

2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: France

FRANCE (Tier 1)

The Government of France fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore France remained on Tier 1. These efforts included investigating more suspects and convicting more traffickers. The government also indicted a municipal official accused of trafficking and identified and assisted more victims. The government continued delivering comprehensive training to a variety of officials; and law enforcement continued participating in extensive international investigations and partnerships, which resulted in the identification of victims and arrest of suspects. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it prosecuted fewer suspects and continued to lack an NRM to ensure uniform proactive victim identification and referral to care. Funding for victim assistance decreased for the second consecutive year and was generally insufficient. Compensation and restitution for victims remained extremely rare. Law enforcement authorities continued to arrest and prosecute child victims of forced begging and forced criminality and deport undocumented migrants from Mayotte, an overseas French department, without screening for trafficking indicators. Furthermore, the government again did not take effective steps to address the 3,000 to 4,000 unaccompanied Comorian children at risk for trafficking in Mayotte. Finally, the government did not sufficiently disaggregate data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation or between sex and labor trafficking, stymieing efforts to assess labor trafficking and diagnose and address trafficking trends.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Coordinate and centralize the timely collection of trafficking data across the government, including sufficiently disaggregating data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as well as between sex and labor trafficking.
- Adopt an NRM for all forms of trafficking.
- Increase efforts to proactively identify and provide assistance to trafficking victims in all regions and departments, both domestic and overseas, including for vulnerable populations like asylum-seekers and child victims of forced begging and criminality.
- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Increase funding and resources specifically for anti-trafficking coordination and victim assistance, including adequate funding for NGOs providing assistance.
- Increase interagency coordination to investigate and prevent labor trafficking.
- Systematically train all front-line officials, including labor inspectors, police, prosecutors, and judges, on a victim-centered approach to investigating and prosecuting labor trafficking and identifying victims.
- Vigorously investigate labor trafficking and prosecute these crimes as trafficking rather than labor code violations.
- Allow formal victim identification without requiring cooperation or interaction with law enforcement and by entities other than law enforcement officials, including by civil society, social workers, and healthcare professionals.
- Ensure adequate training for law enforcement investigators on techniques to dismantle human trafficking organizations operating on the internet and other technologies.
- Consistently screen all migrants for trafficking indicators, including unaccompanied children in Mayotte.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, especially child victims of forced begging and

criminality.

- Adopt a NAP with defined timeframe, a dedicated budget for implementation, detailed measures, and monitoring indicators.
- Provide adequate resources for child victims, including improving the quality of shelters and specialized assistance, especially of forced begging and criminality.
- Increase trafficking survivor access to restitution and compensation and increase prosecutor's efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials, including for victims lacking legal status.
- Offer the reflection period to all victims, including migrants and victims of forced begging and criminality.
- Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism and continue to prosecute and convict perpetrators.
- Ensure sufficient resources are provided to the national rapporteur and the anti-trafficking coordinator.
- Increase worker protections by prohibiting recruitment or placement fees charged to workers by labor recruiters and ensuring employers pay any recruitment fees.
- Establish adequate accommodation centers dedicated to adult male trafficking victims that take into account the specific needs of these trafficking victims.
- Increase survivor engagement when forming policies, programs, and trainings.
- Increase efforts to pursue financial crime investigations in tandem with human trafficking cases.

PROSECUTION

The government slightly increased law enforcement efforts. Article 225-4 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of up to €150,000 (\$160,260) for offenses involving an adult victim and up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to €1.5 million (\$1.60 million) for those involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape.

