

## THE POPULATION GROWTH OF HONG KONG

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At the turn of the twentieth century, Hong Kong's total population was 368,987. The total population rose from 456,739 in 1911 to 625,166 in 1921. In 1931 the population was 840,473, showing an annual rate of increase of over 3 percent in those twenty years. The population increased more rapidly between 1931 and 1941, primarily due to a large number of Chinese coming to Hong Kong to avoid the unsettled and difficult conditions caused by the Japanese invasion of China. In 1941 the Air Raid Wardens, in connection with air raid precautions, estimated that the total population was 1,640,000, nearly double that of 1931. Hong Kong was occupied by Japan between December 1941 and August 1945. Under the Japanese occupation, large scale deportations of Hong Kong's inhabitants were carried out to solve the food shortage problem. At the end of the Second World War, the population was estimated to be only 600,000. There was a massive inflow of Chinese immigrants into Hong Kong as the civil war in China broke out in the late 1940's. The population quickly rose to its pre-war level and reached two million in 1951. Hong Kong's first post-war census was carried out in March 1961 and a total population of 3,129,648 was recorded. The 1966 by-census gave an estimated total of 3,708,920. The second post-war census, conducted in March 1971, recorded a total of 3,936,630 inhabitants. The figures for the 1976 by-census and 1981 census were 4,402,990 and 4,986,560 respectively.<sup>1</sup>

This paper intends to discuss Hong Kong's population growth in the past three decades, to analyse the demographic characteristics of the population, and to

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<sup>1</sup> These figures were population Census/By-Census totals. The 1961 Census was taken on March 7, 1961, the 1966 By-Census on August 2, 1966, the 1971 Census on March 9, 1971, the 1976 By-Census between July 30 and August 8, 1976, and the 1981 Census on March 9, 1981.

Table 1. Hong Kong Population by Sex (in thousands, 1911-1981)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1911	296	161	457
1921	383	242	625
1931	483	358	841
1961	1,608	1,522	3,130
1966	1,881	1,828	3,709
1971	2,001	1,936	3,937
1976	2,251	2,152	4,403
1981	2,604	2,382	4,986

Source: *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1983, p. 27.*

examine the factors which affected the growth during this period.

### Geographical Distribution

Significant changes in the area distribution of the Hong Kong population took place during the post-war years. In 1961, over one million persons or 32 percent of the entire population lived on Hong Kong Island. Kowloon had 725,000 persons or 23 percent. The number of inhabitants living in New Kowloon rose from merely 23,000 in 1931 to more than 850,000 in 1961. About 410,000 persons or 13 percent of the population resided in the New Territories. Another 137,000 persons lived afloat in small boats.

In 1971, both Hong Kong Island and Kowloon had a reduction of around 10,000 residents when compared to their 1961 figures.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the

<sup>1</sup>Central and Sheung Wan districts on Hong Kong Island had only about half of the number of their 1961 residents. Aberdeen district on the Island, however, expanded considerably as public housing estates in Aberdeen attracted large numbers of tenants.

number of people living in New Kowloon further soared to close to one and a half million, showing an increase of seventy percent in the 1960's. This redistribution of population from overcrowded areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon to public housing estates in New Kowloon was mainly the result of urban development plans and re-housing schemes carried out by the Government. The population in the New Territories also increased by 60 percent. The marine population reduced to only 80,000 persons.

In the 1970's, new towns like Sha Tin and Tuen Mun were developed into self-contained communities in the New Territories, and old market towns of Tai Po, Sheung Shui and Yuen Long were expanded and provided with better infrastructure facilities. The size of the population in the New Territories nearly doubled in the 1971-1981 period, while the increase in other areas was only around ten percent.

Between 1961 and 1981 Hong Kong's population increased by 1.86 million. While the development of land by reclamation only increased marginally, the population density increased from 2,905 persons per kilometre in 1961 to 4,760 in 1981. There are significant differences in density among different areas. In 1981 the population density for the metropolitan areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Kowloon was 28,479 persons per kilometre, the corresponding figure for New Territories was 792.

### Age and Sex Distribution

The recent population of Hong Kong is a settled one with a fairly even sex distribution. The 1971 population of Hong Kong consisted of slightly over two million males and approximately 1.94 million females. The sex ratio, which was 1,348 men to 1,000 women in 1931, was reduced to 1,058 in 1961 and further improved to 1,033 in 1971. In 1981 the sex ratio rose to 1,093. This was mainly because of the substantial immigration of males from China to Hong Kong in the 1970's.

