

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Vietnam

VIETNAM (Tier 2)

The Government of Vietnam does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, Vietnam remained on Tier 2. These efforts included passing a new anti-trafficking law governing protection efforts; increasing trafficking prosecutions and convictions; providing, for the first time, investigation case data disaggregated between sex and labor trafficking; identifying more trafficking victims; and screening some potential trafficking victims returned from online scam operations. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government provided services to fewer trafficking victims. The government did not report proactively or consistently screening, identifying, or providing specialized services to the overwhelming majority of potential labor or sex trafficking victims among Vietnamese returnees from online scam operations, including those directly repatriated by the government. For the third consecutive year, the government did not formally identify any foreign national trafficking victims. Authorities inspected thousands of the most at-risk establishments for sex trafficking but did not report formally identifying any victims.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Amend the penal code to fully criminalize the sex trafficking of 16- and 17-year-old children consistent with international law.
- Continue to investigate and prosecute traffickers, including labor traffickers and complicit officials, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Improve victim screening and interagency coordination to identify and assist victims among vulnerable groups, to include individuals in commercial sex, including women and girls discovered during law enforcement actions and inspections of business establishments that facilitate commercial sex; child laborers; individuals fleeing online scam operations; foreign nationals and migrant workers; and Cuban regime-affiliated workers, including medical professionals.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Ensure protection and assistance services continue to be provided to trafficking victims during the ongoing government and provincial restructuring.
- In coordination with civil society and international partners, expand and institutionalize training for law enforcement, diplomats, social workers, the judiciary, and other first responders on proactive victim screening and identification guidelines, trauma-informed care, and victim-centered approaches to working with victims of trafficking.
- Eliminate all worker-paid recruitment fees and predatory recruitment practices for workers migrating abroad and to or within Vietnam; improve the worker complaint process and increase awareness of existing worker protections; strengthen efforts to monitor labor recruitment companies, including state-owned recruitment agencies, third-party sub-brokers, and the protections outlined in migrant worker contracts; and strengthen efforts to hold labor recruiters civilly and criminally liable for fraudulent recruiting.
- Allocate additional resources at the national, provincial, and local levels to implement the 2021-2025 NAP; develop an updated and comprehensive NAP following the completion of the current plan.

- Continue to train officials on implementing Articles 150 and 151 of the Penal Code and implementing guidelines for the new anti-trafficking law, including identifying and investigating labor trafficking and domestic trafficking cases.
- Complete revisions to the NRM to accompany the implementation of the new 2024 anti-trafficking law that include provisions on roles and responsibilities and implementation plans at the national, provincial, and local levels.
- Standardize and integrate comprehensive anti-trafficking statistics into a centralized database to accurately track and report the government's efforts and improve information sharing among relevant government agencies and external stakeholders.
- Invite independent verification of the termination of forced labor in drug treatment centers and make the results of such verification public.
- Screen any North Korean workers for signs of trafficking and refer them to appropriate services in a manner consistent with obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2397.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts.

Article 150 of the penal code criminalized labor trafficking and sex trafficking of adults and prescribed penalties of five to 10 years' imprisonment and fines of 20 million to 100 million Vietnamese dong (VND) (\$785 to \$3,925). Article 151 criminalized labor trafficking and sex trafficking of children younger than the age of 16 and prescribed penalties of seven to 12 years' imprisonment and fines of 50 million to 200 million VND (\$1,962 to \$7,849). These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with other grave crimes, such as rape. However, these laws did not criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking. Article 150 applied to children between the ages of 16 and 17 years old and required a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a sex trafficking crime. In November 2024, the government adopted revisions to the 2011 anti-trafficking law; this new 2024 anti-trafficking law was scheduled for implementation after the reporting period. Consistent with international law, the new 2024 anti-trafficking law removed the required demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion when identifying child sex trafficking victims. The 2024 anti-trafficking law also added "other inhumane purposes" to the definition of trafficking, which included forced criminality. The 2024 anti-trafficking law, similar to the 2011 anti-trafficking law before it, did not amend the penal code, creating conflicting provisions. For example, the penal code still required a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion to constitute a sex trafficking crime in cases of victims ages 16 and 17. In March 2025, the government described plans to revise the penal code, including a review of Articles 150 and 151 to address this conflict and fully criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking.

