TALK

MAGNITUDE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN HONG KONG: REVIEW OF EVIDENCE 2015-2024

How common is child sexual abuse? Who are the victims? Who harms children? This report helps everyone in making evidence-informed responses that best protect as many children as possible from sexual abuse.

Taura Edgar

Dec 2025

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About TALK Hong Kong

We exist to prevent child sexual abuse and support survivors in Hong Kong.

We believe that protecting children from sexual abuse is a responsibility that rests with adults. By providing education and training, we aim to empower adults with the knowledge and confidence they need to take action and create a safer world for children. TALK Hong Kong began in 2019 as a peer support group, built on the belief that no one should face the trauma of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) alone. In 2023, we became an official charity, dedicated to creating a safer future for children.

Through research, public awareness, and prevention training, we strive to shed light on the devastating impact of CSA and empower communities to prevent it.

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All analytics and visualisations were done using R (R Core Team, 2025), RStudio (Posit team, 2025) and the tidyverse package (Wickham et al., 2019). The dataset and R scripts are available under the MIT license on the Open Science Framework (osf.io), using the DOI link provided below.

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Artificial Intelligence Statement

No Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools of any kind, including generative AI, were used at any stage in the creation of this report.

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Executive Summary

Objectives: The prevalence of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Hong Kong is not well known. This report aims to establish a Hong Kong-specific information hub about CSA across the various stages of a case (e.g., from occurrence to sentencing) by sourcing and analysing data on CSA currently available from government departments and bureaus, NGOs, and academic resources. Through the process of gathering and interpreting the data, this report seeks to: (i) estimate the prevalence of CSA in Hong Kong; (ii) illustrate what is known about CSA in Hong Kong based on review and comparison of available data; (iii) identify data that is not available thereby inhibiting a more comprehensive understanding of CSA in Hong Kong; and (iv) promote awareness of and collaboration among stakeholders to improve the safety for children in Hong Kong.

Methodology: The Prevalence section of this report uses studies and meta-analyses of international and China / Hong Kong peer reviewed journals that involved general populations of young people and adults, and specified rates for males or females individually. The What We Know section reviews evidence in the data from Hong Kong government departments and bureaus and NGOs from 2015-2024.

Results: TALK estimates the prevalence of child sexual abuse is 16% of the population of Hong Kong, with the rates being higher for females (20%) than for males (11%). Data is reviewed as obtained from the Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Department of Justice, Education Bureau, Correctional Services Department and two NGOs. Given the diverse nature of the datasets, our analysis respects the unique organisational differences and objectives of the governmental departments and bureaus. The rate of unreported cases in Hong Kong is estimated to be as high as 96%, based on prevalence comparison across a range of international studies. The Social Welfare Department reported cases 2015-2024 averaging 372 cases annually: 86% of victims were girls; 93% of perpetrators were male. In 2024, ~29% of cases involved neurodiverse victims. In the range of 2020-2024, 34% of cases involved children sexually harming children (referred to as Harmful Sexual Behaviour). The Hong Kong Police Force reported cases 2016-2024 averaging 476 cases annually: 74% of children knew their abuser; 73% of reported cases of victims aged 12-16. The Department of Justice reported cases 2015-2024 averaging 51 charges annually: 79% of charges resulted in a guilty verdict, 12% of convicted perpetrators were not given a custodial sentence.

Discussion: We highlight that Hong Kong's Child Sexual Abuse data, with the official average reporting rate of 0.05%, falls below the estimated global reporting rate of 8%. This gap is attributed to potential underreporting and a paucity of local research on disclosure barriers, specific abuse types like child sexual abuse material, and perpetrator characteristics. Data shows that vulnerable populations, such as neurodiverse children, are at higher risk, while 22% of reported persons who harmed are 16 or under, indicating a need for intervention rather than criminalisation. We conclude our discussion by emphasising the need for better data and regulation, anticipating that Hong Kong's new Mandated Reporting Ordinance in 2026 will significantly increase case reporting.

Recommendations: We conclude our report with ten recommendations towards improved prevention and response. These are:

1. Increase public awareness, education and understanding of CSA.
2. Improve the deterrence and interruption of abuse pathways.
3. Improve regulation of the workforce,
4. greater use and public availability of barring services.
5. Establish a public single core dataset of victims and perpetrators.
6. Commission Hong Kong-specific perpetration prevalence research.
7. Review the justice response to CSA.
8. Improve support for victims and survivors of CSA.
9. Continue the efforts of legislative change.
10. Increase awareness of evolving challenges.

Introduction

Taura Edgar
Founder & Chair, TALK Hong Kong

From Our Founder

In our work preventing child sexual abuse and supporting survivors since 2019 I have become more and more convinced that we have to understand the issue to prevent it.

Having met hundreds of survivors in Hong Kong it's clear that what little is reported to the authorities doesn't represent the actual situation for children here. This anecdotal evidence and my own lived experience is the foundation of my belief that to tackle CSA we must understand its causes, scope, scale and impact.

In the report that follows you will find our estimates for CSA in Hong Kong, which represents both a tragedy for victims and a substantial public health issue for society. Studies of Hong Kong's Hospital Authority records determine that mental health problems were found to be particularly common for children who had been sexually abused (Ip 2013; Wong, et al. 2022). The welfare of children and their future healthy development concerns us all - from guardians to teachers, from government departments to employers.

The good news is that we can prevent child sexual abuse and having an evidence informed approach is an integral part of that work.

Why This Report?

Different departments, bureaus and non-governmental organisations in Hong Kong manage data in relation to child sexual abuse. Whilst there are mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration in place, such as multi-disciplinary case conferences, no publicly available centralised dataset exists that highlights the prevalence of child sexual abuse. We are grateful to all individuals from these different governmental departments and bureaus who provided us with their datasets. We appreciate differences exist, as the data is collected for a different purpose than this report. Accounting for these expected methodological variations is essential for a valid interpretation of the figures and for maintaining constructive inter-agency dialogue.

The intention of bringing such data to light, and utilising data in child sexual abuse prevention is perhaps best summarised by Smith et al. (2016, p. 1): "...data can play a big role in supplementing the instincts, compassion and understanding of administrators, social workers and caregivers. Where personal experience leads you down one path, data can prove or disprove the hypothesis on that path and even define the paths that are options. Data can inform agencies on how to apply limited resources in the most productive ways – and can prevent them from investing in unproductive directions."

With this intention in mind, our report has been updated from its first publication (Edgar, 2022). Due to the unique nature of child sexual abuse, which comprises distinct typologies, pathways, legal responses and supportive interventions, this report focuses exclusively on this type of child abuse.

What's Changed Since the Previous Edition?

When compared with the previous edition of this report, we have made a number of changes. We are grateful for the data we received from the Education Bureau and the Correctional Services Department, meaning that we can present additional data in this report. Furthermore, we are grateful for the additional data provided by the Hong Kong Police Force, resulting in a deeper understanding of victim profiles.

We have also included data from the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, to provide a longitudinal view on the child population. Whilst previously provided, we included data on neurodiverse victims and victims with a disability to the Social Welfare Department section of this report.

Next to the additional data, we have also added a glossary to this report, defining the most commonly used terms in this area. We have increased the discussion and recommendations section of this report, to provide more context to our call for action in ending child sexual abuse in Hong Kong.

Defining and Framing Child Sexual Abuse

This section establishes definitions of key terminology used throughout this report. We based this section on the work done by Childlight (Fry et al., 2025), which was in turn based on the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2016). We also drew on the work done by Thorn (2023), particularly for their specific online focus. Wherever possible, our definitions build on available Hong Kong definitions, as described in law or in documents produced by governmental departments. By taking this blended approach, we have attempted to bridge the gap between international and local terminology.

Definitions

Child

At TALK we define "child" to mean every human below the age of eighteen. See the legal note below for further clarification on how a child is not universally defined across various ordinances in Hong Kong.

Child Maltreatment

In its Procedural Guide (Social Welfare Department, 2020), the Social Welfare Department of Hong Kong, in cooperation with other government departments and bureaus and NGOs, defines child maltreatment broadly as "any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical / psychological health and development of an individual under the age of 18." Types of maltreatment are (a) physical harm / abuse, (b) sexual abuse, (c) Neglect, and (d) psychological harm / abuse.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

In alignment with the government definition, at TALK, we use the term CSA to include both abuse and exploitation. Child sexual abuse is a form of child abuse that includes any sexual behaviour (looking, showing, or touching) with a child. All sexual engagement between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. A child under the age of 16 can never consent to any form of sexual activity. When a perpetrator engages with a child this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim for years. Child sexual abuse does not need to include physical contact between a perpetrator and a child. This can include sharing obscene materials or messages with a child, or other sexual misconduct beyond contact abuse. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse, see the section below on Harmful Sexual Behaviour for more details.

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)

Child sexual abuse material (legally known as child pornography in Hong Kong) refers to any content that depicts sexualised images of a child. Visual depictions include photographs, videos, live streaming, and digital or computer generated images, including AI-generated content, indistinguishable from an actual child.

CSAM better describes the reality of this crime, rather than the legal term of child pornography. Pornography implies two things: (1) consent, which a child can never give, and (2) entertainment, which abuse never is. It's important we use terminology that reflects the impact of this crime on its victims.

Exposure to unwanted sexual content

A type of technology-facilitated child sexual victimisation that includes the unwanted exposure of a child to pornographic material (e.g., forcing a child to watch videos or pictures containing nudity or sending a child a link to a pornographic website).

Gender / Sex

Gender refers to the socially constructed norms, roles, behaviours, and relationships associated with being female, male, or another gender, which can vary across societies and change over time. Gender identity is distinct from biological sex and reflects an individual's internal experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex. Sex, as it is used in the published data sources, is a binary classification based on biological factors (male and female).

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

These are sexual behaviours displayed by children that fall outside what may be considered developmentally, socially, and culturally expected. These may cause harm to themselves or others and occur either face-to-face and / or via technology (Technology-Assisted, referred to as TA-HSB). When these behaviours involve another child they may include a lack of consent, reciprocity, mutuality, and involve the use of coercion, force, or a misuse of power.

Intrafamilial CSA

Sexual abuse or exploitation of a child that occurs within the family environment, perpetrated by biological relatives (such as parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles) or individuals in a familial-like role (e.g., foster carers, domestic worker, or a parent's partner).

Rape

Vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of a child with any bodily part or object, with or without the use of force and without consent, because the child is too young to consent or consent is not given. Currently in HK law, the Crimes Ordinance only refers to vaginal penetration with a penis when defining Rape, but

we have aligned our wording with the internationally accepted definition.

Self-generated CSAM

A type of media showing individuals who have physical control of their recording device (i.e., selfies, self-recordings from their computers, etc.), which may have been shared directly or captured indirectly by other means. This is often created due to the grooming, deception or extortion of a child by an offender.

Sexual Assault

Unwanted groping, fondling or other touching of the private parts of a child or making a child touch the private parts of someone else (excluding penetration), with or without the use of force and without consent, because the child is too young to consent or consent is not given.

Technology-facilitated CSA (TF-CSA)

A range of sexually harmful behaviours that occur online or through the use of other digital technologies and include online solicitation, non-consensual image taking and sharing, forced exposure to pornography / unwanted sexual content, and livestreaming of child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual extortion.

Victim / Survivor

A combined term referring to children / adults who have experienced or are experiencing sexual harm, to reflect both the terminology used in legally binding instruments and an individual's choice to identify themselves as they wish to be identified. To support preventative and responsive efforts, we tend to use the term "victim" where the abuse is current / ongoing, and "survivor" where the abuse has ended.

A Legal Reflection on the Definition of a Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Hong Kong is a party, defines a child as a 'human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.' In Hong Kong, a person is of 'full age' or an adult upon attaining the age of 18. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect that when referring to CSA in Hong Kong, one is referring to sexual abuse of a person under the age of 18; however, this is not the case.

Although the starting point for the line between adulthood and childhood in Hong Kong is 18 years of age, what we find is that the age at which a person is considered a 'child' varies at law. For example, for the purposes of the Prevention of Child Pornography Ordinance (Cap 579), a child is a person who is under the age of 16, whereas for the purposes of the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse (Cap 650), a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years.

Thus, whilst the CRC suggests the attainment of 18 years of age as constituting adulthood, and whilst Hong Kong law has adopted a general definition of adulthood starting from 18 years of age, sexual offences (i.e., crimes as set out in Hong Kong's criminal ordinances) against children do not use 18 years old as a bright line between child and adult nor is one consistent age used. Instead, what we see is a variety of ages referred to and to illustrate the point, we have listed out some of the sexual offences against children that are found in the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200):

- Section 48 Incest by women of or over the age of 16
- Section 118C Homosexual buggery with or by a man under 16
- Section 118D Buggery with girl under 21
- Section 118H Gross indecency with or by a man under 16
- Section 123 Intercourse with a girl under 13
- Section 124 Intercourse with a girl under 16
- Section 126 Abduction of unmarried girl under 16
- Section 127 Abduction of unmarried girl under 18 for sexual intercourse
- Section 140 Permitting a boy or girl under 13 to resort to or to be on premises or vessel for intercourse

At law, therefore, what constitutes a sex crime against a child very much depends upon the context or crime at issue.

Hong Kong does not utilise a consistent age at which a person is considered to be a child for the purposes of criminalising sexual conduct with that child. Take for example the crime of buggery, homosexual buggery is a crime where a man commits a buggery of a boy where the boy is 15 years old or younger. Where, however, a man commits heterosexual buggery, it is a crime where the girl is 20 years old or younger. It is also the case that Hong Kong maintains a two-tier crime for rape of a child, with the more serious offence of 'unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13' and the lesser offence of 'unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman under 16'. The former offence carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, whilst the latter carries a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment.

What is also obvious from the above examples, is that Hong Kong separates or criminalises sexual offences against children by gender. Taking the above-referenced offence of unlawful intercourse with a girl under 13 or 16, it is the case that there is no parallel crime of unlawful intercourse with a boy under 13 or 16. Whilst the laws are presently under review and gender neutrality of the law on sexual offences has been recommended, the present situation in Hong Kong, as is the case in many jurisdictions around the world, is that rape is a crime committed only by a male against a female.

Prevalence Research

We believe that the prevalence of CSA in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereafter referred to as Hong Kong or HKSAR) is not well known for two main reasons. First, estimating prevalence is difficult due to the limited and varied information that is available from Hong Kong government departments and bureaus and NGOs dealing with various aspects of CSA. Second, comparison of data that is available with academic studies from around the world suggests that we only know about a fraction of the cases that actually occur in Hong Kong. In 2024, UNICEF estimated that globally, one in eight girls and women and one in 11 boys and men experienced rape or sexual assault during childhood.

Estimated Rate of CSA Prevalence

It is hard to say what the scope of the issue is in Hong Kong. CSA prevalence is not well researched in HKSAR. We are grateful for all the official data provided by the different departments and bureaus, as these provide insight on reported cases. However, as highlighted by Mathews et al. (2020), across the developed world, such sources are recognised to underestimate true prevalence due to underreporting and limited case detection.

We acknowledge that estimating the prevalence of child sexual abuse (CSA) is complex due to definitional, cultural, and reporting differences. Most accepted approaches rely on population-based surveys using standardised instruments, meta-analyses, adjusted for methodological biases (Barth et al., 2013; Choudhry et al., 2018). Why then have we included a prevalence estimation if no representative prevalence study currently exists for Hong Kong?

In this section of the report, we aim to highlight what the prevalence might be. In the absence of regionally representative prevalence research, we have aimed to run a brief systematic review in an initial attempt to synthesise a possible estimate of CSA prevalence in Hong Kong. We do this to highlight that the issue is likely much broader than we currently know it to be.

In one of the largest meta-analyses to date on reporting of CSA, Mehta et al. (2023) measured the global reporting rate of CSA at 8%. This is globally recognised as an under-reporting of cases. We seek to illustrate that Hong Kong's current reporting rate of 0.05% (522 cases out of 883,700, described in the next chapter) indicates potential under-reporting. Until a regionally representative prevalence study becomes available, this part of the report engages in the question: what might CSA prevalence look like in Hong Kong, if we were to base it on available international studies, preferably with a China / Hong Kong context included?

The basis for our estimate is a brief systematic review of several international and Chinese academic studies, including statistics for Hong Kong where possible and large-scale national surveys from the UK and Australia. We conducted a search on Google Scholar, PubMed and APA PsycNet for research on child sexual abuse prevalence. 14 studies were reviewed, out of which seven were selected, based on our inclusion criteria. These criteria were: an adequate sample size, results split by gender, and wherever possible, with a Hong Kong or international population. All included studies were completed no more than 2 years removed from 2015-2024, to keep alignment with the reported statistics as much as possible.

While prevalence calculation is a commonly used method, prevalence is often very difficult to pinpoint in jurisdictions where there is a lack of sufficient local data like ours. We acknowledge that there are differences in the methodologies underlying each of the studies. For example, exact alignment of the studies is difficult because of varying definitions of abuse, the format of the questions being asked, and differing sample sizes with potentially quite homogenous characteristics.

Because of the variability in the methodologies and reporting of results for each study, we have taken a straight average across the overall rate reported by each study. Accordingly, our review of the studies indicates that 7%–37% of girls and 4%–19% of boys around the world experience CSA. We note that in China / Hong Kong focused studies, boys experience similar or even higher levels of abuse compared to girls which differs from other international studies (Ji et al., 2013; Ma, 2018).

