

# **The State of Labour in Hong Kong 2025: Recent Developments in Labour Laws, Labour Standards Violation and Workers' Collective Actions**

## **Summary**

This report documents the latest developments in Hong Kong's labour laws and policies, labour standards violation, as well as trade union activities and worker's collective actions.

**Section 2** reports major developments in the city's labour laws and policies in 2025. The statutory minimum wage was updated to HK\$42.1 per hour starting 1 May 2025, a level which is inadequate to lift low-paid workers and their families out of poverty. The new hourly rate was, for the first time, fixed by adopting the adjustment mechanism approved the previous year, which guarantees that the wage floor can never keep pace with economic or productivity growth. Amendments to the statutory definition of "continuous employment" were passed by the legislature in June 2025 and came into operation in January 2026. The amendments, which lower the weekly threshold from 18 to 17 hours and provide an alternative of using the aggregate working hours in four consecutive weeks as a counting unit (in this case the threshold is set at 68 hours, "4-68 requirement"), still exclude a large number of part-time employees from full statutory protection and benefits, and fail to prevent employers from exploiting loopholes to evade their obligations. A statistical report published in March 2025 reveals that there were about 12,900 persons taking up paid platform work in food and goods delivery services between December 2023 and March 2024. The Government's plan to afford statutory protection to food and goods delivery platform workers with work-injury compensation only is way below international labour standards, and its repeated refusal to institute a comprehensive, effective and accessible mechanism to determine the employment status of platform workers is at odds with ILO recommendations. The Government also declined to halt or scale down the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme amid the weakening of local labour market, and the detrimental impacts of the scheme on the city's grassroots workers are evidently felt. As at end of 2025, roughly one in six persons engaged in accommodation and food services is imported worker and it is estimated that more than 47,000 (or 18.3%) local workers in the sector have been replaced by non-locals since the introduction of the scheme.

**Section 3** documents labour rights violations in Hong Kong. The draconian National Security Law (NSL) remains the major hindrance impeding Hong Kong workers' full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of association. Since the promulgation of the NSL, at least 15 trade union organizers have been arrested or prosecuted, and hundreds of trade unions or labour organizations have dissolved or ceased operation. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the NSL, two more labour groups, the China Labour Bulletin and the Riders' Rights Concern Group, decided to cease operation. On the other hand, an amendment bill to the Trade Unions Ordinance was passed

unanimously by the opposition-free legislature in June 2025 and took effect in January 2026. The amendments empower the Registrar of Trade Unions to refuse applications for new trade union registration on national security ground, bar trade unions from receiving overseas contributions and donations, and search trade union's non-domestic premises without warrant, and increase the penalties of existing offences, including those related to picketing, providing the authorities with all sorts of "weapons" to target independent trade unions and their leaders. Apart from launching lawfare against activists, the Government also employed extra-legal suppression tactics, such as unreasonable tax probes and cancellation of venue bookings, to obstruct the smooth functioning of trade unions.

**Section 4** takes stock of trade union activities and worker's collective actions. Amid the fast-worsening political environments, hundreds of trade unions or labour organizations have been dissolved, stopped operations or withdrawn from Hong Kong. A total of 266 trade unions cancelled their registration since the NSL's implementation. Union membership fell by more than one-sixth in 2024 from five years earlier and average union size almost halved over the same period, reflecting the further weakening and fragmentation of the city's trade union movement. With the police's tightening control on civil society activities, trade union's collective actions have almost disappeared in the public sphere; there had been no Labour Day rally for six years in a row and worker's strikes or industrial actions have become rare. Yet, despite the challenging political environments, 2025 saw a slight resurgence of worker's collective actions. Hundreds of riders working for Keeta staged a series of strikes in April and May 2025, protesting against reduced remunerations and demanding for fair treatments. More than 20 Hong Kong Baptist University sub-contracted janitors staged a sit-in protest on 1 August 2025 demanding better remunerations. The Swire Beverages (HK) Employees General Union launched an indefinite strike on 5 September, protesting against the dismissal of an executive committee member of the union, and settled the disputes with the management after a three-hour negotiation in late evening.

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the NSL, nearly all policy secretaries took turns to speak to the media on the work of combating "soft resistance" under their portfolios. Looking forward, the authorities' crack down on civil society will certainly become even more sophisticated and all-encompassing, and the employment of extra-legal suppression tactics will undoubtedly be more frequent, and trade unionists and labour right activists will unavoidably have to carry out their work in a climate of fear and harassment. The significant weakening of the city's civil society and independent trade union movement has also made it more difficult than ever for people to effectively push the Government to close "decent work deficits". Pro-Beijing trade unions' primary concern is co-operation with the Government; they also lack the capacity and intention to scrutinize the administration's policy proposals or put forward viable policy options. Despite the narrowing of civil society space, it is encouraging that there was a slight resurgence in workers' collective actions last year. Whether the revival will continue remains to be seen, and it is also difficult to tell

whether these industrial actions would cross the “red line”, provoking the authorities’ suppression. Nevertheless, their courage to stand up have proven that worker’s resistance will never disappear because of adverse socio-political environments.