



OSAC Country Security Report

Brazil

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

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[U.S. Consulate Branch Office in Belo Horizonte](#)

Note: Does not offer consular services.

OSAC Country Chapters

São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Porto Alegre have active OSAC chapters.

Contact [OSAC's Americas team](#) with any questions.

Brazil 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 due to crime.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brasília and Belo Horizonte as being **HIGH**-threat locations for crime, and Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as being **CRITICAL**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

Crimes of opportunity such as armed robbery, pickpocketing, purse snatching, and smash-and-grab thefts occur with the greatest frequency. Criminals engaged in this activity are often armed and will target their victims indiscriminately, with a preference for persons projecting affluence and a lack of awareness of their surroundings. Targeted items include wallets/purses, jewelry, and electronics. Cell phones are of particular interest. It is not uncommon for quick snatch-and-grab robberies of phones. Store electronics in the trunk of a vehicle when traveling to and from an airport, and limit the number of possessions carried on your person when out and about in the city.

Street crime is an ever-present problem, especially in the evenings and late at night. Pay particular attention when traveling at night through rural areas and satellite cities, due to the significant potential for roadside robberies. Armed robberies are prevalent throughout major cities. In many of these instances, multiple armed criminals on foot or in vehicles (typically motorcycles) identify an isolated victim or take advantage of traffic jams to rob a series of gridlocked vehicles. The criminals stop in front of or alongside their victim's vehicle, present a firearm, and subsequently demand all of the victim's valuables, then depart the area. In the majority of these incidents, compliant victims are unharmed.

Foreign visitors of all nationalities, including U.S. citizens, have been victims of crime. Criminals most often target their victims due to perceived wealth and lack of awareness. There is no indication that criminals target U.S. citizens or U.S. government employees due to their nationality. Most criminals commit crimes while armed and will not hesitate to use violence if they encounter resistance. In most incidents, compliant victims were unharmed.

Foreign visitors may be more susceptible to targeting for certain crimes because they may be less likely to file a police report and/or return to testify at criminal proceedings, should police apprehend the perpetrators. Foreigners are normally seen by criminals as easier targets due to their facilitated identification and expected lack of familiarization with the local reality. Be

careful of cash transactions on the street – a hurried transaction often leaves the customer with shoddy/counterfeit goods or with counterfeit money.

Although the risk is greater at night, street crime frequently occurs during the day. Incidents of theft are frequent on city buses and metro trains. Brazil's criminals often use motorcycles in street crimes to evade police. Comply with criminals' demands; resisting increases the likelihood of serious bodily harm. Brazil's criminal justice system suffers from low conviction rates. An acute shortage of jail space in Brazil and resulting prisoner furloughs contribute to the cycle of violence. Despite laws that regulate firearms, weapons such as handguns, rifles, military grade weapons, blades, and improvised weapons are frequently involved in criminal activities. These crimes can include gratuitous violence.

Mass robberies, locally known as *arrastões*, occur when a gang of criminals sweep through public places and rob pedestrians, beachgoers, patrons, customers, and individuals stuck in traffic. An *arrastão* can occur randomly during daylight or night hours, regardless of location. Police struggle to react and capture the criminals. Comply with demands for valuables and do not resist. These have most commonly occurred in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Do not accept drinks from strangers and always watch your drink. Criminals may add scopolamine or a similar drug to your drink. This has been particularly prominent in relation to casual meetings at bars and restaurants in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as well as those utilizing dating applications in Brazil. People have woken up robbed of their valuables or sexually assaulted after accepting such advances. Criminals have also utilized dating apps to lure individuals to a location before robbing or assaulting them, which has led to loss of life. Individuals deciding to use such apps should do so with substantial caution.

Exercise extreme caution in nightclubs, especially in São Paulo, where nightclub staff have swindled patrons into purchasing bottles of alcohol without disclosing the actual price of the drinks, at times running up to US\$1,000/bottle. Security personnel have physically harassed patrons who refuse to pay and have taken their credit cards.

