

Health status of Hong Kong citizens

Figure 1 – Rate of persons having chronic diseases

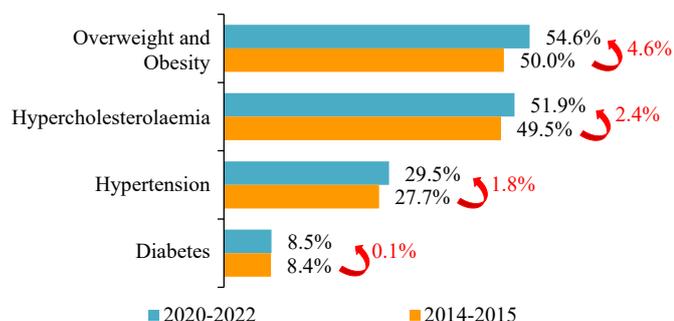
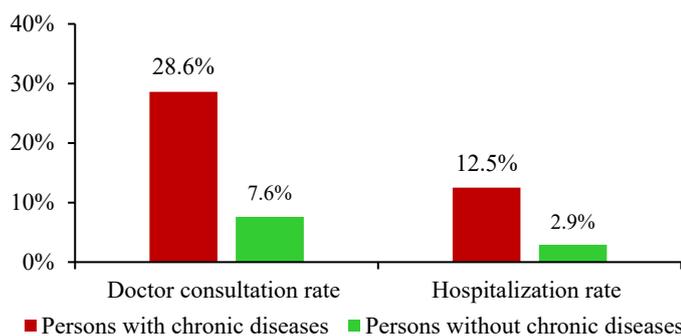
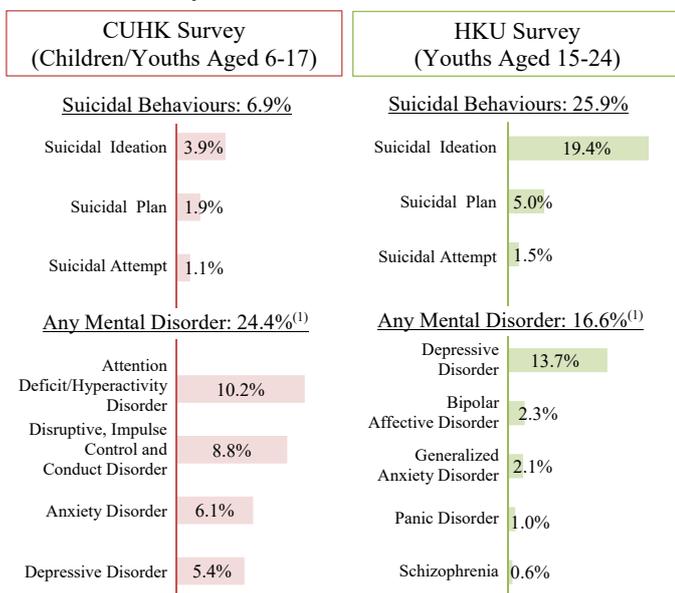


Figure 2 – Doctor consultation and hospitalization rates⁽¹⁾, 2022-2023



Note: (1) The rates refer to the number of persons who had consulted a doctor/ had been admitted into hospitals during the specific survey period as a percentage of all persons in the respective groups.

Figure 3 – Mental health status of children and the youth



Note: (1) The respondents may have more than one type of mental disorders.

Highlights

- As in many other developed places, Hong Kong has seen increased prevalence of chronic diseases among the local population in recent years, attributable to unhealthy lifestyle practices ranging from smoking and excessive alcohol consumption to insufficient physical activity and inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables. According to the third territory-wide Population Health Survey conducted in 2020-2022, there was a small increase in the proportion of persons aged 15-84 with diabetes as compared with the previous (2014-2015) survey (Figure 1). However, the rise in prevalence of other three common chronic diseases – hypertension, hypercholesterolaemia, and noticeably overweight/obesity – was much more visible.
- The increased prevalence of chronic diseases weighs on the public healthcare system in terms of greater demand for medical services from primary care to specialist services. According to a Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2022-2023, the doctor consultation rate of persons with chronic diseases was about four times of that for those without chronic health conditions (Figure 2). A similar trend was observed in the hospitalization rate.
- Mental health is another major concern for the well-being of Hong Kong's population. In particular, mental disorders are increasingly prevalent among children, the youth and the elderly. To better understand their situations, the Government had commissioned targeted studies by the Chinese University of Hong Kong ("CUHK") and the University of Hong Kong ("HKU"). The findings, which were released in 2023, unveiled a significant prevalence of mental disorders among children and adolescents aged 6-17 (24.4% in CUHK survey), and an alarmingly high rate of suicidal ideation among youths aged 15-24 (19.4% in HKU survey) (Figure 3).
- Regarding the elderly, the CUHK survey showed that 22% of persons aged 60 and above residing in the community had mild neurocognitive disorders, and 7.4% were classified as having major neurocognitive disorders (dementia). The corresponding ratios for those residing in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly were higher at 24% and 69%.

