



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, Nigeria.

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses Nigeria at Level 3, indicating travelers should reconsider travel to the country due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, and piracy.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

Review OSAC's [Nigeria-specific page](#) for original OSAC reporting, travel alerts, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

Crime Threats

There is serious risk from crime in Lagos. Crime is prevalent throughout Nigeria. Most crime directed toward U.S. travelers and private-sector entities in southern Nigeria seeks financial gain. U.S. visitors and residents have been victims of a wide range of violent crime, including armed robbery, assault, burglary, carjacking, rape, kidnapping, and extortion. The mostly commonly reported crimes are armed robbery, kidnap for ransom, and fraud. In addition, mainland portion of Lagos has experienced periodic outbreaks of violence, resulting from clashes among localized street gangs known as "Area Boys."

Armed robbers have targeted occupants in vehicles; smash-and-grab robberies are common, with thieves canvassing stopped vehicles for valuables. Thieves will break the vehicle's window or simply reach in and grab items while a vehicle stops in traffic. Victims should cooperate if an armed assailant or carjacker approaches; resistance may invite violence.

Home invasions remain a serious threat, with armed robbers even targeting guarded compounds. Perpetrators have scaled perimeter walls, followed residents/visitors, and/or subdued guards to gain entry. Armed robbers in Lagos have invaded waterfront compounds and businesses by boat, using waterways as a means of escape.

Crime is rampant throughout southern Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta region including Port Harcourt. Multiple armed criminal elements exist throughout Nigeria, ranging from low-level to organized syndicates. Cultist or gang violence, which often erupts in supremacy battles between various groups, is a concern.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cybercrime has become a concern and is becoming more sophisticated. Business email compromise has proliferated and has included phishing, spear phishing, and even social engineering techniques. The technical proficiency has improved, making suspicious emails and contacts harder to identify.

Transportation-Safety Situation

For more information, review OSAC's Reports on [Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public Transport, and Overnights](#) and [Road Safety in Africa](#).

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Local drivers typically disregard traffic laws. Scooters and motorcycles generally do not follow the rules of the road, often using sidewalks to maneuver around other vehicles. Traffic lights and signs, lanes, and highway divisions are often nonexistent or frequently unheeded where they do exist. Formal driver training and enforcement of licensing are random. Remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers.

Roads are not well-maintained and do not meet Western standards. Vehicle disablement, especially flat tires, due to poor road conditions is common. Pedestrian traffic is present on the roadside at all hours. Most roads are not illuminated at night, making travel after dark particularly hazardous. Few major routes connect cities, so construction, accidents, and rush-hour traffic cause traffic jams ("go-slows") cause major delays.

There is only limited and minimally effective enforcement of laws by local traffic officials. Traffic police officers routinely seek bribes. Drivers of all nationalities may experience harassment and shakedowns at vehicle checkpoints and during other encounters with officials. Vehicle occupants should always remain polite, slow down, and acknowledge police or military at checkpoints.

When traffic accidents occur, drivers do not pull over to the side road; instead, they attempt to solve the issue at the location of the accident, blocking traffic. This practice often draws crowds of onlookers looking for money in exchange for offering their opinions of who was at fault. Accidents are frequent and often involve fatalities, especially on the major highways. Many traffic accidents go unreported, and no reliable statistics exist on traffic fatalities due to the lack of centralized reporting. The lack of medical response and adequate trauma facilities is a major concern.

Kidnappers have ambushed vehicles stopped at checkpoints or other obstructions in the roadway. In order to minimize this risk, drivers and passengers should remain vigilant when stopping at these barriers.

Park in an area protected by a security guard or with access control to mitigate risk of vehicle theft or theft of belongings from vehicles. When stuck in traffic, always lock doors and roll up windows. Hawkers sell goods in between the lanes of traffic during rush hour, and indigent people beg aggressively at car windows at major intersections and may knock on the vehicle window or try to open doors. Be alert for suspicious persons when exiting or approaching your vehicle, as individuals sometimes steal items from vehicles through unlocked doors and rolled down windows. Robberies, including those involving armed perpetrators, have occurred along major

roadways; criminals may especially target vehicles caught in traffic jams, particularly along bridges between the mainland and islands and at night.

Avoid traveling outside of major cities after dark because of crime and road safety concerns. Road travel can be extremely difficult during the rainy seasons (March-August and September-mid-October).

