



## 1. Background

1.1 On 15 January 2015, the Government released a report entitled "Population Policy – Strategies and Initiatives" ("the Report") which was compiled following a public engagement exercise conducted by the Steering Committee on Population Policy between 24 October 2013 and 23 February 2014. The Report includes some 50 initiatives revolving around seven areas<sup>1</sup> to address the challenges of the changing population profile in Hong Kong. The House Committee will hold a special meeting on 24 April 2015 to discuss the Report with the Chief Secretary for Administration. This information note highlights the population profile of Hong Kong to facilitate Members' deliberations on the Report.

## 2. Population profile of Hong Kong

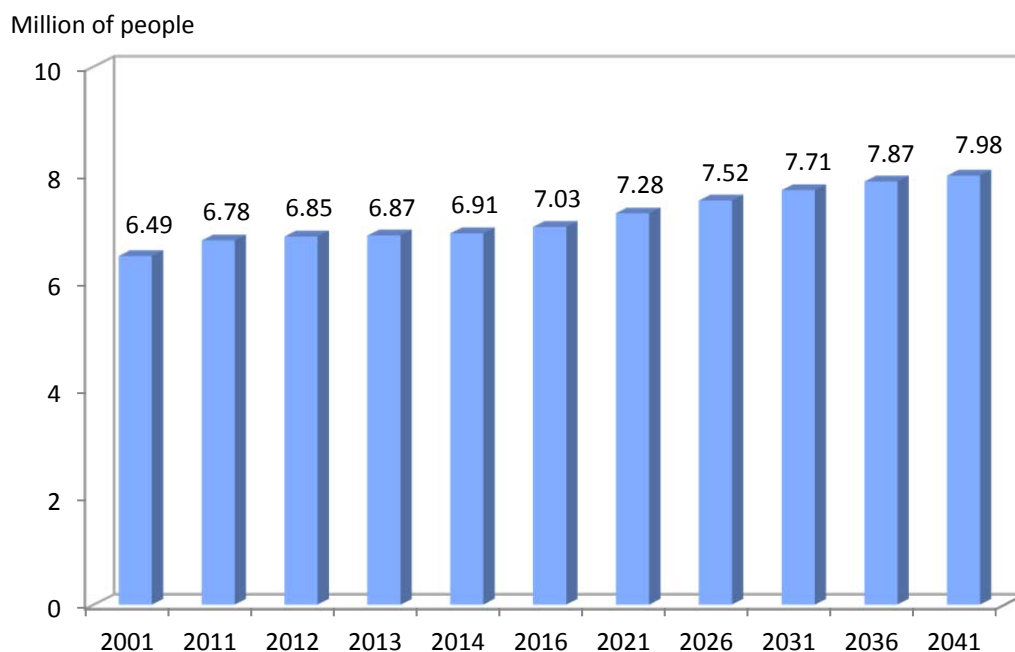
2.1 Hong Kong's population grew slowly by an average of 0.48% per year between mid-2001 and mid-2014. This trend is expected to sustain in the years ahead, as the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") forecasts Hong Kong's population to continue growing by an average of 0.53% per year from 6.91 million in mid-2014 to 7.98 million in mid-2041<sup>2</sup> (**Figure 1**). In addition to slow population growth, Hong Kong has undergone other demographic changes in recent years as elaborated in the ensuing paragraphs.

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<sup>1</sup> These seven areas are (a) promoting sustainable growth; (b) unleashing the potential of the local labour force; (c) enhancing the quality of home-grown talent; (d) attracting talent from outside; (e) importation of labour; (f) fostering a supportive environment for forming and raising families; and (g) embracing opportunities in an ageing society.

<sup>2</sup> Unless specified otherwise, all the population projections (excluding foreign domestic helpers) quoted in this information note are based on the forecasts published by C&SD.

**Figure 1 — Mid-year population of Hong Kong, 2001-2041**



Source: Census and Statistics Department.

