

# Freedom in the World 2026 - China

## A Note About Related Territories

Territories are sometimes assessed separately from related countries if they meet certain criteria, including significantly different conditions for political rights and civil liberties, and boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow annual comparisons.

**Related Territories:** 2026 Global Freedom Score Overview

[Hong Kong](#)

41/100

Partly Free

[Tibet](#)

0/100

Not Free

Click on a scorecard to visit each countries Freedom in the World Report.

## Note

The numerical scores and status listed here do not reflect conditions in Hong Kong or Tibet, which are examined in separate reports. *Freedom in the World* reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Related, disputed, or occupied territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including distinct conditions for political rights and civil liberties and boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

## Overview

The ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) oversees a repressive authoritarian regime and maintains tight control over all aspects of life and governance, including the state bureaucracy, the media, online speech, religious practice, universities, and businesses. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has consolidated personal power to a degree not seen in China for decades, and the country's civil society has been devastated by a multiyear crackdown on political dissent, independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and human rights defenders.

## Key Developments in 2025

- A significant number of high-ranking political and military leaders were purged during the year, ostensibly as part of Xi Jinping's ongoing campaign to curb corruption within the CCP and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In one of the most important shake-ups, General He Weidong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and a member of the CCP's Politburo, was charged with corruption and expelled from both the party and the PLA in October, along with eight other generals.
- Civic and labor protests at the local level increased during the year despite police repression. In August, a school bullying incident in Sichuan Province sparked unusually large protests, ultimately leading to a violent confrontation between protesters and police; video footage of both the initial incident and the police crackdown on demonstrators was later removed from Chinese websites.
- In July, the Ministry of Public Security launched a pilot version of its national digital identification system. The system offered internet users a centralized online identity

verification process, intended to be usable across all platforms, prompting rights defenders to raise concerns that the government could use the database to track users across platforms and increase online surveillance and censorship.

## Political Rights

### A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

**Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?**

0 /  
4

There are no direct or competitive elections for national executive leaders. The National People's Congress (NPC) formally elects the state president for five-year terms. The premier is nominated by the state president and confirmed by the NPC. In practice, both positions are determined in advance by the top CCP leadership and announced at the relevant party congress. The CCP's seven-member Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), headed by the party's general secretary, sets government and party policy.

Xi Jinping was appointed for a third five-year term as general secretary at the 20th Party Congress in 2022, paving the way for him to remain in power indefinitely. This marked a sharp break from the post-Cultural Revolution practice of maintaining a two-term limit for the country's highest leadership position. In 2023, General Secretary Xi secured a third term as state president with a unanimous NPC vote. Xi also serves as chairman of the state and party military commissions. Li Qiang, a close ally of Xi, was named as premier in March 2023.

A2 0-4 pts

**Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?**

0 /  
4

The NPC has a maximum of 3,000 members. They are formally elected for five-year terms by subnational congresses, but the CCP vets all candidates in practice. Only the NPC's standing committee meets regularly, with the full congress convening only briefly to approve proposed legislation; party organs and the State Council, or cabinet, effectively control lawmaking decisions. The incumbent NPC, with 2,977 members, was seated in 2023 and most recently met in March 2025.

A3 0-4 pts

**Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?**

0 /  
4

Political positions are directly elected only at the lowest levels. Independent candidates who obtain the signatures of 10 supporters are by law allowed to run for seats in the county-level people's congresses. Elections for village committees are also supposed to give residents the chance to choose their representatives. In practice, however, independent candidates for these posts are often kept off the ballot or out of office through intimidation, harassment, fraud, and sometimes detention.

Elections are not administered by an independent body. The indirect elections that populate people's congresses at various levels are conducted by those congresses' standing committees, while village-level elections are conducted by a village electoral committee that answers to the local party committee.

## **B Political Pluralism and Participation**

**B1 0-4 pts**

**Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?**

**0 /  
4**

The CCP effectively monopolizes all political activity and does not permit meaningful political competition. Eight small noncommunist parties are represented in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an official advisory body, but their activities are tightly circumscribed. These parties must accept the CCP's leadership as a condition for their existence.

Citizens who have sought to establish genuinely independent political parties or prodemocracy movements are nearly all in prison, under house arrest, or in exile. The authorities continue to hold prodemocracy activists and lawyers in various forms of detention and imprisonment.

