

Youth in Hong Kong A Statistical Profile 2015

Executive Summary

**Prepared for
The Commission on Youth**

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Background

The Youth in Hong Kong – A Statistical Profile is a compilation of statistics concerning Hong Kong Youth. It was first produced in 1988 and has been updated on a regular basis.

Method

The sources of the statistics in this Youth Profile include existing administrative or research data from Government and non-governmental departments. Comments on the statistics were also included to facilitate understanding on the trend of youth behavioral changes.

Topics

This Youth Profile covers topics mainly related to youth aged 15-24 or similar ages within the scopes of demographic characteristics, education, employment, civic and social engagement, cultural development, delinquent and deviant behaviours, youth values and internet.

Summary on Key Statistics

1. Demographical Characteristics

The youth population boomed in the seventies and eighties but a declining trend could be found over the last three decades. According to figures from the Census and Statistics Department, in 2015, there were 808,800 young people aged 15 and 24 living in Hong Kong and the relative size to the whole Hong Kong population was 11.1%. It is projected that the population of youth aged 15-24 should drop to 629,600 in 2023, i.e. 8.2% of the population, and then bounce back to 777,000 in 2033, and then start to drop after 2034 to 622,600 in 2064. For sex ratio, in 2015, the number of males per 1,000 females of those aged 15-24 was 1,017, with a stable trend over the past two decades.

The number of new immigrants who were One-way Permit Holders and aged 15-24 was in a declining trend since 2009. According to the Population Censuses in 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011, compared with other districts, a higher proportion of new immigrants who had resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years and aged 17-24 lived in Yuen Long district, followed by Wong Tai Sin district.

The youth population was not evenly distributed across the 18 districts. Between 1996 and 2011, more than half of the youth were living in the New Territories and the percentage had risen to 56.4% in 2011. In contrast, the youth population in Hong Kong

Island was in a declining trend, especially in Wan Chai.

Between 1996 and 2014, the reported number of missing people per 1,000 males aged 16-20 fluctuated between 0.8 and 1.8 persons while the rates for the females were between 0.9 and 3.1 persons. However, in general, between 1996 and 2014, the number of reported missing females aged 16-20 was higher than that for males.

In terms of health status, according to the survey by Census and Statistics Department, 1.3% of young people aged below 25 had at least one common chronic disease in 2014. The highest proportion of youth with chronic health condition suffered from “Asthma”. Between 2004 and 2014, more than 13% of youth aged 18-24 were classified as “overweight” or “obese” while more than a quarter were classified as “underweight”. Between 2005 and 2014, the physical activity level of 51.3% to 61.1% of youth aged 18-24 were classified as moderate. However, the proportion of youth aged 18-24 with physical activity level of classified as high was in a rising trend after 2008.

The number of youth disability registrants per 1,000 people aged 15-24 decreased from 13.2 persons in 1997 to 9.9 persons in 2015. Among them, a higher proportion was mentally handicapped and autistic. The mortality rate, i.e. the number of deaths per 1,000 population, of youth aged 15-24 was in a declining trend. “External causes of morbidity and mortality” was the most common cause of deaths for youth aged 15-24 between 2001 and 2014. Among the youth whose causes of death were “External causes of morbidity and mortality”, a higher proportion of them died from the cause of “Intentional self-harm”, e.g. suicide.

Between 1996 and 2014, the percentage of never married females aged 15-24 had risen from 90.1% to 97.2% while the percentage for males had increased steadily from 94.5% to 99.1% over the same period. As to the fertility rate, the age specific fertility rate per 1,000 females aged 20-24 was in a declining trend between 1996 and 2014.

Based on the a study by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, the proportion of males aged 18-27 who had sexual intercourse experience had risen from 36.7% in 1991 to 50.0% in 2011, while the proportion of females had also risen from 32.7% to 42.0% over the same period.

Revealed by the Population Censuses conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2001, 2006 and 2011, the proportion of youth aged 15-24 who could speak Putonghua had increased from 39.1% in 2001 to 68.7% in 2011 while there was a modest growth in proportion of youth who could speak English from 67.9% in 2001 to 71.4% in 2011.

The proportion of the youth aged 15-24 receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) had decreased from 6.6% in 2005 to 4.0% in 2015. However, the percentage of youth aged 15-24 living in low-income households (those domestic households with monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income for the corresponding household size) increased from 15.2% in 2001 to 17.5% in 2011 according to The Hong Kong Council of Social Service's analysis of census data. However, according to statistics from the General Household Survey of Census and Statistics Department, the percentage of youth aged 15-24 living in low-income households before policy intervention¹ had decreased from 20.6% in 2009 to 18.7% in 2014, while that percentage after policy intervention² had decreased from 14.5% in 2009 to 12.6% in 2014.

