



Equal Opportunities Commission

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026

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1. FOREWORD

- 1.1 This is the Strategic Plan of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) for 2024-2026. The EOC is an independent statutory body established in 1996 under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap. 480) to implement the anti-discrimination ordinances in Hong Kong. Currently there are four such ordinances, namely the SDO, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) (Cap. 487), the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) (Cap. 527) and the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) (Cap. 602).
- 1.2 The EOC's mandate is to work towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, breastfeeding, disability, family status and race; eliminate sexual harassment, breastfeeding harassment, and harassment and vilification on the grounds of disability and race; and promote equality of opportunities between men and women, between persons with and without a disability, and irrespective of family status and race.
- 1.3 This Plan outlines the priorities for the EOC's work for the upcoming three years, serving as the framework to direct our resource allocation towards addressing the most imminent and pressing issues concerning inequality and equal opportunities in Hong Kong. In defining the strategic goals, the Plan builds on the achievements made under the previous Strategic Plan for 2020-2023, while incorporating input from EOC Members and stakeholders. We have also surveyed the social, economic, political and demographic context in which we operate, examining the key risks, challenges and opportunities that affect our work.
- 1.4 In advancing inclusion and diversity, the EOC aims to contribute to the overall development of Hong Kong, supporting the SAR Government's efforts to improve the quality of life for all segments of the population. By addressing barriers and promoting equal opportunities to education, economic participation, and access to goods, services and facilities, the strategic goals seek to further enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness on the regional and global stage, creating a more vibrant and diverse economy and a fair society for all. The EOC also aims to contribute to the national development strategies, specifically closer integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), leveraging on the unique advantages of Hong Kong and the EOC's strengths.

2. OUR VISION & MISSION

- 2.1 The vision of the EOC is to create a pluralistic and inclusive society free of discrimination, where there is no barrier to equal opportunities.
- 2.2 Our vision is built on the core values of Hong Kong, including the rule of law, a level-playing field, diversity and inclusiveness. Using our unique expertise and powers, we handle or tackle breaches of the anti-discrimination law and remove the barriers to equal opportunities. Lying at the forefront of our work is complaint handling and investigation. We strive to be independent and impartial while adopting a “victim-centric approach”, aiming to provide an effective avenue for complaints to be heard and resolved.

How We Work

- 2.3 To deliver our roles and functions, we undertake a wide range of work, including:
 - (a) Provide redress for unlawful discrimination through complaint investigation and legal assistance and action;
 - (b) Monitor and promote compliance with the law through inquiry into policies and practices that may contravene the law, and issue guidelines to assist compliance;
 - (c) Review the operation of the anti-discrimination ordinances, identify gaps and recommend amendments as appropriate;
 - (d) Promote awareness and public discourse on discrimination issues and their causes through research studies and advocacy, and supply relevant data and information for policy- and law-making;
 - (e) Mobilise and assist organisations and businesses in different sectors to embed equal opportunities in their employment policies and practices; and
 - (f) Enhance knowledge of the anti-discrimination ordinances among individuals and understanding of their rights and responsibilities through education and training programmes.

How We Operate

- 2.4 The EOC Board provides leadership and guidance on the strategic directions and performance of the EOC and the discharge of its statutory duties. The SDO stipulates that the Board shall comprise of a Chairperson and no more than 16

Members appointed by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Coming from diverse backgrounds and professional fields, they provide a wealth of expertise and perspectives to the EOC.

3. OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

3.1 In mapping out the Strategic Plan, we conducted an examination of the social, economic, and political trends taking place in Hong Kong, with a view to identifying the opportunities and challenges ahead. The anticipated changes identified in the subsequent analysis guided us to delineate the priorities and approaches, as well as the trajectory in the Strategic Plan.

Changes in Demographic Composition

3.2 Population ageing will continue to be a major determinant of demographic shifts in Hong Kong in the coming years. Projections published by the Census and Statistics Department forecast that the number and share of elderly persons aged 65 and above will increase from 1.45 million (20.5%) in 2021 to 2.74 (36%) million in 2046,¹ meaning that around one in every three persons will be 65 or above.

3.3 As population ageing continues, our society will need to adapt policies, priorities and infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the elderly population. Issues that will need to be addressed range from economic participation to accessibility to goods, services and facilities. Additionally, ensuring the well-being of caregivers and fostering harmonious intergenerational relationships will be key to building an inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals.

3.4 The growth of ethnic minorities (EMs) is another important factor driving the change in Hong Kong's demographic makeup. In 2021, there were a total of 619 568 EMs, including over 300 000 foreign domestic workers, living in Hong Kong, representing a 6%-increase from the figure in 2016.² Excluding foreign domestic workers, South Asians, including Indians, Nepalese, and Pakistanis, constitute the largest group of ethnic minorities in the city.

3.5 The integration of EMs in society has gained prominence in the policy agenda and public arena in recent years. Nevertheless, there remains significant barriers in various domains, such as education, employment, and the provision of goods

¹ "Hong Kong population projections for 2022-2046 released," *Census and Statistics Department*, 15 August 2023, https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/press_release_detail.html?id=5368

² "Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities," *Census and Statistics Department*, December 2021, <https://www.census2021.gov.hk/doc/pub/21c-ethnic-minorities.pdf>

and services, for EMs to fully participate in society. These challenges were further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating discrimination faced by EMs, especially those working as frontline workers and domestic workers. While EM youth provide a valuable talent pool in Hong Kong, educational and language barriers hamper their access to economic opportunities and stifles their ability to realise their full potential.

