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## Freedom in the World 2015 - China

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### 2015 Scores

Status: Not Free

Freedom Rating (1 = best, 7 = worst): 6.5

Civil Liberties (1 = best, 7 = worst): 6

Political Rights (1 = best, 7 = worst): 7

### Explanatory Note:

The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Hong Kong or Tibet, which are examined in separate reports.

### OVERVIEW

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) general secretary Xi Jinping, who had assumed his post as part of a broader leadership rotation in November 2012, continued to consolidate his power in 2014. He headed a growing list of new coordinating bodies, or "leading small groups," that gave him direct supervision over policy areas including domestic security, internet management, and ethnic relations, emerging as the most powerful CCP leader since Deng Xiaoping.

An aggressive anticorruption campaign reached the highest echelons of the party during the year, and party and government bodies pushed forward incremental reforms of the petitioning system, household registration (hukou) rules, and laws on domestic violence. In October, the CCP Central Committee convened for its fourth plenum, focusing on improvements to the legal system.

However, such initiatives were accompanied by hard-line policies on political freedoms and civil liberties and a rejection of judicial oversight of party actions. Harassment of previously tolerated civil society organizations, labor leaders, academics, and state-sanctioned churches intensified. Internet controls continued to tighten, and several activists who had been detained in 2013 were sentenced to prison on politically motivated charges. Crackdowns related to the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, the prodemocracy Umbrella Movement protests in Hong Kong, and an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Beijing resulted in hundreds of new detentions.

Harsh state repression of the Uighur population's ethnic and religious identity, combined with long-standing socioeconomic grievances, have apparently fueled an escalating cycle of radicalization, with several deadly attacks attributed to Uighur extremists during 2014. The government responded with heavy-handed collective punishment and more intrusive restrictions on religious identity. Meanwhile, Uighur scholar Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life in prison in September for supposedly inciting separatism, signaling the authorities' intolerance of even peaceful advocates of Uighur rights and interethnic dialogue.

## **POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES**

### **Political Rights: 2 / 40**

#### *A. Electoral Process: 0 / 12*

The CCP has a monopoly on political power, and its Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) sets government and party policy. At the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, a new PSC – headed by Xi – was announced following an opaque, internal selection process. The committee shrank from nine to seven members. Party members – who number some 80 million nationwide, or about 6 percent of the population – hold almost all top posts in the government, military, and internal security services, as well as in many economic entities and social organizations. Xi, the CCP general secretary, also serves as chairman of the party and state military commissions, and was named state president in March 2013.

The country's legislature, the 3,000-member National People's Congress (NPC), is elected for five-year terms by subnational congresses. It formally elects the state president for up to two five-year terms, and confirms the premier after he is nominated by the president. However, the NPC is a largely symbolic body. Only its standing committee meets regularly, while the full congress convenes for just two weeks a year to approve proposed legislation. The current NPC was seated in March 2013.

The country's only competitive elections are for village committees and urban residency councils, which hold limited authority and are generally subordinate to the local CCP committees. The nomination of candidates remains tightly controlled, and many of the elections have been marred by fraud, corruption, and attacks on independent candidates.

#### *B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 1 / 16*

The CCP does not tolerate any form of organized opposition or independent political parties. Citizens who attempt to form opposition parties or advocate for democratic reforms have been sentenced to long prison terms. Democracy advocate and 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo remained behind bars in 2014, having been sentenced in 2009 to 11 years in prison for his role in organizing the prodemocracy manifesto Charter 08. His wife, Liu Xia, has been under strict extralegal house arrest since 2010.

More than 190 political reform activists were detained during 2014, many for attempting to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on prodemocracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, or for expressing support for protesters in Hong Kong. Several activists connected to the New Citizens Movement – a loosely organized network of individuals seeking to promote the rule of law, transparency, and human rights – who had been detained in 2013 received prison terms of up to 6.5 years during the year. One of the movement's leaders, Beijing lawyer Xu Zhiyong, was sentenced to four years in prison in January on charges of "gathering a crowd to disturb public order," having organized small protests to urge officials to disclose their assets and circulated photographs of the demonstrations online.

