Highlights

- Solid waste disposal is one of the key challenges of waste management in Hong Kong. During 2012-2016, the total amount of solid waste disposed of at landfills has rebounded significantly by 11% to 5.6 million tonnes in 2016, after an 8% decline in the preceding six years. This also outpaced the 2.6% population growth during 2012-2016 (Figure 1).

- About 68% of the waste was municipal solid waste (i.e. waste from domestic, commercial and industrial sectors), which has gone up by 12% during 2012-2016. As regards the remaining 32% of the waste, they were mainly construction waste which have rebounded noticeably by 9% during 2012-2016, arresting the 20% decline in the preceding six years and despite the implementation of construction waste charging since 2006 (Figure 1). Conceivably, this rebound may be partly related to increased construction activities in Hong Kong recent years.

- Households were the largest generator of municipal solid waste, accounting for 62% of the total in 2016, while the remaining 38% was generated by commercial and industrial sources (Figure 2). To reduce municipal solid waste, the Government is planning to introduce mandatory municipal solid waste charging in 2019.

- Analyzed by type, food waste made up the largest part of municipal solid waste, accounting for 35% of the total. This was followed by paper (22%), plastics (21%), other putrescibles (7%) and glass (3%) (Figure 3).
Highlight

- Focusing on waste paper disposal, it had fallen steadily by a total of 24% during 2006-2013, but rebounded noticeably by 23% to 819,000 tonnes in the more recent years up to 2016. This rebound was mainly driven by a 41% rise in disposal by the businesses, compared to a 14% rise by households (Figure 4).

- There was a significant change in the composition of waste paper disposed at landfills during 2006-2016. Newsprint waste plunged by a total of 51% within a decade, partly reflecting a shift of newspaper reading habits towards online platforms. By contrast, the amount of cardboard waste rose by a total of 42%, suggesting an unabated use of paper in goods packaging (Figure 5).

- Apart from discarding waste paper at landfills, some waste paper generated in Hong Kong is collected for export to other places (mainly the Mainland) for recycling. This amounted to 806,000 tonnes in 2016 (Figure 6).

- As the Mainland has tightened up waste import more recently, the Government has invited interested recyclers in March this year to bid for the lease of a site in Eco Park for setting up a paper recycling facility for locally collected waste paper.

Data source: Latest figures from Environmental Protection Department.