

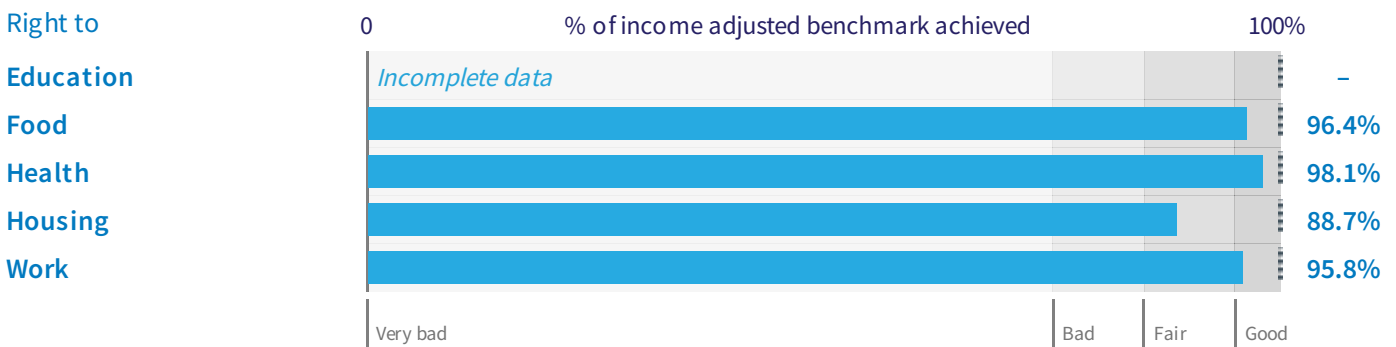
China

Quality of Life

Summary score N/A

Economic and Social Rights (2020)

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



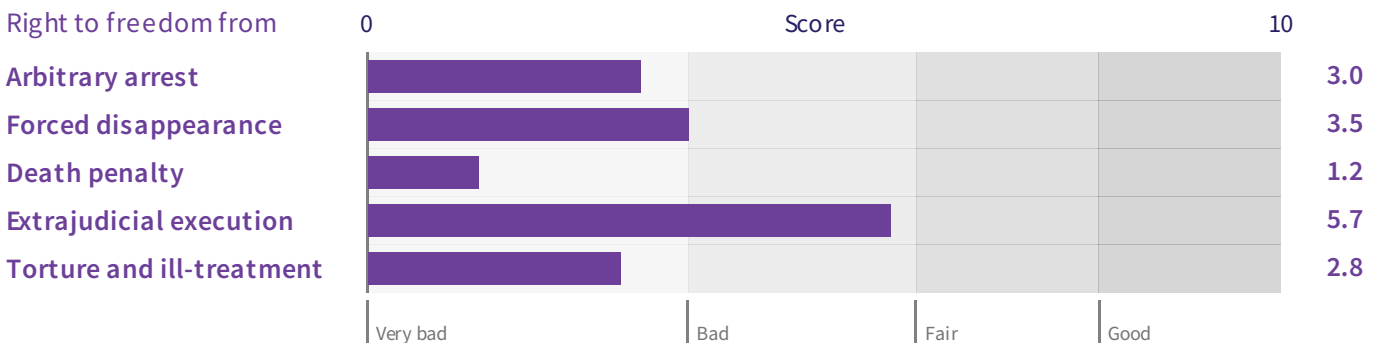
Compared with the other countries in East Asia, China is performing **better than average** when we look across the rights for which we have data (this comparison is calculated using the 'Income adjusted' benchmark).

Safety from the State

Summary score 2.8 / 10

Civil and Political Rights (2022)

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.

