

DH releases latest "Report of Oral Health Survey"

The Department of Health (DH) today (December 6) released the "Report of Oral Health Survey 2021" (OHS 2021), which contains the latest and representative oral health information on Hong Kong citizens.

Report of Oral Health Survey 2021

The OHS 2021 commenced in November of that year, with the objective to continuously monitor the oral health status of the population. It was conducted in accordance with the survey methods recommended by the World Health Organization. Around 7 100 people in five population groups, namely 5-year-old children, 12-year-old youths, adults aged between 35 and 44 (adults), non-institutionalised older persons aged 65 to 74 (NOP), and an additional group of functionally dependent elderly aged 65 or above who were receiving long-term care (LTC) services under the Social Welfare Department were evaluated. Owing to the local COVID-19 epidemic situation, the fieldwork of the OHS 2021 was generally postponed and completed in December 2023.

The OHS 2021 found that the overall level of oral health in Hong Kong has continued to improve over the past 20 years since 2001. There was no obvious change in the proportion of the population with tooth decay experience in the adults and NOP groups, as about one third of adults and almost half of the NOP had untreated tooth decay. There was a significant drop in tooth decay experience among 5-year and 12-year-old groups, from 50.7 per cent and 22.6 per cent in 2011 to 41.6 per cent and 16.3 per cent in 2021 respectively. In terms of the tooth loss situation, the proportion of NOP with no teeth significantly dropped from 5.6 per cent in 2011 to 0.9 per cent in 2021, while their number of "teeth in mouth" increased from 19.3 and 22.8 in parallel.

Effective oral home care is conducive to good oral health. As shown in this survey result, there was an increasing proportion of 5 year olds who brushed their teeth twice or more daily (74.5 per cent in 2011, increased to 77.9 per cent in 2021). The majority of them used toothpaste and had parental assistance when they brushed (90.2 per cent and 90.4 per cent percent in 2011 and 2021 respectively). Over 80 per cent of people who were functionally independent in other population groups brushed their teeth twice or more daily, while only 13.0 per cent to 31.6 per cent of them had daily interdental cleaning habits.

In addition, the periodontal (gum) condition of adults and NOP continued to be a concern. About 40 per cent of adults and NOP presented with gum bleeding at around half or more of their teeth, which was about 50 per cent lower than the percentages a decade ago. However, 57 per cent of adults and 70 per cent of NOP had gum pockets, which was a higher indicator than that of adults (40 per cent) and NOP (60 per cent) in 2011. Gum pockets are more

commonly detected in molars (back teeth) for both age groups, which reflected that the technique of dental plaque removal might not be effective in the prevention of periodontal disease.

Regular professional dental care is crucial for prevention and early identification of oral diseases, so dental check-up habits should be promoted as early as the first tooth erupts in order to identify decayed teeth in a timely manner. The OHS 2021 revealed that the habit of dental check-ups was not common in pre-school children. Up to 39.2 per cent of 5 year olds had untreated decay in primary teeth, while a significant proportion of parents had inaccurate assessments of their children's oral health status. On the other hand, when primary school children are eligible to join the School Dental Care Service with annual dental check-ups, there was a significant improvement in their oral health. On average, the 12-year-old youth group only had 0.24 teeth with decay experience, which was extremely low. To encourage adolescents in maintaining the habit of regular dental check-ups after completion of the School Dental Care Service, the Government will launch a new Primary Dental Co-care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents programme in 2025.

The utilisation of professional dental care services among adult and NOP groups was uncommon. Only 57.3 per cent of the adult group and 33.4 per cent of the NOP group had dental check-up habits. They also tended to ignore oral symptoms, even for severe pain that disturbed sleep, and consider self-management of any discomfort. The lack of time and cost concerns were strong barriers for them to seek dental care. Self-perceived good oral health was the most commonly reported reason of both age groups for not having regular dental check-ups, which is unfavourable to early identification and timely management of dental diseases. The delay in dental care, together with an increase in snacking frequency as found in this survey, may result in further deterioration leading to increasing discomfort and more complex and costly treatment, which can result in the extraction of teeth. Professional instructions from dentists and dental care professionals, and individualised risk assessments are helpful for establishing targeted oral self-care and early identification of any hidden risk factors in developing dental disease. In summary, all age groups should develop regular dental check-up habits as soon as possible.