In 1961 and 1971, 46 percent of the population were below the age of twenty. Of the 1.44 million youngsters below 20 years old in 1961, half a million were children under the age of five, 776,000 were between 5 and 14 years, and only

Table 2. Hong Kong Population by Area (in thousands, 1961, 1971 and 1981)

Area	1961	1971	1981
Hong Kong Island	1,005	996	1,184
Kowloon	725	716	799
New Kowloon	853	1,469	1,651
New Territories	410	676	1,303
New towns	(N.A.)	(396)	(939)
Other areas	(N.A.)	(280)	(364)
Marine	137	80	50
Total	3,130	3,937	4,987

*Source: Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1982, Vol. 1, p. 63.*

165,000 were between 15 and 19 years. In 1971, the number of children under five years old was reduced to 376,000, but the number of children between 5 and 14 and the number of youngsters between 15 and 19 were increased to over one million and 428,000, respectively. The fact that more than one-quarter of the 1971 population were between the age 5-14 well reflected Hong Kong's baby boom in the late 1950's and the early 1960's. On the other hand, the low figure of less than 200,000 persons in the age group 25-29 in 1971 could partly be explained by the low birth rate during the Second World War period. The fact that the number of children below the age of five in 1971 was only three-quarters of the number of children in the same age group in 1961 pointed out clearly the rapid decline in the number of babies born in Hong Kong in the late 1960's. Less than three percent of the population in 1961 were 65 years old and over, but the corresponding proportion of old people increased to 4.5 percent in 1971. In 1981, only 25 percent of the population were below the age of 15, reduced from the corresponding figure of 41 percent in 1961. The proportion of population in the age group 15-34 was 41 percent in 1981, rising from 30 percent in 1961 and 1971. This was explained by the fact that the number of births was relatively high in the



late 1950's and the 1960's. The substantial influx of immigrants towards the end of the 1970's, of whom 60 percent were in the age group 15-34 (Census and Statistics Department 1982b: 17), was another contributing factor. The proportion of the population in the working age group of 15 to 64 also increased from 56 percent in 1961 to 69 percent in 1981. This leads to the rapid decline of the dependency ratio, which relates the number of persons under 15 and those aged 65 and over to the total number of persons aged between 15 and 64, from 774 per 1,000 in 1961 to 457 per 1,000 in 1981.<sup>1</sup> Over 326,000 persons or 6.6 percent

Table 3. Hong Kong Population, by Age and Sex  
(in thousands, 1961, 1971 and 1981)

Age Group	1961		1971		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0 - 4	257.7	243.0	193.2	183.0	203.0	185.7
5 - 9	220.4	204.9	259.3	248.8	212.4	196.5
10 - 14	185.9	165.1	267.7	255.9	227.1	212.9
15 - 19	90.2	74.9	219.7	208.2	292.6	271.3
20 - 24	111.2	91.5	173.2	163.1	307.6	276.2
25 - 29	137.2	116.8	107.1	86.6	258.9	224.2
30 - 34	140.9	122.2	117.1	95.6	219.3	179.8
35 - 39	123.3	111.6	129.5	115.6	132.3	100.6
40 - 44	107.3	95.7	133.7	121.9	140.8	109.7
45 - 49	86.5	80.7	112.9	105.4	141.2	119.3
50 - 54	60.1	63.8	101.0	94.3	136.3	119.8
55 - 59	37.2	49.8	74.9	75.7	109.5	102.6
60 - 64	23.6	40.0	52.3	63.4	90.7	89.5
65 - 69	13.2	27.8	28.4	45.3	65.5	72.5
70 - 74	7.6	18.5	17.4	35.6	37.8	53.9
75 and over	5.4	15.5	13.3	37.6	29.3	67.8
Total	1,607.8	1,521.9	2,000.6	1,936.0	2,604.2	2,382.4

*Note:* Figures may not add up to the total because of rounding.

*Source:* Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 1982, Vol. II, pp. 12-13.

<sup>1</sup>In fact, the dependency ratios of population under 15 and aged 65 and over to population aged 15-64 were 724 and 50, respectively, in 1961. The corresponding figures for 1981 were 362 and 95, respectively.

of the population were aged 65 and over in 1981. Consequently, the changing age structure of the Hong Kong population resulted in an older population. The median age of the population increased from 23.2 years and 21.7 years in 1961 and 1971 respectively, to 26 years in 1981. The mean age increased from 25.2 years and 27.4 years in 1961 and 1971 respectively to 30.3 years in 1981 (Census and Statistics Department 1982b: 120).

When the population was divided into ten-year age groups, more males than females appeared in all ten-year age groups before age 60 in 1981. For those aged 60 and over, more women than men were recorded. The discrepancies between the two sexes in some age groups were considerable. For example, the number of males was approximately 25 percent higher than that of females in age groups 30-39 and 40-49 in 1981; as for those aged 75 and over, the ratio was seven women to three men.

