

Introducing the Hong Kong CHILD Development Longitudinal Study (HK-CHILD): An Overview of Aims, Designs, and Initial Findings

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The first years of life are a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional development, with lasting implications for later educational attainment, health, and social inequality. Yet, despite the centrality of education in East Asian societies, there is a striking lack of large-scale, population-based longitudinal data on early childhood in the region. The Hong Kong CHILD Development Longitudinal Study (HK-CHILD) addresses this gap by establishing the first citywide, representative cohort of young children in Hong Kong. In this presentation, we outline the study's aims, design, and initial findings from the first wave of data collection, completed in 2025. HK-CHILD follows more than 2,400 K1 children and their families recruited from 101 kindergartens spanning diverse sectors, curricula, and neighbourhoods. Using a multi-informant, multi-method design that combines parent and teacher surveys with direct child assessments, the study tracks children's cognitive, language, socioemotional, and physical development from K1 to K3. The design further incorporates rich measures of home environments, parenting practices, family resources, classroom processes, and school characteristics to examine how nested ecological contexts shape early developmental trajectories. We present initial descriptive profiles of child functioning and family backgrounds, document socioeconomic and sectoral disparities, and demonstrate the feasibility and representativeness of the cohort. HK-CHILD is positioned to become a core research and policy infrastructure for early childhood development in Hong Kong and the wider East Asian region, enabling evidence-based interventions and reforms to support children's wellbeing and reduce emerging inequalities from the very start of life.