



OSAC Country Security Report

Zambia

Published: January 2, 2025

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

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Lusaka:

Located at the eastern end of Kabulonga Road, on Ibex Hill, Lusaka.

Tel: +260 (0) 211-357-000.

Hours of Operation: Monday-Thursday: 0730-1700; Friday: 0730-1200.

OSAC Country Chapter(s)

There is no OSAC Country Chapter active in Zambia.

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

Zambia Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise normal precautions in Zambia.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lusaka as being a **CRITICAL**-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 Zambia.

Criminality continues to affect ordinary citizens, diplomats, and visitors alike. Crime has risen in Lusaka since the Zambian government began easing COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 and 2022. This trend has continued since. The rise in crime includes more frequent and more violent crime, including house break-ins, burglary, aggravated robbery, assault, theft, theft of motor vehicles, and murder. Lusaka Province generally leads the nation in crime rates. The use of firearms and edged weapons during the commission of many crimes is common; do not resist if confronted. Street gangs operate in certain parts of Lusaka, Livingstone, and Copperbelt Province. These gangs engage in a variety of criminal activities to include vehicle theft, mugging, burglary, vandalism, and assault. Due to the recent economic decline in Zambia, there has been

a steady increase in theft-related crimes. According to recent police reporting, Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces have higher rates of violent crime compared to the rest of Zambia.

The most commonly reported crimes against Westerners in Lusaka are non-violent confrontations best characterized as crimes of opportunity (e.g., theft of unattended possessions in public places or hotel rooms, confidence scams). Pickpockets operate in crowded markets and on public transportation. Visitors have reported snatch attacks of bags and smartphones on busy city streets, as well as smash-and-grabs of valuables from vehicles idling in traffic or parked insecurely. Other crimes, including thefts, violent attacks, home invasions/robberies, and sexual assaults occur with frequency. Criminals often follow their intended victims from banks, nightclubs, and ATMs, robbing them at gunpoint on the street or upon arrival at their residence. Avoid walking alone in downtown areas, high-density residential neighborhoods referred to locally as a “compound,” public parks, and other poorly illuminated areas, especially at night.

While Zambian citizens are more often the victims of residential crimes, burglary and theft also affect foreigners, despite countermeasures. Thieves view Westerners and other foreigners as especially lucrative targets, often for no other reason than their perceived wealth. Thefts often involve guards, gardeners, or other domestic staff with access to residences. In 2024, reported crimes impacting the diplomatic community included a break-in of a diplomatic vehicle and theft of items inside the vehicle, break-ins of diplomatic residences, theft of perimeter security lights from diplomatic residences, and several muggings, instances of pickpocketing, and snatch-and-grabs in public spaces. These crimes sometimes occur despite the presence of trained security guards patrolling the area.

Crime is not confined to late-night hours. Robberies involving the use of deadly weapons do occur in Lusaka during daylight hours and in populated areas; for example, there was a fatal knife attack in the vicinity of the U.S. embassy in 2017, and a local embassy employee was mugged in 2021 within close proximity of the embassy at the end of the workday while walking home. Carjackings are uncommon.

U.S. travelers occasionally report theft of money and property from locked hotel rooms. This type of crime is usually an inside job perpetrated by hotel employees and housekeeping staff. No hotel in Zambia – even upscale establishments – is immune. Even the small safes provided by the hotel are vulnerable; do not rely on them for the security of your high-value items.

The occurrence of credit card theft and fraud is low in comparison to the United States and South Africa. Zambia is generally a cash economy, although credit card terminals exist in major shops, hotels, most supermarkets, and some restaurants. Travelers should enable PINs for all transactions and check statements shortly after transactions occur.

In Lusaka’s high-density residential neighborhoods or compounds (e.g., Chalala, Bauleni, Kalingalinga, Kanyama, Chibolya, Chainda), groups of criminals commit crimes that go uninvestigated due to a lack of police resources. Criminal gangs do not limit their crimes to the compounds; they often victimize residents, including foreigners, in wealthier neighborhoods.

