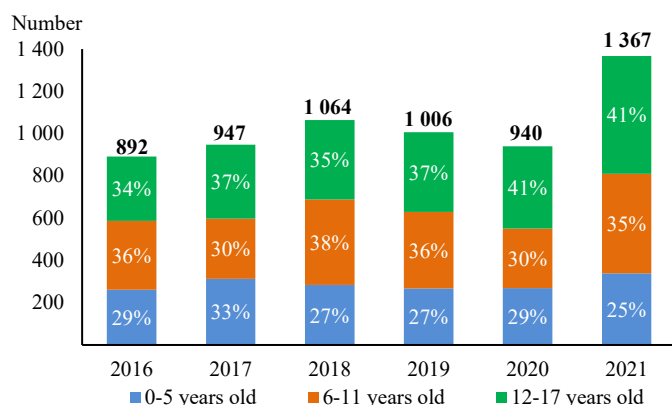




## Child protection

**Figure 1 – Newly registered cases by age group<sup>(1)</sup>**



Note: (1) Newly registered cases hereunder refer to the newly registered child protection cases, including those children having been harmed/maltreated or currently at risk of harm/maltreatment.

**Figure 2 – Newly registered cases by gender and type of harm/maltreatment**

Types of harm/maltreatment	Boys			Girls		
	2020	2021	YoY% change	2020	2021	YoY% change
Physical harm/abuse	240	315	31%	149	278	87%
Sexual abuse	52	47	-10%	261	401	54%
Neglect	101	134	33%	100	141	41%
Psychological harm/abuse	1	4	300%	9	5	-44%
Multiple harm/abuse	10	19	90%	17	23	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>58%</b>

**Figure 3 – Newly registered cases and corresponding incidence rates by selected districts**

Districts	2011-2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Yau Tsim Mong	32 (0.65)	50 (1.13)	69 (1.50)	54 (1.19)	57 (1.28)	74 (1.74)	100 (2.39)
Kwun Tong	94 (1.01)	102 (1.09)	98 (1.03)	126 (1.30)	114 (1.14)	104 (1.01)	181 (2.10)
Yuen Long	134 (1.36)	107 (1.20)	104 (1.14)	127 (1.37)	111 (1.19)	96 (1.05)	172 (1.87)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>893 (0.86)</b>	<b>892 (0.88)</b>	<b>947 (0.93)</b>	<b>1 064 (1.04)</b>	<b>1 006 (0.91)</b>	<b>940 (0.92)</b>	<b>1 367 (1.42)</b>

Notes: (1) Figures in parentheses refer to the incidence rate per 1 000 children aged 0-17 in the district/territory.

(2) Figures highlighted in blue refer to the district having the highest number of cases/incidence rate among all districts in that period.

(3) 2011-2015 figures refer to annual averages during the period.

(4) The highest incidence rate for 2019 was observed in Wong Tai Sin at 1.33 and that for 2016 was observed in Tuen Mun at 1.27.

## Highlights

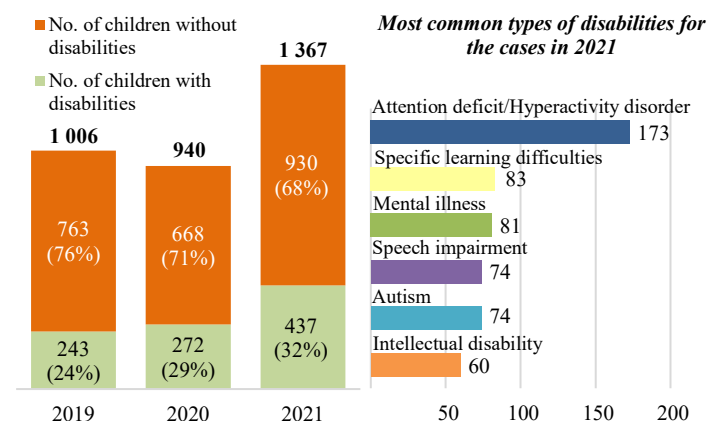
- In Hong Kong, child protection has become a widely discussed topic in the community after several recent reports regarding shocking child abuse cases. Reflecting the growing severity of the problem, the number of newly registered child protection cases surged by 45% from 940 in 2020 to 1 367 in 2021 (**Figure 1**). Yet, this figure might be an underestimation of the total number of child abuse cases as the young victims may not know where and/or whom to reach out for help. They may also be unwilling to recall unhappy experience and share details concerning the incidents.

- Analyzed by gender, the number of female victims increased more rapidly than their male counterparts in 2021 (**Figure 2**), accounting for 73% of the overall rise of cases in the year. During the suspension of face-to-face classes amid the COVID-19 pandemic, teenagers had more time getting online and became more exposed to social networking traps. They were therefore more likely to fall prey to perpetrators, as manifested by the sharp rise of sexual abuse cases on girls. Another noteworthy trend is the visible increases in physical harm/abuse cases for both sexes, probably consequential to the intensified conflicts between parents and children as they stayed longer at home due to the former's work-from-home arrangement/job loss and the latter's online learning amid the pandemic.

