

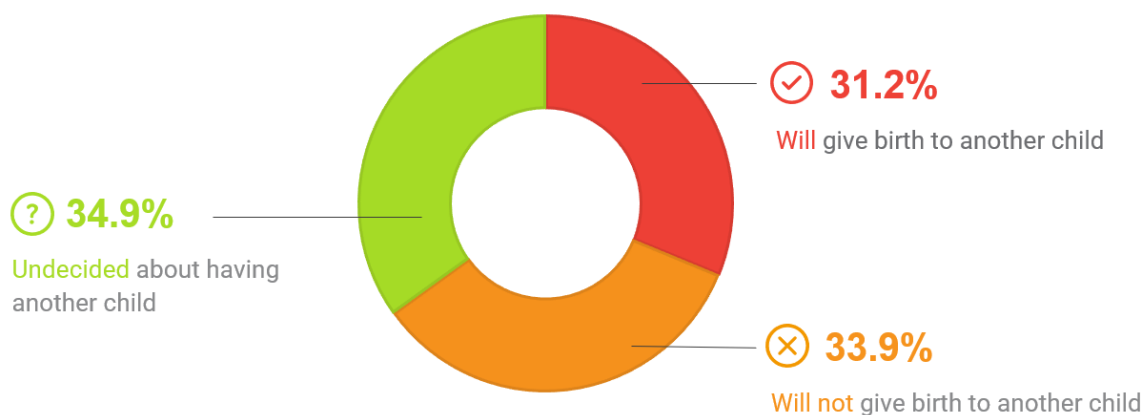


“Second-Child Fertility Intentions Survey Report” Press Conference

To encourage childbirth, the Government in recent years has been implementing a series of measures, hoping to create a more favourable child-rearing and family-friendly environment in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children conducted a “Second-Child Fertility Intentions” online survey from May 14 to June 7, 2024 to explore the intention of Hong Kong women to give birth to a second child and their opinions on the effectiveness of government measures and their employees’ family-friendly employment practices in encouraging childbirth. The survey targeted first-time mothers aged 18 to 45 in Hong Kong, and a total of 1,264 valid responses were collected.

Major Findings

Second-Child Fertility Intentions among Women in Hong Kong



The main reasons for not considering/ undecided about having another child

5 major reasons for wanting only one child:



17.4%

Heavy financial burden



15.4%

Heavy parenting responsibilities



12.1%

Crowded living environment



11.6%

Difficult to balance work and child care



9.5%

Insufficient day child care services

Women's demands for government measures to support childbirth

Measures that respondents believed could best increase their desire to have children include:



10.6%

Offer parental leave and family leave



10.4%

Extend the length of and implement full-paid maternity leave and paternity leave



9.0%

Offer children health care voucher



8.9%

Increase tax allowance for dependent children



7.9%

Increase day child care service places

Women's demands for Family-friendly Employment practices

Top five Family-friendly Employment Practices that respondents believe can best help working parents raise children are:



18.0%

Adopting flexible working hours



16.2%

Allowing employees to work from home



12.4%

Increasing annual leave for employees with children



11.1%

Offering medical insurance to employees and their family members



10.1%

Provide child care service



HKSPC Director Subrina Chow Shun-ye said, “The Government should expand daycare services, especially by increasing Childcare Centre places and long whole-day nursery school places, to alleviate parenting pressure, and support women in joining the workforce and relieving financial burden of families. In the long term, the business sector should popularise family-friendly employment practices to reduce the tension between women re-entering the workforce and childcare.”

Suggestions

1. Increase day childcare service places

In Hong Kong, Childcare centres (CCC) provide daycare services to children aged from birth to under 3. Yet, the service places for children under 2 years old paled in comparison with the total number of children under 2 years old, when only one place was offered for every 40 children. Some parents may even need to travel across districts to find childcare places for their children. Taking the Society's five Day Creches as an example, we provide a total of 329 places, but nearly 1,500 people are on our waiting list for services.