Criminals use a variety of scams to rob victims, including virtual kidnapping, whereby an unknown caller claims to have kidnapped a person you know, possibly a family member. Unless you immediately pay the ransom, they will harm the person in question. It only becomes clear that the kidnapping never occurred until after you pay a ransom. In another scam, an unknown caller states an employee or family member has been in an accident and needs immediate medical attention. You must provide payment for the injured individual to receive treatment—a common requirement in Brazil. This scam often targets household staff, who react without verifying with their employer.

Scams involving credit cards are common as well. Travelers using personal ATM or credit cards sometimes receive billing statements with unauthorized charges after using cards in Brazil, or discover their cards cloned or duplicated without their knowledge.

Due to the heightened risk of credit card fraud in Brazil, cybersecurity companies often note that, while still vulnerable, chip-and-PIN cards are more secure and harder to clone than magnetic swipe cards. Monitor credit card usage during and after your trip for transaction inconsistencies. Commonsense practices to guard against card fraud include inspecting the outside of an ATM for unusual or suspicious devices or equipment, and if using a credit card at a restaurant or store, making sure the employee brings the credit card reader to you. Never let anyone walk off with your credit card. There are reports of beach vendors adding additional zeroes to legitimate charges of those unfamiliar with the exchange rate. Always use an ATM in well-lighted, public areas, and never let someone “assist” you with your transaction.

Local cybercriminals target ATMs to obtain credit card and banking information, as well as portable point-of-sale (PoS) systems to obtain the information stored in the magnetic strip of credit cards. Because this scheme requires access to payment hardware, insider access is usually involved. Cyber criminals can install corrupt PoS card readers (commonly called *chupacabra*) at stores, restaurants, or ATMs. These devices steal card information wirelessly or with the help of an employee accomplice.

Avoid street vendors selling knock-off designer products; by buying them you may face a large fine.

In addition to using only trusted ATMs at major banks, hotels, or shopping malls, exchange dollars only at banks or other reputable money exchanging services. Be aware of the increased risk to credit and debit card information, and carefully monitor accounts for suspicious activity. Criminal groups have reportedly used explosives (primarily dynamite) to destroy ATMs in public areas late at night to gain access to money stored within.

Residential burglaries also pose a constant threat and concern. According to police, mobile street gangs often target residential areas in the city with more affluence. Criminals from the surrounding satellite cities travel by metro, bus, or car into these neighborhoods looking for targets of opportunity. Family members and household employees should not allow anyone to enter the residential grounds without proper identification and prearranged appointments. Local security companies that monitor security alarm systems tend to be the primary responders; local police response can be delayed for hours. Some neighborhoods employ static guard posts to monitor activity on the streets adjacent to homes. Larger properties and commercial sites generally employ 24/7 security guard services.

Typically, criminals gain entry to a property via the vehicle gate while the residents are leaving or arriving, or they threaten local staff into compliance. General countermeasures and situational awareness are strong criminal deterrents. Proper use of alarm systems to give first responders early warning, and properly checking surroundings when entering/exiting homes, have proven most effective. Residences should feature solid-core entry doors with quality deadbolts, peepholes, security grilles on all windows, adequate front and rear security lighting, and a monitored alarm system. Business and home surveillance camera systems are worthwhile investments and are effective deterrents against property crime.

Exercise increased caution in December and January. During the holiday season, Brazil experiences an increase in crime due to several factors: these include Brazil's system of prison furloughs, which allows for prisoner leave during the holidays; a higher percentage of police officers on annual leave during the coinciding summer vacations and Christmas season; and the reality that citizens receive a "13th month" salary bonus in December and are in possession of more disposable income during these months. Burglars target vacant homes and apartments during these two months with a greater frequency than the rest of the year. These crimes affect foreign visitors, who are targets on occasion due to perceived wealth.

Violent crime remains a key concern for large parts of the country, with several large cities having high homicide rates. Almost every year since 2017 overall homicides have gone down, reaching the lowest levels in over a decade. However, some areas like the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil have seen higher rates than the rest of the country. The national homicide rate in 2023 was around 18.5 homicides per 100,000 residents. In 2023, there were 37,639 homicides, a 3.3% decrease from 2022. Around 90% of homicide victims are male. Conflicts between armed criminal factions competing for territorial control between each other and state security forces play a major role in driving homicide numbers.

