



# Denmark 2019 Crime & Safety Report



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses Denmark at Level 2, indicating travelers should exercise increased caution due to terrorism.

## Overall Crime and Safety Situation

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

Review OSAC's [Denmark-specific 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.

### Crime Threats

There is moderate risk from crime in Copenhagen. According to Danish police, some criminal activity in Denmark is increasing, and peripheral individuals may be vulnerable to radicalization. Police have discovered criminal groups organized by foreign nationals with permanent residence in Denmark. The members of these groups use their knowledge of the Danish social system to commit sophisticated criminal activities like human smuggling, weapons trafficking, and other economic crimes.

Between 2014 and 2017, broad categories of reported crime decreased, but organized crime, including drug-related offenses, violence against public officials, economic crimes, and human trafficking-related crimes, increased. Reported sexual assaults, weapon-related crimes, and resisting/assaults on public officials increased by 81%, 13%, and 100% respectively. Burglaries have decreased throughout Denmark by 20% since 2014. Pickpockets, skimmers, PIN eavesdroppers, and other petty criminals operate aggressively at tourist attractions, train stations, and airports, and on public buses. Local pickpockets/ATM shoulder-surfers operate in teams of two or three, with one or more distracting the victim while another steals the victim's valuables/information.

According to the National Center of Investigation, there are two biker gangs (Hells Angels and the Bandidos) and two large immigrant gangs (Brothas and Loyal to Familia) in Denmark. These gangs are involved in a wide range of crimes, including crimes against property, drug sales, extortion, economic crimes (fraud and tax evasion), robbery, and weapons trafficking. Gang-related crime is typically very violent. Many gangs use legal business structures and expertise to execute criminal activities, especially in money laundering and the sale of stolen goods via auction houses. In 2017, 285 members of gangs were in prison in Denmark.

Rising gang violence in Copenhagen is a dominant theme for public discussion in the media and among political leaders. From June 2017 through January 2018, police recorded 42 shootings and four knife attacks, and arrested 36 people in connection with these crimes. At least two innocent bystanders suffered serious injuries. This wave of violence led the Danish National Police to establish temporary “visitation zones” -- areas where police may stop and frisk people without probable cause -- in the Copenhagen communities most affected by the violence. A truce established in 2017 between two of Denmark’s largest immigrant gangs appears to have reduced gang violence. Danish police discontinued the use of visitation zones in 2018.

## Cybersecurity Issues

Denmark is one of the most digitized countries in the world. Consequently, cybercrime continues to be one of the biggest threats to the heavily connected public and private sectors. According to the *Intelligence Risk Assessment 2018* published by the Danish Defense Intelligence Service (DDIS), “cyber-attacks against Danish public authorities or private companies are expected, and can potentially have serious political or economic consequences.” The *Assessment* warns:

- “Foreign states, groups, and individuals that pose a persistent threat to Danish public authorities and private businesses are using a wide range of different attack methods to achieve their goals.”
- “Foreign states may use cyber espionage to obtain new technologies or to ensure that their national companies gain a competitive edge on international markets.”
- “Sophisticated hacker groups are developing offensive cyber-attack capabilities that go beyond simply targeting critical infrastructure.”

The 2017 NotPetya cyber-attack, which inflicted more than \$10 billion in damages to governments and businesses worldwide, had a devastating effect on the global economy. The attack cost Danish business conglomerate Maersk as much as \$300 million, and brought nearly one-fifth of the world’s shipping capacity to a halt for two weeks.

## Other Areas of Concern

There are no areas of Denmark off limits to U.S. government employees. Exercise caution in the neighborhoods of Nørrebro and Christiania. Nørrebro is a less affluent, but steadily gentrifying, area with higher levels of violent street crime, narcotics dealing, and gang activity. Local gang conflicts and demonstrations in Nørrebro and adjoining neighborhoods occasionally result in violence.

Visitors to the Free Town of Christiania, a self-proclaimed autonomous neighborhood in the Christianshavn section of Copenhagen, should also exercise caution and avoid displaying cameras. Christiania has long hosted one of the largest illegal hash markets in Europe. Christiania’s narcotics activity involves organized crime groups, including outlaw motorcycle gangs. Police regularly carry out raids in an effort to restrict the cannabis trade. Drug enforcement efforts have led to violent confrontations between police and Christiania residents, including a 2016 shooting that left a police officer injured and criminal suspect dead. During a 2018 raid in Christiania, the local news reported that approximately 20 masked men attacked police officers with stones and bottles. Tourists have also encountered harassment, assault, and robbery for breaking Christiania’s strict no-photography policy.

In 2017, Danish Armed Forces deployed domestically for the first time since World War II to assist police in protecting potential terror targets in Copenhagen and to support border controls in the south of the country. Be aware of temporary border controls manned by the Danish National Police and Armed Forces

### **Transportation-Safety Situation**

For more information, review OSAC's Report, [Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public Transport, and Overnights](#).

#### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions are on par with Western European and U.S. standards. Denmark is extremely bicycle-friendly; there are bicycle lanes located throughout the country, usually paralleling vehicular lanes. Many urban streets also have traffic lanes reserved for public transport or cycles only. This can cause difficulties for drivers unfamiliar with the area or with Danish rules of the road. You may not turn right at red lights. Drivers must not begin right turns across bicycle lanes until the road behind is clear of bicycles. Authorities strictly enforce traffic laws using both overt and covert means. Violations can result in stiff fines and jail sentences.

Drivers must be at least 18 years old. U.S. drivers may use their valid state driver's license for up to 90 days. Long-term residents must obtain a valid Danish driver's license. Road signs use standard international symbols. Seat belt use is mandatory. Driving any vehicle, including bicycles, under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a very serious offense. It is against the law to drive while using a hand-held cell phone.

#### Public Transportation Conditions

The public transportation system is highly reliable, punctual, and relatively safe. Stay alert for pickpockets on any public transportation system.

#### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Copenhagen International Airport (CPH) is located 10 miles (15 kilometers) south of the city center and is easily accessible from Copenhagen city center by car or public transport (Metro and commuter train). The airport adheres to international air safety and flight operation standards. Security measures for international flights are on par with U.S. airport requirements; security personnel are trained and effective in the performance of their duties.

### **Terrorism Threat**

#### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is moderate risk from terrorism in Copenhagen. Because of Denmark's active foreign/security policies and the country's association with the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, Denmark remains an inviting target for those who sympathize with militant Islam. Terrorism remains one of the three biggest threats to Denmark, according to DDIS. The Center for Terror Analysis (CTA) in 2017 assessed the terror threat to Denmark is mainly posed by lone individuals with the "intent and capability to commit terrorist attacks," and foreign fighters returning to their country of origin CTA warned of the threat from planned, more sophisticated attacks like those witnessed in Paris and Brussels.

According to CTA, at least 150 people have left Denmark for Syria or Iraq since 2012. As of 2017, CTA also believes that about 33% of the travelers have returned to Denmark, 20% remain in the conflict zone, 25% are assumed dead, and the remaining individuals are in other countries. CTA stated that, “[w]omen now constitute one third of the individuals from Denmark located in the conflict zone, and nearly one in every eight of those who traveled from Denmark to the conflict zone in total.” They also warn of the “...growing role [of women] within Islamist circles in Denmark, and the threat to symbolic (e.g., individuals and institutions that are perceived as offensive to Islam) and Jewish targets.” Consequently, “lone wolf” style attacks, similar to the 2015 incidents at the Krudttønden cultural center and the synagogue in central Copenhagen, may take place without warning.

The collapse of ISIS, coupled with improvements in European counterterrorism measures, led to fewer terror attacks across the continent in 2018 in comparison to recent years. However, in 2018, successful terror attacks resulting in multiple fatalities occurred in several countries near Denmark, including Belgium (May) and France (December). Many smaller scale incidents, such as extremist-inspired arsons and stabbings, occurred elsewhere, and law enforcement and intelligence agencies disrupted dozens more. Despite the decline in attacks, the potential exists for extremist violence to occur anywhere in Europe, including Denmark. Although official messaging to would-be terrorists from ISIS has declined, extremist recruitment efforts and instructions for carrying out mass acts of violence continue to be freely accessible in online forums and social media, and the spread of terroristic propaganda and ideas contribute to the radicalization of individuals and circles in Denmark.

#### Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Denmark is generally free from anti-U.S. sentiment. It is common for many people, Danes and U.S. citizens alike, to wear shirts, hats, and jackets with logos and names of U.S. universities, sports teams, and companies without concern for backlash from the general population.

#### **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

There is minimal risk from civil unrest in Copenhagen. The Kingdom of Denmark is a highly functional democracy ranked #1 of 180 in Transparency International’s Corrupt Perceptions Index for 2018. Denmark also enjoys high rankings on equality between genders as well as freedoms of religion, sexual orientation, and speech. The main human rights problem in Denmark concerns the treatment of irregular (or perceived irregular) migrants from outside Europe. Violent gang activity within immigrant communities is on the rise in Denmark.

#### Civil Unrest

Political extremist circles in Denmark, both left- and right-wing, are prepared to use violence to promote their political agendas; however, according to the CTA, “this threat is limited.” “There is an increased focus on the refugee situation among individuals with extreme right-wing sympathies,” and their aggression may focus on “asylum seekers, refugees, religious minorities and related authorities.”

Public demonstrations are common and sometimes result in violence. Typically, demonstrations attract between a few dozen and a few hundred protestors, and very rarely more than 1,000. Public demonstrations may be spontaneous. Police support is extremely well coordinated and appropriate to the size of the demonstration. Police are experienced, with effective riot-control elements.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious/ethnic violence is rare. There is an increased concern regarding potential violence from and toward refugee and migrant populations. The Danish Security and Intelligence Service notes that “political extremist circles or extremist sympathizers may increase the threat to asylum centers, refugees, and migrants, as well as related authorities.”

