Laos



Population 7.9 million · Latest figures: 2025

The Ministry of Public Security, the national police ministry, recorded 481 fraud cases in 2024. Those cases sat inside 7,350 criminal cases, and the ministry resolved 6,519 of the criminal cases. In 2025 the police recorded 6,996 criminal cases, 353 fewer. Drug cases were still the largest group, at 3,660, and economic crimes were 700. Damage from all criminal activity that year was put above US$4.7 million, in cash, gold and vehicles.

Deputy Prime Minister Vilai Lakhamphong chairs the National Internet Management Committee. The technology minister, Santisouk Simmalavong, runs the Anti-Online Fraud Centre, opened on 29 December 2025. By 21 April 2026 the centre had received more than 700 reports and had resolved more than 300. Prime Minister's Order No. 32 makes online scams a national priority. From January to mid-June 2026 the police dismantled 20 scam operations and detained 2,652 suspects.

The Penal Code punishes swindling with three months to three years, or three to eight years for an organised group. The Law on Payment System, in force since January 2024, forbids handing a payment instrument to someone else for an illegal use, and it requires a payment firm to suspend a receiver's account for 72 hours after a written appeal. On 20 October 2026 an amended cybercrime law went before the National Assembly. It would name cyber fraud and give the police, the banks and internet providers a shared route to freeze accounts.

PEOPLE SCAMMED

602,471

11.9% of adults

People in Laos are being approached on the phone and on social media, and the same floors are built to deceive people abroad. In April 2026 the technology minister said the reports reaching the Anti-Online Fraud Centre were from people facing losses to online fraud, bogus investment schemes and social media scams. A raid on 30 June 2026, on the tenth floor of a building in the Boten special economic zone, found fake social media accounts, high-return investment pitches, fake cryptocurrency platforms, invented customs fees, and gambling websites and apps, aimed at people in Laos and at people outside the country.

The work is done from compounds and from ordinary buildings, by Lao and foreign crews. Since 2022 the police have identified 306 call-centre rings, with 15,970 members, 6,120 of them Lao and 9,868 foreign. Call-centre rings have been worked in the Golden Triangle special economic zone in Bokeo. In May 2026 a week of raids in Houayxay and Tonpheung detained 230 people. Of the 159 held in Tonpheung, 106 were Lao. In Vientiane the same pattern turns up in hotels and rented houses: at the end of August 2026 police detained 139 people in Xaysetha district, and on 5 November they found 805 phones set up for automated messages in one rental complex in Xaythany district. The technology minister told the National Assembly in October 2026 that newer approaches include scams built with artificial intelligence and deepfakes, and fraud run from call centres.

PEOPLE WHO LOST MONEY

441,732

73% of victims

The money leaves when someone is talked into sending it, or when someone else's payment instrument is used. The Penal Code calls the first of these swindling: trickery that causes a person to hand over control of a personal asset. On the floors police have raided, the pitch is a high-return investment, a cryptocurrency platform, a made-up customs fee, or a gambling app, often starting from a fake social media account or a bank of phones. A seminar in Vientiane in September 2026, with the banks and the anti-money-laundering office present, described mule accounts and cryptocurrency as the way these networks move and hide the proceeds.

The Law on Payment System, in force since January 2024, forbids a person or a company to hand their payment instrument to someone else for an illegal use, and it requires payment firms to know their customers. After a written appeal, the firm must suspend the receiver's account for 72 hours for the amount that came from an illegal transfer. It can ask another firm to suspend an account when money was sent by mistake, and it must pay for loss caused by its own error. The Anti-Online Fraud Centre, open since 29 December 2025, is where those reports are now gathered: more than 700 by 21 April 2026. An amended cybercrime law, still before the assembly on 20 October 2026, would let the police, banks and internet providers freeze accounts together.

MONEY LOST

US$23.7m

LAK 484.76b in a year, 0.13% of GDP

By 21 April 2026 the Anti-Online Fraud Centre had resolved more than 300 of the more than 700 reports received since 29 December 2025, and staff were still working through the rest. The technology minister described those reports as cases in which people had lost money to online fraud, fake investments and social media scams. For 2025 the Ministry of Public Security put damage from all criminal activity, cash, gold and vehicles together, above US$4.7 million.