Organized crime exists on a large scale. The largest Brazilian criminal organization, *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (First Capital Command, or PCC), is based in São Paulo, but has affiliations in many parts of the country. PCC is a violent prison gang that controls the majority of illegal contraband and drugs coming into/out of the prisons in São Paulo, and remains an organization of great interest to the government of Brazil and the police. *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command, or CV) is Brazil's second largest criminal group with a presence in 23 of Brazil's states. It similarly has roots in the prison system, with a base in Rio de Janeiro. PCC, CV, and other similar groups participate in a variety of illicit markets in Brazil.

Assault with a deadly weapon that led to death fell 5.8% from 2022 to 2023. Additionally, attempted robbery that led to death, locally called *latrocínio*, saw a significant 22.7% reduction from 2022 to 2023.

Brazil's criminals often use motorcycles to evade police. A common street crime involves motorcycle-riding thieves driving alongside stopped cars and robbing the car's driver or pedestrians on the sidewalk. In most cases, the thieves depart after taking the victim's belongings, but sometimes victims receive injuries. Consulate employees have also been victims to these types of crimes. Comply with criminal demands for valuables, resisting increases the likelihood of serious bodily harm.

Carjacking and vehicle theft is common. Perpetrators usually carry firearms and may quickly escalate to violence. Incidents of vehicular robbery and theft declined from 2022 to 2023, by 9.5% and 3.7% respectively.

Bank robberies and assaults on ATMs and armored money trucks by criminal gangs remain a concern, yet incidents declined around 40% from 2022 to 2023, with 131 total incidents. These incidents increasingly involve the use of heavy weaponry and explosives. The criminals' superior

firepower can overwhelm police, particularly in rural interior towns. Gangs have attacked bank branches during day and night. In small cities, where the security is not as omnipresent, thieves have used explosives to assault banks, and have used innocent bystanders as “human shields,” creating a barrier to allow them to escape safely.

Cargo theft remains a major security issue on the roads throughout Brazil, despite a 10% decrease in reported incidents in 2023. Incidents increased in the north and northeast of Brazil in 2023, but São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro states saw about 82% of all incidents. Incidents of cargo theft, both from overland shipments originating at ports of entry and from storage facilities, occur frequently. Brazil’s rate of cargo theft is among the highest in the region, and of particular concern in Rio de Janeiro. Criminals target all commercial goods, although shipments of petroleum, pharmaceuticals, and mobile electronics are especially lucrative. As a result, many companies employ countermeasures, including armed security escorts for high value loads and the use of satellites to track truck movements.

Parks, beaches, and other recreational areas have experienced violent crimes, mostly at night, to include assault, theft, and sexual assault. Although assault and theft are also common during the day, higher rates of crime have been reported at night. Depart from these public areas before sundown.

Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas are the locations with the highest crime rates, ranging from petty theft to armed robbery, especially at night. U.S. government personnel are discouraged from using municipal buses throughout Brazil due to the risk of robbery and assault at all times of day. Crime statistics indicate that passengers face an elevated risk of robbery or assault using public, municipal bus transportation throughout Brazil. Those utilizing metro systems in Brazil should be cautious of pick-pockets and mind their belongings closely – especially during rush hour. Sexual harassment is commonly reported on public transportation.

Crime on the roads remains a problem, especially during evening travel, traffic jams, and road closures due to protests. Carjacking and robbery occur in cities, particularly at night. Criminals take advantage of victims stopped at red lights, particularly in the evening hours, and in less dense or remote areas of the city. Call **0800-081-1078** for the Traffic Police (CTTU). Some U.S. companies use armored passenger vehicles to transport visiting senior executives they deem to be targets due to their high profile or high-value status.

