

# Japan - United States Department of State

## JAPAN: Tier 2

The Government of Japan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included identifying more victims than the previous year; funding a service provider organization to implement an innovative and highly effective online outreach program; and increasing on-site inspections of businesses employing migrant workers. However, these efforts were not serious and sustained compared to those during the previous reporting period. Officials investigated, prosecuted, convicted, and imprisoned fewer traffickers than in previous years. Authorities again failed to identify a single trafficking case in the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) despite persistent reports of forced labor among labor migrants working in Japan under its auspices. The government did not fully implement legally mandated screening procedures aimed at blocking foreign-based labor recruitment agencies from charging excessive fees—a key driver of debt-based coercion among TITP participants. Authorities continued to prosecute and convict traffickers under laws carrying lesser sentences, which courts in most cases suspended in lieu of incarceration. Additionally, some traffickers received only fines. Interagency stakeholders relied on disparate, ineffective identification and referral procedures, leading to issues with proper screening and protection of victims. Law enforcement bodies continued to identify children exploited in commercial sex without formally designating them as trafficking victims, in some cases hindering their access to protection services and judicial recourse. Therefore Japan was downgraded to Tier 2.

## PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Vigorously investigate and prosecute sex and labor trafficking cases, and hold convicted traffickers accountable by imposing strong sentences. • Amend anti-trafficking laws to remove sentencing provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment, and to increase the penalties for trafficking crimes to include a maximum of no less than four years' imprisonment. • Develop, systematize, and implement standard interagency procedures for the identification of, and referral to protective services for, victims of forced labor among migrant workers, including those in Japan under the auspices of the TITP and other visa-conferring statuses, and among those in immigration detention. • Increase efforts to identify male victims of sex trafficking and forced labor. • Increase resources to provide specialized care and assistance to trafficking victims, including designated shelters for trafficking victims, and ensure these services are also available to both foreign and male victims. • Increase implementation of the TITP reform law's oversight and enforcement measures, including by training Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT) personnel and immigration officials on victim identification, improving OTIT coordination with NGOs, reviewing all contracts prior to approval of TITP work plans, increasing employer inspections, and terminating contracts with foreign recruitment agencies charging excessive worker-paid commissions or fees. • Establish formal channels allowing all foreign workers to change employment and industries if desired. • Enhance victim screening to ensure victims—including

children exploited in commercial sex without third party facilitation, migrant workers under the TITP program, and migrant workers entering Japan under the new visa regimes—are properly identified and referred to services, and not detained or forcibly deported for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Enact legislation banning employers from retaining all foreign workers' passports or other personal documents. • Reduce migrant workers' vulnerability to debt-based coercion by amending relevant policies to eliminate the imposition of all worker paid recruitment and service fees. • Increase enforcement of bans on “punishment” agreements, passport withholding, and other practices by organizations and employers that contribute to forced labor. • Aggressively investigate, prosecute, convict, and punish Japanese citizens who engage in child sex tourism overseas.

## PROSECUTION

The government decreased law enforcement efforts. Japan did not have a comprehensive anti-trafficking statute that included definitions in line with international law. However, it criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking offenses through disparate laws pertaining to prostitution of adults and children, child welfare, immigration, and employment standards. Article 7 of the Prostitution Prevention Law criminalized inducing others into prostitution and prescribed penalties of up to three years' imprisonment or a fine of up to 100,000 yen (\$920) if fraudulent or coercive means were used, and up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 100,000 yen (\$920) if force or threats were used. Article 8 of the same law increased penalties to up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 200,000 yen (\$1,840) if the defendant received, entered into a contract to receive, or demanded compensation for crimes committed under Article 7. The “Act on Regulation and Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Pornography and the Protection of Children” criminalized engaging in, acting as an intermediary for, and soliciting the commercial sexual exploitation of a child and prescribed penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. The act also criminalized the purchase or sale of children for the purpose of exploiting them through prostitution or the production of child pornography, and it prescribed a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. The government reportedly also prosecuted trafficking-related offenses using the Child Welfare Act, which broadly criminalized transporting or harboring children for the purpose of causing them to commit an obscene or harmful act and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment, or a fine of up to three million yen (\$27,640), or both, although authorities claimed courts did not implement provisions allowing for fines. The Employment Security Act (ESA) and the Labor Standards Act (LSA) both criminalized forced labor and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment or a fine not exceeding three million yen (\$27,640). When penalties allowed for fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking, they were not commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. Many prosecutors reportedly avoided using the ESA and LSA due to a perception that the relatively high penalties were more likely to trigger appellate processes that would decrease their overall conviction rates and negatively impact their professional standing. Civil society organizations reported that reliance on this series of overlapping statutes continued to hinder the government's ability to identify and prosecute trafficking crimes, especially for cases involving forced labor with elements of psychological coercion.