What the payment law requires is a hold, for a short time, and repayment where the firm itself was at fault. For 72 hours after a written appeal, the payment firm must suspend the receiver's account for the amount that came from an illegal transfer. It must compensate for damage caused by its own mistake. On the criminal side, the Penal Code allows the court to take items used in an offence, and the proceeds of an intentional offence, as state property. In the compound cases the police have been seizing the tools: by January 2025 they had handed 5,430 phones and 1,368 desktop computers to China with 1,394 people, and later raids in Bokeo, Xaysetha and Xaythany took further phones, computers and SIM cards, including 805 phones in one complex on 5 November 2026. A September 2026 seminar put urgent freezing and recovery of assets on the work plan Laos is building towards a January 2027 deadline under the Financial Action Task Force.

MONEY RETURNED

US$743,173

3.1% of the money lost

US$743,173 (LAK 15.19b) of it was returned to victims, 3.1% of the money lost.

REPORTED

75%

of victims reported it

By 21 April 2026 the Anti-Online Fraud Centre had taken more than 700 reports since it opened on 29 December 2025, and had resolved more than 300. The technology minister, Santisouk Simmalavong, gave those figures during a visit by the deputy prime minister and minister of national defence. He said the reports came from people facing losses to online fraud, bogus investment schemes and social media scams. The centre sits under the National Internet Management Committee, which Deputy Prime Minister Vilai Lakhamphong chairs in his role as minister of public security, and the reports are passed on for investigation.

The police book is a separate count, and it is the older one. In calendar 2024 the Ministry of Public Security recorded 481 fraud cases, beside 682 financial crimes and 73 embezzlement cases, inside 7,350 criminal cases. In 2025 the ministry recorded 6,996 criminal cases, 353 fewer than in 2024, of which 700 were economic crimes, and it put damage from all criminal activity above US$4.7 million. The prosecutors recorded 8,795 criminal cases in 2024, covering every offence. Under Prime Minister's Order No. 32, the police and the new centre are meant to feed one crackdown: from January to mid-June 2026 the police dismantled 20 electronic fraud operations and detained 2,652 suspects of 14 nationalities.

POLICE RECORDS

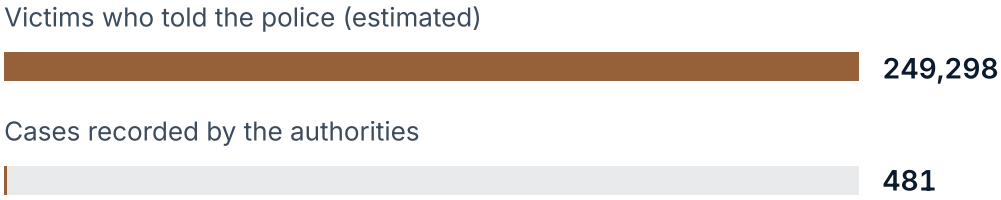
481

cases recorded by the authorities

The figure shown here is 481 fraud cases recorded by the Ministry of Public Security in 2024. Soulina Keopaseuth, head of the ministry's office, gave it at the ministry's meeting on 30 December 2024. It sits inside 7,350 criminal cases that year, of which 6,519 were resolved, with 9,860 people arrested, 344 of them foreign. The same list counted 682 financial crimes and 73 embezzlement cases separately from the 481 fraud cases. In 2025 the ministry recorded 6,996 criminal cases, 353 fewer. Economic crimes were 700, and damage from all criminal activity was put above US$4.7 million.

The Penal Code offence for a trick that makes someone hand over an asset is swindling: three months to three years, and a fine of 5 million to 20 million kip, or three to eight years and a fine of 10 million to 50 million kip where the offence is repeated, done by an organised group, or causes substantial damage.

