



# Radiology Loading and Coverage Hours in Hong Kong

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Similar to global trends, the interplay between service demand and supply in clinical radiology in Hong Kong is dynamically shaped by demographic trends, healthcare policies, and technological advancements. In this article, we shall examine the intricate ecosystem of radiological services, from the factors driving demand to the mechanisms ensuring accessible and efficient service delivery.

With an estimated population of 7.5 million as of 2023, according to provisional data from the Census and Statistics Department of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [1], the need for radiological services is apparent. Presently, there are nearly 1000 members and just over 500 radiology and nuclear medicine fellows in the Hong Kong College of Radiologists [2], equating to approximately 6.7 certified professionals per million residents. Notably, the aging population is a significant element with regards to the service demand. The median age of the population has risen from 31.6 in 1991 to 46.3 in 2021 [3]. This increase is attributable to declining fertility and continuous improvement in mortality over the last 30 years.

As for supply, Hong Kong's radiology services, like those

in other medical disciplines, rely on both the public hospital system and private healthcare providers. The public sector plays a pivotal role in ensuring equitable access to high-quality healthcare, adhering to the long-standing healthcare policy that "no individual is denied adequate healthcare due to lack of means" [4]. Meanwhile, the private sector offers a range of services, including primary care and specialist consultations. While outpatient consultations are predominantly managed by private practitioners, public hospitals cater to the majority of inpatient needs [5,6]. Given its prominence in inpatient services, this article primarily focuses on the public sector. As of March 2023, over 6000 full-time equivalent medical doctors are employed by the Hospital Authority [7].

Within the public hospital system, radiologists typically maintain full-time schedules during standard business hours, with additional on-call responsibilities for emergency cases outside regular shifts. On average, they typically work 40 to 50 hours per week on their duties, with rotating on-call duties during evenings, weekends, and public holidays. Individual radiology departments manage the workload and manpower allocation for on-call duties for coverage during non-business hours.

In the private sector, the workload of radiologists varies depending on specific practices or institutions. The exact workload and responsibilities depend on factors such as patient volume, specialty focus, practice setting, and individual work preferences.

As Hong Kong's healthcare landscape continues to evolve, the demand for radiological services is fueled by an aging population and advancements in medical technology. Balancing this demand, the public hospital system stands as a pillar for equitable healthcare access supported by radiologists delivering timely and quality care. In tandem, the private sector offers complementary services. Together,

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these sectors converge to ensure that the people of Hong Kong receive comprehensive and responsive radiological care, playing a key part in the changing world of healthcare.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author has no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

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