In addition to advocates of democracy and political reform, tens of thousands of grassroots activists, petitioners, Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, Tibetans, and Uighurs are believed to be in prison or extrajudicial forms of detention for their political or religious views, although complete figures are unavailable. In October 2014, the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China published a partial list of over 1,200 current political prisoners.

### *C. Functioning of Government: 2 / 12*

Top party leaders and disciplinary bodies in 2014 continued an antigraft campaign – launched by Xi in November 2012 – that experts described as the most sustained and intensive effort of its kind in recent memory. At least 30 senior state and party officials had been investigated and punished by the middle of 2014. Among those detained during the year were a powerful former general (Xu Caihou), a senior diplomat, and current or former provincial party secretaries. Most notably, Zhou Yongkang, a former internal security chief, was arrested and expelled from the party in December on charges of accepting bribes, violating party discipline, and committing sexual transgressions as part of corrupt transactions. Zhou was the first former member of the PSC to be subjected to such punishment. Tens of thousands of lower-ranking officials were also reportedly investigated, disciplined, and punished during the year.

Despite these efforts, corruption remained endemic, as the leadership rejected more fundamental reforms, such as requiring officials to publicly disclose their assets, creating genuinely independent oversight bodies, or lifting political constraints on journalists and law enforcement agencies. Prosecutions typically remained selective and decision making highly opaque, with informal personal networks and internal CCP power struggles influencing both the choice of targets and the outcomes. Factional infighting was widely seen as the driving force behind Zhou's prosecution, even if the charges themselves had merit.

Crackdowns on independent anticorruption activists and reprisals against foreign media for investigations of influence peddling by top officials' families have further undermined the effectiveness and legitimacy of the campaign. China was ranked 100 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

CCP officials increasingly seek input from academics and civic groups regarding certain policy areas, though without relinquishing control over the decision-making process. Since open-government regulations took effect in 2008, many agencies have become more forthcoming in publishing official documents. High-level party declarations – such as the CCP's fourth plenum communiqué, adopted in October – continue to encourage greater disclosure of information, though implementation of previous measures has been incomplete. The poor quality of official responses has dampened citizens' initial eagerness to lodge complaints.

### **Discretionary Political Rights Question B: -1 / 0**

The government continues to pursue policies, including large-scale resettlement and work-transfer programs, that are designed in part to alter the demography of ethnic minority regions, especially Tibet and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. During 2014, officials offered cash rewards for marriages between ethnic minority and Han Chinese citizens. They also issued high-level statements encouraging Uighurs to relocate to other parts of China, or hinting that the number of children permitted for ethnic minority families may be reduced in the future. [Note: Tibet is examined in a separate report.]

### **Civil Liberties: 15 / 60**

### *D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 4 / 16*

Despite relative freedom in private discussion and citizen efforts to push the limits of permissible public speech, China's media environment remains extremely restrictive. All Chinese television, radio, and print outlets are owned by the CCP or the state. Moreover, all media outlets are required to follow regularly issued CCP directives to avoid certain topics or publish content from party mouthpieces. In addition to routinely censored topics like the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, directives issued in 2014 barred or "guided" reporting on antigovernment protests, an activist's death in custody, high-level cases of official corruption, and extremist violence or fatal accidents. Outlets that disobey official guidance risk closure, and journalists face dismissal and sometimes imprisonment.

Pressure on investigative journalism and liberal media outlets remained intense during the year, as Beijing's municipal propaganda department purchased a large stake in a leading liberal paper; several respected journalists faced detentions, beatings, or dismissals; and regulators took various restrictive actions.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 44 journalists and online writers were behind bars in China as of December 2014, a notable increase from the previous year and the largest total in the world. The total number of Chinese citizens jailed for offenses involving freedom of expression, especially on the internet, was much higher. Several journalists faced questionable charges of bribery, defamation, "leaking state secrets," or "spreading false rumors" in 2014, and for the first time in years, mainstream print journalists were formally arrested or sentenced to prison alongside internet-based writers, ethnic minority journalists, and freelancers. Gao Yu, a prominent dissident journalist, was detained in April, charged with "leaking state secrets," and forced to give a televised confession in May; at year's end she faced a possible sentence of life in prison. Also arrested and punished were individuals involved in the publishing industry, including Yao Wentian, a Hong Kong publisher known for working with dissident writers who was detained in 2013 while visiting China and sentenced in May 2014 to 10 years in prison.