Public Transportation Conditions

Motorcycle taxis (*okadas*) are of particular concern. *Okadas* present a significant nuisance and danger to other motorists, with unpredictable driving and a lack of compliance to traffic rules. *Okada* drivers (and even passengers) often become confrontational and violent when involved in accidents. *Okada* drivers engage in crime, either as active participants or as means of escape.

Taxis are usually yellow or white vans filled beyond their capacity with riders. Occasionally, they are lures for robberies where the occupants of the vehicle work as a team to rob an unsuspecting passenger after they enter the vehicle, assaulting the occupant and then dropping them nearby. Taxis can be unmarked and sometimes found parked illegally outside major shopping centers, high-traffic areas, or large office buildings with sizeable workforces such as a bank headquarters.

Rideshare applications are active in Lagos, but crime and scams do exist. Uber is active, as well as a motorcycle ride share known as GoKada. Some rideshare application drivers use additional applications that mimic legitimate ones, but charge users at a higher than normal rate. Authorities do not enforce insurance, licensing, and other standard ridesharing practices in Nigeria, and riders are certainly taking a risk. For more information, review OSAC's report [Safety and Security in the Share Economy](#).

Some car service companies exist and employ vetted drivers, kill switches in vehicles, and operate a tracking program on their vehicles. Armored vehicles are available for rent in Lagos.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Security at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (LOS) has improved in recent years, and airport officials mostly comply with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security standards. TSA conducts regular security assessments at LOS. Travelers exiting the terminals can expect transients to approach asking for money, sometimes aggressively. Reports of extortion and bribery solicitation attempts by airport officials remain a concern. Delays and cancellations plague domestic travel throughout the country.

Major road construction along the Oshodi Airport Interchange can cause delays traveling to and from the airport. As you approach the airport, the road clogs with vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Terrorism Threat

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is considerable risk from terrorism in Lagos. The threat of terrorism continues to challenge business activity and travel throughout Nigeria. Terrorists groups may attack with little or no warning, targeting shopping centers, malls, markets, hotels, places of worship, restaurants, bars, schools, government installations, transportation hubs, and other places where crowds gather. Do not travel to northern Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States due to terrorism. While the epicenter for terrorist activity is in Borno State, other states in the Northeast and other parts of Nigeria may also be affected. Boko Haram, and ISIS West Africa have previously targeted churches, schools, mosques, government installations, educational institutions, and entertainment venues in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Taraba, and Yobe states, and inside the Federal Capital Territory,.

Terrorist attacks are predominately concentrated in northern Nigeria; however, extremist groups likely aspire to target major cities throughout Nigeria, including Lagos. In 2016, Boko Haram divided into two factions. The new faction calls itself Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISIS-WA) and is an ISIS affiliate, while the other faction remained loyal to its historical leadership.

Boko Haram is suspected of or has claimed responsibility for most of the terrorist activity in Nigeria, but ISIS-WA has become increasingly active. Boko Haram has carried out kidnappings, killings, bombings, and attacks on civilian and military targets, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths, injuries, and significant destruction of property – more than 6,600 deaths in 2014 alone. While most active in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram actions have at times approached Lagos. The group is widely believed to be responsible for a 2014 prison break in Ekiti state and, also in 2014, a suicide bomber detonated next to an oil depot in Apapa, Lagos State. In the areas immediately surrounding Lagos, news outlets have reported the arrest of several Boko Haram members, but no attacks. Both Boko Haram and ISIS-WA likely seek to carry out attacks outside of northern Nigeria, including Lagos.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

There is considerable risk from political violence in Lagos. Nigeria's 2018 and 2019 elections were, for the most part, relatively peaceful compared with previous elections. More acts of violence occurred nationwide during national elections, with civil society groups recording 40 election-related fatalities on Presidential Election Day. States in the South South (Niger Delta), particularly Rivers State, experienced the most violence during their gubernatorial election. Political criminals smashed and destroyed ballot boxes, and burned or raided election centers to support the political party with the most money/influence; party agents bought votes out in the open, and security forces and gangs engaged in voter intimidation. Victims of political violence-related killings ranged from youth political group members and gang members to mid-level political bosses and some nonaffiliated civilians. Political rallies in Lagos and Rivers also resulted in the deaths of several spectators; in one notable incident, at least 14 people reportedly died during an All Progressive Conference rally in Rivers State in February 2019. Other than Rivers state, most of the urban centers in southern Nigeria remained mostly calm in the wake of the elections. There is no indication that political violence will return due to elections-related shifts in political power.