Table 4. Sex Ratio of The Hong Kong Population  
(in number of males per 1,000 females)

Age Group	1961	1971	1981
0 - 9	1067	1048	1086
10 - 19	1151	1050	1073
20 - 29	1193	1122	1132
30 - 39	1130	1167	1254
40 - 49	1099	1085	1231
50 - 59	856	1035	1105
60 - 69	542	742	965
70 and over	380	420	551
Overall	1056	1033	1093

Source: *Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, Vol. II, pp. 12-13.*

#### Marital Status

Thirty-five percent of the 1961 male population aged 15 and over were never

married, and the corresponding proportion increased to 43 percent in 1971 and 1981. For the female population aged 15 and over, nineteen percent were never married in 1961 and this proportion increased to over 30 percent in 1981. This reflects the fact that young men and women in the past decade were planning their marriage two or three years later when compared with the age of marriage of their parents. The number of married persons rose from 1.2 million in 1961 to 1.5 million and over two million in 1971 and 1981, respectively. The proportion of widowed/divorced women was four times higher than the proportion of widowed/divorced men.

For the age groups 20-24 and 25-29 in 1981, only just over 10 percent and 42 percent, respectively, of the men were ever-married; the corresponding proportions for women were 29 percent and 70 percent, respectively. This discrepancy was due to the fact that in Hong Kong husbands were in most cases two to four years older than their wives. In actual numbers, over 32,000 men and 78,000 women aged 20-24 and over 108,000 men and 154,000 women aged 25-29 were married in 1981. More males than females in quinquennial age groups between 30 and 59 were recorded to be married.

Table 5. Hong Kong Population Aged 15 and over, by Marital Status  
(in percentage, 1961, 1971 and 1981)

Marital Status	1961		1971		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Never married	35.3	18.7	42.6	29.5	43.2	32.6
Currently married	62.4	67.6	55.5	61.8	54.1	56.0
Widowed/Divorced	2.4	13.7	1.9	8.7	2.7	11.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, Vol. 1, p. 122.*

## Labour Force

The labour force concept has been used in studying the economic activity of the population. The economically active population includes, under this concept, all persons who work for wages or salaries, the self-employed and employers, and unpaid workers in social or religious organizations or family enterprises, the unemployed but seeking work, and first-time job-seekers (Census and Statistics Department 1982b: 29). Those who had worked for a minimum of 40 hours during the twenty days preceding the 1961 census date and those who had worked for a minimum of 15 hours during the seven days before the enumeration day of the 1971 and 1981 censuses were considered to be economically active.

Of the 1961 population, 1.21 million persons or 38 percent were classified as economically active. The number of economically active persons increased to 1.65 million or 42 percent of the population in 1971.<sup>1</sup> The economically active population consisted of 865,000 males and 347,000 females in 1961 and 1,097,000 males and 558,000 females in 1971. The size of the economically active population increased to two and half million in 1981.

The ratio of economically active to total population rose from 38 percent in 1961 to just over 50 percent in 1981. However, if only the population aged 15 and over are concerned, the ratio only increased marginally from 64 percent in 1961 and 1971 to 67 percent in 1981.

The size of Hong Kong's labour force expanded rapidly between 1961 and 1981. The average annual growth rate was found to be 3.1 percent for 1961-1971 and 4.5 percent for 1971-1981, which was much higher than the average annual growth rate of the total population estimated to be between 2.3 and 2.4 percent. The size of the labour force is affected by two factors: the size and age-sex structure of the working age population 15-64 and the labour-force participation rates, which is defined as the proportion of the labour force in a particular age-sex group to the total population in that age-sex group. There were marked increases in the

<sup>1</sup>The minimum age-limit for an economically active person was 6 years in the 1961 Census, 10 years in the 1971 Census, and 15 years in the 1981 Census.



Table 6. Hong Kong Population Aged 15 and over, by Broad Activity Status  
(in thousands, 1961, 1971 and 1981)

Activity Status	1961	1971	1981
Economically Active	1,188	1,619	2,504
Economically Inactive	665	910	1,245
Total	1,853	2,529	3,749

*Source: Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, Vol. 1, p. 30.*

size of the population in the age group 15 to 64 in the past two decades. It was estimated that this factor alone accounted for over 90 percent of the increase in the labour force. The crude labour force participation rate for men fell slightly from 90.4 percent in 1961 to 82.5 percent in 1981. This was chiefly due to the declines in the age-specific labour force participation rates for men in the age groups 15-19 and 55 and over. The decline for the age group 15-19 reflects the improvements in educational opportunities. The decline in participation rate for older persons aged 55 and over probably indicates that workers can now afford to retire earlier than before. The female participation rates increased in all ages during this period except the youngest group 15-19. The changing attitude of women working outside home, postponement in marriage, attitude towards a smaller number of children, and better employment opportunities for women are the factors which helped to raise the female participation rates. Substantial increases in female participation rates were found in age groups 20-24, 25-34 and 35-44, rising from 51 to 80 percent, from 34 to 57 percent, and from 38 to 53 percent, respectively, between 1961 and 1981.

