

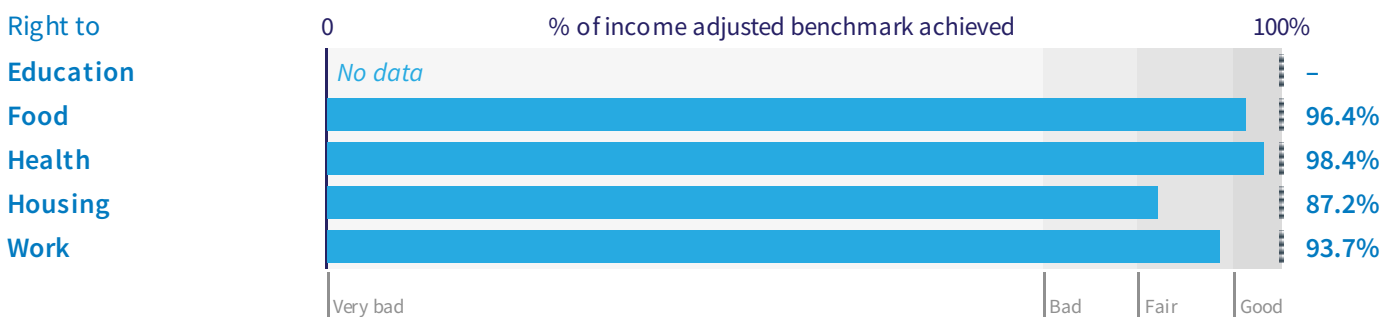
China

Quality of Life

Economic and Social Rights (2019)

Summary score **N/A**

How well is China doing compared to what is possible at its level of income?



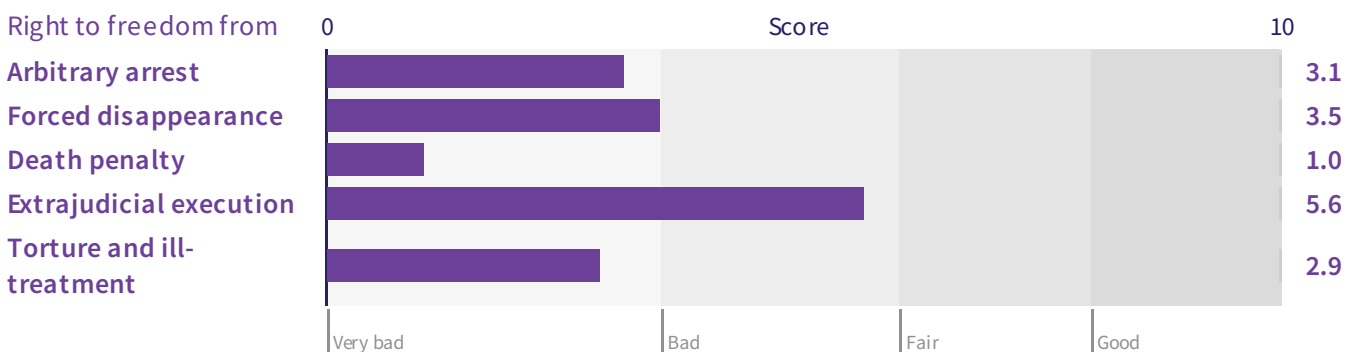
Compared with the other countries in East Asia, China is performing **better than average** when we look across the rights for which we have data (this comparison is calculated using the 'Income adjusted' benchmark).

Safety from the State

Civil and Political Rights (2021)

Summary score **2.8/10**

How well is China's government respecting each right?



China's Safety from the State score of **2.8 out of 10** suggests that many people are not safe from one or more of the following: arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment, forced disappearance, execution or extrajudicial killing.

