

38th CMAAO General Assembly and 59th Council Meeting
Symposium Report — The Hong Kong Medical Association



**THE IMPACT OF WOMEN
IN THE HEALTHCARE
WORKFORCE**

CONTENT

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN IN THE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

1. Current Landscape – Female in HK Healthcare Workforce
2. Challenges Facing Women in Healthcare
3. Advancing Women in Hong Kong, China
4. The HKMA's Support on Empowering Women



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CURRENT LANDSCAPE

FEMALE IN THE HK HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

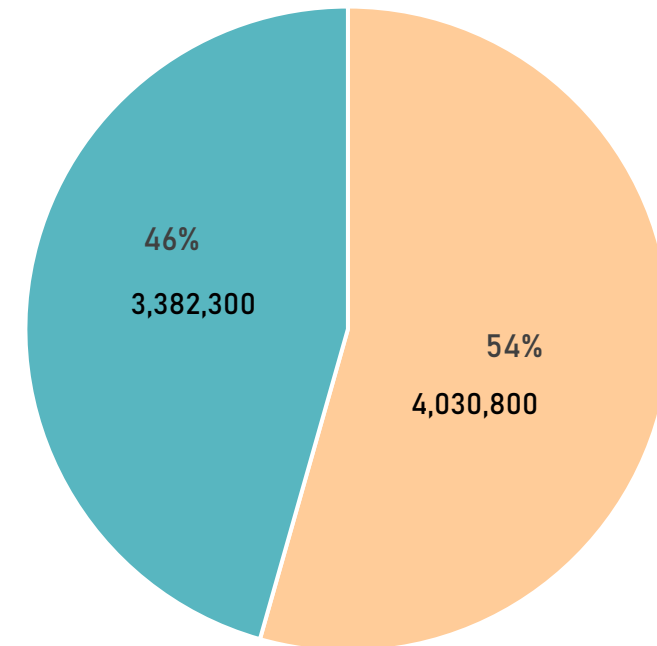
DEMOGRAPHICS OF HONG KONG, CHINA

OVERVIEW

- HK's sex ratio has declined in recent years as the number of women outpaces men.
- In 2006, there were 971 males for every 1,000 females. By 2021, this ratio dropped to 910 males per 1,000 females (excluding foreign domestic workers).