The government did not report comprehensive and disaggregated law enforcement data, but provided information from all French departments and territories, including those overseas. The government conducted 141 investigations ("procedures") related to human trafficking in 2021, the most recent year data was available, an increase compared with 121 in 2020, but less than 190 in 2019. In 2021, law enforcement investigated and dismantled 24 networks involved in facilitating human trafficking, an increase compared with 17 networks in 2020. In a notable case in 2022, the government charged a subsidiary of a French construction company with forced labor of migrant workers hired to build infrastructure in Qatar around the World Cup; the investigation remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

The government remained without adequate data disaggregation between sex and labor trafficking for indictments and convictions. The government reported prosecuting 215 trafficking suspects in 2021, the most recent year data was available, a decrease compared with 245 suspects in 2020 and 318 suspects in 2019. Courts reported convicting 105 traffickers in 2021, the most recent year for which data was available; an increase compared with 66 in 2020 and 91 in 2019, but similar to 104 in 2018. While the government did not report comprehensive and specific sentencing data in a format that allowed for an accurate assessment of significant sentencing, it provided a six-year average (2015-2021) of 3.8 years' imprisonment with 79 percent of convicted traffickers serving all or part of their prison sentence.

In 2021, an elected municipal official was accused of forcing a potential trafficking victim to participate in commercial sex via coercion and threats of deportation; in December 2022, the government arrested and indicted the alleged trafficker for rape and "aggravated pimping" and the case remained ongoing. The government did not report any convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes.

The National Consultative Commission for Human Rights (CNCDH), which functioned as the independent national rapporteur, urged courts to issue more consistent and rigorous sentences to convicted human traffickers and NGOs reported trafficking sentences were not a sufficient deterrent, especially in cases of labor trafficking. NGOs also expressed concern about the inconsistency of anti-trafficking prosecutions across the country, which could vary depending on the level of engagement of local prosecutors. In its 2022 report, GRETA noted many investigators, prosecutors, and judges believed transnational networks or crossing an international border were necessary elements of human trafficking and therefore did not pursue cases without these elements as trafficking cases. Furthermore, an NGO asserted police sometimes recorded sex and labor trafficking complaints as lesser crimes that did not necessitate an official investigation or failed to register the complaint at all. NGOs also observed judges and prosecutors were sometimes reluctant to formally certify forced labor victims because of the protections subsequently granted to them and recommended judges and prosecutors take additional targeted training. Trafficking victims were not afforded the same rights and entitlements, such as residence permits and full compensation, if their cases were pursued as other crimes. GRETA expressed concern trafficking crimes were being convicted under other statutes and urged the government to rectify this, including through further trafficking specialization for investigators, prosecutors, and judges.

The government had several bodies responsible for investigating trafficking: the Ministry of Interior's Central Office for the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings (OCRTEH) was responsible for cases of sex trafficking and other crimes, and the Central Office for Combatting Illegal Labor and the Central Office for the Suppression of Irregular Migration and the Employment of Irregular Migrants were responsible for labor trafficking cases and other crimes. While the government did not have courts specialized in human trafficking trials, there was a court that could hear complex cases related to organized crime. During the reporting period, the government appointed a specialized trafficking judge in Mayotte. The government and government-funded NGOs continued providing extensive anti-trafficking training programs and conferences for various law enforcement officers, prosecutors, magistrates, labor inspectors, officials working with refugees and asylum-seekers, and authorities reviewing residence permits. Several trainings were in-depth and multiple weeks in duration, including a new course, established in 2022, for investigators that focused on labor trafficking. In October 2022, the Inter-ministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Human Trafficking (MIPROF) published and distributed a training guide for front-line officials on the identification and protection of victims. The CNCDH and several other government bodies raised concerns regarding the lack of adequate training for many police investigators on techniques to dismantle human trafficking organizations that operated on the internet and through other technologies – a trend that rapidly increased during the pandemic. The government reported offering several training courses on internet-based investigations in 2022. In its annual report, OCRTEH acknowledged the need to incorporate online surveillance, undercover investigations, and increase the collection and examination of web-based ads for commercial sex.