The government provided data disaggregated by sex or labor trafficking for investigations for the first time. In 2024, the government investigated 237 suspected traffickers in 91 cases – nine cases for sex trafficking, 29 for labor trafficking, and 53 for unspecified forms of exploitation. This data could not be wholly compared to 2023 data, which was not disaggregated between sex and labor trafficking and included overall numbers of both new and ongoing investigations (investigations of 365 suspected traffickers in 147 cases). Authorities continued investigating 218 suspected traffickers in 72 cases opened in previous reporting periods. Authorities did not provide prosecution or conviction data disaggregated by sex or labor trafficking and did not provide sufficient information to determine whether data involving unspecified forms of exploitation met the definition of trafficking according to international law. The government prosecuted 291 alleged traffickers in 2024, compared with prosecuting 198 alleged traffickers in 2023. Courts convicted 246 traffickers, compared with convicting 198 traffickers in 2023. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes. Authorities did not vigorously prosecute previous claims of labor trafficking in state-owned or licensed labor export companies.

The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) led the government’s investigative efforts, and the Supreme People’s Procuracy led the government’s prosecution efforts. The government worked with foreign governments by engaging in anti-trafficking dialogues, sharing information, and cooperating on trafficking investigations. Prosecutors often used other laws, including relating to migrant smuggling, to prosecute transnational trafficking crimes, reportedly due to inadequate resources or capacity to collect evidence from overseas. The government coordinated with foreign governments to investigate and interdict some online scam operations exploiting Vietnamese victims hosted abroad. In the past, officials noted the extraction, storage, and analysis of digital evidence, combined with ambiguities surrounding its permissibility in court proceedings, hindered the government’s ability to combat internet-facilitated trafficking crimes. Authorities reported difficulties prosecuting and adjudicating trafficking cases in border provinces due to limited capacity in rural areas. Authorities reported investigations and prosecutions of potential trafficking allegations were sometimes hindered by insufficient cooperation with neighboring countries and authorities’ difficulty in adapting to changing victim profiles linked to labor trafficking in online scam operations. The government, in partnership with international organizations, NGOs, and foreign governments, provided anti-trafficking training to law enforcement officers, border guards, prosecutors, judges, provincial and district level officials, and other front-line workers.

PROTECTION

The government maintained efforts to protect victims.

The government lacked a reliable mechanism to consolidate statistics on the total number of victims identified and assisted; therefore, the government’s reported victim identification and protection data may have been duplicative or in some cases undercounted, as the government did not report how many victims it referred to NGOs. The government identified 500 victims in 2024 – 310 females, 190 males, and 236 children – compared with identifying 311 victims in 2023 – 195 females, 116 males, and 146 children. All identified victims were Vietnamese, and the government did not provide data disaggregated by form of exploitation, compared with reporting 176 victims exploited in labor trafficking and 40 victims of “sexual exploitation” in 2023; some of the victims of “sexual exploitation” reported in prior years may not have been victims of trafficking as defined by international law. Furthermore, the government likely included victims of unspecified forms of trafficking in their reported data, such as “illegal marriage” and “illegal adoption,” which were inconsistent with the definition of trafficking under international law. Identified victims included 169 members of ethnic minority communities, or 34 percent of the total victims identified. Ethnic minorities constitute approximately 15 percent of Vietnam’s population. The government did not formally identify any foreign national trafficking victims for the third consecutive year. Despite widespread government, NGO, and international organization reporting of traffickers exploiting thousands of Vietnamese nationals in forced labor and forced criminality in online scam operations in Southeast Asia, the government did not report how many victims from such operations it identified.