Health status of Hong Kong citizens (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Number of new psychiatric cases at SOPCs and median waiting time of patients

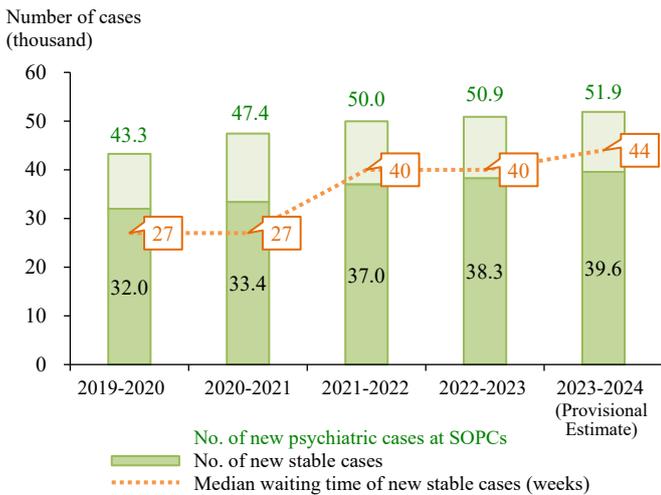
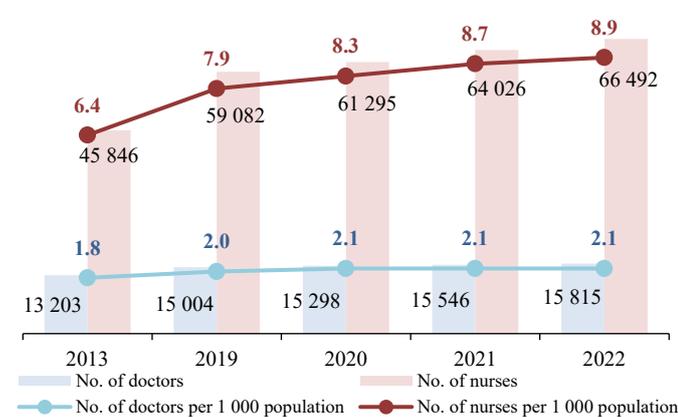
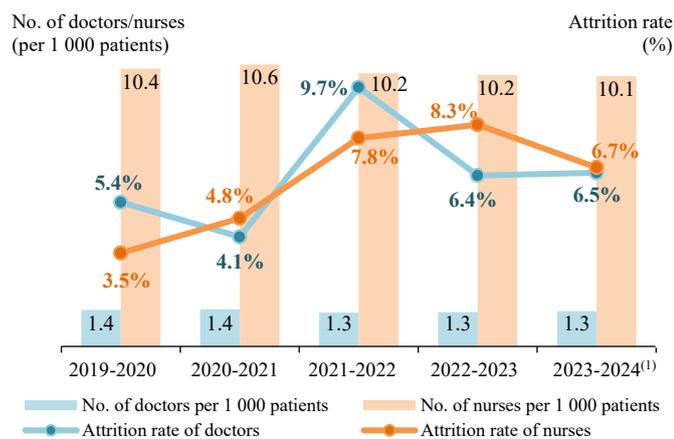


Figure 5 – Number of registered doctors and nurses in Hong Kong⁽¹⁾



Note: (1) Figures refer to the doctors with full registration on local and overseas lists, registered nurses and enrolled nurses.

Figure 6 – Psychiatric doctors and nurses in HA



Note: (1) Figures for attrition rates are based on rolling data from January to December 2023.

Highlights

- The prevalence of mental disorders also translates into high demand for the Hospital Authority (“HA”)’s psychiatric services, as evidenced in the increase in the number of patients with mental illness under its care from 270 700 in 2019-2020 to 305 700 in 2023-2024. Outpatient services provided by the specialist outpatient clinics (“SOPCs”) are the most sought-after psychiatric service provided by HA, when compared to other offerings such as inpatient, day rehabilitation training and community support services. Reflecting this, SOPCs handled an average of 48 700 new psychiatric cases per year between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024 (Figure 4). While the median waiting times for urgent and semi-urgent new cases at SOPCs were kept at one week and four weeks respectively, the waiting time of stable ones increased from 27 weeks to 44 weeks.
- In recent years, the Government has sought to increase the number of subsidized training places for medical professionals in an effort to cope with the rising demand for public health services. This has boosted the number of nurses and doctors by 45% and 20% respectively in the past decade (Figure 5). As a result, Hong Kong’s nurse-to-population ratio stood at 8.9 per 1 000 population in 2022, which compared favourably with many developed places such as Singapore (7.8) and South Korea (8.8). However, its doctor-to-population ratio, at 2.1 per 1 000 population, lagged behind Singapore (2.8), South Korea (2.6) and Japan (2.6).
- There are also concerns about the adequacy of manpower of HA for mental health services; for example, the ratios of psychiatric doctors and nurses per 1 000 patients have remained virtually unchanged over the past five years (Figure 6). Furthermore, there are ongoing issues with high attrition rates among mental health professionals.
- To help improve health status of Hong Kong people, the Government released the Primary Healthcare Blueprint in 2022 to address health challenges from their sources and chronic disease management in particular. Furthermore, HA increased its expenditure on mental health services by some 20.6% over the last five years to enhance its service delivery model that covers prevention, early identification, timely intervention and treatment, and rehabilitation services. Additionally, the Chief Executive announced in his 2023 Policy Address new measures to support individuals in mental health recovery and those with mental health needs.

Data sources: Latest figures from the Census and Statistics Department, Department of Health, Health Bureau, Hospital Authority, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and statistics bureaux/departments of overseas places.

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