TALK estimates child sexual abuse **prevalence** in Hong Kong may be **16%.**

Based on available research, in 2024

Table 1. International studies and meta-analyses on the prevalence of child sexual abuse

Authors	Overall	Among girls	Among boys	Region	Studies included	Age cut-off defining childhood	Age of study participants
Barth et al. (2013)	11.5%	15.0%	8.0%	Global w/ China	55 studies from 24 countries	<18	<18
Ji et al. (2013)	14.6%	15.3%	13.8%	China w/ Hong Kong	27 Studies	<18	students & residents
Ma (2018)	9.0%	8.9%	9.1%	China w/ Hong Kong	131,734 - 36 articles Meta-analysis	<18	various including young people & adults
Mathews et al. (2023)	28.5%	37.3%	18.8%	Australia	8503 self-reports	<18	16-65+
Office for National Statistics (2025)	9.1%	13.9%	4.1%	England & Wales	24,638 - Self-report Questionnaire	<18	18–74
Finkelhor et al. (2024)	21.7%	31.6%	10.8%	United States	2639 self-reports	<18	18-28
Cagney et al. (2025)	16.9%	18.9%	14.8%	Global w/ China	460 global data sources	<18	various including young people & adults
Mean	**16%**	**20%**	**11%**				

When compared with our previous report (Edgar, 2022), the estimated prevalence has increased by 4% (from 12% to 16%). This is due to several significant studies conducted in more recent years, and because these studies intentionally included online sexual harms.

Estimated Rate of Unreported CSA Cases

One of the important steps to uncovering the magnitude of CSA is to estimate the unreported population of victims. To estimate this population, assuming not all age ranges have an equal prevalence of abuse, we have used the Social Welfare Department's average reported annual cases of CSA from 2015-2024 broken down by age range, then compared this to Hong Kong census statistics, and applied our estimate of 16% prevalence of CSA. We use the Social Welfare Department figures as a basis for understanding under-reporting because they are viewed as the main coordinator of child protection in Hong Kong.

Understanding the complexity of CSA disclosures requires a multi-faceted approach. Apart from individual and societal complexities and barriers, for example shame, fear, guilt, taboo, stigma or the weight of familial expectations (Tanweer, 2023). Another reason cases reported to Social Welfare Department only represent a portion of the cases of CSA happening in society, is that some types of cases may be more taboo to report or harder for a case worker to detect (e.g. abuse of a very young child by a parent vs. teen-on-teen abuse resulting in pregnancy). Another reason is that the threshold for a case to be recorded as CSA is high, depending not only on a statement but joint investigation by medical professionals and social workers. As such some cases may be reported, but not recorded in the official dataset as an actual abuse case. Differences in ease of reporting likely affects the cases in various age ranges in the Social Welfare Department records.

Delay in reporting of CSA is also a substantial barrier to cases entering the official data. A sexual violence prevention organisation in Hong Kong, Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women (ACSVAW) RainLily, found that the mean delay in reporting of victims under 16 years (~700 reports in 2000-2018) was 4,814 days (13 years), which is over 10 times longer than the mean delay in reporting for victims over 16 years old (Wong et al., 2019; Yau, 2020). Such non-recent abuse disclosures would not be registered in the official SWD data, as those focus on current harm.

The next section of this report details available data. One such figure is the average reported cases to the Social Welfare Department (an average of 372 reported cases a year), and the census data of all children in Hong Kong in 2024 (883,700). In the age-weighted prevalence estimation below (Table 2), we have divided the average cases per age group and calculated the percentages within each group. The sum total of these percentages (0.22) was then used to calculate age weights, by dividing each % of reported victims by the sum total (i.e. 0.09 / 0.22 leads to 40.7% age weight for the prevalence estimation of the 12-14 age group). We then used the estimated 16% total prevalence to predict the prevalence across the total child population in Hong Kong. This indicated that a total of 141,392 children in Hong Kong are estimated to have been the victim of CSA at one point during their childhood (between the ages of 0 and 18). As this is not an annual estimate, the lifetime CSA estimate was then distributed by age to get an annual estimate, which implied dividing the lifetime estimate by the number of age-years. If CSA was reported by a single year of age (0-1, 1-2, 2-3, etc), we would have divided the lifetime CSA estimate by 17 years. However, the CSA reports are provided in blocks of 3 years (0-2, 3-5), so we divided the lifetime estimate by (17-3) = 14. This gave us the annual prevalence of CSA by age-group, so long as we included the age-weights in the estimation, which gave the annual estimated number of CSA cases at 10,099. This estimation is provided here strictly to illustrate that the magnitude of the issue is likely to far exceed the reported figures, as previously discussed in the meta-analysis by Mehta et al. (2023), and in the absence of a regionally representative study in Hong Kong, to our knowledge, the only existing measure of prevalence available.

> Delay in reporting of CSA is also a substantial barrier to cases entering the official data.

TALK estimates 96% of child sexual abuse in Hong Kong may be unreported.

Based on available research, in 2024

Table 2. Age-weighted prevalence estimation of unreported cases of CSA calculation

Age group	Avg Annual SWD Cases (2015-2024)	Population (2024)	% of reported victims against population	Age weights based on sum % of reported victims (0.22)	Est. childhood prevalence from existing research (Table 1)	Predicted childhood prevalence in total HK child population	Predicted age-weighted prevalence in HK child pop.	Under reporting of average cases vs predicted cases in %
0-2	1	101,500	0.00%	0.5%			53	97.8%
3-5	12	128,300	0.01%	4.3%			433	97.2%
6-8	27	154,000	0.02%	7.8%			789	96.6%
9-11	51	158,100	0.03%	14.5%			1,469	96.5%
12-14	166	181,900	0.09%	40.7%			4,111	96.0%
15-17	115	159,900	0.07%	32.1%			3,244	96.5%
0-17	372	883,700		100%	16%	141,392	10,099	**96.3%**

> Compared to a reported average of around 370 child sexual abuse cases, TALK estimates the actual cases at closer to 10,000 a year.

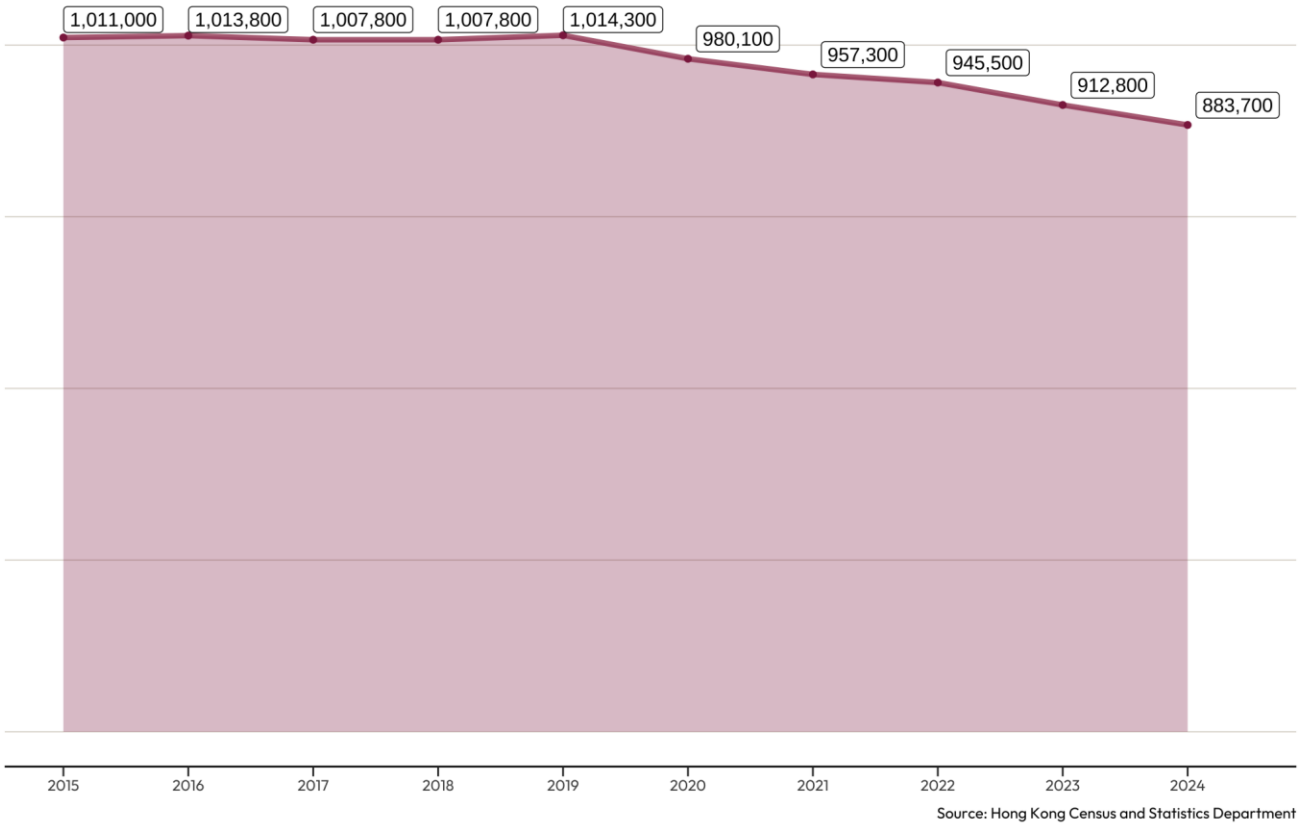
What We Know: Available Data

Official data from government authorities is crucial to understanding the prevalence of CSA in Hong Kong, vital statistics about victim and perpetrator, what care victims receive, and the judicial process and case resolution with respect to perpetrators. In this section of our report, we'll show what is known based on data available from government sources over the past ten years. We'll also provide insights on trends in recent years, in particular how the statistics moved in 2024. For a full overview of all data sources, please see **Appendix A**.

It is important to note that the time period covered in this report includes 2019-2021 during which major societal changes impacted Hong Kong people due to social unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since correlation is not necessarily causation, we have resisted drawing conclusions about the causes of some trends seen in the data in this section. The Discussion section raises some questions to consider.

Hong Kong Child Population

Figure 1. Child Population (<18) in Hong Kong - Annual Trend



Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department

Similar to many nations in the world, the child population in Hong Kong (anyone below the age of 18) has been trending downwards for a number of years. As this report calculates percentages and averages across a range of years, reflection on the total size of the population helps contextualise these statistics further. Overall, the child population has declined by 13% in the past 10 years.

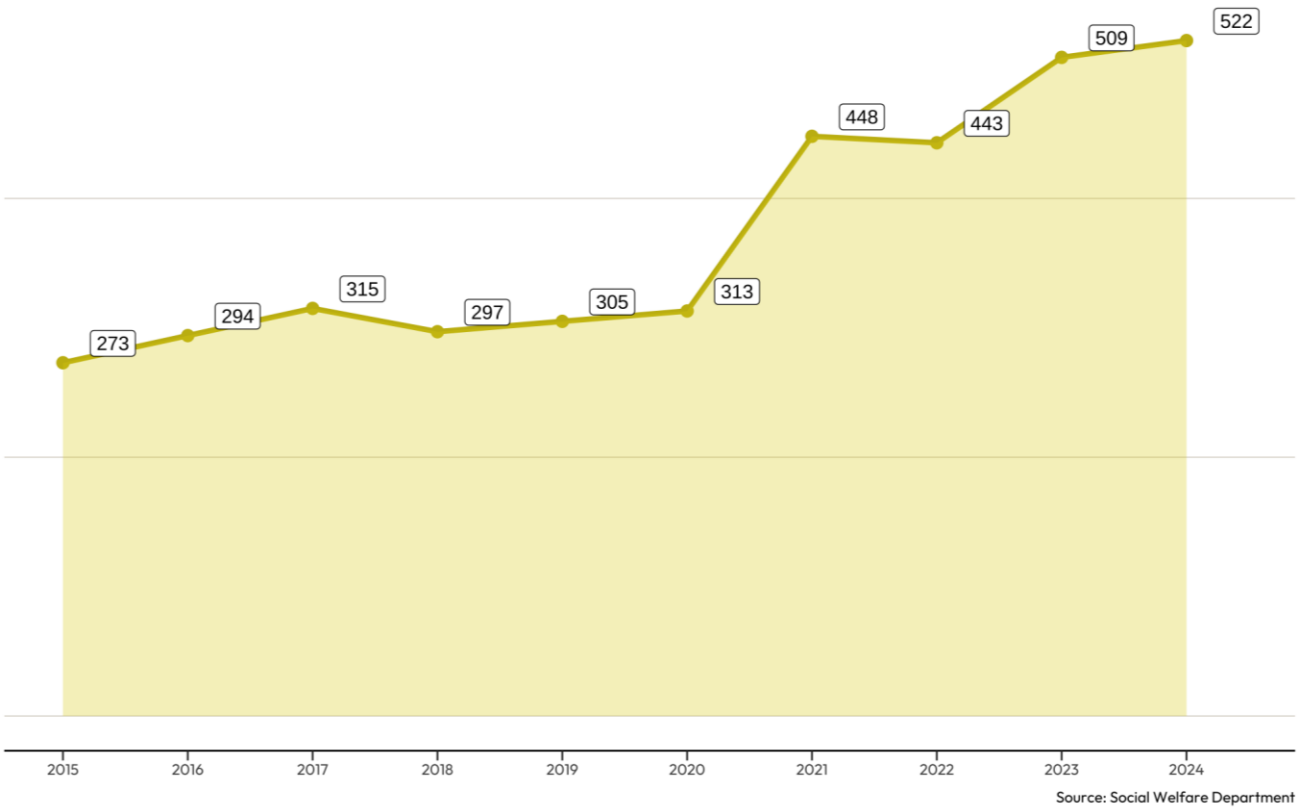
the child population has declined by 13% in the past 10 years.

Social Welfare Department

372 average annual cases	**31%** involved penetration
86% of victims are female	**93%** of perpetrators are male
75% of victims are 12 to 17 years old	**63%** of children in reported CSA cases know their abuser
34% of perpetrators were friends / schoolmates / peers in 2020-2024	**~29%** of victims are neurodiverse in 2024

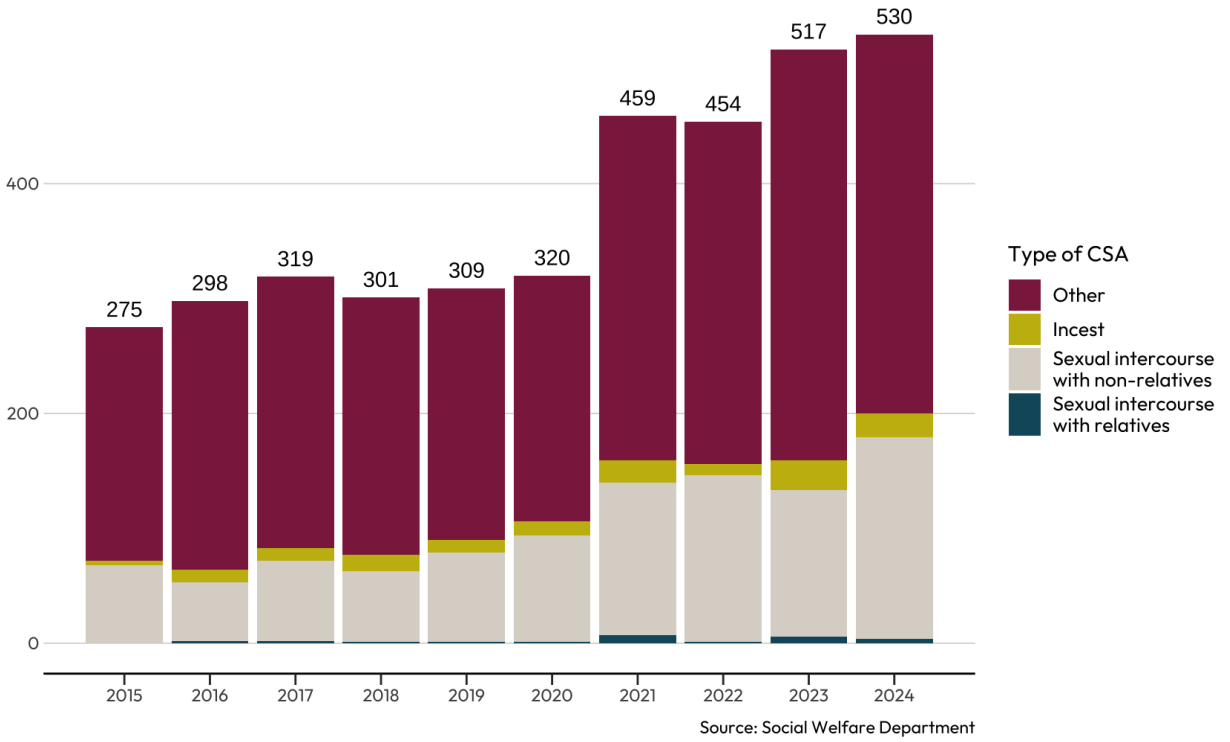
Based on recorded CSA cases, over the past 10 years

Figure 2. Social Welfare Department CSA Cases - Annual Trend



CSA cases reported to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) have been on the rise for most years (Figure 2). In 2021 there was a record rise of 43%, with reporting rates climbing again in both 2023 and 2024 after a slight drop in 2022.

