

China Dissent Monitor

Issue 11: October – December 2025

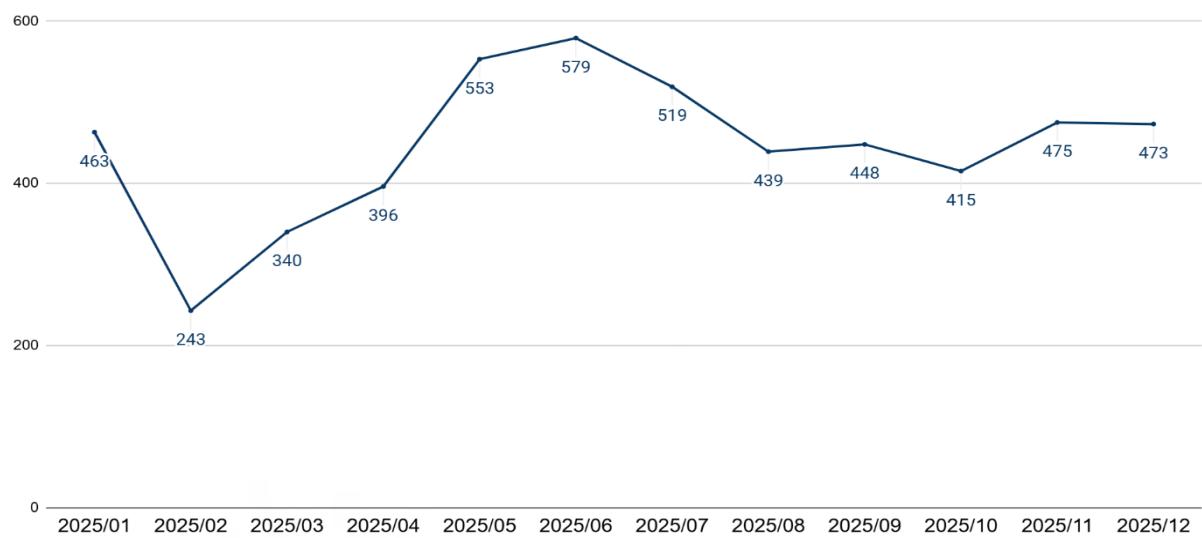
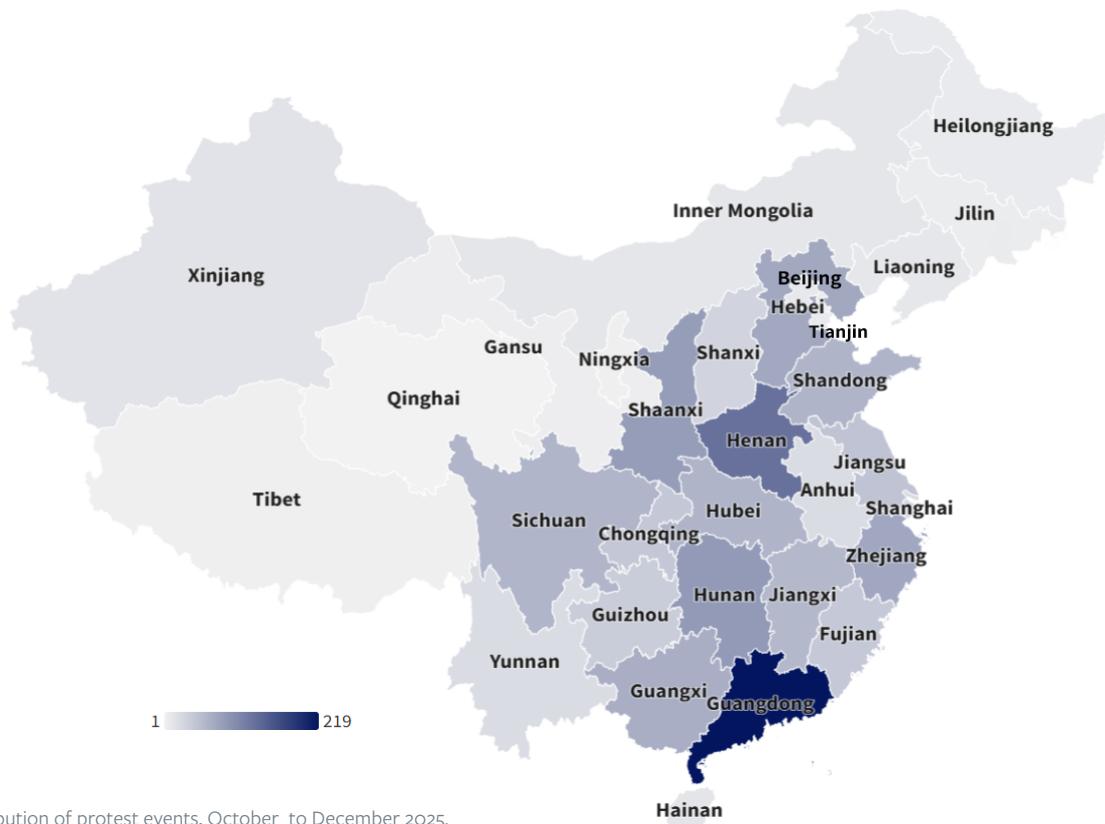
DISSENT EVENTS: 14,347