In 2022, the government continued extensive collaboration on international investigations, including with EUROPOL, INTERPOL, and dozens of countries in some of the larger operations, which resulted in the identification of at least 980 victims, the arrest of at least 151 trafficking suspects, and the conviction of four traffickers in both France and cooperating countries. One notable investigation took place in March 2022 through a joint operational taskforce with Romania and Spain, in which law enforcement dismantled a sex trafficking network that predominantly used the “lover boy” scheme; this cooperation resulted in the arrest of seven suspects (two in France) and identification of 32 primarily Romanian victims (13 in France). French law enforcement continued to participate with 15 joint investigation teams to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation with various countries and maintained a police liaison in Nigeria. To foster increased cooperation with civil society and better assistance to victims, OCRTEH continued a previously established cooperation mechanism with Ac-Se – a government-funded anti-trafficking NGO network – to inform, assist, and protect trafficking victims. This close coordination with civil society and multidisciplinary approach resulted in seamless assistance to trafficking victims identified during operations and allowed NGOs to accompany victims to interviews with law enforcement and ensure local shelters were prepared ahead of time to receive victims.

PROTECTION

The government maintained modest victim identification and protection efforts. The government remained without an NRM and comprehensive, centralized, or sufficiently disaggregated data, making victim identification difficult to assess. The government did not adequately disaggregate data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation or between sex and labor trafficking. In 2021, police identified 331 human trafficking victims, an increase compared with 228 in 2020 and 244 in 2019. In 2021, police also identified additional victims, including 31 “victims of exploitation of begging” (23 in 2020 and 48 in 2019), 24 victims of forced labor (less than five in both 2020 and 2019), and 33 victims of “reduction to slavery and servitude” (five in 2020 and 23 in 2019). Most of these victims were likely trafficking victims, but it was unclear if some victims from these statistics were also included in the aggregated human trafficking statistics. In addition, Police identified 1,044 victims of commercial sexual exploitation in 2021, some of whom may have been sex trafficking victims; of these victims, at least 269 were French children. This compared with 786 victims of commercial sexual exploitation in 2020 (217 children) and 785 victims in 2019 (187 children). In its annual report, OCRTEH stated the number of child sex trafficking victims increased by 23 percent in 2021. Of the commercial sexual exploitation victims where a trafficking element was indicated, 11 victims were French (39 in 2020), including two French children (three in 2020). Gaps in victim identification remained and the government did not report the specific number of French nationals, children, asylum-seeking, or labor trafficking victims it identified in 2021; however, French nationals tended to be the majority of identified victims and identified child victims continued to increase. The government, experts, NGOs, and GRETA expressed concern regarding the government’s national statistics on victim identification and asserted the scale of human trafficking in France was likely much higher than official statistics. Victim protection data included all French departments and territories, including those overseas.

The government remained without an NRM to ensure uniform, proactive identification and equal assistance to victims across the country. However, the government’s previously established interdepartmental working group, which included NGOs, continued to meet, though it did not report concrete progress since it submitted a draft NRM for review in January 2022. In its 2013, 2017, and 2022 reports, GRETA urged the government to adopt an NRM. Most ministries and regions had formal procedures for identifying victims and authorities continued to use an NGO-run referral mechanism. GRETA noted the government remained without a formal identification process for victims who were nationals of France or a European Economic Area country. The government assumed the majority of individuals in commercial sex and all foreign adult individuals in commercial sex were trafficking victims, and it systematically screened this population for indicators. However, this assumption could have led to a misunderstanding of sex trafficking amongst front-line officials and conflation with commercial sex. Authorities also often mischaracterized victims of forced criminality as delinquents or illegal workers and consequently excluded them from assistance. The government did not, as frequently, formally recognize forced labor victims. Given the significant increase in children exploited in commercial sex in the past few years, which NGOs estimated to be between 10,000 and 15,000 predominantly French girls, in April 2021, the national rapporteur publicly urged the government to adopt a clear criminal policy against the sexual exploitation of children. The rapporteur recommended improving the identification of child victims by increasing training and data collection, targeting online platforms, and increasing national awareness campaigns.

