





Chapter III

Together,
We Fight
the Virus



From Belief to Implementation

Nobody have expected COVID-19 to last that long; Hong Kong which had gone through the SARS epidemic in 2003 certainly did not when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in January 2020. Over the past 21 months, the Government and our people soldier on, respectively displaying determination and vigilance in anti-epidemic controls and complying faithfully with personal hygiene measures. As a result, our city has weathered four waves of surging cases and brought the epidemic under control since May 2021. Hong Kong's total number of cases, just exceeding 12 000 and at a ratio of around 1 600 cases per one million population, are amongst the lowest in advanced economies. For a city as compact as Hong Kong and with cross border and international travels maintained, albeit on a limited scale, this is no small achievement which every Hong Kong resident should take pride in.

This global public health crisis has presented governments and scientists with unprecedented challenges. From testing and contact tracing to vaccination and treatment, governments are fighting against time to ramp up capacity while professionals and volunteers are making dedicated contributions. Any fight against a pandemic has to be guided by actions based on science and evidence and supported by solidarity at the national, regional and local levels. Politicisation must be strongly resisted.

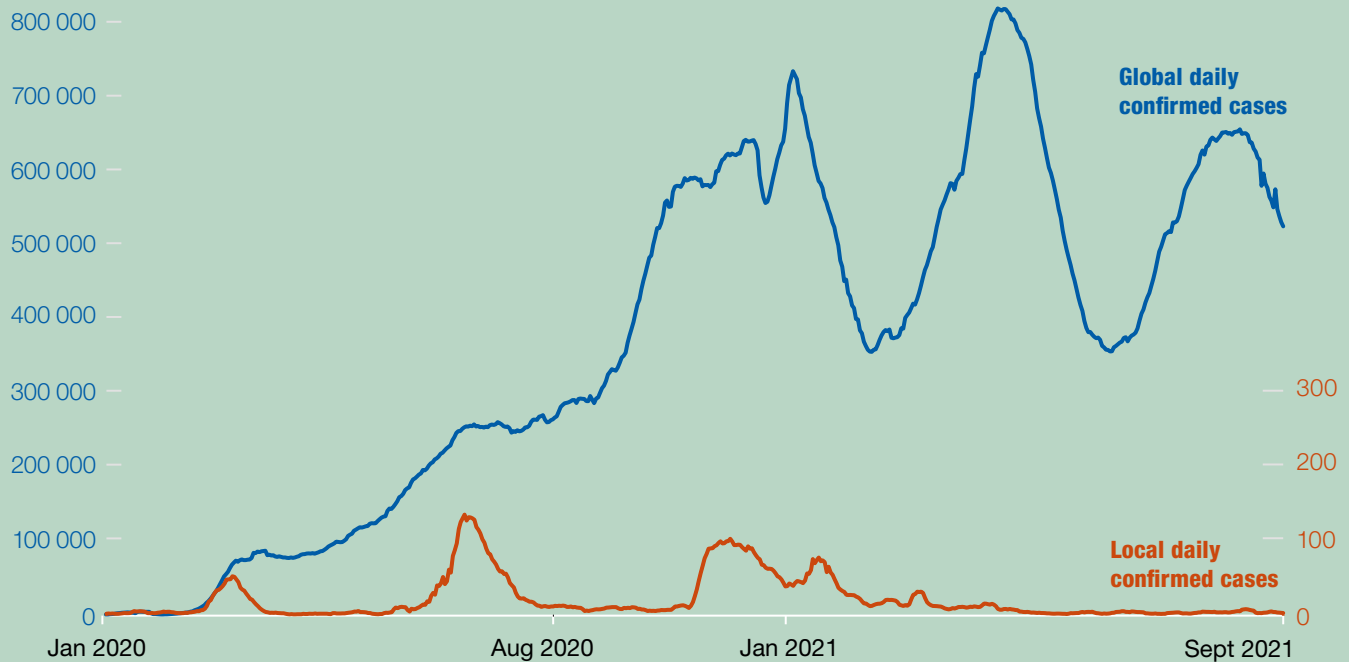
Hong Kong has a robust system of public health surveillance and hospital services. Every infected patient has been admitted into hospitals for care and treatment and comprehensive testing has been adopted on a district or building basis with a view to identifying possible infections as early as possible. Border controls and social distancing measures have to be maintained to keep our city safe so that normal life, including students going back to school, could be maintained. We wish to express deep appreciation to all Hong Kong people for their understanding and support.

