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## **A Linguistic History of Hong Kong**

The following provides a general overview of changing linguistic profile of Hong Kong as it evolved from a small fishing and farming settlement to a global financial center. More detailed information about the history and present-day use of many of the languages and varieties discussed here are included in the ***Telling Stories Language Profiles*** and ***Variety Profiles***.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR) is located in the South China Sea, bordering mainland China to the north. It comprises three main territories: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories. In addition, more than 250 islands belong to the territory of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was part of the Qing Dynasty until Hong Kong Island, and later Kowloon, were ceded to the British starting in 1842. The British later leased the New Territories for 99 years from the Qing Dynasty, an agreement that lasted until 1997, when Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule and became part of the People's Republic of China.

Before colonization by the British, Hong Kong was settled by numerous ethnic groups – the Punti, Tanka (Shuilo), and Hakka, among others. These are now known as Hong Kong's indigenous peoples. The Punti, who speak Waitau, settled primarily in the New Territories, in walled villages. The Shuilo peoples, also called Tanka, were boat dwellers and settled primarily in Tai O and Aberdeen. The Hakka people, also called Kejia, also settled in the New Territories. Tanka, Waitau, and Hakka are now endangered languages in Hong Kong, as they are no longer passed down through the generations.

After colonization by the British, Hong Kong became a free port, and an important hub for trade with China. As a result, Hong Kong saw settlement from all over China, Asia, and the rest of the world.

Cantonese, or Gwóngdūng wá, a Yue language spoken in the Guangdong (Canton) region of Southern China, became the majority language of Hong Kong after waves of immigration to Hong Kong from Southern China after Hong Kong became a British colony, and a free port. Though not the most widely spoken language in Hong Kong, English, as the language of the British colonizers, was the de facto official language of Hong Kong.

In 1911, the first population census of Hong Kong, the population was 456,739. This increased to 625,166 in 1921, and 1931 to 840,473. These first population censuses reveal that few residents of Hong Kong were born in Hong Kong: Of the 1931 population of 840,473, for example, only 33% were born in Hong Kong, with 65% of Hong Kong's residents born in neighboring Guangdong Province in China, which borders Hong Kong's New Territories (HKSAR Population Census). The nationality of the settlers not surprisingly included more than 80,000 British nationals, but also 157 Dutch, 364 French, 158 German,

and 2,789 Portuguese; European settlement to Hong Kong dates back to the 1600s, when Hong Kong was a trading post in the South China Sea.

By 1961, Hong Kong’s population had grown to 3,129,648, in part due to the influx of immigrants from various parts of China because of the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s and the Civil War in China from 1927-1949. This included the more than 1.4 million people from Shanghai, most of whom were speakers of Shanghainese; immigrants from Suzhou Province, who spoke Suzhounese, and immigrants from Fujian Province, who were speakers of Hokkien (also known as Fukien, Hoklo, or Southern Min). Immigration from Chaozhou of the Teochew people (also known as Chiu Chau) also increased after World War II.

Many of these immigrants brought textile and manufacturing skills with them and helped establish Hong Kong as a key industrial and manufacturing center in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1961, the total population of Hong Kong was 3,133,131 with 3,129,648 residents and 3,483 visitors. Table 1, below, shows the Place of Origin of Hong Kong’s residents in 1961. As the Table shows, the majority of Hong Kong’s residents originated outside of Hong Kong, with the majority of residents from Canton (Guangdong) or Macau, which was then a Portuguese colony (HKSAR Population Census).

**Table 1. Place of Origin 1961**

<b>Place</b>	<b>1961</b>
<b>Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Kowloon, NT or Territorial Waters</b>	260,505 8.32%
<b>Canton, Macau, adjacent places</b>	1,521,715 48.62%
<b>Sze Yap</b>	573,855 18.34%
<b>Chiu Chau (Teochew)</b>	257,319 8.22%
<b>Elsewhere in Kwangtung</b>	244,237 7.8%
<b>Coastal provinces and Taiwan</b>	178,626 5.71%
<b>Elsewhere in China</b>	43,644 1.4%
<b>Other East Asian countries not in Commonwealth</b>	7,101 0.23%
<b>East Asian countries in Commonwealth</b>	5,759 0.18%
<b>Countries in Commonwealth (outside East Asia)</b>	27,381 0.88%
<b>Other countries</b>	9,506 0.30%
<b>Unknown</b>	NA

As Figure 1 shows, by 1961, the Usual Language of the majority of Hong Kong’s residents was Cantonese, followed by Fukien/Hokkien (also known as Hoklo) and then Hakka, Taishanese, and Shanghainese, all different varieties of Chinese. There were relatively few

speakers of other Asian languages in Hong Kong at that time. Figure 2 shows these numbers in percentage form.

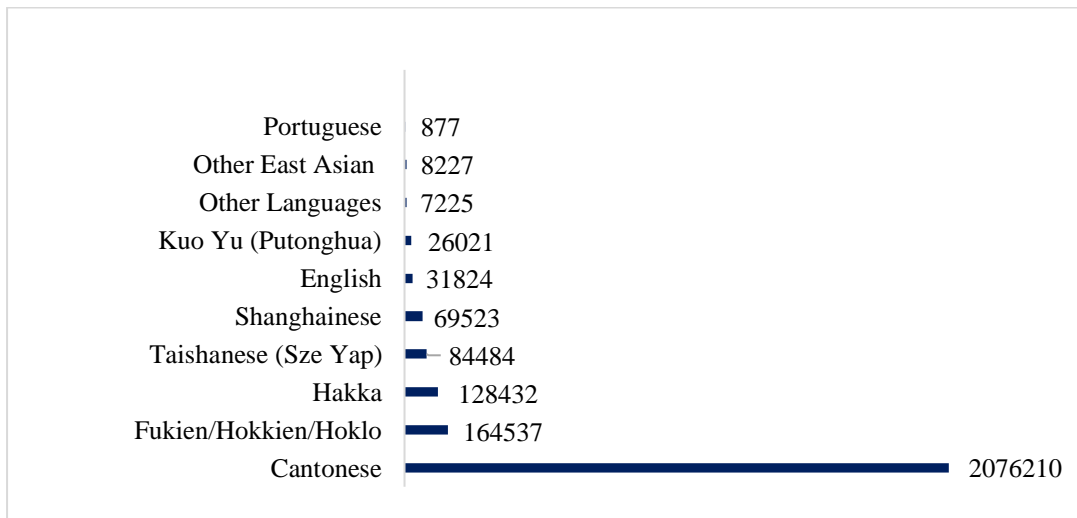


Figure 1. 1961 Usual Language in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

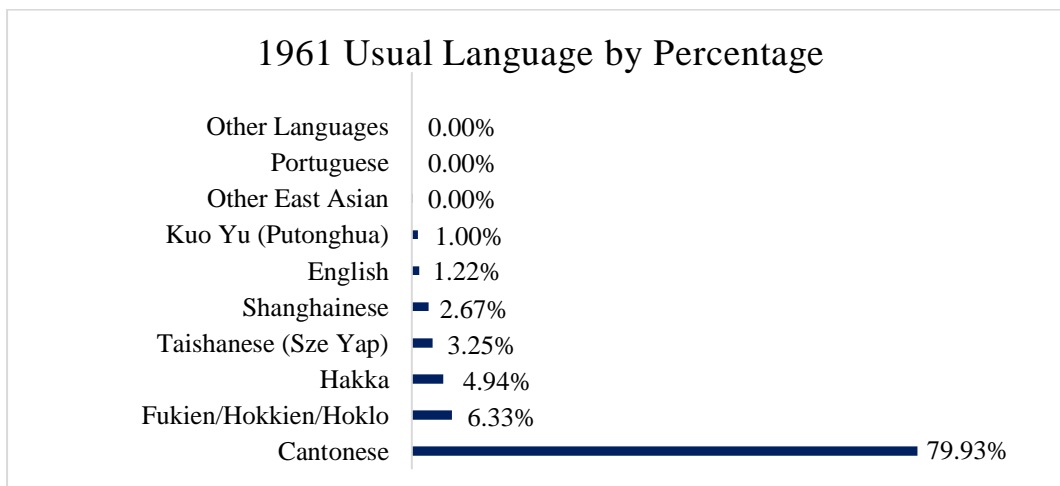


Figure 2. 1961 Usual Language by Percentage

By 1966, the population in Hong Kong had grown to 3,716,400. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the majority of Hong Kong's residents originated from outside of Hong Kong, with most originating in Canton, Macao and other adjacent areas. Only 6.73% stated Hong Kong was their Place of Origin.

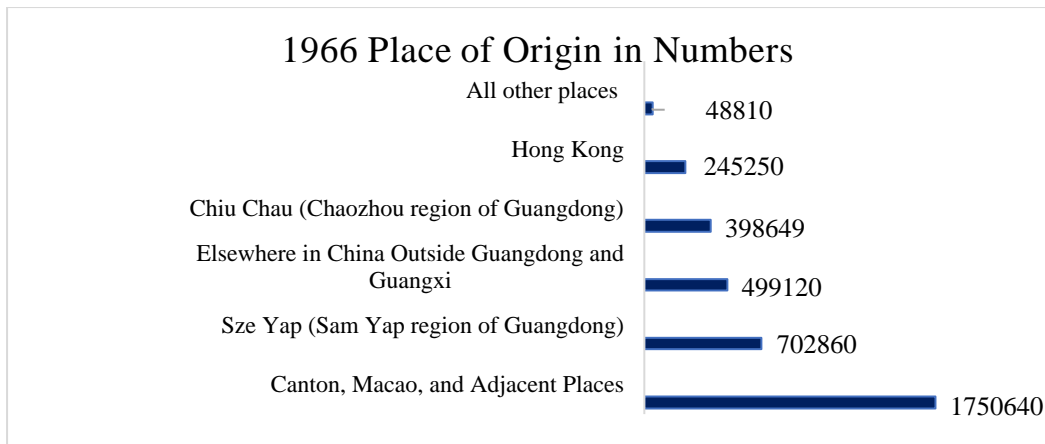


Figure 3. 1966 Place of Origin in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

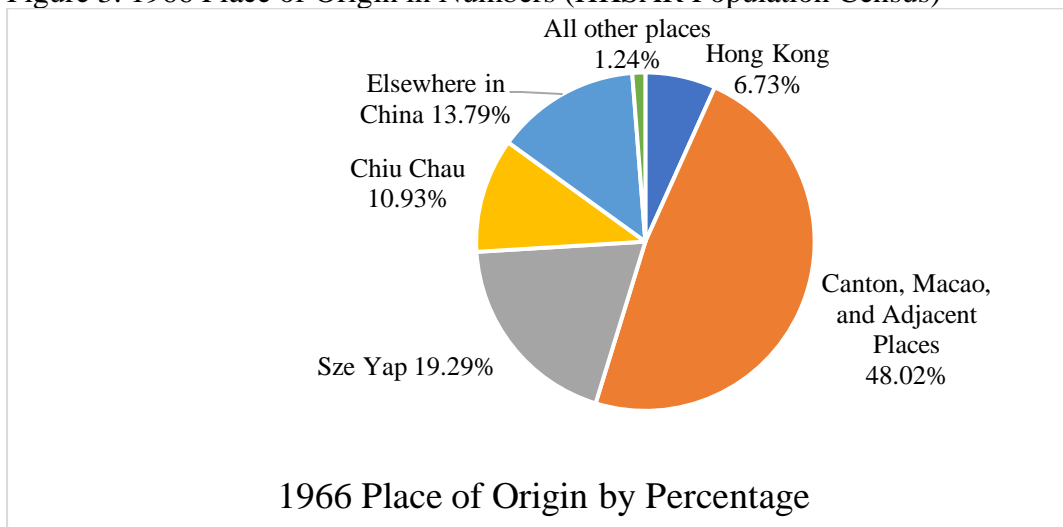


Figure 4. 1966 Place of Origin by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census).

The Usual Language of the majority of Hong Kong's people in 1966 was also Cantonese, followed by Fukien, Hakka, and Hokkien, as shown in Figures 5 and 6.

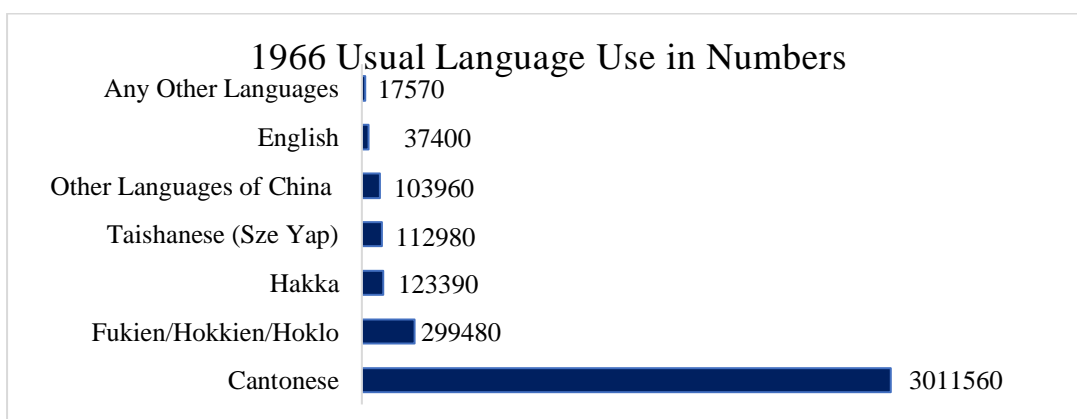


Figure 5. 1966 Usual Language in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

As shown in Figure 6, the number of residents who use Cantonese as a Usual Language in 1966 increased slightly from 1961, while the number of residents who use Hakka decreased from 4.94% in 1961 to 3.32% in 1966; the use of Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo increased from 6.33% to 8.05%, fueled by greater immigration to Hong Kong from Fujian Province.

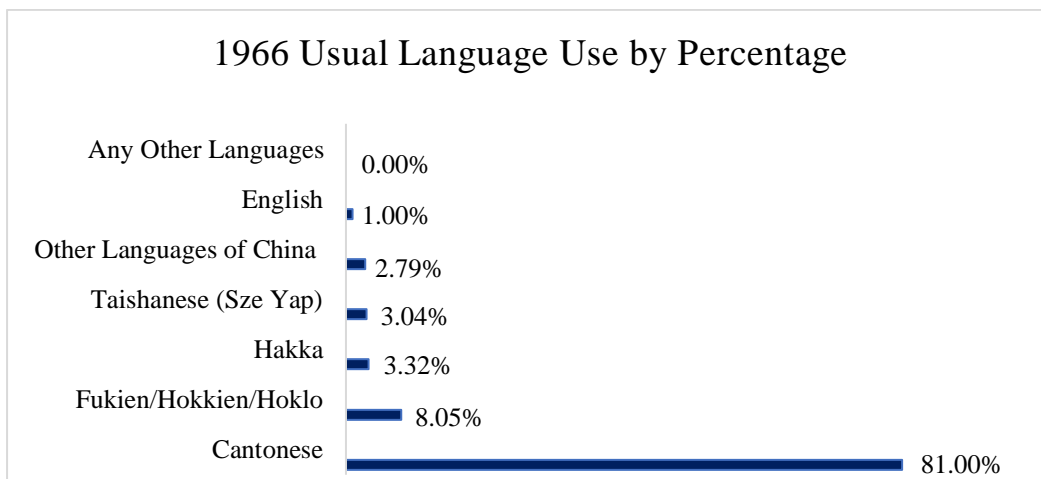


Figure 6. 1966 Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

In 1971, the Population of Hong Kong was 3,948,179, of which 3,936,630 were residents and 11,549 were listed as transients (individuals staying in Hong Kong for fewer than 20 days) (HKSAR Population Census). As shown in Figures 7 and 8, the 1971 HKSAR Population Census shows that only 4.71% of Hong Kong's population list their Place of Origin as Hong Kong; the census also indicates that 2.21% of Hong Kong's population in 1971 originated in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Pakistan, with 2.67% from other Asian countries. In addition, while 7.36% of Hong Kong's residents originated in Britain, 1.34% came from other European countries. The census also indicates that Hong Kong had more than 4,600 residents from the United States and Canada. This increasingly international profile of Hong Kong's population was in part due to Hong Kong's increasing shift from industry and manufacturing to becoming an international financial center in the 1970s and 1980s.

