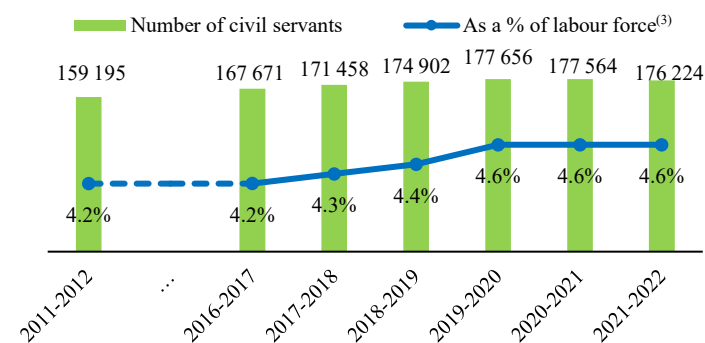


Attractiveness of civil service jobs

Figure 1 – Strength of civil service^{(1), (2)}



Notes: (1) Independent Commission Against Corruption officers, judges and judicial officers, and locally engaged staff working in the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices are excluded.
(2) Figures are as at the end of fiscal years (31 March).
(3) Refers to total labour force, which includes foreign domestic helpers (“FDH”). The share of civil servants shows a similar trend when FDH are excluded, rising from 4.6% in 2011-2012 to 5.0% in 2019-2020 and 5.1% in 2021-2022.

Figure 2 – Applications and new recruits for civil service positions (civilian grades)⁽¹⁾

Fiscal year	Civilian grades		
	Number of applications received	Number of new recruits	Number of applications per new recruit
2012-2013	386 000	6 756	57.1
2013-2014	290 000	7 860	36.9
2014-2015	444 000	7 229	61.4
2015-2016	337 000	8 862	38.0
2016-2017	459 000	7 984	57.5
2017-2018	428 000	9 971	42.9
2018-2019	475 000	10 384	45.7
2019-2020	313 000	11 114	28.2
2020-2021	449 000	9 206	48.8

Note: (1) Refers to the number of new recruits who assumed duty in the years concerned. As a recruitment exercise may straddle two fiscal years, the number of applications received and the number of new recruits appointed in the same recruitment exercise may not be counted under the same fiscal year.

Figure 3 – Applications and new recruits for civil service positions (disciplined service grades)⁽¹⁾

Fiscal year	Disciplined service grades		
	Number of applications received	Number of new recruits	Number of applications per new recruit
2012-2013	106 000	2 485	42.7
2013-2014	87 000	2 557	34.0
2014-2015	70 000	2 838	24.7
2015-2016	94 000	3 052	30.8
2016-2017	134 000	3 295	40.7
2017-2018	119 000	4 283	27.8
2018-2019	87 000	4 270	20.4
2019-2020	76 000	2 427	31.3
2020-2021	86 000	2 366	36.3

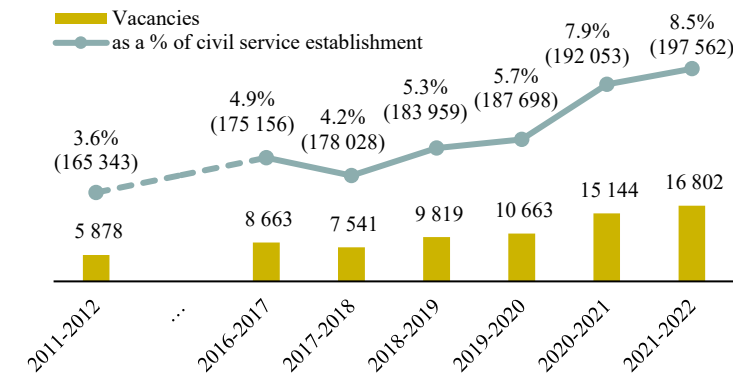
Note: (1) Refers to the number of new recruits who assumed duty in the years concerned. As a recruitment exercise may straddle two fiscal years, the number of applications received and the number of new recruits appointed in the same recruitment exercise may not be counted under the same fiscal year.

Highlights

- Strengthening governance capacity is one of the focuses of the Chief Executive, according to his election manifesto. The new administration envisages to build a government that is “result-oriented and solution-driven” and “highly effective in governance”. The civil service therefore has an important role to play in the effective implementation of the policies laid down by the new administration.
- The number of serving civil servants (“strength”) tapered slightly over the past two fiscal years, and stood at 176 224 at end-March 2022 (**Figure 1**). This represented a reversal from a generally stable growth trend, which totaled 6.0% between 2016-2017 and 2019-2020. As a percentage of total labour force, it remained steady at 4.6% since 2019-2020.
- To fill the vacancies arising from changes in establishment and staff leaving the civil service (“staff wastage”), the Government conducted over 860 recruitment exercises (including open recruitment and in-service recruitment) between 2018-2019 to 2020-2021. Applications to civilian grade positions experienced a brief setback in 2019-2020, falling by over 30% compared to the previous year although the number of appointments appeared unaffected. Applications then recovered in 2020-2021, to a similar level as in the previous few years (**Figure 2**). Roughly speaking, the Government received an equivalent of 48.8 applications per successful new recruit in 2020-2021, a sharp bounce back from 28.2 applications in 2019-2020 and more in line with the situation observed in the past.
- Meanwhile, the disciplined services appear to face bigger challenges in attracting talents. The number of applications saw a significant drop in 2018-2019, while new recruits have fallen by over 40% since 2019-2020 (**Figure 3**). In particular, the Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”), with an establishment size of over 37 000, fell short of its recruitment target. According to the Secretary for Security, HKPF targeted to hire 1 845 officers in 2019-2020, while actual recruitment stood at 754 during the year. The gap in recruitment has probably prompted HKPF to adjust entry requirements for new recruits, including removing the seven-year residency requirement with effect from April 2022.