According to official figures, from April to December 2023, there are about 9,000 childcare aided places. The average utilisation rate of aided standalone Childcare Centres has remained at a high level of 95%. Yet while, standalone CCCs and CCCs attached to Kindergartens provide occasional childcare and extended-hours services, the average utilisation rates of the two services are only 51% and 39% respectively.

Therefore, the Government needs to continue to increase day childcare service places, especially for those under 2 years old. The authorities also need to strengthen the publicity of occasional childcare and extended hours services, as well as the After School Care Programme for Pre-primary Children, in order to increase their awareness and usage so that more families in need can receive appropriate support.

2. Promote the benefits of long whole-day nursery schools

Long whole-day nursery schools (8 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day, 5.5 days a week) not only design all-around development programme for children, but also provide auxiliary services, including occasional childcare service, extended hours services and an Integrated Programme for children with special education needs. Long whole-day nursery schools provide edu-care services for children and support dual-income families to balance work and family, which offers great help in strengthening womens' desire to have a second child and joining and remaining in the workforce.

However, among the pre-primary institutions participating in the Kindergarten Education Scheme, school places for long whole-day only account for 17.5% of the total places. The Society suggested that the Government increase the allocation of places for long whole-day nursery schools to meet the actual needs of dual-income families.

3. Fully subsidise the whole-day and long whole-day nursery school programme

The Government has implemented 15-year free education. Yet only half-day kindergartens are fully subsidized, while full-day and long whole-day nursery schools receive additional subsidies of only 30% and 60% respectively (in 2023/24, the subsidy for half-day, full-day and long whole-day kindergartens and nursery schools are \$38,170, \$49,620 and \$61,070 per student per year).

In 2023/24, among the 372 full-day kindergartens and 243 long whole-day nursery schools participating in Kindergarten Education Scheme, 349 and 232 kindergartens and nursery schools charge tuition fees after receiving subsidies. Among them, the median annual tuition fees are \$9,600 and \$13,300 respectively, while the maximum tuition fees are \$28,100 and \$29,300 respectively.

HKSPC suggested the Government fully subsidise the full and long whole-day preschool programmes, and prioritise the access to these programmes by children of single-parent and working parents.



4. Offer children health care voucher

The Government can refer to the operation model of the Elderly Health Care Voucher and set up "Children Health Care Voucher" by injecting a designated amount every year to reduce the financial burden of families with children and ensure timely medical treatment for children.

5. Promote family-friendly employment practices jointly with the community

The Society suggested that the Government consider extending maternity leave and paternity leave so that parents can work together to take care of their newborn babies, thereby alleviating mothers' physical and mental health issues caused by stress and fatigue.

At the same time, the Government can set up "Parental Leave" and "Family Leave" so that parents can take care of and handle matters related to their children, and encourage the private sector to follow suit. "Parental Leave" refers to a certain number of days of fully paid leave that each parent is entitled to each year before the child reaches 3 years old (for example, the parental leave in Mainland China is 10 days per year).

The Government can also provide tax relief to encourage employers to adopt family-friendly employment practices, in order to help parents strike a balance between work and family.

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US Collegiate Basketball Players Visit



Let basketball connect us

The power of sports, particularly basketball, has the unique ability to bring people together in a positive and exciting way. This was evident when Mr. Anson Cha and 4 elite US collegiate basketball players visited HKSPC on 29 July.

These players not only demonstrated impressive basketball skills, but also emphasized the importance of teamwork and taught passing techniques to 40 of our centre children through various games. Cheers and laughter filled the air, creating a joyful atmosphere.

The players generously gifted signed jerseys and small presents to the children. The children bid farewell to the coaches reluctantly, and eagerly awaiting their next visit.





