



**Department of Geography and Planning**

**University of Liverpool**

**A Study Report on Hong Kong Migrants Recently  
Arrived in the UK**

**June 2023**

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## Executive summary

In July 2020, the UK government announced the new bespoke immigration route (hereinafter referred to as BN(O) route) to allow British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders to relocate to the UK to live, work, and potentially apply for citizenship after obtaining settled status. The BN(O) route was officially launched in January 2021 and has since attracted over 160,000 applications in the first two years of the visa scheme. This wave of influx of Hong Kong migrants is considered one of the largest in recent UK history.

Despite the notable migration trend, there is limited information available regarding the background, reasons for leaving Hong Kong, and current circumstances of these Hong Kong migrants. To address this knowledge gap and with the support of Early Career Researchers and Returners Fund from the University of Liverpool, Dr. Ricci Yue conducted a comprehensive nationwide online survey within the Hong Kong community between November 2022 and mid-December 2022. The survey specifically targeted adult BN(O) visa communities who have already arrived in the UK following the launch of BN(O) route. A total of 1310 completed responses were collected.

This report employed descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the demographic composition and current conditions of Hong Kong migrants in the UK. By addressing the following key questions, we summarized the major findings derived from the survey:

### Who migrate?

- 37.4% of Hong Kong migrants were in their 40s, with a female-skewed gender ratio of 75.5 males to 100 females. The gender imbalance was more prominent among middle-aged groups (40 to 55 years old)
- Hong Kong migrants were highly educated and held professional positions. 78.4% of them had received tertiary education. A great majority of respondents identified themselves as ‘managers and senior officials’ and ‘professional occupations’ before coming to the UK.
- Only 30.3% of Hong Kong migrants were employed full-time after arriving the UK, resulting in an unemployment rate of 17.7% across the population.
- Most respondents (36.4%) considered themselves as ‘moderate democrats’.
- 72.2% of the respondents were either married or co-habiting. More respondents had children (54.3%) than those who did not (43.9%). 79.8% arrived in the UK with at least one family member.

### How and when do they enter the UK?

- Most of the Hong Kong migrants (74.9%) entered the UK by applying for BN(O) route as the main applicant.
- The highest proportion of respondents (32.4%) relocated to the UK 12-18 months prior the data collection period, corresponding to May/June 2021 to Nov/Dec 2021. The remaining respondents were distributed fairly evenly in terms of arrival time since the launch of BN(O) route two years ago.

### **Where are they?**

- Most respondents (23.4%) resided in South East region of the UK, with London (22.2%) and North West (17.0%) following closely behind.
- Most Hong Kong migrants (22.2%) chose to reside in London, with Reading (9.5%) and Manchester (7.5%) as the subsequent popular destinations.
- Hong Kong communities were predominantly clustered in major city regions. For example, major Hong Kong settlements were observed in London-Reading and Manchester-Warrington-Liverpool areas.

### **Why are they leaving Hong Kong?**

- Political factors were the most significant influence on individuals' decision to leave Hong Kong. Conversely, economic factors were the least important factor out of the four categories of factors listed (political, economic, social, and personal factors).
- Respondents cited judiciary independence (98.4% ranked important/very important), freedom of assemble (98.2% ranked important/very important), freedom of speech (98.2% ranked important/very important), and government trustworthiness (98.0% ranked important/very important), as crucial political factors for leaving Hong Kong.
- Cost of living (63.2% ranked important/very important) was the most important economic factor driving respondents to relocate to the UK.
- The presence of civil society (88.8% ranked important/very important) and the sense of safety (88.8% ranked important/very important) were considered the most important social factors in the decision-making process of leaving Hong Kong.
- Quality of life (74.1% ranked important/very important) was the most prominent personal factor influencing individuals to leave Hong Kong.

### **Will they return to Hong Kong?**

- A significant majority of respondents (61.3%) had no intention of returning to Hong Kong permanently in the foreseeable future. Only a small fraction (0.5%) considered returning within the next five years or after obtaining British Citizenship (2.1%).
- 37.4% of respondents would not even return to Hong Kong for a short visit, while only 27.3% expressed their willingness to do so.

### **How are they now?**

- Most respondents (31.3%) were neutral about their integration experience in the UK. 54.9% considered themselves to have an above-average level of integration.
- Respondents perceived their English proficiency as average to above average, with their highest confidence in reading and writing and the least confidence in speaking.
- 38.9% of the respondents were considered socially isolated according to Lubben Social Network Scale. On average, 56.5% had limited family support and 35.0% had limited non-kin social ties.
- A great majority of respondents identified themselves as either 'Hongkonger' (59.9%) or 'British Hongkonger' (36.1%).

- Over half of the respondents (51.7%) indicated a preference to vote for the Tories at the time of data collection. There were more respondents voting for the Liberal Democrats (16.0%) than the Labour Party (14.1%).
- The majority of respondents (57.7%) cited no change in the degree of their concern over Hong Kong politics after arriving in the UK. A significant proportion of respondents (43.9%) declared a moderate degree of concern over UK politics.
- When asked about the stressful events in relation to the relocation process, the top answers from respondents included moving to a new home (41.1%), language (32.9%), pressure of cultural difference (29.7%), financial problems (27.6%), and career break due to migration (24.8%).
- Results obtained from the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 suggested 15.0% and 10.9% of respondents were potentially suffering from anxiety and depression respectively. 6.6% were considered to have moderate symptom burdens, as well as impairment and disability and 2.8% reached severe level symptoms.

## Introduction

### Background of the Hong Kong Exodus

The political instability since 2019 and the announcement of Beijing-imposed National Security Law in 2020 had triggered Western countries, such as the UK, Australia and Canada, to create lifeboat scheme for Hong Kong people to leave their homeland if they wish. Since then, Hong Kong witnessed an exodus of people while the latest figures showed a net outflux of approximately 260,000 people between 2020 and 2022 (Census and Statistics Department, 2023).

This is not the first emigration wave from Hong Kong in relation to China. Following the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, Hong Kong experienced an increased emigration in the subsequent decade, with over 300,000 citizens leaving the city to overseas. The peak of this emigration wave arrived after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, when the emigration number never dipped below 60,000 between 1990 and 1992 (Skeldon, 1997).

### The BN(O) Visa policy

In July 2020, the UK government announced the new bespoke immigration route to allow British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders to relocate to the UK to live, work, and potentially apply for citizenship after obtaining settled status. Potentially 2.9 million BN(O) holders and 2.3 million BN(O) dependents were eligible for the BN(O) route after its launch on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021. The impact assessment released by Home Office estimated visa application volumes between 9,400 1,048,100 in the first five year of the visa route. Central estimation lied in a range of between 257,000 and 322,000 total applications (The Home Office, 2021). In 2022, the BN(O) route was extended to include young Hongkongers with one parents holding a BN(O) passport. Approximately 187,000 became eligible to apply the BN(O) visa as main applicant.

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, there had been a total of 160,700 applicants for the BN(O) route in the almost 2 years since its introduction on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 (Home Office, 2022). A total of 105,200 successful applicants had arrived in the UK and 24,293 grants were given to in country applications. It is noteworthy to mention that Hong Kong migrants might enter the UK through other visa types, such as working visa, global talent visa, student visa, as well as asylum seeking individuals and refugees. The migrant community also included those who held British passport or were spouses of them.

Despite the notable migration trend, there is limited information available regarding the background, reasons for leaving Hong Kong, and current circumstances of these Hong Kong migrants. With the support of Early Career Researchers and Returners Fund under the University of Liverpool, Dr. Ricci Yue conducted an online survey between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 to fill the knowledge gap.

More specifically, the online survey sought to provide information in the following areas:

1. Demographic characteristics of Hong Kong migrants (Part I)

2. Visa route of Hong Kong migrants and their duration of stay in the UK (Part II)
3. Spatial distribution of Hong Kong communities (Part III)
4. Reasons of Hong Kong migrants for leaving Hong Kong (Part IV)
5. Return intention of Hong Kong migrants (Part V)
6. Integration experience and current circumstances of Hong Kong migrants (Part IV)

The objectives of this report is to:

1. Provide a basic overlook of the demographic information, migration patterns and current circumstances of the Hong Kong migrants
2. Generate evidence for policymakers, community organizations, and relevant stakeholders in the development of support services, policies, and initiatives tailored to the specific needs of the Hong Kong communities in the UK



## Methodology

To the best of our knowledge, there was no official information regarding the spatial distribution of BN(O) visa holders or Hongkongers in the UK. To reach this population with unknown distribution, an online survey was conducted between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and 15<sup>th</sup> December to collect data from the Hong Kong community nationwide across the UK. JISC online surveys was employed as the sampling tool. We adopted a convenience sampling approach due to the lack of information about the distribution of the population. A flyer containing a QR code to access the questionnaire was disseminated through government official channels (i.e. BN(O) Welcome Hubs) and community partners (i.e. Hongkongers in Britain, Hong Kong Umbrella Community, Reading Hongkongers CIC) on various digital communication channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Signal, Telegram and Whatsapp. The flyer specified sampling criteria that respondents had to be BN(O) visa holders who had already arrived in the UK and aged over 18. However, since BN(O) visa applicants may have held other visas prior to their successful applications, the survey sample did not exclude respondents residing in the UK with other visa entries. The survey included screening questions to exclude ineligible respondents who were not residing in the UK and to determine the type of visa held by respondents at the time of data collection. Ethical clearance (Ref: 11313) was obtained from the Faculty of Science and Engineering Research Ethics Committee at the University of Liverpool.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot test with 42 responses was conducted before data collection. Minor revisions were made after the pilot test. A total of 2,686 respondents attempted the formal survey. 1,310 of them completed all responses. Statistics from the UK government at the time of questionnaire design cited that 140,500 BN(O) route applications were received by the end of June 2022 (Home Office, 2022). That implied this survey successfully covered approximately 1% of the BN(O) population. The data in this report are presented in a descriptive format.