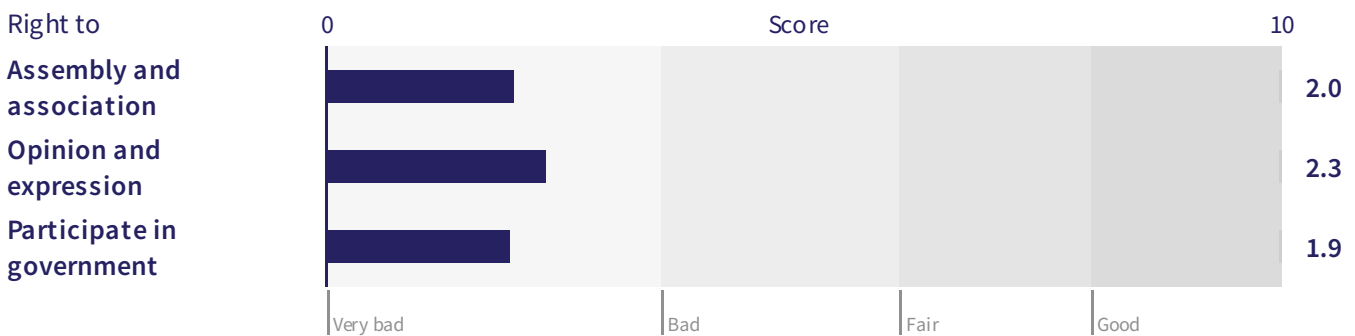
For the civil and political rights we do not have data for enough countries in East Asia and Pacific to do a regional comparison. However, compared to the other 39 countries in our sample, China is performing **worse than average** on the right to be safe from the state.

Empowerment

Civil and Political Rights (2021)

Summary score **2.1/10**

How well is China's government respecting each right?



China's Empowerment score of **2.1 out of 10** suggests that many people are not enjoying their civil liberties and political freedoms (freedom of speech, assembly and association, and democratic rights).

For the civil and political rights we do not have data for enough countries in East Asia and Pacific to do a regional comparison. However, compared to the other 37 countries in our sample, China is performing **worse than average** on empowerment rights.

Country details

Population

1,410.9m (2020)

GDP/capita

\$10,435 (2020) \$16,316 (2020)

current US dollars 2017 PPP dollars

To explore this country's scores in more detail please go to rightstracker.org

Behind the numbers

Quality of Life

China is performing better than average in economic and social rights compared with other East Asian countries, according to our income-adjusted benchmark, though it still has significant challenges. We produce scores for China for the rights to food, health, housing and work.

Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which China has signed, all countries agree to devote their maximum available resources to making things progressively better for their people in these areas.

HRMI has calculated what China could be achieving at its current level of income. The scores are given as a percentage of that realistic potential achievement.

China's best scores are for the **right to health**, where it is achieving 98.4% of what we calculate should be possible, and for the **right to food** (96.4%). For these rights, China is doing nearly as well as it possibly could, given its level of income. It could still afford to make some gains now, but then would need to increase its income to make further improvements.

Of the four quality of life rights we measure, China needs to improve the most in the **right to housing**, where it is currently achieving only 87.2% of what we calculate should be possible at its level of income.

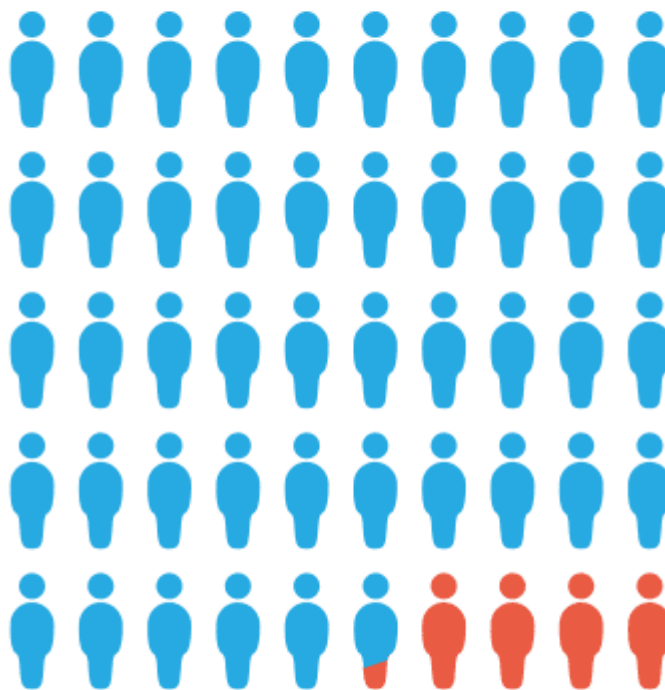
We further break the **right to housing** down into scores for the **right to sanitation** and the **right to water**.

With a GDP per capita of US\$10,144 we calculate that China has the resources to ensure all of its people have running water and toilets in their homes. The good news is that China's scores have been steadily improving since 2007, when the nation scored 74.5%.

However, China's **right to sanitation** score of 83.9% shows that many people are missing out, even though China could afford to do better. If China efficiently used its available resources, it could achieve a score of 100%, which would mean that over 129 million additional Chinese would gain access to basic sanitation in their homes.