Figure 3. Social Welfare Department Type of CSA Cases – Annual Trend

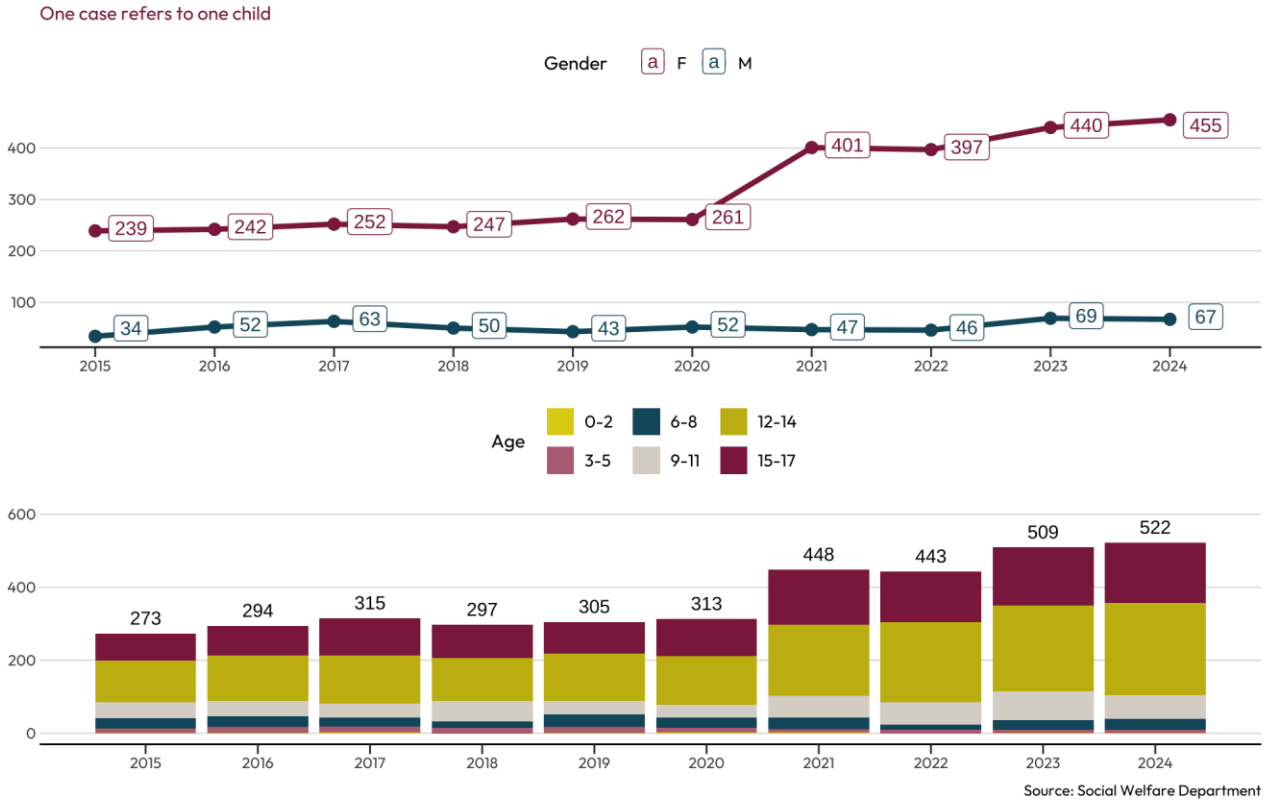


In 2024 the type of CSA cases reported to SWD were Other 62%, Sexual intercourse with non-relatives 33%, Incest 4%, and Sexual intercourse with relatives 1% (Figure 3). The largest year-on-year increases by type of CSA in 2021 were for Sexual intercourse with relatives at +600% and Incest at +58%, demonstrating that reported cases of interfamilial abuse rose substantially.

We requested a further breakdown of the most prevalent type of CSA "Other" and were given the following response by the SWD: "'Others' refers to 'other forms of sexual activity (fondling, mutual sexual fondling, etc.)' as specified in the Child Protection Registry ('CPR') data input form." The response suggests that the SWD has divided CSA into penetrative ('Sexual intercourse') or non-penetrative ('Other') types of CSA.

We also requested that the SWD clarify CSA within families / related persons and received this definition from SWD "Incest refers to sexual intercourse with grandparent / parent / sibling under Section 47 & 48 of Crimes Ordinance, Cap. 200 while sexual intercourse with a relative refers to sexual intercourse with relatives other than grandparent / parent / sibling."

Figure 4. Social Welfare Department CSA Victims Demographics - Annual Trend

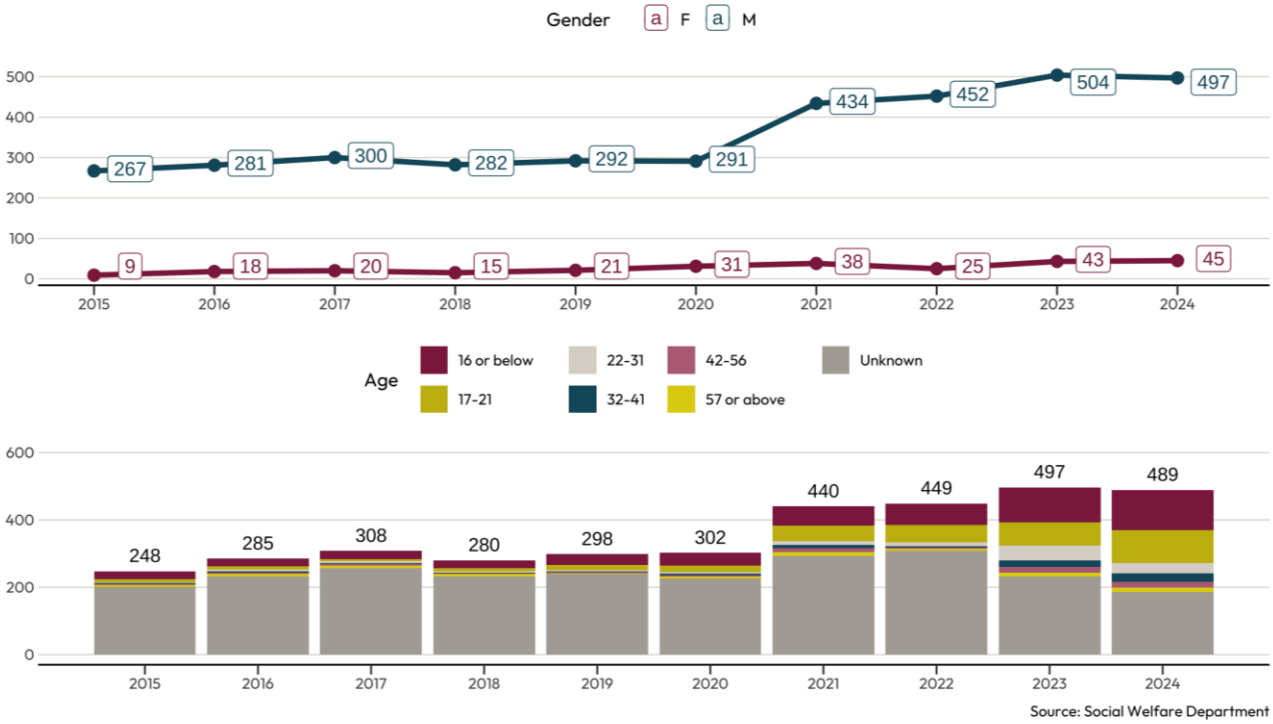


As seen in Figure 4, the overwhelming gender of recorded CSA victims in the SWD data is female (80-90%). In 2021 female victims rose significantly compared to other years increasing from 83% to 90%. Whilst still significantly lower when compared to female victims, in 2023 male victims rose from 46 to 69, an increase of 50%. In 2024, the ratio of reported victims was approximately at 7:1, indicating that, on average, for every eight reported cases, seven would be girls and one would be a boy. In the discussion section, we will explore this gender imbalance in more detail across the various departments and NGOs.

A large percent (80%) of children reported as victims of CSA to the SWD are 12-17 years of age. Whilst 2021 and 2023 saw noticeable increases in reporting numbers, 2024 was an incremental increase in reported cases with no significant population changes related to age or gender when compared to the previous year.

Figure 5. Social Welfare Department CSA Perpetrators Demographics - Annual Trend

One perpetrator might have harmed/maltreated more than one victim.
One victim might be harmed/maltreated by one or more perpetrators.
Perpetrators under the category of the Unknown age group were unrelated or unidentified persons, or where the age could not be determined.

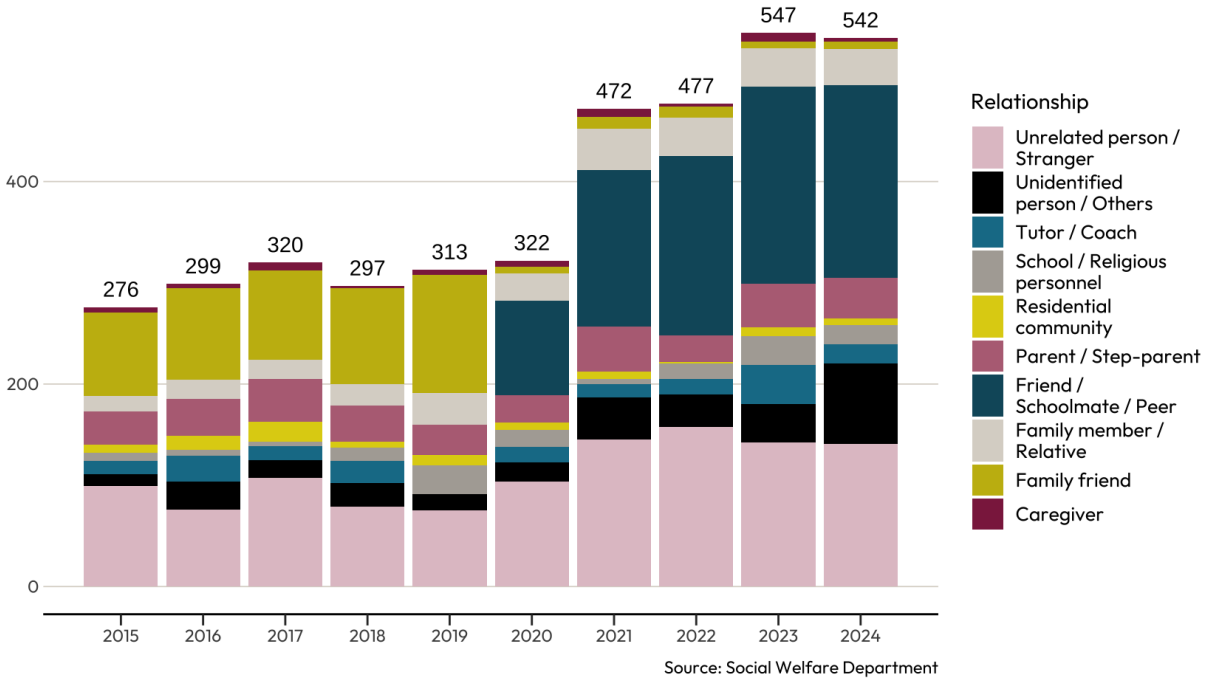


Source: Social Welfare Department

Figure 5 shows the perpetrator demographics as reported to the SWD. The overwhelming gender of recorded CSA perpetrators in the SWD data is male (89-97%). This is similar to other international reports, such as the 92% male perpetrators described in the UK and Wales (Egan, 2020). The number of female offenders did see a considerable increase of 72% in 2023, with a slight increase in 2024. In 2024, 22% of the perpetrators of CSA reported to SWD are children themselves (16 yrs or under). For 2023 and 2024, there was a decline in the "Unknown" category, indicating that the perpetrator's age was successfully determined more frequently.

Figure 6. Social Welfare Department CSA Victim-Perpetrator Relationship – Annual Trend

Perpetrators under the category 'Unknown' were unrelated or unidentified persons, or where the relationship could not be determined.



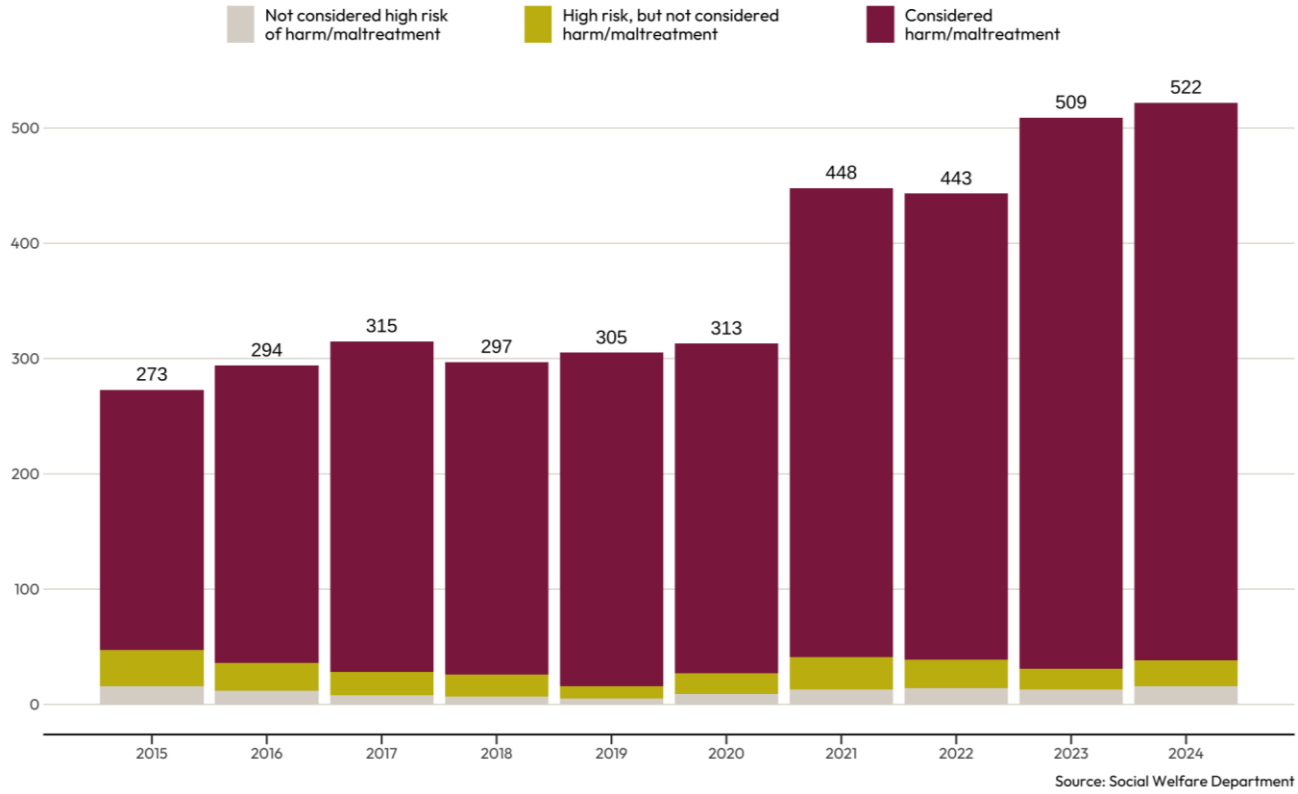
Source: Social Welfare Department

The majority (59% in 2024) of perpetrators in CSA cases reported to the SWD are known to the victim (Figure 6). The distribution of victim-perpetrator relationships has remained fairly stable over the past few years.

Whilst we condensed the dataset for readability, the SWD has only classified "Friend / Schoolmate / Peer" since 2020. For the range 2020-2024, the percentage of perpetrators who were either a friend, schoolmate or peer was 34%. For purposes of prevention and response in relation to so-called Harmful Sexual Behaviour, it is a positive development to see a clearer distinction between adult-to-child and child-to-child abuse, as the pathways into and out of are distinctly different to adult abusers (McKibbin et al., 2024). We explore this further in the Discussion section of this report.

Figure 7. Social Welfare Department CSA Case Outcomes - Annual Trend

Custom data requested from SWD by TALK to highlight case assessment outcomes.

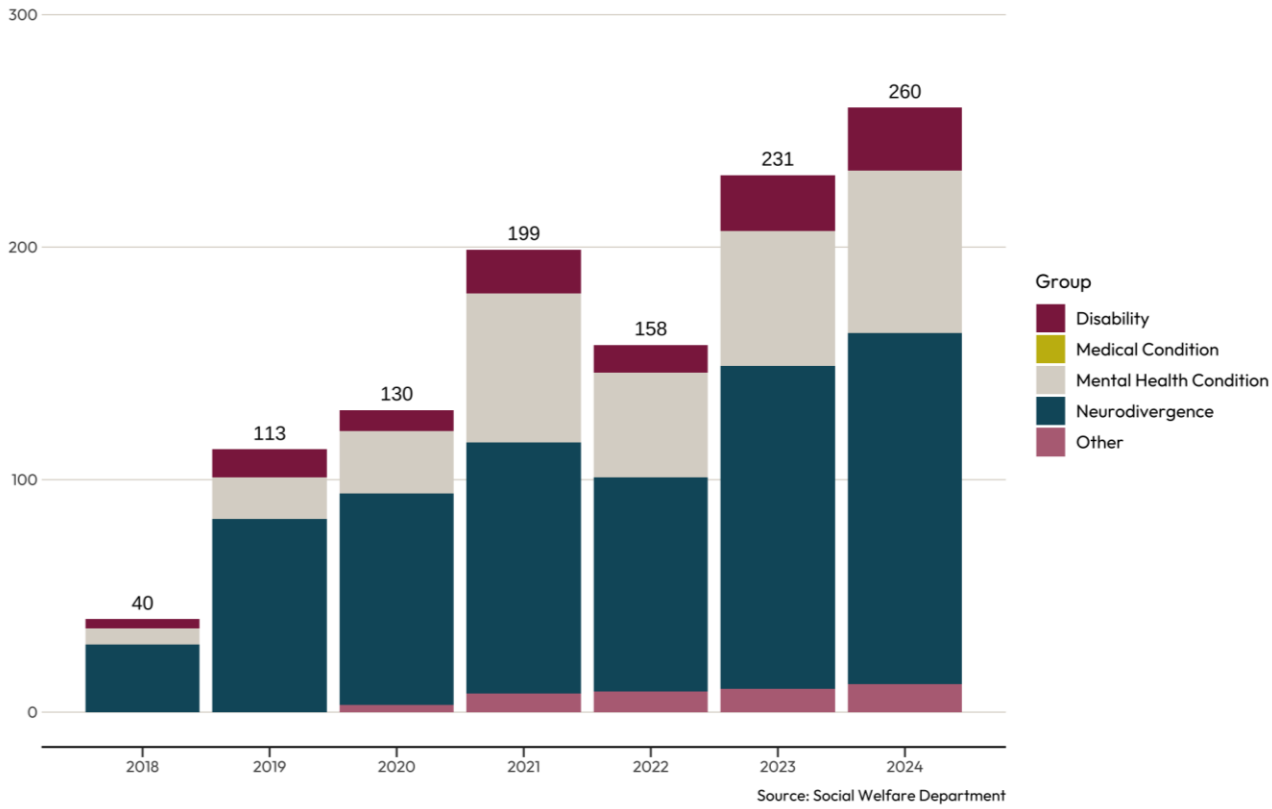


Source: Social Welfare Department

Cases of CSA reported to the SWD are very likely to be considered maltreatment (Figure 7), with the percentage increasing over time. Maltreatment here indicates CSA has likely occurred, as opposed to only a risk of CSA.

