

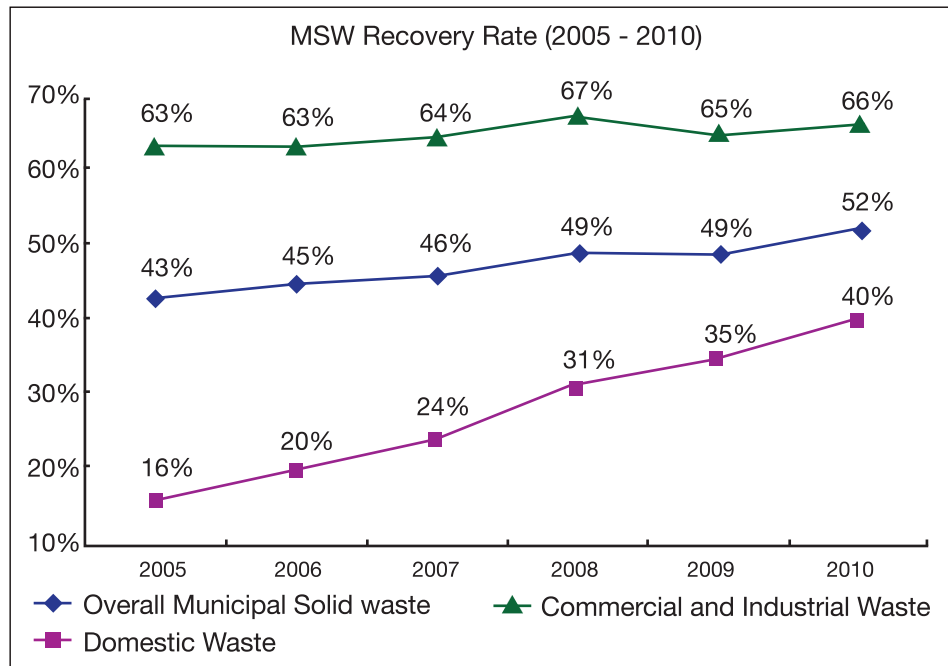
Sustainable Waste Management in Hong Kong

- 1.1** Proper waste management is key to the good management of a city. In recent years, its importance rises as sustainable development assumes higher priority in cities' agenda. Our waste management policy has evolved over the past few decades to a model with an increased focus on sustainability. Reduction of wastes through the promotion of 3Rs, i.e. reduce, reuse and recycle, is the first arm of our strategy, as it serves not only to suppress the volume of wastes that needs to be treated, hence reducing the load of waste treatment facilities, but also to make good use of what is commonly regarded as wastes and turn them into resources.

Reduction at Source is the Priority Task

- 1.2** With the concerted effort of the Government and the community, the waste recovery rate in Hong Kong has been increasing progressively since 2005 (see [Exhibit 1](#)). The Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste was launched in January 2005 and has gradually reached over 80% of Hong Kong's population up to now. A sister programme was launched in October 2007 to cover commercial and industrial ("C&I") sector. Other measures also work to reduce the waste that requires disposal at the landfills. For instance, the Construction Waste Disposal Charging Scheme became effective in January 2006 and has resulted in the reduction in construction waste disposal (by 37% in the first year of implementation and cumulatively by 45% up to 2010). A legislative framework for the implementation of mandatory producer responsibility schemes ("PRSs") was put in place in July 2008, enabling the implementation of the environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags ("PSBs") in July 2009.

Exhibit 1:
MSW Recovery Rate Since 2005



1.3 The combined result of the above efforts has brought the municipal solid waste (“MSW”) recovery rate of Hong Kong to 52% in 2010, exceeding our original target laid down in the *Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)* (“*The MSW Policy Framework*”), i.e. to attain 45% waste recovery rate by 2009. But our effort to reduce waste should continue. **Taking out the 52% of MSW being recovered, the daily quantity of MSW being dumped into Hong Kong’s three strategic landfills still stands at 9 100 tonnes, sufficient to fill up three Olympic-sized swimming pools.** Together with construction wastes, sludge and other wastes, the wastes sent to the landfills add up to 13 800 tonnes a day. At this rate, the annual disposal of wastes to our landfills stands at a staggering 5.04 million tonnes. This exerts tremendous pressure on the demand for landfill space and, at the same time, calls for huge investments in the introduction of modern technology for the proper treatment of the residue waste. We need to continue to redouble our effort in waste reduction.

What is Municipal Solid Waste?

There are three sources of MSW in Hong Kong –

- Domestic solid waste, which comes from households and public areas, including waste collected from residential buildings, public litter bins, streets, marine areas and country parks.
- Commercial solid waste, which comes from shops, restaurants, hotels, offices and markets in private housing estates.
- Industrial solid waste, which is generated by all industries, but does not include construction and demolition waste, chemical waste or other special waste.

- 1.4** The situation of domestic MSW warrants attention. It is true that waste recovery at household level has increased significantly during the last few years, from 24% in 2007 to 40% in 2010. But this still means that the majority, i.e. 60%, of MSW at household level, goes to the landfills. At present, much of the waste recovery activities does not take place in individual households but is undertaken by garbage collectors. Triggering the behavioural changes by individuals at household level would instill a change of culture which could go a long way in reducing waste in our city.

Waste Charging: A Way to Strengthen Waste Reduction

- 1.5** Notwithstanding the efforts that we have made and the action plan that we have pledged, our study of overseas experience shows that any further attempts to significantly reduce waste generation would not be possible in the absence of major economic incentives to drive the requisite behavioural change. **Overseas experience also shows that the introduction of MSW charging has been successful in encouraging the reduction in waste for final disposal, increasing recycling rate, and to a more limited extent, encouraging waste minimization.**

- 1.6** As shown in the experience of other cities, the effectiveness of waste charging in achieving waste reduction depends on the relevant basket of complementary measures as well as the underpinning waste collection system. Due consideration should be given to the local context in determining the charging approach and the coverage of the scheme, in developing the legislative framework, in drawing up an appropriate enforcement strategy and in revamping the existing waste collection system. At a community level, the way a building or premises is managed might require some adjustments. And above all, members of the community need to act together in seeking behavioural changes. The imminence of the waste management problem facing Hong Kong has created an opportunity for our community to look together into the issue of MSW charging in a focused manner, so as to determine its role in our overall waste management strategy. In the remainder of this Consultation Document, we will explain the above issues in detail.
- 1.7** The objective of MSW charging is to create an economic incentive to achieve waste reduction. But there could be wider implications leading to changes in our waste collection system and our everyday habit. Even the protection of privacy in waste disposal or other issues with far-reaching impacts could emerge as concerns. In publishing this Consultation Document, we do not mean to rush, but aim to kickstart a deliberation process through which the entire community (especially the relevant stakeholders) could come to a broad direction on the issue of MSW charging. We would then take it from there and proceed to engage the community into further deliberations on the various key aspects of a charging system.