

World
Watch
Research

China: Full Country Dossier

December 2021



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Man at Hongkong quay (c) Alamy

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / China

Brief country details

In the table below, the number of Christians shown is an Open Doors (OD) estimate.

China: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
1,428,481,000	96,700,000	OD estimate

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021) (Adapted according to OD-estimate)

Map of country



China: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	76	17
WWL 2021	74	17
WWL 2020	70	23
WWL 2019	65	27
WWL 2018	57	43

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

China: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Communist and post - Communist oppression	Government officials, Political parties
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of the persecution situation

The policy of "Sinicizing" the church is implemented across the country as the Communist Party is relying strongly on Chinese cultural identity to stay in control, limiting whatever could threaten its hold on power. New restrictions on Internet, social media, NGOs and the 2018 regulations on religion (with its extension in 2020 and 2021) are or are going to be strictly applied and all seriously limit freedom. Likewise, already existing laws are being implemented more strictly and local authorities barely have any leeway to allow for flexibility. While venues for meetings had to be closed all over China due to COVID-19 restrictions, in some locations the government continues to forbid registered and unregistered groups from resuming worship. The old truth that churches would only be perceived as being a threat if they became too large, too political or by inviting foreign guests, has become an unreliable guideline today. Many churches are being monitored and closed down, no matter whether they are independent or belong to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

If a convert from Islam or from Tibetan Buddhism is discovered by community and family, they are usually threatened and physically harmed – all in an effort to win them back to their original faith. Spouses may be pressed to divorce. Neighbors and the local community may report a convert's Christian activities to the authorities or the village head, who would then take action to stop him or her.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

China has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)*
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)

3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

(*China has signed but not ratified the ICCPR.)

China is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christians are monitored by the state, their activities often hindered and disrupted (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Churches are hindered from obtaining legal status and those officially registered are subject to heavy state interference (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian leaders are imprisoned on charges of national security (ICCPR Art. 9)
- Children of Christians have been harassed and discriminated against because of their parents' faith (CRC Art. 2)
- Christian children are hindered from attending religious services and receiving religious education (CRC Art. 14)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- As one example of many: On 30 April 2021, the authorities [closed](#) down Bulai Protestant church in Fugong county in Yunnan Province, allegedly for violations of COVID-protocol (Radio Free Asia/RFA, 5 May 2021).
- The "Shenzhen Holy Reformed Church" with 60 members has [fled to Jeju Island](#) in South Korea and asked for asylum (China Aid, 11 June 2021), but their application has been declined, the case is still pending. Churches with foreign ties have come under special scrutiny or have been closed down.
- 21 May 2021: "Underground" Catholic bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu of Xinxiang in Henan Province was [arrested](#) together with ten priests and an unknown number of theological students. More than two months after their arrest, they were still unaccounted for (UCA News, 20 July 2021).
- 11 July 2021: Officials from Guangdong Province [raided](#) the Shenzhen Trinity Gospel Harvest Church's where an online worship service was being streamed. The pastor and elder there were forced to stop preaching (China Aid, 19 July 2021).
- August 2021: [Four Christians](#) in Shenzhen, who were arrested in 2020 for illegally selling electronic devices which played Bible verses, were handed prison sentences between 18 months and six years and heavily fined (UCA News, 4 August 2021).

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: closed - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/church-05052021110750.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: fled to Jeju Island - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/06/shenzhen-holy-reformed-church-members.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: arrested - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/arrested-chinese-bishop-priests-untraced-two-months-on/93363>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: raided - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/07/ccp-authorities-forcibly-interrupt.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Four Christians - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-jails-christians-for-selling-bible-players/93577>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / China

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china/	30 July 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877	30 July 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-CHN.html	30 July 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china/	30 July 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	30 July 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	30 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (China is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/china/freedom-world/2021	30 July 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/china/freedom-net/2020	30 July 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/china	30 July 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/china-and-tibet	30 July 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#cn	30 July 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/china	30 July 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/chn	30 July 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CHN	30 July 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/china/	30 July 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/China%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf	30 July 2021
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china	30 July 2021

Recent history

Xi Jinping assumed office as President in March 2013, although arguably his most powerful position is that of Secretary-General of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a position he holds since November 2012. While his first term in office has seen a strong reduction in freedom in all sectors of society, his power became most visible in the abolition of the term-limit for serving as president in March 2018 which gives him a position of authority observers call the strongest since Mao Zedong. At the same time, he faces major challenges, which became more apparent during his second term. First and foremost, the main task domestically is to keep economic growth on track, albeit at a lower level than in previous years, especially after the COVID-19 crisis derailed the world economy. However, there are a number of other issues which also need dealing with:

- The continued US-Chinese "decoupling" process, even with a new administration in Washington
- Challenges concerning the Belt and Road Initiative
- Foreign-policy related issues, including the South China Sea, Taiwan, India and North Korea
- Preparation for both a falling population level and an ageing population

The Church in China is increasingly being affected by the state's much more unified approach of actively interfering with and dominating church affairs (instead of simply acting as a background administrator, as previously). This is happening regardless of whether the churches involved are state-approved or non-registered. Restrictions still come in indirect ways, such as the demand to include Communist ideology and rhetoric in teaching and sermons, but the focus is now clearly on limiting the space in which churches can operate: They are under pressure to adapt their ministry, are more closely watched and some are being simply closed down. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped the authorities suspend the operation of many churches, unnoticed by the majority of the general public. While other sorts of meeting venues were gradually opened to the public again in 2021, many church venues were forced to remain closed, pushing congregations to meet online or dissolve into cell groups. Since the Christian community is arguably the largest organized social force not controlled by the Communist authorities, it is natural that Christians are generally regarded with suspicion by them, especially since religion in general is seen as something which should be overcome by Communism. The regulations on religion, implemented from 1 February 2018 onwards, together with certain additions implemented from 1 February 2020 and 1 May 2021 onwards, provide the authorities with the legal provisions for strict guidance and intervention.

Political and legal landscape

The CCP has tightened its grip on society (including all religious activities) and increasingly uses Maoist rhetoric and ideology in order to keep citizens in line. One of the biggest challenges China faces is its need for structural reforms: Both the demographic path the country is on and the increasing inequality (despite claims of poverty eradication) demand new answers (see below: *Economic landscape* and *Social and cultural landscape*). The economy was already slowing down before the arrival of COVID-19 and the continued US-Chinese decoupling process has made things worse. The Communist Party will have its hands full trying to fulfill the tacitly agreed social contract of trading a lack of freedom for growing prosperity. However, the main CCP goal is not to bring happiness to the Chinese people or bring them prosperity, but first and foremost to stay in power. Peace and harmony in society are key words in this respect and any source of power perceived as posing a danger to the CCP's goal will be opposed, including religion. The COVID-19 crisis has shown how effectively the government can steer society and has been a welcome reason for [intensifying control](#), not least by introducing tracking apps and the like (The Guardian, 9 March 2020).

1) The emphasis on Communist ideology

The CCP's main method for reaching the overarching goal of staying in control is to repeatedly emphasize Communist ideology. There is rarely a public statement or meeting in which the importance of heeding Communist values is not mentioned. This has been an emphasis from the beginning of President Xi's rule in 2012, but really took off when his name and ideas were officially [incorporated](#) into the CCP's Constitution (under the title "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era") at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017 (Washington Post, 24 October 2017). A change in the Constitution made him the first leader since Mao Zedong to be able to extend his state leadership beyond the two-term limit. In an effort to make Xi Jinping's ideas more accessible, Chinese media developed a useful color-coded [mindmap](#) and several universities have opened special institutes to research and teach Xi Jinping's ideological insights (SCMP, 18 October 2018).

In reality, things are much simpler: Having predominantly Communist Party members and civil servants in mind, whoever does not toe the Party line closely, is in high danger of being replaced. And whichever groups do not embrace Communist ideology (e.g. most churches), risk getting into serious trouble at various levels; at the very least they will be given a strict reminder of Communist principles. While President Xi has already been described as the 'core' of the party in countless articles, the fact that his name is [inscribed](#) in the "Regulations on the Work of the Central Committee" is viewed by observers as cementing his position of power indefinitely, which can be seen as a direct consequence of abolishing the presidential term limit in the Constitution in 2018 (RFA, 29 September 2020).

One challenge is to embed Xi Jinping's thinking into the hearts and minds of all citizens and this is where much effort is being made, for instance, through media and censorship (see below: *Technological landscape*). At least 37 universities have set up a [course](#) on "Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era" (China Scope, 6 October 2020). Academia is not just following President Xi, but is also becoming increasingly [nationalistic](#) (China Digital Times, 15 December 2020) and the room for debate is [shrinking](#) (Merics, 2 July 2021). The universities' Communist Party committees are to exercise "[comprehensive leadership](#)" over teaching, scientific research and administration, according to revised rules (RFA, 30 April 2021). Only the CCP's version of Chinese [history](#) is to be told and any dissenters are to be reported (Channel News Asia, 11 April 2021), in what observers have called the "[largest mass-education drive](#) since the Mao era" (Wall Street Journal, 15 June 2021).

Party members are a special target: In order to help keep them in line with Communist doctrine and – more importantly – with Xi Jinping's thinking, the CCP [released a special app](#) (The Guardian, 15 February 2019). All Party members are required to complete lessons on the app and to stick to the [thoughts of Marx and Lenin](#) (Reuters, 27 February 2019). President Xi Jinping even claimed that 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era' is nothing less than 21st century Marxism (Trivium China, 28 February 2019). This is remarkable: No state leader has ever before dared to view his own political theory as an updated version of Karl Marx's thought. Those apps are [monitoring and copying user data](#) as well (BBC News, 14 October 2019).

2) Celebrating victory and President Xi

The 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took place on 1 July 2021 and [Xi Jinping's speech](#) received a lot of well justified attention (BBC News, 1 July 2021). However, other speeches held recently by him are just as revealing. Apart from the CCP's own brand of Chinese history, it was one particular phrase used by Xi Jinping in his anniversary speech which caught the attention of observers: 'Anyone who tries to do so will find their head broken and blood flowing against a great wall of steel built with the flesh and blood of more than 1.4 billion Chinese people!' While it is true that the translation of idioms always has to be viewed with caution, the wording has been used before and it is clearly meant as a [warning](#) to both internal and external audiences (China Digital Times, 2 July 2021). Maybe less vivid than the 'wall of steel' picture, is another phrase Xi Jinping has frequently used in other speeches: '[Time and momentum are on our side](#)' (Merics, 9 July 2021). This slogan claims that the West is in irreversible decline, making way for China's equally unstoppable rise to glory. The CCP and its leader have been sounding self-assured and assertive, along with a newly published Party History book, all serving to hype up the country's patriotic mood. The book follows how Chairman Mao made China 'rise up', the reformer Deng made the country 'rich' and now Xi Jinping is leading China to its historical destiny by making it 'strong', thus justifying his goal of absolute power. It cannot be expected that the country's strong economic development will automatically bring about more democratic freedom; this potential consequence (observed elsewhere) is more than outweighed by the country's [growing totalitarianism](#), as a country expert has shown (Minxin Pei, China: Totalitarianism's long shadow, Journal of Democracy, Volume 32 No.2, pp 5-21, 2 April 2021).

3) Strong stand against (perceived) adversaries and neighbors

Coinciding with this conviction is a much more assertive stance in the foreign policy realm and a Politburo study session in the WWL 2022 reporting period was especially revealing in that respect, as it revolved around the topic of [external messaging](#) and propaganda (China Media Project, 2 June 2021). One sentence that caught the attention of country observers was: "[The CCP] must focus on grasping the tone, being open and confident as well as having modesty and humility, striving to build a credible, lovable and respectable image of China." Members of the Politburo were reminded that they are in a public opinion 'struggle', a term straight from the Maoist toolbox. According to this Maoist view, there are friends of China who understand and accept what is being said, and there are enemies who are hostile and insist on criticism, instead of learning about the inherent 'goodness' of the Communist Party's policies. It is worth reading the [translation](#) of the speech (provided by Neican, 4 June 2021). An excerpt reads:

"It is important to strengthen the propaganda and interpretation of the [CCP], and to help foreign peoples realize that the [CCP] is truly fighting for the happiness of the Chinese people and understand why the [CCP] is capable [of success], why Marxism works, and why socialism with Chinese characteristics is good."

Consequently, Communist Party foreign policy has continued to be something of a challenge to the country's competitors' and neighbors: Apart from the already mentioned tense relationship with the USA, the EU also sharpened its stance by referring to China as "'an economic competitor in pursuit of technological leadership and a [systemic rival](#) promoting alternative

models of governance” (Politico, 12 March 2019). NATO, too, has warned of the military threat posed by China, referring to its behavior as a "[systemic challenge](#)" (BBC News, 15 June 2021). Despite such verbal attacks, the CCP has continued creating hard facts in a range of key areas of contention (see also below: *Security situation*):

- First, it was discovered that seven years ago China had already [trademarked](#) hundreds of South China Sea landmarks with Chinese names (Benar News, 13 April 2021). China has continued to show a strong physical presence in contested areas (for instance, in disputes with the Philippines) and has introduced a new [Coastguard law](#) which would make it easier to use violence against foreign vessels intruding on its claimed national sovereignty (Benar News, 22 January 2021).
- Secondly, another tightening of the screw could be seen in the Tibet Autonomous Region, where a new "[Ethnic Unity Law](#)" has been implemented (RFA, 1 May 2020). Xi Jinping [visited](#) the province for the first time in his tenure in July 2021 to witness the progress these and other policies were making (AP News, 24 July 2021).
- Thirdly, while the Communist Party continues to deny the scale of the crackdown against the Uighur minority in Xinjiang (despite all evidence to the contrary - see Jamestown's report on [coercive labor and forced displacement](#) published in March 2021, Human Rights Watch's article on [systematic suppression](#) published on 19 April 2021 and ASPI's report on how the repression is governed, published on 19 October 2021), in a rare report it was shown that even in Xinjiang [church buildings](#) have to be closed when they fail to follow the policy of Sinicization (China Aid, 23 February 2021).
- Fourthly, with no further skirmishes between China and India in 2021 along its highly disputed 3,500km border (unlike in 2020 with the [stand-off](#) reported by The Diplomat on 15 May 2020), China has continued making potentially provocative infrastructure improvements at various points (as has India).
- Fifth, China has claimed a large piece of [Bhutanese state territory](#) as its own, amounting to around 11% of the whole of Bhutan (The Diplomat, 6 July 2020). Apart from the delicate implications for tiny neighbor Bhutan, the true addressee of this claim seems to be India. Since the claimed territory would be an enclave with no direct connection to the rest of China, it would make the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh the next candidate to be disputed. In the meantime, China has been building complete village infrastructures on [Bhutanese territory](#), thus tacitly claiming ownership of land for the Tibet Autonomous Region (Foreign Policy, 7 May 2021).
- Sixth, the Pacific Islands are going through a phase of [political disunity](#), potentially increasing the chances for China's influence to deepen (RSIS, 1 March 2021). Apart from the very relevant geostrategic implications, which cannot be dealt with here, these frictions also highlight how China is actively competing and winning more and more influence in this part of the world. The new Pacific Islands Forum now has only [one member](#) still recognizing Taiwan diplomatically - namely: Tuvalu (The Diplomat, 10 February 2021).

In relation to gender, China's laws are - on paper - relatively balanced. [The Marriage Law](#) mandates that both parties must be consenting in entering a marriage (Article 4) and forced marriages are prohibited in [Article 44](#) of China's 1992 Revised Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women. Women have the same legal rights as men to be recognized as head of the household and both genders have equal rights in relation to divorce (Marriage Law, Article 31). China ratified the Convention on the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and in 2015 passed its first-ever national law to address domestic violence. Despite these positive legal provisions, gender inequalities persist and the effective implementation of legal frameworks is lacking, allowing widespread [trafficking of child brides](#) (Human Rights Watch, 31 October 2019). The domestic violence law does not cover all situations, such as divorced or separated couples, or instances of sexual or financial abuse. According to [media reports](#), domestic violence has surged amid COVID-19 lockdowns, which critics say points to the ineffectiveness of the 2015 law (The Diplomat, 6 April 2020).

Military service is [technically obligatory](#) for men, with a service obligation of two years (World Population Review, accessed 30 July 2021). Due to the size of the population however, this is rarely enforced, as there is a sufficient number of volunteers.

