According to the current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory at the date of this report’s publication, China has been assessed as Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution.

**Overall Crime and Safety Situation**
The U.S. Consulate in Shanghai does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizens Services unit (ACS) cannot recommend a particular individual or establishment, and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Shanghai as being a **LOW**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.
Please review OSAC’s China-specific webpage for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.
Shanghai is generally considered safe relative to other metropolitan cities of comparable size. China’s high conviction rate, use of modern technology in policing, and extensive law enforcement presence throughout the city serve to deter most criminal activity.

**Crime Threats**
Although some U.S. citizens visiting Shanghai reported being victims of crime in 2017, in most instances Americans do not appear to have been targeted specifically. A majority of crimes are financial in nature, and foreigners may occasionally be the victims of crime due to perceived affluence. In 2017, petty crimes, including pickpocketing, credit card fraud, and various financial scams occurred at rates consistent with previous years and occasionally targeted foreigners. Pickpocketing is quite common on public transportation, in shopping areas, and at tourist sites. Small pickpocketing groups commonly work in concert in targeting their victims.

Violent crimes like homicides, burglaries, and robberies do occur, but the rate of these crimes is relatively low considering the city’s large population (estimated to be roughly 24 million in 2017). Violent crimes affecting the expatriate community most often occur at bars, clubs, and restaurants in Shanghai’s vibrant nightlife districts. Bar fights have occurred due to misunderstandings, miscommunication, bravado, alcohol consumption, or a combination thereof. While the legal age for consuming alcohol is 18, most establishments in Shanghai do not require identification. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report “Shaken: The Don’ts of Alcohol Abroad.” Some bars are overcrowded, and safety standards are seldom enforced. Prostitutes and drug dealers are known to be present in some clubs, though the use of goods or services they may offer remains illegal.

Sexual assaults have occurred, although reported incidents remain relatively rare. Most instances involve the consumption of alcoholic beverages in bars, nightclubs, and massage parlors. Other factors potentially contributing to sexual assault include the use of unlicensed taxi cabs, undertaking high-risk activities, or failing to follow best security practices.

Scams

While there have been reported instances of robbery by force, many cases appear to have involved a variation of the same scam. Typically, a victim is invited to a specific location for a massage, tea, drinks, or music, often by an attractive local national. Once in the establishment, the victim is confronted and forced to turn over his/her credit card under the threat of violence. The credit cards are charged thousands of dollars, and the victim is forced to sign the receipt. In most cases, victims are released unharmed (though distraught or embarrassed) and threatened not to notify the authorities. Although this trend has occurred for several years, it appears to continue unabated. Local police are engaged, but little is done because the victims generally do not report the crime until after they have departed China. Police often seem unwilling to investigate the crimes if the complainant is not in China. In instances where the victim has reported the crime to the police immediately, there has been
limited success in recovering lost money or valuables, but evidence of perpetrators being prosecuted is scarce.

Fake Police Officers: Individuals posing as plainclothes police officers will threaten to levy fake criminal charges against a victim. A financial solution to the problem is suggested; if accepted, the charges disappear, and the victim is “released.”

Take a Picture/Practice English: Foreigners are approached by two or more Chinese citizens (most often attractive females). The two ask the foreigners to take a picture of them or with them. As the conversation develops, the foreigners are invited to practice English over a drink at a tea shop or bar. The bill ends up being overpriced, and foreigners are threatened that the local police will arrest them if the bill is not settled.

Begging: Foreigners are often approached by beggars with young and/or disabled children on the street. Beggars may kneel and ask for money in the company of children or people. They may also approach their victims while singing sad Chinese songs out of sound amplifiers strapped to their upper bodies, appealing to the victim’s sympathy. Some beggars are part of a larger network of criminals using children and handicapped persons in their criminal enterprise.

Cybersecurity Issues

Within China, there are active cyber threat actors targeting foreign governments and members of the private sector. Foreign individuals and organizations in Shanghai should remain vigilant against potential intrusions to their proprietary networks and information technology systems.

Other Areas of Concern

On January 1, 2017, China implemented a new law regulating the operations of foreign NGOs. The law requires foreign NGOs obtain sponsorship from a Chinese government body as part of the registration process administered by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and may limit the scope of foreign NGOs’ activities and sources of funding. The law also states that foreign NGOs must not undermine or damage China’s national interests. The MPS has published foreign NGO registration guidelines on its website, although some requirements and procedures remain unclear. Employees of foreign NGOs should be aware that the Chinese government’s application, interpretation, and implementation of these guidelines could vary widely by location and case. The Consulate recommends that any entities who might be characterized as foreign NGOs, particularly those working in sensitive areas or fields, consult with a local lawyer regarding the law’s requirements and procedures for registration. Foreigners working for NGOs have faced additional scrutiny, so they should
ensure they have the proper visa status to conduct their activities.

