

Hidden youth in Hong Kong

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Definitions of hidden youth in Hong Kong

Wong & Ying, 2006, p. 66

Young people were likely to be in the state of social withdrawal if they had had the following experiences or conditions for **three months** or more:

- 1) being **disengaged** from connections, interactions or participation in education, employment or training (NEET), and in the most severe cases with the family;
- 2) being **excluded** from the family and

“Three months” ←
inadequate explanation,
lack of research evidence

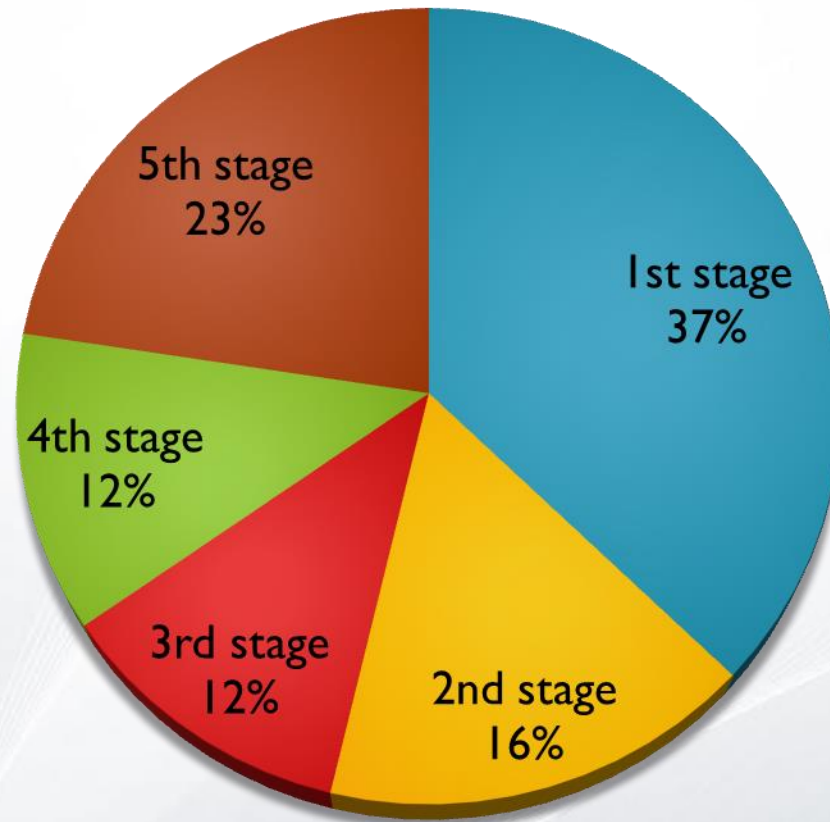
Our current definitions

1. Aged 12-30;
2. Having secluded from society to homes for at least **six months** and refusing to carry on any forms of contact with the outside world, i.e., **not attending school or work** and at the same time, having **no face-to-face connections** with people other than the closest family;
3. **Not having**

Adapt part of definitions of hikikomori in Japan in the context of Hong Kong

Our definitions of hidden youth: Important premise

- Being hidden is a **continuous, developmental period** with stage-like differences (**5 stages**) (Chan, 2016)



Stage 1 (135) (3-12 months of withdrawal)	Stage 2 (60) (13-24 months of withdrawal)	Stage 3 (42) (25-47 months of withdrawal)	Stage 4 (44) (48-72 months of withdrawal)	Stage 5 (82) (73 months of withdrawal or more)
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Figure 1. Demographic information of participants regarding to five stages of hikikomori (N=363)

Hidden youth in Hong Kong

- Origin (Wong & Ying, 2005):
 - a phenomenon **originated from Japan**,
 - Phenomenon **uncovered in Hong Kong in 2004**
 - Number of “**Double-loss**” had achieved 110,000; have potential risks of being hidden
- Phenomenon described as an **increasingly serious ‘epidemic’** and a **‘bomb’ in society** + a ‘problem’ which becomes increasingly serious, e.g. :
 - Double-loss (i.e., Having no social status)
 - Low education, skill level, and motivation (i.e., **‘Three-lows’**)
 - Having **deviant** behaviors
 - Rejecting **social life**
 - Being **purposeless**
 - Being a **burden** of society; worried by society
 - Being **addicted to the Internet**
 - Reliant on technology
 - Self-contained
 - **Marginalized and lower-class**

→ All these discourses have portrayed and even strengthened the negative image of hidden youth

(“Don’t let the hidden parasites”, 2006; “In the virtual world”, 2006; “Otaku, parasites, hidden youth”, 2006; “The population of hidden youth”, 2004)