Figure 8. Social Welfare Department Neurodiversity and Disability - Annual Trend

One child may have more than one type of neurodivergence or disability



The SWD revised the Child Protection Registry form in 2018 to include additional vulnerabilities, such as neurodiversity and disability, which we compiled into the overview seen in Figure 8. When considering commonly identified vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, gender / sexuality minorities, and neurodiverse / disabled individuals (Assink et al., 2019; McGeough & Sterzing, 2018), the SWD captures ethnic minority groups but does not classify them according to types of abuse. Neurodiversity and disability is classified separately and reported here. The data is recoded for readability.

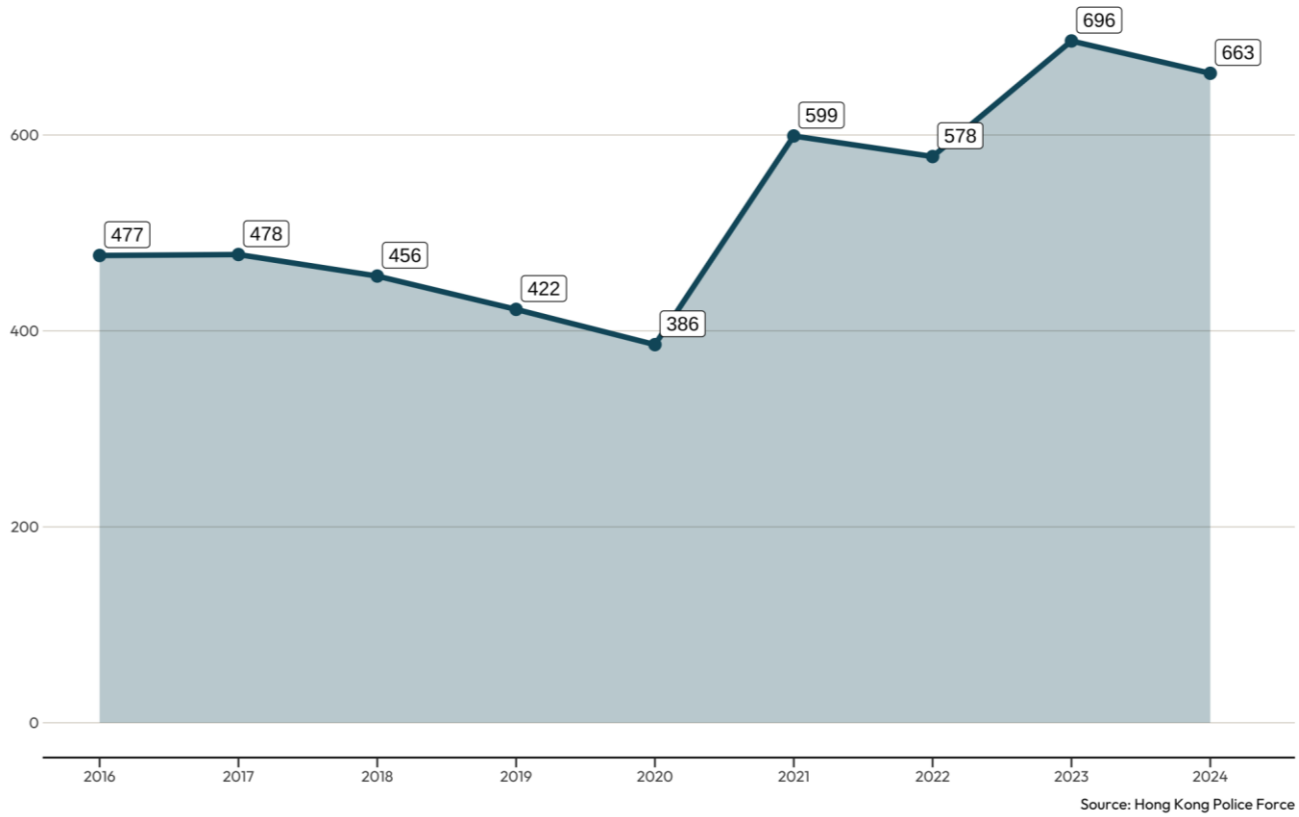
With the exception of 2022, the reported numbers of neurodiverse victims and victims with a disability has been increasing. As the SWD records each neurodivergence separately, so if a victim is autistic / ADHD, they are recorded here twice. As such we can only estimate the percentage of neurodiverse victims or those with a disability. If we are to assume that co-occurring conditions are rare, then, based on the provided data for 2024, approximately 29% of victims are neurodiverse, where approximately 5% are victims with a disability. No victims with a medical condition appear in the provided data.

Hong Kong Police Force

476 average annual CSA cases	**31%** involved penetration
88% of victims are female	
73% of victims were aged between 12-16	**74%** of victims in reported CSA cases know their abuser

Based on recorded CSA cases, over the past 9 years. The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) informed TALK that they do not keep any breakdown of child abuse figures from before 2016.

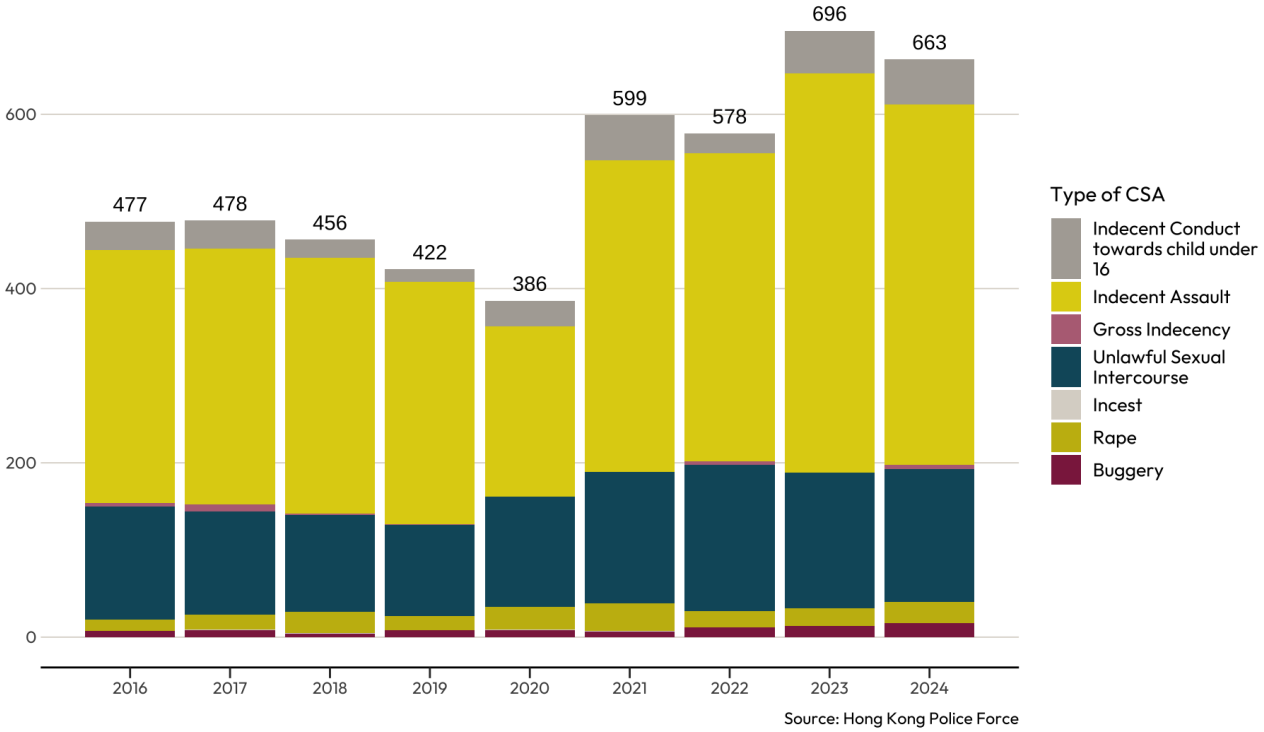
Figure 9. Hong Kong Police Force Number of CSA Cases - Annual Trend



Source: Hong Kong Police Force

CSA cases reported to the HKPF since 2016 dropped a little every year but saw a statistically significant 55% increase in 2021 corresponding with the similar increase seen at SWD (Figure 2 and 9). There was another increase of 20% in 2023, with a slight decrease noted for 2024. The overall trend of the past nine years indicates an increase in reported CSA cases to the HKPF.

Figure 10. Hong Kong Police Force Type of CSA Cases – Annual Trend



Notes: (1) HKPF defines a case as a report made by the public to the police station, no matter via email, 999 call or in-person, in which crime elements were revealed after initial enquiries, (2) Some cases involved more than one type of sexual abuse, and (3) There seems to be discrepancies between the types of cases provided by the HKP and types of charges provided by the DOJ. There is a larger subset of categories provided by the DOJ, where charges like "attempting to make child pornography", etc. would be listed for the DOJ, but not the HKPF.

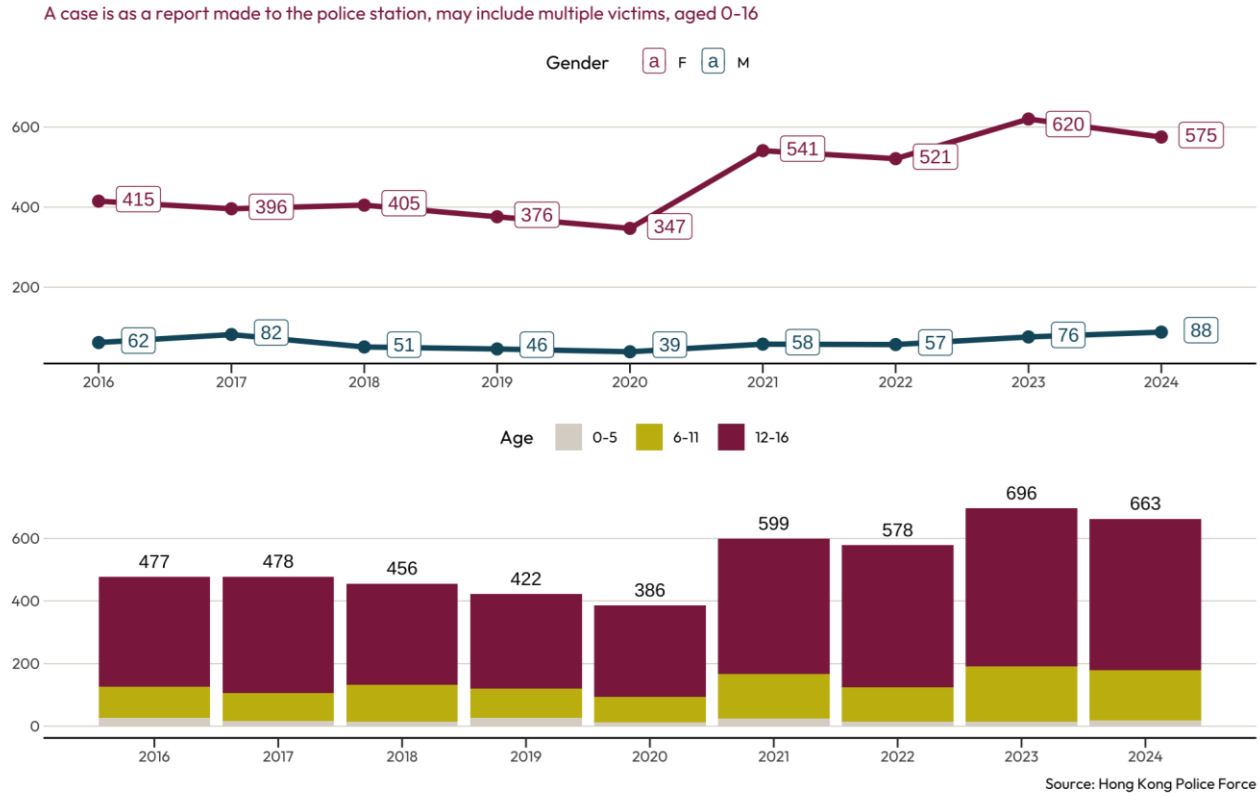
In 2024 the CSA cases reported to the HKPF (Figure 10) were categorised as Indecent Assault 62%, Unlawful Sexual Intercourse 23%, Indecent Conduct towards a child under 16 8%, Rape 4%, Buggery 2%, with <1% for Gross Indecency and no registered cases of Incest.

For the past few years, the two categories that saw the most significant increase since 2021 are Indecent Assault and Indecent Conduct towards a child under 16. For 2024, 27% of CSA cases reported involved penetration.

Like the SWD, the HKPF does not disclose any Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM) or CSEC (AKA pornography, prostitution etc.) related cases in the period 2015-2024, though this type of crime was included in our request. As we will discuss in the next section, the Department of Justice (DOJ) does record 150+ cases related to CSAM (classed as Child Pornography in the Ordinance) for the period 2015-2024.

Like the SWD, the HKPF does not disclose any Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM) or CSEC (AKA pornography, prostitution etc.) related cases

Figure 11. Hong Kong Police Force CSA Victims Demographics - Annual Trend

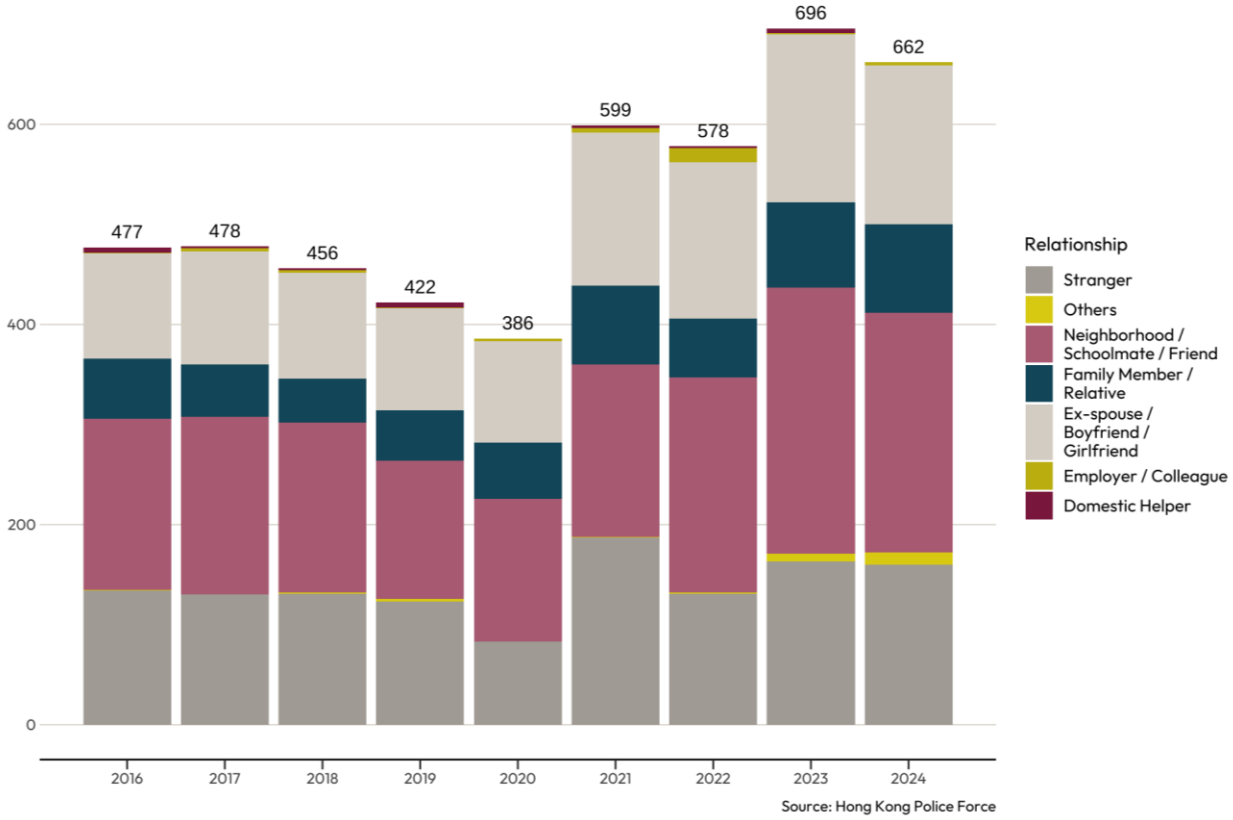


Unlike the SWD, where recorded ages go up to 18 years old for children, the HKPF record children as those under 17 years old (0-16) and provided TALK with this definition: "...police figures concerning the child sexual abuse cases, refer to the sexual abuse cases (e.g. Rape, Indecent Assault, Unlawful Sexual Intercourse, etc.) with the victim under the age of 17."

Similar to the data provided by the SWD, the victim gender balance between female and male shows the majority of cases involve female victims (Figure 11), though male victims have seen a rise in numbers since 2022, similar to the trend seen in the SWD data.

Further, the HKPF does not record demographics related to CSA perpetrators in the same manner as the SWD, so the data cannot be compared across the two departments.

Figure 12. Hong Kong Police Force CSA Victim-Perpetrator Relationship – Annual Trend



For 2024, the majority (74%) of children in CSA cases reported to the HKPF know their abuser.

Around a quarter of all relationships are termed “Lover” in the police records (Figure 12). When queried on why the term would be applied to children the HKPF advised TALK that: “There is no statutory definition for 'lover' and we use common sense to dictate the word.” Since we cannot compare this to their perpetrator demographics we cannot draw any insights about whether or not these “lovers” are also children. For readability purposes, the category of “Lover” has been combined with the “Ex-spouse / Boyfriend / Girlfriend” category in the graph.