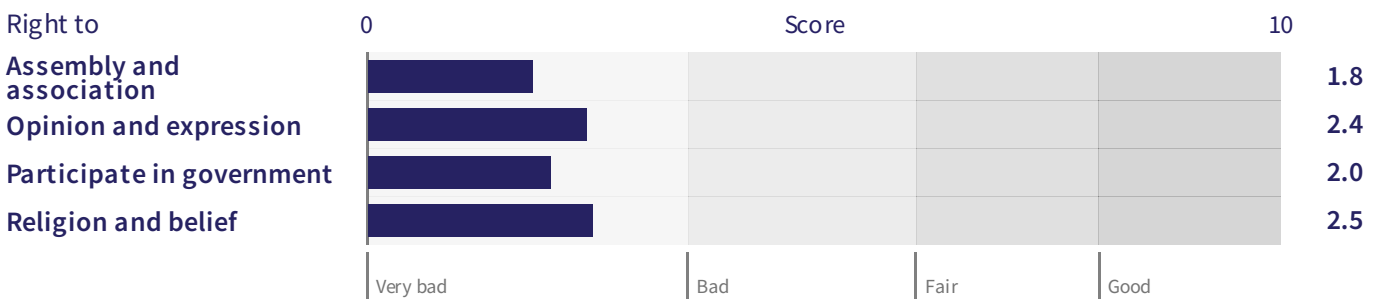
For the civil and political rights we do not have data for enough countries in East Asia and Pacific to do a regional comparison. However, compared to the other countries in our sample, China is performing **worse than average** on the right to be safe from the state.

Empowerment

Summary score **1.9 / 10**

Civil and Political Rights (2022)

How well is China's government respecting each right?



China's Empowerment score of **1.9 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 countries in our sample, China is performing **worse than average** on empowerment rights.

Country details

Population

1,412.4m (2021)

GDP/capita

\$12,556 (2021) \$17,603 (2021)
 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

Overall, 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 education, food, health, housing, and work.

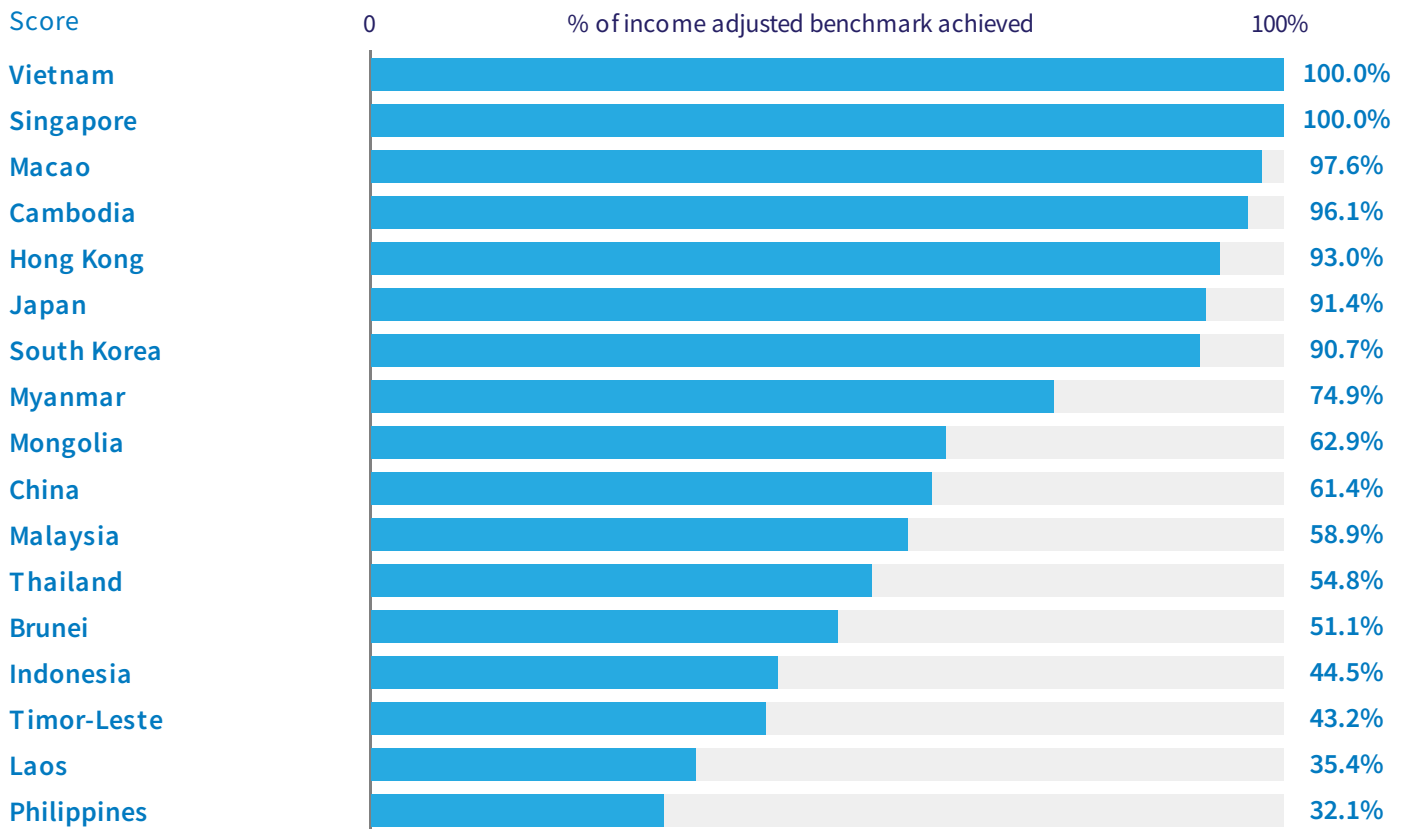
Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which China has signed, all countries agree to devote their maximum available resources to making things progressively better for their people in these areas.

