



Diaspora engagement mapping CHINA

Facts & figures

Terminology: The diaspora tends to be referred to as “overseas Chinese” by the government. In Chinese, this term is divided into three different terms: 1) Huaqiao (华侨), referring to Chinese nationals residing abroad; 2) Huaren (华人), referring to ethnic Chinese overseas who have acquired foreign citizenship; and 3) Huayi (华裔), referring to foreign citizens of Chinese descent. Despite the differences, the administration regards all of them as a key component of the “Chinese Nation”, aiming to encourage ethnic Chinese worldwide, regardless of their citizenships, to contribute to China’s national development and cultural promotion.¹

Political rights



Dual citizenship²



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad³



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.16%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **29,110**

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

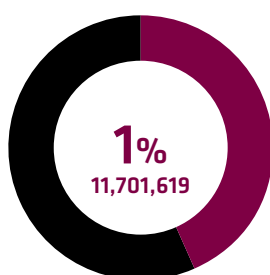
Emigration



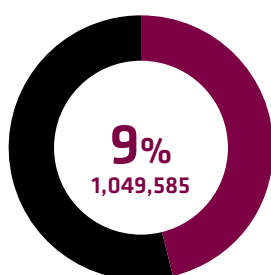
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 43.5%
♀ 56.5%



♂ 44.5%
♀ 55.5%

Top countries of destination



China, Hong Kong SAR	2,490,414
United States of America	2,488,775
Japan	809,893
Canada	771,973
Republic of Korea	756,684

1 Suryadinata, Leo 'Has China Changed its Policy Towards Chinese Overseas?' (2024) ISEAS Perspective. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2024-89-has-china-changed-its-policy-towards-chinese-overseas-by-leo-suryadinata/>
2 <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2134570/entry-denied-identity-crisis-facing-chinas-covert-dual>
3 <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/chinas-overseas-delegates-connect-beijing-to-the-chinese-diaspora/>; Guofo Liu and Zejun Du, 'The People's Republic of China Policy and Institutional Frameworks, National Report' (2014) INTERACT Research Report 2014/19 <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32660/INTERACT-RR-2014%20-%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

Overview of policy and legislative framework



- 1982** ● **The 1982 Constitution (2004 Amendment), Article 50⁴** states that “The People’s Republic of China protects the legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese, Chinese returnees and their family members.”
- 1990** ● **The Law on the “Protection of the Rights and Interests of Returned Overseas Chinese and the Family Members of Overseas Chinese” (1990 - revised in 2000)⁵** establishes the principle of “equal treatment, with no discrimination; to give extra care as appropriate,” for Chinese returnees and their families.
- 1992** ● **Circular by OCAO⁶, MoF⁷, MoPS⁸ on Treatment of Returned Overseas Chinese and Relatives of Overseas Chinese Exiting China to Visit Families⁹** emphasises that all returned overseas students shall be welcomed no matter what their past political attitudes were. For those who were sent overseas by their employers, the circular urges the employers to reach out to and keep in touch with them.
- 2006** ● **Regulations on the Relevant Questions for Returning Offspring of Overseas Chinese for Enrolment in Compulsory Education in China¹⁰** state that children of diaspora Chinese who go to a public school in China for compulsory education, where their domestic guardian’s household is registered will be treated equally to the children of local residents.
- 2011** ● **The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security regulations¹¹** states that in the case of those who leave China before meeting the statutory conditions for receiving state pensions, social security accounts should be retained so that when they reach the age required by law, they can enjoy the pension benefits that they are entitled to.
- 2018** ● **Five-year visa¹²** allows foreigners of Chinese origin to apply for visas that permit them to stay in China for five years or enter the country multiple times in that period. The policy aims to attract more overseas ethnic Chinese people to do business in China.
- 2020** ● **Permanent residence permit for foreigners¹³** - This new policy, in its trial version, allows foreigners who fulfil the application requirements to obtain a Chinese permanent residence permit, which is similar to citizenship. Requirements include following Chinese law, economic security, contribution to economic and social development and good tax and credit records. It will be a major bonus for the overseas Chinese who have obtained foreign citizenship, but lived in China for a significant period or have made major contributions to the Chinese society, such as through investment or scientific innovation.

