

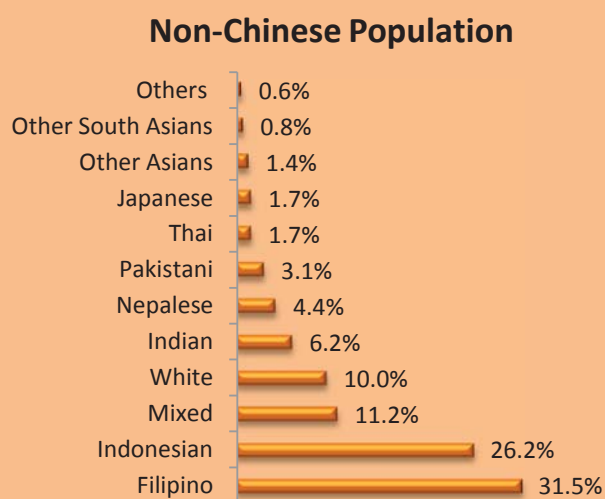
Race Discrimination in Hong Kong

Overview

Hong Kong is renowned as a multi-cultural city and has been a place of settlement for foreigners, especially those in the region. Many of these ethnic minority (EM) residents have been in Hong Kong for generations, including members of the Indian troops and the Nepali Gurkha brigade during the British colonial era, and the Indian and other merchants coming for trading in the early days. Despite their effort to build a home in Hong Kong, some of the EM residents have been marginalised due to language barrier and biases. These in turn restrict their education and employment opportunities, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty and restricting their upward social mobility and full integration into society.

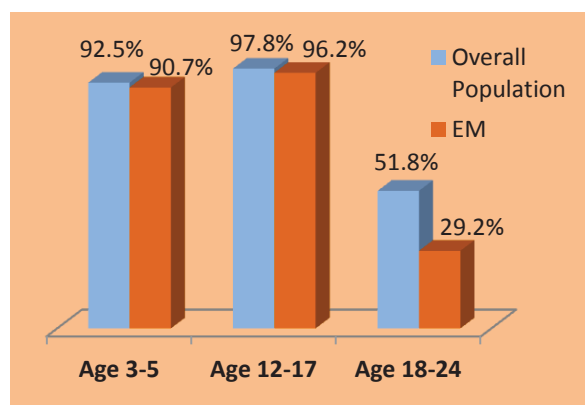
Demographics

- As at end-2016, 92% of Hong Kong's population were Chinese. The 8% non-Chinese included Caucasians, Filipinos, Indians, Indonesians, Japanese, Koreans, Nepalese, Pakistanis, Thais, and others.
- From 2006 to 2016, the non-Chinese population increased by 70.8% from 342,198 to 584,383, far outpacing the growth of the general population (6.9%). The trend can mainly be attributed to the increase in foreign domestic workers (FDW). After excluding FDW, the number of EM stood at 263,593.
- The median age of the EMs was 36.3, lower than the overall population (43.4).



Education

- School attendance rate was relatively lower among EMs, particularly for those aged 18-24 (post-secondary). Excluding FDW, the school attendance rate for this age group went up to 43.3%.
- Chinese is the second (or even third/fourth) language of many EMs. Among EMs aged 5 and over, English was the language most usually spoken at home, with 45.6% of them reporting as such. While nearly half (48.6%) of EMs claimed they could speak Cantonese, many of them were FDW who used Cantonese to communicate with their employers.
- Although the Government introduced the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework and the Applied Learning Chinese Course in 2014/15, many stakeholders consider that there is still a need to introduce a curriculum for learning Chinese as a second language. And despite the abolition of the so-called "designated schools" for non-Chinese speaking students in 2013/14, around 40% of EM or non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students studied in schools with over 70% of NCS students, meaning that they continued to face barriers in integrating into the mainstream community.



School attendance rates in 2016

Employment

- The labour force participation of EMs (85.9%) was higher than that of the general population (60.8%), mainly due to the FDW. Where these are excluded, the labour force participation rate of EMs became 64.5. EM males had a participation rate of 78.1%, higher than the overall male population (68.4%). In contrast, the rate for EM females (50.6%) was lower than that of the overall female population (54.5%). The rate was even lower for some ethnic groups, such as Pakistani female (18.5%).
- The majority (74.7%) of the working ethnic minorities were engaged in “elementary occupations”, which was noticeably more than the proportion for the whole working population (20.9%). This was mainly due to the fact that many of them were FDW. Also, there were variations in the distribution of occupations among different ethnic groups. For example, 37.4% and 37.9% of Nepalese and Pakistani male worked in elementary occupations, while the proportion for Indian and White male was 6.7% and 1.7% respectively.
- The median monthly income of EMs stood at \$4,250 in 2016, compared to \$15,000 for the overall population in the same year. Excluding FDW, the monthly income of EMs rose to \$20,000. The figure varied significantly between different ethnic groups, from HK\$58,000 for white male to \$12,800 for Pakistani male.



Access to Goods, Facilities and Services

- It is common for EMs to encounter discrimination when they obtain goods and services. In 2017, the EOC handled 73 complaints under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO). Most of these fell under the non-employment field, and concerned mainly the provision of goods, facilities and services. Based on the studies conducted and the feedback collected by the EOC, below are some common concerns raised by EM:



Disposal and management of premises – some property owners refused to lease their apartments to EMs.



Financial services – Some EMs were rejected when opening bank accounts.



Medical and health care – EMs were unable to obtain timely treatment due to language barrier and insufficient interpretation services.

Legal Protection from Discrimination



Under the RDO, discrimination, harassment and vilification on the ground of race are unlawful. By race, it means the race, colour, descent, nationality or ethnic origin of a person. The EOC recommended in the Discrimination Law Review that the Government: (1) prohibit race discrimination in the exercise of Government functions or powers, (2) prohibit race discrimination and harassment by association, and (3) repeal the exception in vocational training and education in relation to medium of instruction.

About the Discrimination Law Review: <http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/graphicsfolder/inforcenter/dlr/default.aspx>

Source of information: 2016 Population By-census, Thematic Report on Ethnic Minorities

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