Based on the Population Censuses by the Census and Statistics Department in 2001, 2006 and 2011, the proportion of youth aged 15-24 living with parent(s) only was in a rising trend between 2001 and 2011 and had risen from 91.5% in 2001 to 94.6% in 2011. An "Opinion Survey on Wealth Management and Life Planning of Hong Kong Post 80 & 90 Generations" conducted by The Public Opinion Programme of The University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP) in 2013 showed that more than half of youth aged 16-33 (53.9%) had considered buying a property.

2. Education

The full-time education attendance rate for youth aged 15-24 has continued to increase from 47.8% in 1996 to 65.3% in 2014, and the percentage of youth aged 15-24 with non-degree and degree post-secondary education was in a rising trend between 1996 and 2014. Moreover, based on statistics from Population Censuses and By-census from 1996 to 2011, parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to have children with higher educational attainment.

The number of students enrolled in undergraduate programmes funded by The University Grants Committee had risen from 48,525 to 80,914 between 1996/97 and 2014/15. The proportion of non-local undergraduate students among them grew from 0.18% to 11.6%. During the same period, the number of research postgraduate students funded by The University Grants Committee had increased continuously and the proportion of non-local research postgraduate students grew from 27.8% to 79.8%.

¹ Before policy intervention: This income type only includes household members' employment earnings, investment income and non-social-transfer cash income. In other words, the income is pre-tax income with all cash benefits excluded.

² After policy intervention (Recurrent cash): It refers to the household income after tax, including recurrent cash benefits received.

Students enrolled in the self-financed taught postgraduate programmes had increased from 27,600 in 2008/09 to 38,600 in 2014/15. The proportion of students studying in full-time self-financed degree courses had increased greatly from 9,163 in 2001/02 to 76,801 in 2014/15.

In the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) held from 2012 to 2014, the percentage of day-school candidates who scored Level 2+ in the four core subjects in HKDSE had slightly decreased from 67.6% in 2012 to 66.8% in 2014.

In the area of special education, the enrolment in special education schools and classes had decreased from 8,697 in 1996 to 7,760 in 2014. On the other hand, the enrolment of students with special educational needs (SEN) studying in public sector ordinary secondary schools increased from 8,000 in 2009/10 to 19,640 in 2015/16.

For public expenditure on education, government expenditure on education under General Revenue Account and recurrent government expenditure on education had increased continuously between 1998/99 and 2015/16. And the expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP ranged from 3.3% to 4.6% between 1998/99 and 2015/16.

The total number of applicants of the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) financial assistance scheme for post-secondary students had expanded from 4,093 in 2001/02 to 27,367 in 2014/15 while the number of applicants of non-means tested loans paid increased from 17,197 in 1998/99 to 39,283 in 2014/15. The total number of eligible students for the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme had increased from 63,476 in 1996/97 to 98,929 in 2014/15.

In 2015/16, the study room facilities provided 15,439 seats in total which is less than 17,066 in 2004/05. Between 1995/96 and 2014/15, the proportion of drop-out F.1 to F.3 students had increased marginally from 0.57% to 0.59%.

3. Employment

With the decreasing youth population and increasing participation in full-time education, the labor force of youth aged 15-24 had continued to shrink from 1996 until 2010. The proportion of employed youth aged 15-24 decreased steadily from 45.4% in 1996 to 34.9% in 2014. Between 1996 and 2014, the median monthly employment income of youth aged 20-24 was between \$6,500 and \$10,000 while those for youth aged 15-19 ranged between \$4,000 and \$6,500. The median monthly employment income of these two age groups had slowly risen since 2004.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate of youth aged 15-24 decreased from 2003 to 2008, but rose to 9.2% in 2014. The underemployment rate of youth aged 15-24 peaked at 4.0% in 2003, and then declined to 2.1% in 2014. The proportion of young Hong Kong residents who worked in the Mainland aged 20-29 had declined from 4.5% in 2004 to 1.9% to 2010.

The proportion of working youth aged 15-24 who were associate professionals, service workers and shop sales workers generally increased from 1996 to 2014. On the contrary, the proportion of blue collar workers (i.e. craft and related workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers) had generally decreased. In 2014, a higher proportion of youth aged 15-24 worked as “service workers and shop sales workers” (35.8%), followed by “associate professionals” (21.2%) and “clerical support workers” (20.4%).

