

For discussion on
23 February 2026

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

An Overview of the Civil Service: Establishment, Strength, Retirement, Resignation, Age Profile and Gender Profile

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the overall establishment, strength, wastage situation, age profile and gender profile of the civil service.

Establishment and Strength

(a) Overall

2. Hong Kong has a professional and efficient civil service that serves with integrity and strives to provide quality service to the community. As at 30 November 2025, the civil service establishment (i.e. the number of posts) was around 190 000 and the strength (i.e. the number of serving civil servants) was around 171 000, which represented about 2.3% of the population and 4.5% of the labour force of Hong Kong. The changes in establishment and strength of the civil service¹ for the last 10 years are shown at **Annex A**.

3. To ensure the sustainability of public finances, the Government has strictly controlled the civil service establishment, which has been maintained at zero-growth since 2021-22, with the overall establishment² contained at a level not exceeding that as at end-March 2021. To further utilise manpower resources and to control public expenditure, we will reduce the civil service establishment by 2% each in 2026-27 and 2027-28 basing on the establishment of the preceding financial year. By 1 April 2027, about 10 000 posts are expected to be deleted from the overall civil service establishment within this term of Government. Government departments will continue to optimise the

¹ For the purpose of this paper, civil service establishment and strength exclude judges and judicial officers, Independent Commission Against Corruption officers, etc.

² The civil service establishment includes posts on the permanent establishment and time-limited posts on the non-permanent establishment. The number of posts of the latter (including directorate and non-directorate posts) has already been counted towards the establishment.

use of civil service manpower resources and enhance efficiency through re-prioritisation, internal redeployment, streamlining of work processes and leveraging on technology solutions, with a view to providing high-quality public services to the citizens.

(b) Directorate and Non-directorate

4. As at 30 November 2025, the establishment and strength at the non-directorate level were about 189 000 and 169 000 respectively, and those at the directorate level were about 1 600 and 1 400³ respectively. Directorate officers represent less than 1% of the establishment and strength of the civil service. A breakdown of the civil service establishment and strength by directorate and non-directorate levels over the last 10 years is provided at **Annex A**.

Wastage and Replenishment

5. In 2024-25, the wastage in the civil service was about 8 300, accounting for around 4.8% of the strength, down from 5.4% in the previous year. Retirement was the primary reason for departure of civil servants, accounting for approximately 65% of staff wastage, while the other reasons included resignation, completion of agreement, death, etc.

(a) Retirement

6. The retirement⁴ position of the civil service over the last 10 years is shown at **Annex B**. The number of retirees was around 5 300 in 2024-25, representing about 3.1% of the strength. As regards directorate civil servants, the number of retirees ranged between 9.5% and 11.7% of the directorate strength in the last 10 years. The number stood at around 10% in 2024-25. Details are at **Annex C**.

³ The difference of approximately 200 between the establishment and strength at the directorate level does not denote that there are 200 vacant directorate posts. Whenever a directorate officer leaves the service, the promotion board will unlikely promote an officer from the next lower rank to fill the vacancy immediately. Instead, the board will select the most suitable officer at the next lower rank for acting appointment with a view to testing his/her ability in performing duties of the higher rank. Such arrangement also applies to most non-directorate posts. During the acting period, the officer will not be counted towards the strength of the respective acting rank, hence resulting in the difference between the establishment and strength. In fact, directorate posts are crucial to bureaux and departments, and the majority of directorate posts are properly filled.

⁴ For the purpose of this paper, “retirement” covers normal retirement, early retirement and re-employment after retirement without a break in service.

7. Based on the existing retirement age of civil servants⁵, it is projected that the number of retirees will gradually decline and then stabilise in the next 20 years. The number of retirees will gradually decrease from the annual average of about 2.8% of the civil service strength in the period from 2025 to 2030 to about 2.4% in the period from 2030 to 2035 and further to about 1.4% in the period from 2035 to 2040, then slightly increase to 2.2% in the period from 2040 to 2045.

(b) Resignation

8. The resignation rate of the civil service has declined in recent years, down from about 1.8% in 2023-24 to about 1.4% in 2024-25. The resignation rates of civil servants in the last 10 years are shown at **Annex D**. Government departments have put in place mechanisms for handling the duties of vacant posts, such as appointing suitable officers to take up acting appointments and extending the service of civil servants beyond the retirement age to maintain the operation of public services.

(c) Filling of Vacancies and Boosting Staff Morale

9. The Government maintains a clear and well-structured career development framework for the civil service to attract, nurture and retain talent. Senior rank vacancies are mainly filled by promotion from within the service. The Government is committed to identifying as early as possible officers with potential and outstanding performance for further grooming. In particular, it provides career management planning (e.g. arrange appropriate postings, professional and management trainings, Mainland and overseas visits, and secretariat attachments) for more junior officers to prepare them for taking up higher responsibilities after gaining certain experience and exposure, and to enhance their job satisfaction.

10. The Government has proactively stepped up its recruitment and promotion efforts to attract talent from different backgrounds to join the civil service. The measures include expanding the pool of eligible candidates to undergraduate students in their penultimate year of study for suitable posts, regularly organising local Government Career Fair and other promotion activities, providing a variety of internship opportunities for the youth, as well as intensifying promotion efforts in the Mainland and overseas. All these measures enhance job seekers' understanding of and interest in civil service

⁵ The existing retirement age of civil servants is prescribed under the pension legislation and Civil Service Regulations. New recruits appointed to the civil service on or after 1 June 2015 are subject to the new retirement age of 65 in respect of civilian grades and 60 in respect of disciplined services grades, regardless of their ranks.

work. The Government receives hundreds of thousands of job applications every year, with an average of around 10 000 people being appointed annually, reflecting that civil service jobs are very attractive.

11. As the overall educational level of Hong Kong population has generally improved, there has also been a rise in the educational level of civil service post applicants. We have seen quite a number of applicants with high academic qualifications in recent years, which makes it possible for government departments to hire those applicants that exceed the entry requirements. Taking the post of Assistant Clerical Officer as an example, about 70% of the new recruits possess a university degree or above despite it not being a post at degree level. This not only demonstrates the appeal of civil service posts but also helps enhance the overall quality and service effectiveness of the civil service.

