

World
Watch
Research

China: Country Dossier

December 2019



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55
36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54

60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

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Brief note on 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). The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

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).

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / China

Brief country details

Determining the number of Christians in China is very difficult. Estimates range from 40 million to 150 million, depending on the source. In the table below, the number of Christians shown is an Open Doors estimate.

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
China		
1,420,062,000	97,200,000	OD estimate

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List China	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	70	23
WWL 2019	65	27
WWL 2018	57	43
WWL 2017	57	39
WWL 2016	57	33

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

China: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Communist and post - Communist oppression	Government officials , Political parties, Non-Christian religious leaders
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 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 power, limiting whatever could threaten their hold on power. The new restrictions on Internet, social media, NGOs and the 218 regulations on religion are strictly applied and all seriously limit freedom. The old truth that churches will be tackled which are perceived as being a threat if they become too large, too political or by inviting foreign guests, can only serve as a guideline today; many other churches are being monitored and closed down, no matter whether they are independent or belong to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. However, it is not only the introduction of new laws but also the stricter implementation of already existing laws, which can be observed. One example for this is the ban on the [online sale of Bibles](#), which made headlines in March 2018.

If a convert from Islam or from Tibetan Buddhism is discovered by community and family, they are usually threatened, physically harmed – all in an effort to win them back. Spouses may be forced to divorce. Neighbors and the community may report their practice of Christian activities to the authorities, who would take action to stop them.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- There were no killings reported in the WWL 2020 period. State action against churches went hand in hand with Christian leaders being interrogated and sometimes detained, arrested and the members of the congregations being threatened. Some attacks involved high-profile churches (see below). Such incidents took place in several provinces with an emphasis on Henan, a populous province with a sizeable Christian minority, but went far beyond its borders. Another place where many reports came from was Jiangxi. Interruption to church services were perpetrated most often by members of security forces or the United Front Work Department, but sometimes locally hired mobs were the perpetrators as well.
- There were many incidents (similar to the anti-cross campaign in Zhejiang from 2014 to 2016) of crosses on the outside of church buildings being destroyed, both those of TSPM and house churches alike. There were also many cases of landlords being put under pressure by the authorities to cancel renting contracts with churches. Two widely published cases involved the [Zion house-church network](#) in Beijing and the [Golden Lampstand](#) house church in Shanxi, which were both targeted for harassment and closure. The breadth and depth of the campaign can also be seen by the highly unusual reaction of unregistered house-churches in Beijing issuing a joint-statement calling on the authorities to respect freedom of religion enshrined in China's Constitution in July 2018, which - by December 2018 - had already been [signed by more than 600 house-church pastors](#) all over China.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Summary

- Brief description of persecution situation: online sale of Bibles - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/05/world/asia/china-bans-bible-sales.html>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Zion house church network - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-religion/china-outlaws-large-underground-protestant-church-in-beijing-idUSKCN1LQ07W?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Golden Lampstand - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/world/asia/china-church-dynamite.html>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: signed by more than 600 house-church pastors - <https://bitterwinter.org/solidarity-to-persecuted-leads-to-persecution/>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / China

Introduction

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877>.

Recent history

President Xi Jinping assumed office in March 2013 and his first term in office has seen a strong reduction in freedom in all sectors of society. The abolition of the term-limit for serving as president in March 2018 gives him a position of authority which observers call the strongest since Mao Zedong. At the same time, he faces big challenges, first and foremost domestically in keeping economic growth on track. However, there is also the evolving trade war with the USA, the difficult implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and a growing assertiveness in neighboring North Korea to deal with. The Church in China is increasingly affected by the state's new approach of actively intervening in church affairs (instead of simply acting as an administrator, as previously) regardless of whether the churches involved are state-approved or non-registered. Restrictions still come in indirect ways, such as through the renewed emphasis on Communist ideology and rhetoric, but the focus is now clearly on limiting the space in which churches can operate, as they come under pressure to adapt their ministry and are more closely watched. Increasingly, the restrictions are more direct and hundreds of churches have been closed, forced to merge with others or pushed to 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. The regulations on religion, implemented from 1 February 2018 onwards, provide the authorities with the legal provisions for strict guidance and intervention.

Political and legal landscape

The Communist Party has tightened its grip on society (including all religious activities) and increasingly uses Communist and Maoist rhetoric in order to keep citizens in line. The need for structural reforms can be clearly seen as the economy slows down and the trade war with the USA has started, although both sides seem keen to avoid any major escalation. If these developments continue, the tacitly agreed social contract of trading a lack of freedom for growing prosperity could start to crumble. The overarching aim is to keep the Communist Party in power, if possible, by maintaining social peace and harmony. Any force perceived as posing a danger to this goal will be opposed, including religion.

Another indication of this overarching goal was the way President Xi's name and ideas under the title "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era" have been officially [incorporated](#) into the Communist Party's constitution at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, making 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 ideology. In reality, things are much simpler: Whoever does not toe the Party line closely, is in high danger of being replaced. And whichever group does not embrace Communist ideology (e.g. most churches), risks persecution on various levels.

The challenge is now 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 [influence](#), [universities](#) and [college education](#), and through ideological education along Party lines – so-called "[red culture education](#)". This has started for all levels of education from nurseries through to colleges of higher education, for example in Jiangxi Province. But even Party members are targets: In order to help keep them in line with Communist doctrine and - more importantly – with Xi Jinping's thinking, the Party [released a special App](#). All Party members are required to stick to the [thoughts of Marx and Lenin](#), and 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. 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.