## Part I: Who are the Hong Kong migrants?

### Demography

#### Age and gender

Our survey results show that the majority of the Hong Kong migrants falls within the middle-aged category of 40 to 49 years old, with 18.2% belonging to the 40–44 group and 19.2% belonging to the 45–49 group (See Table 1). In total the middle-aged group (30–49) comprises 57.6% of the sample. On the other hand, the young generation (29 years or below) represents only 13.2% of the total population of the BN(O) visa community. The migrant community is also made up of a significant portion (28.0%) of senior respondents (50 years or above). This age structure is similar to the Hong Kong BN(O) survey conducted by Home Office in 2021 (IFF Research, 2022). The gender ratio across all age groups is 75.5 males to 100 females (See Table 2).

*Table 1.* Respondents' age distribution

	N	Percentage (%)
18–24 years old	58	4.5
25–29 years old	113	8.8
30–34 years old	113	8.8
35–39 years old	148	11.5
40–44 years old	234	18.2
45–49 years old	247	19.2
50–54 years old	159	12.3
55–59 years old	104	8.1
60 years old or above	98	7.6
Prefer not to say	14	1.1

*Table 2.* Respondents' gender distribution

	N	Percentage (%)
Male	537	41.7
Female	711	55.2
Prefer not to say	40	3.1

A further breakdown of age and gender distribution (Figure 1) reveals that the gender imbalance is most prominent within the middle-aged group. The gender ratios for 45–49 and 40–44 age groups were 64.2 males to 100 females and 65.2 males to 100 females respectively. The gender ratio also significantly skews towards females with a rate of 68.1 males to 100 females for the 50–54 age group.

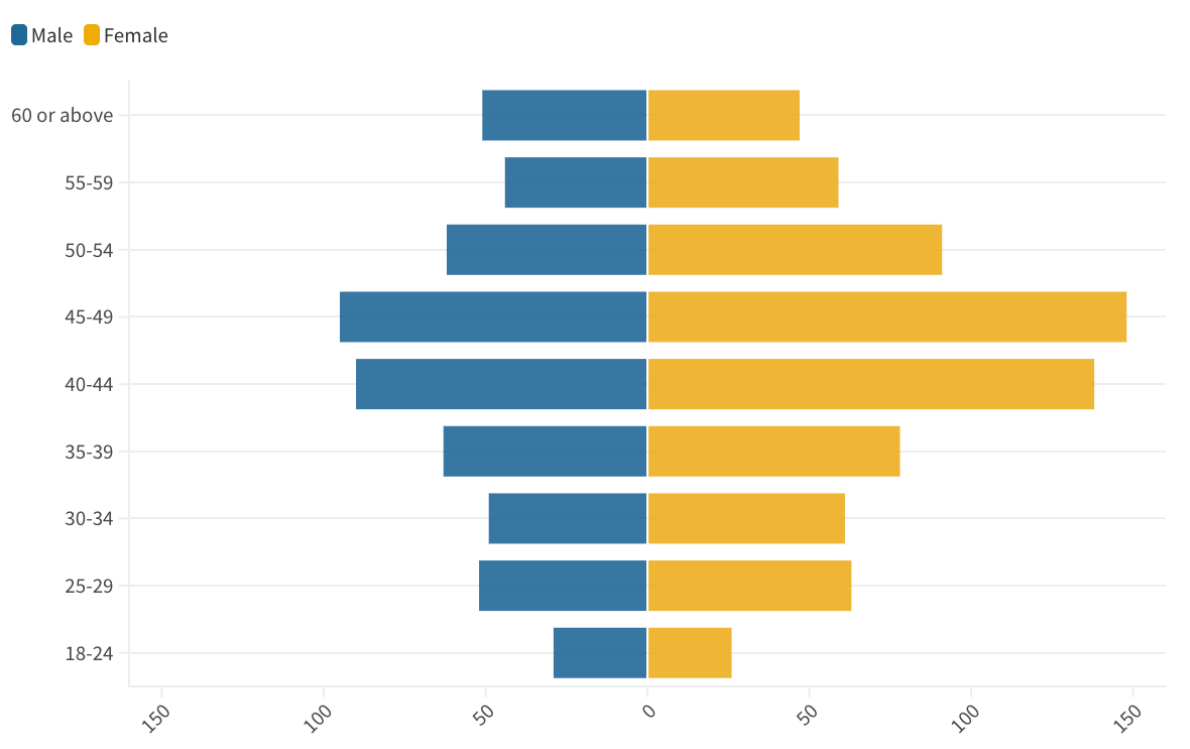


Figure 1. Respondents' age and gender breakdown

### Education Level

The survey demonstrated that most of the BN(O) visa migrants (78.4%) had received tertiary education, indicating a high level of education background within the diasporic group (See Table 3). Specifically, 29.7% of the respondents held a Master's degree or above. A smaller percentage of respondents (10.2%) cited their highest educational attainment as higher secondary. Another small portion of the respondents (9.9%) reported their highest education qualification as junior secondary or below.

Table 3. Respondent's education level

	N	Percentage (%)
Junior secondary or below	128	9.9
Higher secondary	131	10.2
Undergraduate or postsecondary	629	48.8
Master or above	382	29.6
Prefer not to say	18	1.4

### Occupation

Despite the high educational background of the Hong Kong diasporic community, only 30.3% of the respondents reported being employed full-time (See Table 4). A significant amount of respondents (17.6%) stated that they were unemployed at the time of the survey. 12.6% and 5.4% of the respondents worked part-time or worked as freelancers respectively. Additionally,

a considerable amount of respondents identified themselves as homemakers (15.0%) and retiree (9.8%).

Table 4. Respondents' current occupation status

	N	Percentage (%)
Full-time working	397	30.3
Part time working	165	12.6
Unemployed	231	17.6
Free-lancer	71	5.4
Student	68	5.2
Homemaker	197	15.0
Retiree	129	9.8
Prefer not to say	16	1.2

We also provide a further breakdown of the occupation transition of respondents before and after arriving in the UK (See Figure 2). The results indicate a significant drop in respondents identifying themselves as 'managers and senior officials' (n=265 to n=82) and 'professional occupations' (n=329 to n=150). Conversely, there is a notable increase in respondents who shifted to 'process, plant, and machine operatives' (n=2 to n=37) or 'elementary occupation' (n=15 to n=79). We also observe a rise in the number of unemployed respondents (n=9 to n=231). Some respondents decided to leave the job market and became homemakers (n=92 to n=197) or retirees (n=40 to n=129). It appears that many Hong Kong immigrants face challenges in leveraging their professional expertise after relocating to the UK, despite their excellent educational background as indicated in Table 3.

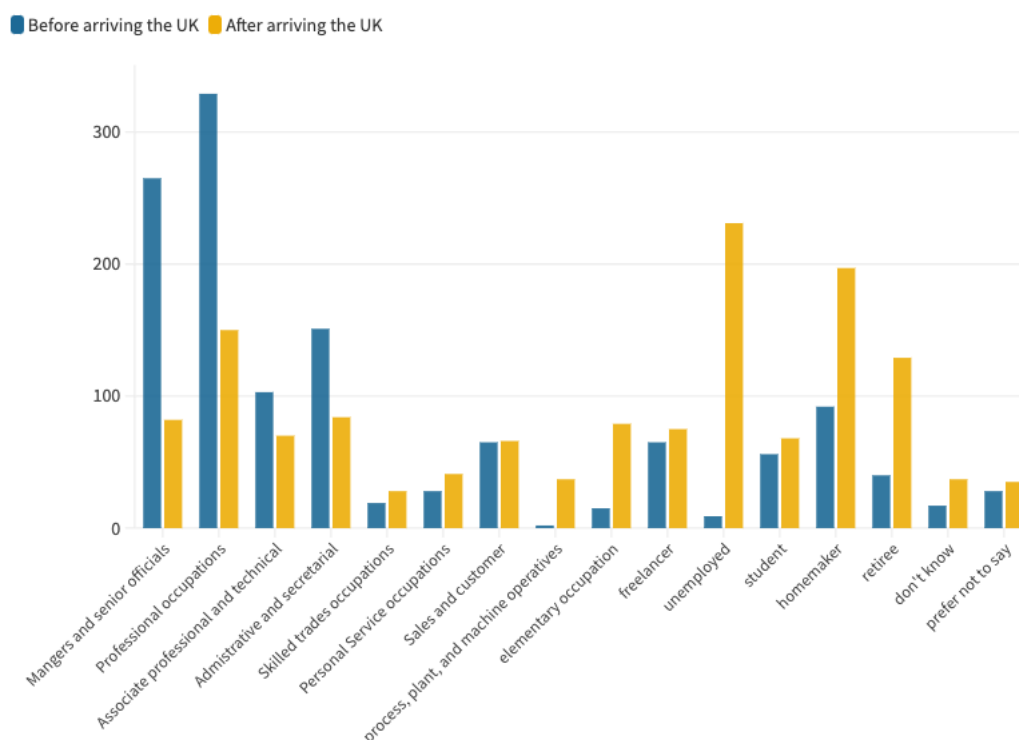


Figure 2. Change of respondents' occupation before and after arriving in the UK

### Socio-economic status

Generally, the majority of respondents from this survey perceived themselves as lower class (45.5%) or middle class (48.5%) in the UK society (See Table 5). Only 1.3% of the respondents believed that they belonged to the upper class of society.