The government used victim identification criteria disseminated by the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking (COMMIT), along with its own victim identification procedures approved in 2014. The government continued using survey forms, developed in partnership with an international organization, for border guards to screen Vietnamese adults and children for trafficking indicators at border crossings. However, authorities did not consistently or proactively use the COMMIT criteria or their own procedures to screen for trafficking indicators among key vulnerable populations in all regions, including individuals in commercial sex, individuals transiting border stations, workers in the fishing and seafood processing industries, migrant workers returning from abroad, child laborers, or individuals fleeing online scam operations in neighboring countries. The victim identification process remained overly cumbersome and complex, requiring approval from multiple ministries before victims could be formally identified and assisted. The government maintained an NRM approved in 2014, but some local officials’ unfamiliarity with anti-trafficking protocol and policies, insufficient interjurisdictional cooperation, and limited social worker capacity continued to hinder its systematic

and effective implementation. Under the 2014 NRM, authorities required victims who were not directly rescued by Vietnamese law enforcement to file a formal declaration to initiate the interagency process to formally confirm their status as a trafficking victim and obtain access to additional services. The 2024 anti-trafficking law, when enacted, would expand many protection services to potential victims, shortening the time between initial identification and service provision under the NRM. The 2024 anti-trafficking law also expanded services available for trafficking victims and mandated a government policy of non-punishment for crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked. The government had not implemented this law, nor updated its NRM, by the end of the reporting period. The Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) Department of Social Vices Prevention continued to develop a screening toolkit to identify Vietnamese trafficking victims in the country, including individuals in commercial sex and those working in restaurants, karaoke clubs, and bars. The government reported further revising the screening toolkit; however, for the third year, officials had not finalized the toolkit by the end of the reporting period and had not provided a timeline for doing so.

A lack of capacity, personnel, and resources sometimes hindered law enforcement, border guard, and other officials' ability to consistently and proactively screen for trafficking victims. Observers reported growing government capacity improved some screening efforts. In the past, civil society groups reported Vietnamese victims feared reprisals from Vietnamese authorities for immigration offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked, and international observers reported government officials often blamed Vietnamese citizens for their exploitative conditions abroad or suggested victims inflated abuses to avoid immigration violations. Authorities did not report formally identifying any trafficking victims during the more than 23,000 inspections conducted at establishments at high risk of sex trafficking in 2024. State-run media reported on multiple law enforcement actions against high-risk establishments during which authorities arrested numerous suspected sex traffickers and reportedly rescued victims; however, the government did not issue data on the status of the potential victims nor whether authorities consistently screened them for trafficking indicators, identified them as trafficking victims, or provided these potential victims with services. Due to a lack of systematic implementation of victim-centered screening procedures during these inspections, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. According to one observer, authorities have previously threatened and harassed survivors of labor trafficking in labor export companies, and their families, to intimidate them from sharing their experiences.

Authorities reportedly repatriated more than 5,000 Vietnamese nationals exploited in online scam operations in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and the Philippines since 2022. Widespread reports indicated the majority of individuals recruited for these operations faced conditions indicative of labor trafficking; however, officials acknowledged most of these potential trafficking victims were not screened or identified as victims prior to or following their repatriation, or provided with specialized or long-term services. Authorities provided emergency medical care for many potential victims and coordinated with each individual's home provinces when conducting repatriations. Border officials reportedly screened some returnees from online scam operations in neighboring Cambodia and Laos. Due to the government's cumbersome victim identification process, which exacerbated economic hardship for survivors and their families, and fears of reprisal and punishment by local authorities, many Vietnamese victims chose not to report their exploitation to government officials – which left these victims without access to most or all protection services. Observers reported that in the past authorities penalized victims exploited in online scam operations for immigration offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked; furthermore, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential Vietnamese labor trafficking victims – apprehended during joint law enforcement actions against online scam operations – solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. NGOs reported Vietnamese diplomatic personnel stationed abroad lacked an understanding of forced labor in online scam operations and did not have adequate resources to identify victims or effectively assist citizens. NGOs noted a hesitancy among some provinces with limited resources to identify potential victims returning from abroad because funding for support services came directly from provincial budgets rather than a central fund, which created a conflict of interest for provinces with limited resources.

Authorities assisted 246 victims in 2024, including 91 women, 78 girls, 62 men, and 15 boys; this compared with the government not reporting how many victims it assisted in 2023. The government provided formally identified Vietnamese victims with support services that included shelter, meals, travel expenses, medical support, psychological support, legal aid, vocational training, and financial assistance. Victims who did not meet a minimum poverty threshold were excluded from some support services, including tuition exemption and financial assistance.