The local economy has been hard hit by the epidemic and the Government has rolled out substantial relief packages over the past two years through two successive Budgets and the \$169 billion Anti-epidemic Fund. We are gratified to see the economy rebound since the first quarter of 2021; we will continue to support the economic recovery through appropriate policy measures.

Throughout this difficult period, the Central Government has shown great care for Hong Kong in all aspects, ranging from providing medical supplies and ramping up our testing capability, to building an 820-bed dedicated isolation facility for Hong Kong. To help our economy to recover, the Central Government has rolled out support measures in many sectors. Hong Kong's economy is closely linked to the Mainland and uninhibited travel between the two places is essential. We will work closely with our Mainland counterparts to enable resumption of travel in a gradual, orderly and safe manner.

Epidemic Situation Under Control

7-Day Moving Average of Daily Confirmed Cases



Cumulative confirmed cases per million people



Global Average
28 908



Hong Kong
1 609

Cumulative deaths per million people



Global Average
594



Hong Kong
28

(as at 17 September 2021)

Quarantine units

- **4 240** units in total
- **4 000+** units built using the Modular Integrated Construction technology

Treatment facilities

- **1 910** beds at hospitals
- **1 900** beds at Community Treatment Facility
- **820** beds at Hong Kong Infection Control Centre



Vaccination made easy and convenient

Community Vaccination Centres **29**

General Out-patient Clinics under Hospital Authority **26**

Outreach Vaccination Programme

80 organisations participated, benefiting around **20 000** persons

Private Clinics **2 300**

Walk-in arrangement benefiting around **96 000** persons



(as at 17 September 2021)

Business and Social Activities Resuming

Hong Kong Sports & Leisure Expo 2021



2021 Tissot UCI Track Cycling Nations Cup

Project Cost Management Forum 2021



Cruise-to-nowhere



Hong Kong Book Fair 2021

Supporting Business, Protecting Jobs, Relieving Hardship

Rolled out over **188** relief measures of **HK\$437 billion**

Improving Economic Indicators

	Onset of COVID-19 outbreak		Latest situation	
	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021
Real GDP Growth (year-on-year change)	-9.1%	-9.0%	+8.0%	+7.6%
Unemployment rate	Peak (Dec 2020 - Feb 2021) 7.2%		Jun - Aug 2021 4.7%	
Exports of goods (year-on-year change)	-9.6%	-2.2%	+30.1%	+20.2%
Retail sales volume (year-on-year change)	-37.0%	-32.5%	+7.2%	+7.0%



Fighting COVID-19 with Technology

Testing

Conducted 24 million tests

- Ranks amongst the top in the world

Maximum testing volume increased almost 100-fold

- Over 100 000 tests per day



Sewage Surveillance

Global leading method for virus tracing

- Collaboration between Government and HKU
- **52** confirmed cases identified from **7 000** sewage samples tested

Contact Tracing

LeaveHomeSafe Mobile App

- **5.4 million** downloads
- **95 000** participating premises
- **81 000** users tested after receiving notifications

LeaveHomeSafe 2.1 with Enhanced Functions

- Vaccination record
- Testing record
- Auto-leave taxi function



Information Dissemination

COVID-19 Interactive Map Dashboard

- Over **56.9** million views since its launch in February 2020



Quarantine

StayHomeSafe Mobile App and Electronic Wristbands

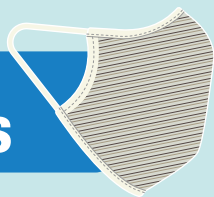
- Used by **590 000** people under compulsory quarantine
- First large-scale application in the world

Enhancing Hygiene

CuMask+™

- Distributed **10 million**
- Developed by Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel
- Won a Gold Medal at the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva 2018

can be reused
60 times



kNOw Touch Contactless Elevator Control Panel

- Developed by Hong Kong Productivity Council
- Widely used in public buildings, government offices, public housing commercial venues and private premises

