

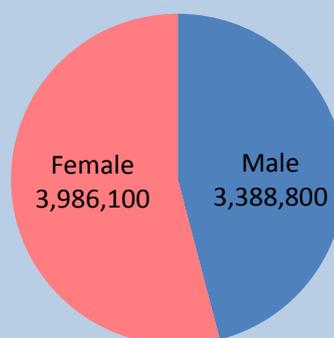
# Gender Equality and Sex Discrimination in Hong Kong

## Overview

There are more women than men in Hong Kong. Notwithstanding the advancement in educational opportunities in the last few decades, women still lag behind men in terms of their economic participation.

There is also huge wage gap disparities, and low representation of women in top executive and professional roles, as well as in the social and political arenas. As Hong Kong faces an ageing population and shrinking workforce, there is an urgent need to attract more women into the labour force.

### Hong Kong Population



Source: 2016 Year-end Provisional Figures, Census and Statistics Department

## Education



- 78.4% of female (aged 15 and over) received secondary education, as against 84.3% for men in 2015.
- Female students enrolled in higher education programmes continued to outnumber male students and constituted 54.3% in the 2015/16 academic year.
- More female students enrolled in arts and humanities (73.7%), education (71.7%), health (66.6%) and social sciences (65.4%) programmes, while more male students enrolled in medicine (51.0%), sciences (61.2%) and engineering and technology (69.5%) programmes.

## Employment



- Women have lower labour force participation rate (54.8%) than men (68.8%) in 2015. There were more economically inactive female (1,576,000) than male (906,400). The major cause for females dropping out of the labour market is engagement in household duties. Female homemakers (0.622M) largely outnumbered that of males (0.017M).
- The median monthly employment earning for female in 2015 was HK\$9,000, lower than the HK\$12,000 for male. There is even wider difference for elementary positions, with women earning HK\$3,600 and men HK\$7,000.

## Social & Political Participation



- Out of the 29 Members of the Executive Council, only 6 belonged to the female sex in 2015. Only 32.3% of the appointed Members serving on Government Advisory and Statutory Bodies were female in 2014.
- The percentages of male and female Directorate Officers in the Civil Service stood at 65.8% and 34.2% in 2014.
- In 2017, 12.4% of the board directors of Heng Seng Index-listed companies were female.

## Legal Instruments

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was extended to Hong Kong in 1996.

In the same year, the **Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO)** came into force, following its passage in 1995. The Ordinance prohibits discrimination against either male or female on the basis of sex, marital status and pregnancy in seven public domains, including employment; education; and provision of goods, services and facilities. It also prohibits sexual harassment of either male or female.



The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) handled **224 complaints** under the SDO in 2015. The majority (85%) belonged to the employment field, with most complaints related to **pregnancy discrimination** and **sexual harassment**. While the law protects both men and women, over 85% of the sexual harassment complaints were filed by women.



**1 in 5**

**mothers reported experiencing discrimination** during pregnancy, maternity leave and/or within first year after returning to work

Only **17%**

employers reported having implemented family-friendly measures in the workplace



Source: "Study on Pregnancy Discrimination and Negative Perceptions Faced by Pregnant Women and Working Mothers in Small and Medium Enterprises" by the EOC, May 2016

## *Give Everyone a Safe & Discrimination-free Workplace*

The EOC has recommended under the Discrimination Law Review to amend the SDO so that women can enjoy stronger protection. The amendments include:

- Introduce statutory right for women to return to their previous work position after maternity leave.
- Introduce express provision to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of breastfeeding, including expressing milk.

Sources:

1. Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics 2016 Edition, Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR
2. Hong Kong Women in Figures, 2015 Edition, Women's Commission
3. Women on Boards Hong Kong 2017, Community Business

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