



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

China: Non-Christian and non-Muslim religious groups

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Executive summary

The Chinese constitution guarantees freedom of religion for 'normal religious activities' but does not define what these include. There are 5 officially recognised religions, including Buddhism and Taoism. China is officially atheist with the majority of the 1.4 billion population having no religion.

Officially recognised religions must register with the state. They are controlled through strict regulations which require allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and are subject to the policy of Sinicisation, which requires religions to adapt their practices and doctrines to conform to traditional Chinese culture. Affiliation with religions perceived as 'foreign' are likely to attract more state interest and have tighter restrictions implemented compared to those who practice religions viewed as part of traditional Chinese culture such as Han Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions, which are generally granted more tolerance.

Under religious regulations, unregistered groups are not allowed to officially operate, and members can be subject to administrative and criminal penalties, however there is limited reporting on the scale, frequency, and information about how it is applied which groups are affected in practice. National laws provide for local governments to use discretion in permitting followers to practice their faith. Unregistered Buddhists and Taoists generally practice without issue and as a result many sites and practitioners remain unregistered. There are reportedly hundreds, if not thousands of folk religion temples. Some folk religious sites receive financial support if they are perceived to be of cultural heritage importance.

In general, Buddhists and Taoists, whether they are registered or unregistered and members of folk religions, are unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm on the basis of their faith alone.

Some religious groups are considered by the government to be 'cult' organisations, or xie jiao. Membership of any group considered to be a cult is illegal, and individuals can face criminal charges and sentences of up to life in prison. However, there is very little information on how and if the law is applied in practice to non-Christian banned groups and illegal cults.

Members of unregistered groups and illegal cults and who are perceived as threatening the interests of the Chinese government are more likely to attract adverse attention. Whether such treatment reaches the high threshold of persecution or serious harm will depend on the facts of the case.

If a person fears the state, they are unlikely to obtain protection. Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from local officials, they may be able to relocate to escape that risk. Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 16 December 2024

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of a person's involvement with a non-Christian religious group.
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#)

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

This note does not cover Muslims or Christians. For information on these groups see the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note](#).

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).]
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 A person's actual or imputed religion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Registered religious groups

- 3.1.1 Buddhist and Taoist members of registered religious groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.1.2 China is an officially atheist country. However, the Chinese government recognises Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Taoism, and Protestantism. Although sources note that the exact figures of religious practitioners in China is difficult to measure, the majority of the 1.4 billion population is considered to have no religion. There are an estimated 288 million Buddhists (around 18% of the total population) and 5.9 million Taoists (less than 1%). There are an estimated 9,000 officially registered Taoist sites across China and around 34,000 Buddhist temples, the vast majority being Han (see [Religious demography](#) and [Religion in China](#)).
- 3.1.3 The Chinese constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion for 'normal religious activities' but does not define what these activities include (see [Constitution](#)).

- 3.1.4 Criminal law contains provisions in which any state official who unlawfully deprives a citizen of their freedom of religious belief may be subject to two years of imprisonment. However, there is no information to indicate whether this is applied in practice. The criminal law does not specify what constitutes deprivation of religious belief or if all religions fall under this provision (see [Legislation](#)).
- 3.1.5 Religious organisations officially recognised by the state must register with the associated state-sanctioned patriotic religious association, which are supervised by the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) and the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). There are no mechanisms within the law for religious groups outside of the 5 recognised by the government to obtain legal status (see [Legislation](#) and [Religious regulations and state administration bodies](#)).
- 3.1.6 Registered religious groups are permitted to operate under strict legislation. Since 2020 there have been a number of regulations which stipulate allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and bring registered religions under tighter control in particular: the 2020 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups and the 2021 Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy, which additionally created a database to track and monitor the behaviour of religious personnel. In September 2023 the Measures for the Financial Management of Venues for Religious Activities came into force to regulate the use, registration, and funding of religious sites, and introduce additional CCP ideological requirements (see [Religious regulations and state administration bodies](#)).
- 3.1.7 Buddhism and Taoism are subject to the government's programme of Sinicisation. This requires religions to adapt their practices and doctrines to conform to traditional Chinese culture and values thereby exerting control over religious institutions and beliefs. The searchable online database of Taoist and Buddhist religious personnel launched in February 2023 lists who is allowed to participate in state-sanctioned religious activity. Therefore, those who are not in the database cannot register with a temple or participate religion in an authorised manner. In sources consulted there is no information on if and how this is being applied in practice (see [Sinicisation](#), [Buddhism](#) and [Taoism/Daoism](#)).
- 3.1.8 Restrictions to activities and personal freedom of religious adherents are more likely when these are perceived to threaten state or CCP interests, particularly in relation to ethnic, political and security issues but may vary depending on location and views and motivations of local authorities. Affiliation with religions perceived as 'foreign', such as Islam and Tibetan Buddhism, are likely to attract more state interest and have tighter implementation of restrictions compared to those who practice religions viewed as part of traditional Chinese culture such as Han Buddhism and Taoism, which are generally granted more tolerance (see [Registered religious groups](#) and [State treatment of specific religious groups](#)).
- 3.1.9 Although recent reporting is limited there are some examples of the demolition of temples, restrictions on religious practices and religious festivals, however the vast majority of Buddhists and Taoists associated with registered groups continue to be able to practice their faith unhindered by

the state (see [Buddhism](#) and [Taoism/Daoism](#)).

- 3.1.10 China's attitude towards Tibetan Buddhists is linked to political issues in the Tibetan region. For more information on state treatment of Tibetans see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Opposition to the state](#)
- 3.1.11 For information on risk to Muslims see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#)
- 3.1.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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3.2 Unregistered religious groups

- 3.2.1 Members of unregistered religious groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state for that reason alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Members of unregistered religious groups who are perceived as threatening the interest of the Chinese government, particularly in relation to ethnic, political and security issues, are more likely to attract attention. This may vary depending on location and the views and motivations of the local authority. Whether such treatment reaches the high threshold of persecution or serious harm will depend on the facts of the case.
- 3.2.3 Religions that are not officially recognised by the government cannot register their religious activity with the state. There are no recent figures estimating the number of unregistered religious groups or practitioners in China. Officially recognised religions can fall under the category of unregistered religious groups if they do not register with their associated patriotic organisation (see [Religious regulations and state administration bodies](#) and [Unregistered religious groups](#)).
- 3.2.4 Under the law, individuals who participate in unsanctioned religious activities can be subject to criminal and administrative penalties and property owners who rent space to unregistered religious groups are at risk of having their property confiscated and being fined. The US State Department's 2023 International Religious Freedom in China report (USSD RIRF 2023 report) stated that authorities harassed and arrested leaders and members of unregistered groups, but did not state which specific groups were subject to this or how often and how many of these arrests occurred (see [Legislation](#) and [Unregistered religious groups](#)).
- 3.2.5 Although religious regulations do not allow unregistered groups to operate, national laws provide for local governments to use discretion in permitting followers of unregistered religions to practice their faith. Sources do not indicate in which provinces this occurs but note that unregistered Buddhists and Taoists generally practice without issue and as a result many sites and practitioners remain unregistered (see [Legislation](#), [Unregistered religious groups](#), [Buddhism](#) and [Taoism/Daoism](#)).
- 3.2.6 Folk religion is not one of the officially recognised religions in China, despite this, it is viewed as an indigenous faith and is granted more tolerance compared to other unrecognised religions. There are no official statistics on

how many people adhere to folk religions, and they are difficult to define and measure as they have no organisational structure and blend beliefs and practices. However, one source reported that folk religion is the religious affiliation of over 30 percent of the population (see [Folk religions](#)).

- 3.2.7 There are reportedly hundreds, if not thousands of folk religion temples. Some folk religious sites and practices are endorsed by the government and receive financial support if they are perceived to be important to cultural heritage. Since 2015 local authorities have been urged by the CCP to regulate folk religion and its sites, but rules and implementation vary depending on location. According to the USSD RIRF 2023, in some instances, the Chinese authorities have withheld social benefits from those who refused to reject folk religions. There are some reports of local authorities banning traditional folk festivals and some practices (see [Folk religions](#)).
- 3.2.8 China's attitude towards Tibetan Buddhists is linked to political issues in the Tibetan region. For more information on state treatment of Tibetans see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Opposition to the state](#).)
- 3.2.9 For information on risk to Muslims see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#)
- 3.2.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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3.3 [Illegal 'cults' \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#)

- 3.3.1 A person belonging to an illegal cult (xie jiao) is unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state for that reason alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.3.2 Members of illegal cults who are perceived as threatening the interests of the Chinese government, particularly in relation to ethnic, political and security issues, are more likely to attract adverse attention. Whether such treatment reaches the high threshold of persecution or serious harm will depend on the facts of the case.
- 3.3.3 China's criminal law specifies that available sentences for those who form a religious cult are between 3- and 7-years' imprisonment and a concurrent fine. In serious cases the maximum sentence is life imprisonment (see [Legislation](#)).
- 3.3.4 The Chinese government publishes a 'xie jiao' (cult) list of banned religious groups. The latest update on 26 July 2022 includes 23 religious movements; four of these were under Buddhist traditions. There are no published criteria for banned religious groups or any information on available procedures to challenge designation. Members of a religion on the xie jiao list can be subject to arrest and are not allowed to practice their religion freely (see [Cults \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#)).
- 3.3.5 There is very little information on non-Christian banned groups and illegal cults. Information tends to focus on Falun Gong and Christian groups. Yi Guan Dao (YGD) is a banned religious group which combines elements of

Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism and has been banned since the 1950s. The Dui Hua Foundation, a humanitarian organisation, in their 2022 annual report noted that some experts are sceptical of both the continuing existence of YGD and adverse treatment towards its members due to a lack of recent reporting, the most recent being 3 trials involving YGD members between 2018-2019 (see [Cults \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#)).

- 3.3.6 The government's 'anti-xie jiao' website provides information about various groups and a function to report 'illegal cult' activity. In the sources consulted it is not clear how it is used and implemented. There is limited information and few specific examples of state treatment towards people involved in 'cults'. Bitter Winter, a religious and human rights focused magazine reported on the 'Love Home' facility in the Gulou district which detains, 'deprograms' and reportedly subjects members of banned religious groups to threats, violence, and torture. However, Bitter Winter does not specify which groups have been detained in the 'Love Home' centre, over which time period and how many people have been subjected to ill treatment.
- 3.3.7 The Freedom House (FH) 2023 report, covering events in 2022 reported the use of mobile 'transformation units' and the detention and ill treatment of 'thousands of members' of illegal groups. However, FH does not specify which illegal religious groups have been subject to this treatment or where it obtained its information from to ascertain the scale and extent to which this applies to the religious groups considered within the scope of this note. In addition, the FH 2024 report did not provide any further information on state treatment of illegal religious groups in the following reporting period of 2023 (see [Cults \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#)).
- 3.3.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 3.3.9 For more information on specific banned religious groups see the Country Policy and Information Notes, [China: Falun Gong](#) and [China: Christians](#)

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from local officials, they may be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 In the country guidance case of [QH \(Christians - risk\) \(China\) CG \[2014\] UKUT 86 \(IAC\) \(heard 6 June 2013 and promulgated 14 March 2014\)](#), the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that in light of the wide variation in local officials' response to unregistered churches, individual Christians at risk in their local areas will normally be able to relocate safely elsewhere in China. The

exception to this would be where the person is the subject of an arrest warrant, or their name is on a blacklist, or they have a pending sentence. Given the scale of internal migration, and the vast geographical and population size of China, the lack of an appropriate residence registration system (hukou) alone will not render internal relocation unreasonable or unduly harsh (paragraph 137 v and vii). Although this country guidance case was specific to Christians, the evidence in this note suggests that the situation regarding internal relocation is likely to be the same for members of other tolerated religious groups (see [Unregistered religious groups](#)).