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 98.1% 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 can, given its level of income. China could still afford to make some gains now, but then would need to increase its income to make further improvements.

Of the five quality of life rights we measure, China needs to improve the most in the **right to quality education**, where it scores 61.4%, which falls in the 'very bad' range. Among 17 East Asian countries, this score puts China in the bottom half for quality education, just below Mongolia and Myanmar, and just above Malaysia and Thailand.

Right to quality education in East and Southeast Asia



China’s other lower score is for the **right to housing**, where it is currently achieving only 88.7% of what we calculate should be possible at its level of income.

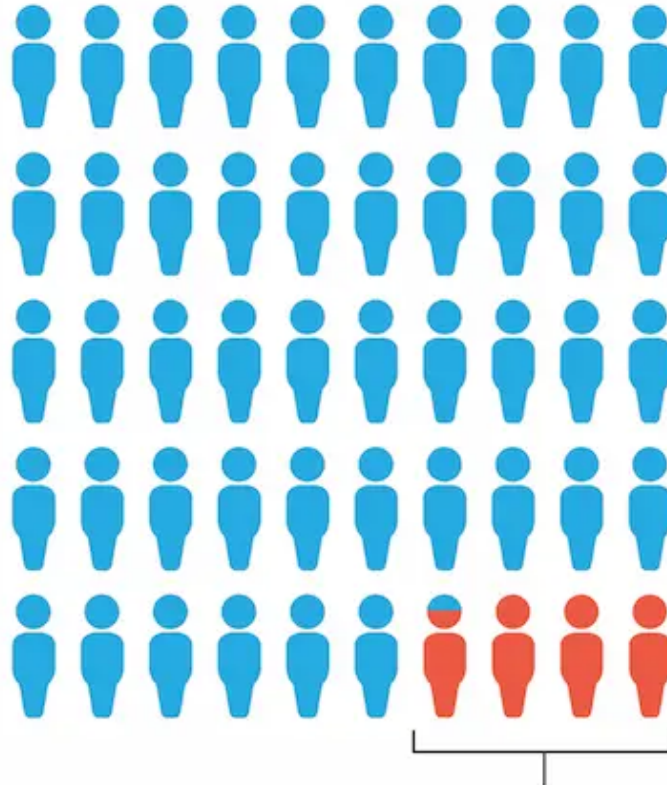
We further break the **right to housing** down into scores for the **right to sanitation** and the **right to water**.

With a GDP per capita of US\$12,556 we calculate that China has the resources to ensure all of its people have running water and toilets in their homes.

However, China’s **right to sanitation** score of 86.3% 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 108 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?

1,303 million people already have access to basic sanitation



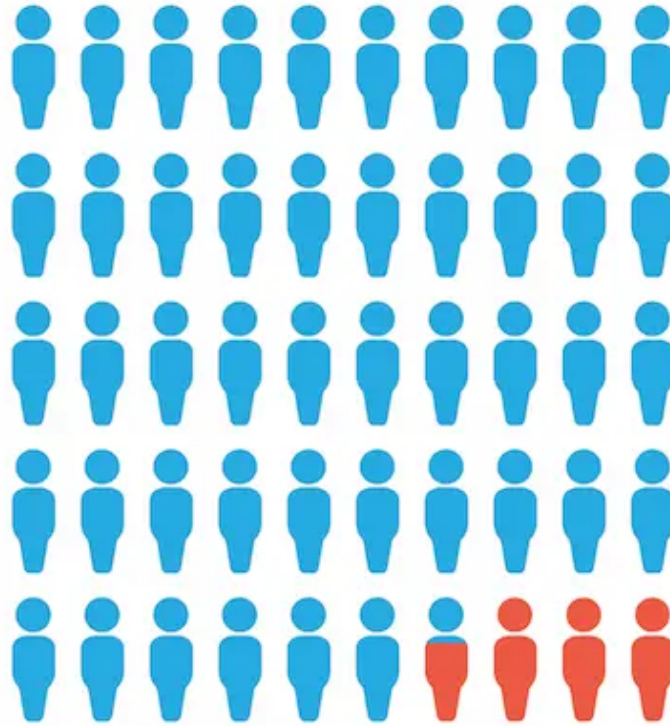
108 million more people could have access to basic sanitation