Civil Unrest

Violence occurs in pockets of southern Nigeria due to endemic poverty, poor education, youth unemployment, and high levels of inequality. Many individuals struggle on a daily basis to access clean water, reliable power, and basic healthcare. In some communities, domestic and international efforts to address these issues occasionally have the unintended consequence of creating divisions within and among communities as groups vie for access to resources. In isolated incidents, protests against the government related to these issues have led to violence.

Incidents of intercommunal violence, including herder-settler violence emanating from the Middle Belt, occur in southern Nigeria and can prompt reprisals. Upticks in armed criminality, including armed banditry and kidnapping, are associated with intercommunal violence in the Middle Belt.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

National disaster management and emergency preparedness are ineffective due to limited resources and capacity. Crowd control and medical response during demonstrations is erratic. Many private-sector organizations operate their own disaster management and emergency preparedness programs that can be more effective than the local response.

Economic Concerns

Economic fraud involving credit card fraud, skimming, and identity theft is widespread. Personal checks are not a commonly accepted monetary instrument. ATM and credit card use is available and accepted at larger, reputable locations, but visitors should use them with caution. Some international hotel brands are present in Lagos and throughout southern Nigeria. These locations have adequate security and safety measures in place. Due to widespread identity and financial fraud, individuals should not carry unnecessarily detailed information about themselves and their financial situation. For more information, see OSAC's report on [ATM Skimmers & Fraud](#).

Scams are prevalent and include offers of fake business opportunities and romance schemes. Fraud is common in Nigeria with "419" style type scams being the most pervasive. 419 scams are classic email frauds and frequently involve the well-known "Nigerian Prince" scam. However, more sophisticated scams and fraud networks exist. One of these more sophisticated scam-based criminal enterprises include "Yahoo boys" who use diverse ploys and platforms including dating sites, chat rooms, social media and other online conduits to deceive their victims.

Fraud also finds its way into the private sector via business fraud and investment scams, especially when attempting to lease or purchase land in Lagos State. Remain wary of business offers promising large payoffs for little investment. For more information on scams in Nigeria and available resources, see the U.S. Embassy's webpage on [scams](#).

Online dating scams are elaborate, believable, and prey on vulnerable people searching for love. An increasing number of incidents involve scammers persuading middle-aged U.S. or European females to travel to Nigeria to marry fiancés they met online. Although the women believe the relationship is legitimate, Nigeria-based perpetrators deliberately cultivate these connections to obtain immigration and/or financial benefits. In most instances, the Nigerian contacts defraud victims of their savings; however, in a handful of cases, they hold victims against their will after

traveling to Nigeria, and occasionally physically and/or sexually assault them in order to obtain cooperation.

Many romance scams originate on legitimate dating websites and quickly transition to a personal messaging applications, such as WhatsApp or Skype. The person based in Nigeria will court the foreigner online and initially ask for small amounts of money to cover “traditional” wedding expenses and visa fees. The Nigeria-based person may or may not use photographs with their true identity. Recent reports suggest that Nigeria-based perpetrators have increasingly asked for sexually explicit or provocative photographs for later use to extort money from the foreign victim.

Critical Infrastructure

Intense urban growth has led to greater poverty, while increasing local government inability to provide services for all people. The growing population, relatively low per capita income, and inadequate existing infrastructure are all causes for concern as the government confronts critical deficits in infrastructure and public services including transportation, electricity, water, and sanitation services. Poor infrastructure and public services leaves people disenfranchised, reduces economic opportunities, and presents logistical challenges. Rapid urbanization and the absence of affordable housing have led to the expansion of slum areas, exacerbating socio-economic disparities, and contributing to widespread poverty within the city. Infrastructure remains poor throughout Lagos, including in affluent areas; in March 2019, two separate buildings collapsed in the affluent area of Lagos Island, killing 20-30 individuals.

Despite being an oil producer, fuel shortages occur, since Nigeria exports crude oil and imports refined fuel. Such shortages often prompt large crowds and lines to form around fuel stations and the more proliferation of street vendors that sell fuel at higher prices. Such gatherings around fuel stations and vendors occasionally escalate to unrest, as crowds become agitated while waiting throughout the day.

Throughout the Niger Delta region, several indigenous militant groups actively target oil pipeline infrastructure and oil company personnel, including those of several major international and U.S. companies. Attacks targeting international oil companies led to a suspension of operations in the region in 2016; operations have since resumed. Some Niger Delta militant groups have separatist ambitions, while others are predominantly criminal in nature. Kidnapping for ransom targeting oil workers is prevalent in the region, perpetrated by a variety of armed groups including militants and criminal elements.

