



**China:  
Loan Shark Activities, Police Protection and Corruption, and  
support, including mental health, to female returnee victims of  
trafficking**

Asylos, September 2025

## Table of contents

Research Timeframe .....	4
Sources consulted .....	4
Findings .....	7
1. Prevalence and activities of loan sharks in China .....	7
2. Extent to which loan sharks are prepared to use violence to achieve their aims/intimidate the debtors .....	11
3. Attitude of the Chinese police towards loan sharks and police protection of people who have become indebted to them .....	13
4. Level of police corruption in China .....	15
5. The prevalence of trafficking (and re-trafficking) of women and children for sexual exploitation within China and to the UK .....	18
6. Support available for victims of trafficking who are returned to China .....	24
7. Barriers to access to mental health support and treatment (especially for female returnees) .....	26

### Acknowledgments

This report was researched and written by Chunyuan Hu and Carmen Vaquero.

**Dear reader,**

This report was researched, written and edited by Asylos, an international network of volunteers providing free-of-charge research for lawyers helping asylum seekers with their claim. Everyone engaged in Asylos believes that asylum matters and so do fair decisions, based on the best available knowledge. We believe that your work as a lawyer dealing with such cases is so important that it is a good thing to assist you for free - and we do that in our spare time.

Please note that Asylos' volunteer researchers are not legally certified experts in the matters we research and cannot be classified as expert witnesses. We compile primary and secondary information to address certain country-specific questions, but we do not provide assessment or analysis of the data. **Accordingly, this report is intended as background reference material for the asylum seeker and his/her counsel, to assist in their preparation of the case.**

Further, the COI presented is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. While we strive to be as comprehensive as possible, no amount of research can ever provide an exhaustive picture of the situation. It is therefore important to note that the absence of information should not be taken as evidence that an issue does not exist.

**Please help us track the impact of our work. It is our best reward and it helps us reward our funders.** If you are reading this report or using any part of it to inform your case, please:

1. Go to <https://resources.asylos.eu/give-feedback/>
2. Insert the case reference number **ASI2025-01** and press submit.

If you want to, you can even leave a message for the volunteers who worked on the research.

Many thanks,

Your Asylos Team

## Research Timeframe

The earliest source dates from February 2017 and the most recent source dates from September 2025.

## Sources consulted

The research was initially conducted in March 2025, and further top-up research was carried out in September 2025.

### 1. International Organisations

- Transparency International
- UN China
- International Organization for Migration

### 2. (Inter)governmental sources

- Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Scotland's Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)
- UK Government
- UK National Crime Agency
- UK Home Office
- UK Parliament
- US Department of State

*DISCLAIMER: readers should be aware of recent reforms under the current US administration have had an impact on the scope and coverage of the information available in the annual United States Department of State human rights reports, as discussed by various [sources](#) or in Asylos' [blog](#).*

### 3. (I)NGOS and think tanks

- Fight For Her Group (FFHG)

*The Fight For Her Group (FFHG) is a Chinese advocacy organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of women, particularly focusing on issues affecting women with disabilities.*

- Migration Policy Institute

*Migration Policy Institute was founded in 2001, and is headquartered in Washington DC. It is described as seeking to "improve immigration and integration policies through authoritative research and analysis, opportunities for learning and dialogue, and the development of new ideas to address complex policy questions." It established the Migration Policy Institute Europe in 2011, described as "a nonprofit, independent research institute based in Brussels that builds upon the work that MPI has done for years in Europe." ([Migration Policy Institute](#))*

- Walk Free

*International human rights organization whose main work focuses on combating modern slavery and human trafficking through research, advocacy, and partnerships.*

#### 4. Media

- Al Jazeera  
*Al Jazeera describes itself as “the first independent news channel in the Arab world”. It states that it is independent, and that it is part-funded by the Qatari government.* ([Al Jazeera](#))
- China Daily  
*China Daily is an English-language newspaper owned by the Chinese government.* ([China Daily](#))
- Central News Agency  
*The Central News Agency (CNA) is the national news agency of the Republic of China (ROC).*
- Financial Times  
*The FT Group states that it is “part of Nikkei Inc., [and] provides a broad range of information, news and services to ambitious individuals and organisations.”* ([About Us](#))
- Liberty Times Net  
*Liberty News was launched in 2000. It upholds the news concept of “Taiwan First, Freedom First”, based on Taiwan and caring about the world, and strives to provide first-hand news at home and abroad, so that netizens can quickly grasp the news.* ([Liberty Time 自由時報電子報s Net](#))
- Radio Free Asia  
*Radio Free Asia states that “Radio Free Asia and its digital brands BenarNews and 歪脑 / WHYNOT provide independent, uncensored and accurate local news to a weekly audience of nearly 60 million who lack access to a free press or live in media environments vulnerable to authoritarian disinformation.”* ([About](#))
- Reuters  
*Reuters states that it “is the leading global source of news coverage. We have been licensing content and information to media organizations, technology companies, governments and corporations since 1851.”* ([About](#))
- Sixth Tone  
*Sixth Tone states that “Through fresh takes on trending topics, in-depth features, and illuminating contributions, Sixth Tone covers issues from the perspectives of those most intimately involved to highlight the nuances and complexities of today’s China. We are a team of writers, editors, and researchers from within China and abroad. We belong to Shanghai United Media Group.”* ([About us](#))
- Thomson Reuters  
*Thomson Reuters states: “We provide trusted data and information to professionals across 3 different industries: Legal; Tax and Accounting; and News & Media.”* ([Thomson Reuters](#))
- Xinhua News Agency  
*Xinhua News Agency states: “Xinhuanet is the web portal for news and information services of Xinhua News Agency. It is China’s most influential online media and a Chinese website with global influence. Xinhuanet serves as an important window for the world to understand China, providing authoritative and timely global news and information service 24 hours a day. On average, it releases some 15,000 media publications per day in Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Japanese,*

*Korean, German, Portuguese, and Mongolian Cyrillic.”* ([About us](#))

## 5. Academic Sources

- Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)  
*CASS describes itself as “the premier academic organization and comprehensive research center of the People’s Republic of China in the fields of philosophy and social sciences.”* ([About CASS](#))
- Peking University Finance Law Research Center  
*Peking University (PKU) Law School states that it “was officially inaugurated on June 26, 1999. In the 1952 “grand adjustment of law departments,” it was once merged into Beijing Politics and Law College. In 1954, however, PKU Law Department regained its independency, supported directly by Vice Premier Dong Biwu, then director of the Political and Legislative Affairs Committee of the Government Administrative Council of China’s Central People’s Government.”* ([About](#))
- SSRN  
*SSRN’s states that its “mission is to rapidly share early-stage research and empower global scholars to help shape a better future. The SSRN platform hosts 1,664,114 preprints from 2,316,431 researchers in over 65 disciplines.”* ([About SSRN](#))
- China Economic Review  
*ScienceDirect provides the following description: “The China Economic Review publishes original research works on the economy of China, and its relation to the world economy. We seek, in particular, quantitative and analytical papers dealing with institutional change, policy and performance of the Chinese economy; research that compares the development process in China with that in other countries is encouraged. Submissions are subjected to double-blind peer review.”* ([China Economic Review](#))

## 6. Other

- China Law Translate  
*Collaborative translation project and legal resource platform that provides English translations of Chinese laws, regulations, official documents, and legal news.*

# Findings

*The findings in this report are presented in order of relevance.*

## 1. Prevalence and activities of loan sharks in China

In February 2019, China Daily reported a police crackdown on 1,664 gangs involved in loan scams, resulting in the arrest of 16,349 suspects and the investigation of 21,624 cases of fraud, extortion, and false litigation.