This survey also found more remaining teeth in the 65-year-old or above LTC users, and a smaller proportion of them had complete tooth loss when compared to the same population groups in 2011. However, untreated decayed teeth were found in more than half of the LTC users, and the cleanliness of their teeth and prosthesis was a concern. The importance of daily oral care must also be promoted to their carers. The majority of LTC users required modifications in provision of dental treatment due to their complex medical conditions. As such, enhanced training of the dental profession in management of this high-risk group is important to address their dental needs.

Moreover, the habit of regular dental check-ups was not common in all the target population groups, which supports and reinforces the need to develop primary oral care services appropriately for different age groups in

order to facilitate lifestyle changes among people. Regular assessments of oral health risks through dental check-ups by dental professionals should be an integral part of the primary dental services to be developed. Combined with a healthy lifestyle, primary oral care services enable effective prevention, early identification and timely management of oral diseases, with an aim to help maintain good oral health by retaining natural teeth into old age.

Oral Health Goals 2030

The Audit Commission Report No. 68 published in 2017 on provision of dental services recommended that the oral health goals established in 1991 should be reviewed. The DH hence set up an Expert Group in May 2019 comprising members from the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong, representatives from the Hong Kong Dental Association and the College of Dental Surgeons of Hong Kong, and Specialists in Community Dentistry from the DH. After reviewing the 2001 and 2011 OHS reports and the local situation, the Expert Group had proposed appropriate oral health goals for different targeted age groups. Based on the OHS 2021 results, DH conducted a review this year and eventually finalised the oral health goals for Hong Kong to be achieved by 2030.

The Government established the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care (Working Group) in December 2022 to review the scope and effectiveness of the existing oral health measures as well as dental care services. These areas are to be examined and suggestions made on the long-term strategic development for oral health and dental care. The Final Report of the Working Group stressed the importance of primary oral health care for all Hong Kong citizens with a focus on prevention, early identification and timely management of dental diseases. The recommendations are substantiated by the findings of OHS 2021.

"The results of the OHS 2021 provides an important basis for the DH in deriving the Oral Health Goals 2030 for Hong Kong. It also supports collaborative planning of oral care services among the Government, dental professionals and relevant stakeholders to meet diverse community needs for better oral health in the Hong Kong population", a spokesman for the DH said.

The full report and highlight versions of the OHS 2021 can be downloaded from the DH website (www.dh.gov.hk/english/index.html).

[LCSD announces updated Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory and](#)

Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department today (December 6) announced that four Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) items, namely Lantern Lighting Ritual, Tai Po Night Dragon Boat Parade, Yu Lan Festival, and Guangcai (Canton Famille Rose Porcelain) Making Technique, will be included onto the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Representative List) of Hong Kong, raising the total number of items on the list to 24. Meanwhile, 34 new items will be integrated into the relevant main items and sub-items in the first Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory (ICH Inventory), increasing the total number of items from 480 to 507.

Article 12 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization stipulates that "to ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories shall be regularly updated." The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) collected public views from August to September this year about the proposed items for inclusion in the two lists. After considering all views received, the ICH Advisory Committee deliberated and reorganised the proposed list. The updated lists were accepted by the Government of the HKSAR and are being promulgated.

The additional items for inclusion in the ICH Inventory include Wai Tau Song; Che Kung (General Che) Festival of Ho Chung, Sai Kung; Tin Tei (Heaven and Earth) Fu Mo (Father and Mother) Festival/Tin Kung (Heaven) Festival/Tin Kung Yuk Wong Tai Tai (Jade Emperor) Festival/Yuk Wong Festival; Lantern Lighting Ritual of Lin Fa Tei Village, Pat Heung; Lantern Lighting Ritual of Shek Kwu Lung Village, Sha Tin; Autumn Ancestral Worship of the Chan Clan in Ma Wan; Cheung Chau Yu Lan Festival; Sham Tseng Chiu Kiu Kaifong Yu Lan Festival; Jiao Festival of the Six Villages in Wang Chau, Ping Shan; Jiao Festival of Tsat Yeuk, Nga Tsin Wai; Jiao Festival of Sheung Shui Heung; Jiao Festival of Lin Fa Tei Village, Pat Heung; Jiao Festival of Shek O Village, Tai Long Wan Village and Hok Tsui Village; On Lung Jiao Festival of Ko Lau Wan Village; Jiao Festival of Lam Tsuen, Tai Po; Traditional Custom of Exhumation (Exhumation of "Gold" (Remains)/Exhumation of Remains/Relocation of Remains); Worship of the Ma Wan Rural Committee at the Free Cemetery; Spring Worship of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce at the Free Cemeteries around Ching Ming Festival; Winter Worship of the Cheung Chau Chiu Chow Association; Kwun Yum (Goddess of Mercy) Treasury Opening Festival; Abacus Calculation Technique; Pork Knuckles with Ginger and Vinegar Prepared for Postpartum Confinement; Kam Wo Tea/Hop Chai Tea; Soybean Product Making Technique; Traditional Shrimp Roe Noodle Making Technique; Patterned Band Weaving Technique (Everyday Objects); Cage Trap Fishing Technique; Rice Cookie Making Technique; Rice Cracker Making Technique; the Art of Chiu Chow Kung Fu Tea; Chinese Brush Making Technique; Neon Tube Making and Styling

