



Higher Education Equity and Access : The Hong Kong Transformation by David Post



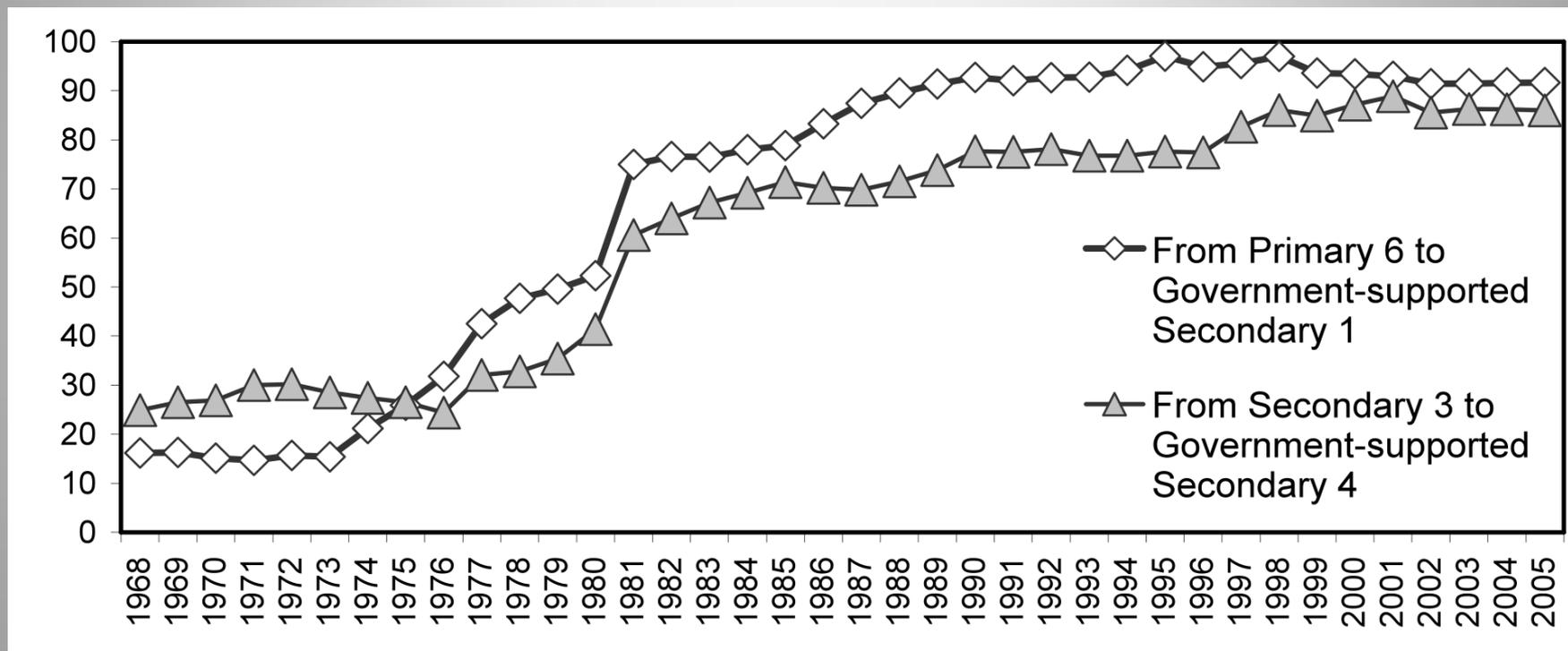
Pre-History:

Government Control Over School Supply
in 1960s-1980s. Supply not directly responsive
nor elastic with respect to public demand.

Restricted access to higher education.

Hong Kong Government Support of Education:

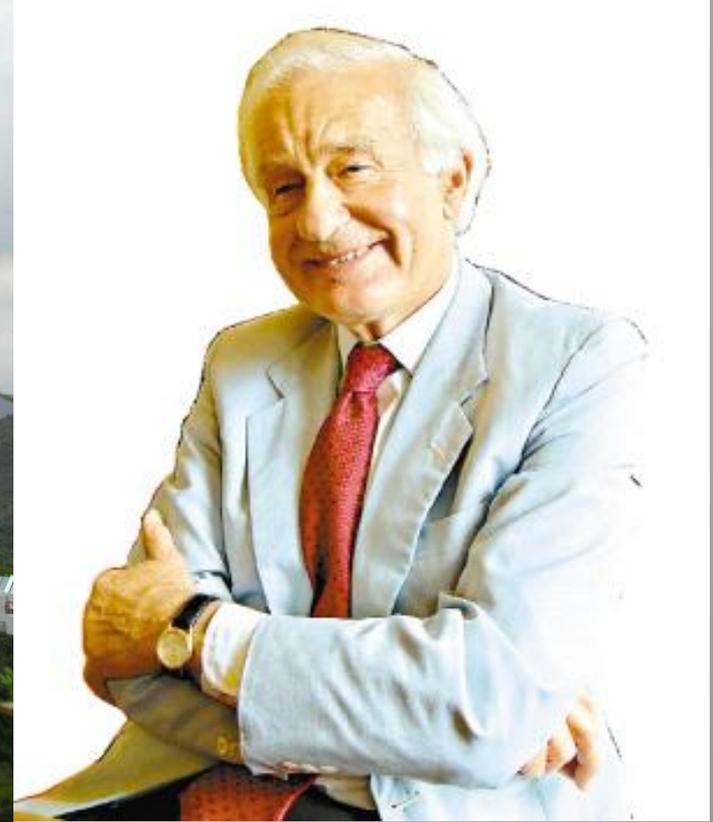
Percentages of Students Who Completed Primary School Six and Secondary School Three Who in Subsequent Year Continued Their Educations in a Government-funded School Space



In 1989, over one million Hong Kong people took to the streets to support the students who were suppressed in the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre in Beijing. Hong Kongers became worried about the coming 1997 Handover to China of the colony.