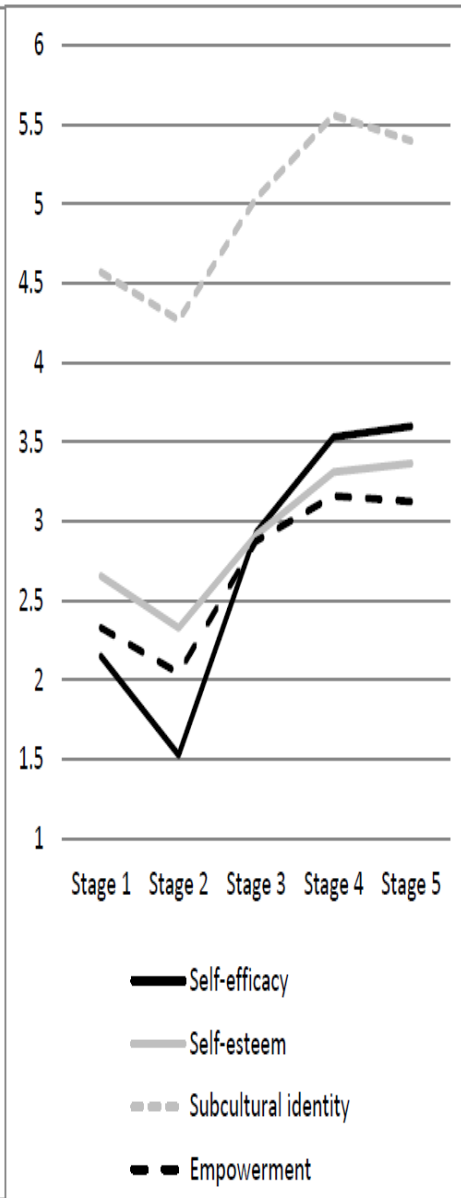
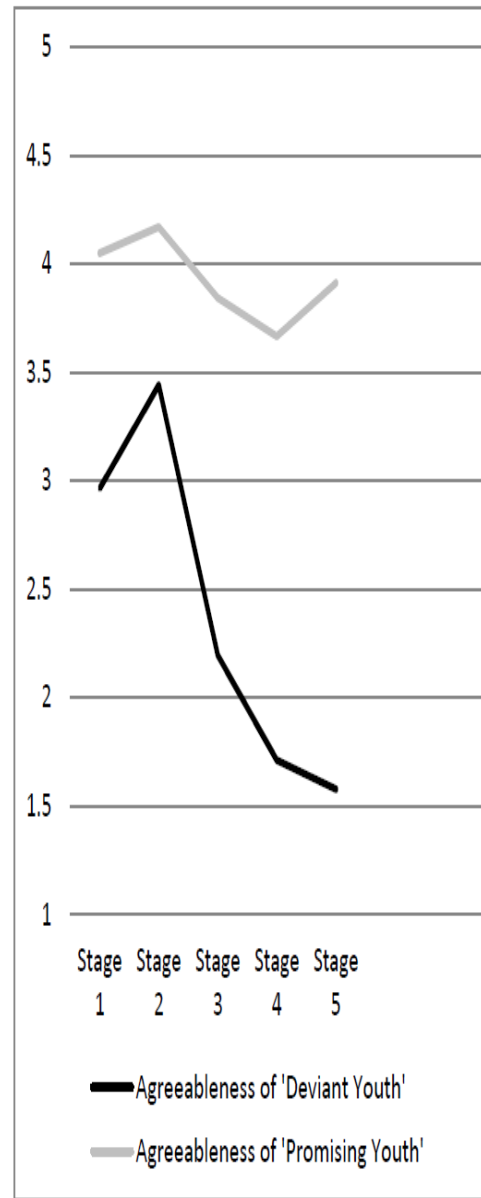
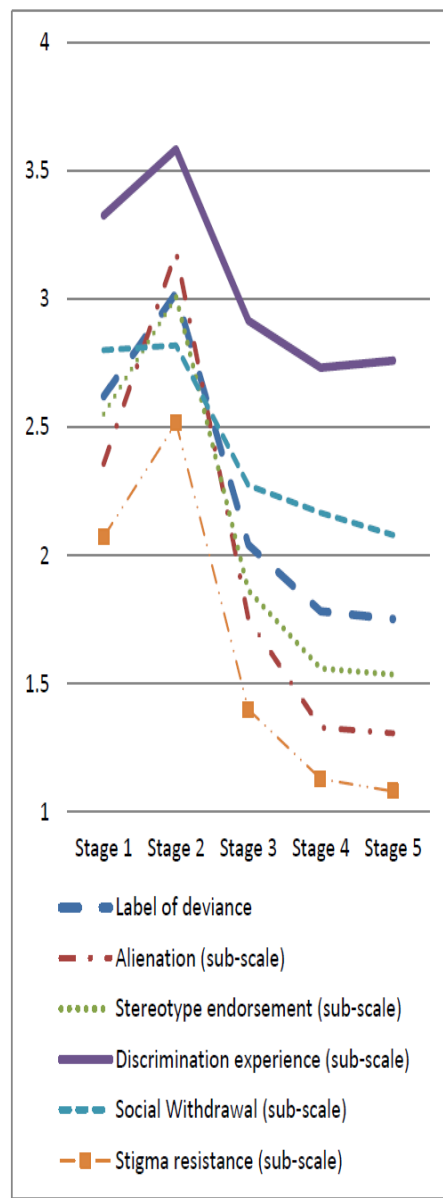
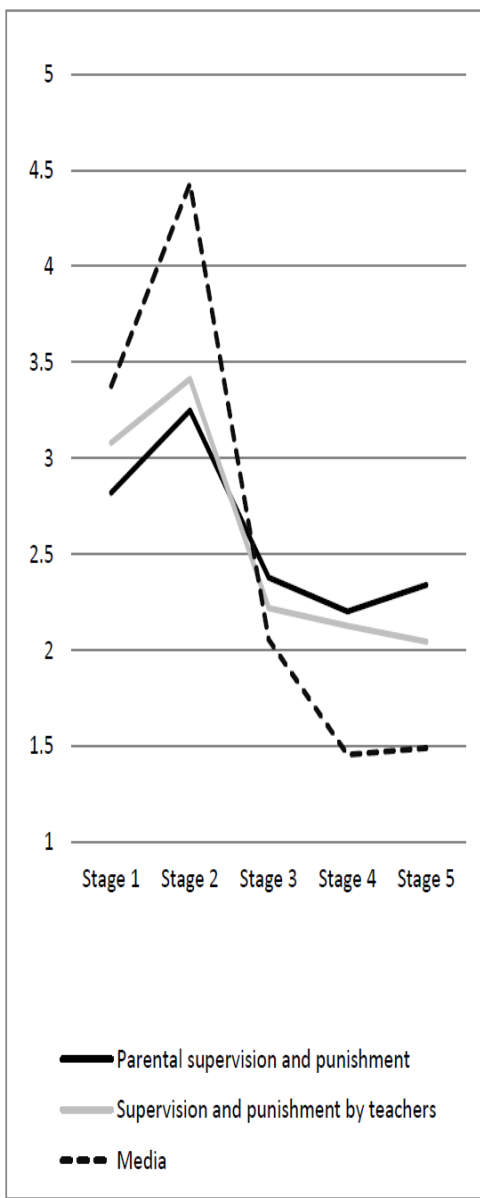