In July 2019, President Xi Jinping warned local officials not to "forget the [original aspirations](#)" of the Communist Party. This term is just one of many variations of a broader theme, namely the tightening of the Communist Party's – and his own – grip on power. This becomes ever more important as internal and external challenges pile up, including some important dates. The 70th birthday of the PRC was celebrated in October 2019 and the 100th anniversary of the CCP is due in 2021. The Communist Party will always ensure that nothing comes in the way of such celebrations.

On the foreign policy front, two new challenges have emerged. Next to the continuing South Chinese Sea questions and the already mentioned US trade war, North Korea made it to the list of priorities again, because the direct meetings of Kim Jong Un with the US president bore the potential of effectively sidelining China. So, Xi Jinping took the opportunity of the stalled talks in Hanoi in February 2019 and visited Pyongyang in June 2019, being the first President and Secretary-General of the Communist Party to do so for 14 years. This gave the clear signal that no solution for the Korean Peninsula can be found without Beijing. The second and quickly growing problem was Hongkong, as explained below.

Anger over the draft extradition law in Hongkong climaxed in June and July 2019, bringing around two million Hongkong citizens to the streets at the peak of protests. [International attention](#) is now clearly focused on Hongkong and it is plain to see that the formula “One country, two systems” does not seem to work anymore. China could end all protests within hours by using force if it wanted to and there is little anyone could do to stop such a 'military option'; there is a garrison of the Peoples` Liberation Army stationed in the city. It remains to be seen if the rulers in Beijing will choose this solution, especially since the District Council elections of November 2019 brought a resounding defeat of those parties supporting mainland China. However, district councilors have only limited political power; the elections which will be more important to watch are those for the Legislative Council (“LegCo”), scheduled for September 2020. At the close of 2019, the situation seems to be more unclear than ever.

What is certain, however, is China's increasingly bold reliance on Communist ideology mixed with strong nationalism. This makes all efforts [to build bridges](#) or start a dialog between China and the West almost impossible as there seems to be no common ground to start from.

Religious landscape

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”. But, as in all Communist countries, the government finds that people tend to be religious and so it tries to use traditional religions and ethics as a means of controlling and steering society. Therefore, Confucianism is 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. As one country observer said: The goal of the Party 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 are beginning to regard religious groups as dangerous and do not want them in their neighborhood. As always in China, this sentiment is not felt in the whole country. In one of the communities running a pilot project for the Social Credit System, Rongcheng in Shandong Province, citizens decided to add penalties to those who “illegally spread Christianity”, although no cases of such penalties being carried out have been reported to date. The threat alone may already be enough. While Prime Minister Li Keqiang emphasized how the [Sinicization of religion in China](#) has to be upheld, Xu Xiaohong, head of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, claimed in March 2019 that [the West is using Christianity](#) to influence Chinese society and subvert power. The Party's top priority is “to maintain [stability](#)” and religion, including Christianity, is seen as destabilizing the system.

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 or are still home to independence movements, some of them acting violently against the authorities. Xinjiang is called by observers 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, thus blatantly ignoring international concerns and trying to win over international opinion. 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 struggle to practice their faith and keep their Christian meetings out of sight under these circumstances. There are other ethnic minority religions in existence, but they are not the focus of government persecution.

Due to the new regulations on religion and its intensifying implementation (both in depth and in breadth), numerous reports are emerging of crackdowns on churches - experienced by both TSPM and house-churches all over the country. Crackdowns include the confiscation of property and Christian materials (including Bibles), raids, fines and arrests of church leaders.

The Sinicization of churches continues. According to a report published in August 2019, the Communist education authorities are [altering works of international literature](#) where there are references to Christian faith or God. The decision to adapt those 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. Reportedly, the Communist Party is also urging church leaders to [interpret the Bible](#) according to ‘core Socialist values’. An example for this are Churches in Shandong Province which 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.

In the table below, the religious statistics follow WCD estimates. Please note that these have not been recalculated to take into account the Open Doors estimate for the number of Christians.

Religious Context: China	Numbers	%
Christians	97,200,000	7.7
Muslim	25,014,000	1.8
Hindu	19,200	0.0
Buddhist	234,020,000	16.5
Ethnoreligionist	59,668,000	4.2
Jewish	2,900	0.0
Bahai	6,900	0.0
Atheist	96,720,000	6.8
Agnostic	450,497,000	31.7
Other	444,519,470	31.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

All kinds of cults are active in China, some of which may have Christian roots, but which seriously deviate from Christian teachings. One of the best known is "Eastern Lightning" or "Church of the 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 caused the authorities to act much more strongly against such groups which are referred to as "[xie jiao](#)", literally translated: "heterodox cults", a term already used in ancient, feudal China. However, the authorities are often unable to distinguish between a cult and a genuine Christian group, so genuine Christian (house) churches sometimes come under the authorities' cult category as well.

Due to rapid urbanization, the Chinese Church is developing from being basically a rural-style to an urban-style Church with large numbers and all the opportunities and problems that come with that. Apart from 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. Despite all challenges, there is a [growing movement](#) among China's churches focusing on overseas mission.

Economic landscape

The days of incredibly strong economic growth in China would seem to be over. In the first quarter of 2019, the growth rate hit a [27 years-low](#) with 6.2% and there is great variation between the provinces, Guangdong being by far the wealthiest. The trade war with the USA has left its mark and is seen by the leadership and many Chinese citizens as being a political move to prevent China taking over as the world's leading economic power.