12. As an effort of pursuing digitalisation of public services, the Government launched the digitalised Basic Law and National Security Law Test (Degree/Professional Grades) in May 2025. Candidates applying for civil service posts of degree or professional grades are allowed to take the test at the Recruitment Centre, General Grades Office of the Civil Service Bureau at their own selected timeslots throughout the year. The new measure not only helps persons who aspire to join the Government in attaining the entry requirements of civil service posts at an early stage, but also benefits individual departments or grades in speeding up the recruitment process and intake of talent.

13. While working to streamline the establishment, government departments will also regularly review and update manpower plans and plan ahead and conduct recruitment exercises as appropriate to ensure the succession of quality staff and filling of vacancies at different levels in a timely manner. We will optimise the use of manpower resources through measures such as reprioritisation and promoting digitalisation to ensure the delivery of quality and efficient public services. Furthermore, departments may flexibly deploy various measures for extending the service of civil servants to retain experienced civil servants who have reached their retirement age so as to meet specific manpower needs.

14. The Civil Service Bureau will also continue to give due recognition to civil servants with outstanding performances and dedication to serving the community through various commendation schemes, including the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance, the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme, the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme, the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award

Scheme, etc. In addition, B/Ds have put in place the Commendation Letter Scheme, Staff Motivation Scheme, etc. to boost the morale of their colleagues. Besides, fair and deserving comments made by the public are crucial to enhancing the morale of the civil service. We will continue our efforts to publicise good stories of civil servants through different channels to enhance public understanding of the nature of civil servants' work, the challenges they face and their contribution to the society.

Age Profile

15. The age profile of the civil service over the last 10 years is illustrated at **Annex E**. In 2024-25, the age groups of 29 or below and 30-39 constituted about 10.5% and 34.9% of the civil service strength respectively. Overall, the average age of the civil service is lower than that of the labour force of Hong Kong. As shown at **Annex F**, the majority of Hong Kong's labour force were aged 50 or above (about 37.1%) whereas the majority of the civil servants were in the age group of 30-39 (about 34.9%). The age profile of the other age groups of the civil service is similar to that of the labour force of Hong Kong.

16. The age profile of directorate civil servants over the last 10 years is illustrated at **Annex G**. The age group of 50 or above remained the largest group, representing about 77.1% of its strength in 2024-25. In terms of percentage, the directorate strength in the other age groups remained relatively stable.

17. The overall appointment of civil servants varies from year to year and the number of applications received per annum may be affected by various factors including labour market situation and preference of applicants. Generally speaking, new blood joining the civil service were mainly young people. As shown at **Annex H**, in the five-year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25, there were around 23 000 new recruits in the age group of 29 or below (or about 55.2% of the total intake) and around 12 000 new recruits in the age group of 30-39 (or about 29% of the total intake). New recruits in these two age groups also account for the highest proportion of the total intake. Nevertheless, appointment to the civil service is based on the principle of open and fair competition. Candidates who meet the entry requirements, irrespective of their age, will receive equal treatment during the selection process. Taking those appointed to the civil service in the five-year period from 2020-21 to 2024-25 as an example, there were about 2 850 appointees aged 50 or above.

Gender Profile

18. The participation rates of female civil servants and female civilian civil servants in the civil service over the last 10 years are illustrated at **Annex I** and **Annex J** respectively. The overall proportion of female civil servants increased from around 37.1% in 2015-16 to around 38.6% in 2024-25. The participation rate of female civilian civil servants⁶ rose from around 47.9% in 2015-16 to around 48.8% in 2024-25.

19. The rising trend of female participation rate is prominent in respect of directorate officers, which rose from around 34.6% in 2015-16 to around 42.8% in 2024-25. The proportion of female civilian civil servants for directorate officers also increased from around 37.1% in 2015-16 to around 45.5% in 2024-25.

20. The rise in the proportion of female civil servants was in line with the overall increasing trend in the female participation rate in the labour force of Hong Kong⁷. The participation rate of female civilian officers was also on par with that in the labour force of Hong Kong, showing that the Government's efforts in actively promoting equal opportunities policies over the years have achieved considerable results.

