



Research Office
Legislative Council Secretariat

Fact Sheet

Religious facilities in Hong Kong

FS01/17-18

1. Introduction

1.1 Hong Kong has diversified ethnically and religiously in recent years. The proportion of ethnic minorities¹ increased from 5.0% in 2006 to 8.0% in 2016, fuelled by Filipinos and Indonesians coming to Hong Kong for work as foreign domestic helpers as well as inflows of South Asians and white residents. Over the period, the proportion of Muslim population in Hong Kong increased from 1.3% to 4.1%, and that of Hindu-community² from 0.6% to 1.4%. The proportion of Christians (comprising mainly Protestants and Roman Catholics) also increased from 9.6% to 12.0%.

1.2 In recent years, there have been concerns over the shortage of religious facilities for the growing ethnic minority population in Hong Kong.³ Against this, the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities has requested the Research Office to study the availability of places of worship for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. This fact sheet provides information on the demographic trend of ethnic minorities and the numbers of their respective places of worship in Hong Kong.

¹ According to the Census and Statistics Department, ethnic minorities refer to persons who reported themselves being of non-Chinese ethnicity in the Population Census/By-census.

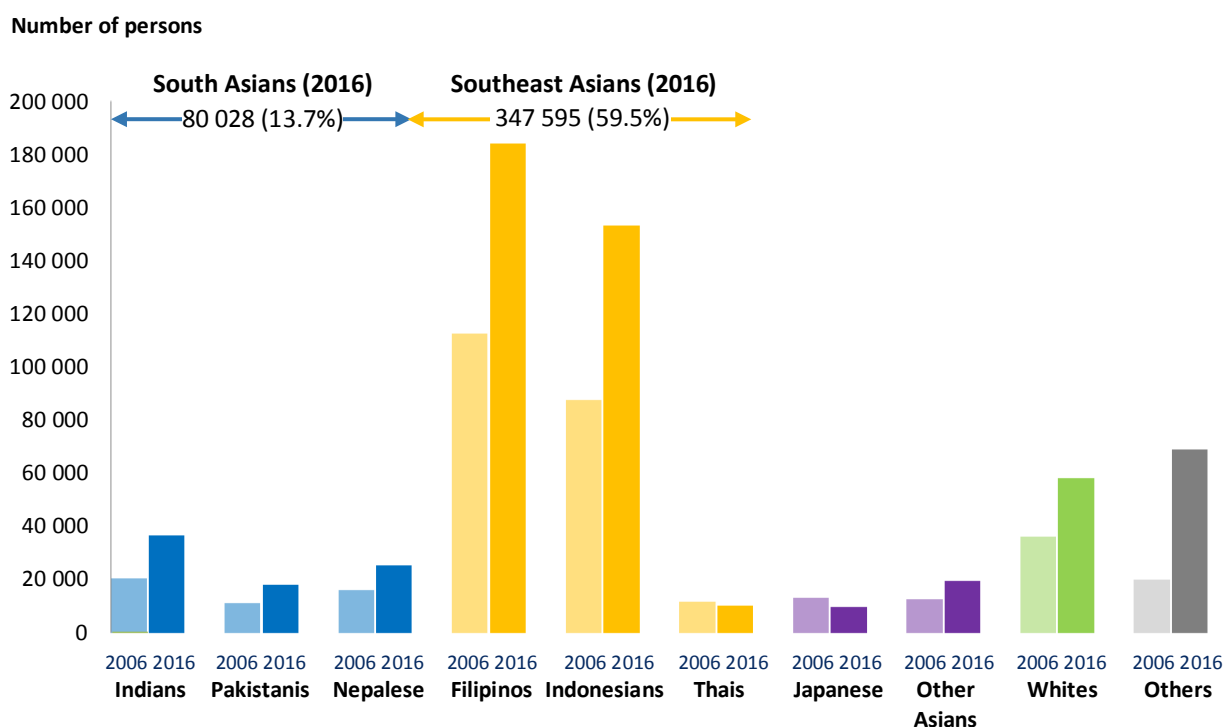
² Hindus in Hong Kong mainly come from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

³ See, for example, South China Morning Post (2016).