2021

Female Male



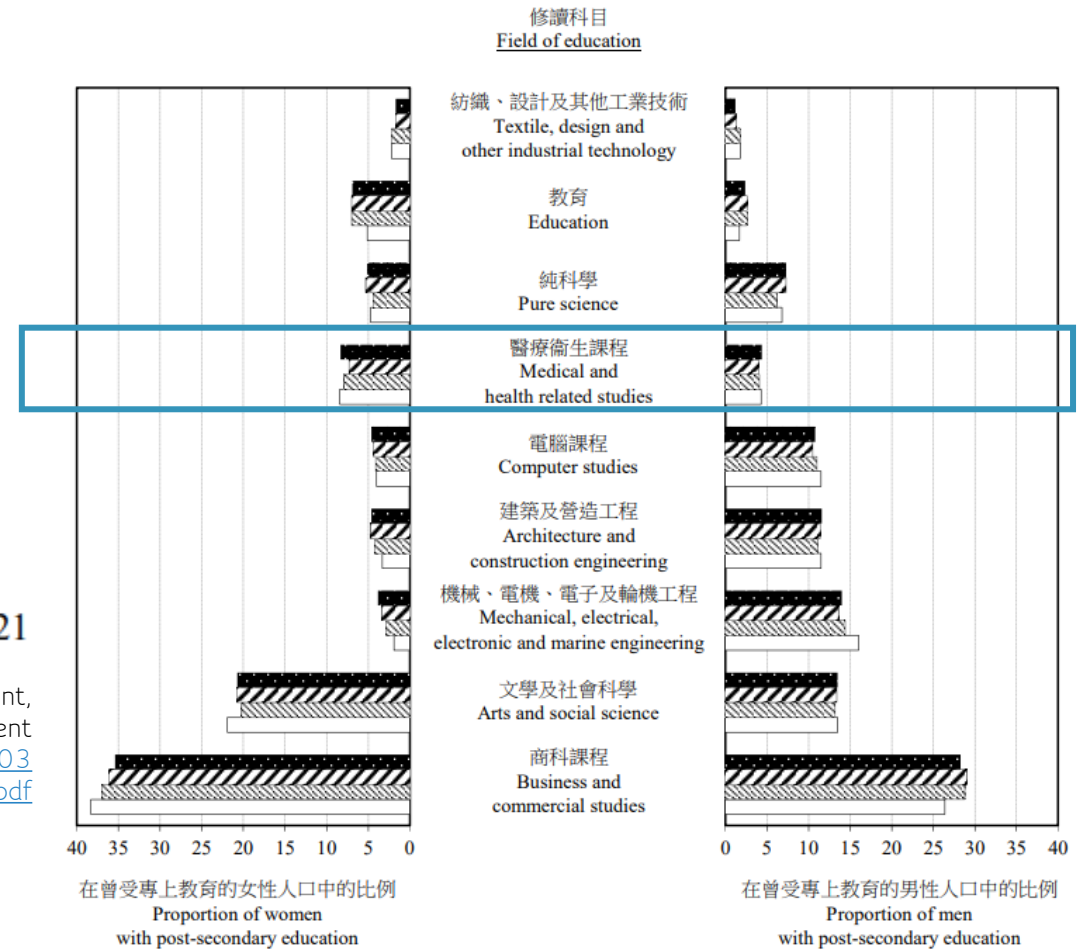
DEMOGRAPHICS OF HONG KONG, CHINA

HK Higher Education Distribution by Gender

- In 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021, more females than males enrolled in medical and health-related studies at the higher education level in HK.

2006
 2011
 2016
 2021

Sources: Demographic Statistics Section (2), Census and Statistics Department, 2021 Population Census Office, Census and Statistics Department
https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1130303/att/B11303032022AN22B0100.pdf