Internationally, China has become the fifth-largest provider of Foreign Direct Investments in the world and invests in such diverse regions and countries as Central Asia, Pakistan, Africa and Latin America. While some gargantuan investments such as plans for building a canal in Nicaragua competing with the Panama Canal seem to have been put on hold, others, for instance several projects for electric power plants, are in progress. In a more geostrategic move, China has built up what observers call its "string of pearls" or "One Belt, One Road" - a network of ports and commercial facilities along the coast all the way from China to Kenya and Sudan, making the (yet to be completed) Pakistani port of Gwadar the most recent addition. 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. And reports emerging in August 2019 were a reminder that not all numbers and reports from China can and should be taken face value, illustrated by the fact that a considerable number of containers travelling the OBOR railroad all the way to Europe, do so [empty](#). Another example for this is the country's famed highspeed rail network, the world's largest with more than 30,000 kilometers of track. According to a report published in November 2019, 12 out of 18 subsidiaries are writing losses, only six are profitable.

One of China's latest projects is the [setting up](#) of an international development bank called the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which has gained support from around the world despite opposition from the USA and Japan. By using "soft power", China is increasing its influence around the world and its self-confidence. At the same time, this presents opportunities for churches to become more active in ministry and mission.

Social and cultural landscape

The Chinese population is “getting old before it gets rich”, since the infamous and now abandoned one-child-policy has had a 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 a longer life-expectancy. According to Chinese government statistics, the number of people older than 60 will have doubled in 2030. Research from the Renmin University in Beijing showed that the population of [China is shrinking for the first time since the 1960s](#); the number of childbearing women is in decline, corresponding with the declining number of births. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said in April 2019 that if the system of social security does not change, the State’s pension fund will be [depleted by 2035](#). Due to this and other considerations, the strict one-child policy was eased, but so far, the effect has been far from impressive.

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; 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.

The WWL 2020 reporting period has been a reminder that the Communist leadership also has to deal with unexpected challenges, as considerable political energy was spent on [pigs](#). The problem was and is the price of pork. Struggling with the effects of African swine flu, the Chinese authorities have had to kill several hundred million pigs, the exact number is not known. The price of pork has been a good indicator of consumer prices and it belongs to the small luxuries which an increasing number of Chinese middle-class citizens can frequently afford. That is, before the outbreak of swine-flu sent prices sky-rocketing by 46.7%, which caused the authorities to buy in as much pork from around the world as possible and to even release 10,000 tons from the national pork reserve, illustrating how seriously this crisis is being taken by the leadership.

Not surprisingly, the Communist Party does not allow other political parties to exist; some continue but only in name, e.g. the Kuomintang Party (KMT). However, civil society organizations are allowed. Among these, Christian organizations are not allowed 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 rural Tibetan communities, Buddhist Lamas have a great influence on daily life (e.g. in health care), 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.

Technological landscape

According to UNDP statistics, the Internet Penetration Rate in China stands at 53.2% and the mobile phone subscription at 97.3 per 100 people. According to Chinese [statistics](#), as of January 2018, there were 772 million internet users in China, or 55.8% of the population, but it is safe to assume that this has already increased in the meantime to [more than 800 million](#). The rural-urban gap is still felt, not just in the accessibility (which in rural areas is still often done via internet cafés), but also in Internet speed. 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 proximity of the company with the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party are not clear.

China is tagged "[Not free](#)" in the "Freedom on the Net" Report 2019, it was even tagged "the world's worst abuser of Internet freedom" for the fourth consecutive year and is the country with the lowest score. While 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: "Despite these restrictions, Chinese internet 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." On the other hand: "The growing crackdown affected tens of millions of internet and mobile phone users, resulting in heightened self-censorship and a reduction in space for online mobilization."

Pilot projects for the much-publicized "[Social Credit System](#)" have been carried out in some areas but there is evidently a long way to go until the system can be introduced nationwide. As one country observer indicated: 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. However, once the technical preconditions and the political will are there, the system may very well become Orwellian and cause serious restrictions for all citizens seen as deviant, including Christians.

Security situation

- **Xinjiang:** The north-western state of Xinjiang, where the Muslim Uighur minority lives, has come under heavy control, making observers speak of a [police state](#), especially since re-education camps for hundreds of thousands of citizens have been set up. China has intensified its crackdown on Islamic militants as well as its control on religious communities in Xinjiang and has been surprisingly successful in keeping Muslim countries from speaking out or taking action for their fellow believers. This is even true for countries like Kazakhstan, since a considerable number of its citizens are interned in the camps as well.

- **Hongkong and Taiwan:** The situation in Hongkong will be watched closely by the Communist Party as it has the potential to trigger wider unrest and also demolish the benevolent and self-assured picture China wants to show the international community. It also adds to the trouble with Taiwan. Naval vessels belonging to various nations continue to cross the Taiwan Strait 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.
- **South China Sea:** China's claims on the South China Sea are also causing international headaches, especially since China's Foreign Minister admitted the militarization of these waters in August 2018. In June 2019, a Chinese vessel [sank a Philippines trawler](#) in waters the Philippines can claim according to international law.
- **North Korea:** China made 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.
- **India:** The military standoff with its neighbor India (at the so-called "chicken neck" close to Bhutan) in July 2017 seems to have cooled down but this incident serves as a reminder that this is also a region for potential major conflict in the future.

Trends analysis

1) China is on the alert for tackling internal and external threats

The 2017 Party Congress in October consolidated President Xi's power and basically made it impossible to challenge him. Elements within the Party that were not deemed loyal enough to him were purged or sidelined and the Party's reach is extending into all areas of society, including business, media and the NGO sector. In the religious sphere, this was most closely felt, when the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) was taken away from government and made a sub-entity of the Party's "United Front Work Department". This [restructuring](#) of responsibilities is considered as very serious by the leadership. In the plethora of challenges the government faces, China's leadership is struggling to keep everything under control. The Party has carefully studied the revolutions that swept away Communist governments and challenged Arab nations. Or in the [words of Xi Jinping](#): "We must keep our highest alert about 'black swan' [i.e., unforeseen] incidents and take steps to prevent 'gray rhino' [i.e., known risks that are ignored] incidents." Distinguishing these is seen by the Party as a major priority.