**B2 0-4 pts**

**Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?**

**0 /  
4**

China's one-party system provides no institutional mechanism for organized political opposition. The CCP has ruled without interruption since winning a civil war against the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) in 1949. Informal factions, sometimes based on personal connections, are known to exist within the CCP, but their functioning is opaque. Xi has steadily increased his personal power and authority within the party since 2012, notably by purging rivals and challengers as part of an anticorruption campaign.

**B3 0-4 pts**

**Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?**

**0 /  
4**

The CCP is not accountable to voters and denies the public any meaningful participation in political affairs. The party uses a broad array of coercive tools and methods to suppress independent political engagement.

**B4 0-4 pts**

**Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?**

**0 /  
4**

The political system is dominated in practice by ethnic Han Chinese men. Members of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as LGBT+ people, have no opportunity to gain meaningful or independent political representation. Nominal representatives of ethnic minority groups such as Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Mongolians hold administrative offices and participate in party and state bodies like the NPC, but their role is largely symbolic. Women are also underrepresented in politics,

particularly in top party and government positions, and are not permitted to advocate for their interests outside the CCP structure.

## C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

**Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?**

0 / 4

None of China's national leaders are freely elected, and the legislature plays a rubber-stamp role in policymaking and the development of new laws. The concentration of power in Xi's hands, a cult of personality centered on Xi, and his regular calls for greater ideological conformity and party supremacy have further reduced the limited space for policy debate, even within the CCP.

C2 0-4 pts

**Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?**

1 / 4

Since becoming CCP leader in 2012, Xi has pursued an extensive anticorruption campaign. Well over a million people have been investigated and punished according to official figures, including senior state, party, and military personnel. Anticorruption functions are currently managed by the National Supervisory Commission, which was established through a 2018 merger of state and party entities and is tasked with enforcing political and ideological discipline in addition to compliance with the law.

Anticorruption efforts originally focused on law enforcement agencies have extended to various other government entities. Nevertheless, corruption remains rooted in the one-party system, which does not tolerate the institutions necessary for effectively addressing graft—such as a free press, independent civil society groups, and impartial courts.

Officials in anticorruption agencies have themselves been investigated for or accused of corruption. Li Gang, a senior inspector at the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, was convicted of accepting more than 102 million yuan (\$14.4 million) in bribes and sentenced to 15 years in prison in December 2025.

Purges of top political and military leaders continued in 2025, ostensibly as part of the crackdown on corruption. In March, rumors began to circulate on Chinese social media that Politburo member General He Weidong, vice chairman of the CMC, had been accused of corruption, removed from his position, and arrested. The Chinese government announced in October that He would be prosecuted on charges related to corruption and abuse of power. That month, he and eight other generals were expelled from the CCP and the PLA for alleged corruption.

C3 0-4 pts

**Does the government operate with openness and transparency?**

0 / 4

The Chinese government and the CCP are notoriously opaque. Regulations on “open government” do not effectively compel local party and state organs to share critical data or respond to citizen requests. Under Xi's leadership, the government has developed increasingly sophisticated methods for controlling the diffusion of information and shaping public discourse.

In 2023, Radio Free Asia reported that the Supreme People's Court would create a new database with approximately 2,000 cases. Observers feared that the new database would replace China Judgments Online, which had allowed far wider access to a larger number of documents. The court also disclosed that it had been adding fewer documents to China Judgments Online since late 2021.

In 2024, the court vowed that more items would be made available in the new database; in early 2025, Supreme People’s Court officials announced that between January and November 2024, it had published 8.1 million documents, a roughly 67 percent increase over the same time period the previous year. Analysts have questioned the accuracy of this figure.

## Add Q

**Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?**

-3

Chinese authorities have aggressively pursued policies to deliberately alter the demographics of ethnic minority regions, particularly the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), Tibet, and the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia. Authorities in the XUAR have interned more than one million Uyghurs and other members of Turkic ethnic minority groups in prisons, other forms of detention, and so-called Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers (VSETCs), which reportedly became inactive by 2020. According to Beijing, VSETCs were educational centers, Uyghurs and others voluntarily entered them, and the centers curbed terrorist and extremist activity. However, a cache of internal government documents obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and published in 2022 describe facilities secured by armed guards who received shoot-to-kill orders regarding escapees. Detainees were subjected to aggressive forms of indoctrination and political reeducation meant to undermine their ethnic identities and religious beliefs. In observations shared with the International Labour Organization in 2024, the International Trade Union Confederation reported that people previously held in VSETCs had been sent either into forced labor or to prison since 2020.

