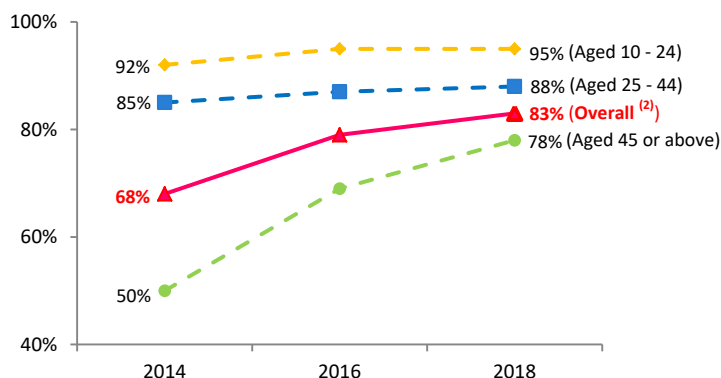




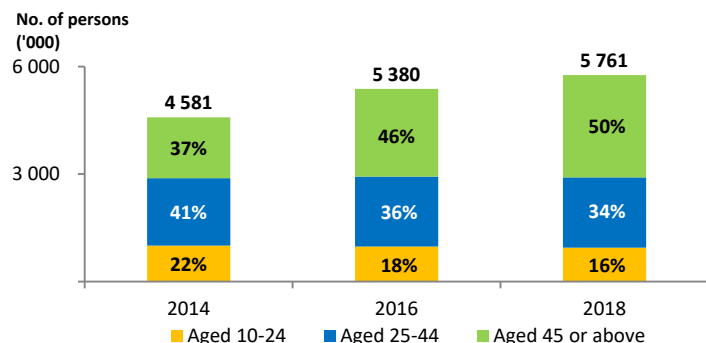
Social media usage in Hong Kong

Figure 1 — Social media participation rates by age group, 2014-2018⁽¹⁾



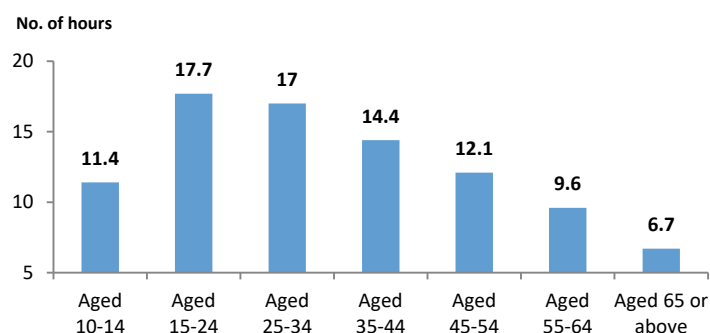
Notes: (1) Social media participation rate is measured by the number of social media users as a percentage of population in the respective age groups.
(2) Overall refers to those aged 10 or above.

Figure 2 — Distribution of social media users by age group, 2014-2018⁽¹⁾



Note: (1) Percentages denote proportion of social media users in respective age groups to the number of social media users aged 10 or above.

Figure 3 — Time spent on social media per week in 2018



Highlights

- Social media is a website or app that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. It has gained increasing popularity in Hong Kong, as evidenced by the increase in the social media participation rate from 68% in 2014 to 83% in 2018 (Figure 1).
- The social media participation rates varied among different age groups. Among them, over 90% of youngsters aged 10-24 had used social media between 2014 and 2018. People aged 45 or above have caught up rapidly with their social media participation rate rising from 50% in 2014 to 78% in 2018. As a result, their share of the total number of social media users increased from 37% in 2014 to 50% in 2018 (Figure 2), implying one in every two social media users were aged 45 or above.
- The above trend reflects increasing appeal of social media to people of different age groups. Social media has now served not only as a personal sharing channel, but also as a multi-functional platform for news feeding, learning and shopping.
- In Hong Kong, increasing popularity of social media has not only manifested in the participation rates, but also in the number of hours people spend on it. In 2018, Hong Kong people spent an average of 12.9 hours per week on social media, up from 10.4 hours in 2014. In comparison, youngsters spent relatively more time on social media than other age groups. In 2018, people aged 15-24 were the heaviest users who spent an average of 17.7 hours on social media per week (Figure 3).