- 3.6 Another segment of population growing continuously in number is people from Mainland China. In 2021, the number of persons from the Mainland residing in Hong Kong for less than seven years was 138 845.³ The number of students from the Mainland in UGC-funded (UGC, University Grants Committee) programmes has also experienced growth. In 2022, there were 8 622 Mainland students enrolled in the eight UGC-funded universities, representing a 13%-increase from the year 2020-21.⁴ As the SAR Government steps up efforts to attract Mainland and overseas talents to Hong Kong through various immigrations schemes, such as Top Talent Pass Scheme, Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, and Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, the number of individuals from the Mainland residing in Hong Kong is expected to continue rising.
- 3.7 Over the years, there have been reports of Mainland Chinese being subjected to discrimination, harassment and vilification in Hong Kong. With the reopening of the border, the influx of tourists and immigrants from the Mainland may give rise to divides and fault lines in society.

The Rise of Digital Technology

- 3.8 Digital technology plays a central role in everyday life, penetrating virtually all aspects of society and all forms of economic activities. According to the figures published by the Census and Statistics Department, around 2.56 million households, or 96.1% of all households in Hong Kong, have access to the Internet in 2022.⁵ The adoption of smartphones is almost universal, with 97.1% of

³ "Persons from the Mainland Having Resided in Hong Kong for Less Than 7 Years (PMRs)," *Census and Statistics Department*, n.d., https://www.census2021.gov.hk/doc/pub/21C_Articles_PMRs.pdf

⁴ William Yiu, "Hong Kong universities attract record number of mainland Chinese students amid rising geopolitical tensions and Covid-19," *South China Morning Post*, 3 October 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3194497/hong-kong-universities-attract-record-number-mainland>

⁵ "Hong Kong as an Information Society," *Census and Statistics Department*, June 2023, https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1110006/att/B11100062023AN23B0100.pdf

individuals aged 10 or over reported to own a smartphone in 2022.⁶

- 3.9 Driving economic development and improving people's livelihoods through digital transformation and innovation and technology (I&T) have been at the top of the agenda for the SAR Government in recent years. Published in 2020, the Hong Kong Smart City Blueprint 2.0 underlines the centrality of digital technology in the Government's vision to enhance delivery of public services, improve quality of life, and cultivate a more resilient, sustainable future. Accordingly, digital technology will have a role to play in efforts to advance inclusion and equality in society.
- 3.10 Despite its promises, the advancement of digital technology can potentially exacerbate inequalities in society, widening the gulf between those who have access and those who do not. To narrow and close the digital divide, the EOC will seek to monitor the access to technology in various communities and promote measures that enhance digital inclusion.

Talent Crunch

- 3.11 Talent shortage in the local labour market has emerged as a major challenge for businesses and organisations as the post-pandemic recovery continues in Hong Kong. According to a 2023 survey by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, around three-quarters of all businesses in Hong Kong are facing a talent shortage.⁷
- 3.12 The need for talent compels the SAR Government, businesses and organisations to explore new sources of labour. At the same time, certain marginalised communities in Hong Kong continue to face difficulties in accessing gainful employment opportunities. In 2020, only 19.7% of persons with disabilities (PWDs) aged 15 and above were economically active, compared to 59.6% of the general population.⁸ Meanwhile, EMs continue to face significant challenges, such as rigid language requirements and cultural insensitivities, in the employment market. With the labour shortage, there exists an opportunity for

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Talent Shortage Taxes Businesses," *Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce*, 6 June 2023, https://www.chamber.org.hk/en/media/press-releases_detail.aspx?ID=3746

⁸ "Special Topics Report No. 63, Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases," *Census and Statistics Department*, December 2021, https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/C0000055/att/B11301632021XXXXB0100.pdf

the EOC to bring these talent pools that have traditionally been overlooked to the forefront as means to alleviate the local talent crunch. Additionally, family-friendly policies and practices that enable individuals to better balance work and caring responsibilities may also gain prominence as solutions to retain existing talent and attract women who have left the labour market to return.

Youth Development

3.13 Young people are the future leaders, change-makers, and influencers of society. In 2021, the number and percentage of youth (aged 12 to 39 years old) in Hong Kong was 2.15 million and 30% respectively.⁹ Their development will have important bearing on the future development of the city, and thus necessitate special attention and focus. The Youth Development Blueprint published in 2022 signals the importance the SAR Government attaches to the issue.

3.14 Young people in Hong Kong are facing numerous challenges, ranging from barriers in social mobility and a lack of psychological well-being. Moreover, these issues are even more pronounced among youths from marginalised groups, such as EMs and PWDs. Cultivating a social environment that provides equal opportunities for all, as well as promoting diversity and inclusion among young people will be central to unleashing the potential of the next generation.

Integration with China's Development and the Greater Bay Area

3.15 In his report to the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party delivered on October 2022, President Xi Jinping expressed that China will continue to develop the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, while supporting Hong Kong's further integration into the country's overall development.

3.16 As Hong Kong seeks for closer integration with China's development strategies and further development of the Greater Bay Area (GBA), new opportunities will emerge for the EOC to strengthen collaboration with relevant Mainland organisations and deepen partnerships to advance diversity, equality and inclusion in the GBA. In particular, the EOC can leverage its over two decades of

⁹ "Overview of Hong Kong's Youth," *Home Affairs Bureau*, n.d., https://www.youthblueprint.gov.hk/en/YouthDevelopmentBlueprint_YouthOverview.pdf

experience in promoting equality in Hong Kong to contribute to the high-quality development of GBA. At the same time, the EOC can look to learn from successful policies and practices implemented in the Mainland, and use insights gained from exchange with relevant organisations to enhance our capacity.

