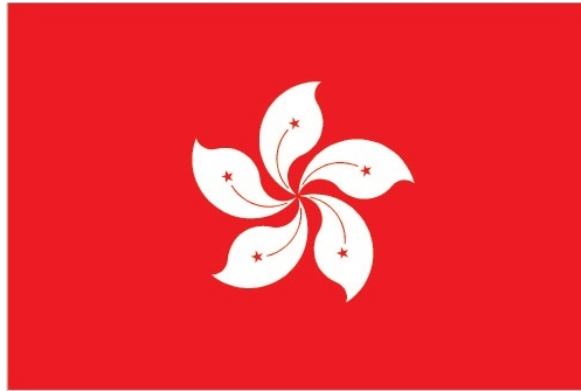


IDENTITIES ABROAD: HONG KONG



IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Hong Kong as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information and resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Hong Kong, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

Population: 7,263,234

Language(s): Cantonese (official) 88.9%, English (official) 4.3%, Mandarin (official) 1.9%, other Chinese dialects 3.1%, other 1.9%

Religions: Buddhist or Taoist 27.9%, Protestant 6.7%, Roman Catholic 5.3%, Muslim 4.2%, Hindu 1.4%, Sikh 0.2%, other or none 54.3%.

Ethnic groups: Chinese 92%. Filipino 2.5%, Indonesian 2.1%, other 3.4%



Hong Kong consists of a mainland area called the New Territories, and over 200 smaller islands in Southeast Asia. It borders the South China Sea and mainland China. There are three official languages; Cantonese, English, and Mandarin, but Cantonese is most commonly used. The climate is subtropical monsoon; cool and humid in the winter, hot and rainy from spring to summer and warm and sunny in the fall. Most of the area is hilly or mountainous with steep slopes and lowlands in the north.

Hong Kong was occupied by the United Kingdom in 1841 and formally ceded by China in 1842 and various adjacent lands were added throughout the 19th century. After an agreement signed by China and the United Kingdom, Hong Kong became the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in 1997. In the agreement, China made a promise that under the "one country, two systems" formula, China's socialist economic system would not be imposed on Hong Kong and that it would enjoy a high level of autonomy in all matters (with the exception of foreign and defense affairs) for the following 50 years.

Hong Kong has a free market economy and is highly dependent on international trade and finance. The open economy has left Hong Kong exposed to the global economic situation. Its reliance on international trade and investment makes it vulnerable market volatility or a slowdown in the global economy. Mainland China has been its largest trading partner and accounts for about half of total trade by value. Hong Kong has very limited natural resources so a great deal of food and raw materials are imported.

Review current travel risks for Hong Kong:

[U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 2,314 students from the United States studied abroad to Hong Kong in the 2018/2019 academic year.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN HONG KONG

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The indigenous peoples of Hong Kong are the Punti, Hakka, Tanka, and Hokkien people. Currently, the largest ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong include Filipinos, Indonesians, South Asians, Caucasians, and those with mixed ethnicities. Most come to Hong Kong, or have family who have come to Hong Kong in the past as foreign domestic helpers.

Racism and colorism are major issues in Hong Kong. The roots of colorism in Asia come from classism. Having darker skin is associated with having to work lower-wage jobs, which take place mostly outdoors working in the fields and causing darker skin color. Lighter skin is associated with more socially acceptable jobs that take place inside, out of the sun and maintaining a lighter complexion as a result. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong Kong government officials, politicians, and the media have faced criticism for unfairly portraying darker-skinned minorities as more likely to transmit and spread COVID. Health officials have blamed ethnic minorities for spikes in COVID cases in crowded housing buildings located in impoverished areas where many South Asian minorities reside. Officials stated that minorities have failed to observe social distancing for "cultural reasons."

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- Hong Kong is racially homogenous. Students of color may be the only non-white person in a class or group.
- People in Hong Kong may have had relatively little exposure to people of color and therefore rely heavily on stereotypes and how people of color are portrayed in the media, mainstream American culture and Hollywood.
- Students of color may experience people staring at them when out and about in Hong Kong.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in China](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [History of Hong Kong](#), Wikipedia
- [Travel Guide – China](#), Diversity Abroad
- [Hong Kong's dark-skinned minorities say they've never felt accepted](#), CNN
- [In Hong Kong, COVID-19 and Racism Make an Ugly Mix](#), The Diplomat

- [Being Black in Hong Kong](#), Ariana life

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN HONG KONG

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

While homosexuality has been legal in Hong Kong since 1991, only foreign same-sex marriages are recognized. Changing gender is legal but requires gender-affirming surgery. There are not many legal protections in place against discrimination (including in housing and employment) for LGBTQ+ individuals in Hong Kong, but in 2009 the Domestic Violence Ordinance was extended to recognize and protect same-sex couples that live together.

