



Finland 2019 Crime & Safety Report



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

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses Finland at Level 1, indicating travelers should exercise normal precautions.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

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Review OSAC's [Finland-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 minimal risk from crime in Helsinki. Finland is one of the safest countries in the world, and has one of the world's most effective and trusted police forces. However, petty crimes such as pickpocketing do occur in crowded areas and during the summer tourist season. The overall crime rate in 2018 remained substantially the same compared to 2017. In 2018, damage to property crimes dropped by 9.5%, property crimes overall dropped by 2.7%, overall theft offenses dropped by 2.7%, and assault offenses dropped by 1.1%. Key areas that showed an increase in 2018 were sexual offenses (up 13.8%), drunk driving (up 8.2%), robberies (up 6%), and narcotic offenses (up 4.1%). Identity theft crimes dropped by 5.4% and payment fraud crimes dropped by 10.2% in 2018.

At least eight motorcycle gangs are active in Finland, although overall membership levels remain low. Russian organized crime is also a topic of concern for authorities.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cybersecurity remains a concern. Authorities continue to express concern over the threat posed by economic espionage facilitated by cyberattack. In 2017, Helsinki opened The European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in order to coordinate a response against political, diplomatic, economic, cyber, and disinformation measures.

Finland also operates a National Cyber Security Center (NCSC-FI), which operates under the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The Finnish road network is safe, comprehensive, and well maintained, despite severe winters. Winter tires (studded or M/S) are mandatory from December through March. Criminal cases involving endangerment of traffic safety dropped by 11.8% from 2017.

Finnish laws governing driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI) are extremely strict; driving with a blood-alcohol content (BAC) level at or above 0.05% is illegal.

Terrorism Threat

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is minimal risk from terrorism in Helsinki. Finland experienced its first terrorist attack in August 2017; the attack left two people dead and eight injured. The Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO) rates the terrorist threat as “elevated,” the second lowest of four levels. In general, SUPO states that terrorist organizations in Finland are focused on support activities and spreading of ideology. Approximately 100 Finns may have traveled to fight in foreign conflicts. Additionally, approximately 370 individuals are under police surveillance for suspected ties to terrorism.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Anti-U.S. sentiment remains very low. Certain small segments of the population tend to hold marginally less favorable views of Americans.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Civil Unrest

There is minimal risk from civil unrest in Helsinki. Tensions between far-left and far-right groups continue against the backdrop of a migration crisis that has not yet fully abated. Protestors in Finland must notify the police at least six hours ahead of any planned demonstration. There are approximately 300 protests a year in Helsinki; most protests are small, peaceful, and unrelated to U.S. interests.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Some far-right groups incite violence against minorities; authorities maintain effective control of the situation via hate-speech legislation and strong social disapproval of far-right views.

The Finnish Immigration Service continues to process migrant and asylum claims; it received and processed approximately 6,300 new asylum applications in 2018, approving approximately 40% of these. A police risk assessment of over 9,000 asylum-seekers since August 2017 revealed approximately 200 to be high-risk individuals due to serious criminal indications.

Post-specific Concerns

Economic Concerns

Gray and black-market activities are relatively rare, although authorities regularly deal with illicit economic activities connected to Russian organized crime.

Privacy Concerns

Finnish and EU privacy laws are strict, although a great deal of personal information remains available via government sources, including address, telephone, and vehicle information. In May 2018, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) went into effect. An updated Finnish Data Protection Act became effective on January 1, 2019.

Personal Identity Concerns

Finland is traditionally an egalitarian country with high levels of social acceptance. Over the past two decades, the greater Helsinki area has become an increasingly cosmopolitan and multicultural environment. However, some far-right groups still espouse racist ideologies.

Drug-related Crimes

Narcotics offenses were up 4.1% in 2018 over 2017; aggravated narcotics offenses were down 4% over the same period. Approximately two-thirds of these crimes were “use offenses.” Cannabis, amphetamines, and MDMA/ecstasy are the most common types of illicit drugs used. Finnish Customs reported its first seizure of carfentanil in 2017.

Police Response

The Finnish police are one of the most professional police forces in the world. Most Finnish police speak English. Due to the high effectiveness level of individual officers, Finland maintains the lowest police-per-capita ratio in the industrialized world. Finnish law allows the police to demand identification on the spot.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police impersonation has increased in recent years, with police warning of several cases of police impersonation via phone in an attempt to steal banking information. All police officers should have an official police identity card that is in the process of updating; two versions of this card will be in use during the next several years as the update progresses. U.S. officials should cooperate fully with police and request consular assistance as appropriate. U.S. citizens in distress should call the main Embassy number at +358-9-616-250 and select 0.

Crime Victim Assistance

Finland’s all-purpose emergency number is 112. Comprehensive victim-assistance resources are available via police and social services agencies.

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

Police/Security Agencies

Finland has ten regional police forces and one metropolitan police force (Helsinki) under the command of the National Police Board. The National Bureau of Investigation serves as Finland's sole investigative agency for major crimes and organized crime. The Security Intelligence Service and its police officer staff serves as Finland's sole civilian intelligence and national security agency. Aside from the police, the Customs Service and the Border Guard are the only government agencies with law-enforcement powers.

Medical Emergencies

The medical system is one of the best in the world. A combination of public and private providers offers comprehensive, state-of-the-art treatment in all areas of medicine.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

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

Available Air Ambulance Services

Finland has a well-developed air ambulance system for acute trauma cases and inter-hospital transfers throughout the country. Private, international air ambulance services are available through Jet Flight (ph. 020-510-1900).

Insurance Guidance

For anyone who does not pay Finnish income tax, the public and private medical systems alike require payment at the time of service. Traveler's insurance is advisable.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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

OSAC Country Council Information

The Helsinki Country Council currently meets once a year and has approximately 25 members. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC's [Europe team](#) with any questions.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Itäinen Puistotie 14, 00104 Helsinki

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 0830 - 1700. Some sections of the Embassy may have different hours. All offices close on Saturdays, Sundays, and on American and Finnish holidays.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: 09-6162-50 (from outside Finland +358-9-6162-50)

For after-hours emergencies, follow the prompts to reach the Consular Duty Officer or Marine Post One.

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

Embassy Guidance

U.S. citizens traveling in Finland 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

[Finland](#) Country Information Sheet