

An overview of HIV/AIDS situation of Adolescent and Youth (AY) in Hong Kong for Community Stakeholders' Consultation Meeting (CCM) 2021

Background

According to UNAIDS report of Young people and HIV¹ in 2021, two out of every 7 new HIV infections globally in 2019 were young people aged 15-24 years. The table below showed the HIV prevalence among young key population from Global AIDS Monitoring countries that submitted a Global AIDS Monitoring report between 2016 and 2020.

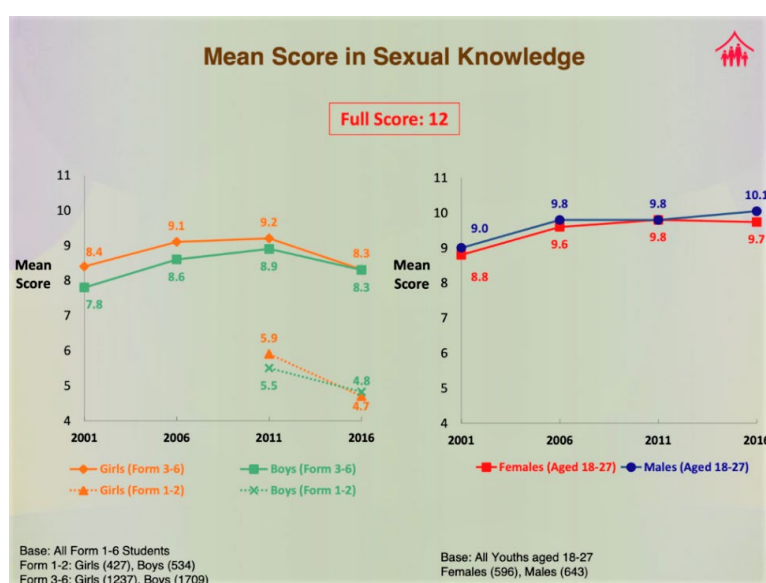
Aged 15-24	Sex workers	Men who have sex with men (MSM)	People who inject drugs	Transgender
HIV prevalence	4%	6%	5%	11%

There is no available data on HIV prevalence of the young people in Hong Kong. In general, the prevalence among general population, young people inclusive, was estimated to be very low.

In Hong Kong, the report of the "Youth Sexuality Study 2016"² issued by the Family Planning Association (FPA) provided valuable reference information on the patterns and trends among youths in Hong Kong in respect of their sexual knowledge, attitude and behaviour. Form 1-6 students and youths aged 18-27 were recruited in 2016 study.

Sexual knowledge

Form 3-6 students and youths got a mean score of >8 and >9.5 (out of 12) respectively. Most of them were correct with some important concept like "Condom reduce chance of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs)", "Not only homosexuals can get HIV/AIDS", "One can get HIV/AIDS by sharing drug needles", etc. However, Form 1-2 students only got a mean score <5. Respondents' sexual knowledge were mainly obtained from teachers/social workers, friends/classmates and internet/online friends.



¹ UNAIDS. Young people and HIV. Available at <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2021/young-people-and-hiv>

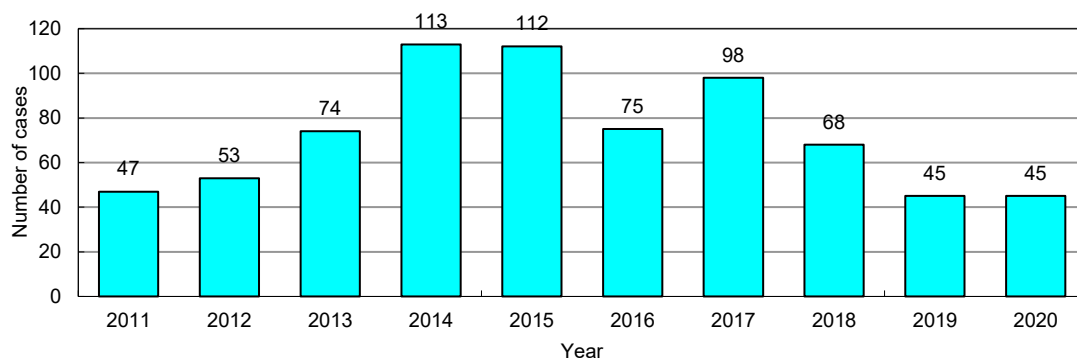
² Family Planning Association. Youth Sexuality Study 2016. Available at <https://www.famplan.org.hk/zh/resources/research-and-studies>

