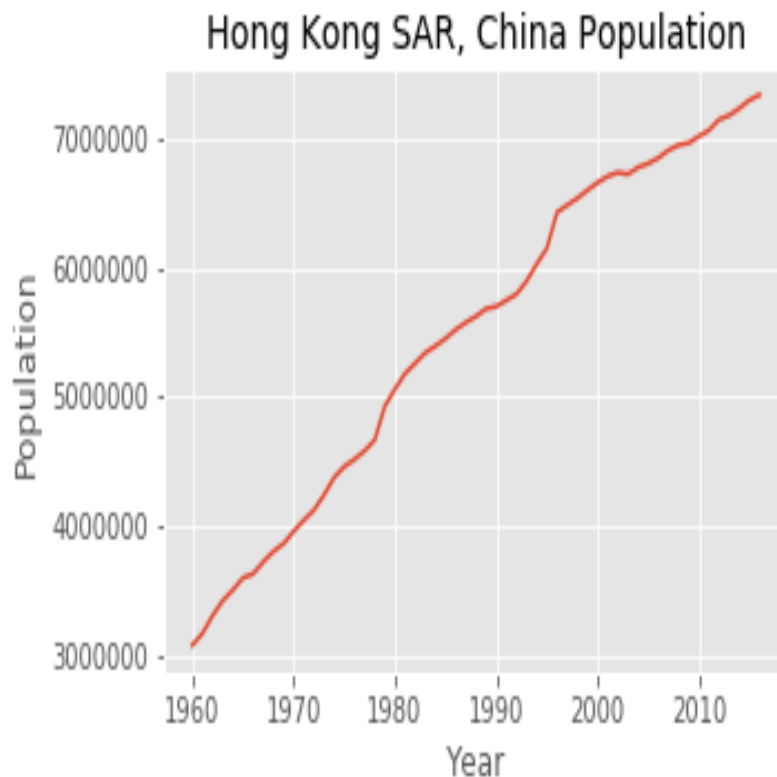


Hong Kong SAR, China



Hong Kong (Chinese: 香港, Cantonese: [hœ̌k.ŋʉŋk.ŋk]), officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, is an autonomous territory on the eastern side of the Pearl River estuary in East Asia. Along with Macau, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and several other major cities in Guangdong, the territory forms a core part of the Pearl River Delta metropolitan region, the most populated area in the world. With over 7.4 million Hongkongers of various nationalities^[note 1] in a territory of 1,104 square kilometres (426 sq mi), Hong Kong is the fourth-most densely populated region in the world. Hong Kong was formerly a colony of the British Empire, after the perpetual cession of Hong Kong Island from Qing China at the conclusion of the First Opium War in 1842. With the exception of the Second World War, during which the territory was occupied by the Empire of Japan, Hong Kong remained under British control until 1997, when it was returned to China. As a special administrative region, Hong Kong maintains a separate political and economic system apart from mainland China.