4 <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/chn164427.pdf>

5 Guofo Liu and Zejun Du, ‘The People’s Republic of China Policy and Institutional Frameworks, Nationa Report’ (2014) INTERACT Research Report 2014/19 <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32660/INTERACT-RR-2014%20-%2019.pdf?sequence=1>

6 Overseas Chinese Affairs Office

7 Ministry of Finance

8 Ministry of Public Security

9 Xiang Biao ‘Emigration from China: A sending country perspective’, (2003) International Migration <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2435.00240>

10 Guofo Liu and Zejun Du, ‘The People’s Republic of China Policy and Institutional Frameworks, Nationa Report’ (2014) INTERACT Research Report 2014/19 <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32660/INTERACT-RR-2014%20-%2019.pdf?sequence=1>

11 Ibid.

12 <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-to-issue-new-five-year-visas-to-attract-foreigners-of-chinese-origin-from-feb-17?login=true&close=true>. According to China’s official definition, a foreigner of Chinese origin refers to a former Chinese citizen who has obtained foreign citizenship, or the offspring of present or former Chinese citizens.

13 Via <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/>



Trends

The Chinese diaspora are keen to receive permanent residency status, to avoid having to apply for work visas and to be treated like Chinese citizens in areas such as investment, property purchase and education. The government is aware of this interest among overseas Chinese and is trying to develop a programme that incorporates these interests. The administration's relevant policies focus on jump-starting immigration reform and strengthening education exchanges to shape the diasporic identity of overseas Chinese. In terms of diaspora engagement, the government focuses on the economic and cultural dimensions of Chinese diaspora. The government seeks to attract overseas Chinese capital, technology and talent for national development as well as build up the transnational imagination of the Chinese nation through cultural exchange programmes. It also encourages diaspora leaders and associations to act as public diplomats to promote such a narrative.



Achievements

Since 2012, the vision of Xi to realize the 'Chinese Dream' has provided a foundation for the current efforts in China's diaspora engagement. Since 2014, the return rate of overseas Chinese students has remained above 78%. There is an integrated set of institutional mechanisms for the diaspora from the central to local level and this has been supported and facilitated by other mechanisms, such as consular departments in overseas embassies and a variety of universities and research institutes providing policy consultations and training of officials pertaining to overseas Chinese policy.

The Ministry of Public Security has launched 20 immigration policies to support the development of Beijing. The bulk of these are on facilitating residence and entry/exit for returned overseas Chinese entrepreneurs.

Obstacles



- **Disconnection:** The majority of the Chinese entrepreneurs at the 2019 WCEC conference were foreign nationals of Chinese descent. Asking them to serve China's interests was somewhat problematic because of differing ideologies.
- **Incentive delays:** Although government initiatives have promised many incentives for overseas returning talents, such as giving overseas returnees huge grants for scientific research, the funds are not immediately paid to the recipients.
- **Freedom of speech:** The scholars who return to China and work in higher education institutions (HEIs) are often advised not to teach anything politically sensitive, or risk being fired. Those who do their research in political science have more concerns over returning, since some of the topics are deemed taboo in Chinese academia.
- **Opaque bureaucratic system:** The Chinese society is built upon *Guanxi*, which means that leaders can sometimes override rules, especially if they are not clearly defined and implemented. This gives rise to a lot of opacity in the bureaucratic operations in HEIs. Returnees are sometimes seen as outsiders and can face great difficulties in breaking into the domestic network. The social norms of proper behaviour and social exchange can also be quite different from the West, hampering (re)integration.