Figure 2. Mean plots of supervision and punishment by teachers and parents and media influence

Figure 3. Mean plots of labels of deviance

Figure 4. Mean plots of agreeableness of promising youth and deviant youth

Figure 5. Mean plots of self-esteem, self-efficacy, subcultural identity, and empowerment

The relationship between participants' involvement in online activities and the period of social withdrawal, and quality of life

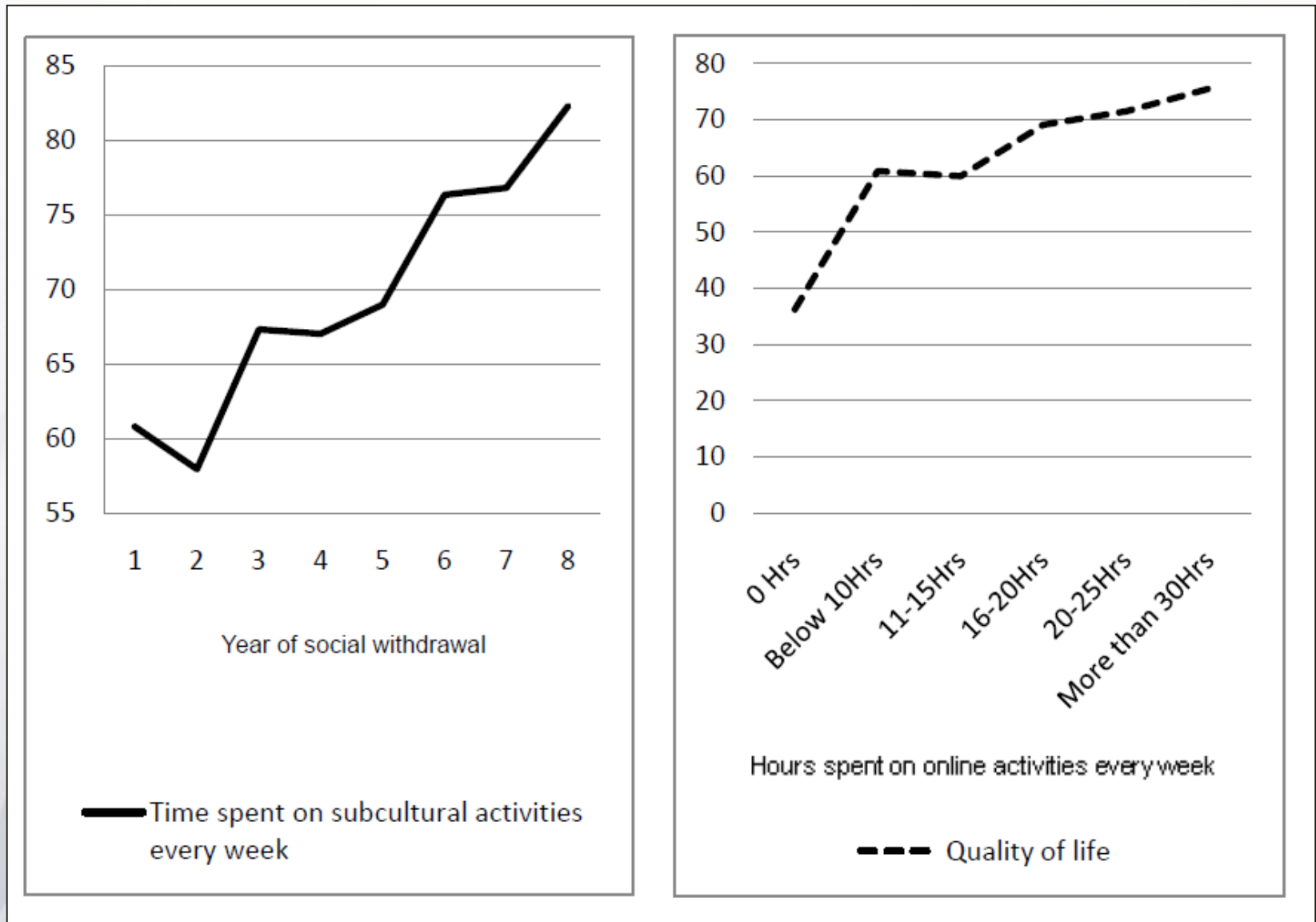


Figure 10. The relationship between participants' involvement in online activities and the period of social withdrawal, and the quality of life