- “The Ministry of Public Security announced on Tuesday [26 February 2019] that police will reinforce the crackdown on loan-related scams and cooperate with financial regulatory authorities to inspect online lending platforms and further standardize online lending activities. Police across the country to date have busted 1,664 criminal gangs involved in loan scams, arrested 16,349 suspects, cracked 21,624 cases of fraud, extortion and false litigation, and seized more than 3.53 billion yuan (\$530 million) in assets involved, according to the ministry. Appearing as an emerging crime, loan-related scams have been specially targeted as part of the nation's ongoing efforts to bust mafia-style criminal gangs, said Guo Lin, the ministry's spokeswoman.”

China Daily, “[Police to fortify crackdown on illegal loan scams](#)”, 26 February 2019, last accessed: 25 March 2025

An academic article published on 1 July, 2019 highlighted the various types of usury crimes, the specific groups targeted by lenders, and the tactics used in these schemes.

- “[C]ampus loans trick college students into heavy debts; naked loans target young female students; recipe loans swindle property from seniors who own property in large cities; and peer-to-peer lending platforms, that are essentially Ponzi schemes, con middle-aged or senior investors. [...]”

In spring 2015, Ant Financial Services Group released its Financial Report for College Students based on data from 2,325 universities in China. As the Report documented, more than 35% of the college students, or 25 million in number, had tried Internet financing in the previous year. A large number of the services they tried were campus loans [...]

In order to apply for a naked loan, the borrower logs into a lending platform and sets the amount she wants. After being matched with a lender, she submits special collateral to the platform: a selfie in which she is naked while holding her identification card beside her face. The lender then retains this nude photo as an IOU and transfers the money to the borrower via the lending platform. [...] In December

2016, a 10-gigabyte file containing the nude photos and/or videos of 161 women was leaked on the Internet, to the distress of the victims, most of them are in their 20s and come from rural areas. [...]

[T]he borrowers of recipe loans are able to repay the loan at the time they borrow. They are, instead, tricked into paying an increasingly large amount of money, eventually having to sell their property in order to pay the debt. [...] The procedure of a typical recipe loan can be summarized in three steps. In the first step, the borrower signs a loan contract with the lender. [...] At the second step, the lender starts to trick the borrower into default using traps in the loan contract. The most common traps include the following. (1) The time to repay the loan is timestamped to the second (Dong and Hou, 2018). For example, 15:50:51 on December 31, 2018. Even one second earlier or later than this time will be considered as a default. (2) When the borrower wants to repay the loan, the lender deliberately refuses to all communication. For example, the lender may hang up when the borrower phones or turn down the borrower's request to meet, thereby forcing the borrower to delay the payment (Xie and Jiang, 2018). (3) The penalty for defaults is set so high that the borrower no longer has enough money to make the repayment. At this point, the original lender introduces the borrower to another lender and swindles the borrower into signing another recipe loan contract with the second lender. [...] In the third and last step, the second lender takes some measures to force the borrower into paying the disproportionately excessive debt. For example, the lender may initiate a lawsuit (sometimes fake) against the borrower and intimidate the borrower by threatening to harm his or her reputation. The lender may also hire gangsters to bully the borrower. The gangsters often resort to phone harassment to annoy not only the borrowers but also their family and friends. They may also splash crimson paint on the door of the borrower's home, in which the red color signifies blood resulted from a fierce fight or homicide. Since the gangsters are not involved in the lending process, it is difficult to file a lawsuit against them. Under great emotional and psychological pressure, the borrowers will eventually cave in and cede their property to the lender."

Li, Dongmei and Peng, Zhe and Xiong, Kainan, "[Usury Crimes in Post-Crisis China: The Underlying Economics and Beyond](#)", 01 July 2019, last accessed: 28 March 2025

Reuters reported that on 20 August 2020, China's Supreme People's Court lowered the maximum private loan interest rate eligible for legal protection, aiming to curb usurious lending practices.

- "China's Supreme People's Court on Thursday [20 August 2020] slashed the upper limit on private loan interest rates that will be protected by law. [...] The ceiling will be capped at four times that of China's benchmark loan prime rate (LPR). [...] That would put the upper limit on one-year private loans at 15.4%, based on the current LPR rate. [...] Previously, China's courts would enforce the rights of borrowers or lenders in disputes over loans with interest rates up to 24%. Interest rates above 36% are considered illegal, according to a 2015 ruling, and those between 24% and 36%

fall into a grey area. [...] Thursday's amendment to the 2015 decision deals another blow to China's non-bank lending market, composed mainly of online peer-to-peer lenders and micro-lenders, which has come under regulatory pressure in recent years as Beijing tries to curb financial risks."

Reuters: "[China's top court slashes maximum legal private lending rate](#)", 20 August 2020, last accessed: 28 March 2025

The Central News Agency also reported on 21 August 2020, a day after the court's announcement, that over 2 million court cases each year were related to private lending disputes.

- "He Xiaorong [賀小榮], a full-time member of the Judicial Committee of the Supreme People's Court, said that in recent years, more than 2 million private lending disputes have flooded into the courts every year. How to define the judicial protection upper limit of interest rates is a prerequisite for the courts to handle private lending cases fairly and impartially. Timely amendments to the judicial interpretation of private lending can provide more specific and clear judgment standards and relief channels for private lending disputes. He pointed out that all sectors of society have great opinions on the behavior of issuing loans to the public in the name of "private lending" without the approval of financial regulatory authorities. Such behavior is easily intertwined with 'trap loans' and 'campus loans', seriously affecting local financial order and social stability, and seriously damaging the legitimate rights and interests of the people and their peaceful life." (*Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.*)

#### ORIGINAL SOURCE:

“最高人民法院審判委員會專職委員賀小榮表示，近幾年每年約有200餘萬件民間借貸糾紛案件湧入法院。如何劃定利率的司法保護上限，是法院公平公正處理民間借貸案件的前提條件。適時對民間借貸司法解釋進行修正，可以為民間借貸糾紛提供更為具體明確的裁判標準和救濟管道。他指出，社會各界對於以「民間借貸」為名，未經金融監管部門批准而面向社會公眾發放貸款的行為意見較大，此類行為容易與「套路貸」、「校園貸」交織在一起，嚴重影響地方的金融秩序和社會穩定，嚴重損害人民群眾合法權益和生活安寧。”

Central News Agency, "[中國大幅調降高利貸認定標準](#)", 21 August 2020, last accessed: 01 March 2025

A 2023 research report by the Peking University Finance Law Research Center, using data from the university's database, found over 51 million cases associated with the search term "loan sharking," including 3 million criminal cases.