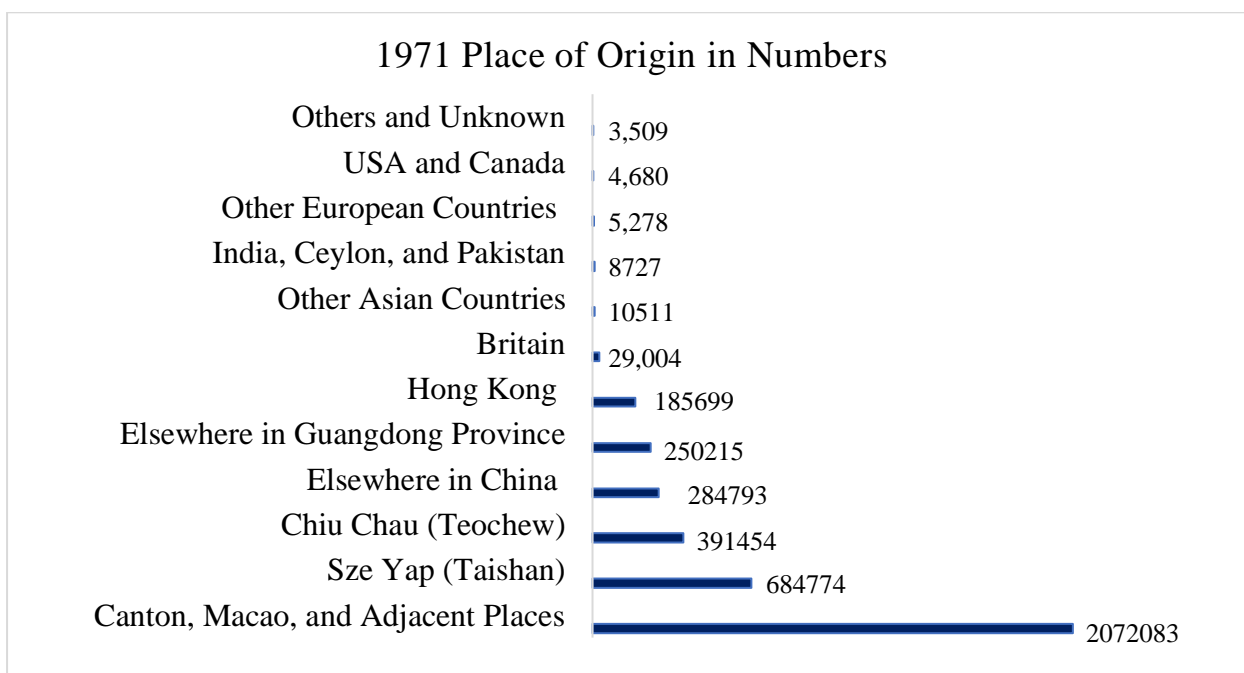


Figure 7. 1971 Place of Origin in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

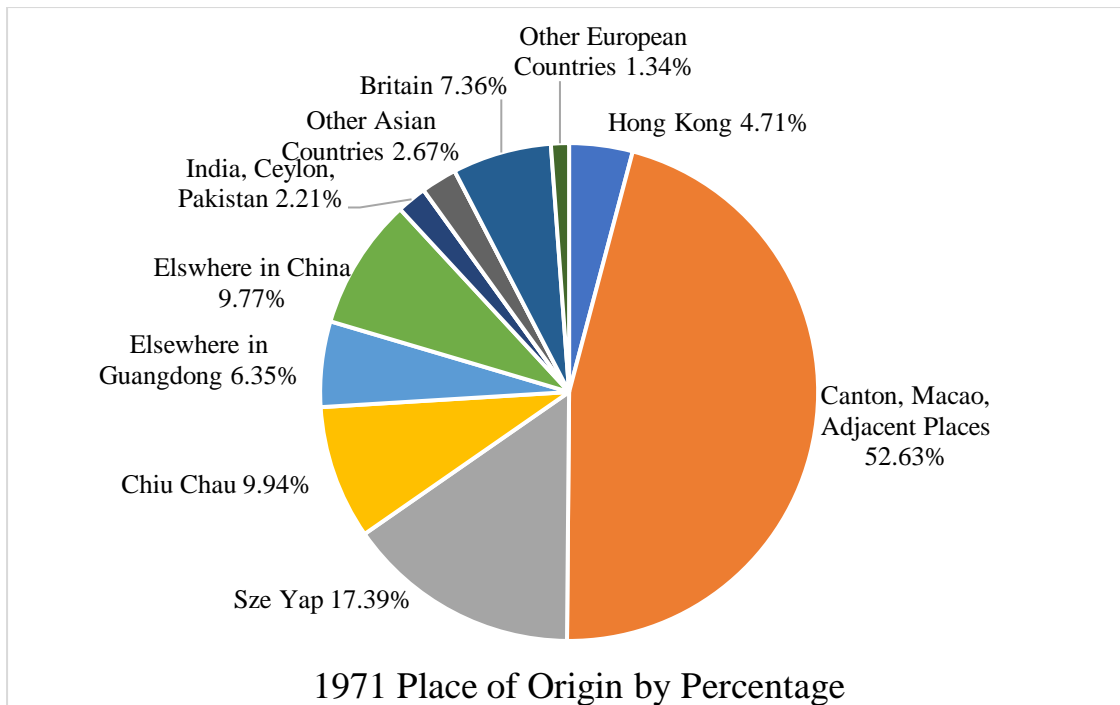


Figure 8. 1971 Place of Origin by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

As shown in Figures 9 and 10, the use of Cantonese among the population as a Usual Language increased from 81% in 1966 to 88.13% in 1971. Because of increased linguistic assimilation to the use of Cantonese among the population, in part due to education conducted in either English or Cantonese, the use of other Chinese varieties continued to decline in Hong Kong. The 1971 HKSAR Population Census shows a steady decline in the use of Fukien and Hakka as the Usual Language in Hong Kong, with 4.17% listing Fukien as their Usual Language and 2.65% Hakka as their Usual Language, compared with 8.05% and 3.32%, respectively, in 1966. ‘Other languages of China’, which includes Shanghainese, has decreased to 2.27% of the population. The 1971 Census also reports on the number of Deaf residents in Hong Kong; according to the Census, 0.13% of Hong Kong’s population in 1971 reported that they were Deaf.

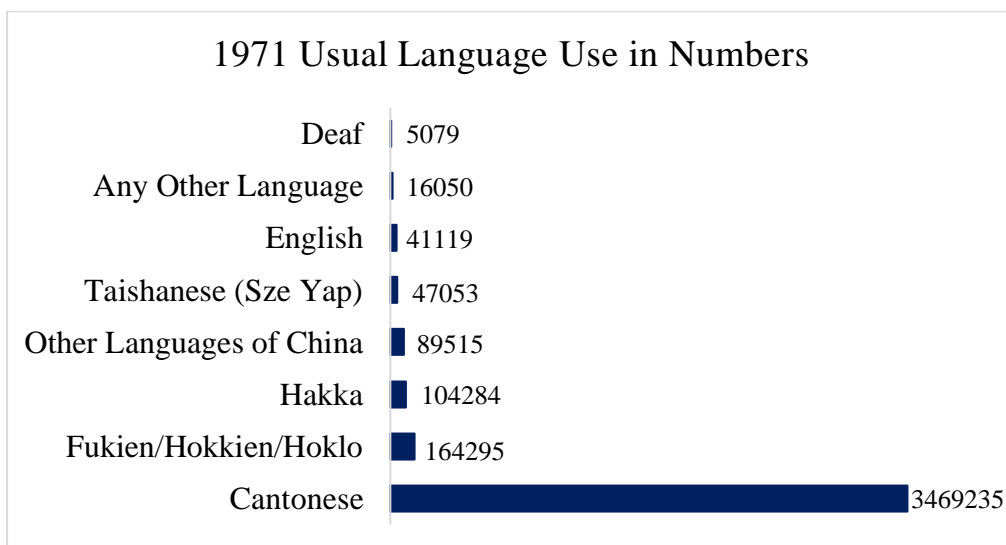


Figure 9. Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

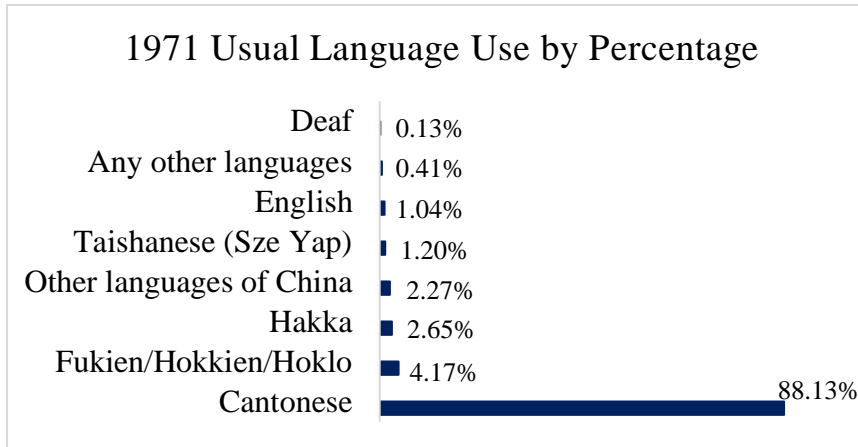


Figure 10. 1971 Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

In 1974, a grassroots Chinese Language movement results in the adoption of the Official Languages Ordinance, which proclaims English and Chinese to be the official languages of Hong Kong. While the Ordinance does not specify which Chinese language is ‘Chinese’, Cantonese is adopted as the de facto Chinese official language as it has the most widespread in Hong Kong. Traditional written Chinese is adopted as the written Chinese language; traditional written Chinese is also used in Macau and Taiwan. Simplified Written Chinese was developed as a simpler form of written Chinese in China in after the formation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 in order to increase literacy and is the standard writing system of mainland China.

By 1976, the total population of Hong Kong was 4,420,390, of which 4,343,790 were land based, 59,200 were labeled as boat people, and 17,400 were labeled as transients (people staying in Hong Kong for fewer than 20 days). The 1976 Census does not include information about Usual Language. The 1976 HKSAR Population Census does not report Place of Origin, but rather Place of Birth: As shown in Figures 11 and 12, by 1976, the vast majority of Hong Kong’s population states they were born in Hong Kong (58.90%) compared with mainland China (38.60%) or elsewhere (2.40%), indicating that many of Hong Kong’s residents are now 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants.

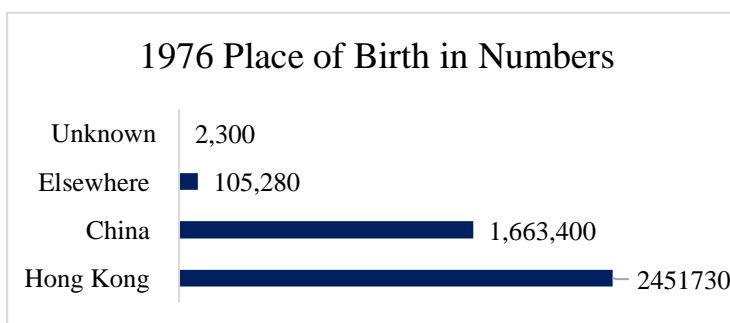


Figure 11. 1976 Place of Birth in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

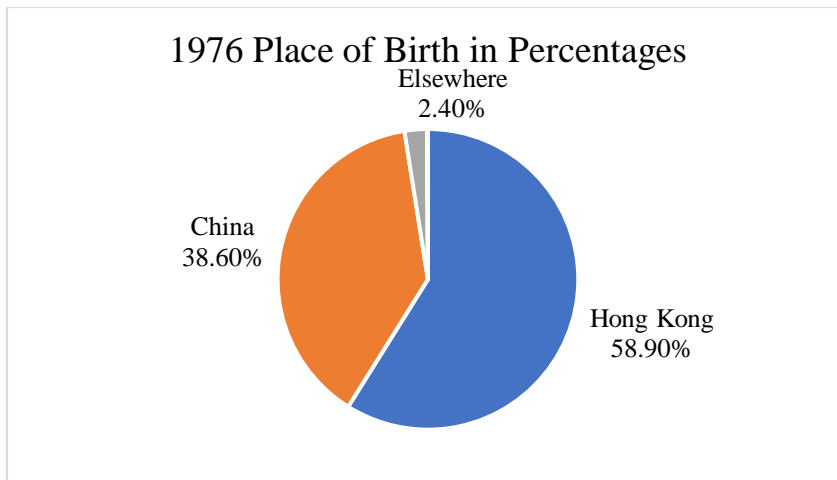


Figure 12. Place of Birth in Percentages (HKSAR Population Census)

In 1981, the total population of Hong Kong was 5,021,066, of which 4,986,560 were residents, 13,906 were transients, and 20,600 were Vietnamese refugees (boat people). No information is available on Usual Language in the 1981 Census reports. The 1981 HKSAR Population Census does report Place of Origin: As Figures 13 and 14 show, the Hong Kong population includes residents from various countries in Southeast Asia, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei, other Asian countries including Japan, as well as Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada, likely due in part to the transition of Hong Kong from a manufacturing center to an international financial center.

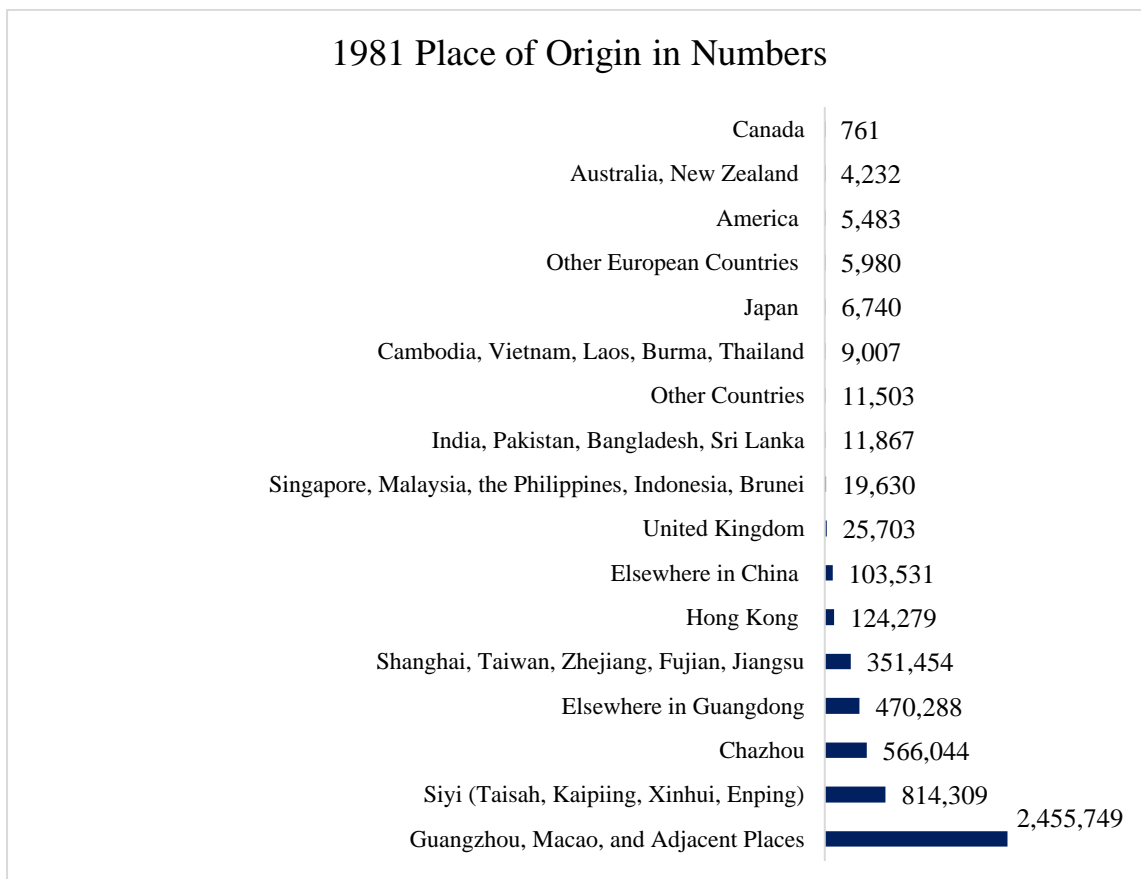


Figure 13. Place of Origin in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)