4. STRATEGIC GOALS 2024-2026

- 4.1 In consideration of the challenges and opportunities examined in the previous section, the EOC has identified six strategic goals for the period of 2024-2026. The goals will guide the development of our work priorities as we strive to seek redress for victims of discrimination, safeguard vulnerable groups from marginalisation, and eliminate barriers to inclusion.

Strategic Goal 1: Enhance capacity building and strengthen the reputation of the EOC's complaint-handling and conciliation mechanism through professional development and knowledge sharing.

- 4.2 Assisting victims of discrimination in seeking redress and addressing unlawful acts through the complaint-handling and conciliation mechanism is one of the three major work approaches – enforcement, prevention and education – of the EOC in implementing the four anti-discrimination ordinances. The functions of handling complaints, conducting investigations and facilitating conciliation are pivotal to achieving the EOC's mission. The effectiveness of their delivery can also influence the public's perception and trust of the EOC, as well as its relationships with relevant stakeholders in the community.
- 4.3 Over the years, the EOC has accumulated a wealth of experience, particularly in handling and resolving complaints of discrimination within the domains covered by the four ordinances. Since its inception, the EOC has handled a significant number of complaints, totalling 21 798 cases.¹⁰ Out of the 6 519 conciliation attempts made, the success rate of conciliation stands at around 67%.¹¹ From 2020 to 2023, the conciliation success rate consistently stood above 80%. These statistics aptly demonstrate the specialised expertise and professional proficiency of our staff in investigating discriminatory practices and mediating instances of discrimination.
- 4.4 Since 2019, the EOC has adopted a "victim-centric approach" for its complaint-handling process. This approach recognises and pays special attention to the needs of victims at all stages of the investigation, while maintaining a commitment to the principles of fairness and impartiality to both parties of a complaint. In line with these principles, several measures have since been

¹⁰ Figure as at 30 September 2023.

¹¹ Figure as at 30 September 2023.

implemented, including strict compliance with the Internal Operating Procedures Manual, expedited case classification, and assigning the same staff member to oversee a case from the enquiry stage through to the complaint stage.

- 4.5 To further strengthen the capacity building of staff working in the complaint-handling mechanism and conciliation services, the EOC will explore avenues for expanding their professional development. By providing additional opportunities for relevant training and facilitating the acquisition of professional accreditation, our staff members will have the means to build on their expertise and experience, enabling the EOC to better serve and respond to the needs of the public.
- 4.6 Through the years, the EOC has established a reputation for its expertise in tackling discrimination in the region. Organisations working in related fields in the region has shown interested in learning from the EOC's expertise. For example, the EOC shared its experience in handling complaints with Singapore's Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management in October 2023. In order to uphold the EOC's reputation as a professional and trusted organisation dedicated to serving the local community, we will explore ways to effectively disseminate our insights and expertise in managing discrimination-related complaints and delivering conciliation services with relevant organisations and bodies both locally and in the region, with a view to establishing the EOC as Asia's leading discrimination conciliator/mediator.

Strategic Goal 2: Promote talents from marginalised communities, and foster a diverse and inclusive workforce.

- 4.7 Marginalised groups in Hong Kong continue to face barriers to participate fully in the labour market. The proportion of PWDs who are economically active is significantly lower than the average population, while opportunities for social mobility remains limited for EMs. Furthermore, sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as domestic and caring responsibilities continue to pose significant challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 4.8 The EOC has to date adopted a multi-pronged approach to foster more inclusive and diverse work environments, and reduce the barriers to employment for marginalised groups. From highlighting the stigmatisation faced by individuals with mental health needs in the workplace to identifying the pervasiveness of

sexual harassment in employment, research projects published between 2020 and 2023 shed light on the causes of discrimination on the individual and systemic level. On the policy front, the EOC has proposed various recommendations to the SAR Government on ways to improve employment opportunities for PWDs and EMs, as well as recommendations to tackle sexual harassment in employment.

- 4.9 Building on the aforementioned efforts, the EOC will focus on the promotion of talents from the marginalised groups and highlight the importance of inclusion in the workplace as a solution to the talent shortage Hong Kong is currently facing. This will involve engaging with employers and stakeholders to understand existing barriers and concerns, showcase success stories, and advocate for policies that incentivise the adoption of inclusive measures. At the same time, the EOC will work to promote family-friendly policies at workplaces, enabling greater participation of women and carers in the labour market. The widespread adoption and implementation of practices that promote diversity and inclusion will enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in attracting and retaining talent.

Strategic Goal 3: Advance accessibility, promote universal design, and realise smart city living.

- 4.10 Ensuring equal access to goods, services and facilities for everyone is essential in constructing an inclusive society. As population ageing accelerates, the EOC anticipates that the issue of accessibility will become even more pertinent and pressing. While considerable advances have been made in enhancing the accessibility of various facilities and residential buildings, there is still more work to be done to create a truly barrier-free city for all. In order to expedite this process, the EOC is committed to promoting the concept of Universal Design (UD) in the community. Going beyond accommodating the needs of persons with disability alone, the UD paradigm encourages design of products, services, and programmes that are usable by everyone, regardless of age, disabilities or other characteristics.
- 4.11 The EOC recognises that the rise of digital technology in everyday life presents both challenges and opportunities in the advancement of diversity and inclusion in society. On the one hand, digital technology has the potential to bridge gaps and foster inclusivity by opening new pathways to information and facilitate the equal participation of everyone in different areas of social life. On the other hand,

the widespread use of digital technology carries the risk of leaving certain groups in society behind, creating a digital divide.