Harassment of foreign reporters, including occasional physical assaults, and intimidation of their Chinese sources and staff continued during the year. The authorities used the threat of visa denials to retaliate against foreign journalists and news organizations for investigative or critical reporting. One *New York Times* correspondent, veteran journalist Austin Ramzy, was forced to leave the country in January and report from Taiwan after the government refused to issue him a visa. *Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof reported in November that he too was being denied a visa. The websites of Bloomberg News and the *New York Times* have been blocked since 2012, when they reported on the wealth of top leaders' families, and other foreign news outlets experienced temporary blocking during 2014. Some international radio and television broadcasts, including the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Asia, have long been jammed.

The authorities block websites or force the deletion of content they deem politically threatening, and sometimes detain those who post such information. Starting around the June anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, a range of Google services that were previously available began being blocked in 2014, with restrictions on the Gmail e-mail application growing tighter toward the end of the year. The U.S.-based social-media platforms Twitter and Facebook have been blocked for years, and Chinese internet companies are obliged to adhere to official censorship directives.

Domestic microblogging and private chat services – with hundreds of millions of users – have grown rapidly since 2010 as a source of news, an outlet for public opinion, and a tool for civic mobilization. However, in 2014, the previous year's crackdown on the popular microblogging service Sina Weibo was extended to Tencent's WeChat, to which many Weibo users had migrated, even though its system of closed communities made it less conducive to news dissemination and public debate. In March, at least 39 public accounts used by journalists, activists, and internet portals to share articles on current affairs were

shut down or suspended. In August, such restrictions were formalized when the State Internet Information Office prohibited instant-messaging accounts from posting or reposting political news without official approval.

Throughout 2014, public figures with large microblog followings continued to face pressure in the form of deletions, locked accounts, and selective arrests and interrogations. In September 2013, the country's highest judicial authorities had issued a legal interpretation that expanded the scope and severity of criminal offenses covering online speech and allowed prosecutors to initiate criminal defamation cases in defense of public order or state interests. In April 2014, in the first reported conviction under the new regulations, microblogger Qin Zhihui was sentenced to three years in prison for alleged rumors he disseminated about celebrities and a former minister of railways.

Religious freedom is sharply curtailed by the formally atheist CCP. All religious groups must register with the government, which regulates their activities, oversees clergy, and guides theology. Some groups, including certain Buddhist and Christian sects, are forbidden, and their members face harassment, imprisonment, and torture. The largest among them is the Falun Gong spiritual group, whose adherents continued to suffer large-scale detention in extralegal centers for forced conversion or sentencing to long prison terms during 2014, despite the dismantling of the "reeducation through labor" camp system that began in 2013. Other unregistered groups, including unofficial Protestant and Roman Catholic congregations, operate in a legal gray zone. Some are able to meet quietly with the tacit approval of local authorities, but other "house church" gatherings are raided or evicted from their meeting locations. During 2014, harassment of both underground and state-sanctioned churches increased, especially in Zhejiang Province, where officials sought to curb the popularity of Christianity by removing publicly visible crosses and demolishing many church buildings; some 400 structures had been affected by year's end, according to Christian activists. In July, Zhang Shaojie, a pastor from a state-sanctioned church in the province, was sentenced to 12 years in prison, apparently in retaliation for his assistance to congregants protesting injustices and his defense of the church's land rights.

Authorities intensified curbs on Islam among the Uighur population of Xinjiang in 2014, while taking a more tolerant stance on religious expression among ethnic Hui Muslims throughout China. With growing tension in Xinjiang and deadly attacks apparently carried out by Uighur extremists, deployments of security forces escalated, as did the use of informants and restrictions on religious attire, beards, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Clashes between Uighurs and police – some sparked by restrictions on religious practice – led to over 100 reported deaths. Official sources labeled many of these incidents terrorist attacks, grouping them with less ambiguous cases in which armed assailants targeted civilians, but rights groups reported that security forces used deadly force to suppress some protests. Official restrictions on journalists' access to Xinjiang made it difficult to independently verify the details of such cases.