Religious landscape

China: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	96,700,000	6.8
Muslim	26,035,811	1.8
Hindu	19,662	0.0
Buddhist	242,409,024	17.0
Ethno-religionist	59,504,952	4.2
Jewish	2,924	0.0
Bahai	7,260	0.0
Atheist	96,055,517	6.7
Agnostic	451,872,224	31.6
Other	455,872,095	31.9
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021) (Adapted according to OD-estimate)

As a Communist country, China is - at least in theory - against all religions, since Marxist teaching states that “religion is the opium of the people”. According to its Constitution, China is atheist. But, as in all Communist countries, the government finds that citizens often tend to be religious and so it tries to use traditional religions and ethics as a means of controlling and steering society. Therefore, traditional Chinese culture in general (and Confucianism in particular) are praised as being truly Chinese, the message being: “If one needs to have a faith, it should be Confucian”, a move which brings around 40% of the population on the side of the government. And since Confucianism is more a philosophy than a religion, it is quite flexible and can accept all kinds of rulers, including Communist. Confucianism can thus “serve as an ethical resource for the state constitution, as well as a resource for [social governance](#)” (Journal of Law and Religion 35, No 1, Abstract, see also pp. 138-148). As one country observer said: The goal of the CCP is to co-opt religion into Communist society.

At the same time, the Chinese government is conducting a pilot project in selected regions, mobilizing citizens into reporting crimes (including illegal Christian activities) by giving them rewards. The strong warnings against religious groups are bearing fruit: Citizens organized in neighborhood committees are beginning to regard religious groups as “troublemakers” and do not want them in their neighborhood. As always in China, this sentiment is not felt in the whole country. Xu Xiaohong, head of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, said in June 2021 at an exhibition in Shanghai entitled ‘One Heart, One Virtue, One Path: Chinese Christianity Loves the Party, the Country, and Socialism Theme Exhibition’: “History fully proves that without the CCP, there is no religious policy that is supported by both believers and non-believers, there is no social environment for the healthy development of religion in China, and there is no good situation where all religions in China can live in harmony.” (Bitter Winter, 29 June 2021). It may be more accurate to use the term “[Chinafication](#)” instead of “Sinification”, as the real goal is not to gain cultural uniformity but to ensure political conformity and obedience to China's government (China Source, 3 February 2020). But in any case, religions have to [serve the goals](#) of the Communist Party (The Globe and Mail, 30 June 2021).

Tibetan Buddhism and Islam (especially in the province of Xinjiang) face particularly harsh restrictions since their activities are widely seen as being political, since both regions have been the scene of (or are still seen as being at risk spawning) independence movements, some of them acting violently against the authorities. Many observers refer to Xinjiang as a police state: When the existence of re-education camps for hundreds of thousands of citizens could no longer be hidden, the authorities simply stated that these camps serve vocational and other training purposes, and tried to win over international opinion by giving carefully guided tours. According to local sources, Christian converts have also been run through these programs. The small numbers of Christian converts within the minority religions struggle to survive as they are under pressure from both government and the surrounding culture, but even Han Chinese Christians are hindered from practicing their faith and keep their Christian meetings out of sight in these regions. Consequently, Xinjiang has been called a “[testing ground](#)” for the Communist Party's religious policies (Made in China Journal, 2 July 2021). There are other ethnic minority religions in existence, but they are not the focus of government repression.

The "Sinicization" (or "Chinafication", see above) of churches continues. Since 1 February 2020, [new rules](#) govern the organization of religion, its rites, selection of leaders and hiring of staff (International-LaCroix, 7 February 2020). Due to the new regulations on religion and its intensified implementation (both in depth and in breadth), numerous reports are emerging of raids and closures on churches - experienced by both TSPM and house-churches all over the country. This iron grip involves the confiscation of property and Christian materials (including Bibles), raids, fines and the arrest of church leaders. The February 2020 rules have since been updated and extended by regulations pertaining to religious ministers, which came into force on 1 May 2021.

All aspects of church life are now under the guidance of the Religious Affairs Office and the Communist Party. The Communist education authorities are [altering works of international literature](#) where there are references to Christian faith or God (Asia News, 1 August 2019). The decision to adapt famous stories for older and younger children and make them more acceptable to the Communist worldview includes classics by Hans Christian Andersen and Daniel Defoe and shows how far the authorities are willing to go in influencing citizens. In a speech, delivered by a high-ranking member of the Communist Party in November 2019, the Ethnic Groups and Religion Committee of the Chinese National People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was asked to [reinterpret and translate](#) (the original language said "re-annotate) holy scriptures (such as the Bible) guided by Socialist core values (China Scope, 1 January 2020). The goal seems to be to cultivate researchers of the Bible, who will work on a exegesis/annotation of the Bible based on Socialist core values.

Another example of this 'guidance' being imposed can be seen in Shandong Province (and increasingly elsewhere) where churches are being forced to display government-prepared posters with verses from the Bible illustrating the twelve core principles of Socialism, namely: Prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendship. These same principles are being incorporated into training courses for church leaders and preachers. Another example is an [ethics textbook](#) published for secondary vocational schools, which has changed the ending of the Biblical account of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery (to be found in the New Testament, Gospel of John, Chapter 8) (UCA News, 22 September 2020). In the Communist version of the story, Jesus does not protect and forgive the adulteress, instead he waits for the Pharisees to leave and then stones her himself, saying: 'I too am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead'. Since schoolbooks have to go through a highly scrutinized process before being published (and as the publisher is the government-run University of Electronic Science and Technology Press), the Chinese authorities must have seen and approved this version. While all these examples may be individual cases, they deserve to be closely watched.

All kinds of cults are active in China, some of which may have Christian roots, but which seriously deviate from core Christian teaching. One of the best known is "Eastern Lightning" or "Church of Almighty God" (CAG), which believes that Jesus Christ has been born again in the form of a Chinese woman. The strong missionary zeal of the CAG has caused the authorities to act firmly against such groups which are referred to as "[xie jiao](#)", literally translated: "heterodox cults", a term already used in ancient, feudal China (Bitter Winter, 9 August 2018). According to a country

expert, the authorities today do not distinguish between *xie jiao* and house churches anymore, they simply enforce the regulations by identifying any such gatherings as “illegal religious groups”.

Due to rapid urbanization, the Chinese church is developing from being basically a rural-style to an urban-style church with large congregations and all the opportunities and problems that accompany such a development. Apart from the long working hours required in modern industry (which challenges the traditional forms of meeting), rising prices also pose difficulties. As the cost of living has risen considerably in recent years, churches have discovered the need to [financially care for pastors](#) and their families (China Source, 21 March 2017). According to the China Religion Survey 2015, the [average income](#) of a church leader has been the equivalent of 70 USD, with 41% lacking any pension system (Bitter Winter, 4 August 2020). Despite all challenges, there is a [growing movement](#) among China’s churches focusing on overseas mission (The Diplomat, 4 July 2018). The circumstances may get more difficult, but Christians are determined to spread the Christian faith, even when they have to [split](#) into cell groups or find other ways of practicing worship and fellowship (China Source, 18 June 2021).

Economic landscape

According to [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343 onwards):

- **Gross National Income (2017 USD PPP):** 16,057
- **Multidimensional poverty:** The rate of people in multidimensional poverty is 3.9%, the rate of people vulnerable to it is 17.4% The rate of people living below the national poverty line is 1.7%
- **Remittances:** 0.13% of the national GDP

According to the World Bank:

- China is classified as an upper middle income country
- **GDP per capita (PPP constant 2017 international USD):** 16,411
- **GDP per capita growth rate:** 1.98% in 2020. The country’s accumulated debt-to-GDP ratio is 283% as of the 1st quarter of 2020
- **Poverty gap at 5.50 USD a day (2011 PPP):** 6.5% (2016)

The days of very strong economic growth in China would seem to be over. For many years, China had recorded a double-digit economic growth, but in 2019, the growth rate hit a [29 year-low](#) at 6.1% (Fortune, 17 January 2020). Because of the already slowing growth and the strongly felt impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the Communist Party did [not set a GDP growth target](#) for the first time in 30 years (The Economist, 30 May 2020). Likewise, in the long-expected 14th Five Year Plan, the Communist Party did not set a concrete growth rate to be achieved, but instead repeated a slogan (which echoes far beyond the economic sphere) about “getting China's house in order”. This should be achieved by “proactively building a more favorable external environment” (MacroPolo, 10 November 2020).

Showing what this last quote might mean, in a surprising development, the authorities [cancelled the IPO](#) (an Initial Public Offering whereby shares of a private corporation are offered to the public in a new stock issuance) of Jack Ma's Ant Group just two days before it was scheduled (Neican, 9 November 2020). The company was slapped with an antitrust fine in April 2021 as well. (Jack Ma is the founder of Alibaba, an e-commerce company which is listed at the New York exchange and similar to Amazon's online retail business; it is also active in other sectors, including artificial intelligence.) The company [Didi](#) Chuxing was also fined for breaking Chinese law after its stocks were listed in New York (Neican, 6 July 2021). These actions may be signs of what is to come and of what "getting China's house in order" means. Another reason may well be corruption, despite all efforts by Xi Jinping and his anti-corruption campaign, China is living through what one observer called the ["Gilded Age"](#) (Foreign Affairs, 24 June 2021).

The companies mentioned above highlight how fast China's economy is developing and it is quite possible that China's GDP, which is the second largest in the world, will overtake the USA's by around 2030. However, there are [two sorts of GDP statistics](#) (Project Syndicate, 30 April 2021) and it is most common for the total GDP to be discussed. But this is a bad indicator for the everyday lives of ordinary Chinese people. Most economists therefore care more about China's per capita GDP, or income per person, than the aggregate measure. China's per capita GDP in 2019 was \$8,242, placing the country between Montenegro (\$8,591) and Botswana (\$8,093). Its per capita GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms – with income adjusted to take account of the cost of living – was \$16,804 (16,411 in 2020). This is below the global average of \$17,811 and puts China 86th in the world, between Suriname (\$17,256) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (\$16,289).

There are also [considerable economic variations](#) between the provinces (Asia News, 5 November 2019). Roughly speaking, the urban and coastal areas in the east are far better off than the rural west and hinterland. Guangdong Province is by far the wealthiest region. Seen as a total, China has what one observer called a [debt hang-over](#), which is mainly a local problem, meaning that local and provincial governments are far more indebted than the nation state as such (Macro Polo, 2 July 2021; this article provides data per province). [Food self-sufficiency](#) still remains an important issue (Jamestown, 7 June 2021) and the CCP has called for efforts to [secure food supplies](#) and citizens have been advised to stock up on food and other supplies as the winter months of 2022 approach (Bloomberg, 23 November 2021).

Due to the ongoing Chinese-US decoupling process, the Communist Party announced a "dual circulation" economic policy, which mainly means that China is turning more [inwards](#) (PRC Leadership tracker, 16 December 2020). This also includes a general strengthening of state-owned enterprises and the active involvement of Party committees in [private companies'](#) policies (Macro Polo, 16 December 2020). One observer summed up the trend as follows: China Inc. is becoming [CCP Inc.](#) (PRC Leadership tracker, 1 December 2020).

Internationally, China has become the fourth-largest provider of Foreign Direct Investments in the world according to [UNCTAD](#) and invests in such diverse regions and countries as Central Asia, Pakistan, Africa and Latin America (UNCTAD World Investment Report 2020). In a both economic and geo-strategic move, China has built up what observers call its "string of pearls" or "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) - a network of ports and commercial facilities along the coast all the way

from China to Kenya, Sudan and Europe, of which ports like the (yet to be completed) Pakistani port of Gwadar are a very important part. Such investments come with a risk, as an [attack](#) on a bus transporting Chinese workers in Pakistan in July 2021, killing nine, showed (Nikkei Asia, 21 July 2021). A new [white paper](#) on foreign aid, released in January 2021, tries to keep the balance between *yi* (public good) and *li* (self-interest) (Panda Paw Dragon Claw, 18 January 2021). In general and also due to COVID-19, the speed of investment has slowed down and the Communist Party is also facing increasing levels of scrutiny when applying for projects abroad. China's success led the G7 summit to react and launch its own initiative (clearly influenced by the World Economic Forum) called "[Build Back Better](#)" (European Council, 13 June 2021).

Additional reasons for the Communist Party to build up the BRI are to connect China's landlocked provinces to the sea and to keep the economy and surplus production running. However, criticism from abroad is being levelled at China for setting high interest rates for loans and requiring large numbers of Chinese workers to work in project countries. Apart from Pakistan, the BRI runs through other contested and insecure areas like Shan and Rakhine states in [Myanmar](#) (Jamestown, 13 April 2020). This may have also been one reason why China took a further step in recognizing the Myanmar regime after the military coup in February 2021 by referring to General Hlaing as "[the leader of Myanmar](#)" (The Diplomat, 7 June 2021). This might be seen as a decision dictated by 'realpolitik', but it is not helping find a solution for a country slowly sliding towards civil war. Finally, in what can also be seen as an attempt to diversify, China joined the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership ([RCEP](#) - a free trade agreement between ASEAN states and six of its partners) which it would also like to use to boost BRI progress (Panda Paw Dragon Claw, 30 November 2020).

One of China's latest projects is the setting up of an international development bank called the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which has gained support from around the world despite opposition from the USA and Japan. Although its lending is still limited compared to other international development banks, China is likely to gain more diplomatic leverage. In general, by using 'soft power', China is increasing its influence around the world and its self-confidence. On the positive side, China's expanding influence presents opportunities for Chinese churches to become more active in ministry and mission. However, where countries feel threatened by China's growing power, there could be reactions causing the overseas mission work carried out by Chinese churches to be hindered.

According to the World Bank (Overview):

- "Over the past few years, growth has moderated in the face of structural constraints, including declining labor force growth, diminishing returns to investment, and slowing productivity. The challenge going forward is to find new drivers of growth while addressing the social and environmental legacies of China's previous development path. China's rapid economic growth exceeded the pace of institutional development, and there are important institutional and reform gaps that China needs to address to ensure a high-quality and sustainable growth path. The role of the state needs to evolve and focus on providing stable market expectations and a clear and fair business environment, as well as strengthening the regulatory system and the rule of law to further support the market system."

- Related to COVID-19, the World Bank noted that China has been the only major economy to report a positive growth in 2020. However, it warned: “China’s recovery from COVID-19 has been swift but uneven. Aided by the containment of the COVID-19 outbreak since March last year, and supported by accommodative financial and fiscal policies and resilient exports, China recorded 2.3 percent real GDP growth in 2020. While China’s GDP is expected to return to its pre-pandemic level by mid-2021, the COVID-19 shock has accentuated many pre-existing structural challenges. Imbalances in the structure of aggregate demand have re-emerged, as households increased savings, government support stressed investment, and external imbalances have widened. Public and private debt stocks—already high before the pandemic—have increased further.”

Christians have also been participating in China's breath-taking economic development over the last decades. At the same time, it has been a challenge for churches to serve the millions of migrant workers (and assist them when facing social difficulties) and to adjust to the new environment in the cities, which is so different to life in impoverished rural areas. Another phenomenon has been that many well-educated middle-class intellectuals have been drawn to Christianity as well, among them many lawyers and university lecturers.

Overall, women remain economically more vulnerable than men in China. The gender gap in education has significantly improved over recent decades, such that girls are even beginning to narrowly outnumber boys in higher-education enrolment ([Borgen Project](#), 2018). Despite this progress in China’s education system, women face disadvantages in the workplace. The labor force participation rate for men is 75.3%, compared to 60.5% for women ([UNDP](#)). Employers have [openly favored men](#) for promotions and high-responsibility jobs, in part eager to avoid the cost of paying for maternity leave (New York Times, 16 July 2019). According to Human Rights Watch, 11% of civil service job adverts specify ‘[men only](#)’ (HRW, 29 April 2020). These problems all play a role in a declining population level (see above: *Social and cultural landscape*).

Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343 onwards) and the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Han Chinese 91.6%, Zhuang 1.3%, other (includes Hui, Manchu, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongol, Dong, Buyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh, Dai) 7.1% (2010 est.)
- **Main languages:** Standard Chinese or Mandarin (official; Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages
- **Urbanization rate:** 61.4%
- **Literacy rate:** 96.8% (of adults of 15 years and older)
- **Mean years of schooling:** 8.1 years.
- **Health and education indicators:** Per 10,000 people, China has 19.8 physicians and 43 hospital beds, the pupil teacher ratio in elementary school is 16:1

According to World Bank (Overview):

- **Population/Age distribution:** The percentage of citizens under 14 years of age is 17.7%; the percentage above 65 years of age is 12%
- **Education:** The primary school completion rate is 98.3% (2009), the primary school enrollment rate is 101.93%
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is 5%, the rate of vulnerable employment is 42.5% (modeled ILO estimate)
- **IDPs/Refugees:** The [IOM](#) (accessed 30 July 2021) estimates that in 2017, 10 million Chinese migrants were living and working overseas, while one million international migrants were registered in China. The country had approximately [286 million migrant workers](#) in 2020, 75% of which worked in their home province; this number means that 20% of the whole population and almost 35% of the total workforce are migrant workers (Statista, 25 June 2021).