Advice Sought

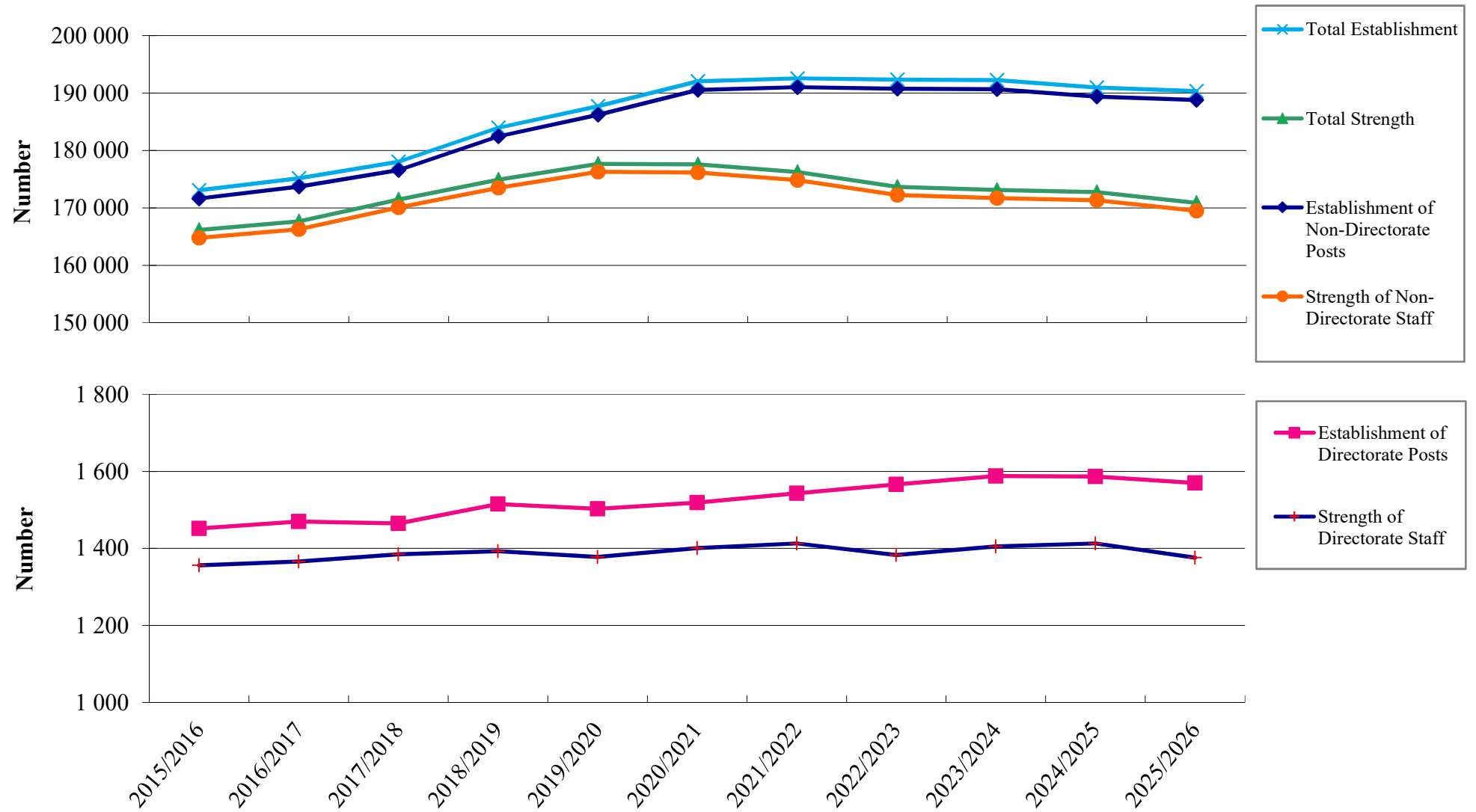
21. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
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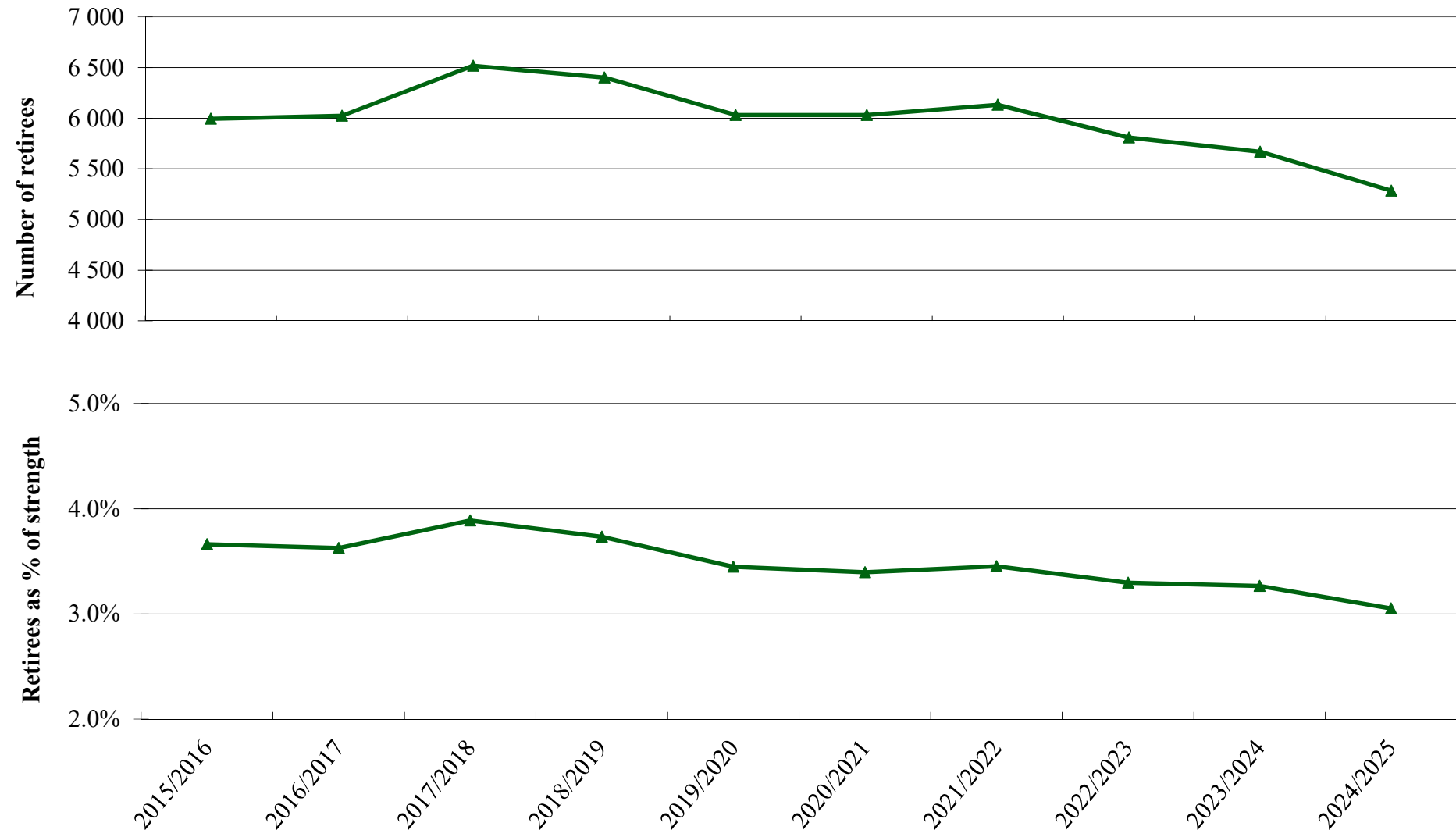
⁶ Calculated by excluding all civil servants who are serving in the disciplined services and remunerated by the Police Pay Scale and Disciplined Services Pay Scales.