- Yau Tsim Mong, Kwun Tong and Yuen Long were the districts recording the highest incidence rates in 2021 (**Figure 3**). In fact, Yuen Long consistently ranked among the top three worst performing districts throughout the decade except for the year 2017, while the incidence rate of Kwun Tong was generally above average and more than doubled in 2021 as compared to 2020. It is worth noting that the incidence rate of Yau Tsim Mong was below the territory-wide average in early 2010s, but registered a noticeable deteriorating trend since then, far exceeding the overall average as well as surpassing those of all other districts in recent years. With only a few studies available online investigating the factors behind cases by district, the above trends might probably be issues worth examining in view of the recent heightened concern over child abuse problem.

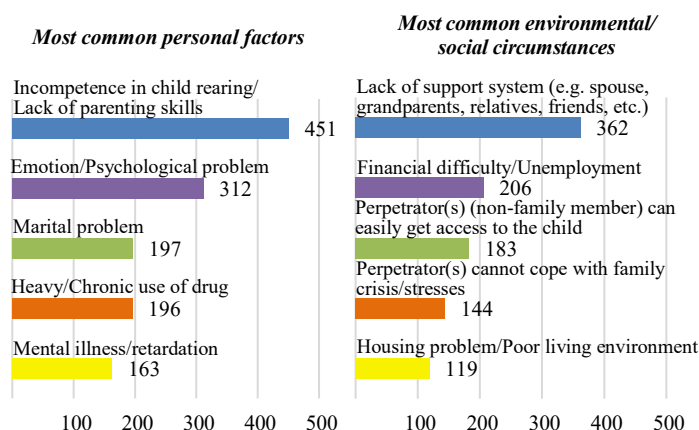
## Child protection (cont'd)

**Figure 4 – Newly registered cases involving children with disabilities**



Notes: (1) The earliest annual figures of the children of newly registered cases with different types of disabilities available started from 2019.  
(2) One child may have more than one type of disability and the sum of different kinds of disabilities may exceed the total number of cases for children with disabilities.

**Figure 5 – Risk factors for the newly registered cases, 2021**



Note: (1) Figures refer to the number of newly registered cases by risk factors of child maltreatment being identified. Each case may have more than one risk factor.

**Figure 6 – Statistics on Family and Child Protective Services Unit and training courses organized by the Social Welfare Department**

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Family and Child Protective Services Unit (FCPSU)</b>						
Number of child protection cases handled by FCPSUs	2 487	2 531	2 800	2 849	3 029	3 568
Expenditure of FCPSUs (HK\$ million)	214	216	230	288	290	N.A.
Staff establishment of social workers (professional grade) in FCPSUs	179	179	220	220	220	220
<b>Training courses organized by the Social Welfare Department for relevant professional practitioners on child protection</b>						
Number of training courses	155	137	151	152	150	167
Number of attendance (approximate)	8 000	7 700	11 000	11 000	7 200	10 100

Notes: (1) Each child protection case handled by FCPSUs may involve one or more maltreated children.  
(2) The actual figure for expenditure of FCPSUs in 2021-22 is not available yet.  
(3) Figures for the number of social workers (professional grade) include senior social work officers, social work officers and assistant social work officers.

## Highlights

• Meanwhile, the number and proportion of newly registered child protection cases involving children with disabilities increased to 437 and 32% respectively in 2021, higher than the corresponding figures of 243 and 24% in 2019 (Figure 4). The figures reflect the vulnerability of children with disabilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and specific learning difficulties. These children generally faced more difficulties in learning online during the pandemic, adversely affecting their learning progress and emotion. Parents could be at higher risk of getting irritated, suffer greater mental stress as a result, and may eventually resort to domestic violence.

• As regards risk factors identified for child maltreatment, the most common ones relating to perpetrators as stated in the Child Protection Registry Statistical Report 2021 published by the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) were incompetence in child rearing/lack of parenting skills and emotion/psychological problem (Figure 5). With respect to environmental or social circumstances, the lack of support system was identified as the most prevalent factor.

• Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSUs) of the SWD are responsible for, among other things, assisting families with problem of child abuse and formulating welfare plan with other professionals for the victims. The upsurge in child abuse cases may warrant the need for additional manpower resource, but it is noted that the staff establishment of professional grade social workers in FCPSUs has held steady since 2018-19 (Figure 6).

• Notwithstanding the above, the Government has taken a number of measures in recent years to enhance child protection. For instance, Positive Parent Campaign has been organized in promoting positive parent education to foster parents’ positive thinking and the proper ways and attitudes to raise children. In addition, the Government will take forward the setting up of a mandatory reporting mechanism for child abuse cases by introducing a bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2023.

Data sources: Latest figures from the Social Welfare Department.