**Transportation-Safety Situation**


**Road Safety and Road Conditions**

The physical road conditions in metropolitan Shanghai are generally good. There is a significant volume of vehicle traffic on the roads, a situation which results in frequent congestion and delays. Driving conditions in rural areas in the Shanghai consular district can be poor. Similarly, while English-language drivers, directions, or maps may be found in developed areas, they may not be available in remote locations.

The greatest road hazard remains local drivers. Many have limited experience operating motor vehicles and can be either overly cautious or overly aggressive, frequently leading to traffic accidents. The presence of traffic police at heavily congested intersections increased in 2017; however, traffic laws are often ignored, and enforcement is done remotely by video cameras, primarily through speed traps. Road signs and traffic signals are often blatantly disregarded, and drivers frequently fail to signal or yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, even in crosswalks. Pedestrians share the sidewalks not only with motor bikes and bicycles, but sometimes with cars as well, and must remain alert. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

More often than not, traffic-related injuries involve motor bikes and bicycle operators being struck by motor vehicles. In traffic accidents involving vehicles operated by foreigners, the foreigner is often ruled at fault, irrespective of the actual cause of the accident. The RSO encourages those involved in collisions not to argue with the other party involved, regardless of who is responsible. Drivers are advised not to overreact to aggressive driving by local nationals and are encouraged to defuse situations in a safe and level-headed manner.

**Public Transportation Conditions**

Public transportation in Shanghai is generally considered safe and, other than petty theft, crimes are relatively uncommon.

Shanghai has a 16-line subway system, which is generally reliable and punctual. Access to the subway system is monitored by closed-circuit television, and guards and police officers are deployed throughout. Guard-operated X-ray machines are used in most subway stations, and passengers are required to be inspected prior to entering some of the subway lines;
levels of enforcement, however, may appear inconsistent. Most stations feature safety devices that prevent individuals from falling on the tracks. Buses are generally modern and in good working order. Individuals are encouraged to use official taxis (two-tone sedans in Shanghai) that employ meters. If a driver refuses to use a meter, exit the vehicle and use another taxi. Since the majority of taxi drivers have limited proficiency in English, travelers are encouraged to have the address written in Chinese characters. In a limited number of cases, foreigners have reported being sexually assaulted, have had their luggage stolen, or have been charged exorbitant fares when using unregistered taxis. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to or from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded. Other examples of problems with taxis include rigged taxi meters that can charge up to double the going rate. The RSO recommends that travelers research the likeness of an official taxi in the city they plan to visit and that they use only official taxis.

**Terrorism Threat**
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Shanghai as being a LOW-threat location for terrorist activity directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

**Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns**
China’s domestic counterterrorism efforts remain primarily focused against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM, the East Turkestan Islamic Party, ETIP), a Pakistan-based group that seeks independence for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwestern China. In public statements, government officials have singled out the “Three Evils” of extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang as the main terrorist threat to the nation and have characterized Uighur discontent as terrorist activity. Human rights organizations maintain that China uses counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the XUAR population. In 2017, the Chinese government characterized numerous incidents in which police and other security officials were attacked with edged weapons and explosive devices as terrorist attacks. Some of these confrontations, a majority of which occur in XUAR, have resulted in the death of police and civilians.
Shanghai did not experience any incidents related to terrorism in 2017, and the RSO is unaware of a significant transnational terrorist presence in China.
Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Shanghai as being a LOW-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

Civil Unrest
There are occasional demonstrations and protests in cities in eastern China, often in connection with labor, environmental, and education issues.

In June 2017, several hundred Shanghai residents staged a protest against a new city rule shutting down the gray market in the city’s real estate sector that had allowed property developers to convert commercial real estate space into residential use.

There were no protests outside official U.S. facilities in Shanghai in 2017. Protests against U.S. facilities in Shanghai are uncommon, and those that do occur typically involve lone protestors. In most instances, individuals are quickly removed by Chinese security officials.

Religious/Ethnic Violence
Since late 2013, the provincial government in Zhejiang province has embarked on a campaign to demolish scores of crosses and other Christian structures in churches. The campaign has resulted in the arrests of several pastors and parishioners who attempted to halt the demolitions, though the number of demolitions and related protests appeared to have decreased in 2017. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report “Putting Your Faith in Travel: Security Implications.”