- "With the abundance of private capital, issues related to loan sharking and associated crimes have become increasingly severe in recent years. The author utilised the Peking University Law Database, setting the time frame from 2019 to 2021, and searched for 'private lending,' which yielded a total of 6,071,849 cases. A search for

‘loan sharking’ returned 51,227,299 cases, including 3,471,539 criminal cases involving a wide range of offenses such as illegal detention, kidnapping, intentional injury, fraud, contract fraud, organising and leading criminal organisations, operating illegal casinos, and unlawfully absorbing public deposits.” (Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.)

#### ORIGINAL SOURCE:

“随着民间资本的充裕，近年来高利贷以及衍生犯罪问题愈演愈烈。笔者通过北大法宝数据库以2019—2021年为时间限制，以“民间借贷”为检索词共6071849件案件。以“高利贷”为检索词共51227299件，其中刑事案件共3471539件，涉及的罪名比较广泛，如非法拘禁罪，绑架罪，故意伤害罪，诈骗罪，合同诈骗罪，组织、领导、参加黑社会性质组织罪，开设赌场罪，非法吸收公众存款罪等。”

Peking University Finance Law Research Center, “[高利贷入罪的理论证成及规制路径](#)”, 2023, last accessed: 01 March 2025

Another China Daily article mentioned the dismantling of nine criminal gangs operating across 21 provinces in China in February 2024.

- “A nationwide crackdown on illegal ‘Apple ID loan’ scams has resulted in the arrest of 41 suspects and the dismantling of nine criminal gangs operating across 21 provinces, authorities announced on Monday [19 February 2024]. The operation, initiated by police in Chongqing, targeted groups that preyed on Apple device users by offering quick loans in exchange for their Apple ID credentials. These IDs were then used to remotely lock users' devices and extort exorbitant interest payments.”

China Daily, “[Nationwide crackdown nets 41, dismantles 'Apple ID loan' scams](#)”, 19 February 2024, last accessed: 25 March 2025

On 13 March 2025, Liberty Times Net published an article detailing the tactics used by loan sharks on online platforms.

- “Many people in urgent need of money have turned to online lending platforms, only to be scammed. In some cases, the 7-day loan interest rate was nearly 43%, and one platform's annual interest rate was as high as almost 6,000%. [...] The term “electronic signature” refers to the act of Chinese borrowers signing IOUs with legal effect on electronic signing platforms such as Jiedaibao or Renrenxin. In reality, however, the lenders are not the platforms themselves but rather strangers who join the platform to offer loans. The borrowing and lending transactions are carried out through WeChat or Alipay. [...] For example, Mr. Hong borrowed 5,000 RMB from a lender. [...] In fact, he only received 3,500 RMB, [...] yet the IOU recorded on the platform still showed 5,000 RMB. Mr. Hong said that within just 7 days he had to pay an additional 1,500 RMB in interest [...], and eventually realised he had fallen into a loan shark scheme. [...] If a borrower on Jiedaibao cannot repay on time, the platform

allows them to apply for an “extension,” which, on paper, only requires paying an extension fee for 7 more days with no extra interest. In reality, however, the lender privately demanded that Mr. Hong pay an additional 300 RMB in daily interest; otherwise, they would refuse to grant him the repayment extension.” (Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.)

ORIGINAL SOURCE: “許多民眾急須資金應急，轉向電子平台借錢卻受騙的事情，7天借款利率高達近43%，甚至其中一家電子借款平台年利率甚至近6000% [...] 「電子簽」指的是一種行為，中國借款人在借貸寶、人人信等電子簽約平台簽署具有法律效力的借條，實際上放款者並不是這些平台，而是加入平台申請要放款的陌生人，借貸雙方是透過微信或支付寶進行借、放款交易 [...] 洪先生向放款人借款5000元人民幣 [...], 實際上卻只收到3500元 [...], 但查詢借款平台上的欠條金額登記卻還是5000元。洪先生稱，短短7天還要付額外1500元 利息 [...], 他最後意識到遇到高利貸。 [...] 假如電子簽的借款人不能如期還錢，「借貸寶」平台會讓借款人辦理「延期還錢」，只要支付展期費用，延長7天不收利息。實際上，放款人私底下讓洪先生每天另外支付300元利息，否則不同意讓他延期還錢。”

Liberty Times Net: “[中國線上高利貸超離譜！利率直逼6000% 放款人竟不是活人](#)”, 17 March 2025, last accessed: 24 September 2025

## 2. Extent to which loan sharks are prepared to use violence to achieve their aims/intimidate the debtors

A 2017 Financial Times article revealed that lenders often employ thugs to collect money from borrowers. Notably, the article pointed out that debt collectors are often aware of legal limitations and that the authorities rarely intervene where non-physical intimidation occurs.

- “Private lenders usually lack legal standing to recover their loans when they are competing against banks or other creditors who are first in line, and often resort to thugs to collect money from distressed private borrowers. [...] [D]ebt collectors are aware that the law forbids beating people up, but that police will rarely intervene in cases of non-physical intimidation.”

Financial Times: “[China murder case shines spotlight on loan sharks](#)”, 30 March 2017, last accessed: 25 March 2025

The 2018 article, published by Sixth Tone, an online outlet under the Shanghai United Media Group, reports on the conviction of a loan shark gang in Shandong. The article describes the tactics used by gang members against debtors:

- “The members of the crime ring, headed by Wu Xuezhan, were gradually apprehended by police over the course of a year after one of their members was killed while forcibly detaining a woman who owed them money. Fifteen members of

the group were convicted of crimes including illegal detention, racketeering, intentional injury, and organized crime, and sentenced to between two and 25 years in prison on Friday. [...] In April of that year, Du [a gang member] and 10 of his cohorts went to collect a debt from entrepreneur Su Yinxia, who had borrowed 1.35 million yuan (\$215,000) from their boss, Wu, at a steep interest rate. The gangsters had detained Su and her then-22-year-old son, Yu Huan, when he came to check on his mother at her office. The men beat and berated Su, at various points forcing a shoe into her mouth and exposing their genitals."

Sixth Tone, "[Ringleader of Shandong Loan Shark Gang Sentenced to 25 Years](#)", 11 May 2018, last accessed: 15 September 2025

Similarly, a 2019 China Daily article highlighted the use of gangs to insult or threaten borrowers, sometimes resulting in violent crimes.

- "These gangs package themselves as private lending platforms but actually are illegal loan sharks and charge an interest rate of more than 2,000 percent. To collect debts, the gangs will insult or threaten borrowers or resort to violent crimes, such as illegal detention, she [Zeng Haiyan, an official at the ministry's Criminal Investigation Department] said."

China Daily, "[Police to fortify crackdown on illegal loan scams](#)", 26 February 2019, last accessed: 25 March 2025

A 2023 China Daily article reported that a borrower in the same province as XS was threatened by a loan company, while another borrower faced threats against their family.