As the population of Hong Kong is becoming older, the proportion of the labour force aged 35 and over in the population is expected to rise, provided the labour force participation rates at the higher age groups remain at the present level, from 42 percent in 1981 to 51 percent in 1991. The median age of the labour force will rise from 32 to 36 for the same period.

About 16,000 persons with previous working experience were unemployed in 1961. The number of unemployed including those looking for jobs for the first time increased from 72,000 in 1971 to nearly 100,000 in 1981. Two-thirds of those unemployed in 1971 had previous jobs, but less than one-fifth of the unemployed in 1981 were looking for work for the first time. Approximately two-thirds of the unemployed were males and nearly 40 percent of the unemployed males were over 45 years of age. To the contrary, almost half of the unemployed females were from the 15-24 age group. Most of the unemployed young females had no previous working experience. Over half of those unemployed in 1981 received only primary school education or less.

Table 7. Unemployed Persons (in thousands, 1961, 1971 and 1981)

Age Group	1961		1971		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15 - 24	1.7	0.9	14.3	13.6	21.5	14.6
25 - 34	3.1	0.8	6.1	2.1	13.8	7.0
35 - 44	3.0	0.6	7.5	2.2	8.5	3.1
45 - 54	2.9	0.8	9.7	3.1	12.8	4.4
55 - 64	1.6	0.4	9.3	4.2	10.3	3.7
Total	12.3	3.5	46.9	25.2	66.9	32.8

Notes: The 1961 totals do not include job-seekers for the first time.

Source: The 1961 Census Report, Vol. III, p. 34, the 1971 Population and Housing Census Main Report, p. 140, and the Hong Kong 1981 Census Basic Tables, p. 17, published by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.

### Fertility

In late 1940's the number of live births was below 50,000 per annum. The number of births each year in the late 1950's doubled that of a decade ago, and it fluctuated between 102,000 and 116,000 in the first half of the 1960's. Since

then the number declined to below 80,000 a year in the late 1970's, and fluctuated between 77,000 and 87,000 in recent years.

The crude birth rate rose from 27 per thousand in 1950 to a peak of 37.4 per thousand in 1958 and began to drop to 25 per thousand in 1966 and further down to below 20 per thousand in 1971. The crude birth rate continues to fall, at a much slower rate in recent years. It was 14.4 per thousand in 1984.

Table 8. Total Live Births and Crude Birth Rate (Selected Years)

Year	Number of Live Births	Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000)
1951	68,500	34.0
1956	96,746	37.0
1961	110,884	35.0
1966	91,832	25.3
1971	79,789	19.7
1976	78,511	17.7
1981	86,751	16.9
1982	86,120	16.5
1983	83,293	15.7
1984	77,297	14.4

*Source: Hong Kong Statistics 1947-1967, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1969, p. 39. Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 1985, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1985, pp. 14-16.*

The fertility decline in Hong Kong started in the late 1950's and gained its momentum in 1960's and 1970's. It was reported that to a very large extent the rapid decline in Hong Kong's crude birth rate in mid-1960's could be attributed to "the relative decline in the number of young women in childbearing years" and "the decline in the proportion of women married especially at the fertile ages 20-24" (Reedman 1968: 182). The further decline in the late 1960's was believed to be largely due to genuine declines in marital fertility. The age structure of

Hong Kong's population in the 1970's produced a positive effect on the birth rate. The decline in crude birth rate by 14 percent between 1971 and 1981 was caused by postponement of marriage and continuous decline in fertility. The median age at first marriage has risen for both men and women, for men it shifted from 25 years of age in the 1950's to 27.0 years in 1981, and the corresponding figures for women were 21 years of age and 23.9 years respectively (Census and Statistics Department 1982c: 40). As a consequence, the proportion of married women fell from 32 percent to 29 percent for the 20-24 age group and from 80 percent to 70 percent for the 25-29 age group between 1971 and 1981 (Census and Statistics Department 1982e: 92). The postponement of marriage can partly be attributed to the better educational and job opportunities available for the young generation, especially for women. The trend for small family can be attributed to the demand pressures on housing and young couples' desire for a higher standard of living.

Table 9. Percentage Decline in Crude Birth Rate

Period	Percentage Decline in Crude Birth Rate	Percentage Attributable to		
		Change in Age Structure	Postponement of Marriage	Fertility Decline
1961-1965	-28	-15	-2	-11
1966-1971	-22	+2	-8	-16
1972-1981	-14	+29	-6	-17

Source: *The 1976 By-Census Report of Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1976, Vol. 1, p. 40.*  
*Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1982, Vol. 1, p. 19.*

The age-specific fertility rate, which is defined to be the number of births born by mothers of a given age group in a calendar year per 1,000 women of that age group, is not affected by the age structure of the female population. Between 1961 and 1981, sharp declines in age-specific fertility rates of all age groups were recorded. In particular, in age groups 15-19, 20-24, 35-39, 40-44 and 45-49, the declines in age-specific fertility rates were more than 60 percent. It can be



noted that greater reductions in age-specific fertility rates appeared in young age groups 15-19 and 20-24 in 1960's and in older age groups 35-39 and 40-44 in 1970's.