As a follow up to this data, we requested a further breakdown of family relationships as this is an important indicator about the situation in which abuse occurs but were informed by the HKPF “The police only keeps the relationship category as “Family member / relative” but without further breakdown.”

As children can get married in Hong Kong from the age of 16 (with parental consent), the category of “Ex-spouse / Boyfriend / Girlfriend” becomes more complicated to interpret. For purposes of Harmful Sexual Behaviour intervention, the SWD data currently provides greater clarity when supporting prevention efforts.

Department of Justice

51 average annual CSA charges	**38%** of all charges involved penetration
79% of CSA charges result in a guilty verdict	**12%** of all convicted CSA perpetrators were not incarcerated

Based on recorded CSA cases, over the past 10 years

The data provided by the Department of Justice (DOJ) is limited in content and similar to the data provided for the previous version of our report. The DOJ does not record the age or gender of the victim or perpetrator. The DOJ informed TALK that the data they provided only "covers the cases prosecuted by in-house counsel or fiat counsel. It does not include those cases prosecuted by court prosecutors attached to magistrates' courts ... the Prosecution Offices in Magistracies do not keep statistics on the subject cases."

Therefore, because the DOJ data is not divided by age or gender, it is only possible to extract data based on offences that specify an age and / or a gender for the victim of the crime, for example s 123 of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200) prohibits intercourse with girl under 13 or s118H of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200) that prohibits gross indecency with or by man under 21. This offence is included, as there currently is no specified offence for gross indecency with or by a man under 18, meaning that the "under 21" category is the best data available on sexual offending against boys, together with the more specific offence of "homosexual buggery with or by a man under 16".

As noted above, there is no data available for the Magistrates' Courts and thus, any crime that carries a penalty of two years or less and a fine of HK$100,000, will not be reflected in the DOJ's data.

Due to the limited data available, it is hard to draw insights about how CSA is handled in the justice system. In future we hope a more detailed set of data will be made available which would allow us to look at the funnel of cases coming to the awareness of officials, charges being brought and court proceedings' conclusions trends over time.

Because the DOJ data is not divided by age or gender, it is only possible to extract data based on offences that specify an age and / or a gender for the victim of the crime.

Figure 13. Department of Justice Number of CSA Charges - Annual Trend

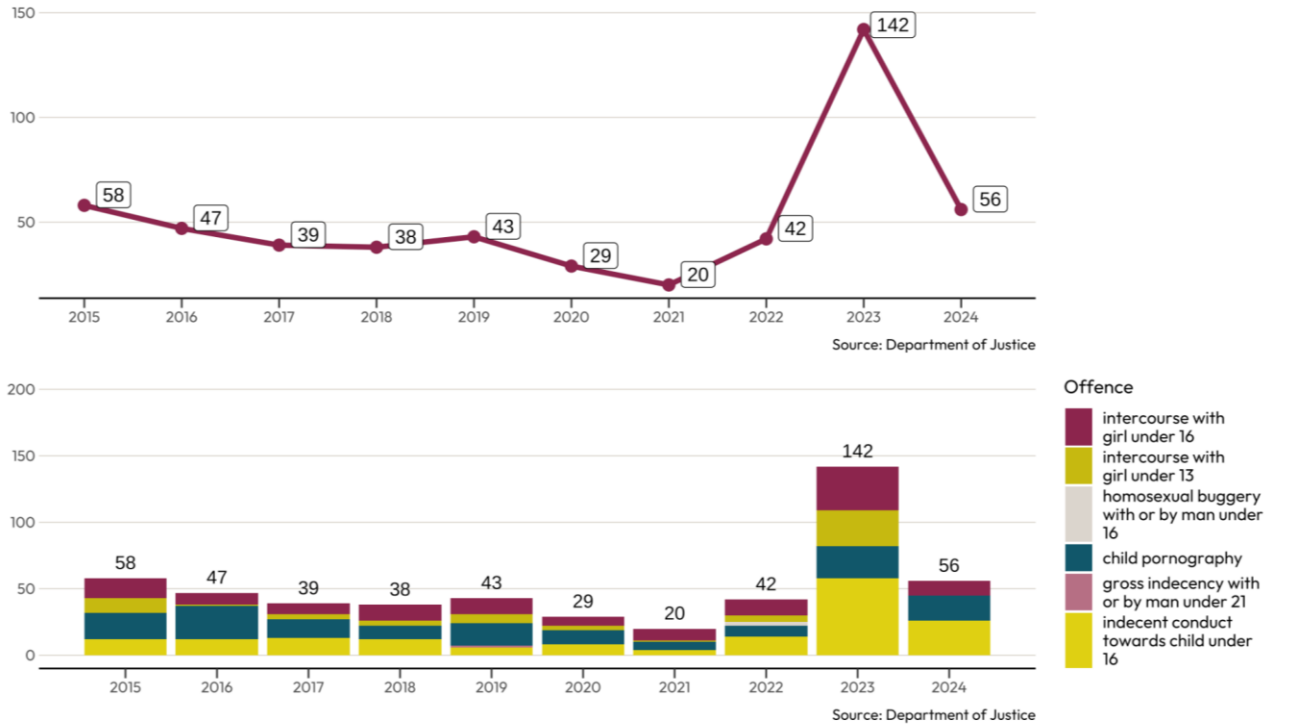


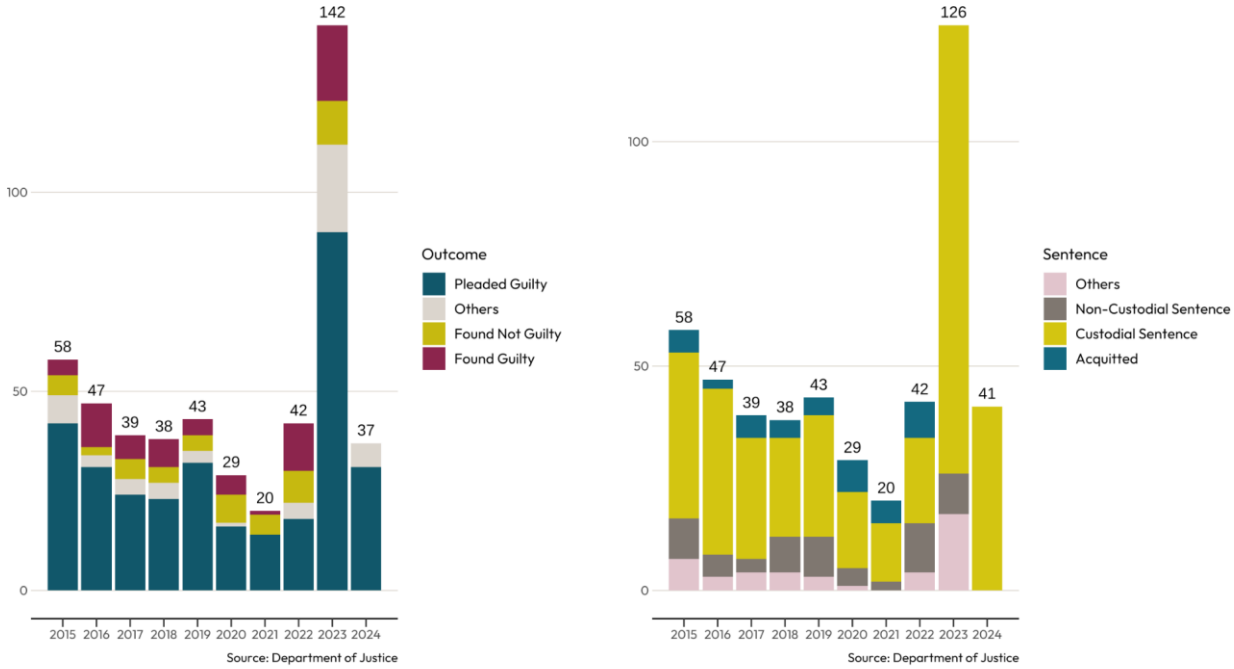
Figure 13 highlights the number of CSA charges and offences reported by the DOJ in the past ten years. In the data provided by the DOJ it seems that there are very few penetrative offenses against boys charged. The only recorded cases are from 2022, where "homosexual buggery with or by a man under 16" was recorded three times. When compared with the SWD and HKPF data, the DOJ dataset is the only one that reports any CSAM-related crimes (referred to as Child Pornography).

Similar to the previous version of our report, we requested a further breakdown of the crime grouping "inciting to commit // committing an act of gross indecency // indecent conduct towards / with a child under the age of 16" to better analyse the data. However, the DOJ's current reporting structure does not provide for that and TALK was given this reply: "The mentioned offences are recorded under the same offence code in our system without further breakdown. Therefore, we are unable to provide a breakdown."

No charges for the following offences were recorded by the DOJ from 2015-2024:

- Section 127 Abduction of unmarried girl under 18 for sexual intercourse
- Section 132 Procurement of girl under 21
- Section 135 Causing or encouraging prostitution of, intercourse with, or indecent assault on, girl or boy under 16
- Section 138A Use, procurement or offer of persons under 18 for making pornography or for live pornographic performances
- Section 140 Permitting girl or boy under 13 to resort to or be on premises or vessel for intercourse
- Section 141 Permitting young person to resort to or be on premises or vessel for intercourse, prostitution, buggery or homosexual act

Figure 14. Department of Justice CSA Charges Outcomes & Type of Sentences - Annual Trend



Note: if the outcome is "Found Not Guilty", then the sentence is "Acquitted". Offences displayed have been limited to those that specifically relate to children. For the Verdict / Outcome, " Others" includes: charge abandoned / defendant absent from trial, charge left on file, jury cannot reach a verdict, charge withdrawn, offer no evidence, nolle prosequi, no case to answer / charge/count nullity, no further action, found guilty on lesser charge, pleaded guilty to alternative charge.
For the Sentence, "Others" includes: charge abandoned / defendant absent from trial, charge left on file, jury cannot reach a verdict, charge withdrawn, offer no evidence, stay of proceeding.

The outcomes and sentences as reported by the DOJ are shown in Figure 14. For the limited range of offences that are defined in law as being against children that we can capture via the DOJ data, there appear to have a fairly high guilty outcome at 79% across the years 2015-2024.

While the DOJ does not provide any other sentencing detail, a reference to sentencing lengths for sexual offences in Hong Kong was given in a recent Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong consultation paper on sexual offences sentencing (The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong, 2020). The LRC references Dr Judy Hui, the founder of the Sex Offenders Evaluation and Treatment Unit run by the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") in Hong Kong, and her views those sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more "constitutes less than 20% of all sex offenders admitted to correctional institutions." This implies that sexual offenders are sentenced to less than 2 years 80% of the time.

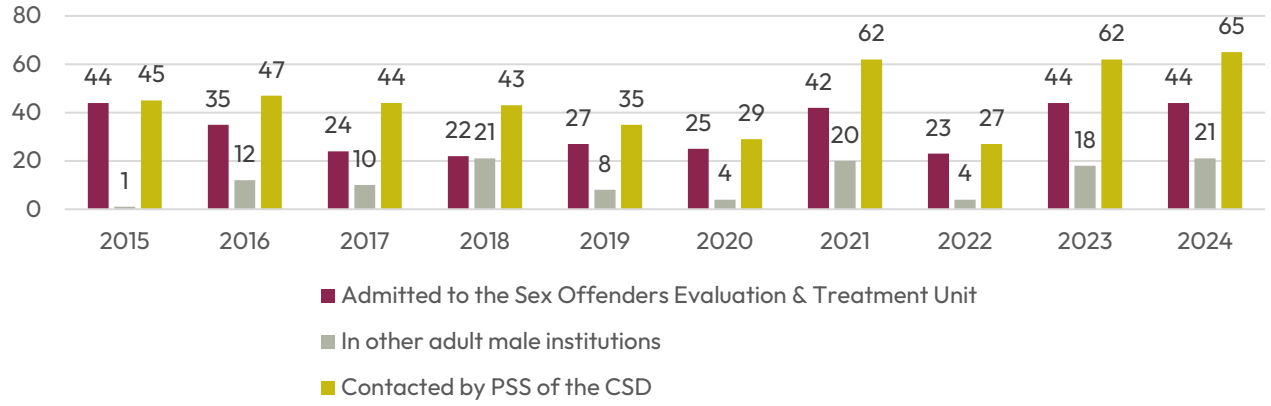
There was a significant increase in court cases in 2023 when compared with all other years. Whilst no clear reason is provided, given the length of time it takes for cases to go to court, it could be indicative of delays due to Covid-19.

Correctional Services Department

The Correctional Services Department (CSD) provided initial data for our report. annual number of persons in custody (PICs) who have been convicted of sexual offences (whose victims being under 16 years old) and contacted by Psychological Services Section (PSS) of the CSD across all male adult institutions from 2015 to 2024.

"The Sex Offenders Evaluation and Treatment Unit (ETU) was set up in 1998 to help persons in custody (PIC) who have committed sex offences lead a law-abiding and constructive life after release. Located in the Siu Lam Psychiatric Centre, it is the first residential treatment unit of this kind in East Asia. It aims to provide participants with comprehensive and systematic psychological assessment and treatment programmes in a therapeutic environment, so as to help them prevent re-offending and develop a positive lifestyle." (Correctional Services Department, n.d.)

Figure 15. Correctional Services Department - Persons in Custody Convicted of Sexual Offences (victims <16 years old) and contacted by PSS of the CSD across all male adult institutions - Annual Trend



Remarks
1. Certain PICs who have been convicted of sexual offences may not be reachable by PSS due to factors such as short remaining sentence.
2. The above table excludes PICs under the age of 21.
3. Other institutions can include addiction treatment centres, hospital custodial wards etc. where treatment may or may not be provided due to various factors, including—but not limited to—a short sentence, denial of offence or refusal of treatment by the PIC, poor mental status, and other circumstances.

End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation (NGO)

End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation (ECSAF) maintains a hotline to provide case referrals and counselling services and the data here results from that. From 2015-2024 they referred between 4-32 cases a year to SWD. ECSAF's phone calls have drastically declined since 2014-2015 (819 calls) through to 2023-2024 (163 calls).

TALK asked ECSAF if the nature of their hotline changed that resulted in the large drop in calls received but no further information has been received. Similarly, ECSAF's casework has equally decreased, with their case referrals to SWD now being in the single digits.

Figure 16. ECSAF Phone Calls and Number of CSA Cases - Annual Trend

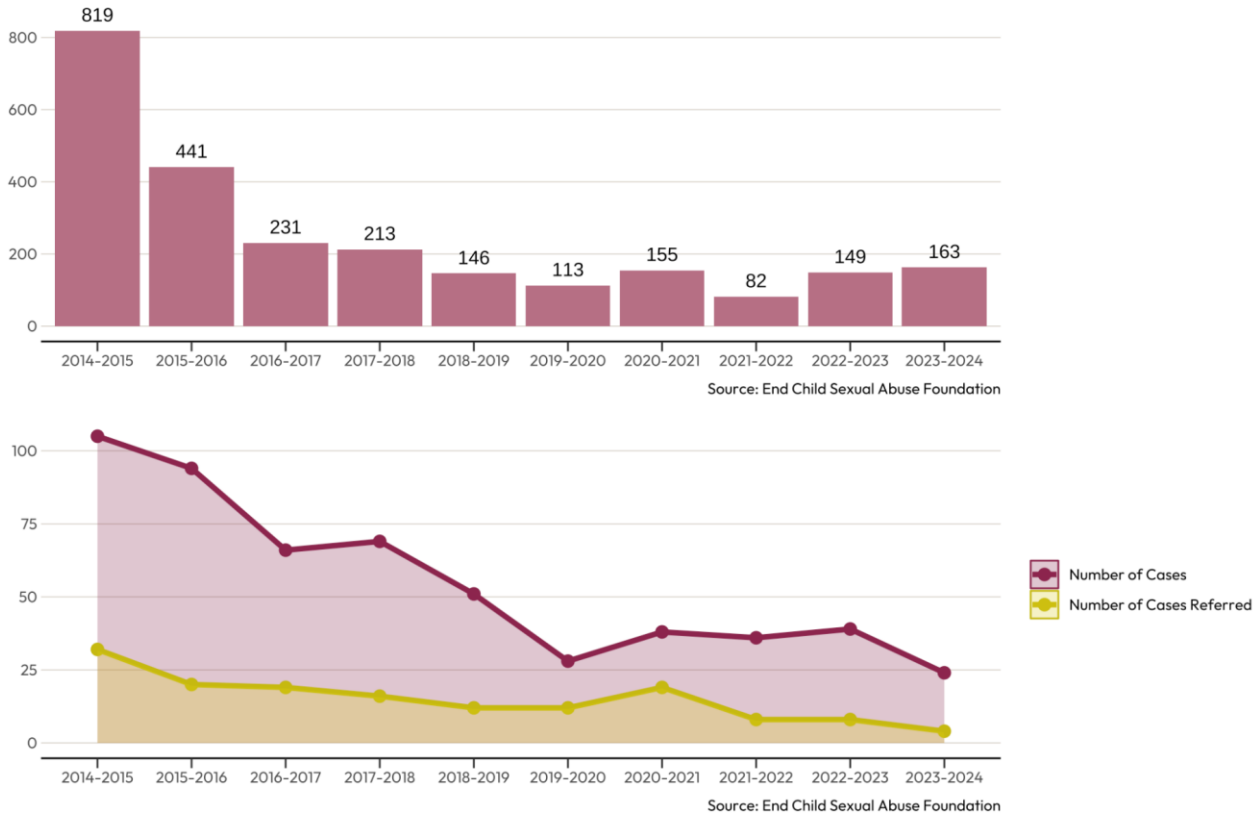
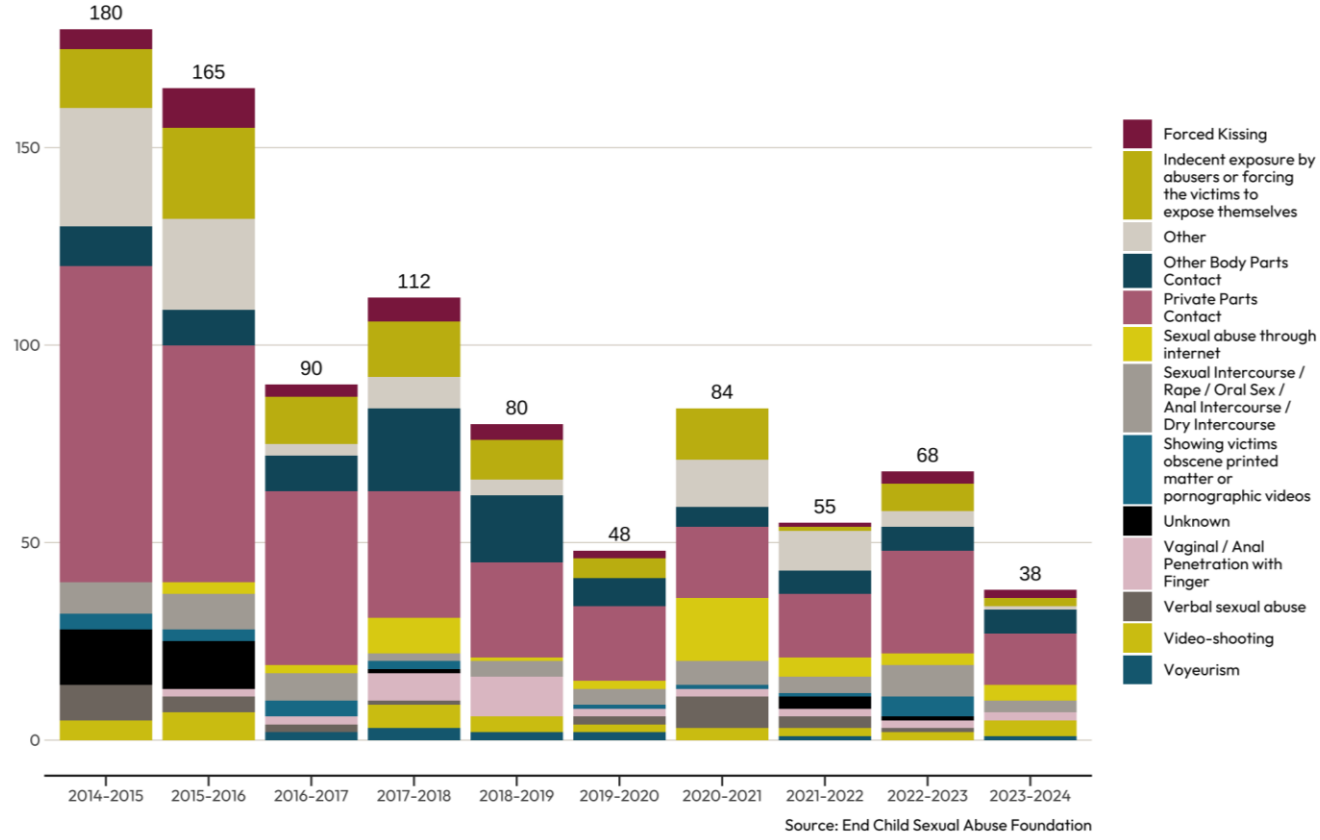


