

China Dissent Monitor

Issue 12: April – June 2026

DISSENT EVENTS: 15,820

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, including the application of a machine-learning algorithm developed by the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Doublethink Lab. See the full dataset and methodology at chinadissent.net.

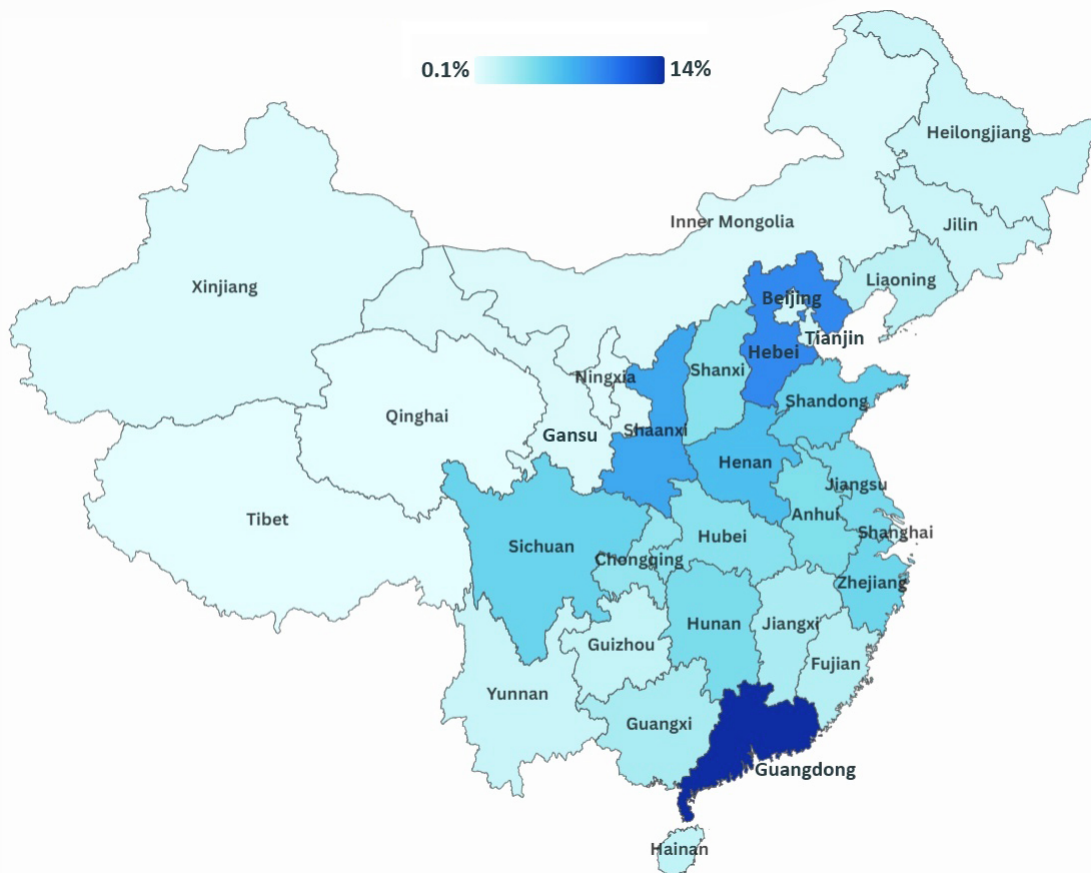
HIGHLIGHTS

- **846 protests in the quarter.** CDM logged 846 dissent events in the second quarter of 2026. While this is a 45 percent decrease compared to the second quarter of 2025, a substantial intensification of government censorship this year (discussed below) is likely responsible for much of the difference. The leading group for protests were homeowners (36 percent), followed by workers (24 percent), and rural residents (18 percent). The remainder were led by diverse groups including parents and students, small business owners, investors, consumers, petitioners, and activists. The top provinces for protest events were Guangdong (14 percent), Hebei, Shaanxi, Henan, and Shandong. CDM has logged a total of 15,820 cases of dissent since data collection began in June 2022.
- **Government censorship campaign reduced available protest information.** On February 12, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) [announced](#) a campaign directing social media platforms to take down and reduce the visibility of content that “incites negative feelings.” This order came in the weeks before the Two Sessions—the annual meetings of the Chinese Communist Party’s rubber-stamp legislature and its political advisory body. Like a similar censorship campaign [documented](#) by CDM at the start of 2024, this campaign appears to have resulted in a persistent drop in dissent information published on social media. CDM’s preliminary analysis estimates a 50-percent reduction in protest posts on Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok) from March to June, compared to the year before the campaign began.