- "A man surnamed Lin went to the police in Wenling, Zhejiang, on April 26 when he was told to repay more than 200,000 yuan after initially borrowing just 1,500 yuan. Lin borrowed the initial amount from an online loans company in Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province, in February, and was told to repay the sum within five days, with a default charge of 500 yuan per hour. Moreover, he was ordered to write the company an IOU for 3,000 yuan. After he failed to repay the loan on time, the company suggested that Lin borrow money from other platforms. By March 16, his debts had snowballed to more than 200,000 yuan. The company kept calling Lin and contacts it found on his mobile phone, threatening to shame him on the internet. It was at this point that he turned to the police for help. In May and June, police cracked a criminal gang led by Wu Yongjie. Wu, who was born in Sanming, Fujian, in 1989, built a network of 13 online loan teams by February 2018 and charged exorbitant rates of interest. He was convicted of fraud and racketeering, and more than 170 people involved in the case were all brought to justice. However, Lin was not the only victim. Wenling police said that in the past year, Wu's company had illegally loaned 290 million yuan to some 90,000 people. At least six of them committed suicide due to their snowballing debts and the company's illegal demands for repayment. Wang Lili (not her real name), a 21-year-old senior student at a university in Shenyang, Liaoning province, committed suicide on May 19, 2018, after being forced by Wu's company to repay debts she couldn't afford. The company also threatened to harm

her family. Her older sister said the company took Wang's money and "destroyed her will to live in just one month". Wang's debt stood at 3,500 yuan on April 25, 2018, but 23 days later, the company demanded that she repay 13,000 yuan. The daily rate of interest was set at 11.8 percent, and the annual rate was 43 times the initial amount, much higher than the rate allowed by the Supreme People's Court."

China Daily, "[Online loan sharks losing their bite](#)", 06 June 2023, last accessed: 01 March 2025

### **3. Attitude of the Chinese police towards loan sharks and police protection of people who have become indebted to them**

As mentioned above, according to the same 2017 Financial Times article, police appeared reluctant to intervene in the absence of physical injury.

- "When a gang of debt collectors showed up to harass his mother [Ms Su], Yu Huan watched helplessly as they pushed her head into a toilet and sexually insulted her. After police refused to intervene, he grabbed a knife and stabbed wildly at the attackers, killing one and injuring three. [...] Ms Su was a typical borrower. She ran a small brake-block factory in Liaocheng, Shandong Province, an area noted for its private businesses. Trial transcripts say she borrowed Rmb1m in July 2014 and had already paid back Rmb1.52m but still owed some interest payments when the 11 debt collectors turned up at her factory last April. [...] A company employee called police, but they refused to intervene when they saw no sign of physical injury. That is also typical: debt collectors are aware that the law forbids beating people up, but that police will rarely intervene in cases of non-physical intimidation. That could change, as the uproar around Mr Yu's conviction gathers steam. This week the supreme procuratorate in Beijing and the local government both announced investigations into the confluence of usury, gangs and police in Liaocheng."

Financial Times: "[China murder case shines spotlight on loan sharks](#)", 30 March 2017, last accessed: 25 March 2025

The 2018 Sixth Tone article states:

- "His gang would allegedly collude with local officials to intercept and abduct petitioners on their way to file grievances with higher authorities, harassing and intimidating them in so-called black jails. [...] But the gang did not fall foul of police until 2016, when one of its members, Du Zhihao, was killed in a high-profile usury case. In April of that year, Du and 10 of his cohorts went to collect a debt from entrepreneur Su Yinxia, who had borrowed 1.35 million yuan (\$215,000) from their boss, Wu, at a steep interest rate. The gangsters had detained Su and her then-22-year-old son, Yu Huan, when he came to check on his mother at her office. The men beat and berated Su, at various points forcing a shoe into her mouth and exposing their genitals. One of Su's employees called the police, but the officers who turned

up left mere minutes after surveying the disturbing scene.”

Sixth Tone: “[Ringleader of Shandong Loan Shark Gang Sentenced to 25 Years](#)”, 11 May 2018, last accessed: 15 September 2025

A 2018 Radio Free Asia report also indicated that authorities are generally unwilling to act unless the situation results in death.

- “Forced by loan sharks to repay their debts, Deng Yang [鄧陽], a young nurse in Beijing, and her family of three attempted suicide in Haikou [海口] last month [May 2018] but were rescued. Recently, they attempted suicide again, resulting in two deaths and one injury. The relentless debt collection by loan sharks, the inaction of the police, and the harsh criticism from netizens ultimately led to this tragic outcome. [...] According to Mr. Li, who has acted as a mediator in loan sharking disputes, the current situation is severe. An annual interest rate of 365% is considered low, with some rates exceeding 20 times the principal. Debt collection methods are brutal, and authorities are generally unwilling to intervene unless the situation results in death, leaving victims in a desperate state. (*Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.*)

ORIGINAL SOURCE:

“被高利貸逼還債，北京年輕護士鄧陽一家三口，繼上月在海口企圖輕生獲救後，近日再度自殺導致兩死一傷。高利貸持續追債及警方的不作為，加上網民的暴力輿論，最終導致三人走向絕路。 [...] 據充當過高利貸雙方調解人的李先生指出，目前高利貸現象非常嚴重。年利率365%還算低的，有的年利率甚至達到本金的20多倍。追債手段殘忍。加上沒到死人的程度，官方一般不願意介入，受害者結局都很慘。”

Radio Free Asia: “[警方無視高利貸逼還債 三口之家再度自殺兩死一傷](#)”, 02 June 2018, last accessed: 01 March 2025

Additionally, a report published on the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ website in 2019 highlighted that debt collectors are skilled at concealing and destroying evidence of illegal activities, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to intervene effectively.

- “Debt collectors deliberately evade criminal sanctions while continuing to exert psychological pressure on borrowers, making regulation difficult. They often understand the legal boundaries of debt collection and engage in illegal activities that fall below the threshold for criminal prosecution, such as insulting borrowers in private settings or detaining them for less than 24 hours. While these actions may not constitute crimes when assessed individually, debt collectors frequently commit a series of violations against borrowers, their relatives, and friends, causing significant physical and emotional harm. Moreover, professional debt collectors are adept at using various methods to conceal or destroy evidence of their illegal activities, leaving law enforcement agencies powerless to take effective action. (*Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.*)

#### ORIGINAL SOURCE:

“催债人刻意避开刑罚制裁，持续对借款人制造精神压迫的行为难以规制。催债人往往能精确拿捏催债的非法行为，在犯罪标准以下进行相关非法行为，如在非公开场合下侮辱借款人、拘禁借款人但不超过24小时等。这些行为单独评价确实不构成犯罪，但催债人反复多次对借款人及其亲友实施各种侵害，对其造成巨大的身心伤害。更有甚者，专业的催债人还懂得利用种种手段隐匿或消灭违法证据，公安机关对此也无可奈何。”

《法学杂志》：“[非法催收贷款行为的刑法规制](#)”，2019，last accessed: 01 March 2025

The 2024 report by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade indicated that loan shark operations have been large-scale, but there have also been equally large-scale police operations in response.

- “Protection is available to debtors, as ‘usurious loans’ are prohibited under China’s Civil Code (2020). The Civil Code (2020) does not define usurious interest rates, although courts have capped interest rates at four times the official rate. China’s official one-year loan prime rate was 3.35 per cent as at 20 September 2024. International media reported that formal credit agencies including banks and peer-to-peer internet lenders could consolidate debts and provide payment plans, and therefore engaging such agencies was an option to mitigate against potential risks posed to those in debt. International media reports from 2016 stated that those unable to service debts to loan sharks, and their family members, could face some familial shame. Loan shark operations have been large-scale, but were matched by equally large-scale police operations. In 2019, 253 suspects from a loan shark operation were arrested in a campaign against loan sharks in Lanzhou, Gansu Province. The operation had over 1,300 mobile phone applications and websites to facilitate usurious moneylending. The government reported that 41,000 suspects were detained in 2021, although it was not clear if this was only during the recent crackdown, or if it included prior arrests.””