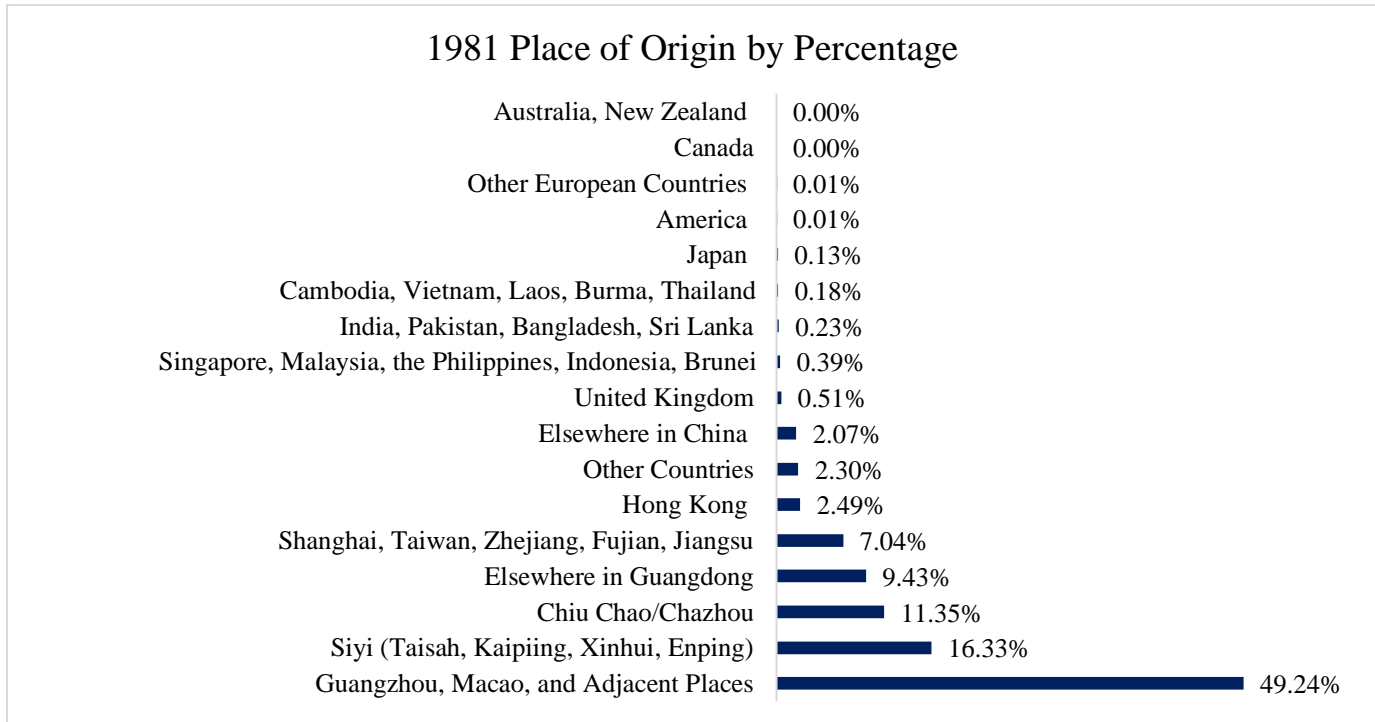


Figure 14. 1981 Place of Origin by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

In 1986, the population of Hong Kong was 5,431,200, comprising 5,396,000 residents, 26,100 transients, and 9,100 refugees. There was no information available on Usual Language or Nationality or Place of Origin in the 1986 Census reports.

In 1991, the population of Hong Kong had reached 5,609,951, including 5,522,281 residents, 35,823 transients, and 51,847 Vietnamese migrants. As shown in Figures 15 and 16, this includes an increasing number of Filipino and Indonesian residents, in part due to the Hong Kong Domestic Helpers scheme, as well as other Asian nationalities, including Thai, Japanese, Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan residents. There are also many Portuguese residents, due to the proximity of Hong Kong to Macao, which is still a Portuguese colony in 1991. Hong Kong also has several thousand American and Canadian residents. The Census also reports that 59.60% of Hong Kong's residents are British nationals with right of abode only in Hong Kong and an additional 1.20% British nationals with right of abode outside of Hong Kong.

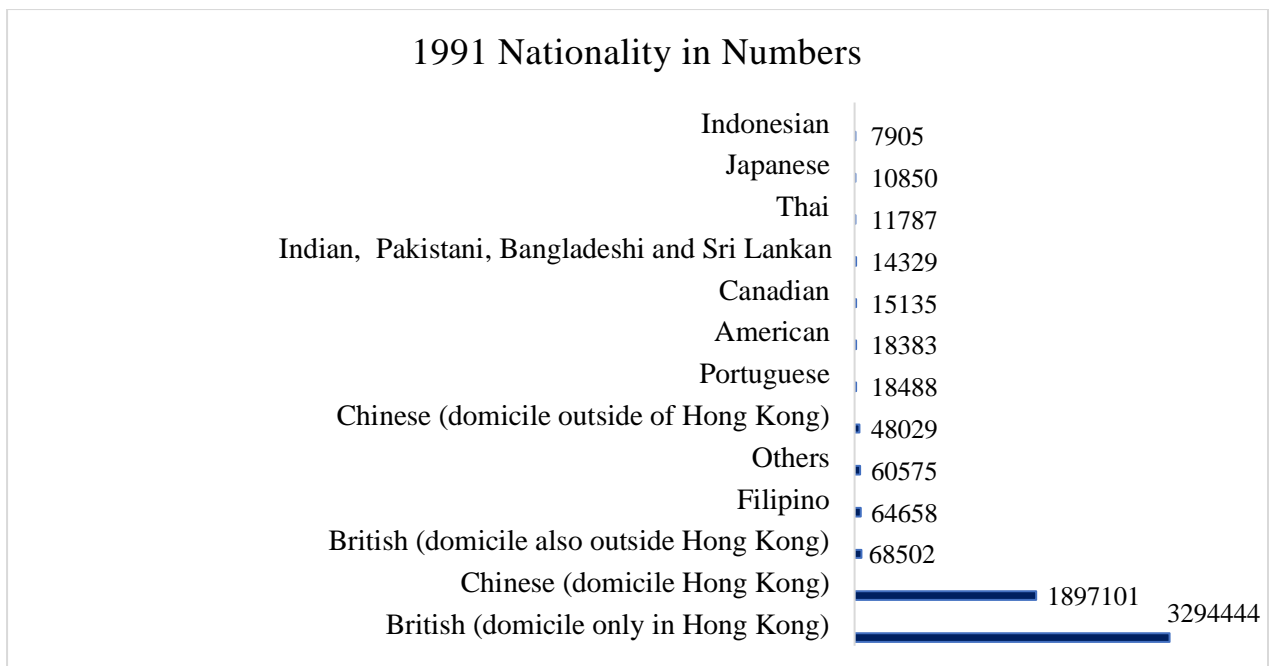


Figure 15. 1991 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

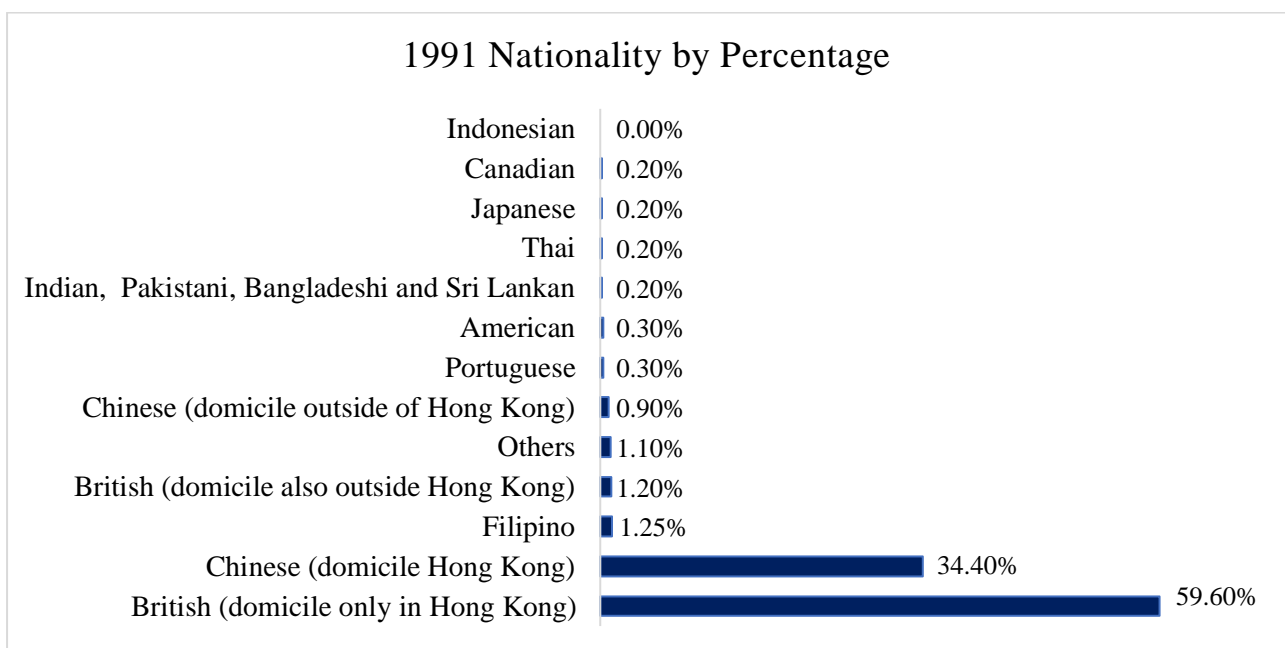


Figure 16. 1991 Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

As shown in Figures 17 and 18 and Table 2, by 1991, 95.8% of Hong Kong's population can speak Cantonese either as a Usual (88.7%) or Another Language/Dialect (7.1%), due in part to education. English, a compulsory school subject as well as an important language in Hong Kong's role as a financial center, is also increasing in use in Hong Kong, with 31.6% of Hong Kong's population using English either as a usual language (2.2%) or another (29.4%) language. Putonghua, the national language of China, is also gaining wider usage in Hong Kong, with 18.1% of the population using Putonghua either as a Usual (1.1%) or Another Language/Dialect (17%). Putonghua was introduced into education system of Hong Kong as an elective in 1984, in preparation for the handover in 1997. Use of Hong Kong's indigenous languages, including Hakka, as well as other Chinese varieties, continues to decline, with

only 1.6% of the population using Hakka, 0.7% using Shanghainese, and 1.9% using Fukien/Hokkien as their Usual Language. The use of Filipino, largely through trade and the domestic helper scheme in the 1970s, has increased, as has the use of Japanese, primarily due to banking and trade.

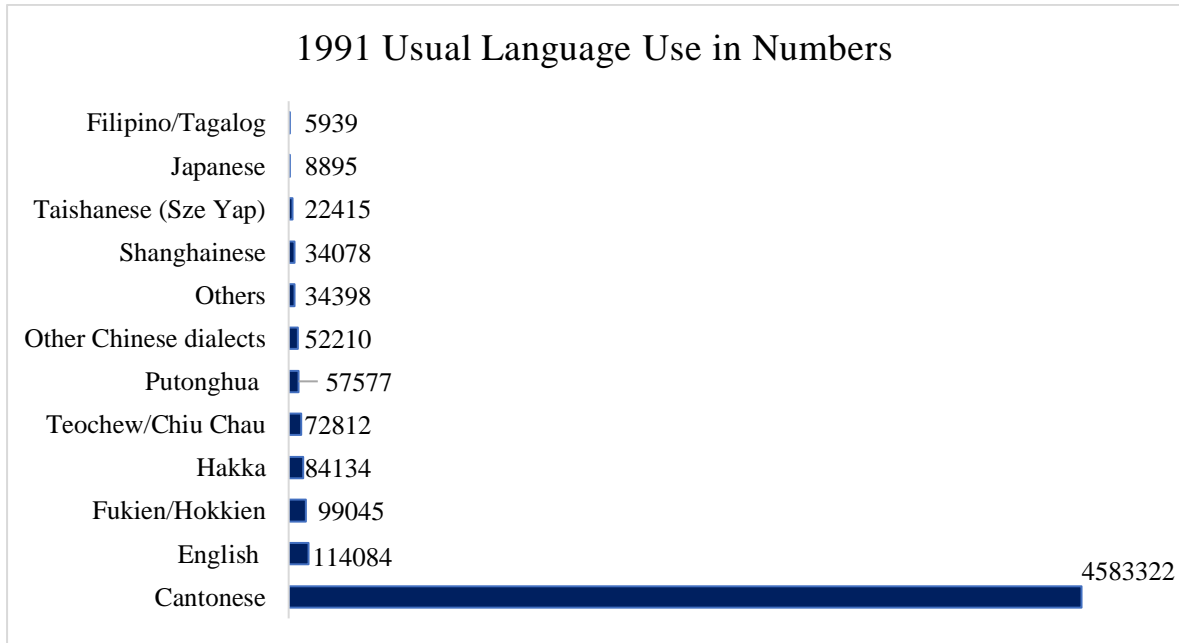


Figure 17. 1991 Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

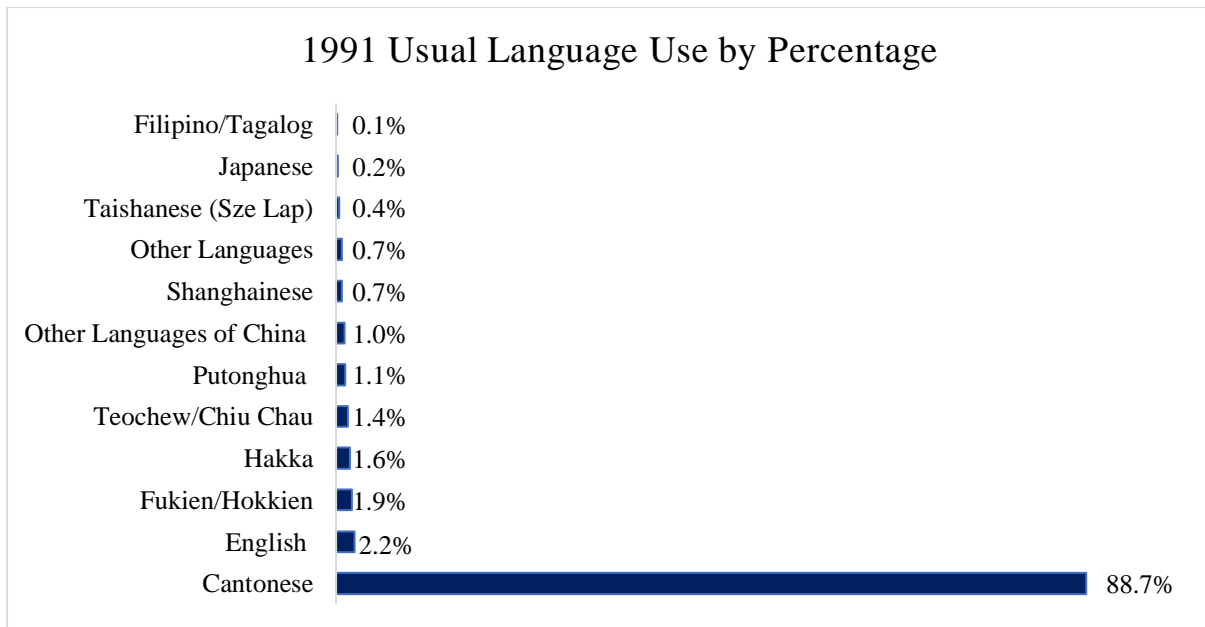


Figure 18. Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 2. 1991 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 1991	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
Cantonese	88.7%	7.1%	95.8%
English	2.2%	29.4%	31.6%
Putonghua	1.1%	17%	18.1%
Teochew/Chiu Chau	1.4%	4.0%	5.4%
Hakka	1.6%	3.7%	5.3%
Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo	1.9%	1.7%	3.6%
Sze Yap (Taishanese), Si yi	0.4%	1.5%	1.9%
Shanghainese	0.7%	1.1%	1.8%
Filipino	0.1%	1.0%	1.1%
Japanese	0.2%	0.8%	1.0%

In 1996, the Hong Kong population was 6,121,217, comprising 6,016,974 residents, 83,093 transients, and 21,150 Vietnamese migrants. 1996 was the eve of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule; as shown in Figures 19 and 20, in 1996, 59.20% of Hong Kong's population had British nationality with right of abode only in Hong Kong. A further 2.80% had British nationality with right of abode outside of Hong Kong. Hong Kong continued to register a wide range of nationalities of residents, including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan, Japanese, Australian, Portuguese, American, and Canadian.