- **Homeowner protest increasingly driven by property-management conflict.** CDM analysis of 3,312 homeowner protests since 2023 indicates that protester grievances have gradually shifted from property developers to property-management companies, typically concentrated around unreasonable fees, repurposing common areas, or use of shared homeowner maintenance funds. This is occurring as financial strain on real estate companies has placed mounting operational pressure on their property-management arms. CDM has also documented a rise in cases of protest involving owners’ committees and homeowner efforts to self-organize, often in response to conflict with property managers.
- **Individual suffering can prompt large-scale protest.** CDM has documented at least 30 instances since 2024 of cases where personal tragedy or harm to life has prompted hundreds of people to mobilize, typically directing grievances at local officials for inadequate or unjust responses. A major protest in Chongqing in June 2026 marked the first time one of these events was prompted by animal abuse. Such cases show that individual tragedies have the potential to spark rapid, large-scale mobilization over public-interest issues and governance in China.

- **Small businesses protest for fairness.** There were more protests by shop owners, suppliers, distributors, and other owners of small businesses in the first half of 2026 than any other period since 2022, likely reflecting financial consequences for these groups of China's sluggish domestic consumption. There also appears to be increasingly frequent repression of small businesses' protests since the beginning of 2025.

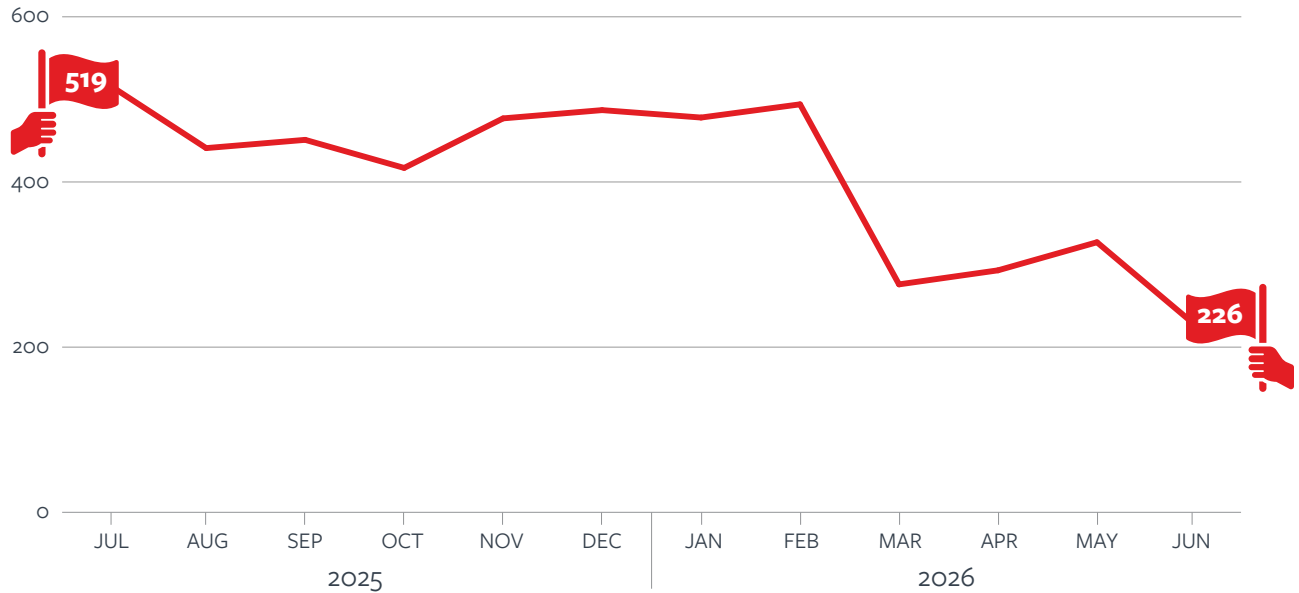
Distribution of protest.

