

**“Working Together to Prevent Suicide”  
The HKU Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention releases  
the latest figures and prevention recommendations on suicide**

With the aim to raise awareness of suicide prevention across the globe, World Suicide Prevention day is observed on September 10 by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) each year. As a member of the IASP, the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) of the University of Hong Kong holds a press conference today with the theme “Working Together to Prevent Suicide” to release the latest suicide figures in Hong Kong together with prevention recommendations, and also to introduce CSRP’s latest collaboration with Hong Kong YouTubers on suicide prevention as well as promoting mental wellness.

**Latest Suicide Figures**

With the data extracted from the Coroner’s Court, CSRP estimated that the suicide rate<sup>1</sup> in Hong Kong was 12.4 in 2017, which was slightly lower than 12.5 in 2016. To enable valid comparison of suicide rates among different countries or regions, suicide rates are often standardized and adjusted according to the age structure of the world population. Since the aging phenomenon in Hong Kong is more serious than other regions, after adjustment of the suicide rate, the age-standardized suicide rate in Hong Kong was estimated at 9.5 in 2017, which is lower than the global rate of 10.5 (World Health Organization, 2018)

The suicide rate of the elderly population has been the highest among different age groups throughout the years. Nevertheless, it is observed that there was a downward trend since 2008, where the suicide rate for people at and over 60 years old stood at 27.1. In 2016, it is estimated that the suicide rate of this age group was 21.0, which reflects a continuous improvement in elderly suicide. On the other hand, the suicide rate of children aged 0 to 14 maintained at a low level of 0.3 and 0.8 in the past ten years.

In recent years, youth suicides have become a heightened concern in society. The estimated suicide rate of the age group 15 to 24 increased from 8.3 in 2012 to 9.5 in 2016. In particular, CSRP has traced the recent situation of suicides among full-time

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<sup>1</sup> All suicide rates are calculated as per 100,000 people. Taking the overall suicide rate in 2017 (12.4) as example, it means there were 12.4 per 100,000 people in Hong Kong died by suicide.

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students aged 15 to 24. Based on death investigation documents provided by the Coroner's Court, CSRP estimated that the suicide cases of full-time students has increased by 52.6% (from 19 cases in 2012 to 29 cases in 2016), while the suicide rate has increased by 76.1% (from 4.6 in 2012 to 8.1 in 2016). Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai, Director of CSRP, explained that the difference of the percentage increase (52.6% vs 76.1%) was partially related to the drop in the student population (from 408,615 people in 2012 to 356,139 people in 2016).

Compared with the suicide rate of full-time students, the suicide rate among all other youths aged 15 to 24 have always been higher throughout the years (11.5 in 2012; 10.7 in 2016), yet the difference between the two rates is slowly narrowing (the difference was 6.9 in 2012; 2.6 in 2016). Professor Yip believes that, as the data suggested, schools appear to be attenuating in timely identifying and supporting vulnerable students.

On the other hand, CSRP finds that in 2016, the proportion of deceased full-time students with academic problems and psychiatric history were higher compared to 2015. Yet, detailed examination of death investigation documents showed that the full-time students had been facing various problems mainly related to family, romantic relationships, study and finance. Previous studies and CSRP's review of the death reports have shown that suicide is a complex phenomenon caused by interlocking factors. Oversimplification of the causes of student suicides should thus be avoided.

The rising number of student suicide cases and the complexity of suicide have warranted each member of the community to work together to prevent suicide.

### **Suicide prevention project with YouTubers**

Since July 2017, with the support of The Hongkong Bank Foundation, HSBC's Charitable Trust, CSRP has used an innovative outreach approach to connect vulnerable youths through social media. In this project, CSRP works collaboratively with influential YouTubers who possess positive public images to produce and organize suicide prevention videos and activities.

CSRP has invited Asha, who has over 126K subscribers, to share her thoughts and feelings on the collaborative suicide prevention project. Asha was attracted to join the project because she discovered that a considerable number of Hong Kong

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people suffered from poor mental health without realizing the problem themselves. She felt related to and concerned as she had a similar experience in the past. She once thought that being sad was a weakness and did not know how to process and express her emotions. As she grew up she met people who shared similar sentiments, and some with even more intense feelings than hers. Therefore, she would like to show her care to these people through this project, as well as learn more about mental health and suicide prevention.

Asha and CSRP have launched two activities last year and released videos on YouTube: 'A Confessional Box 告解箱' and '你有沒有想過/嘗試過自殺?' (translated as: Have you ever thought of suicide or tried ending your life?). The two videos are well-received by the audience, with a lot of commenters appreciating Asha's effort in bringing out the issue, and some also disclosed their own frustrations and suicidal thoughts. Asha is also grateful to CSRP for providing her with mental health training and support, in which she has acquired the skills of interacting with people in distress.

Asha added that, through the two activities, connections between people have been enhanced, as reflected in the comments. The audience and participants of the activities can feel that there are people speaking to and for them and encountering a situation similar to them. Asha herself also feels a sense of responsibility and motivation to keep innovating on her platform to lend a voice to the issue of mental wellness and suicide prevention.

Finally, Asha would like to let the public know that at times, we all experience sadness. We should just open up to express our feelings and be more caring to the people around us. In face of the future, we do not have to follow a specific route if that is not what we want.

Below are the suicide prevention videos collaboratively produced by the YouTubers and CSRP:

ASHA ETC	
A Confessional Box 告解箱	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wu8cM3hjAOc&amp;t=25s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wu8cM3hjAOc&amp;t=25s</a>
你有沒有想過/嘗試過自殺? (Have you ever thought of suicide or tried ending your life?)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEgdvPrkXIE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEgdvPrkXIE</a>

FHProductionHK	
我在香港委屈的日子 (My days of frustration in HK)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTCSrallIWtk&amp;t=14s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTCSrallIWtk&amp;t=14s</a>
TheLittleBalu	
微電影《What Happened To Jane Doe》 (Short film: What Happened To Jane Doe)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwilyDZWQGo&amp;t=67s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwilyDZWQGo&amp;t=67s</a>
遇上陌生人在街上大哭，路人反應是...？   社會實驗(What were the reactions of the people upon seeing someone crying in the public   A social experiment)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKSRcMxlcPM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKSRcMxlcPM</a>
Andrew Yun 的網想正	
父親節呈獻 - 微電影【多一次機會】 (Father's Day special short film "One more chance")	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDlabduRW7Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDlabduRW7Q</a>
關注自殺問題 - 招募人拍片!!! (Engaging in the issue of suicide - video production recruitment!!!)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4i9Gkf_pul&amp;t=2s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4i9Gkf_pul&amp;t=2s</a>

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

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

### **About The Hongkong Bank Foundation, HSBC's Charitable Trust**

The Hongkong Bank Foundation, a charitable trust, was founded in 1981 by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited. The Foundation funds about 150 community projects each year, and since its inception, has donated more than HKD 1.7 billion to projects in Hong Kong and China.

This press release, the PowerPoint and the photos for the press conference can be downloaded from the following website after 16:00, September 10, 2018:

<http://csrp.hku.hk/wspd2018/>

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