In October 1989, David Wilson, the British governor, anticipated further brain drain as professionals emigrated from the colony prior to the 1997 hand-over. In order to compensate for this emigration, and to restore confidence in the future, Wilson accelerated the expansion of Hong Kong's university system. Nearly all of the capital and recurrent costs of university education were to be paid by the government.

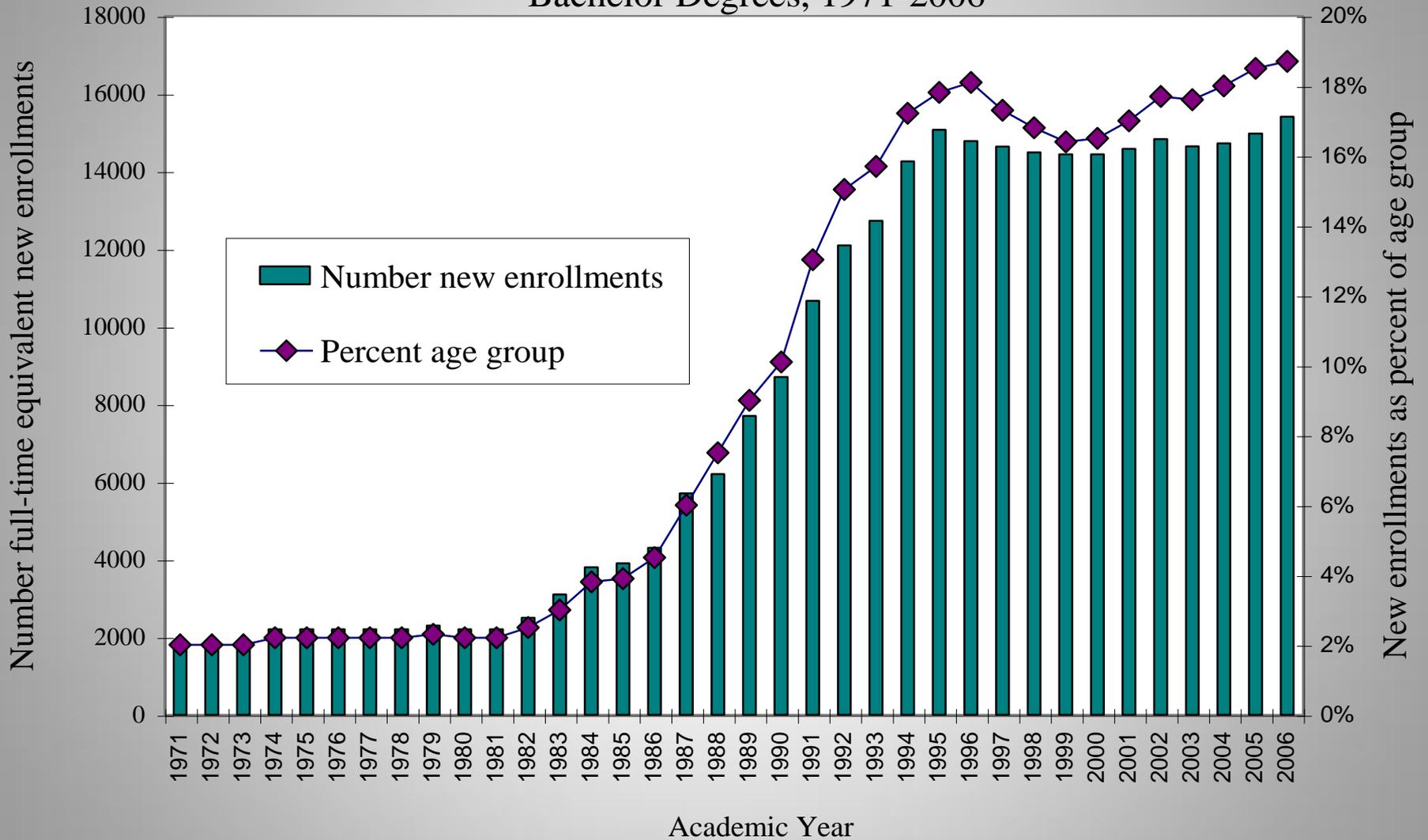


[I remember] the thrill of going to graduation ceremonies in all Hong Kong universities where, as governor, I was *ex officio* chancellor or the equivalent at all universities, giving degrees to these very, very sort of bright, shining-faced young people, carefully, carefully dressed, looking so cheerful and proud of themselves, and then walking out through a great, big hall. I remember particularly trying to do some of this. And where on each side were their parents or their friends, and the sense of pride in the faces of those parents, and the fact that you could see that many of them were very clearly from housing estates, they were from middle to lower social levels of society, and the thrill of seeing both those students, and the thrill of seeing on the faces of their parents the sense of achievement in watching their own children moving up beyond the level that they had ever been able to attain, and thinking, “That, that’s the essence of Hong Kong.” It is this ability to move upwards. - Lord David Wilson, 2007