Share of protests by region in the second quarter of 2026.



Number of protests in China each month from June 2025 to June 2026.

Total dissent events recorded, by year and month.

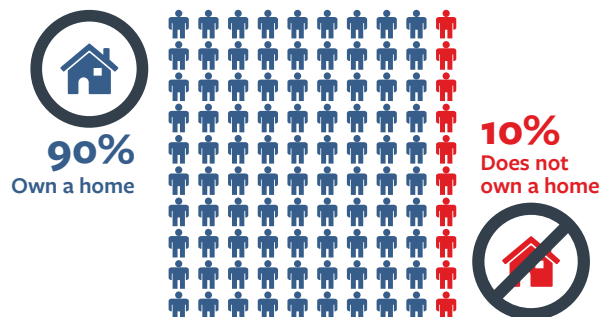


FEATURED ANALYSIS

HOMEOWNER PROTEST INCREASINGLY DRIVEN BY PROPERTY-MANAGEMENT CONFLICTS

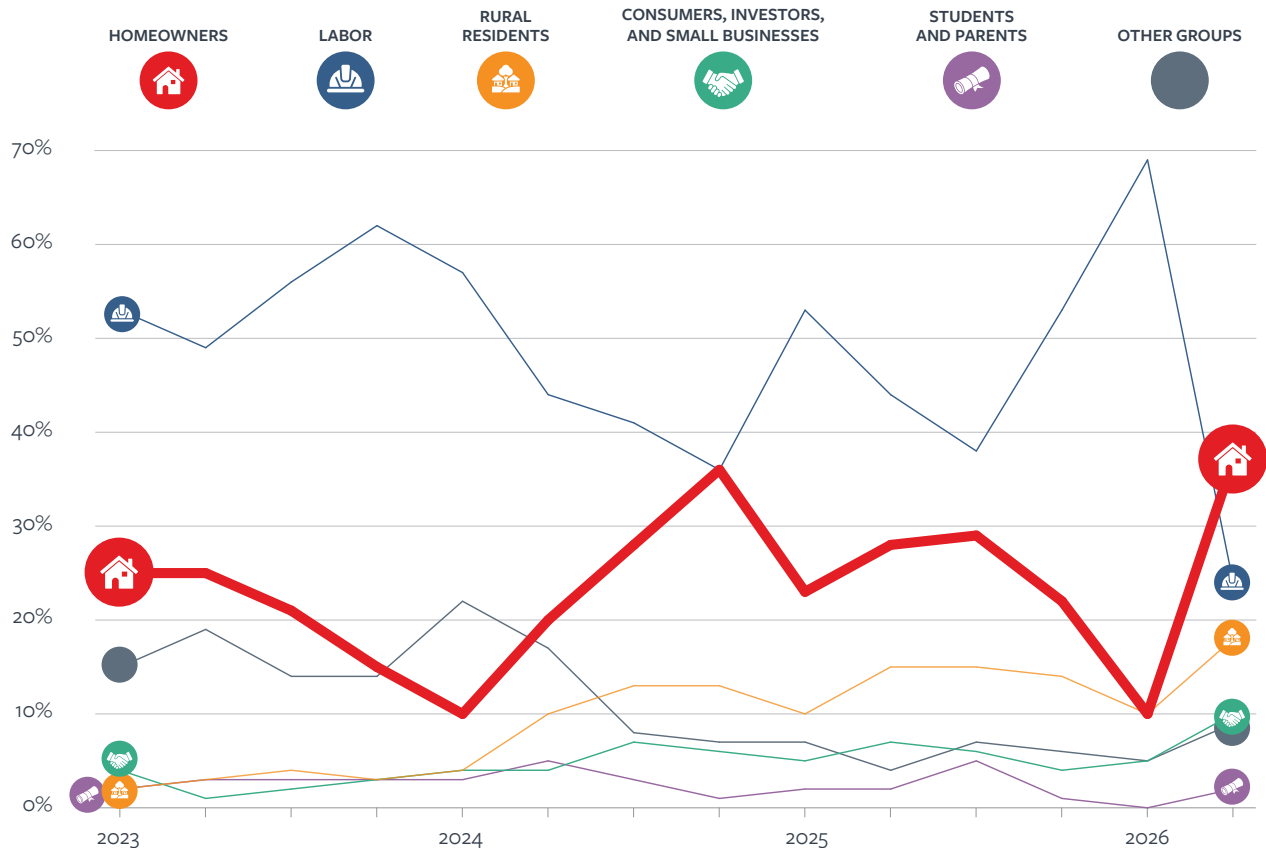
Homeowners as a growing dissent group. Amongst China's urban residents, over 90 percent are homeowners. This is the result of government policy over decades to expand private sector home building, but it also encouraged risky schemes amongst real estate developers that has led to the current crisis in China's property sector and greater conflict with homeowners. The emerging middle class that has enjoyed growing homeownership is consequently becoming the source of more protest. CDM has documented 3,312 homeowner-related protests since 2023, including among both residents who have taken possession of their units, and presale buyers who are in the mortgage or handover stage. The share of homeowner protests among all recorded dissent events has increased in recent years, reaching a record high of 36 percent this quarter (305 events).