Beijing also employs so-called poverty alleviation measures to accomplish its demographic goals; hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minority members—mostly farmers and other residents whom authorities refer to as “surplus rural laborers”—have been coerced into taking low-wage jobs away from their home areas, largely in state-owned factories. Participants have described prison-like environments where they were subjected to political indoctrination. In a 2022 report, a United Nations special rapporteur cited evidence that the programs involved forced labor, heavy surveillance, violence, and degrading treatment, and that “some instances may amount to enslavement as a crime against humanity.” In May 2025, an investigative report by *The New York Times*, *Der Spiegel*, and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism revealed that this relocation practice has been far more extensive than previously thought, allowing the Chinese government to evade international sanctions on goods manufactured using forced labor within the XUAR.

Ethnic minority children in the XUAR and Tibet have been separated from their parents and forced to attend state-run boarding schools, where Mandarin is the sole language of instruction and where students are subject to intense political indoctrination. In recent years the Ministry of Education has required preschools across China to make Mandarin the language of instruction, reflecting an ongoing push to impose Mandarin as the dominant language at all educational levels and further weaken the cultural identities of ethnic minority groups and individuals. A multiyear campaign of detaining and imposing long prison terms on ethnic minority writers, scholars, musicians, and religious figures continues to damage the cultural, religious, social, and economic leadership of these communities.

Previous investigations and witness testimony revealed that authorities in the XUAR have coerced women to accept surgical sterilization, forcibly implanted intrauterine contraceptive devices prior to internment, administered unknown drugs and injections to women in detention, and used fines and internment as punishment for birth-control violations.

## Civil Liberties

# D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? | 0 / 4

China is home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments and its most sophisticated system of censorship, particularly online. The CCP maintains control over news reporting via direct ownership, accreditation of journalists, harsh penalties for comments that are critical of party leaders or the CCP, and daily directives to media outlets and websites that guide coverage of breaking news stories.

State management of the telecommunications infrastructure enables website blocks, removal of smartphone applications from the domestic market, and mass deletion of social media posts and user accounts that address banned topics. Thousands of websites have been blocked, many for years, including major news and social media hubs like *The New York Times*, the British Broadcasting Corporation, YouTube, X, and Facebook.

Rules and regulations governing the media and internet usage include measures that restrict news dissemination and contribute to the banning of mobile apps focused on minority languages, religious content, and foreign-language learning, among other topics. Censors have also removed large numbers of social media groups, accounts, or posts that dealt with LGBT+ issues, financial advice, critical views of CCP history, and celebrities. The country's network of pro-CCP volunteer internet commentators and paid employees aggressively monitors and censors online communications.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 50 journalists were imprisoned in China as of December 2025, though the number of people held for uncovering or sharing newsworthy information is far greater. Numerous citizen journalists and bloggers have been detained, disappeared, or criminally charged in recent years. Zhang Zhan, an activist and citizen reporter, has been repeatedly jailed for her work. She was rearrested in August 2024, just months after being released from a four-year prison term for her reporting. In September 2025, Zhang was convicted of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble"—a charge that Amnesty International has denounced as "baseless"—and sentenced to another four years in prison.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

0 / 4

The party-state operates a multifaceted apparatus to control all aspects of religious activity, including by vetting religious leaders for political reliability, placing limits on the number of religious authorities such as priests and imams, requiring ideological conformity within religious doctrine, and installing security cameras inside religious establishments. The state recognizes Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Taoism. All religious groups must go through a rigorous process of certification to be officially recognized; those that refuse are labeled illegal and persecuted. Thousands of Buddhist, Taoist, and folk-religion temples and Christian "house churches" across China have been completely or partially demolished by authorities.

A 2023 law regulating religious venues reinforced state control over the organizational structure and personnel of religious groups. Under the legislation, religious groups must maintain files on staff activities, including contact with foreign entities.