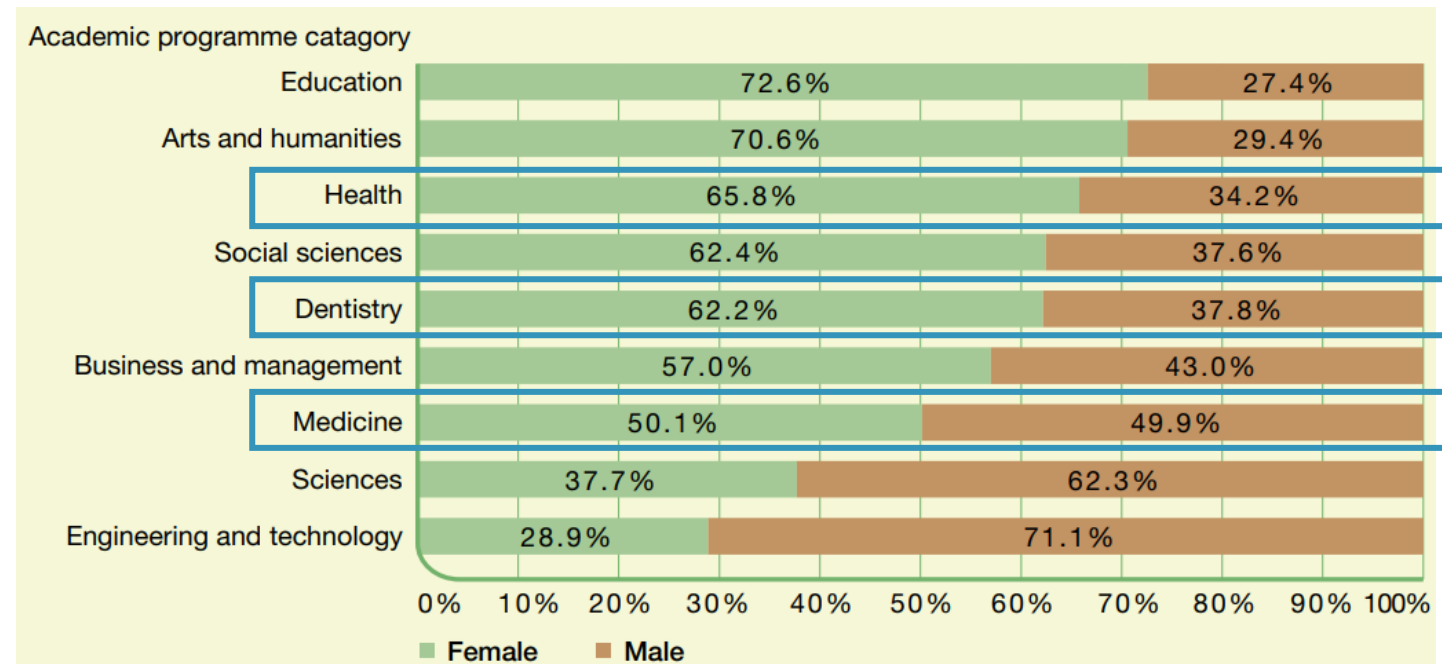
DEMOGRAPHICS OF HONG KONG, CHINA

HK UGC-funded Programmes Distribution by Gender

- In the 2020/21 academic year, more female students than their male counterparts enrolled in:

- Health (65.8%)
- Medicine (50.1%)
- Dentistry (62.2%)
- Education (72.6%)
- Arts and humanities (70.6%)
- Social sciences (62.4%)
- Business and management (57.0%)

HK UGC-funded Programmes
(2020/21 Academic Year)