Sexual attitude and behaviour

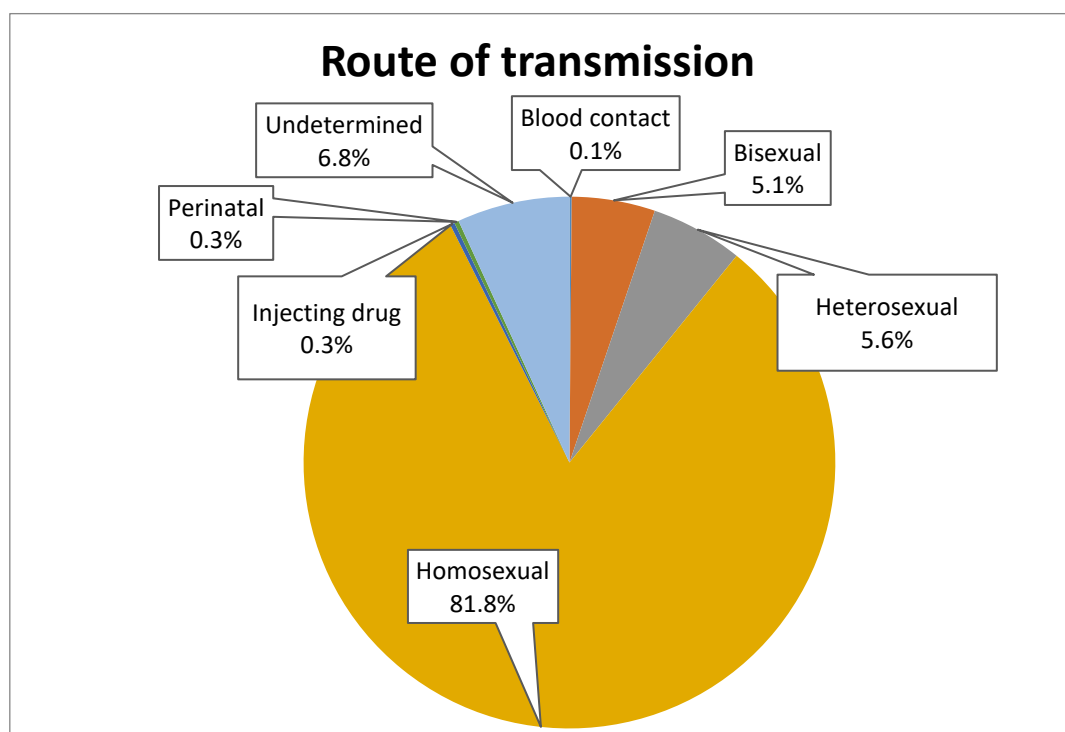
Among the Form 3-6 student interviewee, it was found that the age of first sexual intercourse was as early as in 15-16 years while about 6-7% of respondents and 1-2% for form 1-2 students had had sexual activity experiences. Among interviewee aged 18-27, more male (19%) than female (8%) accepted compensated dating with sexual transaction.

With a higher exposure of pornographic messages from social media and internet, it is important to instill young generation correct knowledge of HIV/STIs and the preventive measures.

Trend of youth (15-24 years) newly reported HIV cases



In 2011-2020, there were 730 (12.2% among all cases) newly reported HIV cases aged 15-24 at diagnosis. Males accounted for 95.6% of cases and Chinese contributed to 89.3% of cases. Most cases (>80%) acquired the infection via homosexual route (MSM).



Majority of cases (around 70%) were suspected to be infected in Hong Kong, followed by around 10% in Mainland China. 87.4% of cases had ever followed up in public HIV clinic.

HIV prevalence among young MSM (Source: PRiSM 2017)

	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	>=65	Overall
Age specific urine HIV test positive rate	2.2%	1.3%	3.2%	1.0%	5.0%	2.1%

In 2020, 23.6% (N=3284) attendance of HIV testing services by AIDS Concern was less than or equal to 25 years old.

An early HIV test was advised if one or his/her partner(s) has acquired a sexually transmitted infection, or has had unprotected sex with someone of unknown HIV status; or he/she has shared needles with others. One may still consider HIV testing if you have never been tested before.