The government reported arresting and initiating investigations into 39 individuals

for 57 alleged crimes related to trafficking in 2019—including at least 15 men for alleged sex trafficking and four men and one woman for forced labor that may have involved corollary sex trafficking—compared with 39 cases in 2018 (unreported in 2017; 44 in 2016). Courts newly prosecuted 32 individuals during the calendar year, compared with 34 individuals in 2018 and 26 in 2017, leading to 17 convictions—a decrease compared with 27 convictions in 2018 and 23 in 2017; the remaining cases were pending trial at the end of the reporting period. According to available data, only three of the convicted traffickers served prison time, a decrease compared with nine in 2018 and five in 2017; one received a 10-month prison sentence, one received an 18-month prison sentence and a fine of 800,000 yen (\$7,370), and one received a sentence of two and a half years' imprisonment. One trafficker received only a fine of 500,000 yen (\$4,610), two received suspensions without fines, and three received suspensions with fines ranging from 200,000 to 300,000 yen (\$1,840 to \$2,760). Courts secured an additional five convictions in trials initiated during previous reporting periods; three of the convicted traffickers received sentences ranging from two to two and a half years' imprisonment, and the remaining two received suspended sentences. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) reported “identifying” an additional four suspected traffickers without prosecuting them. Based on prosecutorial data, some of these prosecutions and convictions may have featured crimes outside the standard definition of trafficking, including facilitation of immigration violations and distribution of child pornography.

The government did not report statistics on arrests or prosecutions of cases involving “children in prostitution.” In previous years, authorities processed hundreds of such cases without formally identifying them as trafficking crimes (more than 700 cases involving nearly 600 suspects in 2018; 956 in 2017). Authorities reportedly continued to fine persons convicted of the latter without incarcerating them, particularly first-time offenders; civil society experts asserted this leniency was permissive of continued commission of the crime. In 2017, Japan passed a law containing a provision that criminalized bribery of witnesses, which would allow authorities additional grounds to pursue obstruction of justice charges against some traffickers. However, for the second consecutive year, the government did not report to what extent it implemented this for trafficking cases during the reporting period.

The National Police Agency (NPA) reported instructing police precincts nationwide to enhance investigations into TITP abuses, and it established an information-sharing mechanism with OTIT to facilitate this cooperation. However, authorities did not report on the status or outcome of its implementation. Despite the prevalence of forced labor indicators identified through increased OTIT inspections, the government did not report prosecuting or convicting any individuals for involvement in the forced labor of TITP participants. OTIT reported conducting on-site inspections of more than 10,000 TITP implementing organizations and nearly 2,500 supervising organizations in 2019. These inspections led OTIT to refer 33 cases to prosecutors for criminal investigation, an increase from 19 referred for criminal investigation in 2018. However, none of these criminal referrals was for labor trafficking crimes, despite repeated attempts by service provision NGOs to draw attention to specific allegations of forced labor occurring within TITP worksites. NGOs claimed courts set prohibitively high evidentiary standards for forced labor cases involving foreign victims, including overreliance on physical indicators of abuse in lieu of evidence supporting psychological coercion, thereby stymying appropriate law enforcement action. In previous years, local law enforcement have reportedly assisted abusive TITP employers in blocking NGOs

from rescuing and assisting victims of forced labor.

Authorities continued to take some law enforcement action against child sex trafficking in *Joshi kosei* or “JK” businesses—dating services connecting adult men with underage high school girls—and in coerced pornography operations, but for the second consecutive year they did not provide data or case specifics. Seven major prefectures maintained ordinances banning “JK” businesses, prohibiting girls younger than 18 from working in “compensated dating services,” or requiring “JK” business owners to register their employee rosters with local public safety commissions; one additional municipality adopted these ordinances in 2019. Unlike in previous years, authorities did not report how many such operations they identified or shuttered for violating the terms of the ordinances (137 identified and none closed in 2018; 114 identified and 14 closed in 2017), nor did they report arresting any individuals alleged to have been engaged in criminal activities surrounding the JK business (69 arrested in 2018). Some authorities were reportedly unaware of the crime or unsure how to prosecute it, often citing prohibitively high evidentiary standards. NGOs alleged police avoided entertainment districts known for “JK” business activities due to perceived connections to organized crime syndicates. The government continued to provide training on investigative methods and victim identification for police officers, prosecutors, judges, and immigration bureau officials. Despite these efforts, contacts noted an acute need for additional training to address the lack of awareness among key law enforcement officials and judicial stakeholders.