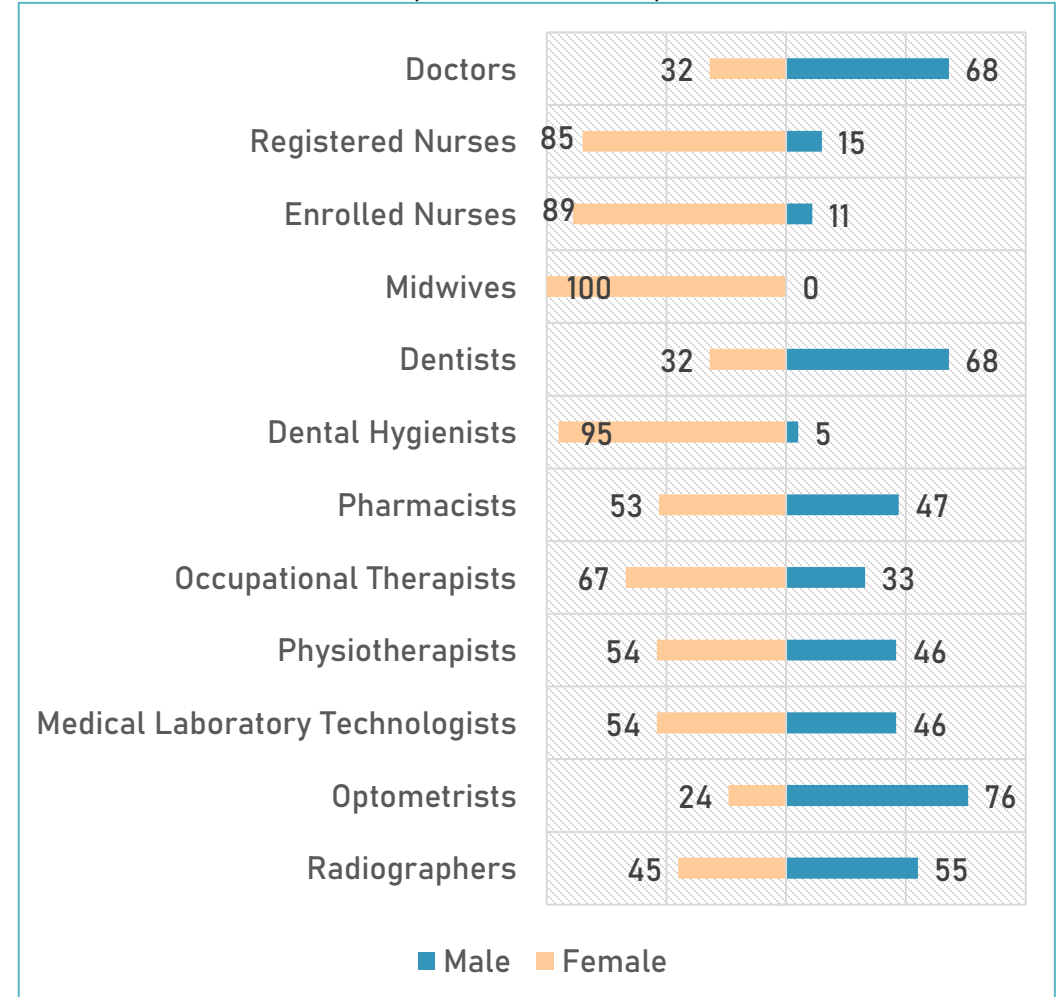


Sources: Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics (2022 Edition), Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR
https://www.women.gov.hk/download/research/HK_Women2021_e.pdf

HK HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

1. Doctors and Dentists: Women now comprise around 32% of registered doctors and dentists, increased from 27% in 2007.
2. Nursing continues to be a female-dominated profession.
3. Pharmacists – both genders accounted for half of the profession in 2007.
4. Optometrists – as of 2007, women were still underrepresented as optometrists, accounting for only 19%.
5. Stagnation in some fields – the gender ratio for dental hygienists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and medical lab technicians remained relatively unchanged since 2007.

Gender Ratio of HK Healthcare Professionals
(as at end 2016)

