

主旨: Our views on population policy

My husband and I are permanent HK residents. Our three children were born in Hong Kong. Our children are currently aged 7, 5 and 2.5

While we continue to believe HK remains a great place to raise children we do have a number of concerns- these concerns hinder us from having more children, and may eventually force us to leave HK.

HK is our home- I have lived in HK since 1993 and my husband since 2003.

These are our concerns (and factors we believe limiting population growth in HK, and limiting its birth

rate):

1). Housing: property is too expensive to buy (even with both my husband and I working as professionals), and rents are almost double what we paid six years ago. Over the years the size of the apartment we can afford to rent has decreased as our family has increased, as opposed to increasing.

We already live on an outlying island to reduce our rent burden but even on the island we call home, we are faced with sky high rents for small apartments. Affordable apartments to house a family of five (plus domestic

helper) are almost impossible to find. The quality of apartments is low in general in HK. The quality, size and price of property is preventing HK residents from having more children.

2). Education: like many professional couples in HK we have little faith in the local education system and government schools. Their curriculums remain outdated and still much too focused on academic and exam results. There is little provision for children who do not excel excellently academically in terms of sporting or drama or art facilities/teaching. The level of English in local schools is also still depressingly low. This leaves us dependent on international schools whose school fees are rising unchecked by the government. The cost of an international kindergarten (half day session) per month on the outlying island we live currently costs around HK\$6,000 per month. Our children's' international school primary fees are set to rise by over 50% in the next four years. Education and it's availability in HK, and it's affordability and level of quality, is a deciding factor (and a huge one) when people decide to have more children or not.

3). Air quality: Hong Kong's deteriorating air quality certainly deters many residents from having children in the territory or having more.

4). Lack of support for working parents: HK's maternity leave (currently at ten weeks, not all of it paid at full salary) is a disgrace. Two weeks of the leave must be taken post birth, which leaves a new mother with just eight weeks at home with her new baby before she must return to work. This is by no means enough time, and is almost impossible for a mother Breastfeeding her baby. At eight weeks old my three children were still nursing every two hours. It would have been impossible to maintain with a return to work at that point. Eight weeks is barely enough time to bond with a baby, and deters many woman from giving birth or from having more children. There is also no protection for mothers/ parents to ensure they can strike a good work/ family life balance- time taken off to care for sick children is not protected and always classed as ' unpaid leave'.

We hope you find our views useful.

Kind Regards
Rebecca and Ido Tomasis
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Sent from my iPad