⁷ The female participation rate in the labour force of Hong Kong increased from around 48.8% in 2015 to around 50.8% in 2024.

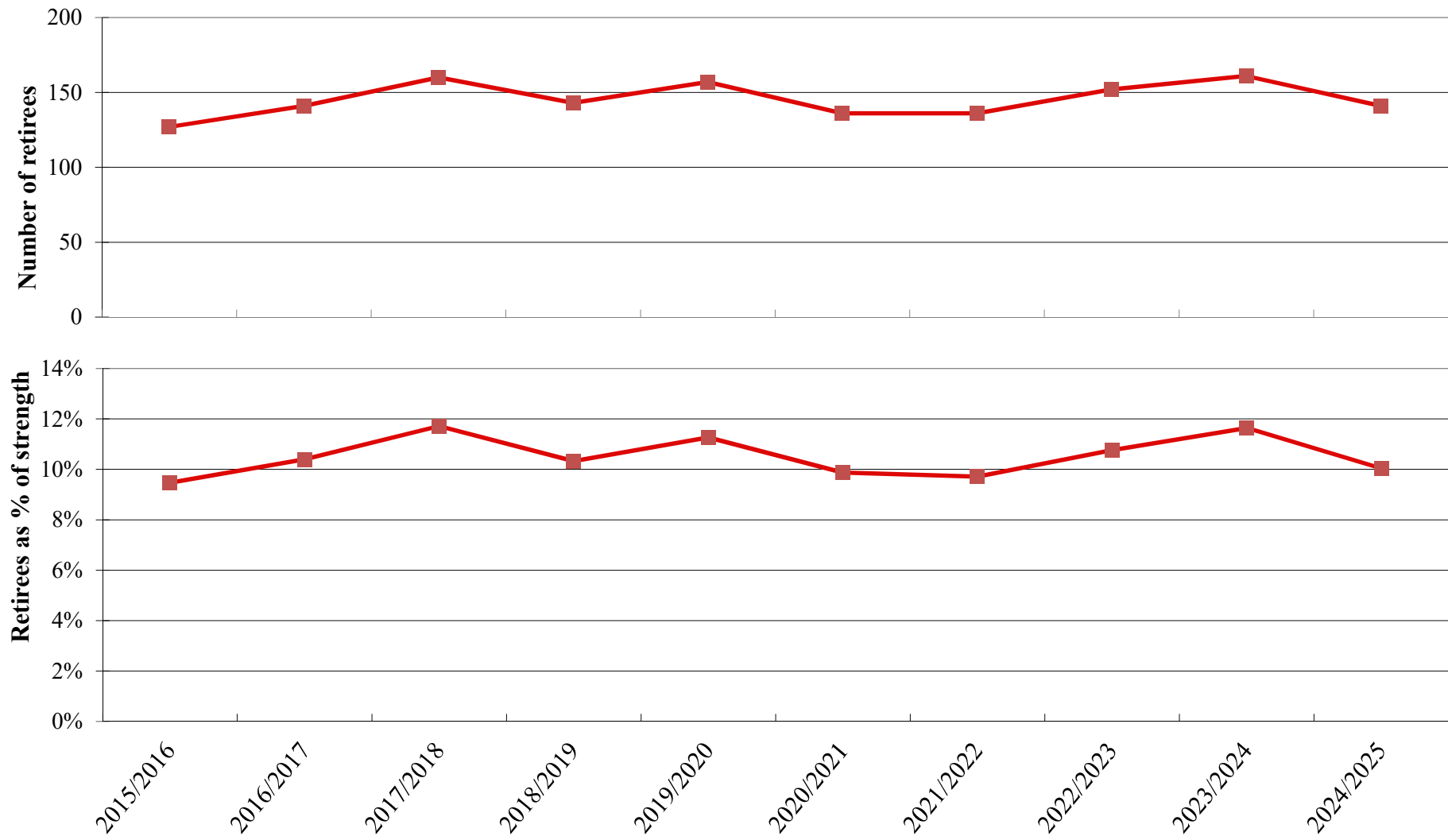
Establishment and Strength of the Civil Service from 2015-2016 to 2025-26 (as at 30 November 2025)



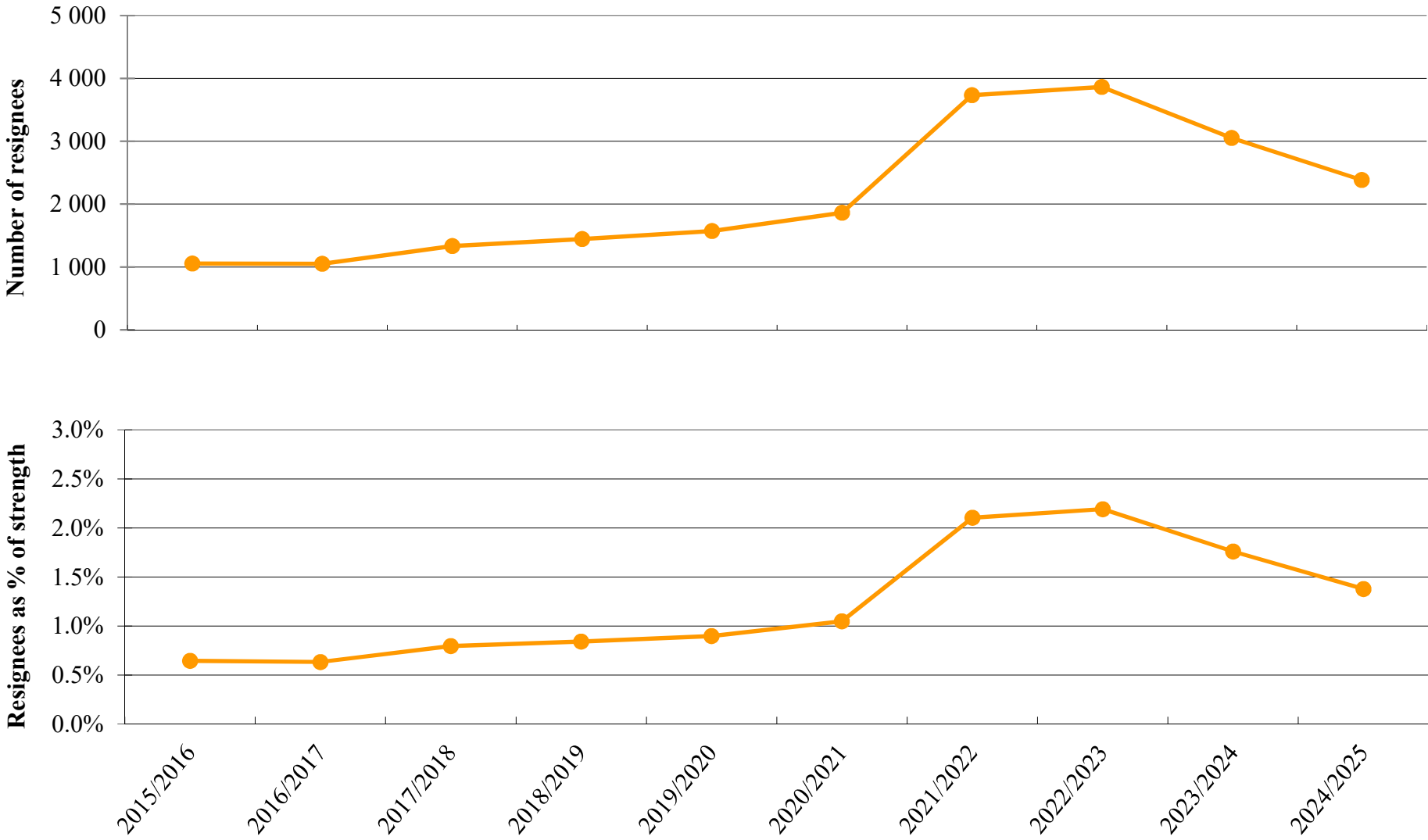
Retirement Position of the Civil Service from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025



