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The Population of Hong Kong, 1961 and 1971

TWO postwar population censuses were carried out in 1961 and 1971 in Hong Kong.¹ The 1971 Census recorded the total number of the Hong Kong population to be 3,936,630², showing an increase of 26 per cent or an average annual increase of slightly more than 80,000 persons over the 1961 Census total of 3,129,648. Table 1 shows Hong Kong's population totals recorded in the 1961 and the 1971 Censuses and the estimated mid-year population of non-census years between 1960 and 1974.

Geographical Distribution

Of the 1971 population, nearly one and a half million persons lived in New Kowloon, almost one million on Hong Kong Island, 716,000 in Kowloon, and 666,000 in the New Territories.⁸ The population density for Hong Kong as

1. The 1961 Census date was February 11, 1961 for marine population and March 7, 1961 for persons living on land. The 1971 Census date was February 23, 1971 for persons living afloat in small boats and March 9, 1971 for land population.

2. The census total included members of consular corps and armed forces but excluded transients who were in Hong Kong on the census day but intended to stay in Hong Kong for less than twenty days.

3. Hong Kong comprises the Hong Kong Island (29 square miles), Kowloon and Stonecutters Island (4 square miles), and the New Territories (370 square miles, leased from China for 99 years from 1898).

TABLE 1—POPULATION GROWTH OF HONG KONG (1960-1974)

Year	Population
1960	3,075,300
1961	3,129,648
1962	3,305,200
1963	3,420,900
1964	3,504,600
1965	3,597,900
1966	3,629,900
1967	3,722,800
1968	3,802,700
1969	3,863,900
1970	3,959,000
1971	3,936,630
1972	4,078,400
1973	4,159,600
1974	4,248,700

NOTE : The 1961 and 1971 figures were the Census figures, and the figures for other years were mid-year estimates.

SOURCES : Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics, various issues, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

a whole averaged about ten thousand persons per square mile in 1971, ranging from slightly below two thousand persons per square mile in the New Territories to well over two hundred thousand persons per square mile in Kowloon. When compared with the 1961 figures in these areas, both Hong Kong Island and Kowloon recorded a reduction of around ten thousand residents in the 1960V, and on the contrary New Kowloon and the New Territories gained

4. In particular the density of Sheung Wan and Wan Chai Districts on Hong Kong Island almost dropped to half of their 1961 figures. This was mainly due to the urban renewal plan carried out in these districts. Old and crowded residential houses were pulled down to give way for modern high buildings to provide more office space in the busy and commercial districts.

625,000 and 255,000 persons respectively during this ten year period. The marine population also showed a substantial reduction from 138,000 persons in 1961 to nearly 80,000 persons in 1971. In other words, 58,000 persons formerly lived afloat in small boats had become land people, not counting the natural increase of the marine population during this period.

TABLE 2—GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF HONG KONG POPULATION
(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Area</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
Hong Kong Island	1,004.9	996.2
Kowloon	725.2	716.2
New Kowloon	852.8	1,478.6
New Territories	409.9	665.7
Marine	136.8	79.9
Total	3,129.6	3,936.6

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Sex and Age Distribution

The 1971 population of Hong Kong consisted of just over two million men and approximately 1.94 million women. The sex ratio, which was 1,056 men to 1,000 women in 1961, was further improved to 1,033 men to 1,000 women in 1971. The sex ratio of different census areas varied from 1,015 for Hong

TABLE 3—SEX DISTRIBUTION OF HONG KONG POPULATION
(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Sex</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
Male	1,607.8	2,000.6
Female	1,521.8	1,936.0
Total	3,129.6	3,936.6
Sex ratio	3,056.5	1,033.0

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Kong Island to 1,059 for Kowloon in 1971. The marine population had the highest sex ratio of 1,150 males to 1,000 females.

