According to the current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory at the date of this report’s publication, Brazil has been assessed as Level 2: exercise increased caution.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

U.S. Consulate General Recife 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 location, and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

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

Please review OSAC’s Brazil-specific page for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

Crime Threats

The general crime rate in Brazil is above the U.S. national average. Street crime incidents (muggings, pickpocketing, armed robbery) pose the greatest risk to tourists and Consulate Recife employees. A 2016 UN publication ranked all eight state capitals in the Consulate’s district in Brazil’s northeast among the 50 most dangerous cities in the world: Fortaleza (12), Natal (13), João Pessoa (16), Maceio (18), São Luís (21), Teresina (30), Recife (37), and Aracaju (38).

The Secretaria de Defensa Social de Pernambuco (SDS), the senior body for law enforcement in the state of Pernambuco (where Recife is the capital), reported that the overall rate of homicides in the Recife metropolitan area decreased by 58% between 2007 and 2014, a period that coincided with a wave of economic growth. As Brazil entered recession (2014 to 2017), however, Pernambuco documented a 13% increase in homicides in both 2015 and 2016 and a 21% increase in 2017.

Brazil’s criminal justice system is overburdened and marked by low conviction rates. An acute shortage of jail space across Brazil and resulting prisoner furloughs contribute to a cycle of violence. Despite laws that strictly regulate firearms, weapons (handguns, rifles, military grade weapons), blades, and other improvised weapons are frequently used to carry out criminal activities. Crimes can include gratuitous violence.

Petty street crime is the greatest risk in Recife. Although the risk is greater at night, street crime frequently occurs during the day. Incidents of theft on city buses and metro trains are frequent. Brazil’s criminals often use motorcycles in street crimes to evade police. Visitors are strongly advised to comply with criminals’ demands, as resisting increases the likelihood of serious bodily harm.

Arrastões (mass robberies) occur when a gang of criminals sweep through public places and tourism areas to rob pedestrians, beach-goers, and restaurant/store patrons. Vehicle
drivers/occupants stuck in traffic may also be targeted. An arrastão can occur at any time and location. Police struggle to react and capture the criminals, who are predominantly juveniles.

There are over 645 surveillance cameras in Recife that are used to monitor and deter crime. These surveillance systems are monitored by the SDS, which can dispatch police. In neighborhoods near Boa Viagem (where U.S. Consulate staff housing is located), there are police and static guards posted in some areas. Larger apartments and commercial sites often employ 24/7 private unarmed and armed security guard services. Despite the installation of cameras and the presence of security guards and police, substantial criminal activities are a regular occurrence.

There is significant and sustained organized criminal activity throughout Brazil, particularly in major cities.

Cybersecurity Issues

A growing area of concern in Brazil is the rise of cybercrime. Visitors and locals are frequent victims of stolen identity involving credit/debit cards. Police have reported that merchants are sometimes involved in the theft of credit/debit card account information at point of sale (PoS) machines. State Department investigations revealed that hackers compromise bank security measures to steal account numbers. Extreme caution should be used when using a credit/debit card. If using credit cards, never allow waiters or clerks to walk away with your card and make sure they use the card's chip (in lieu of swiping). Travelers are encouraged to monitor their accounts for the duration of their visit in Brazil. Travelers should also inform their banks and credit card issuers of travel plans to Brazil to monitor unusual charges. For more information, please review OSAC's Report, "The Overseas Traveler's Guide to ATM Skimmers & Fraud."

Bank robberies and assaults on automated teller machines (ATM) by criminal gangs began to increase dramatically in 2016. These incidents were marked with the use of heavy weaponry and explosives by criminal gangs. Police, particularly in rural interior towns, have reported being overwhelmed by the criminals' superior firepower. The use of explosives against ATMs as well as snatch-and-grab operations has increased. Attacks on armored money trucks by heavily armed gangs coincide with this concerning trend.

Other Areas of Concern

The incidence of crime against tourists is greater in areas surrounding the airport, hotels, bars, nightclubs, Recife Antigo (the historic center of the city), public transportation centers, metro stops, and other establishments that cater to visitors. Crime can occur in any part of the city, including in affluent areas. Cell phone users are frequent victims of theft.