Multilevel Antimicrobial Polymer Coating

- Developed by HKUST
- Kill bacteria and viruses with an effective period of up to 90 days
- Widely used in schools, residential care homes for the elderly and child care centres



Strengthening Research

Food and Health Bureau and Health and Medical Research Fund

- **HK\$513 million** allocated for universities to conduct research studies on COVID-19
- **67** projects approved



University Grants Committee and Research Grant Council

- Allocated additional **HK\$350 million** to support COVID-19 related research projects in universities

Achievements

Leadership

- Convened 24 meetings (as at end-August 2021) of high level inter-bureaux/departmental meetings chaired by the Chief Executive to provide steer in fighting the COVID-19 epidemic. (FHB)
- Enlisted a total of 40 experts to advise the Government on various aspects of the anti-epidemic work. (FHB)
- Maintained close liaison with the National Health Commission as well as health authorities in the Guangdong Province and Macao SAR Government. (FHB)
- Made nine public health emergency regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) and have them updated regularly to provide legal basis for the anti-epidemic work. (FHB)
- Contained the number of confirmed cases at low levels, 1 609 cases per one million people as at 17 September 2021 versus the global average of 28 908 cases. (Relevant bureaux)
- Adopted a new direction since end-April 2021 to implement social distancing and border control measures with “vaccine bubble” as the basis. (FHB)
- Stemmed out four waves of the epidemic and attained “zero” local cases for most of the days during the past four months. (FHB)
- Maintained vigilance in controlling importation of cases through testing and quarantine taking account of the infection risks of the overseas places. (FHB)

- Tightened vaccination requirements for civil servants, public hospital and elderly home staff, teachers, local air crew, airport staff and container terminal workers to provide better protection for the community. (FHB, THB)

Transparency

- Kept the community abreast of the epidemic situation via over 720 press conferences/daily press briefings; around 5 000 press releases, a dedicated government webpage (coronavirus.gov.hk); and over 7 550 social media posts. (Relevant bureaux)
- Released monthly reports by the Chief Executive on the Government’s work in fighting the epidemic. 20 reports have been issued so far. (CEO)
- Launched the COVID-19 Interactive Map Dashboard in February 2020 to provide the latest information on local COVID-19 cases, attracting more than 56.9 million views as at end-August 2021. (ITB)

Testing, Quarantine, Treatment Facilities and Contact Tracing

- Ramped up testing capacity significantly in public and private sectors to over 100 000 tests per day. (FHB)
- Conducted over 24 million tests or 3.2 million per one million population which put Hong Kong amongst the countries/regions with the highest testing intensity. (FHB)
- Pioneered the use of sewage surveillance to trace COVID-19 transmission in the community. As at end-August 2021, identified 52 cases from nearly 7 000 samples tested. (ENB)

- Issued compulsory testing notices (CTNs) to specified persons/groups, and made restriction testing declaration on premises when it is necessary to conduct testing for persons on the premises to curb community spread. Upon issuance of such CTNs and RTDs, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) conducted operations in respect of specified venues in 98 public rental housing (PRH) blocks managed by HKHA as at end-August 2021, while the Home Affairs Department conducted 90 operations for private housing blocks as at end-August 2021. (FHB, HAB, THB)
- Offered free virus testing services since July 2020 to targeted groups that are of higher-risk, high-exposure and from important infrastructure services. Over 2.3 million samples have been tested. (Relevant bureaux)
- Provided convenient voluntary testing services to the public, including free testing through 188 distribution points and 83 collection points to facilitate submission of deep throat saliva specimen (3.76 million specimens tested as at end-August 2021), testing services at 21 community testing centres (1.16 million voluntary tests conducted as at end-August 2021) and 47 General Out-patient Clinics. (FHB)
- Provided over 3 500 propose-built units for quarantine at Penny's Bay in addition to similar facilities at Lei Yue Mun Park. (FHB, DEVB)
- Enhanced service capacity in the Hospital Authority (HA), including deploying around 1 250 Tier-1 isolation beds and retrofitting certain general wards into standard negative pressure wards to provide around 660 Tier-2 isolation beds. (FHB)
- Assisted the HA to establish and expand the Community Treatment Facility (CTF) at the AsiaWorld Expo, and increased the capacity to around 1 900 beds. (FHB, DEVB)
- With financial and technical support by the Central Government, completed the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre with 820 beds in just four months in January 2021. (FHB, DEVB)
- Implemented the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme and the Designated Transportation Scheme in December 2020, requiring all arrivals from specified places to undergo compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels. (FHB)
- Set up designated quarantine facilities for residents of residential care homes for the elderly or persons with disabilities, as well as unaccompanied minors who are close contacts of confirmed cases. (FHB, LWB)
- Set up designated quarantine facility at Penny's Bay for foreign domestic helpers returning to Hong Kong. (FHB)
- Launched the Special Chinese Medicine Out-patient Programme in April 2020 to provide free Chinese medicine out-patient rehabilitation services to discharged COVID-19 patients. Over 1 360 patients have joined so far, with more than 9 800 consultations conducted. (FHB)
- Launched the Special Chinese Medicine Programme in January 2021 to provide an option of Chinese medicine services to COVID-19 in-patients at the CTF and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre. Over 90 patients have joined so far. (FHB)