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020):

- **HDI score and ranking:** With a score of 0.761, China ranks 85th of 189 countries. Its growth in terms of HDI has been one of the strongest of all countries since 1990 and the strongest among the countries categorized as "highly developed"
- **Life expectancy:** 76.9 years
- **Median age:** 38.4
- **GINI coefficient:** 38.5
- **Gender inequality:** With a score of 0.168, China ranks 39th among 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. Together with Azerbaijan, China has the most unequal sex ratio at birth with a score of 1.13 (male to female births)
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is 4.3%; the rate of vulnerable employment is 45.4%; the percentage of youth between 15 and 24 years of age not in employment/school is 17.9%.

The Communist Party is facing a multitude of challenges in the social sphere, but two problems in particular are a focus for attention: 1) The population decline and 2) The eradication of poverty.

1) The Population decline

It is by now well known that the Chinese population is "getting old before it gets rich". The now abandoned one-child-policy has had a serious downside: A growing number of middle-aged citizens are facing the challenge of balancing the needs of making a living, family life and of caring for ageing parents who now enjoy longer life-expectancy. According to Chinese government statistics, the number of people older than 60 will have doubled in 2030.

According to a new [study](#) published by the Ministry of Public Security, the number of births in 2020 dropped by more than one million (or 15%) (Jamestown, 11 February 2021). However, this number varies regionally, with a city like Taizhou in relatively wealthy Zhejiang Province reporting a drop of 33%. A decline in population numbers is predicted to start as early as 2027,

but some Chinese research institutes suggest it may even start during the 14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025).

China's most recent census from 2020 and its publication delay illustrate the related challenges well. Despite being expected to be available in April 2021, the results had [not been published](#) despite the fact that they form an important basis for decision-making (China Digital Times, 27 April 2021). This led to all kinds of public speculation and in a highly unusual effort to counter such speculation, the Statistics Bureau [published a one-liner](#) claiming that the population had not shrunk, but failed to give any further explanation or hint as to when the data would be published (Reuters, 29 April 2021). There was also a psychological effect to consider: If the population level had fallen under the significant threshold of 1.4 billion people, this would probably make India the most populous country on earth sooner than expected. After this delay, the official census results were finally published in May 2021. According to these results, China saw an increase in population but it was the [slowest growth](#) ever recorded within a decade and there was a significant decline in the number of births (Reuters, 11 May 2021).

Looking at the census results, there are three particularly interesting points to take note of: One is that second children make up 50% of all births, showing that the easing of the one-child-policy has been effective, although its effects will come too late according to experts from inside and outside China. A second interesting fact is that only [two provinces](#) have more women than men, namely Liaoning and Jilin, both in China's northwest (Radic China, 11 May 2021). A third point of interest is that migration towards urban areas has continued, despite previous indications suggesting the opposite. In the last decade, urbanization patterns changed as intra-urban migration grew stronger, but the [rural-urban migration](#) was still strong and the urban population increased by 14.21% in the last decade (Sixth Tone, 9 June 2021).

The options for the leadership to react to these challenges are clearly limited, especially since encouraging people to have more children, faces several obstacles: First, there may be social challenges (for instance, for migrant workers or for the increasing number of families who have to take care of their ageing parents while working long hours often a great distance away); secondly, there can also be [monetary challenges](#), as it is simply very expensive to raise even one child, especially in the cities (Sixth Tone, 13 April 2021). The real "[demographic bomb](#)" is China's population structure, which is rapidly ageing (South China Morning Post - SCMP, 12 April 2021). Given the CCP's increasingly nationalist policies, migration will not be seen as an option to defuse this bomb, as it has been in some other countries facing similar challenges. The CCP's immediate reaction was to ease the two-child policy, turning it now into a [three-child policy](#) (Reuters, 31 May 2021). This has led many to question why such a limitation is still seen to be necessary at all. The most likely answer is that the CCP would like only certain people to have more children. Ethnic minorities tend to have more children than the average Han family. As one observer said, this comes very close to making [eugenics](#) widely acceptable: "Beijing is trying to restrict fertility in some groups, it is also encouraging fertility in other groups, namely, among Han urban dwellers." (Neican, 15 March 2021).

Another alternative for ageing societies is to encourage migration from cities into the countryside, a path the CCP will most definitely not want to follow. A far more likely and far less popular measure will be to raise the retirement threshold, something which had been proposed in the last 5 year plan, but never made it into law, as it was highly unpopular and even bore the risk of social unrest. The [retirement age](#) in China for men is 60, while for women, it is 55 for white-collar workers and 50 for blue-collar employees (Xinhua, 12 March 2021).

The SCMP article mentioned above also gives some astonishing figures, illustrating the size of the problem: At the end of 2019, there were 176 million people over 65 years of age; in 2025 it will be 300 million. The labor force continues to decline and will lose a further 66 million by 2030. There are predictions that China's population will peak around 2030 at the 1.44 - 1.46 billion mark and then see a sharp decline, some expecting it to fall to 800 million by the year 2100. And another report has highlighted the fast ageing society in China by saying that 149 cities across the country have entered the state of '[deep ageing](#)', meaning that 14% of the population are over 65 (RFA, 9 September 2021). This poses challenges, but also unique opportunities for Christians, who are known around the world for running nursing homes for the elderly, in obedience to Christ's command to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Taking into account the ongoing trend of urbanization, it is difficult for many to visit their parents on a regular basis. Therefore, millions of old people are left on their own. These demographic challenges translate into political challenges. The three main factors are: 1) The birth rate is shrinking; 2) The workforce is shrinking; and 3) The proportion of elderly people is growing exponentially. The traditional values of caring for ageing parents will therefore become virtually impossible for families to fulfil in the near future. This could become a serious problem for the Communist Party since other countries facing similar challenges have always partnered with social charities and churches. Such a solution is obviously not an option in Communist China where all social activities run by churches have been closed down or made to vanish from public view.

2) The Eradication of poverty

The CCP's success at [eradicating poverty](#) has been widely reported and would seem to be a commendable achievement (China Digital Times, 26 January 2021), but not everyone is convinced the claim is true. These reports should be seen in perspective as the CCP's definition of poverty may need to be revisited given China's overall economic situation. If international standards are used, up to 75% of the Chinese population in urban and 90% in rural areas can still be considered to be living in a [state of poverty](#) (Brookings, 25 January 2021). Whichever standards one follows, there is clearly a huge imbalance in the distribution of wealth in China. This should be kept in mind, whenever the CCP celebrates the eradication of poverty.

As a reminder that all statistics are often just numbers and are not a perfect reflection of reality, China Daily (a newspaper owned by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party) published an article on 25 April 2021 about [two villages](#) in Luonan county in Shaanxi Province. While the county has been officially included in those being lifted out of poverty, it has also been reported that some of the poorer villagers and contract workers have simply been resettled in quickly erected, makeshift buildings with no water supply.

This highlights the problems caused by [centrally-ordered policies](#) (Merics, 29 April 2021). For one thing, the local authorities are confronted with political goals which they have to report as being successfully achieved at a certain point, despite lacking the financial means and staff capacity to actually implement the policies. The Luonan county example is a good illustration of this: On paper, the goal has been achieved; but in reality, the people are still living under dire circumstances. Secondly, the central government is well aware that it cannot trust all data coming in at face value, but it lacks the capacity to control everything. If statistics in general should often be taken with a grain of salt, for China the amount of salt needs to be quite considerable. This was illustrated in the aftermath of the long expected and much debated publication of the census results; one demographic expert has looked into the data available so far and points to inconsistencies, calling them [manipulation](#) (Project Syndicate, 5 August 2021).

At the same time, while the Gini coefficient measuring inequality is quite low, the top 20% across China earn 10.2 times as much as the poorest 20%. As was already reported in WWL 2021's Full Country Dossier, Prime Minister Li Keqiang told his colleagues at the end of the '2020 Two Sessions' meeting that up to 600 million people in China were earning less than 100 yuan (around 145 USD a month) and were struggling to make ends meet. These and other “[inconvenient truths](#)” belong to the real story about poverty and its claimed eradication in China (Foreign Affairs, 28 May 2021).

According to a [survey](#) by the Income Distribution Research Institute of Beijing Normal University, 964 million Chinese people earn a monthly income below 2,000 yuan (US\$ 292.50); 364 million earn a monthly income between 2,000 (US\$ 292.50) and 5,000 yuan (US\$ 731.10) and only 72 million people, or 5.13% of the total population, have a monthly income of more than 5,000 yuan (US\$ 731.10) (Caixin, 6 June 2020). There is a state-welfare program in place, but according to research the Communist Party is making use of it [for surveillance purposes](#), especially for monitoring religious groups (Bitter Winter, 13 June 2020). The welfare program had been initiated more than a decade ago under Hu Jintao to eradicate poverty particularly in rural areas, however, it is now also used as one way of monitoring and controlling the people.

Another challenge is the ripple effect that the COVID-19 crisis has had - and not just on the economy. Millions of migrant workers have lost their jobs, unofficial estimates claiming this could have affected as many as 70 million workers. The continuing US-Chinese decoupling process (also involving other states) has added to this. A return to one's rural origins is for many the only option, but farming has experienced a serious setback due to widespread flooding in southern China in June-August 2020, with more flooding occurring in Henan in July 2021.

3) Other issues

Political parties other than the Communist Party are allowed to exist, but - not surprisingly - these are carefully selected by the Communist Party. They are consulted on a regular basis, but are careful not to go against the grain. Some civil society organizations are also allowed, but not Christian organizations, unless they are run under the auspices of registered churches, which excludes the larger part of Chinese Christianity from getting involved in social action in an organized way. In the past there had always been a certain leeway for local authorities to decide for themselves whom to tolerate, but with the new legislation the goal, as one observer said, is to “[cultivate aridity and deprive them of air](#)” (Made in China Journal, 29 April 2021). This does

not mean that such organizations are banned completely, but they are [vetted much more carefully](#) than before (Made in China Journal, 15 July 2021).

In a move to potentially kill several birds with one stone, the Chinese authorities announced new regulations for the [private education sector](#), which is a 120 billion USD business in China (Al-Jazeera, 26 July 2021). This can be seen together with the state action targeting big tech companies (see above: *Economic landscape*) and it has indeed economic reasons as well. But the main reasons were probably a) to ease the monetary and psychological costs for parents in providing a good education for their children (and help them get good grades in the infamous university entrance exam "gaokao"), but also b) to limit any influence from foreign teachers and educational programs, also those in the Internet.

In rural Tibetan communities, Buddhist Lamas have a great influence on daily life (e.g. government subsidies), because many of them are also local government officials. These Buddhist leaders even allocate resources, including relief resources from government, to families in the communities. If someone is known to be a convert to Christianity, they are excluded.

Despite Communist ideals of gender equality, discriminatory stereotypes in relation to the roles and responsibilities of men and women persist. Men are expected to assume the position of financial provider, whereas women are perceived to [belong in the home](#) (Qing, S, The Journal of Chinese Sociology, July 8, 2020). This increases dependency of women and girls on men, a dynamic that can be exploited for the purpose of religious persecution, although the official policy is one of gender equality and empowering women. The CCP recently started to emphasize traditional "Confucian values" as an alternative to religions and improve birth rates which reflect the classical household gender roles. The 2021 [WEF Gender gap report](#) published on 20 March 2021 lists China at position 107 out of 144 countries, down from rank 69 in 2013, the first full year of Xi Jinping's presidency. This imbalance is reflected in the political leadership as well, leading one observer to use one of Mao's well-known sayings: "[Women hold up half the sky, but men rule the party](#)" (Merics, 3 June 2021).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 68.5% penetration - survey date: June 2020 (over 989 million users)
- **Facebook usage:** 0.3% penetration – survey date: June 2021

According to the World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 121.8 per 100 people.
As of 2015, the GSMA reported a small gender gap in relation to mobile phone ownership and Internet usage, with rural women being least likely to have a phone or access to the Internet (GSMA, [2015 Bridging the gender gap](#): Mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries).

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

- China is categorized as "Not free" and was even listed as "the world's worst abuser of Internet freedom" for the fourth consecutive year. The report gives China the lowest score and states: "Conditions for internet users continued to deteriorate".
- The "Great Firewall" is well-known as a catch-all term for Internet censorship and China arguably hosts the most sophisticated system of censorship worldwide (e.g. by blocking VPN for private use). Freedom House reports: "A minority of Chinese internet users (albeit tens of millions of users) are able to access blocked websites with circumvention tools, such as VPNs, that reroute traffic through a server outside the Great Firewall to bypass censorship. VPNs are also essential to businesses operating in China. However, the government has intensified its restrictions on these tools since new regulations in 2017 placed a ban on the use of unlicensed VPNs. Service providers are barred from setting up VPNs without government approval, and illegal VPN operations have been increasingly targeted for closure or blocking."
- "The intensified internet controls and systematic surveillance evident during the coverage period affected hundreds of millions of internet and mobile phone users, resulting in increased self-censorship. Despite the tighter constraints and risk of criminal penalties, investigative journalists, video bloggers, and ordinary internet users took courageous action to trace the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, report from within the locked-down city of Wuhan, share information on other sensitive topics, and archive deleted news reports."

New [Internet regulations](#), effective from 1 March 2020, further restricted user freedom in the Internet and aim at curbing any opposition to the prevailing Communist worldview (International-LaCroix, 11 March 2020). Christian content is still available on some online platforms, but the risk of access is increasing and it is resembling a game of cat and mouse with increasingly limited space for the latter. One example of this is the Christian platform "[Jingjie](#)", founded in 2013 and active on WeChat. While it continues to be active under different names ("handles"), it had been closed down by the authorities for a second time in summer 2021 without any reasons given (China Source, 15 September 2021). As of November 2021, it was still posting on WeChat.

In one prominent incident, Chinese authorities [blocked](#) access to the Clubhouse app, closing an opportunity of widely uncensored debate (TechCrunch, 9 February 2021). The app offers live audio discussion rooms for specific topics for up to 5000 participants per topic. Although it is not immediately clear how often the app was downloaded inside China (one source speaks of two million times), it had been available for several weeks before being pulled by the authorities, which has now forced the app to cease its services in China completely. Hot topics such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests or the current treatment of the Uighurs were [discussed](#) in these rooms, without any official narrative stifling the debate (ABC News, 10 February 2021), which was of great encouragement to the younger generation, in particular.

New rules for bloggers, fitting into the ever more restrictive Chinese Internet environment, require [real name registration](#) before anyone is allowed to start posting (AP News, 18 February 2021). In what has apparently been a tit-for-tat decision, Chinese regulators have also decided to [ban](#) the broadcasting of the BBC World Service in mainland China (BBC News, 12 February 2021). Although this ban is mainly symbolic since it was mostly only available in a few high-end hotels in cities anyway, it fits into the broader picture of the government making moves to control opinion.

In a vivid reminder that censorship and related operations can reach beyond China, on the anniversary of the 1989 events at Tiananmen Square, Bing and YouTube produced [error messages](#) when searches were made for photos or videos of the iconic “tank man” (the nameless man who faced a row of tanks with just a shopping bag in his hand) (Quartz, 7 June 2021). Although Bing and their parent company Microsoft apologized and spoke of a “human error”, this has not been the first such incident.

An eye-opening interview with a former Weibo censor reveals - at least in part - how [censorship](#) in China works in practice (The Protocol, 4 June 2021): One of the largest Internet and social media companies in China, ByteDance, employs 10,000 content moderators in Tianjin alone, which shows the immense challenge of attempting to censor the whole Internet (or of making it into a de facto intranet). Although some of the operations are automatized and artificial intelligence tools are applied, censorship is still strongly dominated by the human factor. The CAC (Cyberspace Administration of China) only provides guidance (and punishment after failures), but companies have to come up with their own censorship lists, which are consequently seen as valuable assets. The reason behind this policy is simple. In the words of the former censor: “The censors' strategy is to make you feel that the red line no longer exists, scaring you into complete self-censorship. It's always a cat-and-mouse game. Once censors realize users have tested a red line, they move it. The red line has become a moving target.”