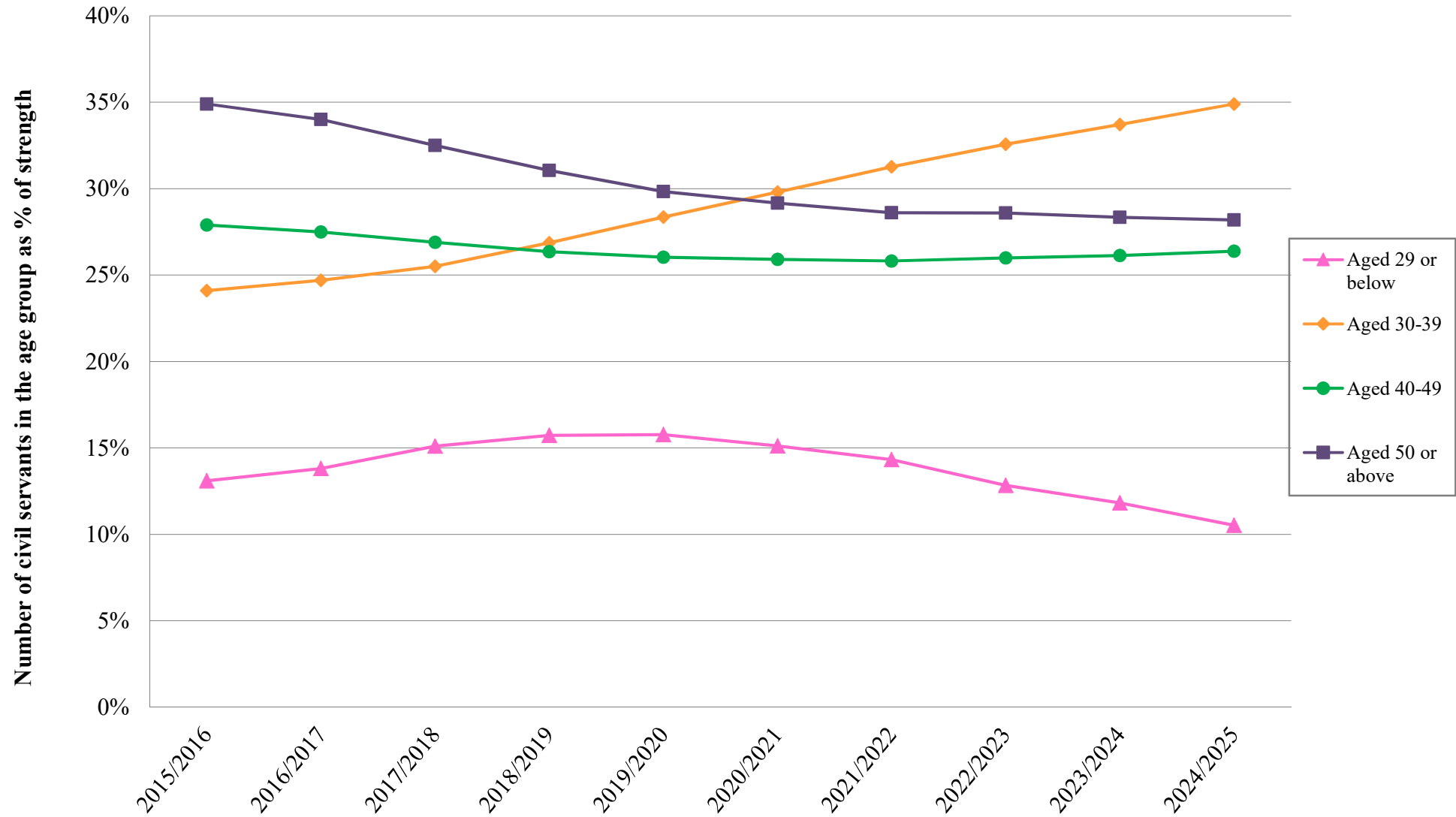
Retirement Position of Directorate Civil Servants from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025

