

Mid-year population for 2022

According to the statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department today (August 11), the provisional estimate of the Hong Kong population was 7 291 600 at mid-2022, representing a decrease of 121 500 or 1.6% from 7 413 100 at mid-2021.

The population decrease between mid-2021 and mid-2022 comprised a natural decrease (i.e. deaths surpassing births) and a net outflow of Hong Kong residents (i.e. inflow less than outflow). A natural decrease of 26 500 was recorded during the period, with 35 100 births and 61 600 deaths. Over the same period, a net outflow of 95 000 persons was recorded, with an inflow of 18 300 One-way Permit holders and a net outflow of 113 200 other Hong Kong residents.

Among the total population at mid-2022, 7 181 900 were Usual Residents and 109 700 were Mobile Residents. The revised figure for the year-end population for 2021 was 7 401 500. The number of Usual Residents was revised to 7 289 600 and the number of Mobile Residents to 111 900. The rate of change in population from end-2020 to end-2021 remained at -0.3%.

Table 1 presents estimated total population as at mid-2022, while Table 2 presents population figures from mid-2010 to mid-2022.

Commentary

A government spokesperson highlighted that natural decrease (deaths surpassing births) has widened between mid-2021 and mid-2022. Over the past five years, the number of births declined continually from 59 500 between mid-2016 and mid-2017 to 35 100 between mid-2021 and mid-2022. Hong Kong's fertility rate is persistently among the lowest in Asian economies. The plunge in births in the recent two years might also be attributable to the outbreak of COVID-19 since early 2020. On the other hand, the number of deaths edged up gradually from 45 400 to 61 600 over the past five years in tandem with the ageing trend of the population.

"Amidst the continued impact of COVID-19, stringent border control and quarantine measures have been in place in Hong Kong, the Mainland and other places around the world, resulting in severe interruption of cross-boundary travel. It is observed that the inflow of people into Hong Kong, including One-way Permit holders and foreign domestic helpers, has remained at a low level. Among others, the flight boarding restrictions imposed on arrivals from certain places from time to time between mid-2021 and mid-2022 due to the then prevailing COVID-19 situation had interrupted population inflow. Although the number of One-way Permit holders who arrived in Hong Kong between mid-2021 and mid-2022 (18 300) rebounded somewhat as compared to that in the preceding year (13 900), it was still visibly lower than the pre-pandemic level (44 400 between mid-2018 and mid-2019). Meanwhile, Hong Kong residents who had left Hong Kong before the pandemic may have chosen to

reside in other places temporarily or were unable to return to Hong Kong. All these might have contributed to the net outflow of Hong Kong residents during the period," the spokesperson said.

"It is believed that the pandemic and the related quarantine requirements would have impacted talent inflow, especially those on short-term employment visas/entry permits. This problem could be resolved when the quarantine and social distancing measures relaxed. In terms of pooling of talents, the Government will continue to attract talents from home and abroad to settle in Hong Kong and to promote the flow of talents within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area."

The spokesperson added, "Net movement includes the movement of Hong Kong residents into and out of Hong Kong for various purposes such as work, study and migration, but the breakdown of figures is not available. Hong Kong residents travelling abroad are not required to declare to the Government their purpose of travel. Therefore, the Government does not have direct statistics on emigration of Hong Kong residents. Being an international city, Hong Kong's population has always been mobile. During the past 10 years, net outflows of Hong Kong residents other than One-way Permit holders were recorded for most of the years."

Further information

"Usual Residents" refer to two categories of people: (1) Hong Kong Permanent Residents who have stayed in Hong Kong for at least three months during the six months before or for at least three months during the six months after the reference time-point, regardless of whether they are in Hong Kong or not at the reference time-point; and (2) Hong Kong Non-permanent Residents who are in Hong Kong at the reference time-point.

For those Hong Kong Permanent Residents who are not "Usual Residents", they are classified as "Mobile Residents" if they have stayed in Hong Kong for at least one month but less than three months during the six months before or for at least one month but less than three months during the six months after the reference time-point, regardless of whether they are in Hong Kong or not at the reference time-point.

Under the current practice, the latest population estimate is released on a provisional basis in each round. The revised estimate will be released six months later. In other words, while the provisional population estimate for mid-2022 is released today, the corresponding revised estimate will be released in February 2023.