Observers noted the quality of care provided to trafficking victims varied widely depending on geography, a victim's circumstance, and the strength of local civil society; NGOs reported the support victims received was often inadequate, especially in remote and poorer provinces where local governments provided the initial support budget. While the government did not identify any foreign national victims, authorities reportedly provided limited assistance services to at least 46 potential foreign national victims. Foreign victims, if identified by the government, were eligible to access medical support, psychological support, and legal aid but were excluded from accessing other long-term support such as travel expense support, vocational training, or an initial financial allowance. The government reported 57 out of 425 social support facilities nationwide assisted trafficking victims as well as other vulnerable populations; some of these facilities operated with NGO funding, and none provided specialized or dedicated services for men or child victims.

Authorities allowed victims to stay at support facilities for up to three months with a meal stipend and medical assistance. The government, in partnership with NGOs, operated three dedicated trafficking shelters for women and children. The government reported officials often placed men referred to trafficking shelters in separate accommodations. Adult victims could leave the facility or shelter unchaperoned at any time, and officials appointed a guardian for child victims. In 2024, the government passed a new Juvenile Justice Law, which expanded protection and rehabilitation services for child victims of crime, including human trafficking; the government did not implement the law by the end of the reporting period. Observers reported many labor trafficking victims did not fully understand their rights and how to access support services, hindering timely identification and access to legal assistance and other protection services. In addition, observers reported some Vietnamese migrant workers returned without formal victim status certification, which made it difficult for authorities to verify and facilitate access to support and legal assistance. Observers reported concern the government did not have minimum quality standards for protection services administered by service providers. Systemic delays in the government's approval of licenses and operations challenged NGOs working in Vietnam, including those working on anti-trafficking activities. The government lacked adequately trained or experienced social workers to provide appropriate support to trafficking victims, and observers reported front-line workers, judges, teachers, and medical professionals were poorly trained to address child protection issues, including human trafficking.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) did not report repatriating any Vietnamese trafficking victims in 2024, compared with repatriating 13 victims in 2023. This number does not include those returned from online scam operations in the region who were not formally identified as trafficking victims. A lack of jurisdictional clarity between MFA and MOLISA in repatriating and supporting overseas trafficking victims increased risks of delays in victim return and assistance. The MFA continued using SOPs for diplomats to support overseas Vietnamese women who were victims of violence, including trafficking. The government maintained labor representatives at diplomatic missions in countries that hosted large numbers of documented Vietnamese migrant workers, such as Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Taiwan, and the United Arab Emirates. These missions could provide basic provisions, transportation, and health care to Vietnamese trafficking victims abroad. The government reported it maintained emergency hotlines for citizen protection, including for reporting trafficking and exploitation, at overseas diplomatic missions; however, observers reported most of these hotlines were non-functioning and failed to support trafficking victims, particularly hotlines in countries impacted by online scam operations. The government did not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they may face retribution or hardship.

Vietnamese law guaranteed trafficking victims legal assistance and protective services, including the right to legal representation; the law did not require victims to be present at or testify in person in court and allowed audio- or video-recorded testimonies. The government increased the number of child-friendly investigation rooms from 45 to 65 at the provincial level. The government

provided legal aid to 122 victims, compared with 50 victims in 2023. The law also entitled trafficking victims to compensation and restitution in trafficking cases. The government reported courts ordered 50 defendants to pay restitution to 54 trafficking victims, ranging from three to 50 million VND (\$118 to \$1,962). The government encouraged trafficking victims to assist in judicial proceedings against traffickers; however, NGOs reported victims – particularly victims of online scam operations – were hesitant to participate in prosecutions due to fears of penalization. The government reported 500 victims participated in investigations and prosecutions, compared with 40 victims participating in 2023.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking.