### Ageing population

2.2 Hong Kong's population has experienced an ageing trend since the early 2000s. The proportion of people aged under 15 decreased from 17% in mid-2001 to 12% in mid-2014 (**Table 1**). In contrast, the proportion of people aged 65 and above increased from 12% to 15% over the same period. Reflecting the above two changes, the median age of the population increased from 37.2 in mid-2001 to 43.7 in mid-2014.

**Table 1 — Mid-year population by age group, 2001-2041**

	2001	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
<b>Age structure</b>											
Aged 0-14	17%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	11%	10%	10%
Aged 15-64	71%	74%	74%	73%	73%	72%	68%	64%	61%	59%	58%
Aged 65 & above	12%	14%	14%	15%	15%	17%	20%	24%	28%	31%	32%
<b>Median age</b>											
	37.2	42.4	42.8	43.3	43.7	44.4	46.5	47.8	49.3	50.7	51.8

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

2.3 The trend of population ageing is expected to be more apparent in the years ahead. While the proportion of people aged under 15 is projected to remain at 10%-12% throughout 2014-2041, the proportion of people aged 65 and above is forecast to rise from 15% in mid-2014 to 32% in mid-2041. As a result, the median age of the population is expected to increase from 43.7 in mid-2014 to 51.8 in mid-2041.

#### Longer life expectancy and low fertility rate

2.4 The ageing population is the combined result of longer life expectancy and a low fertility rate. Hong Kong has experienced a generally declining trend in mortality during 2001-2014, leading to an increase in life expectancy. In 2014, life expectancy at birth was 81.2 years for males and 86.7 years for females (**Table 2**), among the highest in the world. Mortality rate should continue its declining trend and life expectancy at birth is projected to increase further to 84.4 years for males and 90.8 years for females in 2041.

**Table 2 — Life expectancy at birth and total fertility rate in Hong Kong, 2001-2041**

Year	Life expectancy at birth (years)		Total fertility rate
	Male	Female	
2001	78.4	84.6	931
2011	80.3	86.7	1 204
2012	80.7	86.4	1 285
2013	81.1	86.7	1 124
2014	81.2	86.7	1 235
2016	81.4	87.6	1 177
2021	82.2	88.5	1 191
2026	82.9	89.2	1 191
2031	83.5	89.8	1 190
2036	84.0	90.3	1 164
2041	84.4	90.8	1 151

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

2.5 Total fertility rate<sup>3</sup> in Hong Kong has persistently been at a low level during 2001-2014, which is below the replacement level of 2 100 per 1 000 women.<sup>4</sup> It stood at 1 235 per 1 000 women in 2014, and is projected to decrease to 1 151 in 2041 (**Table 2**).

### Shrinking working population

2.6 As Hong Kong continues to face a low birth rate, the labour force is expected to peak at 3.71 million in 2018 and then decline to 3.51 million in 2035 before resuming modest growth. Another noteworthy trend is the projected decline in labour force participation rate<sup>5</sup> from 59% in 2014 to 50% in 2041 (**Table 3**), partly attributable to the expected increase in the proportion of females (whose labour force participation rates are relatively lower than those for men) during the period.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3 — Labour force participation rate and sex ratio, 2001-2041**

	2001	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
<b>Labour force participation rate</b>											
Male	73%	68%	69%	69%	69%	70%	67%	63%	59%	57%	56%
Female	47%	49%	50%	51%	51%	52%	51%	48%	46%	45%	45%
Overall	60%	58%	59%	59%	59%	61%	59%	55%	52%	50%	50%
<b>Sex ratio</b>											
	1 021	948	943	938	935	921	896	867	839	812	786

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

<sup>3</sup> Total fertility rate refers to the average number of babies born alive to 1 000 women (excluding foreign domestic helpers) during their lifetime.

<sup>4</sup> For a population to replace itself, each woman would have to produce on average a sufficient number of children. A total fertility rate of 2 100 children per 1 000 women is considered to correspond to the replacement level, allowing for factors such as sex differential at birth, mortality of infants/children and mortality of women before reaching their reproductive years.

