

The background of the entire page is a blurred photograph of a busy city street. In the foreground, several people are walking, their figures blurred to convey a sense of motion. Two men in suits are prominent on the left, walking away from the camera. To their right, a group of people, including a woman in a bright red coat, are also walking. The background shows city buildings and streetlights, all blurred. The top left corner of the page features a geometric pattern of blue and grey triangles.

# **QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: TRAVEL RISK DECISIONS**

# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: TRAVEL RISK DECISIONS



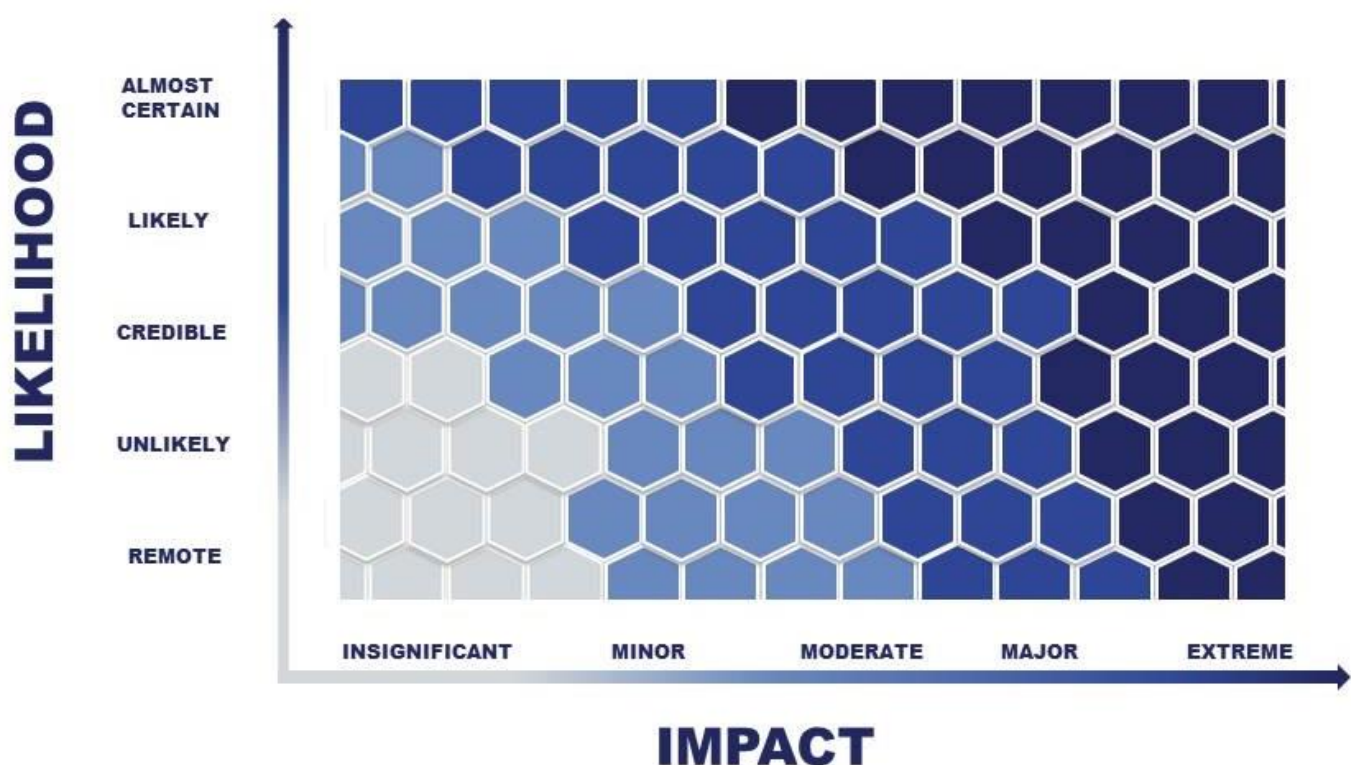
Approving travel is a significant responsibility. How do you conduct a valid risk assessment for a trip, and what constitutes adequate risk mitigation measures for a given location? This is a quick reference guide to support you as a decision-maker, based on our 30+ years of experience in travel risk management.