WHAT IS THE CHINA DISSENT MONITOR?

The China Dissent Monitor (CDM) collects and shares information about the frequency and diversity of dissent in the People's Republic of China (PRC). It was created in response to the information gap resulting from media restrictions in the PRC and the risks associated with collecting information about dissent and protest from within the country. The project prioritizes capturing offline collective action in public spaces, though cases of less public and online dissent are also included to illustrate diversity among dissent actions. Sources for the CDM database include news reports, civil society organizations, and PRC-based social media. See the full dataset and methodology at chinadissent.net.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Protest increased markedly in 2025.** CDM logged 1,363 dissent events in the fourth quarter of 2025, an 8 percent year-on-year increase. CDM counted 5,343 events in total during 2025, a 44 percent rise over the 3,704 events documented in 2024. In the fourth quarter of 2025, workers led more than half of protest events (54 percent), followed by property owners (22 percent), and rural residents (14 percent). The remainder were led by diverse groups such as victims of injury and their families, small business owners, investors, retirees, consumers, students, petitioners, and activists. The top provinces for protest events were Guangdong (16 percent), followed by Henan, Hunan, Shaanxi, and Zhejiang. CDM has logged a total of 14,347 cases of dissent since data collection began in June 2022.
- **Wage protests reach new peak.** Labor protests over unpaid wages have risen before each Lunar New Year since 2023. During the four months before the 2026 holiday, CDM documented a 60 percent increase in such events compared to the same period a year ago. This new peak reflects a slowing Chinese economy and the rising number of firms that are unable to pay workers their due wages.
- **Widespread censorship of protest on Douyin.** A CDM analysis of 2,970 Douyin posts about protest in China published from June to December 2025 found that two-thirds had been deleted. The highest rates of censorship are associated with posts about offline protests by petitioners, or by victims of injury and their families; posts about protests in Beijing or Xinjiang; and posts depicting authorities detaining or using violence against protesters.



Total dissent events recorded, by year and month.