Throughout Brazil, low-income informal housing developments in urban areas known as favelas (sometimes called *comunidades*, *vilas*, or *conglomerados*) are common and easily recognizable. Many of these marginalized areas lack a robust state presence and are controlled by criminal groups. They tend to more frequently see shoot-outs between criminals and police, as well as other illegal activity with a higher frequency. It is not uncommon for these areas to be in close proximity to middle or upper-income areas. These areas are off limits to U.S. government personnel and considered Level 4: Do Not Travel locations. It is recommended to avoid them, especially those without around-the-clock police presence. The [U.S. Embassy](#)

[website](#) has maps of informal housing developments in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília, and Salvador. However, the maps are not exhaustive.

Below includes additional areas of concern within each of the consular districts in Brazil and is separated by the five U.S. consular districts. To locate which consular district a particular location falls within, visit the [Contact Information and Working Hours](#) page on the Embassy website or reference the image below.

Travelers should exercise caution along Brazil’s border areas. Do not travel to any areas within 150 km/100 miles of Brazil’s land borders with Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Paraguay due to crime (note: this does not apply to the Foz do Iguacu National Park or Pantanal National Park).



Figure 1: U.S. Consular Districts in Brazil.

Brasília Consular District

The Federal District (*Distrito Federal*) of Brasília was a planned city and has been the seat of the federal government since its founding in 1960. It has since grown to the fourth most-populated metropolitan area in Brazil. Several outer lying areas of Brasília, known as its Administrative Regions or “Satellite Cities” are considered Level 4: Do Not Travel locations between the hours

of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. (non-daylight hours) for U.S. government personnel, due to crime. These areas include Ceilândia, Santa Maria, São Sebastião, and Paranoá. For 2023, the homicide rate for the Federal District was about 8.0 homicides per 100,000 residents, down from 11.3 in 2022.

Bus stations in and around downtown Brasília remain a concern, including the principal station, Estação Rodoviária. Pickpocketing and armed robberies occur in these locations more frequently than in other areas of the city. Remain alert to surroundings, especially at large markets. Many foreign visitors to Brasília opt to stay in Asa Sul, Asa Norte, Lago Sul, Lago Norte, Sudoeste, and Aguas Claras.

Several states in the northern region of Brazil, which includes much of the Amazon basin, have seen higher violent crime rates in recent years when compared to other parts of the country. Manaus, capital of Amazonas state, was the municipality with the third highest homicide total in 2023 with 866, including 24 robberies leading to death. Amazonas had an overall homicide rate of 31.79. The state of Amapá saw a 59% increase in homicides from 2022 to 2023 and registered the highest homicide rate of any other Brazilian state at 41.29. The state of Pará had a rate of 30.11, with its capital city of Belém registering 284 homicides in 2023. The state of Roraima has had an ongoing challenge related to illegal mining, which has led to conflict between wildcat miners and indigenous groups. However, the state did see a 25% decrease in homicides from 2022 to 2023 with a rate of 20.42. Similarly, Tocantins saw a 14% decline to 22.76, and there was a 12% decline Goiás's homicide rate to 14.07.

The state of Mato Grosso in the center-west region registered a nearly 50% increase in attempted homicides in 2023, with a homicide rate of 23.86.

In Brazil's southeast, Minas Gerais registered a homicide rate of 12.94 in 2023.

Porto Alegre Consular District

Porto Alegre is the capital of Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul. In 2023, the state registered its biggest drop in homicides since 2010, with a homicide rate of 18 per 100,000 residents in 2023. Criminal violence in Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul peaked between 2016 and 2017, mainly due to disputes between local criminal organizations over territory. However, since the implementation of the multiagency program, RS Seguro, by the state government in 2019 crime reporting has shown a substantial drop not only in Porto Alegre, but throughout the whole state. Rio Grande do Sul security authorities continue to repeatedly deny the presence of PCC and/or CV in the state and affirm their indirect presence locally is noted in specific partnerships with local minor criminal groups such as Os Manos and Bala na Cara.

