



## Canada 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Vancouver

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Burglary; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes

Western Hemisphere > Canada; Western Hemisphere > Canada > Vancouver

6/7/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

### Crime Threats

Crime rates in the Vancouver metropolitan area are generally below levels seen in comparable U.S. cities. Violent crime (culpable homicide, attempted murder, sexual offenses, assaults, robberies) reportedly affected 8:1,000 residents in 2015, down 11 percent from 2014. Property crimes remain by far the biggest threat to residents and visitors alike. Vancouver's east side experiences a heavier volume of crimes, generally connected with higher concentrations of transient persons and habitual drug-users seeking to fund their addictions. Although the murder rate is very low for a city its size, narcotic- and gang-related crimes are on par with the U.S.

The majority of crimes are non-violent. Theft from autos, shoplifting, and tourist-related incidents are the most prevalent. However, if doors are locked, and valuables are not visible,

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criminals usually move on to targets that are more accessible. The downtown east-side corridor typically sees more vehicle and residential related break-in thefts. Pickpocketing and theft from parked cars in popular tourist destinations, such as Stanley Park and the waterfront area around the cruise ship terminal, is common. Street crime targeting individuals for robberies is rare. Most drug addicts use much less confrontational means to gain income to support their addictions. The RSO concludes that few incidents affecting U.S. official personnel occurred during 2015. In 2015, U.S. citizens only reported two crimes to U.S. Consulate General Vancouver, but petty crimes are often not reported to the Consulate General.

Gang activity in the greater metropolitan area is well-documented. Gang-on-gang violence, including targeted homicides, continues to pose a concern. Canada reportedly has 950 gangs, many operating in the Vancouver area. Asian organized crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs operate throughout British Columbia, trafficking goods to the U.S., Australia, and Japan. Marijuana cross-border trafficking, kidnapping, extortions, and homicides are the primary means that these elements support their illicit activities. U.S. private sector interests have not been significantly impacted by these recent activities; however, there is a prevailing concern that continuing gang violence could affect the general public.

#### Other Areas of Concern

Generally, the east-side corridor of downtown Vancouver should be avoided. While areas near East Hastings Street and Main Street are filled with attractive boutiques and restaurants, individuals fueling drug addictions are also present and steal/sell items to support their habits.

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## Transportation-Safety Situation

British Columbia's highway and roads infrastructure is on par with the U.S. Traffic congestion does play a key factor in road safety. Pedestrians and bicyclists downtown should use extreme caution, as there have been a number of fatalities involving aggressive drivers or pedestrians who are not aware of oncoming traffic or not observing marked road crossings. In winter, rain and occasional snow/ice can make driving a challenge. Vancouver is home to a diverse population, and many drivers may not be accustomed to operating vehicles in a first-world environment.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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

The Canadian Intelligence Service (CSIS) comments that there are a number of international terrorist organizations active in Canada, in part, due to the porous Canadian and American border and Canada's liberal political asylum policies.

### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

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Throughout 2015, the U.S. Consulate was focus of a number of demonstrations, however, no more than previous years. Demonstrations relate to a wide range of issues, including but not limited to opposition to certain U.S. policies and foreign engagements. The RCMP and VPD provide on-site protection for the Consulate and cover all demonstrations against U.S. government interests and/or near the Consulate. The last major demonstrations in Vancouver was in 2010 while the city hosted the Winter Olympics and Paralympics, and a number of protests targeted the Olympics and/or Olympic-related activities. The RCMP Joint Operations and the Diplomatic Security Joint Operations Center worked together to cover the athletes and Olympic venues so that there were no significant security risks and/or issues involving protestors or American personnel during the Games.

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

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Despite the frequency of organized protests, the vast majority were peaceful and closely monitored by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Vancouver Police Department (VPD). Both are extremely proactive with policing and controlling civil unrest.