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT): “[DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA](#)”, 27 December 2024, last accessed: 12 March 2025

#### 4. Level of police corruption in China

According to Transparency International’s 2020 Global Corruption Barometer Asia report, 16% of surveyed individuals believed that most or all police officers were corrupt.

- “Corruption By Institution (Percentage who think that most or all people in these institutions are corrupt.)

Police: 16%”

Transparency International, “[Global Corruption Barometer Asia 2020 Citizens' Views and Experiences of Corruption](#)”, 24 November 2020, page 40, last accessed: 25 March 2025

Although not directly related to police corruption, numerous sources point to widespread corruption among public officials in China.

- “On taking office in 2013, President Xi launched a nationwide anti-corruption campaign against high and low-ranking corrupt officials. In its first year alone, more than 180,000 officials were disciplined. In the following decade, 3.7 million cadres were punished, including about 1 per cent of national and provincial leaders.”

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), “[DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA](#)”, 27 December 2024, last accessed: 24 September 2025

Another report by Transparency International noted that, despite some improvements over the years, government corruption remained a significant issue.

- “Since 2014, China improved steadily on the CPI, increasing six points from a score of 36 in 2014 to 42 in 2020. Additionally, in the most recent Global Corruption Barometer for Asia, 64 per cent of citizens in China believed that corruption decreased in the 12 months prior to the survey. However, 62 per cent still think that government corruption is a big problem, highlighting that there is more work to be done. To that end, 28 per cent of citizens pay bribes for public services and 32 per cent use their personal connections to receive public services. This translates to hundreds of millions of people, and China still has a long way to go in curbing corruption.”

Transparency International, “[CPI 2020: Asia Pacific](#)”, 28 January 2021, last accessed: 25 March 2025

Chinese President Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign resulted in at least 4.4 million people being investigated for graft-related cases, highlighting the persistence of widespread corruption.

- “Courts in China have handed down a series of high-profile corruption-related convictions in recent weeks in a final push against corruption and political disloyalty by Chinese President Xi Jinping ahead of the party’s once-every-five-years congress. The intensity of Xi’s campaign is almost unmatched in the country’s history: fighting corruption has been a priority since Xi was anointed the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, the leader of China’s ruling party, in 2012, and there has been no let-up as he heads for an unprecedented third term in office. [...] Since Xi ascended to the presidency and rolled out his anti-corruption campaign, at least 4.4 million people have been investigated in graft-related cases, according to Zero Tolerance – a documentary on the party’s anti-corruption efforts, sponsored by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), China’s top corruption

investigation body. [...] But 10 years after Xi first became president, corruption remains rampant and many wonder how much longer the president can continue with the campaign. ‘The continued revelation of corruption reflects how widespread the problem is, how difficult it is to fully root it out, and how determined Xi is to use this mechanism to solidify his control over the CCP,’ said George Washington University’s Dickson.”

Al Jazeera, “[Xi ‘firmly in charge’ as rivals fall in China anti-graft campaign](#)”, 14 Oct 2022, last accessed: 25 March 2025

A 2024 news article revealed the dismissal of three high-level officials from the Public Security Department.

- “Li Wenxi [李文喜], Xue Heng [薛恆], and Wang Dawei [王大偉], who served consecutively as directors of the Liaoning Provincial Public Security Department in China from 2002 to 2022, were all dismissed due to corruption. The Chinese Communist Party’s official media has now disclosed that the three officials collectively accepted bribes totaling 1.231 billion yuan (approximately NT\$5.35 billion) [...] It is understood that Li Wenxi’s bribes primarily came from illegal iron ore owner Liu Zhiting [劉志廷], while Xue Heng facilitated business operations and project contracts for businessman Bai Yuchen [白玉臣] and other bribers. Nearly half of the bribes received by Wang Dawei were linked to Liaoning Zhongwang Group.”(Own translation. The translator is a Mandarin (Traditional) native speaker.)

ORIGINAL SOURCE:

“中國遼寧省公安廳2002至2022年的連續3任廳長李文喜、薛恆、王大偉涉及貪污，全部落馬，中共官媒如今公開3人的收賄金額，總計達人民幣12.31億元（約新台幣53.5億元） [...] 據了解，李文喜所收賄賂主要來自非法鐵礦礦主劉志廷，薛恆則是幫助商人白玉臣等行賄者在企業經營、工程承攬方面大開方便之門，王大偉所收賄款有將近一半是遼寧忠旺集團送的。”

Liberty Times Net, “[中國遼寧省20年連3任公安廳長貪污 共收賄53.5億](#)”, 07 January 2024, last accessed: 12 March 2025

Transparency International also reported that 3.7 million public officials were punished for corruption over the past decade.

- “China [...] has made headlines with its aggressive anti-corruption crackdown, punishing over 3.7 million public officials for corruption over the last decade. A closer study of the cases with guilty verdicts found that public officials often use corruption as a way to drive up their income. However, the country’s heavy reliance on punishment rather than institutional checks on power raises doubts over the long-term effectiveness of such anti-corruption measures.”

Transparency International, “[CPI 2023 for Asia Pacific: Regional stagnation marked by inadequate delivery of anti-corruption commitments](#)”, 30 January 2024, last accessed: 25 March 2025

The United States Department of State highlighted the prevalence of corruption and noted that anti-corruption measures were applied inconsistently and at the authorities' discretion. Readers should note that Asylos has chosen to cite the USDOS human rights report on China that was published in 2024 and has not cited the most recent report published in 2025 report. This is due to the fact that in this instance, the most recent USDOS human rights report does not include coverage of corruption within the Chinese authorities (see the [Sources consulted](#) list for a description of this source).

- “The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials and the government continued its anti-corruption and discipline campaign but did not implement the law consistently or transparently. Corruption remained prevalent. Many cases of corruption involved areas heavily regulated by the government, such as land usage rights, real estate, mining, and infrastructure development, which were susceptible to fraud, bribery, and kickbacks.”

USDOS – US Department of State, “[2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China \(Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet\)](#)”, 23 April 2024, last accessed: 25 March 2025

A report published by the U.S. State Department in July 2024 on the environment as relates to investment in China, discussed efforts to challenge corruption, and assessed that anti-corruption measures are applied inconsistently.

- “In June 2020 the CCP passed a law on Administrative Discipline for Public Officials, continuing efforts to strengthen supervision over individuals working in the public sector. The law enumerates targeted illicit activities such as bribery and misuse of public funds or assets for personal gain. Anecdotal information suggests anti-corruption measures are applied inconsistently and discretionarily. For example, to fight commercial corruption in the medical sector, the health authorities issued “blacklists” of firms and agents involved in commercial bribery, including several foreign companies. While central government leadership has welcomed increased public participation in reporting suspected corruption at lower levels, direct criticism of central leadership or policies remains off-limits and is seen as an existential threat to the PRC’s political and social stability.”