4.12 The EOC has been steadfast in its commitment to ensuring digital accessibility. The Commission jointly organised the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in 2013, and has served as an independent advisor for the Scheme since 2018.

4.13 Through research and engagement with relevant stakeholders, the EOC will continue to monitor the situation of digital inclusion in Hong Kong, ensuring that the benefits of new technologies are equitably accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or abilities. At the same time, we will look for ways to harness digital technology to remove barriers to social participation, and promote the concept of UD in the digital realm.

Strategic Goal 4: Build a respectful culture and foster social inclusion in a diversifying society.

4.14 To uphold Hong Kong's reputation as a cosmopolitan and multicultural city, it is essential to cultivate harmonious relationships and mutual respect among diverse groups within society.

4.15 As previously mentioned, the demographic composition of Hong Kong is experiencing notable transformations, primarily driven by population ageing, growth of EMs, and the influx of individuals from the Mainland. These changes bring along the potential for social marginalisation, misunderstandings and biases to emerge, exacerbating existing inequalities while engendering new divisions in society.

4.16 Separately, as evident from the media coverage of and public responses to various high-profile incidents, there is still a lack of adequate understanding regarding mental health issues among the general public. The stigmatisation and negative portrayal of mental health not only perpetuate the social marginalisation of individuals with mental health needs, but it will also create barriers for them to seek professional support.

4.17 The EOC will aim to promote mutual understanding between different groups in the community, and work with relevant stakeholders to break down stereotypes

of marginalised groups in the planning period. Our focus will be on exploring strategies to combat the stigmatisation of people with mental health needs in the media, enhance the social participation and integration of EMs, and promoting the integration of Mainland arrivals in Hong Kong.

Strategic Goal 5: Empower young people with equal opportunities, promote diversity and inclusion to the next generation.

4.18 Young people are the future of Hong Kong. Creating a positive environment for all young people with different protected characteristics to thrive, especially in education and employment, will be key to building a strong foundation for the sustainable development of our society.

4.19 Young people with different protected characteristics continue to face discrimination and barriers to social inclusion in different areas of life. As studies published by the EOC point out, challenges remain for young persons with disabilities and EM youths as they transition from secondary or tertiary education to the labour market. Furthermore, the EOC has conducted pioneering studies on the occurrence of sexual harassment among university students, highlighting the pervasiveness of the issue on university campuses.

4.20 In light of recurring allegations of sexual harassment during university orientation camps, the EOC recognises the urgent need to enhance education and promote positive and bias-free values on sex and gender to young people. In addition, the EOC will continue to work towards creating a society that provides equal access to support, resources and opportunities for young people, especially those with different protected characteristics.

Strategic Goal 6: Maintain high standards of corporate governance and ensure long-term operational sustainability.

4.21 The EOC is committed to adhering to the highest standards of corporate governance, guided by the principles of accountability, transparency, and stringent financial control. To effectively fulfil this commitment, we have established and implemented a comprehensive framework of guidelines and mechanisms, ensuring that our valuable resources are allocated and expended prudently and in strict alignment with our strategic objectives.

4.22 In 2023, the Audit Commission carried out a comprehensive review of the EOC with recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our services and operations. Following the audit, we have actively implemented the recommendations and will continue to monitor the progress.

4.23 As we look towards the future, the EOC acknowledges the importance of upholding prudent financial control. Considering the SAR Government's active measures to reduce public expenditure, we anticipate the necessity of exploring supplementary sources of funding. In line with this approach, we will consider conducting a review of the current charging rate for our services to ensure we have sufficient resources to carry out our strategic objectives and meet the evolving demands and needs of our stakeholders.

5. FOCUS AREAS & WORK PRIORITIES

- 5.1 The Strategic Goals outlined in the previous section will serve as the guiding principles for the EOC's work during the period of 2024-2026. As we work towards our objective of fostering an inclusive society without barriers to equal opportunities, we acknowledge the importance of prioritising resources and concentrating our focus on specific areas to achieve optimal outcomes and effectively exercise our statutory power.

- 5.2 Taking into account the upcoming challenges and opportunities we anticipate in the operating environment, as well as insights from our research, complaints data, and external partners, we have set out our work priorities across the four anti-discrimination ordinances we are tasked to enforce. The prioritisation process reflects our commitment to evidence-based decision-making and ensures that our efforts and resources are dedicated to addressing the most pressing issues, thus maximising our effectiveness in promoting equality and combating discrimination.

