



Reduce and recycle Stepping up efforts

Reducing waste and increasing recycling has had a slow start in Hong Kong. What should the government do about it?

According to Hong Kong's Environmental Protection Department, the amount of municipal solid waste per capita has continued to rise steadily since 2011. In 2017, it not only reached 1.45kg per head per day, the highest level since 1991, but also failed to meet the interim target stated in the Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013–2022* of 1kg per person per day.

In such a densely populated city as Hong Kong, the growth in waste generation has created a huge challenge, especially when the management system relies on landfills. Recycling is an important part of any waste management system but statistics show that the overall recycling rate actually dropped from 52% in 2010 to 32% in 2017. Serious systemic failure is evident. Given that the recycling rate of domestic waste is even lower - only 23% in 2017 - the failure is shocking.



Report No. 40 HKFYG Youth I.D.E.A.S.

Society and Livelihood group

Published title Stepping up Efforts in Reducing and Recycling Waste in Hong Kong

Respondents 520 15-34 year-olds

More details yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/2019/03/28/yi040/

Enquiries Beji Ho 3755 7042

Read more

* epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/prob_solutions/WFdev_intro.html

** epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/pro_responsibility/index.html

Key points from respondents

In the month before survey:

- Approximately 60% had occasionally or frequently recycled plastic (66%), paper (60.6%) or metal (59.4%)
- Over 31% had never or seldom recycled garbage
- Among the latter, 63% cited inconvenience as their reason

3 main barriers

- Lack of adequate policy and regulations
- Difficulties faced by the recycling industry
- Inconvenient recycling facilities

Recommendations

- Improvement of legislation for waste reduction and recycling
- Increased and improved recycling facilities
- Strengthened support for the recycling industry
- "Plastic Free Days" to promote waste reduction and environment-friendliness

Comments from Youth I.D.E.A.S. think tank members

Alan Yip, group convener, & Jewel Ho, group member

"Hong Kong lags behind its neighbours where waste reduction and recycling legislation are concerned. We suggest the immediate extension of the government's existing Producer Responsibility Schemes** to cover packing materials and containers such as aluminium cans and paper-packed products. We also suggest trialling a compulsory recycling at designated public housing estates, schools and government buildings. In the longer term, the relevant authorities should also formulate legislation to make it mandatory for residents throughout Hong Kong to separate recyclable items from trash before disposal."

Aaron Mou, deputy group convener, & Jenny Liu, group member

"Most importantly, the government needs to attend urgently to the rebuilding of public confidence in recycling as a whole by ensuring the entire process is properly managed. In order to strengthen support for the local recycling industry, the government subsidies should be provided. We also recommend that government promotes waste reduction and environmentally-friendly lifestyles by establishing plastic-free days."