Sexual risk behavioral survey (Source: HARiS - MSM 2020)

In HARiS 2020, 479 respondents (27.3%) aged less than or equals to 24 years. Below are some of the findings:

Condom use in last anal sex in last 6 months with different types of partners

	Intimate	Regular	Causal	Commercial
<=24 years	48.8%	57.0%	67.9%	72.7%
All age range	52.2%	62.2%	69.8%	74.2%

HIV testing behaviour

	Ever test	Tested within 1 year	Tested within 1 year and knew the results
<=24 years	65.6%	51.4%	49.3%
All age range	81.9%	61.3%	60.0%

DH HIV self-testing study (September 2019 – July 2020)

A total of 1260 subjects joined the study over 50% of participants aged 18-29 years. This revealed that HIV self-test, as an alternative option for HIV testing, was much preferred by young ones.

Age distribution	18-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	>=50
%	2.9%	51.5%	33.1%	10.5%	2.1%

HIVST provided an alternative testing option to conventional HIV testing services, especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic.

The condom use rate and HIV testing rate of young MSM were unsatisfactory and worse than all age range MSM in HARiS 2020.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STI) situation in adolescent and youth

Around 43.7% attendees who first visited to social hygiene service in 2019 were under 30 years.

Among them, the top three diagnosis on completion of currently consultation for male attendees (N=219) were non-gonococcal infection (16.4%), genital wart (11.4%) and gonorrhoea (10.1%). For female attendees (N=139), the top three diagnosis were non-specific genital infection (24.5%), genital wart (6.5%) and herpes genitalis (2.9%).

Current Response in HIV Prevention

The ultimate aims of HIV/AIDS health promotion activities are to prevent HIV transmission and minimize the negative impacts of the disease on personal and societal levels.

Objectives

- Foster supportive environment for the delivery of prevention and care services
- Provide broad based public awareness programme on HIV/AIDS for all community groups
- Mobilize and enhance the participation of the community
- Promote acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS

Fundings are available for application by NGOs providing HIV prevention services, drug rehabilitation services and sexual minority services which covers young generation. (**Annex I**)

The following summarises current local HIV interventions covering youth in recent years:

1. Free condom and lubricant distribution

- Free government-funded male condom and lubricant are distributed by DH and NGOs. The condom procurement by DH followed the WHO recommendation on male condom³. (Please refer to **Annex II** for number of condom distributed)
- Red Ribbon Centre provide free condoms and lubricants to student unions of local tertiary institutions.

³ World Health Organization. Male Latex Condom: Specification, Prequalification and Guidelines for Procurement. Available at https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/family_planning/condoms-safety/en/

2. Hotline, counselling service and HIV testing services

(For hotlines, please refer to Annex II) Dr. Sex Hotline 23372121 - provides a 24-hour telephone pre-recorded information service, offering young people and other citizens with comprehensive and correct sex knowledge.

HIV testing service

- All clients attending the Maternal and Child Health Centres of the DH and the Antenatal clinics of Hospital Authority (HA) hospitals will be offered the HIV test as part of routine antenatal blood testing.
- All new/readmitted clients in Methadone clinic of DH required to receive HIV antibody test (urine) upon registration. Urine saving bottles were distributed to all old cases and they were given incentives to get tested once per year.
- All tuberculosis patients in Chest clinics of DH will be offered HIV test.
- Social Hygiene Clinics of DH provides one stop service for sexually transmitted illness (including HIV) testing and treatment free of charge for eligible persons.
- Other people can seek voluntary counselling and testing service (VCT) at the DH clinics or NGO's centres or purchase "HIV self-test" kits. (**Annex II**)
- Guidelines (July 2009) and checklists (September 2013, revised June 2014) were drawn up for quality assurance of the VCT services offered by AIDS NGOs; annual internal audit has been conducted since 2013.