In the Porto Alegre metropolitan area, there are currently over 1,000 surveillance cameras monitoring and deterring crime, controlled and monitored by a state-funded central command center and the current State Government keeps on investing heavily in security technology and other solutions. In neighborhoods such as Bela Vista, Higienópolis, Auxiliadora, Moinhos de Vento and Petrópolis (the site of Consulate direct-hire housing), static guards oversee main

access points. Larger apartments and commercial sites often employ 24/7 on-site private unarmed security guard services. Although there have been no reports of residential break-ins and burglaries against U.S. employees, residential burglaries pose a constant concern.

In Porto Alegre, the incidence of crime against tourists is greater in areas surrounding the airport, hotels, bars, nightclubs, the Porto Alegre Centro Histórico, public transportation, and other establishments that cater to visitors. It's not recommended to wander in suburban areas of Porto Alegre due to its lack of infrastructure, including unclear road signage, poor cellphone service in some areas, deserted buildings, and higher violent crime rates.

The state of Santa Catarina and its capital, Florianópolis are considered to have some of the lowest crime rates in Brazil, with only 8.9 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023. The state does face issues such as money laundering and criminal activities at the seaports related to drug trafficking and transporting other illicit goods. The PCC has a small presence in Florianópolis and other main cities such as Joinville and Balneario Camboriu. Disputes between them and the main criminal organization in Santa Catarina, Primeiro Grupo Catarinense (PGC), for territory do occur, including a violent confrontation in late October 2023 between the two groups and police. However, these incidents are rare.

Although violence is rated very low in Santa Catarina State, visitors should still guard against petty theft- specially at beaches and other touristic spots, exercise caution at night, and preferably not display indications of wealth.

Santa Catarina has also one of the highest rates of neo-Nazism in the country, after São Paulo state, and is partially tied to its large German descendant population. Local security authorities have worked to identify and map neo-Nazi cells and supporters.

Recife Consular District

The northeast region of Brazil had the highest average homicide rate when compared to other regions of the country at 30.15 homicides per 100,000 residents. However, some states saw reductions from 2022 to 2023. Piauí saw a 11.3% decline in homicides, Sergipe had a 22% decline, and Rio Grande do Norte state saw a 17% decline as the state has worked to improve security, including in its capital, Natal.

Like many other metropolitan cities in Brazil, crime is a major concern in Recife. All neighborhoods in Recife are susceptible to criminal activity. Tourists and foreigners are frequently targeted by criminals in Recife Antigo (Old Town Recife). The state of Pernambuco, of which Recife is the capital, had the second-highest homicide rate in Brazil in 2023 at 36.78, a 6% increase from 2022. Public security officials reckon that over 70% of homicides in the state are linked to drug trafficking and violent conflicts among rival gangs. Recife registered the fifth-most homicides for any municipality in Brazil in 2023 with 556.

Alagoas state had the third highest homicide rate among Brazilian states with 35 homicides per 100,000 residents in 2023. Maceió, the state capital, registered 394 homicides. The state of

Ceara had a homicide rate of 33 homicides per 100,000 residents for 2023. Its capital, Fortaleza, registered the fourth most homicides among municipalities in Brazil with 715. Maranhão saw a 5% increase in homicides in 2023 with a rate of 25.35.

Rio de Janeiro Consular District

In Rio de Janeiro, violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, carjacking, assault, drugging, and kidnapping are a frequent occurrence. In Zona Sul, opportunistic street crime such as pickpocketing, purse snatching, and smash-and-grab theft from vehicles and storefronts is a constant concern. These acts take place in all areas of the city at any time throughout the year. Major drug gangs and militias control organized crime in Rio de Janeiro, operating mainly in the favelas and in the country's prison system. All of Rio's neighborhoods are subject to criminal activity.

The south and southwest of the city are more common locations for foreign visitors to stay, and host many of the touristic points and tourist infrastructure in the city. Ipanema, Leblon, Urca, Lagoa, Jardim Botânico, Copacabana, Botafogo, Flamengo, and Barra da Tijuca are among neighborhoods where visitors commonly find lodging. However, crime occurs throughout the city, and you should always exercise an increased situational awareness when in public and transiting between destinations.