How many people have access to at least basic sanitation in their homes?

1,270 million people already have access to **basic sanitation**



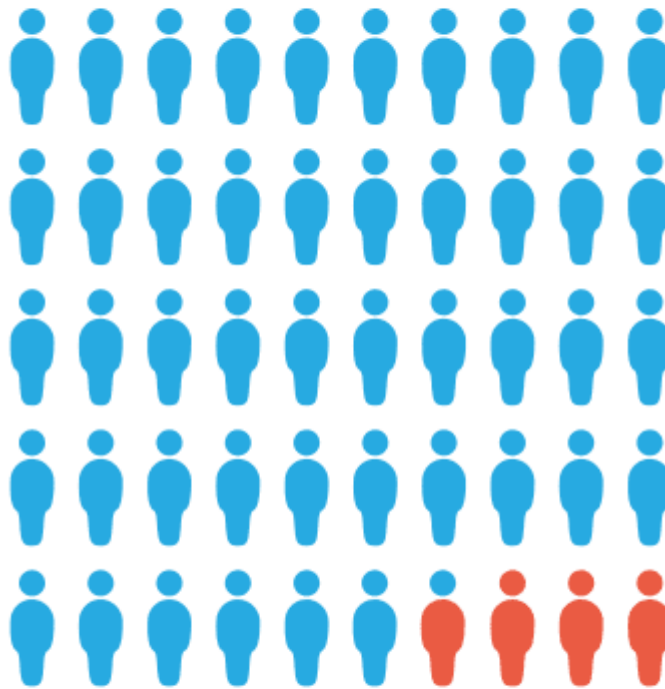
129 million more people could have access to **basic sanitation**

● Enjoying right ● = 28 million people
● Not enjoying right

If China improved its performance for the **right to water** from 90.6% to 100%, over 106 million more people would have water on their premises.

How many people have access to water on their premises?

1,292 million people already have access to **water** on premises



106 million more people could have access to **water** on premises

● Enjoying right ● = 28 million people
● Not enjoying right

When it comes to the **right to food**, if China lifted its score to 100%, over 2.5 million more children under five years old would have enough nutritious food to grow well – that would mean *all* children in China under five would have enough nutritious food to grow well. This is an achievable goal.

With a current score of 96.4%, China has improved only a little in respecting people’s **right to food** over the last 11 years.

On the **right to work**, China’s score has climbed up to 93.7% in 2019 from 62.2% in 2007, meaning many fewer people have been living in poverty over the last decade. Still, the latest score means 76 million Chinese are unnecessarily living in absolute poverty (living on less than \$3.20 per day, measured in 2011 PPP\$), and the government is only doing a ‘fair’ job at ensuring people have subsistence income.

China comes in second in the world in ensuring people’s **right to health** is fulfilled, with a score of 98.4%, when using the low and middle income assessment standard (when using the high income standard, China still comes in third in the world). For countries doing this well with their current level of income, an increase of income will be necessary to make significant further improvements. This is the right where China is most constrained by resources – for all of the other rights we measure, China should already be able to do nearly as well as any country in the world, at its current level of income.

People at risk

While China has room for improvement in all the rights we measure, a further consideration is inequity. There are several groups of people who our experts identified as being at higher risk of missing out. These include:

- People with lower social or economic status
- People from ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and Kazakhs
- Human rights advocates, protestors, and anyone who criticises the government
- People living in rural areas, particularly older people, and women
- Disabled people
- Detainees
- People from religious minorities, particularly those practising Falun Gong, Christianity, or Islam
- Internally displaced people

See the people at risk tab on the Rights Tracker for the full lists. The data also show a strong connection between political activity, especially criticism of the government, and lack of enjoyment of economic and social rights.

Room for improvement

All our Quality of Life scores show that China could make significant improvements to its people's lives, even without more resources.

If China were using its resources more efficiently to ensure its people's wellbeing, it could achieve 100% for all the rights we measure. Yet, while its best score is close to that mark—98.4% on the right to health — its worst score — 87.2% on the right to housing — is far from that level.

