Influence and interference of the People's Republic of China among the Chinese population in the Netherlands

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Responsibility for the investigation and the content of the report obviously lies entirely with me.

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Summary of key findings and recommendations

1. **In the Netherlands, the growth in the number of people, companies and institutions from the People's Republic of China makes it almost inevitable that the impact of the Chinese government will also become more evident here.** This is revealed not only among companies, students and highly skilled migrants, but also within the traditional overseas Chinese communities.

2. **Organizations and leaders of traditional Chinese communities primarily maintain contact with the authorities of their area of origin in China. In addition, Sino-Dutch organizations and media are willing to accommodate Beijing, or at least not antagonize it.** In addition, organizations of Chinese hospitality entrepreneurs are mainly focused on representing the interests of their members. Chinese schools and Chinese churches and temples in the Netherlands are an important focus of local Chinese communities.

3. **Apart from some of the Uighurs, the number of Chinese people in the Netherlands who came here for political reasons (such as asylum or dissidence) is small**. Politically engaged students, academics and activists are active, as evidenced by a number of recent demonstrations in response to the increasingly tough stance of the Chinese authorities on a wide range of issues.

4. **Contact with Chinese authorities or Chinese organizations in the Netherlands does not in itself mean that one would conform one's views to China, let alone be more receptive to the influence of the Chinese government.**

5. **The vast majority of Chinese people in the Netherlands did not know about the existence of the Chinese overseas police stations before they were in the news in autumn 2022.** They have therefore obtained all their information about them from the Dutch and other non-Chinese media. **The Chinese population in the Netherlands almost unanimously see these police stations as an attempt by the Chinese authorities to intimidate the Chinese population.**

6. **Statistically speaking, the most influenced and impressionable people of Chinese background living in the Netherlands are men with a low level of education who speak poor Dutch. The most threatened Chinese in the Netherlands are people from Xinjiang and, to a lesser extent, those who came to the Netherlands for study.**

7. The main factors that make someone less influenced by the Chinese authorities are gender (with women less influenced), area of origin (with those from Xinjiang and Taiwan less influenced) and level of education (with highly educated people less influenced). These findings lead to the following conclusion. **As more 'new migrants' from China with a higher level of education and second-generation Chinese with higher education are present in the Netherlands, the influence of the Chinese authorities on the Chinese population in the Netherlands will decrease. In addition, it is important to note that a significant majority of the Chinese population in the Netherlands are women, who show less conformity.**

8. **Chinese people in the Netherlands feel free and independent of the influence of the Chinese authorities and they trust Dutch sovereignty and freedom of expression.** An exception is some of the Uighurs living in the Netherlands who reported threats and intimidation to the Dutch police in 2019, although the Dutch public prosecution office was unable to prosecute these cases.

9. **What does emerge from our research, however, is a more general and diffuse sense of what we call China's *soft threat*.** Many Chinese Dutch people from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong avoid expressing their views on a number of sensitive issues – a form of self-censorship that both serves as a precaution in case they come to the Chinese authorities' attention and to avoid potentially confrontational discussions with other Chinese people.

10. **Although there is little or no active interference by the Chinese authorities among the ordinary Chinese population in the Netherlands, some degree of at least partial unwanted influence is nevertheless present. The degree of resilience against this unwanted influence is generally low, precisely because it is so diffuse and self-evident for many.**

11. Policies to counter this must assume that most Chinese Dutch people feel a connection with China, although this is generally separate from any specific loyalty to the authorities in China. **One-sided demonization of China, or simple choices for or against China, should therefore be avoided at all costs.**

12. **Dutch policies that focus too heavily on the assumption that there must be active and malign interference from China will have little effect and may only backfire**. Suspicions about the Chinese population in the Netherlands will only increase because of unnecessary attention paid to interference by the Chinese authorities. Chinese people in the Netherlands could then feel compelled to turn to China for protection.

13. **The widely perceived soft threat from China is nevertheless a serious cause for concern.** There are a number of actions the Dutch government can take. **The most important thing is to build on our respondents' general trust in Dutch sovereignty and freedom of expression.** The increased doubt, frustration and distrust about some aspects of the Chinese government's policy among many Chinese people in the Netherlands can help in this regard.

14. **Clear, strong and credible action should be taken where there is an actual threat or interference.** Action regarding these cases could also be taken jointly at the European level. **Political asylum or family reunification for members of vulnerable groups from China should be facilitated and supported as much as possible.** In order to facilitate such actions by the Dutch government, a monitoring and reporting mechanism for Chinese interference and threats should be established.

15. In addition, it is equally important to strengthen the sense of security and belonging in Dutch society among the Chinese population in the Netherlands. Measures to this end

amount to **restoring or further developing a policy encouraging integration and participation in Dutch society.**

16. First, Chinese organizations, schools, churches and temples should be approached for **dialogue both on vulnerability and resilience to influence and about the bridging function between the Netherlands and China that the Dutch Chinese can fulfil.** Here, it is important that the great diversity among the Chinese population in the Netherlands is fully represented.

17. **Second, political participation by the Chinese population in the Netherlands should be encouraged.** This is also the wish of many first-generation leaders and of the authorities in China and care must therefore be taken to ensure that this does not become an entry point for possible Chinese interference in Dutch politics. Political participation is especially important for Chinese people who have grown up in the Netherlands. For them, participating in Dutch politics has nothing to do with possible Chinese interference, but rather implies their full inclusion in Dutch politics and society.

18. **Third, there must be an active anti-discrimination policy.** Particularly Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands have had bad experiences that highlighted their 'otherness'. As they get older, they therefore tend to seek more contact with other Chinese Dutch people. The second-generation Chinese Dutch population must be involved in policies to publicize and tackle stereotyping and discrimination. **Combating the one-sided image of China as an enemy, which threatens to become commonplace in many countries, including the Netherlands, is also essential.** Chinese Dutch people can play a role in this.

19. **Fourth, the development of a Chinese culture in the Netherlands that is separate from China should be promoted.** Chinese-language media produced in the Netherlands and news gathering independently from China should be established or restored. Dutch-language media and cultural activities for the second-generation Chinese Dutch population should also be encouraged. Chinese teaching materials produced in the Netherlands should be (re)introduced in Chinese schools at a price that can compete with teaching materials provided by the Chinese government. China's interference or influence on social media should be addressed and, above all, made public.

1. Objectives of the project

In an earlier report, the LeidenAsiaCentre investigated which instruments the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have at their disposal to exert influence over Chinese citizens and other persons of Chinese origin living in the Netherlands. This previous report, *China's influence and the Chinese community in the Netherlands* (2021), was commissioned by the China Knowledge Network (CKN) of the Dutch government. The report concluded that the conditions and infrastructure for influence are increasingly present and outlined the purposes for which they are or can be used, but made no further statement about the possible vulnerability or resilience of the Chinese population in the Netherlands against such influence.[1]

The current report describes follow-up research in which the question of vulnerability and the resilience to influence and interference among the Chinese population in the Netherlands from the People's Republic of China is central. The aim of this research is to make policy recommendations from both a security outlook and a societal perspective in order to be able to protect Chinese communities from influence and interference where necessary and, at the same time, prevent any stigmatizing side-effects.

The **main question** of the study is:

> *To what extent is the Chinese population in the Netherlands vulnerable or resilient to possible unwanted foreign interference by China, given the composition, orientation and diversity of/within the various communities?*

This main question is broken down into seven more detailed **sub-questions**, namely:

1. *What is the demographic, cultural and socio-economic composition of the Chinese population in the Netherlands?*
2. *Can resilience to unwanted foreign interference be operationalized scientifically and which possible indicators reveal an (in)sufficient degree of resilience?*

[1] Frank N. Pieke, *China's Influence and the Chinese Community in the Netherlands*, LeidenAsiaCentre (2021), F.N.-Pieke.-Chinas-influence-and-the-Chinese-community-in-the Netherlands.pdf (leidenasiacentre.nl).

3. *How and to what extent do Chinese people in the Netherlands experience the role and presence of the Chinese government and CCP as positive attention, help and recognition, respectively, and thus as influence or interference?*
4. *To what extent are Chinese outside the visible elite of leaders and organizations aware of or have experience with unwanted foreign interference?*
5. *To what extent do we see differences in the (potential) unwanted foreign interference by China in ways of approaching/influencing both targets and instruments?*
6. *How can unwanted foreign interference in the Chinese context be scientifically operationalized and which possible indicators suggest an (in)sufficient degree of resilience against unwanted foreign influence?*
7. *What other factors play a role in resilience or vulnerability, such as family or other personal ties to China, involvement in China-related trade, investments or other economic activities, work experience or Communist Party membership in China before emigrating from China, closeness and orientation towards China of one's own community here, as well as political, ethnic or religious orientation and activities in the Netherlands?*

The report consists of the following parts. Chapter 2 explains and justifies the design and execution of the research. Chapter 3 first outlines the development and structure of the Chinese population in the Netherlands, followed by a demographic and socio-economic profile, based on data from Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Chapter 4 provides statistical analysis of our interview data, in which we identify the main vulnerabilities to Chinese influence. Chapter 5 gives a qualitative analysis of our interviews, in which we go into detail about the experience and experiences with Chinese influence of our respondents. Chapter 6 draws a number of conclusions about the most important vulnerabilities and resilience among the Chinese population in the Netherlands. The last chapter suggests policy recommendations to reduce vulnerability and to strengthen resilience where necessary. Finally, four appendices provide additional information about the investigation's design, implementation, data and additional research on Chinese police stations. We have provided this methodological information not only to provide a clear understanding of the intentions and limitations of our approach, but also in the hope that our methodology can be refined and improved in future research.

2. Design and implementation of the research

Chinese Dutch people have their roots not only in all parts of China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong), but also in many other countries with an overseas Chinese community, especially Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries and Suriname. Migrants from non-Chinese minorities in China, such as Uighurs and Tibetans, also belong to the Chinese population in the Netherlands. Because of this diversity, there is in fact not one Chinese community in the Netherlands, but several. We therefore speak in this report of the 'Chinese people' if we want to indicate that it concerns all persons with a Chinese background. We only use the word 'community' to denote a sub-group within the Sino-Dutch population that shows a certain degree of internal cohesion. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (chapter 3).

Policy towards the Chinese population in the Netherlands should therefore approach the various communities differently, a fact that is not only important for the Dutch government and society, but also for the Chinese government and Communist Party. The Chinese authorities' primary target for influence and interference is Chinese Dutch people with a background in China itself (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) and this research therefore focuses on these groups, which make up the vast majority of the Sino-Dutch population. The Netherlands also has an estimated 10,000–15,000 people with a Chinese background from Suriname, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

In order to gain as complete a picture as possible, we approach the main question and the more specific sub-questions of the research from different angles in this report. First, we describe the composition and structure of the Chinese population in the Netherlands based on immigration background, place of origin and socio-economic position in the Netherlands. This includes an overview of Chinese immigration to the Netherlands and the most important (sub-)ethnic and socio-economic groups among the Chinese in the Netherlands, as given in the LeidenAsiaCentre report of 2021. In addition, based on data and source tables provided by the CBS, a detailed socio-demographic profile is given of the numbers, region of origin in China, generation structure, geographical distribution, occupational category and income of the Chinese population in the Netherlands from China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

The rest of the research then uses the structural sketch of the Chinese population to estimate the degree of vulnerability and resilience of different groups. Central to this are the structured

interviews that have been conducted with members of the Chinese community in the Netherlands. For the questionnaire used, please refer to Appendix 1. An anonymized list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 3.

The interviews were conducted by a *team of student interviewers* with a Chinese-Dutch background. This research aims to estimate the degree of influence from the People's Republic of China among the Chinese population in the Netherlands in general. We have therefore excluded leaders of Chinese organizations, media, temples or churches, and persons directly involved in organizations or political activities directed against the authorities in China. Moreover, Chinese influence over these organizations and their leaders was already extensively investigated in the earlier LeidenAsiaCentre (LAC) report.

The selection of interviewers was such that at least one interviewer was available for all main groups of the Chinese population in the Netherlands (that is, from Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hong Kong, students and professionals from urban China, Taiwan and Uighurs). Each interviewer was asked to do the interviews among their own circle of relatives and acquaintances. This was important, because respondents are more willing to agree an interview and feel greater affinity to the interviewer. Moreover, the interview could take place in interviewee's own dialect or language. Because the interviewers were young and largely inexperienced students, they received a course in interview techniques taught by the project researchers before the start of the interviews. In addition to greatly improving the quality and usability of the interviews, participation in the course also increased the team spirit and the interviewers' sense of involvement in the research project.

In total, we conducted 58 interviews involving a team of twelve interviewers. In selecting respondents, we ensured that the total population of interviewees reflected as much as possible the composition of the total Chinese population in terms of gender, age, generation (grown up inside or outside the Netherlands), region of origin and level of education. We also deliberately sought out a number of respondents from Xinjiang, or with a more politically engaged or activist profile, as they could potentially be expected to be targets of Chinese interference. This 'sampling on the dependent variable' is justified in order to find as much evidence of interference as possible, even if it is not or hardly found among the average Chinese population. Conversely, a possible absence of such interference among these respondents is therefore an even stronger indication that interference among other Chinese in the Netherlands does not play a major role.

Such a spread makes it possible to represent the diversity among the Chinese population in the Netherlands without pretending that the research is also statistically representative. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it has remained impossible to reflect fully the Chinese population in the Netherlands. We were able to find relatively few first-generation people from the more traditional communities in Zhejiang and Fujian. Highly educated or Dutch-raised Chinese are therefore overrepresented. This is an important limitation, because our research has shown that it is relatively low-educated, first-generation men who appear to conform most to the authorities in China in their expressions and opinions.

In consultation with the clients, it was decided not to conduct an (online) survey among the Chinese community in the Netherlands. The earlier LAC study in 2021 showed that interviews about the subjective experience with China's influence were very difficult. With the exception of some organizations that are seen as anti-China by the Chinese government, discussions about this generally yielded little concrete information. It is therefore to be expected that a survey conducted by strangers or online would yield little to no new insights on this point and would also be practically very difficult to carry out.

The interviews did not address the sensitive and possibly confrontational question of membership of the Communist Party before or after migration to the Netherlands, but research in China itself has shown that Party members are only marginally more loyal to the Chinese Communist Party than non-Party members. Most Chinese join the CCP because it benefits their careers and not because they necessarily endorse the Party's positions.[2]

In conducting the interviews, we tried to give full disclosure. Respondents were told before the start that the interview was part of a research project of the LeidenAsiaCentre at Leiden University. They were also informed that the research was commissioned by the Dutch government and focused on the perception of the Chinese government within the Chinese community in the Netherlands. We emphasized that although this project was funded by the national government, it was carried out by an independent research institution and independent researchers. We also emphasized that the data would only be used strictly anonymously and that only the research team would have access to the interview reports and transcripts. The vast majority of respondents were willing to participate in the survey without

[2] Lianjiang Li, 'Assessing popular support for the Communist Party of China', *China: An International Journal*, to be published in May 2023.

any problem. In a small number of cases, the interviewee expressed doubts about the interview during or after the interview. Particular concerns were expressed by a number of respondents who were strongly pro-China and who felt that the questions were politically charged and only addressed what could possibly be wrong with regard to the Chinese government's influence. In addition, there were sometimes concerns about how the confidentiality of the data would be guaranteed, but in none of these cases did the respondent refuse to release the interview for our investigation.

The results of the demographic and interview parts of the project were then used to carry out a risk analysis of the nature and degree of Chinese influence, specifying the main factors that determine the exposure and vulnerability to Chinese influence of the Chinese Dutch population. The purpose of this is not only to outline the degree of vulnerability in general, but also to identify more specifically which categories and groups of Chinese Dutch people are particularly at risk and which risks may be associated with each of the above factors.

3. The Chinese population in the Netherlands[3]

3.1 The Chinese communities in the Netherlands

The presence of Chinese people in the Netherlands dates back to the end of the nineteenth century when itinerant traders in trinkets from the area around the city of Qingtian in Zhejiang province reached Europe. In 1911, Chinese stokers from areas in Guangdong province adjacent to Hong Kong (now Shenzhen) were recruited from England to Rotterdam and Amsterdam to break a sailors' strike. Between 1916 and 1918, several hundred thousand Chinese were recruited by the Allies, mainly from Shandong province and the countryside around the city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang, for logistical support and trench-digging in northern France. Several thousand remained in Europe after the First World War, some of whom also ended up in the Netherlands. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Netherlands also had a number of Chinese students from the Dutch East Indies. These students were educated at Dutch-speaking schools and usually did not speak Chinese, but instead Malay or a regional Indonesian language as their mother tongue.

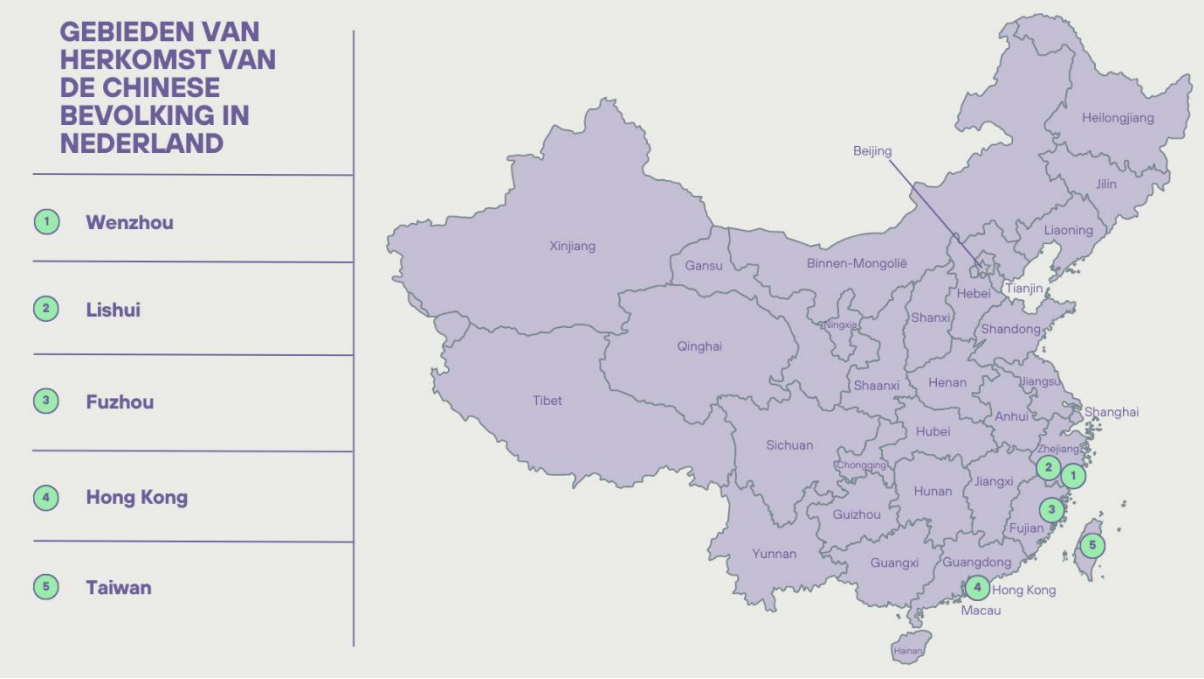
These small and extremely floating Chinese communities declined sharply in number during the Great Depression and the Second World War, but would still become growth centres for the Chinese communities in the Netherlands after the war. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, Hong Kong Chinese were numerically much more important. China gradually closed its borders after the revolution of 1949 and during the Cultural Revolution (from 1966–1969) emigration to the capitalist West was made completely impossible. Hong Kong Chinese from England or Hong Kong relatives of the Chinese already living in the Netherlands jumped into the gap and were largely responsible for the rapid growth and spread of the Chinese–Indian restaurants. Attracted by the opportunities offered in the restaurant sector, a significant

[3] The first four paragraphs of this chapter are taken from Pieke's previous report for the LeidenAsiaCentre on China's influence and the Chinese community in the Netherlands (2021) and are based on his publications on the development of Chinese migration in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, such as Frank N. Pieke and Gregor Benton (eds), *The Chinese in Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Frank N. Pieke, Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø and Antonella Ceccagno, *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese Migrants in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Frank N. Pieke, 'Migration journeys and working conditions of Chinese irregular immigrants in the United Kingdom', in Gao Yun (ed.), *Concealed Chains: Labour Exploitation and Chinese Migrants in Europe*, pp. 139–168 (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2010).

number of Chinese people from Singapore and Malaysia came to the Netherlands in the 1970s. The Cantonese that all these Chinese spoke or learned here soon became the most important Chinese language in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Western Europe.