Forty-six per cent of the population was below the age of twenty in 1961 and in 1971. Of the 1.44 million youngsters of below 20 years old in 1961, half a million were children under 5; 776,000 were between 5 and 14 years, and only 165,000 were between 15 and 19 years. In 1971, the number of children under 5 was reduced to 376,000, but the number of children between 5 and 14

TABLE 4—AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HONG KONG POPULATION (in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>1961</i>		<i>1971</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
0- 4	500.7	16.0	376.2	9.6
5- 9	425.4	13.6	508.1	12.9
10-14	351.0	11.2	523.6	13.3
15-19	165.1	5.3	427.8	10.9
20-24	202.7	6.5	336.4	8.5
25-29	254.0	8.1	193.7	4.9
30-34	263.1	8.4	212.6	5.4
35-39	235.0	7.5	245.1	6.2
40-44	203.0	6.5	255.5	6.5
45-49	167.2	5.3	218.4	5.6
50-54	123.9	4.0	195.3	5.0
55-59	87.0	2.8	150.6	3.8
60-64	63.6	2.0	115.7	2.9
65-69	41.0	1.3	73.7	1.9
70 and over	46.9	1.5	103.9	2.6
Total	3,129.6	100.0	3,936.6	100.0

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

and the number of youngsters between 15 and 19 was increased to over a million and 428,000, respectively. The fact that the number of children below

the age of five in 1971 was only three-quarters the number of children in the same age group in 1961 pointed out clearly the rapid decline in the number of babies born in Hong Kong in the late 1960's. Another fact that more than one-quarter of the 1971 population were between the age 5-14 well reflected

TABLE 5—AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF HONG KONG POPULATION
(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Age group</i>	<i>1961</i>		<i>1971</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
0- 4	257.7	243.0	193.2	183.0
5- 9	220.4	204.9	259.3	248.8
10-14	185.9	165.1	267.7	255.9
15-19	90.3	74.9	219.6	208.2
20-24	111.3	91.5	173.2	163.1
25-29	137.2	116.8	107.1	86.6
30-34	140.9	122.2	117.1	95.6
35-39	123.3	111.6	129.5	115.6
40-44	107.3	95.7	133.7	121.9
45-49	86.5	80.7	112.9	105.4
50-54	60.1	63.8	101.0	94.3
55-59	37.2	49.8	74.9	75.7
60-64	23.6	40.0	52.3	63.4
65-69	13.2	27.8	28.4	45.3
70 and over	12.9	34.0	30.7	73.2
Total	1,607.8	1,521.8	2,000.6	1,936.0

SOURCE : The [1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's baby boom in the late 1950's and the early 1960's. On the other hand, only 406,000 persons or just over 10 per cent of the 1971 population being between the age 25-34 could be viewed as the result of the low birth rate and high mortality rate among children during the Pacific War period in the early 1940's. Less than twelve per cent of the population in 1961 were 50 years old and over, but the corresponding proportion increased to sixteen per cent in 1971.

More males than females appeared in each of the first ten *quinquennial* age groups in 1961 and 1971. For the 1971 population, wider discrepancies between the two sexes were noticed in the age groups between 25 and 44. The sex ratio reached 1,161 men to 1,000 women for this age range. Women seemed to live longer than men in Hong Kong. More women than men were recorded in *quinquennial* age groups after the age of 50 in 1961 and after the age of 55 in 1971. In 1971, the sex ratio was more than two women to one man in the age group 70-74. For those who were older than 75, the ratio between women and men was three to one.

Conjugal Status

Of the 1.85 million persons aged 15 and over in 1961, 27 per cent were never married, 65 per cent were married, and 7 per cent were widowed. Of the 2.53 million persons aged 15 and over in 1971, the corresponding percentages were 36, 59 and 5, respectively.⁵ The number of divorced or separated persons reduced from over 11,000 in 1961 to 8,000 in 1971. Only half a per cent of the males in the age group 15-19 were married in 1971, compared with three per cent of the females in the same age group. Naturally, the proportion of married persons increases as age advances. The proportion of married males increased to 8 per cent in the 20-24 age group, and to 36 per cent in the 25-29 age group. The proportions for married females in these age groups were 32 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. Of persons aged 50 and over, only 3.7 per cent of the males and 6.4 per cent of the females were still not married. As women live longer than men, it is not surprising to find over 100,000 widowed women

5. In 1961, only fourteen persons under 15, three boys and eleven girls, reported themselves as married. In 1971, information on conjugal status was collected only from persons aged 15 and above, and those who had not attained the age of 15 were automatically recorded as never married.

