

Government announces details on latest smoking situation in Hong Kong

The Department of Health announced today (June 8) that the latest government survey results have revealed that the overall prevalence of smoking in Hong Kong was comparable to that recorded in the previous survey. The percentage of daily cigarette smokers aged 15 and above in the local population last year was 10.2 per cent, while in 2017 the figure was 10.0 per cent.

The latest Thematic Household Survey (THS) Report, which was conducted from April to July 2019 and published by the Census and Statistics Department today, contains the findings of the survey on the pattern of smoking among Hong Kong residents. According to the findings, there were about 637 900 daily smokers, representing 10.2 per cent of the local population aged 15 and above. The figure was similar to that of 2017 (10.0 per cent). The average cigarette consumption by daily smokers was 12.7 cigarettes daily, which was similar to the figure of 2017.

Of note, the 2019 survey results have revealed that the smoking prevalence among teenagers aged between 15 and 19 has been decreasing in the past 10 years. However, the percentage of teenage smokers in the local population could not be estimated accurately as the number of smokers in this age group was too low. The smoking prevalence among men in the younger age groups of 20 to 29 and 40 to 49 also decreased 2.6 and 3.0 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, smoking prevalence among men in the age group of 50 to 59 increased 3.4 per cent, making the overall prevalence in the age group of 50 to 59 (both sexes) increase 2 per cent. Moreover, the latest smoking prevalence among females in 2019 was 3.2 per cent, representing a rise of 0.5 percentage points compared to 2.7 per cent in 2017.

On the other hand, the Food and Health Bureau commissioned the School of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong to conduct a school-based survey from October 2018 to July 2019 on smoking among students. According to the survey, the smoking prevalence among Primary Four to Six students and Secondary One to Six students was 0.1 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively, representing no change and a drop of 1 percentage point compared to the 2016-17 survey respectively.

According to the THS Report, the percentage of daily e-cigarette smokers aged 15 and above in the local population was 0.1 per cent (7 200 persons) in 2019, while 5 700 persons were recorded in 2017. The survey also for the first time covered separate statistics on heated tobacco products and revealed that the percentage of daily heated tobacco product smokers aged 15 and above in the local population was 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman said, "The smoking prevalence among secondary school students and men in the younger age groups dropped, which reflected the

effectiveness of the Government's efforts on smoking prevention. Although the overall smoking prevalence was similar to that recorded in the last survey, the Government is very concerned that the smoking prevalence was not further reduced. Furthermore, even though the number of people using alternative smoking products is not high, the Government will continue to closely monitor the situation and step up its efforts on publicity regarding the hazards of these products. As the Government still has as its target further reducing smoking prevalence to 7.8 per cent by 2025, we will continue to work closely with various partners to strengthen public education and explore new initiatives to enhance smoking cessation services.

"We would like to thank our community partners for their support and contributions in the work of tobacco control, which has helped to maintain Hong Kong's daily smoking prevalence as one of the lowest in the world. The Government will continue to push ahead with its tobacco control work, including legislation, law enforcement, taxation, health promotion and smoking cessation services, with a view to encouraging more smokers to attempt and succeed in quitting smoking," the spokesman added.