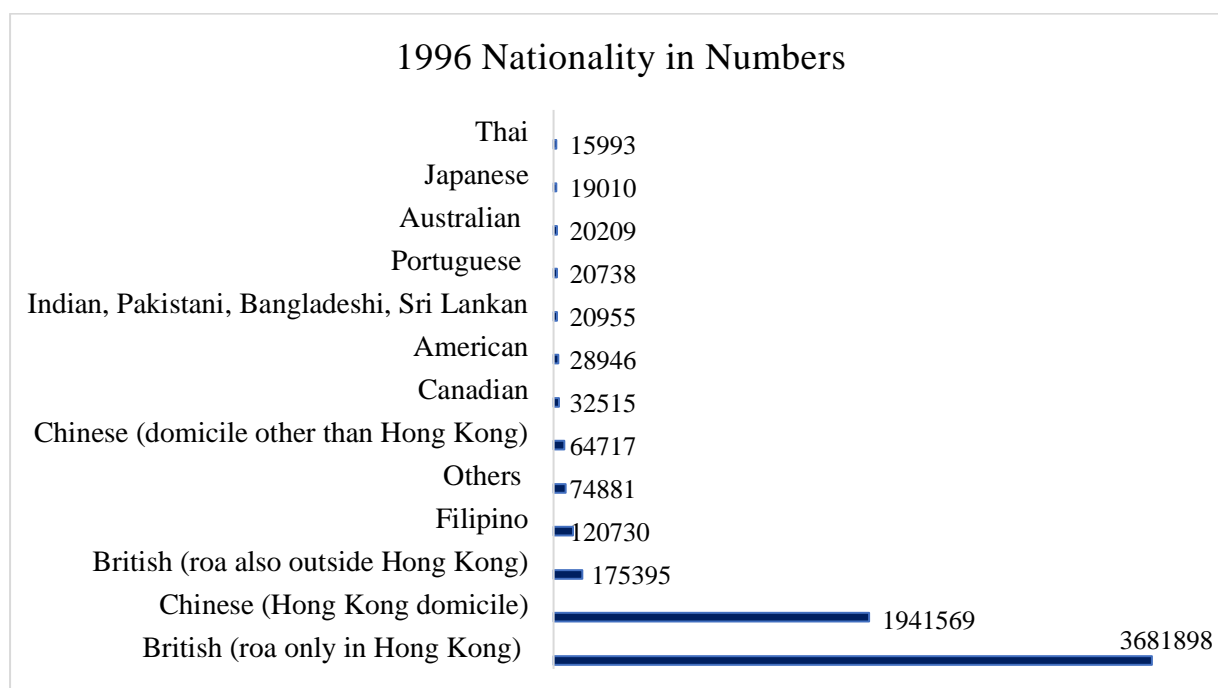


Figure 19. 1996 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

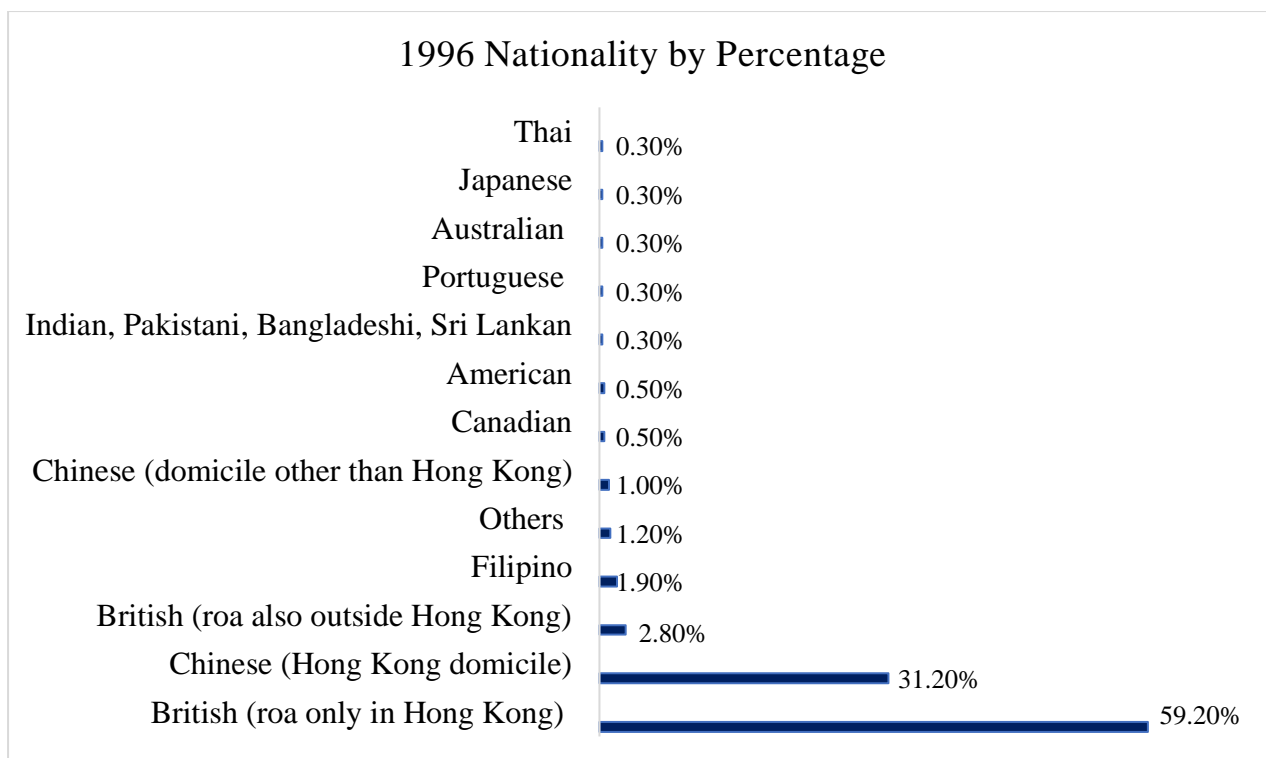


Figure 20. 1996 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census).

As shown in Figures 21 and 22 and Table 3, in 1996, the number of Hong Kong residents who can speak Cantonese as their Usual Language remains at 88.7%, with a further 6.6% speaking Cantonese as Another Language/Dialect. Use of English continues to increase, likely due to its status in the education and financial sectors in Hong Kong, with 38.15% of Hong Kong's population using English as a Usual or Another Language. Ability to use Putonghua also increases, as Putonghua has been introduced into the education system of Hong Kong in 1984 as an elective in preparation of the handover of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997. Putonghua is the national language of the People's Republic of China and becomes a compulsory subject in Hong Kong in 1998. It also attains official language status in Hong Kong in 1997, when Hong Kong adopts a policy of spoken trilingualism (Cantonese/English/Putonghua) and written bilingualism (English/traditional written Chinese).

Use of Hong Kong's indigenous languages as well as other Chinese varieties continues to decline, with only 1.2% of Hong Kong's population using Hakka as a Usual Language (compared with 4.94% in 1961); 1.9% for Fukien/Hokkien (compared with 6.33% in 1961), and 1.1% using Teochew, compared with 1.4% in 1991.

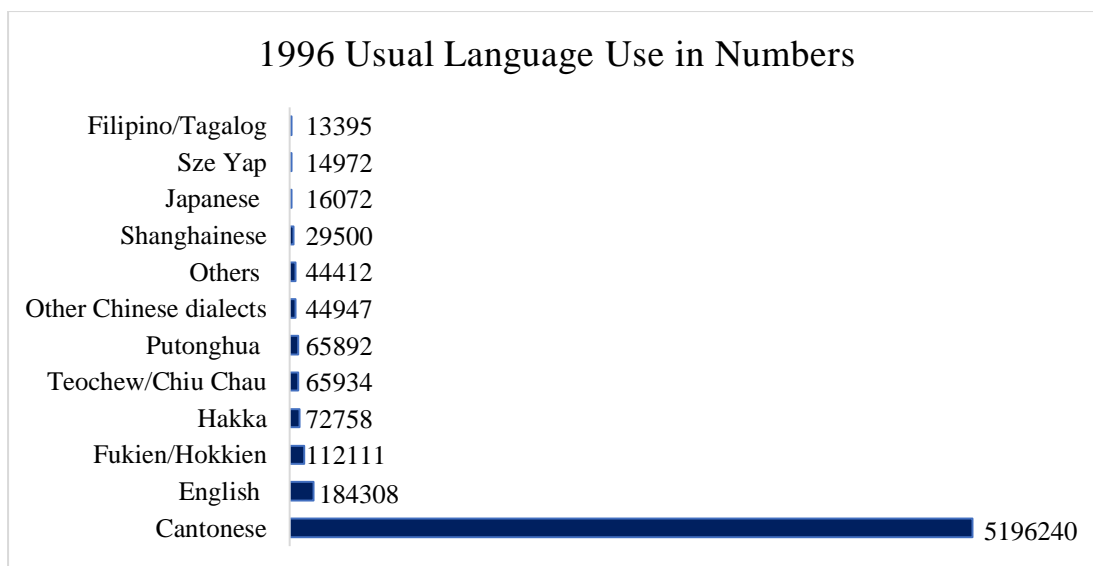


Figure 21. Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

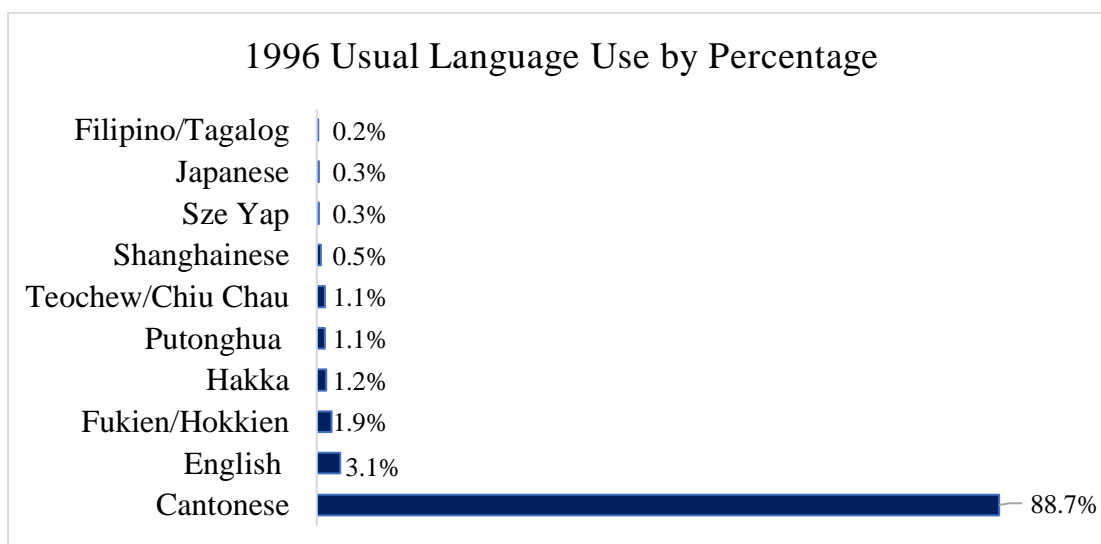


Figure 22. Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 3. 1996 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 1996	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
<b>Cantonese</b>	88.7%	6.6%	95.2%
<b>English</b>	3.1%	34.9%	38.15%
<b>Putonghua</b>	1.1%	24.2%	25.3%
<b>Teochew/Chiu Chau</b>	1.1%	3.9%	5.0%
<b>Hakka</b>	1.2%	3.6%	4.9%
<b>Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo</b>	1.9%	2.0%	3.9%
<b>Sze Yap</b>	0.3%	1.2%	1.4%
<b>Shanghainese</b>	0.5%	1.1%	1.6%
<b>Filipino</b>	0.2%	1.6%	1.8%
<b>Japanese</b>	0.3%	1.0%	1.2%

In 2001, the Hong Kong population was 6,708,389. As shown in Figures 23 and 24, Hong Kong's demographic profile is increasingly diverse, with Australian, New Zealand, and Nepalese nationals along with other Asian and North American nationals. This was the first Census after the 1997 handover of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule; as the Figures show, the number of British nationals in Hong Kong reflects this change of sovereignty, as only 25,418 residents reported British nationality.