Figure 17. ECSAF Type of CSA Cases - Annual Trend

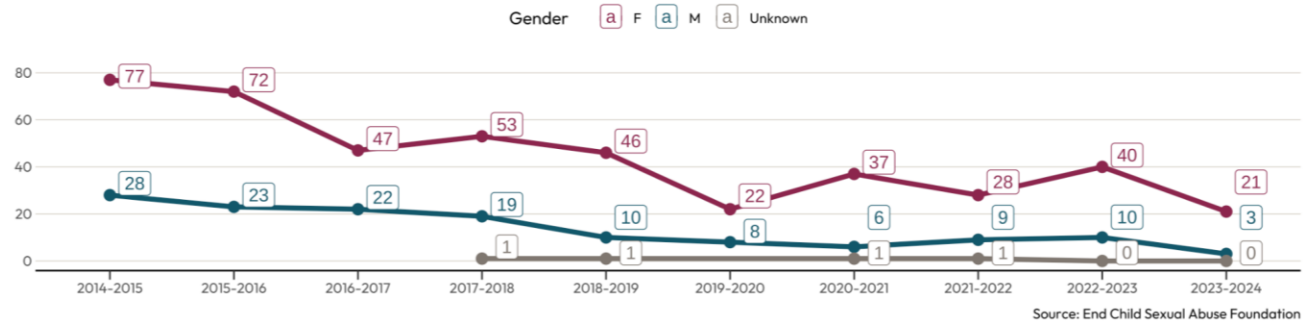
Some cases involve more than one type of abuse



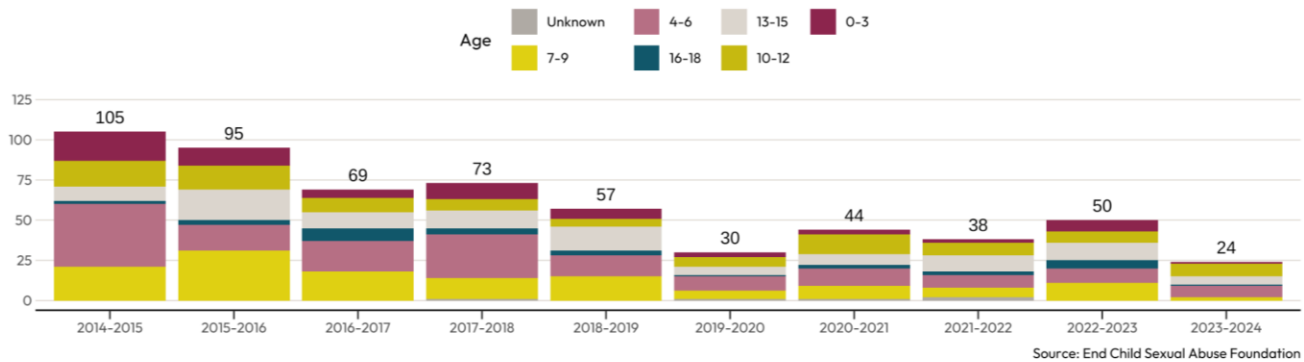
Source: End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation

Figure 18. ECSAF CSA Victims Demographics - Annual Trend

(One case refers to one child)



Source: End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation



Source: End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation

Figure 19. ECSAF CSA Perpetrators Demographics - Annual Trend

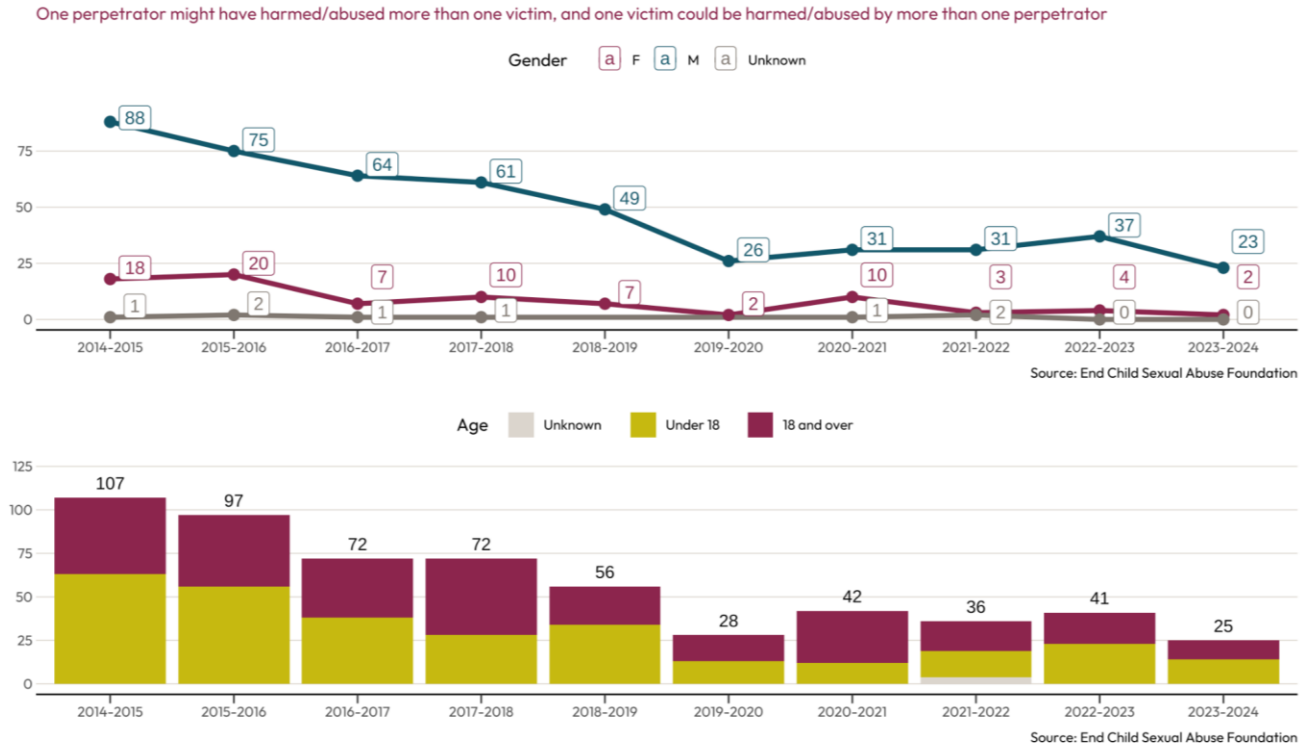


Figure 20. ECSAF CSA Victim-Perpetrator Relationship - Annual Trend

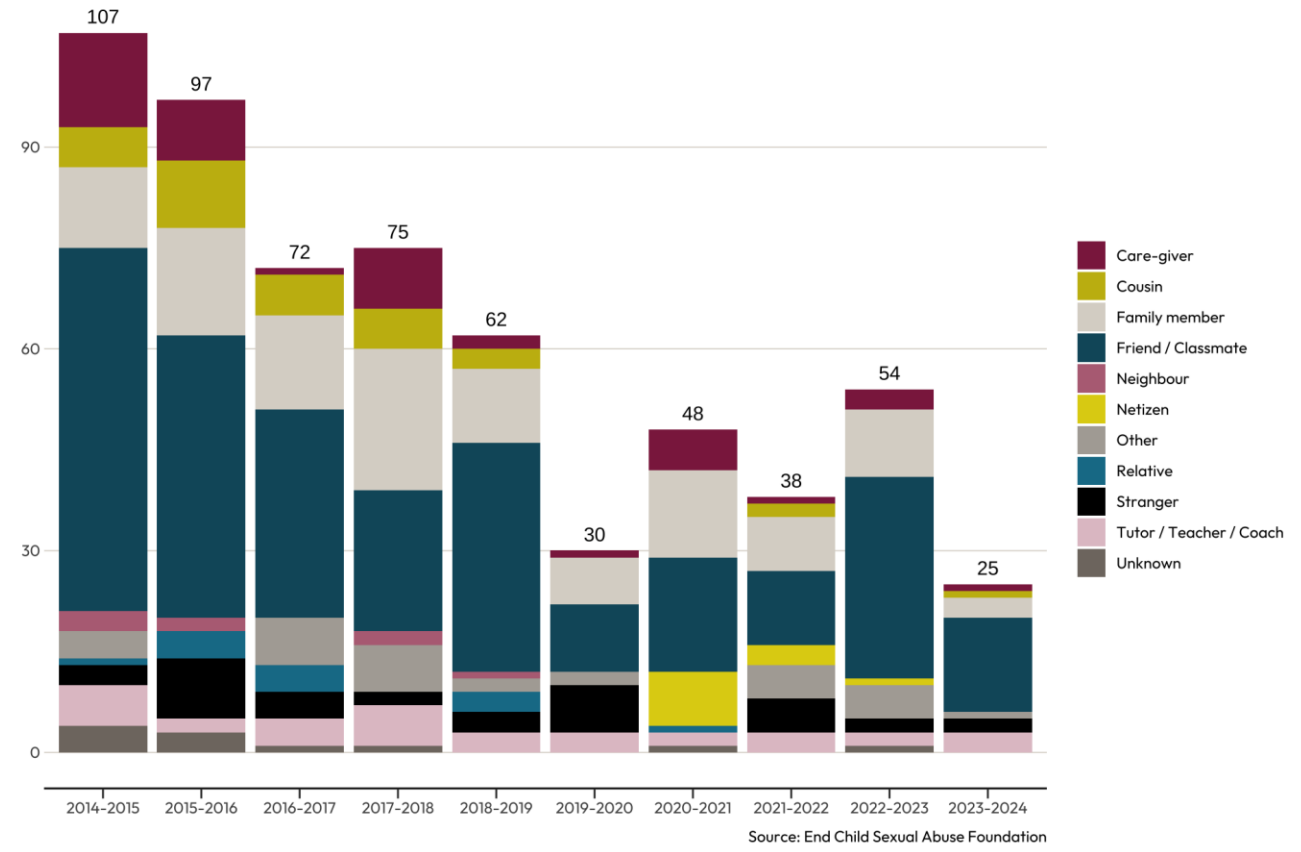
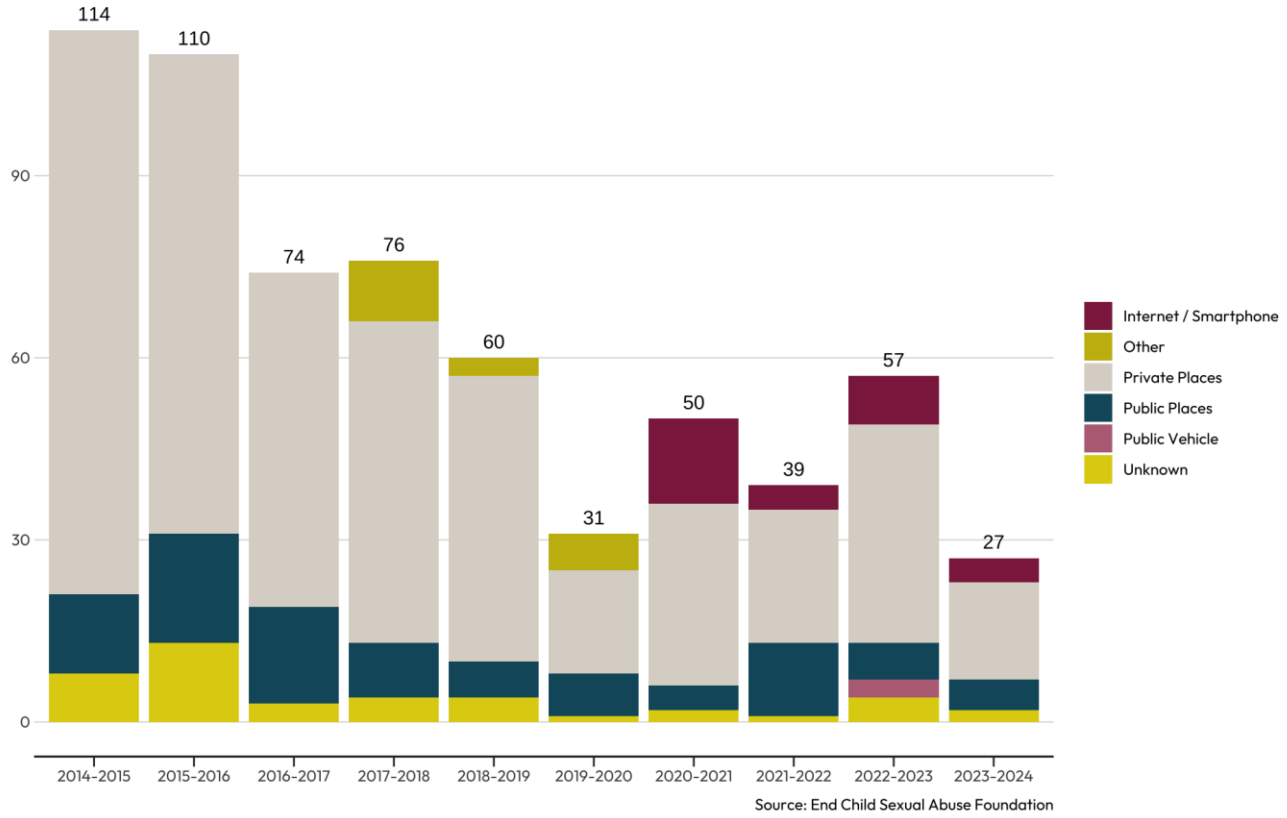


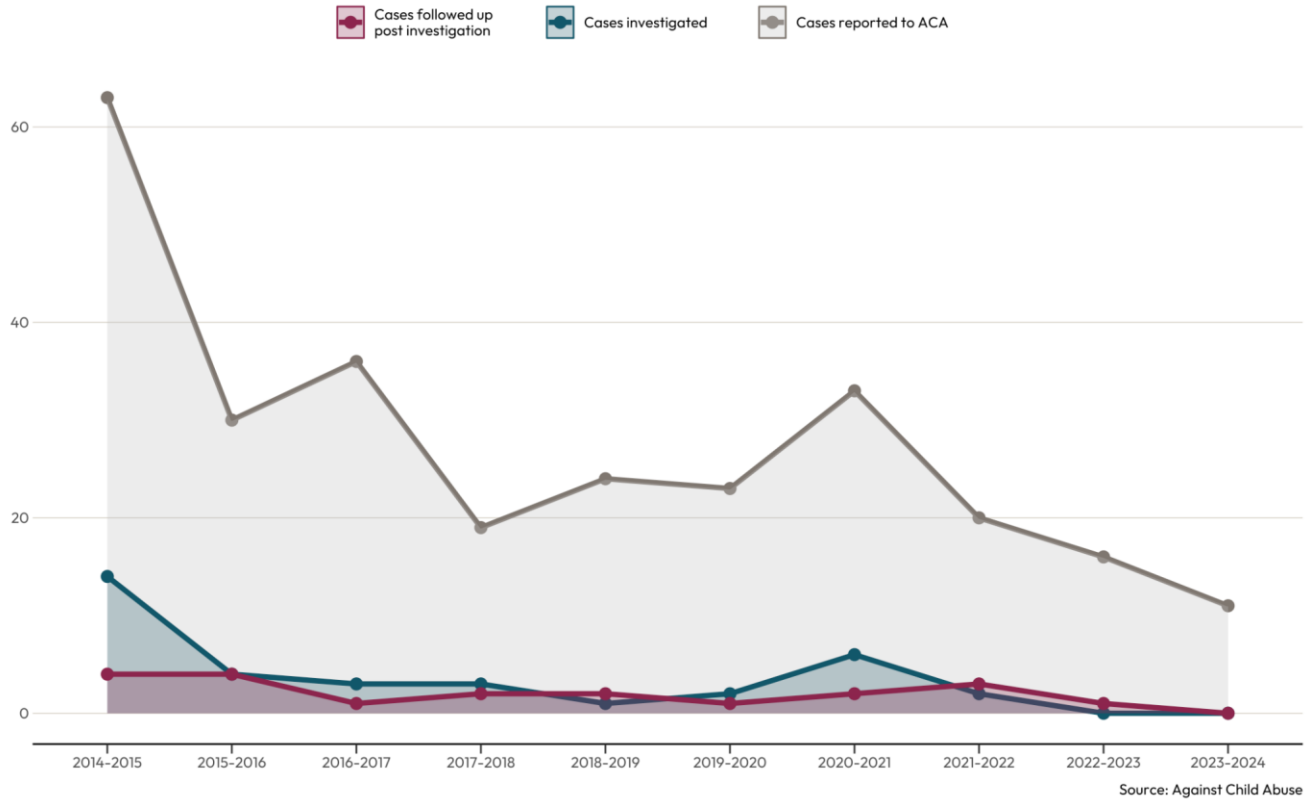
Figure 21. ECSAF CSA Location of Abuse - Annual Trend

Locations have been classified into broader categories to facilitate interpretation. Some cases involved more than one location.



