

**Taiwan**

# *Ethnicity in Taiwan*

## *Group selection*

Politically relevant ethnic groups in Taiwan include the **Taiwanese** (84%), the **Mainland Chinese** (14%) and the **Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese** (2%).

The determination of ethnic groups in Taiwan is relational, political and fluid: Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese may be collectively grouped together as "Han". The nomenclature 'Taiwanese' is often used to refer to a composite of Hoklo and Hakka groups that were present in Taiwan prior to the influx of Mainland Chinese in 1949 at the end of the Chinese Civil War, but this term is also not stable and is used in a variety of ways, especially with respect to political currents and groupings. Additionally, Hakka are alternatively considered by some to be their own ethnic group. Many ethnic dynamics in Taiwan come down to a Taiwan-centric or China-centric focus rather than to a biological/heritage determination.

14 Austronesian people groups (referred to as aboriginal or indigenous) have official recognition. Nine groups were recognized by the KMT using inherited classifications from the Japanese, and five have attained recognition in the past 10 years (i.e. the Thao, 2001; Kavalan, 2002; Truku, 2004; Sakizaya, 2007; Seediq, 2008). These 14 groups are aggregated into one umbrella group, based on shared Austronesian heritage, shared national representation and political cooperation/unification (e.g. Council of Indigenous Peoples under the Executive Yuan from 1996). This umbrella grouping, indicating a common ethnic denominator and political cooperation, should not be confused with the classification used in the People's Republic of China, in which the groups from Taiwan are given a single ethnic classification, the Gaoshan.

## *Power relations*

### *1949-1986*

Taiwan was under martial law for 38 years under the Kuomintang (KMT). Following the establishment of the first opposition party (the Democratic Progressive Party) in 1986 and other democratic reforms, there has been increasing localization and multiculturalism at the political level.

*1987-1995*

The year 1987 indicates the lifting of martial law and the allowance of other political groups. Lee Tung-Hui, a Taiwanese, became president and Chairman of the KMT in 1988, and political power gradually shifted to being less China-centric.

*1996-1999*

Indigenous groups gained national-level representation in 1996, and increasing rights and powers following this time. The ascent of the DPP brought about further representation, recognition of autonomous and political rights, as well as an official change in name to 'indigenous' (previously resisted for its political and rights implications).

*2000-2008*

Taiwanese took a central position in the political arena from 2000, when the DPP came into power, ending more than half a century of the KMT rule. There is, especially from 2000, increasing representation and influence of the Aboriginal/Indigenous groups in the government. However, in absolute terms, their influence is still less than that of Mainland Chinese, so the status designation remains "powerless."

*2009-2016*

Although the KMT was re-elected in 2008 and has been in power until 2016, it can no longer be understood as being composed of and dominated by Mainland Chinese. However, former President Ma Ying-jeou is regarded as being more China-centric.

Most levels of the political system have some sort of indigenous representation, and this is particularly the case for the legislative branch. Furthermore, amendments have been passed in the legislature that will allow the indigenous population to enjoy more local autonomy by electing their own district directors and chiefs, who have previously been appointed by mayors (<sup>5090</sup>). In 2015, critics complained that the government's efforts to preserve indigenous cultures was inadequate (<sup>5091</sup>). In 2016, certain groups continue to push for official recognition of some indigenous tribes. On August 1, the newly elected president issued the first formal apology to Taiwan's indigenous people for the injustices suffered throughout the centuries (<sup>5092</sup>). It is important to note that due to the complicated relations between China and Taiwan, many countries do not recognize Taiwan's sovereignty, and thus only limited information is accessible with regards to the Indigenous Taiwanese peoples.

<sup>5090</sup> [US Department of State, 2014]

<sup>5091</sup> [US Department of State, 2015]

<sup>5092</sup> [US Department of State, 2016]

*2017-2021*

In 2016, presidential and legislative elections took place. The Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency and the majority of the seats in the legislature. The newly elect president Tsai Ing-wen is the first female president in Taiwan, marking the second win in a open ballot with above 56% of the overall vote since 2000. In addition, six seats were reserved for representatives of Taiwanese indigenous people (<sup>5093</sup>). Upon the formal apology in 2016 towards the indigenous people by the newly elect President, her office set up a Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Commission. In 2017, the Indigenous Languages Development Act was approved. recognizing the languages of Taiwan's 16 indigenous groups as national languages and enabling indigenous people to use their language in official settings (<sup>5094</sup>).

<sup>5093</sup> [US Department of State, 2017]

<sup>5094</sup> [US Department of State, 2018]

Tsai Ing-wen of the ruling Democratic Progressive party won a second term following the 2020 presidential and legislative elections, gaining over 57% of the ballot votes. The main political opponent of the KMT party, Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu received around 39% (<sup>5095</sup>). China remained a key issue in these elections, especially after the protests in Hong Kong and China's handling of the situation. While none of the candidates seeks unification with China, Han Kuo-yu is generally in favor of closer economic ties with China, which according to him, would result in more economic prosperity for Taiwan.

