

2022 Beijing Olympics - Event Assessment

Produced January 2022



2022 WINTER OLYMPICS - EVENT ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 Winter Olympics, officially known as the XXIV Olympic Winter Games and commonly known as Beijing 2022, will occur from 4 to 20 February 2022, in Beijing and towns in the neighboring Hebei province in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Beijing 2022 will be open to spectators, but only if they live in mainland China due to rigorous COVID-19 procedures, which are yet to be announced. While the preparations are still unfolding, China has made clear that containing the virus is its top priority, as a result, athletes and visitors will face severe restrictions on their movement and a level of control never seen at the Games.

SECURITY MEASURES

While most of the pre-Olympic focus has been concentrated on China's protocols for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, security preparations for the event venues, athletes, and spectators have been in development for several years and have been modeled on those used during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The health and safety of Games participants and the local population have been an ongoing concern.¹ China has implemented some of the most stringent security measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus to date. Beijing 2022 organizers have implemented a "closed-loop management system" — a bubble-like environment in which athletes and visitors will face severe restrictions on their movement that includes all Games-related areas, arrivals, departures, transportation, accommodation, catering, competitions, and the Opening and Closing ceremonies.² This system will be in effect from January 23, 2022, until the end of the Paralympics on March 13, 2022, and will apply to all three zones for the Olympics: Beijing, Zhangjiakou, and Yanqing. Organizers have also created playbooks, which were developed jointly by the Beijing 2022 Organizing Committee, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) in close collaboration with the Chinese Government and relevant authorities. The playbooks detail the guidelines and COVID-19 countermeasures that will be used to ensure the safety and well-being of others.³

As part of this closed-loop management system, the Beijing Capital International Airport will be the official port of entry for the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. The airport will use T3-D

¹ [hXXps://olympics.com/ioc/news/beijing-2022-readiness-highlighted-by-success-of-test-events](https://olympics.com/ioc/news/beijing-2022-readiness-highlighted-by-success-of-test-events)

² [hXXps://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/sports/olympics/winter-olympics-beijing-restrictions.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/sports/olympics/winter-olympics-beijing-restrictions.html)

³ [hXXps://olympics.com/ioc/beijing-2022-playbooks](https://olympics.com/ioc/beijing-2022-playbooks)

independent closed terminals as entry channels for international arrivals and T3-C and T3-E terminals for international departures with closed-loop management.⁴ Arrivals will undergo COVID tests and swabs of luggage before being escorted by police to fenced-off hotels.⁵ A dedicated Games transport system will be in place for participants to move between Games-related venues for training, competitions, and work. Additionally, food delivery from restaurants outside the loop is not allowed. At the main press center, some of the food will be prepared and served by robot chefs.

South of the National Olympic Sports Center, the Olympic Village consists of 20 buildings and will accommodate 2,338 Olympic participants and 1,040 Paralympic participants. A report from the Datong City government states that the security gates used for the Olympics will be able to classify and identify prohibited items and conduct facial recognition and body temperature scans to ensure smooth entry and orderly conduct at the Games.⁶ In preparation for the Games, Beijing sealed up the Olympic “bubble” on January 4, 2022; the venues, transportation, and staff will be ensconced in the “closed-loop” system until the end of the Games. Those involved will have no direct physical access to the outside world during this time and the participants cannot leave until they either depart the country or complete several weeks of quarantine. The Village will start trial operations on January 23, 2022, and officially open on January 27, 2022.

In preparation for the Olympics, a series of all-factor tests were carried out at the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Village from November 20 - 21, 2021. The tests were conducted with 2,415 participants trying out the check-in systems, accommodations, and catering. Additionally, participants were given polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, which will be given to athletes daily at the Games. Furthermore, more than 70 all-factor tests were carried out December 11 - 12 at the Yanqing Olympic and Paralympic Village with 1,460 participants that also involved a “mock test” for its accommodations, catering, and medical services.

