obstructed daily commutes in Lahore and parts of Punjab throughout November and December 2019. This resulted in shortages of fuel and some food staples in Lahore. Additionally, the air pollution caused changes to the operating hours of schools and institutions, resulting in school closures and cancelation of outside activities. Another contributing factor to the air pollution epidemic comes from agricultural fires and industrial sites. Industrial safety standards in Punjab do not meet U.S. standards, and pollution from raw sewage and industrial waste is commonly dumped in unauthorized areas. Follow the U.S. Mission Pakistan [Air Quality Program twitter feed for Lahore](#).

[Economic Concerns/Intellectual Property Theft](#)

Counterfeit goods and pirated entertainment are readily available. Only exchange currency at recognized banks.

U.S. citizens have been the victims of kidnapping, assault, or threats by family members in response to family disputes over property. Land disputes are common in Pakistan and are often difficult to resolve through legal channels. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates cannot protect personal property, and cannot take sides in a legal dispute. Those wishing to purchase property should be aware of the risks, including not being physically present to oversee property. Those involved in a court dispute run the risk of having cases filed against them, and they may face arrest and imprisonment. In March 2019, two doctors, including one U.S. national, were kidnapped and murdered in Taxila. The suspects confessed to wanting to steal land owned by the U.S. doctor.

Pakistan is largely a cash economy. Neither personal nor travelers' checks are commonly accepted in Pakistan. Outside major cities, credit cards are generally not accepted, and there have been numerous reports of credit card fraud. There are bank branches as well as registered currency exchangers and ATMs in all international airports. Review OSAC's reports, [The Overseas Traveler's Guide to ATM Skimmers & Fraud](#) and [Taking Credit](#).

[Privacy Concerns](#)

Unauthorized access to personally identifiable information (PII) is quite possible. Few holders of PII employ adequate safeguards and access controls to prevent dissemination of sensitive personal information. Official intrusions into personal privacy are also common.

[Personal Identity Concerns](#)

U.S. females have been subject to domestic abuse and violence, and have had their passports confiscated by male family members seeking to control their freedom of movement. Females have been brought to Pakistan by family members and forced to marry against their will. Women who attempt to report these kinds of cases to local police might find their complaints not taken seriously. U.S. citizens in life-threatening situations should contact the police for immediate assistance, and contact U.S. Embassy or its Consulates. Some Pakistani NGOs can assist victimized women within the Pakistani community. Review the State Department's webpage on security for [female travelers](#).

Authorities may not document sexual assaults accurately. Open-source reporting indicates that sexual crimes and gender-based violence, including honor-killings occur, as do cases of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Same-sex sexual conduct is a criminal offense in Pakistan. While the government rarely prosecutes cases, society generally shuns LGBTI+ persons, and violence and discrimination against LGBTI+ persons occur frequently. The penalty for same-sex relations is a fine, imprisonment (sentences ranging from two years to life imprisonment), or both. No laws protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBTI+ persons rarely reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity. Socially conservative elements of the local society tend to disapprove of LGBTI+ individuals, although media reporting indicates more progressive views are evolving, particularly in larger cities. Members of the LGBTI+ community may find Pakistan difficult, and, at worst, dangerous. More detailed information about LGBTI+ rights in Pakistan is available in the [State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) and the department's webpage on security for [LGBTI+ travelers](#).

While in Pakistan, individuals with disabilities can find accessibility and accommodation difficult. The law provides for equality of rights of persons with disabilities, but legal provisions are not always implemented in practice. Families typically care for most individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Access for individuals with physical disabilities to public facilities is very limited in major cities and almost non-existent outside major population centers. Review the State Department's webpage on security for [travelers with disabilities](#).

Drug-related Crimes

Police do not document drug-related crimes well. While illicit drug use occurs, knowledge of its frequency, type, and proliferation remains based mostly on anecdotal evidence. Balochistan and Sindh are drug trafficking routes, with significant quantities of narcotics typically flowing south from Afghanistan for shipment by sea. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe; convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences in local prisons, heavy fines, and sometimes the death penalty.

