

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Macau

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MACAU (Tier 3)

The Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region of China does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. Macau remained on Tier 3. Despite the lack of significant efforts, the government took some steps to address trafficking, including investigating one potential trafficking case, training some officials, and organizing awareness raising seminars at schools. However, overall anti-trafficking law enforcement and victim protection efforts remained inadequate. The government did not report proactively screening vulnerable populations, such as individuals in commercial sex, for trafficking indicators; and the government has not reported identifying or providing services to any victims since 2022. The government did not prosecute any trafficking cases, has not convicted a trafficker since 2021, and has never identified a victim of forced labor exploited in Macau.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Significantly increase proactive victim identification, especially among vulnerable populations such as migrant workers and persons in commercial sex.

Significantly increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict sex and labor traffickers, including those potentially operating in casinos and other entertainment

establishments, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.

Ensure victims are referred to and receive appropriate services, including shelter and protection.

Provide anti-trafficking training to relevant government personnel, including to prosecutors and judges on the use of the trafficking law, ensuring an understanding that a victim's initial consent is not seen as evidence that trafficking did not occur.

Develop, approve, and implement an updated anti-trafficking action plan.

Ensure foreign domestic workers are provided standard labor protections and the general minimum wage.

Take steps to eliminate recruitment or placement fees charged to workers by employment agencies in Macau and in their countries of origin including by ensuring any recruitment fees are paid by employers and coordinating with migrant workers' countries of origin.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained inadequate anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

Article 153-A of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of three to 20 years' imprisonment, depending on the age of the victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape.

The government did not report any trafficking investigations, prosecutions, or convictions. However, according to a Macau Public Security Police report, police investigated one suspected trafficking case in 2024, but this investigation did not lead to a trafficking prosecution. This compared with one investigation, no trafficking prosecutions, and eight prosecutions for "manipulating others into prostitution" initiated in 2023. Macau has not convicted a trafficker since 2021. NGOs reported authorities did not proactively investigate trafficking cases and only initiated an investigation when a victim came forward to authorities, and that the government sometimes prosecuted trafficking crimes as commercial sex or illegal immigration cases.

Officials previously noted a victim's initial consent or "voluntary association" with a trafficker was sufficient evidence to prove a trafficking crime did not occur, which sometimes led to authorities pursuing trafficking cases as other crimes and weakened victim identification efforts. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes; corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action during the year. According to the government's anti-trafficking website, it conducted more than 40 anti-trafficking-related trainings in 2024, primarily for police officers. Observers reported the lack of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation in China negatively affected Macau authorities' ability to conduct joint anti-trafficking operations with mainland Chinese counterparts; this had an outsized impact on anti-trafficking activities because victims exploited in Macau were predominately from mainland China.

PROTECTION

The government maintained inadequate protection efforts. The government has not reported identifying, referring, or providing services to any victims since 2022. The government has never identified labor trafficking victims exploited in Macau. Authorities had formal victim identification procedures, an operational referral process, and standardized screening questionnaires that could guide law enforcement, immigration, and social services personnel to screen individuals vulnerable to trafficking, including persons in commercial sex and migrant workers; however, the government did not report implementing these procedures. Media reports indicated the government conducted law enforcement actions against suspected commercial sex and organized crime operations suspected of human trafficking among other crimes, however, the government did not report screening potential victims for trafficking indicators during these operations. Due to this lack of proactive screening efforts, authorities 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.

Although the government's victim referral process guided authorities to refer child and adult victims to NGOs designated to assist trafficking victims, the government did not report if it referred any victims to the designated shelters. The social welfare bureau operated shelters for adult trafficking victims and would determine appropriate care arrangements for child trafficking victims, ensure confidentiality of legal proceedings, and provide personal security to identified victims. The government could provide immigration and repatriation assistance, interpretation, medical care, financial assistance, counseling, legal assistance, and other

services to identified victims, but it did not report providing these services to any victims during the reporting period. The law permitted victims to seek compensation through civil courts or to obtain restitution in criminal proceedings, but the government did not report any victims receiving restitution or compensation in the covered period. The government did not report how much it allocated for victim protection services. The law permitted foreign victims to remain in Macau temporarily and seek employment while authorities pursued cases against traffickers. For cases in which a victim faced retribution or hardship in their home country, authorities reported a policy allowed for permanent residency on the basis of “well-founded humanitarian reasons,” although the government did not report whether any victims benefited from this policy in the covered period.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts.