Travelers should not drive off-road or in remote areas near the borders with Angola because of the danger of undetected land mines and unexploded ordnance. Parts of the DRC border area can be plagued with unrest and/or armed criminal elements.

Kidnapping Threat

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

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lusaka as being a **LOW**-threat location 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 Zambia.

The Government of Zambia is sensitive to the threat of terrorism, engaging with international partners to combat this issue. However, carefully consider attendance at any large public gatherings that could become attractive targets for terrorists. Zambia is not a state sponsor of terrorist activities and does not permit foreign fighters to transit the country. However, transnational terrorism is a concern throughout Africa, as increased law enforcement and anti-terrorism activities in the Horn of Africa have the potential to force terrorist organizations to seek targets in areas outside their traditional sphere of operations.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lusaka 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 Zambia. 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

General elections in 2021 saw President Hakainde Hichilema defeat Edgar Lungu with a sizable majority of the total vote. Although the results were credible, media coverage, police actions, and legal restrictions heavily favored the ruling party leading up to the national election. The pre-election period featured limits on press freedom and political party intolerance resulting in sporadic violence across the country. There were reports of members of the media, Zambian citizens, and human rights observers receiving threats and/or being harassed. In the campaign period preceding the election, police frequently harassed opposition supporters and denied free assembly. Police regularly arrested opposition supporters indiscriminately, dispersed public

gatherings, allowed ruling party gatherings to proceed, and failed to interdict supporters aiming to disrupt opposition rallies. Tensions between the ruling and main opposition party remain, amid efforts by international and domestic actors to bring about dialogue and necessary reforms. Zambia's next general elections are planned for 2026.

Avoid areas where elections will soon be held or are underway.

Protests & Demonstrations

Zambian citizens are allowed to gather peacefully to demonstrate or protest if the proper requests and permits are submitted; however, civil society and the political opposition have routinely accused authorities of withholding permits. In July 2024, police stopped a demonstration in Lusaka in response to extended electrical blackouts and arrested and charged four demonstrators with idle and disorderly conduct. Spontaneous demonstrations take place throughout the country. Although most protests in Zambia are peaceful, these gatherings can attract large groups of supporters and at the minimum, may impede traffic and cause significant delays. Demonstrations result in increased police presence around the area.

Police often exacerbate tense situations, with numerous cases of police resorting to harsh crowd control tactics such as tear gas. Police have continued the trend of supporting ruling party events and attempting to thwart opposition or civil society events critical of the government. Avoid any large crowds, demonstrations, or political activities.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

With the change in president and administration, Zambia is currently leaning towards a pro-U.S./pro-Western sentiment. There is no reporting of large-scale protests against the United States or other Western countries.

Law Enforcement

The emergency line in Zambia is **991** (or **112** on local phones).

The major law enforcement agencies are the Zambia Police Service (a nationwide police force responsible for traditional policing and investigations), Immigration, Customs, the Drug Enforcement Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife. There is no dedicated border patrol; border security alternates between whichever law enforcement agency may have a presence at a border post at any given time.

The military consists of the army, the air force, and the Zambia National Service, all under the Ministry of Defense. The commanders of each respective service are appointed by and report directly to the president. The military is responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities in cases of national emergency. The president appoints the

commanders of each military service who report directly to him. Civilian authorities generally maintain effective control over the security forces.

Members of the security forces have committed abuses. There were several reports of police committing arbitrary or unlawful kills, including extrajudicial killings, during 2024. Zambia's Human Rights Commission reported police committed "acts of torture" that resulted in the deaths of several detained suspects throughout 2024. Throughout 2024, The Police Public Complaints Commission recorded a significant rise in public complaints regarding police conduct, with 20 allegations of extrajudicial killings recorded during the year.

Police Response

Zambian police units do not perform at the level of a U.S. police force in terms of capability, responsiveness, discipline, or professionalism. The Zambia Police Service is almost solely a reactive force and demonstrates rather poor proactive law enforcement techniques and initiative to deter or investigate crime. Police often lack equipment, resources, training, and personnel to respond to calls for assistance or other emergencies. Police response times can be long, if they respond at all. Police often cite a lack of adequate transportation as an excuse for slow/no response.

