

Being peer volunteers among older adults: opportunities and experiences

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Ageing population

1 in 4 of us will reach > 65 years by 2033 (in HK)

The **elderly dependency ratio** (the number of persons aged 65 or above per 1000 persons aged 15-64)

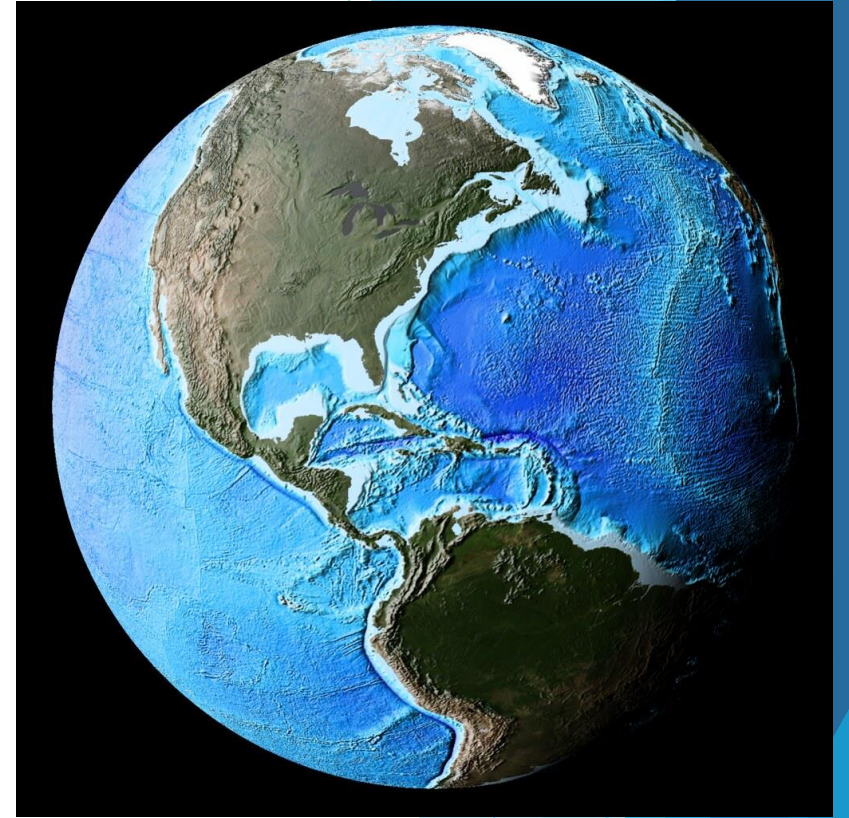
>65

15-64

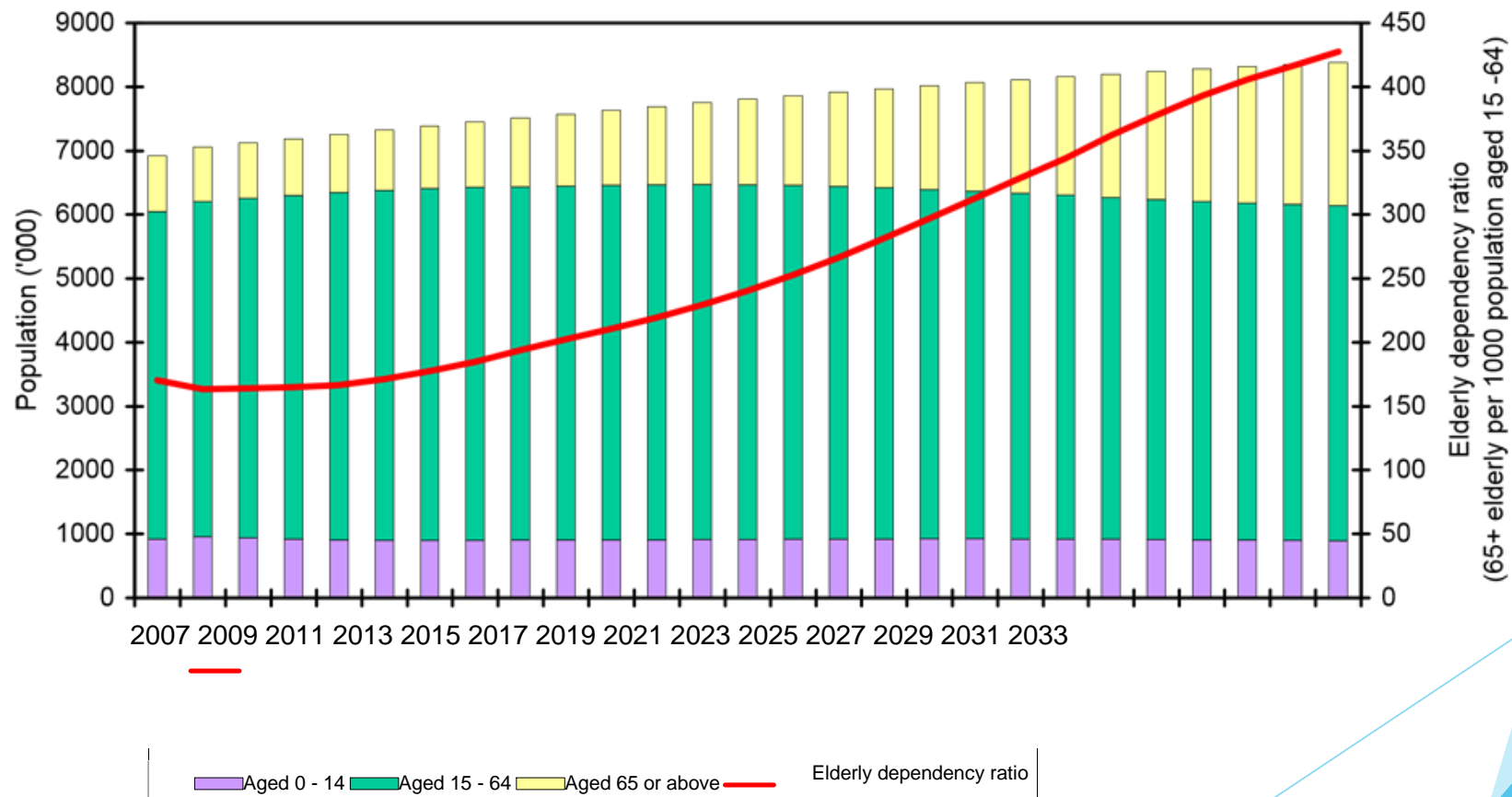
In 2007 = **170**

In 2033 = **428**

Fewer birth rate

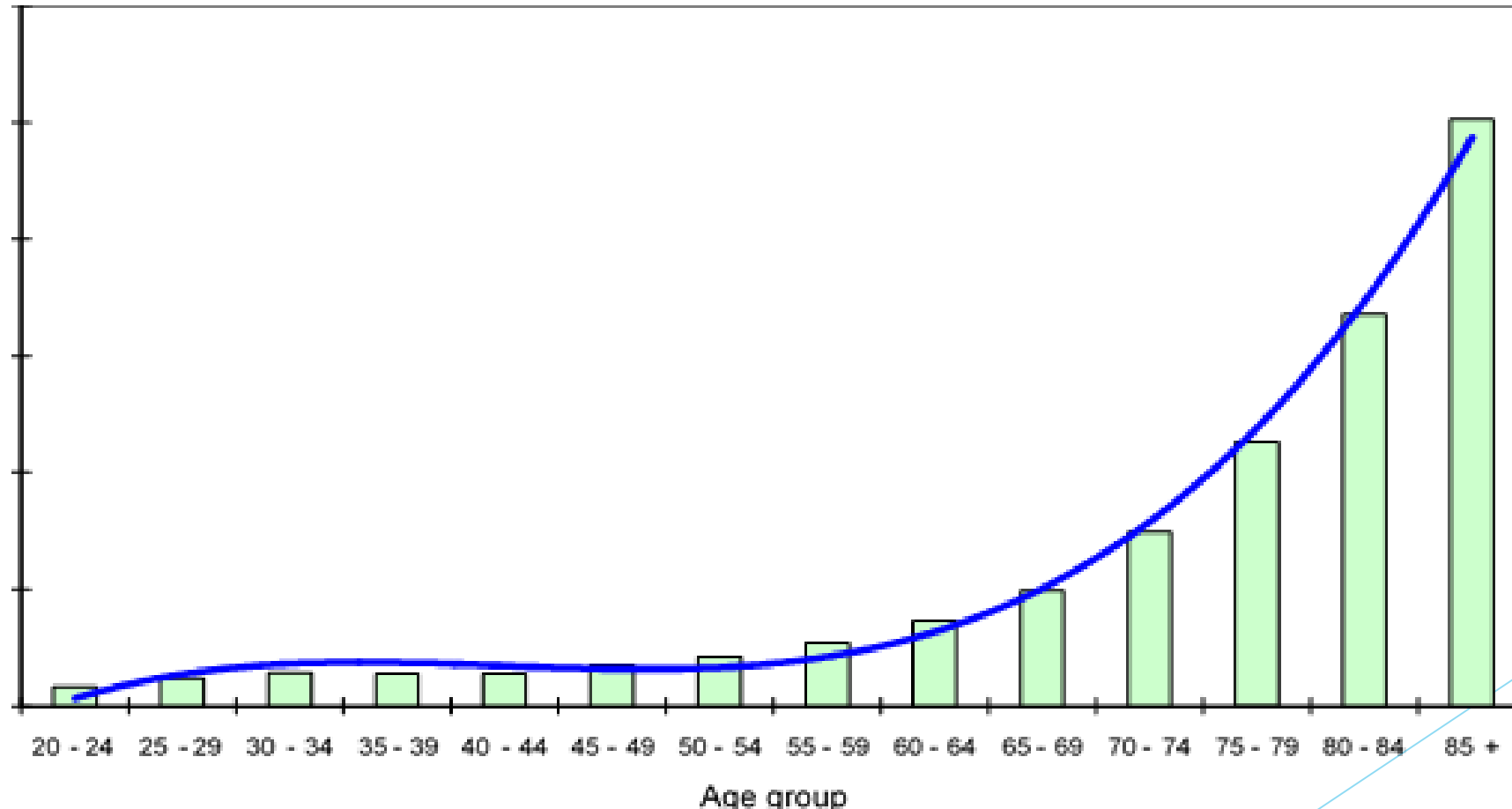


Hong Kong has a rapidly ageing population: Projection of total population, elderly population and elderly dependency ratio, 2007-2033



The elderly population has **greater** healthcare needs

Average number of public hospital bed days utilized by age



Elderly = ↑ healthcare needs

- ▶ In terms of
- ▶ hospital bed-days

< 65



6 times more
in-patient care

> 65

Left-behind elderly



夫婦爭拗相對無語 稚子壓力大至逃學

「留守長者」別至親 移民潮抑鬱籠罩港人



■有精神科醫生指，十名病人當中就有兩人因親友移民，精神狀態受影響。



■幼童需面對離別的傷感，心理輔導員建議家長留意子女日常起居的變化。



Some **older men and women** could be seen **sobbing quietly**, as their children and grandchildren bade a final goodbye before disappearing behind the barriers.

dozens of families, as well as adults travelling alone, among those **saying goodbye to elderly parents staying behind**

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3140557/left-behind-hong-kongs-elderly-face-old-age-less-family> (20 July 2021)

80-year-old : Saying goodbye to my only daughter at Hong Kong airport, struggled to hold back his *tears*.

The former restaurant manager never expected his *39-year-old* daughter to pack up and go to Britain *for good*, after spending her entire life with him and his wife in Hong Kong, where she was born.