4. Civic and Social Engagement

The proportion of youth who were registered electors aged 18-25 had risen from 50.6% in 2000 to 63.7% in 2015. Figures showed that the turnout rate of youth aged 18-25 in Legislative Council elections of registered electors showed no consistent pattern. In the Legislative Council elections and by-elections between 1998 and 2012, the turnout rates of young people ranged from 38.4% to 52.9% and 23.1% to 54.8% respectively. In term of District Council elections, the turnout rates of youth aged 18-25 had risen from 22.3% in 1999 to 34.4% in 2007 but dropped to 29.1% in 2015.

The number of registered young volunteers aged 13-25 in the Volunteer Movement, which was launched by the Social Welfare Department in coordination with a number of Non-governmental organizations / institutions, increased substantially from 78,277 in 1998 to 547,264 in 2015. According to a survey by the Agency for Volunteer Service in 2009, 68.4% of youth aged 15-24 participated in voluntary work in the past 12 months prior to the survey.

For civic and social participation, based on the “Research on Media Literacy of

Hong Kong Youngsters 2010” by Breakthrough in 2010, 82.3% of youth aged 10 to 29 had the habit of reading or listening to news in the past three months prior to the survey. On the other hand, more youth (51.8%) aged 15-29 had “conducted research on a social issue” on the Internet according to “A Study on Understanding our Young Generation” conducted by The University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2011.

“Post-90s Telephone Survey” conducted by the Hong Kong Ideas Centre in 2012 showed that 47.6% of Post-90s (those who were born between 1990 and 1999) had participated in online signature campaign / supporting activities / demonstration / protest. And “Social Attitudes of the youth population in Hong Kong: A follow-up study” conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2014 showed that nearly half (49.8%) of youth aged 15-39 had participated in demonstrations or rallies since handover in 1997.

For participation in the community, based on the figures from the Social and Welfare Department, the membership of “children and youth centres” and “integrated children and youth services centres” subsidized by the Social and Welfare Department had increased from 309,334 in 1996/97 to 322,233 in 2014/15. The number of youth members of non-government uniformed organizations subsidized by the Home Affairs Bureau had risen from 89,771 in 1999 to 113,557 in 2015. And between 2001 and 2015, the number of youth members of major youth organizations established by the government had increased from 285,374 in 2001 to 313,361 in 2015.

“Who is willing to Take up Positions in Public Affairs?” conducted by The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) in 2015 showed that youth aged 10-29 had taken or currently been taking positions to serve some organizations (22.3%), and more youth stated that they had participated in “student organizations such as student council, student union and Scholarism” (11.3%), followed by “NGOs such as Caritas and the Salvation Army” (5.2%).

5. Cultural Development

The number of youth aged 15-19 who had participated in recreational and sports programmes organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department had increased significantly from 132,938 in 1999/00 to 260,429 in 2014/15, while for youth aged 20-24, the number of participants had decreased from 77,934 to 77,375. Based on “Behavioural Risk Factor Survey” commissioned by Department of Health, between 2008 and 2014, more than half of youth aged 18-24 exercised at least 1 time per week in their leisure time after work or study.

Based on “Opinion Survey on LCSD Performing Arts Activities” conducted by Leisure and

Cultural Services Department in 2001, 2004 and 2011, among those audience of LCSD performing arts activities, a higher proportion of youth aged 15-29 had participated in music and theatre programmes organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department than other programme types. Overall, the percentage of youth aged between 15 and 29 among the whole audience had decreased from 32.7% in 2001 to 25.7% in 2011.

The numbers of registered borrowers aged 15-19 in Hong Kong Public Libraries had decreased from 363,000 to 297,000 while that of registered borrowers aged 20-24 had increased from 322,000 to 399,000.

According to “Survey of Hong Kong youth media usage” conducted by Breakthrough in 2013, a relatively larger proportion of youth aged 10 to 29 used to read literary books (57.6%), followed by science books (10.4%). Among youth aged 10-29, 81.3% had watched TV programmes through television and 65.8% had listened to radio.

“Post-90s Telephone Survey” conducted by the Hong Kong Ideas Centre in 2012 on Post-90s (those who were born between 1990 and 1999) revealed that they rated “Websites” as the most important mass media, followed by Facebook and television.

6. Delinquent and Deviant Behaviours

In 2014, the number of males aged 16-20 arrested per 100,000 was 1,087.7 while that for females was 268.7. The number of young males aged 16-20 arrested per 100,000 respective populations had declined gradually between 1996 and 2014, but it remained more than that for young females. In general, a higher proportion of males aged 16-20 were arrested because of “Violent Crimes Against Person”, “Burglary, Theft & Handling Stolen”, “Serious Narcotics Offences” and “Criminal Damage or Offences against Public Order” while females aged 16-20 were more likely to be arrested because of “Burglary” and “Trafficking or Possession of Dangerous Drugs”.