Technique; Traditional Stone Inscription Carving Technique; and Chiu Chow Food Making Technique.

The Representative List provides the Government with a basis for prioritising its resources and safeguarding measures for ICH items, especially those of high cultural value and with an urgent need for preservation. The four new items inscribed on the Representative List have been included in the ICH Inventory of Hong Kong. Among them, three items are under the category of "social practices, rituals and festive events". Lantern Lighting Ritual is an important tradition of a lineage, which is performed during the first lunar month to inform ancestors, deities and family members about the newborn sons in the family. The newborn sons are also officially recognised as new members of the lineage. The ceremony demonstrates the traditional culture of Hong Kong's lineages and villages. Tai Po Night Dragon Boat Parade also serves to solidify the connections within communities. At Dragon Boat Festival, dragon boat races are held in various districts in Hong Kong. Dragon boat water parades are held in traditional fishing areas, such as Tai O, Tai Po and Cheung Chau. The Tai Po Yuen Chau Tsai Shek clan and members of the Wing Chuen Tong of the Chung's of Tai Po hold the night dragon boat parade on the evening of the fourth day and the morning of the fifth day of the fifth lunar month during the Dragon Boat Festival every year. Being held off the shore of Sam Mun Tsai, Tai Po, the parades are carried out to pray for the blessings of the deities and safety of the community on land and at sea.

Yu Lan Festival is an important festive event in various districts and among different ethnic groups in Hong Kong. Rituals are held by religious and community organisations, in which ritual specialists are commissioned to perform Buddhist or Taoist rites. These include paying homage to ancestors, pacifying wandering ghosts with clothing and food, as well as showing gratitude to the deities. Yu Lan Festival is maintained by various communities in different districts in Hong Kong. These are mainly organised as Chiu Chow Tradition, Hoi Luk Fung/Hoklo Tradition, Boat People's Tradition, and Punti Tradition. Apart from being a religious ritual to pray for wishes and purify the community, it also serves to connect different groups of people.

Guangcai Making Technique is under the category of "traditional craftsmanship". Guangcai is the shortened form of "Guangzhou painted porcelain" or "Canton Famille Rose Porcelain". It is a technique of overglaze decoration that involves painting patterns on white porcelain before firing at a low temperature, with the history dating back to the early Qing dynasty. During the 1920s, Guangcai was transmitted from Guangzhou to Hong Kong. Apart from conserving the traditional hand-painting technique and the style of painting auspicious patterns, the techniques of stamping patterns and applying decals were also adopted. Local painting techniques and special patterns were also added to create a fusion style with both Chinese and Western characteristics. As a result, Guangcai produced in Hong Kong (Xianggang in pinyin) is also known as Gangcai (Hong Kong painted porcelain).

For details of the new items included on the two lists, please refer to

Annex I and II.

The updated [ICH Inventory](#) and [Representative List](#) are now available on the website of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office for public inspection.

[LegCo Public Accounts Committee to hold public hearing tomorrow](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council (LegCo) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will hold the first public hearing on "Nano and Advanced Materials Institute" (Chapter 1) of the Director of Audit's Report No. 83 tomorrow (December 7) at 9am in Conference Room 1 of the LegCo Complex.

Six witnesses have been invited to appear before the above hearing to respond to points raised in the Report and answer questions asked by the PAC members.