USDOS – US Department of State, “[2024 Investment Climate Statements](#)”, 17 July 2024, last accessed: 25 March 2025

## 5. **The prevalence of trafficking (and re-trafficking) of women and children for sexual exploitation within China and to the UK**

### a. Human trafficking in Asia

The Migration Policy Institute highlights the widespread and often hidden nature of human trafficking in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly the exploitation of women through

recruitment and violent confinement.

- “Worldwide, human trafficking is under-detected, under-reported, and often not prosecuted. [...] . The Asia-Pacific region accounts for slightly more than half of this industry and is the origin of two-thirds of trafficking victims. [...] Tales of deception are common. Agents, brokers, or traffickers may promise women jobs such as farmworkers or in the service industry in China, but often subsequently sell the women into sexual slavery. [...] Many locals often turn a blind eye to instances of trafficking. Women and girls forced into their situation have described being confined to small rooms and being subjected to physical and sexual violence.”

Migration Policy Institute, “[China’s Demand for Brides Draws Women from Across Southeast Asia—Sometimes by Force](#)”, January 30, 2024, last accessed: 1 March 2025

Interpol's Secretary-General, Jurgen Stock, highlighted that human trafficking in Southeast Asia has escalated into a global crisis, with organized crime rings expanding their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- “Driven by online anonymity, inspired by new business models and accelerated by COVID, these organised crime groups are now working at a scale that was unimaginable a decade ago.

What began as a regional crime threat in Southeast Asia has become a global human trafficking crisis, with millions of victims, both in the cyber scam centres and as targets.”

Yantoultra Ngui “[Southeast Asia human trafficking now a global crisis, Interpol says](#)” Thomson Reuters, March 28 2024, last accessed: 15 March 2025

Furthermore, citing a variety of sources, the Global Slavery Index 2023 portrays China's role as a destination country, documenting the commercial sexual exploitation of children trafficked from neighbouring countries, as well as the practice of forced marriage and the trade of girls (readers are advised to consult the sources to understand the underlying sources upon which the information is based).

- “Perpetrators similarly subject children to commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) in China. [...] North Korean girls as young as nine are reportedly forced into online commercial sexual exploitation in China. Girls from other neighbouring countries such as Lao PDR [...] and Vietnam [...] are also trafficked to China for sexual exploitation.”

Forced marriage in China is fuelled by the skewed ratio of men to women [...] generated a demand for brides and a surge in the marriage brokering profession – a trade that has drawn human traffickers: women are trafficked from neighbouring countries such as Myanmar, [...] Vietnam, [...] Pakistan, [...] Lao PDR, [...] and Cambodia [...] to fulfil the bride shortage. Forced marriage may lead to other forms of exploitation, including domestic servitude, forced labour, [...] and forced sexual exploitation. [...] Forced surrogacy and trafficking of pregnant women to China to sell their babies has also been observed. [...]”

Walk Free, “[Global Slavery Index 2023: Modern Slavery in China](#)”, Minderoo Foundation. November 2023. last accessed: 15 September 2025

### **b. Prevalence within China and efforts to counter trafficking in China**

Given the clandestine nature of trafficking and the challenges that can exist in identifying victims of trafficking, there are no reliable or comprehensive statistics on the prevalence of human trafficking of women and girls in China. As noted in the 2025 U.S. Department of State’s latest Trafficking in Persons (TiP) Report on China, official reporting remains inconsistent and incomplete.

- “For the eighth consecutive year, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) did not report the number of investigations initiated of possible trafficking cases (1,004 in 2016), but publicly claimed in May 2024 that human trafficking cases had declined by two thirds over the previous five years without providing any evidence of this decline. The government initiated prosecutions of at least three traffickers turned over to Chinese law enforcement by foreign law enforcement counterparts (compared with 86 cases prosecuted in 2021). [...] In prior years, the government published limited data on convictions in human trafficking cases on a public judicial database; however, it did not publish any convictions for human trafficking crimes during the reporting period. Reports suggested the government also systematically removed previously published information about trafficking cases from previous years. The government publicized recovering 2,505 abducted women and children – an unknown number of whom were exploited in trafficking – and resolving 109 “trafficking cases,” but it did not provide data on the total number of cases of “forced prostitution” or forced labor it concluded in 2024 (compared with 683 abducted women and children recovered in 2023). For the third year, the government did not report convicting or sentencing any traffickers (compared with nine convictions in 2021; unreported in 2020; 2,355 convictions in 2019).”

US Department of State, “[2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)”, 29 September 2025: October 2025

The Fight For Her Group (FFHG) report “Leaving No Sister with Disabilities Behind”, described an analysis of 616 judicial case files related to trafficking in women between 2017 to 2020, involving 1,252 women trafficked in China. The analysis showed that 20% of these women were living with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

- “An analysis of 616 judicial case files involving trafficking in women from 2017 to 2020 shows that 20% of the 1,252 women trafficked in China had disabilities, and most intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. And more than 60% of the women with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities were abducted by strangers passing by in outdoor locations such as roadsides, stations, and fields. Another study of 1,038 first-instance judgments involving the crime of trafficking in women and children from January 2000 to July 2017 shows that 26.7% of the victims suffered from varying degrees of mental illness. Among the identifiable origins and destinations, rural areas

dominate with 71.7% and 91.5% respectively.”

Fight For Her Group (FFHG), “[Leaving No Sister with Disabilities Behind](#)” January 2023, last accessed: 3 March 2025

The same FFHG report points to social factors associated with trafficking in China.

- “Chinese rural areas generally prefer sons to daughters, and have a deep-rooted obsession with reproduction. The country’s one-child policy has exacerbated the gender imbalance and created a large number of rural bachelors. The parents of rural women with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities transfer their heavy care responsibilities by arranging marriage for their daughters, and even connive in the crime of trafficking in the name of marriage. Meanwhile, they deny their daughters’ rights to education and employment development.”

Fight For Her Group (FFHG), report “[Leaving No Sister with Disabilities Behind](#)” January 2023, last accessed: 3 March 2025

The Global Slavery Index published by Walk Free estimated that 5.8 million people were living in modern slavery conditions in China. Besides, their last assessment report highlights the insufficient Chinese government measures to combat human trafficking:

- “5.8 million people were living in modern slavery in China on any given day in 2021. [...]”

Walk Free, “[Global Slavery Index 2023: Modern Slavery in China](#)”, November 2023, last accessed: 15 September 2025

Citing various sources, Walk Free’s webpage “Modern Slavery in China”, discussed China’s response to modern slavery.

- “While China demonstrated some efforts to tackle modern slavery through sustained coordination at the national and regional levels – including by adopting a new national action plan for 2021 to 2030 [...] – its overall response is critically undermined by the use of state-imposed forced labour. [...]”