Certain religions and religious groups, including Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim groups, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christian house churches, are persecuted harshly. In the XUAR, peaceful religious practices are routinely punished under charges of "religious extremism," resulting in detention, prison sentences, and indoctrination for many Uyghur, Kazakh, and Hui Muslims. In

2024, Beijing imposed new regulations on religious practices in the XUAR; among other requirements, religious groups must “practice the core values of socialism,” religious structures must physically “reflect Chinese characteristics and style” when being built or refurbished, and unauthorized groups are barred from offering religious education. The regulations also allow CCP cadres to monitor for unauthorized religious activity. The 2024 regulations explicitly refer to “Sinicization,” a policy under which authorities restrict religious freedom and more directly influence the conduct of religious groups in China. Separately, in 2025 Chinese authorities launched several crackdowns on “underground” Christian churches, arresting dozens of clergy and hundreds of church attendees in multiple raids.

Authorities have also used digital surveillance to suppress the religious activities of Uyghur and Turkic Muslims. Police have been known to interrogate residents who keep text from the Quran in their smartphones’ storage.

**D3 0-4 pts**

**Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?**

**0 / 4**

Academic freedom is heavily restricted. Efforts to police classroom discussions are present at all levels of education, including via installation of surveillance cameras in some classrooms, large-scale recruitment of student informants, and the creation of special departments to supervise the political thinking of teaching staff. The CCP controls the appointment of top university officials, and CCP committees and party branches have significant formal authority over university administration. Many scholars self-censor to protect their careers and personal safety.

Political indoctrination, including the study of “Xi Jinping Thought,” is a required component of the curriculum at all levels. A number of universities have removed references to “freedom of thought” from their charters, replacing them with pledges of loyalty to the CCP. Professors and students face reprisals for expressing views that are deemed critical of the CCP’s governance or Xi’s leadership.

**D4 0-4 pts**

**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?**

**1 / 4**

Though Chinese citizens are active on the internet and have been known to be quite vocal about public affairs, they continue to be charged and imprisoned for critical or satirical social media posts on a variety of subjects, including real or perceived criticism of Xi or the CCP. Internet users also face account deletions, job dismissals, arbitrary detention, and police interrogation over such posts. In July 2025, Zhang Yadi, a student and human rights advocate, was arrested and charged with “inciting separatism” through social media content in support of Tibetan rights that she had posted while living abroad. As of November, she was being held incommunicado and had repeatedly been denied access to legal representation by Chinese authorities.

The government’s vast ability to monitor citizens’ lives and communications inhibits online and offline conversations. Administrators of social media applications like WeChat closely monitor user discussions to ensure conformity with government content restrictions. Many Chinese social media platforms require users to provide their real name and complete an identity verification process. In July 2025, the Ministry of Public Security launched a pilot version of its national digital identification system, which allows users to submit proof of their identity and obtain a unique code, usable across all platforms that require identity verification. While the government has advertised this centralized online identity verification process as a way to prevent identity theft and fraud, rights defenders have expressed concern that the state will use the database to track users’ activity across platforms and increase online surveillance and censorship.

Police have access to the personal details of broad categories of individuals. China’s Cybersecurity Law obliges companies to store Chinese users’ data domestically and submit to often intrusive security reviews. Telecommunications companies must obtain facial scans of new internet or mobile phone users as part of the real-name registration process, which is combined with mass surveillance tools to closely monitor all residents. Surveillance cameras, frequently augmented with facial-recognition software, cover many urban areas and public transportation, and these networks are expanding into rural regions. Devices used by police to quickly extract and scan data from smartphones, initially deployed in the XUAR, have spread nationwide.

The Counterespionage Law was revised in 2023 to restrict the transmission of information related to national security, which is not clearly defined; it also allows authorities to inspect electronic equipment and data. Amendments to the Law on Guarding State Secrets took effect in 2024, restricting the dissemination of “work secrets” which are not classified. The law also obligates telecommunications companies to stop the transmission of offending material and report incidents to state security authorities.

Electronic surveillance is supplemented with offline monitoring by neighborhood party committees and “public security volunteers” who are visible during large events. There is an especially heavy police presence in ethnic minority regions, particularly the XUAR. The ability of Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minority groups in the XUAR to express themselves freely, even in private, has been further undermined in recent years by a policy of having Chinese officials live in their homes to monitor and indoctrinate them.

