

Chapter 7

Home and Youth Affairs

The government attaches great importance to civic education, youth development, family-related matters, community building, and district and community relations. It works to nurture young people to become a new generation with national pride, a sense of ownership and responsibility and the willingness to strive for the future of the country and Hong Kong.

District Governance

The Home Affairs Department is committed to building a harmonious society and enhancing the communication between the government and the people of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). There are 18 administrative districts under the department, each headed by a District Officer, who represents the government at district level. The District Officers coordinate inter-departmental affairs at the district level and resolve cross-departmental district problems. Each District Officer chairs a District Management Committee, which comprises representatives of government departments providing essential services in the district. It provides a forum for departments to discuss and resolve cross-departmental district problems promptly.

The department runs a Community Involvement Fund to promote and implement cultural, sports and community involvement activities. In 2023-24, the provision for the Community Involvement Programme under the department was about \$340 million. The department also runs the District-led Actions Scheme to address long-standing problems and capitalise on opportunities in the districts. Since 2020-21, the annual recurrent provision for the scheme has been increased from \$63 million to \$80 million.

The District Minor Works Programme and Rural Public Works Programme provide funding for minor works projects to improve the facilities and living environment of the local communities. The annual basic provision for the two programmes is \$340 million and \$160 million respectively.

Twenty Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, attached to the district offices, provide a range of free services to the public, including answering general enquiries about government services; distributing government forms; disseminating information; and administering declarations and oaths, including affirmations in lieu of oaths, for private use. Residents can make appointments at the centres to consult volunteer lawyers under the Free Legal Advice Scheme administered by the Duty Lawyer Service. Rating and Valuation Department representatives are also available at five designated centres on specified days to advise on tenancy matters.

In July, as part of the reform to improve district governance, the government set up the Steering Committee on District Governance, chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, and the Task Force on District Governance, chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, to steer and coordinate the district work of different government agencies. The strengthened structure ensures that policies and initiatives formulated by different segments of district governance are complementary in their implementation.

There is a District Council in each of the 18 districts, the main function of which is to advise the government on matters affecting the well-being of its people. As part of the efforts to improve governance at the district level, the District Councils (Amendment) Ordinance 2023 came into effect on 10 July. The 2023 District Council Ordinary Election was held on 10 December, enabling district councils to return to their positioning as district advisory and service organisations in accordance with the Basic Law and fully implementing the principle of 'patriots administering Hong Kong'.

Care Teams

The government has set up 452 District Services and Community Care Teams across all 18 districts to consolidate community resources and strengthen local networks. The care teams are supervised by District Officers to organise caring activities, assist in handling emergencies, help the government disseminate information to the public and relay the views of the public to the government.

Advisory and Statutory Bodies

About 5,800 members of the public serve on around 520 advisory and statutory bodies. These bodies tap professional expertise in the community and allow a wide cross-section of the community and relevant organisations to take part in the initial stage of policymaking and public-service planning, and to perform specific functions. The government maintains a regular turnover of members to ensure broad participation and the inclusion of fresh perspectives.

Some of the advisory bodies deal with the interests of a particular industry, while others advise on a particular area of government policy. Statutory bodies have legal powers and responsibilities to perform specific functions according to the relevant legislation.

Youth Development

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau is responsible for coordinating various bureaus in formulating an overall youth policy, reviewing and monitoring the implementation progress of the Youth Development Blueprint, setting policy objectives and priorities for youth development, and creating opportunities for upward mobility for young people.

Youth Development Blueprint

The blueprint, released in 2022, outlines the overall vision and guiding principles for the government's long-term youth development work. It put forward more than 160 actions and measures, aiming to nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for the country and Hong Kong, a global perspective, aspiring mind-set and positive thinking. In 2023, the bureau launched the Youth Link, released the Youth Dashboard and established the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area.

Youth Development Commission

The Youth Development Commission strives to enhance policy coordination within the government for promoting youth development and enabling a more holistic and effective examination of and discussion on issues of concern to young people. Since its establishment, it has implemented programmes to promote youth exchange, internship, entrepreneurship, life planning and positive thinking. The commission has also supported the government in formulating and implementing the Youth Development Blueprint.

Promotion of Young People's Positive Thinking

The bureau and the commission launched the first round of two funding schemes under the Youth Development Fund in late 2022. The Funding Scheme for Youth Positive Thinking Activities subsidises eligible non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise projects that

are conducive to nurturing positive thinking among young people, particularly projects that involve cross-sectoral collaboration or are led by young people to drive community building. The Funding Scheme for Youth Adventure Training Activities subsidises NGOs to provide structured adventure training activities for young people with a view to improving their physical and mental well-being, fostering their positive thinking and resilience, and nurturing a sense of discipline and team spirit. Sponsored organisations that received grants from these funding schemes have launched projects and activities, which last for two years.

