

The Real Black Mirror: China's Social Credit System



UNIT 7

Choose the correct words from the choices given.

EMPOWER

C1

China's 'social credit' system blacklists "lazy" citizens who get into debt or spend their time just playing video games in a (1) _____ initiative that could have come straight out of Black Mirror. Analysing users' social media habits and online shopping purchases, the nightmarish system also grants real financial credit to citizens whose lifestyles are deemed to be more wholesome.

While the social credit scheme will become mandatory in China in 2020, it is currently being tested in (2) _____ schemes which have been rolled out through private financial companies. The most high profile of these is Sesame Credit which has been developed by Ant Financial and uses computer algorithms to score people from 350 to 950.

Likened to an episode of dystopian horror series Black Mirror, *Sesame Credit* rates people on factors including "interpersonal relationships" and consumer habits including buying video games. It appears the (3) _____, one-party state believes that someone who plays a PlayStation or an Xbox is an "idle person." Those with a low-rating are excluded from many "privileges" and "freedoms" enjoyed by other citizens meaning that in some cases they are unable to book a plane flight, are prevented from renting or buying property and are unable to (4) _____ a loan or stay in a luxury hotel.

One of the largest schemes currently operating is in Shanghai where jaywalking, traffic violations and skipping train fares can get you (5) _____. But that's not all. Citizens who do not visit their elderly parents or do not sort out their garbage into the appropriate recycling bins can also be penalised and effectively (6) _____ out by the state.

Businessman Xie Wen claims he was put on a blacklist following a financial (7) _____ in which he never paid a debt to a client who then sued his company. He was then added to the Chinese Supreme Court's list of "discredited" people. Wen said: "It hurt my business. My clients didn't trust me. I didn't get much work."

Not only was Wen (8) _____ from going on a plane or a high speed train, but he was unable to send his child to private school. The same report published in February this year says that since October 2013, nearly 10 million people have been (9) _____ to the same list.

At the moment, it is only China that has plans to bring this system into effect. However, a local council in England has been looking at the system with interest. "I think some kind of point-based merit system could be very (10) _____ in controlling anti-social behaviour," said the Mayor of West Walton in Norfolk. Perhaps the voters will have something to say about that.

