

**Youth in Hong Kong  
A Statistical Profile 2012**

**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 Youths. 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-government departments. Comments on the statistics were also included to facilitate understanding in 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, and youth values.

## **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 2011, there were 875,200 young people aged 15 and 24 living in Hong Kong and the relative size to the whole Hong Kong population was 12.4%. It is projected that the population of youth aged 15-24 should drop to 622,400 in 2023 or 8.0% of the population before bouncing back. In 2011, the number of male youths aged 15-24 was similar with the female youths and the sex ratio of the number of males per 1,000 females of those aged 15-24 was 1,006. There was a stable trend in the sex ratio during 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, a usual 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 were not evenly distributed across the 18 districts. Between

1996 and 2011, more than half of the youths were living in the New Territories and the percentage had risen to 56.3% in 2011. In contrast, the youth population in Hong Kong Island was in a declining trend, especially in Wan Chai.

Between 1996 and 2011, the reported number of missing people per 1,000 males aged 16-20 fluctuated between 0.9 and 1.8 persons while the rates for the females were between 1.6 and 3.1 persons. However, in general between 1996 and 2011 the number of reported missing females aged 16-20 was declining.

In terms of health status, 1.8% of young people aged below 25 had at least one common chronic disease in 2010. A highest proportion of youth with chronic health condition was suffered from “Asthma”. Between 2004 and 2011, more than 13% of youth aged 18-24 was classified as “overweight” or “obese” while about a quarter was classified as “underweight”. Between 2005 and 2010, the physical activity level of 54.2% to 61.1% of youth aged 18-24 were classified as moderate. However, the proportion of physical activity level of youth aged 18-24 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 21.0 persons in 2002 to 16.2 persons in 2012. Among them, a higher proportion was mentally and physically handicapped. The mortality rate, thus the number of deaths per 1,000 population, of youth aged 15-24 was in a declining trend between 2001 and 2011. “External causes of morbidity and mortality” was the most common cause of deaths for youth aged 15-24 between 2001 and 2011. Among the youth whose causes of death were “External causes of morbidity and mortality”, a higher proportion of them were dead under the cause of “Intentional self-harm”.

Between 1996 and 2011, the percentage of never married females aged 20-24 had risen from 90.1% to 97.3% while the percentage for males had increased steadily from 94.5% to 98.7% in 2011. As to the fertility rate, the age specific fertility rate per 1,000 females aged 20-24 had rebounded since 2008.

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 female aged 18-27 also had risen from 32.7% in 1991 to 42.0% in 2011.

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 has 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 slightly decreased from 6.6% in 2005 to 5.3% in 2011. 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 16.1% in 2005 to 17.5% in 2011 according to The Hong Kong Council of Social Service's statistics.

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.

## 2. Education

The full-time education attendance rate for youth aged 15-24 has continued to increase between 1996 and 2011. Between 1996 and 2011, the attendance rate of youth aged 15-24 increased from 47.8% to 64.8%. Based on Population Censuses between 1996 and 2011, the percentage of youth aged 15-24 with non-degree and degree post-secondary education was in a rising trend between 1996 and 2011. Moreover, a consistent pattern that more recent cohorts of youth have higher educational attainment and that 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 58,412 between 1996/97 and 2011/12. The proportion of non-local undergraduate students among them grew from 0.18% to 10.12%. During the same period, the number of students enrolled in research postgraduate funded by The University Grants Committee had increased continuously and the proportion of non-local research postgraduate students grew from 27.79% to 72.53%. Students enrolled in the self-financing taught postgraduate programmes had increased from 27,600 in 2008/09 to 36,200 in 2011/12. The proportion of students studying in full-time self-financing degree courses has largely increased from 9,163 in 2001/02 to 63,799 in 2011/12.

The overall percentage of examinations passed by day school candidates across all subjects (except Chinese Language and English Language from 2007 to 2011) increased from 63.0% in 1996 to 76.8% in 2010. The percentage of day-school candidates who

scored Level 2+ in the four core subjects in HKDSE was 67.6% in 2012. The overall percentage of examinations passed by day school candidates across all A-Level subjects increased from 72.4% in 1996 to 78.2% in 2012.

In the area of special education, the enrolment in special education schools and classes decreased from 8,697 in 1996 to 8,050 in 2011. 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 12,690 in 2011/12.

The total public expenditure on education had increased almost every year and the expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP ranged from 3.5% to 4.5% between 1998/99 and 2011/12.