The government provided funding for the Ac-Se system, an NGO-managed network of 88 partners, including 59 reception facilities; five NGOs that act as both reception facilities and specialized service providers; two combined reception and advice centers; and 22 specialized service providers assisting adult victims of sex and labor trafficking. The Ac-Se network provided victims with shelter, legal, medical, and psychological services. However, GRETA reported the network did not cover the entire country or overseas French Departments. Both police and NGOs referred victims

to Ac-Se. However, only the police, gendarmerie, and judiciary could formally identify victims and formal identification required victims to cooperate with law enforcement. NGOs reported formal recognition as a trafficking victim was difficult to achieve; such status offered additional protections and, in practice, was necessary to obtain asylum or a residence permit, healthcare, and housing. The CNCDH urged the government to allow formal victim identification without a requirement to cooperate with law enforcement and also by entities other than law enforcement, including by civil society, healthcare workers, and social workers; however, the government did not report taking concrete steps on this recommendation during the reporting period. The government provided Ac-Se with €228,502 (\$244,130) in 2022, in addition to an unreported amount of funding it dispersed to individual NGOs supporting the Ac-Se network. This amount was a significant decrease compared with €523,000 (\$558,760) in 2021 and €797,000 (\$851,500) in 2020. Another government-funded NGO reported receiving €236,000 (\$252,140) in 2022, an increase compared with €181,000 (\$193,380) in 2021. NGOs criticized the amount of funding generally provided by the government for victim assistance as insufficient and asserted the government often funded anti-trafficking efforts from the women's rights budget with little transparency into how much it allocated specifically to human trafficking. NGOs also raised concerns pertaining to the lack of a dedicated budget allocation to NGOs providing assistance to trafficking victims, forcing NGOs to rely on donations from private entities. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to increase funding and resources dedicated to combating human trafficking. In addition to victims identified by the government, NGOs reported identifying at least 4,868 human trafficking victims (81 percent were sex trafficking victims and 19 percent were labor trafficking victims, including six percent for forced criminality and two percent for forced begging) and assisting 2,872 victims in 2021, but many of the NGOs did not receive government funding and the government did not provide further details. While only partial data on victim assistance was available, government-funded NGOs reported assisting a total of at least 375 trafficking victims, including shelter by Ac-Se network for 84 adult victims and 13 child dependents in 2021; this was an increase compared with 260 trafficking victims in 2020 and 264 in 2019.

Victims were entitled to a 30-day reflection period during which they could decide whether to lodge a complaint or participate in criminal proceedings against a trafficker; however, some authorities were not familiar with the reflection period and did not offer it. Although formal victim identification required law enforcement cooperation, victims who chose not to cooperate could still receive free medical attention. Local governments provided French language classes to victims, and some victims could qualify for subsidized housing and job training programs, but the government did not report the number of victims provided with these benefits. The national employment agency provided some foreign victims with an initial stipend of €350 (\$374) a month, but did not report the number of victims that received this stipend during the reporting period; civil society organizations reported the conditions for being granted a stipend were not uniform and varied by region.

Unless victims were in immediate danger or in a highly vulnerable situation requiring geographic relocation, they were not eligible for admittance into Ac-Se's shelter program; NGOs observed migrants without legal status often struggled to find housing, which increased their risk of exploitation. The central and municipal governments continued to partially fund the operation of a shelter in Paris that could accommodate 20 victims, as well as a small number of emergency apartments external to the Ac-Se system. There were no accommodation centers dedicated to adult male trafficking victims; communal homes or homeless shelters were sometimes used, however, these accommodations did not take into account the specific needs of trafficking victims. NGOs noted the overall limited number of accommodations available to victims throughout the country by the Ac-Se network. Police referred child victims to the Child Welfare Services (ASE) system, which provided shelter, or a government-funded NGO-run shelter for up to 12 children, which could include trafficking victims; the shelter offered health, psychological, and judicial support. Authorities noted a significant increase in children exploited in commercial sex over the past five years with traffickers targeting girls in government children's shelters. GRETA and the national rapporteur reported a lack of adequate resources for the special assistance needs of child trafficking victims, especially considering the increase in child victims in recent years. GRETA noted unaccompanied children at airports or immigration reception centers sometimes disappeared or were picked up by traffickers. While GRETA noted improved assistance to victims in recent years,

it expressed concern regarding the persistent insufficient number of shelters and funding for NGOs who provided victims with care.

