

Guidance

Advice for women travelling abroad

Advice for women travelling and living abroad, including organisations that can help.

From: **Foreign & Commonwealth Office (/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office)** and **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office)**

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Before you go

Research your destination

All travellers face risks abroad. In some countries or cultures, women travelling alone or in female-only groups can face extra risks and obstacles.

When planning travel, consider researching:

- the local culture of a country

- whether women travelling there have received unwanted attention or difficulties because of their gender

You can check:

- the safety and security page on our country [travel advice pages](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>)
- guidebooks and online forums
- our [advice for independent and solo travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/solo-and-independent-travel) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/solo-and-independent-travel>)
- our [advice for LGBT travellers](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice>)

You could also talk to people who have been to the places you plan to visit.

Health conditions or pregnancy

If you have a health condition or are pregnant, you may need specialist healthcare abroad. Check whether the country can provide the healthcare you need and make sure you have [appropriate travel insurance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance>) for unexpected medical evacuation or local treatment.

Many pregnant women travel abroad without any issues. However, you may be at increased risk of some health problems, and the right medical care may not always be available. It is important for you to be prepared. In some countries, if you become pregnant or give birth outside of marriage, you may not be covered by medical insurance.

Where it is heavily restricted, abortion may be denied to pregnant women. This may happen even in cases where it would be life-saving, and where there is little chance of the foetus surviving.

See the [National Travel Health Network and Centre's \(NaTHNaC\) advice on pregnancy](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/45/pregnancy) (<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/45/pregnancy>) for more information.

Medication

If you need to take regular medication, [read advice on medicines and travel from NaTHNaC](https://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/43/medicines-and-travel) (<https://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/43/medicines-and-travel>).

While you're abroad

Violence towards women and girls is a risk in many countries. This may take different forms depending on the local context, laws, history and culture in the country.

If you are travelling by yourself or plan to spend time alone while you are abroad, see our [advice for solo travellers \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/solo-and-independent-travel\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/solo-and-independent-travel).

Rape and sexual assault

Rape and sexual assault are risks to people of all genders worldwide, including women. The local services and attitudes towards helping victims of rape and sexual assault can vary widely by country.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) takes any allegation of rape and sexual assault seriously. Read our advice on what to do [if you have been raped or sexually assaulted abroad, which includes specific advice for the country or territory you're in \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad).

Drug-assisted rape or 'date rape'

Drugs have been used in rape. If someone adds drugs to your drink, you will not normally be able to detect them. Rape drugs also work in non-alcoholic drinks, such as coffee and tea. They are normally colourless and tasteless, and can make you unconscious and defenceless.

You should:

- be aware of how much you are drinking – alcohol is the most frequently used drug in drug-assisted rape
- not leave drinks unattended, and do not accept drinks from strangers
- seek help if you feel strange, sick or drunk after only drinking a small amount. You could tell a trusted friend, who should take you to a safe place, or phone the local police for advice
- if you feel in danger contact the emergency services

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM is illegal in the UK and most other countries. It is also illegal to take a girl from the UK to another country to undergo FGM. FGM takes place worldwide in at least 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It also takes place in parts of western Europe and other developed countries, mainly among immigrant and refugee communities. Read our [guidance on](#)

[how to protect, advise and support victims of FGM](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation>).

Forced marriage abroad

In a forced marriage a person is coerced into marrying someone against their will. They may be physically threatened or emotionally blackmailed. It is an abuse of human rights and cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis. For more information, see:

- advice if you are [affected by forced marriage](https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage) (<https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>)
- guidance on [protecting, advising and supporting victims of forced marriage](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>)

Job opportunity scams and modern slavery

Be careful when considering job opportunities abroad, including:

- in call centres
- as hosts and hostesses
- in childcare
- as domestic help
- other seemingly legitimate jobs

Be aware of job offers that appear too good to be true.

These scams can target anyone. However, criminal gangs have sometimes targeted women and used these job opportunities as a front for human trafficking or modern slavery. Sometimes people have had their passports confiscated, and been held in poor living conditions, forced into illegal activities, or pressured to make large payments.

If you have experienced these crimes and need help, see our [victim of crime abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/victim-of-crime-abroad) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/victim-of-crime-abroad>) guidance.

Know the law

Do your research to understand laws, and authorities' attitudes towards gender equality issues, particularly around crimes and violence against women.

Divorce and child custody

Laws around divorce and custody of children vary by country. There may be different courts or laws depending on the religion of that country or of the child's parents. In some countries, a married woman may need her husband's permission for her or her children to leave the country. The husband may be able to place a 'stop order', which means the authorities will stop you or your children if you attempt to leave the country.

International parental child abduction

International parental child abduction is when a child is taken abroad without the consent of everyone with parental responsibility or against a court order. See our [guidance on international parental child abduction \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-parental-child-abduction\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-parental-child-abduction) for more advice on preventing this or what to do if it has happened.

Resources for women travelling abroad

You can get more information from:

- [Caroline's Rainbow Foundation \(http://www.carolinesrainbowfoundation.org/\)](http://www.carolinesrainbowfoundation.org/) promotes personal safety for travellers
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust \(https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/personal-safety\)](https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/personal-safety) campaigns on personal safety and stalking with much of the information also applying to travel abroad

Urgent or emergency assistance from the FCDO

We can help British nationals in emergencies. For example, if you:

- have been injured or assaulted
- are arrested for a crime

We will prioritise helping those who are vulnerable and need our help the most.

If you are:

- abroad, contact the nearest [British embassy, high commission or consulate \(https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies\)](https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies)
- in the UK, call +44 (0)20 7008 5000

Our phone lines are open 24/7.

Feedback

We welcome your views on the support we provide, to help us to identify what we do well and what we could do better. Contact us using our [feedback contact form \(https://www.contact.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/written-enquiry\)](https://www.contact.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/written-enquiry).

Alternatively write to us:

Consular Feedback Team
Consular Directorate
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Or telephone +44 (0)20 7008 5000

Disclaimer

Read the [disclaimer relating to this guidance \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-commonwealth-development-office-fcdo-consular-information-disclaimer\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-commonwealth-development-office-fcdo-consular-information-disclaimer).

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