China

Population 1416.1 million · Latest figures: 2025

Chinese police solved 258,000 scam cases in 2025, down from 294,000 in 2024, and the Ministry of Public Security, the national police ministry, said the rise in scams had been brought under control. At a briefing on 12 June 2026 the ministry's criminal investigation bureau said the number of these cases had fallen, year on year, in each of the eight months from October 2025.

The ministry leads the response. The National Anti-Fraud Centre runs the warnings, and the criminal investigation bureau runs the campaigns named Cut the flow, Pull the nail and Sever the chain. In 2025 those campaigns caught 542 funders, bosses and key members of scam groups, and police published a wanted list of 100 more who were still at large.

The law they apply is China's main scam law, the Anti-Telecom and Online Fraud Law of 2022. It puts the police in charge, sets up a national coordination body under the government, and gives banks, phone companies and internet firms a duty to watch their own services. In the last three years the supreme court, the national prosecution service and the ministry have added detailed rules to it: on scams run from abroad (July 2024), on selling or renting out bank accounts and phone cards to scammers (July 2025), and on hiding the proceeds (August 2025). Courts finished 41,000 scam cases in 2025, against 85,000 people, 1.2% more cases than in 2024.

PEOPLE SCAMMED

108,634,920

9.5% of adults

China's scam law names older people and young people as the groups that need the closest warnings, and it sends anti-fraud lessons into schools, firms, neighbourhoods, villages and homes. At the June 2026 briefing, Shanghai police said people under 25 were 15% of the city's scam cases, and Beijing police said that from January to May 2026 both the number of cases against people aged 60 and over and the sums those cases took were down, by 78.4% and 77.9%, on a year earlier.

Most approaches no longer start with a cold call. The criminal investigation bureau said 66% of the contacts that draw a person in now happen on social chat, short video and livestreams, shopping sites, everyday-services apps and online games. After that first contact the conversation is moved onto a little-used chat app, which sits outside the main warning systems, and the pressure runs for days. Some victims are then told to install an app that shares the phone's screen and forwards calls, so a card can be spent while it is still in their hand.

The scripts are largely run from outside China. Police say they have cleared large compounds that mixed casinos and fraud in northern Myanmar, in Myawaddy, and in Cambodia, and in 2025 more than 7,600 Chinese suspects were brought home from Myawaddy under a standing arrangement with the Myanmar and Thai police.

PEOPLE WHO LOST MONEY

60,328,230

56% of victims

The payment is usually a transfer the victim is talked into making. Task scams, fake shopping and fake investments all end that way, and the money arrives in accounts opened in someone else's name.

Selling or renting out three or more of one's own bank or payment accounts to scammers is a serious offence once at least 300,000 yuan has passed through them, and so is trading 20 or more phone cards, whether or not they are the seller's own. Phone cards and bank cards are behind about 80% of prosecutions for helping scammers. As those transfers are stopped more often, the June 2026 briefing said groups increasingly tell the victim to take out cash, or to buy gold, a phone or a watch, and to hand it to someone sent to collect it. A second route skips the transfer: a screen-sharing app takes the card number, the password and the code, and spends the account while the card stays in the victim's pocket.

The stop, when it works, is joint. In 2025 the police and other departments blocked 3.6 billion scam calls and 3.3 billion scam texts. The phone industry, on its own figures for that year, blocked 6.48 billion scam calls and texts, dealt with more than 11 million fraudulent web addresses, and warned on 27,000 fraudulent apps, 41.05 million times. By the end of 2025 it had checked nearly 200 million high-risk phone cards and more than 400 million internet accounts, and it had technical links to more than 200 firms.

MONEY LOST

US$21.21b

CN¥152.51b in a year, 0.11% of GDP

China's police solved 258,000 telecom and online fraud cases in 2025, down from 294,000 in 2024, the Ministry of Public Security said in January 2026. These are cases solved, not cases reported, and no national count of complaints by victims is published. At its June 2026 briefing the ministry's criminal investigation bureau said the number of scam cases had fallen year on year for eight months in a row since October 2025.

Fake investments cause the largest losses. Ten scam types made up 85% of cases at that briefing. Task scams, in which people are paid for small online jobs and then asked to put money in, were 25% of cases, while fake online investment took about 40% of the money lost, and most losses of a million yuan or more are of this type. Beijing police said that from January to May 2026 the sums taken from people aged 60 and over fell 77.9% on a year earlier.