Despite holding traditional Chinese values in regards to sexuality close, Hong Kong society in general is fairly accepting of the LGBTQ+ community, which is slowly becoming more visible. There are a handful of openly gay establishments, mostly located in the Lan Kwai Fong/Soho areas. Many LGBTQ+ individuals in Hong Kong are not out at work, but recently, steps have also been taken to create more inclusive work places and multinational companies have visibly shown their support for LGBTQ+ equality.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- Some areas and neighborhoods that are LGBTQ+ friendly may be secluded, be aware that attitudes towards the community may be different just outside these neighborhoods.
- While progress is being made, the trans community continues to face discrimination and stigma. Trans students should always be aware of their surroundings and try to always try to travel with another person.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Travel Guide – China](#), Diversity Abroad
- [LGBT Rights in Hong Kong](#), Equaldex
- [LGBT Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World \(December 2019\)](#), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
- [Legal Challenges Look to Advance LGBTQ+ Rights in Hong Kong](#), The Diplomat
- [Gay Hong Kong](#), Queer in the World
- [Hong Kong](#), Stonewall Global Workplace Briefings

DISABILITY IN HONG KONG

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The government provides support to individuals with disabilities and their families in a number of ways and encourages as much integration as possible. Hong Kong has its own Equal Opportunities Commission created in 1996 to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to provide information about specific legislature. The EOC also offers legal assistance, training and consultancy service, and handles complaints.

The public transportation systems in Hong Kong have taken on initiatives such as Rehabus and Easy Access Bus to accommodate disabled travelers. The Hong Kong Red Cross has a mobility equipment loan program to individuals with temporary disabilities. And major attractions throughout Hong Kong have been encouraged to make Hong Kong accessible to all. Individuals who use wheelchairs find that their needs have been considered at most venues they visit. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service offers the [Hong Kong Access Guide for Disabled Visitors](#) which gives information about different hotels, shops, and other facilities as well as news and press releases from HKCSS. The Transport Department also maintains a [Keep Hong Kong Moving](#) website with a guides for public transportation, resources, and services available for people with disabilities. The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation maintains an [Access Guide](#) that provides information about accessible attractions and points of interest throughout Hong Kong.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Barrier-free travel is fairly easy to find throughout Hong Kong. There are a number of transportation guides provided by government agencies and the metro, city buses, and ferries are wheelchair accessible, as numerous taxi and coach services that accommodate passengers with wheelchairs.
- There are also guides that provide information about accessible attractions, shopping, dining, museums, places of worship, etc.
- A majority of the sidewalks in Hong Kong (especially in tourist areas) do have curb ramps.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA](#), Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in China](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [How to travel in Hong Kong](#), Angloinfo
- [Accessible Travel](#), Discover Hong Kong
- [Hong Kong, China Wheelchair Accessible Travel Guide](#), WheelchairTravel.org

RELIGION IN HONG KONG

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Most religious observance in Hong Kong follows a form of Chinese folk religion, which includes Buddhism, Confucian, and Taoist doctrines and rituals. A great deal of the Hong Kong population avoids declaring a religious affiliation. This could be due in part to the fact that the traditional Chinese religions were not encouraged when the British ruled over Hong Kong, there was instead a strong push towards Christianity. Many also consider what may be religious practices as more of traditional Hong Kong culture, so religion is often overlooked.

There is a considerable Muslim population in Hong Kong as well, many are domestic workers that have come to Hong Kong from Indonesia or India. There are four main mosques and seven madrasas run by Khatme Nubuwwat Islamic Council and are used for daily prayers.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- There are five major festivals in the Chinese lunar calendar, Lunar New Year is the most important. Gifts are exchanged to celebrate this festival. The Ching Ming Festival takes place in the spring and is a time to visit ancestral graves. The Tuen Ng Festival is celebrated with dragon boat races. The Mid-Autumn festival is also celebrated with gifts, mainly mooncakes, wine, and fruit.
- Other “traditional” religious holidays such as Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, and Buddha’s Birthday are also observed and celebrated public holidays.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Hong Kong](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), Every Culture
- [Religion in Hong Kong](#), Wikipedia
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Hong Kong Buddhist Directory](#)
- [China](#), World Jewish Congress
- [2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: China \(includes Hong Kong\)](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hong Kong](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Hong Kong](#), IslamicFinder.org

WOMEN IN HONG KONG

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

There are some cultural differences between Mainland China and Hong Kong that make the experience for female travelers a little different. Hong Kong has a little more of an influence from Western values or Westernization mixed in with the traditional Chinese culture. There are still male dominated social structures in Hong Kong, but there has been a great deal of improvement in the social status of women since the end of World War II. Women in Hong Kong are now more financially independent and career-focused.

Hong Kong is considered very safe for female travelers. There are inexpensive, safe, and clean public transportation options (subway and buses) and taxis are well trusted. Crime rates are very low, but female travelers should still take precautions such as traveling with another person or in a group, and keeping an eye on personal belongings and drinks while out and about. It is also important to keep in mind that while Hong Kong is considered to be a blend of Western and traditional culture and values, it is recommended to dress more on the conservative side. While street harassment is not common, showing more skin may attract unwanted attention and stares.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Ridesharing apps like Uber are not legal, but the subways and buses are very inexpensive and safe, and taxis are a safe option after the trains and buses stop (around midnight).
- There have been reports of men in Hong Kong taking up-the-skirt photos to unsuspecting and non-consenting women in public in Hong Kong, especially on stairs/escalators, or in shopping malls with glossy, reflective floors. Use caution and stay aware of your surroundings if you choose to wear a shorter length dress or skirt.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Section 6 subheading for Women) U.S. Department of State.
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#)
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hong Kong](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; subheading for Women), US Department of State
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Safety for Women Traveling to Hong Kong](#), World Nomads
- [How to Stay Safe as a Solo Female Traveler in Hong Kong](#), yogawinetravel.com
- [Countries and Their Cultures: Hong Kong](#) (see section on Gender Roles and Statuses), Every Culture

REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in July 2021

[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Hong Kong](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in July 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.