Personal Identity Concerns

Rape remains a serious problem. There is no comprehensive national law for combatting violence against women. Rape is a crime in Nigeria, but sentences for persons convicted of rape and sexual assault are inconsistent and often minor. According to the Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, currently applicable only in the Federal Capital Territory until adopted by the states, rape is punishable by 12 years to life imprisonment for offenders older than 14, and a maximum of 14 years’ imprisonment for all others. The VAPP Act also addresses sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, harmful traditional practices, and socioeconomic violence. Federal law criminalizes female circumcision or genital mutilation. Twelve states have also banned FGM/C, though the practice remains common in parts of both northern and southern Nigeria.

Consensual, same-sex sexual relations are illegal in Nigeria. Entering same-sex marriage contracts and civil unions (defined to include “any arrangement between persons of the same sex to live together as sex partners”) is also illegal, with punishments including fines and prison sentences of up to 14 years. Nigerian law does not recognize same-sex marriage contracts and civil unions entered into in a foreign country. Public displays of affection between persons of the same sex are also punishable by up to ten years’ imprisonment. The law allows for the prosecution of persons who support or belong to advocacy groups relating to LGBTI issues, with prison sentences of up to ten years. U.S. citizens who participate in free speech or assemblies relating to same sex marriage could potentially face prosecution under this law. In the following northern states, where Sharia law applies, penalties can also include death: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.

Persons with disabilities can expect to experience difficulty in terms of accessibility and accommodation.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnapping for ransom is prevalent throughout Nigeria. Victims often come from the Nigerian diaspora when they return home from abroad for either a holiday or a specific reason (death in the family/wedding); criminals target them due to their perceived affluence. However, kidnappers take multiple expatriates each year, including in southern Nigeria. Kidnappers frequently target road travelers, and abduct victims from their residences or other frequented locations. Security escorts and guards do not deter all kidnappers. Often, the victim’s family pays a ransom and the kidnappers returned the victim unharmed.

Kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) is a lucrative industry and continues to be a security concern nationwide. KFR is prevalent in southern Nigeria. Kidnapping incidents, including those affecting expatriates, are under-reported making it difficult to determine the exact number of such events.

In early 2017, Lagos state strengthened the penalty for kidnapping. Conviction for kidnapping now carries a life sentence. If a kidnap dies in captivity, kidnapping becomes a capital crime.

Several kidnappings involving U.S. citizens occurred in 2018; a majority concluded with some form of ransom paid prior to the release. Most kidnapped U.S. citizens are Nigerian-American dual citizens. The duration of KFR incidents ranges from less than a week to more than a month. Criminals know that families rarely contact police during a kidnapping ordeal, and that they are quick to pay ransoms for the release of their loved ones. The private sector often spends substantial resources in physical protection of expatriates and other potential high-value KFR targets, as well as during hostage recovery efforts. At times, the security personnel protecting expatriates have died during the initial abduction. Abduction attempts often involve extensive planning by kidnappers, who often have a social or familial connection to the victim and are aware of the movements and habits. For more information, review OSAC’s report [Kidnapping: The Basics](#).

Piracy and Maritime Security

Piracy emanating from Nigeria presents an ongoing challenge for regional maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The majority of GoG piracy events in 2018 occurred in or near Nigerian waters. However, dozens of incidents occurred in international waters or off the coasts of other GoG countries; Nigerian pirates have been implicated in several of these incidents. In 2018, at least 50 piracy incidents (e.g. boardings, hijackings, and armed attacks on vessels) occurred in

and around Port Harcourt and Lagos, including in ports, anchorage points, and inland waterways. Nigeria-based pirates range in sophistication from opportunistic thieves seeking to steal easily lootable items to highly organized bands capable of operating far from coastlines, hijacking ships and moving them over long distances, and offloading large amounts of cargo via ship-to-ship transfers. Increasingly, pirates have kidnapped crewmembers and offshore oil workers for ransom; in such cases, pirates have transferred victims to other vessels or even taken them ashore to hideouts in southern Nigeria. Nigerian pirates have targeted foreign, and particularly Western, personnel for KFR, likely due to the perception that they can exact higher ransoms for their release.

The Nigerian Navy maintains a monopoly over maritime security operations. However, they are not adequately manned, trained, or equipped to police their territorial waters to Western standards. Security responses to incidents are inconsistent and unpredictable.

