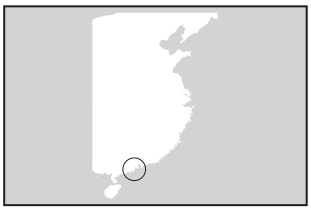
Hong Kong, China

Population	6 925 900
Female population (as % of total population)	52.0
Women's life expectancy	85.4
Men's life expectancy	79.3
Fertility rate (average births per female)	0.966



Degree of gender discrimination (based on SIGI quintile)

Low	Low/medium	Medium	Medium/high	High

In 1997, Hong Kong, China, enacted a Sex Discrimination Ordinance that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy. While people acknowledge that gender stereotyping still exists, the popular belief is that it is not a particularly serious problem.

Nonetheless, a survey by the US Department of State shows that almost 80% of female workers in Hong Kong believe that they are discriminated against, that they have lower salaries than men and that they have fewer promotion opportunities. This is significant as women comprise about 45% of the labour force.

Family code

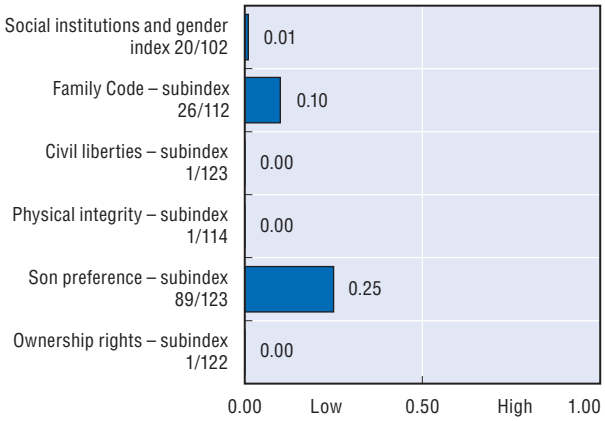
Women in Hong Kong are well protected in relation to family matters. The Marriage Ordinance sets the minimum age of marriage at 16 for both sexes, but parental consent is required for persons younger than 21. Early marriage is quite rare: a 2004 United Nations report estimated that only 2% of girls between 15 and 19 years old were married, divorced or widowed. In fact, Hong Kong has the highest female mean age of marriage (29 years) in the East Asia/Pacific region.

Polygamy was permitted by law in Hong Kong until 1971 when it was rendered illegal under the Offenses against the Person Ordinance. Despite these developments, polygamy still occurs as a cross-border phenomenon, with many Hong Kong businessmen maintaining concubines in mainland China.

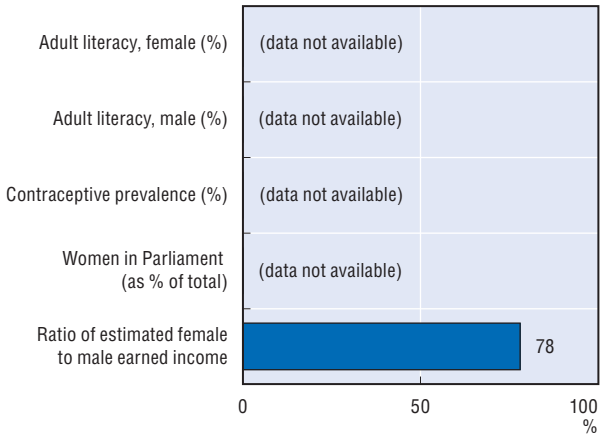
Parental authority in Hong Kong is shared by both parents; the Guardianship of Minors Ordinance ensures that men and women have the same rights and obligations towards their children. The CEDAW Committee reports that in the event of divorce, a court will determine custody. The guardian, be it the mother or the father, has the right to apply for maintenance payments from the other parent.

Although daughters and sons have equal legal rights to inheritance, in accordance with traditional Chinese practice, property is typically divided among sons, especially in the case of a family business. Prior to the 1994 implementation of the New Territories Ordinance, women were not allowed to inherit any land or property.

SIGI ranking



Select indicators of gender equality



Physical integrity

Hong Kong offers a high level of protection for the physical integrity of women. Violence against women is prohibited under three legal frameworks: the Crimes Ordinance; the Offences against the Person Ordinance; and the Domestic Violence Ordinance. Spousal rape is recognised as a crime. In general, the government supports the principle of "zero tolerance of domestic violence", but it has been criticised for failing to adequately address the problem. As reported by the US Department of State, a 2005 University of Hong Kong survey found that one in five families have experienced some form of domestic violence. Women's advocates are proposing that the Domestic Violence Ordinance be strengthened in three areas: by expanding the scope of coverage to include ex-spouses and ex-cohabiters; by including psychological harm as a valid criterion for attaching power of arrest to an injunction; and by lengthening the duration of injunction orders.

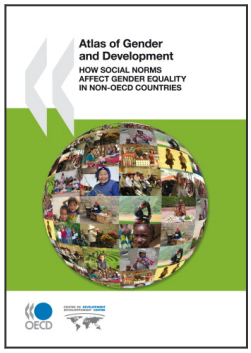
There is no evidence that female genital mutilation is practised.

Ownership rights

Women in Hong Kong have strong support for economic independence. The law grants women and men above the age of 18 years equal access to land and access to property other than land. Women may also freely enter into contracts and apply for access to bank loans and other types of credit.

Civil liberties

Women in Hong Kong are not restricted regarding their civil liberties: they have freedom of movement and freedom of dress.



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