*Table 5.* Respondents' self-perceived socio-economic status

	N	Percentage (%)
Lower class	575	45.5
Middle class	613	48.5
Upper class	17	1.3
Prefer not to say	59	4.7

### Political orientation

Respondents were asked to indicate their political orientation from a range of options. These options mainly reflect their political affiliation according to the mainstream political ideology in Hong Kong.

The moderate democrats constituted the largest group within the Hong Kong diaspora in the UK, comprising 36.4% of the population (See Table 6). 23.1% of the respondents reported themselves as localist. The localist, from a broad definition, represents people who prioritize the preservation of Hong Kong's autonomy and local interests from encroachment of Chinese government. Radical democrat accounted for 7.3% of the total population of the Hong Kong diaspora in the UK. It is worthy to note that a significant proportion of respondents (27.3%) chose not to align with any political fraction or declared no political affiliation. Only a very small portion of respondents identified themselves as centrist (0.9%), pro-business (0.6%) or pro-China (0.2%). No respondent expressed their political orientation for the pro-establishment camp. In general, it can be concluded that the majority of Hong Kong diasporic community belongs to the pan-democracy camp of Hong Kong.

*Table 6.* Respondent's political orientation

	N	Percentage (%)
Localist	303	23.1
Radical democrat	95	7.3
Moderate democrat	477	36.4
Centrist	12	0.9
Pro-establishment	0	0
Pro-business	8	0.6
Pro-China	2	0.2
No political affiliation/Not belong to any fraction	358	27.3
Prefer not to say	29	2.2

## Family structure

In terms of family structure, the majority of respondents (72.2%) were either married or co-habiting with partners (See Table 7). A relatively small proportion of respondents (21.0%) cited themselves as never married and 3.6% of the respondents were divorced or separated from marriage.

Table 8 shows more information about the family structure of Hong Kong family. 43.9% of the respondents reported not having any children. For those who had children, a higher percentage (31.0%) had two or more children compared to having only one child (23.3%).

We also asked respondents the number of family members who migrated to the UK with the respondents. Most respondents came to the UK with family members (79.8%). Among them, the most common scenario was migrating with one family member (25.2%), followed by migrating with two family members (23.8%). 18.4% of the respondents came alone to the UK.

*Table 7. Respondents' marital status*

	N	Percentage (%)
Married or co-habiting	915	72.2
Never married	266	21.0
Divorced or separated	46	3.6
Do not know	4	0.3
Prefer not to say	36	2.8

*Table 8. Respondents' number of children*

	N	Percentage (%)
No children	555	43.9
One child	294	23.3
Two children or more	391	31.0
Prefer not to say	23	1.8

*Table 9. Number of family members coming together to the UK with respondent*

	N	Percentage (%)
0	234	18.4
1	320	25.2
2	302	23.8
3	294	23.1
4	62	4.9
5	10	0.8
6 or more	26	2.0
Prefer not to say	23	2.8

## Part II: How and when do the Hong Kong migrants arrive in the UK?

We inquired about the routes our respondents took to enter the UK. The majority of them (92.3%) entered through the BN(O) route. Amongst these individuals, 74.9% reported themselves as the main applicants of their BN(O) visa, while 17.4% applied as dependent under the BN(O) visa. Although the survey primarily targeted individuals who categorized themselves as BN(O) visa migrants, we did observe a small portion of respondents who held different types of entrance visas at time of data collection. Specifically, 3.7% of the respondents were British passport holders or spouses. 1.9% entered the UK through Work/Global talent/Student visa and 0.2% of the respondents cited themselves as asylum seekers or refugees.

*Table 10.* Type of visa entering the UK

	N	Percentage (%)
BN(O) Visa (main applicant)	965	74.9
BN(O) Visa (dependent)	224	17.4
Work/Global talent/Student Visa	25	1.9
British citizen or spouse	48	3.7
Asylum seeker or refugee	3	0.2
Others	24	1.9

In terms of their duration of stay in the UK, most respondents (32.4%) had arrived the UK within 12–18 month timeframe leading up to the data collection period (Nov–Dec 2022) (See Table 11). Another 17.8% had recently arrived in the UK within a 3–6 month window. The two periods coincided with the summer holidays, which is widely considered the peak season for relocation amongst Hong Kong migrants. The remaining respondents were distributed fairly evenly across other time windows. If the number of respondents were compared by years, more respondents came from the second year of BN(O) route (46.8%) than the first year (45.8%).

*Table 11.* Arrival time of the respondents

	N	Percentage (%)
Within 3 months	151	11.7
3-6 months	229	17.8
6-9 months	138	10.7
9-12 months	98	7.6
12-18 months	418	32.4
18-24 months	172	13.4
Over 2 years	81	6.3

## Part III: Where are the Hong Kong migrants now?

There are 12 Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland that facilitate the Hong Kong BN(O) Welcome Programme, with 12 Hong Kong Welcome Hubs established under the SMP infrastructure. Resources and funding from central government are distributed through SMPs to commission support for those on the BN(O) route. It is, therefore, crucial to have an estimation of Hong Kong populations by regions.

The result (see Table 12) indicated that South East region was the most popular destination of Hong Kong migrants, accounting for 23.4% of the total share of the migrant community. Surprisingly, London ranked only second in terms of number of Hong Kong residents, with figure showing 22.2% of the Hong Kong migrants residing there. Following closely, Northwest and West Midlands were the next preferred regions for the Hong Kong community, receiving a share of 17.0% and 8.4% of the migrant wave respectively. Yorkshire and the Humber, as well as East Midlands, both attracted 6.0% of the Hong Kong migrant population. A small proportion of Hong Kong migrants chose to relocate to Southwest (5.7%) and East of England (4.8%).

Overall, a significant majority of respondents (94.7%) were distributed in the nine regions in England. Only 4.1% of the total respondents were residing at Scotland, with an even smaller percentage declared their residence in Wales (0.9%) and Northern Ireland (0.3%).

It should be noted that the immigration statistics from Home Office were utilized in this report to estimate the number of BN(O) migrants residing in various regions as of 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2022<sup>1</sup>. The number should be approached with caution that the Hong Kong community comprises of individuals who entered the UK under various visa categories, such as student visa, working visa, global talent visa, as well as those seeking asylum or being recognized as refugees. The community also includes individuals who hold British passport, or are spouses of British passport holders. Based on Table 10, these individuals accounted for approximately 5.8% of the total responses. The projected BN(O) population solely represents the estimated number of individuals residing in the UK through BN(O) route and cautions should be exercised when extrapolating this estimation, or the corresponding percentage, to any total Hong Kong population in the UK.

Table 13 lists the major cities with significant Hong Kong diasporic community. The results indicate that the Hong Kong migrants may cluster in some particular cities in various regions. For example, Reading (9.5%) was the second most popular city for Hong Kong migrants after London (22.2%) and it also accounted for approximately 40% of the Hongkongers living in the South East region. Manchester (7.5%) was another major Hong Kong hub away from London. Ten thousands Hongkongers chose to live in this metropolitan at the North West region. Almost 70% of the Hong Kong migrants resided in the eleven cities listed in the chart, indicating their tendency to cluster together and their tendency to live in cities.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Home Office, there is a total of 105,200 out of country BN(O) applicants who have arrived in the UK and 24,293 grants of in country BN(O) applications between 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2022. For further details, please see the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2022/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors>



A map is included to visually depict the spatial distribution of Hongkongers by cities and the clustering of Hong Kong communities (See Figure 3). It is evident that a significant amount of Hong Kong migrants chose to live around London (22.2%) and Reading (9.5%) area. Cluster is also observed at the corridor that runs through Manchester (7.5%), Warrington (3.6%) and Liverpool (3.1%) in the North West. Similar clustering patterns can be found in West Midlands and East Midlands, where Hong Kong communities are found mainly in Birmingham (5.5%) and Nottingham (5.1%) respectively.

