

## **DIVERSIFIED MOBILITIES AND AUTONOMY: MOBILITY STRATEGIES OF YOUTH IN NONSTANDARD EMPLOYMENT IN HONG KONG**

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### **Key implications**

- Young people engage in nonstandard employment in Hong Kong for different reasons.
- While some take up multiple part-time jobs to maintain an acceptable income, others become free-lance workers to gain more autonomy in life-style pursuits.
- The divergent motivations and aspirations of young people in nonstandard employment need to be taken into account in policies aiming at better protection for them as worker.



### **Background**

Nonstandard employment, i.e. part-time, casual and self-employed forms of work, is commonly referred to as flexible employment in Hong Kong, but it is also identified as precarious work for the employment and income insecurities it entails. As nonstandard employment become more common, there is a need to investigate how it affects the mobility prospect of young people and how young people look at nonstandard employment as a form of work.

### **Focus of study**

The study examines the experiences and aspirations of young people engaging in nonstandard forms of employment, seeking to understand the rationales for their engagement in these forms of work and how their engagement in nonstandard employment can be related to their mobility strategies.

### **Research methods**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 young people aged 24-30 in nonstandard employment in Hong Kong, all possessing post-secondary qualifications. They work in the catering, music, education, advertisement design and retail industries. Some of them are part-timers, some combine full-time with part-time jobs, while some are free-lancers or independent contractors.

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## Key findings

Young people engaging in nonstandard employment can be divided into three types:

1. Workers taking up multiple part-time jobs or extra part-time jobs on top of full-time jobs to avoid downward mobility in income, i.e. a fall in income. To the extent they have a plan for future work, it is to get full-time jobs that pay enough to remove the need for multiple-job-holding.
2. Workers engaging in free-lance work to avoid sharing income from their labor with employers as middlemen. Through building-up a network of customers, they may also establish their own businesses and branch out into related lines of work.
3. Workers engaging in free-lance work so that they can have enough autonomy in work arrangements to pursue non-material interests in life.

## Significance of findings for practice and policy

Considerations and motivations differ among young people in nonstandard employment, while all suffer from employment and income insecurities. Young workers who take up multiple jobs to avoid downward mobility in income would switch happily to standard employment if the wage level of available jobs can be enhanced. Those who engage in free-lance work to protect their share of labor income and/or pursue non-material interests in life, on the other hand, call for a rethinking on social policies to offer better protection to workers not in standard employment relationships. The least that can be done to enhance the securities of workers in nonstandard employment in Hong Kong is to review the current exclusion of workers not in continuous employment from protection by the employment ordinance.

### RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Leung, Ho Man & Hon Chu Leung. 2017. "Diversified Mobilities and Autonomy: Mobility Strategies of Youth in Nonstandard Employment in Hong Kong." *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 20, Issue 2: 85-95 (in Chinese).

### REQUEST FOR MORE DETAILS

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