The above explains why the 989 million Internet users in China represent an impressive number, but their access to the Internet is limited. The rural-urban gap is still felt (particularly in the Western part of the country) not just in online accessibility, but also in Internet speed. However, the gap is closing. Internet cafés are becoming less important as access points since mobile phone coverage is improving. China is one of the world's largest technology developers and providers with an emphasis on electric mobility. Another well-known specialization is in providing electronics for mobile phone infrastructure. Indeed, Huawei, the largest and one of the few providers of the 5G mobile standard, is one of the focal points of the trade war with the USA; security aspects and the company's links with the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party are not clear.

Pilot projects for the much-publicized “[Social Credit System](#)” have been carried out in some areas but two years ago there was evidently still a long way to go until the system could be introduced nationwide (Trivium China, 27 August 2019). As one country observer indicated in 2019: The “messy truth” about the [Social Credit System](#) (SCS) is that there is currently no centralized database and efforts at scoring are patchy and localized at best (China File, 22 April 2019). The [Social Credit Score](#) system can easily be adapted and used to monitor the political trustworthiness of all Chinese citizens (China Leadership Monitor, 1 March 2020). This kind of

monitoring is becoming a top priority in today's China and it seems that the timing of the COVID-19 outbreak has been very convenient for the state authorities to [extend control](#) both by technical and more personal means (The Guardian, 9 March 2020).

It is not just the physical surveillance which is increasing and causing worry, but also the growing levels of control in the virtual sphere. The CCP is becoming increasingly successful at indoctrinating a [young generation](#) of Internet and social media users by simply shutting out unfiltered news and feeding in ideological content, often with a strong nationalistic tone (Politico, 1 September 2020). As one observer writes, China's youth is increasingly [turning its back](#) on the West (Chatham House, 1 August 2021). This comes at a certain risk, as nationalism is easily fanned, but hard to contain. The challenge is, above all, to influence a generation who up until now was exposed to a very different narrative for the whole of their lives. And from the media side of things, journalists who wish to obtain a [press card](#) have to pass a test which includes their knowledge about Xi Jinping thought, showing that it is not just a question of access restrictions, but also of shaping reports (RFA, 11 November 2020).

The system of control already in place is far-reaching and may become Orwellian, once the technical capabilities are all in place; the political will for this seems to be a given. Christians are able to access the Internet, but always need to be careful about what they are doing and whom they are meeting. For Christians, the Internet space has become arguably tighter than for the average citizen, as they are perceived as being allied with Western influences.

Security situation

- **Dealing with minorities in Xinjiang, Tibet, Nei Mongol and elsewhere**

While all the policies and actions referred to in the WWL 2021 Full Country Dossier are still in place, it is important not to lose the broader view of what is going on. The ultimate goal of the Communist Party is to [assimilate](#) and 'Sinicize' ethnic minorities (Neican, 11 October 2020). This drive to assimilation is most widely seen in the CCP's efforts at mainstreaming the Xinjiang, Tibet and Nei Mongol regions, but it extends to dozens of recognized and hundreds of unrecognized minorities. As China Neican noted in its October 2020 article referred to above: "A national consciousness fashioned by the CCP is seen as critical to maintaining the Party's rule. This idea influences Beijing's policies with respect to ethnic minorities, religion, education, media and internal security across the length and breadth of China." The pressure to conform to this 'national consciousness' is thus beginning to be felt strongly by Christians and other religious minorities.

The question whether what is happening with China's [Uighur minority](#) should be called genocide or not, while important, should not be seen as the main question (The Diplomat, 1 May 2021). Beyond the defining aspects of international law, the situation in Xinjiang has to be seen in a broader context, as the policy towards all ethnic minorities has changed. The goal, as The Diplomat explains, is now "to actively alter the thoughts and behaviors of what Chinese authorities perceive to be a 'backward', 'deviant' and innately 'dangerous' sub-section of its population by uplifting their 'bio-quality' (suzhi, 素质) and overseeing their rebirth as loyal,

patriotic, and civilized Chinese citizens”. This is to be achieved by “planting the seed of patriotism” through the education system. It has to be kept in mind that China is home to 55 so-called “Minzu” or ethnic minorities. As of 2005, more than 71% of China’s minority population lived within one of the over 1,300 autonomous districts. These cover 64% of Chinese territory but are home to less than 10% of the total population. The long-term policy of granting autonomy has increasingly been replaced by the desire for a process of ‘transformation’ (or rather, assimilation): This entails a more interventionist role for the CCP and involves actively remolding a minority’s ideological, cultural and spiritual fabric into what President Xi calls the ‘collective consciousness of the Chinese (Zhonghua 中华) nation’. As a result, these shifts in policy go well beyond Xinjiang and are part of a fundamental rethinking of how the CCP is seeking to manage ethnocultural diversity.

- **Taiwan**

The policy towards Taiwan is unchanged and China continues to send its navy and airforce across the Taiwan Strait. It, in turn, continued to be crossed by naval vessels belonging to various nations which China sees as a provocation. Many long-term observers think that if China were to be involved in a serious conflict, Taiwan would be the most likely trigger for it. Some also see it as the ultimate prize the Chinese president is eyeing.

- **South China Sea**

China's increasingly pronounced claims on the South China Sea are causing backlashes as extra-regional forces are getting involved and claimant states see themselves forced to take a stand. The five-year anniversary of a ruling by a Court of Arbitration deciding in favor of the Philippines and rejecting almost all of China's claims highlights the prolonged stalled situation. With British, French and German navy vessels exercising freedom of navigation in this region, a greater level of international attention is being brought to the dispute.

- **North Korea**

China has made it repeatedly clear to the world - especially to the USA and South Korea - that no solution for the Korean Peninsula will work without China being directly involved. China is not very happy about North Korea having nuclear weapons, but it sees the country as a risk it can control and contain. By closing its border to North Korea to combat the spread of COVID-19, it also made the country even more dependent on Beijing. Nevertheless, China restarted its policy of [repatriating North Korean](#) refugees to the country they were fleeing from (Human Rights Watch, 22 July 2021). In the WWL 2022 reporting period, overall relations seem to have [warmed again](#), not least illustrated by the fact that the two countries pledged to extend the 1961 mutual friendship treaty by a further twenty years (Jamestown Foundation, 17 August 2021).

- **India/Bhutan**

The military standoff with its neighbor India in May and June 2020, continues to simmer. China has been building village infrastructure on [Bhutanese territory](#), thus tacitly claiming ownership of land for the Tibet Autonomous Region (Foreign Policy, 7 May 2021). Whereas neither the

claim to ownership nor the factual occupation by building infrastructure are new tactics, the building of a whole village complex (named Gyalaphug in Tibetan or Jieluobu in Chinese) is a significant new step. Located in mountainous terrain, the area is still internationally understood to belong to part of Lhuntse district in northern Bhutan. The Bhutanese government does not have the means to monitor this territory and even less to do anything about such Chinese construction-work. As Foreign Policy reports, the territory is of great religious importance to Bhutan and the real goal of the Communist rulers might be to pressurize Bhutan into ceding disputed terrain in a region referred to as the 'Chicken neck'. This lies much closer to India and is a strategically important area on the Doklam Plateau where China and India had a standoff in 2017. Reportedly, the Bhutanese government [concluded](#) a three-step memorandum of understanding with the Chinese government to talk about the boundaries (The Hindu, 14 October 2021). Since China does not have an embassy in Bhutan, these talks may take place in the Bhutanese embassy in India - a delicate situation for China, given the tensions with India.

- **Myanmar**

In an unexpected development, China is [building a wall](#) (or fortified fence) along its border with Myanmar (Asia Times, 19 December 2020). As this border stretches more than 2000 kilometers, this is not a small undertaking and speculation has been rife about the possible motive behind it. Suggestions for the construction range from protecting against the spread of COVID-19 (or future pandemics) to hindering drug smugglers - or perhaps even to preventing dissidents from fleeing the country. But long-term Myanmar watcher Bertil Lintner has another interesting hypothesis; although [the whole article](#) is highly recommended reading, a small extract illustrates his thoughts on this matter (Asia-Pacific Research, 19 December 2020):

“On November 27, the popular, privately-run but still strongly nationalistic Chinese website Toutiao published a long, unsigned [article](#) headlined ‘Speaking English and believing in Christ, is Kachin State in northern Myanmar pro-American?’ The article, which has all the hallmarks of state-approved propaganda, points out that the Kachins, called Jingpo in China, are the same people and, erroneously, that the Kachin Hills were once Chinese but ‘before 1941’, included in the then British colony Burma.”

This is not to say that the CCP's reason behind building the wall is mainly to keep Christians/missionaries out, but it is at least noteworthy that the Party allows propaganda to be published which stirs up nationalist feelings mixed with ethno-religious undertones. At the same time, it shows that the relationship with Myanmar is more complicated than the Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) rhetoric would like people to believe.

- **Afghanistan**

While the Communist Party has studied the historical development of Afghanistan carefully and is not interested in becoming yet another nation to join “the graveyard of empires”, it cannot avoid being drawn into the current situation. For one thing, it is a major player and superpower in the region; secondly, it shares a common border with Afghanistan (if only 76km long); and thirdly, Afghanistan could become an important part of the BRI and help in keeping rivals like India in check. After a Taliban representative called China 'a friend', Foreign Minister Wang Yi

hosted a [delegation of the Taliban](#) (Washington Post, 28 July 2021). Thus, although China is cautious and wary of being dragged into a conflict, it seems to have little choice. After the killing of nine of its citizens in an attack in Pakistan in July 2021 (see above: *Economic landscape*), China has pushed for increasing the coordination of [counter-terrorism measures](#) with both Pakistan and the new Taliban leadership of Afghanistan (Jamestown Foundation, 7 September 2021).

In all the above areas of conflict and dispute, the Communist Party stirs up nationalist sentiment and receives support from most of the Chinese citizenship. In doing so, however, the CCP [leaves out](#) a significant segment of China's population who are not Han Chinese, thus fueling further unrest (The Diplomat, 18 August 2020). Christians are sometimes caught up in the middle of such conflicts. In Xinjiang and Tibet, even Han Chinese Christians suffer from all the restrictions and surveillance, although the small groups of converts (from Islam and Buddhism to Christianity) are more greatly affected.

In countries neighboring China, Christian women and girls are exploited in extensive human trafficking networks. China's earlier one-child policy - which fueled 'son preference' and gender-biased sex selection - resulted in a shortage of women and a [corresponding rise in bride-trafficking](#) (Human Rights Watch, 3 November 2019). According to the US State Department's 2020 [Trafficking in Persons Report](#), traffickers have increasingly targeted impoverished Christian communities. For instance, [629 Pakistani girls](#), many of whom were Christian, were reportedly trafficked to China between 2018 and 2019 (AP News, 7 December 2019). In Myanmar, women from the Christian-majority Kachin State have been trafficked, married and [raped until they become pregnant](#) (The Guardian, 21 March 2019).

Trends analysis

1) The fight against internal threats

The fight against perceived and real internal threats for the Communist Party has several dimensions.

a) Ideology: Reports show that the CCP is increasing its [funding of academic research](#) in social science topics which support Marxist theory, along with a range of other projects (Macro Polo, 30 November 2020). The number of research grants increased by more than 44% from 2015 to 2019, the number of projects sky-rocketed ten-fold and the areas which saw the greatest increase were "Marxism and Scientific Socialism", "Ethnic Studies" and "Party History and Party Building". Many of these projects are directly linked to President Xi and his "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new Era". It is very likely that this ideological pressure will continue and even reach new heights before the 20th Party Congress in November 2022.

b) History - and the art of re-writing it: According to the CCP's "paradigm of continuity", the 5000-year history of China is presented as one seamless development culminating in the emergence of the CCP. This view of history thus instills the Chinese with national pride and confidence in the Party. The reason for President Xi to call archeologists to a politburo study session in the WWL 2022 reporting period may indicate that he perceives dangers ahead and wants to make sure there is an undeniable "historical truth", also called "[party historiography](#)"

(Neican, 5 October 2020). It fits this narrative, when the CCP authorities in Shanxi destroyed [historical evidence](#) of Swedish missionary work in the province (Bitter Winter, 16 October 2020).

c) Social control and surveillance: As was written last year in WWR's WWL 2021 [Full Country Dossier](#), China's much-published Social Credit System (SoCS) is still more fragmented and patchy than a consistent tool for social monitoring. This has been [confirmed](#) by a 24 page report by Merics, published on 3 March 2021. The sheer number of institutions involved in the report (47) and the number of documents relating to SoCS in the Merics database (1456) is impressive. Despite the difficulties, a draft Social Credit Law was prepared for internal review in China in December 2020 and it remains to be seen whether a final law will be implemented. It is particularly important to keep in mind what the authors of the Merics report write on page 18 under the heading "The Party State's growing surveillance eco-system":

"The Social Credit System is often incorrectly conflated with China's surveillance state. In practise, it is a public, relatively transparent system and increasingly curtailed in its reach. But the Chinese party state has other, much more invasive projects at its command. These projects often operate more covertly and act beyond the confines of laws and regulations, in a relatively clear division of labour. These include Golden Shield, Skynet, Safe Cities and Police Clouds, Project Sharp Eyes, and the Integrated Joint-Operations Platform (IJOP) in Xinjiang."

Another instrument in the surveillance toolbox is China's "[Grid Management](#)" (GM), although the capabilities of the current system should not be overstated (China Leadership Monitor, 1 March 2021). This GM system, implemented some years ago, basically divides the whole country into parcels of 10,000 people or clusters of a thousand residents to oversee security and improve the delivery of services. In reality, the implementation has been patchy and one major impediment has been the lack of funds at the provincial and local level.

If one asks for the reasons behind all the measures listed above, it helps to look at the younger generation. "[Lying flat](#)" (or low) has been one of the trending topics among young people on social media, countering society's focus on career and long working hours (Channel News Asia, 16 July 2021). Another [trend](#) which can also be clearly observed among the younger generation is the search for meaning and for improving future possibilities in life (China Source, 16 and 23 March 2021). Perhaps as a testimony of modern Chinese society's hollowness, this interest in spirituality can be seen in how much room social media gives to online horoscopes, fortune tellers and astrology. The followers of such 'services' have reached their millions and the numbers further increased in the crisis year 2020. Many young people are looking for security and are suffering from anxiety and depression. As such, they are unlikely to be convinced by the CCP's efforts at instrumentalizing history (as it did in the run-up to its 100th anniversary). In Marxism, history serves a political purpose and the CCP is trying to create a sense of [historical destiny](#) (Neican, 20 April 2021). Even President Xi Jinping has been using [religious terms](#) like "miracle", "belief", "faith" and "soul", when urging the nation to study Party history (Bitter Winter, 7 April 2021). It would seem that the soil is fertile for the Christian message as a liberating answer to society's growing needs.

To sum up, with the October 2022 Party Congress now not far off, when Xi Jinping will begin an unprecedented third term, the Communist Party will double down on all dangers and dissent it perceives and act against anyone who is not toeing their line.

2) The fight against external threats

In what may be called the most contentious relationship in external affairs, it was watched with much interest how relations with the USA would develop after President Biden was voted in to lead the US-administration. The long-awaited [US-China talks in Alaska](#), which took place 18-19 March 2021, were “tough and direct”. “The two sides publicly skewered each others’ policies in front of TV cameras” (Reuters, 19 March 2021). In the first meeting of a high-ranking US official on Chinese soil, China put forward [two lists](#) - one named “US wrongdoings that must stop”, (Xinhua, 26 July 2021), showing that the relationship will not improve quickly.

At a time when it is said that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) simply [does not “get” democracy](#) (The Diplomat, 25 March 2021), misunderstandings can easily lead to wider consequences. It is however perfectly possible that the CCP understands democracy well enough to realize that it is counterproductive to impose sanctions on members of the very organ (the European Parliament) which has the task of ratifying the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). The [CAI](#) is an agreement which aims to regulate foreign investment and help European companies compete better in the Chinese market (South China Morning Post, 25 May 2021). The CCP simply regards delivering a clear message to be a higher priority than coming to an agreement with the EU. As another example of this may be seen the sentencing of [Canadian citizen Michael Spavor](#) to 11 years for espionage in August 2021 (China Digital Times, 11 August 2021), although he was [released](#) in September 2021 (Reuters, 1 October 2021). Such priorities are bad news for Christians: Advocacy and all efforts to make the CCP understand that the Christian minority not only does not pose a threat, but is even a blessing to society, will have limited effect in an environment where ideology trumps all.