The law entitled trafficking victims to free legal aid, subject to meeting a number of requirements, and victims who did not meet the requirements for legal aid could receive assistance from NGOs. However, in its 2022 report, GRETA asserted lawyers were often unfamiliar with trafficking and urged the government to ensure all victims – regardless of the victim’s immigration status – had systematic early access to legal assistance. GRETA expressed concern legal aid was unavailable for undocumented migrants and may have restricted the rights of some victims’ access to justice. Judges heard criminal trials for trafficking in private at the victim’s request and remote testimony, including by video, was also available. Although NGOs sometimes provided psychological support to victims, the government did not fund this service and NGOs and GRETA asserted psychological counseling to victims was insufficient. However, victims usually had access to a psychologist during court proceedings, which was a legal requirement for children. The government took additional precautions to prevent re-traumatizing children: the law limited the interview of child victims to one time, law enforcement used child-friendly procedures, and the government had specialized law enforcement officials and courts for child victims. The government had specialized private victim interview rooms for children, but GRETA and NGOs reported law enforcement was often unaware of them or did not use them. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to increase usage of audio-visual equipment to interview victims and specialized interview rooms, especially for children. NGOs and GRETA noted, despite the legal entitlement, the government did not consistently provide interpreters to victims during trials or information in a language they understood, the responsibility of which would then pass to NGOs, often without available government funding.

In its 2022 report, GRETA noted front-line officials were not adequately trained on human trafficking and could not inform victims of their rights or anti-trafficking procedures, despite the availability of a standard form on victim rights; GRETA urged the government to address these gaps. In its 2022 report, OCRTEH agreed investigators were often unaware of the specific rights of trafficking victims and because the government did not adequately educate victims on their rights, victims were less likely to cooperate with law enforcement. To address this, officials created a standard document, available in four languages, on the rights of the victim, interview steps, and available services, which were distributed in police stations and to potential victims. While the government provided police protection for victims during trials only, authorities acknowledged the need to allocate additional funding to programs supporting the relocation of trafficking survivors. The CNCDDH urged the government to improve assistance provided to victims during their trials. In its 2022 report, OCRTEH recommended increased training for investigators and the establishment of partnerships with specialized associations on interview techniques for trafficking victims.

The government issued permits only when victims cooperated with police investigations or enrolled in the government’s reintegration program, which required ceasing involvement in commercial sex and often required paperwork victims could not obtain. Authorities generally offered permanent residency to trafficking victims following a successful conviction of the trafficker. The government reported issuing or renewing 428 temporary residence permits (293 in 2020 and 313 in 2019) and at least 37 permanent residence permits (25 in 2020 and 41 in 2019) to trafficking victims in 2021, the most recent year data was available. In its 2022 report, GRETA noted while trafficking survivors with residence permits were permitted to work, they often faced language barriers, lacked necessary training, and were in need of further psychological assistance due to trauma suffered; GRETA urged the government to address these issues. Trafficking victims were also eligible for international protection under refugee status or subsidiary protection status in cases where victims had a credible fear of retaliation, including from public authorities in their country of origin, if returned; however, the government did not report the number of victims granted such status. The government offered a specialized support program for asylum-seekers who were also victims of violence or human trafficking, but it required the victims to be formally recognized. The program provided secure lodging, psychological support, and a path to request asylum, but the government did not report how many asylum-seekers utilized this program. The government had internal guidelines to evaluate and process asylum claims on the basis of labor

trafficking. GRETA and a large collective of anti-trafficking NGOs believed the 2018 law on asylum and immigration, which eased restrictions on migrant deportation, limited victims' ability to receive temporary residence due to time-bound restrictions on permit applications and more stringent approval criteria. In its 2022 report, GRETA cited instances where trafficking victims in the asylum system had numerous interactions with law enforcement but were never identified as a victim, as well as where NGOs had identified trafficking victims, but law enforcement disagreed or deported the victim despite the victim having lodged a complaint against the trafficker; GRETA recommended increased training on human trafficking for front-line officials.