Academic freedom is restricted with respect to politically sensitive issues. The CCP controls the appointment of top university officials, and many scholars practice self-censorship to protect their careers. Like foreign journalists, foreign academics face the threat of visa denials in retaliation for their work. Political indoctrination is a required component of the curriculum at all levels of education. The space for academic discussion of democratic ideas shrank further in 2014 amid growing political pressure on prominent institutions like the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and calls by Xi to intensify ideological controls at universities. The government's intolerance for academic critics of its policies was evident in the January arrest of Ilham Tohti, a prominent Uighur scholar and supporter of improved interethnic understanding, along with seven of his students. Tohti was sentenced in September to life in prison on charges of separatism, and at year's end the students also remained in custody, with some at

undisclosed locations.

### *E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 3 / 12*

Freedoms of assembly and association are severely restricted. Citizens risk criminal punishment for organizing demonstrations without prior government approval, which is rarely granted. Nevertheless, workers, farmers, and urban residents held tens of thousands of protests during 2014, citing grievances including land confiscation, widespread corruption, pollution, and fatal police beatings. The government has struggled to suppress protests without exacerbating public frustration, using force in some cases while employing subtler strategies to deter or disperse large gatherings in others.

The central government rates provincial and city officials based on the number of petitioners who travel from their jurisdictions to Beijing to report injustices. As a result, local authorities routinely intercept and harass petitioners, at times detaining them in illegal "black jails." Detained petitioners, many of whom are women, are reportedly subject to beatings, psychological abuse, and sexual violence. During 2014, the central government issued several guidelines for reforming the petitioning system, including steps to promote online submissions, instructions to courts to handle petitions on legal matters, and a prohibition on officials accepting complaints from petitioners who bypass lower levels of the bureaucracy. The success of the new policies remained to be seen, however, as some repression appeared to shift from Beijing to localities, contributing to a proliferation of extralegal detention facilities around the country.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are required to register, obtain a government sponsor, and follow strict regulations, including vague prohibitions on advocating non-CCP rule, "damaging national unity," or "upsetting ethnic harmony." Hundreds of thousands of civil society organizations have formally registered, especially those whose work is not politically sensitive or is focused on service provision. Registration requirements for service-oriented "social organizations" were loosened under new regulations in many of China's provinces in 2014, though the central government missed a 2013 deadline to pass national legislation. Pressure on other NGOs intensified, with a high-level probe by the new National Security Commission into the activities of international NGOs, restrictions on obtaining foreign donations, and an increase in harassment, raids, staff detentions, and asset freezes for advocacy groups working on public health and educational issues – including the Zhengzhou branch of the prominent Yirenping organization, the Liren Rural Libraries program, and the Transition Institute.

The only legal labor union is the government-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), which has long been criticized for failing to properly defend workers' rights. Nevertheless, workers have asserted themselves informally via strikes, collective petitioning, and selection of negotiating representatives. They have also used social media to bolster solidarity. Strike activity has surged in recent years. According to the China Labour Bulletin, more than 1,300 strike incidents were reported in 2014, double the total for 2013. Arbitration mechanisms established under 2008 labor laws have proven disappointing to workers, who complain of biased mediators, lengthy procedures, and employers' failure to comply with rulings. The hiring of subcontractors has enabled employers to bypass contract protections in the 2008 legal reforms. Amendments that took effect in 2013 were designed to limit the use of subcontractors, but implementation remains uncertain. Workers are routinely denied social insurance and other legal benefits, while dangerous workplace conditions claim many tens of thousands of lives each year. The use of juveniles in government-sanctioned "work-study" programs continues to be a serious problem.

After several years in which it was unusual for a labor leader to face arrest, multiple individuals were prosecuted in early 2014 for leading or participating in labor protests. None were sentenced to more than nine months in jail, and all were released by year's end, but the cases were widely publicized in state

media in an apparent effort to deter other labor activists. In addition, police in Guangdong Province in April detained two NGO activists – Zhang Zhiru and Lin Dong – who had advised workers involved in one of the largest strikes in recent memory, encompassing some 40,000 employees at the shoe manufacturer Yue Yuen. After their cases were publicized domestically and internationally, both were released without charge.

