



# OSAC Country Security Report Belgium

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*This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Belgium Travel Advisory and [Belgium Country Information Page](#).*

## Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

### U.S. Embassy Brussels

25 Boulevard du Régent, B-1000 Brussels (24/7)  
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## OSAC Country Chapter

The Belgium Country Chapter is active, meeting twice per year.

Contact [OSAC's Europe Team](#) with any questions.

## Belgium Travel Advisory

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

## Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brussels as being a **MEDIUM**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Belgium.

Incidents of crime in 2024 for Belgium remained similar to 2023 numbers, with theft and extortion making up most of the crime. Comparing the years, residential burglaries trends continue to see an increase during the holidays due to empty residences of vacationers and more hours of darkness.

Violent crime remains rare, but low-level street crime is common. Muggings, purse snatchings, and pickpocketing occur frequently, particularly in the major cities (e.g. Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent). Thieves often loiter in transportation hubs like the Metro, trams, train stations, and airports to take advantage of disoriented or distracted travelers.

Since 2024, there has been a wave of drug-related crime, including multiple shootings in Brussels. The Federal Police in the Brussels-Capital Region registered 89 shootings in 2024, a 43.5% increase compared to 2023 and an almost 59% increase compared to 2022. As of September 2025, there have been 57 drug-related shootings in Brussels this year.

The Port of Antwerp has seen a significant increase in drug trafficking in recent years, and has experienced a surge in targeted bombings, shootings, and kidnapping as criminal gangs look to establish primacy in the European drug trade. Antwerp and the Brussels communes of Molenbeek and Anderlecht incur most of the violence. The violence mostly affects those living and working in the area, particularly small businesses owned by locals.

Another growing problem, especially in Brussels, is theft from vehicles, both moving and parked. Police continue to report “smash and grab” incidents. Do not leave any valuable items in plain sight inside a vehicle. Make certain your vehicle is locked, as some thieves are using key fob interceptors to block locking mechanisms. Home burglaries and residential property theft remain a concern. If residing in Belgium, using a home alarm system is extremely beneficial, especially if you travel frequently. Lock your windows and doors while not at home, even if you are just going out for ten minutes. While staying at hotels or small inns, use the in-room safe for your valuables.

Check ATMs or other machines for skimmers or removeable readers. When possible, use bank ATMs. In bars and restaurants, have the card swiped in front of you; do not let servers or merchants take your card out of sight.

Pickpocketing, purse snatching, and theft of light luggage, small electronics, and laptops are prevalent at the three major train stations: the North Station (Noord Station or Gare du Nord); the Central Station (Centraal Station or Gare Centrale); and the South Station (Zuid Station or Gare du Midi, the primary international train hub). Criminals frequently work in pairs or as part of an organized gang, often with a high degree of skill and sophistication in selecting victims and places to commit crime. One common trick is for the thief to ask victims for directions or distract them while an accomplice steals the victim’s luggage or electronics. Thieves often steal carry-ons placed above seats when large crowds of people exit at a train stop.

Theft of bags on trains has increased, particularly on the Brussels-Amsterdam route. Do not store any electronics or your identity documents above your seat; carry them on your person or in a bag on your lap or secured at your feet. Small groups of young men sometimes prey on unwary tourists, usually late at night and often in Metro (subway) stations or in tourist areas. Thieves typically seek small, high-value items such as smart phones and watches.

Brussels has the highest crime rate in Belgium. During the day remain extra vigilant in Brussels, especially at the most popular tourist sites like Manneken-Pis where it’s always busy and everyone tourists are preoccupied with taking pictures. It’s best to avoid walking around alone at night and certain parts of the city. The areas of greater concern in Brussels are Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Schaerbeek, Anderlecht, Marollen/Flea market, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, and Square Anneessens.

## Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Belgium.

## Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brussels as being a **Medium**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Belgium, indicating that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

Following the terrorism attack in October 2023 in Brussels, the threat level for Belgium, including Brussels was raised to a three (3), which is defined as “Serious possibility of a threat” by the Belgian Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis. The threat level ranges on a scale from 1, indicating the threat is low, to 4, indicating the threat is very serious.

Belgium has an active counterterrorism policy that includes robust domestic security efforts, international information sharing, and support for multilateral efforts. The country’s greatest terrorism threat remains homegrown terrorism carried out by lone actors, whether inspired by Islamist terrorism or, to a lesser extent, violent right-wing extremism.

Authorities recorded 287 reports of threats potentially related to terrorism or extremism in 2024, a 13 percent decrease from the previous year. Conflict in the Middle East remained a significant factor, with the Jewish community targeted in 15 percent of reported cases. Authorities reported an increasing number of youth plotters as a major source of concern; nearly one-third of individuals planning violent attacks in Belgium over the past three years (2022-2024) were minors. Among minors planning attacks, 75 percent were motivated by jihadism, while 25 percent were motivated by right-wing extremist ideology.

## Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brussels as being a **LOW**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Belgium. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

## Elections/Political Stability

Belgium, a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, is a stable electoral democracy with a long record of peaceful transfers of power. According to the Belgian Coordination Body for Threat Analysis (OCAM), major concerns in recent years have included the threat of terrorism, corruption scandals, and rising right-wing nationalism and xenophobia.

Belgium is politically divided into seven constitutionally equal governments: the federal government (based in Brussels); three regional governments (francophone Wallonia, Dutch-speaking Flanders, and the officially bilingual Brussels-Capital Region); and three language-based community governments (the Flemish Community, the French Community, and the German-speaking Community). Belgium is also divided into 565 municipalities and 10 largely ceremonial provinces. Cultural and political divisions do exist in Belgium, but they are addressed in democratic institutions and generally resolved through compromise. The Federal Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister, remains in office as long as it retains the confidence of the lower house (Chamber of Representatives) of the bicameral parliament.

## Protests & Demonstrations

Demonstrations occur frequently. All public demonstrations require prior police approval and presence to ensure adequate security for participants and bystanders. Spontaneous demonstrations can take place in response to political or economic issues, on politically significant holidays, during international events, or following local developments. Even demonstrations meant to be peaceful can become violent and unpredictable; avoid them if possible.

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

There have been occasional instances of anti-U.S. sentiment displayed by large groups and organizations, as well as those protesting U.S. foreign policy stances.

## Law Enforcement

The federal police are responsible for internal security and nationwide law and order, including migration and border enforcement. They report to the ministers of interior and justice. Civilian authorities maintain effective control over the security forces.

## Police Response

The emergency line requesting police assistance in Belgium is **101**. Report incidents to the police in the event of a crime. For emergency services, dial **112**.

For local first responders, refer to the Embassy's Emergency Assistance [webpage](#). The Belgian "Commission for financial assistance to victims of intentional acts of violence" provides financial compensation, under specific circumstances, for victims of crime and for those who have suffered injuries and consequent loss caused by such incidents. The Commission also provides for dependents or immediate family members of homicide victims. For more information,

contact the Commission at +(32) 25-427-208/218/224/229/244; or by e-mail at [commission.victim@just.fgov.be](mailto:commission.victim@just.fgov.be); or [commissie.slachtoffers@just.fgov.be](mailto:commissie.slachtoffers@just.fgov.be).

Belgian police agencies are very good and responsive. Local police take all reports of crime seriously and do their best to investigate and resolve criminal cases.

## Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Belgium, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

## Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Belgium.

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. Corruption by public officials carries heavy fines and/or imprisonment between 5 (five) and 10 years. Private individuals face similar fines and slightly shorter prison terms (between six months and two years). The current law not only holds individuals accountable, but also the company for which they work. Recent court cases in Belgium suggest that corruption is most prevalent in government procurement and public works contracting. American companies have not, however, identified corruption as a barrier to investment.

## Cybersecurity

Belgium faces a growing and complex cyber threat landscape driven by its strategic infrastructure, digital integration, and hosting of major international institutions, such as NATO and the EU. In 2024, Belgium reported a record number of cyber incidents ranging from ransomware, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS), and espionage-linked intrusions, tied to both state-backed and criminal actors. Against these threats, Belgium ranks fourth globally on the National Cyber Security Index due in part to its strong regulatory framework and collaborative public-private ecosystem.

When adjusted for population size, Belgium faces a disproportionately high volume of cyberattacks compared to other EU countries. The main cyber threats facing Belgium come from state-backed actors primarily stemming from Russia, China, the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Iran, each of which follows globally recognizable attack patterns. Additionally, companies in Belgium are frequent targets of ransomware attacks from criminal actors, causing significant financial losses.

Scammers have victimized U.S. nationals in Belgium. A common scam involves an Internet friend or partner reportedly detained by immigration authorities in Belgium enroute to the United States, who will not be released unless funds are paid for customs fees. In every case, these reports have been confidence schemes. Several U.S. nationals have lost thousands of dollars in such scams. Funds transferred in response to such offers are rarely recovered. The point of the scam is to make the target believe that the message is coming from Belgium, when it is really coming from another country.

## Import/Export Restrictions

There are no import/export restrictions unique to Belgium for U.S. travelers.

If the satellite phones comply with standard EU-regulations and are for commercial use, then there are no restrictions on the importation and use of these phones in Belgium. Iridium, InmarSat and GlobalSat all comply with EU regulations.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

*Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).*