## PROTECTION

The government maintained insufficient efforts to protect victims, including by consistently failing to formally identify victims of trafficking within the TITP and among children in commercial sexual exploitation. Authorities relied on formal manuals instituted by an Inter-Ministerial Liaison Committee in 2010 encouraging government bodies to develop broad protection measures for trafficking victims. NPA officials also reported consulting an IOM-developed handbook to identify and refer victims to available protective services. In practice, interagency stakeholders followed disparate, often insufficient victim identification procedures—especially among child sex trafficking victims and migrant workers. Due to the limited scope of laws prohibiting commercial sex, widespread victimization of minors and adults took place within a legalized but largely unregulated range of “delivery health service” sex acts in urban entertainment centers.

Authorities reported identifying 47 trafficking victims, including 28 adults and 19 children, compared with 25 total in 2018, 46 in 2017, and 50 in 2016. The government identified 12 women and girls forced to work as “hostesses,” some of whom may have also been subjected to sex trafficking (three in 2018), and 35 female sex trafficking victims (20 in 2018; 31 in 2017; 37 in 2016), including at least five children. The government has never identified a forced labor victim within the TITP since its inception, nor during the tenure of its predecessor organization founded in 1993, despite substantial evidence of trafficking indicators. Authorities continued to arrest and deport TITP participants who escaped forced labor and other abusive conditions in their contracted agencies; some labor contracts featured illegal automatic repatriation clauses for interns who became pregnant or contracted illnesses while working in Japan. The government did not report national statistics on forcible TITP deportations, and, unlike in the previous year, it did not provide data on the number of screening interviews of TITP participants departing Japan

prior to the end of their contracts, nor on the number of successful interventions in unjust employer-initiated deportations. Civil society groups noted the government had no procedure for screening foreign nationals in immigration detention for possible trafficking indicators (at least nine attempted forcible deportations among 8,000 interviewees in 2018, with five successful interventions and two employee-reinstatements).

Authorities stated they continued to identify and provide unspecified protection services to “children in prostitution”—a form of sex trafficking—but did not report relevant data, unlike in previous years (544 children identified in 2018; 654 in 2017; 518 in 2016). However, as in previous years, the government consistently failed to identify designate most children identified in commercial sexual exploitation as trafficking victims (none in 2018; six in 2017; 10 in 2016). Authorities continued to separate these statistics based on persistent definitional discrepancies that NGOs claimed affected service provision and proper law enforcement action. Contrary to definitional standards under the 2000 UN TIP Protocol, authorities did not consider children to be victims of sex trafficking unless the sex acts were mediated by a third party, likely preventing hundreds of children from formal designation. Some provincial law enforcement officials noted that Japan’s unusually low age of consent, 13, further complicated efforts to formally identify children exploited in commercial sex as trafficking victims. Police continued to treat some potential child sex trafficking victims as delinquents—particularly LGBTI children—and counseled them on their behavior instead of screening them for victim status, investigating their cases, or referring them to specialized services. Although there were no specific reports in 2019, in previous years, authorities arrested some child victims in connection with their trafficking situations; service provision NGOs believed enduring definitional discrepancies continued to leave child victims at risk of penalization.

The government reportedly increased funding for “one-stop assistance centers” previously established in each prefecture for victims of sexual abuse, including some forms of sex trafficking; these centers were intended to improve coordination between municipal governments and service providers, but the government did not provide data related to their use. As in prior years, the government did not fund trafficking-specific shelters, but it continued to fund Women’s Consultation Offices (WCOs) and Child Guidance Centers, both of which could provide shelter for trafficking victims alongside victims of domestic violence and other crimes. WCO shelters provided food and other basic needs, psychological care, and coverage of medical expenses to victims, who were free to leave the facilities if accompanied by WCO personnel. However, some NGOs alleged the physical conditions and services in these facilities were poor, overly restrictive, and insufficient to provide the specialized care required for trafficking victims. Authorities reported assisting 11 victims in WCO shelters among those identified in 2019, a decrease from 16 in 2018 and 16 in 2017. An unknown number of additional victims received assistance in NGO shelters, where they could access government-subsidized medical care. The government reported allocating more than 3.5 million yen (\$32,250) for sheltering trafficking victims, compared with 3.4 million yen (\$31,330) in 2018, and 3.5 million yen (\$32,250) for male victims alone in 2017. The availability and quality of victim services varied according to prefecture-level officials’ relative experience with trafficking cases.

