

**Youth in Hong Kong
A Statistical Profile 2010**

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 youth statistics on demographic characteristics, education, employment and unemployment, drug abuse, crimes, human capital, social capital and cultural capital etc. It was first produced in 1988 and has been updated on a regular basis.

Method

Statistics included in this Youth Profile were mainly existing administrative or research data from Government or non-government departments. Comments on the statistics were also included to facilitate the understanding in the changes in youth behaviors.

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, drug and substance abuse, delinquent and deviant behaviour, and values.

Key Statistics

1. Demographical Characteristics

The youth population has only changed slightly since the late nineties but the relative size has gradually dropped since 1981. Between 2005 and 2009, the population of youth decreased from 905,100 to 893,800 while the relative size of youth dropped from 13.3% to 12.8%. It is projected that the population of youth aged 15-24 should drop to 692,900 in 2022 or 8.8% of the population before bouncing back. Between 2005 and 2009, the sex ratio of the number of males per 1,000 females of those aged 15-24 slightly rose from 974 to 985.

Between 2005 and 2009, the number of new immigrants who were One-way Permit Holders aged 15-24 ranged from 4,514 to 7,173. In 2006, a significantly higher proportion of new immigrants who had resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years and aged 18 or below lived in Yuen Long, Kwun Tong and Kwai Tsing districts. The number of reported missing persons who were aged 7-15 per 1,000 population fluctuated between 3.4 and 4.5 between 2005 and 2009 while that for persons aged 16-20 fluctuated between 1.5 and 2.0. The youth population was not evenly distributed across the 18 districts with more young people living in Shatin and fewer living in Wan Chai in 2009.

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 2005 and 2009, more than 13% of youth aged 18-24 was classified as “overweight” or “obese” while about a quarter was classified as “underweight”. Between 2006 and 2009, the physical activity level of 54.2% to 58.1% of youth aged 18-24 were classified as moderate while 18.1% to 24.1% were classified as low.

Among the disability registrants aged 15-29, a higher proportion of them were mentally and physically handicapped. The mortality rates, thus the number of deaths per 1,000 population, of youth aged 15-19 and 20-24 ranged between 0.2 and 0.3 during the period from 2005 to 2009. “External causes of morbidity and mortality” was the most common cause of deaths for youth aged 15-24 between 2001 and 2009. 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”. The suicide rate of youth aged 15-24 (per 100,000 population) fluctuated between 7.1 and 9.2 cases during the period from 2005 to 2009.

Between 2005 and 2009, the percentage of never married females aged 20-24 rose from 92.95% to 94.28% while the percentage for males increased from 97.91% to 98.66%. The age specific fertility rate per 1,000 females aged 20-24 decreased from 29.1 in 2001 to 22.8 in 2008 but slightly rebounded to 24.2 in 2009.

In 2004/05, 25% of the youth aged 15-24 claimed having a religious belief. Among them, 70% were protestants. The proportion of youth aged 15-24 who claimed to speak Putonghua increased from 26.1% in 1996 to 53.0% in 2006.

The proportion of the youth aged 15-24 receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance slightly decreased from 6.6% in 2005 to 6.1% in 2009. However, the percentage of youth aged 15-24 living in low-income households increased from 16.3% to 18.8% between 2005 and 2009.

2. Education

The full-time education attendance rate for youth aged 15-24 has continued to increase since 1996. Between 2005 and 2009, the attendance rate of youth aged 15-19 increased from 85.9% to 89.1% while that of youth aged 20-24 increased from 29.7% to 36.2%. Among the youth aged 20-24, the percentage of those with degree increased from 31.2% in 2005 to 36.4% in 2009. Data from the 1996, 2006 By-Census and 2001 Census show 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.

There was a significant decrease in the enrolment number of University Grants Committee-funded taught postgraduate programmes but a steady growth of enrolment in research postgraduate programmes between 2004/05 and 2009/10. The proportion of students studying in full-time self-financing degree courses has increased steadily from 9,163 in 2001/02 to 52,286 in 2008/09.

The overall percentage of examinations passed by day school candidates across all subjects (except Chinese Language and English Language from 2007 to 2009) increased from 72.7% in 2005 to 76.2% in 2009. The overall percentage of examinations passed by day school candidates across all A-Level subjects increased from 74.9% in 2000 to 76.7% in 2009 while that for AS-Level subjects ranged between 81.3% and 83.9% during the period from 2000 to 2009.

The number of persons aged at or below 25 studying outside Hong Kong was about 75,000 in 2009. Among them, a higher proportion of students studied in the United Kingdom, Australia and the U.S.A.