This point was also emphasized when State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi gave an address to the US Council of Foreign Affairs in April 2021, saying that “[democracy is not Coca-Cola](#)” (Xinhua, 24 April 2021), meaning it may have different flavors around the world. However, what this statement seems not to be noting (or rather to be willfully ignoring) is that just like the soft drink, it is American soft power which is still influencing people all over the world, a form of power China is still lacking. Whether the “Coke soft power” has been historically promoted with the state’s help and thus “[American democracy is a lot like Coke](#)”, is another question (SCMP, 26 April 2021).

China is gaining more and more influence around the world and, although it will not happen in the short term, it is worth thinking about what happens when China leads the world. In a cue from China’s foregone dynasties and history, an analysis entitled “[China leads the world](#)” made the following points (The Atlantic, 5 October 2020): China will not be a pacifist power; China will insist on its own world order; China will export its values; China only tolerates relationships it can dominate. The conclusion, however, is worth quoting in full:

“What becomes clear from an examination of China’s history is that the Chinese don’t just want to be a great power—they believe they deserve to be. In centuries past, the Chinese thought their sovereign had a right to rule ‘everything under heaven’. Due to the realities of technology and distance, China’s reach usually remained regional. But now, in the age of globalization, Beijing’s influence may achieve that lofty goal.”

While the authors do not speculate about the reasons for this anti-war sentiment, it may reflect memories of what is known in Chinese history as the “hundred years of humiliation”, a period between 1839 and 1949 where various foreign powers intervened and subjugated China or parts of it.

Another field where China is trying to gain more influence is international diplomacy and especially the United Nations. This does not just mean taking up a position fitting to the growing economic and political power of the country, but it also means efforts in [re-defining](#) the United Nations' tasks and, among the most important questions, who is allowed to participate in debates and how will human rights be shaped in the future (The Diplomat, 1 October 2021).

3) What this means for Christians

The new laws and regulations for foreigners and their involvement in religious activities in China - as well as the draft paper entitled “Administrative measures for religious clergy” - shows that the situation for freedom of religion and belief in general (and for Christians in particular) is getting worse. It is worth repeating what a country expert stated in 2020: "In sum, the political context within which the new regulations and laws have come about is the resurgence of militant atheism as a pivotal component of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. Driven by this ideology, the party-state has tried to subdue religious organizations through the political campaign of *zhongguohua*, which is a form of cultural adaption to ethnic Han majority traditions and political submission to the CCP. The recent regulations and laws are intended to implement this religion policy. Institutional freedom of religion in the People’s Republic of China has reached a new low under Xi Jinping rule." (Professor Fenggang Yang for [Religious Freedom Institute](#), 11 August 2020).

Christians are and will continue to be most affected by the Persecution engine *Communist and post-Communist oppression*; the Communist Party behind the Beijing government has continued to create a negative climate for all forms of religion and put pressure on them. What a Chinese blogger said a few years ago rings truer than ever: "No matter what kind of religion you believe in, there is only one norm - they must obey the command of the Party and acknowledge the Communist Party's superior position over all churches. If you believe Christianity, the Communist Party is the God of your God; if you believe in Buddhism, the Communist Party is the Buddha of your Buddha; for Muslims, the Communist Party is the Allah of your Allah; for the living Buddha, only the Communist Party can approve who will be the living Buddha. The Party wants you to say what she wants you to say; do what she wants you to do. Believers of different religions should uphold their faith to follow the Party's will. If you are not doing so, you will be suppressed by the dictatorship." And with the implementation of the Social Credit System

(referred to above), even though it may be delayed, the authorities will find ways and have the technical means to follow their plans up. In any case, for the foreseeable future, Christians and churches in China will see tough times ahead.

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WWL 2022: Church information / China

Christian origins

The first record of Christians in China is written on an 8th century stone stele stating that (Nestorian) Christians reached the city of Xian in 635 AD. In what is called a [second \(or third\) wave](#), in the 13th century, Catholicism spread among the Mongols and Franciscan and Dominican missionaries worked in China ("A brief history of Christianity in China", 26 July 2017). Later on, Christianity was banned in the Ming dynasty, but Roman Catholics made new inroads to the country in the 16th century. Protestants arrived in Macau with the missionary Robert Morrison in 1807.

When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the Communist Party took over and all religion was viciously fought against, especially religions seen as foreign (like Christianity). Foreign Christian missionaries had to leave the country and for decades, very little was known about how Christians were surviving. When the so-called Cultural Revolution took place (1966 – 1976) the whole of society was turned upside down. As a surprise to many, the Christian faith not only survived all efforts to eradicate it, but had instead become deeply rooted in Chinese society. Despite all efforts at government control, Christians and churches are still thriving and, even though pressure seems to be increasing again, it is currently not as intense and as violent as in the times of the Cultural Revolution; however, many observers argue that it is the strongest wave of repression since that time.

Church spectrum today

China: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox		0.0
Catholic		9.5
Protestant		32.3
Independent		58.2
Unaffiliated		0.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians		0.0
Total		100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement		32.7
Renewalist movement		34.9

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

As can be seen from the percentages listed above, there are more Protestant churches in China than Catholic ones. The Three-Self-Patriotic Movement (TSPM), which is overseen by the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party (UFWD), was founded in 1954 and derives its name from following three principles: Self-governance, self-support and self-propagation. It has branches all across China and runs its own theological seminaries. House churches, on the other hand, are more numerous than TSPM churches and are also spread across the whole of China,

but they are less connected and organized. They are independent, are not associated with the TSPM or the China Christian Council and often follow a variant of evangelical theology; there are also Baptist, Pentecostal and other groups among them. They flourished in the 1980s, following the end of the Cultural Revolution, but predate this time. In the 1990s, they experienced a strong trend to urbanization, following the general worker migration in society. With COVID-19, most had to cease their physical meetings and some have not been allowed to worship together again, despite health-related restrictions being lifted for other forms of meetings.

Catholics make up only a small part of the Christian presence in China, but have similar structures to the Protestants. In 1957, the Catholic-Patriotic Association (CPA) was formed, which also comes under the CCP's UFWD jurisdiction. Catholic churches are most numerous in the province of Hebei and in the northern and central parts of China. Apart from the CPA, there are independent Catholic churches and networks, which adhere to the primacy of the Roman Catholic pontiff in Rome. They have come under increasing pressure through the private [agreement](#) between China and the Holy See (CNA, 22 October 2020) which has been extended for another two years.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: second (or third) wave - <http://www.teachicoc.org/teachers-blog/2017/7/26/a-brief-history-of-christianity-in-china>
- Church spectrum today - additional information: agreement - <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/vatican-and-china-renew-provisional-agreement-on-appointment-of-bishops-38737>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / China

Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

China: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	76	17
WWL 2021	74	17
WWL 2020	70	23
WWL 2019	65	27
WWL 2018	57	43

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

The increase of another 1.7 points in WWL 2022 (after an increase of more than four points in WWL 2021, an increase of five points in WWL 2020 and of seven points in WWL 2019), shows a further considerably deteriorated situation and reflects that the strong pressure on churches, no matter whether they are government-affiliated or not, is felt nationwide. Chinese churches

continue to show resilience in the face of Communist Party pressure, for instance in the teaching of children and young adults. However, it is getting more and more difficult to avoid having to fall in line with official Communist ideology, especially with the continued flurry of published guidelines and policies affecting churches. The violence score remained on the same level as last year and many churches were forced to split up in smaller groups.

The scores for pressure in the *5 Spheres of life* slightly increased across all spheres, reflecting an ever stronger emphasis on Communist ideology and that citizens are being used (and paid) for giving information on Christians and other minorities, especially cult activities and activities seen as criminal. The emphasis on Communist ideology and the over-arching goal of preserving the rule of the Communist Party was reflected in a pronounced increase of scores in the *National sphere*, showing the very strict implementation of the regulations on religion, which were initially introduced on 1 February 2018 and which were tightened by a set of additional rules introduced in February 2020 and rolled out in an increasing number of provinces. Additionally, new rules on organizations and clergy were introduced in the WWL 2022 reporting period (an overview on the clergy rules is provided in a USCIRF [factsheet](#) published in October 2021).

Persecution engines

China: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very weak
Religious nationalism	RN	Very weak
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Weak
Clan oppression	CO	Very weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Very strong
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Weak

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Communist and post-Communist oppression (Very strong):

The over-arching goal of the Communist Party of China (CCP) is to maintain its power through national unity and by limiting outside influences. The rulers will do everything they deem necessary to reach these goals. Recent years have shown a growing orthodoxy in ideology and in emphasizing Communist values. President Xi Jinping is arguably the strongest Communist leader since Mao Zedong and the "core of the party". The 19th Party Congress underlined how strongly the Party is refocusing on Communist ideology and how adamant the CCP is in demand-

ing this focus from all officials and society actors. According to [updated Communist party rules](#), any members clinging to religious beliefs after a dose of “strengthened thought education” will be “encouraged to leave the Party” (Reuters, 27 August 2018). Interestingly, the Party Congress refrained from nominating an “heir apparent” into the new leadership, but did away with the presidential term limit. President Xi inscribed himself into the “Regulations on the Work of the Central Committee”, making his position of power [unchangeable](#) (RFA, 29 September 2020).

The leadership’s goal of maintaining power and social harmony includes the control of all religions (as these are a strong force in society) and hence the control of the growing Christian minority as well. This is even truer for the volatile regions of Buddhist Tibet and Muslim Xinjiang. In these regions, the government has further tightened its grip and this is not only felt by ethnic groups striving for independence, but also by the respective groups of converts to the Christian faith and even strongly by Han Chinese Christians. Inner Mongolia has become another ethnic minority region under increasing pressure to Sinicize. In many regions of China, Christian activities have increasingly been hindered (especially concerning activities for children and youth camps) and although house-churches were still targeted the most, government-controlled churches have faced restrictive control as well. A similar pattern can be seen for the Catholic church. The pandemic has facilitated in “drowning out” churches, with the authorities simply not allowing them to re-open.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

President Xi Jinping has consolidated his power in a manner not seen since Mao Zedong, and under Xi the Communist Party has become almost militant in its efforts to attack any perceived threats to its authority. The main objective of the CCP is to maintain power, increasingly this seems to mean keeping President Xi in power. With the latest moves at the Central Committee meetings in October 2020, President Xi paved the way to stay in power [up to 2035](#), when he would be 82 (The Diplomat, 29 October 2020). The 20th Party Congress, planned for October 2022, will be a decisive date to watch on this way. In some ways, ideology is a tool which serves this purpose rather than being an end in itself. For example, Christianity is seen as a potential threat because it involves people organizing and rallying around something outside Party control, rather than specifically because of its theology.

Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism - Buddhist (Very weak):

Disclaimer: *The fact that the strength of the engines Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism is described here as ‘very weak’ (instead of ‘Weak’ as in previous reporting periods) does not mean there have been changes for the better on the ground. The new categorization is purely because WWL analysis aims to evaluate countries as a whole and an adjustment was seen as necessary since Xinjiang and Tibet are so sparsely populated (together making up less than 2% of China’s total population). In fact, the situation deteriorated for all citizens in these regions, including Christians, as the authorities intensified their suppression.*

The north-western state of Xinjiang, where the Muslim Uighur minority lives, has come under even heavier control than before, making observers speak of a [police state](#), especially after re-education camps were set up (BBC News, 1 February 2018 - more recent examples and reports can be found above in: *Security situation*, and below in: *Persecution of other religious minorities*).

Life for the small number of Christian converts from a Muslim background – most likely a few thousand – is extremely complicated. They suffer from the increased general pressure from the government as described above, but additionally face problems from their own family, friends and neighbors. Any deviation from the Muslim creed and traditions are seen as a disgrace and even as betrayal, since every Uighur is expected to be a Muslim. Although reports on the situation of the converts is difficult to obtain, all information received points to a very harsh situation, sometimes even involving violent incidents such as physical abuse by families. On the other hand, the difficulty of getting reports is also connected to the strong pressure the authorities are exercising on the Islamic community, so that families and communities are often torn apart and cannot target converts.

What has been said about *Islamic oppression* above also applies to the even smaller group of Christians from a Buddhist background in the Chinese region of Tibet (in far western China). Pressure and violence are increasing and the Chinese authorities do everything in their power to curb the Tibetan struggle for independence. On 1 May 2020 a so-called "[Ethnic Unity Law](#)" came into force, undermining Tibetan identity even further (RFA, 1 May 2020). Tibetan Christians face strong opposition from family, friends, neighbors and communities. To have a "deviant faith" in this region has a high price as conversion to Christianity basically shuts one out of the community.

Drivers of persecution

China: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY WEAK	VERY WEAK				VERY STRONG		STRONG	
Government officials	Very weak	Very weak				Very strong		Very strong	
Ethnic group leaders	Weak	Weak				Weak		-	
Non-Christian religious leaders	Weak	Weak				Weak		-	
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-				Weak		-	
Ideological pressure groups	-	-				Weak		Weak	
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Weak	Weak				-		-	
One's own (extended) family	Weak	Weak				-		-	
Political parties	-	-				Very strong		Very strong	

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Communist and post-Communist oppression

- **Political parties (Very strong):** In their efforts to control and guide religious bodies, the Communist Party and government authorities are the main drivers of persecution, discrimination and intolerance against Christians. The Communist Party increasingly boxes Christians in by controlling and acting against them. This is especially because Christians are the largest social body in China not under complete state-control. In strongly Communist families, the family can become another driver since no-one who wants to become a member of the Party or make a career in public service is allowed to be religious. Muslim and Tibetan leaders can be co-opted by the Communist Party to toe the official party line. If they act as Party officials, they can be additional drivers of persecution.
- **Government officials (Very strong):** Whoever wants to become a government official at a higher level has to be member of the Communist Party who follows its ideology and directives. Without this, no career is possible. Whether officials at all levels are totally convinced of Communism's superiority is another question, but in order to prove being ideologically trustworthy, the policy against religions needs to be implemented, even more so as it is now the CCP closely watching over it. The degree of implementation of policies used to vary per region, city and even village, but such variations or gray zones are becoming smaller and smaller. The overall level is very high.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Political parties (Very strong):** In their effort to stay in power, the Communist Party and the government authorities have carefully studied what led to the downfall of Communism elsewhere. One factor is the control of social groups such as Christians, who are still seen as alien and connected with foreign (mainly Western) powers and their potential to organize a significant percentage of the population independently from the Communist Party.
- **Government officials (Very strong):** An official's own position depends on the Communist Party continuing to hold onto power and on how satisfied superiors are with their work. Therefore, most government officials will do everything possible to secure their position or make career, no matter whether they are personally convinced by Communist ideology or not. A standardized implementation of national policies throughout the vast country is a challenge, but the CCP puts a lot of pressure on officials to get policies implemented and also provides incentives, especially since dealing with religious groups is one of the Party's top priorities.

Drivers of Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism - Buddhist

- **Non-Christian religious and ethnic leaders (Weak):** The small convert community from a Muslim and Buddhist background is facing a lot of problems from Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders. These are still influential in Xinjiang and Tibet, as in many cases they also serve official functions in administration and the Communist Party. Although the CCP is taking back the control from religious leaders, some of them remain influential as they perform the rituals for local people like weddings or funerals. Converts will face difficulties

in all of these cases, if their conversion is known. Often such leaders are wearing several hats, as they double as Party members, village and sometimes even religious leaders. Whereas nationwide, their influence on pressure on Christians is very weak, locally and regionally, their influence is strong.

- **Extended family and Normal citizens (Weak):** Converts also face a lot of pressure to return to their old faith from the community they live in and their own parents and family. Conversion is seen as more than just changing religion; it is regarded as betrayal of the family and local community. Whereas nationwide, their influence on pressure on Christians is very weak, in certain locations and regions their influence can be strong.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Converts from a Muslim or Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups arguably face the most severe violations of religious freedom in China as it is driven by their families and communities as well. Consequently, hotspots are Xinjiang, Tibet and Western China with the provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan, but also Qinghai and Ningxia (where Muslim minorities can be mostly found). Many Tibetans are living in the west of Sichuan, and Guizhou and Yunnan are home to many ethnic minorities as well. Yunnan, for instance, is also home to the minority of Hui Muslims.