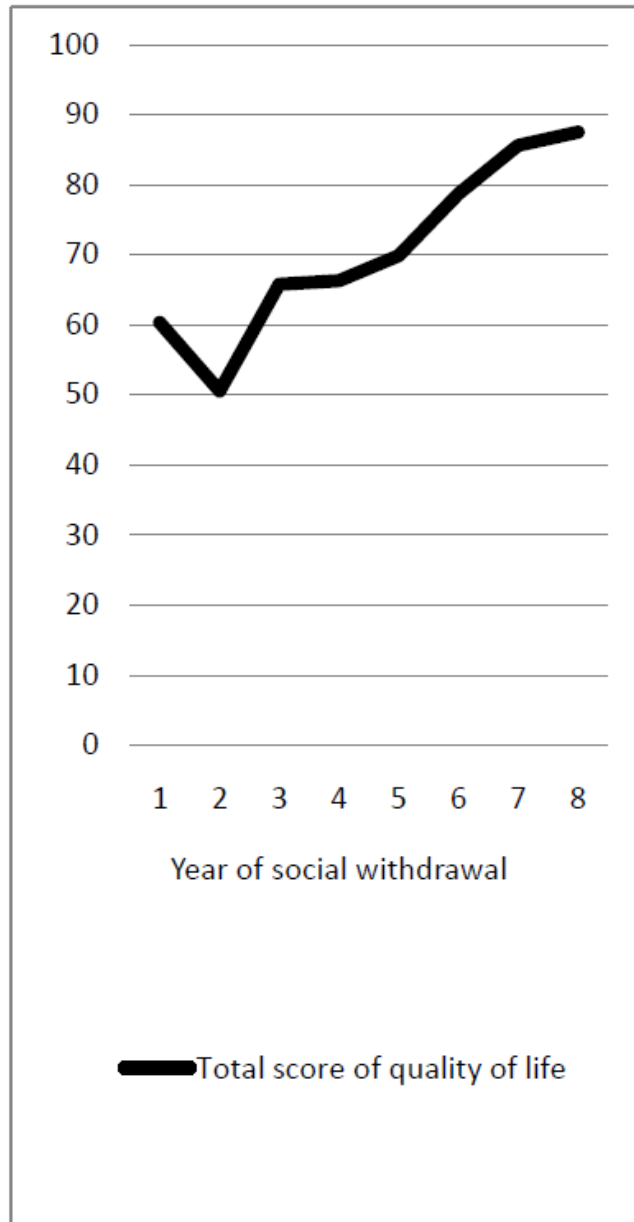
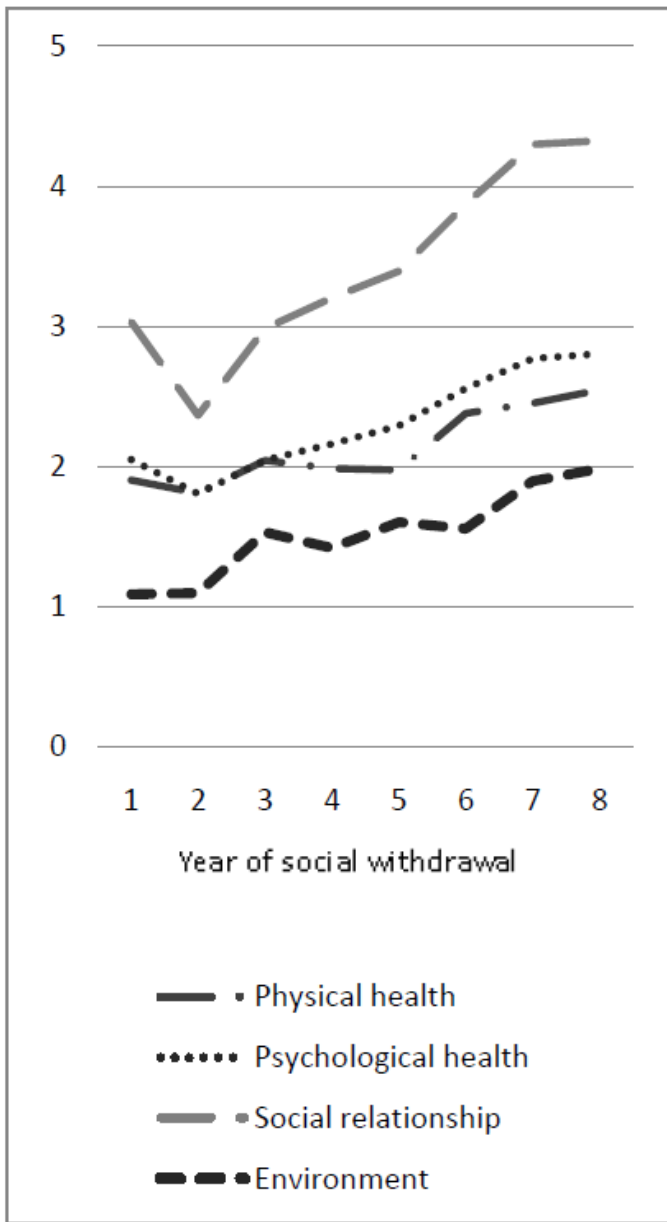