Against Child Abuse (NGO)

Figure 22. Against Child Abuse Number of CSA Cases - Annual Trend



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Against Child Abuse (ACA) provides some basic statistics about the CSA cases that are reported to them each year. In 2023-24 they received reports of a total of 138 child abuse cases of which no cases were registered as child sexual abuse. The number of cases investigated for CSA have steadily been declining since 2014, with a minor increase in 2020-2021, before reaching zero in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

Education Bureau

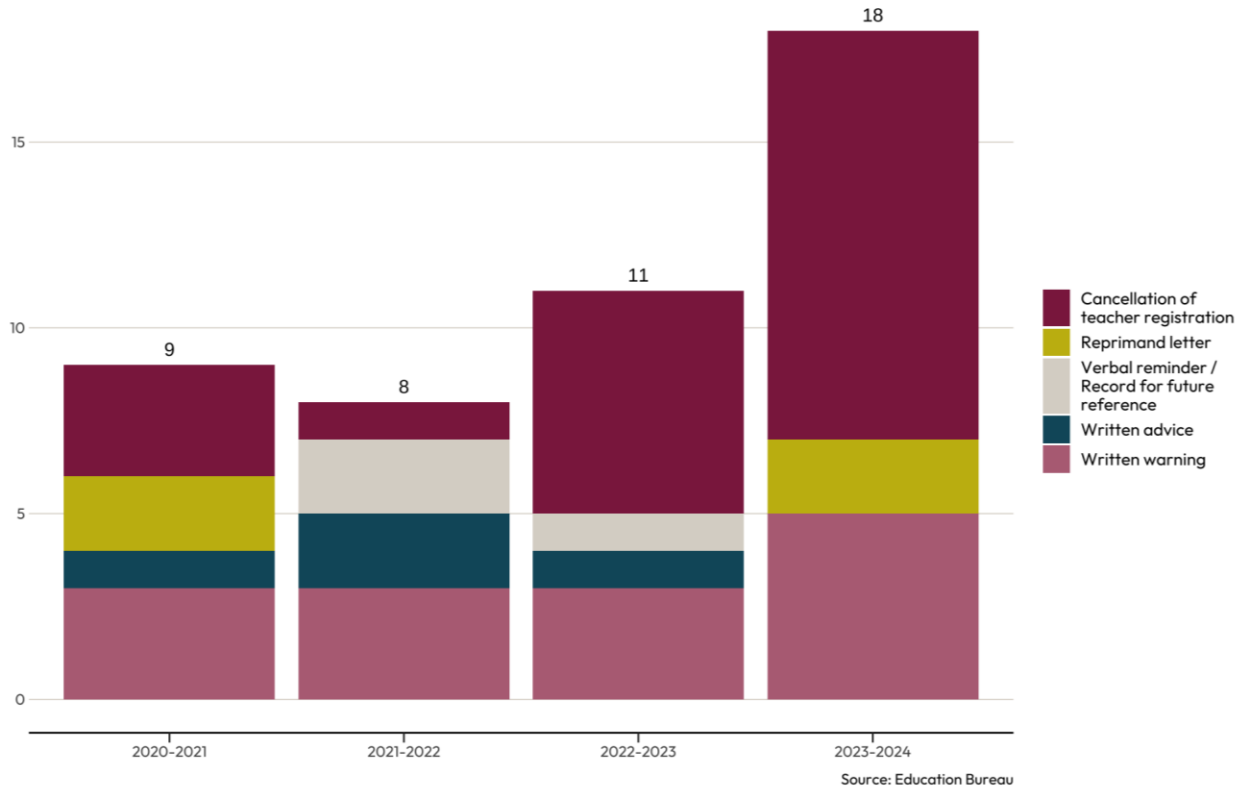
6
average annual teacher deregistrations

<1%
of all registered teachers had actions taken against them for inappropriate conduct of a CSA nature.

Based on reported cases, in the past 4 years

Figure 23. Education Bureau actions taken related to teacher misconduct - Annual Trend

For cases involving indecent, boundary-crossing or sexual behaviour



Source: Education Bureau

As the regulator of all formal education, the Education Bureau (EDB) of the HKSAR provides a range of services related to policy and governance. It governs teacher registration and has disciplinary measures in place (as described in the School Administration Guides) and requires all teachers to uphold the eight codes of conduct, as described in the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct (Education Bureau, 2022).

The teacher workforce in Hong Kong has been declining for the past few years, which, given the decline in children, is not surprising. In 2024, the EDB reported 68,404 registered teachers working across Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary phases. When an allegation of misconduct is made against a staff member, it is a principal's duty to report the staff member to the EDB for further regulatory action. The EDB have released investigation outcomes of this nature since the academic year 2020-2021, which can be seen in Figure 23.

Since the introduction of the circular "Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff in Schools" (Government of the HKSAR, 2023), an increased focus has been given to this regulating function of the EDB when responding to (alleged) teacher misconduct. The number of reported cases related to CSA have slowly been increasing, though the overall figures reflect <1% of the total teacher workforce, averaging at six cases a year when viewed over the past five years.

The Gaps: Requested and Received Data

This concludes the section of our report based on the data requests and report analysis as described in this chapter and outlined in **Appendix A**. The data from official government sources is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of governmental data, requested, received and not received

Who	Requested	Received	Not Received
Social Welfare Department	Full case data, mapping all variables (e.g., district, ethnicity, perpetrator details) to CSA cases.	Custom data breakdown. Public CPR data (sex, age, type of harm, etc.).	Data for CSA cases was missing points for district, ethnicity, living arrangements, and perpetrator details. Not all data is mapped to specific abuse types.
Hong Kong Police Force	Full case data, especially victim and perpetrator demographics (gender, age), mapping all variables (e.g., district, ethnicity, perpetrator details) to CSA cases.	A custom breakdown with four data points: offence, age of victims, gender of victims, and perpetrator-victim relationship.	Ages and genders of perpetrators, and the ability to map data to other points.
Hospital Authority	Data from the Clinical Data Analysis and Reporting System (CDARS) and Accident and Emergency Information System (AEIS) related to CSA.	None.	No data was made publicly available. The HA informed TALK the data was not extracted and could only be provided for academic research for a fee (~HKD60,000).
Department of Justice	Data on all sexual offences committed against children, including general offences like rape or indecent assault.	Custom breakdown of charges by: Offences, Outcomes (verdicts), and Type of Sentence.	The victim's age was not recorded, so CSA cases could not be identified unless the charge was age-specific. Data on general offences (rape, assault) against minors is missing. No data specific to male victims.
Correctional Services Department	Statistics related to CSA, sentencing lengths, perpetrator demographics, and recidivism.	Annual breakdown of offenders being treated for sexual offences.	The CSD informed TALK that they "do not maintain statistics related to CSA or sentencing lengths". However, we did receive some data from the psychological services.
Education Bureau	Statistics related to the regulatory actions taken for reported concerns about CSA-related misconduct by teachers.	Annual breakdown since 2020 on actions taken against CSA-related misconduct by teachers.	

We raise additional discussion points and recommendations in the next chapters of this report, with the aim of improving child safety by working towards a unified single core data set.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to explore questions that the data and TALK's research raises. We reflect on the previous research sources we drew from, and the accumulated data through the joint lenses of prevention and response, before listing our recommendations for this edition of the report.

Estimated Prevalence vs Reported Cases

We estimate the prevalence of CSA in Hong Kong to be at 16%, yet current prevalence data from SWD is at 0.05%, compared to the global reporting prevalence of 8% (Mehta et al., 2023). With this difference in mind, we discuss the different mechanisms at play, in an effort to support increasing reporting rates in Hong Kong.

An underreporting of CSA is not unique to Hong Kong and is seen in many countries around the world (Cagney et al., 2025). We must therefore understand the interconnected dynamics of our complex system here in Hong Kong better, for which no research data exists yet. Thus, understanding the unique patterns of abuse within a Hong Kong context proves challenging. We drew on significant national representative studies from abroad, as none yet exist here in Hong Kong. Such nationally representative studies can help in giving voice to the children being harmed. Understanding that disclosure is a complex process, a study by Moore et al. (2016) provides an alternative measure to adopt to Hong Kong. This study used scenarios to ask children who they would disclose to. Such an approach could provide a lower barrier of entry to gaining insight into how HK children would seek to disclose. A further study conducted by Xu and Cheung (2023) showed that parents are seeking tools and strategies to talk to their children about CSA. In a landmark study conducted in Australia (Salter et al., 2023), we know that 1 in 10 adult men have sexually abused children. A similar prevalence study conducted in Hong Kong could provide critical data to end harm to children. By improving our insights across the spectrum, from victim / survivors, to parents and finally, perpetrators, we can begin to map out opportunity, reasons, access, and vulnerabilities. We describe this issue in more detail in the recommendations below.

In a landmark study conducted in Australia (Salter et al., 2023), we know that 1 in 10 adult men have sexually abused children.

Following our review of prevalence studies which showed that China / Hong Kong seems to have a more similar rate of prevalence for boys and girls, we expected to see the rate of male and female victims in Hong Kong within closer range of each other. It is positive to see that reporting rates for boys have slowly increased over the past ten years, however, both SWD and HKPF data continue to show that there is a significant discrepancy in victim / survivor gender data. As further discussed by Easton and Parchment (2021), there is a growing awareness around the prevalence and consequences of CSA of boys. Research shows that the barriers to identification and reporting differ from girls. Understanding these barriers for the different gender and sexuality subgroups is of crucial importance to increase visibility of this underreported group of victims.

Data from the Hospital Authority is absent from this report, as no public reports are made available for inclusion. However, research by Wong et al. (2022) highlights that approximately 20% of all cases in the Hong Kong hospital Accident and Emergency rooms involve child abuse, of which 26% were younger than six years, with approximately 10% involving CSA. These percentages were obtained from analysing 10 years of data from 2001-2010. More recent data would help increase prevalence figures significantly.

Our current overview of the past ten years shows a shift in numbers. Where ACA and ECSAF received a higher number of calls and cases ten years ago, their numbers have dropped significantly. At the same time, reporting numbers to the SWD and HKPF have increased. It is beyond the scope of our report to infer why these changes are occurring. Nevertheless, we take it as a positive step that reported numbers are increasing, even with a declining child population.

Vulnerable Groups

As identified in two Hong Kong based studies (Chan et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2022), neurodiverse children and children with disabilities are at a much higher risk of becoming victims of abuse, including CSA. These studies also revealed a much higher risk for these children to develop mental health conditions post-abuse. The neurodiverse numbers in the SWD data are concerning, with an estimated rate of 29% of all reporting cases. Co-occurring conditions mask the accuracy of this figure, but it remains considerable regardless.

Understanding vulnerability also means considering other minority groups, including ethnic minorities and sexual minorities. Whilst SWD records ethnicity, the CPR data report does not break down victim / perpetrator ethnicity according to type of abuse, meaning we were not able to include it in our report.

As discussed by Capaldi et al. (2024), young people identifying as LGBTQ+ have an increased risk of being sexually abused. More targeted research done abroad (Vaswani et al., 2022) highlights that specifically, teenage gay / bisexual boys are at a higher risk of CSA.

Such research highlights the need for a trauma-informed and targeted approach. Supporting lesbian girls, for example, will have differences when compared to bisexual boys, or transgender teens. Whilst LGBTQ+ provides a helpful acronym to unite sexual minorities, distinct pathways and support remains important. Understanding any such harms within a Hong Kong context through more targeted research would help increase safety for stigmatised minority groups.

Understanding Different Types of CSA

Each case of CSA is unique in its own way. Understanding the context of CSA cases helps increase opportunities for prevention. One example was highlighted in a study by Allard-Gaudreau et al. (2024), noting that CSA cases where a victim was made to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator was shown to be a significant factor in the length of delay before disclosure. When comparing this research with the data available from ECSAF, for example, this pattern of abuse can be included in a category such as “Private Parts Contact”, though none of the reported data includes specific information on the nature of such contact. Analysing such cases in more detail could help develop response guidelines that address these specifics, with the aim of shortening time to disclosure.

Understanding the context of cases may also help increase disclosure of CSA for boys. As seen in the work done by Easton and Parchment (2021), several key elements for adults working with children were identified that support disclosure conversations with male victims: (1) experience with supporting male victims of CSA; (2) personal characteristics of being supportive, understanding and caring; and (3) specific actions, such as listening, believing and encouraging help-seeking.

Neither SWD or HKPF disclose any data specifically on CSAM (known as Child Pornography in law) or CSAM-related CSA cases, though this type of crime was included in our request. Whilst the CPR registration form used by the SWD has included perpetrator data on CSAM since 2022, we were unable to obtain statistics. In comparison to SWD and HKPF, the DOJ does record 150+ cases related to child pornography. Understanding CSAM and potential pathways towards offending as identified by Wortley et al. (2024) shows that whilst perpetrators may initially come across CSAM by accident, embedded on a legal adult porn site, this can lead to actively seeking out and / or soliciting such materials. Gaining further insight into CSAM viewing within our context is therefore important to prevent further harm.

Increasing Focus on Perpetration to Improve Prevention

Increasing our understanding of CSA perpetrators within our context is of critical importance. To improve prevention, we must consider the various perpetrator profiles, pathways to abuse and successful intervention responses.

Whilst the SWD records basic demographic data about known perpetrators, neither the HKPF nor DOJ report such information, which means the data cannot be compared across departments. Next to reviewing the official SWD annual reports of the Child Protection Registry, we also conducted a brief review of the SWD "Child Protection Registry Data Input Form". This review highlighted several perpetrator characteristics not yet included in the annual SWD report. These characteristics include: residential address and district, marital status, highest educational level attained, occupation, maltreatment history, ethnicity, residential status, vulnerabilities, and case connections with the HKPF or DOJ. If such characteristics were made public in the CPR annual reporting, more detailed demographics could result in more targeted prevention efforts.

Similar to our previous report, the cases of CSA reported to the SWD are generally for 12+ year olds, whereas international literature frequently shows that onset of abuse commonly occurs around 8 years old (Karsna & Kelly, 2021). The lack of reporting of these younger-aged victims in Hong Kong may reflect that younger children are less likely to disclose and / or that higher incidence of intrafamilial abuse in younger children leads to family members being less likely to disclose this more taboo type of offence. As echoed in the Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (Jay et al., 2022), early identification and intervention can significantly reduce the harm a victim suffers as a result of CSA. It is therefore vital for victim / survivor wellbeing that we aim to increase reporting of younger victims in Hong Kong.

incidence of intrafamilial abuse in younger children leads to family members being less likely to disclose this more taboo type of offence.

Based on RainLily’s service database from 2000-2018, they found that victims of sexual offences younger than 18 in Hong Kong were most likely to be abused by a parent, sibling or relative (Wong, et al. 2019). This is not reflected in the reported cases to SWD.

In an effort to successfully charge perpetrators with the correct offence, the 2019 "Review of Substantive Sexual Offences" report from the Law Reform Commission (LRC) of Hong Kong’s Sub-committee provided a crucial next step in updating Hong Kong’s ordinances in relation to sexual crimes. We fully support its initiative and raise further recommendations in the next section of our report.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

A significant group of those reported to harm in the SWD data are 16 or under (22% in 2024) or described as friends / schoolmates / peers (34% in 2020-2024). The pathway where one child or young person sexually harms / abuses another is commonly referred to as Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB, see the Glossary). It's important not to criminalise children who have harmed, but to invest in psycho-education and therapeutic interventions. We must recognise this distinction, as it's common for people to use adult language when describing child behaviour when it comes to HSB. Understanding the pathways to these harmful behaviours, as well as supporting the victim, is of key importance to redirect and stop ongoing harm / abuse. With proper intervention and support, it is important to know that the vast majority of children who engage in harmful sexual behaviours do not grow up to become adult perpetrators of CSA (McKibbin et al., 2024). Relying on the rights-based approach as described in the UNCRC, society's duty of care extends to both parties: it's important that intervention and responses redress the harm done to the child, whilst balancing this with a supportive pathway for the child who has harmed.