6. FOCUS AREA: GENDER DISCRIMINATION

- 6.1 Gender inequality remains a concern in Hong Kong, despite significant progress made in female empowerment in the field of education and employment. Although women continue to outnumber men in higher education, their participation in the labour market and earnings still fall behind their male counterparts. In 2022, the labour force participation rate for women stood at 48.4%, while men had a participation rate of 64.7%.¹² Additionally, the median income for women was HK\$18 000, compared to HK\$21 000 for men.¹³ These statistics underscore the enduring economic disparity between men and women in Hong Kong, stemming from a confluence, such as entrenched gender expectations, caregiving responsibilities, and workplace harassment and discrimination.
- 6.2 A review of complaint data reveals that sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination persist as the predominant cases lodged under the SDO. In 2022, 58% of the total 305 complaints filed under the SDO were related to sexual harassment, while 18% of the cases were related to pregnancy discrimination. Therefore, priority needs to be given to tackle the two issues in different areas of society.
- 6.3 In 2020, the EOC's Anti-Sexual Harassment Unit (ASHU) formally came into operation, strengthening the EOC's efforts to combat sexual harassment in the community. Employing a comprehensive and multifaceted approach, the Unit's responsibilities include reviewing existing legislations to identify gaps and propose recommendations, raising public awareness of anti-sexual harassment policies and measures, and serving as the first point of contact for individuals affected by sexual harassment through a dedicated hotline. In 2021, the EOC submitted recommendations to the SAR Government regarding the expansion of protection against sexual harassment under the SDO. Among the recommendations is introducing a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 6.4 With the passage of the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 and the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2020, the SAR

¹² "Men and Women in Hong Kong – Key Statistics (2023 Edition)," *Census and Statistics Department*, 28 August 2023, <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/wbr.html?ecode=B11303032023AN23&scode=180>

¹³ *Ibid.*

Government implemented a number of the recommendations the EOC put forward in the Report on the Discrimination Law Review. The former broadened the scope of protection offered by the SDO, DDO and RDO, while the latter strengthened legal protection for breastfeeding women.

6.5 In view of the considerations outlined above, the EOC's work priorities in the field of gender discrimination will be as follow:

Work Priority: Enhance awareness of anti-sexual harassment policies and practices in the field of employment	
Actions	Expected Results
6a. Strengthen the promotion of anti-sexual harassment policies and preventive measures, especially to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in different industries.	● Improved understanding of the law and wider adoption of anti-sexual harassment measures by owners and management of SMEs.
6b. Collaborate with different professional bodies and organisations to provide seminars or workshops on drafting and implementing anti-sexual harassment policies and preventive measures.	● Increased reach to enterprises and organisations across Hong Kong in promoting anti-sexual harassment policies and measures.
6c. Highlight the business case and incentives of implementing anti-sexual harassment measures, and identify solutions and good practices for stakeholders in various sectors.	● Broadened knowledge base of good practices and measures for preventing sexual harassment among different organisations.
6d. Explain to stakeholders the need and rationale for policy changes and legislative amendments.	● Mobilise key stakeholders to join in discussion on how to strengthen policy measures for preventing sexual harassment citywide.
6e. Continue to liaise with the Government and Law Draftsman on the legislative proposals of widening the protection against sexual harassment under the SDO.	● Government takes forward the legislative proposals of strengthening protection against sexual harassment under the SDO.

Work Priority: Educate the younger generation on gender equality and enhance their understanding on anti-sexual harassment measures	
Action	Expected Results
6f. Strengthen the promotion of gender equality and anti-sexual harassment message through appropriate channels (e.g. social media) and initiatives (e.g. Equal Opportunities Youth Ambassadors) targeted at youths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultivate mutual respect between sexes among young people.
6g. Engage universities to prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment on campuses and during student activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More targeted delivery of anti-sexual harassment training and education to students.
6h. Enhance interns and fresh graduates' understanding of SDO in the field of employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young people become more equipped to respond to incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination as they enter the labour market.

Work Priority: Empower victims of sex discrimination to come forward and strengthen bystander intervention	
Action	Expected Results
6i. Highlight successful conciliated and legal cases related to sex discrimination and harassment handled by the EOC, and promote the cases through appropriate channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased public awareness of the legal consequences of sexual harassment and protection of the law, and greater confidence in the EOC to seek redress among victims of sex discrimination.
6j. Enhance promotion of the importance of bystander intervention through targeted channels and campaigns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members of the public becoming more aware of how to intervene when incidents of sex discrimination occur.
6k. Launch a citywide campaign on anti-sexual harassment to enhance the public's awareness of the issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate public discussions on the importance of preventing sexual harassment, ways to empower victims of sexual harassment, and

	encourage bystander intervention, and other solutions to tackle the issue.
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Work Priority: Ensure pregnant and breastfeeding women have equal access to opportunities and resources in various social domains	
Action	Expected Results
6l. Continue to educate key stakeholders on policies and measures that improve the social inclusion of pregnant and breastfeeding women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better awareness of pregnancy discrimination, and breastfeeding discrimination and harassment.
6m. Improve access to facilities and services for breastfeeding women through the promotion of universal design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Universal Design Award Scheme to include “breastfeeding friendliness” as a criteria of assessment.
6n. Identify and publicise successful conciliated cases and legal cases handled by the EOC to enhance the public’s awareness of breastfeeding discrimination and harassment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced public understanding regarding the protections provided by the SDO against discrimination and harassment on the ground of breastfeeding.
6o. Provide recommendations on the provision of breastfeeding facilities by releasing the results of the Study on Breastfeeding at Publicly Accessible Premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mobilise more organisations to review and put in place support and facilities for breastfeeding women.

