

## **Abstract**

### **A study on the phenomenon of divorce in HK – Recommendations on addressing their needs**

Dr Sandra Tsang Kit-man, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong

The Department of Social Work and Social Administration at University of Hong Kong conducted a comprehensive study on the divorce phenomenon in Hong Kong. This included (i) a study of the demographic and socioeconomic profiles of divorced people and their families based on data collected from the Family Court and Census and Statistic Department, (ii) interviews of forty-one people who were considering divorce, filing for divorce, or already divorced, and those in marital conflicts, and (iii) two focus groups with frontline professionals who were handling divorce cases.

The average length of marriage lies around 11.5 to 12.7 years amongst these divorcing couples. However, this may be dependent upon the number of children that the couples bear within their marriage.

Also, both quantitative and qualitative data show that many divorced households are facing economic challenges. Their **financial and housing needs** should be addressed by strengthening the existing support from the housing and social welfare systems.

Aside from providing tangible support, policy makers and stakeholders should empower and release the labour force by providing and enhancing **childcare services**.

**Flexible work mode and work hours** should be provided for these parents, enabling them to fulfil duties as both a caregiver and breadwinner.

**Marital counselling** at different life stages empowers couples to make informed decisions to begin, to develop or to end their marriage, as well as to minimize negative impact on well-being of their children, and the occurrence of unhappy married life or divorce. When marital breakdown is inevitable, specific interventions, such as **divorce education**, designed for children and parents experiencing divorce can be considered.

Both participants and frontline professionals think that the **procedure of applying for divorce** should be streamlined, simplified, and improved to reduce stress. This could be achieved by providing **additional education or assistance on the application procedure**. Educational materials should cover important topics such as the divorce process, legal rights of both parties, criteria for custodial arrangements, etc.

Lastly, this study has identified important areas where **more research** should be done to understand the situation better and inform policy formulation.