If China better upheld its rights obligations, and achieved a full 100% score on all the rights we measure, we would see millions more Chinese people living lives of dignity, even without income growth. For example, if China reached 100% we would see the following number of extra people benefitting:

- If China were to operate at its full potential given its current resources, we would expect an **additional 2.5 million children under five to grow well and not be stunted.**
- If China were operating at best practice, each year we would expect **an extra 56,900 newborn babies to survive until their fifth birthday.**
- If China were reaching its full potential, given its income constraints, **an extra 343,300 15-year-olds could eventually reach the age of 60.**
- If China used its resources efficiently, **an additional 129 million people could have a toilet at home, and an extra 109 million people could have access to water in their homes.**
- If China were operating at its full potential given its current resources, it could **lift 76 million people out of absolute poverty.**

Safety from the State

China scores 2.8 out of 10 for our overall **Safety from the State** category, telling us that many people are at risk of arbitrary or political arrest or detention, torture and ill-treatment, forced

disappearance, execution, or extrajudicial killing. This is one of the lowest scores in our sample of 31 countries.

China's worst score in this category is 1 out of 10 for **freedom from the death penalty**, the lowest score among all the countries we measure.

The human rights experts we surveyed said that agents of the state, particularly police, had total impunity to engage in torture of those detained.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that human rights advocates, protestors, and people who criticised the government were at particular risk of rights violations, especially arbitrary arrest and detention, forced disappearance, and torture and ill-treatment.

Survey respondents said that information about executions was deliberately obfuscated by the Chinese government, blurring the line between extrajudicial and judicial executions.

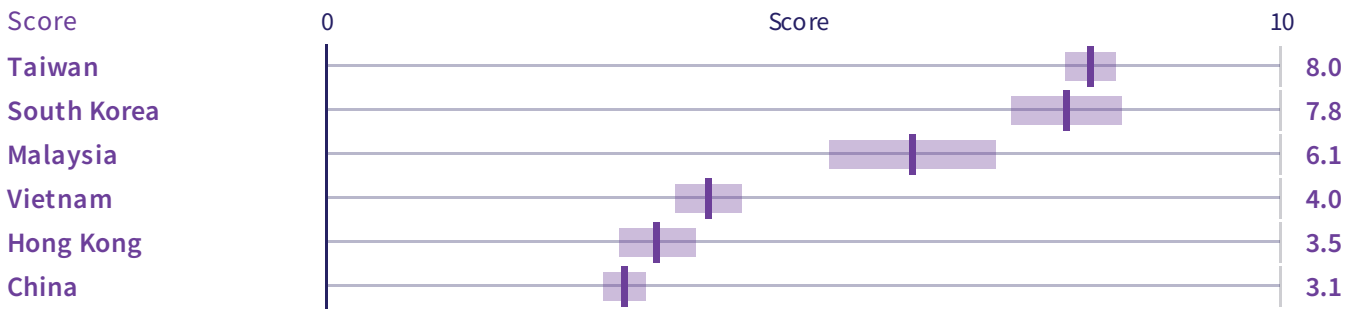
People from ethnic minorities were at extra risk of all five Safety from the State rights. Respondents noted that Uyghur people, and other ethnic minorities, were commonly detained incommunicado in concentration camps.

Other vulnerable groups include:

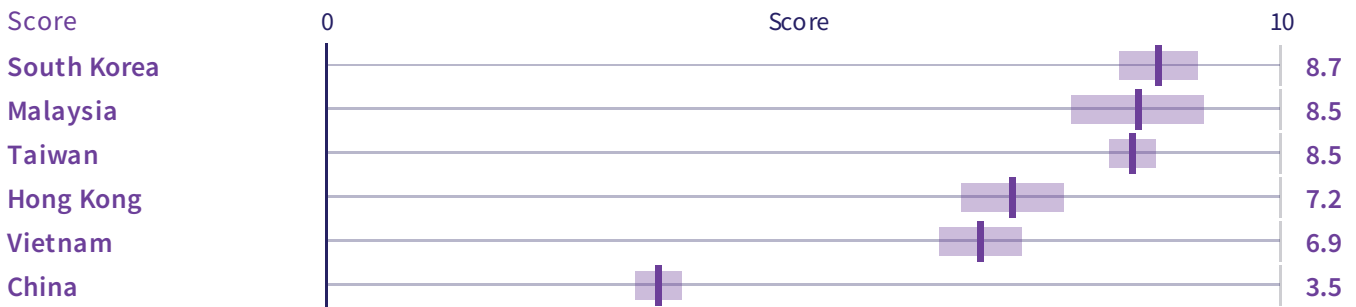
- People from ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and Kazakhs
- Human rights advocates, protestors, and anyone who criticises the government
- Detainees and those accused of crimes
- People from religious minorities, particularly those practising Falun Gong, Christianity, or Islam
- Internally displaced people
- People in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong

Among other East Asian countries and territories where we measure these rights, China has the lowest scores for all five Safety from the State rights.