U.S. government personnel assigned to or visiting Recife are prohibited from accessing the sandy areas of Pina Beach in Recife at night.

Although there have been no reports of residential break-ins and burglaries against U.S. employees, residential burglaries pose a concern. The RSO ensures that direct-hire residences in Recife have enhanced security countermeasures that exceed the typical residential security programs.

All favelas (slum neighborhoods), especially those that do not have around-the-clock police presence, should be avoided, and are prohibited to U.S. government personnel.
Transportation-Safety Situation


Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions vary greatly throughout northeastern Brazil. Most roads in large cities are paved; however, many roads, even in urban areas, are in poor condition with large potholes and overgrown vegetation. Some roads may become impassable during the rainy season (April-August). Recife has poor water drainage systems that are easily clogged, and potholes appear suddenly and remain unrepaired for weeks. Many rural roads are unpaved and can also be impassable during the rainy season.

Street lighting is unpredictable, lanes are not evident, and drivers frequently drift to avoid poor road conditions, resulting in frequent vehicular accidents. In Recife, there is a severe lack of parking, resulting in informal parking that blocks roads and sidewalks. Peddlers and panhandlers create an additional hazard, as do horses, horse drawn buggies, and other slow moving, human-pushed carts.

Defensive driving is a requirement as traffic can be congested and unpredictable. The level of both public and private driver training and safety awareness does not reach minimum U.S. standards. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

Crime on the roads remains a problem, especially during evening travel, traffic jams, and road closures due to protests. Although U.S. government employees in Recife have not reported carjacking incidents, this type of crime poses a particular concern because the perpetrators are armed and may quickly escalate the level of violence.

Brazil has a zero tolerance for drinking and driving and has enacted a law to combat drunk driving known as Lei Seca (Dry Law). Frequent unannounced checkpoints are set up in most cities, including Recife, where police will initiate “breathalyzer” tests on vehicle operators. While these checkpoints establish a viable deterrent, there can still be incapacitated drivers on the road. Throughout Brazil, automatic photo-ticketing systems are deployed to discourage speeding.

Public Transportation Conditions

U.S. government personnel assigned or visiting Recife are prohibited from using the public bus systems and metro/rails.

Terrorism Threat

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Recife 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

There are no known indigenous terrorist groups operating in Brazil. Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not targeted by any known radical groups.
Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

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

Civil Unrest

Extremist groups occasionally conduct acts of civil disobedience and may engage in violent confrontations with police. There have been political protests in 2017 throughout the country. While the majority of protests in Recife are peaceful, they can become confrontational. Visitors should avoid large crowds or ongoing protests.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Flooding and mudslides are a seasonal problem in Recife. Visitors should monitor weather conditions, especially during the rainy season. Many streets and neighborhoods lack drainage systems, which exacerbates flooding.

Recife beaches can be hazardous due to sharks. In 2015, Recife beaches registered two non-fatal shark attacks. Visitors are strongly advised to adhere with the shark danger warning signs posted along the beaches. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report “When Wildlife Attacks.”

Economic Concerns

Cargo theft remains a major security issue on the roads throughout Brazil; as a result, many companies employ countermeasures, including armed security escorts for high value loads and the use of satellites to track truck movements.

Drug-related Crimes

Brazil is the number two consumer of cocaine in the world, behind the U.S. Brazil is a heavy importer of cocaine, and large volumes of drugs pass through Brazil on routes to Europe and Africa. Marijuana, which is illegal in Brazil, is mostly locally produced.

Kidnapping Threat

While kidnappings for ransom have become less common in recent years, these 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 being targeted by criminals. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report, “Kidnapping: The Basics.”

Police Response

Police officials frequently cite lack of resources and equipment, staffing shortages, and low morale for widely varying response times and unsolved crimes. When police do respond, victims are asked to go to the police station and file a report and complete other investigative formalities.
Public confidence in police is low due to perception of heavy handedness, ineffectiveness, and corruption.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Visitors should request assistance from the U.S. Consulate General, American Citizens Services unit in the event they encounter problems while traveling in Brazil, including detainment or arrest by the police.