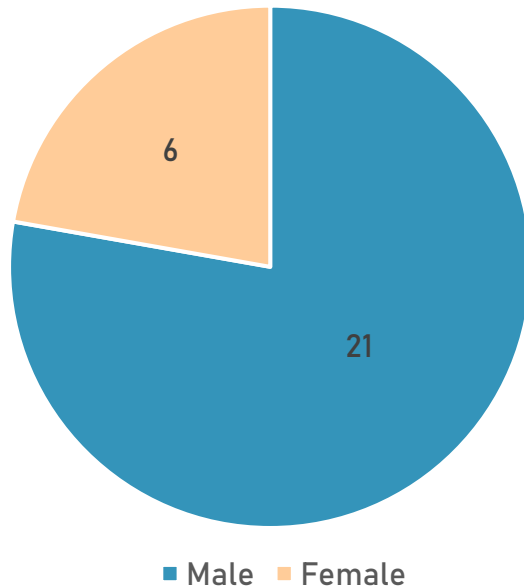


HK HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

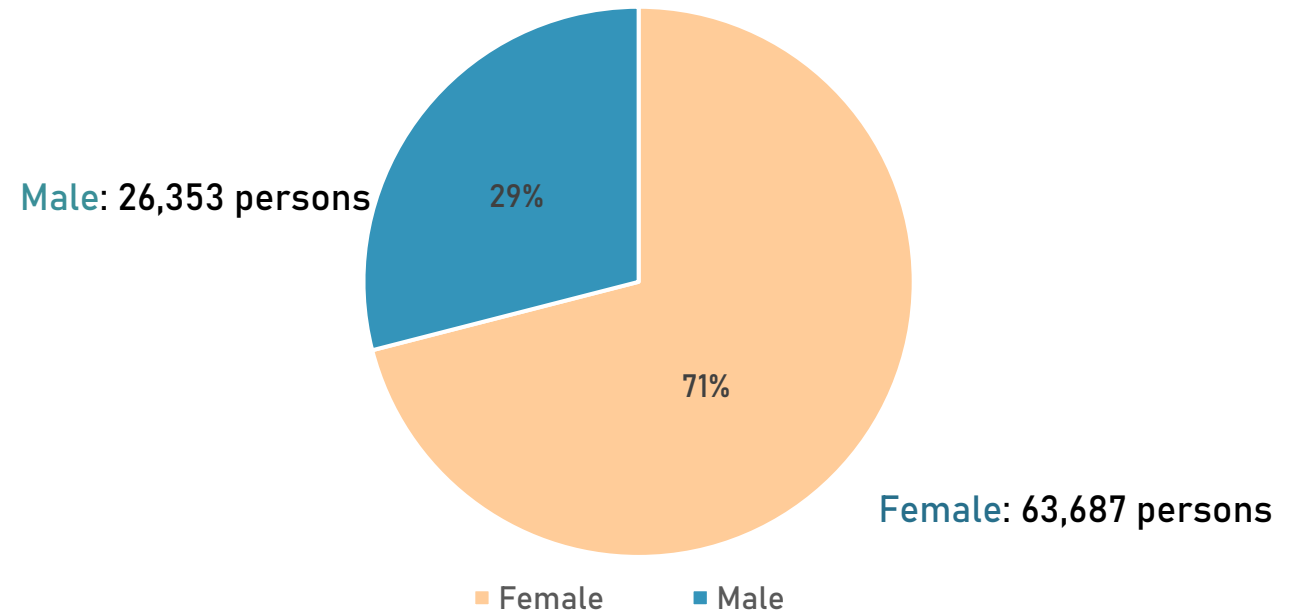
Manpower of Hospital Authority (HA) Distribution by Gender

1. 71% of overall manpower were women
2. HA Board: among all 27 members, 22% (six) were female members

The HA Board member distribution by gender as of 31 March 2023



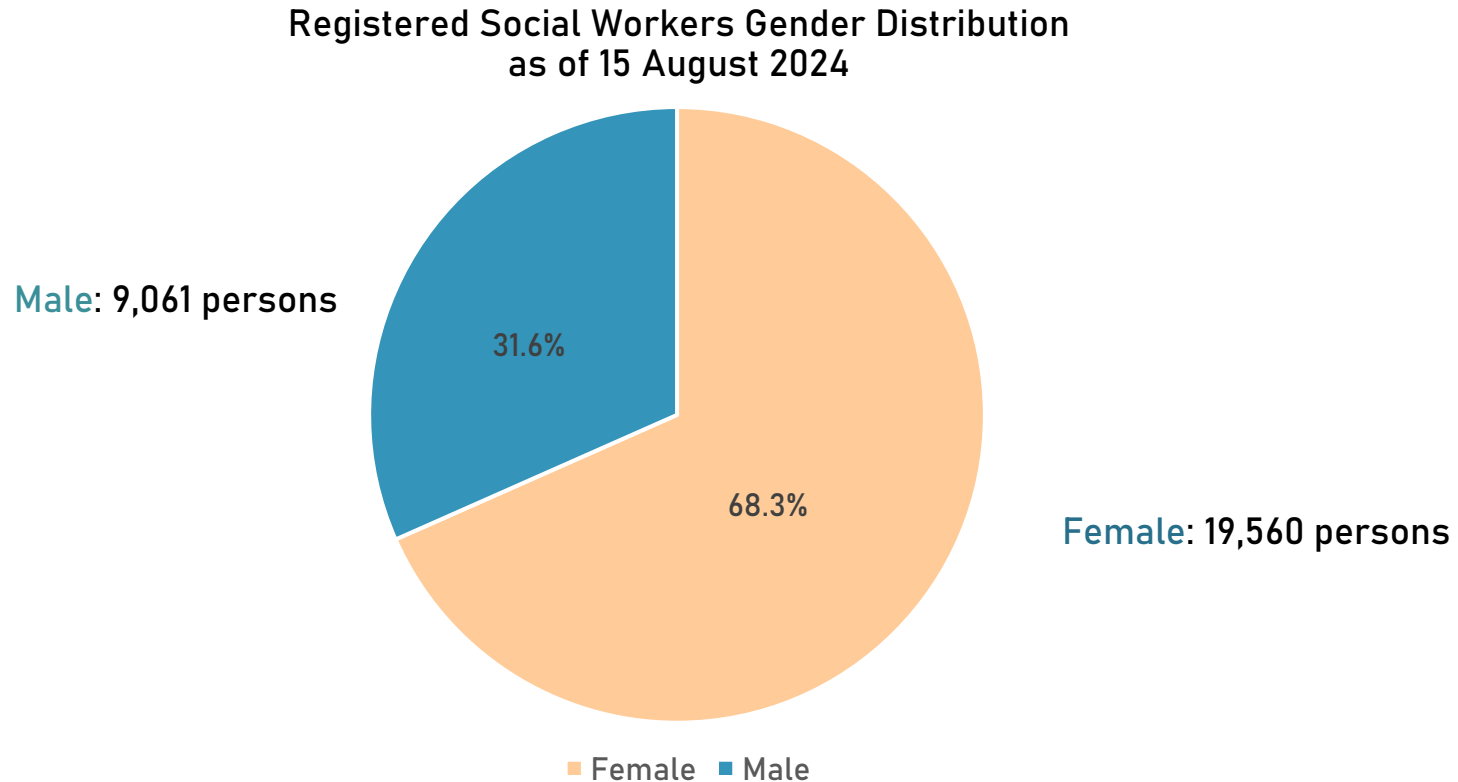
The total manpower of HA distribution by gender as of 31 March 2023