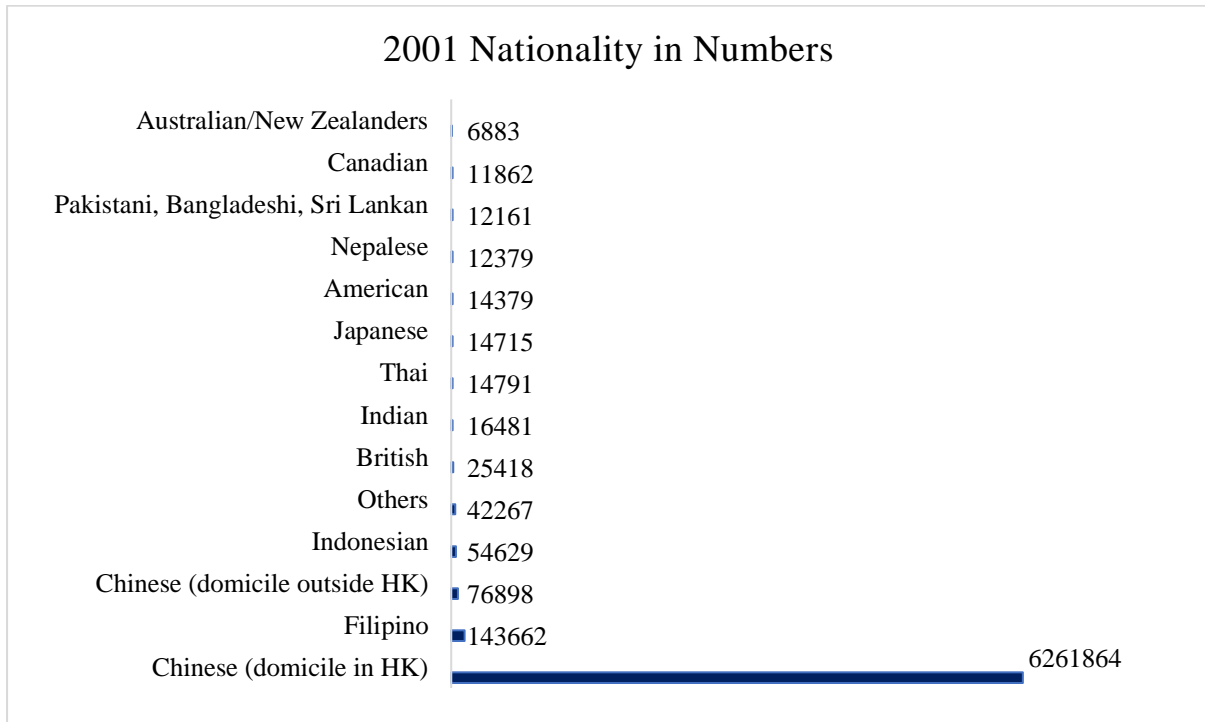


Figure 23. 2001 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

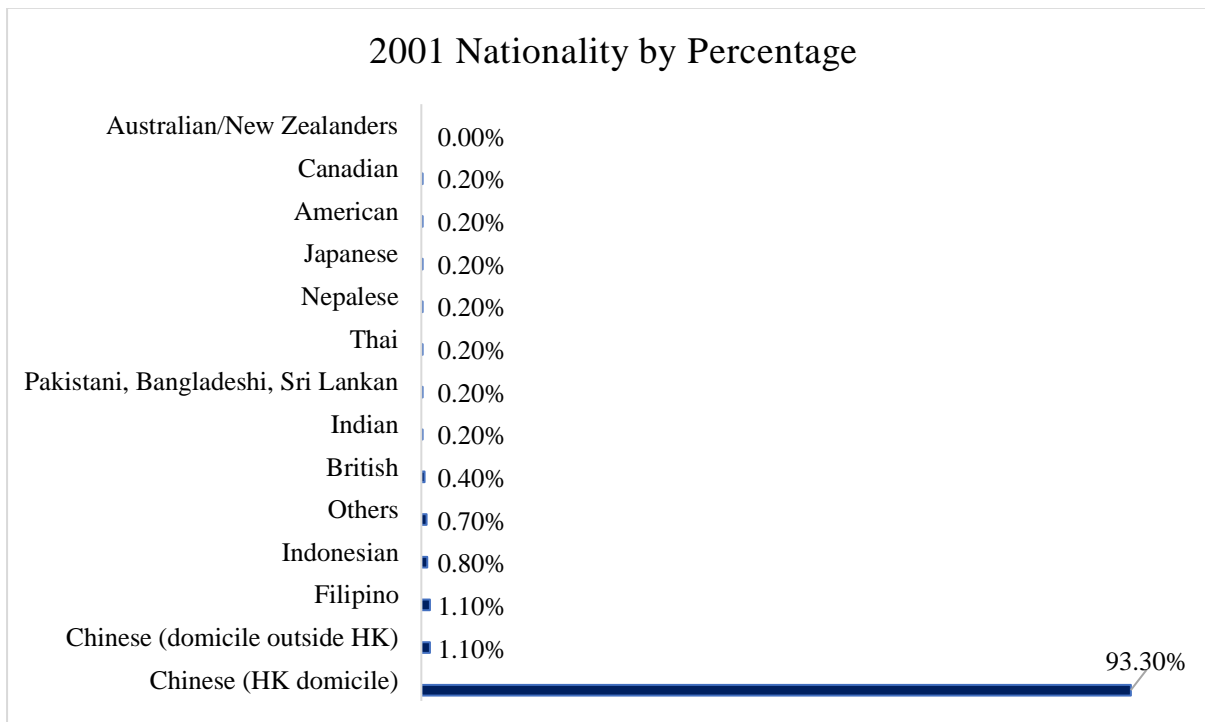


Figure 24. Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

The 2001 Census also reports on Hong Kong's ethnic minorities, defined as residents of non-Chinese ethnicity. As Table 4 shows, ethnic minorities comprise 5.12% of Hong Kong's population in 2001; the majority of these are of Filipino and Indonesian ethnicity, due to trade and the domestic helper scheme. Hong Kong has also historically been home to many Indians, Pakistanis, Thais, and Japanese. There is also a growing number of Korean nationals in Hong Kong, due to banking and trade. The Census also reports on Nepalese residents, many of whom were brought to Hong Kong to serve as Gurkhas in the British Army and have been granted the right of abode in Hong Kong after 1997.

**Table 4. 2001 Report on Ethnic Minorities**

<b>Ethnic Minorities 2001</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of ethnic minorities</b>
<b>Filipino</b>	142,556	41.4%
<b>Indonesian</b>	50,494	14.7%
<b>Indian</b>	18,543	5.4%
<b>Nepalese</b>	12,564	3.7%
<b>Pakistani</b>	11,017	3.2%
<b>Other Asian</b>	7,572	2.2%
<b>Thai</b>	14,342	4.2%
<b>Japanese</b>	14,180	4.1%
<b>Korean</b>	5,263	1.5%
<b>White</b>	46,584	13.5%
<b>Others</b>	1,394	0.4%
<b>Mixed with Chinese parent</b>	16,587	4.8%
<b>Other mixed</b>	2,854	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	343,950 of total population	5.12% of total population
<b>Total Chinese ethnicity</b>	6,364,439	94.88% of total population

As shown in Figures 25 and 26, and Table 5, the use of Cantonese has remained relatively stable across the population from 1996, with 89.2% using Cantonese as their Usual Language and 6.8% as Another Language. The use of English has continued to rise, with 43% of the population using it as a Usual/Another Language. The use of Putonghua has also increased, with 34.1% of the population using Putonghua as a Usual/Another Language. The use of Hong Kong's indigenous languages, as well as other Chinese varieties, continues to decline: Use of Teochew as a Usual/Another Language has decreased from 5.4% in 1991 to 4.8% in 1996; Shanghainese from 1.8% in 1991 to 1.5% in 1996; and Hakka from 5.3% in 1996 to 5.1% in 1996. In contrast, due to higher numbers of residents from Indonesia, The Philippines, and Japan, the use of Filipino, Indonesian, and Japanese has increased in Hong Kong, to 1.4% of the population for Japanese and Indonesian and 1.9% for Filipino.



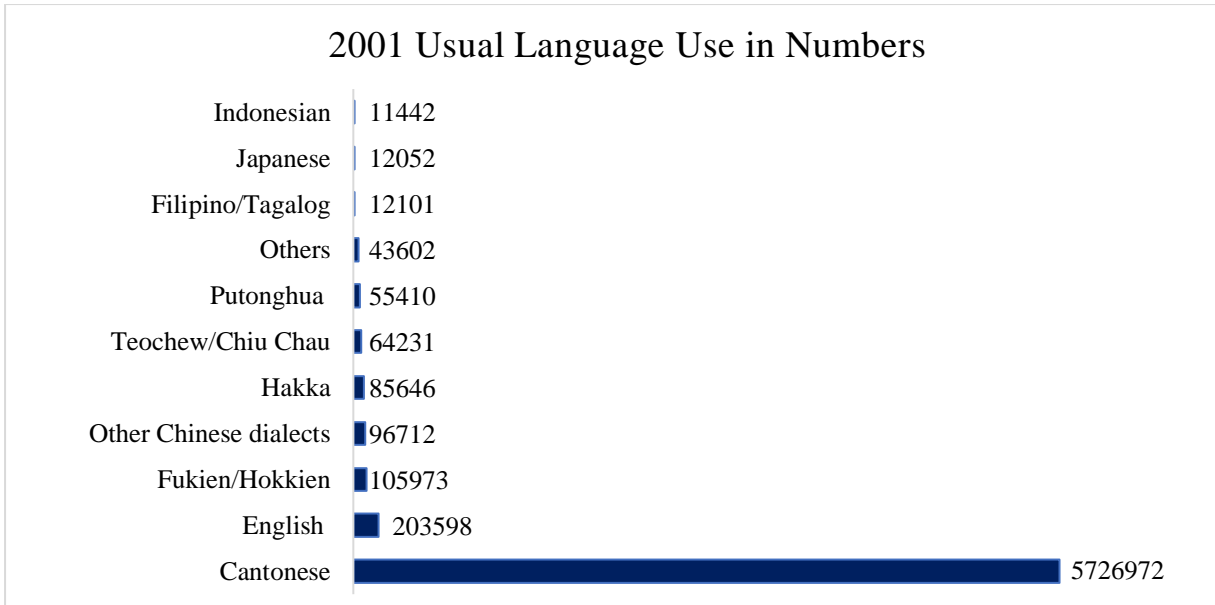


Figure 25. Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

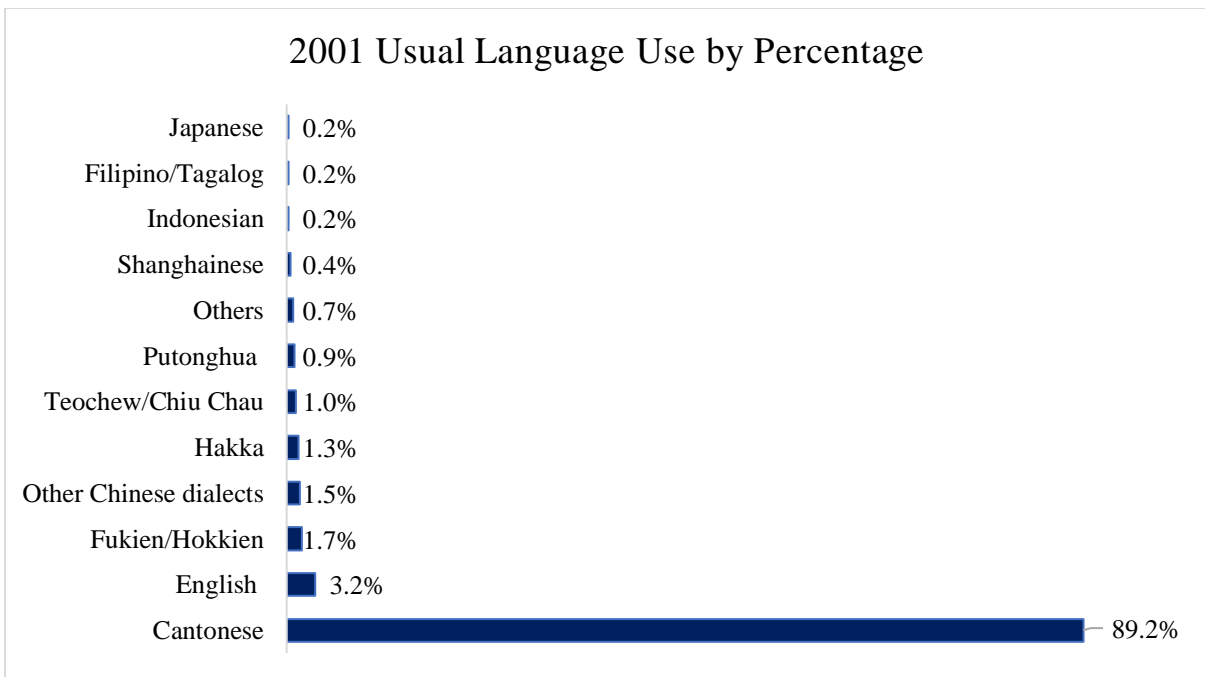


Figure 26. Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 5. 2001 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 2001	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
Cantonese	89.2%	6.8%	96.1%
English	3.2%	39.8%	43.0%
Putonghua	0.9%	25.3%	34.1%
Teochew/Chiu Chau	1.0%	3.8%	4.8%
Hakka	1.3%	3.8%	5.1%
Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo	1.7%	2.3%	3.9%
Shanghainese	0.4%	1.1%	1.5%
Filipino	0.2%	1.7%	1.9%
Japanese	0.2%	1.2%	1.4%
Indonesian	0.2%	1.2%	1.4%

In 2006, the Hong Kong population was 6,864,346; as Figures 27 and 28 show, 92.90% of this population of Chinese nationality with Hong Kong domicile; 1.7% are Filipino and 1.6% are Indonesian nationals. Other nationalities registered in the census include: British, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, American, Canadian, Thai, and Japanese.

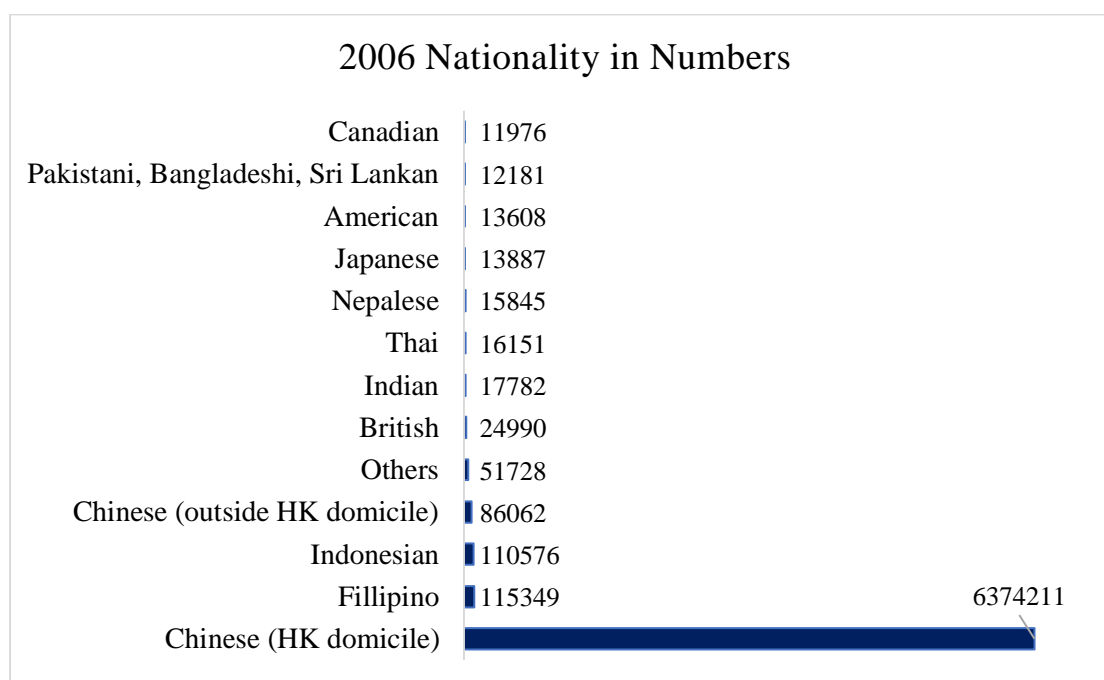


Figure 27. 2006 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

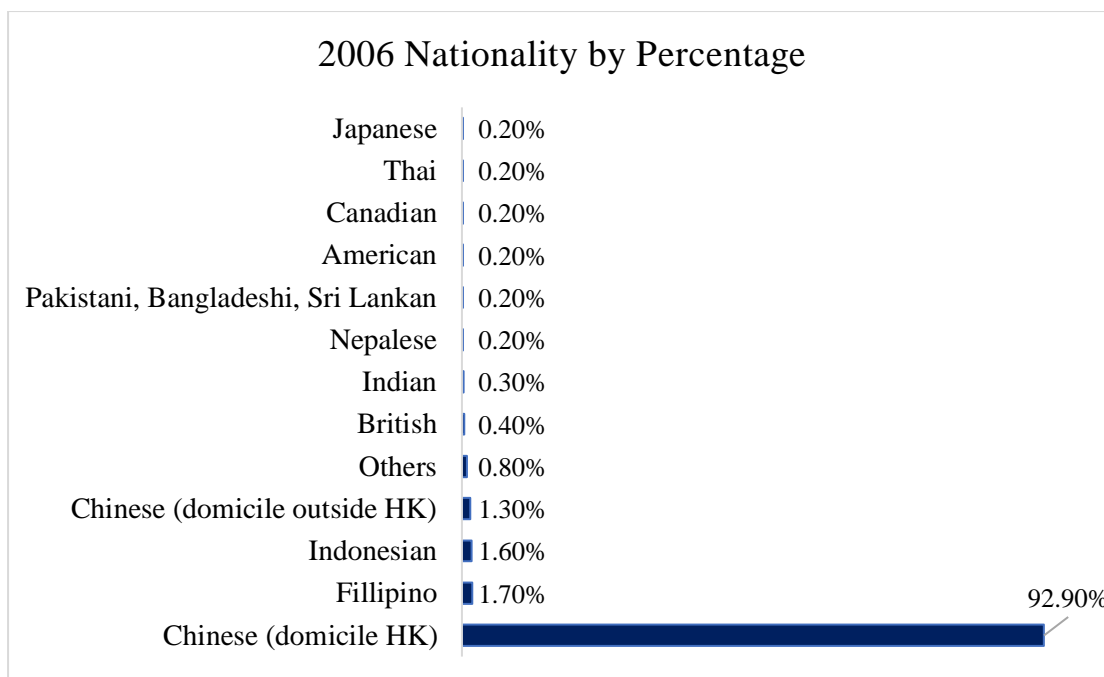


Figure 28. 2006 Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

As shown in Table 6, the 2006 report on ethnic minorities in Hong Kong indicates that 4.98% of Hong Kong's population were of a non-Chinese ethnicity; of these, the largest ethnic minority group was Filipino, followed by White, which likely included Australian, American, and British residents.