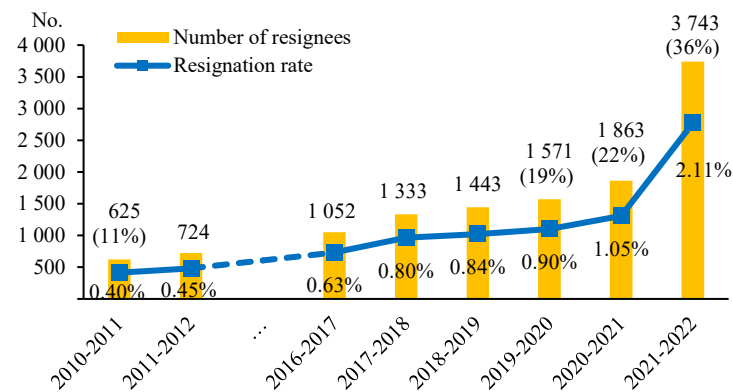
Attractiveness of civil service jobs (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Number of civil service vacancies^{(1), (2)}



Notes: (1) Figures in brackets denote the size of civil service establishment. Figure for 2021-2022 is official estimate as per the 2022-2023 Budget.
(2) Figures are as at the end of fiscal years.

Figure 5 – Number of resignees and resignation rate, 2010-2011 to 2021-2022⁽¹⁾



Note: (1) Figures in brackets denote resignations as a proportion of staff wastage.

Figure 6 – Civil service pay adjustments and net PTIs^{(1), (2)}

Year	Upper salary band		Middle salary band		Lower salary band ⁽³⁾	
	Adjustment rate	Net PTI	Adjustment rate	Net PTI	Adjustment rate	Net PTI
2012	+5.26%		+5.80%		+5.80%	+4.56%
2013	+2.55%		+3.92%		+3.92%	
2014	+5.96%		+4.71%		+4.71%	+3.80%
2015	+3.96%	+3.46%	+4.62%	+4.12%	+4.62%	+3.02%
2016	+4.19%		+4.68%		+4.68%	+3.08%
2017	+1.88%	+1.38%	+2.94%	+2.44%	+2.94%	+1.82%
2018	+4.06%		+4.51%		+4.51%	+2.84%
2019	+4.75%	+4.58%	+5.26%	+5.08%	+5.26%	+3.13%
2020	Freeze	+1.68%	Freeze	+1.98%	Freeze	+1.15%
2021	Freeze	-2.04%	Freeze	-0.54%	Freeze	-0.68%
2022	+2.50%	+7.26%	+2.50%	+4.55%	+2.50%	+2.04%

Notes: (1) Pay adjustments took effect on 1 April each year.
(2) Entries shaded in light grey denote pay adjustment rates that are above net PTI changes, whereas those shaded in red denote pay adjustment rates lower than net PTI changes.
(3) Since 1989, the Government has put in place an arrangement to align pay adjustment for the lower salary band with that for the middle salary band, if the net PTI of the middle salary band is higher than that of the lower salary band.

Research Office
Research and Information Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 August 2022
Tel: 3919 3181

Highlights

- Rise in civil service vacancies was significant in 2020-2021 and accelerated from the preceding few years (**Figure 4**). This may be attributed to (a) somewhat more proactive creation of post (a 9.6% growth in civil service establishment between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021, compared with 3.9% in the preceding four-year period); and (b) retirement and resignation as well as other departures from the civil service. Possibly reflecting also recruitment difficulties, vacancies stood at 16 802 as at end-March 2022, the highest since 1981, and represented about 8.5% of the civil service establishment. Specifically, HKPF accounted for the highest proportion (37%) of civil service vacancies at 5 671 as at end-March 2021, due partly to the below-target recruitment it has been experiencing.
- While retirement has been the primary reason of staff wastage, resignation has risen markedly in recent years, accounting for 22% and 36% of staff wastage in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 respectively (**Figure 5**). Recently, the Civil Service Bureau reportedly indicated that there were 3 743 resignations from the civil service in 2021-2022, increasing by four times from a decade ago, leading to concerns whether civil service jobs are losing their appeal.
- In terms of remuneration, the Government's policy is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain and motivate talent, while maintaining broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. Under the annual civil service pay adjustment mechanism, the Government decides on the adjustment rates, having regard to a number of factors, including net pay trend indicators ("PTI"; derived from the annual pay trend survey which tracks the pay movements in the private sector), the state of the economy, changes in the cost of living, the Government's fiscal position, the Staff Sides' pay claims and civil service morale. In the latest three years, pay adjustments have apparently loosened their linkage with movements in net PTI (**Figure 6**), which on its own could not fully reflect the economic situation, as explained by the Government. That said, attractiveness of civil service jobs is considered a complex issue, and remuneration is but one of the factors involved. To ensure that the civil service meets its manpower needs for effective policy implementation, the multifaceted factors would need to be well understood and addressed.

Data sources: Latest figures from Civil Service Bureau and Census and Statistics Department, and the 2022-23 Budget.