

# Xinjiang / China

<b>Country – capital</b>	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang or XUAR), China – Ürümqi. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Population</b>	Total population 25.8 million. Ethnic groups: Uyghurs (12 mill. <sup>2</sup> ), Hui (Chinese Muslims), Kazakhs, Mongols a.o. small groups. Since 1990s, large-scale influx of Han Chinese. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Geography</b>	Xinjiang, the largest and most westerly region of China, is bordered by Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan-India (Kashmir). <sup>4</sup>
<b>Languages</b>	Uyghur (official <sup>5</sup> ), Mandarin, plus Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Oirat and others. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Writing system</b>	Uyghur Arabic alphabet. <sup>7</sup>
<b>Education and literacy</b>	Of the total population in China, 96.8% is literate (2018 est). <sup>8</sup> Before World War II the educational system in Xinjiang was minimal. Since 1949, educational facilities have been broadened and literacy improved. There are many universities, concentrated in Ürümqi. Standard education is supplemented by instruction broadcast via radio /TV. <sup>9</sup> Since 2006, Uyghurs get 12 years of mandatory education: Secondary school (6 years), Junior high school (3 years), and Senior high school (3 years). <sup>10</sup> By 2013, there were 605 primary schools, 895 high schools and 61 universities in Xinjiang. <sup>11</sup> The Uyghurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asians. <sup>12</sup> The Chinese government imposes bilingual education in both Uyghur and Mandarin for Uyghurs, thereby suppressing their cultural and religious traditions, and causing massive social conflicts in Xinjiang. Governmental vocational education and training internment centers are being deployed as “forced re-education camps”, allegedly assimilating Uyghurs into a Han-Chinese culture while losing their own identity. <sup>13</sup>
<b>Religions</b>	Predominantly Muslim (Uyghurs)- Buddhist or Confucianist (Han Chinese). <sup>14</sup>
<b>Conflict history and overview</b>	Recent decades have seen a mass migration of Han Chinese (China's ethnic majority) into Xinjiang. China has been accused of targeting Muslim religious figures and banning religious practices in the region, as well as destroying mosques and tombs. <sup>15</sup> Increasing tensions resulted in riots and protests in Ürümqi, July 2009, reportedly killing nearly 200 people (mostly Han) and injuring some 1,700; followed by attacks by knife-wielding assailants and suicide bombers. Chinese authorities cracked down on suspected Uyghur dissidents and separatists, incl. shootings, criminal arrests, and long jail sentences. <sup>16</sup> May 2014, the government launched the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, leading to many crimes against humanity. <sup>17</sup>
<b>Humanitarian situation</b>	Life expectancy at birth: 75.6 yrs (2020), lower than Chinese average. <sup>18</sup> Average income per capita of Southern Xinjiang (90% non-Han population) is half of the whole Xinjiang. <sup>19</sup>
<b>Human rights situation</b>	Since 2017, over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in 300 to 400 facilities, which include “political education” camps, pretrial detention centres, and prisons. <sup>20</sup> Courts have handed down harsh and long prison sentences without due process, merely for sending an Islamic religious recording to a family member or downloading e-books in Uyghur. <sup>21</sup> Detainees and prisoners are subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, cultural and political indoctrination, and forced labour. <sup>22</sup> Factories in textile and apparel manufacturing, predominantly owned by Han Chinese, are greatly benefitting from detained Uyghurs’ forced labour; described by Chinese officials as “poverty alleviation”. <sup>23</sup> A 2022 OHCHR report (and many other human rights reports) refers to the existence of a large network of political re-education camps, mass arbitrary detentions, widespread surveillance, tracking and control measures, systemic and severe restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief, as well as the use of forced labour, torture, forced abortion and sterilisation, birth control and family separation policies, and sexual and gender-based violence. <sup>24</sup> Chinese officials deny abuses in the camps but don’t permit monitoring of these facilities by UN, HRW or media. <sup>25</sup>
<b>Situation of women FGM – early marriages</b>	No info on maternal mortality rate, FGM or child marriages amongst Uyghurs. Coercive population control measures are widespread, such as IUDs, abortion and sterilisation. <sup>26</sup>
<b>Situation of LGBTI</b>	Xinjiang is governed by federal Chinese law, in which same-sex activities is legal and freedom of expression regarding “abnormal sexual behaviour” is restricted. <sup>27</sup>
<b>Migration in Malta</b>	No recent info on Uyghur IDPs, or sea arrivals. Chinese UNHCR refugees in Malta 2019-2023: 17; Jan-Jul 2024: 6. Asylum seekers 2019-2023: 0, Jan-Jul 2024: 5. <sup>28</sup>

# Country Factsheet Xinjiang / China

June 2025



<sup>1</sup><https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>;  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>  
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>;  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>  
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china>  
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>;  
<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghur\\_Arabic\\_alphabet#cite\\_note-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghur_Arabic_alphabet#cite_note-1)  
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china/#introduction>  
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Xinjiang>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125972834.pdf>  
<sup>11</sup> <http://www.studyin Xinjiang.com/Education.html> ; see also <https://en.people.cn/n3/2021/1010/c90000-9905256.html>  
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/cike-22/125972834> ; <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125972834.pdf> ;  
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf>  
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>; <https://www.britannica.com/place/Xinjiang/Climate#ref71457>  
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>  
<sup>16</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Uyghur>  
<sup>17</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting> ;  
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/10/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs>  
<sup>18</sup> <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103>  
<sup>19</sup> <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103>  
<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights> ;  
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>  
<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting> ;  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china/>  
<sup>22</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/against-their-will-the-situation-in-xinjiang> ; <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights>  
<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights#chapter-title-0-5>  
<sup>24</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-statement-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-assessment-human-rights-concerns\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-statement-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-assessment-human-rights-concerns_en) ; <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf> ; see also the following reports: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting> ; <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china/> ; <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf>  
<sup>25</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/10/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs> ;  
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting> ;  
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights>  
<sup>26</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/269b3de1af34e17c1941a514f78d764c>  
<sup>27</sup> <https://www.equaldex.com/region/xinjiang> ; <https://database.ilga.org/subjurisdiction-profile-xinjiang-uygur>  
<sup>28</sup> [https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data\\_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data\\_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data\\_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=REF&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=ASY&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=IDP&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OIP&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=STA&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=HST&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OOC&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_filterType%5D=range&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_rangeFrom%5D=2019&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_rangeTo%5D=2024&data\\_finder=on&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_displayType%5D=custom&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_country%5D%5B%5D=37&data\\_finder%5Bcoa\\_displayType%5D=custom&data\\_finder%5Bcoa\\_country%5D%5B%5D=132&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bcoa\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Badvanced\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=](https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=REF&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=ASY&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=IDP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OIP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=STA&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=HST&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OOC&data_finder%5Byear_filterType%5D=range&data_finder%5Byear_rangeFrom%5D=2019&data_finder%5Byear_rangeTo%5D=2024&data_finder=on&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoo_country%5D%5B%5D=37&data_finder%5Bcoa_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoa_country%5D%5B%5D=132&data_finder%5Byear_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoa_%5D=&data_finder%5Badvanced_%5D=&data_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=)

© BDE 2025

This factsheet was compiled for BDE by Adri van den Berg. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.