Table 10. Age-Specific Fertility Rates (per 1,000 Women, Selected Years)

Age Group	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981
15 - 19	47	29	17	17	12
20 - 24	238	213	145	110	87
25 - 29	313	291	243	192	155
30 - 34	231	203	162	120	98
35 - 39	139	111	83	49	35
40 - 44	57	42	28	15	7
45 - 49	9	2	4	2	1

Source: Freeman, R. 'Hong Kong Fertility Decline 1961-1968' *Population Index*, 1970, pp. 9-10.

*Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report*, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1982, Vol. 1, p. 20.

The age-specific fertility rates at younger age groups are affected by the proportion of married women. The postponement of marriage reduces the age-specific fertility rates of younger age groups. The postponement of marriage also shortens the childbearing period for women and reduces the proportion of higher-order births. The proportion of first-order and second-order births increased from 50 percent of all births in 1971 to 77 percent in 1981, and the proportion of fourth and higher-order births declined from 33 percent to 8 percent in the same interval (Census and Statistics Department 1982e: 96).

The net reproduction rate, which is obtained by multiplying the age-specific fertility rate for female births only at a given age by the female survival rate for that age and summing for all ages of the mother, indicates the size of the next generation of women in relation to the present group. The net reproduction rate computed for the period 1971 to 1981 showed a continuous decline; it fell from 1.63 in 1971

to 1.18 in 1976 and even lower to 0.93 in 1981 (Census and Statistics Department 1982e: 96).

The mean number of children born to ever-married women aged 15 to 49 was found to have decreased from 3.4 in 1971 to 2.5 in 1981. The mean number of births varies according to education attainment, employment status and income of the ever-married women. In 1971 the average family size for those with no schooling or kindergarten education was 3.6, for those with post-secondary or university education the figure was 1.9. In 1981, the corresponding figures were 3.3 and 1.5 respectively. It indicates that better educated women favour the small family norm. Working women have smaller number of births than those non-working women. The relationship between women's employment and fertility is complex and difficult to interpret. Some may have fewer children so that they can work, others may work because they have more children to support. In 1981, the mean number of children born to working women was 2.3 versus 2.7 for non-working women (Census and Statistics Department 1982b: 127-128). Among the working women, those with higher income also tend to have smaller families. This can partially be explained by the correlation between education attainment and income level.

### Mortality

The annual number of deaths in Hong Kong fluctuated between 18,000 and 21,000 from the 1950's to early 1970's. It tends to increase in recent years and has been fluctuating within a range of between 25,000 and 26,500 in the past six years. Two factors account for this phenomenon, neither of which reflects discredibly on Hong Kong's socio-economic development. Firstly, the Hong Kong population has grown and this increase in the size of the population is, of course, mirrored in the increase in total deaths. Secondly, the Hong Kong population is ageing. As a larger proportion of the population enters the older age groups, an increase in total deaths is to be expected.

The crude death rate of Hong Kong was very high, fluctuating between 26 and 37 deaths per 1,000 population, before the outbreak of the Second World War. After the war, however, the crude death rate dropped rapidly, decreasing from over 10 per 1,000 population in 1946 to 5.0 in 1966. Since 1966 the crude

death rate has hovered around 5.0 per 1,000.

Table 11. Number of Deaths, Crude Death Rate and Infant Mortality Rate of Hong Kong (Selected Years)

Year	Number of Deaths	Crude Death Rate (per 1,000)	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)
1951	20,580	10	92
1956	19,295	7	61
1961	19,325	6.1	37.0
1966	19,261	5.3	25.1
1971	19,996	5.1	17.7
1976	22,633	5.1	13.7
1981	24,832	4.8	9.7
1982	25,396	4.9	9.9
1983	26,522	5.0	9.9
1984	25,520	4.8	8.8

Source: *Hong Kong Statistics 1947-1967, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1969, p. 39.*

*Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 1985, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1985, pp. 14-17.*

Crude death rate only gives a very general indication of the level of mortality, and does not eliminate the differences in the sex and age structures of the population. Standardized death rates which eliminate these differences are better for comparison purposes. When using either the 1971 population or the 1980 population as the base population, standardized death rate showed a reduction of 20 percent in the mortality level. The decline in mortality is associated with the rapid socio-economic and environmental development which resulted in higher per-capita incomes and standards of living, for example, better medical facilities and improvements in education, housing, sanitation and hygiene (Census and Statistics Department 1982b: 21-22).