- **Transnational repression:** Certain groups of Chinese nationals abroad are subject to “transnational repression” by the state, in a bid to discourage those in the diaspora from speaking out against certain state policies or practices, such as the treatment of the Uyghur minority. This also creates tension among diaspora communities as some groups are regarded as public diplomats of the government.¹⁴

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC)¹⁵ and Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations, ongoing

NETWORKS

The WCEC was first organised in 1991. Biannual conventions have been organised since then to appeal to the overseas Chinese. The ninth edition of Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations was held in Beijing in 2019. Xi Jinping graced the conference, which was attended by over 450 members of overseas Chinese associations from more than 90 countries.¹⁶

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Returned Overseas Students Industry Parks¹⁷

Since the mid-1990s, Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian and Shandong, to name a few, have adopted numerous policies to offer skilled returnees high salaries, beneficial tax rates, special business loans, housing subsidies and subsidies for children's education. Industrial parks also offer facilities and beneficial policies.

Developing Motherland and Benefitting-Assisting Overseas Chinese (xingguo li qiao-zhu qiao), 2002¹⁸

NETWORKS + RETURN

The plan has two components: the first aims to promote the interaction between overseas Chinese and ‘new migrants’ (those who left China after 1980s) on a global scale. Activities include the pairing of Chinese associations in North America with those in South-East Asia to facilitate collaboration. The plan also promotes websites of Chinese associations and plans to hold web-based business and technology fairs among Chinese around the world. The second component seeks to enhance connections between Chinese communities overseas and China. For example, delegations were sent from China to North America to raise the community's awareness of China's recent policy to attract returnees.

Talent Plans, ongoing¹⁹

NETWORK + EDUCATION

A “Twelve-words Approach” has been in place since the 1990s.²⁰ Programmes such as the Changjiang Scholars Programme or the Hundred Talents programme offer high salaries and research funds. The 2008 Thousand Talents Plan (*qianren jihua*) focused on four areas, namely national innovation, science and laboratories, SOEs and hi-tech parks. In 2013, Xi expanded the ‘twelve words’ policy by adding four additional words ‘*fahui zuoyong*’ (playing a role), pledging that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the government would ensure that the Chinese diaspora could play a significant role when returning to China, and that it could also contribute to China's development when remaining overseas.

14 Kam, Stefanie, ‘Global Ambassadors or Agents of Influence? How China's Diaspora Drives Xi Jinping's Geopolitical Ambitions’ (2024) S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/IP24090.pdf>

15 <https://www.wcecofficial.org/en/>

16 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201905/28/WS5ced49c9a3104842260be51f_1.html

17 Xiang Biao ‘Emigration from China: A sending country perspective’, (2003) International Migration <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2435.00240>

18 Xiang Biao ‘Emigration from China: A sending country perspective’, (2003) International Migration

19 Hong Liu, ‘China's Diaspora Policies as a new mode of transnational governance’ (2016) Journal of Contemporary China. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304032491_China's_Diaspora_Policies_as_a_New_Mode_of_Transnational_Governance

20 Xiang Biao ‘Emigration from China: A sending country perspective’, (2003) International Migration <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2435.00240>

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

The China Zhigong Party

Founded in 1925 in San Francisco, the China Zhigong Party consists mostly of returned overseas Chinese and family dependents. In 1947, the party reorganised in Hong Kong and became part of the United Front led by the CCP. Its role today is the advancement of multi-party cooperation and political consultation, in which strengthening ties with Chinese overseas organizations occupies a central role. Through visits and exchanges, the Zhigong Party attracts overseas capital and strengthens ties with organisations in over 40 countries. Following more flexible policies, it both encourages Chinese overseas to return to China and to serve from overseas.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO)