#### *F. Rule of Law: 2 / 16*

The CCP controls the judiciary. Party political-legal committees supervise the operations of courts at all levels, and allow party officials to influence verdicts and sentences. CCP oversight is especially evident in politically sensitive cases. Most judges are CCP members, and party and government officials determine judicial appointments, salaries, and promotions. Adjudication of minor civil and administrative disputes is fairer than in politically sensitive or criminal cases. However, even in commercial litigation and civil suits involving private individuals, previous limited progress toward the rule of law has stalled or been reversed in recent years. Judges have increasingly been pressured to resolve civil disputes through mediation, sometimes forced, rather than actual adjudication.

Following official statements in 2013 acknowledging the need for greater transparency and judicial autonomy from local authorities, incremental reforms were initiated in 2014, including a requirement for judges to post decisions on a public online portal and pilot programs in six provinces that shift oversight of appointments and salaries to a higher bureaucratic level. The party's fourth plenum in October focused on legal reforms. The concluding communiqué included potentially meaningful changes, emphasizing the importance of the constitution and judicial professionalism, exploring the creation of cross-jurisdictional courts, and indicating that prosecutors would be permitted to file public-interest lawsuits. However, it also retained emphasis on the supremacy of the party over the legal system, rejecting actions that would increase the judiciary's independence and generating skepticism among observers as to how significant any reforms would be.

The country's growing contingent of civil rights lawyers continued to face restrictions and physical attacks in 2014. Lawyers were prevented from seeing their clients, disbarred, beaten, and in some cases detained and tortured. Prominent lawyer Gao Zhisheng was released in August after several years in prison or arbitrary detention, showing signs of torture and psychological trauma from his time in custody; he remained under tight surveillance and was barred from leaving the country to join his family in the United States.

Criminal trials, which often amount to mere sentencing announcements, are frequently closed to the public, and the conviction rate is estimated at 98 percent or more. Amendments to the criminal procedure code that took effect in 2013 include the exclusion of evidence obtained through torture, access for lawyers to their clients, and the possibility of witnesses being cross-examined. A survey of defense lawyers published by a Beijing law firm in March 2014 found that the ability of defense lawyers to meet with their clients had improved (except in politically sensitive cases), while the other provisions were proving more difficult to implement. The emerging trend of televised "confessions" by journalists, businessmen, and targets of corruption probes also raised doubts about the protection of defendants' rights.

Torture remains widespread in practice, either for the purpose of extracting confessions or forcing political and religious dissidents to recant their beliefs. Security agents routinely flout legal protections, and impunity is the norm for police brutality and suspicious deaths in custody. Overall, detention facilities are estimated to hold three to five million people. Conditions are generally harsh, with reports of inadequate food, regular beatings, and deprivation of medical care; the government generally does not



permit visits by independent monitoring groups.

Under a reform initiated in 2013, the decades-old network of "reeducation through labor" camps, which permit individuals to be held for up to four years without a judicial hearing, has been abolished. Alternative nonjudicial detention systems were used during 2014 to hold the same categories of detainees, though often for shorter terms. Some camps were transformed into coercive drug-rehabilitation centers, and prostitutes were sent to "custody and education centers," both of which typically involve forced labor. More broadly, a growing number of activists, petitioners, microbloggers, and Falun Gong practitioners have been confined in extralegal "black jails," "legal education centers," or psychiatric facilities. Others faced formal prosecution, with some receiving harsher sentences than those possible under the labor camp system, or intense official surveillance under the country's rapidly expanding "community corrections" system.

Fifty-five crimes carry the death penalty, though state media reported in October 2014 that proposed legal amendments could downgrade nine nonviolent offenses, such as fraud and smuggling. The number of executions each year is a state secret. An estimate by the San Francisco-based Duihua Foundation put the number at 2,400 for 2013 and projected a similar figure for 2014. While still more than the combined total for the rest of the world, the rates represent a sharp decline from an estimated 12,000 annual executions in 2002. The government has voiced plans to phase out the use of organs from executed prisoners, who have served as the country's primary source for transplant operations. Some experts have raised concerns that those imprisoned for their religious beliefs or ethnic identity have been used as sources for organs.

