

Hong Kong population projections for 2022-2046 released

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (August 15) an updated set of population projections.

The C&SD has compiled a new set of population projections covering the period from 2022 to 2046, using the mid-2021 population as the base. Apart from the baseline population projections, the C&SD has also compiled high and low population projections for reference. While projections under the baseline projection scenario are based on assumptions on fertility, mortality and movement that are considered most likely to be realised at the time of compilation, the two additional projection scenarios explore possible outcomes under relatively aggressive or conservative assumptions.

The Hong Kong Resident Population will reach 8.19 million in mid-2046 under the baseline population projections, and it will reach 8.96 million and 7.76 million under the high and low population projections respectively.

The population movement of Hong Kong during mid-2021 to mid-2022 was adversely affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. Nevertheless, with the moderation of the epidemic situation and the gradual relaxation of anti-epidemic control measures, normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland and other parts of the world has been progressively resumed. Many Hong Kong residents who had stayed abroad during the epidemic have returned to Hong Kong, while some Mainland and overseas persons have also been admitted to Hong Kong through various schemes, resulting in a rebound in the population in 2023. Under the baseline population projections, the Hong Kong Resident Population is projected to generally maintain an upward trend over the entire projection period and the mid-2046 population would be 780 000 higher than the mid-2021 population of 7.41 million.

In particular, the number of deaths would significantly increase in tandem with the ageing trend of the population. Coupling with the decreasing number of births, there would be a natural decrease (i.e. deaths less births) of 750 000. On the other hand, there would be a net population inflow (i.e. inflow less outflow) of 1.52 million.

Population ageing is expected to continue. With post-war baby boomers entering old age and the rising life expectancy at birth for both sexes, the number of elderly persons aged 65 and over is projected to nearly double over the 25-year period. Excluding foreign domestic helpers, the number of elderly persons will increase from 1.45 million in 2021 to 2.74 million in 2046. The corresponding proportion of the population is projected to increase from 20.5 per cent to 36.0 per cent, meaning more than one in every three Hong Kong people will be an elderly.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's fertility rate is expected to remain low. The

total fertility rate (i.e. the number of children born alive to 1 000 women during their lifetime) is projected to rebound slightly from 772 in 2021 to 938 in 2046.

In recent years, the Government has launched a number of talent attraction and labour importation schemes, which will provide an important impetus to facilitate population growth in the next two decades or so. Throughout the projection period, the net inflow of population would comprise 890 000 One-way Permit holders, 510 000 Hong Kong Non-permanent Residents admitted through various schemes and 240 000 foreign domestic helpers.

The projected size and characteristics of the population for selected years are presented in Tables 1 and 2, while the components of population growth are analysed in Table 3. The population under the high and low projection scenarios is presented in Table 4.

The C&SD has also updated the labour force projections (figures excluding foreign domestic helpers) and household projections with the availability of the latest population projections.

Based on the updated results of labour force projections, the total labour force will generally increase from 3.54 million in 2021 to a peak of 3.66 million in 2038, before decreasing gradually to 3.58 million in 2046. The overall labour force participation rate (i.e. the proportion of the labour force in the land-based non-institutional population aged 15 and over) is projected to decrease from 57.2 per cent in 2021 to 51.6 per cent in 2046. This is mainly due to the increasing proportion of elderly persons in the total population, driving down the overall labour force participation rate.

Based on the updated domestic household projections, the number of households will increase gradually from 2.67 million in 2021 to 3.08 million in 2046. The average household size is projected to decrease continuously, from 2.7 persons per household in 2021 to 2.6 persons in 2046.

Tables 5 and 6 present the updated labour force projections and domestic household projections respectively.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said, "The new set of population projection results released by the C&SD will provide important references for Government bureaux and departments in planning various public services and formulating policies. Population projection is an objective statistical tool that enables us to understand more specifically how the overall population will change in the future upon assessment of the implications of relevant policies."

The spokesman mentioned that the trend of population ageing and low fertility rate will persist in the future, leading to a change in the composition of domestic households and the supply of labour force. However, as the COVID-19 epidemic subsided and the society and economy of Hong Kong further return to normalcy, Hong Kong will continue to resume normal travel

with the Mainland and other places around the world. In addition, various policies on talent attraction and labour importation introduced by the current-term Government are conducive to pooling talents from outside Hong Kong, which will become a crucial driving force for future population growth, and thus the overall population will gradually increase.

Further information

The "component method", which is commonly used internationally, was adopted for compiling the population projections. Under this method, the population of a base period is analysed by age and sex, then projected by incrementing each individual's age year after year until the end of the projection period, taking into account assumptions on fertility, mortality and movement, as well as interactions among various factors.

A publication entitled "Hong Kong Population Projections 2022-2046" on the detailed projection results, along with the projection methodology and assumptions, is now available.

Hong Kong has weathered the impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic, and the movement of the Hong Kong population has begun to resume normal gradually since end-2022. In formulating the projection assumptions, it is assumed that the population will generally return to the pre-epidemic trends in the medium and long term, thus figures which deviate from past trends have not been incorporated in the projection assumptions. In the short term, transitional adjustments have been introduced as appropriate, with a view that the population will return to the growth trend from the epidemic period in the medium to long term.

Another publication entitled "Hong Kong Life Tables 2016-2046" has also been published. It describes the present and future mortality conditions of Hong Kong in the form of life tables and the method of constructing a life table.

The above publications and the projected figures on households (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode190.html), as well as the projected figures on labour force (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode220.html), can be downloaded at the C&SD website.

Enquiries about more detailed statistics can be directed to the Demographic Statistics Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 6943, or email: population@censtatd.gov.hk).