The Chinese government has promised athletes free access to social media platforms and other websites in the Village. Experts claim that, by opening its “great firewall,” China plans to boost its reputation ahead of the Games but that surveillance of online activity should be expected, even for visitors who are allowed to access sites that would otherwise be blocked.⁷ China Unicom, the official communication service partner for the Games, has stated that they have built Smart Link private lines on the optical transport network technology. Additionally, China Unicom Beijing will build an

⁴ [hXXps://www\[.\]globaltimes\[.\]cn/page/202111/1238655\[.\]shtml](https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202111/1238655.shtml)

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[hXXps://www\[.\]reuters\[.\]com/world/china/beijings-olympic-bubble-police-escorts-daily-covid-19-tests-robot-chefs-2022-01-13/](https://www.reuters.com/world/china/beijings-olympic-bubble-police-escorts-daily-covid-19-tests-robot-chefs-2022-01-13/)

⁶ [hXXp://www\[.\]dt\[.\]gov\[.\]cn/dtzw/bmdt/202112/2052240f628143be8b058b5563d33c2f\[.\]shtml](https://www.dtt.gov.cn/dtzw/bmdt/202112/2052240f628143be8b058b5563d33c2f.shtml)

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[hXXps://www\[.\]axios\[.\]com/beijing-china-olympics-internet-censorship-35e1cd8e-0af4-4175-825b-19ee68fd8e34.html](https://www.axios.com/beijing-china-olympics-internet-censorship-35e1cd8e-0af4-4175-825b-19ee68fd8e34.html)

all-round security system focused on high intelligence and a mature ecosystem to meet the high network security requirements for the event.

Even with rigorous protocols in place, Chinese officials have acknowledged the inevitability that some infections will emerge at the Olympics. Olympic athletes, team staff, and journalists will be required to be vaccinated for the Games. Those who are not vaccinated will have a mandatory 21-day “hard quarantine” that will require the individual to remain in a tightly-controlled area.⁸ The vaccination requirement can be medically waived but that will be decided on a case-by-case basis. No information has been released about the Olympic quarantine facilities or where athletes will be placed during this time. Additionally, every participant will take a daily PCR test and must receive a negative test. This is stricter than the testing requirements used in the Tokyo Olympics, where athletes were required to be tested multiple times as they traveled to Japan but were required to quarantine for only three days.

However, with increasing variants of the coronavirus, China has attempted to end the spread of locally-transmitted cases of Omicron with their strict zero-tolerance policy on COVID. Officials in Tianjin, a northern Chinese port city of 14 million, reported 21 transmitted cases — which has caused the city to be in lockdown in several of the affected neighborhoods. Additionally, millions of people in the Chinese cities of Xi’an and Yuzhou, in Henan Province, are currently being confined in their homes due to a recent surge in cases of the Delta variant. Furthermore, the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention called on residents who traveled to areas with recent flare-ups to report themselves to the authorities. Beijing officials have urged residents not to leave during the Lunar New Year holiday, which begins on January 31, 2022, to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

PHYSICAL SECURITY CONCERNS

Any event that garners global attention has the potential to be an attractive target to an individual or group looking to spread their ideology or send a message to the world, and the Winter Olympics in Beijing is no exception.

Overall, the threat of widespread unrest during the Beijing 2022 events is unlikely given China’s low tolerance toward protest activities. As with the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics, there have been calls to boycott Beijing 2022 due to a number of issues with the Chinese government, including alleged human rights abuses. In 2020, the World Uyghur Congress urged the IOC to reconsider holding the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing because of the Uyghur genocide.⁹ Websites akin to

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⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/25/1048953043/beijing-olympics-games-2022-athletes-vaccine-quarantine-play-books-paralympics>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKCN25A1PG>

“#NoBeijing2022” have been set up to highlight the abuse by the Chinese government, calling sympathizers to take action.¹⁰

As a COVID-19 mitigation measure, all Beijing 2022 volunteers, event staff, security personnel, and athletes will stay in the closed-loop “bubble” for the weeks leading up to and following the event. Residents have been told to avoid all contact with Olympic vehicles, and all those involved in an accident cannot request Olympic drivers and passengers to get out of the vehicle and must instead wait for “professionals” to arrive on the scene to handle the situation.¹¹

Several countries have voiced concern that the measures look to be so impregnable that they will not be able to offer proper help to those inside the bubble and that things happening inside will be somewhat hidden from those outside.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

In December 2021, the IOC, the IPC, the Beijing Organizing Committee, and the Chinese government set forth plans to allow for the Olympic Games to move forward given the ongoing threat of COVID. Two playbooks have been developed by the organizing groups for athletes and team officials, as well as members of the media, rights holders, and other senior officials involved in the Olympics.¹² Further breakdown of who classifies as which category is included within each playbook.^{13 14} Both playbooks are based on three pillars to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 at the 2022 Olympics. The first pillar is mandatory vaccination for all involved with the Olympic games. Full vaccination is dependent on the home country’s requirements, type of vaccine, medical history, and previous infection history. All those involved with the Games must be fully vaccinated two weeks prior to arrival in China. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a mandatory three-week quarantine in Beijing. The second pillar is the development and enforcement of the closed-loop system, which will apply for the duration of one’s visit. The final pillar, as part of the closed-loop system, is the enforcement of daily health monitoring and PCR testing. These two policies will help lower the risk of the spread of COVID within those involved in the Olympic games. Minimizing physical interaction, including social distancing, along with proper masking and increased hygiene measures will further reduce the risk of spreading COVID.