- 5.1.3 China is a large country about 39 times bigger than the UK with an estimated population of over 1.4 billion people. Buddhists are the largest religious group (around 18% of the total population) and exist throughout the majority of the country. Taoists constitute less than 1% of the population and are scattered in small numbers in various areas of the country. Other non-Christian religious groups such as followers of folk religion and members of illegal cults and banned groups also exist, although it is difficult to accurately ascertain their numbers and location (see [Religious demography](#)).
- 5.1.4 National law allows for each provincial administration to issue its own regulations on religious affairs, including permitting followers of some unregistered religious groups to carry out religious practices, particularly those who practice religions viewed as part of traditional Chinese culture such as Han Buddhism, Taoism and folk religions (see [Unregistered religious groups](#)).
- 5.1.5 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **16 December 2024**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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List of acronyms

List of common abbreviations used in this CPIN below:

CECC	Congressional-Executive Commission on China
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FH	Freedom House
HRW	Human Rights Watch
NRAA	National Religious Affairs Administration
PRC	People's Republic of China
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs
UFWD	United Front Work Department
USCIRF	US Commission on International Religious Freedom
USSD	US State Department

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7. Legal framework

7.1 International conventions

- 7.1.1 The government signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998 but has not ratified it¹. The ICCPR includes the right to have or adopt a religion of choice and practice this religion in private or public².

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7.2 Constitution

- 7.2.1 Article 36 of the Constitution of China states:

¹ OHCHR, [Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard](#), undated

² OHCHR, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), 16 December 1966

‘Citizens of the People’s Republic of China shall enjoy freedom of religious belief.

‘No state organ, social organization or individual shall coerce citizens to believe in or not to believe in any religion, nor shall they discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion.

‘The state shall protect normal religious activities. No one shall use religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the state’s education system.

‘Religious groups and religious affairs shall not be subject to control by foreign forces.’³

7.2.2 The US State Department 2023 Report International Religious Freedom in China, published in June 2024, covering the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 (USSD RIRF 2023 China report) noted: ‘The constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping Thought, states citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief,” but it limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities” without defining “normal.” ...’⁴

7.2.3 The same USSD RIRF report noted ‘The law does not allow individuals or groups to take legal action against the government based on the religious freedom protections afforded by the constitution...’⁵

7.2.4 The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC established by US congress in 2022 to monitor China’s compliance with international human rights standard published its annual report based on information from CECC staff fact finding missions to China, formal and informal hearings⁶, on 10 May 2024, covering the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023⁷. In regard to Article 36 of the constitution the report noted:

‘...by leaving terms such as “normal” undefined, China’s Constitution fails to protect the same range of beliefs and outward manifestations as is recognized under international law. Nevertheless, China’s Constitution and other legal provisions align with the ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] in prohibiting discrimination based on religion and loosely parallel the ICCPR’s prohibition on coercion by forbidding groups or individuals from compelling citizens to believe or not believe in any religion...’⁸

7.2.5 China’s national report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 2 February 2024 noted: ‘China guarantees citizens’ right to freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law...’⁹

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³ The State Council, [Constitution of the People’s Republic of China](#), 20 Nov 2019

⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁵ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁶ CECC, [Frequently Asked Questions](#), undated

⁷ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p.3), 10 May 2024

⁸ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p.88), 10 May 2024

⁹ UNHRC, [National report submitted in accordance with...](#), (p8), 3 November 2023

7.3 Legislation

7.3.1 The Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Article 251 states: 'A functionary of a state organ who unlawfully deprives a citizen of his freedom of religious belief... if the circumstances are serious, shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than 2 years or short-term custody.'¹⁰ The Criminal Law does not provide a definition for 'freedom of religious belief' or specify what is considered 'serious circumstances'.

7.3.2 The Criminal Law of the PRC, Article 300 states:

'Whoever organizes or exploits a secret society or an evil organization, a cult, or a superstitious belief to undermine the enforcement of laws and administrative regulations shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than 3 years but not more than 7 years, and concurrently, a fine. If the circumstances are especially serious, the offender shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than 7 years or life imprisonment, and concurrently, a fine or confiscation of property. If the circumstances are relatively minor, the offender shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than 3 years, short-term custody, non-custodial correction, or deprivation of political rights, and concurrently, a fine, or shall be sentenced to a fine only.

'Whoever organizes or exploits a secret society or an evil organization, a cult, or a superstitious belief to deceive another person, thereby causing serious injuries to or the death of another person, shall be punished in accordance with the provisions in the preceding paragraph

'Whoever committing a crime as prescribed in the first paragraph also commits another crime such as rape or fraud shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of combining punishments for multiple crimes.'¹¹ (For more information on state treatment of banned religious groups see [Cults \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#))

7.3.3 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated:

'The law bans religious or spiritual groups that the government considers to be "cults" or promote heterodox teachings. Laws ban unauthorized domestically generated online religious content and prohibit overseas organizations and individuals from operating online religious information services in the country without a permit. National law prohibits organizations or individuals from interfering with the state educational system for minors, effectively barring individuals younger than 18 from participating in most religious activities or receiving religious education.'¹² (For more information on prohibited religious groups in China see [Cults \(xie jiao\) and banned groups](#))

7.3.4 The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index 2024 report on China published on 19 March 2024 (BTI 2024 China report), covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 which assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the

¹⁰ NPC, [Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China](#), 26 Dec 2020

¹¹ NPC, [Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China](#), 26 Dec 2020

¹² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

quality of governance in 137 countries through country experts¹³ noted ‘The state’s legal framework and institutional arrangements are based on secular norms in China. ...religious organizations must register with state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations, which are supervised by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)... Since 2020, new regulations even require religious groups to spread CCP [Chinese Communist Party] ideology.’¹⁴

- 7.3.5 For more information on sinicisation of religious groups, see [Sinicisation](#).

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7.4 Religious regulations and state administration bodies

- 7.4.1 The Regulation on Religious Affairs 2017 came into effect in 2018, revising previous regulations. All religious organisations in China are bound to these regulations, which define the administrative framework around religious activities¹⁵. An unofficial translation of the Religious Affairs Regulations 2017 is available on the [China Law Translate website](#)¹⁶.
- 7.4.2 In relation to the 2017 RRA USCIRF noted: ‘...The 2017 New Regulation on Religious Affairs—which went into effect on February 1, 2018—requires religious organizations to register with the government and report donations that exceed 100,000 yuan (approximately \$15,900) [£10,836¹⁷]. In addition, it bans “unauthorized” religious teaching. The regulation effectively eliminated the legal gray area that had existed for independent religious activity since the 1980s.’¹⁸
- 7.4.3 The Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT), Country Information Report on the People’s Republic of China, ‘...based on DFAT’s on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in the People’s Republic of China and Australia [and] ...relevant information from government and non-government reports... reputable news organisations and academic sources...’¹⁹ updated 22 December 2021 noted: ‘New religious regulations and implementation organisations aim to enhance government control over the appointment of religious leadership, increase transparency over sources of funding, limit religious practice to venues authorised by the government, reduce links with foreign religious organisations, and give the Party greater say over religious doctrine taught in China... The 2018 Regulations on Religious Affairs contain broadly worded prohibitions against the use of religion to ‘split the country’, ‘undermine ethnic unity’ or ‘engage in terrorist activities’.’²⁰
- 7.4.4 Pew Research Center which describes itself as a ‘...a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world...[through] public opinion polling, demographic research, content

¹³ BTI, [Methodology](#), undated

¹⁴ BTI, [China Country Report 2024](#) (Political Transformation), 19 March 2024

¹⁵ USCIRF, [The 2019 Regulation for Religious Groups in China](#), February 2020

¹⁶ China Law Translate, [Religious Affairs Regulations 2017](#), 9 July 2017

¹⁷ Xe.com, [100,000 CNY to GBP - Convert Chinese Yuan... to British Pounds](#), 10 October 2024

¹⁸ USCIRF, [The 2019 Regulation for Religious Groups in China](#), February 2020

¹⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People’s Republic...](#) (Para 1.4), 22 December 2021

²⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People’s Republic...](#) (Para 3.24), 22 December 2021

analysis and other data-driven social science research²¹, published a report on 30 August 2023 focussed on measuring religion in China. The Pew Research Center 2023 China report noted:

‘In 2018, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), which previously enforced religious policy relatively independently, was renamed the National Religious Affairs Administration [NRAA] and placed under the direct supervision of the United Front Work Department (UFWD) – a powerful agency responsible for neutralizing or stifling potential opposition groups that is sometimes referred to as the CCP’s “magic weapon” – signaling a tightening of the party’s grip on religion. SARA’s local offices were subsequently absorbed into the UFWD.’²²

7.4.5 In regard to the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the USSD RIRF 2023 report provided the following detail: ‘The CCP is responsible for creating religious regulations and oversees the UFWD, which in turn manages the SARA’s functions and responsibilities. The SARA is responsible for implementing the CCP’s regulations on religious affairs and administers the provincial and local bureaus of religious affairs.’²³

7.4.6 Regarding regulations around officially recognised religions, the same USSD RIRF 2023 report stated:

‘The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Regulations require religious organizations to register with the government. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations are permitted to register, and only these organizations may legally hold worship services. The five associations, which operate under the direction of the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD), are the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), Taoist Association of China, Islamic Association of China, TSPM [Three-Self Patriotic Movement], and CCPA [Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association]. ...The law does not provide a mechanism for religious groups independent of the five official patriotic religious associations to obtain legal status.’²⁴

7.4.7 The same report noted:

‘Publication and distribution of literature containing religious content must follow guidelines determined by the State Publishing Administration. Publication of religious material must also conform to guidelines determined by the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee. Online activities (“online religious information services”) of religious groups require prior approval from the provincial religious affairs bureau, a requirement that overlaps with measures passed in 2022 regulating religious content online. Authorities may confiscate religious texts published without authorization, including Bibles, Qurans, and Buddhist and Taoist texts, and close unauthorized publishing houses.’²⁵

7.4.8 In regard to recent measures which have been enacted to regulate and

²¹ Pew Research Center, [About Pew Research Center](#), undated

²² Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (Government policy...religion...), 30 Aug 2023

²³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

²⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

²⁵ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

control religion in China, the same report highlighted:

‘The 2020 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups regulate the organization, function, offices, supervision, projects, and economic administration of communities and groups at the national and local levels. The measures state that only registered groups may operate legally and stipulate that religious organizations must support the leadership of the CCP, adhere to the direction of Sinicization, and implement the values of socialism. They state specifically that religious organizations shall “follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, abide by laws, regulations, rules, and policies, correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon, and enhance national awareness, awareness of the rule of law, and citizenship.”