The way money is taken is changing. As stops on transfers have tightened, groups increasingly have the victim withdraw cash or buy gold, a phone or a watch and hand it over, the police say.

MONEY RETURNED

US$1.23b

5.8% of the money lost

China's scam law sets no general duty on a bank to refund a payment the customer made. It makes the scammers liable to the victim in civil law, and firms that break the industry rules in the law face legal liability.

Far more money is stopped than returned. From the start of 2024 to June 2025 the National Anti-Fraud Centre and other departments intercepted 315.1 billion yuan linked to cases, alongside 1.838 million payment warnings. Intercepted money is not the same as money returned to victims, and no national total of money returned has been published.

Getting money back runs through the criminal case. Rules of July 2024 on scams run from abroad tell police, prosecutors and courts to trace the group's property, including accounts, homes, cars and gold, and to use the procedure for confiscating illegal gains where a leader has fled abroad. Since August 2025 hiding at least 500,000 yuan of fraud proceeds can bring a heavier sentence, and real help in tracing the money back up the chain can bring a lighter one.

REPORTED

75%

of victims reported it

Scam reports go to the police. The National Anti-Fraud Centre turns reports and bank alerts into a warning, and local officers then visit.

In 2025 those face-to-face visits ran to 6.747 million. From 2024 to the June 2025 briefing the running total of such visits was 4.778 million. Alongside the visits, police and other departments blocked 3.6 billion scam calls and 3.3 billion scam texts in 2025. The phone industry's warning texts, sent when someone appears to be in the middle of a fraud, stand at 1.726 billion in total, and an official label on police warning calls has been used 660 million times. That label lifted the share of warning calls that were answered by 32.8%. Banks act when the police send an emergency stop: the centre issued 1.838 million payment warnings from 2024 to June 2025. A police report, a bank alert and an industry warning meet in that stop, and in the visit that follows.

People also use the industry's own checks. There have been 370 million queries of how many phone cards and internet accounts sit in a person's name, and 587 million uses of a switch that blocks calls and texts from abroad. Calls from abroad have carried a label 2.523 billion times, so the person who picks up can see that the call is not a domestic one.

POLICE RECORDS

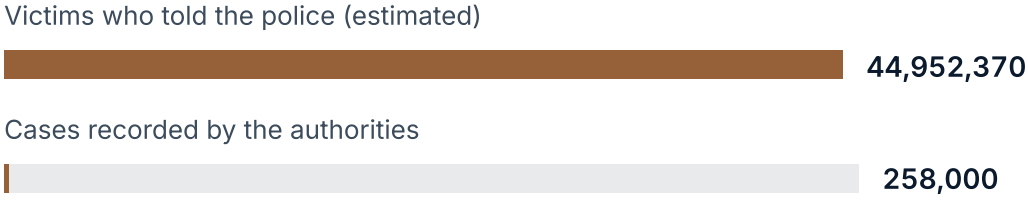
258,000

cases recorded by the authorities

The figure shown here is the 258,000 scam cases the police solved in 2025, as the Ministry of Public Security reports them. It counts cases solved, not cases reported. The same series stood at 294,000 cases solved in 2024. On top of the count, the 2025 campaigns named Cut the flow, Pull the nail and Sever the chain caught 542 funders, bosses and key members, and police issued a public wanted list of 100 more. More than 7,600 Chinese suspects were brought back from Myawaddy in Myanmar, after a three-way arrangement with Myanmar and Thailand.

The courts see a different slice of the same crime. The supreme court's annual report records 41,000 scam cases finished in 2025, and 85,000 people, a 1.2% rise in cases. Helping scammers, the offence used against people who sell bank accounts and phone cards or give technical help, accounted for 25,000 cases finished and 38,000 people, down 62%. July 2025 rules treat three or more of a person's own bank or payment accounts, sold or rented out, as a serious offence once 300,000 yuan has flowed through them, and it treats 20 or more phone cards the same way.

Concealing the proceeds is a separate offence: from 2020 to 2024 prosecutors brought 230,200 such cases and courts concluded 220,900. Sixteen principals of the northern Myanmar groups known as the four families were sentenced to death.



