

Foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong

Figure 1 – Number of FDHs in Hong Kong

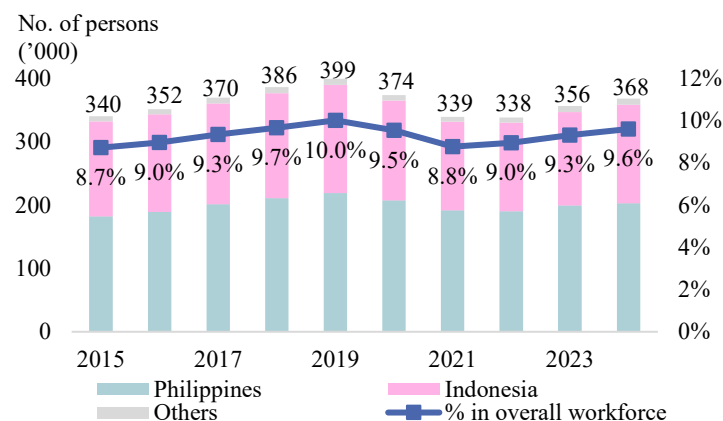
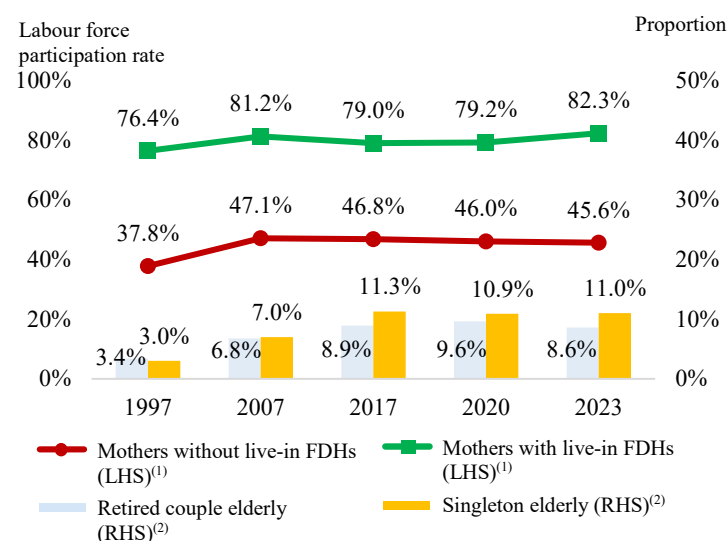
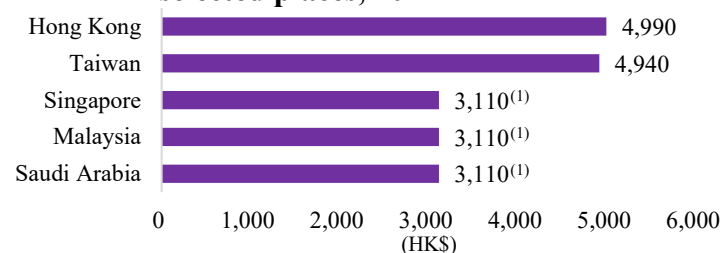


Figure 2 – Attributes of selected local households with FDHs



Notes: (1) Refers to mothers with children aged 14 and below. "LHS" refers to left hand side.
(2) Refers to persons aged 60 and above. "RHS" refers to right hand side.

Figure 3 – Minimum monthly wages for FDHs in selected places, 2024



Note: (1) This is the minimum wage for Filipino FDHs as agreed with the Philippines Government. For Indonesian FDHs, the respective minimum wages agreed with the Indonesian government were from HK\$2,600.