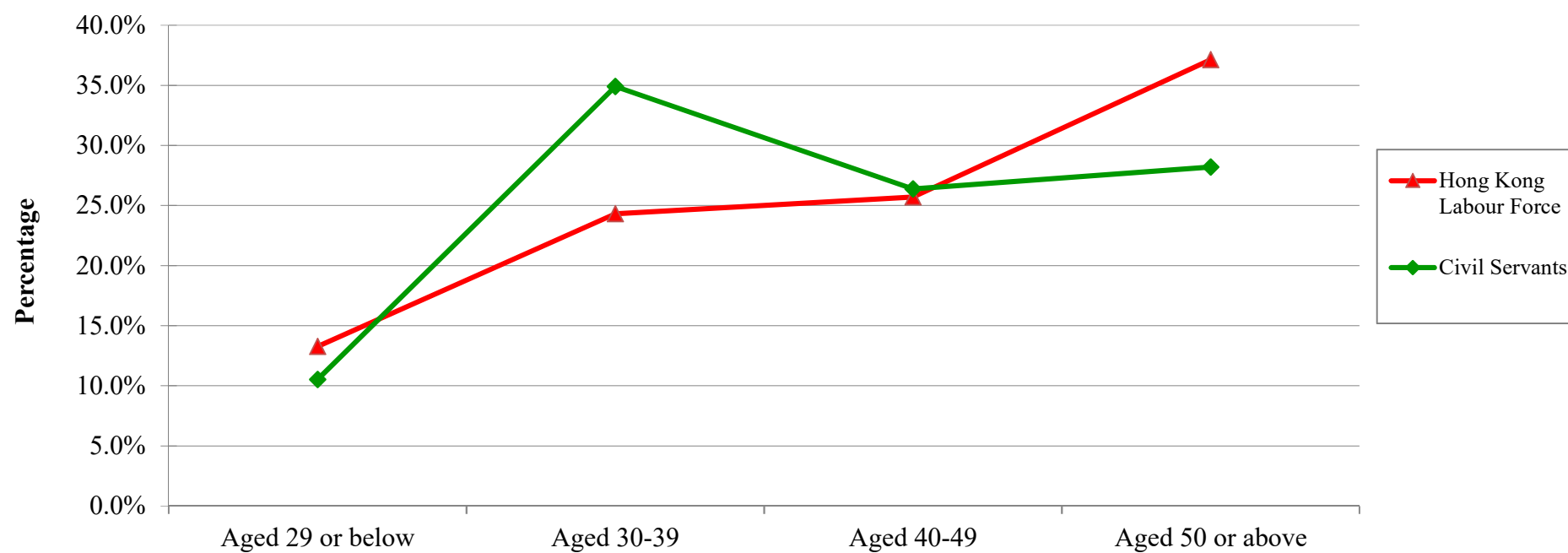


Resignation Position of the Civil Service from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025