Confrontations between outlaw motorcycle gangs and street gangs composed of ethnic minorities occur. Motivation involves general criminality issues and turf wars, but violence can be indiscriminate.

#### Post-Specific Concerns

##### Environmental Hazards

The 2017 *National Risk Overview*, published by the Danish emergency response authority – Beredskabsstyrelsen – identified hurricanes, strong winds, flooding, extreme rain, and disease as the five biggest environmental hazards facing the country.

Torrential rains may temporarily flood roads and basements. Significant flooding occurred in 2010 and 2011, resulting in damage to businesses and homes in/around Copenhagen.

##### Personal Identity Concerns

Denmark is a very open society. Violence or other discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or disability is rare. Discrimination based on race, nationality, or religion is likewise rare. As in other European countries, anti-immigrant sentiments became more visible following the refugee and migration crisis; there have been reports of harassment by individuals who do not appear ethnically Danish.

##### Drug-related Crimes

Denmark has seen a rise in drug-related arrests over the past year, owed in part to increasingly aggressive counter-narcotics measures. Reports of drug sales, smuggling, and other violations of narcotics law increased dramatically in 2018. As the only Nordic country with a land border with Western Europe, Denmark is an important transshipment point for all types of cargo, including illegal narcotics. Law enforcement continues to observe trafficking in hashish via the large volume of legitimate trucking through Denmark from the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain. Authorities have routinely seized amphetamines, cocaine, and heroin at the ferry crossings from Germany, and during random checks on the bridges from Jutland or Sweden. A majority of the heroin destined for Sweden and Norway transits Denmark. The availability of heroin fluctuates based on the heroin production levels in Afghanistan.

The use of “date rape” drugs, including GHB, is an increasing concern in Copenhagen. In 2017, there was at least a 30% increase in the number of cases handled by the poison hotlines at Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg hospitals over 2016. For more information, review OSAC’s Report [Shaken: The Don’ts of Alcohol Abroad](#).

## **Police Response**

Danish law enforcement, public safety, and security services are professional, highly trained, well equipped, and effective. Denmark has very little corruption. Most police officers are proficient in English. Response for non-violent crimes may be limited due to labor shortages.

All individuals must provide their name, address, date of birth, and proof of identity to police if asked.

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Comply with police instructions if detained. Immediately report an instance of unlawful detention, corruption, bribery, or harassment to the Embassy and request assistance.

### Crime Victim Assistance

The Danish National Police are very proactive and responsive when dealing with violent criminal activity, but are selective about responding to non-violent crimes. Dial 112 for emergencies and life-threatening situations.

The American Citizen Services unit accepts appointments for routine services between 0900-1200 on weekdays, except Fridays. The Embassy closes on U.S. and Danish holidays. For emergency cases involving the death, arrest, or serious medical emergency of a U.S. citizen in Denmark, call +45 33-41-71-00. For all other inquiries, email [CopenhagenACS@state.gov](mailto:CopenhagenACS@state.gov).

For local first responders, refer to the Embassy’s [Emergency Assistance page](#).

### Police/Security Agencies

The Danish National Police are typically the primary law enforcement responder in the case of an emergency. The National Police are the primary law enforcement authority in Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, and are under the direction of the Ministry of Justice. The National Police develop strategies, support work in the local police districts, and coordinate police operations on a national level.

## **Medical Emergencies**

In the event of a non-life-threatening injury, those in need of medical attention must telephone 1813 before going to the doctor/hospital. The dispatcher will provide instructions based on the trauma/injury and the location of the caller. ER or acute services will not occur without this call.

For medical emergencies (life-threatening situations), to include the need for medical evacuation (medevac), call 112. The dispatcher will provide instructions to the caller, identify the hospital best suited to meet the needs of the patient, and dispatch the required support.

## Contact Information for Available Medical Services

For medical assistance, refer to the Embassy's [Medical Assistance page](#).

Danish Poison Control: 82-12-12-12

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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

## OSAC Country Council Information

The Country Council in Copenhagen is active, meeting twice per year. For additional information, contact the RSO office via [CopenhagenRSO@state.gov](mailto:CopenhagenRSO@state.gov) or by telephone: +45-33-41-71-00. Interested private-sector security managers can also contact OSAC's [Europe Team](#) with any questions.

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Copenhagen, Dag Hammarskjölds Allé 24, DK 2100 Copenhagen Ø

Operating Hours: 0830-1700

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Main: +45 33-41-71-00

Post One: +45 33-41-74-00

RSO: +45 33-41-74-13

E-mail: [CopenhagenRSO@state.gov](mailto:CopenhagenRSO@state.gov)

Website: <https://dk.usembassy.gov>

### Consular coverage for multi-post countries

Denmark includes the mainland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.

### Embassy Guidance

U.S. citizens traveling in Denmark are encouraged to 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 Resources

[Denmark](#) Country Information Sheet