In the area of special education, the enrolment in special education schools and classes increased from 7,734 in 2005 to 8,075 in 2009. The enrolment of students with special educational needs (SEN) studying in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools in the 2009/10 school year were about 13,720 and 8,000 respectively.

A significant increase in number of those newly admitted students from the mainland was found in 2006 in both primary and secondary schools but enrolment largely dropped afterward to 4,346 for primary schools and to 2,939 for secondary schools in 2009.

The total public expenditure on education had increased almost every year and the expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP ranged from 3.0% to 4.3% between 2004/05 and 2008/09.

The total amount of grant / loan paid by the financial assistance scheme for post-secondary students expanded rapidly from 306.7 million in 2005/06 to 921.7 million in 2009/10 while the total amount of non-means tested loans paid decreased from \$1,040.57 million in 2005/06 to \$1,216.90 million in 2009/10. The total amount of grant paid to youth aged 15-24 under the Tertiary Student Finance Scheme has dropped from \$889.98 million in 2005/06 to \$812.01 million in 2009/10.

In 2008/09, the study room facilities provided 16,095 seats in total compared to 17,066 in 2004/05.

In 2008/09, there was 1,490 and 347 dropout cases for secondary 1-3 and primary 1-6 students respectively. The proportion of drop-out secondary students increased from 0.39% in 2004/05 to 0.6% in 2008/09. The dropout rate of primary students also increased from 0.06% in 2004/05 to 0.1% in 2008/09. A higher proportion of students, parents and teachers considered the causes of school dropouts were “Not interested in going to school”, “Personality”, “Learning adjustment problems” and “Bad friends’ influence”.

3. Employment

With the decreasing youth population and increasing participation in full-time education, the labour force of youth aged 15-24 has continued to shrink since 1986. The labour force of youth aged 15-24 decreased from 396,700 in 2005 to 359,400 in 2009 while the labour participation rate decreased from 44.0% to 39.6%. The number of employed youth aged 15-24 gradually decreased from 457,700 in 1991 to 314,000 in 2009. The median monthly employment earning of youth aged 15-24 was between \$6,500 and \$7,300 between 2005 and 2009.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate of youth aged 15-24 dropped from 10.7% in 2005 to 8.5% in 2008 but bounced back to 12.6% in 2009. Between 2005 and 2009, the underemployment rate fluctuated between 3.1% and 4.8% for youth aged 15-19 and between 1.5% and 2.3% for youth aged 20-24. The percentage of youth aged 15-19 taking

part-time jobs in their respective age group has climbed from 7.5 % in 1999 to 20.3% in 2009. The proportion of youth who resided in Hong Kong but worked in the mainland in the age group of 20-29 has also dropped from 4.5% in 2005 to 2.5 % in 2009.

The proportion of youth who were blue collar workers (i.e. craft and related workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, elementary occupations) continuously dropped between 2005 and 2009 while that of associate professionals, clerks and service workers and shop sales workers gradually increased. In 2009, a higher proportion of youth aged 15-24 worked in the “public administration, social and personal services industry” (30.3%), followed by “retail, accommodation and food services” (27.1%) and “financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business services” (15.7%).

4. Civic and Social Engagement

The proportion of youth who were registered electors aged 18-25 rose from 34.0% in the 2006 District Council Election year to 40.2% in the 2008 Legislative Council Election year. The turnout rate of youth aged 18-25 in District Council Elections rose from 22.3% in 1999 to 54.8% in 2007. Compared with the 52.9% turnout rate of youth aged 18-25 in the Legislative Council Election in 2004, the turnout rate of youth dropped to 45.1% in 2008. Yet, it was still higher than the 38.4% Legislative Council Election turnout rate in 2000.

The number of registered young volunteers aged 13-25 in the Volunteer Movement, which was set up by the Social Welfare Department in coordination with a number of Non-governmental organisations / institutions, increased substantially from 240,278 (20.5% in the respective age group) in 2005 to 387,227 (33.3% in the respective age group) in 2009. In 2004/05, 48% of youth aged 15-24 had ever participated in volunteer work. Among those who had participated in volunteer work, the majority of them (71.0%) had worked as volunteers for less than 50 hours or below in the past 12 months.

A comparatively higher proportion of youth aged 15-24 joined “Church / religious organizations” (17.3%) and about 16% had participated in signature campaigns, rallies, demonstrations and protests in the past 12 months in 2004/05.

