



## Nigeria 2018 Crime & Safety Report: Lagos

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Terrorism; Crime; Financial Security; Cyber; Maritime; Aviation; Political Violence; Elections; Natural Disasters; Oil & Energy; Disease Outbreak

Africa > Nigeria > Abuja

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According to the current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory at the date of this report's publication, Nigeria has been assessed as a "Level 3: Reconsider travel" country due to crime, terrorism, and piracy.

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

U.S. Consulate Lagos does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

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

Please review OSAC's Nigeria-specific page for original OSAC reporting, travel alerts, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

### Crime Threats

Crime is prevalent throughout Nigeria. Most crime directed toward Americans and U.S. private-sector entities in southern Nigeria is motivated by financial gain. U.S. visitors and

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residents have been victims of a wide range of violent crimes, including armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, carjackings, rapes, kidnappings, and extortion. The mostly commonly reported crimes are violent armed robberies, kidnap for ransom, and fraud. In addition, mainland of Lagos has experienced periodic outbreaks of violence, resulting from clashes among localized street gangs known as “Area Boys.”

U.S. citizens, Nigerians, and other expatriates have been victims of armed robbery at banks and grocery stores and on airport roads during all hours. Armed robbers have targeted occupants in vehicles; smash-and-grab robberies are common with thieves canvassing stopped vehicles for valuables. Thieves will break the vehicle’s window or simply reach in and grab items while a vehicle is stopped. Expatriates should cooperate if approached by an armed assailant or carjacker; resistance may cause the situation to escalate to violence. Home invasions remain a serious threat with armed robbers targeting even guarded compounds. Perpetrators have scaled perimeter walls, followed residents/visitors, and/or subdued guards to gain entry. Armed robbers in Lagos have invaded waterfront compounds and businesses by boat, using the Lagos waterway as a means of escape.

Crime is rampant throughout southern Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta region including Port Harcourt. Multiple armed criminal elements exist throughout Nigeria, ranging from low-level to organized syndicates. Cultist or gang violence, which often erupt in supremacy battles between various groups, is a concern.

Economic fraud involving credit card fraud, skimming, and identity theft is widespread. For more information, also see OSAC’s Report on ATM Skimmers & Fraud. Visitors are also advised not to use personal checks, credit cards, or ATMs. Due to the proliferation of identity and financial fraud, individuals should not carry unnecessarily detailed information about themselves and their finances.

Scams are prevalent and include offers of fake business opportunities and romance schemes. Individuals should be wary of business offers promising large payoffs for little/no investment. For more information on scams in Nigeria and available resources, see the U.S. Embassy’s webpage on scams.

#### Cybersecurity Issues

Increasingly, cybercrime has become a concern and is becoming more sophisticated.

### **Transportation-Safety Situation**

For more information, please review OSAC’s Report, “Security in Transit: Airplanes, Public

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Transport, and Overnights.”

#### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Local drivers typically disregard traffic laws. Scooters and motorcycles generally do not follow the rules of the road and often use sidewalks to maneuver around other vehicles. Traffic lights and signs, lanes, and highway divisions are often nonexistent or frequently go unheeded where they do exist. Formal driver’s training and enforcement of licensing are random. Drivers should try to remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers.

Roads are not well-maintained and do not meet Western standards. Vehicle disablement, especially flat tires, due to poor road conditions is common. Pedestrian traffic is present on the roadside at all hours. Most roads are not illuminated at night, making travel after dark particularly hazardous. Few major routes connect cities, so construction, accidents, and rush-hour traffic cause traffic jams (go-slows) and major delays.

Enforcement of laws by local traffic officials is limited and minimally effective. Traffic police officers routinely seek bribes. Drivers of all nationalities may experience harassment and shakedowns at vehicle checkpoints and during other encounters with officials. Vehicle occupants should always remain polite, slow down, and acknowledge police or military at checkpoints.

When traffic accidents occur, drivers do not pull to the side road; instead, they attempt to solve the issue where the accident has occurred, blocking traffic. Many traffic accidents go unreported, and no reliable statistics exist on traffic fatalities due to the lack of centralized reporting. This practice often draws crowds of onlookers looking for money in exchange for offering their opinions of who was at fault. Accidents are frequent and often involve fatalities, especially on the major highways. The lack of medical response and adequate trauma facilities is a major concern.

Cars should be parked in an area that is protected by a security guard or access is controlled to mitigate risk of vehicle theft or theft of belongings from vehicles. Never leave identifying materials or valuables in a vehicle. When going through traffic with stop lights, vehicles should always be locked and windows rolled up. Hawkers sell goods in between the lanes of traffic during rush hour, and indigent people beg aggressively at car windows at major intersections and may knock on the vehicle window or try to open doors. Be alert for suspicious persons when exiting or approaching your vehicle, as sometimes items are stolen from vehicles through unlocked doors and rolled down windows. Robberies, including those involving armed

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perpetrators, have occurred along major roadways; criminals may especially target vehicles caught in traffic jams, particularly along bridges between the mainland and island and at night. Traveling outside of major cities after dark is not recommended because of crime and road safety concerns.