2. Ethnic minority population in Hong Kong

2.1 The total number of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong increased by 70.8% over the past decade to some 584 000 in 2016, constituting 8.0% of the total population in Hong Kong. The increase was fuelled largely by the influx of Southeast Asians, of whom Filipinos, Indonesians and Thais constituted 59.5% of the total ethnic minority population in 2016 (**Figure 1**). South Asians came after Southeast Asians as the second largest ethnic minority group in 2016, which consisted mostly of Indians, Pakistanis and Nepalese.

Figure 1 – Major ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong, 2006 and 2016



Source: Census and Statistics Department.

2.2 In 2016, 30.1% of ethnic minorities resided on Hong Kong Island, while 27.4% and 42.5% in Kowloon and the New Territories respectively. Distribution of ethnic minorities between different districts was quite distinct. In 2016, about half of Whites and one-third of Japanese and Filipinos resided on Hong Kong Island (**Table 1**). Meanwhile, more than half of Nepalese (mainly in Yau Tsim Mong District) resided in Kowloon and the proportions of Indians, Japanese, Thais and Pakistanis living in Kowloon were around 40%. In contrast, more than half of Pakistanis (53.2%) and Indonesians (51.2%) resided in the New Territories.

Table 1 – Distribution of ethnic minority population by places of residence (2016)⁽¹⁾

Ethnicity	Hong Kong Island		Kowloon		New Territories	
	Persons	% share ⁽²⁾	Persons	% share ⁽²⁾	Persons	% share ⁽²⁾
<i>Southeast Asians</i>						
Filipino	64 815	35.2%	45 621	24.8%	73 536	40.0%
Indonesian	35 325	23.0%	39 548	25.8%	78 426	51.2%
Thai	2 328	22.8%	3 921	38.4%	3 966	38.8%
<i>South Asians</i>						
Indian	9 311	25.6%	15 745	43.2%	11 382	31.2%
Nepalese	3 360	13.2%	14 562	57.2%	7 550	29.6%
Pakistani	1 749	9.7%	6 716	37.1%	9 629	53.2%
<i>Other ethnic groups</i>						
Whites	30 921	53.6%	5 685	9.9%	21 097	36.6%
Japanese	3 783	37.9%	3 696	37.0%	2 497	25.0%
Other Asians	5 179	26.5%	7 275	37.2%	7 111	36.3%
Others ⁽³⁾	18 966	27.5%	16 963	24.6%	32 962	47.8%

Notes: (1) Excluding marine population.

(2) Referring to the proportion of the respective ethnic minority group residing in different areas of Hong Kong.

(3) Including persons who reported more than one ethnicity.

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

3. Religions in Hong Kong

3.1 Religious freedom is one of the fundamental rights enjoyed by Hong Kong residents. It is protected by the Basic Law and other relevant legislation. There is a variety of religions in Hong Kong, including Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism.

3.2 According to the Government's Hong Kong Yearbook⁴ and information provided by local religious associations, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity had the most number of followers in Hong Kong over the years. This was followed by Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism (**Table 2**).

⁴ While the Census and Statistics Department publishes every five years a thematic report on socio-economic characteristics of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, it does not cover individual religious affiliation.

Table 2 – Estimated number of followers of major religions in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾

Religion	2007 ⁽²⁾	2010	2013	2016
1. Buddhism	> 1 million	> 1 million	≈ 1 million	≈ 1 million
2. Taoism	≈ 1 million	≈ 1 million	> 1 million	> 1 million
3. Christianity	660 000	833 000	860 000	884 000 (including 166 000 Filipinos)
4. Islam	90 000	220 000	300 000	300 000 (including 150 000 Indonesians, 40 000 Chinese, and 30 000 Pakistanis)
5. Hinduism	40 000	40 000	40 000	100 000
6. Sikhism ⁽³⁾	10 000	10 000	10 000	12 000
7. Judaism	N.A. ⁽⁴⁾	N.A.	N.A.	5 000

Notes: (1) There are no estimates of the number of local Confucian followers by the Government and relevant religious association.