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## Post-Specific Concerns

### Environmental Hazards

Seismic experts indicate that the Cascadia Subduction Zone, running up the West Coast from Washington state to northern British Columbia, could precipitate a major destructive earthquake (8.0-9.0 magnitude) in the near future. The city has an emergency response center with staff who regularly provide public seminars on earthquake preparedness.

### Drug-related Crimes

The pervasiveness of drug dependence continues to drive property crimes upward. Pickpocketing and theft from parked cars in popular tourist destinations are of particular concern.

Vancouver is considered the epicenter of a US\$7 billion annual drug trade, which recently included significant illegal fentanyl and fentanyl precursor importations from China. Gang tensions between international drug distribution networks, including Sikh, Asian, Punjabi, and Mexican organizations, remain high.

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## Police Response

General police response times are consistent with most U.S. cities. All police agencies and emergency medical services within British Columbia employ standard 911 capabilities. Both the VPD and RCMP have met routine and emergency requests for police assistance from the RSO in Vancouver with a good response. Working relationships between the U.S. officials and local authorities are excellent.

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

When an American citizen is detained by police during normal business hours, the matter is directed to the American Citizen Services section (ACS) in Consular Affairs. All issues involving American citizens detained after hours should be directed to the Consulate Duty Officer. The RSO has responsibility for addressing issues of police harassment.

## Crime Victim Assistance

The Vancouver Police Department is the central repository for reporting crime within the city. Victims are advised to call 911 when involved with any criminally related matters.

## Police/Security Agencies

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The Vancouver Police Department has jurisdiction within the city and has responsibility for managing the full spectrum of police services. The RCMP is mainly responsible for the federal policing and national security-related issues. Both services are extremely professional and proactive in their enforcement efforts.

## **Medical Emergencies**

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Vancouver General Hospital is a full service, trauma-certified hospital with an airlift unit. The hospital is located in central Vancouver at 950 W. 10th Avenue. The contact number is (604) 875-4111.

### Available Air Ambulance Services

The British Columbia Ambulance Service can be reached at (604) 660-6006.

### Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
[http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/canada?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/canada?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001).

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

Although the OSAC Country Council was established for the 2010 Winter Olympics, it has not garnered enough support to maintain it. In 2014, RSO Vancouver, along with the Political/Economic Section, engaged the American Chamber of Commerce Pacific Chapter (AMCHAM) in an attempt to reestablish the OSAC Country Council. POC is RSO Justin T. Alderman, (604) 642-6670, [aldermanjt@state.gov](mailto:aldermanjt@state.gov). To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email [OSACWHA@state.gov](mailto:OSACWHA@state.gov).

## **U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information**

### Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

1075 W Pender St, Vancouver, BC V6E 2M6, Canada

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## Consulate Contact Numbers

Consulate Operator (604) 685.4311

Regional Security Office (604) 642-6672

Consular Affairs Duty Office Answering Service (604) 681-3022

U.S. Embassy Ottawa – Marine Security Guard Post One (613) 688.5249.

Website: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/vancouver/>

## Nearby Posts

Embassy Ottawa: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Calgary: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/calgary/>

Consulate Halifax: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/halifax/>

Consulate Montreal: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/montreal/>

Consulate Quebec: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/quebec/>

Consulate Toronto: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/toronto/>

Consulate Winnipeg: <https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/winnipeg/>

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## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors are advised to take the same security precautions they would take while traveling to any major city in the U.S. Tourists and official Americans alike are reminded to be situationally aware of their surroundings, and take appropriate precautionary steps to ensure their own safety.

The U.S. passport remains a highly sought after document, and U.S. travelers should practice sound security procedures and immediately report any unusual incidents to the local authorities. Visitors should keep a photocopy of their passport's first page in a separate location. Wallets, cash, and valuables should be kept in a secured location, and visitors should avoid displaying large sums of cash or jewelry in public.

When staying in a hotel, visitors should always keep their room door locked and valuables secure in a safety deposit box or room safe.

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