<sup>5</sup> Labour force participation rate refers to the proportion of the labour force in the population aged 15 and above after excluding foreign domestic helpers.

<sup>6</sup> As shown in Table 3, the sex ratio (i.e. number of males per 1 000 females after excluding foreign domestic helpers) of Hong Kong's population is projected to fall noticeably from 935 in 2014 to 786 in 2041.

## Rising overall dependency ratio

2.7 The increasing proportion of people aged 65 and above boosted the elderly dependency ratio<sup>7</sup> from 163 in mid-2001 to 211 in mid-2014 (**Table 4**). On the other hand, the child dependency ratio<sup>8</sup> fell from 237 to 159 over the same period. The lower child dependency ratio contributed to the decrease in the overall dependency ratio<sup>9</sup> from 399 in mid-2001 to 371 in mid-2014.

**Table 4 — Dependency ratios in Hong Kong, 2001-2041**

	2001	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Child	237	164	161	158	159	162	178	179	176	170	163
Elderly	163	188	194	202	211	231	293	375	457	514	549
Overall	399	352	355	360	371	393	471	555	633	684	712

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

2.8 The declining trend in the overall dependency ratio is unlikely to sustain in the coming years under the prevailing population ageing trend. The proportion of people aged 65 and above is projected to rise markedly, thereby increasing the elderly dependency ratio from 211 in mid-2014 to 549 in 2041 (**Table 4**). This increasing trend, coupled with shrinking working population, will boost the overall dependency ratio from 371 in 2014 to 712 in 2041.

## Growing importance of immigrants to population growth

2.9 Given the low fertility rate, net inward migration (particularly new arrivals from the Mainland) has been a major source of population growth for Hong Kong. Since the early 1980s, Mainland spouse and accompanying children of a Hong Kong resident may apply for settling in Hong Kong for family reunion through the One-Way Permit ("OWP") Scheme. The scheme is administered by the Mainland authorities and the daily quota is set at 150. A total of 497 586 Mainland residents came to settle in Hong Kong on the strength of the OWP Scheme between 2004 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Elderly dependency ratio refers to the number of persons aged 65 and above per 1 000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

<sup>8</sup> Child dependency ratio refers to the number of persons aged under 15 per 1 000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

<sup>9</sup> Overall dependency ratio is defined as the number of dependents (persons aged under 15 and those aged 65 and above) per 1 000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

<sup>10</sup> See Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department (various years).

## Reversed trend in the number of babies born to Mainland women

2.10 In July 2001, the Court of Final Appeal ruled that Chinese citizens born in Hong Kong are Hong Kong permanent residents regardless of the status of their parents.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the number of babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women increased from 7 810 in 2001 to 43 982 in 2011, of which 6 110 or 14% were Type I babies<sup>12</sup> and 35 736 or 81% Type II babies<sup>13</sup> (Table 5).

**Table 5 — Number of births given by Mainland women in Hong Kong, 2001-2014**

Year	Type I babies	Type II babies	Others <sup>(1)</sup>	Total
2001	7 190	620	n.a.	7 810
2002	7 256	1 250	n.a.	8 506
2003	7 962	2 070	96	10 128
2004	8 896	4 102	211	13 209
2005	9 879	9 273	386	19 538
2006	9 438	16 044	650	26 132
2007	7 989	18 816	769	27 574
2008	7 228	25 269	1 068	33 565
2009	6 213	29 766	1 274	37 253
2010	6 169	32 653	1 826	40 648
2011	6 110	35 736	2 136	43 982
2012	4 698	26 715	1 786	33 199
2013	4 670	790	37	5 497
2014	5 179	823	22	6 024

Note: (1) This refers to Mainland mothers who chose not to provide the father's residential status during birth registration.