7. FOCUS AREA: DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

- 7.1 In Hong Kong, there are around 534 200 PWDs, constituting around 7.1% of the total population.¹⁴ Restrictions in body movement and mental illness or mood disorder are two of the most common types of disabilities, with the respective figures standing at 244 000 and 256 800.¹⁵
- 7.2 In almost all aspects of daily life, PWDs face barriers to participate in society. Complaints lodged under the DDO continue to constitute the largest portion of complaints received by the EOC. Between 2022 and 2023, the EOC handled 874 complaints under the DDO, representing 53.3% of all complaints received.
- 7.3 In the field of employment, many struggle to find opportunities in the labour market. In 2020, only 19.7% of PWDs aged 15 or above were economically active, compared to 59.6% for the general population.¹⁶ Many young PWDs have expressed that misunderstandings, discrimination, and a lack of accommodation hinder their progress, further contribute to their challenges as they transition from education to the labour market. Therefore, it is imperative that concerted efforts be dedicated to addressing these systemic barriers and improving equal access to employment opportunities.
- 7.4 There remains an assumption in the community that barrier-free facilities and designs only benefit PWDs and that they are a burden for property owners, employers, or goods and services providers. However, as the elderly population in Hong Kong continues to grow, the demand for barrier-free access and facilities will become even more pressing.
- 7.5 The EOC recognises Universal Design (UD) as a viable solution to address the barriers PWDs face and tackle the challenges posed by population ageing. UD goes beyond merely accommodating the needs of PWDs and emphasises the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people without specific adaptations. By working towards the widespread adoption of UD principles, Hong Kong can enhance its responsiveness to the

¹⁴ "Special Topics Report No. 63, Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases," *Census and Statistics Department*, December 2021, https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/C0000055/att/B11301632021XXXXB0100.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

diverse needs of all individuals with a wide range of characteristics.

- 7.6 Besides the Hong Kong SAR, China is also stepping up the promotion of the rights and interests of PWDs, according to the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). As stated in the action plan issued by the State Council, China will take measures to promote the employment of PWDs in a bid to realise adequate and relatively high-quality employment for the group, setting the goal of creating one million new jobs for PWDs by end-2024.¹⁷ It also envisions better care and service systems, as well as a barrier-free environment offering easy access to physical facilities and digital information and services.
- 7.7 Building upon the ongoing exchanges and discussions with relevant stakeholders in the Mainland, the EOC will step up exchanges with the Mainland organisations on policies and solutions developed in Hong Kong and the GBA cities, which can serve as valuable case studies with potential for application across the GBA to facilitate greater integration of PWDs, given the increased cross-border travel between the two regions. In line with this, the EOC will seek to further opportunities to facilitate knowledge exchange with relevant stakeholders in the Mainland, especially in the GBA, on ways to address discrimination and challenges faced by PWDs in different areas of social life.
- 7.8 The number of persons with mental health needs in Hong Kong has grown significantly in recent years. According to the Hospital Authority, the number of mental health patients grew from 187 000 in 2011/12 to 275 800 in 2020/21.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Despite this growth, the acceptance of individuals with mental health needs remain insufficient in the wider community. Biases, stigmatisation, and negative portrayals in media continue to persist. In response, the EOC is committed to improving public understanding of mental health issues, and facilitate the integration of persons with mental health needs and those in recovery into society.
- 7.9 In view of the considerations outlined above, the EOC's work priorities in the

¹⁷ "Five-year plan unveiled for supporting disabled," *The State Council of the People's Republic of China*, 21 July 2021, https://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202107/21/content_WS60f81715c6d0df57f98dd589.html

¹⁸ "LCQ14: Mental health services," *Health Bureau*, 19 December 2012, https://www.healthbureau.gov.hk/en/legco/replies/2012/lq121219_q14.htm

¹⁹ "LCQ7: Mental health services," *Food and Health Bureau*, 14 July 2021, <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202107/14/P2021071400450.htm>

field of disability discrimination will be as follow:

Work Priority: Promote greater understanding and adoption of UD in the community	
Actions	Expected Results
7a. Promote the concept of UD to the wider community through the Universal Design Award Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater application of UD principles in facilities, services, and programmes.
7b. Highlight innovative applications of UD and encourage its adoption in digital technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved understanding of applying UD principles in UX design and digital technology. ● Improved digital inclusion in the community.
7c. Provide practical guides and case studies on UD application in different sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen the promotion of Practical Guide on Universal Design for Catering Services. ● Explore ways to build a knowledge base comprising of case studies to showcase diverse applications of UD.

Work Priority: Enhance employment opportunities for PWDs	
Action	Expected Results
7d. Strengthen training and education for employers on the DDO and highlight the talent of PWDs and tackle biases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced understanding of how to provide accommodation for PWDs among employers.
7e. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote the business case for the employment of PWDs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More employers come to see PWDs as a valuable talent pool in Hong Kong.
7f. Share good practices and success stories of disability-inclusive workplaces and employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change in employers' perceptions of PWDs and making accommodations in the workplace.
7g. Monitor complaints data and make necessary recommendations to the SAR Government on policies and measures to encourage the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate policy gaps and opportunities to the SAR Government with recommendations for solutions.

employment of PWDs.	
7h. Continue to tackle disability discrimination in the workplace through the complaint-handling mechanism and litigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address breaches of DDO and encourage victims of disability discrimination to come forward.
7i. Making use of complaints data, build a portfolio of real-life cases that demonstrate the need and importance of providing reasonable accommodation for PWDs, with a view to securing stakeholders' support for legislative amendments to DDO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support by stakeholders for amending the DDO to introduce positive duty for employers to provide reasonable accommodation for PWDs.