American Citizen Services (ACS): M-F, 7:00AM to 4:00PM, (+55) 3416-3080
After hours Duty Officer Emergency Line: 4:00PM to 7:00AM and on weekends: (+55) 9916-9470

Crime Victim Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recife Emergency Services</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Emergency (Ambulância)</strong></td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fire Service / Sea Rescue (Corpo de Bombeiros)</strong></td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourist Police Station (Delegacia do Turista)</strong></td>
<td>(+55) 81-3322-3122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Police (Polícia Civil)</strong></td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal Police (Polícia Federal)</strong></td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traffic Police - CTTU</strong></td>
<td>0800-081-1078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transit Department - DETRAN</strong></td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Airport (Guararapes)</strong></td>
<td>(+55) 81-3464-4188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military Police (Polícia Militar)</strong></td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Police/Security Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Officials</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Police</td>
<td>23,379</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Police</td>
<td>5,858</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Fighters</td>
<td>2,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forensic Investigators</td>
<td>787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Vehicles</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helicopters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Cars</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAT vehicles</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Motorcycles</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Police Vehicles</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medical Emergencies**

Visitors are advised to bring prescription medicine sufficient for their length of stay and should be aware that Brazil’s humid climate may affect temporary and long-term storage of medicines. Some prescription medicines (mainly generic) are available. 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](#).

Available Air Ambulance Services

For air medical evacuation services, visitors may wish to purchase private air medical evacuation insurance before travelling to Brazil.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Travelers should consult with their medical providers regarding immunization and vaccination requirements prior to traveling to Brazil.

Mosquito-borne viral infection is a significant health risk throughout Brazil. Such infections include chikungunya, dengue fever, yellow fever, malaria, and Zika. There are no prophylactic therapies for dengue and chikungunya.

While chikungunya and dengue fever have become endemic countrywide, malaria is more prevalent in the interior.

Personnel traveling to regions One, Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten are advised to use malaria prophylaxis.

All U.S. government personnel are advised to obtain yellow fever vaccination prior to travel to Brazil. Travelers should have a documented yellow fever card.

On January 15, 2016, the U.S. CDC issued a Level 2 travel alert for countries affected by the Zika virus. Because of concerns with microcephaly associated with Zika virus infection
during pregnancy, the travel alert recommends pregnant women and those who may become pregnant avoid unnecessary travel to the region or take special precautions. The most prudent strategy is to prevent mosquito bites through repellants, treated bed nets, window screens, and air-conditioning.

Incidences of water-borne diseases increase during periods of flooding. Only bottled or purified water should be consumed, and special precautions should be taken when eating fruits and vegetables, especially during the rainy seasons. For more information, please refer to OSAC’s Report, “I’m Drinking What in My Water?.”

Leptospirosis, while not common, is a viral infection spread via rodent droppings and waste. Given the limitations of the sanitation system in Brazil, one should exercise caution including vigilant hand washing after outdoor contact and vaccination of pets that may contract the disease from food bowls and other exposed surfaces where rodents may traverse. Be careful of canned beverages and coconuts that are typically stored on the ground, where rodents and other insects congregate.

Special attention should be paid to HIV/AIDS. In addition to elevated infection rates among high-risk populations, data from the World Health Organization shows that Brazil has among the highest prevalence rates in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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

**OSAC Country Council Information**

There is no Country Council in Recife. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC’s [Western Hemisphere Team](https://osac.gov) with any questions.

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

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

Rua Gonçalves Maia, 163  
Bairro Boa Vista  
Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil 50070-065

Mon-Fri: 0700 to 1600

Consulate Contact Numbers

After hours Duty Officer: (+55) (81) 99916-9470  
Emergencies and calls after normal business hours may be directed to Post One Brasilia: (+55) (61) 3312-7400.

Nearby Posts

Embassy Brasilia: [https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/brasilia/](https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/brasilia/)  
Consulate Rio de Janeiro: [https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/riodejaneiro/](https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/riodejaneiro/)  
Consulate Sao Paulo: [https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/saopaulo/](https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/saopaulo/)  
Consulate Porto Alegre: [https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/u-s-consulate-porto-alegre/](https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/u-s-consulate-porto-alegre/)
Consulate Guidance

U.S. citizens traveling to Brazil should register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to ensure they receive pertinent security updates and notices.

Additional Resources

Brazil Country Information Sheet