FEATURED ANALYSIS

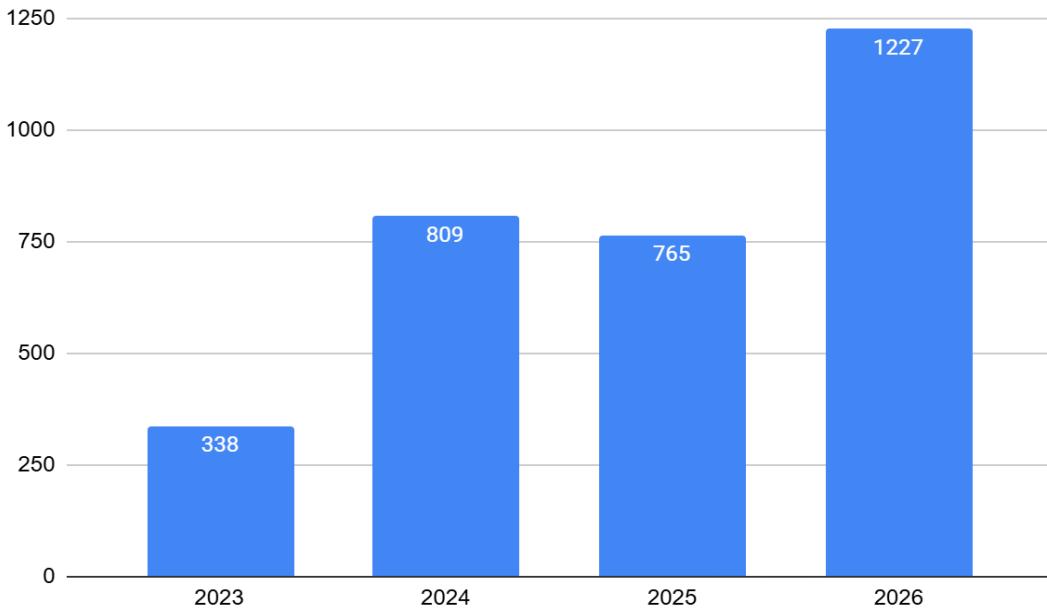
WAGE PROTESTS REACH NEW PEAK

Long-term rise in unpaid wage disputes. For three decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has permitted greater private enterprise. At the same time, it has suppressed independent labor organizations whose work can prevent labor rights violations and which serve as a counterbalance on increasingly powerful companies. Greater private enterprise coupled with inadequate labor protections has resulted in a persistent rise in the number of companies that fail to pay their workers. The government's own data indicates that labor disputes over remuneration filed with local labor offices have risen steadily every year, reaching 665,000 in 2024, a 510 percent increase over the 109,000 disputes in 2007. Importantly, China's total number of employed people in 2024 was 3 percent smaller than it was in 2007, so there are now significantly more wage disputes despite a smaller working population, revealing greater discontent amongst working people.



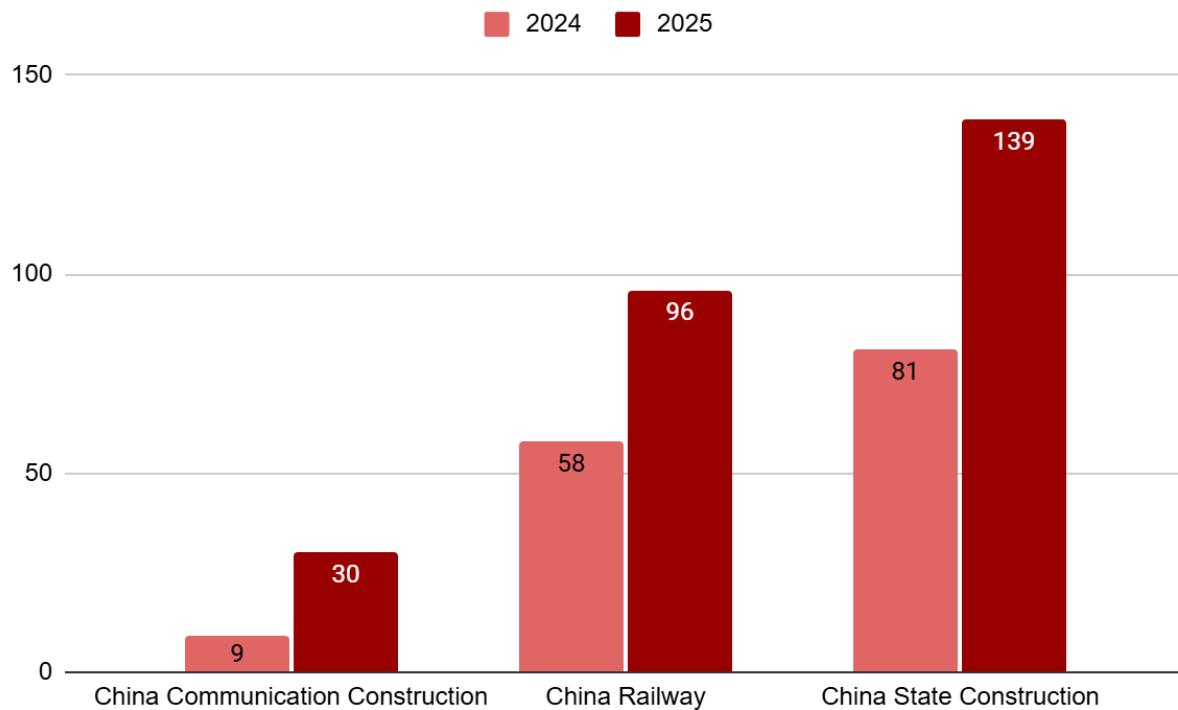
Workers form the protest slogan “give me my wages” in front of a China Railway office in Tonghua, Jilin (source: Douyin).