The interagency Human Trafficking Deterrent Measures Concern Committee, led by the Security Bureau, coordinated Macau’s anti-trafficking efforts, but the government did not report if the committee met or how much it allocated for its activities. The government reported working with civil society to conduct on-the-job trainings, seminars, and events at local schools to raise awareness about trafficking and forced labor during the covered period. According to the government’s anti-trafficking website, the Labor Affairs Bureau held 30 sessions with various local associations on labor rights and forced labor, seven talks at local schools on human trafficking prevention, and 54 talks organized at schools, which included discussion of human trafficking alongside other topics; the Judiciary Police also organized four workshops on anti-trafficking measures for casino and gaming industry employees. The government had anti-trafficking pamphlets available in many languages at immigration counters as well as on the Macau government website. In response to the exploitation of Macau residents in trafficking in online scam operations in Southeast Asia, the government released public warnings about the risks of fraudulent job offers, but it highlighted that participating in online scams was a criminal offense, indicating that trafficking victims of these operations were potentially prosecuted upon their return to Macau. The government operated and publicized a trafficking hotline, as well as a hotline for reporting labor exploitation, for the public and potential victims to seek assistance but did not report initiating any investigations or identifying any victims based on calls to the hotlines in the covered period. Standard labor laws did not explicitly state coverage of foreign domestic workers; this legal ambiguity and weak enforcement resulted in authorities not applying these laws to

foreign domestic workers in practice. Foreign domestic workers were excluded from the standard minimum wage of 7,072 patacas (\$884) per month (as of 2025). Instead, there was a separate minimum wage for domestic workers of 3,500 patacas (\$437.50) per month as of 2025 per media reports, which increased their vulnerability to trafficking. Macau tax code required employers pay a monthly recruitment fee of 200 patacas (\$25) for each non-resident they employed – these fees for manufacturing industries was 100 patacas (\$12.50), and foreign domestic workers were exempt from this requirement – and these fees were likely passed on to foreign workers. Macau law limited the amount of fees employment agencies could charge migrant workers to 50 percent of the first month's salary and prohibited withholding of workers' identity documents or other personal belongings; however, these fees continued to represent a significant burden for workers and increased their vulnerability to exploitation by employment agencies. Violators were subject to a fine of 20,000 to 50,000 patacas (\$2,500-\$6,250) and license revocation; however, the government did not report identifying any violations. The Macau government's Labor Affairs Bureau did not report the number of labor disputes adjudicated in 2024. The Labor Affairs Bureau adjudicated 1,843 labor disputes and reported 2,520 cases still pending resolution in 2023, the last year for which data was available. In prior years, the Labor Affairs Bureau reported conducting labor inspections at construction sites and other workplaces but did not report screening for or identifying any trafficking victims during these inspections. The government did not report that it provided anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel. The government did not report that it made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

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 foreign victims in Macau, and traffickers may exploit victims from Macau abroad. Traffickers recruit victims, primarily from mainland China, Russia, and Southeast Asia, using false advertisements for jobs such as singing and modeling or jobs at casinos in Macau. According to a dated media report, as of 2019, adult and child victims are exploited in sex trafficking in massage parlors, illegal brothels, nightclubs, entertainment establishments in casinos, hotels, and private homes where they are closely monitored, threatened with violence, forced to work long hours, and sometimes have their identity documents confiscated. Staff within some casinos and other entertainment establishments reportedly partnered with criminal networks to facilitate illegal commercial sex activities, which likely facilitated sex trafficking. Migrant construction and domestic workers, primarily from

mainland China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, are vulnerable to forced labor in Macau. Some employment agencies overcharge workers recruitment fees of approximately two to three months' salary and withhold workers' passports, potentially leading to debt-based coercion. Some brokers bring migrant workers to Macau to renew work visas for other countries while restricting their movement and withholding their passports. Traffickers fraudulently recruit Macau victims into forced criminality in Taiwan, to commit telecommunications and internet scams. Online scam operators in Southeast Asia, including in Cambodia, and Burma, recruit and subsequently exploit Macau victims in forced labor. Observers reported some casinos in Macau may operate as online scam operations, which if utilizing the same operandi as those operating in Southeast Asia, have risks of trafficking.

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