<sup>5095</sup> [BBC, 2020]

The relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan has remained tense. In several public speeches, such as the one commemorating 40 years since the beginning of improved ties between the two countries, the Chinese President called for a peaceful unification between China and Taiwan, but did not exclude the use of force, if necessary. However, the Taiwanese president reiterated that Taiwan would never accept unification with China under Beijing's terms of "one country, two systems", the principle currently in place between China and Hong Kong (<sup>5096</sup>). This is not surprising considering the negative view of Taiwanese people for thee most part towards mainland China and the DPP maintenance on a Taiwanese identity. In addition, while the majority of Taiwanese are in favor of closer economic ties with China, few of them support closer political ties (<sup>5097</sup>). Taking into account the support for the DPP and its stances, we code Taiwanese as senior partners, whereas Mainland Chinese as coded as junior partner.

<sup>5096</sup> [BBC, 2019]

<sup>5097</sup> [Pew Research Center, 2020]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan

From 1949 until 1986

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	POWERLESS
Mainland Chinese	0.14	DOMINANT

From 1987 until 1995

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mainland Chinese	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER

From 1996 until 1999

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mainland Chinese	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER
Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2000 until 2008

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	SENIOR PARTNER
Mainland Chinese	0.14	JUNIOR PARTNER
Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2009 until 2016

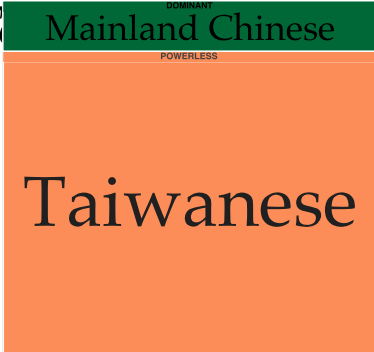


Figure 1000: Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1949-1986.

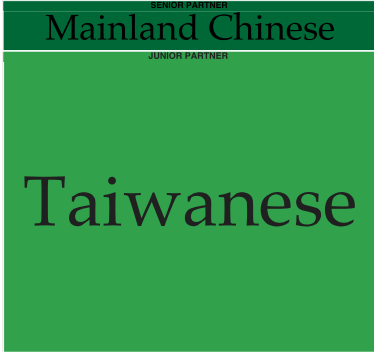


Figure 1001: Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1987-1995.

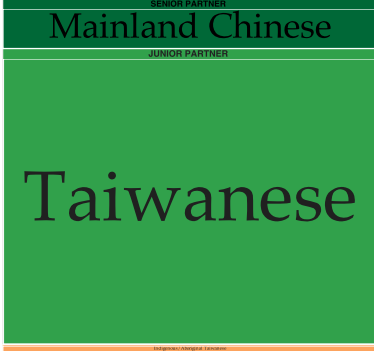


Figure 1002: Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1996-1999.

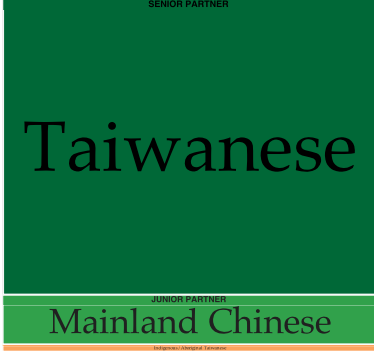


Figure 1003: Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 2000-2008.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	SENIOR PARTNER
Mainland Chinese	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER
Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese	0.02	POWERLESS

*From 2017 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Taiwanese	0.84	SENIOR PARTNER
Mainland Chinese	0.14	JUNIOR PARTNER
Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese	0.02	POWERLESS

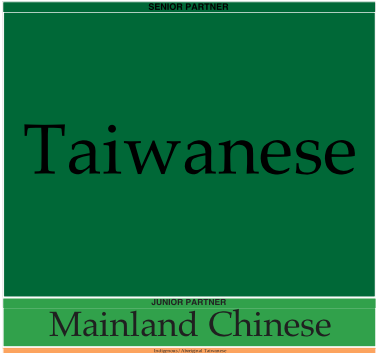


Figure 1005: Political status of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 2017-2021.

# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Taiwan

From 1949 until 1995

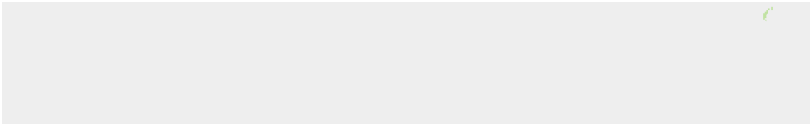


Figure 1006: Map of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1949-1995.



	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
	Taiwanese	17 248	Regional & urban
	Mainland Chinese	0	Urban

Table 365: List of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1949-1995.

From 1996 until 2021

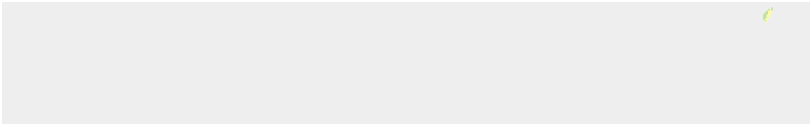


Figure 1007: Map of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1996-2021.




	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
	Indigenous/Aboriginal Taiwanese	18 741	Regionally based
	Taiwanese	17 248	Regional & urban
	Mainland Chinese	0	Urban

Table 366: List of ethnic groups in Taiwan during 1996-2021.



*Conflicts in Taiwan*

*Starting on 1949-10-30*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of China	Government of Taiwan		1949-10-30			