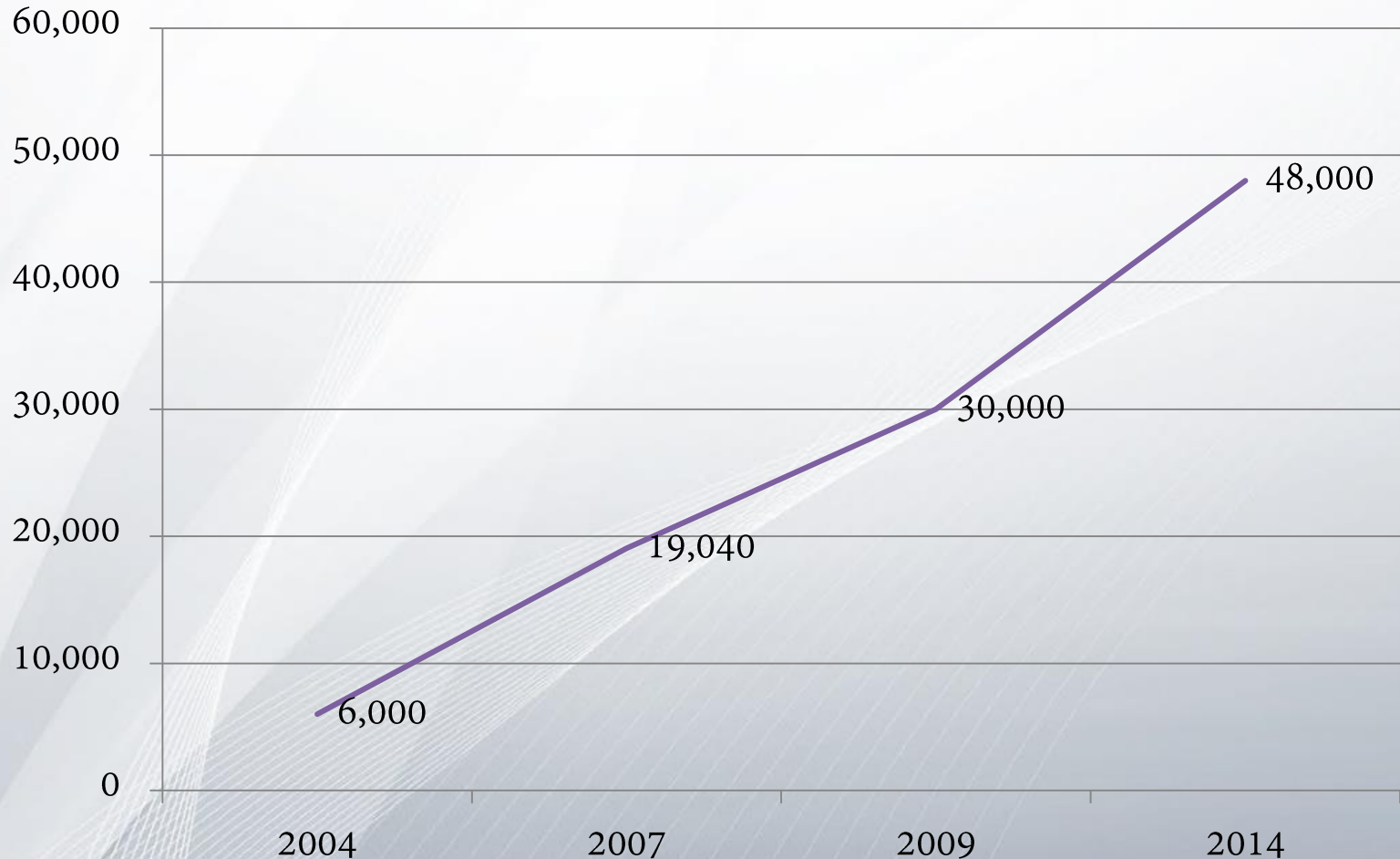