The government did not uniformly screen undocumented migrants in Mayotte for trafficking indicators prior to their deportation, which may have left some trafficking victims unidentified. The Government of Tanzania reported attempting to coordinate with France regarding an increasing number of trafficking victims from Burundi transiting Tanzania to Mayotte, but the government did not take any action. Of the 3,000 to 4,000 unaccompanied Comorian children at risk for sex and labor trafficking in the French department of Mayotte, the government reportedly provided only approximately 40 children per year with accommodation and education; it did not address the protection needs, including medical care, shelter, or education, of the remaining 3,000 to 4,000 children.

The government continued to lack comprehensive statistics on compensation, restitution, and damages awarded to trafficking victims. Trafficking victims could obtain compensation for personal injuries from the government through the commission for the compensation of victims of criminal offences (CIVI). GRETA reported if prosecutors charged a suspect with a labor law violation instead of labor trafficking, victims would receive less compensation. The government did not report granting compensation to any trafficking victims in 2022 or 2021, but a government-funded NGO reported one trafficking victim received compensation. While not systematic or mandatory, criminal courts could order traffickers to pay restitution to victims who were citizens of France or the European Economic Community (ECC), when the act was committed on French territory, or the victim had legal immigration status. The government reported awarding restitution to an unknown number of victims from one case in 2022, compared with zero in 2021. Victims who were citizens of France, the ECC, or had legal immigration status could also bring a civil suit against a trafficker for damages; however, authorities did not report any victims filing suits or awarding damages to any victims during the reporting period. GRETA and NGOs reported victim restitution was rare and amounts for compensation and restitution were small. GRETA reported in 2022 that even when traffickers were ordered to pay restitution or damages, victims often did not receive payment because enforcement was difficult and traffickers often declared bankruptcy. Victims of sex trafficking may have had difficulty in claiming restitution or damages because they did not have a legal form of employment. Victims lacking legal status were ineligible for restitution or damages, potentially increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. The government could use assets confiscated from traffickers and provide them to victims or associations providing care; however, the government did not report whether any of these funds were provided to trafficking victims in 2022, 2021, or 2020. Victims could also receive backpay from the Labor Court. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to better guarantee effective access to compensation, restitution, and damages; increase training for frontline officials; and use the confiscated assets from traffickers for victims.

GRETA reported the lack of a specific provision in French law protecting victims from being inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked could leave victims vulnerable to penalization, especially child victims of forced criminality and forced begging. The Minister of Justice requested prosecutors avoid prosecuting children for forced criminality, but this continued to leave adult victims vulnerable and this request was not codified in law. In its 2017 and 2022 reports, GRETA expressed concern that police continued to arrest and prosecute child victims of forced begging and forced criminality without screening for trafficking indicators. NGOs and MIPROF reported in 2021, 76 percent of forced criminality victims identified by NGOs were children and of those victims, 53 were prosecuted for offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked; in the cases where NGOs were aware of the outcome, 98 percent of the victims were convicted. GRETA and NGOs expressed concern the