The government's Steering Committee on Combating Crimes (steering committee) led Vietnam's anti-trafficking efforts; the committee was headed by MPS, which directly coordinated nationwide anti-trafficking efforts. The government's interagency working group, which included provincial-level government agencies, supervised anti-trafficking efforts in the provinces and coordinated with the steering committee. Observers reported an increasingly strict project review process and widespread bureaucratic caution caused by both an ongoing government restructuring effort and an anti-corruption campaign resulted in delayed approvals for both foreign funded and domestic projects in all sectors, including some anti-trafficking activities. The government continued to implement its anti-trafficking NAP for 2021-2025; the government reported reviewing, but not yet updating, its NAP for after 2025. The government allocated 14.7 billion VND (\$576,923) across several ministries for trafficking prevention efforts and for the implementation of the NAP, compared with allocating 18.4 billion VND (\$722,135) in 2023. The government held public mid-term assessments of the NAP in 2023 and monitored and evaluated progress against the plan through internal weekly, monthly, and semi-annual reports. The government, in partnership with NGOs, conducted awareness campaigns at the national, provincial, and district levels targeting vulnerable populations and the broader public; some campaigns focused on raising awareness around online scam operations. The government, in partnership with an international organization, released research on transnational migration and trafficking trends. MOLISA, with donor funding, operated a 24-hour hotline for victims of crime, including trafficking; operation of the hotline was transferred to the Ministry of Health in March 2025 following the abolition of MOLISA. The hotline retained translators who could speak English and several ethnic minority languages. The hotline received 1,920 calls, compared with 1,781 in 2023, and it received 64 trafficking referrals involving 75 victims; it referred 59 victims to the police, 18 victims to MOLISA, seven to the border guard, and 48 victims to NGOs. The 2024 anti-trafficking law mandated the creation of a trafficking specific hotline.

The government continued implementation of Law 69 and its related policies that prohibited charging contract-based Vietnamese overseas workers certain fees and expanded their protections, including the right to unilaterally terminate a contract; however, the law permitted recruitment agencies to continue charging worker-paid recruitment fees. Although observers reported that since its passage Law 69 had overall reduced the cost of worker-paid recruitment fees, government officials lacked adequate training to support the law's implementation, and the government lacked a formal system to receive worker complaints. Some destination countries' individual labor recruitment regulations, at times, conflicted with Law 69; for example, Japan passed a regulation in 2021 affirming that Vietnamese workers were still required to pay service fees to participate in work programs there. State-licensed private labor recruitment firms, in particular those affiliated with state-owned enterprises, and unlicensed brokers reportedly continued to charge some workers seeking overseas employment higher fees than the law allowed, making them vulnerable to debt-based coercion. Border officials reportedly prevented more than 500 individuals from traveling abroad to potentially exploitative situations in 2024.

MOLISA received 73 civil complaints related to labor recruitment practices in 2024, compared with 119 in 2023. The government inspected 60 labor export enterprises, of which it fined 50 for

administrative violations to a total of 1.83 billion VND (\$71,821), compared with 41 inspections and 27 fines leading to 1.03 billion VND (\$40,424) in 2023. MOLISA revoked one recruiter's business license and suspended another two for violations of Law 69, compared with revoking seven business licenses and suspending another five in 2023. The government reported 10 cases were transferred to local authorities to investigate organizations and individuals sending workers abroad without licenses, compared with nine such cases in 2023. Reports indicated the government did not make sufficient efforts to educate the public on the risks inherent to seeking work abroad through unscrupulous labor export companies or vulnerable recruitment channels. The government reportedly did not issue clear guidance about the formal process for migrant workers to file complaints against their employers. Observers reported the government did not adequately implement fisheries laws and regulations or monitor the domestic fishing fleet; however, the government made some efforts to prosecute and convict individuals allegedly in violation of the fisheries law. Officials reportedly lacked appropriate resources and trainings to adequately enforce labor laws in the fishing sector.