The proportion of young persons cautioned under the Police Superintendents' Discretion Scheme was usually around 30%-40% among those arrested between 1996 and 2014. A higher proportion of youth were cautioned for “Shop Theft” and “Miscellaneous Thefts”. Between 2003/04 and 2011/12, the total number of youth who received probation orders ranged from 1,268 to 1,749, but it started to drop from 2012/13 to 599 in 2014/15. A higher proportion of youth who received probation order was because of minor offence, crimes against property and other serious offences. The recidivism rate (rate of re-admission to CSD within two years after discharge) for young offenders aged 15-24 declined from 35.0% in 1996 to 18.3% in 2012.

“Problem encountered in the Cyber World” conducted by HKFYG in 2009 showed that 9.9% and 9.2% of youth aged 10 -24 thought that “uploading music or films to BT / Foxy websites for sharing” and “stealing cyber weapons or assets of other people in cyber games” were not illegal respectively.

On the issue of drug abuse, the number of all reported drug abusers per hundred population aged 15-24 dropped from 0.66 in 1996 to 0.21 in 2014. Within the same period, the number of youth drug abusers of heroin showed a significantly declining trend while those used psychotropic substance had fluctuated and then decreased. Among the drug taking youth, “Peer influence/to identify with peers” remained as the main reported reason for using drugs.

Concerning the youth smoking issue, the rate of daily cigarette smokers aged 15-24 was in a declining trend, which had dropped from 8.0% in 1996 to 3.8% in 2012. Based on “Thematic Household Survey Report” conducted by Census and Statistics Department, more than half of daily smokers aged 15-24 started the habit of smoking cigarettes weekly between the ages of 10 and 19 (59.6%-67.1%) between 2000 and 2015. The average number of cigarettes smoked per day by daily smokers aged 15-24 dropped from 14 in 1996 to 12 in 2012. Among the daily smokers aged 15-24, “Influence of friends” was the main reason for starting to smoke cigarettes followed by “Out of curiosity” between 1996 and 2012.

For alcohol abuse, based on the “Behavioural Risk Factor Survey” commissioned by Department of Health between 2004 and 2012, the proportion of youth aged 18-24 who had consumed at least one alcoholic drink in the previous month prior to the survey had decreased from 45.1% in 2004 to 33.6% in 2012. For the survey conducted in 2014, nearly two-thirds of youth had consumed at least one alcoholic drink in the past year prior to the survey. The proportion of youth aged 18-24 who had consumed at least 5 glasses/cans of alcoholic drinks on one occasion was in between 21.8% and 31.2% from 2004 to 2014.

Regarding the gambling problem, “The Study on Hong Kong People’s Participation in Gambling Activities” commissioned by Home Affairs Bureau in 2011 showed that 37.5% of youth aged 12 and 18 had first participated in gambling activities when they were aged between 10 and 13. Among youth aged 12-18 who gambled in the past 12 months, the main reasons for participation in gambling were “Gambling is an entertainment”, “Betting for money is an exciting activity” and “For curiosity”. Youth were more likely to participate in social gambling such as “Card Games” and “Mahjong”, followed by “Mark Six”. Based on the same survey, 1.4% and 1.8% of youth aged 12-18 were “Possible problem gamblers” and “Possible pathological gamblers” respectively.

7. Youth's Values

Concerning self-identity among youth, "Social Attitudes of the youth population in Hong Kong: A follow-up study" in 2014 conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit showed that about four-fifths of youth aged 15-19 (80.1%) and 20-29 (80.7%) identified themselves as Hong Kongers, while about one-tenth of youth aged 15-19 (10.5%) and 20-29 (10.3%) identified themselves as Chinese.

For political and social values, according to the above survey, more than half of youth aged 15-19 and 20-29 tended to be "very dissatisfied/ dissatisfied" with political development in Hong Kong. Regarding political trust towards the Hong Kong government, more than half of youth aged 15-19 and 20-29 "do not trust / do not trust strongly" the Hong Kong government.