HK HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

Gender Distribution of Registered Social Workers in HK

- 68.3% were women; 31.6% were men.



FEMALE IN THE HK HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE



GENDER GAP

The gender gap persists among HK healthcare professionals. In 2021, around 32% of doctors and dentists were women, up from 27% in 2007. Women still only comprise 19% of optometrists.



WOMEN-MAJORITY FIELDS

Nursing stands out as a female-concentrated field, underscoring the importance of women's participation across HK's healthcare workforce.



RISING FEMALE ENGAGEMENT

Women's representation in healthcare has grown, with female doctors and dentists increasing from 27% to 32% since 2007.



DISPARITY AT TOP LEVELS

According to data from the HA, women make up 71% of the overall workforce. However, at the board level, only 22% (six out of 27 members) are female.



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CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN HEALTHCARE WORKERS

1. GENDER GAP

Gender acts as a fundamental factor that divides the health workforce into different levels. However, its influence cannot be examined in isolation, as gender will inherently intersect with other systemic influences such as competing interests, power imbalances, and organizational values within the system [1].

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Balancing career and family remains challenging for women doctors, especially childcare duties given HK's high costs and limited options. Flexible working arrangements in the workplace is rare. [2]

3. TOP-LEVEL AND WAGE DISPARITIES

Women predominate in nursing and midwifery cadres, are under-represented in management positions and are clustered in lower paying positions [3]. While wage gaps may not be prevalent in HK's public sector due to fixed pay scales, potential differences in compensation for similar roles in some private practices warrant further research.

4. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence does not currently appear to be a significant issue in HK. Nurses in HK who were victims of workplace violence themselves were found to have a lower level of concern about or awareness of the seriousness of workplace violence, compared to their colleagues who had not experienced such violence first-hand. [4]

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Workplace violence among female doctors

Recent case of the killing of a 31-year-old trainee doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in eastern Kolkata city, India.

- Doctors say they often face abuse from relatives of patients, with some medics assaulted. A survey by the Indian Medical Association found 75% of doctors had faced some form of violence. [5]
- Female healthcare professionals' rights and safety should, with no hesitation, be the priority to be safeguarded.
- Ensuring a safe workplace for healthcare professionals, especially for women, is our utmost concern.
- A safe workplace should be secured to enable professionals to perform their duties with no fear of being threatened.