For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC's report, *Driving Overseas: Best Practices or Road Safety in Africa*.

#### Public Transportation Conditions

All public transportation is considered unsafe and is discouraged.

Motorcycle taxis (*okadas*) are of particular concern. *Okadas* present a significant nuisance and danger to other motorists with unpredictable driving and a lack of compliance to traffic rules. *Okada* drivers and even passengers often become confrontational and violent when involved in accidents. *Okada* drivers are known to engage in crime, either as active participants or as means of escape.

Taxis are usually yellow or white vans that are filled beyond their capacity with riders. Occasionally, they are lures for robberies where the occupants of the vehicle work as a team to rob an unsuspecting passenger after they enter the vehicle. The occupant may be assaulted and then dropped nearby.

Rideshares are active in Lagos, but crime and scams do exist. In 2017, a driver posing as rideshare driver picked up an unsuspecting passenger outside of the Oriental Hotel and drove her to various ATMs, where she was violently robbed. Some rideshare drivers utilize additional applications that mimics legitimate applications but charge users a higher than normal rate. For more information on ride-sharing, please review OSAC's Annual Briefing Report "Safety and Security in the Share Economy."

Some car service companies exist and employ vetted drivers and command center personnel. Armored vehicles are available for rent.

#### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Security at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (LOS) has improved in recent years, and airport officials comply with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security standards. TSA conducts regular security assessments at LOS. Travelers can expect to be approached by transients asking for money, sometimes aggressively, immediately after exiting the terminals. Reports of extortion and bribery solicitation attempts by airport officials have declined but remain a concern. Delays and cancellations plague domestic travel.

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Road repairs along the southern portion to the airport have caused travel delays and sizable traffic jams. Robbers have exploited gridlock to target vehicle occupants, particularly after dark. Roads approaching the airport become more congested with vehicular and pedestrian traffic especially in the Oshodi Market area, which is oftentimes lined with yellow taxis.

#### Other Travel Conditions

There have been security incidents reported in the Gulf of Guinea including hijackings, militant attacks, and kidnappings. In instances where the pirates have boarded, the Nigerian Navy has been known to intervene.

#### Terrorism Threat

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

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

The threat of terrorism continues to challenge business activity and travel throughout Nigeria. A significant terrorist threat exists, particularly in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram is suspected of or has claimed responsibility for most of the terrorist activity in Nigeria. Boko Haram carried out kidnappings, killings, bombings, and attacks on civilian and military targets, resulting in more than 6,000 deaths, injuries, and significant destruction of property in 2014 and 2015. Boko Haram is widely believed to be the group responsible for a December 2014 prison break in Ekiti state and a bomb attack at an oil depot in Apapa, Lagos state. In 2016, Boko Haram divided into two factions. One faction affiliated itself with ISIS in West Africa, and the other remained loyal to its historical leadership. In the areas surrounding Lagos, news outlets reported the arrest of several Boko Haram members, but no attacks. However, both groups likely aspire to target major cities in Nigeria.

Throughout the Niger Delta region, several indigenous militant groups actively target oil pipeline infrastructure and personnel of oil companies, including those of several major international and U.S. companies.

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

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

Nigeria's 2015 elections were considered generally peaceful despite several reported isolated incidents of violence. National elections are scheduled for early 2019. However, numerous off-cycle elections occur for state and federal candidates throughout the year. In addition,

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chieftancy disputes often result in localized clashes. Travelers should check with local contacts regarding the possibility of elections and generally avoid areas where elections are in progress.

#### Civil Unrest

Large areas of southern Nigeria experience civil unrest due to endemic poverty, poor education, youth unemployment, and significant inflation. In addition, many individuals struggle on a daily basis to access clean water, reliable power, and basic healthcare.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

Government, international, and corporate social welfare programs occasionally create claims of injustice among neighboring populations divided by ethnic identity. Demonstrations against the government related to these issues occasionally leads to protests and outright sectarian violence.

Additional instability derives from skirmishes between indigenous farming communities closer to the geographic middle of the country and nomadic cattle herders looking for grazing land. Reprisal attacks are common and lead to a perpetual cycle of violence in the Middle Belt region.

Foreigners are not typically targeted by intercommunal violence but may become victims of wrong-place/wrong-time violence.

### **Post-specific Concerns**

#### Environmental Hazards

Road travel can be extremely difficult during the rainy seasons (March-August and September-mid-October).

National disaster management and emergency preparedness are ineffective due to limited resources and capacity. The civilian sector's disaster management capabilities are poor to nonexistent. Crowd control during demonstrations and medical response are erratic. .

#### Critical Infrastructure

Nigeria exports crude oil and imports refined fuel. Fuel shortages occur. This oftentimes leads to large crowds and lines around fuel stations, including fuel being sold on the streets at higher prices. Such gatherings occasionally erupt into instances of civil unrest, as crowds become agitated while waiting throughout the day.

#### Economic Concerns

Locally-produced knock-off luxury goods are common.