"Post-90s Telephone Survey" conducted by the Hong Kong Ideas Centre in 2012 revealed that nine-tenths (90.5%) of Post-90s agreed or strongly agreed that "The disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong is wider and wider". Also, over half of the interviewed Post-90s disagreed or strongly disagreed that "Professionals usually can represent my view / stand in Government consultations" or "Political party usually can represent my view / stand in Government consultations" respectively. Besides, only about one-third (31.4%) of Post-90s considered that there were sufficient opportunities for development. For attitudes towards integration with the Mainland, about two-fifths (41.1%) of Post 90s agreed or strongly agreed that "Hong Kong should strengthen its economic integration with the Mainland". Nevertheless, there was about two-fifths (38.8%) of Post-90s disagreed or strongly disagreed that "Hong Kong should strengthen its cultural integration with the Mainland".

As for the family attitude among youth, "A Study on Understanding our Young Generation" conducted by The University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2011 showed that more than half (51.5%) of youth aged 15 to 29 felt that family really cared about them a lot. However, only less than one-fifth (18.3%) of youth considered that they "understand the way family feels about things" a lot. Close to four-fifths (79.6%) of youth agreed that "A child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily" and more than four-fifths (87.2%) disagreed that "Marriage is an outdated institution". And based on "Views on Filial Piety among Youth in Hong Kong Study" conducted by the Commission on Youth in 2013, the most common filial behaviours of youth aged 12-24 were "I respect my parents in front of other people.", followed by "I listen to my parents talking about their past." and "To avoid my parents worrying about me, I never do dangerous things.". According to the surveys by the

Family Planning Association Hong Kong in 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011, more and more young females and males did not know their marriage plans in the future.

On attitudes to sexuality, a study of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong in 2011 showed that less than half of youth aged 18 to 27 accepted "Gay", "Public intimacy between two males", "Lesbian" and "Public intimacy between two females". As to "bisexuality", less than four-tenths of males and females could accept it. According to the same survey, the proportion of male youth who accepted "Multiple sexual partners", "Cohabitation", "Premarital sex" and "Extra-marital sex" was higher than females.

For attitudes to money, youth tended to judge whether one is poor or rich by looking at whether he/she can support their own basic needs and the amount of assets he/she owned according to "Young People's View on Making Money through Quick Investments" conducted by HKFYG in 2007. To escape poverty, many of youth believed that one should upgrade their knowledge and skills. Besides, a higher proportion of youth hold a negative view on making quick money.

The importance of environment conservation was widely observed by youth. "Social Attitudes of the Youth Population in Hong Kong" conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2010 showed that more than three-quarters of youth aged 15-19 (80.3%) and of youth aged 20-29 (77.5%) agreed that "environmental conservation is preferable to economic growth". Besides, more than seven-tenths of youth aged 15-19 (71.4%) and 20-29 (73.2%) agreed to pay more tax for environmental conservation. And "Social Attitudes of the youth population in Hong Kong: A follow-up study" conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2014 showed that more than half of youth aged 15-39 (54.4%) were "dissatisfied / strongly dissatisfied" with environment conservation in Hong Kong.

In terms of youth aspiration, "Diversity of Youth Aspirations" conducted by Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre in 2010 showed that more than half of the youth aged 16-35 had confidence in their future. More than half of the youth considered that they would have a very large / large chance "to control their own future", "to achieve their own goal within the next ten years" or "to have a quality life in the next ten years". The higher the education level of the youth, the more likely that they had confidence in their future. And based on "Opinion Survey on Wealth Management and Life Planning of Hong Kong Post 80 & 90 Generations" conducted by HKUPOP in 2013 and 2015, the dream that mostly want to be achieved at this moment for youth aged 12-33 was "Buy property", followed by "Earn more money / Be a billionaire".

8. Internet

According to the figures by the Census and Statistics Department in 2015, more than 99.7% of youth aged 15-24 had accessed the Internet in the past twelve months prior to the survey. And in 2014, their major purposes of using the internet service were for “communication / interaction”, “information searching” and “online digital entertainment”.

“Youth and Information Technology” conducted by HKFYG in 2013 showed that more than four-tenths (44.1%) of youth aged 10-24 had had online consumption in the past years prior to the survey. And more than seven-tenths (77.1%) of youth had had online learning in the past years prior to the survey. Moreover, for nearly seven-tenths (68.0%) of youth, their main channel of receiving / browsing news or social current affairs was “Internet (e.g. Webpages or mobile apps)”. More than half (57.3%) of youth always or sometimes “give “like” to someone’s view” and then “comment to someone’s views” in response to social issues on personal social webpage among youth. And the most common used smartphone’s function among the youth aged 10-24 who had smartphone was “Instant messaging (e.g. WhatsApp, WeChat, etc.)” (75.8%), followed by Social networks (e.g. Facebook, Blog, etc.).