‘The SARA’s 2021 Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy require all clergy to pledge allegiance to the CCP and socialism...[and] “adhere to the direction of the Sinicization of religion in China, and operate to maintain national unity, religious harmony, and social stability.” The measures also state that clergy should “resist illegal religious activities and religious extremist ideology, and resist infiltration by foreign forces using religion.” The measures also provide that “entrance to religious places of worship should be regulated through strict gatekeeping, verification of identity, and registration.” The measures create a database of “religious personnel” to track their performance and also stipulate that authorities shall hold religious organizations and institutions responsible for the behavior of individual religious clergy. They stipulate religious staff should study “the contents of doctrines and regulations that are conducive to social harmony, progress of the times, and health and civilization.” The measures instruct religious clergy to integrate these doctrines and regulations into “preaching and to play a role in promoting the Sinicization of religion in our country.”’²⁶

- 7.4.9 On 31 August 2023 US international broadcaster Voice of America (VoA),²⁷ reported: ‘The Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues requires religious venues to “support the leadership of the CCP, support the socialist system, and thoroughly implement Xi Jinping’s new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” The new rules prohibit organizations and individuals from using religious venues to endanger national security or to disrupt social order, public interests or citizens’ legal rights, among other activities.’²⁸

- 7.4.10 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

‘Regulations stipulate that individuals who participate in unsanctioned religious activities are subject to criminal and administrative penalties. The regulations also stipulate that any form of income from illegal activities or illegal properties shall be confiscated and a fine imposed of between one to three times the value of the illegal income or properties. If the illegal income or properties cannot be identified, officials may impose a fine of less than 50,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$7,000) [£5,416²⁹]. Authorities may penalize

²⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

²⁷ VoA, [Mission, Firewall and Charter](#), undated

²⁸ VoA, [China Issues New Requirements for Religious Groups](#), 31 August 2023

²⁹ Xe.com, [50,000 CNY to GBP - Convert Chinese Yuan Renminbi to British Pounds](#), 11 Oct 2024

property owners renting space to unregistered religious groups by confiscating those properties and related income and levying fines of between RMB 20,000 (\$2,800) [£2,166³⁰] and RMB 200,000 (\$28,000) [£21,661³¹].³²

7.4.11 The US CECC annual report 2023 section on ‘Regulations and Policies Pertaining to Religious Freedom’³³ provided the below overview:

These include:

‘• Measures for the Financial Management of Venues for Religious Activities (2022). These measures bring religious venues’ finances more directly under the joint oversight of the Ministry of Finance and the NRAA. They require that venues provide all donors with a numbered receipt issued by the provincial religious affairs bureau...

‘• Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services (2022). In July 2022, provincial authorities in multiple provinces reported holding trainings for the implementation of the measures. In Guangdong province, authorities announced that hundreds of candidates had qualified as auditors and would be tasked with monitoring and licensing religious content in accordance with the measures. Providers of online religious content and internet users attempting to access such content or to openly discuss religion reported reduced freedom to operate in light of the measures...’

‘• Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel (2021). In February 2023, the NRAA rolled out a database of “approved” Buddhist and Taoist clergy, in a first step toward developing similar databases for all religious groups in compliance with the Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel (2021). In May 2023, the NRAA announced the rollout of databases for Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic clergy.

‘• Measures for the Management of Venues for Religious Activities. In March 2023, the NRAA released a draft for comment of new measures governing sites for religious activity that would heavily regulate the use, funding, personnel, accepted activities, and other aspects of religious sites, in effect covering “all aspects” of religious life, according to one advocacy group. When adopted, they will replace the 2005 measures by the same name. The draft version of the new measures includes additional ideological content and ideological requirements for religious sites, including a requirement that sites establish an education system and regularly organize study sessions for personnel on Party guidelines, PRC [People’s Republic of China] law, and Chinese traditional culture, among other topics.’³⁴

7.4.12 The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) which describes itself as ‘...an independent, bipartisan, U.S. federal government commission...that monitors the universal right to

³⁰ Xe.com, [20,000 CNY to GBP - Convert Chinese Yuan Renminbi to British Pounds](#), 11 Oct 2024

³¹ Xe.com, [200,000 CNY to GBP - Convert Chinese Yuan Renminbi to British Pounds](#), 11 Oct 2024

³² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

³³ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p88), 10 May 2024

³⁴ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p88-89), 10 May 2024

freedom of religion or belief abroad...³⁵ publishes an annual report which ‘...by statute, recommends countries to be designated as “countries of particular concern”³⁶ The USCIRF 2024 annual report published May 2024 covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2023³⁷ (USCIRF 2024 report) noted: ‘...China’s religious regulations and policies explicitly require state-controlled religious organizations to be loyal to the CCP and to serve its political objectives and interests...’³⁸

7.4.13 China Aid, a non-profit advocacy organisation published an Annual Persecution Report on 1 March 2024 covering the period January 2023 to December 2023, based on ‘...content from China Aid Association’s exclusive news sources and the Communist Party of China’s official websites concerning religion...’³⁹ The China Aid 2024 report noted:

‘On July 31 [2023], the State Administration of Religious Affairs released the Measures for the Administration of Religious Activity Sites..., which took effect on September 1, 2023, and marked the end of the “Measures for the Setup, Approval and Registration of Religious Activity Sites” promulgated in 2005. The 10 chapters and 76 articles of the new Measures intend to regulate the inspection, approval, and registration of religious activity sites, their organization and structure, management of religious activities and personnel, management of construction and security, accountability, and legal obligations... Per the new Measures, religious activity sites:

‘Must be government-certified and obtain “religious clergy certification” to be officially approved and registered

‘Religious activity sites shall not form an affiliation relationship

‘Religious activity sites shall not be named after any church, denomination, or person

‘Management personnel must “support the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system”

‘Those who participate in “illegal religious organizations, engage in illegal religious activities or provide support to illegal religious activities,” and those who are “dominated by foreign forces, accepting unauthorized teaching posts from foreign religious groups or institutions, or committing other violations of the independence and self-management of religion in China” will be removed

‘Religious adherents are prohibited from organizing and holding religious activities outside religious venues.’⁴⁰

7.4.14 The CFR 2024 report noted:

‘New regulations that went into effect in early 2020 require religious groups to accept and spread CCP ideology and values. Faith organizations must now get approval from the government’s religious affairs office before

³⁵ USCIRF, [Frequently Asked Questions](#), undated

³⁶ USCIRF, [Frequently Asked Questions](#), undated

³⁷ USCIRF, [Annual Report 2024](#) (p1), May 2024

³⁸ USCIRF, [Annual Report 2024](#) (p22), May 2024

³⁹ China Aid, [ChinaAid publishes Annual Persecution Report for 2023](#), 1 March 2024

⁴⁰ China Aid, ChinaAid’s Annual Persecution Report 2023 (p1-2), 1 March 2024

conducting any activities. The next year, the CCP banned unregistered domestic religious groups from sharing religious content online and prohibited overseas organizations from operating online religious services in China without a permit, particularly targeting Christianity-related content on the messaging service WeChat.⁴¹

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7.5 Proselytising

7.5.1 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: ‘The law does not define what constitutes proselytizing. The constitution states that no state unit, social organization, or individual may force a citizen to believe or not believe in a religion. Offenders are subject to administrative and criminal penalties.’⁴²

7.5.2 In regard to religious organisations proselytising online, the USSD RIRF 2023 noted:

‘Measures promulgated in 2022 ban unauthorized domestic online religious content and prohibit overseas organizations and individuals from operating online religious information services in the country without a permit... The measures require that any individual or organization engaging in “cyberspace religious information-releasing services, reposting services, and dissemination platform services,” such as streaming or publishing sermons, obtain a government permit to do so and validate that permit every three years. Without a permit, organizations and individuals “must not proselytize online, carry out religious education or training, publish preaching or repost or link to related content, organize the carrying out of religious activities online, or broadcast religious rites such as obeisance to Buddha, burning incense, ordinations, services, masses, or baptisms, through means such as text, images, audio, or video either live or in recordings.” To acquire a permit, individuals or organizations must apply to the religious affairs department of the government of the province, autonomous region, or municipality where they are located.’⁴³

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8. Religion in China

8.1 Religious demography

8.1.1 OnTheWorldMap.com, described as a website providing a collection of world maps created by ‘expert cartographers’⁴⁴, published the below map showing divisions of religion in China last updated 16 November 2023⁴⁵:

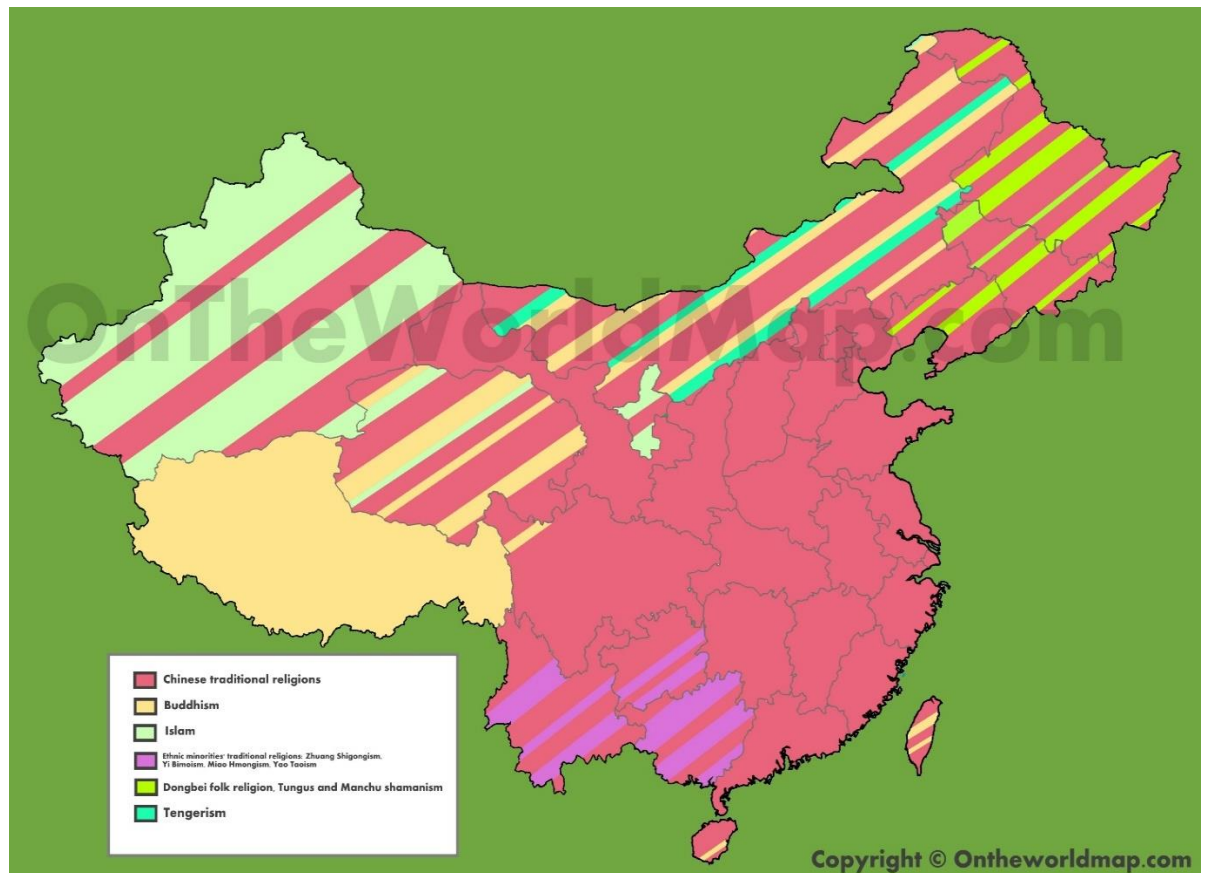
⁴¹ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Freedom and Regulation), 15 May 2024

⁴²USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁴³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁴⁴ OnTheWorldMap.com, [About us](#), undated

