

Press Release

For Immediate Release

**Latest Figures show Hong Kong Suicide Rate Remains High in 2023
Elderly Females Show Improvement, while Suicide Rates Among Teenage Females Rise
CSRP together with SPS Urge Strengthened Mental Health Support Across Society**

Image and suicide statistics chart (provided by HKU):



Hong Kong, September 10, 2024 — To heighten global awareness of suicide prevention, the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) designates September 10 each year as World Suicide Prevention Day. The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), a member of IASP, hosted a joint press conference today with the Suicide Prevention Services (SPS). The conference unveiled the latest suicide statistics for Hong Kong. Dr. Ngan Man-yu, Legislative Council member of Hong Kong (Kowloon East constituency), was invited to discuss how measures and resource allocations in Kwun Tong are aiding in addressing student mental health issues.

Latest Suicide Figures and Trends: Overall Numbers Remain High

According to the Coroner's Court, CSRP estimated that the suicide rate¹ in Hong Kong for 2023 was 13.6. Although there was no significant deterioration from the previous year, the suicide rate remains comparatively high. Notable fluctuations were observed across various age groups, particularly among the elderly and teenagers, within the past year.

Good News: Significant Decrease in Suicide Rates Among Females Over 60

The report indicated a 25.9% decrease in the suicide rate among women over 60 in 2023. This

¹ All suicide rates are calculated as per 100,000 people. Taking the overall suicide rate in 2017 (13.0) as example, it means there were 13.0 per 100,000 people in Hong Kong died by suicide.

encouraging trend may be linked to the elderly reengaging with society and participating in community activities post-pandemic. These activities play a crucial role in improving the quality of life and reducing suicide risks among the elderly.

Community activities not only help the elderly strengthen social connections and reduce feelings of loneliness but also enhance their sense of self-worth. SPS emphasizes that these activities effectively promote the physical and mental health of the elderly, providing psychological support and helping to reduce depression and anxiety. Additionally, positive social interactions help the elderly regain interest and hope in life, make life feel meaningful, and eliminate despairing thoughts, thereby reducing suicidal thoughts.

Rising Suicide Rates Among Teenage Females, a Focus on Mental Health Issues

Alarmingly, there has been a significant rise in the suicide rate among teenagers under 15, particularly among females, with the rate rising from 0.5 in 2022 to 4.2 in 2023. This trend may be due to the mental health aftermath following the pandemic, as some teenagers have struggled to adapt to the school environment and rebuild their social support networks.

Student Suicide Notes Reveal Feelings of Guilt and Despair; Urgent Need for Enhanced Mental Health Support

Insights from student suicide notes reveal feelings of guilt and a sense that they cannot escape their predicaments, leading them to view suicide as their only way out. This behavior reflects a lack of mental health support in the current system, highlighting an urgent need for increased attention to adolescent mental health.

Kwun Tong and Kowloon City Identified as Hotspots for Teenage Suicides

According to data on suicide distributions among teenagers under 15, Kwun Tong and Kowloon City areas have shown higher suicide rates. Schools and communities in these areas need to strengthen mental health education to enhance student awareness. Teachers and parents should also be trained to timely recognize emotional issues and understand how to seek professional help. Additionally, efforts should be made to support teenagers in building more robust social networks to reduce suicide risks.

Dr. Ngan Man-yu, Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (Kowloon East constituency), stated that the government is currently strengthening support for schools, students, and parents through cross-departmental collaboration, aiming to build a more robust safety net for students. He urged the government to continue cooperating with all stakeholders to more comprehensively promote adolescent mental health and advance efforts to prevent student suicides.

In response to student suicide issues, Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai, Director of the HKJC CSRP, HKU, has called for comprehensive societal support to create a campus environment centered on well-being, allowing students to learn in a pleasant atmosphere rather than focusing solely on academic achievement. He urged schools to actively engage with the Education Bureau's "4Rs Mental Health Charter," organizing related activities to provide more stress-relieving opportunities for students, thereby enhancing their sense of happiness and resilience. This also involves helping students to establish healthy, positive interpersonal relationships, enhancing the overall health culture of schools, and thus promoting community care and inclusiveness.

Ms. Lisa Ho Sin-hang, Training Consultant and Clinical Psychologist of the HKJC CSRP, HKU, pointed out that the rising suicide rate among females under 15 could be linked to the onset of puberty and the associated changes in female hormones. This group may experience greater emotional instability due to the pressures of readjusting to school life.