#### Kidnapping Threat

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Kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) is a lucrative industry and continues to be a security concern nationwide. KFR is prevalent in southern Nigeria, and incidents targeting expatriates have been reported in the more affluent areas of Lagos. Kidnapping incidents are under-reported, and the rate of unconfirmed kidnappings continues to grow.

Most victims tend to be Nigerian dual citizens who return home from abroad for either a holiday or specific reason (death in the family/wedding) and are kidnapped due to their perceived Western affluence. However, multiple expatriates were targeted for kidnapping in 2017:

An expatriate was traveling to the airport from Ibadan when he was kidnapped; his driver was killed, but the expatriate was released unharmed.

A dual citizen was kidnapped in southern Nigeria in early January and released after a ransom was paid.

A group of British missionaries were kidnapped in southern Nigeria in October, one died while in captivity, possibly due to health-related issues.

In early 2017, Lagos state strengthened the penalty for kidnapping. Conviction for kidnapping now carries a life sentence. The penalty rises to execution if a kidnap victim dies in captivity. In addition, a Nigerian-American was murdered in 2016 after being kidnapped near Owerri and held in captivity for a brief period. In 2015, seven kidnappings involving U.S. citizens were reported.

Most expatriate victims are released unharmed after being briefly held; however, substantial resources are often used in their recovery, and security personnel protecting high-level expatriates have been killed. The duration of KFR incidents ranges from a week to more than a month. Criminals know that police are rarely contacted during a kidnapping and that families are quick to pay ransoms for the release of relatives. Abduction attempts often involve extensive planning by kidnapers, who often have a social or familial connection to the victim

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and are aware of the victim's movements and habits. For more information, please review OSAC's report Kidnapping: The Basics.

### **Police Response**

Despite a visible police presence in large cities, police response is variable. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all and provide minimal investigative support to victims. The Rapid Response Squad's policing capacity and emergency response capabilities continue to grow but remain in a nascent state.

A serious lack of resources (communications equipment, vehicles, skilled leadership, and training) continues to undermine the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Usually, victims must maintain in close contact with local police to move an investigation forward.

Crime laboratories and facilities to process evidence are rare. In 2017, the construction of a DNA forensic lab was complete and the lab opened in late 2017.

Most Nigerians do not perceive the NPF as an effective law enforcement body and have little faith in the criminal justice system. A call to police for assistance may result in the solicitation of bribes. Criminal groups do not fear arrest or prosecution for their activities. Local police and neighborhood associations generally do not deter or disrupt crimes and seldom apprehend or detain suspects. Vigilante justice is common. Perpetrators of crime may be injured by mobs before police arrive. Numerous NPF officers assigned to private security details for either businesses or individuals routinely ignore any requests for assistance not directly associated with their assignments.

#### **How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment**

Visitors should always be polite and respectful of police officers and soldiers.

#### **Crime Victim Assistance**

There is no reliable national emergency communication number. The American Citizen Services unit should be contacted for crime victim's assistance. While in Lagos state, travelers may attempt to obtain police assistance by calling 767 or 112. Individuals should inquire at the nearest police station about the contact telephone numbers for that particular station.

#### **Police/Security Agencies**

Expatriates and affluent Nigerians employ their own security and use armored vehicles for travel. Police officers and other law enforcement agents are frequently hired by businesses and individuals to provide private security. Most businesses employ guard services, and many companies offer varying quality of service. As Nigerian law prohibits the arming of private

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security personnel, police often supplement guard forces. These arrangements can be made by your local guard company or at a local police station.

### **Medical Emergencies**

The best health care is available in private and nonprofit medical facilities. However, even these facilities typically fail to meet U.S. standards.

The availability of dependable and safe over-the-counter and prescription medications is a concern. Although local pharmacies are abundant, counterfeit products, including medications, have negatively affected many Nigerians. Visitors should consider bringing a sufficient supply of needed medication. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

#### **Contact Information for Available Medical Services**

For medical assistance, please refer to the Consulate's Medical Assistance page. Resources for individual states can be located toward the bottom of the page.

#### **Insurance Guidance**

All private hospitals and clinics require cash payments before receiving any care. Prices can be quite high, and it is often difficult to withdraw the required amount of money in a single bank transaction. Hospitals may detain patients who have not paid in full or deny services, even during exigent circumstances.

#### **Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance**

Nigeria is a malaria-endemic country.

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Nigeria.

### **OSAC Country Council Information**

Nigeria's OSAC Country Councils are located in Abuja and Lagos. General membership meetings of the Lagos Country Council occur monthly. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC's Africa team with any questions.

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

#### **Consulate Address and Hours of Operation**

U.S. Consulate General Lagos

2 Walter Carrington Crescent

Victoria Island, Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria

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#### Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: (234) 1-460-3400

Website: <https://ng.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/lagos/>

#### Nearby Posts

Embassy Abuja: <https://ng.usembassy.gov/>

#### Consulate Guidance

U.S. citizens traveling in Nigeria are encouraged to register in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP is a free service that helps the U.S. Embassy disseminate information about safety conditions and contact travelers in an emergency.

#### Additional Resources

Nigeria Country Information Sheet

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