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Regulating Adults Working with Children

There are a number of professions in Hong Kong which can be considered child-facing across a range of organisations, governmental departments, and private companies. We have included the outcomes of regulatory actions of misconduct by the EDB in this report. When compared to data available from the SWD, no direct comparison can be made, as the SWD records the category as "schoolteacher / personnel", whilst the EDB solely records disciplinary actions taken against staff with a teacher registration in Hong Kong. Such comparisons could provide insight on whether cases fall apart as they transition from the SWD to the EDB, but would require SWD reports to separate out the category into teachers and non-teachers.

When compared with other similar organisations in the world, the EDB dataset appears limited and reports only on outcomes. A US-based study with thousands of participants demonstrated sexual misconduct prevalence to be at around 12% (Jeglic et al., 2023). When contrasting this with the reported misconduct outcomes from the EDB at <1%, conducting a similar study within our context could help provide valuable insights.

We were unable to gain insight into the misconduct data of any other regulated professions in Hong Kong. Furthermore, a large number of adults working with children aren't governed by a regulatory body. Tutors, coaches, or independent music teachers, for example, who regularly work one-to-one with a child. Whilst we can infer sexual harms are reported to the SWD or HKPF against individuals in these roles, no regulatory body oversees these roles in Hong Kong, meaning the data lacks context and is based on reported cases alone. We do note the government's increased efforts in this area and are particularly pleased to see that the Sexual Convictions Record Scheme has been expanded to include self-employed individuals in 2024, with volunteers being added late 2025. Concern remains that in order for something to be highlighted on such a check, an individual must be convicted of a sexual crime, with the conviction rate of a 51 average (based on DOJ data) against a 372 average of cases (based on SWD data), the likelihood of this happening is at 14% for reported cases only.

An Ever-evolving Landscape

On the 20th of January, 2026, Hong Kong's new Ordinance on the Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse will come into effect. We fully support the implementation of this ordinance and hope its impact on CSA offending will result in increased reporting and response. Based on analysis of other countries who have adopted mandated reporting (Mathews et al., 2016), it may be that reporting rates increase three-fold or four-fold. Any such potential outcomes will become visible over time as we continue to monitor reporting rates in Hong Kong.

Efforts must continue to be made on prevention, raising knowledge and awareness of CSA, and increasing the UNCRC rights of all children to feel safe in Hong Kong.

Another significant, ongoing development is the rapid pace with which the online world is changing. CSAM statistics, real or generated using AI, are rising exponentially. A concerted effort must be made on prevention and response.

Recommendations

This part of the report is divided into two sections: Improving Prevention and Improving Response. Our reason for providing recommendations are perhaps best captured by this quote from the Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (Jay et al., 2022): “The effective protection of children from harm is an essential feature of a civilised society. Despite this, child sexual abuse occurs in many institutions, contexts and settings.”

Our previous report (Edgar, 2022) already listed several recommendations, which have been factored into the ten recommendations below.

Improving Prevention

1. Public Awareness, Education and Understanding

Limited research exists on contextual barriers to engaging with CSA from a cultural perspective in Hong Kong. The issues surrounding awareness and attitudes towards CSA are not unique challenges for Hong Kong, but of a global nature. In recommending steps to take, a culturally sensitive approach is recommended, beginning with building an awareness of how the public perceive stigma, shame, fear and barriers to reporting / discussing CSA in everyday life. A study conducted by Tanweer (2023) identified potential barriers more unique to the Asian / Chinese community in this area, e.g. the weight of familial expectations, or the stigma around mental health issues. It's only through understanding barriers to awareness campaigns and activities that we can formulate a more targeted approach. As mentioned in the previous section, specific focus must be given to the gender imbalance in the reporting data. Awareness-raising activities further include a review of the curriculum on relationships and sexuality education in Hong Kong schools, supported by student surveys on lived experience and / or scenario-based questions. Finally, we recommend that public awareness must highlight that the current reporting balance between girls and boys is 7:1 respectively, whilst prevalence research suggests it may be much closer to 2:1.

2. Deterrence and Interruption of Abuse Pathways

We recommend all possible efforts be made to establish a "Stop it Now!" type service in Hong Kong. The absence of perpetrator prevalence research should not hinder us from providing pathways that deter and interrupt potential sexual abuse of children. Providing an anonymous support platform for adults struggling with their thoughts and feelings is therefore crucial to help stop abuse before it happens. Perpetrator research has shown that sexual feelings towards children begin to develop during puberty, where currently, there are no clear signposted support areas available in Hong Kong for adolescents and adults struggling with these feelings. We suggest NGOs such as TALK Hong Kong offer suitable avenues in providing such informational and supportive services, as core elements of success will be anonymity, autonomy and voluntary engagement. We can learn from similar efforts with "Stop it Now!" services in countries such as the Netherlands, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

3. Regulation of the Workforce

We recommend that greater efforts are made on regulating the workforce for all adults working with children. We are grateful to the EDB for their efforts in this area and their willingness to provide data for this report. We also express gratitude for the Mandated Reporting Ordinance to establish a list of child-facing professions with a regulatory system or body in place. Sector-wide standards and a Code of Conduct for working with children should be established across these groups, to provide clarity and set boundaries which protect both adults and children. We further recommend these standards and Code are put in place for non-regulated professions, such as tutor, private creative arts teachers, and sports coaches. Based on the SWD dataset, the harm is prevalent with these perpetrator groups. A regulatory body, which oversees standards and establishes reporting mechanisms related to indecent conduct would be recommended. We recognise it is difficult to regulate all such individuals, but initial efforts can focus on established clubs and institutes (such as the Hong Kong Sports Institute). We suggest that, as the leading authority in education, the EDB are uniquely positioned to share their current principles / guidelines and work with the Leisure / Culture Department in establishing these for the larger, unregulated workforce. NGOs such as TALK Hong Kong can collaborate and provide an important feedback element in these processes.

4. Greater Use and Public Availability of Barring Services

Building on our previous recommendation, we suggest that Hong Kong establishes a clear platform for the reporting of professional misconduct, in line with the Code of Conduct recommended previously. We support the requirement of a Sexual Convictions Records Check for professionals in child-facing professions, but recognise the limitations that an SCRC will only give insight on convictions, which won't capture the full spectrum of whether someone is suitable to work with children. The EDB mechanism for responding to

misconduct already allows for actions to be taken, even if the criminal threshold isn't met. For example, a teacher displaying clear behaviours in line with sexual grooming can lose their teaching license, even if sexual grooming isn't yet an offence in Hong Kong. What might such a barring service and barred list look like, across a wider range of professions and available to the public? This would allow non-regulated organisations, such as sports clubs, to increase safety for their children. Such steps can only increase safety for all children and adults involved. The creation of such public lists would stop someone from moving from a regulated profession (e.g. teacher) to a non-regulated one (e.g. tutor) and continue sexual abuse, either in Hong Kong or abroad.

5. A Single Core Data Set

We recommend that all relevant government departments and bureaus, including the Social Welfare Department, Hospital Authority, Hong Kong Police Force, Department of Justice, and Education Bureau, work towards consistent and compatible data about CSA. The goal is to standardise the variables used to record data on CSA. This requires unifying the definitions for types of abuse, victim-perpetrator relationships, specific vulnerabilities, victim and perpetrator demographics, and using consistent age groupings for both victims and perpetrators. We also recommend these agencies to establish a system for cross-agency data integration using anonymised unique identifiers. This integrated, longitudinal database would then allow the tracking of cases, from reporting through to prosecution. This would enable deeper analysis, and regular publication of comprehensive, anonymised data to inform prevention strategies. NGOs such as TALK Hong Kong can support in consultation and help develop a template for CSA recording.

6. Commission Hong Kong-specific Perpetration Prevalence Research

To strengthen CSA prevention, we recommend commissioning the first comprehensive, local study on the prevalence of perpetration. While statistics from the SWD and HKPF provide data on reported cases, a preventative approach requires a deeper understanding of the unreported scale of the problem. This research must be designed to investigate two distinct populations, as they require fundamentally different prevention and intervention strategies: (1) adults who perpetrate: We propose adapting a robust methodology, such as the nationally representative study on perpetration prevalence conducted in Australia (Salter et al., 2023). A similar, culturally specific study in Hong Kong is needed to quantify the local scale of adult perpetration and inform evidence-based public health and prevention campaigns, and (2) children with Harmful Sexual Behaviour: A separate but equally important study must be developed to understand the prevalence and nature of HSB among children and young people in Hong Kong. This data is essential for developing appropriate, therapeutic, and non-punitive interventions for children who harm.

This approach moves the research burden away from an over-reliance on victims and survivors having to recount their trauma, placing the focus instead on understanding and preventing the source of the harm.

Improving Response

7. Review the Justice Response

We recommend a system-wide review to embed trauma-informed practices throughout the criminal justice system. With an average of 372 reported cases to the SWD, where more than 90% of cases are deemed abuse, the DOJ average of 54 cases is in stark contrast to the 372 reported cases. While positive steps like specialised police interview safe houses exist, access can be a barrier, and there is little data on the victim's overall experience. Further analysis, guided by TALK's recent legal pathways research (Hader, 2025), can help identify how police and judicial procedures can factor in the cognitive and memory effects of trauma. Concurrently, a parallel review can be explored to assess perpetrator management, specifically to gather data on recidivism and strengthen rehabilitative programs to prevent re-offense. To increase options and reduce the feelings of hopelessness and isolation for victims, we recommend establishing an independent Child's Ombudsman for Hong Kong. Modelled on successful international counterparts, such as in the Netherlands, this office would provide a dedicated, high-level channel for advocacy and redress. This new function could be structured as a specialised, independent division within the existing office of the existing Ombudsman.

8. Supporting Victims and Survivors

We recommend a comprehensive strategy to increase victim voice, choice and support, drawing on the principles of international models such as the UK's Truth Project, which provides a platform for survivors to be heard, and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation's "Everybody's Safer" initiative, which champions a whole-system approach to support. This strategy can result in a dynamic online platform for connection and support, ensuring clear direction to therapeutic services and a thorough review of specialist services for all vulnerable groups. We further recommend platforms and surveys are initiated to give voice to several marginalised, vulnerable groups discussed in this report. Such platforms and research data would help increase support for, and visibility of, victims who are neurodiverse, have a disability, belong to a sexual minority or to an ethnic minority. This should be paired with establishing formal mechanisms for victim redress (McKibbin et al., 2024), to reduce long-term impact. Finally, we recommend a crucial gap is addressed by the development of Hong Kong's own anonymous online reporting platform for CSAM, as no such platform currently exists.

9. Continue the Efforts of Legislative Change

We recommend that the government accelerates the comprehensive reform of its sexual offence laws. While the 2019 "Review of Substantive Sexual Offences" report from the Law Reform Commission (LRC) of Hong Kong's Sub-committee represented a crucial step, these vital proposals remain largely unlegislated. Key legislative changes, as identified in TALK's recent legal pathways document (Hader, 2025), must include the immediate establishment of a uniform definition of a "child" and a consistent age of consent — a core recommendation of the 2019 LRC report. Vital reforms included in the LRC recommendations include a definition of consent, gender neutrality, the inclusion of a grooming offence, abolishing the marriage defence, among others. We also strongly encourage the creation of a Persistent Child Sexual Abuse offence to reduce the harm done to children in having to recall in court what is often many incidents over time (often a psychologically impossible task). This reform should also include the modernisation of all legal terminology, such as replacing "Child Pornography" with the accurate term "Child Sexual Abuse Material" (CSAM).

10. Evolving Challenges

We recommend that Hong Kong leverages its position as a leading global technology hub to develop a robust and agile digital safety strategy, addressing the rapid increase of new threats like generative AI and synthetic CSAM. We recommend this is supported by practical policy measures, including the exploration of effective age verification systems and stricter enforcement of social media age restrictions. We applaud the ongoing efforts and work currently underway by the Digital Policy Office on their work in this area.

Closing Comments

We conclude our report by thanking all individuals and professionals who tirelessly work to stop child sexual abuse in Hong Kong. Your work is immensely valuable, whether you're a frontline worker or policy writer, we are all part of the interconnected system that aims to stop children from being sexually harmed and abused.

We remain committed to any and all opportunities to collaborate with all departments, bureaus, other agencies and NGOs in Hong Kong in all efforts to end CSA. We aim to monitor progress on our ten recommendations to support future collaboration. We are committed to collaborate with anyone seeking to make a positive change in line with these recommendations. To that end the future edition of this report will include a review of these recommendations. Our annual planning will also incorporate targets from this review for future projects at TALK Hong Kong.

Our ten recommendations are summarised below to help guide future development and actions.

The concluding recommendations of TALK Hong Kong's **Magnitude of Child Sexual Abuse in Hong Kong: Review of Evidence 2015-2024 Report** are:

1. Increase public awareness, education and understanding of CSA.
2. Improve the deterrence and interruption of abuse pathways.
3. Improved regulation of the workforce.
4. Greater use and public availability of barring services.
5. Establish a public single core dataset of victims and perpetrators.
6. Commission Hong Kong-specific perpetration prevalence research.
7. Review the justice response to CSA.
8. Improve support for victims and survivors of CSA.
9. Continue the efforts of legislative change.
10. Increase awareness of evolving challenges.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data requests and sources

Although there is much more data we would have liked to have had, we focused our requests on basic information about CSA we thought should be available from Hong Kong government departments and bureaus. In each case, we asked for the following data for the period from 2015 to 2024:

- Number of CSA cases
- Type of CSA
- Sex of victim
- Age of victim
- Sex of perpetrator
- Age of perpetrator
- Relationship of perpetrator to victim
- Case outcome (referrals, convictions etc.)

Many of these requested data points were not available and we will discuss this more in the section about gaps in the available data.

We generally requested the types of CSA according to the sexually based crimes in the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200)[1] but rarely received it in that format:

- Section 47 incest by men
- Section 48 Incest by women of or over 16
- Section 118 Rape
- Section 118A Non-consensual buggery
- Section 118B Assault with intent to commit buggery
- Section 118C Homosexual buggery with or by man under 16
- Section 118D Buggery with girl under 21
- Section 118G Procuring others to commit homosexual buggery
- Section 118H Gross indecency with or by man under 21
- Section 118I Gross indecency by man with male mentally incapacitated person
- Section 118J Gross indecency by man with man otherwise than in private
- Section 118K Procuring gross indecency by man with man
- Section 119 Procurement by threats
- Section 120 Procurement by false pretences
- Section 121 Administering drugs to obtain or facilitate unlawful sexual act
- Section 122 Indecent assault
- Section 123 Intercourse with girl under 13
- Section 124 Intercourse with girl under 16
- Section 125 Intercourse with mentally incapacitated person
- Section 126 Abduction of unmarried girl under 16
- Section 127 Abduction of unmarried girl under 18 for sexual intercourse
- Section 128 Abduction of mentally incapacitated person from parent or guardian for sexual act
- Section 129 Trafficking in persons to or from Hong Kong
- Section 130 Control over persons for purpose of unlawful sexual intercourse or prostitution
- Section 131 Causing prostitution
- Section 132 Procurement of girl under 21
- Section 133 Procurement of mentally incapacitated person
- Section 134 Detention for intercourse or in vice establishment
- Section 135 Causing or encouraging prostitution of, intercourse with, or indecent assault on, girl or boy under 16
- Section 136 Causing or encouraging prostitution of mentally incapacitated person
- Section 137 Living on earnings of prostitution of others
- Section 138A Use, procurement or offer of persons under 18 for making pornography or for live pornographic performances
- Section 140 Permitting girl or boy under 13 to resort to or be on premises or vessel for intercourse

[1] https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap200

- Section 141 Permitting young person to resort to or be on premises or vessel for intercourse, prostitution, buggery or homosexual act
- Section 142 Permitting mentally incapacitated person to resort to or be on premises or vessel for intercourse, prostitution or homosexual act
- Section 146 Indecent conduct towards child under 16
- Section 147 Soliciting for an immoral purpose
- Section 148 Indecency in public
- Section 159AAB Voyeurism
- Section 159AAC Unlawful recording or observation of intimate parts
- Section 159AAD Publication of images originating from commission of offence under section 159AAB(1) or 159AAC(1)
- Section 159AAE Publication or threatened publication of intimate images without consent
- Section 159AAG Who cannot give consent that would prevent conduct from becoming offence under Division 2
- Section 159AAH Disregard whether consent is given
- Prevention of Child Pornography Ordinance (Cap 579)
- Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse (Cap 650)

We were not provided data from any department for certain of the offences that we asked about, including Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC):

- Section 127 Abduction of unmarried girl under 18 for sexual intercourse
- Section 132 Procurement of girl under 21
- Section 135 Causing or encouraging prostitution of, intercourse with, or indecent assault on, girl or boy under 16

We requested data from the following government departments and bureaus via the Hong Kong Code of Access to Information which you may view here https://accessinfo.hk/en/user/taura_edgar/requests.

Hospital Authority (HA)	request denied
Education Bureau (EDB)	data received for 2020-2025
Social Welfare Department (SWD)	data received for 2015 – 2024
Hong Kong Police Force Crime Wing (HKP)	data received for 2016 – 2024
All registries and administrative offices of courts and tribunals for which the Judiciary Administrator has responsibility	request denied
Department of Justice (DOJ)	data received for 2015 – 2024
Correctional Services Department (CSD)	data received for 2020 - 2024

Next to these requests, this report used annual reports published to the public domain from:

- SWD: https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/family/fcw_info/fcwdocument/cprstat/index.html
- ACA: https://aca.org.hk/en/quarterly
- ECSAF: https://www.ecsaf.org.hk/en-hk/annual_reports/

Notes

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