convictions for formally recognized trafficking victims could not be expunged, which could prevent some victims from accessing employment.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts. MIPROF continued to coordinate government-wide efforts on anti-trafficking and the prevention of violence against women; however, NGOs and GRETA urged the government to increase personnel and resources allocated to the office. MIPROF's anti-trafficking steering committee included national, regional, and local governments, as well as NGOs; it met once during the reporting period to discuss the next NAP. NGOs noted an overall decrease in the government's engagement with NGOs on national coordination efforts. The CNCDH continued to serve as the independent national rapporteur for trafficking, but resources remained insufficient. The government's anti-trafficking NAP for all forms of trafficking expired in December 2022 and the government did not report efforts to draft a new plan; however, the government continued to implement a NAP specifically for children exploited in commercial sex, including child sex trafficking. Ahead of drafting a new NAP, experts urged the government to address the flaws in the prior plan, including the need for a defined timeframe, a dedicated budget for implementation, detailed measures, and monitoring indicators. The government made limited efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking by continuing several awareness campaigns launched in prior years, including one campaign on child sex trafficking and one on the trafficking risks for refugees fleeing Russia's war against Ukraine, which included the distribution of leaflets and a webinar in July 2022. In 2022, the government also continued a local awareness campaign in Mayotte on sexual violence against children, which could include trafficking.

The government did not report having a licensing or accreditation process for labor recruiters, and there was no law prohibiting or criminalizing recruitment companies from charging recruitment or placement fees to workers. Passport withholding, contract switching, and wage withholding were illegal and workers could pursue legal recourse. Fraudulent labor recruitment remained a concern. The government disproportionately focused on sex trafficking which led to insufficient efforts to combat labor trafficking. The CNCDH recommended increased training for all front-line officials to ensure labor trafficking cases were correctly categorized and not deemed lesser crimes or administrative violations such as labor code violations, undeclared work, undignified work conditions, or employing undocumented migrants, which decreased deterrence. In 2022, GRETA recommended the government increase its efforts to combat labor trafficking, including by increasing labor inspections of high risk sectors and raising awareness among migrant worker populations. In 2022, labor inspectors referred at least 171 labor potential trafficking victims to police, which resulted in the conviction of several perpetrators. Labor inspectors lacked the authority to identify trafficking victims, but could refer potential victims to police. In its 2022 report, GRETA recommended authorizing labor inspectors to formally identify victims. Labor inspectors also continued to lack the authority to inspect private homes, thereby limiting their identification of domestic servitude. French law required large companies (with more than 5,000 employees) to enact due diligence measures to identify risks and prevent serious harm to human rights, including labor exploitation, by subcontractors and suppliers. In its 2022 report, GRETA encouraged increased implementation of the due diligence law.

The government made efforts to reduce the demand for child sex tourism by including warnings on its website for travelers to destinations with higher incidences of child sex tourism, like Cambodia and the Philippines. In May 2022, French law enforcement charged and prosecuted a French national for child sex trafficking in France; the allegations also included instances of child sex tourism in Morocco and Moroccan law enforcement began a simultaneous investigation. Both cases remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex by fining approximately 1,000 purchasers of commercial sex annually, though efforts were inconsistent throughout the country. OCRTEH established a relationship with a major online short-term rental platform, which resulted in law enforcement's

ability to inform rental hosts of indicators their property was being used to facilitate commercial sex and sex trafficking, including a special tab on the platform that allowed investigators to facilitate information requests.

Ac-Se continued to operate a hotline for trafficking victims and the government continued to operate a hotline for children in abusive situations, including trafficking; however, neither hotline reported the number of trafficking-related calls received during the reporting period. GRETA recommended the government establish a dedicated national human trafficking hotline. NGOs noted there was insufficient follow-up by the government regarding domestic workers who were employed by diplomats in France and that little could be done to assist victims because of the diplomatic immunity of the trafficker. Authorities ordered a new trial for a convicted former Burundian diplomat and his spouse for labor trafficking and the exploitation of a domestic worker; in April 2022, courts overturned the convictions on a technicality, but the new trial had not begun by the end of the reporting period.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit foreign and domestic victims in France. Sex and labor traffickers exploit foreign victims from Eastern Europe, Latin America, West and North Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. NGOs reported in 2021, one-third of sex traffickers were close family members of victims. The government estimates the majority of the 40,000 to 50,000 individuals in commercial sex in France, about 90 percent of whom are foreign nationals, are likely trafficking victims. Authorities noted an increase in French girls as sex trafficking victims, as well as a general increase in child victims since 2016; NGOs estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 French teenagers are victims of child sex trafficking – a significant increase compared with previous estimates of between 6,000 and 8,000. In suburban areas, there has been a sharp rise in “lover boys” schemes, whereby traffickers coerce vulnerable girls and women into sex trafficking through a sham romantic relationship. Traffickers target girls in government-funded shelters for children. Traffickers exploit children, primarily from Romania, West and North Africa, and the Middle East, in sex trafficking in France. Sex traffickers have increased the usage of online platforms to recruit and exploit victims, and book hotel and short-term apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track, also called the “uberization” of commercial sex; officials estimate 84 percent of commercial sex encounters were initiated or occurred online in 2021. Officials noted the evolution of sex trafficking to online platforms has increasingly made victims more difficult to identify and assist, as the technology creates an additional barrier preventing direct law enforcement contact with potential victims, it also increases victim isolation and the trafficker’s control.