## **E Associational and Organizational Rights**

### **E1 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom of assembly?** | 1 / 4

The constitution protects the right of citizens to demonstrate, but in practice protesters seldom obtain approval and risk punishment for assembling without permission. Spontaneous demonstrations have provided some outlet for local grievances, though they are frequently met with police violence and criminal prosecution. In August 2025, video footage of a school bullying incident in Sichuan Province circulated widely online, sparking unusually large local protests that were forcibly shut down by police. Additional video of the police crackdown also spread online before being removed from Chinese websites.

Solitary protests—in which an individual holds a placard in public, for example—can be criminally punished. A handful of isolated prodemocracy protests occurred in 2025, including in April, when a lone protester attached three prodemocracy banners to an overpass in Chengdu. Another individual protester remotely projected prodemocracy and anti-CCP slogans onto a building in Chongqing in September.

Armed police have been accused of opening fire during protests, particularly in the XUAR.

### **E2 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?**

| 0 / 4

Domestic and foreign NGOs lack meaningful autonomy. While hundreds of thousands of NGOs are formally registered, many effectively operate as government-sponsored entities and focus primarily on service delivery. Nearly all prominent NGOs that focused on policy advocacy, including in previously less politically sensitive areas, have been shuttered under government pressure in recent years. Engaging in unsanctioned civic activity is risky, and many NGO workers have been detained and jailed.

**E3 0-4 pts**

**Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?** | 1 / 4

The only legal labor union organization is the government-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which has long been criticized for failing to defend workers' rights. Efforts to organize independent trade unions are swiftly shut down by authorities, and the activists involved face harsh penalties. Workers have nevertheless engaged in largely spontaneous strikes, assemblies, or other forms of public action, with nearly 2,500 such incidents recorded by Freedom House's China Dissent Monitor during 2025, compared with about 1,600 in 2024.

## **F Rule of Law**

**F1 0-4 pts**

**Is there an independent judiciary?** | 1 / 4

The CCP dominates the judicial system, with courts at all levels supervised by party political-legal committees that have influence over the appointment of judges, court operations, and verdicts and sentences. CCP oversight is evident in politically sensitive cases, and most judges are CCP members. Judges are expected to conform to CCP ideology and uphold the principle of party supremacy over the judiciary. Many judges complain about local officials interfering in cases to protect powerful litigants, support important industries, or avoid their own potential liability.

**F2 0-4 pts**

**Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?** | 1 / 4

Violations of due process are widespread in practice. Trials of civic activists, religious dissidents, and other human rights defenders are routinely held in secret, with even family members being denied information or entry. Criminal prosecutions in general rely heavily on confessions, many of which are obtained through torture despite laws prohibiting such practices. Forced confessions are often televised. While adjudication of routine civil and administrative disputes is considered more fair, cases that touch on politically sensitive issues or the interests of powerful groups are subject to decisive "guidance" from party political-legal committees.

Legal counselors are ultimately meant to serve the state, not the client. Clients do not benefit from an expectation of attorney-client privilege. A crackdown on human rights lawyers has left many defendants without effective or independent legal counsel.

Extrajudicial forms of detention remain common. The practice of "residential surveillance in a designated location" allows the police to hold individuals in secret detention for up to six months and has been deployed against human rights defenders and government critics. Several individuals are known to have died under residential surveillance.

**F3 0-4 pts**

**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?** | 0 / 4

Conditions in places of detention are harsh, with reports of inadequate food, regular beatings, and deprivation of medical care. In addition to their use to extract confessions, torture and other forms of coercion are widely employed in efforts to force political and religious dissidents to recant their beliefs. Impunity is the norm for police brutality and suspicious deaths in custody. Citizens and

lawyers who seek redress for such abuse are often met with reprisals or imprisonment. Peaceful protesters are regularly beaten by police or hired aggressors.

The government has gradually reduced the number of crimes that carry the death penalty, though individuals can still be executed for nonviolent offenses. The government does not publish the number of executions it carries out. In an April 2025 report, Amnesty International found that Chinese authorities had likely executed thousands of people in 2024.

**F4 0-4 pts**

**Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?**

0 /  
4

Chinese laws formally prohibit discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, or health condition, but these protections are often violated in practice. Several laws bar gender discrimination in the workplace, and some indicators of gender equality have reportedly improved in recent years. Nevertheless, bias remains endemic, including in job recruitment and college admissions. Women's rights activists and individuals who campaign against sexual harassment and assault have themselves faced harassment, detention, and sometimes criminal prosecution.

