

## Summary of key findings

This report is a commentary section of *Youth in Hong Kong: A Statistical Profile 2002* which focuses on six topical youth issues, including poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, as well as human, social and cultural capital formation. The objectives of this report are, *first*, to develop six sets of key indicators to facilitate the understanding of the youth and *second*, to analyse the situation of the youth based on available data. The key findings of the above topical youth issues are summarized below.

### *Human Capital*

Both public and private investment in human capital on education between 1997 and 2001 had been increased. The proportion of the youth with higher educational level has also increased. Nonetheless, issues like unemployment among youth with lower educational levels and school attendance rates among the ethnic minorities aged 17-24 had aroused public concern. The key findings of the discussions on human capital are summarized as follows:

- There was an increasing proportion of the youth with higher educational level. The percentage of youth with matriculation or tertiary educational level increased from 21.8% in 1991 to 38.0% in 2001.
- The number of school dropouts at primary and junior secondary level had decreased. There were 1,333 school dropout cases in 2000/01, compared with 1,999 in 1997/1998 and 1,362 in 1999/2000.
- The government had increased its total public expenditure on education. Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP increased from 3.5% in 1997/98 to 4.1% in 2001/02.
- Private consumption expenditure spending on goods and services for educational use increased 16.9% between 1997 and 2000.
- The unemployment rate of youth with lower secondary and below level was 2 times higher than that of those with tertiary level (degree). In other words, youth with lower educational levels are more likely to be unemployed.
- Youth suicide rates were lower than those of other adult age groups in Hong Kong, as well as the youth suicide rates of some Western countries and Asian countries.
- The percentage of ethnic minorities in total youth population increased from 1.6% in 1991 to 4.7% in 2001. But the school attendance rates among ethnic minorities aged 17-18 and 19-24 were 54.7% and 3.7% respectively,

compared with 71.0% and 26.4% of the same age groups in the whole population.

### *Unemployment*

Youth unemployment had been worsened in the past two decades. The obtained data illustrated the seriousness of youth unemployment. Compared with the USA and some Asian cities, unemployment for the youth aged 15 to 19 in Hong Kong was found to be more serious. It was also found that 10.6% of total youth population did not engage in work and were not in school between June and August 2002. Nonetheless, the obtained data is insufficient for understanding the working conditions of youth and identifying the structural constraints on youth employment. Data on reasons for long-term unemployment, for example, is useful to recognize the constraint to the youth.

- The situation of youth unemployment had become worse since the late 1990s. Unemployment rate of the youth was 2 times higher than the total unemployment rate between 1997 and 2001 in Hong Kong. Unemployment was the worst among the youth aged 15 to 19, compared with those aged 20 to 24. The unemployment rate of the youth aged 15 to 19 reached 30.1% between April and July 2002.
- There had been an increasing trend of economically inactive youth population since 1998. One-tenth (10.6%) of the youth aged 15 to 24 were not engaged in work and were not in school between June and August 2002.
- More youth were employed in the tertiary service industries. There was 58.6% of the youth working in wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels industry and community, social and personal services industry.
- There was an increasing proportion of youth working as managers and administrators, professionals and associate professionals. More than one-fifth (21.4%) of working youth worked as managers and administrators, professionals and associate professionals in 2001, compared with 16.0% in 1991 and 19.5% in 1996.

### *Poverty*

The findings show that the proportion of youth in low-income households (please refer to section 4.3.1 for definition of low-income households) as well as the

percentage of youth under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme increased in the past decade. The key findings of youth poverty in Hong Kong are summarized as follows:

- From 1991 to 2000, the percentage of youth in low-income households increased from 11.0% to 24.7%.
- From 1996 to 2002, the number of young CSSA recipients increased more than 2 times. Amongst the CSSA recipients, the category of youth had increased from 5.7% in 1996 to 9.0% in 2002. In 2002, nearly one-tenth (9.8%) of youth CSSA recipients was unemployed.
- There were an increasing number of primary and secondary students receiving full grant under School Textbook Assistance Scheme.
- In 2001, there was 15.8% of the working youth whose monthly income was less than HK\$4,000.

#### *Substance abuse*

The findings show that the number of young heroin abusers had been decreased since 1997. Nonetheless, the number of psychotropic substance abusers increased sharply at the same period of time. The negative effects of taking psychotropic substance among the young aroused public concerns. The key findings of the discussions on substance abuse among the youth are summed up as follows:

- The number of young heroin abusers decreased from 1,855 in 1997 to 426 in 2001.
- There were increasing trends in young psychotropic substance abusers. The number of psychotropic substance abusers increased from 1,092 in 1997 to 4,525 in 2001.
- Ketamine and MDMA (Ecstasy) had become the most common types of drug abused by the youth in 2001.
- Rave party/party, Karaoke, TV game centres and bar/pub are common venues for consumption of heroin and psychotropic substances.
- Peer influence was found to be a major reason for abusing drugs.

#### *Cultural Capital*

With the limited data available, the discussion cannot fully reflect the cultural awareness and cultural identity of the youth in Hong Kong. Systematic and comprehensive data collection on cultural capital among the youth in Hong Kong is

needed in the future studies. The key findings of the cultural capital among the youth are summarized as follows:

- Only a small number of youth were registered borrowers in Hong Kong Public Libraries.
- The number of adults who attended the program organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department was higher than the youth.
- Compared with the youth in Guangzhou and Macau, Hong Kong youth are relatively less interested in buying reference books but more likely to go to karaoke and cinema for leisure.
- Using Internet and ICQ is a common activity of the youth for leisure. However, the impact of Internet on the development of youth is under-researched.
- One-tenth of the youth aged 15-24 is working in the creative industries.
- Those who are interested in arts usually attended self-financed short courses to gain training related to art.
- Youth in Hong Kong tend to have a strong sense of identity as Chinese and belonging to Hong Kong.
- Filial piety was highly appraised by the youth and they used to comprehend it as “living together with parents”.

### *Social Capital*

While the key findings of social capital among the young will be summed up in the section below, it is worth noting that the views of the youth in the quality of family relationship as well as their perceptions towards the government and various social institutions need further exploration so as to grasp a comprehensive picture of the social cohesion of youth in society.

- About one-fourth of the youth had participated in voluntary services. The major reasons for not involving in voluntary services are “no time” and “no channel”.
- There was a decreasing voting rate of youth in the Legislative Council elections. It could be explained by the fact that the perceived self-efficacy of the youth towards the influences on the government was quite low. Also, many youth did not think the government was willing to listen to their opinions.

- Weak linkage to the neighbourhood is observed. Youth tended to have a stronger sense of trust and cohesion towards their friends and family members.
- More studies on views of youth towards the quality of relationship among the family members are needed.
- The tolerance of youth towards the diversities such as “AIDS carriers” and “homosexuals” is not high enough.
- Many youth are not satisfied with the current political development.

Discussions on selected topical youth issues were constrained by data availability within data collection period. Such data are mainly collected by government departments, social welfare organizations and academics, and hence could be said as mainly reflecting their concerns and priorities. It is suggested that the views and perspective of the youth be incorporated in future research.