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

<sup>11</sup> *Director of Immigration v Chong Fung Yuen (2001) 4 HKCFAR 211.*

<sup>12</sup> Type I babies refer to babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong and whose fathers are Hong Kong permanent residents.

<sup>13</sup> Type II babies refer to babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong and whose fathers are not Hong Kong permanent residents.

2.11 Increased number of Type II babies has aroused public concerns over the adequacy of the provision of obstetric services for local pregnant women, and the longer-term implications on education, health and social services in meeting the needs of these babies. To address the above concerns, the Government has since January 2012 stepped up various administrative measures including ceasing to accept delivery bookings by Mainland pregnant women in public hospitals and setting a delivery quota in private hospitals. As a result, the number of Type II babies decreased by 25% year-on-year to 26 715 in 2012.

2.12 In 2013, the Government implemented a zero quota policy requiring all public and private hospitals not to accept any bookings by Mainland pregnant women whose husbands are not Hong Kong permanent residents for delivery in Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup> This resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Type II babies born in Hong Kong from 26 715 in 2012 to 823 in 2014.

2.13 To assess the impact of babies born to Mainland women on the Hong Kong population, C&SD conducted six rounds of "Survey on babies born in Hong Kong to Mainland women" during 2007-2012. These surveys were to enquire the intentions of parents of Type I and Type II babies on whether they would bring their babies born in Hong Kong back to the Mainland and, for those babies who have been taken back to the Mainland, the intention of their parents on whether these babies would be brought back to Hong Kong later.

2.14 Based on the average result of the six rounds of survey conducted, about 51% of Type I babies would stay in Hong Kong after birth (**Table 6**). Among the 49% of the parents of Type I babies who indicated that their children would not stay in Hong Kong before the age of one, about 86% of the parents indicated that they intended to bring their children back to Hong Kong later. That means, about 93% of Type I babies would eventually settle in Hong Kong.

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<sup>14</sup> For those Mainland pregnant women whose husbands are Hong Kong permanent residents, they can only make bookings at private hospitals for delivery.

**Table 6 — Surveys on intentions of parents about future living arrangement for their Type I babies**

	First round	Second round	Third round	Fourth round	Fifth round	Sixth round	Average <sup>(1)</sup>
Staying in Hong Kong	65%	53%	47%	54%	31%	56%	51%
Not living in Hong Kong before age one	35%	47%	53%	46%	69%	44%	49%
With intention of being brought back to Hong Kong	90%	87%	87%	87%	88%	77%	86%
Others <sup>(2)</sup>	10%	13%	13%	13%	12%	23%	14%
Overall proportion of babies living in Hong Kong eventually	97%	94%	93%	94%	92%	89%	93%

Notes: (1) Average result of the six rounds of survey conducted.

(2) Figures include those cases that the parents chose the options "not yet decided", "possibly will not bring back" and "definitely will not bring back".

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

2.15 As to Type II babies, about 4% of them would stay in Hong Kong after birth (**Table 7**). The remaining 96% of Type II babies would not live in Hong Kong before reaching the age of one, and 55% of their parents indicated the intention of bringing them back to Hong Kong later. In other words, about 57% of Type II babies would eventually settle in Hong Kong.



**Table 7 — Surveys on intentions of parents about future living arrangement for their Type II babies**

	First round	Second round	Third round	Fourth round	Fifth round	Sixth round	Average <sup>(1)</sup>
Staying in Hong Kong	9%	3%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%
Not living in Hong Kong before age one	91%	97%	97%	96%	99%	98%	96%
With intention of being brought back to Hong Kong	58%	28%	61%	67%	64%	53%	55%
Others <sup>(2)</sup>	42%	72%	39%	33%	36%	47%	45%
Overall proportion of babies living in Hong Kong eventually	62%	30%	62%	68%	64%	53%	57%

Notes: (1) Average result of the six rounds of survey conducted.

(2) Figures include those cases that the parents chose the options "not yet decided", "possibly will not bring back" and "definitely will not bring back".

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

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