(2) It was not until 2007 that Hong Kong Yearbook started reporting the estimated number of Buddhism and Taoism followers in Hong Kong.

(3) Sikhs in Hong Kong mostly originate from the Punjab region in India.

(4) N.A. = information not available.

Sources: Hong Kong Yearbook (various years), Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong (2017) and The Incorporated Trustees of the Jewish Community of Hong Kong (2017).

3.3 As shown in Table 2, Islam and Hinduism have recorded the most rapid growth with the number of Muslims and Hindus more than tripled and doubled respectively over the past decade or so. The surge should reflect the influx of Indonesians and Indians into Hong Kong during the period, as many of them have Islam and Hinduism as their respective religions.

4. Places of worship in Hong Kong

4.1 According to the information provided by local religious associations, **Table 3** below shows the breakdown of the number of places of worship by major religion and district in 2016.

Table 3 – Places of worship by major religion and district in 2016

	Buddhism	Taoism	Protestant	Catholic	Islam	Others ⁽¹⁾
Hong Kong Island						
1. Central & Western	13	5	43	5	1	3 ⁽²⁾
2. Wan Chai	32	3	39	5	1	2 ⁽³⁾
3. Eastern	25	6	117	7	1	0
4. Southern	2	1	37	5	1	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>236</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Kowloon						
5. Kowloon City	6	6	98	7	0	0
6. Wong Tai Sin	6	5	70	7	0	0
7. Kwun Tong	6	4	113	8	0	0
8. Yau Tsim Mong	31	21	167	7	2	0
9. Sham Shiu Po	14	8	134	4	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>582</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>
New Territories						
10. Tsuen Wan	35	3	64	2	0	0
11. Kwai Tsing	0	3	75	5	0	0
12. Sai Kung	4	1	58	8	0	0
13. Shatin	18	7	122	5	0	0
14. Tai Po	10	3	61	4	0	0
15. North	5	5	53	4	0	0
16. Tuen Mun	15	4	91	2	0	0
17. Yuen Long	12	4	78	2	0	0
18. Islands	84	1	26	7	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>628</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total	318	90	1 446	94	6	5

Notes: (1) Confucianism currently has no temple in Hong Kong. As such, "others" comprise solely Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism.

(2) Judaism has three main synagogues in the Central & Western District.

(3) Hinduism and Sikhism each has one temple in Wan Chai.

Sources: Various religious associations and Hong Kong Yearbook 2016.

4.2 The number and distribution of the places of worship vary markedly among various religious groups, as evidenced by the observations below:

- (a) **Christianity:** has the largest number of worship places in Hong Kong, which include stand-alone facilities, and premises in schools, commercial buildings and commercial-cum-residential buildings. In 2016, they totalled 1 540 and scattered around the territory with 17% of them on Hong Kong Island, 40% in Kowloon and 43% in the New Territories;
- (b) **Buddhism:** has the second largest number of religious places, totalling 318 in 2016 and 58% of which were in the New Territories;
- (c) **Taoism:** comes third with 90 abbeys and temples concentrated mainly in Kowloon and the New Territories in 2016;
- (d) **Islam:** currently has six mosques in the territory, four on Hong Kong Island and two in Kowloon. There is no mosque in the New Territories where more than half of Pakistanis and Indonesians resided in 2016 (see Table 2) and the total number of them increased by 87% over the last decade; and
- (e) **Others:** Hinduism and Sikhism each has one temple and Judaism has three main synagogues, which are all on the Hong Kong Island. In contrast, Confucianism currently has no temple in the territory.⁵

⁵ According to 黃大仙區議會 (2015), it is planned to build a new Confucius temple in the Diamond Hill Comprehensive Development Area.

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Research Office
Information Services Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 December 2017
Tel: 2871 2134

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