**Table 6. 2006 Report on Ethnic Minorities**

<b>Ethnic Minorities 2006</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of ethnic minorities</b>
<b>Filipino</b>	112,453	32.9%
<b>Indonesian</b>	87,840	25.7%
<b>Indian</b>	20,444	6.0%
<b>Nepalese</b>	15,590	4.7%
<b>Pakistani</b>	11,111	3.2%
<b>Thai</b>	11,900	3.5%
<b>Japanese</b>	13,189	3.9%
<b>Korean</b>	4,812	1.4%
<b>Other Asian</b>	7,851	2.3%
<b>White</b>	36,384	10.6%
<b>Others</b>	2,172	0.6%
<b>Mixed with Chinese parent</b>	14,932	4.4%
<b>Other mixed</b>	3,160	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	342,198 of total population	4.98% of total population
<b>Total Chinese ethnicity</b>	6,522,148	95% of total population

As shown in Figures 29 and 30 and Table 7, by 2007, 96.5% of Hong Kong's population speaks Cantonese as a Usual/Another Language, while 44.7% speak English and 40.2% Putonghua. There is a further decrease in the use of Hong Kong's indigenous languages and other varieties of Chinese: Only 3.9% use Teochew, a decrease from 4.8% in 2001. Use of

Hakka has decreased from 5.1% in 2001 to 4.7% in 2006; Fukien/Hokkien from 3.9% in 2001 to 3.4% in 2006; and Shanghainese from 1.5% in 2001 to 1.2% in 2006.

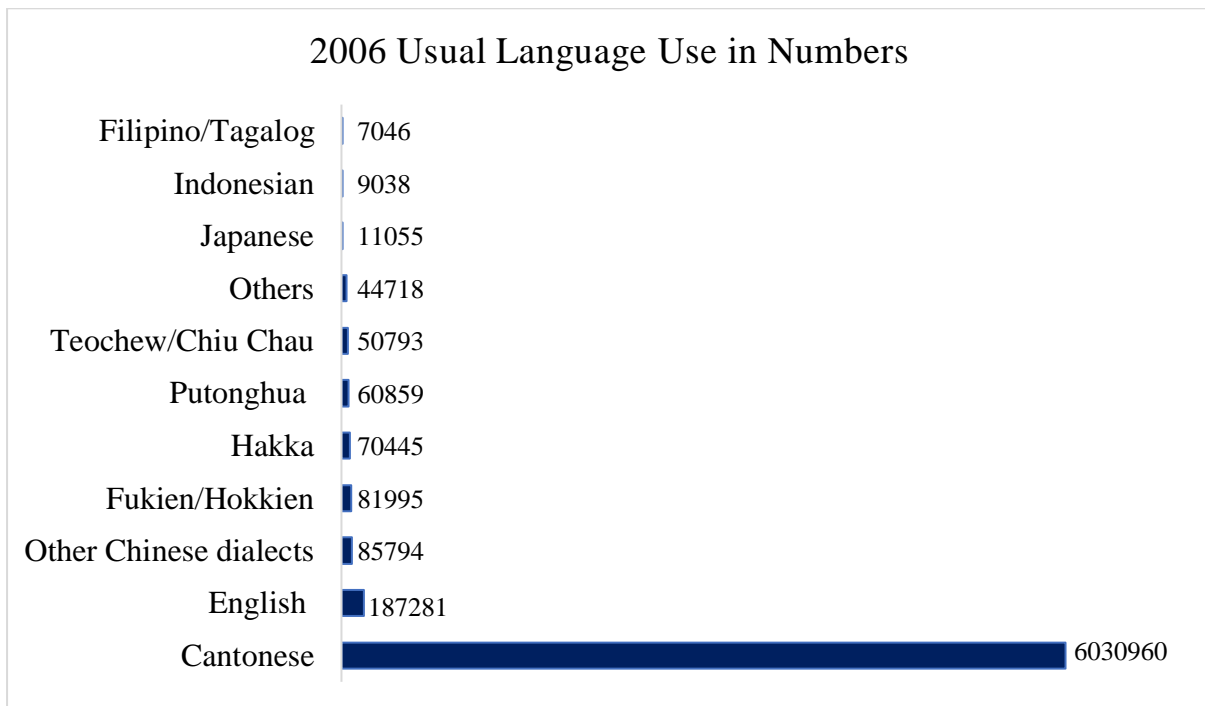


Figure 29. Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

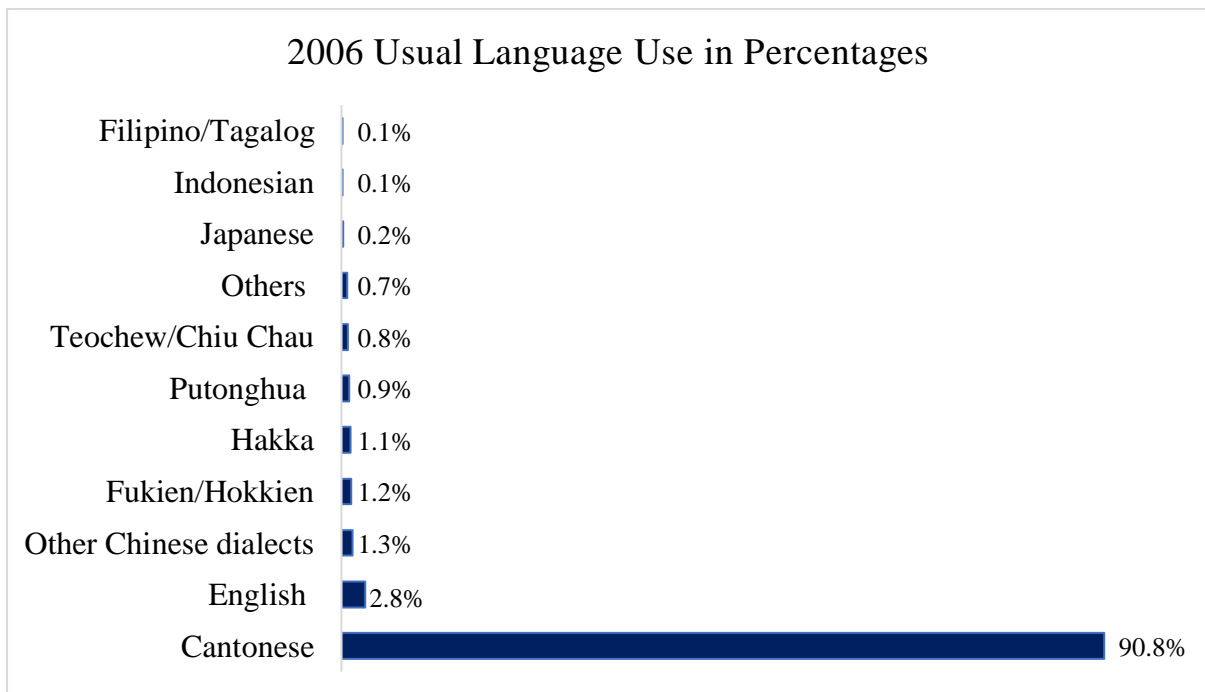


Figure 30. Usual Language Use in Percentages (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 7. 2006 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 2006	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
Cantonese	90.8%	5.7%	96.5%
English	2.8%	41.9%	44.7%
Putonghua	0.9%	39.2%	40.2%
Teochew/Chiu Chau	0.8%	3.2%	3.9%
Hakka	1.1%	3.6%	4.7%
Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo	1.2%	2.1%	3.4%
Shanghainese	0.3%	0.9%	1.2%
Filipino	0.1%	1.3%	1.4%
Japanese	0.2%	1.1%	1.2%
Indonesian	0.1%	1.5%	1.7%

A 2007 HKSAR Special Census reports states that 92,200 Hong Kong residents, 1.33% of the population, report hearing difficulty and 28,400, or 0.41% of the population, report speaking difficulty.

In 2011, the population of Hong Kong was 7,071,576. The percentage by nationality remains relatively the same from the demographics presented in the 2006 census report, as shown in Figures 31 and 32.

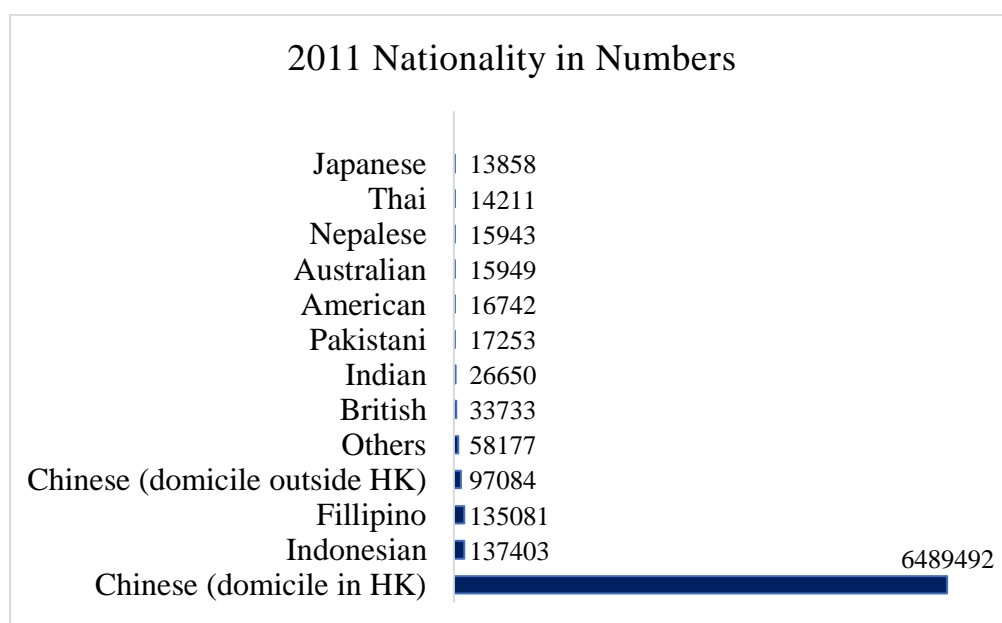


Figure 31. 2011 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

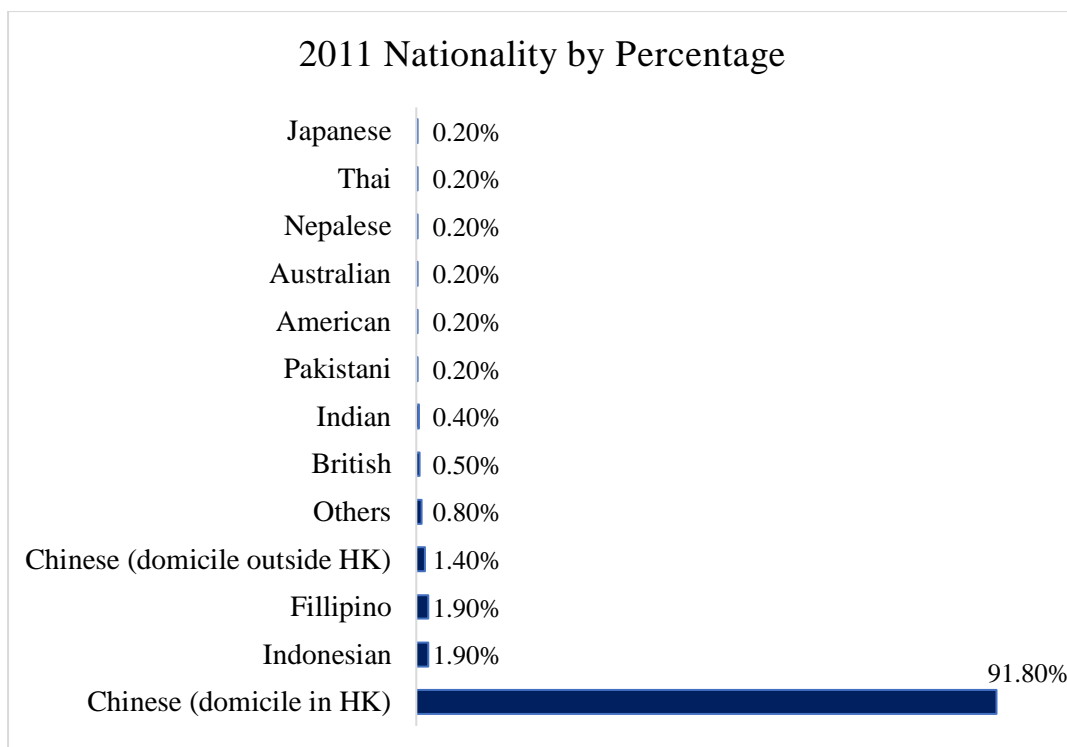


Figure 32. 2011 Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

Table 8 shows the 2011 Report on Ethnic Minorities; the highest percentage of the ethnic minority population in Hong Kong remains Filipino and Indonesian nationals, followed by White and Indian.

**Table 8. 2011 Report on Ethnic Minorities**

<b>Ethnicity 2011</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	6,620,393	93.6%
<b>Filipino</b>	133,018	1.9%
<b>Indonesian</b>	133,377	1.9%
<b>Indian</b>	28,616	0.4%
<b>Nepalese</b>	16,518	0.2%
<b>Pakistani</b>	18,042	0.3%
<b>Other South Asian</b>	2,345	0.0%
<b>Thai</b>	11,213	0.2%
<b>Japanese</b>	12,580	0.2%
<b>Korean</b>	5,209	0.1%
<b>Other Asian</b>	4,693	0.1%
<b>White</b>	55,236	0.8%
<b>Others</b>	30,336	0.4%

As shown in Figures 33 and 34, and Table 9, in the 2011 the use of Cantonese across the population continues to remain stable. The use of both English and Putonghua, both compulsory subjects in Hong Kong's education system and important in Hong Kong's role as a key financial center, continue to rise; by 2011, 46.1% of Hong Kong's population use English as a Usual/Another Language while 47.8% use Putonghua. Use of Teochew has further decreased to 3.8%, Fukien/Hokkien to 3.5%, and Shanghainese to 1.2% of the population. The increasing number of Indonesian nationals in Hong Kong has increased the

use of Indonesian in Hong Kong, with 2.4% of the population of Hong Kong using Indonesian as a Usual/Another Language, an increase from 1.7% in 2006.