*Table 12. Number of Hongkongers by regions*

	N	Percentage (%)	Projected BN(O) population*
East Midlands	74	6.0	7772
East of England	59	4.8	6196
London	274	22.2	28776
North East	17	1.4	1785
North West	209	17.0	21950
Northern Ireland	4	0.3	420
Scotland	50	4.1	5251
South East	288	23.4	30247
South West	70	5.7	7352
Wales	11	0.9	1155
West Midlands	103	8.4	10817
Yorkshire and the Humber	74	6.0	7771

\* The projection is made according to the immigration statistics released by Home Office between 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2022

*Table 13. Cities with the most Hongkongers (list only top 10)*

	N	Percentage (%)	Projected BN(O) population*
London	274	22.2	28776
Reading	117	9.5	12288
Manchester	92	7.5	9662
Birmingham	68	5.5	7141
Nottingham	63	5.1	6616
Bristol	60	4.9	4621
Warrington	44	3.6	4411
Exeter	42	3.4	3991
Liverpool	38	3.1	3676
Guildford/Sheffield	30	2.4	3151

\* The projection is made according to the immigration statistics released by Home Office between 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2022

## Distribution of Hongkong community in the UK

Population 5 ● 10



Figure 3. Map showing the distribution of Hongkongers by cities

## Part IV: Why are the Hong Kong migrants leaving Hong Kong?

Respondents were asked how various political, economic, social and personal factors drove their decision in leaving Hong Kong to the UK on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'not at all important' to 'very important'.

From an overview, the political factor is the most important factors influencing individuals' decision to leave Hong Kong (See Figure 4). All factors under this category are ranked 'important' or 'very important' by more than 70% of the respondents. The mean score of political factor (mean=4.67) is also the highest across the four factors. Social factor ranked second in mean score (3.88) and it is followed by personal factors (3.52) and economic factors (3.49).

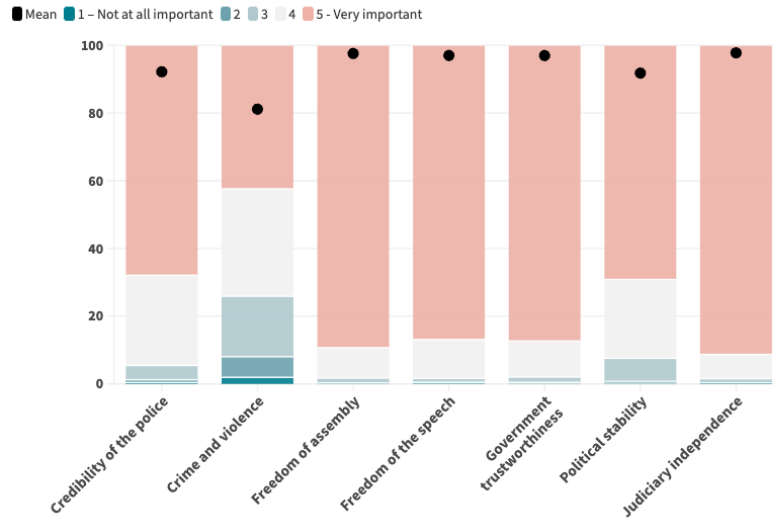
Amongst all political factors, judiciary independence (98.4% ranked important/very important, mean=4.88) and freedom of assemble (98.2% rank ranked important/very important, mean=4.88) were the most crucial factors influencing Hongkongers' decision to leave Hong Kong. Freedom of speech (98.2% ranked important/very important, mean=4.85) and government trustworthiness (98.0% ranked important/very important, mean=4.85) followed closely behind.

For economic factors, cost of living (63.2% ranked important/very important, mean=3.64) was commonly cited as the most important factor driving Hong Kong migrants to relocate to the UK. Property price (58.8% ranked important/very important, mean=3.58) and job opportunity (59.1% ranked important/very important, mean=3.56) were closely behind.

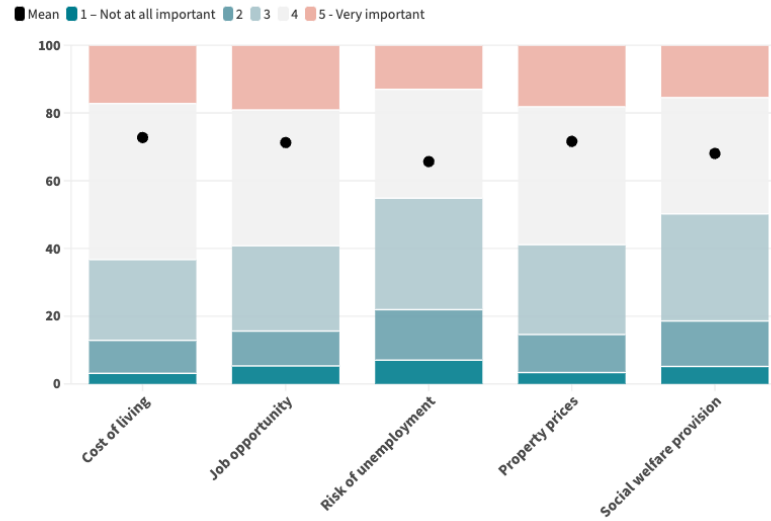
For social factors, presence of civil society (88.8% ranked important/very important, mean=4.32) was considered most important by Hong Kong migrants in their decision-making process of relocation. Sense of safety (88.8% ranked important/very important, mean=4.32) and quality of health service (82.8% ranked important/very important, mean=4.27) were amongst those being considered important in social factors.

When respondents were considering personal factors in deciding their exodus from Hong Kong, quality of life (74.1% ranked important/very important, mean=3.98) and children's prospect (65.5% ranked important/very important, mean=3.84) were two determining factors they took into account.

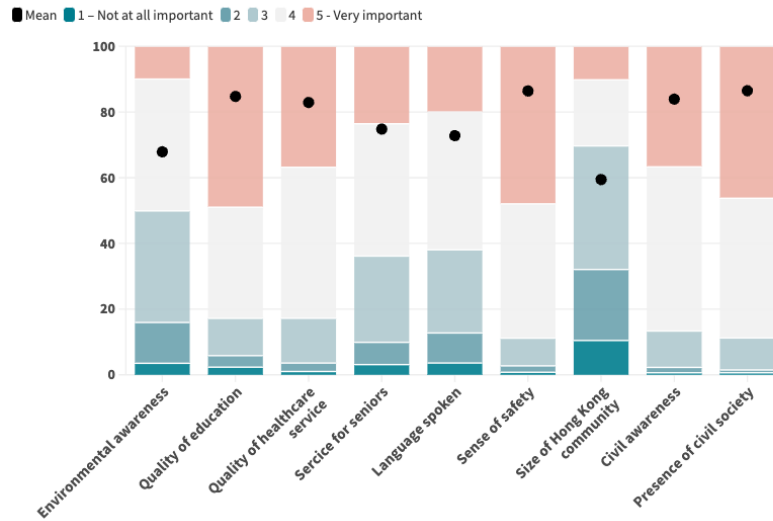
### Political factors



### Economic factors



### Social factors



### Personal factors

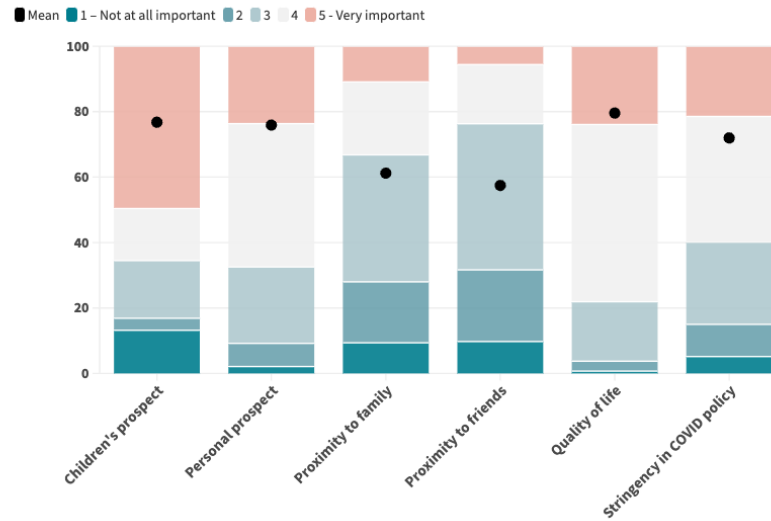


Figure 4. Respondents' reasons for leaving Hong Kong to the UK

## Part V: Will the Hong Kong migrants return to Hong Kong?

Respondents were asked in the survey whether they intended to return to Hong Kong for short visit in the foreseeable future. The results indicated that the majority of respondents (37.4%) expressed no intention to return back to Hong Kong, not even for a short visit (See Figure 5). Only 27.3% stated they would return to Hong Kong for short visit. 29.4% had not yet made a decision and 5.9% responded with 'I don't know' to this question.

Regarding their intention to return to Hong Kong permanently in the foreseeable future, 61.3% of the respondents acknowledged that they would never consider returning to Hong Kong. 23.9% had not made a decision, and 12.1% were uncertain about their future plan. Only a very small proportion of respondents expressed their intention to return to Hong Kong in the future, with 0.5% citing they would return to Hong Kong in 5 years' time, and 2.1% indicating their plan to return to Hong Kong only after obtaining British Citizenship.