The government maintained labor migration agreements on Vietnamese workers with 16 governments. The government continued negotiations on labor cooperation agreements initiated in a prior reporting period with additional foreign governments. The government also maintained a separate 2017 Memorandum of Cooperation with the Government of Japan to improve protections for Vietnamese participants in Japan's Technical Intern Training Program amid continued reports of exploitation of Vietnamese workers in the program; together with an international partner, the government reported cooperating with the Government of Japan in tentatively forming new policies and mechanisms to reduce worker paid recruitment fees. In prior years, reports indicated the government did not exercise sufficient oversight of contract and recruitment processes under the auspices of some of these bilateral agreements. Within the country, observers noted an inability to form independent unions continued to constrain the protection of worker's rights, and restrictions on freedom of expression and association continued to impede some public discourse on key labor and land rights issues related to trafficking vulnerabilities. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and extraterritorial commercial child sexual exploitation and abuse among foreign visitors, including by imposing fines for administrative violations related to commercial sex and closing online marketplaces for purchasing commercial sex and sexual exploitation and abuse material. The government did not take steps to deny entry of known sex offenders. For the first time, the government provided anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to their deployments as peacekeepers.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Vietnam, and traffickers exploit victims from Vietnam abroad. Sixty-nine percent of workers are employed in the informal economy where labor laws are not effectively enforced, increasing vulnerability to trafficking. Traffickers are sometimes parents, family members, or small-scale networks exploiting Vietnamese men, women, and children – including children who were homeless – in forced labor, although little information is available on these cases. A previous study indicated 80 percent of known trafficking victims in Vietnam were members of ethnic minority communities; however, NGOs report an increasing number of Kinh ethnic majority members exploited in forced labor, especially in online scams. Government estimates suggest 78 percent of known trafficking victims in 2024 were Kinh ethnic majority members. Other reports suggest many children in Vietnam may experience coercion or exploitation indicative of trafficking, with children from rural and vulnerable communities at particularly high risk. Traffickers exploit children and adults in forced labor in street hawking and begging in major urban centers and urban family homes. Adults are also at risk of forced labor in the garment industry. Reports indicate traffickers exploit women and girls domestically in Vietnam in sex trafficking in massage parlors, karaoke bars, and hotels. Observers claim many sex trafficking cases are unreported because of social stigma and victims' fear of possible repercussions by authorities. Domestically, traffickers often create and exploit personal, trusting relationships with potential

victims before isolating and exploiting them in sex or labor trafficking in karaoke bars, massage parlors, and restaurants. Sex traffickers target many children from impoverished rural areas. Traffickers increasingly channel their criminal activities through the traditional practice of “bride kidnapping” to exploit girls from ethnic minority communities in the northwest highlands, including in sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service. Perpetrators of extraterritorial child sexual exploitation and abuse travel to Vietnam to exploit children; many of the perpetrators reportedly originate from elsewhere in Asia, the United Kingdom (UK), other countries in Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Environmental impacts causing displacement, including extreme heat, saltwater intrusion, and drought, force an estimated 24,000 people to leave the Mekong Delta region every year, increasing trafficking risks due to livelihood loss.

In prior years, there were reports of some complicit Vietnamese officials, primarily at commune and village levels, who allegedly facilitated trafficking or exploited victims by accepting bribes from traffickers, overlooking trafficking indicators, and extorting money in exchange for reuniting victims with their families. In 2019, the government reported it had ceased the practice of subjecting drug users to forced labor in its 105 rehabilitation centers; this claim has not been independently verified. In 2021, the government reported revising its regulations on drug addiction treatment, stipulating that any labor performed by detainees in compulsory drug rehabilitation centers must comply with provisions of Vietnam’s labor law and include remuneration. A 2014 legal provision requires a judicial proceeding before detention of drug users in compulsory drug rehabilitation centers and restricts detainees’ maximum workday to four hours. There were prior reports that prisoners, including political and religious dissidents, were forced to work in agriculture, manufacturing, and hazardous industries, such as cashew processing. North Korean nationals working in Vietnam may be operating under exploitative working conditions and display multiple indicators of forced labor. The Cuban regime may have forced Cuban regime-affiliated workers, including medical professionals, in Vietnam to work. Vietnamese authorities reported Cuban medical workers are paid directly by employing hospitals.