Private Chinese citizens, not associated with a political or terrorist organization, have used indiscriminate violence to express their discontent with the Chinese authorities, resulting in injuries and deaths.

In June 2017, an emotionally disturbed person in Nanjing constructed and detonated a homemade bomb outside a school, killing seven people and wounding dozens of children.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards
Potential natural disasters include rainstorms, floods, hail, droughts, and earthquakes. Southern and eastern areas are prone to heavy rainfall during the monsoon seasons; typhoons can bring floods, strong winds, and even landslides.

Shanghai does not experience significant snowfall, but even small amounts of snow can bring parts of the city to a standstill.

Due to its location along a number of fault lines, earthquakes are not uncommon.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China’s heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking. Commercial transportation accidents are not uncommon. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers are poorly trained.

Economic Concerns

Counterfeit currency remains a concern, as evidenced by the scrutiny exercised by storeowners when receiving cash payments and the use of a money counting machine prior to acceptance to ensure validity. Travelers are advised to understand the signatures of authentic currency and not to change money with individuals in the streets. Money changers offering unrealistic exchange rates may often be using counterfeit currency.

Counterfeit products are readily available, but it is illegal to import them into the U.S.

Privacy Concerns

Visitors should be aware that they have no expectation of privacy. The Consulate regularly receives reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. businesspeople and visiting U.S. citizens. The areas around U.S. and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance; security personnel are posted outside facilities and around residences; and CCTVs are visible throughout Shanghai. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in taxis.

Hotel rooms and offices are subject to on-site or remote technical monitoring. Hotel rooms, residences, and offices may be accessed without the occupants’ consent or knowledge. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are under continuous surveillance. Consulate employees are warned not to discuss sensitive information in their homes, vehicles, or offices. Members of the private sector are encouraged to take similar precautions to safeguard sensitive, personal, and/or proprietary information, including information stored on personal laptops, cell phones, etc. All means of communication (telephones, mobile phones, faxes, e-mails, text messages) are likely monitored. Wireless access to the internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming common. As a result, the Chinese government may have greater access to official and personal computers. The Chinese government has
declared that it regularly monitors private e-mail and internet browsing through cooperation with local ISPs. Some bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny in China, where such activity is carefully monitored and may be blocked. Common Western social media websites (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter) are blocked in China.

**Personal Identity Concerns**

Many locations in China lack equipment to support disabled persons on public transportation systems. Citizens of the U.S. and elsewhere visiting or resident in China have been interrogated or detained for reasons said to be related to “state security.” In such circumstances, citizens could face arrest, detention, or an exit ban prohibiting their departure for a prolonged period. Dual U.S.-Chinese nationals and U.S. citizens of Chinese heritage may be at a higher risk of facing such special scrutiny.

**Drug-related Crimes**

Drug consumption exists, but drug-related crimes do not appear to be a significant issue affecting the U.S. private sector. The Chinese government is concerned about domestic drug use, and enforcement efforts are widespread, with the punishment for violators being severe. However, illicit drugs are available in Shanghai to both Chinese citizens and foreigners.

**Kidnapping Threat**

Kidnappings are not common; however, the RSO has received accounts of businesspeople being held against their will in a hotel room while being forced to pay a debt or settle a labor-related dispute. One distinction is that preventing a person from leaving a location due to a commercial or business dispute is not viewed as kidnapping by Chinese law enforcement. In some cases, labor disputes have resulted not only in protracted stoppages, but in temporary detention of expatriate managers by workers demanding continued employment or enhanced severance packages.

There have also been reports of taxi drivers transporting passengers to remote locations and forcing them to pay a fee under threat of injury.

Such reports are relatively rare and are often secondhand, circular accounts.

**Police Response**

Although police officers in some cities, including Shanghai, have begun carrying firearms, the majority of officers on the street remain unarmed. Patrol officers may be augmented by armed specialized units (SWAT). These SWAT officers are occasionally deployed during
special events, at air and railway stations, and in response to protests or demonstrations. Police in Shanghai are increasingly using body cameras to record their interactions with the public.

Local police are effective at deterring crime; most responses to alarms/emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police are informed that the victim is a Westerner or person of importance. In some cases, local police will serve as a mediator between the complainant and the other party to agree upon financial compensation (sometimes in lieu of jail time). Police reports are not taken at the scene of a crime or vehicle accident; if a report is deemed necessary, all involved parties have to respond to the attending officer’s police station.