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

If China improved its performance for the **right to water** from 91% to 100%, 101 million more people would have water on their premises.

How many people have access to water on their premises?

1,310 million people already have access to water on premises



101 million more people could have access to water on premises

- Enjoying right
 - Not enjoying right
- 👤 = 28 million people

The good news is that China's scores for the **right to housing** have been steadily improving since 2001, when the nation scored 68.6%. The progress from 2019 to 2020 suggests around 28 million people gained access to basic sanitation over that period, and around five million people gained access to water in their homes. China's scores for the **right to sanitation** are rising more quickly than those for the **right to water**.

When it comes to the **right to food**, if China lifted its score to 100%, around 1.1 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 a little in respecting people's **right to food** over the last 20 years, with its score increasing from 86% in 2000.

On the **right to work**, China's score has climbed strongly up to 95.8% in 2020 from 34.6% in 2000, meaning many fewer people have been living in absolute poverty over the last two decades, and bringing it into the 'good' band of scores. Still, the latest score means 4 million Chinese are unnecessarily living in absolute poverty (living on less than \$3.65 per day, measured in 2017 PPP\$), so significant improvement is still possible and necessary.

However, for the **right to health**, expert respondents noted significant problems with air and water pollution, food safety, and the impacts of the government response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents also noted inequities in access to healthcare, including regional differences, and differences in access according to wealth and political influence.

China comes in second in the world in ensuring people's **right to health** is fulfilled, with a score of 98.1%, when using the low and middle income assessment standard (when using the high income standard, China still comes in fifth in the world, when taking countries' income into account). 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 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
- Single parent families
- People who are homeless
- Disabled people
- Detainees
- People from religious minorities, particularly those practising Christianity, Islam, or Falun Gong, or other unregistered religions
- 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 — 98.1% on the right to health — its worst score — 61.4% on the right to quality education — 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 1.1 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 39,500 newborn babies to survive until their fifth birthday.**
- If China were to operate at its full potential given its current resources, we would expect **an additional 161,000 newborns to be born at a healthy birth weight.**
- If China were reaching its full potential, given its income constraints, **an extra 444,000 15-year-olds could eventually reach the age of 60.**
- If China used its resources efficiently, **an additional 108 million people could have a toilet at home, and an extra 101 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 4 million people out of absolute poverty.**

Safety from the State

China scores 2.9 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 the lowest score in our sample of 30 countries.

China's worst score in this category is 1.3 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, protesters, 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. Respondents particularly noted risks to people participating in the White Paper protests, and those criticising the government response to the Covid-19 pandemic, or disobeying quarantine and lockdown rules.

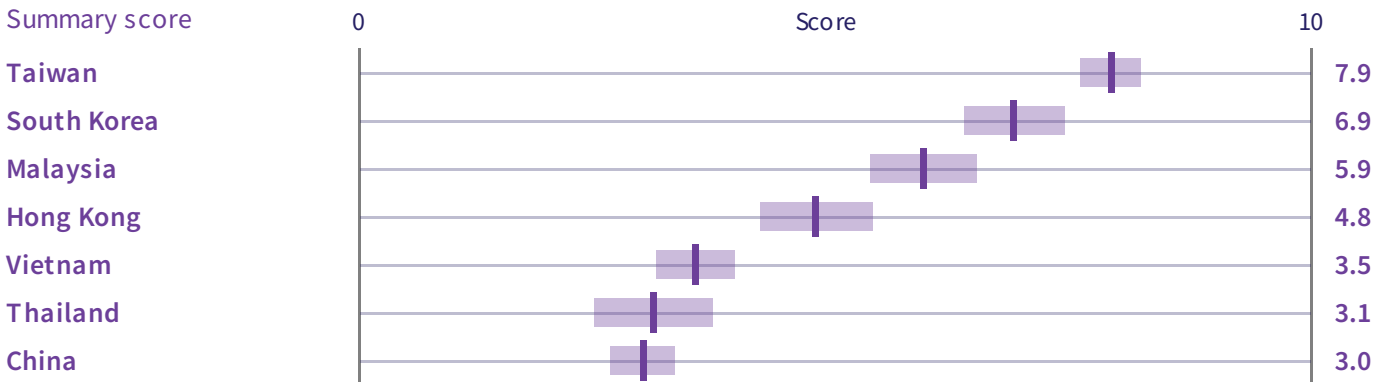
People from ethnic minorities were at extra risk for all five Safety from the State rights.