As Protestant Christians are more concentrated in the provinces of Henan, Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi, and the numbers of Catholic Christians in Hebei are high, those provinces might be additionally considered to be hotspots. However, Christians and Christian churches face restrictions and monitoring countrywide and reports are coming from almost all provinces.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians

Compared to the other categories of Christian communities below, expatriate Christian communities experience more freedom, but they face monitoring and limitations in their contact with local Chinese churches. However, Chinese authorities throughout the country are cracking down on [foreign Christian](#) missionaries, especially South Koreans (SCMP, 10 June 2018), but also Americans and Taiwanese. In 2020, the Chinese authorities published a draft of [new rules](#) for foreigners and their involvement in religious activities in China (CNN, 25 November 2020). These rules are part of a series of tightening laws on religion. Given that the Communist Party (CCP) has always been wary of 'foreign connections' or even 'interference' in religious affairs, it is not surprising that the new rules limit the extent of citizens' contact with foreign worshippers in the country. Overall, the number of foreign Christians in China has fallen drastically, not only because of the restrictions, but also because of the pandemic.

Historical Christian communities and government controlled churches

This category highlights a unique factor in Chinese Christianity: There are registered and government-recognized churches – the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) – and non-registered, independent churches. On the Roman Catholic side, these independent congregations are the followers loyal to the Vatican. TSPM and CPA-related churches are government-controlled and even if there is no direct censorship, their leaders will carefully weigh their words. Election of leadership is state-influenced. [TSPM](#) and [CPA](#) have each published five-year-plans on how their churches will 'Sinicize' (UCA News, 17 August 2020 and 2 August 2018). Churches have published white papers from the leadership level on this topic, e.g. on [Sinicization](#) in a Catholic context (UCA News, 23 July 2018). The fact that the president of the TSPM is stressing the importance of the CCP for church work shows that the pressure to Sinicize is continuing (see above: *Religious landscape*).

Since September 2018, the Holy See (the smallest sovereign state in the world and the central administration of the Roman Catholic Church) has been party to a "[Provisional Agreement](#)" with China on the appointment of Roman Catholic bishops (Asia News, 22 September 2018), which was [renewed](#) for two years in 2020 (China Digital Times, 8 October 2020). However, no details have been made public. This has not led to any tangible relief of pressure on Catholic Christians; it is even claimed that it has led to additional pressure. Before prolonging the agreement in October 2020, it was reported that computers belonging to the Vatican had been [hacked](#), most likely by the Chinese authorities (UCA News, 30 July 2020). That the pope mentioned publicly for the first time the [suffering of the Uighurs](#) in Xinjiang in a book published on 1 December 2020 led to a sharp rebuke from China's foreign ministry (AP News, 25 November 2020). Despite all this, the Vatican is determined to [continue](#) "the dialogue" (UCA News, 2 September 2021).

Converts to Christianity

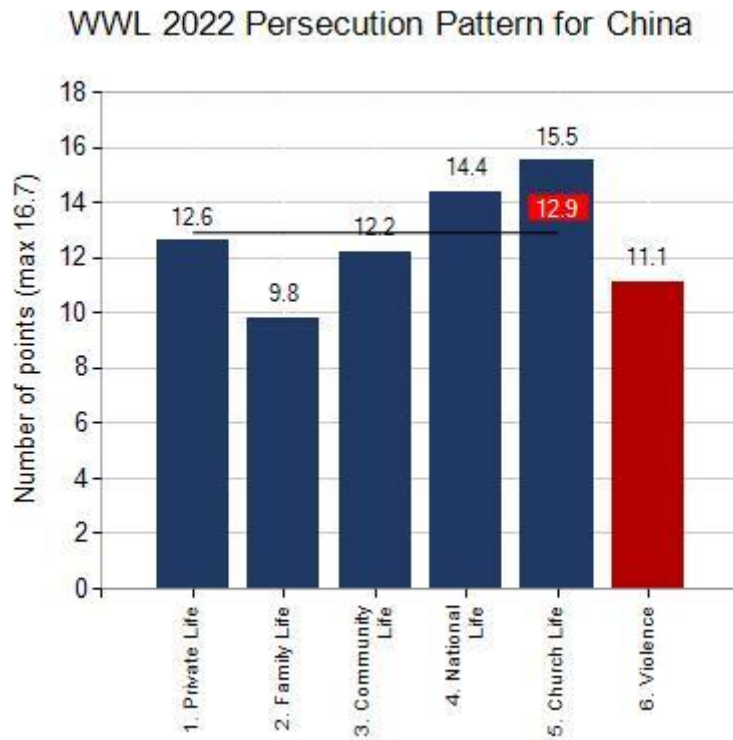
Converts are either from a Muslim background or from a Buddhist (Tibetan) background. Living in ethnic minority regions where some elements strive for independence and which are becoming ever more volatile, converts are facing pressure from two sides - from the government and family and community. While the government restricts any meeting or action it deems political or dangerous, family, friends and community put converts under pressure to return to the "true faith", because it is an important uniting factor for the ethnic groups, especially in times when the Communist authorities are pushing for homogeneity and imposing an "Ethnic Unity Law".

Non-traditional Christian communities

This category is made up of a multitude of Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations under a whole variety of names. On the Protestant side, these (often unregistered) non-traditional churches are also called house-churches or underground churches, sometimes also family churches. Unlike several years ago, when congregations consisted of hundreds of members and in some provinces met openly in commercial buildings, most house churches (one country expert gives an estimation of up to 80%) have now returned to home gatherings. This category is seriously affected by the intensification of control and 'Sinification'. Along with the

pandemic and the 100th anniversary of the CCP, many house churches have stopped in-person meetings and moved their services online. There have even been instances where online meetings via Zoom etc. have been stopped (for more details, see below: *Church sphere* and *Violence*).

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for China shows:

- The average score for pressure on Christians in China rose from 12.6 points in WWL 2021 to 12.9 in WWL 2022. The score for pressure increased most strongly in the *National sphere*, showing that the pressure on implementing the new regulations on religion from 2018, 2020 and 2021 came directly from the national state level and the implementation has been rolled out over all provinces and implemented according to the will of the Communist Party, directly implemented by the UFWD, not the government. In many places, restrictions on meetings, which were imposed due to the pandemic, have simply not been lifted for churches, leaving them no other option than to meet online. The legal and administrative environment became even more difficult, not just for the so-called house churches, but also for churches belonging to the Three Self Patriotic movement as well. The pressure to fall in line with and repeat the prevailing ideology of praising the achievements of the Communist Party in sermons and other areas of teaching has become much stronger and poses arguably one of the greatest risks for Christians in the long term.

- Pressure is strongest in the *Church* and *National spheres of life* (with scores of 15.5 and 14.4 respectively). While pressure in these spheres is typical for countries where *Communist and post-Communist oppression* is active, the pressure in the *Private sphere* (12.6) points to the problems Christian converts with a Muslim or Buddhist background are facing, but is increasingly mixed with pressure on individual believers - not just churches - to adhere to Communist beliefs and on limitations concerning the revealing of one's Christian faith. This is also true for the *Family sphere*, which still has the lowest score of all spheres with 9.8 points. Pressure from *Islamic oppression* and *Religious nationalism* is present not just in the *Private sphere*, but also in the *Family* and *Community spheres*. But increased pressure resulting from *Communist and post-Communist oppression* is felt more strongly in these spheres as well, for example in questions dealing with education or with employment, e.g. where Christians are teachers or medical staff and/or members of the Communist Party. The continued rise in pressure in the *National sphere* (14.4) is due to increased interference by the Communist Party into the way that Christians are running their businesses, especially when these businesses include some form of communication of Christian faith.
- The score for violence against Christians remained at 11.1 points. There were initially fewer reports of church buildings being destroyed or closed, but the pandemic offered the Communist authorities a unique opportunity: While at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis meetings in general were banned, in the re-opening phase Christian meetings were simply kept shutdown in some places, affecting both registered and unregistered churches. China has thus once again crossed the threshold for scoring maximum points for churches being closed (which has been the case for many years already). There were no killings reported, but an increasing number of Christians continue to be imprisoned or detained, sometimes for “education” purposes. The authorities - and the Communist Party in particular - do not seem to care much about negative international headlines in this respect or, in fact, in any human rights related issue.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points)

This is true for three groups of Christians, which will face different levels of opposition. 1) Members of ethnic minorities, especially Muslims and Tibetans, will face the strongest pressure against conversion, up to being physically harmed in some cases. 2) Party and military members and applicants for these positions (more than 110 million people) as well as civil servants Will

also face pressure to keep their conversion a secret. However, depending on their family, they may at least be able to be open about it at home. 3) Finally, young Christians (under 18 years of age) will face opposition. This is a group of about 20% of the population (although numbers are disputed) and they are legally not permitted to attend any religious meetings. This law aims at hindering young people from converting to any faith, including Christianity.

Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points)

While access to Christian content on the Internet is possible in general and communication on social media can also take place, (leading some observers to speak of a “vibrant online Christian community”), all this is strictly monitored by the government. TSPM churches are allowed to have websites and many have good evangelical content of these websites. Christians are already preparing for more restrictions and a good deal of [self-censorship](#) is practiced (China Source, 28 June 2021). The government increasingly blocks website content and limits the space of available content, e.g. by blocking Bible apps. While it is common for Chinese Christians to use VPN to obtain resources on the Internet, the risk for doing this is increasing and frequent users of VPN would catch the attention of the authorities. In one province, Zhejiang, those who were scaling “the Great Firewall” have been [publicly shamed](#) (China Digital Times, 15 October 2020). The authorities are also quick to act against what they see as “[illegal activities](#)” in the Internet, including religious activities (UCA News, 3 August 2020); several of those in contact with Christian websites have been visited and interrogated. For converts to Christianity in Xinjiang and Tibet it has been especially risky to access Christian content, but they only number a few thousand.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points)

For converts with a Muslim or Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups, it is virtually impossible to talk with others about their faith. If a convert dares to do so and is reported, he or she would be warned by local authorities and – depending on the case – could even be detained for a few days. Christians among Communist Party members, military staff, government officials or educators practice self-censorship, since being seen as religious carries a risk. The increasing overall pressure on churches and Christians discourages them from speaking about their faith and leads to more self-censorship in general, too. One very public example is the series of [short term detentions](#) Chen Wensheng received in Hunan Province due to his regular street-evangelism (China Aid, 28 June 2021).

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.00 points)

For converts with a Muslim or Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups, it is impossible to wear Christian symbols such as a cross or indicate Christian faith by displaying Bible verses at home. Young people under the age of 18 are legally prohibited from attending religious meetings and are also not supposed to display any Christian symbols. But also for other Christians, there have been some reports from areas such as Hebei, Henan, Jiangxi, Shaanxi,

Shandong, Shanxi and Zhejiang, where the authorities have threatened Christians for this reason. For Christians who are Party members or in the army, this can be risky as well, as they are not supposed to belong to any religion, let alone show it.

Block 1 additional information:

Muslim Uighur and Tibetan Buddhist converts have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian materials have to be hidden carefully and can only be read with much caution since devout Muslim or Tibetan-Buddhist families will not accept this. Meeting with other Christians is a special challenge in these circumstances as on the one hand it is dangerous for the converts themselves, and on the other hand it may endanger other Christians at the meeting. Meeting with high-profile church leaders, especially those known for having connections abroad, is very risky as well. Known converts are closely monitored and will face threats and in some cases even physical or mental abuse.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points)

Children of all categories of Christian throughout the country are forced to study anti-biblical and anti-religious teachings as the atheist education system discourages religious belief (this is a campaign which was re-started in 2018). Children of Christians have been put under pressure to reveal their parents' religion, which tells a lot about the pressure teachers' superiors and the CCP are exercising, but not necessarily about the teachers' own attitudes. In a telling example reported in UCA News, 22 September 2020, a Chinese [ethics textbook](#) deliberately changed the ending of the Biblical account of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery (see details above in: *Religious landscape*). Although this one example should not be over-interpreted, it serves as an illustration of the sort of Communist goals the education system is working towards. The introduction of the "Children speak in unison" plan led one observer to state that the educational reforms contained in that plan "aim to mold [model citizens](#) from pre-school" (Jamestown, 10 September 2021).

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)

As indicated above, in some parts of China, children have been set under pressure to tell teachers (who in turn have been pressured by their superiors, see Block 2.8 above) and the local authorities if their parents are religious. The CCP goes to great lengths to encourage an anti-religious mindset in children and warns that religious activities are to be regarded as illegal behavior. Strong atheistic education and promotional opportunities based on a young person's loyalty to the CCP, as well as restrictions on minors attending church, make it difficult for Christian parents to raise their children according to their Christian beliefs. For converts from Muslim or Buddhist background, members of their wider family will try to influence the education of their children.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.75 points)

If children remain strong in their Christian faith, despite being constantly taught otherwise, teachers (and peers) discourage them from attending Christian activities in order to avoid pressure from superiors. By law, all children are required to attend state school education according to the 9-year free education scheme. This policy has been very strictly implemented by the authorities. Young people in some areas have been threatened with not being allowed to graduate or not being accepted for further studies. This is even stronger for children of known converts.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.25 points)

For converts, baptisms cannot be held in public (and even baptizing them "low profile" to avoid being exposed) carries a risk as has been shown when authorities hindered a baptism in the Guangdong Province in September 2021 (CBN News, 22 September 2021). While the authorities would detain a pastor who baptizes converts of Muslim and Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups, in most cases they would be released after a few days with a stern warning. Likewise, it is not permitted to baptize Christians under the age of 18, a limitation which is felt more strongly by the TSPM churches as they are more visible and much better known to the authorities. Technically, TSPM and Catholic Patriotic Movement churches are the only ones which are allowed to conduct baptisms.

Block 2 additional information:

In Tibet and Xinjiang the situation is volatile and the more pressure the government places on society in these provinces, the more a conversion is seen as being a disgrace to the family and as a betrayal of the close-knit community life. Therefore converts are very cautious and hide their new-won faith. Once converts are discovered, they face the threat of divorce (if married) and may lose their inheritance rights. It is difficult for them to organize Christian weddings or funerals. Converts are expected to hold a traditional wedding ceremony and can therefore celebrate a Christian wedding only in hiding, if at all. One reason that the score in the Family sphere is lower than that for the other spheres is that registration of births etc. (Questions 2.1 and 2.2) is not a problem.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.75 points)

Converts, mainly of Muslim and Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups, are put under pressure by family, friends and neighbors to renounce their Christian faith, and their children face discrimination and bias from Muslim or Buddhist teachers and pupils at school. Monitoring (e.g. by school authorities and neighborhood committees) is prevalent in the whole country and affects Christians as well as other citizens. Targets for monitoring are places where people meet, but also "high-profile" Christians who come under special scrutiny as they are

either very outspoken, critical of the administration or are seen as being connected to foreign groups. Not always are these criteria clear-cut. The Communist Party operates a system of rewards to encourage security guards in the community to report any irregularities; this [grid management system](#) is tight and used for several purposes, including monitoring neighborhoods (PRC Leader, 1 March 2021).

Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (3.75 points)

Meetings organized by Communist Party groups on a frequent basis (most commonly at the workplace), can be regarded as being quasi-religious. They invoke the Communist spirit and serve to align every part of society with Communist ideology. Civil servants, and staff in other public institutions and most workplaces, are required to attend and participate in community events organized by the local Communist authorities. In many cases, these events include singing Communist hymns and chanting slogans. This is true for the educational sector as well, but even outside of these fields, Communist ideology is ever present, be it in the media or in hoardings dotting the landscape and cities.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

In public employment, discrimination against Christians is more the norm than in private employment. It has to be kept in mind here, that the state-owned enterprise sector is much larger than in most other countries, so public and quasi-public employment is more the norm than in other countries. However, there are cases where the government has interfered in employment matters and pressed private employers to terminate contracts with religious believers. Private employers are required to have an active Party Cell and all religious believers are excluded from government positions which require Party membership. An illustration, although not directly related to this kind of discrimination, is the push for increasing the Party's presence via UFWD supervision of [private enterprises](#) (Jamestown, 28 September 2020).

Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

In Xinjiang and Tibet, interrogation by the police is highly common, but Christians are a particular target since they are regarded as being potential "troublemakers". This is also true for Han Chinese church leaders in these regions. But even throughout China, church leaders and ordinary (often: key) church members are increasingly being called in for interrogation at police stations and offices of the Religious Administration. The former, well-known invitation to church leaders "to meet for a cup of tea" with the authorities has now been widely replaced with open monitoring and direct interrogation. One country expert stated: "Police keep tabs on all known religious leaders (registered or unregistered)." A well-publicized case has been that of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, which was raided by police at Easter 2020 and whose members [continued to be interrogated](#) long after the initial raid (RFA, 24 August 2021). There have been numerous reports of cases concerning less well-known churches, too (e.g. from the provinces of Anhui, Henan, Jiangsu, Shanxi, Sichuan and Zhejiang), and it is anyway more than likely that most cases go unreported.