Walk Free, “[Global Slavery Index / Country Study Modern slavery in China](#)”, n.d, last accessed: 23 October 2025

The Chinese government goals of the 2021 “The China Action Plan Against Human Trafficking (2021–2030)” are:

- “Strengthen governance at the source, improving the socially-based prevention network for human trafficking crimes and carrying out grid management to build a group prevention and corrections system that coordinates multiple departments and

in which society broadly participates. Comprehensively punish human trafficking activities in key areas and "buyer's markets" and strictly combat the use of networks to carry out human trafficking, to effectively prevent the occurrences of human trafficking"

*(China Law Translate provided English translation)*

ORIGINAL SOURCE:

加强源头治理，完善以社区为基础的预防拐卖人口犯罪网络，实施网格化管理，构建多部门协同、社会广泛参与的群防群治工作体系。综合整治拐卖人口犯罪活动重点地区和“买方市场”，严厉打击利用网络实施拐卖人口犯罪，有效预防拐卖人口犯罪发生。

China Law Translate: "[China's Action Plan against Human Trafficking \(2021-2030\)](#)," April 29, 2021, last accessed: 20 March 2025

Nonetheless, according to the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons 2025 report assessed that the Chinese Government has still not taken the necessary steps to eradicate human trafficking in the country.

- "The Government of the People's Republic of China does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. [...] Despite this, the government took some steps to address trafficking, including to raise Chinese citizens' awareness of human trafficking – including the risk of forced labor in online scam operations in Southeast Asia – and cooperating with foreign law enforcement to repatriate Chinese nationals suspected of human trafficking abroad. [...] For the eighth consecutive year, the government did not report complete law enforcement data, nor did it report identifying any trafficking victims or referring them to protection services. The government did not investigate Chinese criminal organizations operating many of the online scam operations in the region."

US Department of State, "[2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)", 29 September 2025: October 2025

According to China Daily some Chinese policymakers and legal experts have called for tougher criminal penalties for buyers of trafficked women and children, especially in light of public outrage over recent trafficking cases. These calls reflect an internal recognition that demand-side enforcement remains weak and socially tolerated.

- "The Criminal Law stipulates that those who abduct and traffic women and children face at least five years behind bars, with penalties rising to 10 year's imprisonment or more, and even the death penalty in especially serious cases. But the maximum prison sentence for those who purchase abducted women and children is three years. '*Whether they are traffickers or purchasers, essentially they violate the core values of human beings and enslave other people, which is inhumane and unbearable*,' said Pan Xiangli, an NPC deputy from Shanghai who is planning to file a

motion calling for a revision to the Criminal Law. *'It's more than necessary to legally fix the act of buying women and children as a felony and impose heavy criminal penalties on violators. This will be a necessary correction to rectify distorted value positions.'*"

China Daily, "[Lawmakers, advisers seek tougher penalties for human trafficking](#)", China Society for Human Rights Studies, February 28, 2022, last accessed: 25 March 2025

### c. Prevalence within the UK

It is important to note that the following sources provide statistics on those identified as potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking who were referred to the UK National Referral Mechanism [NRM]. Readers should note that these statistics are not an indicator of the full prevalence of trafficking and modern slavery in the UK, only represent the number of potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking who have been identified by the relevant UK authorities within the stated time periods.

According to the National Crime Agency the UK continues to face a growing challenge of modern slavery and human trafficking, with victims found in a range of industries including sex work and forced labour.

- "Referrals for modern slavery and human trafficking have increased: in the year ending December 2022, 7,936 referrals were made for potential victims of exploitation that has taken place solely in the UK, an increase of 10.3% on the previous year. Many victims work in the construction industry, in agriculture, in the sex industry, and in places like nail bars, car washes, and cannabis farms. Children are found working in all of these situations, as well as in sexual slavery."

UK National Crime Agency, "[Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#)", 2023, last accessed: 26 March 2025

The UK Home Office Country Policy and Information Note China: Modern Slavery cited UK Home Office's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics, outlining that in 2023 a total of 269 Chinese potential victims of modern slavery were referred, of whom 121 were related to sexual exploitation. In the first quarter of 2024, 122 Chinese potential victims were referred, including 40 cases linked to sexual exploitation.

- "The UK Home Office's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics for 2023 stated there were a total of 269 Chinese potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM, 249 were adults at the time of referral and 20 were children at the time of referral. Of the 269 referrals, 121 were related to labour exploitation, 121 were related to sexual exploitation, 15 were unspecified/unknown, 9 were related to criminal exploitation and 3 were related to domestic exploitation. NRM statistics for the first quarter of 2024 recorded 122 Chinese potential victims of modern slavery, 102 were adults and 20 were children at the time of the referral. Of the 122 potential victims 50 related to labour exploitation and 40 to sexual exploitation."

## 6. Support available for victims of trafficking who are returned to China

According to UN China, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) aims to support China's national anti-trafficking initiatives. Their involvement encompasses a comprehensive approach to prevention, assistance, and reintegration efforts.

- “IOM has undertaken various counter-trafficking activities to assist the implementation of China's Second National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking for the period 2013-2020 and for the period 2021-2030. In particular, IOM supports the Government of China's efforts to prevent and respond to human trafficking including provision of assistance to trafficked persons, both in China mainland and in Hong Kong and Macau SARs, China. IOM has also provided support for assisted voluntary return and reintegration of vulnerable migrants from and to China.”

UN China “[Consultant – Counter-Trafficking in Persons](#)” November 2, 2021, last accessed: 25 March 2025

The U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons report 2025 gave an overview of support for victims of trafficking in China, although the report noted that the Chinese government did not provide any information on victim service provision, and therefore relies on previously reported data.

- “For the eighth consecutive year, the government did not report how many victims it screened, identified, or referred to protection services, although media reports indicated authorities continued to remove some victims from exploitative situations. NGOs in neighboring countries reported Chinese security and law enforcement officials working with foreign authorities encouraged those authorities to eschew standard victim screening procedures. The government did not report any cooperation between police and social workers, women's shelters, or NGOs to identify victims during the reporting period. Local Public Security Bureaus (PSBs) were responsible for investigating suspicious cases involving women, children, individuals experiencing homelessness, and individuals with disabilities, and were required to establish local public reporting mechanisms; the purpose of the reporting mechanisms was unclear. [...]”

China lacked a standardized national referral mechanism, but MPS maintained written instructions for law enforcement officers throughout the country aiming to clarify procedures for identifying trafficking victims among individuals in commercial sex and forced or fraudulent marriage. Due to a lack of formal identification procedures, observers reported authorities detained, arrested and penalized unidentified trafficking victims, including for commercial sex and immigration offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked, and among the Chinese

nationals arrested and returned from online scam compounds in Southeast Asia. MPS officials reportedly maintained a procedure to screen for trafficking indicators among individuals arrested on suspicion of “prostitution” crimes, but did not implement this procedure in practice. [...]

The government did not provide data on victim service provision in 2024. The government previously reported maintaining at least 10 shelters specifically dedicated to care for Chinese national trafficking victims, as well as eight shelters for foreign trafficking victims and at least 1,567 multipurpose shelters nationwide that could accommodate trafficking victims; it did not provide any information on these shelters for the sixth consecutive year. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, the All-China Women’s Federation, and community-based NGOs could provide victims with shelter, medical care, counseling, legal aid, and social services, as well as rehabilitation services in some cases; the government did not report providing these services to any victims. Access to specialized care depended on victims’ location and sex; experts noted there were ad hoc referral procedures and an acute lack of protection services in the south [...]