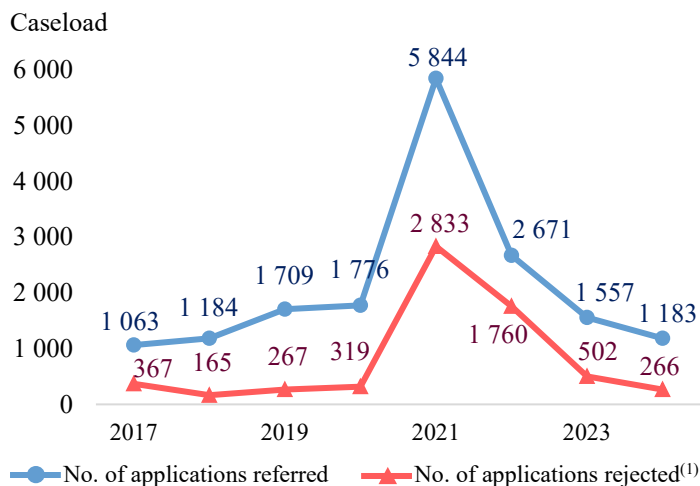
Highlights

- In Hong Kong, the number of foreign domestic helpers ("FDHs") has reached a peak of 399 000 in 2019, before easing by a total of 15% amidst the city lockdowns in the three epidemic years (**Figure 1**). After a rebound to 368 000 in 2024, FDHs now account for one-tenth (9.6%) of the local workforce. Analysed by source, a large majority of the FDHs comes from the Philippines, with a share of 55%. This is followed by Indonesia (42%) and other places in South and Southeast Asia (3%).
- The economic contribution of FDHs is not confined to the domestic services they offered to the households. More importantly, FDHs help unlock the work potentials of housewives to re-join the labour market. Based on the latest statistics of the Census and Statistics Department, only 45.6% of married women with young children participated in the job market, if they did not have live-in FDHs in 2023 (**Figure 2**). Yet the work propensity of such women almost doubled to 82.3%, if they had FDHs at home.
- In the face of rapid ageing, the caring duties of FDHs have extended from children to elderly. Taking those retired couple households with members aged at least 60 as an illustration, 8.6% of them hired FDHs in 2023, 2.5 times the respective figure of 3.4% in 1997 (**Figure 2**). Likewise, the proportion of singleton elderly households hiring FDHs almost quadrupled from 3.0% to 11.0% over the past 26 years. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the proportion of elderly population was projected to rise from 30.4% in 2023 to 34.7% in 2030 and further to 38.4% in 2040. It is expected that FDHs will play a bigger role in elderly home care in the future.

- In September 2024, the Government adjusted the monthly Minimum Allowable Wage for FDHs upwards by 5.5% to HK\$4,990 (**Figure 3**). This is higher than the respective wage in Taiwan (HK\$4,940), and the required rate (HK\$3,110) set by the Philippines Government for Filipino FDHs abided by Singapore, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

Foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Number of investigations over suspected “job-hopping” of FDHs



Note: (1) The applications processed in a year may not correspond with the applications received in the same year.

Figure 5 – Complaints against employment agencies of FDHs

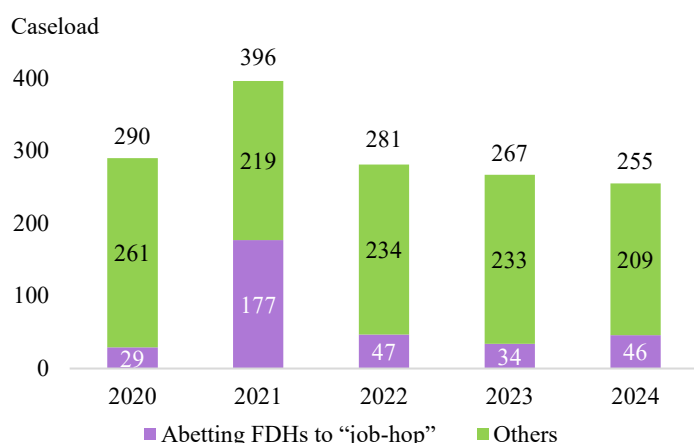


Figure 6 – Sanctions against unscrupulous FDH EAs

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Licences revoked, refused issue/renewal	7	7	1	3	3
Written warnings	60	63	49	13	7
Verbal warnings	532	874	603	852	720

Highlights

- There are reports of “job-hopping” (i.e. frequently changing employers within a contract period) by FDHs over the past two decades, prompting persistent advocacy in society to regulate such behaviour over the past decade, especially so during the epidemic. In June 2013, the Immigration Department (“ID”) set up a special duties team to investigate those visa applications of FDHs suspected of “job-hopping”. The investigation caseload had more than quadrupled in four years to a record high of 5 844 cases in 2021 (**Figure 4**). Upon strengthened enforcement, coupled with increased supply of FDHs after the epidemic, the investigation caseload eased back significantly by 80% to 1 183 in 2024. As regards visa applications rejected by ID due to “job-hopping”, the trend movements were broadly similar.
- Reportedly, some employment agencies (“EAs”) also offer money to induce FDHs to change employers so as to earn more commission fees. Indicative of this development, complaints lodged to the Labour Department (“LD”) against FDH EAs related to abetting FDHs for job-hopping increased by five times within a year to a peak of 177 cases in 2021 (**Figure 5**). After the epidemic, such job-hopping caseload then fell back significantly to an average figure of 42 cases during 2022-2024. In May 2024, the Government revised the Code of Practice (“CoP”) for EAs to deter job-hopping. While EAs are required to state clearly if refunds or replacements are arranged to FDH employers in case FDHs prematurely terminated contracts, they are prohibited from providing monetary incentives to FDHs.
- Moreover, LD inspects EAs from time to time and sanctions those EAs committing malpractices. During 2020-2024, verbal warnings given to EAs averaged at 716 each year, while some 21 licences were revoked or refused for renewal (**Figure 6**). However, some revoked licences of FDH EA were found to have stayed in business by using the licences of other agencies. There are thus increasing calls in the community to (a) make breaches of CoP of EA as a criminal liability; and (b) establish a dedicated regulatory authority over FDHs and EAs.

Data sources: Census and Statistics Department, Immigration Department and Labour Department.

Research Office
Research and Information Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 February 2025
Tel: 3919 3181

Statistical Highlights are compiled for Members and Committees of the Legislative Council. They are not legal or other professional advice and shall not be relied on as such. Statistical Highlights are subject to copyright owned by The Legislative Council Commission (The Commission). The Commission permits accurate reproduction of Statistical Highlights for non-commercial use in a manner not adversely affecting the Legislative Council. Please refer to the Disclaimer and Copyright Notice on the Legislative Council website at www.legco.gov.hk for details. The paper number of this issue of Statistical Highlights is ISSH02/2025.