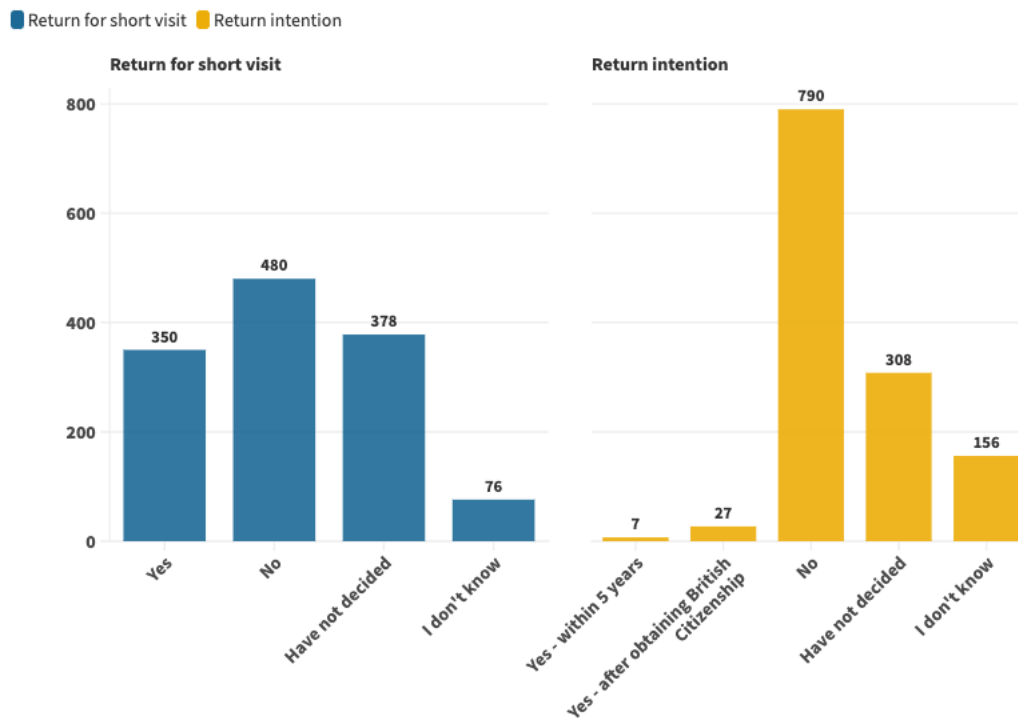


Figure 5. Respondents' intention to return for short visit (blue) and permanently (yellow)

## Part VI: How are the Hong Kong migrants now?

### Self-perceived level of integration

Respondents were asked whether they found themselves settling down well in the UK since their arrival of the country in 7-point Likert scale, with choices ranging from 'very poor' to 'excellent'. Results indicated that a substantial share of the respondents were positive about their current status in integration (See Figure 6), with over 54.9% of individuals cited themselves having an above average level of integration. 31.3% of the respondents remained neutral about their integration experience while 13.8% of the respondents reported a below average level of integration.

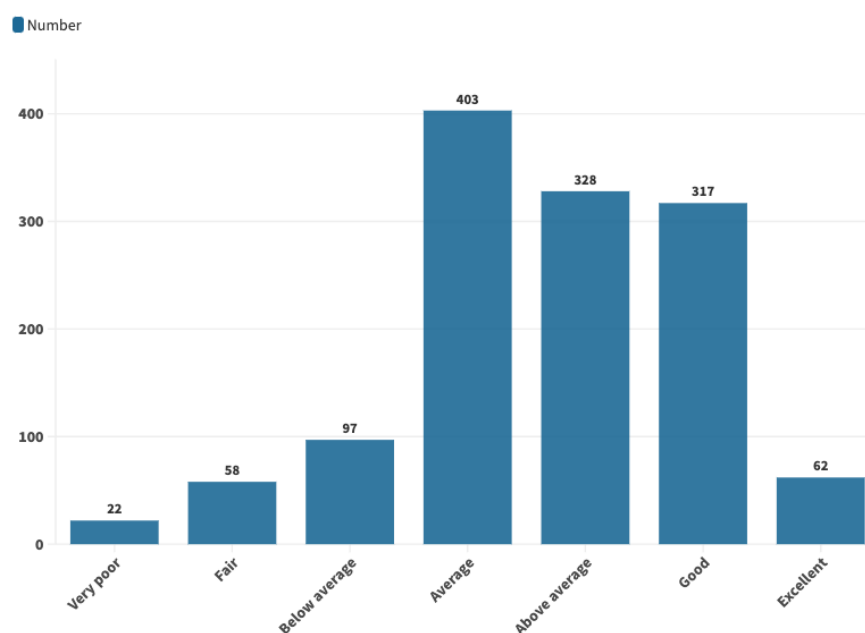


Figure 6. Respondents' self-perceived level of integration

### Self-perceived language efficiency

Respondents' language proficiency was assessed by requesting them to self-report their English level in terms of speaking, understanding, as well as reading and writing (See Figure 7). On average, respondents were most confident in their reading and writing (mean = 4.46) and least confident in expressing themselves in speaking (mean = 4.24). This finding is further supported by comparing the percentage of respondents citing their English proficiency as 'above average' and more in reading and writing (49.1%) and speaking (41.2%). The results also indicate respondents perceived themselves as average to above average in overall English proficiency.

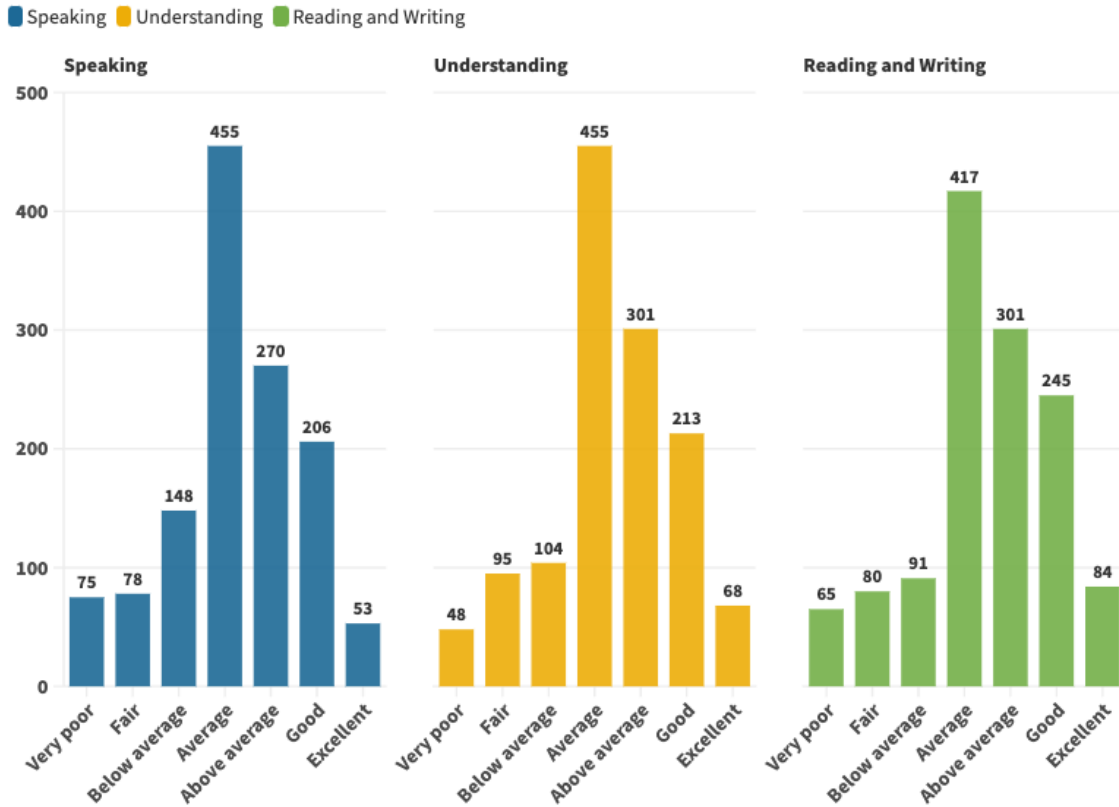


Figure 7. Respondents' self-reported English proficiency in speaking (blue), understanding (yellow), and reading/writing (green)

### Social life

Migrants, especially those who reluctantly left their homes, are more susceptible to experiencing heightened level of social isolation than the local population, owing to the fact that the new immigrants have no established social networks in the new environment and barriers related to culture or language. In the survey, the Lubben Social Network Scale-6 (LSNS-6) was adopted to gauge the degree of social support received from friends and families. Each question carries a score of 0 (none) to 5 (nine or more). A score less than or equal to 2 indicates less social engagement. The total score ranges from 0–30. We used a cut point of 10 to indicate social isolation. LSNS-6 was primarily designed for measuring social isolation among the elderly but the scale has also been validated for uses with new immigrants (Hong, Casado, & Harrington, 2011) or post-COVID communities (Sugaya, Yamamoto, Suzuki, & Uchiumi, 2021).