Vaccination Programme

- Launched the territory-wide COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in February 2021 providing the two vaccines Sinovac and BioNTech to eligible population. The public may receive vaccination in 29 Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs), and more than 2 300 private clinics and 26 designated general out-patient clinics under the HA. Towards the end of September 2021, more than 4.43 million persons have received their first dose (amounting to about 66% of the eligible population) and more than 4.04 million persons (about 60% of the eligible population) have received the second dose. (CSB)
- Conducted outreach operations to 80 organisations and in different districts. About 20 000 persons received their COVID-19 vaccine on these occasions. (CSB)
- Arranged outreach vaccination service at 11 secondary schools for students from 40 schools while students from about 310 schools have been vaccinated through school group bookings at CVCs. Students of 37 special education schools were arranged to receive assessment and vaccination in designated hospitals under the HA. (CSB)
- Started to distribute same day tickets at 24 CVCs to elderly over 70 since 29 July 2021 and gradually extended the arrangement to elderly over 60, students, designated groups and eventually all persons eligible for vaccination. Towards the end of September 2021, about 96 000 same day tickets have been distributed. (CSB)

Cross-boundary Travel

- Launched the Return2hk Scheme in November 2020 to exempt Hong Kong residents returning from Mainland and Macao from compulsory quarantine in Hong Kong, upon fulfilment of all the specified conditions. As at 20 September 2021, about 300 000 passenger trips were made. (CMAB, FHB)
- Launched the Come2hk Scheme on 15 September 2021 to exempt non-Hong Kong residents arriving from Guangdong Province and Macao from compulsory quarantine in Hong Kong, upon fulfilment of all the specified conditions. (CMAB, FHB)

Application of Technology

- Provided online booking services for community testing programme, vaccination programme, and citizens returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland and Macao. (ITB)
- Jointly developed the electronic wristband and StayHomeSafe mobile app with local research and development institutes, universities and start-ups, now used by over 590 000 persons. This is the largest scale of such application in the world. (ITB)
- Launched the LeaveHomeSafe mobile app in November 2020 for the public to record visit history. The number of downloads has exceeded 5.4 million. Over 95 000 public and private venues and around 18 000 taxis have participated. (ITB)