In addition to the Hong Kong Chinese, the number of Chinese from Indonesia also grew strongly in the 1950s and 1960s. Because they were well educated, fluent in Dutch and often did not speak Chinese, they remained separate from the other Chinese groups in the Netherlands. The same was true – albeit to a lesser extent – of the Hakka-speaking Chinese who came to the Netherlands around the time of Suriname's independence in 1975 and the mainly Cantonese-speaking Chinese–Vietnamese boat people at the end of the 1970s. Their status as Dutch citizens or political refugees meant that they were not dependent on the job market in Chinese restaurants and therefore did not have to gain a place in the Hong Konger-dominated Chinese population.

1



Source: LeidenAsiaCentre (2023).

In the second half of the 1970s, migration from the People's Republic of China became possible again. At first sparsely, but rapidly increasing in numbers, Chinese people from the areas around Qingtian in Lishui and Wenzhou in the province of Zhejiang came to the Netherlands

to work in Chinese–Indian restaurants. Although Qingtian and Wenzhou are less than 100 kilometres apart and have mutually intelligible dialects, they still developed their own communities. In the second half of the 1980s, a largely new migrant group was added, namely Chinese people from the areas around the city of Fuzhou (especially the Changle region), the capital of Fujian province, and the Fuqing district, a little further south. They were part of a diaspora that extended worldwide within just a few years. Although the language of these Fujianese is completely different from Cantonese or the language of the Wenzhounese and Qingtianners, they too ended up for the most part in the Dutch Chinese-restaurant sector.

Until about the year 2000, the Chinese population in the Netherlands consisted of two internally very diverse groups. The first and largest group concentrated almost exclusively on the restaurant sector. Because the limits to growth of traditional Chinese–Indian restaurants were reached long ago, many Chinese from the restaurant sector are now seeking refuge in related sectors, such as snack bars or sushi restaurants. For the most part, these Chinese originated from areas of south-eastern China that had traditionally specialized in emigration. The second and much smaller group came from former Dutch colonies (such as Indonesia and Suriname) or came to the Netherlands as political refugees. These people were not concentrated in any particular sector of the economy and were often much more strongly integrated into Dutch society.

Driven by fundamental changes in China itself, the already great diversity of the Chinese community in the Netherlands increased even more in the new millennium. From 1994, China changed in less than a decade from being a state socialist country where people were tied to their work and place of residence into a society of autonomous families and individuals. The reorganization of state-owned enterprises, relaxation of the household registration system, transition from social housing to a private housing market, and the growth and further opening up of higher education forced China's population to take responsibility for their own livelihoods and the future of themselves and their children.

The new freedoms and responsibilities brought groups of so-called 'new migrants' from very different backgrounds and areas of China to the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. Farmers and workers from the mainly 'rust-belt' provinces in north-eastern China (Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning) sought unskilled and temporary work in agriculture, construction, prostitution and personal care, but ultimately predominently in the Chinese-restaurant sector. After studying abroad was allowed at your own expense without a

scholarship in the 1990s, the number of Chinese students in the Netherlands increased rapidly. More and more highly educated Chinese also found jobs in business or higher education. These were often Chinese people who had graduated in the Netherlands and had found work here after their studies. A smaller group of often highly educated Chinese people work in the Netherlands as expatriates for branches of Chinese or international companies and organizations, or have married Dutch citizens (whether or not of Chinese origin).

Another group of new migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) are the Uighurs, of whom about 1,500 currently live in the Netherlands. From the 1990s onwards, many Uighurs moved to Central Asia and the Middle East as students or pilgrims in search of sources of authentic Islam. After the PRC authorities began to apply increasing pressure on Middle Eastern governments and on individual Uighurs to return to China, many sought refuge in Western Europe or North America. The Uighur community in the Netherlands is divided among themselves, but is also strongly linked to the global Uighur diaspora. There are also ties with the Turkish community in the Netherlands, whose language and culture closely resemble those of the Uighurs. The current Uighur community in the Netherlands also has a growing second generation.[4]

The shifts in migration flows to the Netherlands have had fundamental cultural, economic, linguistic and political consequences. The restaurant sector was dominated by Cantonese-speaking Hong Kongers until the 1990s. With the arrival of large numbers of migrants, the Wenzhounese and to a lesser extent the Qingtianners have taken their place. China's national standard language, Mandarin, is taking over the place of Cantonese as a common language for the Dutch Chinese, although this is the mother tongue for practically no one and is often imperfectly mastered. The increasing number of 'new migrants' from cities and provinces outside the traditional overseas-Chinese origin areas – and in particular the presence of more and more highly educated Chinese – is further encouraging the transition to Mandarin. The much greater role of Chinese media, social media and the PRC government among the Chinese population in the Netherlands also stimulates the passive mastery of Mandarin even more.

[4] In addition to our interviews for the current project and the LAC project in 2021, we also derive this information about the Uighurs from the Ph.D. research of Elke Spiessens.

Since the 1990s, migration from Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia, and from former Dutch colonies, has only occurred sporadically. These Chinese communities now consist of several generations, with the original migrants often starting to age and their children and grandchildren becoming increasingly prominent. Although members of the second and third generations may have spent part of their childhood in Asia, they are primarily Dutch. This also applies to the second generation from Qingtian, Wenzhou or Fujian. They generally have little interest in the Chinese restaurant sector. Many of them hold a regular job, others have started a business, sometimes (but certainly not always) with a Chinese slant, such as hotels, more expensive restaurants, travel agencies, or trading with China. Most speak only their parents' native Chinese language (such as Cantonese, Hakka, Wenzhounees, or Fuzhounees), although some have also learned Mandarin, for example in Chinese schools at weekends or at a Chinese or Dutch university.

3.2 Demographic and socio-economic profile

The changes in Chinese migration flows are evident from research carried out in 2011 by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) into the Chinese population in the Netherlands. In the CBS study, as in the study for our own report, the Chinese groups from Indonesia, Suriname, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore were not included. On 1 January 2011, 51,000 first-generation Chinese immigrants from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan lived in the Netherlands. The number of second-generation Chinese was 28,000. Of the first-generation Chinese who had settled in the Netherlands in 1990 or earlier, nearly three-quarters were born in Hong Kong or Guangdong province. Just over 60 per cent of first-generation Hong Kongers had come to the Netherlands before 1990, while only just over 20 per cent of Zhejiang Chinese (from Wenzhou and Qingtian) and only 4 per cent of Chinese from 'other provinces' (excluding Beijing and Shanghai) had come to the Netherlands before 1990. Since 2000, both new migrants from the People's Republic of China and the second generation have grown

rapidly,[5] so that by 2011 both groups had become about the same size as the groups of pre-2000 migrants.[6]

A more recent study by the CBS (2020) is limited only to people with Chinese nationality, but it does provide a good insight into the composition and professional profile of students and highly skilled migrants, in particular among new migrants who arrived after 2000. In 2019, 37,000 people with Chinese nationality lived in the Netherlands, or 0.2 per cent of the total Dutch population. Their number has grown sharply in the last 20 years compared to about 8,000 in 1995. Of the people with Chinese nationality, 400 were studying for a Ph.D. at a Dutch university, which accounts for about 10 per cent of all international Ph.D. candidates in the Netherlands. According to earlier research by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (2015), 43 per cent of Chinese Ph.D. candidates remain in the Netherlands after graduation. In addition, 4,500 Chinese people study for a BA or MA in the Netherlands, with 33 per cent of BA students and 40 per cent of MA students still in the Netherlands three years after graduation.[7]

For the current project, we asked CBS to carry out an even more detailed study into the demographic and socio-economic profile of the Chinese population in the Netherlands. Data for 1 January 2022 from the Personal Records Database (BRP), the System of Social Statistical Files (SSB) and the Tax and Customs Administration were used. The two source tables

[5] Carel Harmsen, 'More than 51 thousand first-generation Chinese in the Netherlands', The Hague: Central Bureau of Statistics, 28 April 2011, https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2011/17/ruim-51-duizend-chinezen-van-de-eerste-generatie-in-nederland, read online on 22 January 2021.

[6] Frank Linder, Lotte van Oostrom, Frank van der Linden, and Carel Harmsen, 'Chinese in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century', *Population Trends*, 2011(4), 22 December 2011, https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2011/51/chinezen-in-nederland-in-het-eerste-decennium-van-de-21ste-eeuw, p. 28, diagram 1, read online on 22 January 2021.

[7] Dennis Cremers, Iryna Rud and Sarah Creemers, 'Chinese workers and students in the Netherlands', in *Internationalization Monitor China*, 2020-II (The Hague: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020), pp. 93–116, https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/publicatie/2020/26/internationaliseringsmonitor-2020-tweede-kwartaal-thema-china, read on 22 January 2022; and Iryna Rud, Bram Wouterse and Roel van Elk, 'Stay rates of foreign Ph.D. graduates in the Netherlands' (The Hague: Centraal Planbureau, 2015), https://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/download/cpb-background-document-stay-rates-foreign-phd-graduates-netherlands.pdf, read online on 22 January 2021.

provided by CBS are available both on the LeidenAsiaCentre webpage for this report and on the CBS website.[8] A brief methodological explanation is also included in these source tables.

For this report, we have distilled a number of smaller and therefore more accessible tables from the two source tables, which we present and discuss below. Table 1 gives an initial overview of the numbers of Chinese people in the Netherlands, broken down by region of origin (birth), gender and generation. The first thing you notice is that among the first generation, the number of women (56.5 per cent) is considerably larger than the number of men (43.8 per cent), while men form the majority among the population in China itself, with 51.1 per cent men and 48.9 per cent women.[9] Among the approximately 250 million internal migrants in China, men are also by far the majority.[10] As shown by the sex ratios (that is, the number of men divided by the number of women, times 100) in the table, women form the majority from all the areas of origin, including Taiwan and Hong Kong. Exceptions are Fujian, where emigration from the overseas-Chinese origin areas is (still) dominated by men,[11] and, curiously, Shandong. This also applies to the 'one and a half generation', or 'intermediate generation' raised in China, but not to the second generation raised in the Netherlands, who have a normal sex ratio regardless of region of origin.

The traditional areas of origin for overseas Chinese (Wenzhou, Lishui/Qingtian, Fujian, Guangdong and Hong Kong) still account for the numerically largest number of Chinese in

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8 https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2023/07/chinezen-in-nederland-1-januari-2022 and https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbs.nl%2Fnl-nl%2Fmaatwerk%2F2023%2F08%2Fsociaaleconomische-kenmerken-van-chinezen-in-nederland-1-januari-2022&data=05%7C01%7Cf.n.pieke%40hum.leidenuniv.nl%7Ccf1e71229c86419ed68d08db173b343b%7Cca2a7f76dbd74ec091086b3d524fb7c8%7C0%7C0%7C638129315279238658%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=M6vedjYRsymBphwPC6lIQi110rqrwpaoiVSLHDiSIvY%3D&reserved=0); and https://leidenasiacentre.nl/invloed-en-inmenging-van-de-volksrepubliek-china-onder-de-chinese-bevolking-in-nederland/.

9 C. Textor, 'Population in China from 2012 to 2022, by gender', *Statista*, 17 January 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/251129/population-in-china-by-gender/, read online on 24 February 2023.

10 *Domestic migrants in China (2018): trends, challenges and recommendations*, NBS/UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Data Project, 2018, pp. 4–5, https://china.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E7%9A%84%E6%B5%81%E5%8A%A8%E4%BA%BA%E5%8F%A3%EF%BC%882018%EF%BC%89-EN-final.pdf, viewed online on 27 February 2023.

11 Frank N. Pieke *et al.*, *Transnational Chinese*.

the Netherlands with 33,403 people, but all the other provinces together ('China other' in the table) total 25,254 people, so now quite close. The number of 5,193 Taiwanese is also surprisingly high; the Taiwanese community is certainly not a negligible part of the Chinese population. If we look further at the individual provinces under the 'China other' category, it appears that China's largest and most developed cities (Beijing and Shanghai, but not Tianjin) and the provinces around the Yangzi River (Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei and Hunan) flowing through central China are relatively strongly represented. These provinces are generally more economically prosperous than other provinces. The poorer provinces in the north, south and west of China are underrepresented, with the exception of Xinjiang (because of the persecution of Uighurs there) and the highly industrialized provinces of Shandong and Liaoning. This confirms the view that China's new emigrants are relatively prosperous, urban and highly educated, much more so than traditional overseas Chinese.

1Chinese population in the Netherlands by region of origin, gender and generation, 1 January 2022

First generation region of origin	Husband	Wife	Total	Sex ratio
Traditional overseas territories				
Hong Kong and Macau	5,150	5,773	10,923	89
Guangdong	2,922	4,350	7,272	67
Fujian	1,565	1,486	3,051	105
Lishui/Qingtian	1,699	1,759	3,458	97
Wenzhou	4,190	4,509	8,699	93
Total overseas territories	15,526	17,877	33,403	87
Other areas of origin				
China other, *including*	9,714	15,540	25,254	63
Anhui	341	777	1,118	44
Gansu	98	143	241	69
Guizhou	62	190	252	33
Hainan	39	53	92	74
Hebei	246	300	546	82
Heilongjiang	237	342	579	69
Henan	281	371	652	76
Hubei	373	782	1,155	48
Hunan	779	1,325	2,104	59

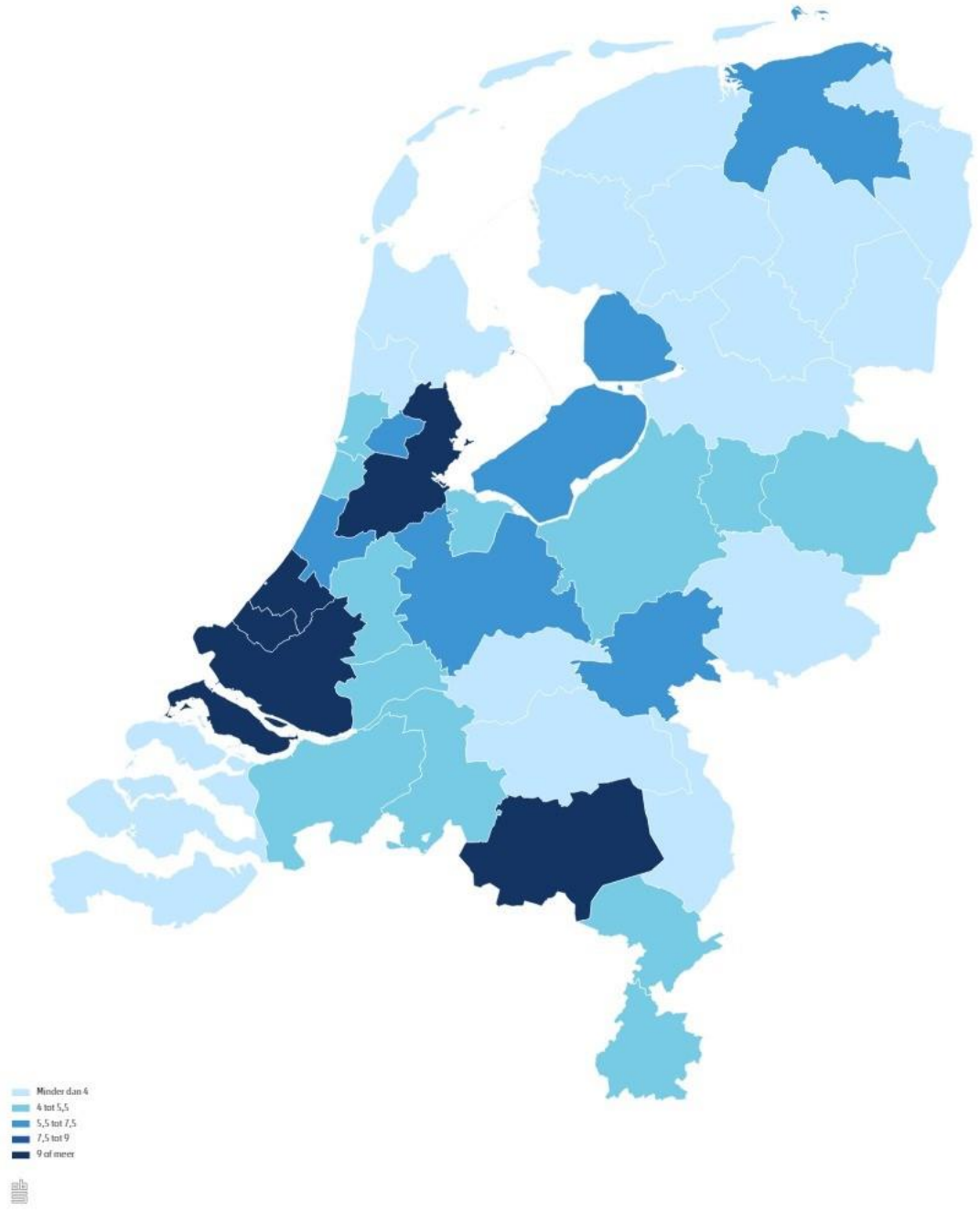
Jiangsu	756	1,015	1,771	74
Jiangxi	296	1,127	1,423	26
Jilin	231	290	521	80
Liaoning	752	1,153	1,905	65
Qinghai	15	30	45	50
Shaanxi	303	419	722	72
Shandong	797	657	1,454	121
Shanxi	183	192	375	95
Sichuan and Chongqing	529	1,077	1,606	49
Yunnan	180	261	441	69
Shanghai	1,033	1,475	2,508	70
Beijing	713	1,054	1,767	68
Tianjin	173	277	450	62
Guangxi	178	867	1,045	21
Xinjiang	594	591	1,185	101
Inner Mongolia	108	153	261	71
Tibet	30	37	67	81
Ningxia	39	42	81	93
Zhejiang other	348	540	888	64
Taiwan	2,018	3,175	5,193	64
China unknown	7,781	8,976	16,757	87
Total first generation *including*	35,039	45,568	80,607	77
'One-and-a-half' generation	6,541	9,442	15,983	69
Second generation region of origin				
Taiwan	481	473	954	102
China	13,097	12,407	25,504	106
Hong Kong plus Macau	4,615	4,465	9,080	103
Total second generation	18,193	17,345	35,538	105
Grand total	**53,232**	**62,913**	**116,145**	85
Per cent	45.8	54.2	100.0	

Source: CBS source tables

The distribution of the Chinese population across the Netherlands is shown in Figure 2 below. The Netherlands is divided into so-called COROP areas, each of which has a central core with a surrounding catchment area. Both the first- and second-generation Chinese follow the same pattern, with a clear concentration in the three major cities and in the Randstad more generally, including Delft thanks to its technical university, and the Eindhoven region with its large number of high-tech companies and technical university. The regions of Other Groningen and Arnhem–Nijmegen also have a relatively large number of Chinese and, here too, the presence of universities (the University of Groningen, and Radboud University and Wageningen University & Research, respectively) probably plays a role. The existence of a technical university in the Twente region, on the other hand, seems to have only a modest effect. Finally, the Flevoland region is attractive to some Chinese companies and households because of the relatively low land and house prices and its proximity to the Randstad. Despite their concentration in a limited number of regions, Chinese people can be found all over the Netherlands, mainly because of Chinese restaurants, which are relatively evenly distributed among the population because of competition between them.

In Table 2, also below, we indicate the different nationalities of the Chinese population in the Netherlands. It turns out that only about half of first-generation Chinese have taken Dutch nationality, but that this is mainly caused by the 'new migration', of which a significant number are students. Fewer than one-third of persons from overseas Chinese territories have retained the nationality of the People's Republic of China, and they too can be assumed to be mainly more recent immigrants. Hong Kong nationals also hold Dutch nationality by a large majority, with only small numbers retaining the nationality of Great Britain–Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, or another. Among Taiwanese, retention of their Republic of China (RoC) nationality is even more general than among new migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC), probably because many of them do not see the benefits of Dutch nationality, or only expect to stay in the Netherlands for a few years. As far as the second generation is concerned, there is a clear difference between people from the People's Republic of China, on the one hand, and Hong Kong and Taiwan on the other. Dutch nationality among the last two groups is almost universal, while the children of parents from the People's Republic of China have retained Chinese nationality in 13 per cent of cases, although some will also have Dutch nationality.

Figure 2: Per mille share of first- and second-generation Chinese in the population of the Netherlands, by COROP areas, 1 January 2022



Source: CBS source files

2First- and second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands by nationality, age and region of origin, 1 January 2022

Region of origin/nationality	PRC/China	Netherlands	ROC/Taiwan	GB/Hong Kong	Remaining
First generation					
Hong Kong and Macau	609	9,236	0	646	427
Guangdong	1,820	5,339	0	0	84
Fujian	1,743	1,223	0	0	81
Lishui/Qingtian	1,525	1,901	0	0	32
Wenzhou	4,235	4,330	0	0	134
Total overseas-Chinese territories	9,932	22,029	0	0	758
China other	13,566	10,985	0	0	637
Taiwan	426	344	3,590	0	808
Unknown	13,372	2,679	18	153	664
Total first generation	37,296	36,037	0	0	2,867
Second generation					
Taiwan	3	855	0	0	42
China	3,284	21,606	0	0	574
Hong Kong plus Macau	8	9,030	0	0	24
Total second generation	3,295	31,491	0	0	640
Grand total	**40,591**	**67,528**	**3,608**	**799**	**3,507**

Source: CBS source tables

The distinction between overseas Chinese from the traditional areas of origin and the new migrants is also evident from the age structure and income profile of both groups. Table 3 below first gives the age structure for each area of origin and for the first and second generation. Although the age structure of the Chinese population as a whole is currently fairly balanced, albeit still relatively young, there are sometimes large differences between individual groups. The group from Hong Kong and Macau is clearly the oldest. Immigration from this area has been slow since the 1990s. At the moment, not only are the youngest age categories very small, but also the group for 25–45 years old is modest in size.

The pattern for the traditional overseas areas of origin in the People's Republic of China (Guangdong, Fujian, Wenzhou and Lishui/Qingtian) reflects the fact that large migratory flows from those areas continued until the mid-2000s, but then declined rapidly. These groups are therefore currently dominated by people aged 25–65 years old, with relatively few elderly people over the age of 65. This applies most strongly to the group from Fujian, where emigration to the Netherlands only started at the end of the 1980s. Taiwan and 'China other' contrast strongly with this, but are very similar to each other. These are areas of origin for the 'new migration' from China, with large numbers of students and highly educated people. This new migration really started in the 2000s and remains ongoing. These groups not only have a small number of elderly people, but also a modest number of first-generation children. Immigration for this group apparently takes place generally before one has children.

The second-generation Chinese population in the Netherlands has rapidly increased in size. First, there is the large group of the 'one-and-a-half' generation or intermediate generation: children who were born in China but came to the Netherlands before the age of twelve and therefore grew up partly in China and partly in the Netherlands (see Table 1 above). This group plays an important role in the profiling and functioning of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands, because these people are ideally equipped to fulfil a bridging function between the first-generation immigrants and Chinese society because of their shared background. The second generation of Dutch-born or largely Dutch-raised Chinese consists for the most part of children with parents from the People's Republic of China. Because immigration from other regions in China is still too recent, it is likely that these are almost exclusively the children of parents from one of the overseas-Chinese regions of origin. The group of children of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants to the Netherlands is much smaller, but it should be noted that many of the third-generation Chinese will also come from this group, but unfortunately this is not included in the CBS data.

As Table 3 below shows, the second generation is a young group, including a large number of children and young adults. For the second generation, it is not possible to make a breakdown between different areas of origin in the People's Republic of China. However, it is clear that those in the second generation whose parents come from Hong Kong or Macau are clearly older than those with parents from the People's Republic of China. The youngest group is the Taiwanese, although it is expected that the second generation with 'China other' parents will also be very young.

3Chinese population in the Netherlands by age, region of origin and generation, 1 January 2022 (% horizontal)

Age/area of origin	*0 to 15*	%	*15 to 25*	%	*25 to 45*	%	*45 to 65*	%	*65+*	%	*Total*
First generation											
China other	2,254	9.3	5,345	21.9	12,078	49.6	4,143	17.0	546	2.2	24,366
Hong Kong and Macau	474	4.3	567	5.2	1,808	16.6	4,574	41.9	3,500	32.0	10,923
Guangdong	441	6.1	1,080	14.9	1,665	22.9	2,172	29.9	1,914	26.3	7,272
Fujian	203	6.7	291	9.5	1,392	45.6	966	31.7	199	6.5	3,051
Zhejiang, *including*	398	3.1	652	5.0	5,361	41.1	5,308	40.7	1,326	10.2	13,045
Lishui/Qingtian	47	1.4	116	3.4	1,300	37.6	1,495	43.2	500	14.5	3,458
Wenzhou	257	3.0	381	4.4	3,578	41.1	3,670	42.2	813	9.3	8,699
Taiwan	575	11.1	1,092	21.0	2,540	48.9	849	16.3	137	2.6	5,193
Unknown	375	2.2	3,763	22.5	10,401	62.1	1,778	10.6	440	2.6	16,757
Total first generation	4,720	5.9	12,790	15.9	35,245	43.7	19,790	24.6	8,062	10.0	80,607
Second generation											
Taiwan	623	65.3	200	21.0	126	13.2	5	0.5	0	0.0	954
China	12,092	47.4	6,252	24.5	5,559	21.8	1,032	4.0	569	2.2	25,504
Hong Kong plus Macau	1,341	14.8	1,354	14.9	5,326	58.7	1,029	11.3	30	0.3	9,080
Total second generation	14,056	39.6	7,806	22.0	11,011	31.0	2,066	5.8	599	1.7	35,538
Grand total	**18,776**	16.2	**20,596**	17.7	**46,256**	39.8	**21,856**	18.8	**8,661**	7.5	**116,145**

Source: CBS tables

In Table 4 below we show the build-up of the Chinese population according to so-called income quintiles. Based on data from the tax authorities and population registers, the total population of the Netherlands is divided equally into five different income groups (quintiles), each of which accounts for 20 per cent of the population. Table 4 shows to what extent the Chinese population and various sub-groups within it deviate from this and are therefore poorer or richer than the Dutch population as a whole. The table divides the group 'China

other' into five Chinese regions in order to be able to see the influence of socio-economic differences in China itself.

The figures in this table are not entirely unambiguous, but there are nevertheless a number of patterns. First, the households of first-generation migrants from all overseas Chinese territories are clearly poorer, both in comparison with the Dutch population as a whole and compared with people from most other areas in China and with the second-generation Chinese. The upward mobility of the second generation that emerges from this is a pattern common among migrant groups and is seen as an indication of the long-term success of immigration. The contrast with Chinese from the other regions of origin is also not surprising in itself, as they generally have much higher education and often come from urban China rather than rural areas. The contrast with the Dutch population as a whole is also interesting. The Chinese are often classified as an economically successful 'model minority' in many countries. Based on the income data provided to the Dutch tax authorities, this appears to be quite a bargaining chip.

Some of the differences in income by area of origin are also worth mentioning. First-generation Chinese from most regions do not differ much from each other. People from China's richer coastal region do a little better than others, surprisingly with the exception of the western region, which is not easy to explain. However, it is much clearer that people from Xinjiang and Tibet are generally considerably poorer, so it seems that their disadvantage in China also translates into a disadvantaged position in the Netherlands. The reverse also appears to be true, because by far the most successful group are the Taiwanese, both from the first and second generations. Many Taiwanese immigrants are students, highly skilled migrants, businessmen, or employees of Taiwanese companies. Their high socio-economic position in their country of origin continues in their position and that of their children in Dutch society.

4First- and second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands by household income* and region of origin, 1 January 2022 (% horizontal)

Quintile/area of origin	1st	%	2nd	%	3rd	%	4th	%	5th	%	Total
First generation											
AAC areas											
Hong Kong plus Macau	3,487	34.9	1,635	16.4	1,546	15.5	1,443	14.4	1,878	18.8	9,989
Guangdong	2,931	42.7	1,232	18.0	951	13.9	842	12.3	906	13.2	6,862
Fujian	1,132	40.3	688	24.5	399	14.2	277	9.9	316	11.2	2,812
Lishui/Qingtian	1,287	38.6	752	22.5	501	15.0	378	11.3	418	12.5	3,336
Wenzhou	3,180	38.0	1,885	22.5	1,292	15.4	1,003	12.0	1,017	12.1	8,377
Total AAC areas	12,017	38.3	6,192	19.7	4,689	14.9	3,943	12.6	4,535	14.5	31,376
China other											
Coast	1,689	22.3	1,318	17.4	1,070	14.1	1,097	14.5	2,061	27.2	7,580
Central	1,448	24.3	912	15.3	1,009	16.9	1,133	19.0	1,451	24.4	5,953
North-east	729	29.7	538	21.9	358	14.6	310	12.6	518	21.1	2,453
West	786	19.8	573	14.4	660	16.6	819	20.6	1,140	28.7	3,978
Xinjiang and Tibet	626	59.3	188	17.8	100	9.5	.	.	.	.	1,055
Total China other	5,278	25.1	3,529	16.8	3,197	15.2	3,359	16.0	5,170	24.6	21,019
Taiwan	560	14.8	520	13.8	748	19.8	777	20.6	1,171	31.0	3,776
Unknown	3,193	34.5	2,050	22.2	1,353	14.6	1,137	12.3	1,514	16.4	9,247
Total first generation	21,048	32.2	12,291	18.8	9,987	15.3	9,216	14.1	12,390	18.9	21,048
Second generation											
Taiwan	123	14.8	110	13.3	143	17.2	161	19.4	293	35.3	830
China	6,610	28.0	4,396	18.6	3,846	16.3	3,725	15.8	5,041	21.3	23,618
Hong Kong plus Macau	1,214	13.8	1,194	13.6	1,663	18.9	2,126	24.2	2,591	29.5	8,788
Total second generation	7,947	23.9	5,700	17.2	5,652	17.0	6,012	18.1	7,925	23.8	33,236
Grand total	**28,995**	**29.4**	**17,991**	**18.2**	**15,639**	**15.9**	**15,445**	**15.7**	**20,584**	**20.9**	**98,654**

* Standardized income of private household of which person is a part (% horizontal).
Source: CBS source tables; the figures in the table do not include persons with an unknown household income.

5First and second generation Chinese in the Netherlands by socio-economic position and region of origin, 1 January 2022 (% horizontal)

Position/ origin	Work taker	%	Independent	%	Payment/ pension	%	Child or student	%	No income	%	Total
First generation											
AAC areas											
Hong Kong and Macau	3,823	35.0	1,181	10.8	3,697	33.8	922	8.4	1,300	11.9	10,923
Guangdong	2,124	29.2	667	9.2	2,261	31.1	1,333	18.3	887	12.2	7,272
Fujian	1,317	43.2	526	17.2	367	12.0	418	13.7	423	13.9	3,051
Lishui/ Qingtian	1,205	34.8	1,069	30.9	630	18.2	117	3.4	437	12.6	3,458
Wenzhou	3,022	34.7	2,868	33.0	1,178	13.5	535	6.2	1,096	12.6	8,699
Total AAC areas	11,491	34.4	6,311	18.9	8,133	24.3	3,325	10.0	4,143	12.4	33,403
China other											
Coast	3,829	44.6	606	7.1	547	6.4	2,246	26.2	1,743	20.3	8,588
Central	2,768	40.5	531	7.8	296	4.3	2,128	31.2	1,104	16.2	6,827
North-east	1,468	48.9	308	10.2	219	7.3	372	12.4	638	21.2	3,005
West	1,733	36.9	.	.	.	.	1,694	36.1	772	16.4	4,694
Xinjiang and Tibet	367	29.3	110	8.8	371	29.6	221	17.7	183	14.6	1,252
Total China other	10,165	41.7	1,555	6.4	1,433	5.9	6,661	27.3	4,440	18.2	24,366
Taiwan	2,186	42.1	226	4.4	295	5.7	1,430	27.5	1,056	20.3	5,193
Unknown	6,566	39.2	1,079	6.4	1,014	6.1	3,327	19.9	4,771	28.5	16,757
Total first generation	30,408	37.7	9,551	11.8	11,131	13.8	14,953	18.6	14,564	18.1	80,607
Second generation											
China	5,426	21.3	1,146	4.5	1,014	4.0	17,300	67.8	618	2.4	25,504
Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan	5,052	50.3	830	8.3	400	4.0	3,265	32.5	487	4.9	10,034
Total second generation	10,478	29.5	1,976	5.6	1,414	4.0	20,565	57.9	1,105	3.1	35,538
Grand total	**40,886**	35.2	**11,527**	9.9	**12,545**	10.8	**35,518**	30.6	**15,669**	13.5	**116,145**

Source: CBS source tables.

For the new migrants from 'China other' and Taiwan, the picture looks radically different. Most are salaried employees or students. Of particular note, the number of employees from the north-east of China is very high, which is probably because there are still many low-skilled people from the north-east in the Netherlands, who are largely dependent on employment in the Chinese hospitality sector or elsewhere. The picture is very different for people from Tibet and Xinjiang, who are mainly employed, on benefits or pensioned. Finally, the second generation is still largely at school or university. The elderly among the second generation are for the most part employed and few are attracted to self-employment.

In summary, we can make the following comments. A significant majority of first-generation Chinese in the Netherlands are women. Many Chinese in the Netherlands have Dutch nationality, with the exception of almost all first-generation Taiwanese and about half of the first-generation from the People's Republic of China. The vast majority of Chinese from traditional overseas origin areas (including Hong Kong) and all the second generation have Dutch nationality. The Chinese population in the Netherlands is not only very diverse in terms of area of origin, migration generation, nationality and area of settlement, but also socio-economically. Moreover, there is a clear link between these factors. The dominant groups among the first generation are the overseas Chinese from Wenzhou and Lishui/Qingtian in the Chinese hospitality industry, as well as highly educated new migrants from 'China other' and Taiwan, who are mainly employed by Dutch, Chinese, or Taiwanese companies. At the bottom of the ladder are migrants from Xinjiang and Tibet, who are employed or on benefits. However, there is also a group of younger Uighurs who came to the Netherlands as students and therefore have to be counted among the highly skilled new migrants. Although this cannot be deduced from the figures of Statistics Netherlands, some recent migrants from north-eastern China, Fujian, and even Qingtian and Wenzhou, also occupy a low and in some cases even marginal socio-economic position. A shrinking number of first-generation migrants from Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong are still working in the Chinese hospitality industry as employees or self-employed entrepreneurs, but more and more are retiring and falling down the socio-economic ladder.

3.3 Organizations, media and political involvement

The 2021 LAC report describes in detail how Chinese Dutch people have established a large number of organizations. In 1989 there were already 83, with 130 by 1996.[12] At present, there are several hundred organizations in the Netherlands, most of which are dominated by a relatively small group of first-generation leaders. These organizations fall into the following categories:

- Organizations that represent the Chinese population *vis-à-vis* the Dutch government and society;
- Organizations that function as extensions of the Chinese government;
- Organizations of communities from a specific area of origin;
- Organizations, temples, or churches of Chinese faith communities;
- Organizations focused on a specific political goal in China;
- Chinese social work organizations and community centres;
- Chinese schools and organizations for Chinese education;
- Organizations and clubs for professional groups, culture, sports, or public holidays;
- Chinese-language media, including newspapers, radio and television stations, internet sites, blogs and social media.

In recent years, the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have stepped up their ambitions about strengthening their influence among Chinese communities, businesses and institutions abroad, and have strengthened and expanded their arsenal of resources to this end. This also applies to the Netherlands. The growth of the Chinese population, companies and institutions in the Netherlands makes it almost inevitable that the Chinese government's stamp will also become clearer here. This is expressed not only among

[12] B.R. Rijkschroef, *Ethnic entrepreneurship: the Chinese hospitality sector in the Netherlands and the United States*, Ph.D. thesis on obtaining a Ph.D. in Psychological, Pedagogical and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen, 1988, p. 98.

companies, students and highly skilled migrants, but also within the traditional Chinese communities and their organizations.

In the last 20 years, Chinese Dutch from the People's Republic of China have politically eclipsed Chinese people from Hong Kong, South-East Asia, Indonesia, Suriname and Taiwan. However, there are also very clear differences among the Chinese people from the People's Republic. Chinese from the area around the city of Wenzhou were already at the heart of the Netherlands General Chinese Association in the past, but this group was numerically far in the minority compared to the Hong Kong Chinese. With the large-scale immigration from Wenzhou, however, they have gained a dominant place *vis-à-vis* Hong Kongers. Meanwhile, the communities from Qingtian and Fujian, also from the People's Republic of China, have also grown strongly and strengthened their position.

In relations with the Chinese government at the central level, the Wenzhounese are most prominent. Organizations and the leaders of other communities maintain primary contact with the authorities of their region of origin (whether province, prefecture, city, or region) and play only a minor role in relations with Beijing. It is important to appreciate properly the divisions within the Sino-Dutch population. Although this division is played out through relations with the Chinese authorities, it is primarily (sub-)ethnic in nature. This is therefore not about opposition to or dislike about the dominant role of the People's Republic among the Chinese Dutch from areas other than Wenzhou. An important factor in this is also the strong national pride that lives among *all* Chinese communities (including most Hong Kongers) and in which the People's Republic is seen as the self-evident embodiment of the Chinese nation. The exception to this rule is the Taiwanese community and its organizations, which avoid relations with Beijing.

During the interviews conducted with Sino-Dutch organizations and media for the earlier LAC report, there was always an almost casual willingness to accommodate Beijing, or at least not to upset Beijing. The Sino-Dutch media generally do this by avoiding coverage of strictly political topics and focusing on social and cultural topics and business news. If it is necessary to raise issues that are sensitive for the Chinese government, care must be taken not to fall out of step with Beijing.

Apart from many of the Uighurs, the number of Chinese who came to the Netherlands for political reasons (asylum and dissent) is very small. There are hardly any Chinese (former) dissidents or disgraced intellectuals and politicians in the Netherlands, in contrast to other

Western countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany, or France. Politically engaged students, academics and activists from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are present in the Netherlands, however, as evidenced by recent demonstrations bringing together supporters of democracy in Hong Kong, the rights of Uighurs, Tibetans and the Falungong (a religious sect banned in China), as well as protesting for improved human rights in China. Joint activities by these organizations are struggling to get off the ground because of the deep divisions between them on fundamental issues, such as the status of Hong Kong, Taiwan or Chinese minorities, although recent years have seen some rapprochement in response to the increasingly tough stance of the Chinese authorities on many issues.

These demonstrations have also led to countermeasures on the part of the Chinese authorities. Organizations active in the Netherlands that are against the Chinese government's policy in, for example, Xinjiang or Hong Kong, notice that there are groups within the Chinese community that actively support the Chinese government's views. For example, protesting Uighurs in the Netherlands had to deal with a counter-demonstration by Dutch-speaking Chinese who propagated the official Chinese position. In addition, a large number of Chinese organizations and companies in the Netherlands have expressed their support for the National Security Act and the actions of the Hong Kong police and government in 2019 and 2020. In 2020, an article about the Hong Kong protest movement in the university newspaper of the University of Groningen led to a reaction from the local branch of the Chinese Embassy-controlled student association (the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands, ACSSNL), which stated on WeChat that the freedom of expression in this article had been taken too broadly.[13]

Compared to other Western countries such as Australia or Great Britain, these are so far small-scale and non-violent incidents. Apart from a small, politically committed group, Chinese students and the Chinese population in the Netherlands are hardly politicized. As we will see later in this report, opinions differ on sensitive issues, but these are not the focus of political divisions and activities.

[13] 'Students in the Netherlands fear China: "some do not dare to open their mouths"', *NOS*, 17 February 2021, https://nos.nl/artikel/2369102-studenten-in-nederland-vrezen-china-sommigen-durven-hun-mond-niet-open-te-doen.html, read on 23 February 2021.

First-generation Chinese Dutch from Hong Kong were already active in Dutch politics in the 1980s, especially as city councillors, but that now seems to have come to an end. In 2018, a number of Chinese people again stood as candidates – albeit unsuccessfully – for municipal elections in, for example, The Hague and Amsterdam. Participation by the Chinese Dutch in local or national politics remains a hot topic. Chinese people raised in the Netherlands often have to deal with everyday stereotyping.[14] As our interviews show, discrimination and a divided identity are important themes for many Chinese who grew up in the Netherlands, and their position in Dutch society. Participation in Dutch politics is supported by first-generation leaders of the Chinese community. They regret that Chinese Dutch people seem aloof from Dutch politics and they believe that the Chinese use their passive and active voting rights much less than other minorities. They feel that there is now an opportunity with a new generation of Chinese Dutch people to rectify this situation. Apart from combating racism, however, it remains unclear what exactly the unifying political agenda of the Chinese Dutch should be. One partial exception here is the discrimination against Chinese and other Asians that took on worrying forms particularly during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic and that led to a number of initiatives to raise awareness and combat this.

3.4 Chinese police stations in the Netherlands

In September 2022, the hitherto relatively unknown NGO Safeguard Defenders published a brief report on Chinese overseas police stations, something that until then was a completely unknown phenomenon.[15] The report documented the existence of police stations in more than 100 countries, including two in the Netherlands in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, with a third to be established in Utrecht at that time. After a few weeks, this report was picked up by the press and almost immediately caused a huge controversy. The Dutch foreign minister demanded of the Chinese authorities that these offices be closed. The opening of such police stations on Dutch soil by a foreign power without informing the foreign ministry is illegal,

[14] See, for example, 'Chinese people are fed up with discrimination and talk to alderman about solutions', *Rijnmond*, 20 February 2020, https://www.rijnmond.nl/nieuws/192273/Chinezen-zijn-discriminatie-zat-en-praten-met-wethouder-over-oplossingen, read on 13 January 2021; and 'We must protect the Netherlands, our second homeland, without sowing panic', *De Volkskrant*, 10 February 2020.

[15] *110 overseas: Chinese transnational policing gone wild*, Safeguard Defenders, September 2022, online at https://safeguarddefenders.com/sites/default/files/pdf/110%20Overseas%20%28v5%29.pdf, read on 13 March 2023.

and these police stations are 'presumably' used to monitor Chinese people who are critical of the Chinese government. This was confirmed by a press release in which a Chinese man said he was followed by the Chinese police agency in Rotterdam after his arrival in the Netherlands.[16]

The Chinese government's reaction to this news coverage and the minister's statement was predictable. It was emphasized that the 'service stations' were staffed by volunteers among the relevant Chinese community and only served to facilitate the handling of administrative procedures, such as renewing a driver's licence or passport. Of course, China fully respected the sovereignty of other countries. According to a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, many Chinese were unable to return to China because of the coronavirus and, to help them, local governments have opened online service platforms.[17]

The truth here, not unexpectedly, is somewhere in the middle. The service agencies are certainly not only online platforms, but also have a physical presence and address. The first offices also date back to 2016, long before the Covid-19 crisis. On the other hand, the staff does indeed consist of local volunteers rather than professional police personnel. Their goal is mainly to provide services, but they are also active in tracking down lawbreakers who have sought refuge outside China and persuading them to return to China (*quanfan*). In some cases, measures against fugitives' families in China may also be threatened. However, there are only a very small number of cases of tracking and harassing dissidents internationally and this is certainly not the reason why the police stations exist. As we will see in chapter 5, many Chinese people in the Netherlands actually knew little or nothing about the existence of the police stations and have all their information about them from the Dutch and other non-Chinese media. It therefore seems that the role of such police stations in the Netherlands is minimal in practice. However, it is true that these police stations are almost unanimously seen

[16] 'Hoekstra on Chinese police stations in the Netherlands: bottom stone must be above', *RTL News*, 26 October 2022, updated 27 October 2022, https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/nederland/artikel/5342627/hoekstra-over-chinese-politiebureaus-nederland-onderste-steen-moet, read on 13 March 2023. The same Chinese man is also at the centre of coverage about false bomb threats allegedly made by Chinese authorities to discredit him: 'Police investigate false bomb threats: "They want me to go back to China"', *Pointer KRO-NCRV*, 3 March 2023, https://pointer.kro-ncrv.nl/politie-onderzoekt-valse-bommeldingen-ze-willen-dat-ik-terugga-naar-china, read on 13 March 2023.

[17] 'China accused of illegal police stations in the Netherlands', *BBC*, 26 October 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63395617, read on 13 March 2023.

by the Chinese in the Netherlands as an attempt to intimidate the Chinese population and force them to support the attitude of the Chinese government.

A central fact for considering the police stations correctly is that they were not established by China's central government, but instead by local authorities in the areas of origin of the overseas Chinese. This usually takes the form of a government police station for overseas Chinese (*jingqiao yizhan*) in a particular area in China itself, with overseas service centres (*haiwai fuwu zhongxin*) abroad where relatively large numbers of overseas Chinese from that area live. These regional governments primarily want to handle relations with their (former) citizens abroad as effectively as possible – and that includes enforcement of the law – and are much less interested in political dissidents, unless those dissidents or activists have also been a problem locally. The central government, as far as we have been able to investigate, has confined itself to giving a fiat to local authorities, which explains why the timing for the establishment of overseas police stations in all the areas is roughly parallel. Our research found that a lot of information about the overseas police stations was removed from the internet and social media in recent months, yet information is still openly accessible on the websites of the relevant local authorities. We also found no evidence of an attempt to close the overseas police stations. A longer report on the investigation into the overseas Chinese police stations that we carried out for this project has been added to this report as Appendix 4.

4. The pattern of Chinese influence

This chapter specifies the most important background variables that determine the Chinese Dutch pupulation's exposure and vulnerability to Chinese influence. The purpose is not only to outline the degree of vulnerability in general, but also to identify more specifically which categories and groups of Chinese Dutch people are particularly at risk.

Through the interviews, vulnerability and resilience to influence and interference were measured in a number of different ways. The first part of the interview concerned the respondent's background in China, their migration and personal history after immigration to the Netherlands. This section was important to establish a number of background variables that we expected could potentially affect their degree of vulnerability and resilience. These variables are partly the same as those used in the demographic profile. In this way it is possible to extrapolate the analysis and findings of the interviews to sub-groups of the total Chinese population in the Netherlands.

The second part of the interview was used for a social science quasi-experiment, in which the respondents' reactions to a situation that we constructed and monitored were measured. Experimental methods have also come into vogue in the social sciences in recent years (especially political science and sociology), and research into Chinese politics and society is also increasingly making use of them, including the role of Chinese media on attitudes and perceptions. Our qualitative interviews are not suitable for simulating a fully double-blind experiment with control groups that measures the influence of various stimuli controlled and manipulated by the researchers. However, it is possible to measure the influence of the respondents' background variables and the differences in the extent to which respondents conform to the way the Chinese authorities view certain issues.[18]

In the interviews, we discussed four specific issues of the Chinese government's policy: the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic; reunification with Taiwan; the conflict between China and the United States; and relations between China and the Netherlands. Respondents were

[18] Recent examples include Jennifer Pan, Zijie Shao and Yiqing Xu, 'How government-controlled media shifts policy attitudes through framing', *Political Science Research and Methods* 10(2), 2021, pp. 317–332, doi:10.1017/psrm.2021.35; and Daniel Mattingly, Trevor Incerti, Changwook Ju, Colin Moreshead, Seiki Tanaka and Hikaru Yamagishi, 'Chinese state media persuades a global audience that the "China Model" is superior: evidence from a 19-country experiment', *OSF Preprints*, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/5cafd.

first asked to share their own understanding and opinions of at least two of these issues in their own words. Respondents were then asked to read short texts on these two issues, as we had found and summarized them on the website of the Chinese Embassy. They were then asked what they thought of those texts and to what extent the texts corresponded to their own opinion and understanding. The purpose of this approach is, first, to measure the degree of conformity in word usage with each respondent's Chinese authorities, which is an indicator of the degree of Chinese influence. Second, this approach provides insight into the subjective degree of influenceability and resilience to Chinese influence. We will return to this in more detail below.

The third part of the interview specifically related to possible experiences with influence. Questions addressed the respondents' relationship with other Chinese and Chinese organizations in the Netherlands; media use (Chinese and Dutch); work or personal relations with China (including the original territory of origin); contact with organizations or representatives of the Chinese government and the Communist Party (both in the Netherlands and in China); and their experiences of coercion or pressure exerted by Chinese organizations or leaders in the Netherlands or the Chinese government and Communist Party. Finally, respondents were asked about their attitudes or actions towards China that may not be in line with those of the Chinese government and what they think can happen to Chinese people who express such opinions or engage in such activities.

In this chapter we first focus on an analysis of the patterns of Chinese influence and the background variables that can (partly) determine this. In the next chapter, we will go into more detail about how our respondents experience Chinese influence and the influence on themselves and their social environment and how they try to deal with it and be resilient to it. We also focus on deepening and interpreting the patterns of influence that emerge in the current chapter.

For this study, a data matrix was first constructed for all interviews, in which 13 (independent) background variables and four (dependent) variables, each covering an aspect of Chinese influence, are included. The analyses of variance (ANOVA) between the dependent and independent variables were then calculated. These statistical relationships are not necessarily causal. The importance of the connections does not lie in measuring causes and effects, but in providing an overview of the patterns of influence of the Chinese state and the CCP on the Chinese population in the Netherlands. These patterns give an indication of where (that is,

among which sub-groups) the vulnerabilities to influence within the Chinese population in the Netherlands primarily lie.

Variables 1 to 13 are the background characteristics of the interviewees. In addition to the ANOVA analysis, these variables were also used to ensure diversity among the interview respondents. By ensuring sufficient distribution across these background variables, we have been able to prevent our interviews from systematically excluding or overrepresenting certain categories among the Chinese population (for example, men, the elderly, people from a certain part of China, etc.). However, this should not be confused with statistical representativeness. The latter basically allows quantitative statements about the extent to which influence is correlated with specific variables, but such an analysis assumes a randomly drawn and much larger sample, rather than the interviews of this study, which were conducted through personal contacts.

'Influence' is the central concept in this research. Influence often involves separate aspects and is therefore not directly measurable. Moreover, 'influence' or 'effect' presupposes a causal relationship that cannot be determined by statistical methods. For this project, we opted for operationalization of influence by means of four different indicators, each of which gauges a different aspect of influence: conformity; contact; influenceability; and threat. Two of the indicators (conformity and contact) measure an objective aspect of influence; the other two (impressionability and threat) measure aspects of the respondents' often more subjective perception of influence. All indicators were measured through our interviews with Chinese Dutch people. Appendix 2 provides the complete codebook for both the background variables and the influence variables.

The variable conformity (no. 14 in the codebook) is the objectively measurable similarity between the representation of cases by the Chinese authorities and our respondents. The score for this indicator is given on the basis of the degree of conformity between the presentation of the themes of four issues by the Chinese Embassy and by the respondent. It is tempting to see a causal relationship in this: conformity would then influence the objectively measurable effect because of the causal components of influence: contact; influence; and threat. However, this is not statistically possible: a link is only a link; an agreement regardless of its causes. We will return to this in the next chapter, in which the qualitative analysis of the interviews is discussed.

The variable contact (no. 15 in the codebook) is the objective degree of contact with organizations, individuals or media reported by the respondents to the Chinese government (both in China itself and in the Netherlands) and with Chinese organizations and leaders in the Netherlands. This is not a score of the degree of influence that these contacts could have.

The variable influenceability (no. 16 in the codebook) is the subjective degree of conformity with and influence by Chinese authorities and Chinese organizations and leaders in the Netherlands, as shown by the respondent in the interview. This also includes the degree of loyalty and connectedness that the respondent feels towards China and the Chinese authorities.

The variable threat (no. 17 in the codebook) is the (most subjective) degree of interference or coercion experienced by the respondent on the part of Chinese authorities or Chinese actors in the Netherlands. Interference or coercion can involve both the respondent's own life and the respondent's broader social environment in the Netherlands or China.

The first conformity indicator (no. 14) was calculated by means of analysis of the discussion of the four issues with the respondent. Using an algorithmic text analysis (structural topic modelling) based on the so-called dictionary method, we measured conformity in the use of keywords between the respondent's own narration and a corpus of 174 texts placed on the website of the Chinese Embassy between 2019 and 2022. For this, all texts were translated into English (from Chinese or Dutch) where necessary, in order to arrive at a uniform text corpus and keywords.

The scores for the other three indicators of contact, influenceability and threat (numbers 15, 16 and 17) were assigned by the principal investigator on the basis of the interview reports. This looked at both the answers to the questions in the thematic section of the interview (part 3) and the discussions about the texts of the Chinese Embassy (part 2).

Table 6 below shows the relationships between the background variables and the influence variables. Here we limit ourselves to the relationships that are statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level. A p level of < 0.1 is high in itself (more generally a p is < 0.05), but this was necessary given the statistically small number of interviews. It must therefore be borne in mind that an association that comes out as significant has a 10 per cent chance of having come about purely on the basis of chance.

6 ANOVA relationships between selected background and influence variables

	1. Gender	2. Age	3. Nationality	4. Origin	5. Migration
14. Conformity	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
15. Contact	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
16. Influenceable	No	No	No	No	No
17. Threat	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

	6. Education	7. Profession	8. Income	9. Generation
14. Conformity	Yes	Yes	No	No
15. Contact	No	No	No	No
16. Influenceable	Yes	No	No	No
17. Threat	No	No	No	No

	10. Length of stay	11. Dutch	12. Mandarin	13. Chinese media
14. Conformity	No	No	No	No
15. Contact	No	Yes	Yes	No
16. Influenceable	No	No	No	Yes
17. Threat	No	No	Yes	Yes

Source: LAC interviews.

It is important to note that a number of background variables do not appear to have a significant relationship with our influence variables. Age, income, migration generation and length of stay are not significantly related to any aspect of Chinese influence. This in itself is an important outcome of the research. Many aspects of what is often seen as permanent settlement or integration into Dutch society apparently do not matter that much. Chinese people are not more or less influenced or impressionable the longer they stay in the Netherlands, whether they earn a lot or a little, are younger or older, whether they have grown up in the Netherlands or not.

A first connection that does emerge is gender. There is less conformity with the authorities among women (variable 14) than among men. This is also and especially important because, as we have seen in chapter 2, women form the majority of the Chinese population in the

Netherlands. The reason for migration to the Netherlands (variable 5) is mainly related to the degree of contact with the Chinese government (variable 15), but also to the threat that is felt or experienced (variable 17). Behind these connections lies a complex reality. Economic migrants are generally neutral towards the Chinese authorities because they have little contact with them. This is particularly important, because a large majority of Chinese people in the Netherlands migrated for economic reasons. Students have more contact and also tend to see more of a threat in this. Migrants who have come for family reasons have little contact with Chinese authorities, but are also inclined to (be able to) avoid those contacts and see them as a potential threat. Respondents born in the Netherlands have little contact with the Chinese authorities and, like economic migrants, they see little threat in this. As the interviews will also show, there are few opportunities for the growing second generation to be directly influenced and they do not see the Chinese authorities as a serious danger because of this lack of contact.

The level of education (variable 6) is linked to conformity (variable 14): the more education a respondent has had, the less conformity with the authorities they display on the discussed issues. Apparently, people with a high level of education know how to avoid the Chinese media or how to read through the authorities' messaging. Knowledge of Dutch or Mandarin also matters to a certain extent. People with less knowledge of Dutch (variable 11) and people with a greater knowledge of Mandarin (variable 12) both have more contact with Chinese authorities or organizations in the Netherlands (variable 15), although this does not lead to greater conformity (variable 14).

The Chinese region of origin appears to matter the most of all the factors, because it corresponds to important political divisions in China. Region of origin (variable 4) has correlation with conformity to the positions of the Chinese government and also with contact with the Chinese government in the Netherlands or in China. Respondents from Xinjiang and Taiwan are less affected (negative association with variable 14 'conformity') than Chinese people from the other groups. Respondents from the traditional overseas Chinese territories and the other parts of the People's Republic of China have more contact (variable 2), while respondents from Taiwan have less contact. Although respondents from Xinjiang experience an average level of contact with Chinese authorities, they feel more threatened than respondents from elsewhere in China, including Taiwan.

Also in the case of nationality (variable 3) it appears that people with Chinese nationality have more contact (variable 15) and also see a greater threat in that contact (variable 17). Interestingly enough, exposure to Chinese media has little effect in itself (variable 14), but does lead to greater (potential) influenceability (variable 16) and a perception of threat (variable 17).

In addition to the importance of background variables for conformity, we also looked at the correlations between the conformity we measured and the other three indicators that could cause such conformity (see Table 7 below).

Table 7: Pearson's R correlations between influence variables

	15. Contact	16. Influenceability	17. Threat
14. Conformity	No	Moderately positive	Moderately negative

Source: LAC interviews.

There are indeed links between what could be seen as cause (influenceability and threat) and effect (conformity). Experience, or experience with threats, leads to less inclination to share the views of the Chinese government, while the extent to which a respondent is potentially impressionable actually leads to a respondent's greater conformity with the Chinese authorities. At least as important, however, is the simple fact that if one comes into contact more often with the Chinese government or is more involved with Chinese organizations in the Netherlands (the 'contact' variable), this in itself does not mean that one appears to be more receptive to the views of the Chinese government.

5. Experiences with Chinese influence among the Netherlands' Chinese population

For the qualitative part of the analysis of the interviews we conducted with Sino-Dutch respondents, we first identified a number of themes, both on the basis of the research questions of the study and by means of a first reading of the interview reports. The interviews were then re-read and coded based on these themes. This chapter reports on this analysis under the following main themes: 1. position in the Netherlands of the respondent as a member of the Sino-Dutch population; 2. media consumption and other sources of information; 3. influence of Chinese authorities; 4. Pressure from the Chinese authorities; and 5. threat by the Chinese authorities.

5.1 Position in the Netherlands

Almost all of the interviewees told us they felt Chinese to a greater or lesser extent, regardless of their length of stay in the Netherlands or degree of integration into Dutch society. However, what this means in practice varies enormously. For many first-generation immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Macau in particular, the area or country of origin rather than China as a whole is the most important. For the Taiwanese, this also has a strong political connotation, as they do not recognize that Taiwan is part of the People's Republic of China and instead see the Taiwanese government as their legitimate government. This often goes hand in hand with a strong focus on the United States as the country that guarantees the maintenance of Taiwanese sovereignty. Despite their common Chinese background and culture with Chinese people from elsewhere, the Taiwanese we spoke to have little to no contact with members of other Chinese groups. They have their own organizations in the Netherlands and mainly deal only with other Taiwanese (often family).

To a lesser extent, this also applies to Chinese people from Hong Kong and Macau, although this is more a result of the strong individuality of the Cantonese culture and language that dominated the Netherlands' Chinese population until a few decades ago. This group is hardly supplemented by new immigrants and is ageing rapidly. Many of these older Cantonese speak little or no Mandarin and often poor Dutch and they only interact with other Cantonese from Hong Kong or the neighbouring province of Guangdong. Nevertheless, most identify

primarily as Chinese (rather than as someone from Hong Kong) in the Netherlands, although this is not reflected in their social contacts.

For immigrants from the People's Republic of China, there is a clear distinction between those who come from the traditional overseas origin areas of Zhejiang, Fujian or Guangdong, and migrants from other parts of China. The first group is part of a relatively large community that speaks the same dialect, is concentrated in the restaurant sector and has many organizations and leaders of its own, who often have good ties with the authorities in the area of origin in China. These organizations are often part of an international network of organizations for Chinese people from the same region of origin. Although these communities increasingly identify with the People's Republic of China as a whole, their territory and community of origin still remain of primary importance.

This is fundamentally different for immigrants from other parts of China, who often only know a few others in the Netherlands who also happen to come from their city or province. Mandarin is the primary language with which they communicate with other Chinese and when they participate in association life in the Netherlands, these are often associations or churches that target the entire Chinese population. Many of them are highly educated, work for a Dutch or international company and often have a partner who comes either from another part of China or from the Netherlands. Their degree of integration into Dutch society is therefore often greater than that of the first generation from overseas Chinese territories or Hong Kong.

The position of the Uighurs in the Netherlands can to some extent be compared to that of other immigrants from China. Like the communities from the traditional overseas Chinese origin areas, they have a relatively high degree of organization and their organizations are also strongly internationally oriented. However, the Uighurs we interviewed are not among these organizations. Most did not come to the Netherlands for political reasons, but for study or family reasons. Socially, they are often in a difficult situation. In contacts with Chinese people in the Netherlands, it is difficult to avoid possible disagreements about the status of Xinjiang. In their contacts with other Uighurs in the Netherlands, they tend to be reluctant for fear that they will unexpectedly be associated with political activities of the Uighur community here. Their social contacts are therefore quickly limited to Dutch or other foreigners.

Younger Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands often navigate between their Dutch and Chinese identities. A recurring theme in the interviews is that they were often the only Chinese at school and had to deal with stereotypical treatment or statements, which made them realize that they looked different and would never quite belong. Especially at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of respondents also experienced direct discrimination by non-Chinese Dutch people. Anti-Chinese discrimination had already become an important theme in activities organized by young Chinese people (and other Asians) who grew up in the Netherlands. Despite their strong integration into Dutch society, many respondents in their teens sought contact with fellow Chinese (or sometimes other Asian) young people in the Netherlands via social media, parties or student associations. Many of the interviewees have a Sino-Dutch partner and report that their best friends are the Chinese–Dutch youngsters they met in their teens or at university. In most cases, such friendship groups consist of Chinese people from different regions of origin in China, although sometimes they are also exclusively from one specific group.

5.2 Media consumption

Where and how information about current events in the Netherlands, and elsewhere in the world, is obtained varies considerably. The degree of trust that respondents have in conventional media (television, radio and newspapers) in the Netherlands or China also varies. Older Cantonese people often watch Hong Kong and sometimes Taiwanese television channels online. Older Chinese from other overseas Chinese regions of origin also often read or read the Chinese-language newspapers that are distributed free of charge in the Netherlands. *Asian News* (*Huaqiao xintiandi*) is regularly mentioned. People also regularly watch the Dutch *NOS Journaal*, although a number of people admit that they often do not understand everything. Some older, especially Cantonese Chinese in the Netherlands have little faith in the media of the People's Republic of China, which they see as a propaganda mouthpiece of the Chinese government. Others, however, see it differently, such as this Cantonese respondent:

> She has no reason not to trust the Chinese media. 'Censorship has always existed. But in my entire life, there has never been a moment when the

> Chinese media's coverage has turned out to be wrong in hindsight' (interview 6).

For many older Chinese who have worked in the restaurant sector, their children (and sometimes other acquaintances) are often the main source of information and opinion. It is often said that if they do not know what to think of something, they ask their children, because their children are well informed and reliable. This reflects the role of the second generation as interpreters and intermediaries in relationships and interactions with Dutch people and Dutch institutions or companies:

> 'I know what my kids are like, so I trust their opinions about what's happening in the world' (interview 32).

Young Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands regularly report that they receive their opinion and information from their Sino-Dutch circle of friends, whether or not via social media: unfiltered information from any source is not indiscriminately trusted. For this group and for younger, more recent immigrants, social media provide an extremely important source of information. This applies to highly educated people and students, as well as to migrants with only secondary education. It is often said that conventional media are no longer used at all, often with the exception of the *NOS Journaal*, which is seen as honest and reliable, although some note that it is paid for by the Dutch state and is often Western-coloured. In particular, information about or from China is obtained via WeChat (*Weixin*) groups (and sometimes also official accounts), Weibo, Little Red Book (*Xiaohongshu*) and international social media such as Twitter, in which messages from the press or other information are forwarded, blogs and vlogs from influencers, and so on. One of our respondents even turned out to be a commercial influencer himself. Many younger Chinese people in the Netherlands also say they actively search for the news themselves with Google searches and clicking through links in messages. This also gives them regular access to coverage from the Chinese press, but in a completely different context and with different reporting and opinion formation than in the original source.

Second-generation Chinese people use the Dutch media regularly (newspapers, mostly online, and television) and, to a lesser extent, also international media. This also applies to some of the more educated first-generation migrants, although they tend to use reputable international media (the *BBC* and *CNN* are the most frequently mentioned). All higher-educated people have little interest and trust in the Chinese-language newspapers and internet sites produced in the Netherlands, as they assume that the Chinese authorities have a major influence on this.

Many respondents – regardless of the reason for coming to the Netherlands, region of origin or level of education – also have little interest or trust in the media in China itself:

> The respondent says that it is difficult to determine whether the information from the Chinese media can be trusted, so she thinks it is better not to comment on something if she only has it from the media. Instead, she relies on family or friends for information. For example, during the pandemic, they believed what they said, because they had experienced it themselves. In the media, on the other hand, you only see what they want you to see (interview 39).

This is even more true for the Taiwanese, who simply see the Chinese media as (hostile) propaganda:

> 'Chinese news is controlled by the government – that is, they can turn white into black and black and white' (interview 10).

Conversely, many other respondents (including some from Taiwan itself) note that the coverage in Taiwanese media is also biased and thus cannot be a reliable source of information, particularly about what is happening in China.

Yet many first-generation Chinese tend to follow the Chinese media in their opinions. This is particularly evident from interviews with their (adult) children, who experience a gap between their own understanding and views and those of their parents or other family in the Netherlands or China:

> The respondent often talks to his mother about events in China. He notices that she very indiscriminately takes over the reporting as told by the Chinese government. He gave as an example the news about the violation of human rights of the Uighurs. 'Her first reaction was just like, "That's not true. That's fake information. That's what the West wants to spread, especially America". Yes, without first thinking about whether it could be true. It's just an automatic response: "it's not true". And then a whole load of Chinese arguments that I hear from every other Chinese parent'. By having conversations with his mother, she started to think more critically and also to see the more negative sides of the Chinese government. For example, she will now search for information on a certain topic on YouTube to hear other perspectives on the subject. For example, she watches Western YouTubers talk about their experiences and life in China (interview 48).
>
> The respondent herself does not read Chinese news media, but her parents do. She notices that her opinions on Chinese issues differ immensely from those of her parents. 'When I hear my parents talking, I think, that's real propaganda news they've seen, in my opinion. But they also think that of our news, of Dutch news, of what we say in the Netherlands, that it is wrong' (interview 49).

A number of first-generation respondents also said that it was only after the migration to the Netherlands that people began to realize how much the Chinese media are on the leash of the Chinese government and that this realization has changed their understanding of the world. On the other hand, it was noted a number of times that Chinese media (including those in Taiwan) mainly want to express or form an opinion, but that Chinese people are used to this and therefore know very well how to read between the lines to decipher the actual message of a message.

An exception is the handful of respondents who explicitly indicated that they support the opinions and policies of the Chinese government. These respondents also often told us that they found the media coverage in China reliable:

> The respondent says it is the duty of Chinese abroad to defend the Chinese government and its actions and positions. He says it's actually impossible to disagree with them. 'That government has so much more opportunity, more money and more tools to make the right choices than I do. So I think they know better. That's why I just think they should be right. It seems silly to me if someone disagrees; you're not smarter than an entire government, are you?' (interview 44).

It should be noted that it seems that trust in the Chinese media is more a consequence (or a symbol) of loyalty to China than the cause of it.

5.3 Influence of Chinese authorities in the Netherlands

Contacts with the Chinese authorities in China itself are very scarce. Some businessmen are in contact with representatives of the Chinese government or the Communist Party to do business in China, but none of our respondents indicated that this had a political content. Visits to China were for business or private reasons, such as family visits or tourism, and had nothing to do with politics. A number of Dutch-born respondents had gone to China for summer camps organized for overseas-Chinese youth or during a study stay for their university programme. In some cases, they are still in contact with other Chinese youth they met there. At the summer camps, politics was not discussed; it was mainly about leaving a positive impression about China.

Direct contact with Chinese authorities in the Netherlands is also very limited. A few respondents said that their father sometimes received a visit from what they thought was a member of the Communist Party, but that their father did not want to say anything about it. Contact or involvement with Chinese organizations in the Netherlands is also limited. Traditional Chinese organizations for certain areas of origin (*tongxianghui*) are often dismissed by both the first- and second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands as something in which only a number of older Chinese participate, those who have nothing else to do and as a platform for a small group of leaders:

> 'Most organizations are a tea club where everyone comes together to have a nice chat. They are just institutions to make friends and to enter into business relationships' (interview 41).

Respondents often assume that these organizations have ties to the Chinese Embassy:

> The respondent thinks that these associations are controlled by the Chinese government, which he thinks is fine: 'As a mother, China keeps an eye on the children, but does not determine what happens'. He thinks it should go without saying that the people in these associations are loyal and feel connected to China, because if not, it proves the point that these associations should be monitored by the government. He says it doesn't take pressure from the government to support government policies and actions, because you feel it intrinsically or not. He says no one is forcing anyone to support the Chinese government (interview 5).

Nevertheless, Chinese organizations are more concerned with the relationship with the government in the area of origin than with the central authorities:

> 'I don't think it has much to do with central government. I found that these organizations are more like liaison channels in the exchanges and trade activities of local governments in China, and they are channels for China's exports abroad' (interview 41).

It is also often assumed that the umbrella National Federation of Chinese Organizations in the Netherlands (LFCON) has ties to the Chinese Embassy. Some respondents from Taiwan have at some point participated in one of the Taiwanese organizations in the Netherlands, which are of course completely separate from the government of the People's Republic of China and, on the contrary, often have ties with the government in Taiwan. Not a single respondent from Hong Kong reports participating in one of the Hong Kong associations in the Netherlands.

A number of respondents mention one or more organizations of Chinese hospitality entrepreneurs in which they themselves, or people they know, are or have been involved. According to our respondents, these organizations are exclusively focused on representing the interests of Chinese entrepreneurs, helping each other and exchanging information:

> The respondent joined Chinese hospitality associations because he was able to benefit from the connections he built there, including customers. He says he participated in these associations quite often; he went to various meetings and events about three or four times a month. He does not think that the Chinese government is in any way interested in the associations he has been part of, since they are only focused on hospitality. He adds that the government may care whether the 'normal Chinese in the Netherlands' support them or not, but that they are just 'little fish'. He says that little is said about politics in the associations. Most of the time, they will support the government, even if some do so only to save face (interview 16).

> 'The association has a board, a team. But for the rest, yes there will probably be people who are Party members, but that doesn't matter. I mean, traditionally they're more Cantonese people I think, so there you have it [i.e. that Cantonese are most from Hong Kong and therefore can't be Party members FP]' (interview 31).

Retired respondents sometimes visit local Chinese centres or clubs for activities such as mahjong, dance or singing lessons, or just for fun. Several respondents have been active as volunteers in a Chinese community centre or as teachers at a Chinese school. In one case, our respondent reported that representatives of the Chinese Embassy had visited the school. Many Chinese schools were originally set up by a Chinese church or other organization, and that connection is more important than any contacts with the embassy. Chinese schools are also mentioned by Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands and who had Chinese lessons there as a child. In some cases, they are still in touch with their peers. For parents,

Chinese schools are a way to make friends with other Chinese parents, even if they sometimes come from a completely different part of China.

Chinese churches in the Netherlands have been active for a long time. The churches are mostly Protestant or non-denominational and are still growing in number and membership, both among Chinese from overseas Chinese areas of origin and among immigrants from other parts of China. In addition to services, churches organize Chinese-speaking schools, social work, charity collections, summer camps for children in China or the Netherlands, and other social activities. A significant number of our respondents have been in contact with a Chinese church at some point during their lives in the Netherlands. For example, the parents of some second-generation respondents have been members of a church, and their children have participated in activities in this way. Other respondents report that the church was a way for them to get to know other Chinese people:

> The respondent grew up in a large city in the Netherlands and ended up among immigrant youth of the same age from Hong Kong. She joined a Cantonese Protestant church, where she met friends for life, as well as her future husband. She describes this period as a happy and gentle landing in a terrifying, foreign country (interview 1).

Apart from the few respondents who were already Christian in their country of origin, remarkably few respondents explicitly report faith as a reason to join a church. We were repeatedly told that after a while they stopped going to church because they were not actually religious and had already built up sufficient contacts with other Chinese. It was also repeatedly noted that people were disappointed when they learned that the church they went to was actually set up for commercial reasons:

> The respondent had been a member of a church for some time, but there she also discovered that the people were not pure and opened churches to make money and use the name of the church. She was very sorry about this and therefore chose to leave (interview 21).

Unlike Christian churches, Chinese (Buddhist) temples are only mentioned by a few respondents, in one case specifically for religious reasons and in the other cases as a place to participate in activities. In both the case of temples and churches, no respondent reports any contact with the Chinese authorities or the Chinese Embassy.

A significant proportion of second-generation respondents have been involved or involved in a Chinese student association. In most cases, the association in Rotterdam was called the Chinese Student Association Erasmus University Rotterdam (CSA-EUR). This association is not affiliated with the Chinese Embassy and focuses on Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands, students from China and other students who are interested in China. A similar, smaller association exists in Amsterdam.

For many of our respondents (including a few non-students), these associations are a place to meet other Chinese youth, to celebrate and to participate in other China-related activities. In some cases, respondents said that they already knew a group of Chinese youth from their time in college and participated with them in the association. The association plays an important role in building and strengthening a Chinese identity and social level for the second generation that often transcends the individual communities of the parent generation:

> The respondent was a member of the CSA-EUR during his studies. He says that it was very informal then, but that it has now become a large association. According to him, the association is mainly intended to organize informal events and meetings for people with an interest in Chinese culture. Usually this meant Chinese–Dutch or native Chinese students. He says he knows quite a few college friends through this association. He frequented these events, but as soon as he started working, he stopped going. He thinks that this association has no ties with the Chinese government, as it was made clear that the association is non-political and differs from the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands. Thus, the association did not expect their members or other Chinese to support the Chinese government. Still, he remembers conflicting opinions about China within the association, which sometimes made it difficult to speak out (interview 13).

The Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands (ACSSNL) mentioned by the respondent above has departments in many Dutch university cities. None of our respondents had anything to do with this association, which was portrayed as an instrument of the Chinese Embassy to influence students from China:

> 'This Chinese student association is actually sponsored by the CCP, and they maintain a terror regime. They reward snitchers; if you say something bad about the CCP, people can betray you. It's not nice to be there, I've heard. I think this is also illegal, right?' (interview 36).

> 'My cousin studies and tells me that the ACSSNL is very strict and has ties to the CCP, so you have to be careful with what you say' (interview 5).

With regard to the Chinese police stations in the Netherlands that were suddenly in the news since September 2022 (see chapter 3.4 above), there is a striking agreement in the disapproval among our respondents. However, a small number of respondents who explicitly support the Chinese government see no problem with this issue. They feel that the Dutch police know nothing about Chinese criminals and it is therefore only natural that the Chinese government itself acts abroad to prosecute these criminals:

> 'As I understand it, it is amateurishly set up by private individuals, mainly to facilitate the handling of documents, such as the renewal of a driver's licence, because people cannot go to China because of Covid. Nothing to be afraid of'. When asked what he would think of the police stations if they actively prosecuted or arrested Chinese people abroad, he says: 'If something like that were the case, certainly. What can I say? The Dutch police know nothing about the crimes of Chinese people. We need Chinese police for that' (interview 8).

The vast majority of respondents, however, take a very different view. The existence of Chinese police stations is strongly frowned upon. The Chinese government has no say in the Netherlands and the presence of the Chinese police stations is thus seen as an explicit threat to the freedom of the Chinese population here in the Netherlands. However, what is also striking is that our respondents had never heard of these police stations abroad until the Dutch media started reporting on this in October 2022. There was only one exception to this, namely someone whose friend had renewed his passport at such a police station. A number of respondents had never even heard of the police stations, but when they were told about them, they immediately expressed their strong disapproval:

> When asked about the Chinese police stations in the Netherlands, the respondent reacts with surprise and indicates that he will look for more information about this after the interview. He finds it serious and embarrassing. When asked if this will affect him in his daily life, he says, 'If you give in to these acts of oppression, you only encourage it, so you must either pretend that it is not there, or act harshly against it' (interview 13).

What is striking in these and many other reactions to the Chinese police stations is that the respondents generally do not believe that they are only intended to facilitate the lives of Chinese people in the Netherlands and to persuade criminals to return to China. Immediately, the fear or expectation is expressed that these agencies are also intended to intimidate the Chinese in the Netherlands and perhaps also to undertake espionage activities. This feeling often plays a role because in recent years Chinese people abroad have been forcibly repatriated or sometimes kidnapped from Hong Kong and elsewhere, which does not give confidence in the good intentions of the current regime:

> 'I have not heard about this in the Netherlands, but I have heard of many cases in Hong Kong. In recent years, I've heard of people suddenly disappearing in Hong Kong. It later turned out that they had been brought to China. This makes people feel unsafe. Freedom is very

important and it's really hard to live under this kind of pressure. I wouldn't want to live like that' (interview 45).

5.4 Pressure by Chinese authorities

A small number of respondents consider it self-evident or even the duty of a Chinese person abroad to adopt and support the positions of the government of the People's Republic of China. These are typically first- or second-generation younger men from one of the traditional regions of origin of overseas Chinese. All other respondents see it radically differently: Chinese people, citizens or not, have no obligation whatsoever to the PRC government and instead have the right to their own vision and to stand up for it. People are living in the Netherlands and the Chinese government should therefore have no control over what Chinese people say or think here in the Netherlands. Sometimes, at most, respondents said that it is normal for a Chinese person to support the Chinese government, but if one does not agree with that government, that should not be a problem either.

Behind these sincere and often unhesitating opinions, however, lies a more complex reality. Almost all first-generation migrants say that they and others they know or meet are cautious about expressing their opinions on the well-known sensitive topics: the unification of China with Taiwan; the protests in Hong Kong; the oppression of Uighurs in Xinjiang; and the status of Tibet. People are either afraid that their views will somehow come to the attention of the Chinese authorities, or do not want heated and often useless discussions that would only upset their relations with other Chinese people in the Netherlands. One example:

The respondent noticed that many Chinese tend to proclaim very aggressively that everyone is Chinese. When she worked in a sushi restaurant with Chinese owners, she had a Tibetan colleague who had fled China. But when he told his story, the Chinese owners exclaimed, 'But we're all Chinese, aren't we?' (interview 33).

This also applies to the Uighurs we interviewed, who try to live a normal life in the Netherlands without being constantly questioned about what is or is not happening in Xinjiang. They therefore also avoid contact with the politically active part of the Uighur

population in the Netherlands. This is true to a much lesser extent for the Hong Kong Chinese and Taiwanese. These groups are much larger and much more structured internally and they also experience much less direct pressure from the Chinese authorities. They can move in their own world without necessarily coming into constant contact with other Chinese people who point out to them that they are Chinese or want to test their opinion about China.

The respondents rarely tell us that close family or friends in the Netherlands or China play an important role in any pressure to conform. A few fathers may want to give their opinion on relations between China, the United States and Europe. It can also sometimes be said by family in China that no matter how long they live in the Netherlands, they will always remain Chinese and must retain their Chinese nationality and come back to China. As Chinese people, they can never betray China. However, such statements led to more surprise or annoyance among our respondents than actually having an effect.

Respondents from the People's Republic of China often say that they suspect that there are people in their area who are members of the Communist Party or at least sympathize with it, but this is not something that is ever discussed. It is also assumed, as noted earlier, that many organizations in the Netherlands have ties to the Chinese authorities, but this is also not something that plays a clear role in the way these organizations operate, for example by putting pressure on people to support China:

The respondent considers the attitude of these associations or Buddhist organizations towards the Chinese government to be instrumental: 'They do not ask the members of the community to support the Chinese government, because it is in the Netherlands after all. Even if their leaders are patriotic and want to bring Chinese ideas to the Netherlands, they will not say it publicly, because after all they are in the Netherlands, they have no way back and they are very sensitive to Dutch society' (interview 41).

The respondent thinks the CCP is unable to monitor every China-related association abroad, but suspects it would. 'I think that, if possible, the CCP would have at least one person in charge of every China-related association abroad, just as in China every major company has a Party

> member. But it's hard'. He thinks China-focused associations have a problem with conflicting opinions because opinions about China tend to polarize: 'If you have an association for all Chinese, will Uighurs join, Hong Kong people, Taiwan people? Would they discuss political issues? It's risky, and what direction should the association take?' (interview 7).

Only a few of our respondents say they have experience with direct pressure or threats from Chinese authorities. However, what does come up again and again in the interviews is a degree of fear and caution in what people say about China, especially in public or on social media:

> 'There's definitely an impact. If I were to participate in an "anti-China" demonstration, they could find me and I would never get a visa to go back to China. They monitor and oppress the Dutch Chinese who are against the Chinese government'. The respondent indicates that she is cautious about expressing her political opinion around some Chinese friends, as well as on WeChat. Her friends and acquaintances have scolded her for her views on China's approach to the pandemic. In the past, she has sent voice messages on WeChat to her Chinese friends, talking about the demonstrations in Hong Kong. She found out that the messages were corrupted or fragmented and that her account was blocked for several hours. 'I don't dare to publish my opinion on WeChat anymore, or even comment on YouTube'. When asked if she has ever been approached or threatened by Chinese authorities, she replies: 'I have no personal experience, including from my close friends. But you do get a certain amount of fear' (interview 12).

As can be seen from the above, fear or caution among the respondents has increased because of the pandemic and the doubts that many Chinese in the Netherlands had about Chinese face-mask diplomacy and in particular the long and far too strict Covid measures. In some cases, this has even led to a radically different perception of the Chinese authorities:

> Through WeChat, she is still in contact with Chinese friends from her exchange programme and they often send videos of what the situation is like in China. She says those videos shock her: 'They couldn't leave their homes, couldn't buy food. I hated that' (interview 36).
>
> The respondent thinks that the Chinese Embassy controlled the spirit of the Chinese Dutch people. She says she used to trust the embassy almost blindly, but is now a lot more suspicious, because she discovered that China does not help the Dutch population as well as they say (interview 35).

A recurring theme in almost all of the interviews is the uncertainty and fear about being completely free to express one's own views or to enter into discussions on sensitive topics for China and other Chinese people in the Netherlands. As we have seen, this is often because of the hostile reactions that this sometimes provokes in other Chinese people, but our respondents are also often afraid to declare their dislike of the Chinese government. Although they may never have had to deal with any repercussions themselves, the uncertainty they feel is fuelled by stories from others who, in turn, are often equally fuelled by what they have heard. Reports of repercussions against, or even the kidnapping of, Chinese people by the Chinese government elsewhere abroad also fuel fear and uncertainty. This applies to both people from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong respondents:

> 'I haven't really heard it from other people, but I've become more cautious myself. Especially since the situation in Hong Kong has changed. I have become more cautious about expressing my opinion on things related to the People's Republic' (interview 46).
>
> The respondent says he is taking some degree of caution when speaking publicly about the Chinese government. He also recognizes this in his environment. He himself has never been threatened by people from the Chinese government, but he says he knows such stories (interview 2).

> The respondent has occasionally heard of people who don't want to express their opinions for fear of China. She thinks this is unfortunate, but logical. She thinks she has also heard stories on the news of Chinese suspects abroad who are threatened to force them to return to China. She herself and people close to her have never experienced anything (interview 3).

A number of respondents say that they know such stories, but think that people should not be too afraid, because there is freedom of expression in the Netherlands:

> The respondent has heard that Chinese people do not give their opinion about China, but has never done so himself. She thinks people are too scared. 'We live in the Netherlands, what are they going to do?' (interview 6).

Other respondents acknowledge that there is indeed fear, but that it is best for them to deal with it pragmatically. These are either Chinese of an older generation who are much more accustomed to the power of the Chinese government, or businessmen who feel they have nothing to gain from venting their opinions unrestrained:

> The respondent says his parents are more cautious when they talk about China than he is, and that he feels his parents have become even more cautious in recent years. He thinks this is because China has shown in recent years what it is capable of 'in terms of pressuring overseas Chinese'. When asked, he knows stories of protesters in Hong Kong abroad who are dealing with Chinese charges and being harassed by Chinese government officials (interview 13).
>
> The respondent certainly thinks that Chinese people in countries other than China are also suffering from the pressure and fear of the CCP. He himself is not bothered by this, but he thinks that especially among older

> generations it is possible not to criticize the CCP too much. Even with his own family, he doesn't think the CCP has ever been involved. 'Leave us alone', he says (interview 31).
>
> The respondent has heard that people in the Netherlands do not give their opinion for fear of the Chinese government. He himself has not done so, but he says that is because he does not feel the need to express his opinion about China. He says: 'Certainly, those who just want to stay out of trouble, and have nothing to gain from expressing their opinion, will refrain from expressing their opinion'. However, he does not think it is good to be afraid of expressing your opinion, and emphasizes freedom of expression in the Netherlands (interview 7).
>
> The respondent says that he is already cautious about expressing his opinion, as there will always be people who disagree with what he says and that can be bad for business. He says he has good relations with Chinese officials, both in the Netherlands and in China, and that it goes against his self-interest to oppose what they say. He says he has never been threatened (...) He says he will support the Chinese government and its actions with love, as he will always be a Chinese man. He is grateful for the life he and his parents had in China before he emigrated to the Netherlands. However, he says that one should think critically and not support the actions if one does not agree with them. He says it has been beneficial for his businesses and for his family to support the Chinese government (interview 16).

A few strongly pro-China respondents clearly see it differently. The fear of repercussions only shows that people who criticize the Chinese government actually know that they are wrong:

> He says he's heard from people who don't speak their minds out of fear. 'These cowards, they should stand by their opinions and face the consequences. If they're scared, it's because they know they have the

> wrong opinion'. He reiterates that he has never been deterred from expressing his opinion. 'I stand for what I think'. He knows that Chinese abroad have been pressured to return to China for prosecution. He thinks it's noble to return for trial. Neither he nor any of his family or friends have ever been approached or threatened by Chinese government officials (interview 8).

5.5 Threat and endangerment from Chinese authorities

As can be seen from the above, almost all of the respondents say they have no personal experience with threats from the Chinese authorities. A worrying development is that scammers have also gotten wind of the increased fear among the Chinese population and are trying to use this to extort people:

> Taiwanese students share stories on Facebook about suspicious phone calls from people with a Chinese accent claiming to be from the embassy or other official body. This happened after they provided their phone number at certain stores. However, there is no indication that these calls come from actual official sources (interview 33).

> The respondent says that she once received a strange call from the Chinese Embassy, which in hindsight she thought must have been a scammer. The embassy person said the Shanghai police station had contacted them and had some questions. They had given her a phone number that she then had to call. In that conversation, she revealed a lot of personal information. After a while, she realized that something wasn't right and ended the conversation. She says the man made statements along the lines of, 'Because you've lived in Europe for ten years, do you think you're not Chinese anymore or something?' She attributes such statements to a culture of 'we still influence you; don't think that if you are somewhere else, or are citizens of another country,

> that you...' She changed her phone number after the phone call and didn't hear anything after that (interview 30).

It is probably no coincidence that the last respondent is a Uighur from Xinjiang. Fear and concern about the threat posed by the Chinese government are even more acute among Uighurs than among the other groups within the Chinese population in the Netherlands. They are therefore even more potential prey for scaremongering and scams:

> There is pressure everywhere, there is self-censorship every time, our family is still in China, we are also worried that WeChat will be cancelled and the group therefore does not dare to talk. While individuals have experienced no more than that, some friends from Xinjiang know they are being watched (interview 34).

> The respondent says she finds it difficult to speak out about the situation in Xinjiang. 'No, with me, I find that difficult, because I don't want to put my family at risk. (…) I just want to try to give my family safety by not being present too much or not making the wrong statements'. She says that Uighurs who do speak out openly have their families all in the Netherlands and are therefore not in much danger. She believes that people who have family in China might go to a protest in The Hague, but wear a face mask and do not want to be recognizable: 'All Chinese people pay a little attention to what they say, we say. We Uighurs pay extra attention. You're treated differently anyway, so you pay a lot of attention to what you say, outside'. She says she has never really felt unsafe in the Netherlands. But she is careful in her contact with Chinese people. 'I'm not saying I don't trust Chinese friends; you do trust them. But if you make new Chinese friends, which doesn't happen very often with me, you're not going to say everything. You are more careful with the information you share, even with Uighurs: What can I share, what can I not share? You can't be open right away' (interview 30).

The Uighurs we interviewed above all came to the Netherlands for non-political reasons and therefore are not an immediate target of any threats from China, but they too can run a risk:

> The respondent has been approached several times by people he suspects are Chinese Communist Party officials. 'They asked about my origins, my job, my living situation. I think if they were looking for a way to threaten me, they would ask about my family as well. I think they want to know if I have contact with them and if I have family here'. When asked, he says that he tries to be sober about it, but that he sometimes worries about it or is afraid of it. He says: 'As long as it stays with online contact, I can go about my business. But I'm afraid they'll find me or blackmail me or my family' (interview 14).

This applies to an even greater extent to Uighurs who have fled China, refused to return or are active in the Netherlands or elsewhere for the Uighur cause. In 2019, several Uighurs filed a complaint. A total of 24 reports have been made that Uighurs in China are being pressured to call relatives who have fled to the Netherlands and provide information about them. The declarants say they are being called upon to return to China by the Chinese government. There are also reports of missing family members in China.[19]

One of our respondents confirms at least part of these declarations, although he is not involved in the declarations themselves or with Uighur organizations in the Netherlands:

> When he was still living in Turkey, his mother came to visit him for eight months. He says that in April 2017, the Chinese government started recalling people from abroad. He says the government has contacted his two sisters in Xinjiang, saying that if his mother does not return, they

[19] 'Uighurs in the Netherlands are suing the Chinese government', *NOS*, 14 August 2019, https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2297578-oeigoeren-in-nederland-klagen-de-chinese-overheid-aan, viewed online on 27 February 2023; and 'Declarations of Uighurs in the Netherlands: decision OM', Public Prosecution Service, 25 August 2020, https://www.om.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/08/25/aangiften-oeigoeren-in-nederland-beslissing-om, viewed online on 27 February 2023.

> will withdraw her pension and take away other property. He says he had no choice but to let his mother return. The day after she returned to Ürümqi, police came to her house and let a Han live at her home [gets emotional]. As far as he knows, this took about three months. After those three months, he hasn't been in touch and he doesn't know if she's still alive or not. He also has no contact with his sisters.
> He participated in the protest in The Hague on 14 September 2022 and in a protest in February 2022. He says he's not afraid anymore, including reprisals against family in China [gets emotional]. He says the threats no longer have any meaning for him. He says that if Uighurs stop protesting because of security concerns about their parents, it will only get worse [can't talk any further]. He says he was lucky to have escaped from China. Now that he is here, he wants to make himself heard (interview 47).

Finally, it should be noted that a number of respondents who are more politically engaged or activist have faced pressure or threat from the Chinese authorities during a stay or visit to China. Sometimes this involved blocking accounts on social media, or friends in China who are suddenly being targeted, and in one case there was even a day of confinement for interrogation. This has often made a deep impression and leads to a lasting fear of the Chinese authorities, even after returning to the Netherlands.

6. Risk analysis of Chinese influence

This chapter returns to the main question of the research, namely *To what extent is the Chinese population in the Netherlands vulnerable or resilient to possible unwanted foreign interference by China, given the composition, orientation and diversity of/within the different communities?* When analysing the nature of vulnerability and resilience to Chinese influence, we focus in particular on the original sub-questions of the study, thus highlighting the study's main findings.

First, we will discuss the methodological sub-question: *How can unwanted foreign interference in the Chinese context be scientifically operationalized?*

In this study, we operationalized China's influence by breaking it down into four components: conformity; contact; influenceability; and threat. We then developed a methodology to measure these components and analyse their relationships (associations) with each other and a number of background variables. Of course, this does not provide insight into whether this is unwanted foreign influence. The extent to which influence is desired or undesirable has emerged in the other, qualitative analysis of our interviews. We found that a 'soft threat' from China permeates through the Chinese population in the Netherlands and leads to a degree of self-evident restraint among many individuals with a Chinese background. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that there is little or no active interference among the ordinary Chinese population in the Netherlands, but that there is indeed a clear degree of at least partly undesirable influence.

The first influence-oriented sub-question was: *To what extent are Chinese outside the visible elite of leaders and organizations aware of or have experience with unwanted foreign interference?*

We have made China's influence (effect of influence or threat) measurable by assessing the degree of conformity between our respondents' language and the Chinese authorities. The most important factors that make a person more or less conform to the Chinese authorities are gender (women are less), area of origin (people from Xinjiang and Taiwan are less), level of education (less education leads to more conformity). These findings are important. As more 'new migrants' from outside the traditional overseas territories and members of the second generation with a higher education live in the Netherlands, China's influence on the Netherlands' Chinese population may decrease. In addition, a better command of the Dutch

language means that the Chinese population's contact with the Chinese government will be less easily influenced.

The degree of influenceability of a respondent is also expressed in greater conformity. It is also striking that the degree of contact with Chinese authorities, organizations or media does not in itself play a role in the extent to which respondents are impressionable. Perhaps less surprising is that a sense of threat from China leads to people becoming less easily influenced. Threats from China appear to backfire, particularly for students and Uighurs. Migration background also matters. There is less conformity among families of migrants, especially because the elderly among them close themselves off from influence by limiting themselves to their immediate environment.

Another important conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that there is no indication that the Chinese government or Communist Party is undertaking specific activities to intimidate or threaten the Chinese population in the Netherlands. This also applies to the politically committed people or activists in the Netherlands who we interviewed. They generally manage to carry out their activities – even if they are critical of China – without incurring the wrath of the Chinese rulers. This group is vulnerable during a visit or stay in China, but their overseas-Chinese status still gives them a certain amount of protection there, compared to politically active friends and acquaintances who live permanently in China. The relatively large community of Taiwanese in the Netherlands mainly lives separately from Chinese people from the People's Republic and has little or no contact with the Chinese authorities.

Most Chinese people in the Netherlands feel free and independent of the Chinese authorities and rely on Dutch sovereignty and freedom of expression. The Netherlands has also so far been spared confrontations between pro-China students and others, such as those that have taken place in Britain and Australia in recent years. One exception is a number of the Uighurs living in the Netherlands who reported threats and intimidation in 2019, without the Dutch Public Prosecution Service being able to prosecute on these reports. However, in our own interviews with Uighurs, we did not hear about cases of threats in the Netherlands, where the interviewee or someone from their social environment had been the victim. It should be noted, of course, that Chinese dissidents, activists or members of organizations or movements that are not to the liking of the Chinese authorities were not the target groups of this study.

Examples include the Falungong (a religious movement that is banned in China) and organizations working for Tibetan or Uighur independence.

What does come up constantly in the interviews, however, is a more general and diffuse sense of what we call a *soft threat*, following the concept of soft power (*ruan shili*) that is so beloved by the Chinese government. In particular, first-generation Chinese people from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong keep their opinions on a number of sensitive issues to themselves (including on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang), both as a precaution in case the Chinese authorities should hear them and to avoid hopeless and confrontational discussions with other Chinese people. There has also been increasing caution in recent years, as the Chinese authorities in China and abroad tighten the reins. This fear is fuelled by media or social media posts about China's crackdown on its opponents abroad. The soft threat is also felt to a lesser extent among the second-generation Chinese population in the Netherlands and highly educated members of the first generation, but they are generally less afraid of Beijing's 'long arm'.

The soft threat means that there is no need for the Chinese authorities to enforce compliance with Beijing. The Chinese population in the Netherlands apparently does this to a large extent themselves. This self-censorship stems both from the fact that many Chinese people actually endorse Beijing's view and disapprove of dissent, and as a precaution in case any dissent somehow reaches the authorities in China. With some exaggeration, we can say that this creates a panopticon for self-surveillance that in some ways is reminiscent of today's China itself.

The consequences of China's soft threat are difficult to concretize. As we saw in the earlier LAC study, it is certainly the case that Chinese people who play a leading role in a Chinese community, or more generally have a prominent profile in the Netherlands, increasingly fall in line with Beijing or at least keep their criticism or questions to themselves. For our respondents in this current study, the consequences of China's soft threat are much smaller or more diffuse, and they are limited to abstaining from potentially dangerous social media discussions or interactions with others. However, there is no indication of direct attempts from China to monitor opinions that do not fit Beijing's playbook, let alone to contain such opinions.

The next sub-question we will address here is: *How and to what extent do Chinese people in the Netherlands experience the role and presence of the Chinese government and CCP as positive attention, help and recognition, respectively, and thus as influence or interference?*

Our interviews did not show that most Chinese in the Netherlands appreciate the soft threat from China. Rather, the reverse is the case. China's handling of the Covid pandemic has raised doubts about the veracity of China's presentation of its policies and approaches in this and perhaps other areas. The revelation of the existence of Chinese police stations in the Netherlands has also led to outrage and a strengthening of the perception of China as a soft threat. It thus appears that as Beijing tries to exert more direct influence and power over Chinese people abroad, the result is rather the opposite. As long as the Chinese authorities have no concrete goals to pursue among the Chinese population in the Netherlands, soft threats and the resulting self-censorship they engender among the Chinese Dutch population are much more effective.

One important exception is the Chinese Dutch who remain loyal to China, or at least do not want to upset the Chinese authorities. This group includes a significant portion of the first-generation Chinese people in the Netherlands, particularly from the traditional overseas territories of origin in China itself. Although this group is underrepresented among our respondents and so we cannot draw conclusions on this point too firmly, some interviews indicate that people either simply believe what the Chinese media say, or try to bend with the wind, or even actively state that what the Chinese authorities want or say is in the interest of China and all Chinese and should therefore be supported a priori.

We next want to discuss the sub-question: *To what extent do we see differences in the way in which both targets and instruments are approached/influenced by China in (potential) unwanted foreign interference?*

The previous LAC study contained extensive coverage of the instruments of influence among Chinese people in the Netherlands. This new study therefore looks at the Dutch Chinese population as a target rather than an instrument of influence. We have indeed found that the influence (or effect of influence) of China is measurable on the opinions and understanding about China-related issues among Chinese people in the Netherlands. The main factors that make a person less receptive to influence are gender (women are less influenced), area of origin (people from Xinjiang and Taiwan are less easily influenced) and level of education (those with higher levels of education are less influenced). Indeed, the degree of

influenceability of a respondent is expressed in greater conformity. It is also striking that the degree of contact with Chinese authorities, organizations or media does not in itself play a role in the extent to which the respondents conform. Perhaps less surprising is that a sense of threat from China leads to less influence, especially among students and Uighurs. Migration background also matters. There is less contact with the authorities in China among families of migrants, especially because the elderly among them close themselves off from influence and limit themselves to their immediate environment. Economic migrants and second-generation Chinese also have little contact with the authorities.

In summary, the following picture emerges. The Chinese Dutchman most vulnerable to interference from the Chinese authorities is a low-educated man who originates from an overseas Chinese region or elsewhere in the People's Republic. The Chinese Dutch people most at risk are people from Xinjiang and those who came to the Netherlands for study. These groups also have more (threatening) contact with Chinese authorities. Chinese Dutch people born in the Netherlands, families of migrants and economic migrants have little contact with the Chinese authorities, and this contact therefore has little effect and is not seen as a threat by those involved. Taiwanese Dutch people have the least contact of all and do not experience a threat. Of course, this image is a stereotype based on statistical relationships, behind which many large differences and nuances between individuals and sub-groups are hidden, as our interviews also show.

Finally, we want to address the sub-questions about resilience and vulnerability. *Which possible indicators suggest an (in)sufficient degree of resilience against unwanted foreign influence? What other factors play a role in resilience or vulnerability, such as family or other personal ties to China, China-related trade, investments or other economic activities, work experience or Communist Party membership in China, for the migration, closeness and China orientation of one's own community here, as well as political, ethnic or religious orientation and activities in the Netherlands?*

The degree of resilience to an undesirable influence and soft threat is generally low, precisely because it is so diffuse and self-evident, but many Chinese Dutch people still have great confidence in the protections offered by Dutch sovereignty and freedom of expression. People who are relatively far removed from situations where compliance with Beijing is high also have the least to fear from the growing Chinese panopticon and may not even be aware of it. Examples are the Taiwanese, the second-generation Chinese, and in particular those with a

background from Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as highly educated people working for a non-Chinese employer. Most sensitive to the soft threat of China's influence are first-generation individuals from overseas Chinese areas in China, students, Uighurs and new migrants with an active interest in or loyalty to China. Such interests may include returning to China, investment or trade with China, or a role or job as an intermediary in relations between China and the Netherlands. A middle position is occupied by the second-generation Chinese Dutch from overseas Chinese territories in the People's Republic of China and the first-generation Chinese immigrants to the Netherlands from Hong Kong.

With the exception of the Uighurs, our respondents said that the presence of family members in China plays no role in their perception of the soft threat from China and the influence on their own opinion formation also seems to be small. Visits to see family, tourism, and summer camps or study in China are important for strengthening a Chinese person's identity and pride in China, but this does not necessarily mean that they would also become more loyal to the Chinese authorities. Membership or participation in one of the Christian church communities or Buddhist temples in the Netherlands has no political significance among our respondents, but mainly serves as a way for them to become more involved in activities and gain contacts among the local Chinese population.

7. Recommendations

Policy towards Chinese influence and interference among the Chinese population in the Netherlands should be based on the following principles. First, the Chinese population consists of diverse communities and groups that often have very different experiences and perceptions and therefore have to be approached in their own way and sometimes separately. Second, practically all Chinese people in the Netherlands have not only a Dutch but also a Chinese identity, although these are often very different in origin and interpretation. Policy must therefore assume that there is a link with China, although this is generally independent of any loyalty to the authorities in China. However, demonizing China or insisting on simple choices for or against China or the Netherlands should be avoided at all costs. This creates an 'enemy image' of the Chinese in the Netherlands and will encourage them into the arms of China.

Although Chinese organizations, media and leaders in the Netherlands are increasingly listening to Beijing, active interference among the Chinese population hardly takes place. Policies from the Dutch government that focus too much on this will therefore have little result and may indeed be counterproductive. Suspicion towards the Chinese population in the Netherlands will only increase because of unnecessary attention for interference by the Chinese authorities, so Chinese people in the Netherlands could therefore feel compelled to turn to China for protection. Experiences in the United States (for example, the US government's 'China Initiative' between 2018 and 2022, which persecuted American Chinese and others for their ties to China) and Australia (where Chinese interference was disproportionately inflated, with major consequences for the Chinese there) should be important lessons in this regard.[20]

Nevertheless, the widely felt 'soft threat' from China that we describe in this report is a serious cause for concern. However, there are only a limited number of things that the Dutch government can do about this. The most important thing is to build on the general trust in Dutch sovereignty and freedom of expression that our respondents expressed. The increased

20 https://www.justice.gov/archives/nsd/information-about-department-justice-s-china-initiative-and-compilation-china-related, viewed online on 3 March 2023.

doubt, frustration and distrust of some aspects of the Chinese government's policy among many Chinese in the Netherlands can help with this.

Moreover, clear, strong and credible action should be taken where there is an actual threat or interference. The Uighurs' report of threats from China in 2019 therefore deserved more – and, above all, more visible – diplomatic action to make it clear that the Dutch government will do everything it can to protect Dutch residents. The Chinese police stations that became known in 2022 must also be tackled not only in words, but in (visible) deeds. Action on these or similar cases could also be taken more jointly at the European level. Political asylum or family reunification for members of vulnerable groups from China should be facilitated and supported as much as possible. In order to facilitate such actions by the Dutch government, a monitoring and reporting mechanism for Chinese interference and threats should be established.

In addition, it is just as important to strengthen the sense of security and belonging in Dutch society among the Chinese population in the Netherlands. Many first-generation members from traditional overseas Chinese territories are still inclined to have as little to do with the Dutch government and society as possible, out of conviction that attracting attention only works against you. This self-imposed 'invisibility' of Chinese immigrant communities is certainly not limited to the Netherlands. Remaining invisible is accompanied by a continued focus on the People's Republic of China, a situation that is actively fuelled by the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party. The unity of the Chinese nation inside and outside China and the inextricable bond between China and its 'sons and daughters' abroad are standard ingredients in the recipe for China's overseas-Chinese policy.

The belief that they are merely 'a foreigner in a foreign country' also makes the first-generation Chinese migrants in particular more receptive and vulnerable to influence and interference from China. There are a number of things that the Dutch government can do about this, all of which amount to restoring or further developing an active integration and participation policy.

First, Chinese organizations, schools, churches and temples should be actively approached for a dialogue about both vulnerability and resilience to influence and about the bridging function between the Netherlands and China that the Dutch Chinese can fulfil. It is important that the great diversity among the Chinese population comes into its own. These dialogues should make it clear that as a resident of the Netherlands, one not only has rights, but also the responsibility to address the risks of Chinese influence and interference for Dutch society and

the Chinese population in the Netherlands. Concrete measures for concrete problems should be central, such as threats from China, Chinese police stations, or censorship and self-censorship of Chinese media. On the other hand, the Dutch government's China policy and its implementation should also be discussed in these dialogues, both for information and to encourage contributions to the policy by Chinese people in the Netherlands.

Second, political participation by the Chinese population in the Netherlands must be stimulated. This is also on the wish list of many leaders of the first-generation Chinese and of the authorities in China and care must therefore be taken to ensure that this does not become an entrance for Chinese interference in Dutch politics. However, political participation is especially important for Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands. For them, it has nothing to do with possible Chinese interference, but rather implies broad and full participation in the political process, including through the existing political parties.

Third, there must be an active anti-discrimination policy. Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands in particular have bad experiences that emphasize their 'otherness'. As they mature, they therefore tend to seek more and more contact with other Chinese Dutch people. These second-generation Chinese Dutch citizens must play a role in policies to publicize and tackle stereotyping and discrimination. Combating the one-sided 'enemy image' of China, which threatens to become commonplace in many countries, including the Netherlands, is also essential. Chinese Dutch people can play an exemplary role in this.

Fourth, the development of Chinese culture in the Netherlands must be promoted independently of China. Chinese-language media produced in the Netherlands and news gathering that is independent of China must be established or restored. Dutch-language media and activities for second-generation Chinese should also be stimulated. Chinese teaching materials produced in the Netherlands must (again) be imported into Chinese schools at a price that can compete with material provided by the Chinese government. China's interference or influence on social media must be addressed and, above all, made public.

Finally, we would like to advocate for further improvement of the research system for measuring foreign influence, as developed for this project. We have only been able to make an initial move and are aware that our methodology needs to be further improved and strengthened. Of course, this does not have to be limited to the Chinese population or other

immigrant groups or minorities in the Netherlands, but can in principle target any segment of the Dutch population.

Appendix 1: Interview protocol

Below is the Dutch version of the full interview protocol. The Chinese and English versions can also be made available on request if desired. Appendix 2 provides the complete coding book for the background variables and influence variables, as used for the analysis in Chapter 4 of this report.

The interview consists of three parts: the first part concerns the respondent's personal background, focused on work and life experiences. The second part concerns the case studies, in which questions are asked about a number of specific issues based on messages on the website of the Chinese Embassy in The Hague. The third part consists of thematic and concluding questions.

Part 1: Personal background

1. First of all, can you tell us about your experiences regarding your immigration to the Netherlands? (*If the interviewee was born in the Netherlands, ask about the experiences as a child regarding identity issues. If the interviewee is a migrant, ask about his/her life and work experience before arriving in the Netherlands.)
2. Why did you emigrate? Why did you choose the Netherlands? Did you have family at the time who already lived in the Netherlands or Europe? What kind of work did/do they do? (*You can also ask whether compatriots or family members encouraged the respondent's immigration, and/or if there were political or economic reasons for the emigration.)
3. Did you start working or studying immediately after your arrival in the Netherlands and, if so, where? What differences did you notice in terms of work and study between the Netherlands and China after you arrived in the Netherlands?
4. Do you have a lot of family and friends in the Netherlands? What kind of sectors do they generally work (or study) in? Do you meet often? (*How often per week, or how many times a month?) (*If someone mentions (a) partner(s) or children, ask one or two questions about the partner(s) and children).
5. As for your social environment, where do you generally know your friends from? (*If someone is talking about *tongxianghui* (association of region of origin) or churches, ask one

or two questions about this, such as: Have you easily made friends here yourself? Do you think these places are generally suitable for making friends? Are *tongxianghui* and churches places where you can easily make friends?)

6. Since you settled permanently in the Netherlands, how many times did you visit China before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic? Have you been to China since the outbreak of the pandemic?

7. When you were last in China, where were you and for what reason did you visit this place (for example, family/friends, delegation, conference or other event, work or business, tourism)?

Part 2: Case studies

Case 1: Coronavirus measures in China and in the Netherlands

1. Understanding and attitude towards coronavirus measures in China:

   a. What are the changes in the coronavirus measures in China from the beginning of the outbreak to now?

   b. Which measures in China do you think are acceptable and which are not?

      Which measures do you think are acceptable in the Netherlands and which are not?

   c. To what extent do you think the Chinese Embassy has had an impact on your life during the pandemic (e.g. face masks, vaccinations, medical treatment)?

      If so, in what way?

2. Information channels:

   a. What sources do you use to get information about the coronavirus pandemic in China and the Netherlands (e.g. RIVM, television, WeChat)?

   b. What are the differences between the Chinese and Dutch coronavirus measures? Why do these differences exist (e.g. differences in the political system, freedom of speech)?

c. What do people in your area think of the coronavirus measures in the Netherlands and in China? Why do they think the coronavirus measures are different in China than in the Netherlands?

How do you rate the following posts:

- 当前荷兰疫情发展较快，形势趋于严峻。确保留学生等在荷海外同胞的安全和健康是当前使馆工作的头等大事之一。为帮助学生抗击疫情，使馆一直同荷兰及国内有关部门保持密切沟通，第一时间向大家推送防疫信息和咨询平台。积极为大家筹集口罩、消毒液及'健康包'等防疫物资,将很快发放到大家手中。

  The coronavirus pandemic in the Netherlands is developing rapidly and the situation is becoming serious. Ensuring the safety and health of Chinese students and other compatriots in the Netherlands is one of the Chinese Embassy's priorities. To help students fight the coronavirus pandemic, the embassy is in contact with relevant authorities in the Netherlands and in China. The embassy is also in the process of collecting face masks, disinfectants and *jiankangbao* [health kits] for Chinese students, which will be distributed soon.

- 少数几个国家炒作所谓'独立的国际调查'。他们的目的是对中国搞污名化，将科学问题政治化，将自身应对疫情失败的责任推到中国身上.

  Some countries are pushing for a so-called 'independent international investigation' [into the origins of Covid]. Their goal is to stigmatize China, politicize scientific issues, and blame China for their own failure to address the coronavirus pandemic.

- 中国持续向国际社会提供力所能及的支持和帮助。面对全球医疗物资短缺，中国作为当今世界最大的医用防护服和口罩生产国，急各国之所急，加大力度向国际市场供应防疫物资等产品。同时，中国政府高度重视出口医疗物资的产品质量安全，不断出台更加严格的监管措施，采取一切措施严厉打击违法违规行为。

  China continues to provide as much support as possible to the international community. Against the backdrop of the global shortage of medical materials, China, as the largest producer of medical masks and protective clothing, has supplied medical

materials and other products to the international market. At the same time, the Chinese government pays a lot of attention to the quality and safety of the medical products that are exported. The Chinese government is constantly implementing stricter policies and taking all measures to tackle illegal activities.

Case 2: Reunification of Taiwan

1. How do you view the issue of 'the peaceful reunification of Taiwan'?

   Are you following this topic?

   Do you think Taiwan is part of China?

   Do you support the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with China?

   What could be the personal consequences of a 'peaceful reunification' for you?

2. Understanding China's official narrative:

   Have you ever heard the '1992 Consensus'? What do you think this consensus means?

   Do you follow the Chinese official interpretation of 'the peaceful reunification of Taiwan' and the [recent] changes in it? What do you think is the Chinese government's explanation of 'peaceful reunification'?

3. What sources do you use in the Netherlands to follow this topic?

How do you rate the following posts?

- 实现中华民族伟大复兴，是近代以来中国人民和中华民族最伟大的梦想。实现祖国完全统一，才能使两岸同胞彻底摆脱内战的阴霾，共创共享台海永久和平；才能避免台湾再次被外国侵占的危险，打掉外部势力遏制中国的图谋.

  Realizing the great resurrection of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation in modern times. Only by achieving the complete reunification of the homeland can compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait be completely freed from the darkness of civil war and bring about a permanent peace in the Taiwan Strait. Only then can the danger of Taiwan being reoccupied by

foreign forces be avoided and the attempts of foreign forces to contain China can be overcome.

- 民进党当局坚持'台独'分裂立场,勾连外部势力不断进行谋'独'挑衅。导致两岸关系紧张,危害台海和平稳定，破坏和平统一前景、挤压和平统一空间，是争取和平统一进程中必须清除的障碍.

  The DPP authorities [Taiwanese Democratic Progressive Party] adhere to the separatist position of 'independence from Taiwan' and cooperate with foreign forces continually to seek 'independence' and provoke China. This leads to tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and endangers peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. This has also undermined the possibilities for peaceful reunification, and is an obstacle that must be removed in the process of peaceful reunification.

- 外部势力打'台湾牌',是把台湾当作遏制中国发展进步、阻挠中华民族伟大复兴的棋子,牺牲的是台湾同胞的利益福祉和光明前途,绝不是为了台湾同胞好

  Foreign forces playing the 'Taiwan Card' are using Taiwan as a tool to contain China's development and complicate the great resurrection of the Chinese nation, at the expense of the interests and future of our compatriots in Taiwan.

Case 3: The conflict between China and the US

1. Understanding the subject:

   Are you following the developments of the conflict between China and the US?

   What are the reasons for the conflict between China and the US, in your opinion?

   Why do you think the conflict has intensified [in recent years]?

   What do you think is the [possible] impact of the conflict on your personal life?

2. What sources do you use to get information about this conflict (e.g. acquaintances, family, media, official propaganda)?

How do you rate the following posts?

- 美国制定所谓《新疆人权政策法案》，根本不是为了保护新疆人权，而是出于不可告人的政治目的，是对中国内政赤裸裸的干涉。他们的图谋注定不会得逞.

  The intent of the US's Uighur Human Rights Policy Act is not to protect human rights in Xinjiang, but serves their political agenda. This is an interference in China's internal affairs. Their plans will certainly not succeed.

- 根据 2018 年人类自由指数报告,香港社会自由度高居全球第三. 这都得益于'一国两制'的有效实施

  According to the Human Freedom Index 2018, Hong Kong ranks third in the world in terms of social freedom. This is the result of the effective application of 'one country, two systems'.

- 美国一些议员指责香港警察暴力执法,但他们提出的'证据'只不过是香港警察使用了多少催泪弹和水炮。而实际上,香港警察在执法行动中屡受攻击.

  Some US politicians have accused Hong Kong police of violent law enforcement, but the only 'evidence' they show is the number of tear gas vehicles and water cannons used by police. In fact, Hong Kong police have been repeatedly attacked [by the protesters].

- 前不久荷兰农民开着拖拉机上街游行，荷兰政府就调动军车封路。大家可以想象，如果在香港大街上出现军车，你们媒体会作何反应

  Not so long ago, when Dutch farmers took to the streets with their tractors, the central government blocked the roads with military vehicles. Imagine how Dutch media would react if there were military vehicles on the streets of Hong Kong.

- 在香港，有一些外国机构和人士在背后活动，这是不争的事实。前不久,中国外交部宣布对美国的一些 NGO 实施制裁,也表明中方是有这方面证据的.

  It is an established fact that in Hong Kong there are a number of foreign organizations and individuals operating behind the scenes. Not long ago, China's Foreign Ministry

announced that sanctions are being imposed on some US NGOs. This also shows that the Chinese side has evidence of this.

- 美国政府在阻止 ASML 光刻机出口中国一事上向荷兰政府施加强大政治压力,我们对此表示遗憾。美国单纯以意识形态和国家体制的差异为由，将世界割裂为两个敌对阵营,鼓吹国家间的隔离、对立和对抗

  The US government is exerting strong political pressure on the Dutch government to prevent the export of ASML lithography machines to China. The US has divided the world into two hostile camps, advocating for isolation, antagonism and confrontation between countries, based on differences in ideologies and political systems.

Case 4: relations between the Netherlands and China

1. Understanding the subject:

   Are you following the developments in relations between the Netherlands and China?

   What do you think the relations between the Netherlands and China consist of?

   How do you assess relations between the two countries over the past ten years?

   What do you think is the [possible] impact of relations between the two countries on your personal life?

2. What resources do you use to follow this topic (e.g. acquaintances, family, media, official [Chinese] propaganda)?

How do you rate the following post?

- 中荷在 400 多年前就开启了经贸、人文往来。近年来,中荷关系发展保持良好势头,在经贸、抗疫、应对气候变化等各领域合作亮点纷呈,特别是去年双边贸易额逆势增长 7.8%,达 918 亿美元,创历史新高。疫情之下，这一非凡成绩充分显示了两国经贸关系的韧性和潜力。同时，我们对面临的挑战有清醒认识。受国际形势、地缘政治等多重因素影响,出现一些诸如脱钩、孤立、遏制甚至冷战的言论，增进相互理解仍是最艰巨挑战。

China and the Netherlands have had commercial, economic and cultural exchanges for more than 400 years. In recent years, the development of Sino-Dutch relations has maintained good momentum, with many highlights of cooperation in various areas such as trade, the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and climate change. It should be noted that bilateral trade grew by 7.8% against the trend in the previous year, reaching an all-time high of 91.8 billion US dollars. This remarkable achievement shows the potential of commercial relations between the two countries. At the same time, we have a clear understanding of the challenges we face. Under the influence of multiple factors, such as the international situation and geopolitics, [negative] reporting has emerged such as decoupling, isolation, deterrence and even Cold War rhetoric, and improving mutual understanding remains the biggest challenge.

Part 3: Thematic questions

Information/media

1. Which television channels do you watch? How often/how many hours a day? What language are they in? How do you view them? (Via Ziggo or another provider? Internet streaming? WeChat?) Why choose these channels?
2. What newspapers do you read? In which languages? How do you read them (subscription/one-time purchase/in club, association, restaurant/online)? How often do you read them?
3. Other sources of news or information: internet/WeChat? (*Please specify: which blog, website or WeChat group?)
4. If you are interested in a specific issue or event, how and from what sources would you try to get information? (*Interviewers can cite one of the case studies.)
5. Do you find the media from mainland China to be reliable sources? On what topics could they be less reliable?
6. What do you think is the best and most reliable source for information on issues, events or developments in China? (*Ask the same question about news in the Netherlands and international news.) To whom (in the Netherlands or elsewhere) would you ask for information or opinion about current events in Chinese or Dutch politics and society?

Associations

1. If the interviewee mentioned in the general background section of the interview that he/she had participated in some associations: When did you join these associations? How many associations are you a member of? What kind of associations? In order of importance, which one do you find most important and why?

   If the interviewee did not mention participation in associations during the oral history interview, or did not find participation in associations interesting: why do you not find participation in these associations interesting?

2. How many/are there people in your area who participate in these organizations? Do you participate more or less often? Do you know people within these organizations? What is your relationship with them (friends, work, family, etc.)?

3. Who do you think is/are the most important person(s) in these organizations? Do you know these people or are you familiar with these important people?

4. What do you think is the relationship of these associations with the Chinese government and how do you think that works? What would be their job or responsibility in the eyes of the Chinese government? In other words, what could the Chinese government expect from them?

5. Do these associations expect their members to support the Chinese government? Do these associations expect that from other people of Chinese descent?

6. Have you experienced such expectations from Chinese friends or other members of the Chinese community here in the Netherlands?

Travel to China and region of origin

1. If the interviewee said in the oral history interview that he/she often went to China: as you mentioned, did you often go to China, did you then have contact with government bodies (local or central government), Chinese Communist Party organizations or civil servants? If so, with whom?

2. Can you describe the meeting or the visit? Who took the initiative, why did it take place and why with you? Was there anything you wanted to achieve (e.g. investing, family visits, etc.)?

3. If you didn't meet with the Chinese government or Chinese Communist Party officials, is it because you didn't want to or because you had nothing to do with them?

Contact with the Chinese government or Chinese Communist Party in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe

1. Have you ever been approached or visited by Chinese officials or delegations in the Netherlands? Do you know activities or employees of the Chinese government or Chinese Communist Party that are active in the Netherlands?
2. Have you heard about the Chinese overseas police stations, including those in the Netherlands? Have you ever had contact with them or do you know of people who have been in touch? What kind of institution do you think it is? Do you think this attitude will affect your life as a person of Chinese descent?

Experiences with pressure from the Chinese government or CCP

1. Have you ever heard of people from China who do not want to express their opinion because they think that the Chinese government may be dissatisfied with it? Did you do that yourself?
2. Have you ever heard of Chinese suspects abroad who have been persuaded/threatened to return to China?
3. Have you ever experienced being approached or threatened by Chinese authorities about your work, opinions or activities, including threats against your family, community or friends in China?
4. Do you believe that it is the responsibility of overseas Chinese to support the actions and positions of the Chinese government, even if they do not agree with this?

Appendix 2: Codebook variables for quantitative analysis

Background variables

1. Gender

   1. man; 2. woman

2. Age

   1. 20 years or younger; 2. 21–35 years; 3. 35–50 years; 4. 51–65 years; 5. over 65 years of age

3. Nationality

   1. The Netherlands; 2. China; 3. Hong Kong/Macau; 4. Taiwan; 5. other

4. Place of origin

   1. China, overseas Chinese region of origin in Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong; 2. China, Xinjiang/Tibet; 3. China other; 4. Hong Kong/Macau; 5. Taiwan; 6. other

5. Migration background

   1. economic; 2. study; 3. marriage/family; 4. politics/flight/asylum; 5. none (born in the Netherlands)

6. Education

   1. primary education or none; 2. secondary education (incl. MBO); 3. BA/MA/Ph.D. at HBO or university

7. Professional category

   1. student; 2. unskilled worker; 3. trained employee (incl. education); 4. own company; 5. retired; 6. no work

8. Income per month in euros

   1. less than 2,000; 2. 2,000–4,000; 3. 4,000–6,000; 4. more than 6,000

9. Generation

1. first generation; 2. second generation and more; 3. between ('one and a half') generation

10. Length of stay in the Netherlands

    1. five years or less; 2. ten years or less; 3. more than ten years; 4. grew up in the Netherlands

11. Knowledge of Dutch

    1. none or little (beginner); 2. reasonable (intermediate); 3. good or fluent; 4. mother tongue or second mother tongue (native)

12. Knowledge of Mandarin and written Chinese

    1. none or little (beginner); 2. reasonable (intermediate); 3. good or fluent; 4. mother tongue or second mother tongue (native)

13. Use of conventional Chinese media from the Netherlands or China

    1. none or little; 2. reasonable; 3. a lot; 4. almost exclusively

Influence variables

15 Conformity as expressed in the cases

    1. negative/rejection; 2. none; 3. moderate; 4. strong

16 Contact with Chinese government or CCP in the Netherlands or China

    1. negative/rejection; 2. none; 3. moderate; 4. strong

17 Influenceability, loyalty and conformity

    1. negative/rejection; 2. none; 3. moderate; 4. strong

18 Threat

    1. negative/rejection; 2. none; 3. moderate; 4. strong

Appendix 3: Anonymized list of interviewees

No.	Generation	Age	Education	Gender	Origin
1	1.5	51–65	HBO	F	Hong Kong
2	1.5	51–65	university	M	Hong Kong
3	2	21–35	university	F	Hong Kong
4	1.5	36–50	HBO	F	Guangdong
5	1	36–50	primary school	M	Wenzhou
6	1	66 or older	primary school	F	Macau
7	2	21–35	university	M	Shanghai
8	1	51–65	primary school	M	Sichuan
9	1.5	21–35	university	F	Taiwan
10	1	65 or older	university	F	Taiwan
11	2	21–35	HBO	M	Taiwan
12	1	51–65	university	F	Wenzhou
13	1.5	21–35	university	M	Wenzhou
14	1	21–35	university	M	Xinjiang
15	2	20 or younger	university	F	Fujian
16	1	36–50	secondary	M	Guangxi
17	1	21–35	MBA	F	Shanxi
18	1	21–35	university	F	Shanghai
19	1	51–65	secondary	F	Guangdong
20	1	66 or older	secondary	F	Guangdong
21	1	36–50	MBO	F	Guangdong
22	2	20 or younger	secondary	M	Fujian
23	1	36–50	university	M	Guangdong
24	2	21–35	HBO	F	Guangdong
25	1	21–35	university	M	Sichuan
26	1	21–35	university	M	Shanghai
27	1	21–35	university	F	Guangdong
28	1	21–35	university	F	Xinjiang

29	1	36–50	secondary	F	Fujian
30	1	36–50	university	F	Xinjiang
31	2	21–35	VMBO	M	Wenzhou
32	1	66 or older	primary school	M	Hong Kong
33	1	36–50	HBO	F	Taiwan
34	1.5	36–50	university	F	Hong Kong
35	1	66 or older	university	F	Wenzhou
36	2	21–35	university	F	Lishui
37	1	51–65	secondary	M	Hong Kong
38	1	21–35	university	F	Hunan
39	1	36–50	secondary	F	Hubei
40	1	51–65	university	M	Taiwan
41	1	21–35	university	F	Anhui
42	1.5	21–35	secondary	M	Guangdong
43	1	21–35	university	F	Anhui
44	1.5	20 or younger	secondary	M	Wenzhou
45	1	51–65	university	F	Hong Kong
46	1	51–65	secondary	M	Hong Kong
47	1	36–50	secondary	M	Xinjiang
48	1	36–50	primary school	M	Guangdong
49	2	21–35	university	M	Wenzhou
50	2	21–35	university	F	Lishui
51	2	21–35	HBO	M	Hong Kong
52	1	21–35	university	M	Sichuan
53	1	21–35	university	F	Jiangsu
54	1	21–35	university	F	Hubei
55	1	21–35	university	F	Shanxi
56	1.5	21–35	HBO	M	Xinjiang
57	1	21–35	university	F	Hunan
58	1	36–50	HBO	M	Hebei

Appendix 4: Overseas Chinese police stations

This appendix provides additional information about Chinese police stations, as found in the Chinese press and websites of the Chinese government. This information serves to further substantiate our description of these police stations, as given in section 4 of chapter 3.

According to an article on *China Overseas Net* (*Zhongguo qiaowang*, the largest official website for overseas Chinese affairs), in Zhejiang province the 'office of overseas Chinese police affairs' (*jingqiao gongzuoshi*) and three overseas police stations in France and Italy (officially overseas Chinese service stations, called *qiaozhuzhan*) were initially established in 2016 as a pilot programme under police reform. When overseas Chinese people who need police services have to come personally to such a foreign police station, the agency's employees contact China via WeChat or Skype. It is likely that the establishment of the office for overseas Chinese political affairs and the overseas police stations is related to the general national policy of offering government services online as much as possible (the so-called 'internet+', *hulianjia*).[21]

The police of the city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang offer types of services to overseas Chinese, about half of which relate to personal registration (e.g. registering a marriage or updating information). Some others are related to issues associated with Chinese nationality and travel documents or a driver's licence. Lishui Prefecture and the Qingtian Region (Xian) in Zhejiang also have dozens of foreign police stations that offer the same kind of services as Wenzhou.[22]

Although it is not mentioned by official Chinese sources as one of the targets of overseas police stations, overseas police stations affiliated with Qingtian are involved in at least two individual cases of persuading lawbreakers to return to China (*quanfan*). In 2018, the Qingtian

[21] '"Overseas Chinese" in this new era: play this "overseas Chinese card" well' ('*Qiao' zhei xin shidai: dahao zhei zhang 'qiaopai'*), Zhongguo qiaowang, 23 November 2017, http://www.chinaqw.com/qx/2017/11-23/169584.shtml, read online on 24 February 2023.

[22] Ibid.; Overseas Chinese Federation of Wencheng (*Wencheng qiaolian*), 'See upgraded version of "go at once": The Overseas Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Milan joins forces with the Wenzhou police to launch the "police and overseas Chinese online" service' ('*Zuiduo pao yici' haiwai shengjiban milan huaqiao huaren gongshanghui qiangshou wenzhou gong'anju qidong 'jingqiao zaixian' fuwu*), 7 August 2018, no longer online; 'On the day before Chinese New Year: Lishui police station for overseas Chinese connects to overseas branches' (*Chunjie qianxi: 'Lishui jingqiao yizhan' lianxian haiwai fenzhan*), 8 February 2021, no longer online; and 'Convenience for cross-border business: online services for overseas Chinese make overseas compatriots feel comfortable' (*Bianyi kuajing banshi: xianshang wei qiao fuqu rang haiwai qiaobao anxin), Zhongguo qiaowang*, 18 April 2022, no longer online.

office in Belgrade helped repatriate a Chinese citizen suspected of theft who had fled China in 2004. In 2020, a Chinese citizen was repatriated from Spain, although he is said to have been contacted by the Qingtian Association in Spain instead of an overseas police station. Be that as it may, Qingtian's four overseas police stations in Spain are usually run by leaders of local Chinese associations, so this nuance is probably not terribly important. This is also evident from two articles on official WeChat accounts that report that the overseas police stations in Prague and Barcelona play a role in resolving disputes within the overseas Chinese.[23]

The Fuzhou police force (in the capital of Fujian province) works somewhat differently: individual overseas Chinese can contact the Fuzhou municipal police directly through an official WeChat account platform (not by personally visiting a local foreign police station). The platform was still active and accessible in February 2023 (see attached image). The Fuzhou Municipal Police has also reportedly set up 30 overseas police stations around the world. These offices share administrative issues and, in addition, overseas Chinese can also report a crime to the municipal police of Fuzhou. For example, on 7 February 2022, someone from Canada reported a phone fraud involving a suspect that Ms. Wang believed was in China. Similarly, someone from Mozambique contacted Fuzhou police in April 2022, believing that one of his employees had stolen a large sum of cash and returned to China.[24]

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[23] There are no sources to suggest that this is also done by police stations set up by other prefectures or regions in the Wenzhou area. See 'The Lishui Office of Public Security extends the "Fengqiao experience" abroad and loves and protects overseas Chinese by offering services worldwide' (*Lishui zheige gong'anju jiang 'Fengqiao jingyan' yanshen zhi haiwai, aiqiao huqiao shixian quanqiu fuwu*), *Xinlangwang*, 23 May 2019, http://i.cztv.com/view/13192197.html, read online on 24 February 2023; and 'Prague Daily: overseas Chinese police station and Prague office of the overseas service centre of the Qingtian police is officially established on 28 September' (*Bulage shibao: Qingtian jingqiao yizhan haiwai fuqu zhongxin Bulage zhan yu 9 yue 28 ri zhengshi chengli*), Golden Prague WeChat Official Account, 23 May 2019, no longer online.

[24] '"The other side of the world is like neighbours, Overseas 110': the Fuzhou Office of Public Security presses the fast forward button for the cross-border convenience of providing services to overseas Chinese' ('*Tianya ruo bilin,*

Jiangsu Province and Nantong Municipality, in particular, have also established a number of overseas police stations. The motivation given is somewhat different than the provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian, which are mainly focused on serving their large overseas Chinese communities. In Jiangsu, it is about providing security to Chinese citizens and companies that are (temporarily) abroad and to protect the interests of Chinese companies overseas. In this context, the overseas police stations are considered a tool that serves China's 'Going Out' strategy. According to an article by the Nantong Municipal Police, they have established 31 foreign police stations since 2016. The agencies affiliated with Jiangsu Province focus mainly on tackling crime, rather than providing administrative services to overseas Chinese citizens. Another article by the Nantong Municipal Police indicates that foreign police stations specifically support addressing four types of criminal activity: (1) violent crime or terrorism; (2) cybercrime; (3) drug-related crime; and (4) repatriating fugitives from abroad. For example, in January 2021, a Chinese citizen from Nantong was kidnapped in Ecuador. Nantong Municipal Police organized overseas police stations and specialists in China to conduct preliminary investigations, which reportedly helped Ecuadorian police to apprehend the suspects. However, it is unclear from open sources exactly what role the overseas police stations play. It is also important to point out that Nantong Municipal Police has reportedly established multiple bilateral cooperation relationships with police forces in other countries, including in South Africa, Costa Rica, Italy, Fiji and Romania. No Chinese sources were found

haiwai 110': Fuzhou gong'an anxia kuajing bianqiao fuwu 'kuaijin jian'), no longer available online. Anyone with a WeChat account can access the platform through a search 'Fuzhou Public Safety' in official WeChat accounts, followed by a click on 'Huiqiao Service'. See also 'Fuzhou's 'Overseas 110' relaunches household registration cases to facilitate overseas Chinese services and solve problems for overseas Chinese' (*Fuzhou 'haiwai 110' zai tui huzheng bianqiao fuwu: wei qiaobao paiyou jienan*), *Zhongguo xinwenshe*, 3 March 2022, no longer online; Fuzhou People's Government, 'Fuzhou's "Overseas 110" relaunches the "Three Connections Office" for driver's licence matters, a new initiative in favour of the overseas Chinese' (*Fuzhou 'haiwai 110' zai tui jiashizheng yewu 'san tongbian' huiqiao fuwu xin jucuo*), 24 June 2022, no longer online; 'Play the "overseas Chinese" card well and drive abroad! Overseas 110 alarm service open for a month, what happened?' (*Dahao 'qiao' pai, jiashi haiwai! Haiwai 110 baojing fuwutai kaitong yige yue, dou fasheng shenme gushi?*), *Fujian chang'an wang*, 21 February 2022, chinapeace.gov.cn/chinapeace/c100049/2022-02/21/content_12597785.shtml, read online on 24 February 2023; and 'The Story of the Banyan "Overseas 110": How Fuzhou's Office of Public Security serves Chinese compatriots abroad' (*Fuzhoushi gong'anju 'haiwai 110' fuwu rongji haiwai qiaobaode gushi*), *Fujian ribao*, 1 September 2022, no longer online.

pointing to the involvement of overseas police stations from other parts of Jiangsu in the repatriation of Chinese suspects to China.[25]

There are sporadic indications about what role other Chinese government agencies besides the police play in establishing these overseas police stations. We are clear that at least the Overseas Chinese Federation and some Chinese embassies or consulates are involved. The municipal trade office (*shi shangwuju*) is also involved in Jiangsu.[26]

Overseas police stations are tasked with providing administrative services or tackling crime, and sometimes both, according to Chinese sources reviewed while researching for this report. It is necessary to clarify that the Chinese police carry out some of the administrative work usually handled by municipalities or notaries in Europe, such as issuing driving licences, transferring ownership of real estate, or changing address records. The Chinese National

[25] 'Nantong Office of Public Security "connection between police and overseas Chinese" to protect the interests and safety of overseas Chinese businessmen and overseas compatriots' (*Nantong gong'an 'jing-qiao liandong' weihu haiwai qiaoshang qiaobao liyi anquan*), no longer online; 'Nantong Bureau of Public Security has issued ten measures to improve the quality and efficiency of overseas Chinese police liaison services and build the reputation of protecting the safety of overseas interests' (*Nantong gong'anju chutai jing-qiao liandong fuwu tizhi zengxiao shixiang cuoshi tuijin weihu haiwai anquan liyi pinpai jianshe*), 24 June 2022, no longer online; and 'Nantong police are doing everything they can to protect the capacity to protect security overseas' (*Nantong jingfang quanli tisheng haiwai anquan baihu nengli*), 28 December 2021, no longer online. In the Italian case, it is not clear whether the Chinese side is represented by the municipal police specifically of Nantong: see 'The Consulate General in Milan holds an event on "the entry of overseas Chinese organizations by the Chinese police"' (*Zhu milan zonglingguan juban 'zhongguo jingcha jin qiaoshe' huodong*), 19 June 2018, milano.china-consulate.gov.cn/chn/zxhd/201806/t20180619_3820281.htm, read online on 24 February 2023. See also 'The Chinese Embassy in Fiji held a symposium on security exchanges between police and overseas Chinese' (*Zhongguo zhu Feiji shiguan juban jingqiao zhi'an jiaoliu zuotanhui*), 15 January 2021), fj.china-embassy.gov.cn/LSFW/202101/t20210116_885616.htm, read online on 24 February 2023; 'The Chinese Embassy in Costa Rica and the Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica have jointly established the "China–Costa Rica Connection System" and convened a symposium on public safety' (*Zhu gesidalijia shiguan tong ge gong'anbu gongtong jianli 'zhong-ge jingqiao lianluo tixi' bing juban zhi'an zuotanhui*), cr.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/lqfw/lbxw/201707/t20170729_5100403.htm, read online on 24 February 2023; and 'Consul Kang Yong has received a delegation from Nantong in Jiangsu' (*Kang yong zonglingshi huijian jiangsusheng nantongshi daibiaotuan*), 1 July 2017, capetown.china-consulate.gov.cn/chn/lsbh/201707/t20170710_7015280.htm, read online on 24 February 2023.

[26] 'Decision on praising leading collectives and overseas Chinese liaison officers of Nantong Domestic and Overseas Police and the Sea Chinese Connection and Service Center' (*Guanyu biaozhang nantongshi hainei-wai jingqiao liandong fuwu zhongxin xianjin jituan, youxiu jingqiao lianluoyuande jueding*), 20 April 2020, no longer online.

Immigration Service is also part of the Ministry of Public Security, which includes the police. Much of this administrative work has little to do with what is considered police work in European societies.

Apart from these administrative issues, foreign police stations, as we have seen, are also engaged in 'real' policing such as tackling crime and repatriating criminals. In general, there are very few open sources in Chinese that discuss cases of those practices; research for this report found only a handful.