The decline of mortality in the period 1961-71 has occurred in all age groups and in both sexes. In most age groups, the decline in female mortality was greater than that in male mortality. The mortality fell more rapidly in the age groups below ten years old. In particular, the mortality of the age group from 1-4 years declined by 80 per cent for both sexes. For males, with the exception of the ages 15-19 years, the decline was more than 30 percent for all groups below 25 years old. For the age group 25-29 years the decline was very small, and the mortality decreased by 10 to 26 percent in all age groups 30 years and over. For females in all age groups below 40 years the mortality declined by 30 percent or more excepting the group 20-24 years. For those between 40-46 years the decline was between 13 and 28 percent, for those of 65 years and over, the decline was only 2 percent.

Between 1971 and 1981 the mortality fell more significantly in the younger age groups but in the older age groups the improvement in mortality is slower. At most ages, male mortality performed much better than the female mortality, especially in the older age groups. By 1981, for many age groups, the mortality rates for both males and females had reached the biological limit. The difference in the age-specific death rates between both sexes is gradually disappearing, especially between 5-39 years. The relatively low male mortality rates at these ages are indirectly associated with the large influx of immigrants from China into Hong Kong in the late 1970's.

The infant mortality rate declined rapidly after the Second World War, from 100 per 1,000 live births immediately after the War to 36.3 per 1,000 in 1961, and to 17.7 in 1971. Hong Kong's infant mortality rate was below 10 per 1,000 live births in the past few years and was estimated to be only 8.8 in 1984. Neonatal mortality, deaths which occur in the first four weeks after birth, is associated with the development of the foetus in the womb, congenital malformations, prematurity and birth injury. Post-neonatal mortality, deaths which occur from four weeks to less than one year of age, is affected by infection, nutritional deficiency, accidents or other diseases. Post-neonatal mortality declined faster than neonatal mortality in Hong Kong. In 1981 the post-neonatal mortality was only 5 percent of that in 1946. For neonatal mortality, the figure was 20 percent of that in 1946. Post-neonatal mortality declined markedly in the early years, from 70.0 per 1,000 in 1950 to



Table 12. Age-Sex-Specific Death Rates (per 1,000 population)

Age Group	1961		1971		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Under 1	43.7	33.4	21.2	16.1	10.7	9.2
1 - 4	4.3	4.3	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.4
5 - 9	1.0	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2
10 - 14	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
15 - 19	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.2
20 - 24	1.4	0.8	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.4
25 - 29	1.7	1.3	1.7	0.8	0.9	0.6
30 - 34	2.3	1.6	2.0	1.1	1.2	0.7
35 - 39	3.2	2.2	2.8	1.5	1.7	1.0
40 - 44	4.9	3.1	4.3	2.2	2.8	1.6
45 - 49	7.6	4.1	6.2	3.3	4.7	2.7
50 - 54	13.3	6.5	10.4	5.5	7.7	3.9
55 - 59	20.0	8.8	17.7	7.8	12.2	6.7
60 - 64	33.6	14.3	28.8	11.7	19.6	9.9
65 - 69	41.8	18.9	43.0	20.0	30.8	16.8
70 - 74	60.3	34.9	61.0	31.0	47.5	25.2
75 +	98.9	75.5	106.0	73.4	81.9	65.7

Source: *Demographic Trends in Hong Kong 1971-1982, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1983, p. 10.*

20.6 in 1960. Neonatal mortality also decreased, albeit not so spectacularly, after the War from 30.0 per 1,000 in 1950 to 20.9 in 1960. In 1946, post-neonatal mortality accounted for 64 percent of infant mortality. This decreased to 56 percent in 1961, and to 32 percent in 1981. The rapid decline in post-neonatal mortality explains the rapidly declining trend in infant mortality since the War.

In 1957 one-third of the infant deaths was caused by bronchopneumonia. Diarrhoeal disease and immaturity accounted for another 19 percent. In 1976, the major causes were congenital anomalies, immaturity and anoxic and hypoxic

conditions, which accounted for 57 percent of the total infant deaths. As congenital anomalies are the major cause of neonatal mortality, this explains the slow decline in the neonatal mortality (Census and Statistics Department 1977c: 60). The male infant mortality rate was higher than that of female infants. In 1981, the difference between male and female infant mortality rates was about 18 percent. The decline in infant mortality is influenced by the rapid socio-economic development and improvements in the state of health in Hong Kong. Especially significant is the development of the Family Health Service, improved obstetric care and success in the immunization programmes for the new-born and health education.

Shortly after the War, pneumonia, tuberculosis and enteritis and diarrhoea were the major causes of death. The mortality pattern has changed considerably since then. In 1951 half of the recorded deaths were due to infections and parasitic causes and diseases of the respiratory system. The percentage fell to 30 in 1961 and 19 in 1982. As for the deaths from neoplasms, the percentage increased from 4 percent of all deaths in 1951 to 27 in 1981. Diseases of the circulatory system, including cerebrovascular diseases, have become one of the major causes of death, increasing from 5 percent of all deaths in 1951 to 29 in 1981. The fall in mortality is best illustrated by life expectation at birth. It is defined as the average number of years a new born baby may be expected to live if the infant experiences the same mortality rates prevailing in that year. For males it rose from 63.6 years in 1961 to 72.4 years in 1981, the corresponding figures for females were 70.5 years and 78.1 years respectively (Census and Statistics Department 1982c: 17).