Growing wage protests ahead of Lunar New Year. The months leading up to each Lunar New Year typically feature a rise in labor protests as workers, especially migrant workers from rural areas, demand that companies provide unpaid wages before they return home to observe the annual holiday with their families. This cyclical pattern has been [documented](#) for more than two decades, and the curve has grown recently, according to CDM's latest analysis. Labor protest in the four months ahead of the 2026 Lunar New Year rose 60 percent over the same period a year ago, as illustrated in the chart below. While lower than in 2026, labor protests were also high in 2025 and 2024; the relatively low preholiday wage protest wave in 2023 was likely related to Covid-19 restrictions that limited public protest and work.



Number of labor protests in the four-month period up to three days before the Lunar New Year. For example, the 2025 Lunar New Year began on January 28, and the period of observation is September 26, 2024 to January 25, 2025.

A sluggish economy. The significant rise in preholiday wage protests occurs against the backdrop of a 58 percent rise in total labor dissent from 2024 to 2025, according to CDM data, which is likely driven by a slower economy. Despite the government recently heralding robust exports and 5 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2025, a multiyear decline in the real estate sector has deeply impacted the livelihoods of many Chinese citizens. This has led to persistently sluggish domestic consumption that affects companies across different sectors. As firms increasingly fail to provide their employees' wages on time, workers have more frequently resorted to public dissent to demand remedy. In a sign of how pervasive this problem has become, even state-owned enterprises are increasingly not paying workers: CDM has documented 79 percent more worker protests in 2025 against the major state firms China Communication Construction, China Railway, and China State Construction than in 2024.



Number of labor protests in 2024 and 2025 involving three major state-owned companies.



Workers protest unpaid wages at the partly state-owned DTP power plant in Togtoh County, Inner Mongolia (source: Kuaishou).

Recent trends reflect general economic pain and inequality. Analysis of CDM data indicates that the geographical and sectoral distribution of this year’s wave of preholiday wage protests is similar to all labor dissent going back to 2022—suggesting the recent rise is linked to broad economic patterns rather than any single cause. At the same time, unpaid wages disproportionately affect migrant workers with rural hukous (household registration) who have less economic resources than urban residents. Consequently, the unprecedented peak in labor dissent is indicative of both broad economic pain and widening inequality. It remains unclear how the CCP may respond in 2026. These economic problems are rooted in long-term structural choices—such as incentivizing property development and the two-tiered hukou system—that are not quickly remedied through policy changes. In the meantime, Xi Jinping seems to have decided in 2024 to [ramp up](#) repressive surveillance and controls at the grassroots level to head off dissent. This pattern is reflected in CDM data; our team documented some type of repression in at least 25 percent of labor protests in 2024 and 2025, compared to only 13 percent in 2023.