⁴⁵ OnTheWorldMap.com, [Map of Religions in China](#), 16 November 2023



- 8.1.2 The CIA World Factbook, published by the US Central Intelligence profile on China updated 3 September 2024 noted the total population in China is estimated at 1,416,043,270⁴⁶. China is officially an atheist country⁴⁷.
- 8.1.3 The BTI 2024 China report noted 'According to a government report issued in 2018, China has nearly 200 million believers and more than 380,000 clerical personnel.'⁴⁸
- 8.1.4 The Pew Research Center 2023 China report based on various different data sets from 2007 to 2021⁴⁹ 'in regard to religious affiliation, the noted: 'Depending on the source used, estimates of the share of Chinese people who can be described as religious in some way – because they identify with a religion, hold religious beliefs or engage in practices that have a spiritual or religious component – range from less than 10% to more than 50%.⁵⁰
- 8.1.5 The same report highlighted that measuring religion in China with accuracy is difficult due to restrictions around certain beliefs and affiliations making people less likely to disclose their faith, and other issues affecting disclosure are linguistic and cultural differences⁵¹.
- 8.1.6 The same report included the below infographic regarding religious affiliation in China since 2010 based on the question 'what is your religious belief'. The

⁴⁶ CIA, [The World Factbook: China](#) (People and Society), 3 September 2024

⁴⁷ CIA, [The World Factbook: China](#) (People and Society), 3 September 2024

⁴⁸ BTI, [China Country Report 2024](#) (Political Transformation), 19 March 2024

⁴⁹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (Methodology), 30 August 2023

⁵⁰ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#), 30 August 2023

⁵¹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#), 30 August 2023

report noted the 2021 data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore some provinces, municipalities and regions were not included in the data collected⁵²: The table below by CPIT provides the % of adults who identify with each religion⁵³:

	2010	2012	2013	2015	2017	2018	2021
No religion	88	86	89	90	90	90	93
Buddhism	6	6	5	5	5	4	4
Folk	3	3	2	2	2	3	<0.5
Christianity	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Islam	1	1	1	1	1	2	1

8.1.7 China's national report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review on 2 February 2024 noted: 'There are currently nearly 200 million religious believers, more than 380,000 members of the clergy, some 5,500 religious groups, 144,000 places of religious activity and 95 religious schools.'⁵⁴

8.1.8 The USSD RIRF 2023 China report noted:

'Local and regional figures for the number of religious followers, including those belonging to the five officially recognized religions, are unclear. Local governments do not release these statistics, and even official religious organizations do not have accurate numbers... In 2021, the U.S. government estimated Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the country's total population, ... Muslims 1.8 percent, followers of folk religions 21.9 percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons 52.2 percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising less than 1 percent. According to a 2017 estimate by the NGO Freedom House, there are more than 350 million religious adherents in the country, including ...six to eight million Tibetan Buddhists, and hundreds of millions who follow various folk traditions. According to Boston University's 2020 World Religion Database, there are 499 million folk and ethnic religionists (34 percent), 474 million agnostics (33 percent), 228 million Buddhists (16 percent), ... 100 million atheists (7 percent), 23.7 million Muslims (1.7 percent), and other religions adherents who together constitute less than 1 percent of the population, including 5.9 million Taoists, 1.8 million Confucians, 20,500 Sikhs, and 2,900 Jews...'⁵⁵

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8.2 Folk religions

8.2.1 On 10 December 2022, the University of Wisconsin-Madison published a blog on folk religion in China which noted:

'Traditional Chinese beliefs, as an unrecognized religion in China, is the religious affiliation of over 30 percent of the population and is often referred to as Chinese folk religion or Chinese popular religion...

Chinese folk religion involves the worship of a variety of local gods and

⁵² Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#), 30 August 2023

⁵³ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#), 30 August 2023

⁵⁴ UNHRC, [National report submitted in accordance with...](#), (p8), 3 November 2023

⁵⁵ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec I), 26 June 2024

immortals, which could be roughly categorized into three groups. First, there are those associated with natural phenomena, with the example of Mazu as the sea goddess. Second, there are historical personages like Guan Yu, who was a Chinese military general serving under the warlord Liu Bei during the late Eastern Han dynasty of China. Third, Chinese people also worship the early ancestors of our devotees by having ancestral shrines...

Chinese folk religion is different from typical Western religions that, in general, tend to require exclusive adherence. Eastern religions often are not exclusionary but incorporate different belief systems. Furthermore, the syncretic nature of the Chinese folk religion allows easy incorporation of certain local beliefs and practices. As a result, both from China's history and the nature of Chinese folk religion, it is more like tradition or culture rather than religion.⁵⁶

- 8.2.2 The Pew Research Center 2023 China report provided the following brief on Chinese folk religions: 'Also called folk belief or minjian xinyang..., Chinese folk religions were recorded as early as the Shang dynasty (c.1600-1046 B.C.E), well before Confucianism and Taoism. Folk religions originated in shamanism, and today include a broad range of beliefs and practices directed at supernatural forces — such as fortune telling and making wishes to ancestors and gods. Folk deities include the goddess of the sea...and the god of wealth (caishen...).' ⁵⁷

- 8.2.3 Regarding the number of places of worship for folk religion the PRC 2023 report noted:

'Folk religious temples, measured by the presence of temples (tudi ci) or local shrines (shenkan), seem to be relatively common in China, being present in 19% of neighborhood committees, according to the 2014 CLDS [Chinese Labour-force Dynamics Survey]. Neighborhood committees in rural areas are particularly likely to have a site dedicated to local folk deities (27%). However, not all folk religious sites are dedicated *solely* to local folk deities, national heroes, trade gods, and/or other so-called "tutelage" or protector gods (such as the mountain god). In fact, it is common for folk religious temples also to house Buddhist or Taoist figures.

'As a result, the CLDS-based estimate that there are at least 165,000 folk temples (tudi ci) or local shrines (shenkan) might not count some sites that house Buddhist or Taoist deities together with folk deities, thus leading to a possible undercount of folk religious sites in China.'⁵⁸

- 8.2.4 An academic paper published in the Chinese Journal of Sociology titled 'Exploring Chinese folk religion: Popularity, diffuseness, and diversities', by Chunni Zhang, Yunfeng Lu and He Sheng published 8 November 2021 noted:

'Folk religion, as the basis of the religious landscape in traditional China, is a highly syncretic system which includes elements from Buddhism, Daoism, and other traditional religious beliefs. Due to the shortcomings of denomination-based measurement, most previous social surveys have

⁵⁶ University of Wisconsin-Madison, [The State of Religion in China and Chinese Folk...](#), 10 Dec 2022

⁵⁷ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

⁵⁸ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

documented a very low percentage of folk religion adherents in China, and found almost no overlapping among religious beliefs...With the improved instruments in the 2018 China Family Panel Studies [a nationally representative, annual longitudinal survey of Chinese communities, families, and individuals launched in 2010 by the Institute of Social Science Survey (ISSS) of Peking University, China.⁵⁹], we first observe that nearly 50% of respondents claim to have multiple (two or even more than three) religious beliefs and the believers of folk religion account for about 70% of the population.⁶⁰

- 8.2.5 The CFR 2024 backgrounder noted: ‘...Chinese folk religions...have no rigid organizational structure blend practices from Buddhism and Daoism, and are manifest in the worship of ancestors, spirits, or other local deities...’⁶¹
- 8.2.6 The same report stated: ‘By some measures, there are as many as 220,000 places of folk religious worship in China, dwarfing the 43,500 Buddhist and Daoist temples...’⁶²

See also [Religious demography](#), [Taoism \(Daoism\)](#) and [Buddhism](#)

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8.3 Taoism (Daoism)

- 8.3.1 The Pew Research Center 2023 China report provided the following brief on Taoism: ‘Founded by Zhang Daoling, religious Taoism (*Daojiao* 道教) dates to the second century C.E. The principal teachings of religious Taoism – similar to philosophical Taoism – focus on nonaction and harmony with the Tao, or universal order. Traditional practices include meditation; self-discipline in diet, exercise and sex; and rituals to promote harmony with the heavenly order or higher forces of the cosmos.’⁶³
- 8.3.2 The same report noted as of 2018 Chinese government statistics show approximately 9000 officially registered Taoist sites across China⁶⁴.
- 8.3.3 The same report included the below map showing the percentage of Taoist temples in each province⁶⁵:

⁵⁹ Peking University, [CFPS](#), no date

⁶⁰ Zhang, C et al, Exploring [Chinese folk religion](#), 8 November 2021

⁶¹ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Chinese Buddhism and Folk Religions), 15 May 2024

⁶² CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Chinese Buddhism and Folk Religions), 15 May 2024

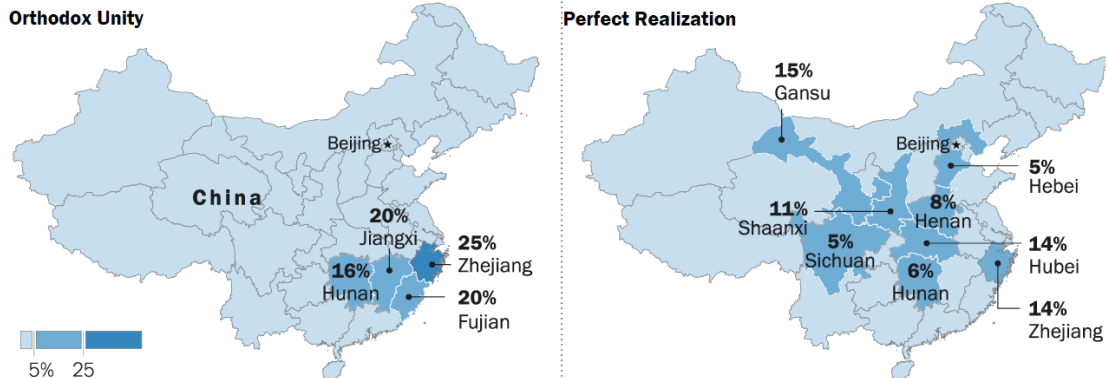
⁶³ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

⁶⁴ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

⁶⁵ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

Taoism: Most Orthodox Unity temples are in the South, while Perfect Realization sites are scattered across China

% of Taoist temples in each province, among all Taoist temples in China, by tradition



Note: Only provinces with Taoist temples (*gong* or *guan*), accounting for 8% or more of the total, are labeled. "Perfect Realization" refers to *Quanzhen*; "Orthodox Unity" refers to *Zhengyi*. Data is only available for mainland China.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data accessed on the National Religious Affairs Administration of China website in July 2023. "Measuring Religion in China"

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- 8.3.4 Britannica, described as a '...dynamic, continuously updated, rigorously fact-checked information source'⁶⁶ website page on Taoism last updated on 7 November 2024 noted:

'Taoism, indigenous religio-philosophical tradition that has shaped Chinese life for more than 2,000 years... More strictly defined, Taoism includes: the ideas and attitudes peculiar to the Tao-te ching ("Classic Way of Power"), the Zhuangzi, the eponymous Liezi, and related writings; the Taoist religion, which is concerned with the ritual worship of the Tao; and those who identify themselves as Taoists.