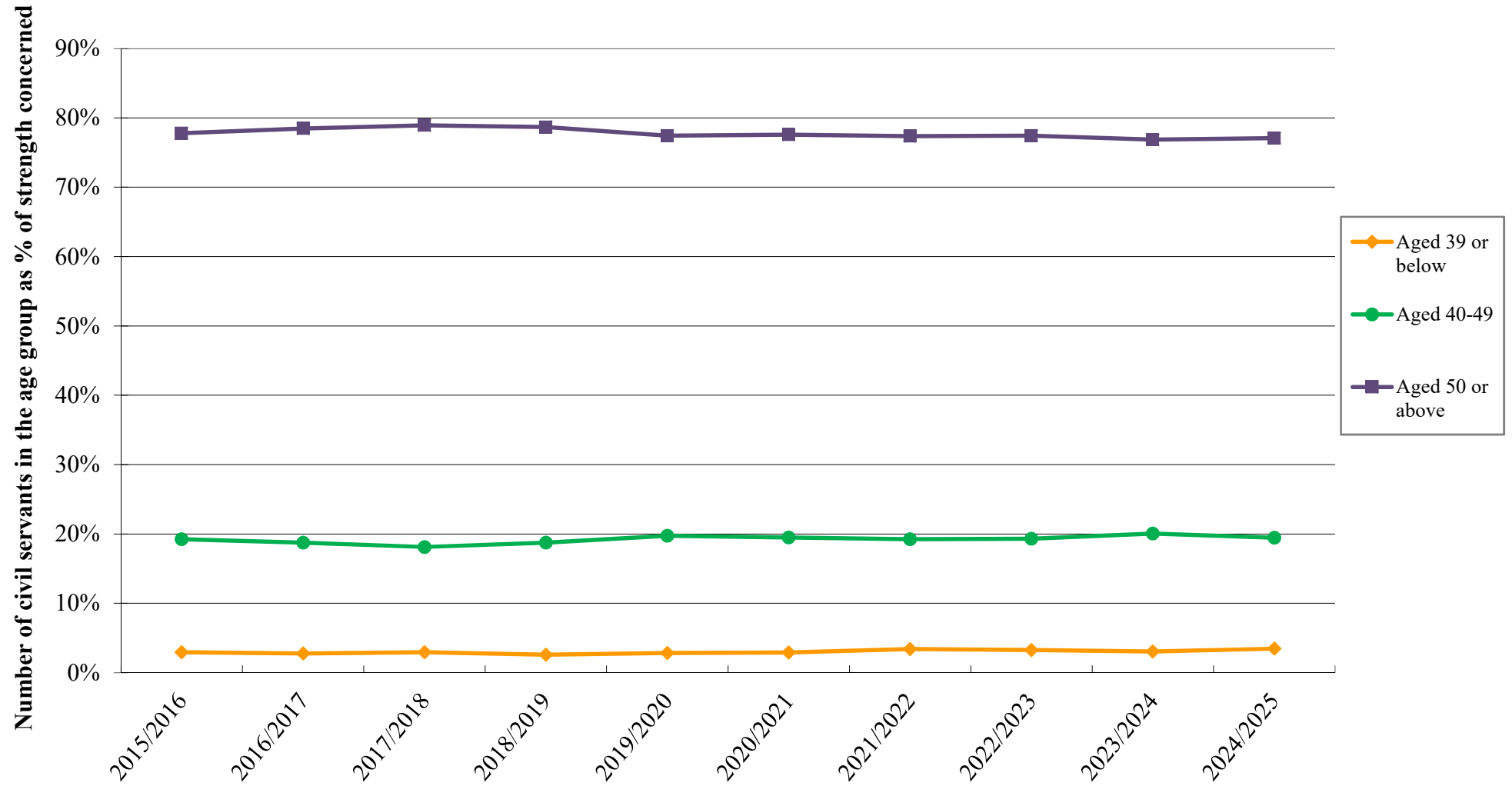


Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025

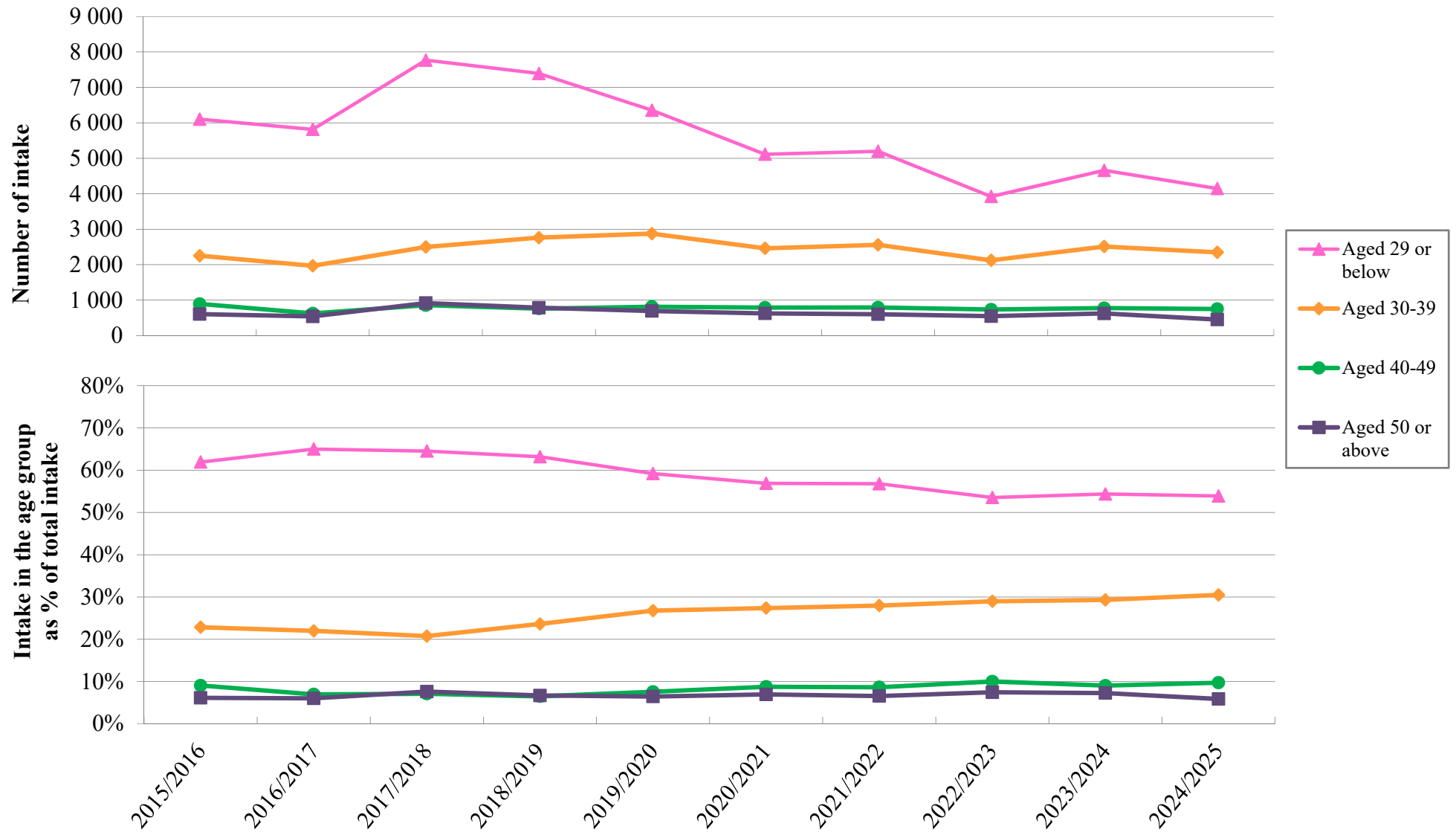


Age Profile of the Hong Kong Labour Force and the Civil Servants in 2025

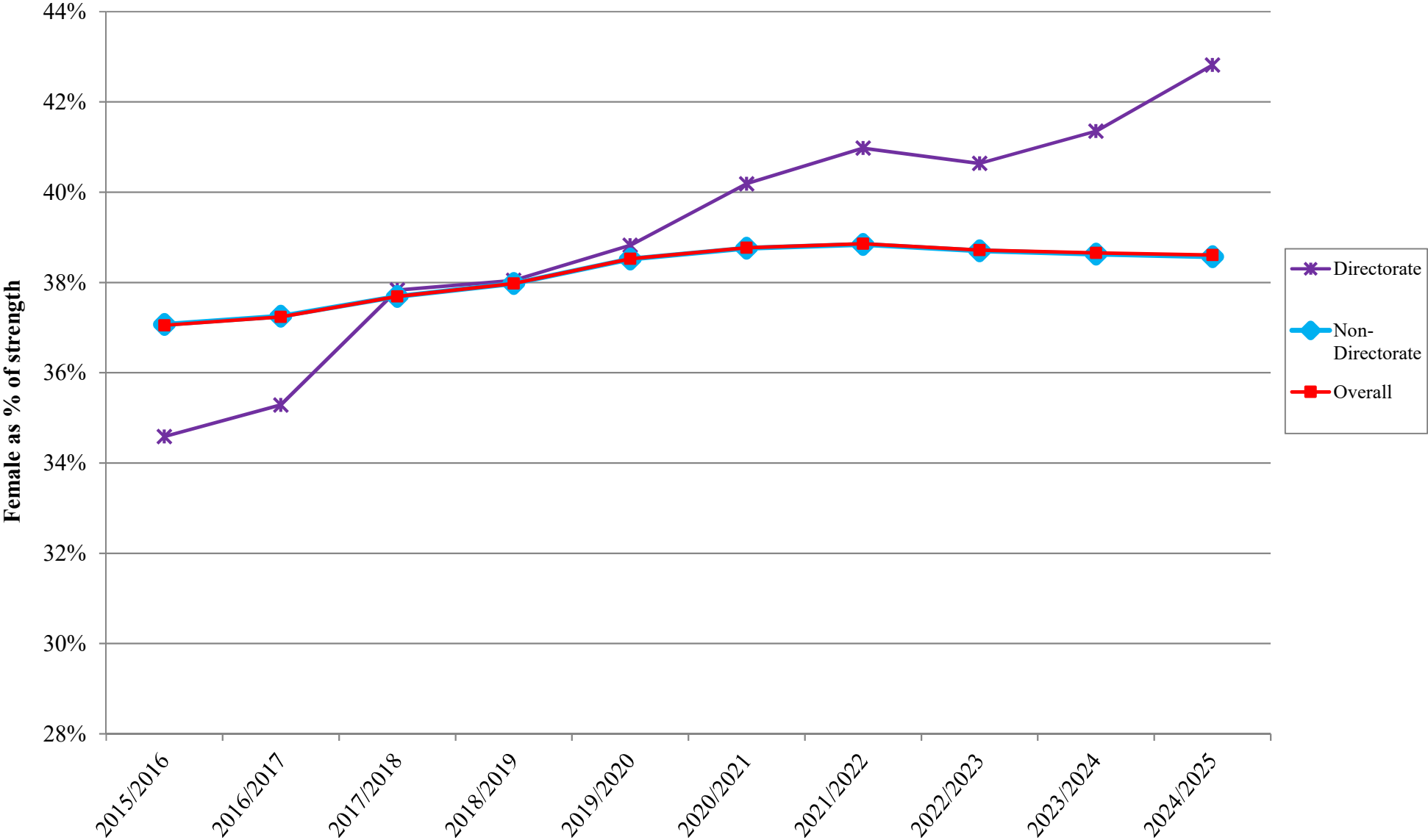