TABLE 6—CONJUGAL STATUS OF HONG KONG POPULATION (in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Conjugal Status</i>	1961			1971		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Never married	333.6	170.2	503.8	545.7	368.6	914.3
Married	587.6	614.0	1,201.6	710.1	770.5	1,480.6
Widowed	16.7	118.7	135.4	20.2	105.4	125.6
Divorced	5.8	5.9	11.7	4.5	3.7	8.2
Total	943.7	908.8	1,852.5	1,280.5	1,248.2	2,528.7

NOTE : This table was confined to those of 15 years old and over.

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, Published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

in Hong Kong, five times the number of widowed men, in 1971. Nearly two-thirds of the widowed women were over 60 years of age. In 1971, eighty per cent of the 8,200 divorced or separated were in the age range of 30 to 59 years. The divorced or separated group consisted of 4,500 males and 3,700 females.

Fertility Rate

Of the 738,000 ever-married women in 1961, nearly 100,000 had no child or no child still living. About 57 per cent of ever-married women had one to three living children, 20 per cent had four to five living children, and less than 10 per cent had more than five living children. In 1971, 71,000 of the 880,000 ever-married women had no children.⁶ Forty-four per cent of married women at ages 15-19 and 26 per cent of married women at ages 20-24 had not given birth. Half of the married women had one to three children, and nearly one-quarter gave birth to four or five children. Of the 149,000 married women who had more than five children, 44 per cent were in the age range 40-49 and 36 per cent aged 50 years and over. More than 10,000 women gave birth to nine children and a similar number of women had ten children or more.

6. Fertility in the 1961 Census referred to the number of children still living, and in the 1971 Census changed to the mean number of children born alive.

TABLE 7—FERTILITY RATE OF EVER-MARRIED WOMEN IN HONG KONG
(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Number of Ever-Married Women</i>	
	<i>1961 (with number of children still living)</i>	<i>1971 (with number of children born alive)</i>
0	99.0	71.2
1	161.5	149.8
2	144.2	159.4
3	114.9	137.3
4	90.4	121.0
5	60.7	92.2
6	36.1	65.1
7	17.9	39.6
8	8.3	22.5
9	3.2	10.8
10 and over	2.4	10.7
Total	738.6	879.6

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Place of Origin and Usual Language

Over two million persons of the 1971 population claimed their place of origin to be Canton, Macau and adjacent places.⁷ Another 1.3 million persons claimed that their families came from Sze Yap, Chiu Chau or elsewhere in Kwantung. About 285,000 persons came from elsewhere in China, and only 186,000 persons took Hong Kong as their place of origin. Among the 65,000 non-Chinese in Hong Kong, 29,000 were British, 8,700 were Indian, Pakistani and Ceylonese, 13,600 were from other Asian countries, 5,300 were from other European countries, and 4,700 from Canada and the United States. Over 2,700 persons could not tell their place of origin.

Nearly 3.5 million persons, or 88 per cent of the 1971 population, spoke Cantonese with members of their families. Slightly over 400,000 persons, or 10 per cent of the population, used other Chinese languages such as Hakka,

7. The place of origin is defined to be, for Chinese, that part of China from which their families came; or, for non-Chinese, the nationality claimed.

Hoklo, Sze Yap and Mandarin as their usual language. English and other foreign languages were used by 57,000 persons in Hong Kong. Five thousand persons were dumb.

Educational Level

Over 40 per cent of the Hong Kong population attained primary school level in 1961 and 1971. However, a higher proportion of the population attained secondary school or university level in 1971 when compared with the 1961 proportion. This might be explained by the fact that nearly 33 per cent of the 1971 population were within the age range 10-24, while only 23 per cent of the 1961 population were within this age limit. As a result of the change in the age structure of the Hong Kong population, the number of students attending secondary schools or universities increased substantially during this decade. Of the 1.23 million students who were attending schools at the time when the 1971 Census was taken, 194,000 were kindergarten kids, 744,000 at primary schools, 281,000 at secondary and post-secondary schools, and 8,000 university students. The number of persons who had no formal school education reduced from 614,000 in 1961 to 541,000 in 1971.