Block 3 additional information:

In an effort to fulfil the new Party regulations dealing with religions, local authorities do not shy away from switching their mode of operation from monitoring to actively intimidating. This may be a reflection of the fact that it is the Communist Party which has taken control of all religious affairs via the already mentioned UFWD in concert with local government agencies. There are hardly any gray areas left for local authorities in dealing with religious communities and especially house churches.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)

While China does recognize freedom of religion in its Constitution, the implementation of this freedom is a far cry from having any real meaning. The Constitution makes this freedom contingent upon the priorities of the State, which has the power to define what constitutes "normal" religious activity. As the article "Freedom in handcuffs: Religious Freedom in the Constitution of China" explains, this right is limited by five restrictions described in Article 36 of the Constitution: i) Atheism is the official ideology of the state; ii) freedom of religion is just a legal not a fundamental right; iii) the Constitution enumerates citizen's obligations limiting the right; iv) Article 36 protects the inner freedom to have a particular religion, but not the freedom to outwardly live according to its rules of faith; and v) Article 36 speaks of "normal" religious activity (Professor Songfeng Li in: [Journal of Law and Religion](#) 35, No. 1/2020, pp. 113–137).

On 26 July 2021, China's Supreme People's Court published a [text](#) giving local authorities the power to further limit and even close down Christian and other religious groups (Bitter Winter, 12 August 2021). The text, entitled "Opinions on Providing Judicial Services and Protection for Accelerating the Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Areas", provides guidelines under Paragraph 9 for implementing the overall national security concept and for promoting harmony and stability in rural regions. The practice of religious activities is listed among various other 'dangerous elements' in Chinese society. This shows how religion (and religious freedom) is perceived in general.

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (4.00 points)

The laws for both Chinese and overseas NGOs forbid organizations from engaging in religious activities. The space for Christian NGOs is therefore shrinking, although some Chinese NGOs still try to find remaining space to operate in. China does not allow any political parties independent of the Communist Party and any political activity outside the CCP is forbidden; thus, any Christians attempting to set up an organization for political purposes will be dealt with swiftly by the authorities.

Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (4.00 points)

Courts in China serve the purposes of the Communist Party. They are not impartial, do not follow the rule of law principle and do not have juries. As a result, in cases in which the defendant is a

Christian and the prosecutor is the state, once cases get to court, the verdict has already been decided by the Party and the prosecutors and the courts will decide accordingly. The best illustration of this in the WWL 2022 reporting period was the [sentencing of four Christians](#) (UCA News, 4 August 2021) for illegally selling electronic devices which played Bible verses (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*).

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

All Communist Party members are by definition expected to be atheists. So it is clear that Party members, army staff and civil servants are not allowed to have any religious belief and even their family members are not supposed to be religious in any way. If their Christian faith becomes known, they will immediately face pressure to give it up. If they refuse, they may be demoted or lose their job. Equally likely, is that they cave in to the pressure and leave their public occupation.

Block 4 additional information:

The ban on holding religious beliefs in public employment has been extended to schools and medical staff. Teachers have been put under pressure by the authorities and senior staff [not to hold religious beliefs](#) (Bitter Winter, 18 May 2020). Reports have also emerged that school-children, students and medical staff in hospitals elsewhere in China have been asked to sign letters stating that they do not hold any religious belief. Publicly displaying religious symbols is a problem for all Christians in the provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet.

The March 2018 White Paper made it clear that "actively guiding religions in adapting to socialist society" not only means "guiding religious believers to love their country and compatriots, safeguard national unity [and] ethnic solidarity", but also expects all religious bodies to "be subordinate to and serve the overall interests of the nation and the Chinese people. It also means guiding religious groups to support the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system; uphold and follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics; develop religions in the Chinese context; embrace core socialist values; carry forward China's fine traditions; integrate religious teachings and rules with Chinese culture; abide by state laws and regulations, and accept state administration in accordance with the law." One goal of this White Paper is to uncover any foreign contacts sponsoring church activities; its aim is therefore to promote the 'Chinafication' of churches. This goal has been spelled out in detail in regulations for Christian clergy and religious institutions, further explained below under "Church sphere".

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)

As mentioned above, the government's interest is in maintaining a "harmonious society" and in only protecting "normal religious activity". In terms of religion this means not just "managing" registered and non-registered churches but actively steering them. All communities of Christians are being monitored. In general, many church activities are not just monitored by the presence

of agents, but also by CCTV cameras watching the pulpit, congregation and surrounding church compound. A country expert explained: "The preaching in Sunday services needs to be approved for TSPM churches, but situations still vary." For unregistered churches, monitoring has increased this in the WWL 2022 reporting period. More and more house churches experience harassment and obstruction once their activities have been discovered. Most have been forced to split up into small groups and gather in different locations, keeping a low-profile so as not to be detected by the sub-district officer or neighborhood committee. As one country expert summarized: "Prior to COVID-19 the government had begun shutting down large unregistered congregations. During lockdown, no public meetings were allowed so believers continued meeting online. It is highly unlikely that unregistered groups will attempt to resume large in-person meetings. The future of small group meetings, which many are currently utilizing, is uncertain." Many house churches switched to (limited) online meetings. Churches that are officially closed down for good - particularly in rural areas - lose everything, including church property and assets.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points)

The regulations on religion (February 2018 and February 2020) continued to be implemented in a very strict way which has led to churches being under tighter control and monitoring. At the same time, [new regulations](#) for religious institutions were made public in May 2021 (China Aid, 19 May 2021). As they are only to be implemented from 1 September 2021 onwards, the exact consequences remain to be seen. There have been a few reports of unregistered churches being harassed and/or shut down as a result in the WWL 2022 reporting period. As stated above under 5.1, the authorities seem to prefer simply not to allow churches to open again after lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (4.00 points)

Christian activities are not allowed outside areas specifically designated for religious purposes. Even religious processions which have a long tradition among Catholic Christians are closely monitored and limited in terms of space, time and the number of participants allowed. Due to COVID-19 measures, the number of group outdoor activities has been very limited in general. But even after the gradual re-opening, Christian venues had to remain closed. And where they were allowed to open, they were monitored or prevented from meeting due to the sensitive events of the 100th Anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in July 2021 (and the Beijing Winter Olympics coming up in February 2022).

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points)

Everything is monitored. As part of the Sinicization campaign, pastors in registered churches are increasingly under pressure to promote CCP teaching in the churches. Although this is not a general trend, in a TSPM conference in the WWL 2022 reporting period, pastors were instructed to [preach about](#) Xi Jinping's 100th anniversary of the Communist Party speech in their churches and were given a 9-point sermon outline to use (Bitter Winter, 14 July 2021). At the same time,

the Communist Party has introduced new "Administrative measures for [religious staff](#)" for creating a national database of recognized and authorized church and other religious leaders (Bitter Winter, 11 February 2021).

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (4.00 points)

In the highly controlled political environment that China has become under the Communist Party, foreign organizations or individuals that criticize government policies are likely to be censored and/or expelled. Christian citizens who speak out against government measures are likely to be arrested and charged with disrupting social order, spreading rumors, or endangering national security. The Communist Party reacts harshly against anyone who provides foreign news sources with information about persecution, which has resulted in a significant drop in reports. Since the sentencing of Pastor Wang Yi from the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, Sichuan, in December 2019, many pastors have decided to avoid speaking out against the authorities, saying that it is not worth the risk.

Block 5 additional information:

The Chinese authorities drafted new guidelines to [curb "chaotic" online information on religion](#) in September 2018 (Reuters, 11 September 2018). Online resources have always been a major source of encouragement and training for Christians all over China. Since September 2018, by the regulation, the online sharing of resources is only allowed when the provincial religious affairs department has issued a license for it. Some resources - such as the live broadcasting of sermons – are not allowed any more at all, although this is not yet implemented everywhere. Reportedly, pastors and priests from both [Catholic](#) and [Protestant \(TSPM\)](#) churches are required to pass ideology tests, in an effort to control churches more effectively (UCA News, 30 April 2019 and Bitter Winter, 28 April 2019). Christian material is still available online, but the scope is decreasing and accessing it is becoming increasingly difficult.

It should be noted that the local authorities are mainly responsible for implementing the new regulations. Now that the Communist Party is in control of religious matters, a more unified and strict approach is being taken. Christians in China still experience differing levels of freedom today, but most observers agree that freedom is shrinking fast. The COVID-19 crisis has been used as a pretext for delaying (often indefinitely) the re-opening of a church building, providing the perfect way for not having to officially raid a church building (with its risk of photo and video footage of the police in action being leaked to a wider public). It seems that the goal is changing: The aim is to 'suffocate' unregistered churches out of existence, while co-opting and strictly monitoring the TSPM churches.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. **Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.** Possible reasons for this may be:
 - Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.
 - In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.
 - If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.
 - In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.
2. **Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:**
 - Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).
 - In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.
 - Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.
3. **For further discussion** (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.
4. **The use of symbolic numbers:** In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.
5. **The symbol "x" in the table:** This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

China: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	3000	3088
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	10 *	10
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	10
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	1000
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10

For the WWL 2022 reporting period:

- **Christians attacked:** Often the arrest of Christian leaders and beatings went hand in hand with attacks on churches. Reports have been considerably fewer than in earlier reporting periods, so the estimated number given here may be a serious understatement. One illustration of these incidents are [attacks](#) against and abuses of Christians being members of the Early Rain Covenant Church (ERCC) in Chengdu (China Aid, 17 May 2021).
- **Christians arrested or detained:** As stated above, church leaders were often detained as part of actions targeting churches. These incidents could span any length from a few hours to years. In cases of 'administrative detention', this was usually not longer than 15 days. The most prominent case in the WWL 2022 reporting period was that of four Christians in Shenzhen who had been selling electronic Bible verse players (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*). But there were several others as well.

- **Churches attacked:** It is impossible to give a concrete number of incidents where churches have been attacked. One reason for this is that authorities go to great lengths to prevent reports being made. But the more important reason during the WWL 2022 reporting period was that church buildings were closed as part of COVID-19 lockdown measures. While all locations used for religious meetings had to be closed down in reaction to the pandemic, the Communist authorities seem to have used this opportunity to shut some of them down for good or erect insurmountable hurdles for re-opening. Such cases are difficult to track, as this does not need a discernable government action. Many churches and meeting places have simply vanished. (However, when church gatherings have vanished, it often means that the Christians have decided to simply split up and now meet in smaller groups at other locations.)

One country expert estimates that up to 15,000 house churches and 5,000 TSPM churches and meeting points have been closed. The reports collected throughout the previous WWL reporting period (for WWL 2021) resulted in a conservative estimate totaling 3088 churches closed. This would seem to be the minimum level for a WWL 2022 estimate too. Keeping in mind that the real number is most likely much higher than the number reported (possibly even higher than 20,000), the number has been set at 3,000 for WWL 2022.

- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** Homes of Christians have been raided in which electricity has been cut off and furniture damaged. In one illustrative case, the local authorities [removed crosses](#) from boats of Christian fishermen in Zhejiang (China Aid, 31 July 2021).
- **Other:** South Korean missionaries were expelled from the country, who had been living in the border region close to North Korea, especially in the province of Jilin. Their numbers have dwindled as this campaign has been running for a number of years already. Churches with foreign ties have come under particular scrutiny or have been closed down. The "Shenzhen Holy Reformed Church" with 60 members [fled to Jeju Island](#) in South Korea and asked for asylum (China Aid, 11 June 2021), but their application was declined. The case is still pending.

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

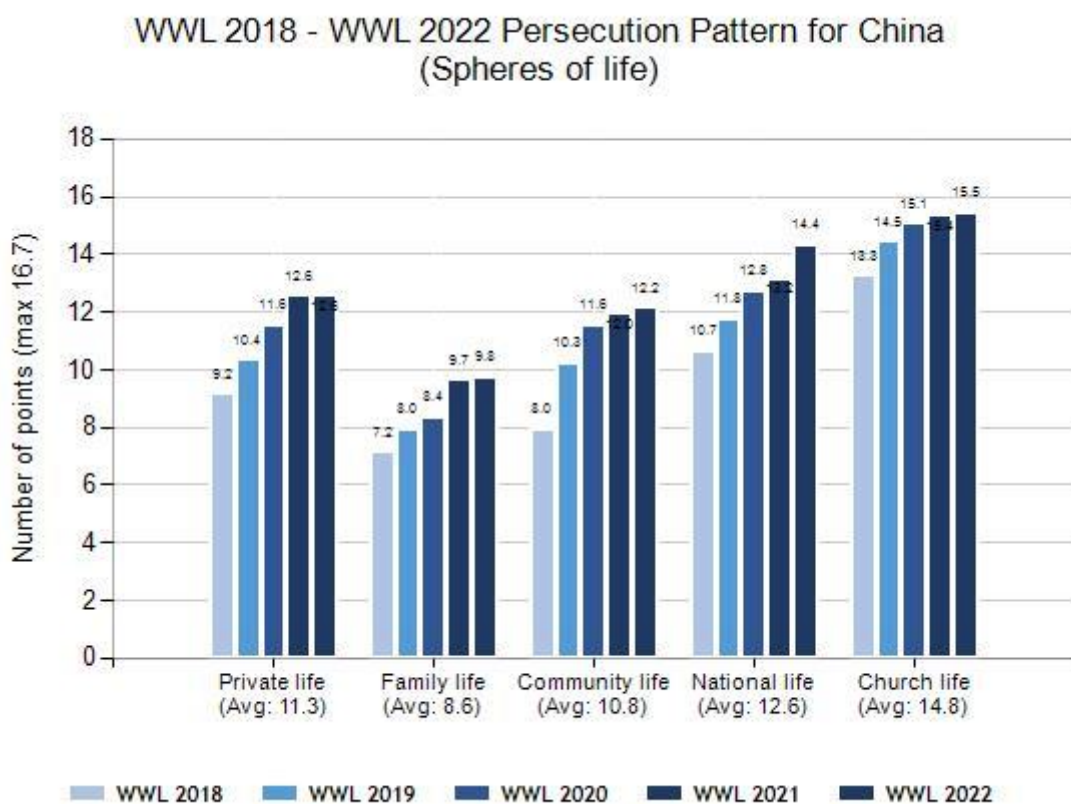
5 Year trends: Average pressure

China: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	12.9
2021	12.6
2020	11.9

2019	11.0
2018	9.7

The score for average pressure further increased to a very high level of 12.9 points in WWL 2022, showing a period of pronounced increase after starting the five year period at 9.7 points in WWL 2018. This reflects how strict the implementation of the law on religion and related laws has been and also includes the introduction of new laws and restrictions. It also indicates a consistently deteriorating situation for Christians in more and more regions of China.