Youth Hostel Scheme

To meet the aspirations of some working youth to have their own living space, the government fully funds NGOs to construct youth hostels on under-utilised sites under the Youth Hostel Scheme. Furthermore, the Subsidy Scheme for Using Hotels and Guesthouses as Youth Hostels, launched in January, increases the supply of youth hostel places.

The scheme will encourage youth tenants to participate in training activities and community or volunteer services so that they can achieve self-enrichment and widen their personal and social networks during their stay at the hostels. It will also help nurture talents with an aspiration to serve the community.

Media and Communications

Dissemination of Government Information

The bureau oversees the policy on dissemination of government information. The Information Services Department (ISD) is the government's news and communications agency and advises the government on public relations matters in Hong Kong and overseas.

The department's Information Officers work as Press Secretaries to Principal Officials or in information units in bureaus and departments to help formulate and implement public relations and publicity strategies, handle media enquiries and organise promotional activities.

The department operates a 24-hour media enquiry service. The Government News and Media Information System gives journalists access to press releases, photographs and video clips. Press releases are available online, while major press conferences and events are webcast live. Government news and messages are also disseminated in a dynamic multimedia fashion on the news.gov.hk website and through social media.

The ISD helps bureaus and departments mount local publicity campaigns and is responsible for advertising, creative design, photography, videography and the production of a range of government publications. Among the major campaigns conducted during the year were 2023 District Council Ordinary Election, Happy Hong Kong, Night Vibes Hong Kong, the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands project and implementation of HKeToll.

The department helps develop the government's public relations strategy outside Hong Kong and promote the city's image overseas. It liaises with more than 60 foreign media organisations based in Hong Kong, engages media outside Hong Kong to produce multimedia content publicising the city's strengths, and develops publicity campaigns and materials to support the

government's Economic and Trade Offices' events, senior officials' visits and major promotional activities outside Hong Kong. It also runs the Brand Hong Kong communications programmes to promote Hong Kong globally as Asia's world city, and sponsors political and business leaders, academics and journalists to visit Hong Kong to see the latest developments and take home Hong Kong's good stories.

Mass Media

Hong Kong's mass media at the end of 2023 included 90 daily newspapers (including digital newspapers), 376 periodicals, three domestic free-TV programme service licensees, one domestic pay-TV programme service licensee, nine non-domestic TV programme service licensees, two sound broadcasting licensees and one public service broadcaster.

Registered Hong Kong-based press at the year-end included 61 Chinese dailies, 11 English dailies, 14 bilingual dailies, three Japanese dailies and one Korean daily. One of the English dailies publishes a daily Braille edition in conjunction with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind. Of the Chinese dailies, 43 cover mainly local and international news, while the others focus on particular subjects such as finance.

International media including *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Nikkei*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters have a presence in Hong Kong. International broadcasters with operations in Hong Kong include the BBC, CNBC, CNN International, CNA and NHK.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education advises the government on civic education outside schools, and works with the government and other parties to organise or sponsor civic education activities. It promotes the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law to deepen public understanding of 'one country, two systems' while enhancing the awareness and sense of responsibility towards the rule of law and national security, and encouraging the public to learn about the latest developments and opportunities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The committee also promotes the four core civic values of 'Respect', 'Responsibility', 'Love' and 'Inclusiveness'.

The committee's Civic Education Resource Centre houses reference materials on civic education and organises training courses, seminars, film sharing sessions, guided tours and exhibitions.

Helping Ethnic Minorities Integrate into Community

The government commissions non-profit-making organisations to run eight support service centres for ethnic minorities, offering classes, counselling and integration programmes. One of the centres also provides free language interpretation on the telephone to help ethnic minorities use public services. During 2023, the support service centres strengthened their services, particularly those catering for new arrivals and young people. District-based programmes were organised to encourage interaction and exchange between ethnic minorities and local communities.

In addition, two government-sponsored community support teams offer special services for ethnic minorities through members of their own communities. The government funds radio programmes and publishes service guidebooks in a number of ethnic minority languages. Two ambassador schemes provide information about public services to ethnic minority families and young people, and make referrals where necessary. A team of publicity officers who are familiar with ethnic minority cultures and languages holds talks and exhibitions to promote racial harmony in the community.

The Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony advises the government on support services for ethnic minorities and race-related public education and publicity.

Women's Commission

The Women's Commission advises the government on policies and initiatives of concern to women. In 2023-24, 145 projects were approved under the commission's Women Empowerment Fund. As at end-2023, the government had applied the commission's Gender Mainstreaming Checklist to more than 1,600 major policies and programme areas to assess gender implications. The commission's Capacity Building Mileage Programme is a learning programme focusing on women. It had over 6,700 enrolments in 2022-23.