Work Priority: Tackle the stigmatisation of mental health issues and improve the social integration of persons with mental health needs and those in recovery

Action	Expected Results
7j. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to address negative portrayals of persons with mental health needs in the media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop guidelines to encourage more balanced and accurate media coverage of mental health issues.
7k. Promote positive stories of persons with mental health needs, persons in recovery, and carers to foster a change in the public's attitude and perceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater understanding and acceptance of mental health needs and their carers.

Work Priority: Enhance exchange with relevant stakeholders in the GBA and Mainland on the issue of disability discrimination

Actions	Expected Results
7l. Establish regular exchange and sharing with relevant organisations in the Greater Bay Area and the Mainland on ways to improve equality for PWDs in different areas of society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborate with disability research centre at Shenzhen University on regular forum to connect with organisations and stakeholders.

8. FOCUS AREA: FAMILY STATUS DISCRIMINATION

- 8.1 Beyond providing protection for persons with caring responsibilities, the issue of family status discrimination has implications for gender equality as well as disability inclusion. Family care responsibilities still largely fall on women in Hong Kong, perpetuating gender inequality. Additionally, individuals providing care for PWDs may also encounter disadvantage and face discrimination in the workplace and in the community. As population is ageing rapidly, more individuals will need to shoulder caring responsibilities.
- 8.2 The number of complaints lodged under the FSDO has consistently remained the lowest among the four anti-discrimination ordinances. This may in part be explained by the lack of understanding of the protections provided by FSDO among the public. In 2023, the SAR Government launched the Care the Carers campaign to recognise carer's needs and contributions, as well as rally the community to provide support for them. Aside from providing practical support to alleviate the pressure on carers of PWDs and the elderly, the three-year territory-wide campaign also seeks to heighten the public's understanding of their needs. Leveraging the Care the Carers campaign, the EOC will focus on further amplifying the message of providing support for carers in different areas of society.
- 8.3 Following the COVID-19 pandemic, family-friendly employment policies (FFEPs) has gained traction and greater acceptance among employers and the public. Flexible work arrangements and policies that encourage work-life balance have gained greater importance for employees, while hybrid work arrangements has also become the new normal for many employers. With a more competitive labour market and heightened talent competition, the EOC can leverage this environment to encourage a wider adoption of FFEPs by employers.
- 8.4 In view of the considerations outlined above, the EOC's work priorities in the field of family status discrimination will be as follow:

Work Priority: Enhance the public’s understanding of FSDO and protection against discrimination for carers

Actions	Expected Results
8a. Share stories of carers to foster greater understanding of the challenges they face and the support they need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved understanding of the meaning of carer and protections provided by the FSDO among the public.
8b. Identify and publicise successful conciliation cases and where possible, conduct strategic litigation on case(s) involving family status discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhanced awareness of the protection against family status discrimination under FSDO.

Work Priority: Foster greater adoption and implementation of FFEPs among employers

Actions	Expected Results
8c. Step up education on the benefits of FFEPs for employers through training and promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build positive perception of FFEPs and rally more employers to take active steps to cultivate family-friendly culture.
8d. Collect, build, and share a knowledge base of good practices and success stories of FFEPs in different sectors to encourage wider adoption of family-friendly practices and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employers and employees receive practical guidance on how to implement FFEPs.

9. FOCUS AREA: RACE DISCRIMINATION

- 9.1 The integration of EMs in Hong Kong has gained priority in the policy agenda in recent years, with the SAR Government announcing additional resources for this purpose in the 2023 Policy Address. In 2024, it will also mark the 15th anniversary since the RDO came into effect in 2009.
- 9.2 The EOC has been at the forefront of advancing the inclusion of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong society. Established in 2014, the EM Unit (EMU) combines advocacy with training and community outreach to tackle the challenges ethnic minorities face in education, employment, and access to goods and services.
- 9.3 The population of EMs residing in Hong Kong has witnessed marked growth in recent years. Between 2011 and 2021, the population of EMs rose from 451 183 to 619 569, representing a 37.3%-increase.²⁰ Although there is a greater recognition of the challenges they face, barrier to racial inclusion in the community still persist. Language barrier continue to contribute to the inequality and marginalisation EMs face in the field of education and employment. In addition, negative racial stereotypes and racial discrimination remain prevalent in the wider community.
- 9.4 Simultaneously, the discussion surrounding intra-racial discrimination has gained prominence in recent years, especially in light of social tensions and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Hong Kong looks to attract more talent from the Mainland to address gaps in the labour market and enhance integration with the GBA, the EOC acknowledges the importance of taking proactive steps to ensure harmonious relations in society amidst ongoing shifts in the population makeup.
- 9.5 In view of the considerations outlined above, the EOC's work priorities in the field of racial discrimination will be as follow:

²⁰ "2021 Population Census – Interactive Dashboard of Main Results and Population Subgroups (Ethnic Minorities)," *Census and Statistics Department*, n.d., https://www.census2021.gov.hk/en/mrpsg_dashboard.html

Work Priority: Foster greater understanding and harmonious relations between communities from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds	
Actions	Expected Results
9a. Engage schools to take an active role in promoting racial inclusion to students of different ages.	● Growing number of schools and students in the Racially Friendly Campus Recognition Scheme.
9b. Promote the value of racial inclusion in diverse settings and encourage greater interactions and collaborations across cultural communities.	● Launch Racial Diversity and Inclusion Sports Day to foster positive perception of different groups and communities.
9c. Explore the use of digital and communication channels to promote acceptance and integration of Mainland people in Hong Kong.	● Greater understanding between populations of different origins in Hong Kong.
9d. Work with NGOs and relevant organisations to promote the interaction of EMs with other segments of society.	● Improved cross-cultural understanding and interactions between EMs and wider society.