In 2006, sports activities (43.9%) were the most popular community activities among the youth aged 18-24, followed by voluntary works (25.0%) and social gatherings (24.1%). On the other hand, 12.2% of youth aged 18-24 were members of the community service organisations (e.g. youth centre, community centre, etc.) in the district they lived. However, only 10% of youth aged 18-24 had ever expressed their opinions on community issues in the past one year.

In 2004/05, 59% of youth aged 15-24 had donated money in the past 12 months.

5. Cultural Development

The percentage of youth aged 15-19 who had participated in recreation and sports programmes organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department increased significantly from 29.9% in 2005/06 to 64.8% in 2009/10. As for the youth aged 20-24,

the percentage of participation rose from 13.9% in 2005/06 to 18.0% in 2007/08 but dropped to 17.0% in 2009/10. In 2009, 63.4% of youth aged 18-24 exercised at least 1 time per week in their leisure time.

The number of registered borrowers aged 15-19 in Hong Kong Public Libraries increased from 378,000 in 2005 to 400,000 persons in 2009 while that of registered borrowers aged 20-24 has increased from 354,000 in 2005 to 385,000 in 2009. However, a survey showed that the percentage of youth aged 12-34 who never read when they were not in class or at work increased from 15.3% in 2005 to 22.9% in 2008.

In 2007, youth aged 10-29 spent on average 2.8 hours watching TV programmes, 1.9 hours in listening to radio programmes and 2.0 hours listening to music per day.

In 2008, on average youth aged 12-29 spent 57.9 minutes a day on mobile phone and the average number of SMS received and sent a day was 7 and 6 respectively. The average monthly expenditure on mobile phone communication and SMS services by the youth was \$117 in 2008.

In 2009, more than 99% of youths aged 15-24 had accessed to the Internet in the past twelve months and their major purpose of using the Internet service was for “communication / interaction”, “information searching” and “online digital entertainment”. The average hours which the youth aged 15-24 spent on the Internet per week increased from 17.8 hours in 2005 to 25.9 hours in 2009.

According to a survey by the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of youth aged 15-24 who were aware of the GovHK website increased from 51.4% in 2007 to 75.5% in 2009. The proportion of youth who had used the online Government services during the twelve months before enumeration also rose from 59.9% in 2007 to 80.3% in 2009.

6. Drug and Substance Abuse

After the consecutive yearly drops in the number of all reported drug abusers aged 15-24 from 6,311 in 2000 to 3,372 in 2005, the number increased again to 4,529 in 2009 which was equivalent to a ratio of 0.51 reported drug abusers aged 15-24 per 100 population. Between 2005 and 2009, a higher proportion of youth drug abusers used psychotropic substances. The reported drug abusers who used psychotropic substance increased from 2,890 in 2005 to 4,375 in 2009.

“Peer influence/To identify with peers” remained as the main reported reason for using drugs according to a survey conducted between 2005 and 2009. In 2008/09, among the drug taking students who studied in secondary schools, “Friends” were the most common suppliers of drugs and students most usually took drug at “Friend’s / schoolmate’s / neighbour’s home”. “Curiosity” was the main reason for taking drugs. “Mass media such as TV, radio, newspaper, etc.” was the main source of non-drug taking students to receive anti-drug messages.

Concerning the youth smoking issue, the rate of daily cigarette smokers aged 15-24 dropped from 8.0% in 2000 to 5.7% in 2007/08. However, the rate of daily smokers for females aged 20-24 only dropped slightly from 4.9% in 2000 to 4.5% in 2007/08. The majority of

daily smokers aged 15-24 started the habit of smoking cigarettes weekly between the ages of 15 and 19. 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 2000 and 2007/08. The daily smokers aged 15-24 smoked 12 cigarettes per day on average in 2007/08.

Between 2005 and 2009, the percentage of the youth aged 18-24 who had consumed at least once alcoholic drink in the previous month rose from 27.1% in 2005 to 37.1% in 2009. More than one-third of F.1 to F.7 students fairly or greatly agreed that “Drinking alcohol is acceptable under the festive atmosphere”.

7. Delinquent and Deviant Behaviour

The arrest rates in youth aged 16-20 between 2005 and 2009 were lower than those between 2002 and 2004. However, the arrest rate for males was significantly higher than females. The number of youth aged 16-20 arrested per 100,000 population decreased from 1,355.3 in 2002 to 1,050.9 in 2009. In general, a higher proportion of youth aged 16-20 were arrested because of “Violent Crimes Against Person”, “Burglary, Theft & Handling Stolen”, “Serious Narcotics Offences” and “Miscellaneous Crimes” between 2005 and 2009. Among all the arrested youth, the number of the young males arrested was 4 times or higher of young females. Special attention should be paid to the significant increase in the percentage of youth arrested for “Serious Narcotics Offences” between 2005 and 2009.