The city center, or *Centro*, is lower risk to visit during the day. However, it is not recommended to go to the center after dark as it is known to become more unsafe, with a higher risk of mugging and violent crime. The north of the city includes some higher-crime areas that may put visitors at greater risk if they are unfamiliar with the area. The U.S. government includes informal housing developments, commonly referred to as *favelas*, as Level 4: Do Not Travel locations in Brazil.

There has been an increase in roadway violence that is directly attributed to favela police operations. This is most impactful on the road from the Galeão–Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport (GIG) to Zona Sul, along Linha Vermelha. A new tactic has appeared in recent months whereby criminals deliberately shoot at cars and drivers to divert police attention away from arrest operations they may be conducting. Linha Vermelha was shut down at least twice, for an hour or more, in late 2024 due to this kind of activity. This can impact travelers transiting to/from the international airport.

In 2023, the state of Rio de Janeiro had a homicide rate of 22.21. Fifty of the 131 bank robberies carried out nationally occurred in the state, and it saw the highest number of state security personnel killed with 51. The city of Rio de Janeiro registered the largest total number of homicides than any other municipality in Brazil in 2023 with 1,118 murders, a 6.6% increase from 2022, and saw the second most deaths resulting from armed robbery with 26.

Violence escalated in the state of Bahia in 2022-2023 as rival criminal factions, including PCC, CV affiliates, and others engaged in territorial battles, with violence concentrated in Salvador. In 2023, the state of Bahia registered a homicide rate of 32.67 homicides per 100,000 residents.

The state capital, Salvador, had the second highest number of homicides of any municipality in Brazil with 986.

São Paulo Consular District

All neighborhoods in São Paulo are susceptible to crime, including affluent residential sections where government and business leaders reside. Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas have the highest rates of robbery and theft. The Secretary of Public Security publishes comprehensive crime statistics. In 2023, São Paulo state registered the lowest homicide rate of any state in Brazil at 5.64 homicides per 100,000 – its lowest rate in almost 20 years. However, the state registered the highest number of robberies that ended in homicide than any other state, with 43 in the city of São Paulo alone. Car theft remains a prominent problem in the state of São Paulo. Homicides in Sao Paulo state in 2024 are on track to be lower than 2023, with an estimated rate of 4.68 homicides per 100,000.

Many visitors to São Paulo stay in the west and southwest of the city. This includes areas near to Avenida Paulista, Jardins, Vila Madelena, Pinheiros, Paraíso, and Bela Vista. International business travelers commonly stay in the Itaim Bibi, Faria Lima, and Berrini areas. Crime, especially non-violent crimes, still occurs in these areas.

The Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay is a regional hub for the transit of illicit goods, including narcotics and firearms. To date, no incidents directed against U.S. citizens have occurred in this area. Visitors to the area, to include Foz de Iguaçu, should remain especially vigilant and maintain a low profile. Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, and São Paulo states contain trafficking routes for marijuana and cocaine.

Kidnapping Threat

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

While Brazilians are most often the targets of kidnapping, foreigners are also vulnerable. Vary routes and times of travel. Household help should not allow anyone to enter the residence without identification and prearranged appointments. Report suspicious persons or activities in the neighborhood to the police immediately. Kidnapping for ransom involving U.S. citizens is rare. Regardless, U.S. businesses often take security precautions for senior executives who are resident in São Paulo and other major cities, arranging significant security measures for high-level visits.

While kidnappings for ransom have become less common in recent years, incidents continue to occur. One tactic of organized gangs is to target individuals observed withdrawing money from ATMs or exiting banks. Using ATMs located in secure locations such as shopping malls or major hotels reduce the chances of criminal targeting.

Another version of this is express kidnapping, an ongoing criminal activity in which kidnappers take ATM users at gunpoint and take them to several ATMs to withdraw cash. Criminals have also utilized banking applications when carrying express kidnappings, forcing victims to open their banks apps and transfer funds. This has primarily been used with the local banking application Pix. While Brazilians are the most frequent targets, foreigners are also vulnerable to this crime.

It is also advised to park vehicles in garages and other well lighted/guarded areas, since criminals will often confront victims upon entry into their vehicles. Limit the amount of bank/credit cards in your wallet to limit the potential loss and duration of the incident.