MOST COMMON

1. Online shopping
2. Jobs
3. Investment

Ten types accounted for 85% of scam cases at the Ministry of Public Security briefing on 12 June 2026. Task and rebate scams were the most common, at 25% of cases: a person is paid, or promised a commission, for tapping orders that do not exist. Fake online investment took the most money, about 40% of losses, and the losses of a million yuan and of ten million yuan mostly sit in this type. A chat, often after a move to a little-used app, leads to a fake trading screen that shows profits the victim has not made, and the payments in are ordinary transfers. The other eight types on that list are fake shopping and services, someone pretending to be an online shop or a delivery firm, loan and credit-record scams, fake trades inside online games, romance and friendship scams on the internet, someone pretending to be the police, a prosecutor or a court, someone pretending to be a boss or a friend, and scams dressed up as a refund on a flight ticket.

How the approach is made has changed. The bureau said 66% of the contacts that draw someone in now happen on a platform: social chat, short video and livestreams, shopping, everyday services or games. Where a bank transfer would be stopped, the same briefing said the group asks for cash or for gold, or uses a screen-sharing app to spend the card while the victim still holds it.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The programme is joint by law. China's scam law puts the police in charge, sets up a national coordination body under the government, and gives banks, phone companies and internet firms the duty to check identity, to limit how many cards and accounts one person holds, and to monitor suspicious use. Police, the central bank and the industry ministry work the same cases: the central bank runs the work on the flow of funds, and by the end of 2025 the phone industry had technical links to more than 200 firms. It had checked nearly 200 million high-risk phone cards and more than 400 million internet accounts, seized 210,000 SIM-box devices used to place masses of calls, and shut 117,000 sites where those devices were set up.

Solved cases fell from 294,000 in 2024 to 258,000 in 2025, and from October 2025 the monthly number of cases fell, year on year, for eight months. Court cases against people who helped scammers fell 62% in 2025, to 25,000.

The weak point, on the police's own account at the June 2026 briefing, is that the crime is still common and changes shape. Investment scams still take about 40% of the money. Groups shift the conversation onto niche apps that sit outside the main monitors, and they shift the payment into cash and gold when a transfer would be stopped. Compounds in Myanmar and Cambodia have been cleared and thousands of suspects sent back, and the criminal investigation bureau still describes the crime as stubborn and quick to return.

Calculation Methodology & Sources

People scammed

- 9.5%. Where reliable survey data is not available, we estimate using mobile and broadband penetration.
- 9.5% of 1,145,889,628 adults.

People who lost money

- 55.5%. Where reliable survey data is not available, we estimate using mobile and broadband penetration.

Money lost

- Our estimate of the money lost in cases recorded by the authorities is CN¥112.3b. Adding the 60,070,230 victims who lost money but are not in those records, at CN¥669 each, gives CN¥152.51b.
- Price of an unrecorded loss: Read off the line fitted to GDP per person in the countries where this price is measured (Canada, Chile, Mexico, Singapore and United States): US$93.10 = CNY 669.39.
- US dollars at 0.139085011 per CNY.
- Share of GDP: US$21.21b against GDP of US$19.5tn in 2025. World Bank, GDP (current US$) 2025.

Money returned

- Vanguardia, reporting CONDUSEF, Crece la estafa digital: más de 2.4 millones de fraudes bancarios en México durante 2025, Level average, see note.
- No national figure covers every route, so the average is used for countries where the rules make banks refund only part of fraud losses. Worked out: banks return 11.4% of money lost through banks, the average of Russia and Mexico; banks returned CNY 7.46bn (11.4% of the 42.9% of money lost through banks); CNY 1.39bn came back on money lost outside banks (1.6%, from Armidale's non-government survey of seven Asian markets, converted to money).
- 5.8% of CN¥152.51b lost.

Reported

- Borrowed from Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam: 75.0%. The median of the shares measured by the non-government survey: Indonesia (48.0%), India (87.9%), Malaysia (55.2%), the Philippines (76.9%), Singapore (87.1%), Thailand (75.0%) and Vietnam (65.2%).

Police records

- Borrowed from Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam: 41.4%. The median of the shares measured by the non-government survey: Indonesia (28.0%), India (53.4%), Malaysia (41.4%), the Philippines (13.5%), Singapore (54.8%), Thailand (45.8%) and Vietnam (39.4%).
- 258,000: Scam cases recorded by the Ministry of Public Security (cases the police solved, not cases filed).

Most common

- Borrowed from Indonesia, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam: ranked by the average of the scam types their victims named (no survey of China's own). 34.6% of answers are methods such as phishing, or other, and are not ranked.

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