TABLE 8—EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS OF HONG KONG POPULATION
(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
Too young to go to school	591.2	376.2
Kindergarten	*	202.5
Private tutor	108.7	134.4
Primary	1,304.9	1,755.9
Secondary	441.9	814.3
Post secondary	24.4	46.0
University	44.0	65.6
No schooling	614.5	541.7
Total	3,129.6	3,936.6

*"Kindergarten" was not listed in the 1961 Census.

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Economically Active Population

Of the 1961 population, 1.21 million persons or 38 per cent were classified

as economically active.⁸ The number of economically active persons increased to 1.65 million or 42 per cent of Hong Kong population in 1971. If children below 10 years of age were left out, then the proportion of economically active persons in the population would be around 55 per cent for 1961 and 1971. The economically active population of 1971 included 1,097,000 males and 558,000 females, and the economically inactive population included 904,000 males and 1,378,000 females. The sex ratios for economically active population and economically inactive population were 1,966 males and 656 males to 1,000 females, respectively. Fifty-five per cent of the 1971 male population were economically active, while only 29 per cent of the female population were economically active.

The analysis of the distribution of the 1971 economically active population by occupation reveals that the 748,000 craftsmen, production workers and labourers formed the largest group in number and accounted for 45 per cent of the economically active population.⁹ Three-quarters of the workers in this group were permanent in-workers. Clerical, sales, service, sport and recreation workers totalled 508,000. Four-fifths of them were permanent in-workers, and ten per cent were self-employed. Professional and technological workers followed a similar pattern. On the other hand, one-third of the administrative, executive, and managerial workers were self-employed, another one-third were employers and only one-quarter were permanent in-workers. Two-fifths of the 53,000 farmers and fishermen were classified as self-employed.

The important contribution of manufacturing industry towards Hong Kong's economy can be seen from the analysis of the distribution of economically active population by industry. The manufacturing industry alone absorbed 476,000 workers in 1961, or 40 per cent of Hong Kong's 1961 economically active population not including the unemployed and job-seekers. In 1971, 686,000 workers or 42 per cent of Hong Kong's economically active population, excluding those seeking work for the first time, were engaged in manu-

8. The labour force approach was adopted for classifying persons aged 10 and over into economically active or economically inactive. In this approach, persons who were engaged in productive work for more than 15 hours during the seven days before enumeration, including those who were not working but looking for work during the reference week, were included in the economically active population.

9. The occupation classification used in the 1971 Census was adopted from the International Standard Classification of Occupation laid down by the International Labour Office.

TABLE 9-INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE
POPULATION (in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Industry Classification</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	87.6	64.7
Mining, quarrying and unclassified	25.5	51.4
Manufacturing	475.5	685.8
Construction and engineering	100.2	171.8
Utilities	19.0	8.9
Commerce	131.3	211.6
Transport and communication	86.7	119.4
Services	265.3	317.3
Total	1,191.1	1,630.9

NOTES : (1) The 1961 headings for "construction and engineering" and "transport and communication" were "constructions" and "communications" respectively. (2) The 1961 total does not include unemployed and job-seekers, and the 1971 total does not include those seeking work for the first time.

SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

facturing activities. Services and commerce took another 32 per cent of the economically active force, and construction, engineering, transport and communication industries employed 17 per cent in both years. Over 110,000 workers were classified as working in agriculture, fishing, mining and quarrying industries. Of the manufacturing workers, 294,000 or 43 per cent were females in 1971. However, there were 185,000 female workers, as compared with 154,000 males, in the 339,000 textile workers. The proportion of female workers varied from one-third to two-fifths in the farming, fishing, mining and servicing industries. Of those working in commercial firms, one-quarter were females. The proportion of females working in utilities, transport and communication industries was only seven to eight per cent.