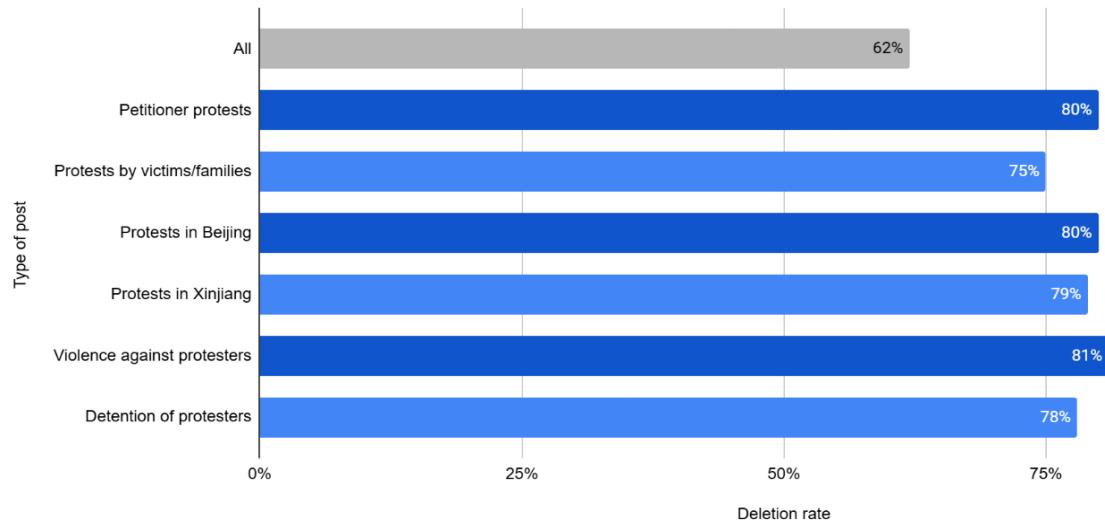


Workers at a factory in Shenzhen, Guangdong, operated by the company Malata protest unpaid wages (source: Douyin).

BY THE DATA

WIDESPREAD CENSORSHIP OF PROTEST ON DOUYIN

Due to systematic censorship of dissent on China’s internet, CDM’s research team must move quickly to find and document protest events before they are deleted. To better understand the extent of censorship, CDM analyzed 2,970 posts that contained information about protests published from June to December 2025. Douyin, China’s domestic version of TikTok, is the second-most popular social media site in the country with 800 million users, so controlling its content is an important way for the CCP to limit the general population from observing certain types of information. Using automation on January 19 and 20, 2026 to check if Douyin posts were still active, CDM found that two-thirds of all protest-related posts we documented between June and December had been deleted. Interestingly, this proportion stayed consistent across months, indicating that censors finish most of the takedowns within a relatively short period of time.



Deletion rate of Douyin posts by the type of post, based on analysis of 2,970 posts that contained information about protests published from June to December 2025.

Douyin posts about protests led by petitioners—people who protested in the course of filing grievances with official government petitioning offices—were deleted more often (80 percent) than posts about other groups. Protests led by victims or family members in cases over injury or death from medical malpractice, occupational hazards, or school safety issues (75 percent) were the second-most commonly deleted category. A reason could be that authorities consider these types of events more likely to involve government malfeasance (petitioners) or personal hardship (victims and families) that could evoke public anger than common demonstrations over unpaid wages or other economic grievances.

Geographically, posts about protests in Beijing and Xinjiang were more likely to be deleted (80 percent and 79 percent, respectively) than posts about protests in other regions. The Douyin posts from these two places were primarily about labor dissent, which are not especially sensitive. Instead, the government likely prioritizes limiting information about any type of protest because of the political risks of any dissent in these two regions. Finally, posts that contained evidence of protesters experiencing violence or being detained were deleted more often (81 percent and 78 percent) than other posts, signaling that the government aims to reduce the visibility of severe repression.

The proportion of protest-related posts that were deleted was consistent across six months, indicating that censors finish most of the takedowns within a relatively short period of time.



A Douyin post depicting family of a woman who died of complications after a knee surgery protesting in front of a hospital in Handan, Hebei. This post has been deleted.