Funding

Community Care Fund

The Community Care Fund helps people with financial difficulties, especially those who either fall outside the social safety net or have special needs that are not covered by it. As at end-2023, 62 assistance programmes were endorsed to launch under the fund, with a commitment of around \$20.8 billion benefitting over 2,830,000 cases. These included pilot programmes to help the government identify measures that could be considered for incorporation into its regular assistance and service programmes. A total of 25 programmes have been incorporated into the government's regular assistance programmes since the fund was set up in 2011.

Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

The fund finances diversified social capital development projects, promotes trust and reciprocity among the public and various sectors, and builds cross-sectoral collaborative platforms and mutual help networks to achieve a caring society. In 2023, it allocated \$107.81 million to 31 new projects. About 113,160 people took part in ongoing projects, including about 21,600 volunteers, and about 2,450 collaboration partners. Together, they have built about 216 mutual support networks.

Religion

Hong Kong's Basic Law guarantees religious freedom, allowing a diversity of faiths to coexist harmoniously.

Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced into China from India more than 2,000 years ago. It is one of the main religions in Hong Kong, with about 1 million followers and more than 400 temples, some over 700 years old. Notable worship sites include the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island, famous for its giant bronze statue of a seated Tian Tan Buddha that is also known as the Big Buddha, and the Chi Lin Nunnery in Diamond Hill, Kowloon, which is a cluster of temple structures built in the architectural style of the Tang dynasty.

Local Buddhist groups aid social welfare and education, operating nearly 100 primary and secondary schools, homes for the elderly and centres for children and youths. The Hong Kong Buddhist Association seeks to propagate Buddhist teaching and culture and provide charitable services to the public. The association runs 11 secondary schools, seven primary schools, eight kindergartens, a hospital and six Chinese medicine service units.

The major Buddhist festival takes place on Buddha's birthday, which falls on the eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar and is a statutory holiday. The association holds celebrations on that day and organises dharma functions during the Ching Ming Festival.

Taoism

Taoism is an indigenous religion of China with a 2,000-year history. Hong Kong has over 1 million followers and more than 300 Taoist abbeys and temples.

The Hong Kong Taoist Association, set up by representatives of major temples in 1961, is a non-profit-making charity. It organises religious, cultural and charitable activities to promote Taoist scriptures and moral values. These activities include the annual Taoist Day held on the second Sunday of March to celebrate the birthday of the deity Taishang Laojun, or Laozi, whom Taoists believe is the founder of Taoism and author of *Tao Te Ching*, the main Taoist text dated to the late 4th century BC. Worshippers also mark the triennial Taoist Blessing Ceremony on the 15th day of the 10th lunar month and attend religious lectures and *tai chi* classes.

Educational, social and charitable services include running more than 40 schools and kindergartens and subsidising tertiary-level courses. Taoists operate clinics, homes for the elderly, care homes, child care centres and community service centres in Hong Kong.

Confucianism

Confucianism, originating in China, is a set of religious, ethical and philosophical teachings derived from ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (Kongzi, 551-479 BC) that emphasises the importance of morals, tradition and rites. *The Analects*, a record of Confucius's words, acts and teachings, is the main text edited by his followers.

Confucian values are introduced in local primary, secondary and university teaching through the advocacy of the Confucian Academy, founded in 1930. The academy incorporates principles of Confucianism in the curricula of its own Confucian Tai Shing schools. Local Confucian groups promote education and organise charitable activities.

Other local Confucian organisations include the Hong Kong Confucianism Association and Confucius Hall. The major Confucian festival takes place on Confucius's birthday, which falls on the 27th day of the eighth month in the lunar calendar. The academy celebrates Confucian Day on the day following the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Christianity

The Christian community numbers about 1.4 million, most of whom are Protestants and Roman Catholics. The Greek, Russian and Coptic Orthodox Churches also have a presence in Hong Kong. There is an annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Protestant Community

The local Protestant movement began in 1841 and Hong Kong now has about 1,040,000 Christians, more than 300,000 of whom attend church services regularly. The Protestant community is composed of more than 70 denominations within 1,300 congregations which are Chinese-speaking. These include indigenous denominations as well as other independent churches. The Hong Kong Christian Council and the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Church Union facilitate cooperation among the Protestant churches.

The Protestant community runs five tertiary institutions as well as 130 nurseries, 260 kindergartens, 206 primary schools and 180 secondary schools. It also operates more than 30 theological and bible seminaries, 150 publishing houses, 58 bookstores and 55 media and art agencies, which produce the *Christian Times* and *Christian Weekly*, regular television programmes and a weekly radio show.