Chinese laws formally prohibit discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, or health condition, but they do not guarantee equal treatment for all segments of society in practice. Ethnic and religious minorities, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, the disabled, and people with HIV/AIDS face widespread de facto discrimination, in some cases with official encouragement. This includes discrimination in access to employment and education. Separately, despite international legal protections for asylum seekers and refugees, Chinese law enforcement agencies continue to seek out and repatriate North Korean defectors, who face imprisonment or execution upon return.

### *G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 6 / 16*

The hukou system remains in place, limiting the ability of China's 800 million rural residents and migrant workers to fully access urban social services, such as education for their children. In late 2013, senior leaders vowed to gradually lift registration restrictions, first in smaller cities and then in the larger ones. In July 2014, the State Council published a set of guidelines devolving authority for determining residency requirements (such as education level) to lower levels of government when granting urban hukou, while restricting their ability to use certain criteria, like the price of an applicant's apartment.

Millions of people are affected by restrictions on foreign travel and passports, many of them Uighurs and Tibetans. Political and religious dissidents, human rights defenders, and certain scholars are also prevented from traveling abroad or to Hong Kong. Several individuals from Hong Kong who participated in prodemocracy protests in 2014 were barred entry to the mainland.

Property rights protection remains weak in practice. Urban land is owned by the state, even if the buildings that sit on it are privately owned. Rural land is collectively owned by villages. Farmers enjoy long-term lease rights to the land they farm, but are barred from selling or developing it. Low compensation standards and weak legal protections have facilitated land seizures by local officials, who often evict the residents and transfer the land rights to developers. Corruption is endemic in such projects,

and local governments rely on land development as a key source of operating revenue, funds for debt repayment, and economic growth statistics that are critical to officials' careers. Residents who resist eviction, seek legal redress, or organize protests often face violence at the hands of local police or hired thugs. Since November 2013, the government has announced several policies aimed at expanding farmers' land-use rights and abolishing the cap on compensation for land expropriations; however, the reforms had not been implemented on a large scale by the end of 2014.

While state-owned enterprises continue to dominate banking and other key industries, the government in 2014 began instituting policies that could increase private-sector lending and strengthen market-based competition and energy pricing. Chinese citizens are legally permitted to establish and operate private businesses. However, those without official protection can find themselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis competitors, in legal disputes, or in dealings with regulators. Foreign companies can similarly face arbitrary regulatory obstacles, demands for bribes and other inducements, or negative media campaigns.

China's population controls require couples to obtain government permission before having children. In 2014, authorities began to relax the one-child policy, allowing more couples to have two children, so long as at least one parent is an only child. Compliance with population controls is enforced by intrusive government directives – such as required implantation of long-term contraception devices – and the inability of unregistered children to obtain hukou status, except upon payment of substantial fines. Meeting birth quotas remains crucial to career advancement for local officials. Consequently, some have continued to resort to brutal practices like compulsory abortion and sterilization, though this is less common than in the past. According to the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, regulations in 22 of 31 provincial-level administrative units explicitly prescribe abortions as an enforcement tool. Relatives of unsterilized women or couples with unapproved births are subject to high fines, job dismissal, reduced government benefits, and occasionally detention. These controls, combined with commercial ultrasound technology and societal pressures favoring boys, have led to sex-selective abortion and a general shortage of females, exacerbating the problem of human trafficking.

Domestic violence affects one-quarter of Chinese women, according to official figures. The problem is addressed in scattered provincial-level laws; national-level provisions are not comprehensive. Many claims are not recognized by courts, leaving victims unprotected. In November 2014, the State Council released a draft anti-domestic violence law, though many Chinese advocates and foreign experts criticized it for its narrow definition of domestic violence, which excluded sexual violence, economic control, and relationships outside marriage. Several laws bar gender discrimination in the workplace, and gender equality has reportedly improved over the past decade, but bias remains widespread, including in job recruitment and college admissions. Women remain severely underrepresented in important CCP and government positions.

### **Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

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