Members of ethnic and religious minority groups, LGBT+ people, people with disabilities, and people with illnesses such as HIV, AIDS, and hepatitis B face discrimination in employment and access to education. Members of religious and ethnic minorities are disproportionately targeted and abused by security forces and in the criminal justice system.

Despite China's international obligation to protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, law enforcement agencies continue to repatriate North Korean defectors, who face imprisonment or execution upon return. In October 2025, Human Rights Watch reported that at least 406 North Koreans had been repatriated by Chinese authorities since 2024.

## **G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

**G1 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?**

1 /  
4

While China's constitution gives individuals the right to petition the government concerning a grievance or injustice, in practice petitioners are routinely intercepted in their efforts to travel to government centers, forcibly returned to their hometowns, or extralegally detained.

The *hukou* (household registration) system previously prohibited 295 million internal migrants from enjoying full legal rights as residents in the cities where they worked. However, local governments have eased enforcement in recent years. In 2024, the State Council published a plan to abolish hukou in cities with fewer than three million registered residents, while the system would be loosened in cities with three to five million residents.

Police checkpoints throughout the XUAR limit residents' ability to travel or even leave their hometowns.

Millions of people are affected by government restrictions on their access to foreign travel and passports, with Uyghurs and Tibetans experiencing the greatest difficulty. Many overseas Chinese nationals who engage in politically sensitive activities abroad are prevented from returning to China, while those who seek refuge abroad often face forced repatriation and arrest.

In general, border control rules have been arbitrarily imposed. The revised Counterespionage Law allows authorities to stop individuals from leaving or entering China on national security grounds. Public-sector employees and high-ranking CCP members face increasingly strict exit restrictions, limiting their ability to travel or study abroad.

**G2 0-4 pts**

**Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?**

1 /  
4

The authorities dominate the economy through state-owned enterprises in key sectors such as banking and energy, state ownership of land, and political and regulatory control. Chinese citizens are legally permitted to establish and operate private businesses. However, all enterprises are vulnerable to political interference, arbitrary regulatory obstacles, debilitating censorship, negative media campaigns, demands for bribes, and other forms of corruption.

An ongoing government crackdown on private businesses, particularly large technology and social media firms, has ostensibly been aimed at curbing monopolistic practices, uncontrolled growth, and other economic ills, but has also brought the private sector more firmly under CCP control. Local governments facing fiscal deficits have been known to selectively enforce laws in order to extort private companies in wealthier provinces, which has resulted in the financial collapse of some of the targeted companies.

Property rights protection remains weak. Urban land is owned by the state, with only the buildings themselves in private hands. Rural land is collectively owned by villages. Farmers enjoy long-term lease rights to the land they work, but they have been restricted in their ability to transfer, sell, or develop it. Low compensation and weak legal protections have facilitated land seizures by local officials, who often evict residents and transfer the land rights to developers. Corruption is endemic in such projects, and local governments rely on land development as a crucial source of revenue.

**G3 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?**

2 /  
4

Following regulatory changes in 2021 that allowed couples to have up to three children, the government in 2022 launched a campaign instructing local family planning officials to limit the number of abortions, including by discouraging abortions for “nonmedical” reasons. Childbirth incentives have also been offered by some local governments in recent years, but these policies have been largely ineffective at reversing a long-term decline in fertility rates. While ethnic minority couples were already permitted to have up to three children prior to 2021, ethnic Tibetans as well as Uyghurs and other Muslims in the XUAR face abusive policies aimed at limiting their reproduction in practice.

Domestic violence continues to affect a large number of Chinese women, though a 2023 State Council report noted that domestic violence had fallen since the 2015 introduction of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. That law does not criminalize spousal rape.

Chinese law defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman, denying marriage rights to same-sex couples. Separately, Muslims in the XUAR face restrictions and penalties related to aspects of their appearance with religious connotations, such as headscarves on women or beards on men.

**G4 0-4 pts**

**Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?**

2 /  
4

While workers in China are afforded important protections under existing laws, violations of labor and employment regulations are widespread. Exploitative employment practices such as wage theft, excessive overtime, student labor, and unsafe working conditions are pervasive in many industries. Forced labor and human trafficking are common, affecting internal migrants as well as Chinese nationals who are trafficked abroad. Forced labor is the norm in prisons and other detention facilities.