The Protestant community runs eight hospitals and 52 hospital chaplaincies, as well as 160 social welfare organisations that provide services at over 130 centres for families and youths, 11 children's homes, 182 elderly centres and nursing homes, and about 60 rehabilitation centres for drug addicts and the disabled. There are three prison chaplaincies, one airport chaplaincy and around 30 campsites.

Roman Catholic Community

The Roman Catholic Church in Hong Kong was established as a mission prefecture in 1841 and became a diocese in 1946. The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong has about 392,000 Catholics served by 269 priests, 92 brothers and 404 sisters in 52 parishes, comprising 39 churches, 30 chapels and 26 halls for religious services conducted in Cantonese; three-fifths of the parishes also provide services in English and, in some cases, Tagalog, the Filipino language. The diocese has its own administrative structure while maintaining close links with the Pope and other Catholic communities around the world.

Through the assistance of the Catholic Education Office, 249 Catholic schools and kindergartens educate 134,824 pupils. Caritas-Hong Kong is the diocese's official social welfare arm and provides medical and social services to at least six hospitals, 10 clinics, 46 social and family service centres, 22 hostels, 15 homes for the aged and 33 rehabilitation service centres. The diocese publishes two weekly newspapers: *Kung Kuo Po* and the *Sunday Examiner*. Its Diocesan Audio-Visual Centre produces programmes for evangelising and pastoral purposes, disseminated via various channels, including online platforms.

Islam

Hong Kong has an estimated 300,000 Muslims, according to the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong.

All local Islamic activities are coordinated by the trustees, which form a charity managing five mosques, two cemeteries and a kindergarten. They make funeral arrangements, announce the dates of festivals including Ramadan, and conduct inspections and issue certificates for halal food in Hong Kong and parts of the Mainland. The Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association operates a college, two primary schools and two kindergartens.

The oldest mosque is the Jamia Masjid in Mid-Levels, built in 1849 and rebuilt in 1915, which was declared a monument in 2022. The eight-storey Masjid Ammar and Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre in Wan Chai features a library, a clinic, a canteen and a kindergarten. The Kowloon Masjid and Islamic Centre, with its distinctive white-marble finish, is a landmark in Tsim Sha Tsui. It has a capacity of 3,500 and sees nearly 1 million users yearly. Stanley Mosque is inside Stanley Prison, while Chai Wan Mosque is at Cape Collinson. The cemeteries are in Happy Valley and Cape Collinson.

Hinduism

Religious and social activities of the 100,000-strong Hindu community are centred on the Hindu Temple in Happy Valley, which is managed by the Hindu Association of Hong Kong. Worshippers use the temple for meditation, spiritual lectures, yoga classes and other community activities, and to observe major festivals including Diwali, Dussehra, Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Cheti Chand and Hanuman Jayanti. They also perform engagement and marriage ceremonies according to Hindu rites and the Marriage Ordinance. Other important services include administering last rites and making arrangements for cremation and related rituals.

The temple holds devotional music sessions and religious discourses every Sunday morning, followed by a free community meal that is also served on Monday evenings.

Sikhism

Hong Kong's first Sikhs came from Punjab, India, as part of the British Armed Forces in the 19th century. The first Sikh temple, Sri Guru Singh Sabha, on Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, was built in 1901 and later renamed Khalsa Diwan Hong Kong Sikh Temple. It was reopened in 2022 following redevelopment and features two prayer halls, a free kitchen and dining room, private function rooms, seminar halls, a digital library and a car park.

The Khalsa Diwan, a registered charitable organisation that manages the temple, offers voluntary services, including the provision of *langar* (a free meal) and short-term accommodation for overseas visitors.

The Khalsa Diwan estimates Hong Kong has about 15,000 Sikhs. Followers of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev Ji attend religious services at the temple every morning and evening, and gather there on Sundays and the main Sikh holy days. Their most important religious dates are the birthdays of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji (the 10th Guru), and Vaisakhi (the birthday and baptism day of all Sikhs).

Judaism

The settlement of the Jewish community in Hong Kong dates from the 1840s. There are three main synagogues: Ohel Leah Synagogue (Orthodox) providing daily, Sabbath and festival services; the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong (Reform) with Sabbath and festival services, both of which share the same premises in Mid-Levels; and the Chabad Lubavitch in MacDonnell Road, which has daily services.

Ohel Leah Synagogue, built in 1901, includes a *mikvah* (ritual bath). The Jewish Cemetery in Happy Valley was built in 1857.

The site next to Ohel Leah houses a residential complex and the Jewish Community Centre. The centre offers its 400 member families from all three congregations kosher dining, banqueting, cultural and recreational facilities, a supermarket and a specialist library, as well as activities and classes. The community also runs the Carmel School and religious classes as well as several charity and cultural organisations.

Other Faiths

The Baha'i Faith and Zoroastrianism are among other religions that have been established in Hong Kong for many years.

Websites

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