In the years leading up to the 1997 handover, Hong Kong's eight degree-granting universities benefited from real increases in government subsidy, and maintained student fees that were a small fraction of the cost. The last British governor, Chris Patten, became an advocate for democratic governance, and encouraged great autonomy of the government-sponsored universities. Enrollments grew to about 18% of each age cohort, then leveled off in 1995. The government indirectly owned and operated all BA-granting university programs until 2006, when the first private university was allowed to grant degrees.

New Students Enrolling in Publicly-Funded (UGC) Bachelor Degrees, 1971-2006



Summary of policy problems facing higher education in Hong Kong:

Dilemma #1. Should Hong Kong continue to expand postsecondary by building, owning and operating postsecondary institutions, or should it subsidize student demand?

Dilemma #2. What would be the political consequences of a higher education system in which private interests compete and even share power with central government planners?

Dilemma #3: What is the rationale for supporting higher education and its expansion by the government? Human capital investment or civic development?

实事求是

Seek Truth From Facts

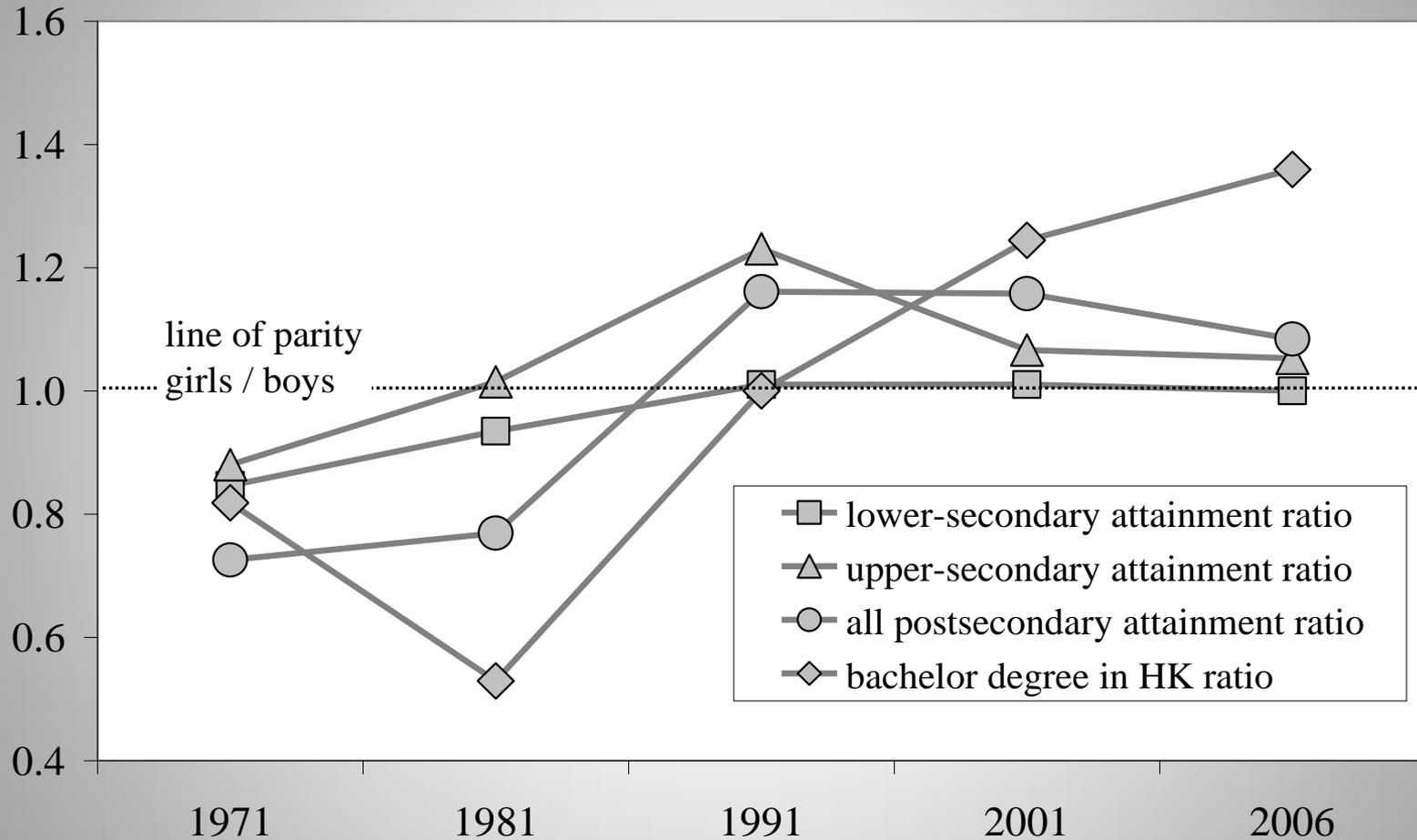
Decisions about higher education, and the resolution of the policy dilemmas discussed above, need to be informed by facts about the operation of the current system.