The government did not report providing support to victims who assisted with investigations or prosecutions of trafficking cases in 2024. Authorities did not condition access to victim care on cooperation with law enforcement, but they did require victims to provide information to police and did not provide alternatives to speaking with law enforcement during investigations. The law entitled victims to obtain restitution during criminal prosecutions and claim compensation through civil lawsuits against traffickers; however, the government did not report whether any victims benefited from this provision in 2024 and observers assessed authorities likely did not apply this benefit equitably across all cases. [...]

In prior years, MOJ officials reportedly provided some free legal assistance to trafficking victims, but government-affiliated NGO observers noted some victims faced difficulties accessing these services or had to pay for their own representation.”

US Department of State, “[2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)”,  
29 September 2025: October 2025

A “Directory of Services for Vulnerable Individuals Returning to China” published by the IOM and the UK International Development Program in March 2025, sets out different types of support, including shelter, legal, psychological and social support, that exist for survivors or potential survivors of trafficking.

- “Shelter support: In China, government agencies are the primary providers of shelter support.  
Legal support: Several pro bono law firms offer legal assistance to vulnerable individuals, accessible through a national centralised hotline. This Directory also includes examples of law firms that service users can contact directly if preferred.  
Psychological support hotlines: Each province in China operates dedicated hotlines offering free mental health support. These hotlines are typically managed by provincial government authorities in collaboration with local hospitals and health commissions. While long-term, in-person treatment is available when necessary,

service fees may apply depending on the provider.

Social support: A range of organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foundations, and social work organisations, offer various forms of social support. This section is organised by region to facilitate easier access to services based on location. [...]

These shelters can be categorized into three types:

1. Women's Homes: Operated by the Women's Federation at the provincial and municipal levels, these facilities provide assistance to victims of domestic violence and other forms of sexual exploitation. Every city in China has at least one such facility to support women in need.

2. Youth Protection Centres: These centres, jointly managed by the Bureau of Civil Affairs and the Women's Federation at the provincial and municipal levels, aim to protect and enhance the well-being of children under the age of 18. They offer services such as emergency shelter, counselling, legal assistance, rehabilitation programs, and family tracing and reunification. These centres are available to children whose legal guardians are missing or unable to provide care.

3. Shelters for individuals facing significant challenges: Managed by the Bureau of Civil Affairs, these shelters are primarily designed for the homeless population. Vulnerable individuals of all genders are theoretically eligible to apply for these shelters if they can provide documentation that proves they come from low-income families or suffer from significant challenges such as disabilities. [...]

Individuals can seek legal support if the traffickers or perpetrators are in China and/or if the exploitation occurred within China. In general, consultation services are free, while a minimum fee may be charged for facilitating a legal case. Legal assistance primarily focuses on helping individuals pursue prosecution against traffickers and seek financial compensation for the harm they have suffered [...]

[For psychological support] most of the hotline services are available 24/7, free of charge and accessible for everyone. Upon calling, individuals will be immediately connected to a therapist. However, this service is intended as a short-term solution. For cases requiring long-term intervention, individuals can request a referral to the nearest mental health support clinic. The costs for such services vary depending on the specific circumstances of each case."

International Organization for Migration and UK International Development Program, "[Directory of services for vulnerable individuals returning to China](#)", March 2025, last accessed: 15 September 2025

## 7. Barriers to access to mental health support and treatment (especially for female returnees)

It should be noted that shortcomings in victim identification can present barriers to accessing mental health support and treatment for victims of trafficking. For information on victim identification, see [6. Support available for victims of trafficking who are returned to China](#).

### a. The Ministry of Public Security

According to the U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons report 2025, a law pertaining to foreign NGOs placed restrictions on their activities, including those intended to support victims of trafficking:

- “Implementation of a law placing foreign NGOs in China under MPS supervision continued to impose burdensome requirements and restrictions on the activities of civil society organizations, including those able to provide services for trafficking victims and communities vulnerable to the crime.”

US Department of State, “[2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)”, 29 September 2025: October 2025

#### **b. Institutional barriers: The Hukou System**

According to the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons report 2024, the Chinese government’s household registration (hukou) system significantly impedes trafficking survivors’ access to essential reintegration support, including mental health and social services. The most recent release of the Trafficking in Persons report 2025 on China does not explicitly mention the impact of the hukou system on the ability of those returning from exploitation abroad to access social services. Lack of reporting on this issue in the most recent Trafficking in Persons report does not necessarily indicate that this issue does not persist.

- “The government hukou [household registration] system continued to contribute to trafficking risks of internal migrants by reducing access to social services, particularly for PRC victims returning from exploitation abroad, and by driving hundreds of millions of individuals to live and work illegally outside the jurisdiction of their household registration. The government continued to address some of these vulnerabilities by requiring local governments to provide a mechanism for migrant workers to obtain residency permits. However, authorities disproportionately made these residency permits unavailable to rural ethnic Han migrants and members of ethnic minority groups, exacerbating their constrained access to employment and social services.”

US Department of State, “[2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)”, 2024, last accessed: 15 March 2025

Research published in *China Economic Review* further emphasizes how the hukou system negatively influences migrants’ welfare by effectively forcing their return to their hometown:

- “[...] if the returning is caused by institutional barriers such as Hukou registration constraints, and migrants are ‘forced’ to going back to their hometown, returning could lead to significant welfare loss. In China, most migrants return to their hometown more likely because of Hukou registration constraint that reduces migrants’ willingness to settle down in their working location.”

Zhang, Huang et al., "[Return migration and Hukou registration constraints in Chinese cities](#)" in China Economic Review Vol 63, October 2023, last accessed: 15 March 2025

### c. Social Stigma

According to the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons report 2025, social stigma continued to prevent many sex trafficking victims from seeking help.

- "Widespread stigma against sex trafficking victims likely continued to discourage many from accessing protection services."

US Department of State, "[2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#)", 29 September 2025: October 2025

The Migration Policy Institute reported that many returnees experience severe stigma and discrimination and that official government support tends to be minimal.

- "Research suggests that returnees face steep challenges to reintegration. Many experience severe stigma and discrimination from their trafficking, and official government support tends to be minimal. Some non-government organizations provide food, health checkups, and legal counseling, among other supports."

Migration Policy Institute, "[China's Demand for Brides Draws Women from Across Southeast Asia—Sometimes by Force](#)", January 30, 2024, last accessed: 1 March 2025



## About Asylos

Asylos is a network of volunteers providing research assistance to lawyers who represent refugees. Asylos is an international network of over 60 volunteers in 25 countries who provide high-quality Country of Origin Information research for people claiming asylum and their representatives around the world.

Asylos provides services free of charge to lawyers and NGO caseworkers around the world who are assisting asylum seekers through their legal procedures. We produce case-based and broader Country of Origin Information (COI) research reports, used to support a variety of protection-based claims in court.

Contact us if you have any specific needs/have spotted any gap in COI research [info@asylos.org](mailto:info@asylos.org). For more information, please visit our website [www.asylos.org](http://www.asylos.org).

You can subscribe to our monthly research update on  
<https://asylos.org/subscribe-research-newsletter/>

## Support Asylos

If you value our work, please consider donating to support us. Just €5 per month helps us continue to support lawyers and organisations like yours to access justice on behalf of their clients. Thank you!

You can donate at [asylos.org/appeal/donate](http://asylos.org/appeal/donate)