Enforcement against the compounds is counted in raids, beside the 481. Since 2022 the police have identified 306 call-centre rings and had dismantled 63 of them by January 2025, while 46 had disbanded themselves and 37 were still being pursued. From January to mid-June 2026 they dismantled 20 scam operations and detained 2,652 suspects, 780 of them women. Raids continued after that: 230 people in Bokeo in May, 139 in Xaysetha district at the end of August, and 27 people in Xaythany district on 5 November, with 805 phones seized at that last address.



MOST COMMON

1. Online shopping
2. Jobs
3. Investment

Officials describe two clusters. One is the fraud people in Laos report. The other is the call-centre industry, much of it aimed abroad as well as at home, and now found in rented rooms in Vientiane as well as in the zones on the northern border.

On the reports, the technology minister said in April 2026 that people were losing money to online fraud, bogus investment schemes and social media scams. The police gave their 481 fraud cases for 2024 as one total, and their 700 economic crimes for 2025 as one total. On the raids, the Boten operation of 30 June 2026 found fake social media accounts, high-return investment schemes, fake cryptocurrency platforms, invented customs fees, and gambling sites and apps. In Bokeo in May 2026 the police described the target as organised scam networks running online and phone-based fraud, and they seized computers, phones and SIM cards.

The same pattern shows up in the capital. Raids in 2026 have hit hotels, rental houses and a specific economic zone, and the equipment is the method: hundreds of phones used to send the approaches, including 321 phones at one Xaysetha hotel in August and 805 phones in one Xaythany complex in November, set up for automated messages. The amended law presented in October 2026 names the newer forms, including scams built with artificial intelligence and deepfakes, and fraud run from call centres. Since 2022 the police count of those rings stands at 306, with 15,970 members, 6,120 of them Lao.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Online scams are a national priority under Prime Minister's Order No. 32, which the Minister of Public Security, Vanthong Kongmany, reviewed on 17 June 2026. The National Internet Management Committee, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Vilai Lakhamphong, opened the Anti-Online Fraud Centre on 29 December 2025. By 21 April 2026 the centre had taken more than 700 reports and resolved more than 300. Payment firms must know their customers and suspend a receiver's account for 72 hours after a written appeal about an illegal transfer. The law also forbids handing a payment instrument to someone else for an illegal use, and a firm repays a loss only when the mistake was its own. A bill to put the police, the prosecutors, the courts, the central bank and internet providers on one committee, with a shared route to freeze accounts, was still before the National Assembly on 20 October 2026.

The results so far are raids. Of 306 call-centre rings identified since 2022, 63 had been dismantled by January 2025, 46 had broken themselves up, and 37 were still being pursued. From January to mid-June 2026 the police dismantled 20 further operations and detained 2,652 suspects, and raids were still turning up in rented houses in Vientiane in November. Freezing and recovery sit on an anti-money-laundering plan aimed at January 2027. The police fraud register for 2024 stands at 481 cases, while the centre's report line passed 700 in its first four months.

Calculation Methodology & Sources

People scammed

- 11.9%. Where reliable survey data is not available, we estimate using mobile and broadband penetration.
- 11.9% of 5,075,790 adults.

People who lost money

- 73.3%. 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 LAK 308.87b. Adding the 441,251 victims who lost money but are not in those records, at LAK 398,616 each, gives LAK 484.76b.
- 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$19.50 = LAK 398,616.00.
- US dollars at 0.000048914 per LAK.
- Share of GDP: US$23.7m against GDP of US$18.3b in 2025. World Bank, GDP (current US$) 2025.

Money returned

- Estimated: the median share of money recovered in lower-middle-income countries that publish it: Bangladesh (1.1%), Egypt (7.6%), India (4.3%), Nigeria (0.3%), the Philippines (6.6%), Pakistan (6.2%), Tanzania (0.5%) and Vietnam (2.0%).

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%).
- 481: Fraud cases recorded by the Ministry of Public Security.

Most common

- Borrowed from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam: ranked by the average of the scam types their victims named (no survey of Laos's own). 34.2% of answers are methods such as phishing, or other, and are not ranked.

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