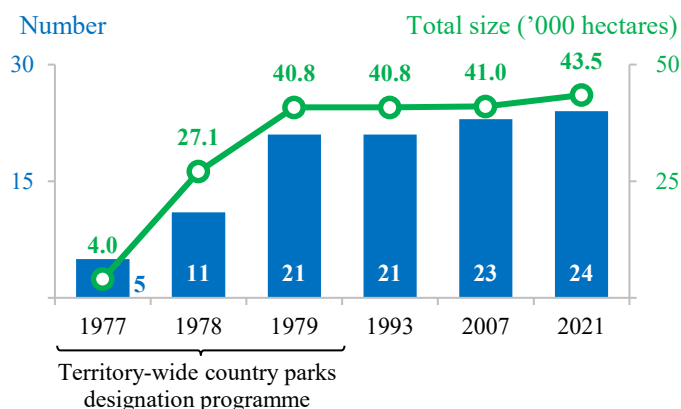




## Conservation of country parks in Hong Kong

**Figure 1 – Number and area of country parks in Hong Kong**

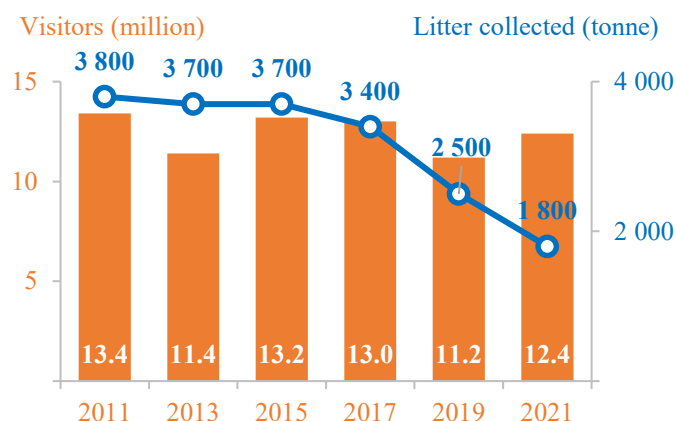


**Figure 2 – Major land supply options and the share of support in public engagement<sup>(1)</sup>**

Land Supply Option	Questionnaires	Telephone Surveys
	Share of support (%)	
(a) Developing the East Lantau Metropolis	62%	58%
(b) More new development areas in the New Territories	61%	78%
(c) Near-shore reclamation outside Victoria Harbour	49%	61%
(d) Developing caverns and underground space	43%	66%
(e) Developing the River Trade Terminal site	41%	65%
<b>(f) Developing two pilot areas on the periphery of CP</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>53%</b>

Note: (1) Views expressed in over 29 000 questionnaires and some 3 000 interviews in a randomized telephone survey.