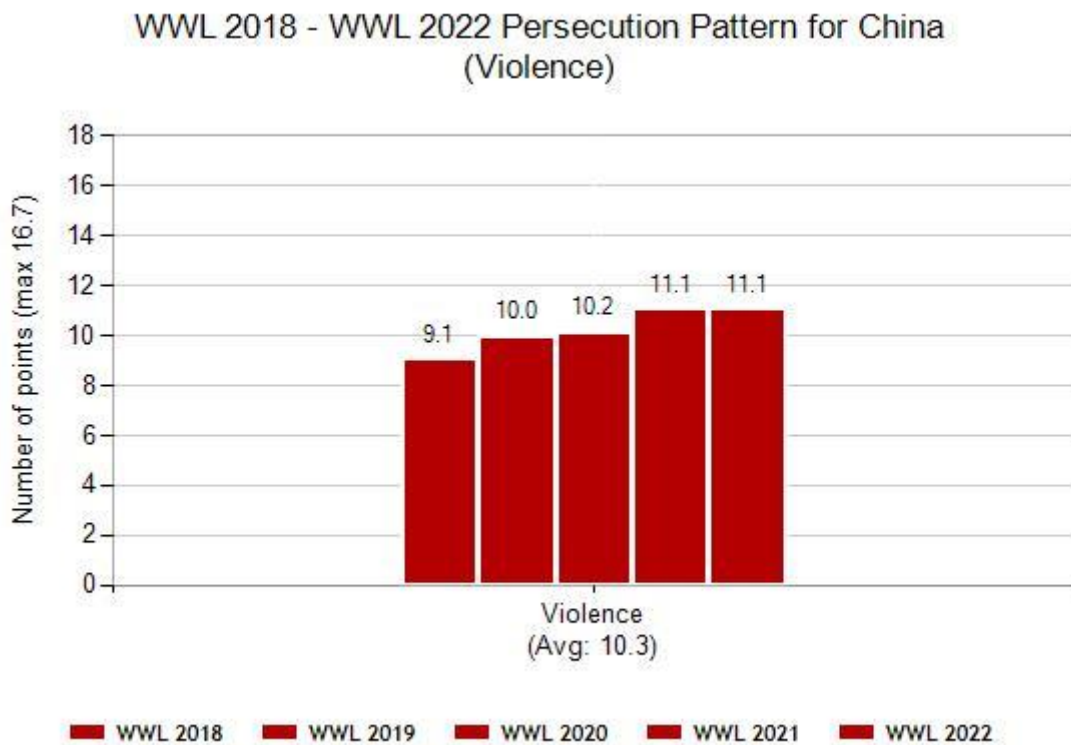
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



It can be seen in the chart above that all five *spheres of life* show marked increases in score in the last five reporting periods and now - in WWL 2022 - have never been at a higher level in the past five years. The fact that the level of pressure in the *Private* and *Family* spheres is not higher may be surprising at first sight. It should be kept in mind, however, that the situation of converts in Xinjiang and Tibet in particular has become increasingly difficult to monitor as reporting from these provinces is heavily restricted. Not surprisingly, the scores for *National life* have increased particularly significantly over the last reporting periods (and showed the highest increase of all spheres compared to WWL 2021), reflecting the ever stronger pressure caused by the authorities bringing everything and everybody into the framework of Communist ideology.

The high scores for *Church life* have been in the category 'extreme' since WWL 2019, reflecting how life for all churches has become much more complicated, no matter how big or small they are or whether they are TSPM or (unregistered) house churches. That is not to say that all churches have already been targeted, but that all churches need to be cautious, especially when dealing with the authorities.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The scores for violence against Christians - consistently in the category "very high" - have steadily increased and have now peaked at 11.1 points. However, there have not been any reports of Christians being killed for their faith.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Forced marriage; Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Trafficking; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Christian leaders are a target in China. Since many churches, especially house churches, are led by women, women are similarly affected by persecution, discrimination, and intolerance as men, and may be imprisoned if their religious activities are discovered.

Generally speaking, converts from Muslim and Buddhist backgrounds face the greatest pressures if their faith is discovered; Their husbands may be pressured into divorcing them because they are seen as traitors to their ethnic group. They may further encounter bullying and harassment in their school or place of work.

China's (now abandoned) one-child policy is notorious for having created a gender imbalance. The consequences of this policy are interacting with the vulnerability of Christian communities in neighboring countries. Female Christians from neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Myanmar caught in China's network of trafficking may be sold as brides ([USDS Trafficking in Persons Report 2021, pp.179-180](#)).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Forced to flee town/country
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Similar to the situation facing Christian women, male Christian leaders are generally the main target for government surveillance. Catholic priests and high-profile house church leaders have been abducted. "In most of the cases," a country expert explains, "it's rather common for house church pastors or leaders to be asked to attend a meeting (where they are investigated by the authorities) they are closely monitored and restricted from leaving the country. Their family members could also face interrogation or threats." Due to such pressure, some church leaders choose to emigrate.

Although they face similar pressure to women, men and boys are at greater risk of being physically abused, such as being beaten by police officers. Furthermore, men are often still the financial providers of the family. Consequently, if they are taken away - e.g. through arrest or even if they are just threatened with losing their jobs, especially when they are civil servants, teachers or medical staff – this puts the whole family under financial strain. In many cases, being held in custody for weeks or months and being treated harshly there leaves physical trauma, so that in some cases it is impossible for them to go back to work.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department's IRFR 2020:

- "From January to July, officials across the country shut down religious venues, including some that were affiliated with the authorized patriotic religious associations, in some but not all cases citing COVID restrictions. There were reports the government used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to increase the surveillance and arrest of religious practitioners, including members of state-sanctioned groups, and to curtail private worship among religious groups. Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized publishing and copying businesses that handled religious materials." (Page 2)
- "There were numerous reports that authorities closed or destroyed Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country. The government removed architectural features that identified churches and mosques as religious sites. It altered textbooks to delete references to religious holidays. Officials routinely made public statements denigrating the Dalai Lama." (Page 2)
- "Christians, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Falun Gong practitioners reported severe societal discrimination in employment, housing, and business opportunities. In Xinjiang and Tibet, authorities continued to suppress Uyghur and Tibetan language and culture, while promoting ethnic Han individuals in political, economic, and cultural life. Anti-Muslim speech in social media remained widespread." (Page 2)
- "Unequal treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities' suppression of Uyghur language, culture, and religious practices while promoting the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims reported severe societal discrimination in employment and business opportunities. There were reports that some Han Chinese living in Xinjiang described Uyghurs in derogatory terms." (Page 86)

Besides Christians, Muslims in Xinjiang and Tibetan Buddhists face strong pressure from the government, as does Falun Gong. Details can be found in the still valid Freedom House Special Report of February 2017: "[The Battle for China's Spirit](#)".

Meanwhile, several internal documents on the treatment of the Muslim minority of the Uighurs in Xinjiang have emerged, revealing not just the strict political and ideological drive of the CCP's policy, but also the industrial scale of detention and "re-education". Among those reports, the "[China Leaks](#)" published by an international consortium with the New York Times on 16 November 2019, were particularly revealing. Other [reports](#) by Adrian Zenz and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) have added to the knowledge of what is going on in Xinjiang (China Digital Times, 27 November 2019). Another series of reports from BuzzFeednews used satellite images to give an [overview](#) of the scale of detention (BuzzFeednews, 27 August 2020). The Chinese government is openly defending its policy of detaining up to one million Muslim Uighurs and ethnic Kazakhs in detention centers in Xinjiang, claiming the fight against radical Islam makes such measures necessary.

Typically, the [United Nations](#) is the main forum for battles on this subject: In October 2020, a coalition of 39 member states demanded an international investigation; however, China managed to bring together a coalition of 45 countries, opposing such a move and praising China for its minority policy (Catholic News Agency, 7 October 2020). This battle continued in the WWL 2022 reporting period, and while no official investigation has been possible, a privately organized investigation, supported by NGOs, called the [Uyghur Tribunal](#), started in September 2020 in London. The "[Ethnic Unity Law](#)" applying to Tibet shows that assimilation is a wider policy of the CCP now (RFA, 1 May 2020). The plight of other groups like the "[Church of the Almighty God](#)" (CAG) also belongs here (Bitter Winter, 20 August 2020), a more detailed explanation can be found above under *Religious landscape*. There have also been reports that members of religious minorities being detained in the labor camps (such as Uighurs and members of the CAG) have been killed.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Communist oppression

The law on religion and its February 2020 supplement continue to being implemented by the Communist Party via its United Front Work Department and the related offices on religion. Its strict implementation is strongly felt by all religions, but Christians have been a particular target and even TSPM churches have come under scrutiny. The CCP is much more relentless in following its goals and preserving its national ideology and will do whatever it deems necessary, as has been shown during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis when many church buildings were simply kept closed, while most other meetings and venues could start up again (some church venues were allowed to re-open as well). The "[Administrative measures for religious staff](#)" entered into force on 1 May 2021 (gov.cn, 9 February 2021). If they are implemented equally strictly (first and foremost for TSPM and CPM leaders), the room for churches in particular will shrink considerably, but house churches may be affected, too.

The centennial anniversary celebration of the CCP showed that despite all challenges, the Communist Party displays a more self-assured image than ever and with President Xi Jinping heading for a third term at the Party Congress in October 2022, it will take no chances on anything perceived as dissent. As one country observer summed up, this will mainly [play out in the fields](#) of expanding economic control, digital governance and national security (Merics, The CCP's next century, 15 June 2021). There is evidence that many of the younger generation are beginning to doubt the social contract (of participating in the ever improving economic situation in exchange for agreeing with strict limitations on personal freedom) and look for alternative meaning to life (see Trend 1 above in: *Trends analysis*); this can be seen as a rich mission-field for Christians, but may also feed into the CCP's paranoia and its need for tighter control.

Dictatorial paranoia

Dictatorial paranoia plays out in an emphasis on national ideology and indoctrination, but may find its culmination in efforts to control and supervise society. China is the country where online and mobile paying systems are by far the most advanced and used, especially in cities, and such systems can be used for monitoring, too, leading to questions about data protection within

China itself. While the Social Credit System and GM are still being developed (see above - Trends 1 c), citizen ratings will have very serious implications. Questions arise not just about fraud or buying a better rating: What happens if citizens show socially unwanted behavior, by being – for example – religious or Christian? What will be the consequence of that?

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that it is relatively easy to introduce strict surveillance and isolation measures for health-related reasons, although there were some fears related to data protection being raised by Chinese citizens, too. However, the stronger the personality cult around President Xi Jinping grows, the more weight this Persecution engine, *Dictatorial paranoia*, will carry. Although the headline used in a Washington Post article may be a bit too strong: “As repression mounts, China under Xi Jinping feels increasingly like North Korea” (Washington Post, 29 September 2020), it nevertheless describes how life in [many Chinese cities](#) increasingly feels today.

An outline of what to expect from Chinese politics in the [next five years](#) up to 2025 by observers of the CCP includes a third term for President (and Party Secretary-General) Xi Jinping and a stronger focus on internal politics. The key points mentioned are: ‘Xi consolidates political power in 2022’, ‘Government will become a better means to Xi’s ends’ and ‘Xi’s Party-state will deliver more for most Chinese citizens’ (MacroPolo, 26 October 2020). This holds for the WWL 2022 reporting period as well, with the addition of: ‘Manage to go it alone and overcome effects from the decoupling trends’, increasing the economic autonomy and independence of China. Given how much these trends are centered around the person of President Xi, aged 68 at the time of writing, it will become increasingly important to think about [succession scenarios](#) with each passing year (CSIS, After Xi, 21 April 2021). This will add to CCP paranoia. For Christians in China, this consolidation of political power may well translate into increasing pressure to conform and the decoupling may lead to stronger isolation from other churches worldwide.

Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism - Buddhist

These Persecution engines are mainly driven by family, society and religious leaders and aimed against the few thousand converts among the Muslim and Buddhist (Tibetan) people groups. Pressure on converts is likely to remain high and potentially even increase as the urgency for conformity among these minority communities grows due to the increasing pressure being placed on them by government policing measures.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Position on the World Watch List: factsheet - <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/2021%20China%20Factsheet.pdf>
- Persecution engines description: updated Communist party rules - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-corruption/china-targets-rumors-religion-in-updated-party-rules-idUSKCN1LC0AQ>
- Persecution engines description: unchangeable - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/xi-jinping-09292020120632.html>
- Persecution engines description: up to 2035 - <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/chinas-fifth-plenum-what-you-need-to-know-2/>
- Persecution engines description: police state - <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-china-42911468/china-xinjiang-police-state-fear-and-resentment>
- Persecution engines description: Ethnic Unity Law - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/law-05012020182336.html>

- Christian communities and how they are affected: foreign Christian - <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2150057/south-korean-missionaries-fearful-crackdown>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: new rules - <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/25/asia/china-foreign-religion-christianity-islam-intl-hnk/index.html>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: TSPM - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/protestant-five-year-plan-for-chinese-christianity/82107>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: CPA - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/sinicization-of-china-church-the-plan-in-full/82931>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: Sinicization - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-churches-get-ready-for-sinicization/82876>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: Provisional Agreement - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Press-Office-announces-a-%E2%80%98Provisional-Agreement%E2%80%99-between-China-and-the-Holy-See,-the-beginning-of-a-process,-says-Greg-Burke-45010.html>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: renewed - <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2020/10/vatican-moves-to-extend-secret-deal-with-beijing/>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: hacked - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/vatican-hong-kong-diocese-hacked-by-china-ahead-of-talks/88962>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: suffering of the Uighurs - <https://apnews.com/article/beijing-china-pope-francis-xi-jinping-f679c9f2c2cc2afeb21c3e961a67051a>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: continue - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pope-wants-to-continue-dialogue-with-china-despite-challenges/93983>
- Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points): self-censorship - <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries/wechat-and-chinese-christians-part-2/>
- Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points): publicly shamed - <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2020/10/zhejiang-government-publicly-shames-people-for-scaling-the-great-firewall/>
- Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points): illegal activities - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-tightens-cyber-checks-bans-christian-accounts/89009>
- Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points): short term detentions - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/06/hunan-police-arrest-street-preacher.html>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points): ethics textbook - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-catholics-angry-over-book-claiming-jesus-killed-sinner/89619>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points): model citizens - <https://jamestown.org/program/educational-reforms-aim-to-mold-model-citizens-from-preschool-in-the-prc/>
- Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.25 points): hindered a baptism - <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2021/september/chinese-officials-harass-church-members-swarm-beach-to-block-new-believers-from-being-baptized>
- Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.75 points): grid management system - <https://www.prcleader.org/pei-grid-management>
- Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points): private enterprises - https://jamestown.org/program/the-ccps-new-directives-for-united-front-work-in-private-enterprises/?mc_cid=e2f5a07e80&mc_eid=f11cc21a62
- Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points): continued to be interrogated - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/church-08242021122734.html>
- Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points): Journal of Law and Religion -

- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-and-religion/article/freedom-in-handcuffs-religious-freedom-in-the-constitution-of-china/55969679D7541B29CAA7477AE1503627>
- Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points): text - <https://bitterwinter.org/supreme-court-asks-for-heavier-repression-of-illegal-religion-in-rural-areas/>
 - Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (4.00 points): sentencing of four Christians - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/china-jails-christians-for-selling-bible-players/93577>
 - Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: not to hold religious beliefs - <https://bitterwinter.org/medical-staff-expose-chinas-disinformation-on-covid-19/>
 - Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points): new regulations - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/05/ccp-issues-administrative-measures-for.html>
 - Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points): preach about - <https://bitterwinter.org/christian-churches-ordered-to-preach-xi-jinpings-july-1-speech/>
 - Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points): religious staff - <https://bitterwinter.org/enter-the-administrative-measures-for-religious-clergy/>
 - Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: curb “chaotic” online information on religion - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-religion/china-to-crack-down-on-chaotic-online-religious-info-media-idUSKCN1LQ2QC?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
 - Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: Catholic - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-catholics-worried-about-political-scanning/85059>
 - Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: Protestant (TSPM) - <https://bitterwinter.org/main-preacher-assessment-standard-obey-and-follow-the-party/>
 - Violence / Block 6 - commentary: attacks - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/05/chengdu-police-officers-abuse-ercc.html>
 - Violence / Block 6 - commentary: removed crosses - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/07/qushan-county-ccp-contractors-removing.html>
 - Violence / Block 6 - commentary: fled to Jeju Island - <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/06/shenzhen-holy-reformed-church-members.html>
 - Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: USDS Trafficking in Persons Report 2021, pp.179-180 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: The Battle for China’s Spirit - https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_ChinasSprit2016_FULL_FINAL_140pages_compressed.pdf
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: China Leaks - https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html?mc_cid=51ab797dd4&mc_eid=cb0c885248
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: reports - <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2019/11/new-leaks-uncover-xinjiang-detentions-and-surveillance/>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: overview - <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/china-new-internment-camps-xinjiang-uighurs-muslims>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: United Nations - <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/investigate-china-for-uighur-persecution-39-nations-tell-un-77918>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: Uyghur Tribunal - <https://uyghurtribunal.com/>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: Ethnic Unity Law - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/law-05012020182336.html>
 - Persecution of other religious minorities: Church of the Almighty God - <https://bitterwinter.org/1634-church-of-almighty-god-members-arrested-in-first-half-of-2020/>
 - Future outlook: religious staff - http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2021-02/09/content_5586371.htm
 - Future outlook: play out in the fields - <https://merics.org/en/report/ccps-next-century-expanding-economic-control-digital-governance-and-national-security>
 - Future outlook: many Chinese cities - https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-muslims-xinjiang-north-korea-repression/2020/09/28/ad2fef8d-f316-11ea-8025-5d3489768ac8_story.html
 - Future outlook: next five years - <https://macropolo.org/analysis/china-forecast-politics-2025-stronger-as-xi-jinping-goes/>

- Future outlook: succession scenarios - <https://www.csis.org/analysis/after-xi-future-scenarios-leadership-succession-post-xi-jinping-era>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=China>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/China>
- China blog 2020 - 2021: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password: freedom)