“Virtual kidnapping” scams also occur with some frequency, particularly targeting business leaders. These incidents often involve allegations that the business leader’s family member has been kidnapped, and demand a ransom. Usually these incidents involve smaller amounts, with demands for expediency (before it is discovered that the alleged kidnapping victim is not actually kidnapped.)

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as **LOW**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil.

Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not the target of any known radical groups. Though there are no known indigenous terrorist groups operating in Brazil, several al-Qa’ida members or sympathizers operate in the country. Concerns exist regarding the facilitation of transfers of money and people for terrorist organizations.

While organized terrorism may not be as pronounced of a threat in Brazil, lone wolf terrorist attacks have gained momentum. School shootings have become more prevalent in Brazil over the past few years. Since 2019, Brazil has experienced 17 school attacks that have led to the deaths of 26 people.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. The U.S. Department of State has assessed Recife as being a **LOW**-threat location for political violence.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil. 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.

Political violence is possible in any of the major cities of Brazil, but generally uncommon. Economic conditions in Brazil have the potential to contribute to civil unrest, protests, and strikes.

Extremist groups occasionally conduct acts of civil disobedience and may conduct violent confrontations with police. There have been political protests in the past year throughout the country.

Elections/Political Stability

Nationwide municipal elections were held in October 2024 and were considered free and fair. However, the 2024 election campaign did register a record number of cases of political violence in Brazil. There were at least 338 episodes from July to September 2024, according to a survey by the Electoral Investigation Group of the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

General elections were last held on October 2, 2022, to elect the president, vice-president, and many other political offices. The presidential election was extremely close with current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or simply Lula, defeating the then incumbent Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro made several allegations of election fraud and requested that the Superior Electoral Court invalidate the votes recorded by electronic voting machines that lacked identification numbers. The court rejected the request. On January 8, 2023, pro-Bolsonaro protestors unsuccessfully stormed the offices of the National Congress, the Presidential Palace, and the Supreme Federal Court seeking to violently overthrow the democratically elected Lula. Bolsonaro was subsequently barred from running for office until 2030.

There has been increased polarization between right and left-wing supporters in recent years, with increased concerns of partisan violence. Polarization has resulted in more protests split along ideological lines. Protestors and counter-protestors often demonstrate on issues such as human rights, the right to bear arms, labor laws, and social security system reform. These demonstrations are sometimes violent.

The next general election in Brazil is scheduled to occur in October 2026.

Protests & Demonstrations

São Paulo hosts public demonstrations periodically. Frequent calls for strikes remain a constant concern. São Paulo continues to experience strikes originating from the public transportation, petroleum, postal, and education sectors. Most protests in São Paulo occur on Avenida Paulista (near the *Museu de Arte de São Paulo*, or MASP) or in or around Praça da Sé (See Square).

The vast majority of these are peaceful, but some develop into violence, resulting in disturbances, property damage, and confrontation between protestors and opposing groups and/or police. Some protestors in Brazil use black bloc tactics. Their mission is to infiltrate otherwise peaceful demonstrations to cause chaos and violence between police forces and protestors. Their tactics involve total face coverage.

In Rio de Janeiro protests often occur in the city center, which includes many other government and cultural buildings. These may occur near Praca Floriano and along the broad Avenida Presidente Vargas. Occasionally, demonstrations are organized along Copacabana's Avenida Atlantica.

In Brasília and other cities, protests over inflation, living conditions, and labor relations are common. While most demonstrations remain peaceful and well controlled by local authorities, acts of violence and confrontation with police occurs. Protests can form with little notice, and often result in clashes with police, deployment of tear gas, and destruction of property, to include burning city buses and attacking private business establishments. Within the Federal District, most protests and demonstrations take place in the city's large, open public Esplanda area.

In the past several years, Brazilians, political parties, and social organizations have used major international and national events as a platform to voice discontent with the Brazilian government.