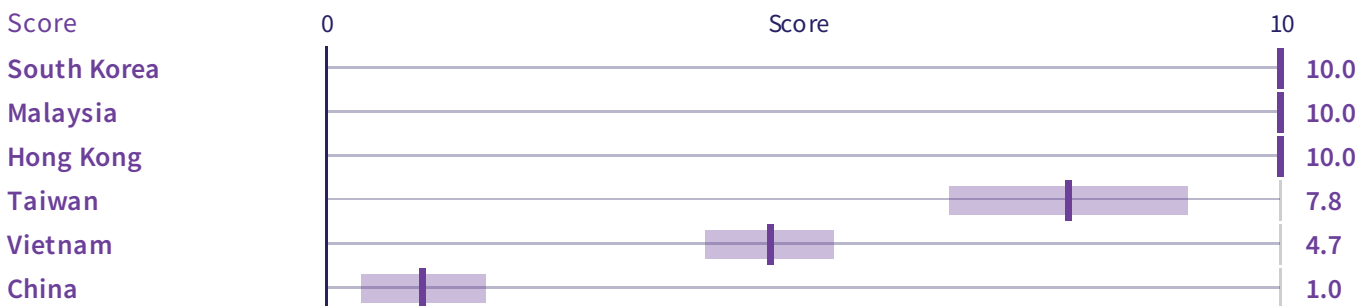
Right to Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Detention in East Asia



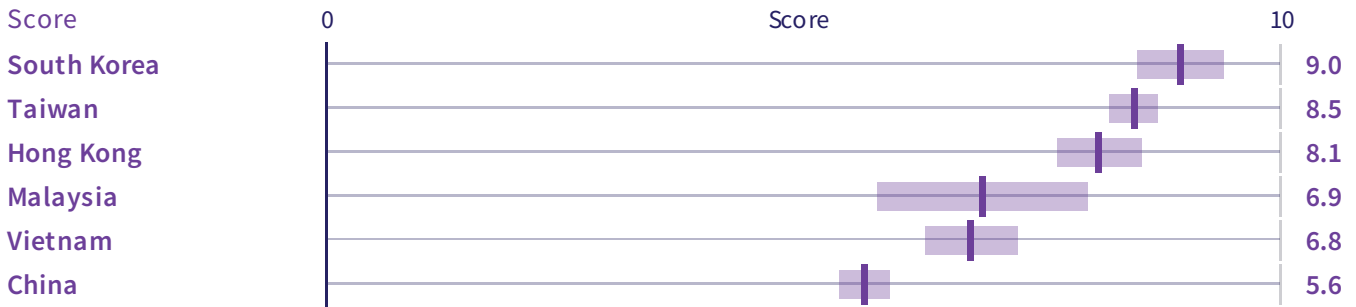
Right to Freedom from Forced Disappearance in East Asia



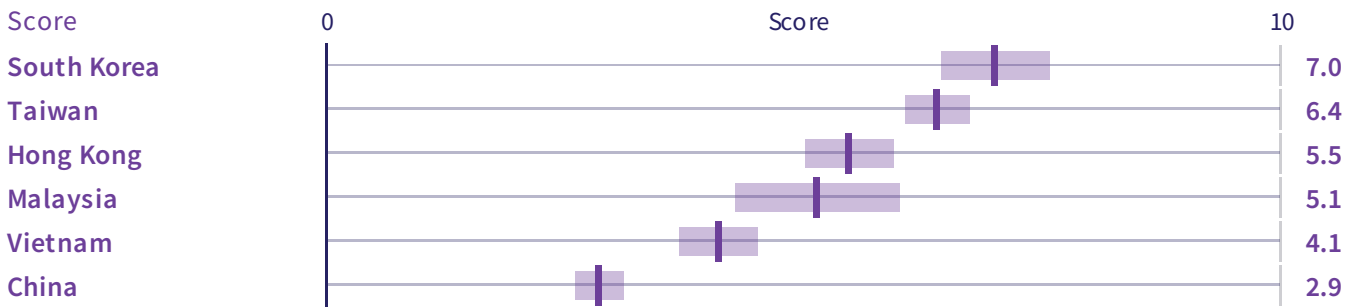
Right to Freedom from Death Penalty in East Asia



Right to Freedom from Extrajudicial Execution in East Asia



Right to Freedom from Torture and Ill-treatment in East Asia



Empowerment

The Chinese government limits civil liberties and political freedom, with China scoring a very low 2.1 out of 10 in empowerment rights. This is the lowest score in our sample of 30 countries.