Most crimes go unreported and/or uninvestigated. The police have a poor record of solving serious crimes. Inadequate legislation and investigation results in the lack of prosecution or large numbers of acquittals. Corruption occurs at all levels, resulting in an ineffective legal and justice system. Vigilantism is present as a result.

Low pay and morale create an environment in which bribes of even a few dollars can make allegations or charges disappear. Attempt to cooperate and follow the instructions of police at checkpoints to avoid problems. Do not pay bribes, comply with requests for a "gift," or pay on-the-spot fines. Police will issue an official receipt for all legitimate fines.

Travelers with Special Considerations

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

Rule of law, unlawful detention, harassment, corruption and transparency are ongoing issues in Zambia. The current president and administration have made addressing these issues a priority, vowing to correct these problems that are largely blamed on the prior administration.

The law provides criminal penalties for officials convicted of corruption, and the government attempts to enforce the law, but not consistently. Officials often engage in corrupt practices with impunity. Although the government collaborates with the international community and civil society organizations to improve capacity to investigate and prevent corruption, anticorruption NGOs have observed the enforcement rate among senior government officials and in the civil service is low.

According to Transparency International Zambia, the average conviction rate for those prosecuted for corruption is 10-20 percent. The government does not effectively or consistently apply laws against corrupt officials; it selectively applies anticorruption law to target opposition leaders or officials who ran afoul of it. Officials frequently engage in corrupt practices with impunity.

The United Nations recorded 26 incidents of arbitrary arrests and detentions against opposition political party leaders and members, parliamentarians, and human rights activists between January 2022-August 2024. In some of the recorded incidents, the detained members of society expressed views diverging from or critical of the ruling government’s platform.

Cybersecurity

Cybercrime is an increasing problem in Zambia, according to various media reports. Although the rate of personal computer ownership is about 50 percent, many Zambians have smartphones and regularly access social media, where online scams are prevalent. Advance-fee fraud schemes are prevalent throughout Africa, including in Zambia, and pose a danger of grave financial loss. These scams begin with unsolicited communication (usually e-mails, texts, or WhatsApp messages) from strangers who promise quick financial gain, often by transferring large sums of money or valuables out of the country, but then require payment of a series of "advance fees," such as fees for legal documents or taxes. The final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees.

A common variation is the scammer’s claim to be a refugee or émigré of a prominent family or a relative of a present or former political leader who needs assistance in transferring large sums of cash. Still other variations appear as legitimate business deals that require advance payments on contracts. Sometimes scammers convince victims to provide bank account data, credit card information, and financial authorization they then use to drain their accounts; as a result, they incur large debts against their credit and lose their savings.

Another common scam in Zambia is the “black money” or “wash wash” scam, in which con artists attempt to obtain money from a victim by persuading them that piles of banknote-sized paper in a trunk or a safe are actually U.S. currency notes that have been dyed to avoid detection by authorities. The fraudster then persuades the victim to pay fees and purchase chemicals to remove the dye, with the promise of a share in the proceeds. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of any scheme is by using common sense. Research any unsolicited business proposal thoroughly before committing any funds, providing any goods or services, or undertaking any travel. It is virtually impossible to recover money lost through these scams.

Import/Export Restrictions

It is illegal to purchase tortoise shells, rhino horns, elephant ivory, or any items made out of these materials. Only purchase other wildlife products, such as hippo teeth, crocodile teeth or skins, flat skins, horns, or animal bones from animal product vendors licensed with Zambia’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife, which provide certification of purchase. Travelers must present the items and certification of purchase in person to Department of National Parks and Wildlife officials within 45 days of departure to obtain an export permit. Permits for items derived from CITES regulated species, such as hippo or crocodile, may take time to obtain, may include additional fees, and may require an import permit from a destination country. Authorities will confiscate wildlife products with no export permit upon departure and prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law, with penalties ranging from large fines to minimum five-year prison sentences. It is illegal to export game meat in any form, whether dried, processed, or raw.

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](#).