- Developed the Health Code Conversion System for the public to transmit valid negative nucleic acid results from the health code systems of Guangdong and Macao to the electronic health declaration system upon entry into Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme and the Come2hk Scheme. (ITB)
- Launched the COVID-19 Electronic Vaccination and Testing Record System for the public to download the electronic vaccination record for free through the “iAM Smart” mobile app. The number of downloads has reached over 1.1 million. (ITB)
- Launched the Public Sector Trial Scheme in 2020 to support product development and application of technologies for prevention and control of the epidemic. 63 projects were approved with total funding of over \$102 million. (ITB)
- Launched in December 2020 an internal information portal designed for contact tracing to link up relevant departments, agencies and existing information systems. (FHB)
- Modernised the HA’s service model, including piloting the use of “HA Go” mobile application to provide telehealth services for suitable patients. Installed network infrastructure at village offices to enable provision of telehealth services for elderly persons living in remote areas. (FHB, ITB)
- Allocated \$513 million under FHB and its Health and Medical Research Fund to support COVID-19 related research projects undertaken by universities. 67 projects have been approved. (FHB)
- Utilised different coating technologies to disinfect buses and train cars and sprayed anti-bacterial and anti-virus films in vehicles or vessels. (THB)
- Launched the Distance Business Programme to support private enterprises to continue business during COVID-19 through adoption of information technology solutions. As at 6 September 2021, approved around 26 000 applications with funding of around \$1.7 billion. (ITB)

Relief Measures and Temporary Jobs

- Launched a wide range of measures totalling over \$437 billion to help businesses stay afloat, keep workers in employment and assist the economy to recover. Major items included:
 - four rounds of measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) (\$168.9 billion), and other epidemic related measures (\$28 billion) amounting to over \$197 billion, notably an Employment Support Scheme benefiting 152 000 employers and 1.95 million employees; (Relevant bureaux)
 - a relief package of over \$120 billion in the 2020-21 Budget; (Relevant bureaux)
 - various counter-cyclical measures of over \$120 billion in the 2021-22 Budget; (Relevant bureaux)
 - creation of about 30 000 time-limited jobs in the public and private sectors under the AEF. Allocated an additional \$6.6 billion from the AEF in 2021 for creating another 30 000 time-limited jobs. Some of these jobs are sector-specific to help fresh graduates or young professionals to acquire on the job experience; (CSB) and

- stabilising supply of surgical masks in the retail market through the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme. The 20 subsidised production lines delivered 469 million masks to the Government as at end-August 2021. (CEDB)
- Distributed over 10.7 million reusable CuMask+™ and another 63 million surgical masks to citizens free of charge, as well as some 137 million surgical masks to staff and residents of residential care homes, frontline workers in government contracts and other vulnerable groups; and around 6 million donated masks to the needy. (ITB, CEDB, HAB, LWB, FHB)
- Provided concessions in fees and charges and government rental amounting to \$14.2 billion revenue forgone to help businesses to tide over the economic downturn. (FSTB)
- Launched the Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme under the AEF and extended the validity of the scheme thrice to run until 31 December 2022. As at end-August 2021, subsidised 53 exhibitions, involving subsidy of about \$122 million. (CEDB)
- Increased manpower to step up anti-epidemic measures at HKHA's shopping centres and directly managed markets and public housing estates and installed touchless lift button devices for its shopping centres, car parks and office buildings. (THB)
- Implemented the Drainage Inspection Programme since October 2020 to inspect the drainage pipes of PRH flats with target completion in the first quarter of 2022. As at end-August 2021, HKHA had inspected the in-flat drainage pipes of about 460 000 PRH flats and all the external drainage pipes of about 390 000 PRH flats. Necessary repairs had been arranged during the inspections. (THB)

Preventive Measures

- Enhanced anti-epidemic measures in public markets including thorough cleaning and disinfection. (FHB)
- Provided a one-off subsidy to tenants of public markets and licensed hawkers to promote contactless payment in markets and hawker stalls. Around \$18.09 million was disbursed to 3 276 market stalls and 342 hawker stalls. (FHB)

New Initiatives

Vaccination

- Press ahead with vaccination of target groups, particularly the elderly over 70 years of age to protect them from serious illness if they were infected and to build a protective shield. (CSB, FHB)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the vaccination programme to provide a third dose to those who need it to enhance the protection. (CSB, FHB)
- Liaise with the vaccine manufacturers to review the clinical data with a view to lowering the age limit for Sinovac. (CSB, FHB)

Social Distancing

- Facilitate major events to be held safely through adoption of “travel corridors” and “vaccine bubbles” to enable individuals and businesses to return to normal life as far as possible. (FHB, CEDB, HAB)

Boundary Controls

- Seek the Central Government’s support for resuming quarantine-free travel with Mainland in a gradual, orderly and safe manner. (CMAB, FHB)