The results of LSNS-6 are reported in Figure 8 and Table 14. The figures are concerning that the prevalence rate of social isolation was high (38.9%) among the Hong Kong migrant community. The results from item subscales also indicate limited family support (ranging from 41.8% to 61.0%, average=56.5%) and limited non-kin social ties (ranging from 22.1% to 46.1%, average=35.0%) after relocating to the UK. The results generally emphasize a population with restricted social connections, with their physical and mental well-being at risk due to social isolation.

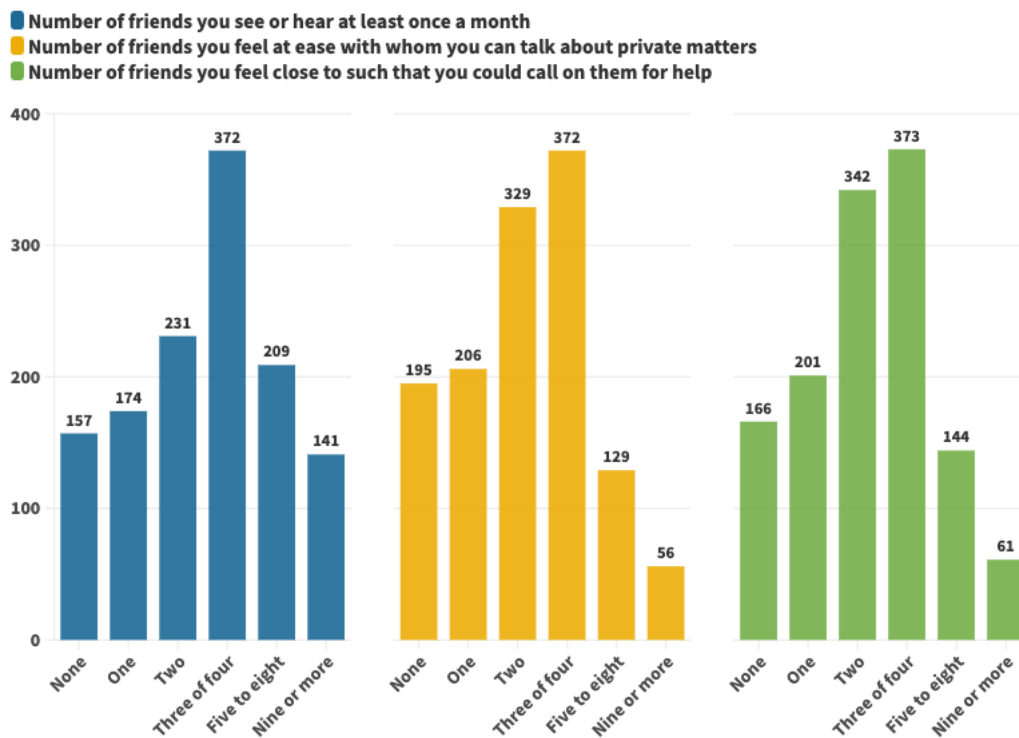
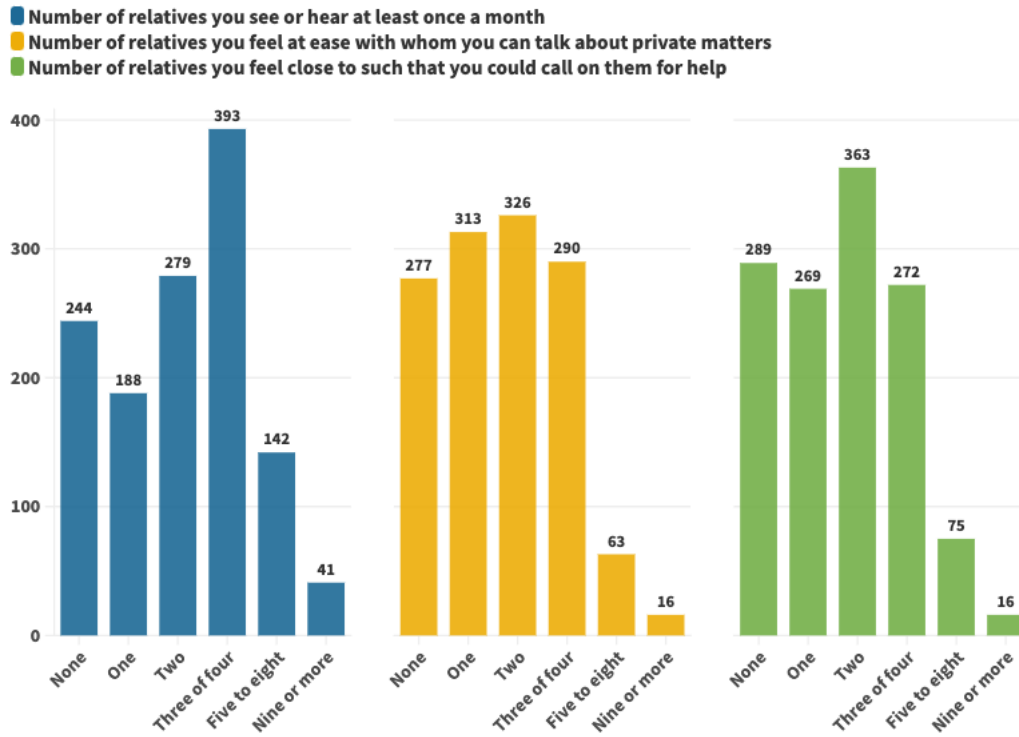


Figure 8. Measures of social isolation by LSNS-6

Table 14. Respondents' degree of social isolation as measured by LSNS-6

Item	Mean	% below 10
LSNS-6	12.5	38.9



Respondents were surveyed about their experience fitting with people from different ethnicities on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly do not fit' to 'fit very well'. The results demonstrated that most Hong Kong migrants had positive perceptions (neutral to fit very well: 92.3%) fitting with people who are non-Hongkongers (See Figure 9). This figure is similar when respondents fit with people from the same ethnicity (neutral to fit very well: 91.3%).

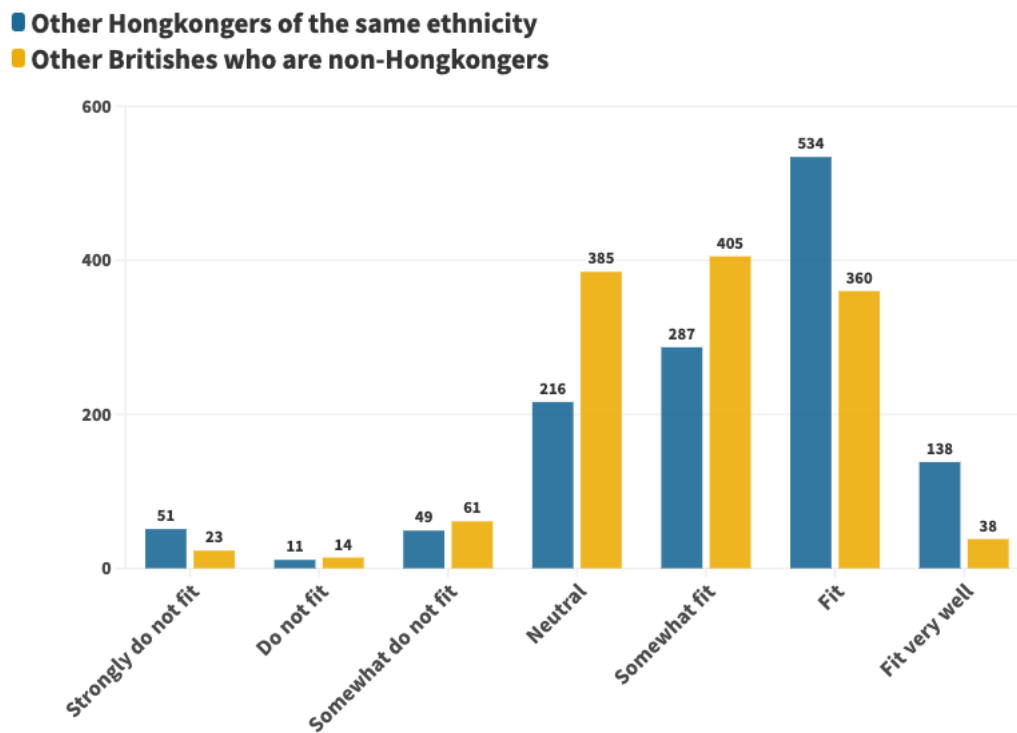


Figure 9. Respondents' experiences in making friends in the UK

### Identity

This part of the survey showed an overwhelming consensus amongst respondents to identify themselves as either 'Hongkonger' (59.9%) or 'British Hongkonger' (36.1%) (See Figure 10). It was surprising to discover the existence of the identity of 'British Hongkongers', especially since it is not currently recognized in official government documents that pertain to identity or ethnicity. Additionally, it is worth noting that although most respondents entered the UK through the BN(O) route, only a small proportion (1.6%) identified themselves as 'British', indicating a relatively low adoption of this identity among the surveyed population.