Its goal of maintaining power includes the need to control all forms of religion, especially the strongly growing Christian minority. The question for the future is whether the governing authorities can view Christians as a positive force in society. It seems that Christians will only be seen as a positive and contributing force for establishing a "harmonious society" if they fully and whole-heartedly Sinicize and submit to Communist and Socialist thinking. In this respect, even government-affiliated churches are coming under increasing pressure. If the continued implementation of the new regulations on religion is anything to go by, churches are deemed by the government to be a considerable threat and what is taking place has to be called a crackdown by the Communist Party.

The first term of President Xi Jinping's rule has seen an (in recent times unprecedented) reduction in freedom in all sectors of society. The preferred line of thinking has been emphasized by introducing President Xi's own brand of "political thought" into the Party constitution at the 19th Party Congress, the first time this has happened for a living president since Mao Zedong. This emphasis was also clear when Xi Jinping was given a new title, which referred to him as the "core" of the Party leadership – a title unheard of for the last 15 years. The basic message is that whoever does not embrace Communist ideology (as is the case for most churches), risks persecution on various levels. The Fourth Plenum of the 19th CCP Central Committee meeting, held at the end of October 2019, confirmed the role of the "core" and even [added more powers](#) to him.

The government's current biggest challenge is the continuing trade war with the USA (including 'skirmishes' with other countries such as Canada because of the detention of the Huawei CFO). This trade war has left China in the uncomfortable and unexpected position of promoting free trade, vitally needed for the country's economic growth, while at the same time protecting its own economy and - much more importantly - the political system. In an increasingly insecure world the Chinese government is stepping up its ideological drive, growing even more conservative and - despite going ahead with free trade - following a more nationalistic path. Many Chinese citizens view the trade war as an attempt to curb China's growing economic power.

2) Christians are seen as a challenge - and competitor?

Christians seem to be regarded as supporting foreign forces and alien to China. Since churches are therefore regarded as a threat, the pressure on them is likely to intensify. Christians will thus continue to be affected by Communist and post-Communist oppression; the Party and the government continued to create a negative atmosphere towards all forms of religion. As one Chinese blogger put it: "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 Buddha of your Buddha; for Muslims, the Communist Party is 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.

To put it more broadly, the insight that [Communism is a faith](#) – and therefore faces competitors – is not new, but seen has having far-reaching consequences in the future. The same thought was shared in more Christian terms, when a Catholic commentator in August 2019 said that the Communist Party is demanding that 'what has to be rendered to God, should be [rendered to Caesar as well](#)'. All this illustrates the ideological challenge Christians and other religions are facing in contemporary China, an illustration of which was given in an [open letter](#) to China on the occasion of its 70th anniversary on 1 October 2019.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / China

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877>
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WWL 2020: 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. 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 persecution seems to be increasing again, it is not as intense and as violent as in the times of the Cultural Revolution; however, some observers argue that it is the strongest persecution since that time.

Church spectrum today

The table below is based on WCD statistics (and has not been recalculated to take into consideration the OD estimate). It is included here to give a rough impression of the denominational divisions.

Church networks: China	Christians	%
Orthodox	10,000	0.0
Catholic	10,010,000	9.1
Protestant	31,737,000	29.0
Independent	67,816,000	61.9
Unaffiliated	21,500	0.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	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	34,735,000	31.7
Renewalist movement	27,924,000	25.5

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

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: Believers 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.

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

China scored 70 points in WWL 2020, rising to rank 23, while in WWL 2019 it ranked 27 with a score of 65 points.

The violence score basically remained unchanged as China already scores the maximum for destroyed and confiscated church buildings, although the campaign is spreading in geographic scope and zeal. The scores for pressure in the Spheres of life increased in the Private and Community spheres, reflecting a continued stronger emphasis on Communist ideology and that citizens are being used and paid for giving information on Christians and other minorities. The emphasis on ideology and the over-arching goal of preserving the rule of the Communist Party is reflected in a continued increase of scores in the National and Church spheres, reflecting the very strict implementation of the regulation on religion, beginning 1 February 2018 and rolled out in more and more provinces. Christians are witnessing many more problems with the authorities and this pressure is especially felt in the Church sphere. What is said here each year has to be kept in mind again: It must be remembered that China is vast and the situation for Christians can be very different in the various parts of the country. However, it is correct to say that the situation for Christians deteriorated all over the country, as reports from many different provinces show and even state-approved Three-Self churches are facing more and more difficulties.

The increase of almost five points, after an increase 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. The Chinese church continues 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 ideology. Many churches suffering from the state crackdown did not just dissolve but re-organized themselves and deliberately split up into smaller groups. However, this tactic did not always save them from continued pressure.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: China	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Weak
Religious nationalism	RN	Weak
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Not at all
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 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 rules. President Xi Jinping is arguably the strongest Communist leader since Mao Zedong. The 19th Party Congress underlined how strongly the Party is refocusing on Communist ideology and how adamant it is in demanding 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”. Interestingly, the Party Congress refrained from nominating an “heir apparent” into the new leadership.

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. In many regions of China, Christian activities have increasingly been hindered and although house-churches were still targeted the most (especially concerning activities for children and youth camps), government-controlled churches have faced restrictive control as well.

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 Party is to maintain power. In some ways, ideology is a tool which serves this rather than being an end in itself. For example, Christianity is seen as a possible threat because it involves people organizing and rallying around something outside Party control, rather than specifically for its theology.

Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism (Weak):

Disclaimer: *The fact that the strength of the engines Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism is described here as 'Weak' (instead of 'Medium' 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.*

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 since re-education camps have been set up. 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 persecution from their own family, friends and neighbors. Any deviation from the Muslim creed and traditions will be seen as a disgrace and even treason since every Uighur is expected to be a Muslim. Although it is difficult to obtain reports on the situation of the converts, all information received points to a deteriorating situation, sometimes even involving violent persecution such as physical abuse by families.

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. 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.

Organized corruption and crime (Weak):

Local officials in some regions can be corrupt. Land disputes involving Christians were among the reported cases of persecution in the WWL 2020 reporting period. However, the Communist Party has started up a big anti-corruption campaign, so this persecution engine might become less significant in the future. Local governments often [hire thugs](#) to implement unpopular or illegal measures, which frequently affects religious groups, particularly the house-churches.

Drivers of persecution

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

Political parties	-	-	-	-	Very strong	-	Very strong	Medium
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 the government authorities are the main drivers of persecution for Christians. (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). 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.
- **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 Party watching over it.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** 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 drivers of persecution.

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.
- **Government officials (Very strong):** Their own position depends on the Communist Party continuing to hold onto power. Therefore, most government officials will do everything possible to secure their position, no matter whether they are personally convinced by Communist ideology or not. The implementation of national policies is challenging, due to the sheer size of the country, but the Party puts a lot of pressure on officials 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:

- **Non-Christian religious and ethnic leaders (Strong):** The small convert community from a Muslim and Buddhist background is facing a lot of persecution from Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders. These are still very influential in Xinjiang and Tibet, as in many cases they also serve official functions. Some of these leaders are 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.
- **Extended family and Normal citizens (Strong):** 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.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Political parties and government officials (Medium):** Local Party and government officials sometimes prefer to hire mobs and gangs to close a church, put pressure on a landlord or evict a Christian community from a plot of land. In cases of land-grabbing, the demand can come from property development companies as well.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Converts from a Muslim or Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups arguably face the strongest persecution in China as it is driven by their families and communities as well. Consequently, hotspots are Xinjiang, Tibet and southwestern China. As Protestant Christians are more concentrated in the provinces of Henan and Zhejiang, and the numbers of Catholic Christians in Hebei are high, those provinces might be considered as 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 Christians 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. As of December 2018, a significant number of foreign missionaries already had been forced to leave the country because of proven or suspected missionary activities. Others have simply been refused visa renewal with no explanation given.

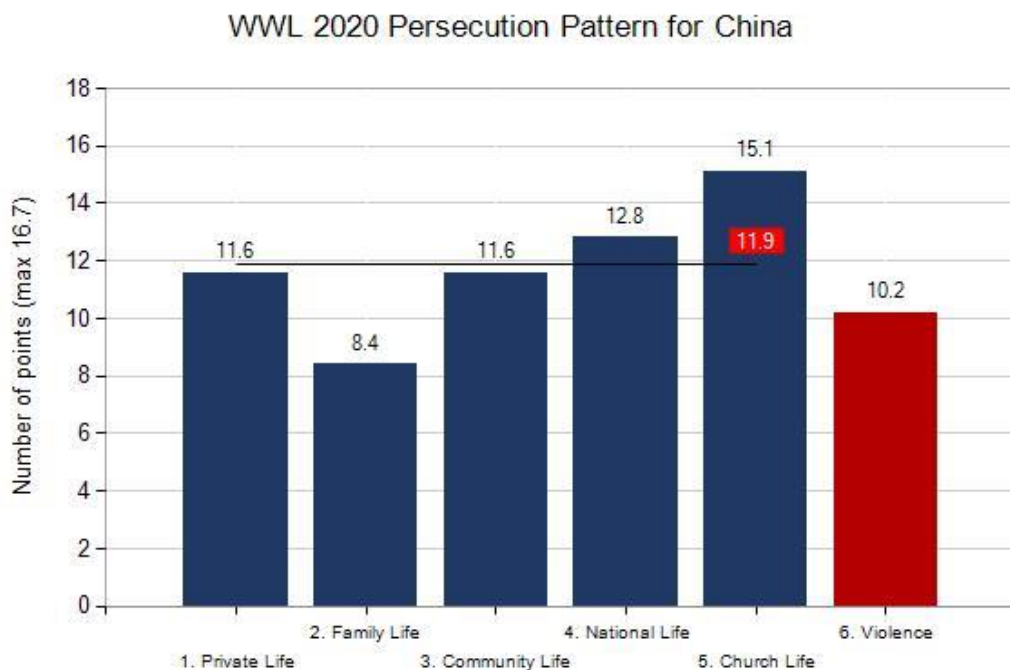
Historical Christian communities and government controlled churches: This category highlights a unique factor in Chinese Christianity: There are registered and government recognized churches – the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) – and non-registered, independent churches.

On the Roman Catholic side, these are the followers loyal to the Vatican. TSPM and CPA-related churches are government-controlled and even if there is no direct censorship, they 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'. Churches are continuing to publish white papers on this topic, e.g. on [Sinicization](#) in a Catholic context. In an unprecedented development in September 2018, the Holy See (the smallest sovereign state in the world and the central administration of the Roman Catholic Church) has entered into a "[Provisional Agreement](#)" with China on the appointment of Roman Catholic bishops. However, no details have been made public. This has not led to a tangible relief of pressure on Catholic Christians.

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.