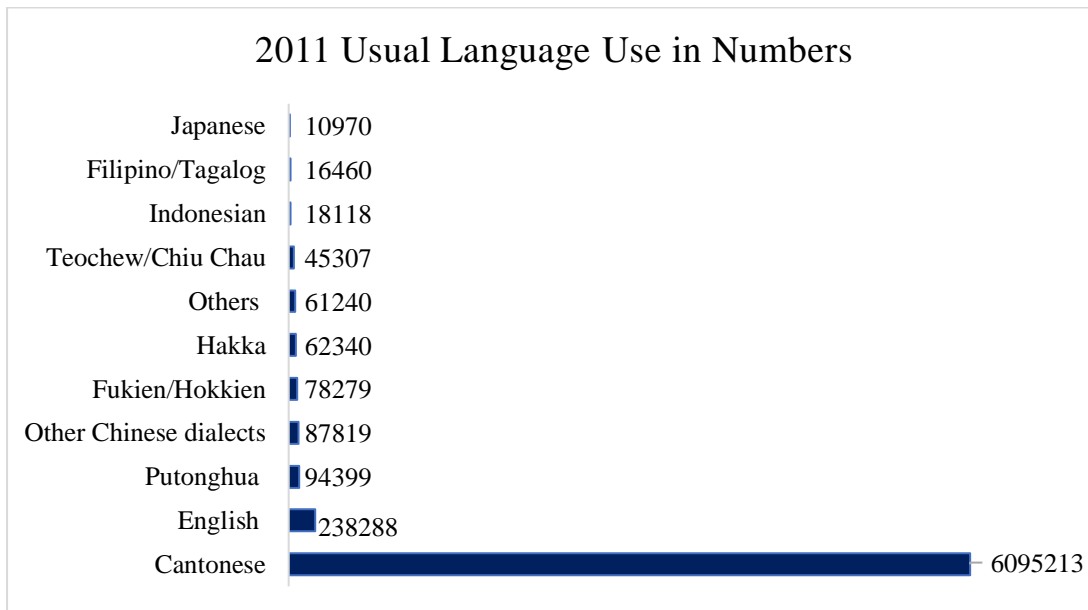


Figure 33. 2011 Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

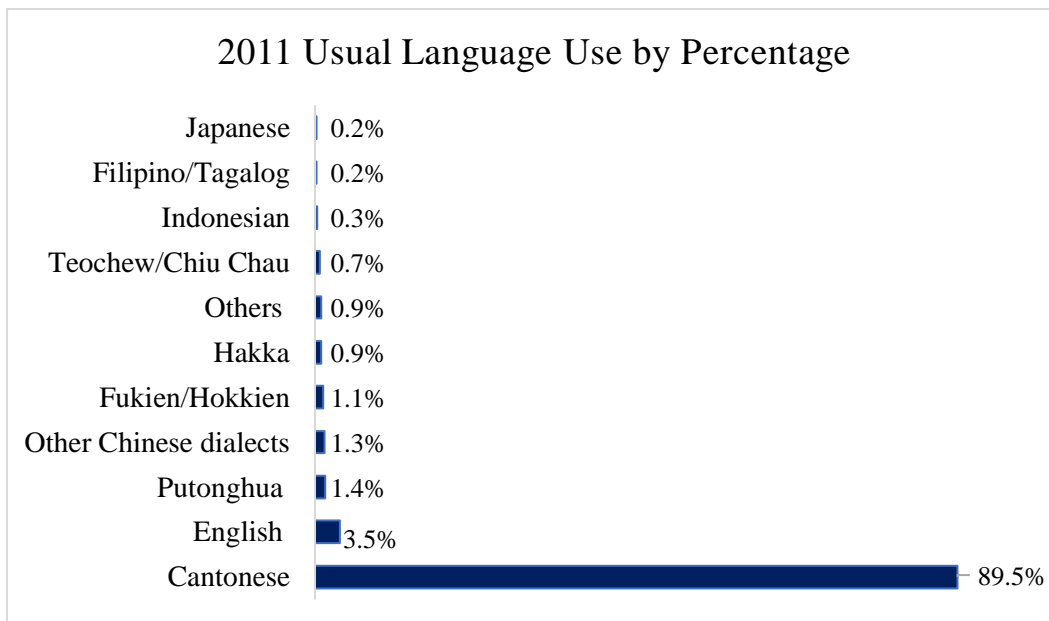


Figure 34. 2011 Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 9. 2011 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 2011	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
Cantonese	89.5%	6.3%	95.8%
English	3.5%	42.6%	46.1%
Putonghua	1.4%	46.5%	47.8%
Teochew/Chiu Chau	0.7%	3.1%	3.8%
Hakka	0.9%	3.8%	4.7%
Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo	1.1%	2.3%	3.5%
Shanghainese	0.3%	0.9%	1.1%
Filipino	0.2%	1.4%	1.7%
Japanese	0.2%	1.4%	1.5%
Indonesian	0.3%	2.2%	2.4%

A 2013 Special Census Report found that 174,800 Hong Kong residents, or 2.16% of the population, reported hearing difficulties while 49,300 residents, or 0.69% of the population, reported speaking difficulties.

In 2016, the population of Hong Kong was 7,336,585. As shown in Figures 35 and 36, the nationality of the population of Hong Kong is relatively stable from 2011 and 2006. The number of Filipino and Indonesian nationals in Hong Kong has increased from 2011.

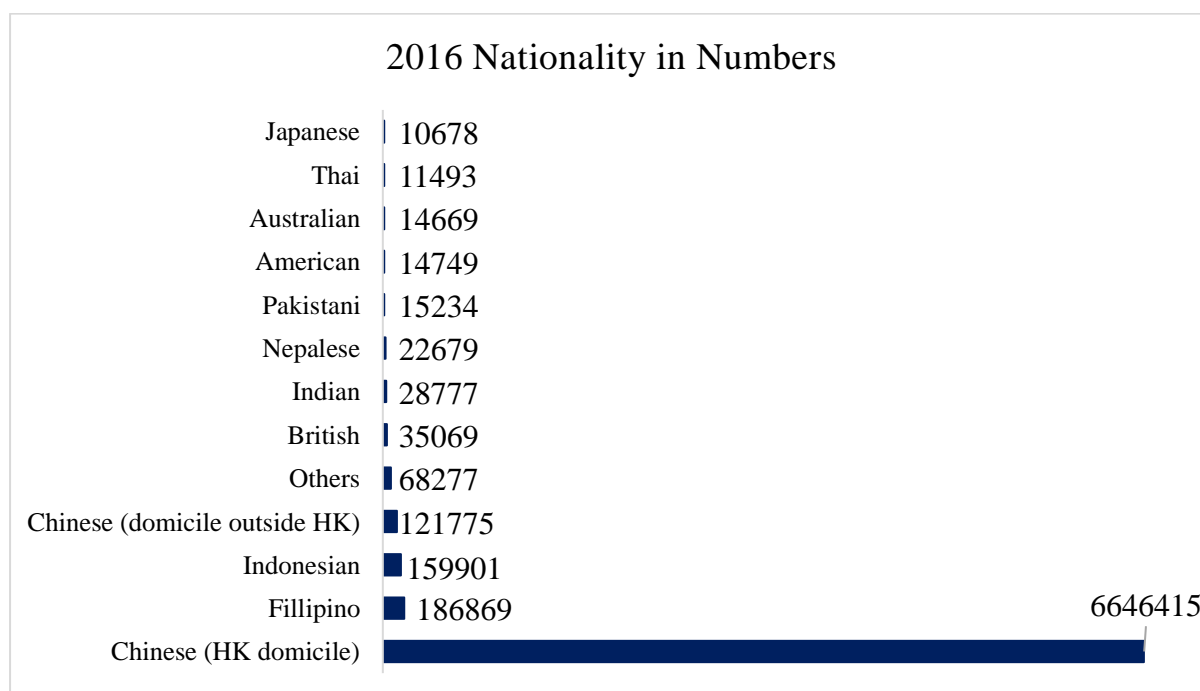


Figure 35. 2016 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)



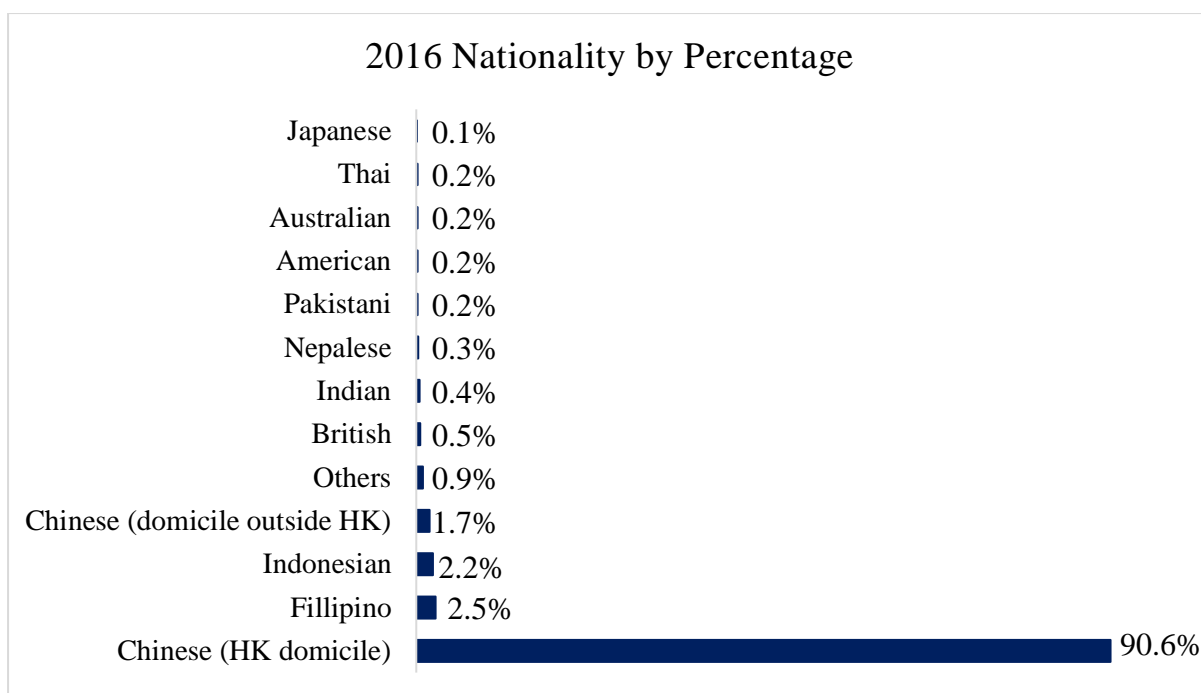


Figure 36. 2016 Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

As shown in Table 10, the 2016 Report on Ethnic Minorities shows that the highest percentage of the ethnic minority population in Hong Kong continues to be Filipinos and Indonesians.

**Table 10. 2016 Report on Ethnic Minorities**

<b>Ethnicity 2016</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	6,752,202	92.0%
<b>Filipino</b>	184,081	2.5%
<b>Indonesian</b>	153,299	2.1%
<b>Indian</b>	36,462	0.5%
<b>Nepalese</b>	25,472	0.3%
<b>Pakistani</b>	18,094	0.2%
<b>Other South Asian</b>	4,847	0.1%
<b>Thai</b>	10,215	0.1%
<b>Japanese</b>	9,976	0.1%
<b>Korean</b>	6,309	0.1%
<b>Other Asian</b>	8,433	0.1%
<b>White</b>	58,209	0.8%
<b>Others</b>	68,986	0.9%

As shown in Figures 37 and 38, and Table 11, use of Cantonese as a Usual/Another Language remains stable in Hong Kong. Use of English and Putonghua continue to increase, to 53.2% (English) and 48.6% (Putonghua). The use of Hong Kong's indigenous language and other Chinese varieties continues to decline, with only 0.6% of the population using Hakka, 0.5% Teochew, 1.0% Fukien/Hokkien, and 0.2% Shanghainese as their Usual Language, compared with 0.9% (Hakka), 0.7% (Teochew), 1.1% (Fukien/Hokkien) and 0.3% (Shanghainese) in 2011.

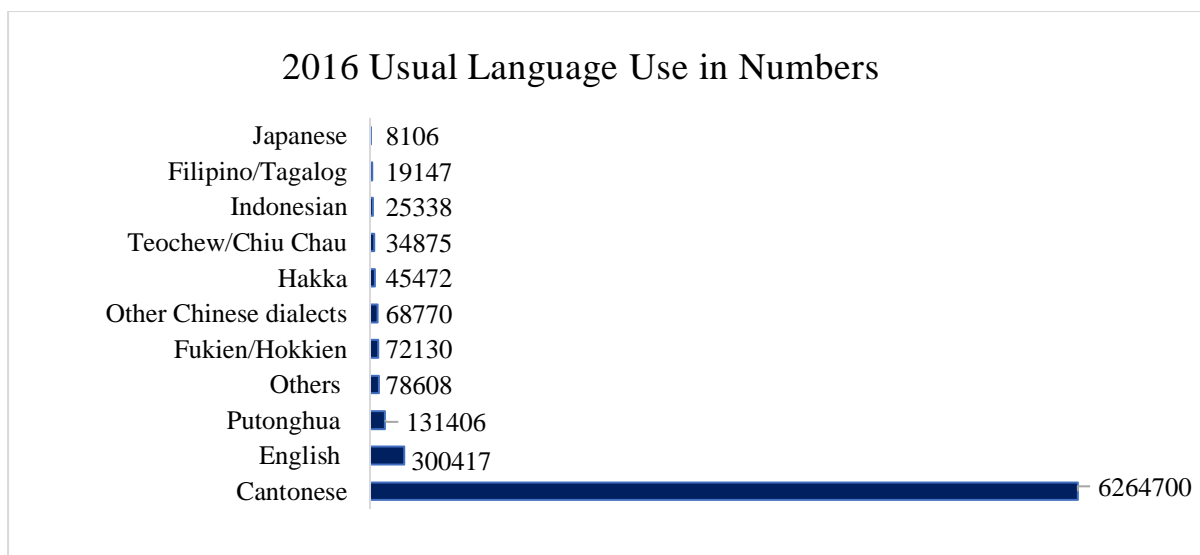


Figure 37. 2016 Usual Language Use in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

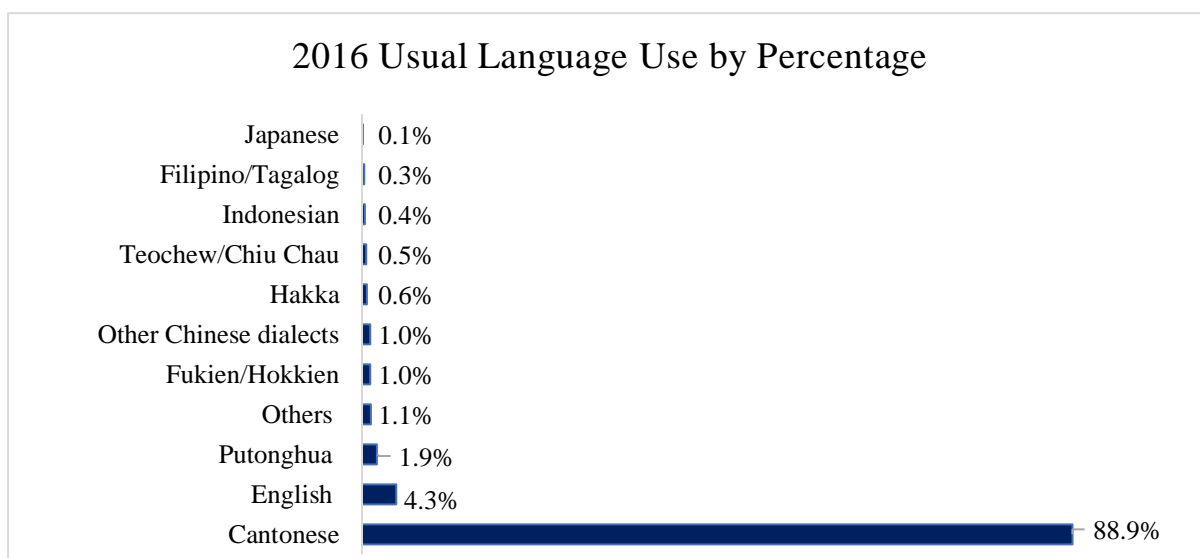


Figure 38. 2016 Usual Language Use by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 11. 2016 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 2016	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
<b>Cantonese</b>	88.9%	5.7%	94.6%
<b>English</b>	4.3%	48.9%	53.2%
<b>Putonghua</b>	1.9%	46.7%	48.6%
<b>Teochew/Chiu Chau</b>	0.5%	2.9%	3.6%
<b>Hakka</b>	0.6%	3.5%	4.2%
<b>Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo</b>	1.0%	2.6%	3.6%
<b>Shanghainese</b>	0.2%	0.9%	1.1%
<b>Filipino</b>	0.4%	2.3%	2.7%
<b>Japanese</b>	0.1%	1.7%	1.8%
<b>Indonesian</b>	0.3%	2.4%	2.7%

In 2020, a Special Report by the HKSAR Population Census indicates that 47,900 members of the population, or 0.6%, report hearing difficulty while 48,700, or 0.7%, report speaking difficulty.