### Components of Growth

The growth of a population is influenced by two factors: natural increase and migration. Natural increase accounted for sixty percent of Hong Kong's population increase in the 1950's. Its share increased to around 80 percent for the period 1971-1976. In recent years, the net difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths fluctuated around 60,000 persons each year. Official statistics showed that from 1961 to 1971 the total number of legal immigrants from China who had entered Hong Kong was about 140,000. Since then the number increased significantly. In 1973 the figure was 55,000 and declined to 18,000 in 1976 and reached a maximum of 70,000 in 1978 and 1979. The number decreased slightly to around 55,000 in 1980 and 1981. It was noted that the

number of legal immigrants from other countries was about 36,000 during the period from 1976 to 1981 (Census and Statistics Department 1982d:57). It is difficult to have accurate statistics on the number of illegal immigrants. An estimate based on the figures obtained when illegal immigrants registered for identity cards was 178,324 persons during the period 1961-1970 (Census and Statistics Department 1973:22). In 1971 the estimated figure was around 15,000 and rose rapidly to 30,000 in 1974. The number decreased to around 10,000 in 1975-1977. However about 220,000 Chinese entered Hong Kong illegally during 1978-1980. In October 1980, the Hong Kong Government abolished the 'reach-base' policy, all illegal immigrants caught will be repatriated immediately. Since then the flow of illegal immigration is under control.

Hong Kong does not collect data on emigration. One crude estimate is the difference between total departures and arrivals of Hong Kong residents. Between 1961 and 1971 an estimate of 140,500 persons emigrated to other countries. The average annual negative balance amounted to over 27,300 persons for the period 1971-1981 (Census and Statistics Department 1982d: 57).

Table 13. Components of Population Growth (in thousands, 1951-1981)

Period (mid-year)	Natural Increase %	Net Migration %	Population Growth		
1951-1961	730.6	63.1	422.2	36.6	1,152.8
1961-1971	761.8	86.8	115.4	13.2	877.2
1971-1976	296.6	74.4	101.9	25.6	398.5
1976-1981	289.8	42.0	400.1	58.0	689.9

Source: *Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report, Vol. 1, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1982, p. 119.*

*Demographic Trends in Hong Kong 1971-1982, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1983, p. 3.*

## Conclusions

The population of Hong Kong increased from 3.13 million in 1961 to 3.94 million in 1971 and further to over 5 million in 1981.<sup>1</sup> The population showed an increase of 807 thousand persons, or 25.8 percent, in the 1961-1971 period and an increase of 1,050 thousand persons, or 26.7 percent, in the 1971-1981 period. The mid-year population for 1985 was estimated to be 5,422,800, of which 2.81 million were males and 2.61 million were females. Of the 1985 population only 832 thousand were children, or 15.3 percent of the population, were under the age of ten. A relatively large number of old people, 622 thousand or 11.5 percent, were aged 60 and over. The bulge in the population was in the 20-34 age, amounting to 1.68 million or 31 percent. This was primarily attributable to the high birth rates in the late 1950's and early 1960's as well as the large number of Chinese immigrants during the 1970's. Less than half a million persons, or 9.2 percent, were aged 40-49. This could partly be explained by the low fertility and high infant and child mortality during the Pacific War period (Census and Statistics Department 1985:99). The changing age structure of the Hong Kong population has reduced the dependency ratio to around 450 per 1,000 and also resulted in an older population with mean age over 30 years in recent years.

The number of live births was below 80,000 in 1984 and the crude birth rate was below 15 per 1,000 persons. The decline in fertility in the last decade was due to genuine decline in marital fertility and postponement of marriage. The median age at first marriage is now 27 years for men and 24 years for women. The fertility rates of quinquennial child-bearing age groups declined by between 20 percent to more than 50 percent in the 1970's except that the fertility rate for age group 15-19 remained at a very low level of 17.4 per 1,000 female population. Greater reductions appeared in older age groups 35-39, 40-44 and 45-49. The total fertility rate decreased from 3.41 in 1971 to 1.97 in 1981. The net reproduction rate fell from 1.78 in 1969 to 0.93 in 1981. The first-order and second-order births account for over 75 percent of total births in recent years. Sizeable reductions in fertility rates are projected to appear in age group 20-24 from the present 90 per 1,000 to 70 per 1,000 female population in 1991 and

<sup>1</sup>The 1981 Census total would be 5.1 million if residents temporarily abroad were included.



in age group 25-29 from 161 per 1,000 to 146 per 1,000 female population in 1991.