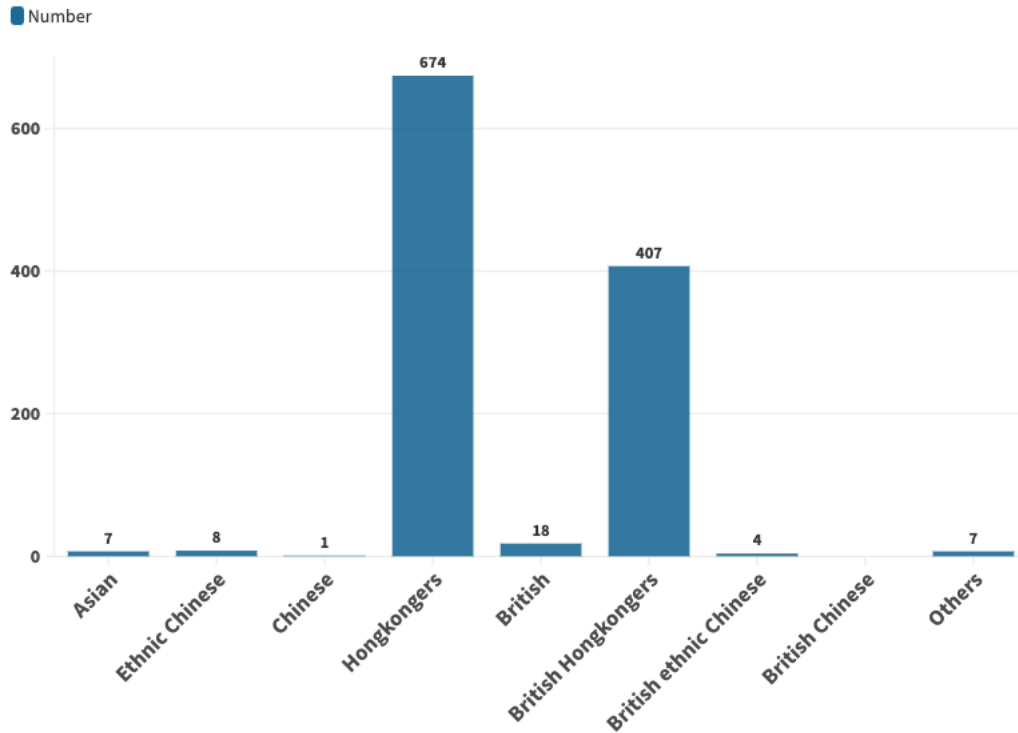


Figure 10. Respondents' self-perceived identity

### Voting preference and civil engagement

Since BN(O) visa holders are considered 'Commonwealth citizens' and 'qualifying' residents in the UK, voting rights are established as long as they register to vote in the UK election. Against this backdrop, a question regarding the political party respondent would vote for, if a UK general election were taking place at the time of data collection, was included in the survey. Generally, over half of the respondents of this survey (51.7%) indicated a preference to vote for the Tories at the time of data collection (Nov 2022 to Dec 2022) (See Figure 11). There were more respondents voting for the Liberal Democrats (16.0%) than the Labour Party (14.1%). A considerable proportion of respondents (14.6%) would not vote or abstained in the election.

Additionally, we sought to gain insight into the level of civic engagement among the respondents in this section of the survey. Respondents were first asked how much they continued to concern about Hong Kong politics. It is not surprising to see that the majority of respondents (57.7%) cited no change in the degree of this concern over Hong Kong politics (See Figure 12). 24.2% expressed less concern about Hong Kong politics after leaving Hong Kong. Conversely, 18.1% of respondents admitted to being more concerned about Hong Kong politics than before.

Respondents were also asked about their concerns regarding UK politics. 27.2% of the respondents paid little attention (Not at all concern or slightly concern) on local UK politics, while the majority of respondents (43.9%) declared a moderate degree of concern. 21.3% and 7.7% cited very concern and extremely concern over UK politics respectively.

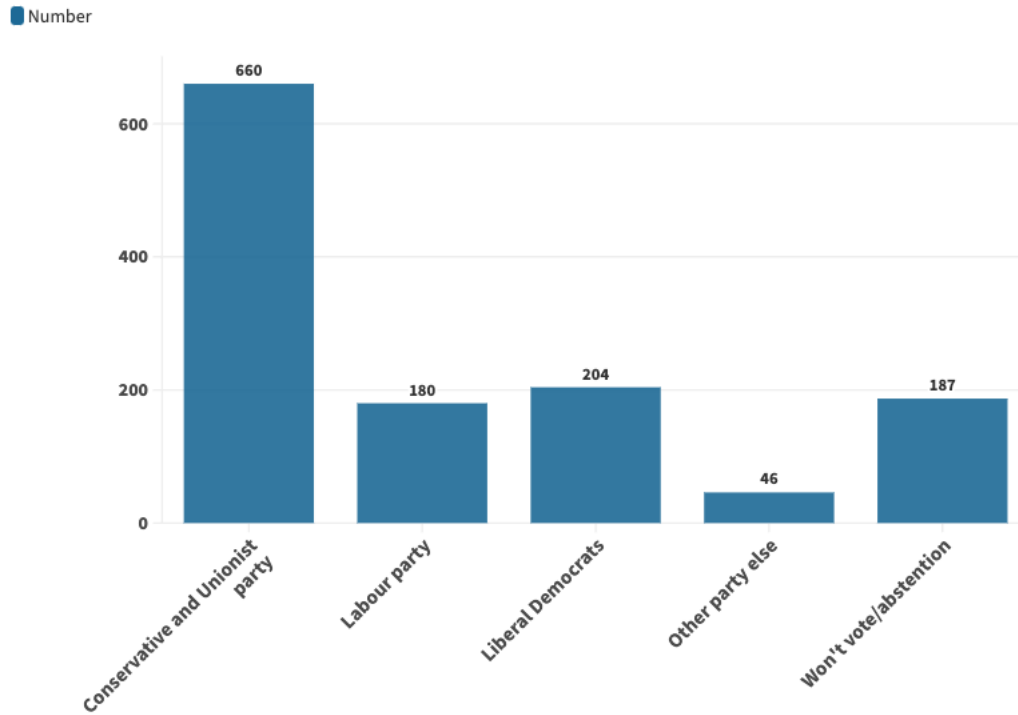


Figure 11. Voting preference of respondents at the time of data collection

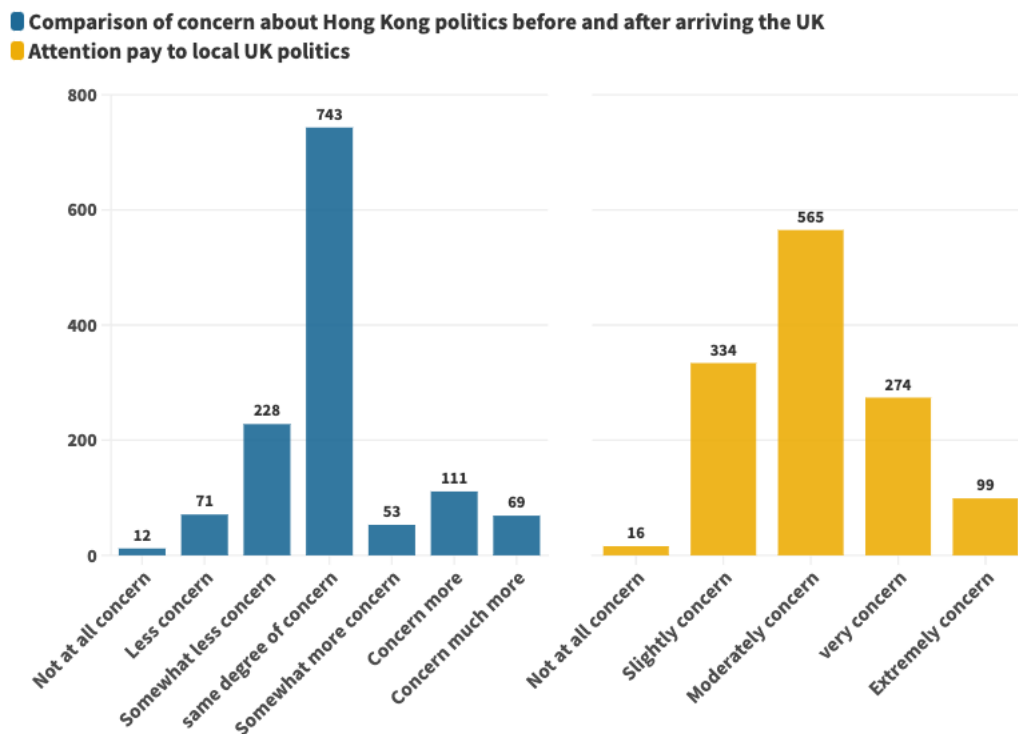


Figure 12. Change of respondents' concern about politics in Hong Kong after arriving the UK (blue) and their current concern on UK politics (yellow)

## Major stressors

Relocation is never an easy process, especially for Hongkong migrants who left their homes in a short period of time reluctantly. As such, they may have experienced different kinds of stressors during their relocation and settlement in the UK. The survey asked respondents to indicate the stressful events that had burdened them since their relocation, or in the last six months. The results highlighted several major stressors, including moving to a new home (41.1%), language (32.9%), pressure of cultural difference (29.7%), financial problems (27.6%) and career break due to migration (24.8%) (See Figure 13).