Kidnapping Threat

Reports of kidnappings in the city decreased from 2,753 in 2018 to 2,650 in 2019. In Pakistan, kidnap reporting encompasses crimes that have a broad base of motives; from kidnapping for ransom and sexual exploitation to property disputes and elopement. Travelers who feel followed or threatened in any way should immediately go to a safe public place, such as a government building or police station. Review OSAC's report, [Kidnapping: The Basics](#).

Police Response

The emergency line in Pakistan is **15**. Police response times are generally between 15-25 minutes, depending on the location and traffic conditions. The Punjab Police is the largest police force in Pakistan, numbering over 180,000 active members. Yet police funding, resources, and training (as with the rest of the Pakistani police services) remain scant. Police resources and service remain well below Western standards, though the government is working to improve the situation with computerization and modernization. As of 2019, approximately 10,000 surveillance cameras monitor Lahore under the Punjab "Safe City" Project. The system features a 24-hour command center where police officials monitor various areas of the city, looking for criminal or terrorist activities. These cameras also monitor traffic, with violators receiving mailed violations based on license plate numbers.

Download the State Department's Crime Victims Assistance [brochure](#).

Medical Emergencies

Emergency medical care equivalent to Western standards in Pakistan is only available at a few hospitals within the major cities. Most Pakistani hospitals possess limited advanced life-support equipment and may not be up to U.S. standards. Find contact information for available medical services and available air ambulance services on the [U.S. Consulate website](#).

The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) is Punjab's premier emergency response unit. In case of a medical emergency or a fire, dial **1122** locally to report it. Ambulance and fire response from Rescue 1122 are reasonable in Lahore; response times range from 5-10 minutes, depending on the location and traffic conditions.

Medical facilities require pre-payment. Local hospitals generally do not accept insurance as payment; travelers must instead seek reimbursement from their insurers. Emergency medical evacuation (medevac) by air is very expensive. Any personally funded medevac requires funding upfront. Insurers typically coordinate medevac directly with a contracted air ambulance service. The U.S. Department of State strongly recommends purchasing international health insurance before traveling internationally. Review the State Department's webpage on [insurance overseas](#).

Take steps to avoid tainted food and water. Water is not potable in Lahore, and sanitation in many restaurants is inadequate. Gastrointestinal illness is common and can be life threatening. Review OSAC's report, [I'm Drinking What in My Water?](#)

The CDC recommends vaccinations for hepatitis A and B, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis (for prolonged travel), polio, and rabies. Prevent mosquito bites to avoid malaria and dengue fever. The Consulate Health unit considers the risk of malaria to be moderate and recommends medication to prevent the disease.

The Pakistani government has implemented the polio vaccination for travelers' guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization. Authorities may ask travelers to show proof of recent polio vaccinations. Visitors who have stayed in Pakistan for longer than four weeks might have to show a yellow vaccination card certifying that they have received a dose of polio vaccine within the past year.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [Pakistan](#). Review OSAC's reports, [The Healthy Way](#), [Traveling with Medication](#), [Shaken: The Don'ts of Alcohol Abroad](#), [Health 101: How to Prepare for Travel](#), and [Fire Safety Abroad](#).

OSAC Country Council Information

There is an active Country Council in Lahore. Please contact OSAC's [South & Central Asia team](#) if you are interested in private-sector engagement in Lahore or have questions about OSAC's Country Council programs.

U.S. Consulate Contact Information

50 Empress Road, Lahore 54000

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 0800-1630

Switchboard: +92-42-3603-4000

Marine Security Guard Post One: +92-42-3603-4104

Website: <https://pk.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/lahore/>

Other U.S. Diplomatic Posts in Pakistan:

- [Embassy Islamabad](#), Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5, Islamabad. (+92) 051-201-4000/5000
- [Consulate Karachi](#), Plot 3, 4, 5, New TPX Area Mai Kolachi Road, Karachi. (+92) (21) 3527-5000.
- [Consulate Peshawar](#), 11, Hospital Road, Peshawar. (+92) 091-526-8800. U.S. Consulate General Peshawar does not provide routine consular services.

Helpful Information

Before you travel, consider the following resources:

- [OSAC Risk Matrix](#)
- [OSAC Travelers Toolkit](#)
- [State Department Traveler's Checklist](#)
- [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [Pakistan](#) Country Information Sheet