“Cross-professional Support for Caregivers” Seminar

The HKSPC Child Safeguarding Academy “Cross-professional Support for Caregivers” seminar was successfully held on July 4, 2024 at the Christian Family Service Centre. The event attracted over 80 social workers, teachers and parents from within and outside HKSPC. Four speakers shared their inspirational insights on the needs of caregivers from the perspectives of child education, family support and social enterprises, and explored how caregivers can better utilise social resources.

The four speakers include Ms. Yonnie Lam, Service Director (Nursery School) of HKSPC, Ms. Cheng Yin Ping, Senior Social Work Supervisor of Caritas Rehabilitation Service, Mr. Verdi Lai, Coordinating Secretary of Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong, as well as Mr. Ringle Leung, Founder of HealthyMind Parents Academy.

Ms. Mary Wong, Deputy Director (Child Care & Education) of HKSPC, said in her speech that “Happy childhoods uplift us all” is not only the slogan of HKSPC, but also the motivation for the Society to constantly advance various services to benefit our young children. The Society works to connect social workers and teachers in the industry, approach the issue from multiple professional angles, and better utilise community resources, joining hands with parents to build a loving environment for our children.

The seminar consisted of four key sessions. The four speakers shared their professional knowledge, first-person experience, daily life examples and case studies with the audience to explore how to build secure attachment with children, ways to support the career paths of parents and carers of children with special education needs, and how to enhance a sense of family wellbeing.

We sincerely hope that this seminar can promote cooperation between different social welfare sectors, educational institutions and parents. Everyone can contribute to bringing happiness to more families and children in the community.



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Happy childhoods uplift us all

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“Happy Childhoods Uplift Us All” Conference

Scope of Conference

The first 1,000 days of a child’s life are the golden period for their growth and development, laying the foundation for the comprehensive development of each individual. This conference examines the three key aspects that contribute to a well-rounded upbringing: physical health, mental health, and interpersonal relationship. A panel of experts will join us to share their insights and practical advice on creating a more nurturing environment for young children in Hong Kong.

We believe that all of society benefits when children experience a happy childhood. Through this conference, we hope to share evidence-based practices and experiences with audiences to promote children’s healthy development to reach their full potential. Together, we seek to create happy and fulfilling childhoods that uplift all of us and the community.

Target Audience for Conference

- Industry partners (e.g. social workers, child care workers and teachers)
- Parents and caregivers
- General public interested in child development

AM Session - Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Social Wellbeing for a Happy Childhood

Speaker:

- Dr. Patrick Ip (Clinical Professor, Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, School of Clinical Medicine, The University of Hong Kong; Consultant (Hon) in Paediatrics, Queen Mary Hospital)
- Dr. Doris Cheng Pui Wah (Honorary Professor of Tung Wah College)
- Dr. Joyce Mok Wing Si (Clinical Psychologist; President, Hong Kong Association for Infant Mental Health Limited)
- Prof. Yip Kam Shing (Research Professor, Saint Francis University)

Moderator :

- Dr. Anna Cheng (HKSPC Executive Committee Member; Member of HKSPC Child Safeguarding Academy Advisory Panel)

PM Session - Thematic Sessions

Topic:

1. How to promote the healthy growth of children in the home, school and residential setting
2. The role of daily routine, art and nature in child development

Speaker:

- Mr. Louis Hou (CEO, Child Parent Relationship Therapy Association of HK)
- Mr. Eddie Lo (Clinical Psychologist)
- Dr. Charmaine Tidmarsh (Director, Clinical & Residential Programs, Mother’s Choice)
- Ms. Daisy Lau (Montessori Education 0-3& 3-6 years old Teacher Trainer)
- Mr. Savage Mok Ho-kwong (Director, Natural Network)
- Dr. Wong Kit Mei Betty (Guest Lecturers, Department of Early Childhood Education, Education University of Hong Kong)



1 November 2024
(Friday)



Time

10:00-12:45 (AM Session)
14:30-17:30 (PM Session)



Venue

Hong Kong Productivity Council
HKPC Building, 78 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon,
Hong Kong



Language
Cantonese

Free Admission
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