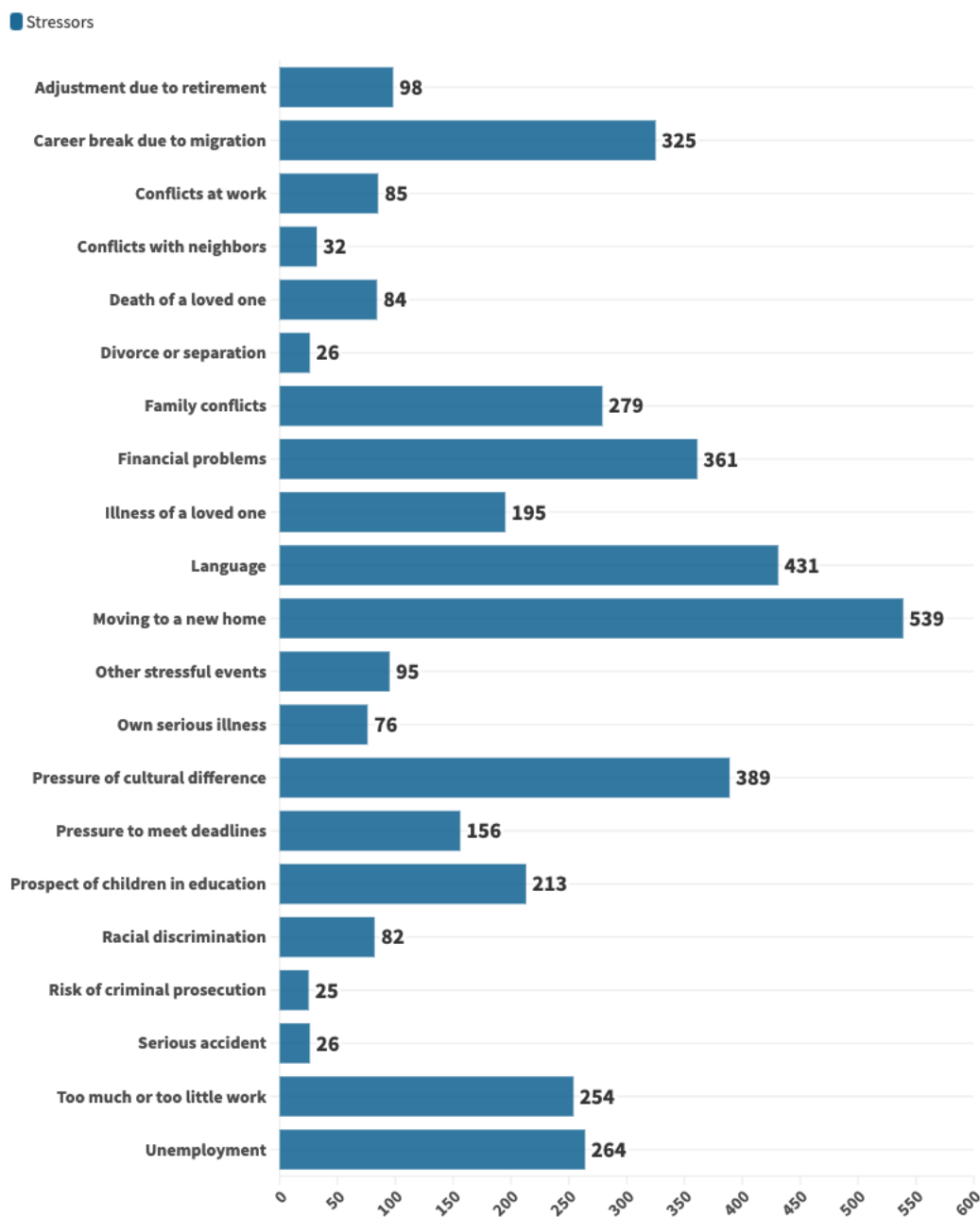


Figure 13. Major stressors in relation to relocation

## Mental health

The last part of the survey utilized the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) to briefly measure anxiety and depression. PHQ-4 consists of 4 questions, with the first 2 (GAD-2) suggesting anxiety and the next 2 (PHQ-2) suggesting depression. Respondents were asked to rank the frequency of symptoms on a 4-point scale, ranging from 'not at all' to 'nearly every day'. Scores are categorized as normal (0-2), mild (3-5), moderate (6-8), and severe (9-12) in terms of symptom burden, as well as impairment and disability. The total score for GAD-2 and PHQ-2 over or equal to 3 suggests anxiety and depression respectively. The results of PHQ-4 are reported in Table 15. Within our sample, 15.0% and 10.9% were identified to potentially suffer from anxiety and depression respectively. 6.6% were considered to have moderately symptom burdens and 2.8% reached the severe level. The percentage of respondents suffering from depressive symptoms and anxiety symptoms was comparatively lower than in a clinical survey conducted by Liang (2022).

*Table 15.* Mental health of respondents as measured by PHQ-4

Items	Mean (95% CI)	S.D	N	%
<b>Anxiety (GAD-2)</b>				
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0.73 (0.68–0.77)	0.78		
Not being able to stop or control worrying	0.53 (0.49–0.58)	0.79		
Subtotal	1.26 (1.18–1.34)	1.46		
Number of respondents with score $\geq 3$			193	15.0
<b>Depression (PHQ-2)</b>				
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0.48 (0.44–0.53)	0.76		
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	0.45 (0.41–0.49)	0.74		
Subtotal	0.93 (0.86–1.01)	1.36		
Number of respondents with score $\geq 3$			140	10.9
<b>Distress (PHQ-4)</b>				
PHQ-4 total score	2.19 (2.05–2.34)	2.62		
Number of respondents with score 6–8			85	6.6
Number of respondents with score $\geq 9$			36	2.80

## Discussion and conclusion

This section aims to synthesis the evidence collected from the survey to offer insights and organized evidence for policymakers, community organizations, or relevant stakeholders to generate support services for the Hong Kong communities.

The survey findings reveal that the Hong Kong migrants are primarily middle-aged, female-skewed, highly educated, highly functional and have above-average English proficiency. It is important for social services to align with these demographic profile to address the specific needs and challenges faced by this migrant community. For example, middle-aged migrants usually face more obstacles in career transition and social integration after relocation (it could be relevant to the patterns observed in 'occupation' and 'social life'). They may also encounter specific set of health problems and family issues corresponding to their life phase. We encourage social service providers and policymakers to consider these demographic information to enhance the efficiency of service provision.

The demographic characteristics clearly display a gender imbalance across the Hong Kong community. It should be taken into account when developing social service to ensure gender equity and to avoid gender-related issues.

The survey suggests that a significant amount of Hong Kong migrants may have transitioned from professional or managerial roles to primary industry or elementary worker positions, or have become unemployed upon arriving the UK. This highlights the potential waste of human capital and skills, which will cause inefficiency to the BN(O) visa policy. Efforts should be made to create opportunities for talent utilization and support the transition of professional qualification for Hong Kong migrants.

This survey provides valuable information about the spatial distribution of Hong Kong communities across the UK. The central government should consider whether to distribute resources and funding according to this spatial distribution to ensure adequate support in areas with high concentration of Hong Kong migrants, facilitating their integration into local communities.

Findings from Part IV indicate that political factors are prominent in influencing Hong Kong migrants' decision to leave Hong Kong. This may imply that future migration trends from Hong Kong will continue to be shaped by the political environment of Hong Kong. In the latest six-monthly assessment of the situation in Hong Kong, the UK government stated that the Hong Kong authorities continued to crack down on free speech, the free press, and free assembly (Secretary of State for Foreign, 2023). The pervasive, chilling effect of the National Security Law had seeped into all aspects of society. The wave of Hong Kong exodus is likely to persist against this background.

The emigration wave of Hong Kong in the 90s ended up with a substantial proportion of emigrated population returned after securing a foreign passport from the destination countries. Results from Part V suggest the current emigration wave will behave differently, with only a small portion planning to return back to Hong Kong in the foreseeable future. This finding will have implication that BN(O) integration programs and support services should be

designed to meet the long-term needs of a population that intend to stay in the UK for an extended period.

Despite the respondents perceiving themselves as integrating above average and having a moderately good language proficiency, social isolation remains a significant issue among respondents. This highlights the importance to address social isolation and loneliness problems through initiatives that encourage social connections, such as facilitating opportunities for making friends and engaging with local communities. Social service and support networks should also pay special attention to individuals who having loved ones remaining in Hong Kong. The survey also indicates potential mental health concerns among Hong Kong migrants. Further study and clinical diagnosis are warranted to identify at-risk populations to ensure efficient allocation of mental health support and resource. This survey identifies a number of common stressors experienced by Hong Kong migrants, which can inform the development of interventions to mitigate their impact on well-being.

## Acknowledgment

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