Other vulnerable groups include:

- People from ethnic minorities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and Kazakhs
- Human rights advocates, protesters, 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

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

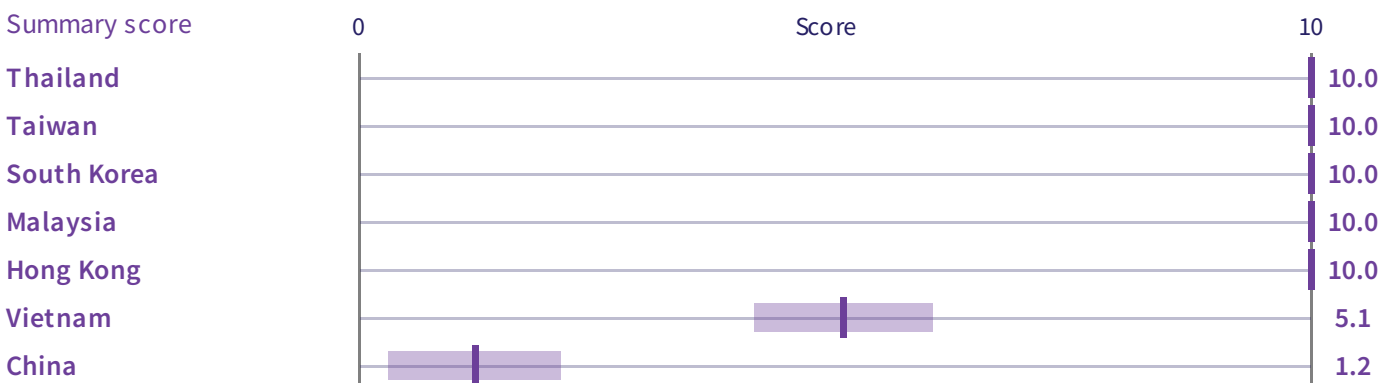
Right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention in East and Southeast Asia



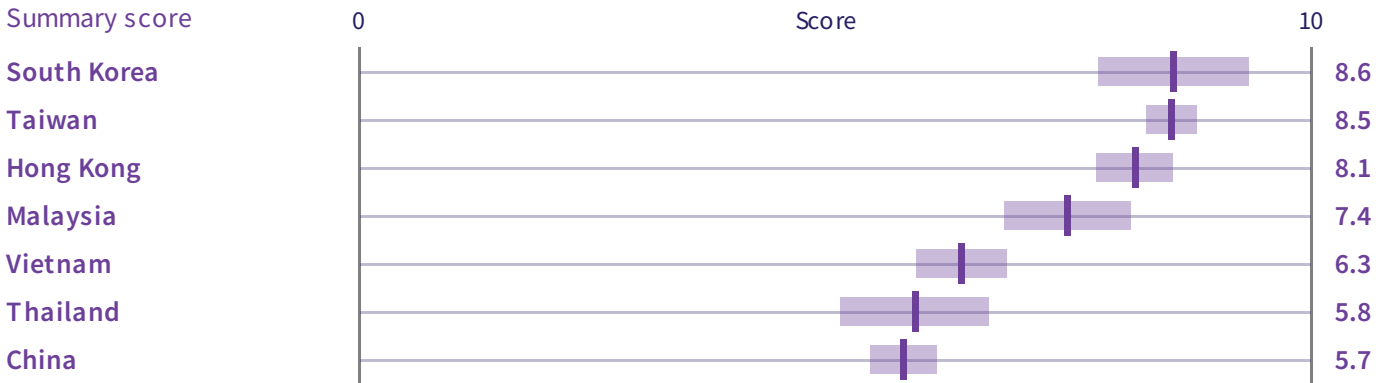
Right to freedom from forced disappearance in East and Southeast Asia