Vietnamese men and women migrate abroad for work informally, including through illicit brokerage networks operated by other Vietnamese nationals based abroad, or through state-owned or state-regulated labor recruitment enterprises. Approximately 158,000 Vietnamese workers went abroad under contracts in 2024 alone; most of these workers went to Japan, Taiwan, ROK, Singapore, and China. Some recruitment companies are unresponsive to workers’ requests for assistance in situations of exploitation, and some charge excessive fees, increasing workers’ vulnerability to forced labor through debt-based coercion. High worker-paid recruitment fees pushed many Vietnamese workers to migrate outside legal channels and increased their vulnerability to trafficking. Traffickers exploit Vietnamese nationals in forced labor in construction, agriculture, mining, maritime industries, logging, and manufacturing, primarily in Malaysia, ROK, Laos, Japan, and in some parts of the Middle East and Europe – such as the UK and Iceland – including in nail salons and on cannabis farms. Traffickers reportedly exploit Vietnamese fishermen in labor trafficking in the fishing fleets of countries in the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia and Southeast Asia, including on Taiwan- and Indonesia-flagged vessels; many of these vessels operate under complex ownership and registration arrangements that enable traffickers to evade detection and intervention by law enforcement. The lack of a requirement for labor contracts and use of oral agreements in the fishing industry increases fishermen’s vulnerability to trafficking. Vietnamese traffickers, including two members of Vietnam’s diplomatic service, reportedly exploited Vietnamese nationals in forced labor in Saudi Arabia; the diplomats in this case were recalled and investigated. Some Vietnamese nationals are exploited in forced labor under the auspices of Japan’s Technical Intern Training Program and in agricultural education programs in Israel. Vietnamese nationals endure restricted freedom of movement, travel and identity document confiscation, threats of physical violence, poor living and working conditions, contract irregularities, fraudulent recruitment, and punitive deportation at Chinese national-owned factories affiliated with the Chinese government’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Balkan region. Widespread social stigma against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or identity increases their vulnerability to trafficking.

Traffickers in border villages reportedly lure Vietnamese women and girls, particularly from the Hmong ethnic minority group, to China for forced marriages that often involve sex trafficking

and/or forced labor. There are past reports of Vietnamese women and girls in forced childbearing, including cases in which traffickers lure them to China with false job offers, abduct them at the border, and transfer them to unregulated hospital facilities, where they are subjected to forcible artificial insemination and confined until they give birth. Vietnamese women and girls are reportedly vulnerable to forced labor and sex trafficking at “girl bars” – entertainment sites advertising paid “accompaniment” services often involving sex acts with young women and girls – in urban areas in Japan. Organized crime syndicates operating within special economic zones (SEZs) in Southeast Asia – particularly in the Golden Triangle SEZ at the intersection of the Burmese, Thai, and Lao borders – exploit Vietnamese nationals through deceptive recruitment and in sex trafficking. During migration, European gangs and traffickers often exploit Vietnamese victims in forced labor and sex trafficking before they reach their final destination. The operators of Vietnamese national-owned agricultural plantations exploit local internal migrants in forced labor in neighboring Laos.

Traffickers exploit tens of thousands of Vietnamese nationals in forced labor in online scam operations, or in sex trafficking in locations near online scam operations, located primarily in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and the Philippines. Traffickers are reportedly increasingly using Ho Chi Minh City as a transit point for trafficking. Traffickers lure Vietnamese nationals, increasingly men and young adults with secondary education, with false promises of job opportunities abroad to then exploit them in forced criminality in online scam operations. There are at least 10,000 Vietnamese nationals ostensibly working in casinos and gaming businesses in Burma – industries that frequently disguised online scam operations – though the true number of Vietnamese nationals exploited in these operations is almost certainly much higher. Traffickers increasingly use the internet, gaming sites, and social media to lure victims, proliferate trafficking operations, and control victims by restricting their social media access, impersonating them, and spreading disinformation online. Male traffickers sometimes entice young women and girls with online dating relationships, persuade them to move abroad, then exploit them in forced labor or sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit Vietnamese women and children in sex trafficking overseas, misleading many victims with fraudulent employment opportunities and transferring them to commercial sex establishments on the borders with China, Cambodia, and Laos, or elsewhere in Asia, West Africa, and Europe. Traffickers exploit an increasing number of Vietnamese women and girls in sex trafficking in Burma. Traffickers exploit some Vietnamese women who travel abroad for internationally brokered marriages or jobs in restaurants, massage parlors, and karaoke bars – including to Burma, Japan, ROK, Malaysia, China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Taiwan – in forced labor in domestic service or sex trafficking.