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. These terms, however, are misleading as some congregations consist of thousands of members and in some provinces they are often meeting openly in commercial buildings and not in secret. This category is seriously affected by the intensification of control over the last months.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for China shows:

- The average score for pressure on Christians in China rose from 11.0 in WWL 2019 to 11.9 in WWL 2020. The scores for pressure increased in all *spheres of life*, showing that the implementation of the new regulations on religion is rolled out over all provinces now and implemented according to the will of the Communist Party, which is the main implementer now, not the government. The legal and administrative environment became 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 the prevailing ideology of praising the achievements of the Communist Party 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 15.1 and 12.8 respectively, increasing 0.5 and one point in score in the WWL 2020 reporting period). While pressure in these spheres is typical for countries where Communist and post-Communist oppression is active, the pressure in the *Private sphere* (11.6) points mainly to the problems Christian converts with a Muslim or Buddhist background are facing. 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* can be felt in these spheres, for example in questions dealing with education or with employment, e.g. where Christians are teachers or medical staff. The increase in the *National sphere* (12.8) is due to an increased pressure caused by the teaching and following of Communist Party ideology.
- The score for violence against Christians remained almost unchanged (rising from 10.0 in WWL 2019 to 10.2 in WWL 2020). Although even more churches have been closed down across the country, among them some very high profile churches, China once again crossed the threshold for scoring maximum points for churches being closed. This 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 bad international headlines, as can be plainly seen in their handling of the situation in Xinjiang. On the contrary, the Party is trying to promote its own narrative concerning “vocational training camps”.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. 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 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, of Christian materials in the Internet (Block 1.6 / Score: 3 points):*** While access to Christian content on the Internet is possible in general and also communication on social media is able to take place, all this is strictly monitored by the government. The government increasingly blocks website content. Christian radio and TV are not allowed. For converts in Xinjiang and Tibet it has been especially risky to access Christian content, but they only number a few thousand.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (Block 1.8 / Score: 3 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 Party members, military staff and also non-Party government officials or educators practice self-censorship, since being seen as religious carries a risk.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 3 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. But also for other Christians, there have been some reports from certain areas where the authorities have entered homes and destroyed Christian paintings or Bible verses. For Christians who are Party members or in the army, this can be risky as well, as they are not supposed to belong to a religion, let alone show it.
- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable (Block 1.1 / Score: 3 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. 2) Party and military members will also face pressure, especially 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 people (under 18 years of age) will face opposition. They are not supposed to attend any religious meetings, in an effort to hinder young people from converting to any faith, including Christianity.

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. Known converts are closely monitored and will face threats and in some cases even physical or mental abuse.

Family sphere:

- **Christian children have been pressed to attend anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2.8 / Score: 4 points):** Children of all categories of Christian throughout the country are forced to study anti-biblical teachings as the atheist education system discourages religious belief (this is a campaign which has been re-started in 2018). Children of Christians have been forced by the authorities in several parts of the country to sign statements confirming that they are 'not religious' - and they have been put under pressure to reveal their parents' religion.
- **Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs (Block 2.7 / Score: 3.75 points):** As indicated above, in some parts of China, children have been even set under pressure to tell teachers and authorities if their parents are religious. The Party goes to great lengths to encourage an anti-religious mindset in children and warns that religious activities are to be regarded as criminal behavior. This leaves many children confused and sometimes angry with their Christian parents and brings parents in the difficult situation of having to defend themselves almost constantly. For converts, members of their wider family will try to influence the education of their children.
- **Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2.9 / Score: 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 their seniors. Children in some areas have also been threatened with not being allowed to graduate or not being accepted for further studies. This is even stronger for children of known converts.
- **Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score: 3.25 points):** For converts, baptisms cannot be held in public and even baptizing them "low profile" to avoid being exposed carries a risk. While the authorities would detain a pastor who baptize converts of Muslim and Buddhist background from minority ethnic groups, in most cases they would be released after a few months with a stern warning. Likewise, it is not permitted to baptize Christians under the age of 18.

In Tibet and Xinjiang the situation is very volatile and the more pressure the government places on society in these provinces, the more a conversion is seen as 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. The score in the Family sphere is lower than that for the other spheres, since registration of births etc. (Questions 2.1 and 2.2) are not a problem.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (Block 3.2 / Score: 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 the 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. However, high-profile Christians often come under special scrutiny.

- ***Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons (Block 3.6 / Score: 3.5 points):*** It is difficult for Christians to participate in communal forums since most community organizations include a political element. In rural areas of Tibet, Buddhist Lamas have great influence on peoples' daily lives since many are local government officials. They allocate resources, also government relief resources, to families in the community and frequently discriminate against or even exclude known converts.
- ***Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3.5 points):*** In public employment, discrimination is more the norm than in private employment. However, there are cases where the government have 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.
- ***Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local police for faith-related reasons (Block 3.13 / Score: 3.5 points):*** In Xinjiang and Tibet, interrogations are ubiquitous, 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 over all China, church leaders and church members are increasingly being called in for interrogation at police stations and offices of the Religious Administration.

The occasional 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 at times. In an effort to fulfil the new Party policy 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 (and not the government any more) that has taken control of all religious affairs. In the WWL 2020 reporting period, elderly people and parents were threatened with having their government subsidies cut if they continued to be actively religious. This also encourages local communities to harass elderly Christians; it is assumed that if officials are treating them as criminals, they must be 'bad').

National sphere:

- ***The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 4 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 government continues to propagate a Communist and atheist ideology: In August 2017 Cambridge University Press (CUP) decided - at the request of the Chinese authorities - to [censor hundreds of academic papers](#) being prepared for publication in China, since many were regarded as being too politically sensitive.

Although CUP quickly changed its mind after an international outcry, this episode shows that control of what is reported and said, be it in the academic world or elsewhere, plays a key role in national life. The media are state-controlled and there is an inherent anti-religious bias which also affects the reporting about Christians. Non-state-controlled news is being made increasingly inaccessible.