Rate of home ownership among China's urban residents.



Who is protesting in China?

Protest groups by percentage of documented protests each quarter from January 2023 to June 2026.



From developer disputes to grievances with management. CDM has closely tracked the continued rise in homeowner-related protests since 2024, which remain tied to two persistent problems. First, a debt crisis in the property sector has led firms to stall or cut corners on many housing projects nationwide, leading homebuyers who paid in advance for these properties to [protest](#). Second, there is growing homeowner discontent over the fees and conduct of underregulated yet powerful property-management companies.

CDM has registered a notable trend in the data: management-related cases surpassed developer-related cases to become the leading driver of homeowner protest in the final quarter of 2025, and hit a record-high 55 percent of documented protests in the current quarter. The shift reflects [reporting](#) that China's property crisis has expanded beyond developers into the property-management sector. As many of these management firms are subsidiaries of real estate developers, financial strains on parent companies have placed mounting operational pressure on their property-management arms, contributing to more disputes with homeowners. This may explain why disputes are increasingly concentrated around unreasonable management fees and the unauthorized use of shared homeowner maintenance funds. Protests over such issues account for half of all homeowner protests, up from one-third in [earlier CDM observations](#).

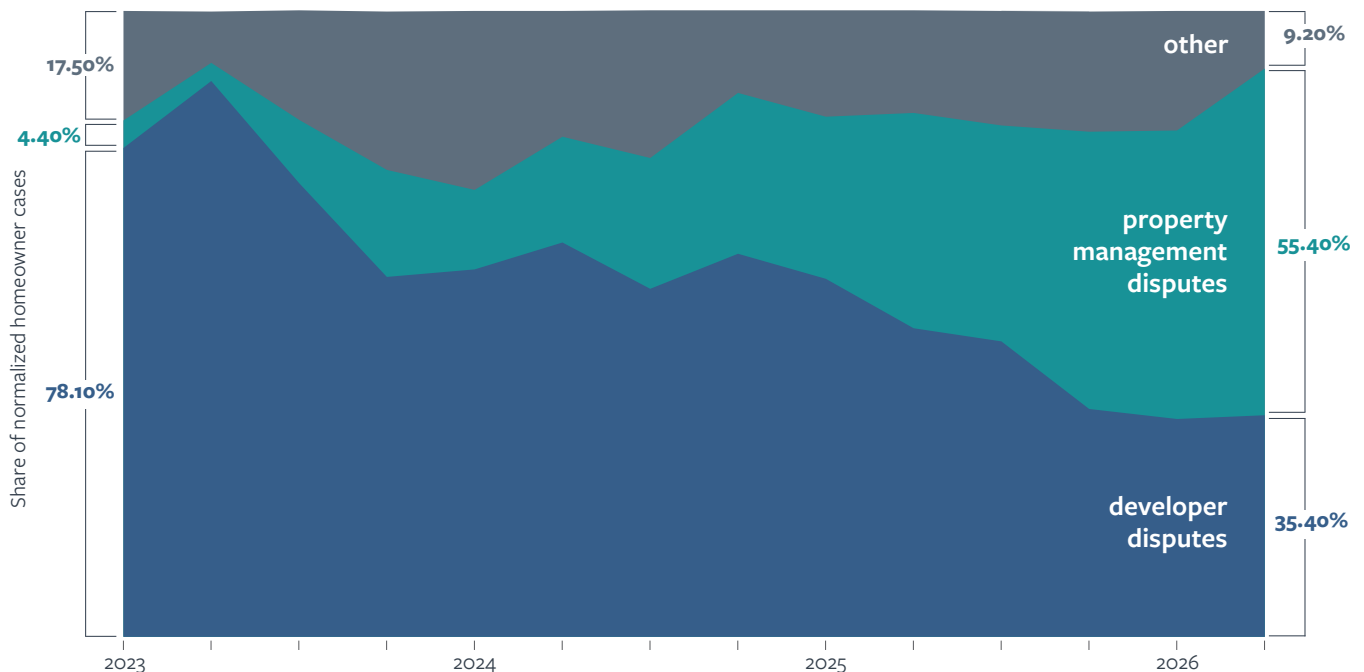


Homeowners of a residential community in Baoding, Hebei Province, gather in front of the Communist Party Committee entrance for Li County in June 2026 to protest high fees and misconduct of their property management company. (Source: Douyin)

The Chinese government appears to recognize property-management issues as a growing source of discontent. The Urban Renewal Plan during the 15th Five-Year Plan Period (2026–30) [explicitly identifies](#) the regulation of property-management services as a priority. At the local level, major cities like [Shanghai](#) have also issued new policies to strengthen property management service standards and fee transparency.