For the **rights to assembly and association, opinion and expression, and participation in government**, all of China's scores fall into the 'very bad' range. For all three rights, the human rights experts we surveyed agreed overwhelmingly that 'all people' were at risk of violations of these rights.

When it comes to the **right to assembly and association**, China scores 2 out of 10, and human rights experts identified a wide range of people not enjoying their rights, including human rights advocates, protestors, and people criticising or opposing the government, as well as those from ethnic and religious minorities. They also noted that people from religious minorities cannot freely gather, and that even small gatherings in homes have been broken up by authorities.

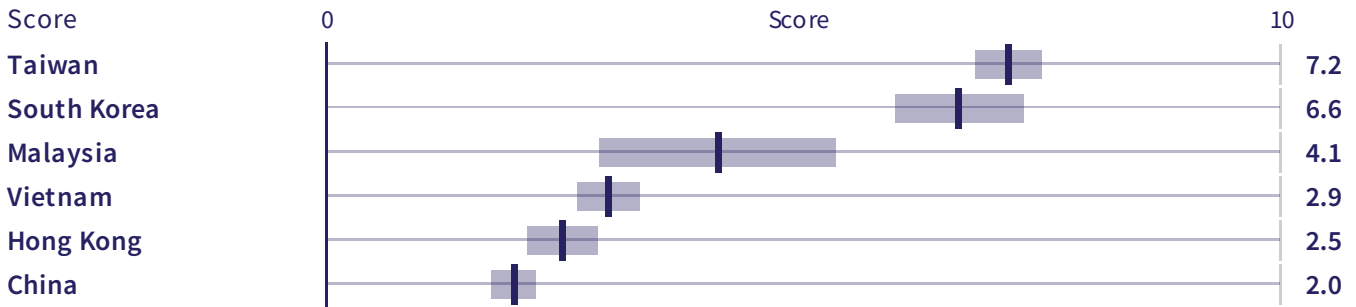
China's score for the **right to opinion and expression** is a very low 2.3 out of 10, with no improvement from 2021. Respondents noted that there are no independent media organisations allowed in China, and that teachers, academics, and journalists cannot speak freely. Expression is also limited online, where content is censored by Chinese regulators.

China also scores in the 'very bad' range for the **right to participate in government**, with a score of 1.9 out of 10. Respondents noted that political participation is controlled and severely limited by the Chinese Communist Party, which selects legislators and other political representatives.

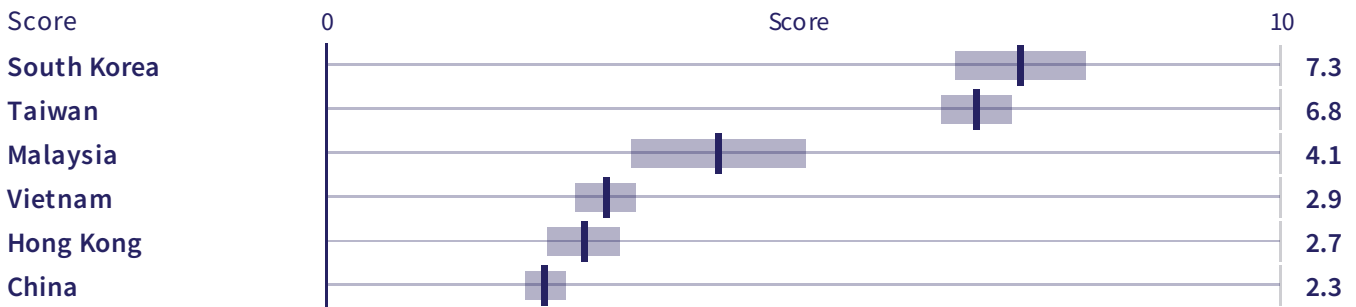
Other vulnerable groups include:

- People from ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and Kazakhs
- Human rights advocates, protestors, and anyone who criticises the government
- Detainees and those accused of crimes
- People from religious minorities, particularly those practising Falun Gong, Christianity, or Islam
- Internally displaced people
- People in Tibet and Xinjiang

Right to Assembly and Association in East Asia



Right to Opinion and Expression in East Asia



Right to Participate in Government in East Asia