The proportion of young persons cautioned under the Police Superintendents' Discretion Scheme decreased continuously from 44.4% in 2005 to 36.7% in 2009. A higher proportion of youth arrested for “Shop Theft” and “Miscellaneous Thefts” were being cautioned.

The total number of youth who received probation orders increased from 1,268 in 2005/06 to 1,709 in 2008/09. The number of males sentenced to imprisonment who were aged under 21 years dropped from 496 in 2005 to 388 in 2009 while that for males aged 21-24 dropped from 1,287 in 2005 to 955 in 2009. The number females aged under 21 sentenced to imprisonment dropped from 1,097 in 2005 to 225 in 2009 while that for females aged 21-24 dropped from 1,566 in 2005 to 602 in 2009.

Regarding the gambling problem, surveys in 2005 and 2008 showed that over half of the gamblers first gambled at the ages of below 20. “Killing time”, “Curiosity” and “Trying my luck” were the main three reasons for first participating in gambling and continuing to gamble among secondary student gamblers. “Mahjong”, “Card Games”, “Dice Games” and “Mark Six” were the main gambling activities for the youth gamblers. Moreover, 1% of secondary students had pathological gambling problems according to a survey 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” are not illegal.

8. Youth's Values

According to the surveys by Hok Yau Club conducted between 2003 and 2006 and by the Central Policy Unit in 2010, the level of acceptance of national identity among youth was comparatively high. In a scale of 1 - 6 score in which 1 means "totally disagree" and 6 means "totally agree", the surveys by Hok Yau Club showed that the self-rated scores for the agreement level of "I agree that I am Chinese" increased from 4.34 in 2003 to 4.78 in 2006. On the other hand, the agreement level of "I agree that I love China" increased from 3.68 in 2003 to 4.01 in 2006. Meanwhile, the survey by the Central Policy Unit showed that 62.9% and 68.4% of the youth aged 15-19 and 20-29 identified themselves as Chinese respectively. However, both survey showed that percentage of youth who identified themselves as Hong Kongers were higher than those who identified themselves as Chinese.

Concerning the attitudes towards the Government, politics and society, a survey in 2010 showed that 65.2% of youth aged 15-19 and 54.8% of youth aged 20-29 trusted or strongly trusted the Hong Kong Government. Nearly three quarters (73.4%) of youth aged 15-19 agreed or strongly agreed that democratic development is preferable to Government efficiency while 68.5% of youth aged 20-29 believed so. However, many youths thought that there was insufficient number of political talents in Hong Kong.

A higher proportion of youth had confidence in "incorruptibility" among the Hong Kong Core Values. The percentage of youth reported that they felt satisfied with their overall personal development in Hong Kong was slightly more than those who were unsatisfied. However, a relatively higher proportion of youth thought that the development opportunities in Hong Kong for people of their ages are "about the same" or "worse than now".

Surveys showed that interpersonal relationship had great influence on youth's psychological state. Also, about a quarter of youth aged 15-29 claimed that they had often felt lonely. The youth opined that the main reason for feeling lonely were "having bad relationship with classmates / friends". Survey also showed that youth considered having a love relationship is important in life.

It was shown that although youth were more likely to accept "Premarital sex with a plan to marry" compared to elder persons, the majority of youth would not easily have sex with strangers. On the other hand, a higher proportion of youth agreed that homosexuality is about sexual orientation and with no relation to morals and did not resist having personal contact with homosexuals.

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. 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 showed that 80.3% of youth aged 15-19 and 77.5% of youth aged 20-29 agreed that environmental conservation is preferable to economic growth. Besides, 71.4% and 73.2% of youth aged 15-19 and 20-29 agreed to pay more tax for environmental conservation among generations respectively. Moreover, young people were usually positive towards recycling.

As for the family attitude among youth, a higher proportion of youth supported the idea that "A childless couple can be an ideal family" and accepted "cohabitation with a plan to marry". The youth were also more likely to be "willing to live with parents" and to "consult parents for major decision". However, they tended to disagree with the ideas that "Man makes all important decisions in family", "Man earns money outside while woman stays home to take care of the family" and "Having a son is better than having a daughter".

In terms of youth aspiration, a survey showed that more than half of the youth aged 16-35 had confidence in their future. 53.2% of youth considered that they would have a very large / large chance "to control their own future"; 52.5% thought that they would have a very large / large chance "to achieve their own goal within the next ten years"; and 54.1% thought that they would have a very large / large chance "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.

(End)