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (August 11) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department have been collecting sewage samples for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in some areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 240 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Sha Tin District – Monte Vista, Wu Kai Sha Village, Yiu On Estate, Sunshine City, Baycrest and Vista Paradiso
- Southern District – South Horizons, Larvotto, Shun Lee Building, Command Tower, Billion Court, Yee On Building, Happy View Building and Coble Court
- Yau Tsim Mong District – Sorrento, The Cullinan I, Prosperous Garden, 8 Waterloo, The Coronation, The Hermitage and The Metropolis Residence

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose of them properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If

individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

HAD distributes complimentary COVID-19 rapid test kits to households, cleansing workers and property management staff in Tai Po, Wong Tai Sin and Central and Western Districts

In light of positive test results for the COVID-19 virus from sewage samples collected in Tai Po, Wong Tai Sin and Central and Western Districts, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) said today (August 11) that the Tai Po District Office (TPDO), the Wong Tai Sin District Office (WTSDO) and the Central and Western District Office (C&WDO) have distributed a total of about 312 000 COVID-19 rapid test kits to households, cleansing workers and property management staff living and working in the Districts.

The TPDO distributed rapid test kits to households, cleansing workers and property management staff living and working in Yat Nga Court, Elegance Garden, Uptown Plaza, King Nga Court, Fu Shin Estate and Wang Fuk Court for voluntary testing through the property management companies. The TPDO also distributed rapid test kits to households living in Sheung Wun Yiu, Ha Wun Yiu, Pan Chung San Tsuen and Tai Po Pan Chung for voluntary testing through the Village Representatives.

The WTSDO also distributed rapid test kits to households, cleansing workers and property management staff living and working in Fu Keung Court, Kai Tak Garden, Tsz Oi Court Stage I and II, Tsz Oi Court Stage III, Chuk Yuen North Estate, Ying Fuk Court, Tropicana Gardens, Hsin Kuang Centre, The Forest Hills and residential premises around Fung Tak Road and Fei Fung Street for voluntary testing through the property management companies and the owners' corporations.

In addition, the C&WDO distributed rapid test kits to households, cleansing workers and property management staff living and working in residential premises around Tai Ping Shan Street, Upper Station Street, Tung Street and Sai Street for voluntary testing through the property management companies and the owners' corporations. The C&WDO also arranged to distribute rapid test kits to households living in "three-nil" buildings with positive sewage testing results in the district.

The HAD made the above arrangements in the hope of identifying infected persons early.

Members of the public may refer to the demonstration video produced by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) under the Department of Health (DH) via www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzFAUzTtmKk to learn how to use the rapid antigen test (RAT) kit.

Persons testing positive through an RAT should take a photo of the test result and declare the result within 24 hours via the Declaration System for Individuals Tested Positive for COVID-19 Using Rapid Antigen Test (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If members of the public encounter difficulties in using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The CHP under the DH will contact the relevant person later to complete the report procedure. There is no need to declare negative test results.

The Government appeals for the co-operation of members of the public to safeguard the health of themselves and their families by undergoing testing on a voluntary basis and fighting the virus together. The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases that tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons to reduce the transmission risks of COVID-19.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, August 11, 2022 is 100.2 (down 0.5 against yesterday's index).

Hong Kong Customs detects sea smuggling case involving cigarettes and seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \$115 million

(with photos)

Hong Kong Customs on August 5 detected a suspected illicit cigarette smuggling case involving a barge and a tugboat in the waters off Stonecutters Island and Tsing Yi. About 42 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$115 million and a duty potential of about \$80 million were seized.

Through risk assessment, intelligence analysis and data analysis, Customs officers intercepted a suspicious barge and tugboat in the waters off Stonecutters Island and Tsing Yi in the morning on that day. Three 40-foot containers and two 20-foot containers with suspected illicit cigarettes concealed inside were found on board the barge.

During the operation, Customs officers arrested six men, aged between 36 and 69, suspected to be connected with the case.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Including the suspected illicit cigarettes seized in this operation, Customs has seized about 376 million suspected illicit cigarettes this year as at August 10, an increase of about 53 per cent compared to around 245 million seized during the same period last year.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Customs stresses that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