The total number of applicants of the SFAA financial assistance scheme for post-secondary students had expanded from 4,093 in 2001/02 to 27,760 in 2011/12 while number of applicants of non-means tested loans paid increased from 17,197 in 1998/99 to 28,847 in 2011/12. The total number of eligible students for the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme has increased from 63,476 in 1996/97 to 79,028 in 2011/12.

In 2011/12, the study room facilities provided 16,142 seats in total which is less than 17,066 in 2004/05. Between 1995/96 and 2010/11, the proportion of drop-out F.1 to F.3 students increased from 0.57% to 0.63%. The dropout rate of primary students also increased from 0.07% in 1995/96 to 0.13% in 2010/11.

### 3. Employment

With the decreasing youth population and increasing participation in full-time education, the labor force of youth aged 15-24 has continued to shrink since 1997 until 2011. The proportion of employed youth aged 15-24 gradually decreased from 45.4% in 1996 to 32.9% in 2011. Between 1996 and 2011, the median monthly employment earning of youth aged 20-24 was between \$6,000 and \$8,500 while those for youth aged 15-19 ranged between \$4,500 and \$6,500. The median monthly employment earning 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 in 2009 and 2010 before dropping again to 9.3% in 2011. The underemployment rate of youth aged 15-24 peaked at 4.0% in 2003, and then declined to 2.2% in 2011. The proportion of young Hong Kong residents who worked in the Mainland aged 20-29 years had declined from 4.5% in 2004 to 1.9% in 2010.

The proportion of working youth aged 15-24 who were associate professional generally increased from 1997 to 2011. On the contrary, the proportion of clerks or blue collar workers (i.e. craft and related workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, elementary occupations) had generally decreased. In 2011, a higher proportion of youth aged 15-24 worked as “service workers and shop sales workers” (34.0%), followed by “clerks” (23.6%) and “associate professionals” (18.6%).

#### 4. Civic and Social Engagement

The proportion of youth who were registered electors aged 18-25 rose from 39.9% in the 2005 to 50.8% in 2012. 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 24.6% in 2011.

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 429,474 in 2011. According to a survey by the Agency for Volunteer Service in 2009, 68.4% of youth aged 15-24 had participated in voluntary work in the past 12 months prior to the survey.

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

A survey 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 among Post-90s and about one-fifth of Post-90s had participated in demonstration / protest.

The membership of “children and youth centres” and “integrated children and youth services centres” had increased from 309,334 in 1996/97 to 335,473 in 2011. The number of youth members of non-government uniformed organizations subsidized by the Home Affairs Bureau had risen from 99,198 in 2001 to 131,278 in 2011.

## 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 increased significantly from 129,708 in 2001/02 to 296,702 in 2011/12. As for the youth aged 20-24, the number of participants has risen from 65,167 to 113,816. Between 2008 and 2011, 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 the surveys conducted between 2001 and 2011, a higher proportion of youth 15-29 participated in music and theatre programmes organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Overall, the percentage of youth aged between 15 and 29 among the whole audience decreased from 32.7% in 2001 to 25.7% in 2011.

Between 2003 and 2011, the numbers of registered borrowers aged 15-19 in Hong Kong Public Libraries increased steadily from 363,000 to 409,000 while that of registered borrowers aged 20-24 has increased from 322,000 to 409,000.

According to a survey by the Breakthrough in 2010, a relatively larger proportion of youth aged 10 to 29 used to read literary books (54.4%), followed by psychology books (including counseling, health, personal growth) (20.9%). In 2010, among youth aged 10-29, 95.1% had watched free TV programmes and 44.2% had listened to analog broadcasting of traditional radio in past 3 months.

A survey by the Hong Kong Ideas Centre in 2012 on Post-90s (those who were born between 1990 and 1999) revealed that “Website” was rated as the most important mass media among them, followed by Facebook, television, free Newspapers, charged newspapers and radio.

According to a survey by the Census and Statistics Department, in 2011, more than 99.7% of youths aged 15-24 had accessed to the Internet in the past twelve months and their major purpose of using the Internet service were for “communication / interaction”, “information searching” and “online digital entertainment”. Based on another survey in 2012, the majority of the Post-90s considered that “WhatsApp” and “Facebook” as important or very important social networking channels / devices in communication with others. This proportion was even higher than “mobile voice calls”.