Visitors must understand that policing in China is different than U.S. policing, and that preserving social harmony is a large component of the Chinese policing doctrine. Depending on the crime for which a foreigner may have been detained, he/she may be asked to negotiate for monetary damages with the alleged victim. This may be driven by the belief that if everyone is in agreement with a monetary arrangement, no further quarreling should take place.

Urban police units are better trained and equipped to respond to calls, especially in Shanghai and other first-tier cities where authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Investigative training techniques and forensic equipment continue to improve but are not comparable to those of developed countries.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event of arrest, American citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy or the nearest consulate for guidance.

Crime Victim Assistance

Police response for foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim.

If private U.S. citizens become the victim of a crime, they should contact the police by dialing 110. Westerners who do not speak Mandarin can be transferred to an English speaking officer. Additionally, visitors must report any criminal victimization to the police while in China. Any attempts to do so while out of China will be ignored by the Chinese authorities. The victim must be present if any judicial actions are to be taken.

Americans may also contact American Citizens Services (ACS) at the Embassy or nearest Consulate for assistance. ACS officers can recommend appropriate medical facilities, provide contact information for local attorneys, notify family members, and explain how to transfer funds to China.

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The Chinese police training system has not yet evolved into one that is sympathetic to victims. Regardless of the crime, the victim has to visit the nearest police station to report it. The victim must have the evidence to support his or her claims, and could likely have the assailant present in the same room while he/she narrates the incident to the police. The role of the police is to assist in negotiating a financial solution. Expressions of sympathy/support to the victim should not be expected.

Police/Security Agencies
The Shanghai Police fall under control of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The Shanghai Police enforce laws enacted by the National People’s Congress and any local municipal laws passed by the Shanghai municipal government. The Shanghai Police have uniformed officers and specialized investigative units. They also have a SWAT team. The People’s Armed Police (PAP) do not perform traditional law enforcement responsibilities but do provide static protection of Chinese government buildings, ministries, foreign missions and public transportation centers such as airports and train stations.

Medical Emergencies
Western-style medical facilities with international staff are available in Shanghai and a few other large cities. Many hospitals in major Chinese cities have so-called VIP wards / Special Needs (te xu) wards with reasonably up-to-date medical technology and skilled physicians who typically speak English.

Ambulances do not carry sophisticated medical equipment, and ambulance personnel generally have little/no medical training. Therefore, injured or seriously ill Americans may be required to take taxis or other immediately available vehicles to the nearest major hospital rather than waiting for ambulances. In rural areas, only rudimentary medical facilities are generally available. Medical personnel in rural areas are often poorly trained, have little medical equipment, or availability to medications. Rural clinics are often reluctant to accept responsibility for treating foreigners, even in emergency situations.

Contact Information for Available Hospitals/Clincis
For medical assistance, please refer to the Consulate’s Medical Assistance page.

Available Air Ambulance Services
The availability of air ambulance services varies by city.
International SOS is the main Western air ambulance provider along China's east coast.

MEDEX also provides regional air ambulance services.

Insurance Guidance
All Americans traveling to China are encouraged to buy foreign medical care and medical evacuation insurance prior to arrival. Most hospitals will not accept medical insurance from the U.S., with the exception of hospitals on the BlueCross BlueShield’s worldwide network. Hospitals in major cities may accept credit cards for payment, but U.S. citizens have frequently encountered difficulty due to cultural and regulatory differences. Travelers are typically asked to post a deposit prior to admission to cover the expected cost of treatment.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
Air quality can be an issue for employee health and safety. Air quality ratings for Shanghai and other U.S. Mission China posts can be found at the Air Quality Index website. The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for China.

OSAC Country Council Information
Shanghai has an active OSAC Country Council that meets every other month. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC’s EAP team with any questions.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information
Consulate Address and Hours of Operation
U.S. Consulate General Shanghai
1469 Huaihai Zhonglu, Shanghai 2000031
Normal hours of operation are 0800-1700, Mon-Fri, except for U.S. and Chinese holidays.
Consulate Contact Numbers
Telephone: 86-21-8011-2200
Website: http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/
Nearby Posts
Embassy Beijing: https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/
Consulate Chengdu: https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/embassy-consulates/chengdu/

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Consulate Shenyang: https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/embassy-consulates/shenyang/
Consulate Wuhan: USConsulateWuhan@state.gov
Consulate Guidance
U.S. citizens traveling to China should register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to ensure they receive pertinent security updates and notices.
Additional Resources
China Country Information Sheet