¹⁰ [hXXps://nobeijing2022\[.\]org/](https://nobeijing2022.org/)

¹¹ [hXXps://www\[.\]scmp\[.\]com/news/china/science/article/3162736/beijing-authorities-warn-residents-not-try-help-olympic-vehicles](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3162736/beijing-authorities-warn-residents-not-try-help-olympic-vehicles)

¹² [hXXps://olympics\[.\]com/ioc/beijing-2022-playbooks](https://olympics.com/ioc/beijing-2022-playbooks)

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[hXXps://stillmed\[.\]olympics\[.\]com/media/Documents/Olympic-Games/Beijing-2022/Playbooks/The-Playbook-Athletes-and-Team-Officials-December-2021\[.\]pdf](https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Olympic-Games/Beijing-2022/Playbooks/The-Playbook-Athletes-and-Team-Officials-December-2021.pdf)

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[hXXps://stillmed\[.\]olympics\[.\]com/media/Documents/Olympic-Games/Beijing-2022/Playbooks/The-Playbook-RHBs-IFs-TOP-OF-PF-Press-Workforce-December-2021\[.\]pdf](https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Olympic-Games/Beijing-2022/Playbooks/The-Playbook-RHBs-IFs-TOP-OF-PF-Press-Workforce-December-2021.pdf)

International spectators were barred from the Olympic Games in September 2021. However, on January 17, 2022, Olympic organizers announced that tickets to the Games would be distributed to select members of the Chinese public and would not be broadly sold as previously indicated. Those Chinese spectators who are allowed to attend the event will be subjected to the established Games COVID health and safety protocols.¹⁵

GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES

Independence issues over Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have always been sensitive subjects for the Chinese central government. Political adversaries of China could use the Olympic spotlight to highlight these differences. One of the primary issues the international community could address during the Olympics is the alleged forced labor in the Xinjiang region. The U.S. government and activist organizations have accused the Chinese government of having detained an estimated 800,000 to two million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other majority-Muslim groups, most of whom are Chinese citizens, in prison-like conditions in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) of China.¹⁶ The accusations and ongoing campaigns to raise awareness of the situation pose reputational risks to companies operating in Xinjiang or mainland China, and most Western diplomatic measures against China are focused on the region. The most likely protests against the Olympics or boycotts of sponsors will stem from Uyghur-related issues.

The greatest opposition comes from activist groups, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the U.S. government. The U.S. government already announced a diplomatic boycott of the event in December 2021 in which the UK, Canada, and Australia are also participating. While athletes from these countries will be permitted to compete, government officials will not attend the event. Relatedly, Japan will partially participate in the boycott, withholding high-level government officials but sending Olympic officials and athletes. Within China, there is negligible risk of protests or boycotts in the region or around Olympic venue sites. However, international activism could prompt a boycott movement or otherwise embarrass Olympic organizers. In addition, in December 2021, President Biden signed the Xinjiang forced-labor bill, effectively banning all imports from Xinjiang when the law goes into effect in June 2022. While implementation is months after the Beijing Olympics, the recent signing of the bill into law not only represents a shift in tensions between China and the United States but also likely increases discourse surrounding the camps in Xinjiang and the forced-labor protests.

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<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/beijing-olympics-tickets-will-not-be-publicly-sold-due-covid-19-2022-01-17/>

¹⁶<https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/china-includes-tibet-xinjiang-hong-kong-and-macau/xinjiang/>

Recognition of Taiwan is another sensitive geopolitical issue for China, and there could be a high-profile announcement or a protest movement regarding support for Taiwan during the Olympics. However, should that not occur, relations with Taiwan and Hong Kong will be muted, as the economic consequences on Hong Kong will see China delay forcing their will on other territories.

Activist Groups

Activist and human rights groups have become more vehement in calling for popular brands, including Olympic sponsors, to be transparent regarding their operations in China, particularly in the Xinjiang region. Uyghur issues in the Xinjiang region have gained more attention globally as the international community has become vocal about launching campaigns to spread awareness and put pressure on international governments.