- **Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered or forbidden (Block 4.9 / Score: 4 points):** The laws for both local and overseas NGOs forbid organizations from engaging in religious activities. The space for Christian NGOs is therefore shrinking. China does not allow any political parties apart from the Communist Party, so any Christians who organize for political reasons are quickly dealt with.
- **International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial (Block 4.16 / Score: 4 points):** International monitoring of any court case is seen as an example of "interference by outside powers" and therefore not permitted.
- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score: 3.75 points):** The Communist Party tightly controls and restricts any public discourse, including all online platforms. Christians are under these restrictions just like all other citizens. Those who have dared to speak out are swiftly dealt with. A recent example is that of Pastor [Wang Yi](#), who was first detained in December 2018.

The ban on religion in the public sphere in China has been [extended to schools and medical workers](#). In some parts of the eastern province of Zhejiang the authorities have demanded that teachers in high-schools sign a letter confirming that they do not hold religious beliefs. Reports have also emerged that school-children, students and medical staff in hospitals elsewhere in China have been asked to sign comparable letters.

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 CPC 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."

Church sphere:

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5.1 / Score: 4 points):** As mentioned above, the government's interest is in maintaining a "harmonious society". In terms of religion this means not just "managing" registered and non-registered churches but now actively guiding them.

The unpublished, but tacitly well-understood guidelines every Christian church should adhere to are: (1) Report to the authorities about recent activities; (2) Allow no participation of foreign Christians or income from foreign funds; (3) Stage no high-profile activities; (4) Only conduct "regular" Christian activities during sensitive periods. These are no guarantee that if churches follow them they will be left alone by the authorities. Reportedly, the authorities frequently also go after [dissolved churches' assets](#) to raise funds.

- ***It has been difficult to get registration or legal status (Block 5.2 / Score: 4 points):*** The regulations on religion are implemented in a very strict way which has led to tighter control of churches and monitoring. Unregistered churches continue to be pushed by local authorities to join state-registered churches. Additionally, an increasing number of house-churches are facing difficulties in renewing their rent contracts, due to the pressure landlords have been receiving from local authorities, in particular following the publication of revised religious regulations. Unregistered churches (but also some Three-Self churches too) in the provinces of Anhui, Beijing, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Heilongjiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanghai, Shanxi, Sichuan, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Zhejiang (alphabetical order) have been harassed and/or shut down. Henan Province has been of particular interest to the authorities since it is a province with a relatively high number of Christians and three large house-church networks originated there.
- ***Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Christian activities are not allowed outside areas specifically designated for religious purposes. Even religious processions which have a long tradition are closely monitored and limited in terms of space, time and the number of participants allowed.
- ***Work among youth has been restricted (Block 5.6 / Score: 3.75 points):*** It is forbidden for children under 18 to attend churches and this ban has been implemented country-wide, particularly strictly in Henan and Gansu provinces.

The Chinese authorities drafted new guidelines to [curb "chaotic" online information on religion](#) in September 2018. Online resources have always been a major source of encouragement and training for Christians all over China – especially in rural and remote areas. Since September 2018, 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. Reportedly, pastors and priests are required to pass ideology tests, in an effort to control churches more effectively, for [Catholic](#) and [Protestant \(TSPM\)](#) churches alike.

It should be noted that the bulk of implementation work for the new regulations lies with local authorities. 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. Churches are being monitored and will be closed down if deemed necessary - and this goes not only for "high-profile" churches (which are often perceived as acting politically).

The sword of Damocles is hanging over all non-registered churches in China and the thread holding that sword is getting decidedly thinner. If Beijing demands it, all house-churches will be asked to register under the umbrella of TSPM churches and act according to the guidelines referred to above, or face the consequences. And even TSPM churches are under strong pressure, especially their pastors, as [the suicide](#) of Pastor Song Yongsheng in Shangqiu/Henan shows.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (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 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

China	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	1015	1147	5576	60
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	58	1131	171	15
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	12	134	10	11

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- **Christians attacked:** Often the arrest of Christian leaders and beatings went hand in hand with attacks on churches. This happened in several provinces with an emphasis on Henan (a populous province with a sizeable Christian minority) and Jiangxi, for example. The perpetrators were often members of security forces or the United Front Workers Department, but sometimes locally hired mobs were responsible as well. The real number may be much higher.

- **Christians arrested:** As stated above, church leaders were often detained and arrested as part of actions targeting churches. These incidents could span any length from a few hours to years.
- **Churches attacked:** It is difficult to verify incidents of church attacks as the authorities go to great lengths to prevent reports being made. This means many cases will only be known months later and most may well be going unnoted. One estimation gave a number of 30,000 churches attacked (15,000 in Henan alone) in the WWL 2020 reporting period, but this is impossible to verify. From the reports collected throughout the reporting period, a cautious counting sets the number at 5,576 (and many of those reports referred to more cases, either in other regions or affecting other churches, often not giving precise numbers, but speaking of "several" or "dozens"). These have not been included in the counting. In many cases (almost a repeat of what was witnessed in Zhejiang from 2014 to 2016) crosses of churches have been destroyed, both of TSPM and house-churches, and thousands of churches have been closed down, often at one and the same time. There were also many cases of landlords being put under pressure by the authorities to cancel renting contracts with churches.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** Especially when house-churches have been raided, there were cases where the place was also being used as home for Christians. In other cases, homes have been raided in which Christian images have been destroyed, electricity has been cut off and furniture damaged.
- **Other:** South Korean Christians have also been expelled from the country, who had been living in the border region close to North Korea.