Figure 8. Means of scores in the quality of life (total score and its four specific domains) across the period of social withdrawal.

Phenomenon of hidden youth in Hong Kong

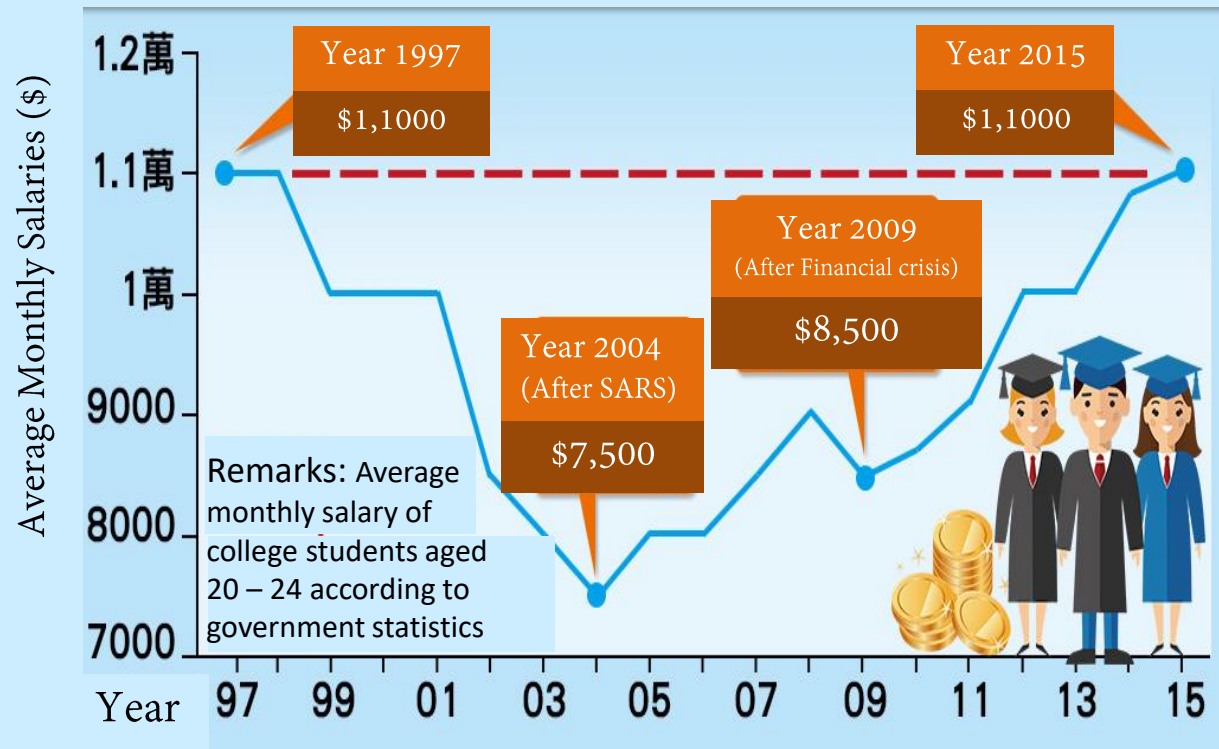
Incidence rate

The number of hidden youth from 2004 to 2014



Salary

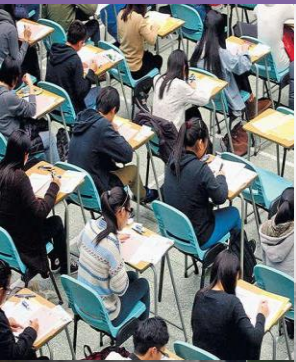
Average monthly salary of college students did not ascend in the past 20 years



Source:

<https://www.ctgoodjobs.hk/article/%E5%A4%A7%E5%B0%88%E7%94%9F%E6%8D%B1%E5%B9%BE%E5%A4%9A%E5%80%8B%E5%8D%81%E5%B9%B4-%E6%9C%88%E8%96%AA%E6%89%8D%E6%9C%89%E8%90%AC%E5%85%83/1144-17078>

Depression

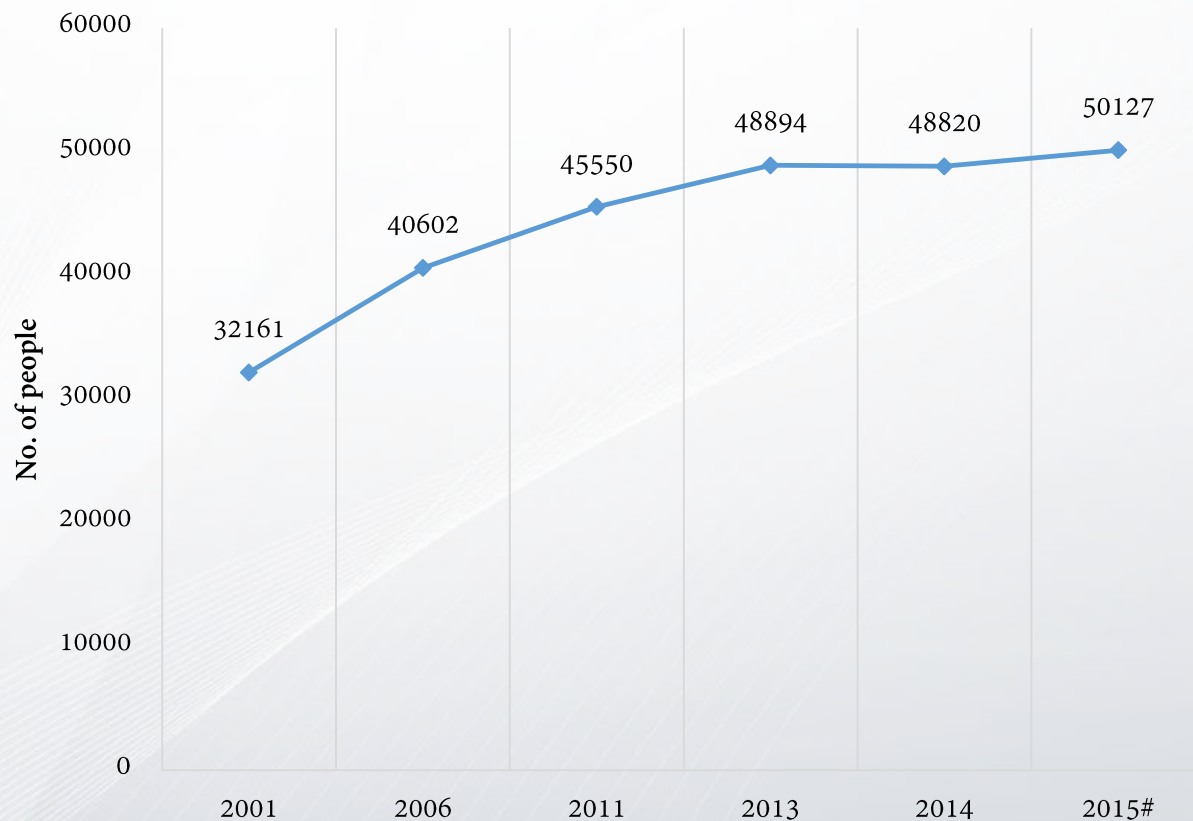


The mysterious link between Instagram filters and depression

By Rob Verger August 19, 2016 | 3:53pm



2001, 2006, 2011, 2013 – 2015 Specialist Outpatient Attendances (Psychiatric Specialty) of Hospital Authority Hospitals for the age group of 15 - 24



Notes: # Provisional figures

Source:

http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/gender/medical_and_health/index_tc.jsp

Political Protest



Number of Public Order Events in Hong Kong, 1986 -
2014



Source: http://socialindicators.org.hk/en/indicators/political_participation/2.5

Property Prices



港人不吃不喝17年 方能置業



全球10大高樓價城市

排名	城市	樓價入息比率(倍)
		2014年 2013年
1	中國香港	17.0 14.9
2	加拿大溫哥華	10.6 10.3
3	澳洲悉尼	9.8 9.2
4	美國三藩市	9.2 9.0
4	美國聖何塞 (San Jose)	9.2 8.7
6	澳洲墨爾本	8.7 8.4
7	英國倫敦	8.5 7.3
8	美國聖迭戈 (San Diego)	8.3 7.9
9	新西蘭奧克蘭	8.2 8.0
10	英國曼徹斯特	8.0 7.7