In July 2020, End Uyghur Forced Labor, a coalition of more than 190 organizations that includes the AFL-CIO, published a call to action over human rights violations in Xinjiang, demanding that brands in the apparel and textiles sector withdraw supply chain ties from the region.¹⁷ On September 9, 2020, a global coalition of 321 civil society groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, signed an open letter urging the United Nations to create an independent international mechanism to address the Chinese central government's human rights violations in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang.¹⁸ Of note, 40 of the organizations chose to remain anonymous out of fear of retribution from mainland China's government.

In addition, Uyghur issues tend to be brought up by various activist groups outside of mainland China, particularly during civil unrest. During the 2019-2020 Hong Kong unrest, demonstrators staged rallies in support of Uyghur freedom.¹⁹ Political changes regarding Hong Kong and Tibet are likely to spark demonstrations outside of mainland China and inspire pro-Uyghur protests as well.²⁰

In recent years, the Chinese central government has transferred large numbers of Uyghur citizens from the far west region of Xinjiang to factories nationwide. These transferred Uyghurs, under conditions that strongly suggest forced labor, are working in many factories that are in the supply chains of at least 82 well-known global brands, such as Apple, BMW, Gap, Huawei, Nike, Samsung, Sony, and Volkswagen.²¹ These companies are expected to face mounting pressure to remove forced Uyghur labor from their supply chains in the first half of 2022, particularly as the United States' law

¹⁷ [hXXps://enduyghurforcedlabour\[.\]org/](https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/)

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[hXXps://www\[.\]hrw\[.\]org/news/2020/09/09/global-call-international-human-rights-monitoring-mechanisms-china](https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/09/global-call-international-human-rights-monitoring-mechanisms-china)

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[hXXps://www\[.\]reuters\[.\]com/article/us-hongkong-protests/clashes-as-police-try-to-clear-hong-kong-protesters-after-uyghur-support-rally-idUSKBN1YQ076](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests/clashes-as-police-try-to-clear-hong-kong-protesters-after-uyghur-support-rally-idUSKBN1YQ076)

²⁰ [hXXps://www\[.\]uyghurcongress\[.\]org/en/category/wucactivities/wucdemoprotest/](https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/category/wucactivities/wucdemoprotest/)

²¹ [hXXps://www\[.\]aspi\[.\]org\[.\]au/report/uyghurs-sale](https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale)

banning Xinjiang exports goes into effect in June 2022 and throwing into question the impact on international supply chains.

Activists and NGOs may organize campaigns using the publicity of the Olympics to suspend business operations in China in response to the central government's reported oppression and unfair treatment of ethnic Uyghurs.

Activist Group TTPs

The most common activist TTP is an open letter awareness campaign in which high-profile academics, NGOs, charities, and human rights activists sign letters critical of China's treatment of the Uyghur population or pertaining to any other human rights-related issue. The End Uyghur Forced Labor campaign is an example of an awareness campaign.

Activist groups also lobby government officials to issue their own statements on the matter with varying degrees of success. EU officials have publicly criticized China over human rights issues following lobbying from activist groups but stopped short of issuing sanctions over the matter. Activist groups have had more success lobbying the U.S. government, which may be due to other geopolitical disputes between the United States and China mainly involving trade. This culminated in the United States issuing directives to ban purchases of certain products allegedly made with forced labor in the Xinjiang region.²²

Protests outside Chinese embassies and consulates are also common, mainly in the United States, EU, Eastern European countries, and Southeast Asia. Activists used the act of China moving its embassy in London to put pressure on Chinese authorities over issues regarding Xinjiang in September and October 2020.²³ This could extend to protests outside embassies coinciding with the Olympics.

Outside of China-U.S. relations, other nations have expressed dissatisfaction with the current human rights situation in China, which could resurface during the Olympics. EU legislators have called for independent inquiries into the reported human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and Hong Kong and powerful European nations like Germany have led initiatives condemning Chinese policies.²⁴ However, these countries have refrained from specific economic sanctions and the targeted policies aimed at discouraging supply chain exposure to China that have been initiated by the United States. China has effectively used its trade dominance to pressure foreign governments from engaging in

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²² [hXXps://www\[.\]dhs\[.\]gov/news/2020/09/14/dhs-cracks-down-goods-produced-china-s-state-sponsored-forced-labor](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/09/14/dhs-cracks-down-goods-produced-china-s-state-sponsored-forced-labor)

²³ [hXXps://www\[.\]cnn\[.\]com/2020/10/03/europe/china-london-embassy-uyghurs-uk-gbr-intl/index\[.\]html](https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/03/europe/china-london-embassy-uyghurs-uk-gbr-intl/index[.]html)