5 Year trends

The three charts below show the situation for Christians in China over the last five reporting periods.

Chart 1:

The score for average pressure rose to a very high level (11.9) in WWL 2020 after a period of stability at the high level 9.7-9.9, reflecting a strict implementation of the law on religion and related laws.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: China	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	11.9
2019	11.0
2018	9.7
2017	9.7
2016	9.8

Chart 2:

It can be seen in the chart below that the level of pressure in the *Private* and *Family* spheres has increased in the most recent reporting period and exceeded the level of five years ago. That it 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* increased over the years, in WWL 2019 and WWL 2020 particularly strongly, reflecting the ever stronger pressure caused by the authorities bringing everything and everybody into the framework of Communist ideology. The scores for *Church life* rose as well, 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 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.



Chart 3:

The scores for violence against Christians - always in the category "very high" - have steadily increased over the last 5 reporting periods.



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Violence – sexual***

Christian leaders are a target in China. Since many churches, especially house-churches, are led by women, women are similarly affected by persecution as men. Unlike men, women are sometimes raped while in prison. In addition, sources report that there are cases of women escaping abroad alone and compelled to leave children in China. They do so because they know that if they had stayed in China, they would be in jail and separated from the children in that instance as well. One exception to the socialist rule of equal treatment in persecution is the situation of converts from a Muslim or Tibetan background. After their conversion, women are more vulnerable as they can lose custody of their children more easily and the right to inherit. They may also be put under stronger pressure to divorce because of their new-found faith. All efforts of Sinicization so far only had a limited impact on such traditions.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Military/militia conscription/service against conscience***
- ***Violence - physical***

Similar to the situation facing Christian women, male Christian leaders are generally the main target. Although similar, it is usually men and boys who are 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 - 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. In more extreme cases, the persons themselves need special treatment. This is true for women and men alike.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Besides Christians, Muslims in Xinjiang and Tibetan Buddhists face strong pressure from the government, as does Falun Gong. Details can be found in the Freedom House Special Report of February 2017: "[The Battle for China's Spirit](#)". Meanwhile, China 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. More details about human rights violations can be found in the [CSW report](#) dated 16 October 2018. Leaked Party documents, coming to the surface in November 2019, show how systematic and strict the crackdown on the Uighurs is and that the camps are all but vocational training centers. It is aptly titled with a line from one of President Xi's leaked secret speeches "[Absolutely no mercy](#)". A strong target for government persecution is as well the Church of the Almighty God, a more detailed explanation can be found above under "Religious landscape".

There have been reports that members of religious minorities being detained in the labor camps (such as Uighurs and members of the CAG) have been killed and their organs harvested and there has been a private international tribunal investigating those claims. In its report, published in [June 2019](#), they find for the credibility for these claims and mention the possibility that in earlier years, organs of Christians attending house-churches have been harvested as well.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Communist oppression:** The fact that the law on religion is not being implemented by the government but by the Communist Party itself is strongly felt by all religions, but Christians have been a special target; the Party is much more relentless in following its goals and preserving its national ideology and will do whatever it deems necessary. The emphasis on ideology and a budding personality cult around President Xi have all been signs of the emerging pressure to Sinicize. Restrictions are becoming much more open and direct as can be seen in the closure of churches and pressure to adapt church ministry in preaching and teaching as well. Increasingly, violence in closing churches plays a role, too. The restrictions on Internet access and news consumption point in the same direction.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** Plans to introduce a Social Credit System (SCS) in China have emerged, by which authorities are planning to rate each and every citizen by 2020, although the timeline turned out to be very ambitious. While this may appear logical for a country developing online and mobile paying systems, such a rating has very serious implications. Provided the plans are serious, 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?
- **Islamic oppression and Religious nationalism:** These Persecution engines are mainly driven by family, society and religious leaders and aimed against the few thousand converts among the Muslim and Tibetan people groups. Pressure on converts will remain high and potentially even increase as the urgency for unity among these minority communities grows due to the increasing pressure being placed on them by government policing measures.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: updated Communist party rules - https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-corruption/china-targets-rumors-religion-in-updated-party-rules-idUSKCN1LCOAQ?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=e919f5bce7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_27_01_42&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-e919f5bce7-399904105
- Persecution engines: police state - <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-china-42911468/china-xinjiang-police-state-fear-and-resentment>
- Persecution engines: hire thugs - <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/thugsforhire-subcontracting-of-state-coercion-and-state-capacity-in-china/C53871B8B259B893E1D0B4E1985B764E>
- 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: 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>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : censor hundreds of academic papers - <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-censorship-journal-idUSKCN1B103J?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : Wang Yi - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/earlyrain-pastor-07182019165327.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : extended to schools and medical workers - <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/religion-09262018110746.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : March 2018 White Paper - <http://asianews.it/news-en/White-Paper-on-Religions:-Beijing-defends-itself-43516.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : dissolved churches' assets - <https://bitterwinter.org/chinese-government-upping-the-seizure-of-churches-assets/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : 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 the 5 spheres of life : Catholic - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-catholics-worried-about-political-scanning/85059>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : Protestant (TSPM) - <https://bitterwinter.org/main-preacher-assessment-standard-obey-and-follow-the-party/>

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-catholics-worried-about-political-scanning/85059>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : the suicide - <https://bitterwinter.org/new-testimonies-help-to-sort-out-the-mystery-of-pastors-suicide/>
- 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: CSW report - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2018/10/16/report/4122/article.htm>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: "Absolutely no mercy" - 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: June 2019 - <https://chinatribunal.com/china-tribunal-final-judgement-and-report-17th-june-2019/>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

At the time of publication there were no items specifically for China.

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/china>

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=China> (password: freedom).