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) provided funding via the Tokyo Prefectural Government to an NGO to optimize their

online presence for youth sex trafficking victims searching for shelter and protection services, doubling the NGO's online contact with victims seeking care. MHLW maintained a general counseling hotline for foreign workers in multiple languages, but it was not trafficking-specific; it reported fielding 1,950 calls from TITP participants, but it was unclear how many featured trafficking allegations (2,197 calls in 2018). The immigration bureau operated a similar hotline but did not identify any victims through its use (unreported in 2018; two in 2017). NPA also ran a general Japanese language hotline through a private entity, but it did not report the number of calls received or identify any potential trafficking cases through the use thereof (295 potential cases among more than 14,500 calls in 2018; 433 cases among over 19,000 in 2017). The government continued to fund a program through an international organization to provide counseling, temporary refuge, social reintegration, and repatriation services to trafficking victims; however, it significantly reduced the relevant budgetary allocation during the reporting period. Through this program, 14 foreign victims received repatriation assistance (five in 2018; seven in 2017; 23 in 2016). Despite the existence of these services, international organizations and NGOs reported most foreign trafficking victims had limited or no access to other government-provided social services from which legal resident victims could benefit. NGOs highlighted a lack of language interpretation services as a particular challenge to the protection of foreign victims.

Although the law ostensibly protected victims from denial of entry into or deportation from Japan, inadequate screening of vulnerable groups reportedly led to the arrest and deportation of some victims due to immigration violations or other unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. Temporary, long-term, and permanent residence benefits were available to foreign victims who feared the repercussions of returning to their countries of origin. Unlike in prior years, the government did not disaggregate information on conferral of residential benefits by type; authorities reported granting five foreign trafficking victims "special permission to remain in Japan" after overstaying their visas, as well as issuing unspecified changes in residency to seven additional trafficking victims (one long-term and eight short-term visas in 2018; two and 16, respectively, in 2017). Victims had the right to file civil suits to seek compensation from their traffickers; some foreign workers, including potentially unidentified victims, and sex trafficking victims filed civil suits for non-payment of wages in 2018. However, the owners of abusive supervising organizations and subsidiary businesses employing TITP participants frequently filed for bankruptcy or falsified administrative changes in order to shield themselves from civil or criminal liability, enabling forced labor to continue throughout the program with impunity. Some employers pressured TITP participants to leave their labor unions to reduce their chances of seeking recompense for labor abuses committed against them. Receipt of compensation awards was therefore nearly impossible in practice. Authorities did not report any instances of court-ordered restitution for victims during the calendar year (unreported in 2018). In previous years, civil society organizations reported some victims of coerced pornography chose not to participate in court proceedings against their traffickers due to fear that doing so would create stigma-based challenges to their reintegration and rehabilitation.

## PREVENTION

The government maintained insufficient efforts to prevent trafficking, including by continuing to demonstrate a lack of political will to adequately do so among highly

vulnerable migrant worker populations. It produced its fifth annual report on government actions to combat trafficking and tracked measures against the stated goals of its 2014 anti-trafficking action plan. Authorities raised awareness on trafficking by disseminating information online and through radio programs, posters, and brochures, as well as through leaflets distributed to NGOs, immigration and labor offices, and diplomatic missions in Japan and abroad. The government continued to distribute posters and brochures in transportation hubs and to travelers warning that Japanese citizens could face prosecution if suspected of having engaged in child sex tourism overseas. Authorities continued to advertise the multilingual emergency contact hotline number at local police and immigration offices, through NGOs, and in consultations with source countries' governments.