Unemployed Group

Nearly 16,000 persons, not including job-seekers for the first time, were unemployed in 1961. The ratio between unemployed males and females was

almost four to one. The number of unemployed, including those looking for job for the first time, increased to 72,000 in 1971. A relatively large number of unemployed appeared in the age group between 15 to 24 years. This was

TABLE 10-AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNEMPLOYED (in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>1961</i>			<i>1971</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
15-24	1.7	0.9	2.6	14.3	13.6	27.9
25-34	3.1	0.8	3.9	6.1	2.1	8.2
35-44	3.0	0.6	3.6	7.5	2.2	9.7
45-54	2.9	0.8	3.7	9.7	3.1	12.8
55-64	1.6	0.4	2.0	9.3	4.2	13.5
Total	12.3	3.5	15.8	46.9	25.2	72.1

NOTE : The 1961 total does not include job-seekers for the first time. SOURCE : The 1961 Census Report and the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

because 70 per cent of job-seekers for the first time, were in this age range. One-quarter of the unemployed aged between 25 and 44. Over 13,000 unemployed persons, nearly one-fifth of the unemployed population, were in the age group of 55 to 64 years. Approximately two-thirds of the 1971 unemployed were males and one-third were females. The women looking for work were younger than the men. Of the 25,000 unemployed women, over half were under 25 years, and 30 per cent were between 25 and 54 years of age. Of the 47,000 unemployed men, only 30 per cent were under 25 years, and half were aged between 25 and 54. Nearly half of the unemployed women were with no previous working experience, compared with 26 per cent of the unemployed males.

Economically Inactive Population

Nearly two-thirds of the 1961 economically inactive population were below 15 years of age. In 1971, 60 per cent of the economically inactive population were under 15 years of age, 29 per cent between 15 and 54, and 11 per cent were 54 years and over. Over one half of the 1971 economically inactive population were full-time students.¹⁰ Of this student group, one million were

10. No detailed information on the activity status of the 1961 economically inactive population was published.

under the age of 15 and only 6,000 were over 24. Home-makers accounted for one-quarter of the economically inactive population. Of the 58,000 home-makers, 99 per cent were females. Another one-sixth of the economically inactive population were children under 14 years and not attending school. The remaining five per cent included retired persons, persons living on income from subletting premises, investments, and overseas remittances, and inmates of penal, mental and charitable institutions. Three-quarters of the 24,000 persons living on income just mentioned were females, and a like proportion of the 10,000 inmates of institutions were males.

TABLE 11-ACTIVITY STATUS OF ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE POPULATION, 1971

<i>Activity Status</i>	<i>Number (thousands)</i>
Home-maker*	580.0
Retired person*	79.3
Student*	1,216.9
Under 14 years, not at school	370.8
Income from subletting premises, investments, overseas remittances, or other means	24.3
Inmate of institution	10.4
Total	2,281.7

*With no part-time work.

SOURCE: The 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

Summary

The population of Hong Kong, which has a total land area of slightly over four hundred square miles, stood at just below the four million mark in 1971. The population averaged an increase of 80,000 persons a year in the 1960's. The Hong Kong population was a young one, with 46 per cent of the residents below the age of twenty and only 7 per cent aged over 60. The sex ratio was quite even, with 50.8 per cent of the population males and 49.2 per cent females, except that the number of women more than doubled that of men in older age groups beyond 70. Of Hong Kong's 1971 population, nearly 59 per cent of those aged 15 and over were married, 36 per cent not married and the remaining 5 per cent widowed or divorced. Of the married women in 1971,

8 per cent had no children, about half had one to three children, another one-third had four to six children, and the remaining 10 per cent had given birth to seven children or more. Between 38 and 42 per cent of the population were classified as economically active in the 1961 and the 1971 Censuses. Fifty-five per cent of the males and 29 per cent of the females in 1971 were economically active. The manufacturing industry was the most important sector in Hong Kong, followed by services, commerce, construction and engineering, the transport and communication sectors. In 1971, 72,000 persons were unemployed in Hong Kong. Two-thirds of the unemployed were males and one-third were females. More than half of the 2.28 million economically inactive persons in 1971 were full-time students. Home-makers, young children not at school, and retired persons totalled over another million economically inactive persons.