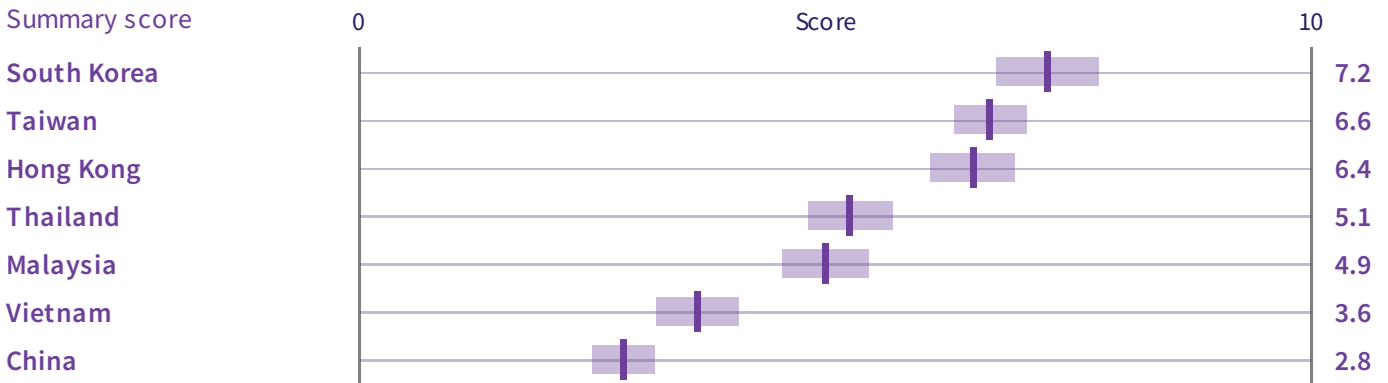
Right to freedom from death penalty in East and Southeast Asia



Right to freedom from extrajudicial execution in East and Southeast Asia



Right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment in East and Southeast Asia



Empowerment

The Chinese government limits civil liberties and political freedom, with China scoring a very low 1.9 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, participation in government, and freedom of religion and belief** all of China's scores fall into the 'very bad' range. For all four 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 1.8 out of 10, and human rights experts identified a wide range of people not enjoying their rights, including human rights advocates, protesters, 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 social gatherings in homes have been broken up by authorities.

China's score for the **right to opinion and expression** is a very low 2.4 out of 10, with no improvement over the three years we have measured this right. Respondents noted that no one can speak freely, even online, and that doing so can lead to a range of punishments and reprisals.

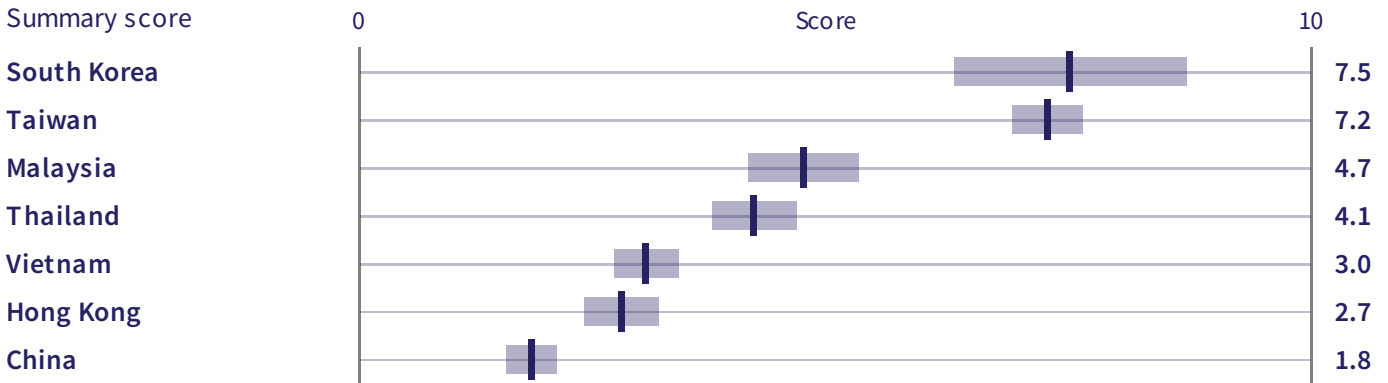
China also scores in the 'very bad' range for the **right to participate in government**, with a score of 2 out of 10. Respondents noted the lack of free elections, and that ordinary people have no ability to participate in political life.