Mr. Vincent Ng Chi-kwan, Executive Director of SPS, stated, "SPS receives an average of nearly 10,000 calls per month. Additionally, our organization is currently collaborating with schools to provide in-class training and using online learning platforms to identify students who need follow-up. We also offer expressive arts therapy groups to address emotional issues. Moreover, we provide training for parents, teachers, and volunteers to comprehensively protect the precious lives of our youth."

Suicide prevention has become a global public health concern. The conference calls on schools to actively respond to the Education Bureau's newly launched “4Rs Mental Health Charter” which consists of the following four key elements:

- **Rest:** Help students cultivate healthy habits from an early age including having enough rest, adequate sleep and leisure activities.
- **Relaxation:** Teach students to take the time to relax, take care of their mental health and practise self-compassion.
- **Relationship:** Strengthen the relationships among students, teachers and students, as well as parents and children, so as to enhance their sense of connectedness; help students understand their roles and their importance in these relationships, so as to willingly take on responsibilities and make contributions.
- **Resilience:** Equip students to adapt to the inevitable stress and setbacks in life, and teach students to deal with emotions, cope with stress and overcome difficulties with a positive attitude.

Mr. Justin Leung Wing-tong, Program Manager of SPS, stated, “Hong Kong's suicide rate remains high, although there has been a decrease in the suicide rate among elderly females. However, the suicide rate among elderly men has not improved. Elderly men, both younger and older, tend not to actively participate in community activities or seek help. We should pay more attention to the needs of the elderly and encourage them to seek help proactively when they are emotionally distressed.”

Photo caption :



Photo 1: The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong, together with Suicide Prevention Services, today (September 10) released the latest suicide statistics and trends in Hong Kong. Attendees include Dr. Ngan Man-yu, Member of the Legislative Council for Kowloon East (second from the left), Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai, Director of the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (third from the left), Ms. Lisa Ho Sin-hang, Training Consultant and Clinical Psychologist at the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (first from the left), Mr. Vincent Ng Chi-kwan, Executive Director of SPS (second from the right) and Mr. Justin Leung Wing-tong, Program Manager of Suicide Prevention Services (first from the right).






Photo 2: from Left to Right

1. Dr. Ngan Man-yu, Member of the Legislative Council for Kowloon East
2. Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai, Director of the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention
3. Ms. Lisa Ho Sin-hang, Training Consultant and Clinical Psychologist at the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention
4. Mr. Justin Leung Wing-tong, Program Manager of Suicide Prevention Services



Photo 3: Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai, Director of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong, points out that the overall suicide figures in Hong Kong remained high last year. There was a significant decrease in the suicide rate among females over 60, but a marked increase in the suicide rate among teenagers under 15, particularly among females, where the rate rose from 0.5 in 2022 to 4.2 in 2023, which is concerning.

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|  | <p>Photo 4: Dr. Ngan Man-yu, Member of the Legislative Council for Kowloon East, calls on the government to continue collaborating with all stakeholders to more comprehensively promote adolescent mental health and implement initiatives to prevent student suicides.</p> |
|  | <p>Photo 5: Ms. Lisa Ho Sin-hang, Training Consultant and Clinical Psychologist at the Centre, points out that the rising suicide rate among females under 15 may be linked to the onset of puberty and the associated changes in female hormones, which can lead to greater emotional instability when facing the pressures of readjusting to school life.</p> |
|  | <p>Photo 6: Mr. Justin Leung Wing-tong, Program Manager of Suicide Prevention Services, notes that while the suicide rate among elderly females in Hong Kong has decreased, the rate among elderly males has not improved. Elderly males, whether younger or older, tend not to actively participate in community activities or seek help.</p> |
|  | <p>Photo 7: Mr. Leon Yue Lee-on, Senior Program Manager of Suicide Prevention Services encourages society, including schools and parents, should foster more open discussions on mental health, work to dispel stereotypes, and actively listen to the voices of young people.</p> |

About the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP), HKU

Founded in 2002, CSRP has established its worldwide reputation in suicide research and prevention and extended its scope of research to the well-being of individuals and the whole society. CSRP believes that empirical research would optimize practices and contribute to the improvement of society.

About Suicide Prevention Services (SPS)

Founded in 1995, SPS is a registered charitable organization committed to serving people who are suicidal, despairing or distressed by means of befriending and other services supporting them to regain control of their emotions and the will to live on. SPS has been helped more than 1,100,000 people, providing services including: 24-hour Suicide Prevention Hotline Service, Suicide Prevention Service for the Elderly, Services for Family with Elderly, Services for Survivors of Sudden Death and Suicide Loss, Community Education and Life Education for Youth.

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