In 2021, Hong Kong’s population was 7,413,070. As shown in Figures 39 and 40, and Table 12, the majority of residents in Hong Kong are Chinese with HK domicile; this next largest group are Filipino nationals, followed by Indonesian nationals.

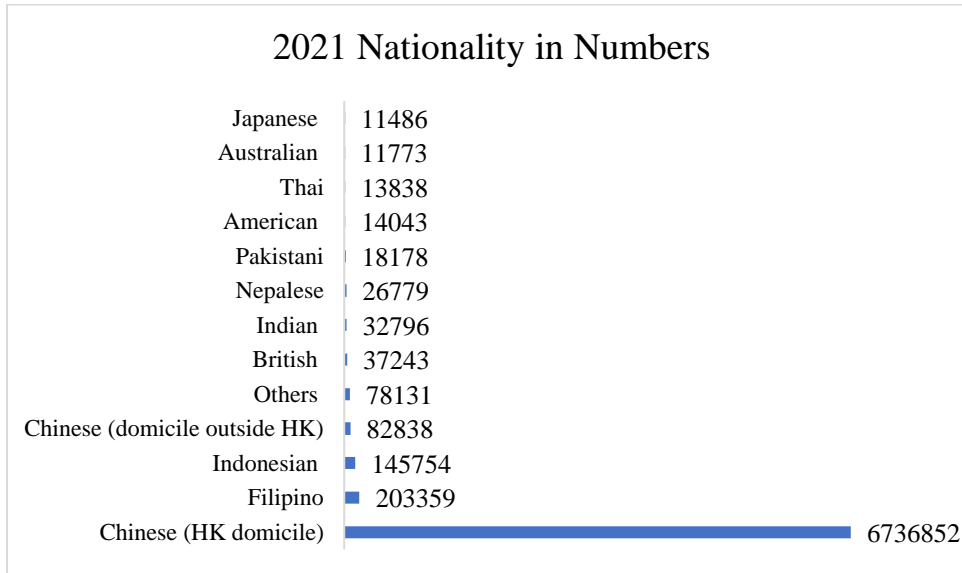


Figure 39. 2021 Nationality in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

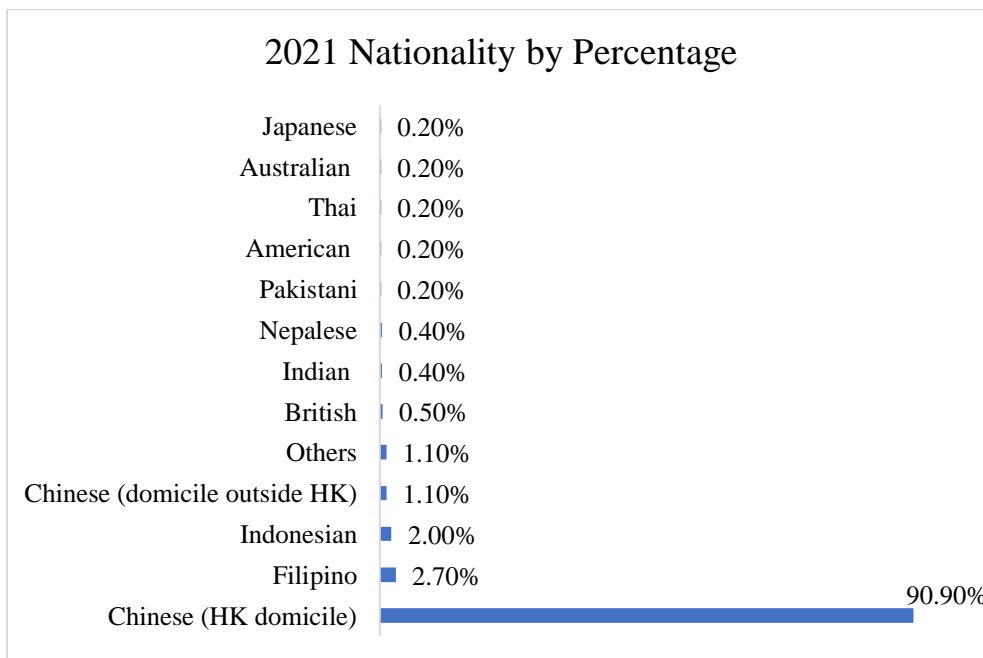


Figure 40. 2021 Nationality by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 12. 2021 Report on Ethnic Minorities**

<b>Ethnicity 2021</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	6,793,502	91.6%
<b>Filipino</b>	201,291	2.7%
<b>Indonesian</b>	142,065	1.9%
<b>Indian</b>	42,469	0.6%
<b>Nepalese</b>	29,701	0.4%
<b>Pakistani</b>	24,385	0.3%
<b>Other South Asian</b>	5,314	0.1%
<b>Thai</b>	12,972	0.2%
<b>Japanese</b>	10,291	0.1%
<b>Korean</b>	8,700	0.1%
<b>Other Asian</b>	10,574	0.1%
<b>White</b>	61,582	0.8%
<b>Others</b>	70,124	0.9%

As shown in Figures 41 and 42 and Table 13, the most widely used language in Hong Kong remains Cantonese, which is used by 93.7% of the population as a Usual/Another Language/Dialect. The use of English (58.7%) and Putonghua (54.2%) continues to increase in Hong Kong's population while the use of Hong Kong's indigenous languages and other Chinese varieties continues to decrease: Only 0.5% use Teochew, 0.6% Hakka, 0.8% Fukien/Hokkien, and 0.2% Shanghainese as their Usual Language.

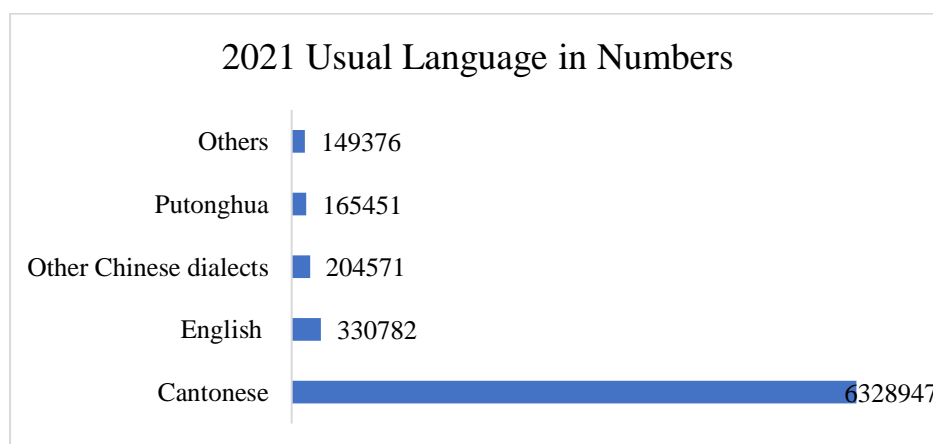


Figure 41. 2021 Usual Language in Numbers (HKSAR Population Census)

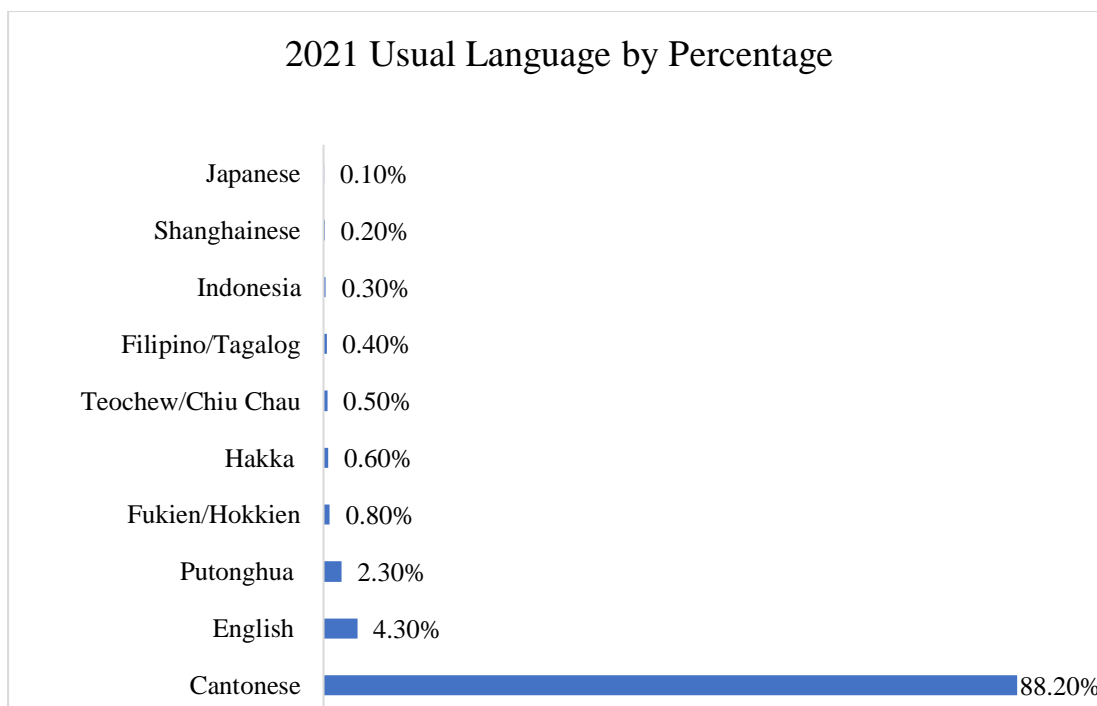


Figure 42. 2021 Usual Language by Percentage (HKSAR Population Census)

**Table 13. 2021 Language Dialect as Usual/Another Dialect**

Language/Dialect 2021	As a usual language/dialect	As another language/dialect	Total
<b>Cantonese</b>	88.2%	5.5%	93.7%
<b>English</b>	4.6%	54.1%	58.7%
<b>Putonghua</b>	2.3%	51.9%	54.2%
<b>Teochew/Chiu Chau</b>	0.5%	2.3%	2.8%
<b>Hakka</b>	0.6%	3.0%	3.6%
<b>Fukien/Hokkien/Hoklo</b>	0.8%	2.3%	3.1%
<b>Shanghainese</b>	0.2%	0.6%	0.8%
<b>Filipino</b>	0.4%	2.4%	2.8%
<b>Japanese</b>	0.1%	2.0%	2.1%
<b>Indonesian</b>	0.3%	2.1%	2.4%

Table 14, below, provides a summary of the shift in nationality in Hong Kong from the years 1991 to 2021. Table 15 provides a summary of the shift in language use in Hong Kong from 1961-2021. Further details are provided in the *Language Profile/Variety Profile* for each Language/Variety included in this website.

**Table 14. Nationality in Hong Kong 1991-2021**

Nationality	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>British (roa HK)*</b>	3,294,444 59.60%	3,681,898 59.20%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Chinese (HK domicile)</b>	1,897,101 34.40%	1,941,569 31.20%	6,261,864 93.3%	6,374,211 92.90%	6,489,492 91.80%	6,646,415 90.6%	6,736,852 90.90%
<b>Chinese (domicile outside HK)</b>	48029 0.90%	64717 1.00%	76,898 1.1%	86,062 1.30%	137,403 1.40%	121,775 1.7%	82,838 1.1%
<b>Filipino</b>	64,658 1.2%	120,730 1.90%	143,662 2.1%	115,349 1.70%	135,081 1.90%	186,869 2.5%	203,359 2.7%
<b>Indonesian</b>	7,905 0.0%	NA	54,629 0.8%	110,576 1.60%	137,403 1.90%	159,901 2.2%	145,754 2%
<b>British</b>	68,502 1.2%	175,395 2.80%	25,418 0.4%	24,990 0.40%	33,733 0.50%	35,069 0.5%	37,243 0.5%
<b>Thai</b>	11,787 0.2%	15,993 0.30%	14,791 0.2%	16,151 0.20%	14,211 0.20%	11,493 0.2%	13,838 0.2%
<b>Japanese</b>	10,850 0.2%	19,010 0.30%	14,715 0.2%	13,887 0.20%	13,858 0.20%	10,678 0.1%	11,486 0.2%
<b>American</b>	18,383 0.3%	28,946 .50%	14,379 0.2%	13,608 0.20%	16,742 0.20%	14,749 0.2%	14,043 0.2%
<b>Canadian</b>	15,135 0.3%	32,515 0.50%	11,862 0.2%	11,976 0.20%	NA	NA	NA
<b>Indian</b>			16,481 0.2%	17,782 0.30%	26,650 0.40%	28,777 0.4%	32,796 0.4%
<b>Pakistani</b>	14,329 0.2%	20,955 0.30%	12,161 0.2%	10,256 0.20%	17,253 0.20%	15,234 0.2%	18,178 0.2%
<b>Bangladeshi</b>					NA	NA	NA
<b>Sri Lankan</b>					NA	NA	NA
<b>Nepalese</b>	N/A	N/A	12,379 0.2%	15,845 0.20%	15,943 0.20%	22,679 0.3%	26,779 0.4%
<b>Australian</b>	N/A	20209 0.30%	NA	NA	15,949 0.20%	14,669 0.2%	11,773 0.2%
<b>Others</b>	60,575 1.1%	93,771 1.10%	49,150 0.7%	55,439 0.80%	58,177 0.80%	68,277 0.9%	78,131 1.1%

\*right of abode only in Hong Kong

**Table 15. Usual Language in Hong Kong 1961-2021**

Usual Language	1961	1966	1971	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Cantonese</b>	2076210 79.93%	3011560 81%	3469235 88.13%	4582233 88.7%	5196240 88.7%	5726972 89.20%	6030960 90.8%	6095213 89.5%	6264700 88.9%	6328947 88.2%
<b>English</b>	31824 1.22%	37400 1%	41119 1.04%	114084 2.2%	184308 3.1%	203598 3.2%	187281 2.8%	238288 3.5%	300417 4.3%	330782 4.3%
<b>Hakka</b>	128432 4.94%	123390 3.32%	104284 2.65%	84134 1.6%	72758 1.2%	85646 1.3%	70445 1.1%	62340 0.9%	45472 0.6%	NA 0.6%
<b>Taishanese (Sze Yap)</b>	84484 3.25%	112980 3.04%	47053 1.20%	22415 0.4%	14972 0.3%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Teochew/ Chiu Chau</b>	NA	NA	NA	72812 1.4%	65934 1.1%	64231 1.0%	50793 0.8%	45307 0.7%	34875 0.5%	NA 0.5%
<b>Putonghua/ Kuo Yu</b>	26021 1.00%	NA	NA	57577 1.1%	65892 1.1%	55410 0.9%	60859 0.9%	94399 1.4%	131406 1.9%	165451 2.3%
<b>Fukien/ Hokkien/ Hoklo</b>	164537 6.33%	299480 8.05%	164295 4.17%	99045 1.9%	112111 1.9%	105973 1.7%	81995 1.2%	78279 1.1%	72130 1.0%	NA 0.8%
<b>Shanghainese</b>	69523 2.67%	NA	NA	34078 0.7%	29500 0.5%	NA 0.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Other East Asian</b>	8227 0.00%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Portuguese</b>	877 0.00%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Other Languages</b>	7225 0.00%	17570 0%	16050 0.41%	34398 0.7%	44412 0.7%	43602 0.7%	44718 0.7%	61240 0.9%	78608 1.1%	149376 NA
<b>Other Languages of China</b>	NA	103960 2.79%	89515 2.2%	52210 1.0%	44947 0.7%	96712 1.5%	NA	87819 1.3%	68770 1.0%	204571 NA
<b>Japanese</b>	NA	NA	NA	8895 0.2%	16072 0.3%	12052 0.2%	11055 0.2%	10970 0.2%	8106 0.1%	NA 0.1%
<b>Filipino/ Tagalog</b>	NA	NA	NA	5939 0.1%	13395 0.2%	12101 0.2%	7046 0.1%	16460 0.2%	19147 0.3%	NA 0.4%
<b>Indonesian</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	11442 0.2%	9038 0.1%	18118 0.3%	25338 0.4%	NA 0.3%
<b>Hearing difficulties</b>	NA	NA	5079 0.13%	NA					NA	NA

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HKSAR Population Census: <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/>

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