'Taoist thought permeates Chinese culture, including many aspects not usually considered Taoist. In Chinese religion, the Taoist tradition—often serving as a link between the Confucian tradition and folk tradition—has generally been more popular and spontaneous than the official (Confucian) state cult and less diffuse and shapeless than folk religion.'⁶⁷

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8.4 Buddhism

- 8.4.1 A Pew Research Center article on Buddhism in China published 21 September 2023 reported 'The vast majority of Chinese Buddhists follow Han Buddhism, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that has intermingled with other Chinese belief systems for centuries. Han Buddhism was promoted by multiple emperors, especially during the Tang dynasty (618-907), which helped it spread across the country. Currently, more than eight-in-ten registered Buddhist temples in China are Han Buddhist.'⁶⁸
- 8.4.2 The Pew Research Center 2023 China report noted: 'Buddhism (*Fojiao* 佛教) is the largest officially recognized religion in China. The share of Buddhists in China ranges from 4% to 33%, depending on the measure used and whether

⁶⁶ Britannica, [Our Brands](#), undated

⁶⁷ Britannica, [Taoism](#), 7 November 2024

⁶⁸ Pew Research Center, [6 facts about Buddhism in China](#), 21 September 2023

it is based on surveys that ask about formal affiliation with Buddhism or beliefs and practices associated with Buddhism.⁶⁹

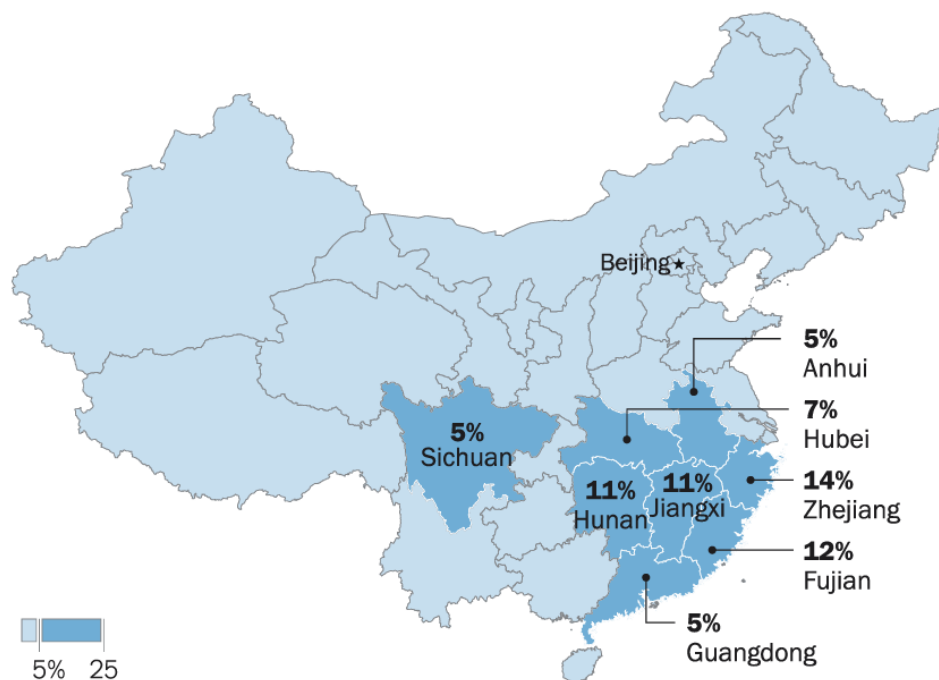
8.4.3 The same report highlighted: ‘Buddhism in China has three main branches. Han Buddhism, or Chinese Buddhism, accounts for the vast majority of the country’s Buddhists, as measured by the number of registered temples... In China, the word “Buddhism” typically refers to Han Buddhism.’⁷⁰

8.4.4 In regard to the number of Buddhist temples, the same report noted: ‘The National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA), which measures officially registered Buddhist temples with a monastery, found that there are about 34,000 such venues in China. Han Buddhist temples are most common (28,528)...’⁷¹

8.4.5 The same report included the below map showing the percentage of Han Buddhist temples in each province in China taken from data on the National Religious Affairs Administration website accessed in July 2023⁷²:

Han Buddhist temples are found across China, with a heavy concentration in the South and East

% of Han Buddhist temples in each province, among all Han Buddhist temples in China



Note: Data is only available for mainland China.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data accessed on the National Religious Affairs Administration of China website in July 2023.

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⁶⁹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

⁷⁰ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

⁷¹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

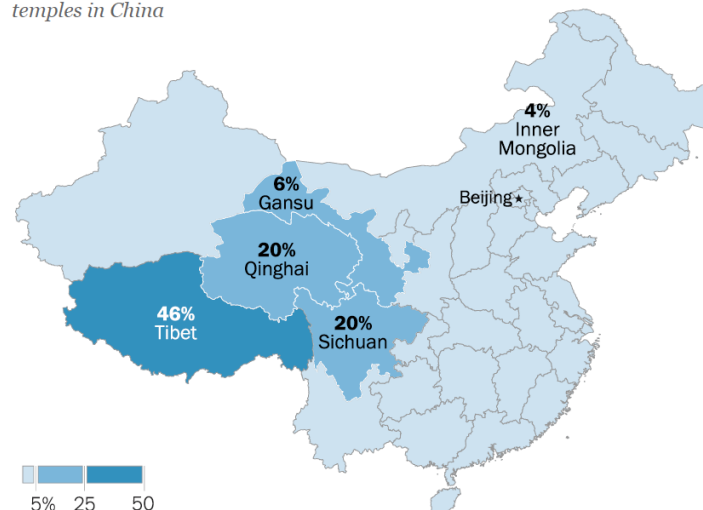
⁷² Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

8.5 Tibetan and Theravada Buddhism

- 8.5.1 The Pew Research Centre September 2023 article reported: ‘Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism are practiced primarily by ethnic minorities in remote regions in southwestern China. Like Han Buddhism, they have incorporated beliefs and practices associated with those regions and ethnicities. Tibetan Buddhism incorporates aspects of Bon, a traditional religion of Tibet...’⁷³
- 8.5.2 The CFR 2024 backgrounder noted: ‘According to China’s 2020 census data, the Tibetan region of China is home to seven million Tibetans, more than 90 percent of the region’s population. Nearly all Tibetans in the region practice a distinct form of Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of one of the main schools of Tibetan Buddhism and symbolizes Tibetan identity for both Tibetans in China and in exile.’⁷⁴
- 8.5.3 In regard to the location of Tibetan Buddhist temples in China, the Pew Research Center 2023 China report highlighted: ‘Tibetan Buddhist temples are largely confined to the southwestern region known as the Tibetan Plateau, which encompasses the Tibet Autonomous Region established by the Chinese government in 1965, as well as portions of the neighboring provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai. (In this report, Tibet refers to the Tibet Autonomous Region.) Nearly 86% of China’s Tibetan Buddhist temples are found in Tibet, Sichuan and Qinghai.’⁷⁵
- 8.5.4 The same report included the below map illustrating the percentage of registered Tibetan Buddhist temples in China⁷⁶:

Most of China’s temples for Tibetan Buddhism are in the southwestern provinces

% of Tibetan Buddhist temples in each province, among all Tibetan Buddhist temples in China



Note: Data is available only for mainland China.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data accessed on the National Religious Affairs Administration of China website in July 2023.

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⁷³ Pew Research Center, [6 facts about Buddhism in China](#), 21 September 2023

⁷⁴ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Tibetan Buddhism), 15 May 2024

⁷⁵ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

⁷⁶ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

- 8.5.5 The same report stated: ‘...Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism are practiced primarily by ethnic minorities in the Tibetan Plateau, Inner Mongolia and along the southern borders with Myanmar, also called Burma, and Laos.’⁷⁷
- 8.5.6 The USSD RIRF 2023 China report noted: ‘...Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, a pre-Buddhist Indigenous religion...’⁷⁸
- 8.5.7 The same report noted: ‘The National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA), which measures officially registered by Tibetan (3,857) and Theravada (1,705) temples...’⁷⁹
- 8.5.8 For more information on the treatment of Tibetans see the [Country Policy and Information Note China: Opposition to the State](#)

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8.6 Islam

- 8.6.1 See the [Country Policy and Information Note on China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#) for more information on Muslims.

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9. State treatment of religious groups in general

9.1 Sinicisation

- 9.1.1 Since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, the government has introduced a program of Sinicisation of religion. This requires religions to adapt their practices and doctrines to conform to traditional Chinese culture and values⁸⁰.
- 9.1.2 For more information on Sinicisation in general see the [Country Policy and Information Note China: Christians](#) sections on Legal context and State treatment.
- 9.1.3 The CECC 2023 report noted:
 ‘During the Commission’s 2023 reporting year, Chinese Communist Party authorities required religious groups affiliated with Party-controlled religious associations to participate in educational and ceremonial events surrounding the 20th Party Congress that were designed to reinforce “sinicization” among religious bodies. Taoist and Buddhist state-affiliated institutions held trainings to study the “spirit of the 20th Party Congress,” and official Islamic ... religious communities organized joint viewings of the event.’⁸¹
- 9.1.4 The BTI 2024 report noted: ‘The authorities tightly monitor registered and unregistered groups, and... Under Xi Jinping, religions are increasingly “sinicized” to conform to the doctrines of the party...’⁸²
- 9.1.5 The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)’s an independent, nonpartisan

⁷⁷ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

⁷⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec I), 26 June 2024

⁷⁹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (3. Buddhism), 30 August 2023

⁸⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People's Republic...](#) (Para 3.24), 22 December 2021

⁸¹ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p90) 10 May 2024

⁸² BTI, [China Country Report 2024](#) (Political Transformation), 19 March 2024

membership organization, think tank, and publisher⁸³, backgrounder on Religion in China last updated on 15 May 2024 noted:

‘The CCP is officially atheist. The party prohibits its roughly ninety-eight million party members from holding religious beliefs, and it requires the expulsion of party members who belong to religious organizations. Officials have said that party membership and religious beliefs are incompatible, and they discourage families of CCP members from publicly participating in religious ceremonies. Although these regulations are not always strictly enforced, the party periodically takes steps to draw a clearer line on religion.’⁸⁴

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9.2 Registered religious groups

- 9.2.1 The FH 2024 China report included information on Tibetan Buddhists: ‘Certain religions and religious groups, including Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christian “house churches,” ... are persecuted harshly.’⁸⁵ FH did not provide any further information on how Tibetan Buddhists were ‘persecuted harshly’ or the nature of such treatment. The specific examples given by FH related to the treatment of Muslims.
- 9.2.2 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: ‘According to regulations, in order to register, religious organizations must submit information on the organization’s historical background, members, doctrines, key publications, minimum funding requirements, and government sponsor, which must be one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations. Registration information is required only once, but religious organizations must reregister if changes are made to the required documentation.’⁸⁶
- 9.2.3 The US CECC 2023 report stated: ‘Since 2022, the Party and government have taken steps to draft and implement measures pertaining to religion, bolstering their control over religious believers in both registered and unregistered communities.’⁸⁷
- 9.2.4 In regard to the effect of regulations on registered groups, the CECC 2023 report stated ‘... According to one pastor, this allows the state to more closely supervise foreign donations and further weakens the independence of local, government-affiliated churches, which previously enjoyed some level of financial autonomy...’⁸⁸
- 9.2.5 Regarding the state treatment of certain registered religious groups, a CFR expert brief published on 14 May 2024 noted:

‘... Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions are seen as indigenous faiths with fewer overseas ties (the main exception being Tibetan Buddhism, whose spiritual head, the Dalai Lama, lives in exile in India). Chinese President Xi Jinping began alluding to the importance of local ties to Buddhism as early

⁸³ CFR, [About CFR](#), undated

⁸⁴ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Atheism and the CCP), 15 May 2024

⁸⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Report 2024: China](#) (Sec D2), March 2023

⁸⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁸⁷ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p88), 10 May 2024

⁸⁸ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p89), 10 May 2024

as 2014. During a speech at the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris, he said that even though Buddhism originated in India, it has indigenized over the centuries and now is firmly rooted in Chinese culture...⁸⁹

9.2.6 The CFR 2024 backgrounder highlighted: ‘China’s religious policy is inherently tied to political tensions across the Tibetan region, which comprises the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in neighboring provinces....’⁹⁰