3. Dissemination of HIV prevention messages

- DH and AIDS NGOs heavily utilises websites and social media to promote HIV prevention targeting youth and adolescents. Interesting short video clips and promotional materials were produced to promulgate correct use of condoms and HIV-related knowledge. (<https://www.rrc.gov.hk/english/rrcprod.html>)
- NGOs have been running projects through internet outreach : mobile HIV testing/HIV self test and health education through chat rooms and social media to reach the more hidden population. Dating apps become more important as a channel of internet outreach service, especially for MSM and FSW and compensated dating targets.
- Some NGOs set up thematic website for HIV prevention targeting young MSM, examples are
Man-d project (Hong Kong AIDS Foundation) *Chinese only*
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Man.D.Project.Man.D/>

Guts Army (AIDS Concern) *Chinese only*
 - <http://men.org.hk/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/gutsarmy/>
- TV advertisement has spearheaded publicity campaign in the past. Different strategies and means have been adopted at various stages of publicity to keep AIDS on the public agenda.
- In the World AIDS Day on December 1st every year, DH and AIDS NGOs hold different events to increase public awareness on HIV prevention and caring on PLHIV.

4. Sexuality (and HIV/STI) education for young people

Current curriculum on HIV/STI

- Sexuality related skills and knowledge is only part of the curriculum under the subject - Values Education (Moral and Civic Education). Education Bureau (EDB) have been advocating a holistic approach to fostering positive values and appropriate attitudes of students, and encouraging schools to systematically plan their curriculum for implementing value education, including sexuality education.
- HIV/STI knowledge is not made mandatory by Education Bureau (EDB) in the curriculum but different attributes were included in learning milestones spanning from Primary 1 to Secondary 6. Related "life event" exemplars could be found in EDB's webpage at https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/moral-civic/L_and_T/Sex_Education/SexEd_LEA.html (*Chinese only*)
- EDB regularly held workshops for teachers/ educators in recent years and invited DH and Family Planning Association as speakers.
- The World Health Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended "life skills-based education" (LSBE) on HIV/AIDS for promoting sexual and reproductive health in students. This includes teaching students how to obtain and use condoms, and how to avoid the influence of alcohol and drugs. Research evidence showed that LSBE is effective in reducing students' high-risk behaviours that can lead to unwanted pregnancies, abortion, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS without hastening sexual debut.

Red Ribbon Centre, Department of Health

- "Red Ribbon 100" - It is a 100-minute guided tour at the Red Ribbon Centre consisting of health talks, interactive activities, quizzes and games to reinforce participants with the knowledge about the causes and routes of transmission about AIDS and STIs so as to protect oneself against infection. The tour also appeal for an accepting and caring attitude towards the people living with HIV.
- "HeHeSheSheOut@U"- integration of film sharing with health promotion. Safer sex and understanding of LGBT community were promoted by forum session with guest speakers and condom demonstration in universities. (2015-2018)

Family Planning Association (FPA)

- FPA offered various sexuality education programmes to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutes, as well as the general public. Regular training programmes targeting at teachers, parents, social workers and healthcare professionals are provided. A wide range of multi-media resources, resource centre and mobile classroom services are developed to provide teaching support for sex educators, serving over 70,000 people every year.

- BGCA has been promoting inclusion and diversity youth services, catering for the needs of different communities, and striving to promote social respect for multiculturalism. Since 2002, BGCA has promoted equality education to secondary schools. Every year, it cooperates with nearly 20 secondary schools to provide about 8,000 secondary school students with awareness of sexual orientation and equality education.
<http://www.newtouch.net/>

5. Medical services for HIV and sexually transmitted infection treatment

HIV post-exposure prophylaxis

- PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis) refers to taking anti-HIV medicine after any high-risk exposure to HIV virus in order to reduce the risk of HIV infection. PEP must be started within 72 hours after a possible exposure, the sooner the better. Generally speaking, anti-HIV medications for PEP are available at the Accident and Emergency Departments of public hospitals and at certain private clinics or hospitals.
- If PEP is started, continued follow up is important. The Therapeutic Prevention Clinic of the Department of Health provides follow up after initiation of PEP. The Hospital Authority also follows up its health care staff exposed in the health care setting.

HIV treatment

- Currently, there are three designated HIV clinical services in the public sector: the Integrated Treatment Centre (ITC) of the Department of Health, the AIDS Clinical Service of Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and the Infectious Disease Special Medical (IDSM) Clinic of Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH). These centres serve the vast majority of HIV infected patients engaged in care.

Other sexually transmitted illness

- The Social Hygiene Service of Department of Health is responsible for the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections (STI). In the control of STI, the clinics accept walk-in clients and provide medical treatment and counselling service, thus ensuring a high degree of accessibility. Staff of the Anti-Venereal Disease Office carries out contact tracing, health education and outreach activities to control the spread of STI.

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