An administrative office under the State Council that was reinstalled in 1978, the OCAO's main tasks are the coordination of policy formulations with regard to overseas Chinese work by the CCP and the State Council, and monitoring implementation. In addition, it seeks to advance the protection of the rights and interests of the Chinese overseas and of the returned overseas Chinese and family dependents (*guiqiao qiaojuan*). Apart from research and policy recommendations on attracting Chinese overseas capital, technology and talent, it also develops cultural exchange and Chinese language education programmes. Local offices are present in all provinces, the autonomous regions and municipalities. In some cases, such as major *qiaoxiang* like Guangdong and Fujian, a separate OCAO office is integrated into government structures. It works closely with the Office of Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs. Specific activities organised by the OCAO to increase networking with overseas Chinese are the 'Grand union of Global Chinese Overseas Organizations' (*Shijie huaqiao huaren shetuan lianyi dahui*), the 'Global Ethnic Chinese Forum' (*Shijie huaren luntan*) and the 'Global Chinese Language Media Forum' (*Shijie huawen chuanmei luntan*).

In 2018, OCAO was incorporated into the United Front Work Department (UFWD) of the CCP Central Committee. While two new bureaux under UFWD, namely the Overseas Chinese Affairs General Bureau and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau, have taken over the OCAO's functions, the initial name of the OCAO is still used for external communication with overseas Chinese.

China Overseas Exchange Association (COEA)

Founded in 1990, this organisation is affiliated with the OCAO and serves as a platform for people-to-people exchange through both individuals and organisations based within and outside China. It promotes exchange and cooperation in the areas of trade, science and technology, culture and education, as well as tourism and media. It currently has 52 advisers from 88 different countries and regions. In 2019, following the reorganisation of UFWD and OCAO in 2018, the COEA was merged under the Overseas Chinese Affairs General Bureau.

United Front Work Department (UFWD) of the CCP Central Committee (Zhonggong zhongyang tongue zhanxian gongzuobu)

This department contributes to the formation and implementation of China's diaspora policies. The Western Returned Scholars Association is affiliated to this department. Some local United Front Work departments, such as the one in Shenzhen, incorporate elements of religious policy, ethnic minority policy and overseas Chinese affairs (which is in turn divided into 'domestic overseas Chinese affairs' and 'external overseas Chinese affairs'). In addition, for each core area of Chinese diaspora policies, such as economic development, science and technology, propaganda, policies with regard to Taiwan, and public diplomacy, additional actors are involved.

- At sub-ministerial level

Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (OCAC) of the National People's Congress (NPC)²¹

The OCAC was set up as one of six permanent committees in the 1982 constitution with the right to draft legislative proposals and examine bills and inquiries. The OCAC investigates and deliberates legislative proposals by the presidium or the standing committee of the NPC and puts forward new legislative proposals. It also deliberates and reports on regulations, resolutions, orders and directives of the state council, its ministries, committees and local governments. Overseas Chinese Committees also exist at the various lower levels of government. Cities and counties in important sending areas of migration each have their own committee.

Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan Compatriots and Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference)

This committee of the CPPCC is composed of representatives from the CCP, the eight democratic parties (one of which is the China Zhigong Party) and 25 other civil society groups. These groups include "person-ages without party affiliation, mass organisations, all ethnic groups, and sectors of society, compatriots from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macau Special Administrative Region and Taiwan, returned overseas Chinese and specially invited public figures". The committee's tasks are political consultation, democratic supervision and participation in the administration of state affairs.

Western Returned Scholars Association/Overseas-Educated Scholars Association of China (Oumei tongxuehui Zhongguo liuxue ren yuan lianyihui) (WRSA)

Established in 1913, the WRSA is a national association of returned Chinese students from overseas. Since 2003, WRSA acquired a new title – Overseas educated scholars association of China to meet the requirements of the CPC leadership. It has intensified its efforts in ideological, organisational, cultural and membership building. Leveraging its human and intellectual resources, it has established bases for overseas scholars to make contributions to China and it has provided a large number of ideas and proposals for the CPC and government. It has provided good services to high-level Chinese talents overseas and become increasingly influential. It keeps close contact with more than 100 associations of Chinese scholars overseas in major destination countries for Chinese students.