How well is the current system working in terms of creating opportunities for Hong Kong people? What has been the historical trend under this heavily subsidized system?

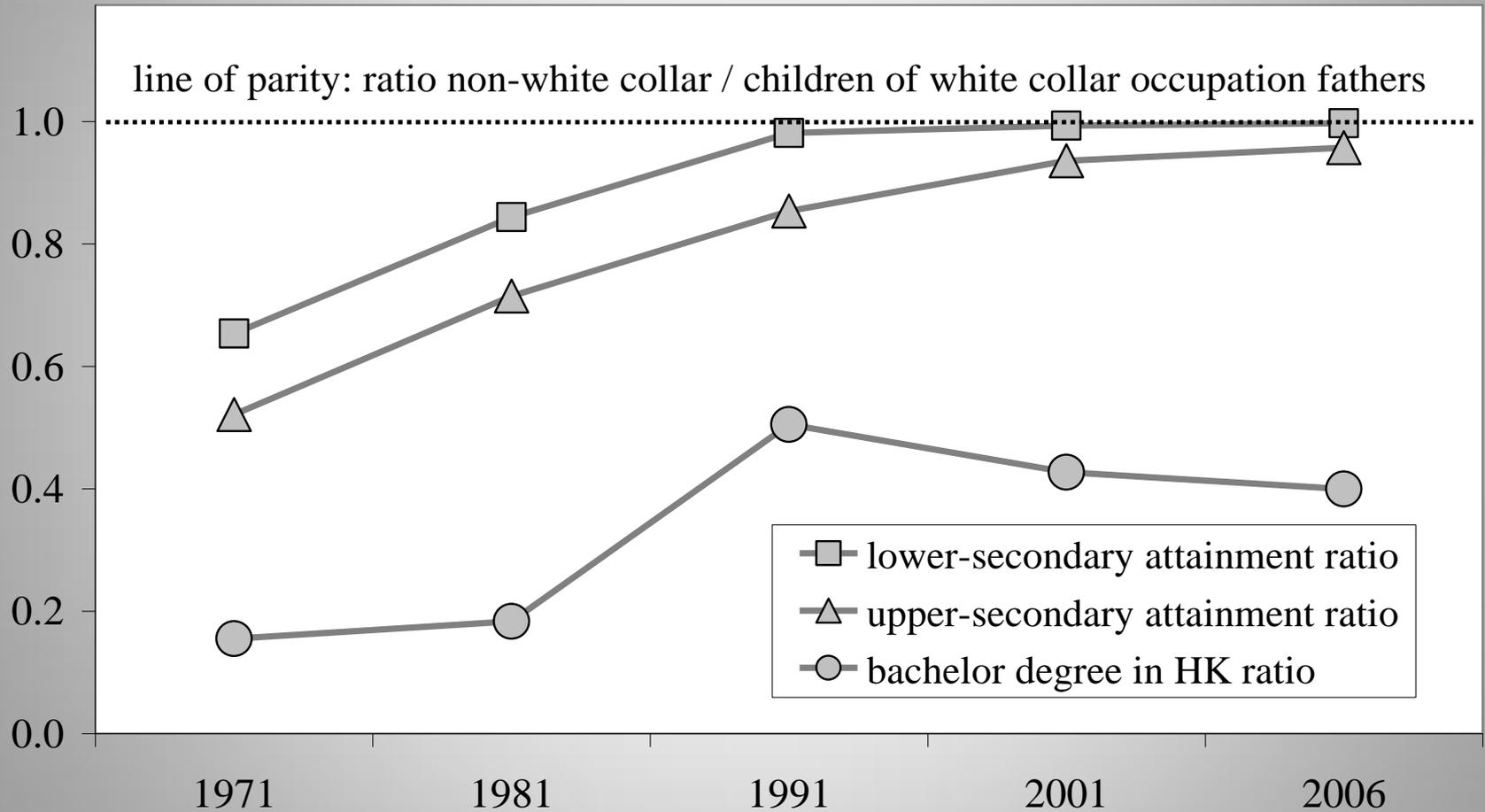
Who has benefited most from the subsidies and the higher education expansion since 1989?

What has been the impact on post-secondary opportunity of creating a two-tiered system including lower-quality and non-subsidized “associate degree” programs without articulation to a traditional university program and without the guarantee of transferring credits (there is no “credit” system in Hong Kong).