For the **right to freedom of religion and belief**, China scored 2.5, the lowest in our sample of nine countries in a new pilot study. Respondents noted that the government restricts all religious practices, and is particularly repressive towards people following unregistered minority religions such as Falun Gong, as well as Uyghur Muslims.

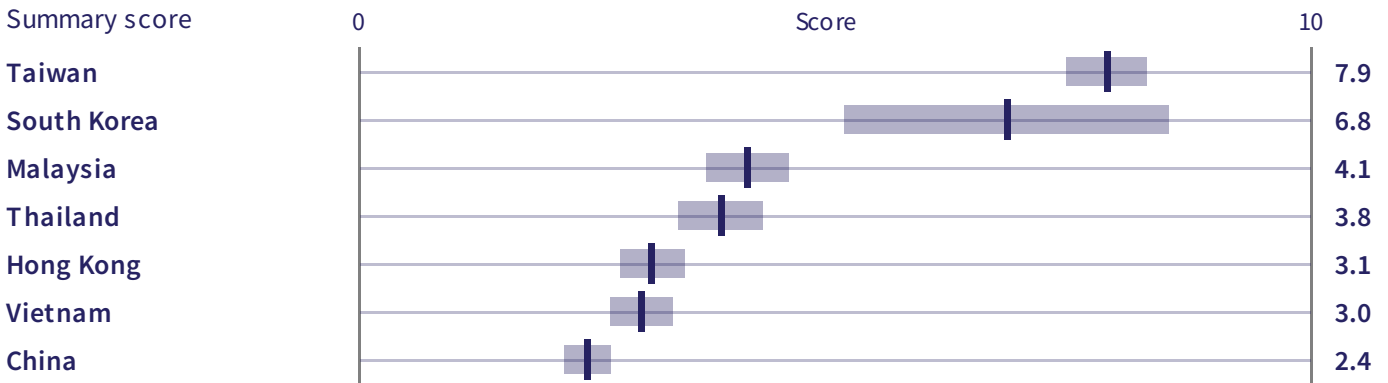
Groups that are particularly vulnerable to empowerment rights violations include:

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

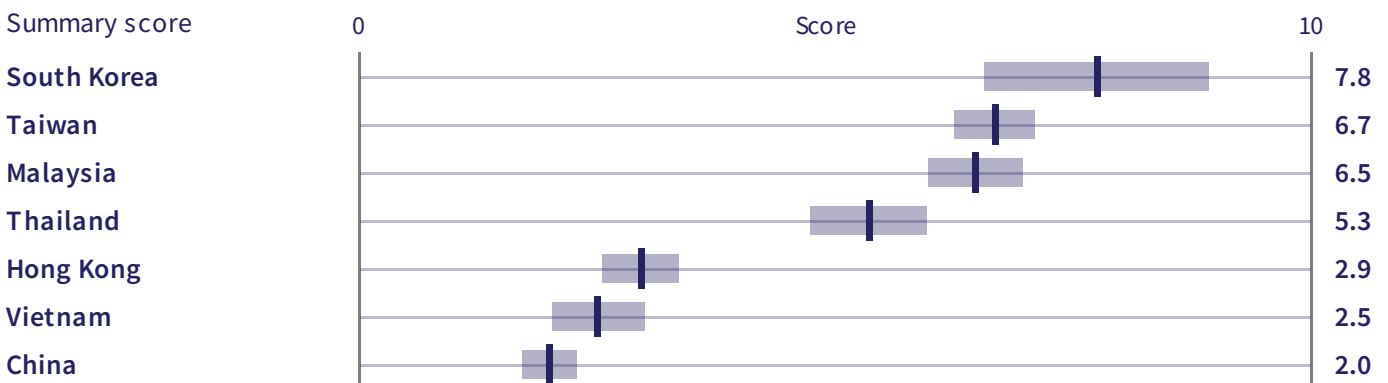
Right to assembly and association in East and Southeast Asia



Right to opinion and expression in East and Southeast Asia



Right to participate in government in East and Southeast Asia



Right to freedom of religion and belief in East and Southeast Asia

