

Overview

The family structures of Hong Kong have undergone significant changes over the past few decades, most notably the increase of nuclear families, as led by various demographic and social-economic factors, such as increased participation of women in the workforce. Given a general lack of family-friendly employment policies and practices (FFEPs) in the workplace, employees have difficulties in achieving balance between work and family life.



2.648M households*

Domestic household is defined by Census and Statistics Department as a group of persons who live together and make common provision for essentials of living. A person living alone is also regarded as a household. Family, according to the United Nations, is defined as those members of the household, who are related, to a specified degree, through blood, adoption or marriage.

*Figure as at end-2019

Smaller & More Nuclear Families



- The average household size reduced from 4.5 in 1971 to 2.9 in 2011 and further to 2.7 in 2019.
- The proportion of households with six persons decreased from 16% in 1986 to 3.3% in Q1, 2019. The number of households composed of only a couple increased, indicating preference of more married couples to form families of their own and have fewer or no children.
- In 2016, the number of persons living alone was 243,475 for women and 215,540 for men, a rise of 91.7% and 33.0% respectively when compared with 2001.

Lower Marriage & Fertility Rate



- There is a trend for marriage postponement and non-marriage in both genders. Between 1986 and 2018, the median age of first marriage increased from 28 to 31.5 for men, while that of women rose from 25.3 to 29.7.
- The number of never married persons aged 15 and above increased by 59.7% for female and 11.7% for male between 1986 and 2018.
- The overall fertility rate decreased from 49.8% in 1986 to 32.2% in 2018. However, the fertility rate for older age groups (35-39) women showed a generally upward trend – from 26.9% in 1986 to 52% in 2018 – indicating a trend for postponement in marriage and child-bearing. The median age of women at first childbirth rose from 26.6 in 1986 to 31.8 in 2018.

More Divorces & Single Parents



- The number of divorces increased substantially from 4,257 in 1986 to 20,321 in 2018.
- As a result, the number of single parents increased from 61,431 in 2001 to 73,428 in 2016. In particular, single mothers grew by almost 20%, whereas single fathers by 18.8%. Most of the single parents lived with their children.

Work and Family Balance

Only **17%** of employers implemented family-friendly employment policies¹

Working Hours – Hong Kong has the longest working hours (2,606 per year) in the world, out of 71 cities surveyed in the UBS Price and Earnings Report 2015. To date, there is no statutory provision stipulating the standard or maximum working hours, although 101 out of 107 countries/regions already introduced some form of statutory working hour limits, with 41% having adopted a 40-hour work week (*Source: International Labour Organization ILO*).

Maternity & Paternity Leave – The statutory maternity leave in Hong Kong is currently 10 weeks. In 2018, the SAR Government proposed to increase the statutory maternity leave from 10 to 14 weeks, in line with the 14-week period stipulated by ILO. On 9 July 2020, the Legislative Council passed the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2019, which sought to extend the statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks. Yet the implementation date is to be confirmed by the Government. As for the statutory paternity leave, this was increased from 3 to 5 days with effect from January 2019.

What the Employees said...



Nearly 48% of employees lived with children and/or elderly

15%

Job applicants alleged being discriminated on the ground of family status²

22%

were discriminated during pregnancy, maternity leave, and/or within first year after returning to work from giving birth¹

20%

working mothers encountered difficulties in applying for leave to take care of children¹

¹Study on Pregnancy Discrimination and Negative Perceptions faced by Pregnant Women and Working Mothers in Small and Medium Enterprises, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2016

²A Study on Family Discrimination in the Workplace in Hong Kong, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2018

Legal Protection

The **Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO)** was enacted in 1997. It makes unlawful for any person or organisation to discriminate against another person, male or female, on the basis of family status. A 'family status' means a person has the responsibility for the care of an immediate family member, that is, a person who is related by blood, marriage, adoption or affinity.

The EOC has recommended under the **Discrimination Law Review**:

- To introduce under the SDO the statutory right for women to return to their previous work position after maternity leave.
- To conduct research and public consultation on the extension of protection under the FSDO to that related to the care of immediate family members from former marriages, and from current and former cohabitating relationships.

About the Discrimination Law Review: <http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/graphicsfolder/inforcenter/dlr/default.aspx>

Sources from Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR:

- Quarterly Report on General Household Survey (Jan-Mar 2020)
- 2017 Year-end Population & 2016 Population By-census
- "Women and Men in Hong Kong – Key Statistics" (2019 Edition)
- Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Single Parents

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Address: 16/F, 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong

Tel: 2511 8211 Fax: 2511 8142 E-mail: eoc@eoc.org.hk Website: www.eoc.org.hk