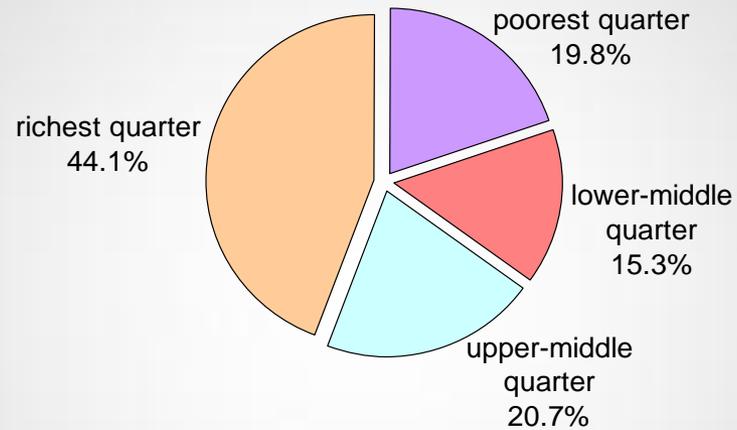
Education Attained by Hong Kong Girls Relative to Attainment by Boys at Ages 19-20, by Census Year



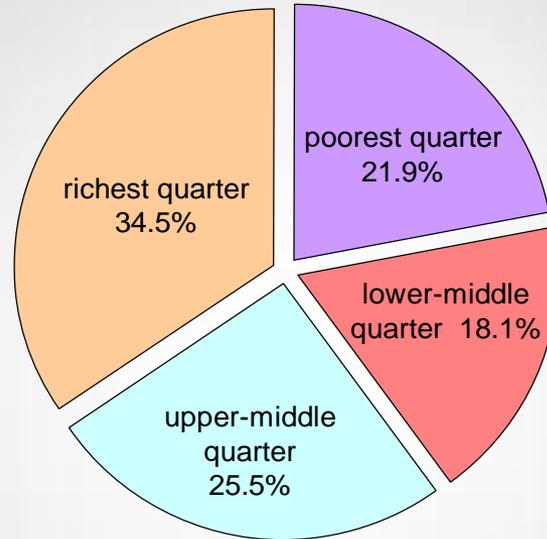
Educational Equity, 1971 – 2001: Ratios of Attainment Rates Depending on Fathers' Occupational Class



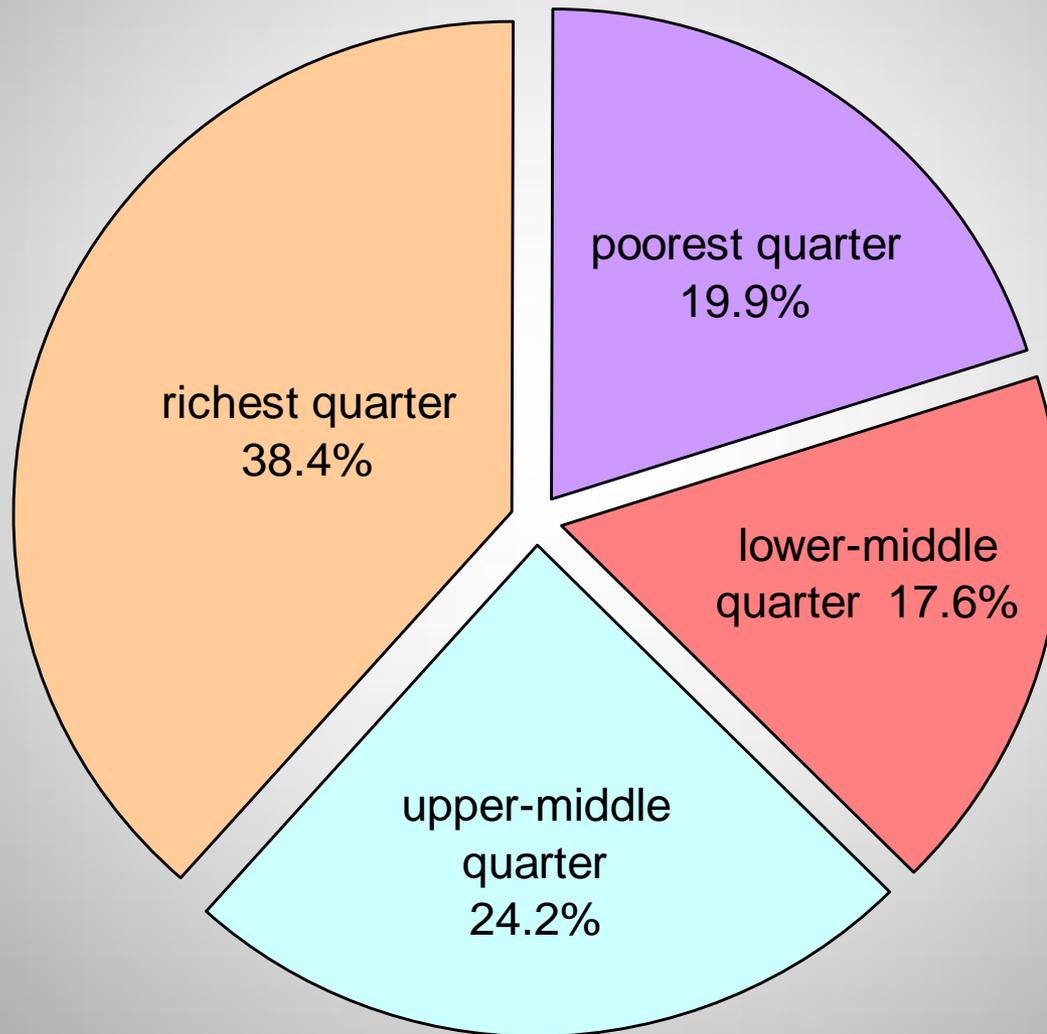
Composition of university student body in **1981**, by quarters of parents' income



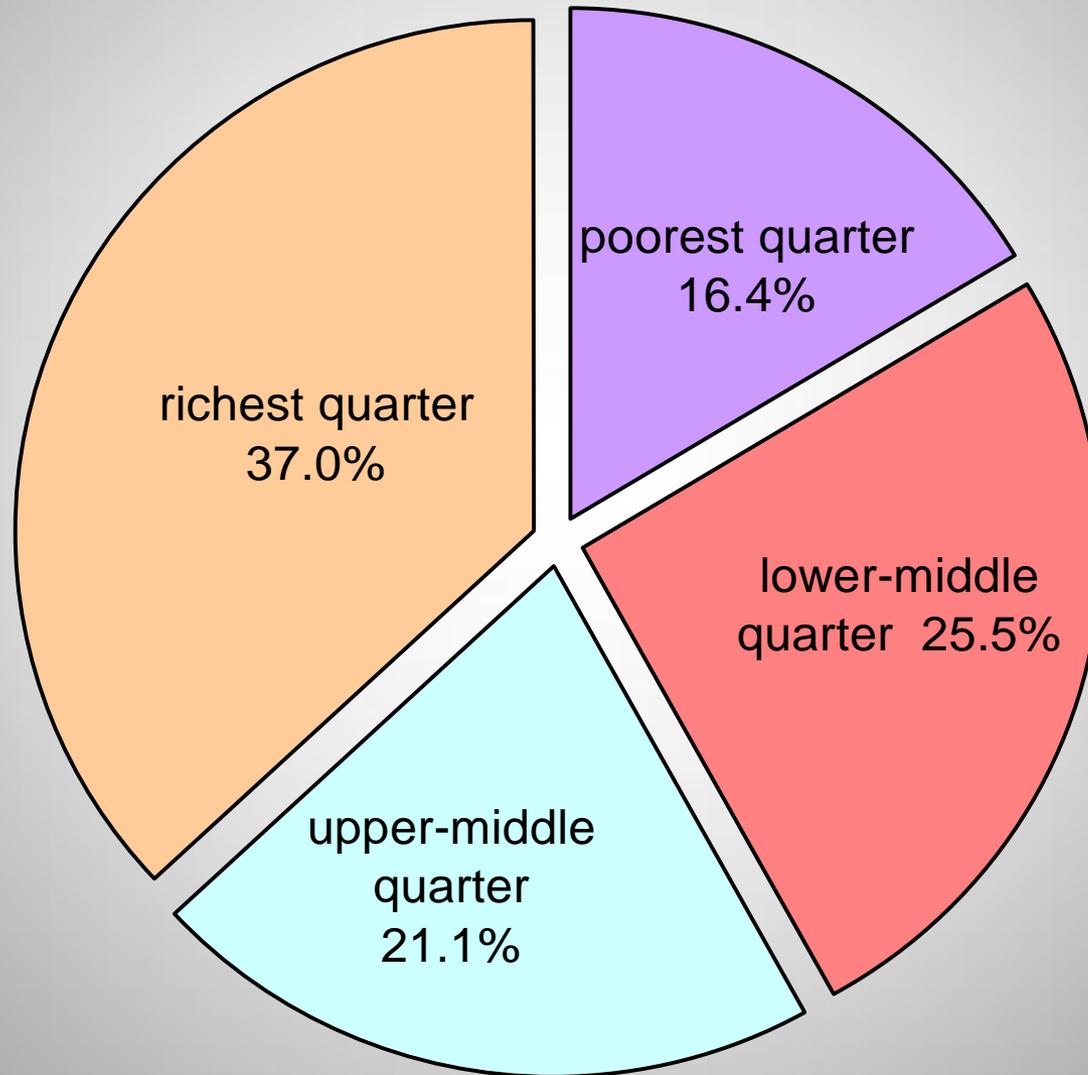
Composition of university student body in **1991**, by quarters of parents' income



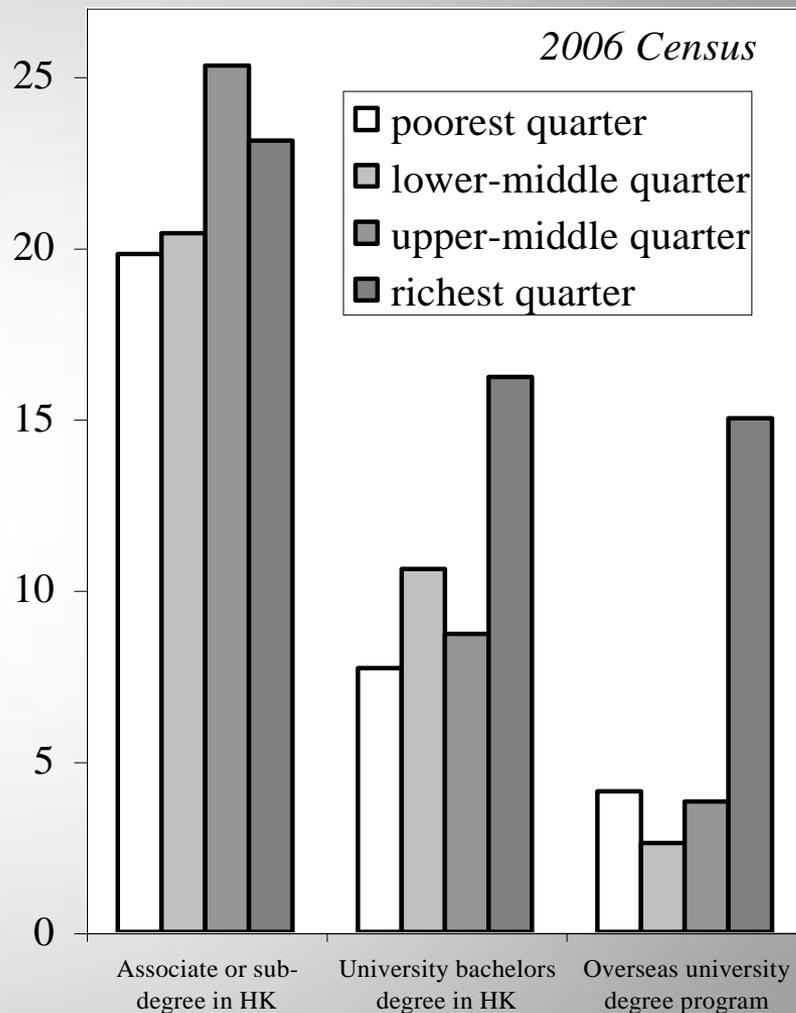
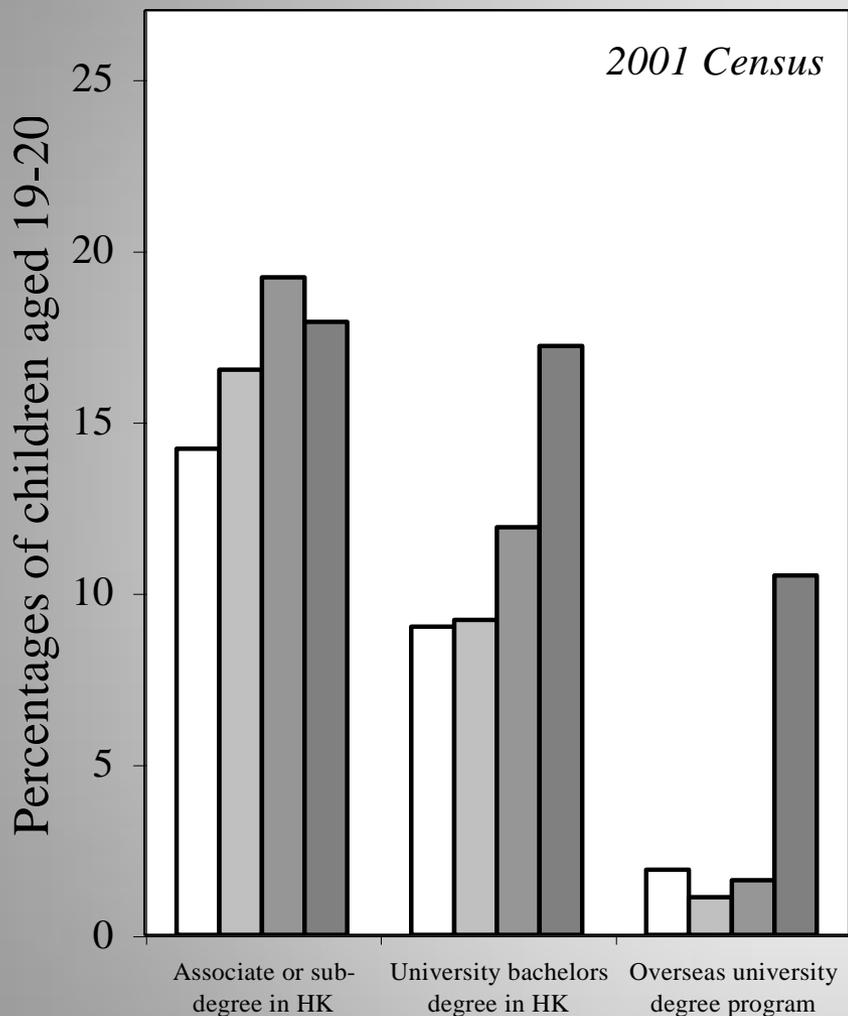
Composition of university student body in **2001**, by quarters of parents' income



Composition of university student body in **2006**, by quarters of parents' income

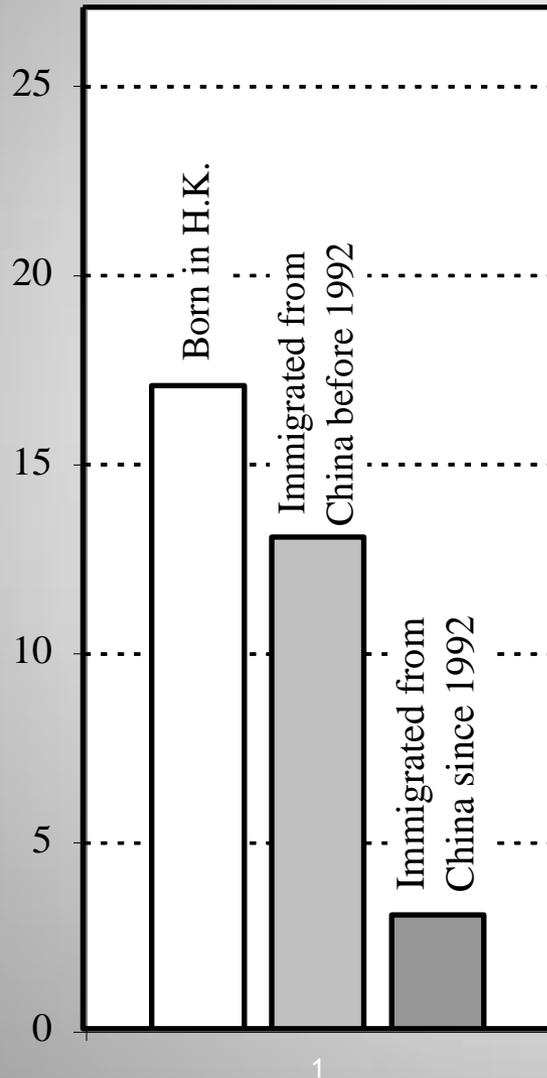


Children's Postsecondary Attainment in Sub-degree, B.A. or Overseas by Quarters of Total Parental Income and Census Year

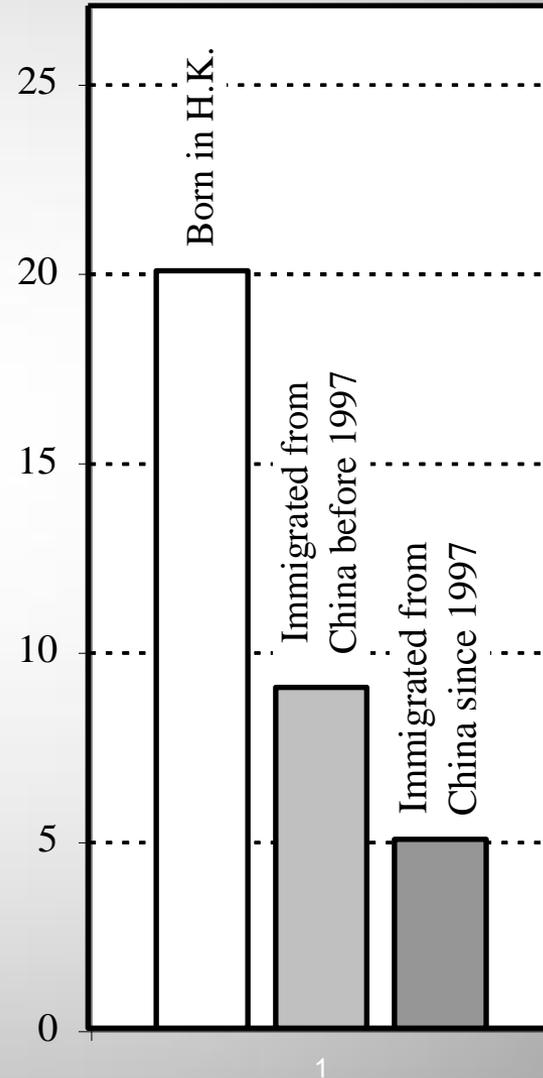


Educational Attainment in 2001 and 2006 of Residents *Born in Hong Kong* and of Immigrants from Mainland China

Any university, 2001



Any university, 2006



Summary of Census Analysis

Question: Who has benefited from the existing secondary and university system?

Question: Which groups tended to benefit more over the past thirty years?

The major conclusions of the census investigation are:

1. Over the 1981 – 2006 period, the expansion of university education was accompanied by an equalization in opportunities to attend in 2006, as compared with 1981.
2. This equalization occurred for income only during the 1981-1991 period. Since 1991, there has been a modest (but statistically significant) reversal in the earlier trend.
3. In 2001 and 2006, we know which children attend a university outside of Hong Kong, and from which income groups. It is primarily children in the top quarter of parents' income children.
4. Children immigrating from China are at an increasing disadvantage in terms of university attendance, even after controlling for family resources (mother's education, parent's income, and ability to use English). However, this disadvantage for children born in China is only for those who came to Hong Kong after 1991.



Donald Tsang Yam-Kuen became the acting Chief Executive in March 2005, and in 2007, an 800-member election committee (composed mostly of functional representatives of interest groups), selected over the candidate of the Citizen's Party, Alan Leong Kah-kit

In the debates leading up to the election, Alan Leong's Civic Party raised the profile of education policy. The party platform promised that, if elected, Alan Leong would extend free and compulsory education from 9 to 11 years. He also promised to upgrade postsecondary education, and to stop further reductions in the budgets allocated to universities. He emphasized that the government should allow schools greater autonomy from the government.

After his election, and in his formal Policy Address, Donald Tsang gave education attention, but for different reasons than those mentioned by the Civic Party or the opposition “Pan-Democrats.” Tsang promised to “continue to raise the quality of education and upgrade our human capital, encourage more outstanding non-local students to study in Hong Kong and work here after graduation, and attract more talents to Hong Kong with a view to optimising our demographic structure.”

Will a rationale for education based on human rights or educational opportunity, and the development of potential emerge in Hong Kong? Or will human capital and manpower planning approaches remain dominant?