The government continued to implement the 2016 Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees (TITP reform law), including by allocating more human and financial resources to OTIT—its oversight mechanism; increasing the number of inspections of TITP implementing and supervising organizations and worksites; and continuing the issuance of corrective orders for labor violations detected during inspections. The TITP reform law mandated the MHLW approve work plans outlining living conditions, working hours, and other factors developed jointly by incoming TITP participants and their employers; as of January 2020, authorities reported having approved over 300,000 of these plans. However, authorities did not fully implement oversight procedures to ensure unity among sending and receiving organizations' contracts, nor among these contracts and the participants' work plans, resulting in discrepant language that left many volunteers vulnerable to labor abuses. OTIT reported conducting on-site inspections of more than 10,000 TITP implementing organizations and nearly 2,500 supervising organizations in 2019, compared with roughly 7,900 and 2,500, respectively, in 2018, leading to the detection of nearly 6,800 employers committing labor violations and the issuance of "corrective guidance" to around 4,200 (5,160 found in violation of unspecified labor laws and issued corrective notices in 2018; 4,226 in 2017). The Labor Standards Bureau (LSB) also conducted on-site inspections of more than 9,000 TITP work places but did not report additional information on corrective measures; some of these likely overlapped with the aforementioned OTIT inspections. In a departure from prior years, the Immigration Services Agency did not report data from its own process for notifying TITP organizations of misconduct (more than 100 employers notified in 2018, leading to approximately 170 corrective notifications), and the MOJ did not report how many organizations it banned from receiving interns in 2019 (over 100 in 2018).

Civil society groups continued to express concern the OTIT was too understaffed to adequately investigate allegations of abuse, including forced labor, within such a large program—particularly as the number of participants continued to grow. Authorities did not report revoking any MHLW-approved work plans for labor violations in 2019, compared with eight revocations in 2018; some observers expressed these work plans lacked enforceability due to the high number of TITP employers and participants relative to the small number of inspectors. Although the TITP reform law ostensibly expanded participants' rights to change employers at will once in Japan, civil society observers and officials noted most TITP participants were still barred from doing so; some participants reportedly fled from abusive conditions in their contracted workplaces, thereby violating the terms of their visas and becoming more vulnerable to trafficking in unemployment. Immigration officials issued orientation pamphlets with hotlines and contact information to all incoming TITP participants. Some TITP employers continued to threaten

participants with punitive fees, deportation, and harm to their families, if they attempted to leave. Some participants reported the OTIT and the LSB were unresponsive to their request for mediation when their employers suddenly changed or terminated their contracts.

The government maintained memoranda of cooperation (MOC) with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, India, Laos, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, as well as a newly signed MOC with Indonesia, affirming it would accept TITP trainees only from state-approved organizations that would not charge participants “excessive fees” known to place workers in high debt. However, some sending organizations in these countries were able to circumvent the fee restrictions and still secure their respective governments’ approval by charging high “commissions” in lieu of fees; trainees from these countries therefore remained at risk for debt bondage once in Japan. This was especially true for Vietnamese participants, who constituted the highest proportion of TITP trainees. Some Japanese TITP employers forced participants to remit portions of their salaries into mandatory savings accounts as a means to prevent their abscondment and retain their labor. OTIT authorities could request that sending countries investigate allegations of recruitment fee violations, but the decision to penalize or ban sending organizations for the practice was at the discretion of sending country authorities; OTIT offices did not report requesting any such investigations. Japanese authorities published the names of “discredited” TITP sending organizations on a website and reported 73 “inappropriate organizations” to sending governments, but they did not report steps to ensure incoming TITP participants avoided those organizations.

In 2018, the government established a new “Special Skilled Worker” visa regime to allow an additional 354,000 migrant workers to enter Japan and fill positions in construction, shipbuilding, nursing care, and 10 other sectors with known labor shortages over a five-year period. The new regime reportedly permitted qualifying individuals already participating in the TITP to switch their visas to the newly created categories, allowing them to extend their stay in Japan and change jobs within the same sector. Although there were no reported cases of forced labor within this system in 2019, observers continued to express concern that it would engender the same vulnerabilities to labor abuses, including forced labor, as those inherent to the TITP, and that oversight measures were similarly lacking. One NGO noted more than 90 percent of the migrant workers in Japan under the auspices of this new visa regime were former TITP interns in vulnerable sectors prior to 2019. MOJ issued regulations requiring employers to compensate these workers at a rate equal to or greater than Japan’s minimum wage in 2018. However, the law also enabled for-profit employment agencies and individuals to become “registered support organizations”—with no licensing requirements—to liaise between labor recruitment brokerages and employers for a fee. Observers were concerned these service fees would create additional risks for debt-based coercion among migrant workers entering under the auspices of the new regime, and that the authorities had not instituted sufficient preventative measures in favor of accelerating the process to assuage urgent labor shortages.