9.2.7 In regard to state monitoring of registered religious groups, the China Aid 2024 annual report noted:

‘To monitor religious clergy, the CCP government established a “*Clergy Information Inquiry System*.” The inquiry systems for China’s Buddhist and Daoism clergy were activated on February 22,... These inquiry systems are made available to the public on the internet, providing seven pieces of information about religious clergy, i.e., name, gender, photo, religious belief, denomination, role/status, and ID number. A person can only make an inquiry after entering required mobile phone verification code and photo verification code and meeting the system’s inquiry requirements. If the inquired person is found in the system and officially recognized as a member of religious clergy, the system will display the person’s information. If a religious person cannot be found in the system, the system will show “The information of this person cannot be found.”’⁹¹

9.2.8 The September 2024, USCIRF factsheet stated:

‘Chinese authorities attempt to exert total control over religion through an extensive, complicated web of state laws, regulations, and policies that the CCP and various government agencies enforce. At the center of the CCP’s institutional control of religion are seven state-controlled national religious organizations, often referred to as “patriotic religious associations,” and their local branches. [The 3 non-Christian ones are] ... the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), the Chinese Taoist Association (CTA)... and the Islamic Association of China (IAC).’⁹²

For more information on state treatment of registered Muslims see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#)

9.2.9 The annual Freedom in the World 2024 report (FH 2024 China report), published in March 2024, assessed the rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals in China from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023. The report was produced by in-house and external analysts who used a range of sources from news articles to on-the-ground research to inform the report⁹³. The FH 2024 China report noted:

‘The party-state operates a multifaceted apparatus to control all aspects of religious activity, including by vetting religious leaders for political reliability, placing limits on the number of religious authorities such as priests and

⁸⁹ CFR, [China Is Reversing Its Crackdown on Some Religions, but Not All](#), 14 May 2024

⁹⁰ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Tibetan Buddhism), 15 May 2024

⁹¹ ChinaAid, ChinaAid’s Annual Persecution Report 2023 (p2), 1 March 2024

⁹² USCIRF, [Sinicization of Religion: China’s Coercive Religious Policy](#), September 2024

⁹³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Research Methodology](#), undated

imams, requiring ideological conformity within religious doctrine, and installing security cameras inside religious establishments. The state recognizes Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Taoism. All religious groups must go through a rigorous process of certification to be officially recognized; those that refuse are labelled illegal and persecuted. Thousands of Buddhist, Taoist, and folk-religion temples and house churches across China were completely or partially demolished by authorities in recent years.⁹⁴ The FH 2024 report did not provide a breakdown of how many temples were demolished or details of when these events occurred. In addition, the FH 2024 report did not state whether the 'thousands' of temples and house churches were registered or not and no information was provided on how those who refuse to register are 'persecuted' or the number of those who are unregistered who are 'persecuted'.

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9.3 Unregistered religious groups

9.3.1 The DFAT 2021 China report stated:

'Professor Fenggang Yang of Purdue University describes religious groups as operating in a 'red', 'grey' or 'black' market. The red market groups are the officially sanctioned churches, such as the 'patriotic associations', the name used for officially sanctioned organisations that represent the five recognised religions. Grey markets include unofficial but tolerated (to a degree) religious gatherings. Black markets include underground movements and xie jiao. Some home congregations were originally in the black market but moved to the grey market with increased tolerance over decades. But the recent crackdown to 'sinicise' religions is reversing this trend. Those groups that are allowed to exist are subject to close monitoring. CCTV cameras may be installed in religious buildings to monitor congregations and virtual platforms used by religious groups to meet may be monitored or censored.'⁹⁵

9.3.2 The same DFAT 2021 report noted 'Religious groups that refuse to bring themselves under the authority of state-sanctioned religious organisations face being shut down. Some religious leaders have faced charges like subversion of state power...Although centrally organised, the situation for religions varies from place to place and is influenced by the actions and motivations of local authorities.'⁹⁶

9.3.3 The CECC 2023 report noted: 'Members of unregistered and sensitive religious groups faced increased repression during the lead-up to the 20th Party Congress [in 2022].'⁹⁷

9.3.4 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted: '...NGOs reported that the government continued to pressure unregistered religious groups to join state-sanctioned patriotic religious associations or disband, subjecting their leaders to arrests

⁹⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World Report 2024: China](#) (Sec D2), March 2023

⁹⁵ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People's Republic...](#) (Para 3.25), 22 December 2021

⁹⁶ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People's Republic...](#) (Para 3.24), 22 December 2021

⁹⁷ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p90) 10 May 2024

and harassment...⁹⁸

9.3.5 The same report continued:

‘...The government does not permit unregistered charitable groups to raise funds openly, hire employees, open bank accounts, or own property. According to several unregistered religious groups, the government requires faith-based charities to obtain official cosponsorship [sic] of their registration application from the local official religious affairs bureau. Authorities often require these groups to affiliate with one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations.’⁹⁹

9.3.6 The same report stated: ‘...In addition to the five officially recognized religions, local governments may, at their discretion, permit followers of certain unregistered religions to carry out religious practices.’¹⁰⁰

9.3.7 Regarding specific examples of state treatment of unregistered religious groups, the same report noted:

‘Religious rights advocacy groups and media reported the government continued to prohibit or hinder the activities of religious groups not affiliated with the state-sanctioned religious associations, including unregistered ...Buddhists and others. At times, authorities said they shuttered a gathering because the group or its activities were unregistered; at other times, the place of worship lacked necessary permits. Local authorities tacitly allowed some unregistered groups to operate, but in other cases, authorities required unregistered religious groups to disband, leaving their congregants with the sole option of attending services under a state-sanctioned religious leader.’¹⁰¹

9.3.8 The same report added:

‘Authorities continued to arrest and otherwise detain leaders and members of religious groups, often those connected with groups not registered with the state-sanctioned religious associations. Authorities reportedly used vague or insubstantial charges, sometimes in connection with religious activity, to convict and sentence leaders and members of religious groups to years in prison. Due to the lack of transparency regarding law enforcement’s persecution of religious followers, estimates of those imprisoned during the year for their religious beliefs ranged from the low thousands to more than 10,000.’¹⁰² The source did not break this information down into specific religious groups affected.

9.3.9 The USSD RIRF 2023 report stated: ‘...The government prosecuted unregistered clergy for “fraud.” ...’¹⁰³

9.3.10 For more information on state treatment of unregistered Christian groups see the [Country Policy and Information Note China: Christians](#)

9.3.11 In the sources consulted, CPIT could not find any official or unofficial

⁹⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

⁹⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁰⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁰¹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁰² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁰³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Exec Summ), 26 June 2024

statistics on the numbers of unregistered groups currently operating in China. (See [Bibliography](#))

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9.4 Cults (xie jiao) and banned groups

9.4.1 Sources provide information on illegal religious groups known as xie jiao or 'cults'. Sources often refer to 'cults' collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, this note refers to and considers the treatment of each group discretely. Most information focuses on Christian groups and the practice of Falun Gong. For more information on 'cults' generally and for those linked to Christianity see the Country Policy and Information Note China: Christians See also [Country Policy and Information Note China: Falun Gong](#)

9.4.2 The DFAT 2021 China report noted:

'Some new religious movements, known as xie jiao, are illegal in China. The Criminal Law provides for prison sentences of up to seven years for individuals who use 'superstitious sects, secret societies or evil religious organisations' to undermine the state's laws or administrative regulations.

'Many xie jiao began as a formal expression of a syncretic mix of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism ('three religions in one') along with cultural practices, which from a Western perspective are sometimes difficult to separate from religious practices. Some later incorporated foreign religions into their mix of beliefs (especially Christianity and Islam, becoming 'five religions in one'). Many of these beliefs obscure these backgrounds and adherents might not recognise their new religious movement as influenced by other religions.

'There is a list of xie jiao but it can change quickly and is not available from official sources, making it difficult to determine at any time whether a particular religious movement is banned. ...

'One Chinese county government website from Shaanxi states that xie jiao often 'disguise themselves' or 'pretend to be religions' (such as Christianity or Buddhism) or a manifestation of science or ancient practices. Another city government website from Shantou in Guangdong says that xie jiao spread false teachings and heresy. The national government's 'anti xie jiao' website has articles about various groups, a section to help people find missing relatives and a place to report xie jiao activity. Membership of such groups is illegal and the profile of a person who is a member is not relevant to the chances of arrest once detected; a low profile worshipper in a xie jiao is still subject to arrest.'¹⁰⁴

9.4.3 The DFAT 2021 report added further:

'Yi Guan Dao (YGD, also: Tian Dao or I-Kuan Tao) is a syncretic Chinese religion combining elements of Buddhism, Confucianism and folklore...

'YGD beliefs may take different forms in different communities and might be influenced by different religions when established in different places around the world. Most practitioners are vegetarian. As with other xie jiao, the range

¹⁰⁴ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People's Republic...](#) (Para 3.53 – 3.56), 22 Dec 2021

of communities and propensity to split means that different adherents might have different beliefs.

‘While YGD continues to be prohibited in China, it is not included on the list of active cults released in 2017... The Dui Hua Foundation reports YGD followers in mainland China are likely to be concentrated in Guangdong and Fujian. The current status of the group is not clear, but data on court cases collected by Dui Hua found that arrests and imprisonment of members does occur, for example for proselytisation activities.

‘YGD is not as large as it used to be but reports of some attention by authorities continue. Members are not allowed to practise their religion freely. DFAT assesses that members of YGD face a moderate risk of official discrimination and a low risk of societal discrimination.’¹⁰⁵

- 9.4.4 On 7 May 2021, Bitter Winter, a religious and human rights focused magazine reported on the Gulou district “Love Home” centre, a facility which detains and ‘deprograms’ members of banned religious groups. The article stated:

‘...Gulou district’s “Love Home” is one of the oldest centers in the province where members of xie jiao (“heterodox teachings,” i.e., banned religious movements, sometimes less correctly translated as “evil cults”) are detained and deprogrammed.

‘Gulou district’s “Love Home” was established in 2009 and also train [sic] anti-xie-jiao volunteers. Xie jiao members are “transformed through education,” in the hope they will not only renounce their faith, but will become themselves active in the anti-xie-jiao propaganda. If the “transformation” is not successful, they will be sent back to jail.

‘While official propaganda insists that xie jiao members are “transformed” through education, love, and care, tales of brutality, threats, violence, and even torture in these deprogramming centers are frequent.’¹⁰⁶ Bitter Winter did not specify which xie jiao groups were detained, how many people were subjected to ill treatment and over which time period in the “Love Home” centre.