²⁴ [hXXps://www\[.\]aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2020/10/7/germany-leads-charge-against-china-on-rights-abuses](https://www.aljazeera[.]com/news/2020/10/7/germany-leads-charge-against-china-on-rights-abuses)

public criticism on a wide range of topics. China's recent import ban on products from Australia has all but ended public criticism from Australia of China's policy towards human rights issues, as the country relies on China for 30 percent of its exports.²⁵ China has also publicly accused Brazil of exporting COVID-19 in frozen meat to China with little evidence, but Brazil accepted the criticism in a move that was seen as acquiescing to their largest meat customer.²⁶ Since official government sanctions against China are unlikely (aside from the United States), activist groups, civil society organizations, and NGOs are the leading critics of China's policy in the Beijing region and present the greatest reputational threat to companies operating there and the Olympics.

CYBERSECURITY PREPAREDNESS AND CONCERNS

While ZeroFox did not identify any planned cyber attacks against Beijing 2022, major international sporting events draw the interest of various threat actors. With the Games around the corner, Chinese software company Qi An Xin has been named the official cybersecurity partner of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Qi An Xin is one of China's largest cybersecurity companies, boasting expertise in security intelligence, security operations, and emergency responses.

The organizers hope to avoid a repeat of the cyber attack on Olympic networks that occurred before the opening ceremony in Pyeongchang in 2018, which slowed down spectators' entry, took Wi-Fi networks offline, and affected portions of the broadcast. Despite thorough preparedness, any nation-state that is not aligned with China may see an opportunity to try to embarrass the Games host through a cyber attack. Nation-states can seek to conduct additional offensive operations throughout the Games. These offensive operations could take the form of data theft and leaks, misinformation, or disruption of systems involved in various sporting events.

Furthermore, as the threat and pervasiveness of ransomware actors has increased dramatically over the last year, a ransomware attack on Beijing 2022, the IOC, or a third-party vendor that could impact the Games is likely, as cyber criminals might see Olympics-related vendors as prime targets for extortion. During the preparations for Tokyo 2020, for instance, the Japanese Olympic Committee revealed that it was hit by a ransomware attack in April 2021 as part of a breach in which hackers broke into a Japanese government contractor's data-sharing tool made by technology company Fujitsu. The Olympic vendors will have little tolerance for downtime during Beijing 2022, making them key targets for attack by ransomware actors seeking a quick payday.

One of the main cybersecurity concerns comes from the MY2022 Olympics smartphone app. MY2022 was built by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the purpose of the Games and is owned

²⁵ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3108844/china-tells-australia-reflect-its-own-deeds-it-imposes-new>

²⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-brazil-meatpackers-idUSKBN2460PC>

by a state-owned company. The app has a wide range of functionalities, including tourism recommendations, GPS navigation, and COVID-19-related health monitoring. One of the app's functions is to collect a list of medical information for health monitoring, which includes users' daily self-reported health status, COVID-19 vaccination status, and COVID-19 lab test results.²⁷ Although mandatory for use by all athletes, the app has raised security and privacy questions about end user privacy and security. Cybersecurity experts detailed a series of security vulnerabilities in data transmission and failures to encrypt sensitive data that have since been allegedly fixed.²⁸ While concerning, these findings are not surprising and are common among apps developed by Chinese companies. Nevertheless, overall data privacy and censorship in China are of concern to the attendees and participants. While Chinese officials have indicated they will give athletes and journalists uncensored access to the Internet, it is unclear if the country will still block certain sites. The United States, Germany, and the Netherlands have already warned athletes not to use, or even bring, personal phones, tablets or laptops because of cybersecurity and surveillance concerns.²⁹ Similarly, before the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a similar advisory for any travelers headed to China, warning that bringing any devices potentially exposes them to unauthorized access and theft of data by criminal or foreign government elements.

²⁷ [hXXps://apps\[.\]apple\[.\]com/nz/app/my2022/id1548453616](https://apps.apple.com/nz/app/my2022/id1548453616)

²⁸ [hXXps://citizenlab\[.\]ca/2022/01/cross-country-exposure-analysis-my2022-olympics-app/](https://citizenlab.ca/2022/01/cross-country-exposure-analysis-my2022-olympics-app/)

²⁹ [hXXps://www\[.\]theverge\[.\]com/2022/1/22/22896398/winter-olympics-2022-beijing-us-athletes-burner-phones](https://www.theverge.com/2022/1/22/22896398/winter-olympics-2022-beijing-us-athletes-burner-phones)