The number of deaths rose to around 26,000 each year recently, though the crude death rate remained at a low level of five per thousand. The increase in total deaths is due to the fact that the Hong Kong population continues to grow and a larger proportion of the population is in the older age groups. The standardized death rate, which takes account of changes in age and sex structure of a population, decreased from 5 per thousand in 1971 to 3.7 per thousand in 1981. Mortality in infancy, childhood and young adult ages fell considerably. The mortality improved more rapidly for males than for females. Some of the age-sex-specific mortality rates have reached the biological minimum (Census and Statistics Department 1982c: 9). The infant mortality is now below 9 per 1,000 live births. Post-neonatal mortality declined faster than neonatal mortality. Further decline in infant mortality depends on the possibility of a significant drop in neonatal mortality in the future. The age-sex-specific mortality rates are projected to fall slightly in the next decade for age groups over 35 years.

As the inward migration is under control and the net balance is estimated to be around 15,000 per annum, the major factor contributing to the future population growth will be natural increases. The Hong Kong population is estimated to reach 5.85 million in 1990 and 6.41 million in the year of 2000 according to the revised projections prepared in 1984 (Census and Statistics Department 1984). The growth is estimated to be 426,000 persons between 1985 and 1990, and 560,000 persons between 1990 and 2000. The ageing of the Hong Kong population will continue. The proportion of population under 15 years of age will decrease from 23.1 percent in 1985 to 21.4 percent in 2000. The proportion of population aged 65 and over will increase from 7.8 percent in 1985 to 10.3 percent in the year of 2000. However, the proportion of Hong Kong's working population will remain fairly stable at just below 70 percent in the next fifteen years.

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# 香港人口的增長

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(中文摘要)

香港的人口，從1961年的313萬人，增至1985年的542萬人，在這25年中，增加達230萬人，幾達75%。本文旨在討論香港人口在過去二、三十年間的增長，分析人口在分佈、性別、年齡、婚姻和勞動力方面的特徵和演變，及出生、死亡和移民增加等因素對香港人口增長的影響。

香港的人口出生率，在1950年代後期高達37%，每年出生嬰孩數在10萬名以上。進入1960年代後，逐漸下降至目前的出生率在15%以下和每年出生嬰孩數少於8萬名。近年來青年男女，因受教育和就業機會增加，有將結婚年齡推延二、三年的跡象，年青夫婦因居屋面積窄小和欲享受較高生活水平意願，多以一、二個子女為標準，促使出生率迅速下降，出生嬰孩為首兩位子女佔全部出生嬰孩的比率，已增至四分之三以上。

香港每年死亡人數，從1960年代的2萬人左右，增至目前的2萬5、6千人，這是因為人口的增長和人口較為老化所致。死亡率則從戰後的30%以上，降至過去10多年的5%左右。如果扣除人口年齡結構方面的影響，則在過去10年中，死亡率在實質上有20%的減少。嬰孩死亡率的下降尤為迅速，從戰後的100%，降至近年的10%以下。生活水準的提高，所得增加，醫學和醫療服務的改善，都是促成死亡率下降的原因。

過去二十多年中，合法與非法移民進入香港人數變動甚大，對香港人口增長的影響，也波動頗大。1980年起，嚴格防止非法移民進入，不准非法移民在港居留後，自然增長成為香港人口增長的主要因素。

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## THE POPULATION GROWTH OF HONG KONG

### (ABSTRACT)

The population of Hong Kong grew from 3.13 million in 1961 to 5.42 million in 1986. The population increased by 2.29 million, or 75 per cent, in the past 25 years. This paper tries to analyse the demographic characteristics of the population and to examine the factors, such as fertility, mortality and migration, which affected Hong Kong's population growth.

The fertility decline in the 1960's was believed to be due to the relative decline in the number of young women and the decline in the proportion of women married especially at the fertile ages 20-24. The continued fertility decline in the 1970's was caused by postponement of marriage and the genuine decline in marital fertility. The postponement of marriage was largely attributable to the better educational and job opportunities available for the young generation. The trend for small families was attributable to the pressures on housing and young couples' desire for a higher standard of living.

Hong Kong's crude death rate fluctuated around the level of five per 1,000 persons in the past twenty years. However, standardized death rates showed a reduction of 20 per cent in the mortality level in the past decade. The decline in mortality is associated with the rapid socio-economic and environmental development, better medical facilities and improvements in education, housing, sanitation and hygiene. The infant mortality is now below 9 per 1,000 live births. Further decline in infant mortality depends on the possibility of a significant drop in neonatal mortality in the future.

As the inward migration is under control and the net balance is estimated to be around 15,000 persons per annum, natural growth will be the major factor contributing to the future population growth of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong

population is projected to reach 6 million in 1992. The ageing of the population will continue, and the proportion of population aged 65 and over will reach 10 per cent in the late 1990's.