- 9.4.5 On 29 March 2022, The Dui Hua Foundation, a nonprofit humanitarian organisation¹⁰⁷, published its report Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China on the 29 March 2022, covering the period 1978 to 2022¹⁰⁸:

‘Due to a lack of recent reporting on Yi Guan Dao in China, some experts are skeptical about the extent of the group’s persecution or even its existence in China today, claiming that “it is unlikely that [they] still exist.” However, Yi Guan Dao practitioners continue to be at risk of imprisonment. Dui Hua’s research into court judgments found that three trials involving Yi Guan Dao leaders were concluded between 2018-2019 in Guangdong. These cases demonstrate that the group continues to gain adherents among the middle-aged rural population where prosecutors accuse Yi Guan Dao of

¹⁰⁵ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report: People’s Republic...](#) (Para 3.75 – 3.78), 22 Dec 2021

¹⁰⁶ Bitter Winter, [“Deprogrammed Cultists” Compelled to Sing...](#), 5 May 2021

¹⁰⁷ Dui Hua, [About Dui Hua](#), undated

¹⁰⁸ Dui Hua, [The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China](#) (p1), 29 Mar 2022

conducting “reactionary” activities.’¹⁰⁹

- 9.4.6 The Dui Hua 2022 report defined ‘unorthodox’ as a group which has a doctrine that has adjusted to the local contexts of believers, or a syncretic blend of elements from Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Chinese folklore, and/or overseas theologies, new religious movements, or contradict or criticise the state¹¹⁰. The definition did not specify whether unorthodox groups were banned or considered a cult. The Dui Hua 2022 report found that there were 7 Buddhist Groups which were categorised as unorthodox: Amitaba Buddhist Society, Guanyin Famen, Huazang Dharma Group, The Order of Holy Lord Maitreya Buddha, Secret School of Mind Recharge, True Buddha School and Yuanden Famen¹¹¹.
- 9.4.7 On 30 August 2022 Bitter Winter an online magazine on religious liberty and human rights in China published by the Center for Studies on New Religions, headquartered in Italy, published an article which reported the publication of a new unofficial list on 26 July 2022 which included 23 movements. Four of these were under Buddhist traditions including: the Guanyin Method of Supreme Master Ching Hai, the True Buddha School, Yuandunfamen, and Huazang Zongmen¹¹².
- 9.4.8 The same Bitter Winter report explained:
‘The Guanyin Method, or Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association, was founded by Vietnamese spiritual master Hue Thi Thanh (Ching Hai). It is a global movement with some two million followers worldwide, which combines Buddhism with the Indian Radhasoami tradition... Yuandunfamen, ...[it] is a new entry [on the list]... Huazang Zongmen... [founded by] Wu Zeheng teaches what looks like traditional Zen Buddhism but has advocated political reform and the end of state control of Buddhism. He [Wu Zeheng] was repeatedly arrested, and jailed for life on charges of rape that international organization and the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have regarded as trumped up.’¹¹³ In sources consulted (see Bibliography) no further information could be found on Wu Zheng’s case after the imposition of the custodial sentence in 2015¹¹⁴
- 9.4.9 The Freedom House 2023 Freedom in the World report, covering events in 2022 in China, noted:
‘The government has expanded the use of mobile “transformation” units, which subject members of illegal religious groups to severe psychological and physical torture intended to force them to “transform” by renouncing their religious beliefs. Thousands of members of such illegal groups are also sentenced to long prison terms and illegal forms of detention, in which torture and ill-treatment are routine...’¹¹⁵ The FH 2023 report did not specify which illegal religious groups were subject to the use of mobile transformation unit or provide exact numbers on how many people were

¹⁰⁹ Dui Hua, [The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China](#) (p38), 29 Mar 2022

¹¹⁰ Dui Hua, [The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China](#) (p4-5), 29 Mar 2022

¹¹¹ Dui Hua, [The Persecution of Unorthodox Religious Groups in China](#) (p29-34), 29 Mar 2022

¹¹² Bitter Winter, [Xie Jiao: China Updates the List—With Some New Entries](#), 30 August 2022

¹¹³ Bitter Winter, [Xie Jiao: China Updates the List—With Some New Entries](#), 30 August 2022

¹¹⁴ The Diplomat, [The Detention of Wu Zeheng](#), 4 February 2017

¹¹⁵ FH, [Freedom in the World 2023: China](#) (Sec D2), March 2023

subject to this treatment. In addition, the FH 2024 report did not provide any further update or information on state treatment of illegal religious groups¹¹⁶.

9.4.10 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted:

‘The law bans certain religious or spiritual groups. Criminal law defines banned groups as “cult [xie jiao] organizations” and provides for criminal prosecution of individuals belonging to such groups and punishment of up to life in prison. There are no published criteria for determining or procedures for challenging such a designation. Criminal law prohibits “organizing and using a sect, cult, or superstition to undermine implementation of the law.” Violations carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.’¹¹⁷

9.4.11 The same report stated: ‘According to reports, the government maintained a near-ubiquitous system of high-technology surveillance of religious sites and expanded use of local party cadres to surveil neighbors and report “cult-related activities, illegal preaching, and other political and security risks.”’¹¹⁸

9.4.12 The CFR 2024 report stated:

‘Several religious and spiritual groups that fall outside the CCP’s officially recognized religions, dubbed “heterodox cults” by Beijing, are subject to regular government crackdowns. The party-state has banned more than a dozen such faiths on the grounds that adherents use religion “as a camouflage, deifying their leading members, recruiting and controlling their members, and deceiving people by molding and spreading superstitious ideas, and endangering society.”’¹¹⁹ The specific examples provided by CFR related to Christian-inspired groups and Falun Gong.

For more information on banned Christian groups see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Christians](#) and for more information on Falun Gong see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Falun Gong](#)

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10. State treatment of specific religious groups

10.1 Folk religions

10.1.1 The Pew Research Center 2023 report noted:

‘In 2015, the Chinese government issued, for the first time, a national document urging local governments to regulate folk religion and its sites. However, registration requirements for folk religion sites vary widely by province. For instance, in Guangdong province, any folk religion site seeking to register must have a minimum building area of 500 square meters (5,382 square feet), while in Hunan province, the requirement is just 50 square meters...’¹²⁰

10.1.2 The same report added: ‘...folk religion sites – which are mostly shrines and temples– are not tracked closely by the government since folk religion is not one of China’s five official religions and does not have its own supervisory

¹¹⁶ FH, [Freedom in the World 2024: China](#), March 2024

¹¹⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹¹⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Exec Sum), 26 June 2024

¹¹⁹ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Banned Religious Groups), 15 May 2024

¹²⁰ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 August 2023

agency.’¹²¹

- 10.1.3 The Union of Catholic Asian News (UCA News), described as the ‘leading independent Catholic media service from Asia’¹²², in its article dated 1 September 2023 reported: ‘Authorities in several Chinese provinces have banned traditions and worship systems associated with the Hungry Ghost festival, a major folk religious celebration, calling them “uncivilized.”...Local governments in other places have also issued notices banning the traditions... Media reports say many people have opposed the attempt to change traditional ways, despite the government's claim that they are “feudal superstitions.”’¹²³
- 10.1.4 The same UCA article stated: ‘The move also comes against the backdrop of a campaign by the ruling Chinese Communist Party under Xi Jinping to encourage cremation rather than elaborate burials in expensive plots with good feng shui or Chinese geometry. The district government in Guangzhou's Baiyun district called on party members and officials to lead the way and asked them to “change people's ideas, break with bad traditions and start a new trend.”’¹²⁴
- 10.1.5 Radio Free Asia, described as operating ‘...under a [US] Congressional mandate to deliver uncensored, domestic news and information to China, Tibet, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma, among other places in Asia with poor media environments and few, if any, free speech protections.’¹²⁵, article on 28 March 2024 reported:
- ‘Authorities in some parts of China have announced a ban on the burning of “ghost money” and other paper offerings for departed loved ones ahead of the annual grave-tending festival of Qingming next week, calling the practice “feudal superstition” and sparking an outcry on social media. Bans on the burning of “ghost money” and on the sale of “superstitious feudal” goods have been issued by authorities in the northern city of Tianjin, in Nenjiang city in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang and in Nantong city in the eastern province of Jiangsu, among other locations, the party-backed Legal Daily newspaper reported on March 27... The Nantong ban warned of fines, administrative sentences and even criminal prosecutions for those found breaking the new rules.’¹²⁶
- 10.1.6 The USSD RIRF 2023 report noted ‘...in some instances, it [the Chinese government] withheld social welfare benefits from individuals who refused to reject folk religions...’¹²⁷
- 10.1.7 The CFR 2024 expert brief reported:
- ‘...Some of these folk religious sites get direct government support. Borrowing terminology from UNESCO, Beijing has designated many cultural practices as “intangible cultural heritage.” The designation often involves a

¹²¹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (2. Confucianism, Taoism...), 30 Aug 2023

¹²² UCA News, [About us](#), undated

¹²³ UCA News, [Dismay over China's clampdown on folk religious practices](#), 1 September 2023

¹²⁴ UCA News, [Dismay over China's clampdown on folk religious practices](#), 1 September 2023

¹²⁵ Radio Free Asia, [Mission](#), undated

¹²⁶ RFA, [Chinese cities ban burning of 'ghost money' ahead of grave festival](#), 28 March 2024

¹²⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

small subsidy, such as to a master of Sichuan cuisine, Mongolian throat singing, or traditional papercutting. But the state also supports folk religious practices just by giving them intangible cultural heritage status... One such practice is the temple fair held each spring on Miaofengshan, a mountain west of Beijing... Over the past decade, however, state support for the fair has increased. Many of the pilgrimage associations are now designated as intangible cultural heritage, as is the entire pilgrimage to Miaofengshan. That translates into government money to renovate the temple, police to help guide crowds, and firefighters to make sure the vast amounts of incense burned don't spark a fire. It also means positive media coverage and, for the association, money to hire buses to the temple.¹²⁸

- 10.1.8 The 2024 CFR backgrounder noted: '...the number of Chinese adults who practice religion or hold religious belief is likely much higher because many believers do not follow organized religion and are said to practice traditional folk religion. These practitioners, along with members of underground house churches and banned religious groups, account for many of the country's unregistered believers... folk religions are treated more leniently by the party compared to "foreign" religions, such as Islam or Christianity.'¹²⁹
- 10.1.9 The same CFR backgrounder noted that 'According to CFR Senior Fellow Ian Johnson, author of *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*, "hundreds, if not thousands, of folk religious temples are unregistered," but are tolerated.'¹³⁰

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10.2 Buddhism

- 10.2.1 The Pew Research Center 2023 China report noted: '...some [Buddhist] temple managers may have little incentive to register because local authorities often permit unregistered Buddhist temples to operate normally (even though they crack down on unregistered churches).'131
- 10.2.2 Pew Research Center's 23 October 2023 article detailing China's policies on religion noted: 'China treats Buddhism – particularly Han Buddhism, the most widespread branch in the country – more leniently than Christianity or Islam. Xi frequently praises Han Buddhists for having integrated Confucian, Daoist and other traditional Chinese beliefs and practices.'¹³²
- 10.2.3 On 3 August 2023 Radio Free Asia published an article regarding the updated religious venue regulations and sinicisation policies. It included information from a Buddhist monk Shi Daoguo:
- "Buddhism is a religion of wisdom, which should train people to think independently," he [Shi Daoguo] said. "But sinicized Buddhism is just a form of organizational brainwashing in disguise." "It can't lead people to free or independent thought."

¹²⁸ CFR, [China Is Reversing Its Crackdown on Some Religions, but Not All](#), 14 May 2024

¹²⁹ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Chinese Buddhism and Folk Religions), 15 May 2024

¹³⁰ CFR, [Religion in China](#) (Chinese Buddhism and Folk Religions), 15 May 2024

¹³¹ Pew Research Center, [Measuring Religion in China](#) (Buddhism), 30 August 2023

¹³² Pew Research Center, [10 things to know about China's policies on religion](#), 23 October 2023

‘Shi Daoguo said he is already under close surveillance by local officials, who have cut off his religious credentials and his income after he started to speak out against the sinicization of his religion.