The programme for the public hearing is as follows:

Subject: Nano and Advanced Materials Institute
(Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No.83)
Date: December 7 (Saturday)
Time: 9am
Venue: Conference Room 1

Witnesses:

Professor Sun Dong
Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry

Mr Ivan Lee
Commissioner for Innovation and Technology

Mrs Elina Chan
Assistant Commissioner for Innovation and Technology (Research and Development Centres)

Professor Cheng Shuk-han
Chairwoman, Nano and Advanced Materials Institute

Mr Andy Fung
Chief Executive Officer, Nano and Advanced Materials Institute

Ms Jenny Yiu
Chief Operating Officer, Nano and Advanced Materials Institute

The PAC is chaired by Mr Shiu Ka-fai, and its Deputy Chairman is Mr Paul Tse. Other members are Ms Yung Hoi-yan, Mr Luk Chung-hung, Mr Edmund Wong, Mr Louis Loong and Ms Carmen Kan.

Ozone Layer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2024 gazetted today

The Ozone Layer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2024 (Amendment Bill) was published in the Gazette today (December 6) to implement relevant requirements of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal Protocol).

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau indicated that the Kigali Amendment was adopted by parties of the Montreal Protocol in 2016 and entered into force in 2019 with a view to progressively phasing down the production and consumption of 18 hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), thereby mitigating global climate change. The Kigali Amendment requires its parties to implement a licensing system for the import and export of these 18 HFCs and meet the relevant phasedown targets.

The spokesman said, "Our country accepted the Kigali Amendment in June 2021. The Kigali Amendment was effected in our country in September of the same year. Hong Kong is duty bound to promptly complete the legislative procedures to fulfil our international obligations."

By amending the Ozone Layer Protection Ordinance (Cap. 403), the Amendment Bill proposes to implement a three-pronged control strategy. Amongst which, the Government targets to prohibit the manufacture of the 18 HFCs controlled by the Kigali Amendment and implement a licensing system on their imports and exports, starting from the fourth quarter of 2025. To progressively meet the phasedown targets of the Kigali Amendment and assist the market to smoothly transit to suitable alternatives in a safe and environmentally friendly manner, the Government also proposes to, by separate subsidiary legislations, progressively implement strategies on relevant product regulations and recovery mandates, as well as related safety requirements, with a target from mid-2026 onwards.

The Amendment Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council for first and second readings on December 18.

Private Columbaria (Amendment) Bill 2024 gazetted

The Private Columbaria (Amendment) Bill 2024 was published in the Gazette today (December 6), proposing amendments that aim to enhance the current regulatory regime on private columbaria and strengthen protection of consumers' interests.

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau said, "Since the implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630), we noticed some 'pre-cut-off columbaria' (i.e. private columbaria that commenced operation and had ashes interred in them before the Government announced the proposal to establish a licensing system in 2014) that are currently applying for a licence may have to cease operation when they fail to obtain one. It is therefore proposed to appropriately adjust the eligibility criteria for exemption to allow 'pre-cut-off columbaria' meeting certain conditions to apply for such exemption, thus enabling their continued operation at their current scale and averting 'ash-disposal'. However, new sale or letting out of niches is not allowed."

Specified conditions required from these "pre-cut-off columbaria" include not being located in populated zones for high-density residential development, and the planning application submitted by the subject "pre-cut-off columbarium" pursuant to the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) has been granted or accepted, has not been refused, or has been refused but subsequently granted or accepted, as of the commencement of the Bill. The spokesperson explained that the said proposal aligns with the prevailing "pragmatic and sympathetic" approach in regulating "pre-cut-off columbaria", while minimising their impact on neighbouring communities and balancing the different interests of the public concerned.

The Government also enhances enforcement-related provisions through the Bill, including increasing penalties for non-compliance with enforcement notices, introducing new offences and amending existing ones to prohibit "overselling niches" and "over-placing ashes", as well as prohibiting the sale of interment rights by private columbaria when their authorisation to sell has been revoked or suspended, in order to enhance the deterrent effect of the Ordinance. Further, the Bill will also stipulate that the Private Columbaria Appeal Board may only receive and consider new materials that were never submitted to the Private Columbaria Licensing Board upon special grounds being shown, ensuring a consistent approach in the handling of appeals; and to enshrine in the Ordinance the current administrative arrangements that allow eligible masons' workshops meeting certain conditions to keep ashes temporarily for operational reasons.

The existing Ordinance was enacted in 2017, which, through the establishment of a licensing regime, ensures private columbaria's compliance with statutory and government requirements, protects consumers, and fosters sustainable operation within the industry. The Bill will be introduced to the

Legislative Council for its First and Second Reading on December 18, and the amendments will take effect upon Gazettal following passage of the Bill by the Legislative Council.