The ring leaders of trafficking networks are often located outside of France, leaving only the drivers or collection agents within French borders, and complicating law enforcement efforts. Authorities report traffickers encourage Nigerian victims to claim asylum to obtain legal residency and facilitate their continued exploitation; French authorities have also noted trafficking victims from several other countries claimed asylum for this purpose as well. Sex trafficking networks, controlled by Bulgarian, People’s Republic of China (PRC) nationals, French, Hungarian, Nigerian, Romanian, and South American traffickers, exploit women through debt bondage, physical force, and psychological coercion, including the invocation of voodoo and drug addiction. In its 2022 report, OCRTEH noted a recent increase in Latin American organized trafficking networks in France. Nigerian gangs associated with sex trafficking and linked to the Black Axe, Arobagi Vikings, the Maphite, and the Eiye syndicate continue to grow more sophisticated, organized, and violent, but authorities note the gangs have begun to branch out to other crimes and decreased their focus on human trafficking. Authorities report the recent combination of pandemic-related health restrictions, several police operations that dismantled key networks, and the decreased effectiveness of the “juju” curse after 2018, has all contributed to a decline in the operations of Nigerian trafficking networks. PRC-national criminal networks also use as many as 400 massage

parlors as fronts for the purchase of commercial sex, continuing to raise concerns about sex trafficking. Members of the LGBTQI+ community, especially from South America, are vulnerable to trafficking and traffickers increasingly exploit transgender victims in sex trafficking. A June 2020 government report asserted law enforcement lacked sufficient awareness of trafficking organizations that exploited male and transgender victims, despite the extreme violence often used by these criminal organizations. In 2022, refugees, predominantly women and children, fleeing Russia's war against Ukraine, are vulnerable to trafficking. French citizens sometimes engage in child sex tourism abroad.

Labor trafficking most frequently occurs in domestic work, followed by construction, small commerce, agriculture, fishing, and livestock; the majority of identified labor trafficking victims are women. Expansive criminal networks force children to commit crimes; most victims are from Romania and North Africa, many of whom are addicted to controlled substances. Seasonal migrant workers are vulnerable to labor trafficking while harvesting grapes for winemakers in the Champagne region and are often hired through subcontractors using fraudulent job descriptions and wages. Roma and unaccompanied children in France are at risk of forced begging and forced theft. The families of Romani children are often also their traffickers. Traffickers exploit victims with intellectual disabilities in forced labor in agriculture and begging. The estimated 3,000 to 4,000 unaccompanied Comorian children on the island of Mayotte, a French department, remained at risk for trafficking. Protection services, such as medical, shelter, and education, are not available to unaccompanied children on Mayotte, exacerbating their risk. Labor traffickers exploit women and children in domestic servitude – the most frequent case being when families exploit relatives brought from Africa to work in their households; according to a 2020 report, domestic servitude makes up approximately 10 percent of all trafficking in France. Cuban medical professionals working in Martinique, a French department, in 2020 may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.