The HKMA would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the bereaved family and the medical community of India!



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ADVANCING WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE

ADVANCING WOMEN IN HK

Legislative Council Meeting on 10 May 2023

Motion on “Promoting the Comprehensive Development of Women in HK”

INCREASING CHILDCARE SERVICES*

The Social Welfare Department has been increasing the provision of aided childcare centres service places through various development projects

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING*

Establish breastfeeding-friendly workplace so that breastfeeding women can sustain employment or rejoin the job market during breastfeeding

ENHANCE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Enhance education opportunities in the healthcare sector i.e. providing a wider choice of university courses to ensure even access to education resources for women, securing their upward social mobility

*Sources: Legislative Council Meeting on 10 May 2023, LC Paper No. CB(3)641/2023(01)
<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr2023/english/counmtg/motion/cm20230510m-cmkm-prpt-e.pdf>

THE HKMA'S SUPPORT

Department of Health – Committee on Promotion of Breastfeeding

Providing lactation facilities and flexible breaks empowers nursing mothers to continue breastfeeding upon returning to work. This enables women to reconcile professional and maternal responsibilities rather than having to sacrifice either. By creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment, employers both accommodate natural motherhood needs and tap into an expanded talent pool as women remain in the workforce.



Health Bureau

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China

About us

Our Work

What's New

Press Releases
and Publications

Boards and Committees

Committee on Promotion of Breastfeeding

A. Terms of Reference

1. To advise the Government on strategies and action plans to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding in Hong Kong;
2. To advise the Government on measures to encourage different sectors in the community to support breastfeeding;
3. To oversee the planning and monitor the implementation of programmes, services or initiatives to promote breastfeeding.

B. Membership

Chairman : Under Secretary for Health

Members : Hong Kong Medical Association

Hong Kong Nutrition Association

Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association

Hong Kong College of Paediatricians

Hong Kong College of Nursing

THE HKMA'S SUPPORT

The Recent Committee Meeting on the Promotion of Breastfeeding



The 9th Meeting of the Committee

Reviewed the progress and effectiveness of measures for promoting and supporting breastfeeding; discussed ways to step up the efforts in supporting breastfeeding.

THE HKMA'S SUPPORT

The Progress of the 9th Committee Meeting on the Promotion of Breastfeeding



Breastmilk bank establishment and breastmilk donation mechanism formulation in 2025



Strengthening the Peer Support Scheme for breastfeeding mothers



Setting up a working group under the Committee to reinforce and consolidate the breastfeeding-friendly practices in birthing hospitals

REFERENCE

- [1] Li, M., Raven, J., & Liu, X. (2024). Feminization of the health workforce in China: exploring gendered composition from 2002 to 2020. *Human Resources for Health*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-024-00898-w>
- [2] Yau, E. (2014, January 20). Professional women still face old ways of thinking in the workplace. *South China Morning Post*. https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/family-education/article/1407754/professional-women-still-face-old-ways-thinking-workplace?campaign=1407754&module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article
- [3] Witter S, Namakula J, Wurie H, Chirwa Y, So S, Vong S, Ros B, Buzuzi S, Theobald S. The gendered health workforce: mixed methods analysis from four fragile and post-conflict contexts. *Health Policy Plan*. 2017;32:v52–62.
- [4] Hong, S., Nam, S., Wong, J. Y. H., & Kim, H. (2023). Post-traumatic responses to workplace violence among nursing professionals: a collaborative and comparative study in South Korea and Hong Kong. *BMC Nursing*, 22(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01502-7>
- [5] The National. (2024, August 17). Indian doctors start nationwide strike after sexual assault and murder of Kolkata medic. *The National*. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/08/17/indian-doctors-start-nationwide-strike-after-sexual-assault-and-murder-of-kolkata-medic/>

THANK YOU



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