‘All of my documentation has been revoked, and my phone is being monitored,” he said. “They [local officials/government] can cripple you financially, making it very difficult for you ... without any formal affiliation with a religious venue or any donations, there is no income.”...¹³³

10.2.4 Regarding the effect of Sinicisation policies on Buddhism, the CECC 2023 report stated:

‘The Chinese Communist Party and government’s relationship with Buddhist and Taoist groups has continued to reflect the tension between appropriation of these groups by PRC leadership and coercive control, both of which infringe on the ability of these religious groups to exercise their freedom of religion in accordance with international standards. Consistent with the Party and central government’s “sinicization” policy, PRC officials have embraced Taoist and Buddhist groups that are perceived as serving the Party’s agenda, closely regulating them to ensure they continue to do so. To this end, in February 2023, Xinhua reported that the Buddhist Association of China (BCA) and the Taoist Association of China had launched a searchable online database of Buddhist and Taoist religious personnel indicating who is permitted to participate in state-sanctioned religious activities, citing concerns about “fraud.” One Buddhist monk said that, because he did not appear in the database, he would not be able to register with a temple or participate in any religious activities. PRC authorities have also continued to seek closer alignment of Buddhist and Taoist religious identity with the Party and government’s conception of China’s national identity, emphasizing the Chinese character of these faiths and guarding against “outside influence”...¹³⁴

See also [Taoism/Daoism](#)

10.2.5 On 4 April 2024, Hindustan Times, described as ‘...a comprehensive news portal...ranked as India’s leading news website...’¹³⁵, article noted:

‘Beijing, China has held a major conference of influential Asian Buddhist monks where its top monk has affirmed that Beijing has played a “pivotal role” in the promotion of Buddhism globally... In recent decades, the ruling Communist Party of China has permitted the Sinicised or Chinese version of Buddhism to be practised at home Beijing also seeks to project it globally as part of its efforts to tap into Buddhism’s global influence... China as part of its promotion of Buddhism made Sanskrit and Buddhist studies as part of academic courses in its prominent universities....’¹³⁶

10.2.6 USCIRF produce the Frank R Wolf Freedom of Religion or belief ‘Victims List’, which records victims targeted due to their religion or belief and includes those currently detained, those released, those who have died in custody and those whose whereabouts are unknown. According to the

¹³³ RFA, [China steps up political control over religious venues, sermons and activities](#), 3 Aug 2023

¹³⁴ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p90), 10 May 2024

¹³⁵ Hindustan Times, [First voice, last word](#), undated

¹³⁶ Hindustan Times, [China played 'pivotal role' in promotion of Buddhism globally...](#), 4 April 2024

website the list is compiled using USCIRF ongoing monitoring, communication with those affected and organisations that focus on religious freedom¹³⁷. USCIRF noted that: ‘... due to the policies of foreign governments and the lack of independent news and human rights organizations in the countries represented in this database, it is difficult to obtain, confirm, and verify comprehensive information about all victims.’¹³⁸

- 10.2.7 At the time of writing, the list recorded the details of one Buddhist (sect unspecified/other) Wu Aping detained since July 2022 on a public disorder charge¹³⁹ and provided the following details of detention:

‘In July 2022, authorities in Xuanwu district, Nanjing municipality, Jiangsu province, detained Wu after raiding Xuanzang Temple. The raid followed reports on social media that the temple had on display memorial tablets, for which Wu had paid, dedicated to Japanese war criminals who took part in the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. In Wu's televised confession, she said she had purchased the tablets in an attempt to “resolve grievances” and “relieve suffering.” Wu was criminally detained for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”’¹⁴⁰

- 10.2.8 Regarding the arrest of Wu Aping, the CECC 2023 report noted:

‘Following the incident, the BCA and the National Religious Affairs Administration launched a nationwide campaign to “rectify” Buddhist temples, requiring that Buddhist institutions cultivate the “correct” perspective on national security, history, culture, national identity, and religion, with “zero tolerance of any behavior jeopardizing national interests and hurting national feelings,” leading some observers to posit that the incident is being used as a pretext for tightening ideological oversight of Buddhism at the national level.’¹⁴¹

- 10.2.9 The USSD RIRF 2023 report cited examples of the sinicisation of Buddhism in China:

‘The Guangdong Buddhist Association reported that in April [2023], it convened 60 local Buddhist leaders at the Jiangmen Guanyin Temple in Jiangmen City to discuss the Sinicization of Buddhism in Guangdong Province. According to an account of the conference published on the Jiangmen government website, participants agreed they should be guided by Xi Jinping’s “important exposition on religious work” and “lead Buddhist believers to focus their will and strength on the new journey of comprehensively building a socialist country.”

‘Tibet Press reported that on September 5 [2023], the state-run BAC [Buddhist Association of China] held a training course for 100 Buddhist leaders from all parts of the country, plus UFWD officials, at Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province, one of the country’s most sacred Buddhist sites. BAC president Master Yanjue urged participants to study and implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the CCP and Xi Jinping Thought. Attendees

¹³⁷ USCIRF, [About USCIRF's Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), undated

¹³⁸ USCIRF, [About USCIRF's Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), undated

¹³⁹ USCIRF, [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), undated

¹⁴⁰ USCIRF, [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#) (Wu Aping), undated

¹⁴¹ CECC, [2023 Annual Report](#) (p91), 10 May 2024

were also tasked with studying and implementing Xi's views on religious work. Tibet Press noted Buddhism has existed in China for millennia and said the training course "was not aimed at preserving or enhancing the existing harmony between Buddhism and Chinese culture. Instead, it was yet another step in the CCP's campaign to reframe Chinese Buddhism in its own image." According to Tibet Press, the CCP's Sinicization effort "raises concerns about the erosion of the unique spiritual identity of Chinese Buddhism, which has evolved over centuries. Monastic traditions, meditation practices, and philosophical teachings may be subsumed under the umbrella of party ideology. Moreover, the risk of religious persecution and suppression looms large. The CCP's efforts to exert control over religious institutions and beliefs can stifle the freedom of religious expression, undermining the very essence of Buddhism as a path to spiritual enlightenment."

'State media reported that at an event marking the seventieth anniversary of the BAC in October, Politburo Standing Committee member and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Wang Huning called for developing Buddhist teachers who were "politically reliable" and said the Buddhist community must guide religious believers to "continuously enhance identification with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party, and socialism with Chinese characteristics."¹⁴²

10.2.10 The USSD RIRF 2023 report added: 'National laws allow each provincial administration to issue its own regulations concerning religious affairs, including penalties for violations. In addition to the five officially recognized religions, local governments may, at their discretion, permit followers of certain unregistered religions to carry out religious practices.'¹⁴³

10.2.11 The September 2024 USCIRF factsheet noted:

'The Chinese government has not spared perceived traditional and majority ethnic Han Chinese religious groups like Chinese Buddhists and Taoists from sinicization. Authorities have destroyed temples, posted CCP slogans on temple grounds, and ordered the removal or destruction of statues and religious architecture from temples. Any religious activity viewed as directly contradicting the CCP's vision for patriotic activity could lead to criminal and/or administrative punishments.'¹⁴⁴ The examples provided are from incidents reported by Bitter Winter in 2019 and 2020

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10.3 Taoism/Daoism

See also information on Taoism which is combined with information on Buddhism from the CECC 2023 report paragraph 10.2.4 of this note.

10.3.1 On 8 August 2023, Bitter Winter reported:

'On July 25 and 26, 2023, the government-controlled [China Daoist Association](#), in cooperation with the Shanghai Taoist Association, the

¹⁴² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁴³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁴⁴ USCIRF, [Sinicization of Religion: China's Coercive Religious Policy](#) (p3), September 2024

Shanghai City God Temple, and the Mingdao Taoist Culture Research Institute of East China Normal University co-organized in Shanghai “[Taoism](#) on the Sea: The First Forum on the Theory and Practice of [Sinicization](#) of [Taoism](#).”...Chen Chang, director of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Affairs, told the delegates that [Taoism](#) needs to be “rectified” and subject to a “modern transformation.” Meng Zhiling, Vice President of the [China Daoist Association](#), said that [Taoism](#) always survived by “adapting itself to the times,” and is now called once again to put itself in harmony with the new times. Lu Zheng, a representative of the [United Front Work Department](#), reminded the audience that “[Sinicization](#) of religion” is “a new requirement for religious work since the [2012] 18th National Congress of the [CCP](#).”

‘Representatives of dozens of leading Taoist temples from all over the country attended the conference. They were trained through several workshops to offer in their temples “educational activities on the theme of loving the Party, loving the country and loving socialism, learning the history of the Party, the history of New China, the history of [Deng Xiaoping’s] reform and opening up, the history of socialist development, and the history of the [United Front](#).”’¹⁴⁵

- 10.3.2 The USSD 2023 RIRF China report noted: ‘The government reported officials and religious leaders in Fujian Province held several events during the year designed to promote the Sinicization of religion. State media reported that on May 31, the Fujian Taoist Association established an education center to promote the Sinicization of Taoism and encourage Taoists to “love the Party, the country, and socialism...”’¹⁴⁶
- 10.3.3 The BTI 2024 China report noted: ‘Among the officially recognized religions, Taoism is the least controlled.’¹⁴⁷ The BTI 2024 China report provided no further details about state treatment of Taoism in China.
- 10.3.4 On 29 August 2024 Bitter Winter reported ‘...Provincial “strict governance” training courses and conferences are being organized in August by the China Taoist Association. They also insist on the duty of the Taoist clergy to propagate and explain to the devotees the documents of the recent Third Plenum, presenting Xi Jinping as the “Great Reformer” and the heir of Deng Xiaoping’s “Reform and Opening Up,” and to continue with the “Sinicization” of Taoism.’¹⁴⁸
- 10.3.5 In regard to further examples of the Sinicisation of Taoism, on 20 September 2024 Bitter Winter reported at the opening ceremony for the 2024 freshman at the China Taoist College, the highest Taoist educational institution in China. According to Bitter Winter:

‘...[the college President Li Guangfu] stated that “China Taoist College has embraced the principles of patriotism and religion, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” The college, Li said, “has implemented the spirit of the 2021 National Religious

¹⁴⁵ Bitter Winter, [Even Taoists Are Being “Sinicized”: Shanghai Hosted...](#), 8 Aug 2023

¹⁴⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: China](#) (Sec II), 26 June 2024

¹⁴⁷ BTI, [China Country Report 2024](#) (Political Transformation), 19 March 2024

¹⁴⁸ Bitter Winter, [“Strict Governance of Religion” Implemented Among Taoists Too](#), 29 Aug 2024

Work Conference and the CCP Central Committee’s decisions on religious work, prioritizing political and ideological guidance, incorporating socialist core values in talent cultivation, and emphasizing ideological and political education in the first place.” Professor Jiang Shoucheng, as a representative of the external teachers, urged students to “expand their perspectives, strengthen their social responsibility and sense of history, and turn their knowledge into motivation and action.” Jiang encouraged the students “to promote the integration of Taoism with socialist society and contribute to the realization of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”¹⁴⁹

10.3.6 The September 2024 USCIRF factsheet reported:

‘...The 2023 Work Plan for the Sinicization of Taoism—a religion native to China—similarly emphasizes the need to “strengthen ideological and political learning and continuously improve political consciousness.” Accordingly, Taoists must carry out political education, cultivate patriotic feelings, conduct patriotic activities, and raise awareness of the Taoist community’s history of support for the CCP... CTA Chair Master Li Guangfu has emphasized sinicization and called on Taoist communities to be “patriotic,” underscoring the importance of loyalty to the CCP and China’s political system...’¹⁵⁰

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10.4 Islam and Uyghurs

10.4.1 For information on state treatment of Muslims see [Country Policy and Information Note China: Muslims \(including Uyghurs in Xinjiang\)](#)

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¹⁴⁹ Bitter Winter, [Taoist Seminary Places “Ideological and Political Education...”](#), 20 September 2024

¹⁵⁰ USCIRF, [Sinicization of Religion: China’s Coercive Religious Policy](#) (p3), September 2024

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal Framework
 - International Conventions
 - Constitution
 - Criminal law
 - Legislation
 - Religious regulations
- Religion in China
 - Religious demography
 - Folk religions
 - Buddhism
 - Tibetan Buddhism
 - Taoism/Daoism
 - Islam and Uighurs
- State attitude towards religious groups
 - Proselytising
 - Sinicisation
- Banned religious groups
- State treatment of religious groups
 - Folk religions
 - Buddhism
 - Tibetan Buddhism
 - Taoism/Daoism
 - Islam and Uighurs

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