In 2018, a massive nationwide strike by truck driver unions protesting diesel fuel prices, tolls, and the need for tax reform paralyzed roads, causing nationwide shortages of food, medicine, and oil.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Most Brazilians regard U.S. nationals in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement and Emergency Contact Information:

- Civil Police Emergency Line: **197**
- Federal Police: **194**
- Military Police: **190**
- Federal Highway Patrol: **191**
- State Highway Patrol: **198**

The three national police forces—the Federal Police, Federal Highway Police, and Federal Railway Police—have domestic security responsibilities and report to the Justice Ministry.

Federal Police (*Policia Federal*, DPF): Responsible for crimes against federal institutions, to include international drug trafficking, terrorism, cyber-crime, organized crime, public

corruption, white-collar crime, money laundering, immigration, border control, airport security, and maritime policing.

Federal Highway Police (*Polícia Rodoviária Federal, PRF*): Brazil’s federal highway patrol is principally tasked with combatting crime on Brazil’s federal roads and highways, as well as monitoring and enforcing traffic laws. They may also perform emergency response. Federal roadways are designated with a “BR.”

There are two distinct units within each state’s police forces:

- **Civil Police (*Polícia Civil*):** They carry out criminal investigations, gather evidence, execute warrants, operate police stations (*delegacias*) where crimes are reported and processed. They focus on complex crimes like fraud, homicide, drug trafficking, and organized crime.
- **Military Police (*Polícia Militar*):** They are tasked with maintaining law and order. They conduct patrols, deter criminal activity, provide immediate response to emergencies and disturbances, conduct traffic enforcement, and crowd control. Despite the name, military police forces do not report to the Defense Ministry. They are the Brazilian equivalent of U.S. uniformed state police officers, deploying solely to respond to or act as a deterrent against the commission of crime.

The armed forces also have some domestic security responsibilities and report to the Defense Ministry.

Police Response

Local police are generally well equipped and responsive to requests for assistance from U.S. and other foreign visitors. However, disparities do exist across Brazil’s 27 states in terms of response capability and law enforcement resources for public security.

Civilian authorities have at times not maintained effective control over security forces. Members of the security forces have committed numerous abuses. From 2018-2023 police-involved shootings resulted in over 6,000 civilian deaths nationwide in 2023, with Bahia and Rio de Janeiro seeing the largest number of victims.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Brazil, 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 Brazil.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and limits arrests to those caught in the act of committing a crime or called for by order of a judicial authority; however, police at times did not respect this prohibition. The law provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observes this provision.

The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials and stipulates civil penalties for corruption committed by Brazilian citizens or entities overseas. There have been numerous reports of corruption at various levels of government, and delays in judicial proceedings against persons accused of corruption were common, often due to constitutional protections from prosecution for elected officials. This often resulted in de facto impunity for those responsible.

Brazil embraces a robust and energetic press system that is often critical of the government. The Brazilian press has been successful in the past in uncovering and reporting corruption. Several past high ranking Government officials have gone to prison as the result of investigative reporting.

Cybersecurity

Brazil is one of Latin America’s leading digital nations. Approximately 84% of Brazilians are active internet users, with 8 out of 10 active on social media. Brazilian financial institutions were early pioneers of online services, and continue to invest heavily in evolving IT security solutions. Next-generation biometric identity technologies are common features in Brazil’s consumer banking sectors. Nevertheless, cybersecurity and online fraud are persistent concerns, with annual losses reaching billions of dollars. Hacktivists have defaced government websites and taken them offline in recent years.

Brazil continues to rank as one of the most pervasive cybercrime environments in the world. Brazilian cybercriminals have grown more brazen despite new legislation and official efforts to stop malicious activity online. The banking sector has been the primary target of these operations; however, cybercrime in Brazil also affects daily Internet users, private-sector organizations, and short-term travelers. Maintain awareness of popular schemes to avoid becoming a cybercrime victim.

Import/Export Restrictions

Brazilian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporarily importing or exporting items such as firearms, ammunition, antiques, mineral samples, tropical plants, wildlife, medications, and business and communication equipment. There are no known issues with bringing in satellite phones.

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](#).