註：計算方法由業權住宅樓價中位數除以家庭收入中位數，涉及全球378個城市
資料來源：美國研究機構Demographia



Hong Kong Property Prices (price/ sq. ft.), 2006 - 2016



Source: <http://proptx.midland.com.hk/mpp/main.jsp?lang=zh>

Demographic background of hidden youth in Hong Kong: Present findings (2015)

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (N=588)

Variables	%	N
Gender		
Male	63.4	
Female		
Age		
Below 15		
16-20		
21-25		
26-27		
Education		
Junior		
Senior		
Matriculated		
College/University		
Family Income		
Below HK\$10,000		
HK\$20,001–30,000		
HK\$30,001 or above		
Having Engaged in Delinquent Behavior		
Yes	61.1	359
No	38.9	229
Period of Social Withdrawal		
1 year	26.0	153
2 years	22.1	130
3 years	8.5	50
4 years	16.0	94
5 years	11.9	70
6 years	6.5	38
7 years	6.1	36
8 years	2.9	17
Level of Social Withdrawal		
1	20.1	118
2	15.6	92
3	27.7	163
4	26.4	155
5	10.2	60

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Youth in a Social Withdrawal Situation (N=588)

	Yes	No
Currently	N=491 (83.5%)	16.4% (97)
Recently	N=166 (28.2%)	71.8% (422)
Not recently	N=96 (16.3%)	83.7% (492)
Never	N=89 (15.1%)	84.9% (499)
Unknown	N=87 (14.8%)	85.2% (501)
Other	N=78 (13.3%)	86.7% (510)
Not applicable	N=50 (8.5%)	91.5 (538)

Compared to Japan:

- Male-dominant phenomenon (Okuma, 2005; Takahata, 2003)
- Middle-class phenomenon (Shiokura, 2000)
- Half of the participants had been withdrawn for less than 5 years (Okuma, 2005)
- In their 20s (Takahata, 2003; Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour Welfare, 2003)

...the scale of life-course transitions, not the participants' demographic background. This may lead to different results, because the items for life-course transitions assess transitions (e.g., whether they have graduated from high school or college), while the items for general background (e.g., whether the participants are at high school or college) assess the participants' general background (e.g., whether the participants are at high school or college).

Compared to previous statistics in Hong Kong:

- Male-dominant phenomenon
- Not lower-class but middle-class
- Not low education level but fairly high education level
- Some of them have social status and life-course transitions as other ordinary youth
- They are not necessarily delinquent

Demographic background of hidden youth in Hong Kong: Present findings (2015) (Cont'd)

- For their types of employment (N=89, 15.1%)
 - 87.6%: Internet-based
 - 10.1%: self-employed
 - 2.2%: unknown
 - Examples:
 - graphic design
 - online shop assistant
 - programming
 - webpage designing
 - game manager
 - making cosplay costumes
 - translation
 - sensory operator on the gaming platform
 - peer counselor

Demographic background of hidden youth in Hong Kong: Present findings (2015) (Cont'd)

- Types of deviant behavior:

Table 3. Types of deviant behavior engaged by hidden youth (N=588)

	Yes	No
Drug abuse	N = 36 (6.1%)	N = 552 (93.9%)
Self-harm behavior	N = 30 (5.1%)	N = 558 (94.9%)
Spreading virus in the Internet deliberately	N = 106 (18%)	N = 482 (82%)
Hacking websites	N = 71 (12.1%)	N = 517 (87.9%)
(online) bullying	N = 67 (11.4%)	N = 521 (88.6%)
(online) gambling	N = 43 (7.3%)	N = 545 (92.7%)
Theft / fraud (online)	N = 26 (4.4%)	N = 562 (95.6%)
Smoking	N = 144 (24.5%)	N = 444 (75.5%)
Reading/watching pornographic materials	N = 66 (11.2%)	N = 522 (88.8%)
Drinking	N = 154 (26.2%)	N = 434 (73.8%)
Theft	N = 9 (1.5%)	N = 579 (98.5%)
Fraud	N = 5 (0.9%)	N = 583 (99.1%)

- Negative experiences
 - Being hidden does not lead to delinquent behavior, but **negative experiences do** (especially negative relationships with other people) (Chan & Lo, 2016)
- Negative emotions
 - **It is the higher level of social withdrawal, not longer period of social withdrawal, increased the engagement of the youth in delinquent behavior**, because of the mediating effect of negative emotions caused by lower level of social support received (Chan & Lo, 2014b). This shows that hidden youth are not necessarily related to delinquent behavior.
- Transitions
 - **Hidden youth's experience in life-course transitional events, not the hidden situation, may affect their tendency to engage in delinquent behavior.** These events can enhance their quality of life, which in turn reduce their tendency to engage in delinquent behavior (Chan & Lo, 2015).
- **Internet:**
 - **The Internet help youth receive social support and regain sense of identity →** encourage hidden youth to maintain the hidden status (Chan, 2016; Chan & Lo, 2010)