The government had extraterritorial jurisdiction to prosecute Japanese nationals who engaged in child sexual exploitation abroad, and authorities reported exercising this jurisdiction for the first time in several years. In October, police arrested a Japanese man suspected of engaging in child sex tourism in Laos in 2017 under “child prostitution” charges, but the case appeared to involve child pornography,

and they did not provide further information on the status or outcome of those charges. Authorities also established a new consultative mechanism with Japan's aviation industry to train flight attendants on victim identification and referral to law enforcement, but they did not provide information on its implementation. The government did not make significant efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, and many of its awareness-raising content on the JK business appeared to be targeted toward victims, rather than the demand source.

## TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the last five years, human traffickers subject Japanese and foreign men and women to forced labor and sex trafficking, and they subject Japanese children to sex trafficking. Traffickers also transport victims from elsewhere in the region through Japan before exploiting them in onward destinations, including East Asia and North America. Traffickers subject male and female migrant workers, mainly from Asia, to conditions of forced labor, including at companies participating in Japanese government-run programs. Men, women, and children from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Latin America, and Africa travel to Japan for employment or fraudulent marriage and are subjected to sex trafficking. Japan's fast-growing foreign student population is also at risk for trafficking in the unskilled labor sector due to abusive and often deceptive work-study contract provisions. Traffickers use fraudulent marriages between foreign women and Japanese men to facilitate the entry of women into Japan for sex trafficking in bars, clubs, brothels, and massage parlors. Traffickers keep victims in forced labor or forced commercial sex using debt-based coercion, threats of violence or deportation, blackmail, confiscation of passports and other documents, and other psychologically coercive methods. Employers require many migrant workers to pay fees for living expenses, medical care, and other necessities, leaving them vulnerable to debt-based coercion. Brothel operators sometimes arbitrarily impose "fines" on victims for alleged misbehavior, thereby extending their indebtedness as a coercive measure.

Traffickers also subject Japanese citizens and foreign nationals—particularly teenage girls—to sex trafficking. *Enjo kosai* or "compensated dating" services and variants of the "JK" business, often with ties to organized crime, continue to facilitate the sex trafficking of Japanese boys and girls; underage youth from China, South Korea, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam are also reportedly exploited in these establishments. "JK" bar owners may subject some underage boys and girls, including LGBTI youth, to forced labor as hostesses and club-promoters. Highly organized commercial sex networks target vulnerable Japanese women and girls—in many instances those living in poverty or with cognitive disabilities—in public spaces such as subways, popular youth hangouts, schools, and online, and subject them to sex trafficking in commercial sex establishments, small musical performance venues, retail spaces, and reflexology centers, often through debt-based coercion. Some groups posing as model and actor placement agencies use fraudulent recruitment techniques to coerce Japanese men, women, boys, and girls into signing vague contracts and then threaten them with legal action or the release of compromising photographs to force them to participate in pornographic films. Some transgender youth seek employment in unregulated urban entertainment districts as a means of financing their gender-affirming care and are subsequently exploited in commercial sex and possibly forced labor. Private Japanese immigration brokers help Japanese-Filipino children and their Filipina mothers move to Japan and acquire citizenship for a significant fee, which the mothers often

incur large debts to pay; upon arrival, some of these women and their children are subjected to sex trafficking to pay off the debts. Organized crime syndicates posing as immigration brokers also lure these families to Japan with deceptive job offers, and then subject the women to forced labor and sex trafficking in the nightlife industry. Japanese men remain a source of demand for child sex tourism in other countries in Asia.

Cases of forced labor occur within the TITP, a government-run program originally designed to foster basic technical skills among foreign workers that has effectively become a guest-worker program. TITP participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, the Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam pay sending organizations in their home countries thousands of dollars in excessive worker-paid fees, deposits, or vague “commissions”—despite bilateral agreements between sending countries and Japan aimed at curbing the practice—to secure jobs in fishing, food processing, shellfish cultivation, ship building, construction, textile production, and manufacturing of electronic components, automobiles, and other large machinery. TITP employers place many participants in jobs that do not teach or develop technical skills, contrary to the program’s stated intent; others place participants in jobs that do not match the duties they agreed upon beforehand. Some of these workers experience restricted freedom of movement and communication, confiscation of passports and other personal and legal documentation, threats of deportation, physical violence, poor living conditions, wage-garnishing, and other conditions indicative of forced labor. Some sending organizations require participants to sign “punishment agreements” charging thousands of dollars in penalties if they fail to comply with their labor contracts. Participants who abscond from their contracted TITP jobs fall out of immigration status, after which some are reportedly subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor.