



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice China

China – CHN35907 – Communist Party of
China Membership – Workforce – Party
membership benefits – Employment

17 December 2009

1 What proportion of the Chinese population (or workforce?) are party members?

There are approximately 76 million Communist Party of China (CPC) party members (2008), about 5% of the country's population.¹ Approximately a quarter of all urban workers (those with urban *hukou* registration) are CPC members. This figure varied little from the late 1980s to 1990s, rising from 23.5% in 1988 to 26.9% in 1999.²

The proportion of workers who are CPC members differs by employment sector. Party membership is significantly more likely for white collar workers (managers, administrators, clerks and those in technical professions), those employed in State Owned Enterprises (SOE) and especially those working in government administration. Blue collars workers, defined as industrial, service and commercial workers, are less likely to be CCP members: around 20% between the years 1988-1999.³

2 Is it known if citizens are asked to join, even if indicating their unwillingness to do so?

While direct information was not found on whether citizens are asked to join the party even after expressing an unwillingness to do so, in general this seems unlikely except in employment areas where party membership expected as in government administration. CPC membership is voluntary and, in general, applicants must first express a wish to become a member as the first step in a lengthy screening process which can take several years.⁴

¹ Yu, W. 2009, 'Party Control in China's Listed Firms', January, p.7

[http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary\(yuwei\)\(full_version\).pdf](http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary(yuwei)(full_version).pdf) - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 1; 'Communist Party retains vigor, charisma among Chinese youth 88 years after its founding' 2009, People's Daily Online, 2 July <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6691284.html> - Accessed 18 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

² Appleton, S. Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2003, 'Long Lasting Attraction? Impacts of Communist Party Membership on the Chinese Labour Market', CERDI website, September, p.8 <http://www.cerdi.org/Colloque/IDREC2003/LinaSong.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 3.

³ Appleton, S., Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2008, 'The Economics of Communist Party Membership: The Curious Case of Rising Numbers and Wage Premium during China's Transition', IZA DP No.3454, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor website, April, p.13, 17 <http://ftp.iza.org/dp3454.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 4; Appleton, S. Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2003, 'Long Lasting Attraction? Impacts of Communist Party Membership on the Chinese Labour Market', CERDI website, September, p.10 <http://www.cerdi.org/Colloque/IDREC2003/LinaSong.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 3.

⁴ Bian, Yanjie, Shu, Xiaoling and Logan, John R. (2001) 'Communist Party membership and regime dynamics in China', *Social Forces*, 79 (3), p.813-815 – Attachment 5.

Furthermore, there are at present more applicants than those admitted to the Party: in 2008 there were 10 million applicants with just 2.8 million new CPC members.⁵

There are employment areas where citizens may be more likely to be asked to join the CPC, even after indicating an initial unwillingness to do so. Party membership is often “expected” of workers in government administration, as this work more likely involves loyalty to government policy and in the performance of confidential and important tasks of the state.⁶ According to one source, “Party membership remains crucial for public employment”.⁷ In addition the CPC may at times target specific groups for membership. Currently the CPC is encouraging membership of young people and college students under 35 with above average talents, and senior intellectuals and professional technicians.⁸ Top level university students have also been asked to become members in recent years.⁹ In previous decades, exemplary workers and the economically productive were targeted for recruitment.¹⁰

3. Does party membership improve treatment in the workplace and enhance promotion prospects?

There is a widespread perception in China that party membership brings various forms of benefits in the workplace, including additional income, career advancement, along with perks, higher status and greater power or influence. The Chinese government itself has recently admitted that Party membership is often seen as an advantage when individuals compete for places in the areas of education, employment and promotion.¹¹

CPC members do earn higher wages: between 1988 and 1999 they earned between 29-33% more than those who were not party members. The reasons for this earnings differential remain in doubt, with some studies arguing that the difference is explained more by the fact that CPC members are better educated or have family connections, rather than by CPC membership of itself.¹² Of particular significance to the current case is one study which has

⁵ ‘Communist Party retains vigor, charisma among Chinese youth 88 years after its founding’ 2009, People’s Daily Online, 2 July <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6691284.html> - Accessed 18 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

⁶ Appleton, S., Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q. 2003, ‘Long Lasting Attraction? Impacts of Communist Party Membership on the Chinese Labour Market’, CERDI website, September, p.11 <http://www.cerdi.org/Colloque/IDREC2003/LinaSong.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 3.

⁷ Hertzke, A., 2000, ‘What I Learned in China’, *First Things* website, March <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/what-i-learned-in-china-17> - Accessed 17 December 2009 - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 6.

⁸ ‘Communist Party retains vigor, charisma among Chinese youth 88 years after its founding’ 2009, People’s Daily Online, 2 July <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6691284.html> - Accessed 18 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

⁹ Hertzke, A. 2000, ‘What I Learned in China’, *First Things* website, March <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/what-i-learned-in-china-17> - Accessed 17 December 2009 - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 6.

¹⁰ Appleton, S., Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q. 2008, ‘The Economics of Communist Party Membership: The Curious Case of Rising Numbers and Wage Premium during China’s Transition’, IZA DP No.3454, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor website, April, p.8 <http://ftp.iza.org/dp3454.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 4.

¹¹ ‘Communist Party retains vigor, charisma among Chinese youth 88 years after its founding’ 2009, People’s Daily Online, 2 July <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6691284.html> - Accessed 18 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

¹² Appleton, S., Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q. 2008, ‘The Economics of Communist Party Membership: The Curious Case of Rising Numbers and Wage Premium during China’s Transition’, IZA DP No.3454, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor website, April, pp.9-10, 14, 17 <http://ftp.iza.org/dp3454.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 4.

concluded that while blue workers are the least likely to be members, this occupational category appears to benefit most from party membership.¹³

A 2005 paper on the Party's recruitment of college students gives some of the reasons why membership advantages employees in the public and private sector:

In the increasingly competitive job market, Party membership has become a decisive edge, not only for positions in government agencies and state-owned enterprises, but also for private and foreign firms in some cases. To prospective government employers, Party membership is a sure indication of a student's political reliability. To other employers, Party membership can suggest desirable qualities too, such as organizational and communication skills, teamwork spirit, capability to get things done, etc. A survey of 1,637 prospective employers of college graduates conducted by Wuhan University in 2000 shows that 'political quality' is the third most popular quality (after 'enterprising spirit' and 'cooperative spirit') that employers think highly of, ranking even before 'health'.¹⁴

4. Is it likely that refusal to join the Party would be a reason for dismissal and refusal of other employment opportunities?

Refusal to join the Party is most likely to be a reason for dismissal and refusal of employment opportunities in the case of government positions and managerial positions in state run organisations, where candidate choice is controlled or strongly influenced by party authorities.¹⁵ Outside elite or managerial positions in government and state-run organizations where party influence on recruitment is weaker, refusal to join the Party seems unlikely to influence employment status or opportunities. Bian *et. al.* have concluded that "one does not have to be a party member to hold an elite position in China, but we expect party membership to be a benefit because the party itself has historically had a voice in who gets the job":

In China, securing cadre positions with political or managerial authority involves more than just being an able individual; the attainment of these positions is subject to screening by the Communist party. Throughout the country, party committees are established at all levels of the state hierarchy, and the personnel offices of these committees are responsible for screening and managing rank-and-file cadres under their jurisdiction. Dossiers for all these cadres are stored in the personnel offices, and the cadres' career achievements and mistakes are recorded in their dossiers by the party authorities. These dossiers are consulted when cadres are evaluated for job reallocation, promotion, or demotion.

In screening a cadre for a party and government position at a certain level of the state hierarchy, party authorities at the next higher level have the authority to select and examine the candidates and to make the choice. In screening managerial promotions in state-run organizations, the party authorities of government jurisdictions are often responsible for selecting and examining the candidates and making the final choices. From the mid-1980s

¹³ Appleton, S. Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2003, 'Long Lasting Attraction? Impacts of Communist Party Membership on the Chinese Labour Market', CERDI website, September, p.11

<http://www.cerdi.org/Colloque/IDREC2003/LinaSong.pdf> - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 3;

¹⁴ Guo G., 2005, 'Party Recruitment of College Students in China', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol.14, no.43, May, pp. 371–393 <http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol324/guo05jcc.pdf> - Accessed 21 December 2009 – Attachment 7.

¹⁵ Bian, Yanjie, Shu, Xiaoling and Logan, John R. (2001) 'Communist Party membership and regime dynamics in China', *Social Forces*, vol. 79, no. 3 pp.815, 834 – Attachment 5; Yu, W. 2009, 'Party Control in China's Listed Firms', January, pp.14-15

[http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary\(yuwei\)\(full_version\).pdf](http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary(yuwei)(full_version).pdf) - Accessed 17 December 2009 – Attachment 1.

onward, managerial positions of some state-run organizations were filled through elections by employees (Naughton 1995), but in these cases the party authorities of government jurisdictions closely participated in the selection of candidates and had the authority to approve or disapprove the results. For managerial positions in nonstate organizations (collective enterprises, joint ventures, stock-sharing companies, etc.), party authorities are less involved in the selection process, although they can influence the process informally. In sum, one does not have to be a party member to hold an elite position in China, but we expect party membership to be a benefit because the party itself has historically had a voice in who gets the job.¹⁶

The US State Department also highlights the importance of party membership as an “unofficial requirement” for certain jobs and promotions, including high-level official positions at universities and almost all high-level positions in government, state-owned businesses, and many official organisations. In such contexts, refusal to join the Party is more likely to be a reason for dismissal and refusal of employment opportunities.¹⁷

Some Falun Gong sources do emphasize that its adherents have been pressured into joining the CCP. One 2006 report states that party membership was essential to obtaining an executive position in the 1980s, with the clear implication that refusal to join would have jeopardized the promotion.¹⁸

List of Attachments:

1. Yu, W. 2009, ‘Party Control in China’s Listed Firms’, January [http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary\(yuwei\)\(full_version\).pdf](http://admin.darden.virginia.edu/emUpload/uploaded2009/party_secretary(yuwei)(full_version).pdf) – Accessed 17 December 2009.
2. ‘Communist Party retains vigor, charisma among Chinese youth 88 years after its founding’ 2009, People’s Daily Online, 2 July <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6691284.html> – Accessed 18 December 2009.
3. Appleton, S. Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2003, ‘Long Lasting Attraction? Impacts of Communist Party Membership on the Chinese Labour Market’, CERDI website, September <http://www.cerdi.org/Colloque/IDREC2003/LinaSong.pdf> – Accessed 17 December 2009.
4. Appleton, S., Knight, J., Song, L., Xia, Q., 2008, ‘The Economics of Communist Party Membership: The Curious Case of Rising Numbers and Wage Premium during China’s Transition’, IZA DP No.3454, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor website, April <http://ftp.iza.org/dp3454.pdf> – Accessed 17 December 2009.
5. Bian, Yanjie, Shu, Xiaoling and Logan, John R. (2001) ‘Communist Party membership and regime dynamics in China’, *Social Forces*, vol. 79, no. 3 p.813-815.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ US State Department 2008, *Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*, 25 February – Attachment 8.

¹⁸ ‘Forced to Join but Willingly Quit the CCP’ 2006, *The Epoch Times*, <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/6-9-2/45592.html> - Accessed 18 December 2009 – Attachment 9.

6. Hertzke, A., 2000, 'What I Learned in China', *First Things* website, March
<http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/what-i-learned-in-china-17> – Accessed 17 December 2009 – Accessed 17 December 2009.
7. Guo G., 2005, 'Party Recruitment of College Students in China', *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol.14, no.43, May, pp. 371–393
<http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol324/guo05jcc.pdf> – Accessed 21 December 2009.
8. US State Department 2008, *Human Rights Report: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*, 25 February.
9. 'Forced to Join but Willingly Quit the CCP' 2006, *The Epoch Times*,
<http://en.epochtimes.com/news/6-9-2/45592.html> – Accessed 18 December 2009.