

Partly due to a number of major protests made by its citizens, the Chinese government reversed its zero-COVID policy in early December 2022, leading to mixed reactions from the country's citizens.

The end of zero-COVID has multiple implications for Chinese citizens, including access to restaurants or public spaces and permission to travel to other countries for vacation. With the newfound possibility of traveling and roaming throughout public spaces, many take the opportunity to reunite and celebrate the holidays with their families for the first time in years.

However, the country's citizens have mixed feelings toward the government's actions.

"When the zero-COVID policy was still active, people always complained, saying they had no freedom," says one interviewee, who shares her experience living in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. "But when the zero-COVID policy was terminated, when circumstances changed from being under the government's management and control to individuals being responsible for the protection of their own health, I feel there is an even greater lack of freedom now." She explains, "Now, I feel unsafe when going anywhere, especially while using public transportation; I feel constantly aware of the possibility of being surrounded by those who have been infected with COVID-19, and I am at risk of being infected with the contagious disease myself."

Other Chinese residents, however, say they welcome the policy changes.

"I think it's pretty good because the government used to have control over quite a lot, so many restrictions were placed on different aspects of our lives, and the government had also been facing financial limits," she says. "But after the government loosened its lockdown policies, all aspects of life have improved, and so have our overall lives."

Being at a higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 may affect an individual's perspective on the end of the zero-COVID policy. Those who may be more susceptible to catching the disease, such as the elderly or immunocompromised, might feel more anxious about the situation.

According to an elderly interviewee, who is 80 years old, before the zero-COVID policy was lifted, people felt "more at peace" and more susceptible populations, like the elderly and immunocompromised, are now increasingly fearful of contracting the disease.

"People seen walking around outside were sure to be uninfected with COVID-19 and had not had recent contact with the disease, so I felt comfortable going outside and taking walks or jumping a bit," he says. "But now that the zero-COVID policy has been lifted, the government no longer does the babysitting and the people are free to make their own decisions. Eventually, many people will test positive for COVID-19, and my heart feels unsettled."

When asked about how the end of the zero-COVID policy might have impacted everyday life, another interviewee, who is fourteen years old, states that there have hardly been any changes in her everyday life since the policy's end.