Police Response

Despite a visible police presence in large cities, police response is variable. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all, and provide minimal investigative support to victims. The Rapid Response Squad's policing capacity and emergency response capabilities continue to grow, but remain in a nascent state.

A serious lack of resources (e.g. communications equipment, vehicles, skilled leadership, and training) continues to undermine the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Usually, victims must maintain close contact with local police to move an investigation forward. Crime laboratories and facilities to process evidence are rare. A DNA forensic lab opened in late 2017.

Visitors should always be polite and respectful of police officers, soldiers, or any Nigerian who appears to be in a position of authority. Most Nigerians do not perceive the NPF as an effective law enforcement body, and have little faith in the criminal justice system. A call to police for assistance may result in the solicitation of bribes. Criminal groups do not fear arrest or prosecution for their activities. Local police and neighborhood associations generally do not deter or disrupt crimes, and seldom apprehend or detain suspects.

Vigilante justice is common. Mobs may attack perpetrators of crime before police arrive. During the 2019 Presidential elections in Lagos, a crowd stoned to death one individual suspected of stealing a ballot box from a polling station.

Crime Victim Assistance

There is no reliable national emergency communication number. Contact the American Citizen Services unit at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General for crime victim's assistance. While in Lagos State, attempt to obtain police assistance by calling **767** or **112**. Inquire at the nearest police station about the contact telephone numbers for that particular station.

Police/Security Agencies

Expatriates and affluent Nigerians employ their own security, and use armored vehicles for travel. Businesses and individuals frequently hire police officers and other law enforcement agents to provide armed private security. Most businesses employ guard services, and many companies offer varying quality of service. As Nigerian law prohibits the arming of private security personnel,

police often supplement guard forces; you can make these arrangements via your local guard company or at a local police station.

Medical Emergencies

Nigeria has a number of well-trained doctors, yet medical facilities are generally poor. The best health care in Nigeria is available in private and nonprofit medical facilities. However, even these facilities typically fail to meet U.S. standards. Many medicines are unavailable, including medications for diabetes and hypertension. Use caution when purchasing medicines locally, as counterfeit pharmaceuticals are a common problem and may be difficult to distinguish from genuine medications. Consider bringing a sufficient supply of needed medication. For more information, refer to OSAC's report, [Traveling with Medication](#).

Emergency services comparable to those in the United States or Europe are non-existent, and the blood supply is unreliable and unsafe for transfusion. For serious medical problems, consider traveling to the United States, Europe, or South Africa for treatment.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

For medical assistance, refer to the Consulate's [Medical Assistance page](#). Resources for individual states are located toward the bottom of the page.

Insurance Guidance

All private hospitals and clinics require cash payment before receiving any care. Prices can be quite high, and it is often difficult to withdraw the required amount of money in a single bank transaction. Hospitals may detain patients who have not paid in full or deny services, even during exigent circumstances.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Typical childhood diseases such as measles, mumps, and chickenpox are common in Nigeria. All travelers should be up to date with all these immunizations, as well as such travel related immunizations such as hepatitis A, meningococcal, typhoid, and Yellow Fever.

Malaria is prevalent throughout the country and yellow fever is present. You must prove yellow fever immunization to enter Nigeria. All travelers should take anti-malarial medication, even for short stays. Bring malaria chemoprophylaxis with you. Carry and use insect repellents containing either 20 percent DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Treat clothing and tents with permethrin. Sleep in screened or air-conditioned rooms under insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [Nigeria](#).

OSAC Country Council Information

OSAC Country Councils are active in both Lagos and Abuja. Both Country Councils meet the last Thursday of each month. Access to both is restricted to active OSAC members only. Private sector representatives interested in participating in the Country Councils should reach out to OSAC's [Africa team](#) to contact the Regional Security Office.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Lagos
2 Walter Carrington Crescent
Victoria Island, Lagos

Consulate Contact Numbers

Regional Security Office: (234) 1-460-3514
Consulate Operator: (234) 1-460-3400
Marine Security Guard at Post One: (234) 1-460-3410
Duty Officer: (234) 807-550-0167
Website: <https://ng.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/lagos/>

Nearby Post: [Embassy Abuja](#)

Consulate Guidance

U.S. citizens traveling in Nigeria should register in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP). STEP is a free service that helps the U.S. Embassy disseminate information about safety conditions and contact travelers in an emergency.

Additional Resource: [Nigeria](#) Country Information Sheet