‘I am not moving to Britain with my family members - mainly because we could not speak English

- did not want to uproot at this late stage of their lives
- leaving their friends and other relatives in the city

Some elderly - “ don’t go....”
tried to talk children from
emigrating

Situations

- ▶ Ageing population
- ▶ Increase health care cost
- ▶ Left behind elderly....
- ▶ Loneliness..
- ▶ Chronic illness..
- ▶ pain situations ...



Peer volunteers ?

- ▶ Peer volunteers are people who provide *emotional, informational, relationship advice and support* to others with whom they share similar age and life experiences



Peer support models

- ▶ A Cochrane review described **positive outcomes** in people with chronic conditions
- ▶ Peer-led programs may also **cost less** than those led by professionals
- ▶ a higher level of rapport and **less of a feeling of threat** when one is supported by people like oneself as compared to professionals



Peer volunteers (PV) to lead pain management program

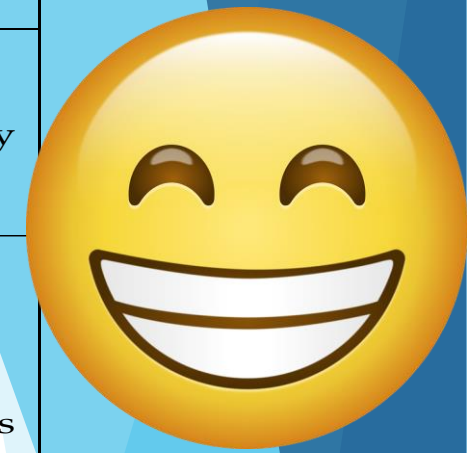
- ▶ PV - recruited from Institute of Active Aging hosted by the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- ▶ Training

	Date	Volunteers recruited	Completed training & joined the Pain Management Program (PAP) in nursing homes
1 st round of recruitment	July 2018	28	14
2 nd round of recruitment	September 2018	30	16
3 rd round of recruitment	January 2019	25	23
4 th round of recruitment	April 2019	30	18
5 th round of recruitment	Sept 2020	14	0
Total		127	71

Our peers ; our older adults

Variables		N (%)
Sex	Female	34 (74)
Age, years		
Age group	Under 60	22 (48)
	60-70	22 (48)
	70-80	2 (4)
Marital status	Married	34 (74)
	Single	4 (9)
	Divorced	5 (11)
	Widowed	3 (7)
Level of education	Primary school	1 (2)
	Secondary school	17 (37)
	University	28 (61)
Occupation	Physical laborer	2 (4)
	Clerk	17 (38)
	Technical job	23 (51)
	Housewife	3 (7)
Any chronic illnesses, yes		12 (26)
	Diabetes	1 (2)
	Hypertension	6 (13)
	Heart disease	2 (4)
	Cataract	2 (4)
	Stroke	1 (2)
	Arthritis	1 (2)
	Cancer	2 (4)
	Other chronic illness	1 (2)
Chronic pain, yes		31 (67)
	Head	6 (13)
	Shoulders	8 (17)
	Arms	9 (20)
	Back	10 (22)
	Legs	17 (37)

Categories	Comments and feedback from PVs
<i>PVs described leading the PAP as a meaningful experience</i>	<p>I was appreciated by nursing home residents</p> <p>Nursing home residents were touched and said that they never expected us to be so nice to them</p>
<i>Perceived benefits: helping themselves & helping others</i>	<p>My pain is gone after volunteering in the program</p> <p>I feel happy by helping others</p> <p>I can see that the participants are happier and feel less lonely</p> <p>This program effectively relieves the pain of the participants</p> <p>My pain is gone after volunteering in the program</p> <p>I feel happy by helping others</p> <p>I can see that the participants are happier and feel less lonely</p> <p>This program effectively relieves the pain of the participants</p>
Boosted my sense of self-worth	<p>My family and friends recognized my achievement and were proud that I was a volunteer</p> <p>I get satisfaction in giving something back to the society and providing support to the participants</p>



The use of peers



References

- ▶ TSE, MMY et al (2019). Lesson learnt from peer volunteers in a peer-led pain management program among nursing home residents. *International Journal of Environmental and Public Helath*, 16 (7), 3097.