



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
of Philadelphia

Hong Kong

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region



Key Facts



World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall): 73 (29.65)

Head of State / Head of Government: President of China XI Jinping (since 14 March 2013) & Chief Executive Carrie LAM (since 1 July 2017)

Capital city: N/A

Population: 7,213,338 (July 2018 est.)

Official Language(s): Cantonese 88.9%, English 4.3%, Mandarin 1.9%

Ethnic Groups: Chinese 92%, Filipino 2.5%, Indonesian 2.1%, other 3.4% (2016 est.)

Currency: Hong Kong dollar

Gross domestic product (PPP): 341.4 billion USD (2017)

Internet penetration: 85% (July 2016 est.)

Most trusted medium of information: N/A

Legal System: mixed legal system of common law based on the English model and Chinese customary law (in matters of family and land tenure)

Political system: presidential limited democracy; a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China

Journalists Killed/Jailed 2019: 0

Media Environment: 4 commercial global TV networks each with multiple stations; multi-channel satellite and cable TV systems available; 3 licensed broadcasters of terrestrial radio, one of which is government funded, operate about 12 radio stations; note - 4 digital radio broadcasters operated in Hong Kong from 2010 to 2017, but all digital radio services were terminated in September 2017 due to weak market demand as of 2019. Freedom of the press and publication are enshrined in Article 27 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution, and are also protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under Article 39 of the Basic Law. There is no law called "media law" in Hong Kong. Instead, the media are governed by statutory laws. In brief, there are 31 Ordinances that are directly related to mass media. Six of which are highlighted below.

Media Issues: Beijing's influence has led to a decline in press freedom in Hong Kong, which is supposed to enjoy separate status as a special administrative region until 2047. The most notable recent incident was the expulsion of Financial Times Asia editor Victor Mallet in October 2018. As vice-president of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong (FCCHK), Mallet had chaired an event that wasn't to Beijing's liking. More than half of Hong Kong's media owners, most of whom have major business interests in mainland China, are also members of political bodies on the mainland such as the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The Chinese Communist Party's Liaison Office in Hong Kong controls – partly or entirely – several media outlets in the territory including two daily newspapers, Tao Kung Pao and Wen Wei Po. Nonetheless, there is resistance. It is being led by a handful of independent online media such as Citizen News, The Initium, Hong Kong Free Press and inMedia. They exist thanks to participative funding and their audience is growing. Political influence in Hong Kong's media came under international scrutiny when Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet's visa renewal application was denied by the immigration department without explanation. Most observers credited this to Mallet's role as the first vice-president of the Foreign Correspondent's Club (FCC) and his chairing of a talk in August 2018 by an outlying political party convener who openly advocates Hong Kong's independence from China. Indeed, when the event was announced the FCC was criticized by both pro-government politicians and the media for providing a public platform for the calling for Hong Kong independence. Representatives from the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China also sent representatives to dissuade the club from hosting the event, but it eventually went ahead as scheduled. On Sunday August 11th, four five journalists were assaulted in the North Point area. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the Hong Kong authorities to put an end to the violence against the press. In the past two months, journalists covering the anti-extradition bill protests were increasingly becoming victims of intimidation and physical abuse by the police as well as pro-Beijing mobs; this includes several previous attacks on journalists during 2019.

Popular Forms of Media Consumption

Social Networks: Consumption habits have changed little over the last few years with television and online remaining main sources of news. The use of social media is slightly down in the last year – mainly due to declines in Facebook usage – while WhatsApp and Instagram continue to grow.

Print: According to independent surveys conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, South China Morning Post and Ming Pao are the most trusted newspapers in Hong Kong.