Characteristics of hidden youth in Hong Kong

Previous studies	Our studies
<p>Prolonged use of computers (Wong & Ying, 2006)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prolonged subcultural engagement on the Internet (Chan, 2016) ➤ Those who are in severe level of social withdrawal do not get online
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some of them were <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignorant about their personal hygiene and not took proper meals • bullied at school • had no support for their interests and career plans from their parents ➤ Parents or family members of these young people do not know how and where to seek help ➤ Many of them do prefer engaging in solitary activities (e.g., watching television, surfing the internet, chatting with strangers in the virtual world) (Wong & Ying, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enjoy enhanced quality of life when they increase subcultural engagement on the Internet during prolonged seclusion ➤ have positive emotions caused by parental support for their self-preferred lifestyle and peer support received from the Internet (Chan, 2016; Chan & Lo, 2013a)
<p>Socially isolated (Wong & Ying, 2006)</p>	<p>Hidden youth can develop intimate relationships online whose level is comparable to that of the traditional face-to-face connections (Chan & Lo, 2014a)</p>

Insights

- Many studies perceive hidden youth as **a problem to be treated**, not a social phenomenon or youth transition
- Youth choose to be hidden as **an ultimate coping strategy** when they find themselves **no longer fit into the societal structure** (social censure)
- **Prolonged seclusion at home → subculture → empowerment + positive identity → encourage them to maintain in the hidden situation**

Services for hidden youth in Hong Kong

Services for hidden youth in Hong Kong												
Name of agency / institution	Forms of services											Service nature
	Counseling			Group activities (1)	Training courses (2)	Vocational counseling	Clinical psychological assessment	Community education (3)	Peer counseling programme	Parenting groups	Business operation	
	Individual	Family	Group									
CA (ended)	✓			✓				✓				Regarding NEET as service targets: Helping them re-integrate into society
NAAC (ended)	✓			✓	✓							
HKCS (2004-Now)	✓			✓	✓	✓						
CHK (2009-Now)	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓				
CEZCSSD (2010-Now)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					
St. James' Settlement (2016-2018)	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
Hong Kong Children and Youth Services (2015-2020)	✓			✓								
Cryout (2007-Now)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	

Table 4

A comparison between the services for hidden youth provided in Japan and Hong Kong.

Countries/areas	Service provision		Mode of service provision		Intervention approach		
	Clear and consistent definition of service targets		Government	Non-governmental organizations	Psycho logical/clinical approach	Non-clinical/socializing approach	Other approaches
	Yes	No					
Japan	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hong Kong		✓		✓		✓	

Service gap

- Services for hidden youth are generally underdeveloped:
 - Lack of resources + **project-based service provision** → **lack of routine services offering services specifically to this target group**; rather, services for hidden youth are **attached** to other services (e.g., youth services)
 - Over-emphasize **job training and skills training** for hidden youth while putting **little emphasis** on the youth's **underlying issues** → services aim at fitting the hidden youth into the established social structure + **cannot directly respond to youth's needs**
- Tends to perceive this group of youth as a homogeneous group, ignoring their individual differences, their perception of life experiences, and unique trajectories for becoming hidden

Challenges faced

- The phenomenon of hidden youth is **seldom researched in Hong Kong** → **inadequate understanding** of the youth's unique characteristics → **affect the effectiveness of social services** for hidden youth
- **Traditional intervention methods** (e.g., home visit) are usually used → **cannot identify real hidden youth** as the methods applied cannot fulfill the lifestyle of hidden youth
- **Project-based system** of service implementation → **restrict** the allocation of resources and **shift** the direction of services from meeting the youth's needs **to achieving required performance**
- **Phenomenon is “hidden”** → the Government has **not fully attended** to the hidden youth
- Discourses in society: many negative labels of hidden youth → services become **problem-focused**, aiming at alleviating the hidden youth problem

Our perspective

- Hikikomori is a **phenomenon**
- The development of being a “hikikomorian” has its **transitions**, just like one transiting from childhood to adolescence
- This viewpoint is initially inspired by own **observation in direct practice** with this group of youth, in which they show their confidence, their thoughtful and hopeful side, their enhanced well-being, as well as their capabilities, **just like ordinary youth**

Rather than re-engaging them into society, we **de-label** the youth + **help them find positive identities and strengths** + **fasten their transition** for becoming hidden

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Thank you!

Table 2

The services for hidden youth provided in Asian countries.

Countries	Services								
	Counseling/therapy			Clinical psychological assessment	Medication	Groupwork, group activities, voluntary work, and interest classes	Socialization, job training, and skill training	Parenting advice	Community education
	Individual	Family	Group						
Hong Kong	✓					✓	✓		
Macau	✓					✓		✓	✓
Taiwan							✓		
Mainland China	✓							✓	
Korea	✓			✓					
Oman	✓				✓				

Table 1

The services for hidden youth provided in Japan.

Types of agency/i institution	Services									
	Counseling/therapy			Clinical psychological assessment	Medication and hospitalization	Group activities	Socialization, job training, and skill training	Support for families with hidden youth	Information provision and community education	Leisure
	Individual	Family	Group							
Hikikomori Regional Support Centers	✓	✓								
Mental Health Centers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Rehabilitation centers/programs (e.g. New Start, Takeyama Gakko, Youth Independence Camp, Dora Theatre Group)						✓	✓			
Free Space										✓
Websites (e.g. K.HJ, Carpe Fidein, Hikikomori Support Navigation)	✓							✓	✓	

Table 3

The services for hidden youth provided in western countries.

Countries	Services						
	Counseling/therapy			Hospitalization	Socialization and career development	Recreational activities	Parenting advice
	Individual	Family	Group				
France	✓			✓			
America	✓						
England					✓		
Australia	✓				✓	✓	✓

Table 4

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	Yes	No					
Japan	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hong Kong		✓		✓		✓	