The drivers of homeowner dissent.

Disputes with property-management companies have become the most common issue in protests by homeowners.



Growing tension with owners' committees. While the government has rhetorically [encouraged](#) homeowners to establish owners' committees as means for solving communal problems, the process of establishing them has proven contentious in practice, particularly when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) treats independent social organizations as latent political threats. CDM previously [reported](#) several owners' committee-related protests, showing how these legally recognized groups are in reality often obstructed by property-management companies and local authorities. In this quarter, we observed a record high of 18 owners' committee-related dissent cases, which went beyond mere obstruction by external parties, demonstrating that even if these committees are formed they may not represent the common interests of residents. For example, homeowners in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, gathered in May to protest alleged collusion between their property-management company and the owners' committee in misusing property-management fees. Even amid contested claims about representation and conduct of these groups, owners' committees offer important opportunities for large groups of middle-class citizens to self-organize and participate in grassroots democracy within an authoritarian state.



Homeowners of the Fuying Gongguan community in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, protest obstruction of their efforts to form an owners' committee in May 2026. (Source: Douyin)

WHEN INDIVIDUAL SUFFERING PROMPTS LARGE-SCALE PROTEST

Personal tragedies can resonate far beyond the victims and their families, attracting public attention and sparking collective action. CDM has documented at least 30 cases since 2024 of large mobilization over individual incidents involving harm to life. These demonstrations involve hundreds of local residents and are typically directed at local officials for inadequate or unjust responses. Until 2026, all of these events started with harm to children or other vulnerable people, but this quarter was the first time CDM documented a large-scale protest over animal abuse.