## 6. Delinquent and Deviant Behaviours

In 2011, the number of males aged 16-20 arrested per 100,000 respective populations was 1,665.2 while that for females was 318.6. The number of young males aged 16-20 arrested per 100,000 respective populations declined gradually between 1996 and 2011, but it remained more than twice of the rate 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 “Disorder/Fighting in Public Place” while females aged 16-20 were more likely to be arrested because of “Burglary” and “Possession of Dangerous Drugs”.

The proportion of young persons cautioned under the Police Superintendents' Discretion Scheme was usually around two-fifths among those arrested between 2000 and 2011. A higher proportion of youth were cautioned for “Shop Theft” and “Miscellaneous Thefts” were being cautioned. Between 2003/04 and 2011/12, the total number of youth who received probation orders ranged from 1,301 to 1,749 and a higher proportion of youth who received probation order 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 had an overall declining from 35.0% in 1996 to 25.0% in 2009.

A survey conducted 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 0.37 in 2011. Within the same period, the number of youth drug abusers of heroin showed a significantly declining trend while those used psychotropic substance continued to rise. Among the drug taking youths, “Peer influence/to identify with peers” remained as the main reported reason for using drug.

Concerning the youth smoking issue, the rate of daily cigarette smokers aged 15-24 dropped from 8.0% in 1996 to 4.8% in 2010. The majority of daily smokers aged 15-24 started the habit of smoking cigarettes weekly between the ages of 15 and 19 according to studies between 2000 and 2010. Between 1998 and 2010, the average number of cigarettes taken by daily smokers aged 15-24 smoked per day on average dropped to 12 in 2010. 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 2010.

The proportion of the youth aged 18-24 who had consumed at least once alcoholic drink in the previous month prior to the survey showed a stable trend since 2010. The proportion was 30.5% and 30.0% in 2010 and 2011 respectively. The proportion of youth aged 18-24 who had consumed at least 5 glasses/cans of alcoholic drinks was 24.3% and 29.5% in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Regarding the gambling problem, a survey by Home Affairs Bureau in 2011 showed that 37.5% of youth aged 12 and 18 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”. Youths were more likely to participate in social gambling such as “Mahjong”, “Card Games”, “Dice games” and “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 youths, a survey in 2010 by the Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit showed that over four-fifths (81.9%) and three-fifths (62.9%) of the youth aged 15-29 identified themselves as Hong Kongers and Chinese respectively. Also, according to the “International Civic and Citizenship Education Study Hong Kong Report 2009”, over nine-tenths (91.2%) and four-fifths (86.5%) of F.2 students agree / strongly agree that “I am Hong Kong people” and “I am Chinese” respectively.

According to a survey by the University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2011, youth aged 15 and 29 tended not to be “generally satisfied with the political situation in Hong Kong” while the proportion of youths who agreed and not agreed that they were “generally interested in what’s going on in politics” ranged from three-tenths and four-tenths respectively. More than seven-tenths (70.7%) of youths disagreed or strongly disagreed that that they “trust politicians to tell the truth”. Moreover, only less than four-tenths (36.8%) of youths agreed or strongly agreed that they “trust politicians to deal with the things that matter”. As for “whether Hong Kong has the conditions to implement democracy”, the youths were divided into three-tenths on each side. Based on the same study, over nine-tenths (91.2%) of youths aged 15 and 29 agreed or strongly agreed that they “have a responsibility to contribute to HK”. However, only less than four-tenths (33.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that “most people in HK would contribute to activities that benefit the public without expectation of personal reward”.

A study 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 are sufficient opportunities for development and 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 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 youths 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”. 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 planning.

On attitude about sexuality, a study of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong in 2011 showed that less than half of youths aged 18 to 27 accepted “Gay” behaviours, “Public intimacy between two males”, “Lesbian” behaviours” 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 proportions of male youths who accepted “Multiple sexual partners”, “Cohabitation”, “Premarital sex” and “Extra-marital sex” was higher than females.

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 a survey by HKFYG in 2007. To leave the poverty life, many of youths 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. A survey conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong commissioned by the Central Policy Unit in 2010 showed that four-fifths (80.3%) of youth aged 15-19 and close to four-fifths (77.5%) of youth aged 20-29 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 among generations respectively.

In terms of youth aspiration, a survey 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 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. Also, the majority of youth wished that they could “buy flat or improve living environment” and “have the first fortune in life” within the next 10 years.