- At local level

All China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC)

The ACFROC - part of the CPCC Committee and established in 1956 - is an organisation for returned overseas Chinese and their family members. It is recognised nationwide and works as a hub bringing

²¹ In the case of both the NPC and the Committee of the CPPCC, an increasing number of overseas Chinese have been attending the two meetings. Between 2001 and 2015, 437 delegates from 66 countries have been present at the NPC and CPPCC meetings.

together the party, the government, returned overseas Chinese and their families. Its key function is to “work with people, participate in politics, protect the rights and interests of overseas Chinese and promote friendship.”²² The 18 vice chairmen and secretary are either returnees or dependents, the majority of whom are from Southeast Asia and the US. Its main tasks include liaising with returned overseas Chinese, dependants and overseas Chinese, assistance with policy formulation and supervision of policy implementation. The ACFROC emphasises the importance of Chinese overseas in economic construction and technological advancement. The ACFROC Youth Committee (Zhongguo qiaolian qingnian weiyuanhui), founded in 2001, promotes economic, scientific and cultural exchange with a special focus on youth. Another affiliated organisation, the China Federation of Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurs (Zhongguo qiaoshang lianhehui), established in 2003, promotes overseas Chinese enterprises and strengthens overseas Chinese entrepreneur organizations.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Association des jeunes chinois de France 2009 France

AJCF provides a space for exchange, mutual aid and development for young French people of Chinese origin. The association aims to improve inclusion in the French cultural landscape and to promote Chinese culture in France. AJCF was active in Covid-19 response activities, including in anti-racism campaigning and promoting Chinese businesses in Paris.

Read more about diaspora organisations in “[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)”



Asociatia ChinaRO

Integration activities

Asociatia ChinaRO is a non-profit organisation established in 2014 and based in Pitești. ChinaRO aims to enhance ties between Romania and China, promoting values, culture, history, traditions, social exchanges and bilateral social integration.

Associazione Nuova Generazione Italo-Cinese (ANGI)

-  Development activities
-  Integration activities

Nuova Generazione Italo-Cinese is a non-profit association founded by young Chinese diasporans based in Turin. It aims to encourage collaboration and mutual help among the new generation of Chinese, support integration into Italian society, safeguard the Chinese community's rights, and promote development co-operation between Italy and China.

British Chinese Network UK

The BCN organises Manchester-based networking events for the British-born Chinese and wider British Chinese community to get together and meet new people.

²² <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32660/INTERACT-RR-2014%20-%202019.pdf?sequence=1>

London Chinatown Chinese Association 1978 UK

LCCA was founded with the aim of developing and expanding businesses in Chinatown and representing British Chinese to engage effectively with the British government. LCCA is also devoted to working closely with the London Chinese Community Centre in providing a wide range of essential services for the many Chinese “living in the United Kingdom and with a heart connecting to China”. More importantly, LCCA serves as an outlet for Chinese businesses to voice their concerns and together bring better conditions and prosperity to the whole of Chinatown.

London Chinese Community Centre 1980 UK

The London Chinese Community Centre was founded in 1980 and was the first Chinese Community Centre in the UK. Within its first year the centre received almost 1,000 requests for support with people coming from as far as Scotland. To date, it has helped over 50,000 people by providing advice and assistance and is seen as a valuable service and resource for many of the Chinese Community in London and beyond.

Pan-European Rainbow Chinese (PERC) 2022

Pan-European Rainbow Chinese (PERC) is a collective of activists, academics, students, artists and professionals advocating for LGBTQ+ and feminist issues in Pan-European countries. PERC aims to raise awareness and increase representation of the Chinese LGBTQ+ diaspora community, and to combat against discrimination and oppression.

UK Chinese Business Association 2012 UK

Development activities

The association was formed by a group of Chinese entrepreneurs in the UK. During its founding, it received strong support from the Chinese Embassy and the British government. It aims to promote business cooperation and cultural exchange between the UK and China.

UK Federation of Chinese Professionals UK

The UKFCP brings together four regional professional associations across the UK. It is an association which supports UK-China professionals with networking and training. It is notable for its work in Covid-19 response in 2020, including anti-racism campaigning.

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