Work Priority: Promote equal access to employment opportunities for EMs	
Actions	Expected Results
9e. Engage relevant stakeholders to promote the adoption of flexible language requirement by employers.	● Growing acceptance of adapting language requirements to enable equal access to employment opportunities for EMs.
9f. Demonstrate the value of racial diversity for employers and highlight success stories in public discussions.	● Growing number of signatories of the Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter for Employers.

Work Priority: Continue to improve educational opportunities for EMs	
Actions	Expected Results
9g. Explore the potential to leverage digital technologies to enhance Chinese language teaching for ethnic minority youths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased discussion among stakeholders on innovating Chinese language education for EMs.
9h. Continue to engage senior government officials and legislators on improving measure and support for ethnic minority students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate discussions on concrete KPIs to measure progress made in education for EMs.

Work Priority: Enhance the integration of EMs by addressing the digital divide	
Actions	Expected Results
9i. Conduct and release the findings of Study on Improving Social Wellbeing of Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong through Ameliorating the Digital Divide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify solutions to bridge the digital divide for EMs.

Work Priority: Enhance the public's perception of the RDO	
Actions	Expected Results
9j. Promote the achievements of RDO in the past 15 years and highlight its role in advancing racial equality and inclusion in Hong Kong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foster discussions among the community on ways to further advance racial equality.
9k. Identify and promote successful conciliated and legally-assisted cases, and where possible, conduct strategic litigation to illustrate the principles and workings of the RDO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater awareness and understanding of the application of the RDO and the protection it offers.

10. FOCUS AREA: OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 10.1 Establishing a robust organisation is crucial to ensure the EOC's continued effectiveness in fulfilling its statutory duties, serving the public, and working towards fostering an inclusive and diverse society. The expertise and experience of our staff members are our most valuable resources, enabling us to help victims of discrimination seek redress, identify barriers to inclusion in society, engage relevant stakeholders, and navigate future issues and challenges. By investing in the professional development of our staff and fostering a supportive work environment, the EOC can build a strong organisation foundation with the capacity to meet evolving needs of the community, and drive positive change in the long run.
- 10.2 In response to ongoing fiscal deficits, the SAR Government has introduced a service-wide Productivity Enhancement Programme, which requires the EOC to reduce baseline recurrent resources by 1% for two consecutive financial years, namely 2024-25 and 2025-26. As a public body, the EOC has a duty to use the subvention from the SAR Government in a cost-effective manner, while ensuring that there is sufficient resources for the long-term operation of the organisation. Considering the anticipated reduction in resources from the SAR Government, it may be necessary to explore alternative sources of funding to ensure the continued effective delivery of services and successful implementation of our strategic goals.
- 10.3 Establishing effective channels of communication with different segments of the public plays a key role in the EOC's management of external relations. As the population makeup of Hong Kong continues to change, it may be necessary for the EOC to review and adapt its existing communications and public education strategy to ensure it can reach all sectors of society. More specifically, the social media platforms frequented by individuals from the Mainland maybe outside the coverage of the channels currently utilised by the EOC.
- 10.4 Digital technology is indispensable to the operations of the EOC. While such technology has enabled the streamlining of work processes and improve efficiency, they also exposes the organisation to the escalating risk of cyber-attacks. In order to safeguard the integrity of the EOC's operations, we will take steps to address potential threats in the digital space.

10.5 In view of the considerations outlined above, the EOC's work priorities in maintaining operational sustainability will be as follow:

Work Priority: Explore avenues to further enhance the performance and professional image of EOC staff members	
Actions	Expected Results
10a. Explore how the EOC can potentially adopt technology to streamline and enhance workflow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved understanding of opportunities for technology deployment among staff members.
10b. Explore networking opportunities with relevant institutions to share knowledge and experience from the EOC's policy advocacy work, public training engagement, and complaint-handling process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build up the EOC's standing as a leader in tackling discrimination, advocating for the value of equal opportunities, and providing redress for victims of discrimination through conciliation.

Work Priority: Ensure the long-term stability of EOC's operations	
Actions	Expected Results
10c. Explore the possibility of finding and utilising additional sources of funding for the EOC's activities.	Identified gateways and viable work plans to navigate the sourcing of additional funding support for the EOC's activities.
10d. Review current charging rate for services (e.g. training).	

Work Priority: Establish effective communication channels with external stakeholders	
Actions	Expected Results
10e. Explore potential channels of communication (e.g. social media platforms frequented by individuals from Mainland) in accordance with the changing composition of Hong Kong's population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A review of potential channels and platforms the EOC could incorporate into its overall communications strategy.
10f. Conduct stakeholder mapping and engagement programme through tailored communication and engagement strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased understanding and buy-in of EOC's initiatives.

Work Priority: Review existing measures against cyberattacks and address potential vulnerabilities

Actions	Expected Results
10g. Review existing protocols and measures against cybersecurity threats and develop measures to minimise risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Address potential vulnerabilities in the EOC's network and develop more robust cybersecurity measures.

11. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

11.1 In order to monitor the performance and effectiveness of our work, the EOC will submit periodic reports to the Board on work progress. At the same time, we will continue to gather views and feedback from stakeholders on our operations and performance.

Ends