Residents gather to demand justice. Public outrage erupted in Chongqing in June after animal rights activists discovered information indicating that a local man had abused and killed multiple cats and dogs under the guise of pet adoption. Smaller actions by dozens of people grew into a larger, peaceful [protest](#) outside of the man's apartment building beginning on June 8 that persisted for four days. Police detention of some participants on the first day drew even more Chongqing residents to join the demonstrations in defiance, and to call for justice. Authorities ended the mobilization with a crackdown on the morning of June 11 and scrubbed online hashtags linked to the protests.



Demonstrators hold up protest signs and face off with police in Chongqing in June 2026 around a case of animal abuse. (Source: HK01)

Pet owners on the rise. In recent years, rapid urbanization and the [growth](#) of the pet economy have transformed pets in many Chinese households from being regarded merely as property to [companions](#) and family members. This has led to a relative shift in the China where animal abuse is more likely to provoke strong responses. However, the current legal framework [lacks](#) specific protection against animal cruelty. This gap likely amplified public anger in Chongqing, as the man could likely only be [charged](#) with disrupting public order, an offense carrying a maximum punishment of 15 days' detention.

Bullying case brings people to the streets. Another large-scale mobilization over individual abuse emerged last August in Jiangyou, Sichuan Province. A teenage girl was violently bullied by other students and the video was shared online, and public anger erupted over what was viewed as an insufficient response by local authorities. Initial public sympathy was also heightened by the fact that the girl's mother was deaf and mute. After hundreds of residents protesting at the Jiangyou government building on August 4 were met with a police crackdown, thousands gathered in the streets that evening to demand justice, with some participants even recorded chanting "give us back democracy." As the event attracted nationwide and international attention, police carried out a harsh crackdown and broad online censorship.



Residents in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, protest in September 2025 to demand justice after a student at Shiqiao Middle School was violently bullied. (Source: Douyin)

A pattern of rapid mobilization. These two cases share characteristics typical in the 30 large-scale harm-to-life protests identified by CDM since 2024. Each case involved harm to vulnerable groups—pets, children, and the disabled—who garnered public sympathy. Criticism of official handling of the initial cases in Chongqing and Jiangyou also drew attention to failures in institutional channels for remedy. The early, knee-jerk response of the government to suppress the protests fueled even larger mobilization within hours. Ultimately, the discourse in both cases quickly shifted from nonpolitical social disputes to discontent with the government and societal problems like animal abuse and bullying. This means that any individual tragedy has the potential to prompt rapid, large-scale mobilization over public-interest issues and governance.

On the very evening of June 8 that people protested over animal rights in the Liangjiang District of Chongqing, another large demonstration broke out 300 kilometers (185 miles) away at a government building in the city’s Kaizhou District. After a teenage boy drowned in a reservoir while fishery enforcement officers on the scene failed to provide timely rescue, hundreds of local residents marched on a government office near the reservoir, carrying the boy’s body and demanding accountability. Like residents in Liangjiang, they too were met with a harsh police crackdown, and the victim’s body was taken away.

BY THE DATA

SMALL BUSINESSES PROTEST FOR FAIRNESS

CDM has documented markedly more protests by shop owners, suppliers, distributors, and other owners of small businesses recently. Of 358 such events in the database over four years, 62 percent have occurred over the past 18 months, including the most events ever logged in the first half of 2026. The protests occurred 27 provinces or regions in China, led by Sichuan (44), Guangdong (38), and Hubei (37).

Most of these cases involve one of two broad scenarios. First are protests over arrears, such as small suppliers demanding payments from larger factories or shop owners demanding fees from malls that can no longer pay. Second are protests for relief, such as shopkeepers demanding rent cuts or refunds because of poor business. The apparent rise in such events reflects China’s [sluggish domestic consumption](#) that has spread from the long-term decline of the property sector, including very [slow retail sales](#) over the past year, as well as the greater use of online shopping over physical retail stores. There also appears to be increasingly frequent repression of small businesses protests: CDM documented evidence of repression, including police response, arrests, and violence by state or nonstate actors, in 48 percent of cases since January 2025, compared with only 39 percent before 2025.

Small business protests.

The frequency of small business protests on a semiannual basis.