The fundamentals of managing travel security risk are relatively straightforward. First, you need to know what the risks are in the location that you or your team are travelling to. Then you need to understand how your travellers and organisation interact with that security environment. From there, you can recognise your risk exposure. The next step is to design mitigation measures that reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring. Finally, you need to have measures in place to minimise the impact an incident would have on your travellers and organisation.

The risk level of any given location without mitigation measure in place is referred to as *inherent risk*, while *residual risk* refers to the level of risk remaining once you have put measures in place to reduce the likelihood or impact of an event. By reducing the likelihood of an incident occurring, or the impact an incident would have on your travellers and organisation (ideally reducing both), you are minimising the level of *residual risk* in a location.

The level of risk depends on the likelihood that an event will take place multiplied by the impact of that event (see figure 1). Measuring risk in a security context is an inherently subjective process, even when using sophisticated data-based and quantitative risk-management methods. This is why we have a large team of regional specialists on hand to assist you.

**RISK MATRIX (fig. 1)**





## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There is a nearly endless range of risks present in any location, and knowing where to start – and where to stop – assessing risk can be difficult. We have identified twelve categories of risk that enable a comprehensive assessment of the threats to travellers to be conducted in an efficient manner. There are six groups each for security and medical risks. The level of risk in each category varies significantly from place to place – some locations have very high crime rates but very low risk of terrorism, for example. You can find out about the specific risks in a location by consulting our country and city guides or by calling our 24/7 Assistance Centres.



## WHAT IS YOUR EXPOSURE?

Once you know what risks exist in the environment to which your travellers will go, you then need to assess what impact the profile of your organisation and your travellers will have on their health, safety and security.

### TRAVELLER PROFILE

- The profile of your traveller matters. A female traveller will be exposed to different risks than a male in some locations, as will an LGBTI traveller. The traveller's nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, level of familiarity with the destination and previous travel experience will all change the risk level of a trip and so must be considered. Pre-existing medical conditions are also critically important.

### ORGANISATION PROFILE

- Your organisation's profile can affect the likelihood of your traveller being deliberately targeted. Is your organisation high profile in this location? Is your organisation a symbol for a sensitive or controversial issue in the destination country?

### ITINERARY

- When is your traveller going to the location? Are there any important anniversaries, protests, elections or other political events at that time? Could the travel be timed better to reduce risk?

## HAVE YOU MITIGATED THE RISKS?

Identifying risks requires local knowledge and an understanding of your travellers' unique profiles. Mitigating risks requires medical and security expertise. The priority is to prevent something from happening by preparing your travellers and protecting them.

### PREPARATION

Equip your travellers with the skills and knowledge to manage risks no matter where they go. Are they trained in travel security? Did they receive a briefing on the location from our medical and security experts? Have all efforts been made to avoid higher-risk times and areas?

### PROTECTION

When in location, are your travellers protected from known threats? Is their accommodation suitable for the environment? Do they have appropriate transportation arrangements?

## WHAT CAPACITY DO YOU HAVE TO RESPOND IF SOMETHING HAPPENS?

**Communication:** How will you know if something is wrong? Will you be able to communicate with the traveller in an emergency? Do your travellers have the equipment they need? If the traveller fails to make contact with anyone for a period of time, who will notice that there may be something wrong?

**Medical support:** Have you confirmed with International SOS that there are appropriate medical facilities in the location your travellers will be in? If the available medical facilities are inadequate, how will you manage a medical event?

**Security support:** If your travellers are going somewhere higher-risk, do they have access to security support should they need it? Do you have an evacuation plan in place? Has your Crisis Management Plan been tested in a simulation exercise so you know that your procedures are fit-for-task and your team is prepared?

## WHAT IS YOUR RISK APPETITE?

The stated objective of risk management is to reduce the level of risk to an *acceptable* level. There are legal requirements in many countries and organisations must meet their Duty of Care obligations, but even beyond this, every organisation has a risk appetite – its own idea of what level of risk is acceptable. What would the consequences be for your organisation if travelling staff were affected by a medical or security incident? Consider legal, financial, reputational, workplace culture and staff retention risks, among others. Your risk appetite will determine what level of mitigation measures you need to have in place.

**Need further advice?** Our Assistance Centres operate 24/7 so you can call anytime to ask about the medical or security risks in a location and get profile and itinerary-specific advice – or assistance – when you need it. If you'd like to discuss training, exercises, workshops or your travel/security policy, please contact your International SOS account manager.

**Sydney Assistance Centre:** +61 2 9372 2468