Social media usage in Hong Kong (cont'd)

Figure 4 — The use of social media of the youths by activities, 2017

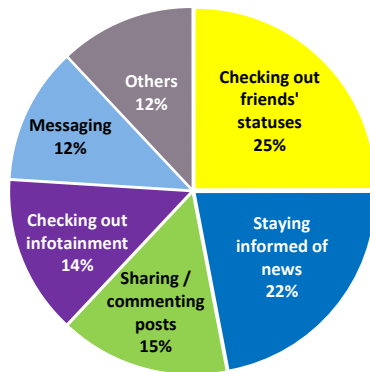


Figure 5 — Social media deception and financial loss involved, 2013-2018

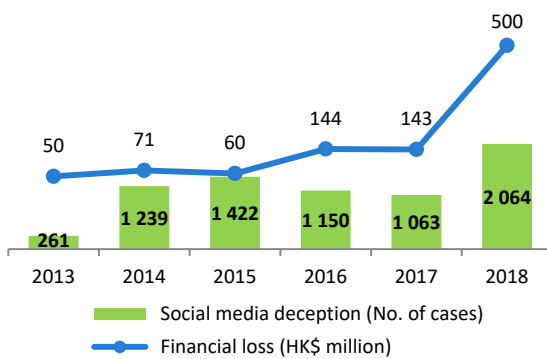
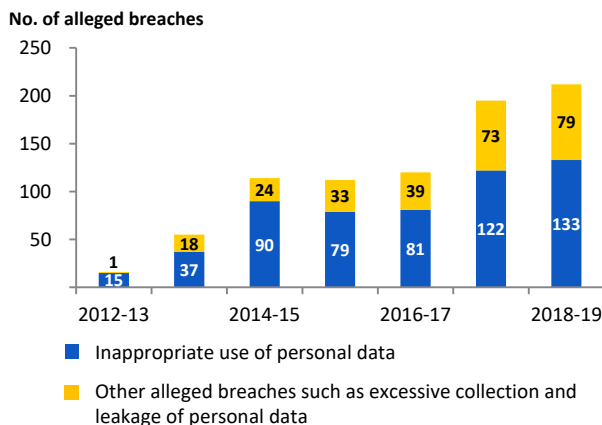


Figure 6 — Alleged breaches of data protection principles in relation to social media



Highlights

- Indeed, social media has penetrated into various areas of youngsters' daily lives. According to a survey on the use of social media by local people aged 15-29, checking out friends' statuses was the most common activity among respondents, followed by staying informed of news (Figure 4). Meanwhile, there were also respondents using social media for sharing ideas and sending/receiving messages.
- Alongside growing popularity, social media also raises legal and ethical concerns. Social media platforms do not require users' true identities for registration, and social networking with strangers on the Internet might give rise to the risk of deception. According to the Security Bureau, both the cases of social media deception and the amount of financial loss involved increased by almost 10 times between 2013 and 2018 (Figure 5). Among the 2 064 deception cases in 2018, 596 were related to online romance fraud involving a total loss of HK\$450 million.
- Aside from social media deception, there are concerns over sufficiency of data privacy protection. According to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data ("PCPD"), complaints related to social media surged from 16 cases in FY2012-2013 to 146 cases in FY2018-2019. These complaint cases might include more than one alleged breaches of data protection principles, of which inappropriate use of personal data accounted for over half of the complaints in FY2018-2019 (Figure 6). Furthermore, information extracted from social media may spread across the Internet. Amid recent social incidents, PCPD had received a total of 2 683 cases of doxxing and cyberbullying between 14 June and 21 October 2019, involving 13 social media platforms and discussion forums as well as 2 145 web links.

Data sources: Latest figures from Census and Statistics Department, Security Bureau, Hong Kong Police Force, Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data and the Chinese University of Hong Kong

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