**Figure 3 – Number of visitors to country parks and volume of litter collected**

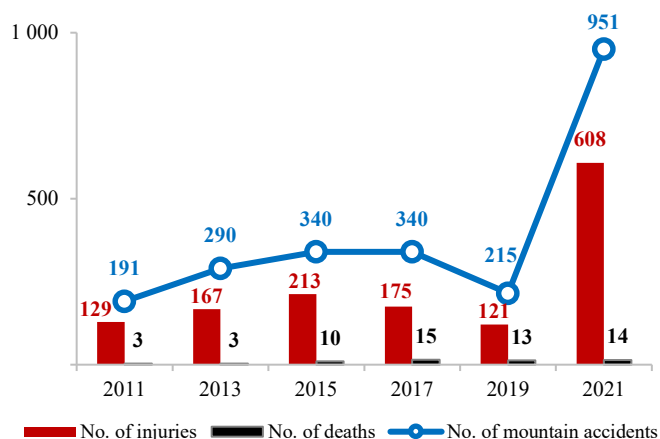


### Highlights

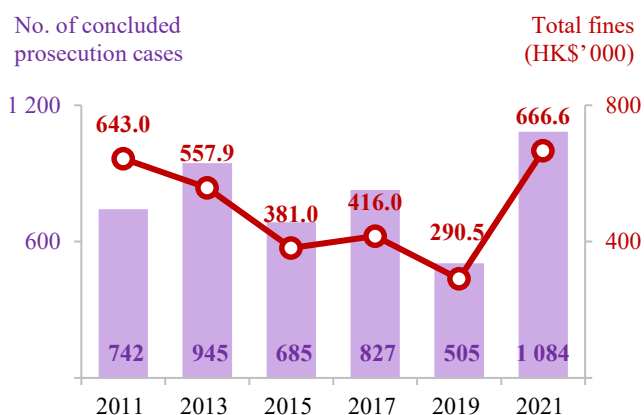
- Within three years after the enactment of Country Parks Ordinance (“CPO”) in 1976, as many as 40 833 hectares were designated as statutory country parks (“CP”) in Hong Kong by 1979 (**Figure 1**). Based on seven established criteria for designating new CP (e.g. conservation value, landscape and aesthetic value, recreation potential and size), 6.5% of extra land was added into CP over the next 42 years. Currently, there are 24 CP covering an area of 43 467 hectares, accounting for 39% of total land in Hong Kong. In the near term, the Government will initiate the statutory procedures for designating the 495-hectare Robin’s Nest as the 25th CP in 2024.
- In the face of severe housing shortage, there are persistent suggestions in the community that those CP land deemed to have lower ecological value could be deployed for development. As such, the Government invited the Hong Kong Housing Society (“HKHS”) to conduct an ecological and feasibility study of developing two pilot areas on the periphery of Tai Lam and Ma On Shan CP (“CP option”) in 2017. However, in a public engagement exercise conducted by Task Force on Land Supply in 2018, only 28% respondents in the questionnaires and 53% in telephone surveys supported the CP option, lower than other land supply options (**Figure 2**). The Government subsequently asked HKHS to put the study on hold in 2019.
- While beautiful scenery along hiking trails in CP is globally renowned, the number of CP visitors was down by 16% from 2011 to 2019 (**Figure 3**). Visitors rebounded visibly by 11% to 12.4 million in 2021 when hiking becomes a popular recreation activity after the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. Yet heavier visitor flows come with vegetation loss and rapid deterioration in many hiking trails. While litter collected in CP halved within a decade to 1 800 tonnes in 2021, it was largely attributable to removal of rubbish bins along hiking trails in 2017 and closure of barbecue sites and campsites amidst epidemic since 2020.

## Conservation of country parks in Hong Kong (cont'd)

**Figure 4 – Number of mountain accidents and casualties**



**Figure 5 – Number of prosecutions in relation to offences in country parks<sup>(1)</sup>**



Note: (1) Covering offences under the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A) only. Statistics on cases and fines are for fiscal year beginning in April.

**Figure 6 – Hill fire incidents and tree planting in country parks<sup>(1)</sup>**

	2012-2016	2017-2021
	<i>Five-year total</i>	
<b>Hill fire incidents within or adjacent to country parks</b>		
Hill fires	97	116
Affected area (hectares)	1 175	1 437
Trees damaged ('000)	51	21
<b>Tree planting in country parks</b>		
Seedlings planted ('000)	2 780	1 569
% of native species planted	80%	80%-85%

Note: (1) Fiscal year beginning in April.

## Highlights

- With increasing popularity of hiking, the number of mountain accidents reported to the Fire Services Department (“FSD”) almost quintupled within a decade to 951 cases in 2021 (Figure 4). Both the numbers of injuries and deaths also surged by three-folds concurrently, to 608 and 14 respectively in 2021. In October 2016, FSD set up a “Mountain Search and Rescue Team”, with 210 trained members at present. In February 2018, the Security Bureau also introduced a hiker tracking service with global positioning system (“GPS”) function on its mobile app to expedite the rescue.
- On enforcement of CPO, the annual number of concluded prosecutions hovered within a range of 500-950 cases before 2019, before surging by 147% in two years to a peak of 1 084 cases in the fiscal year 2021-2022 (Figure 5). The fines collected followed a similar profile, doubling in two years to over HK\$660,000 in 2021-2022. For the most recent five-year period from 2017 to 2021, driving of vehicle/bicycle in CP without permit was the largest category of offence (accounting for 62% of the caseload). This was followed by entering closed part of CP (12%), littering (11%) and camping outside designated sites (7%). In view of strong demand for camping, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (“AFCD”) is setting up more campsites and launching an advance booking system for campsites by phases.
- Fire hazards are another key concern in the conservation of CP. Comparing the five-year period ending 2021 against that ending 2016, the occurrences of hill fires have increased by 20% to 116 incidents, along with a 22% increase in the affected area to 1 437 hectares (Figure 6). To compensate for trees damaged in hill fires, AFCD planted over four million seedlings in CP in the past decade, with the proportion of seedlings of native species increased from 80% in 2012-2013 to 85% in 2021-2022. This apart, AFCD has been conducting a trial on “automated hill fire surveillance system” in Tai Lam CP since 2017 to enhance monitoring efficiency, and the system managed to detect 12 hill fires from 2019 to 2021 reportedly.

Data sources: Latest figures from Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Fire Services Department and Task Force on Land Supply.

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