Directorate Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025



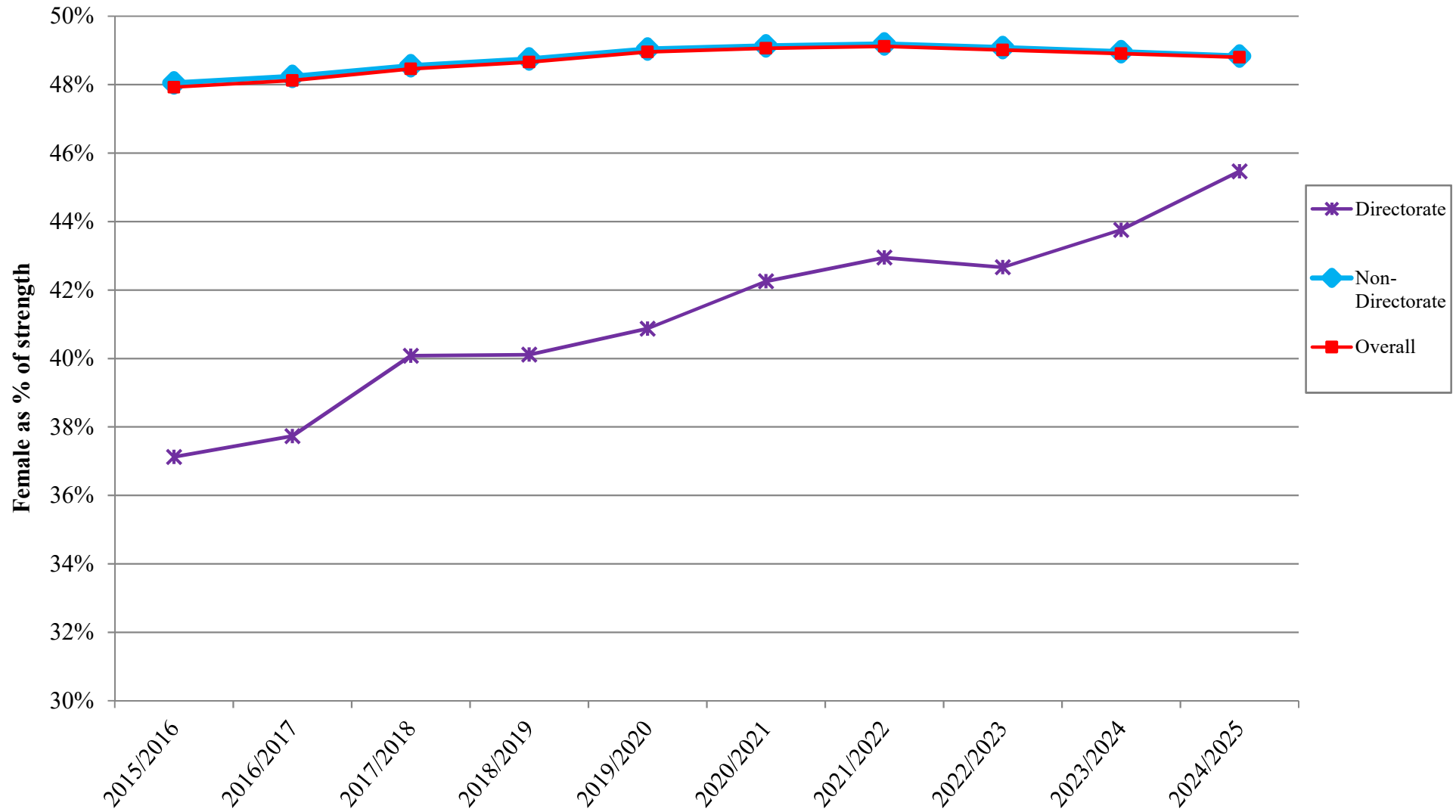
Intake of Civil Servants by Age Groups from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025



Percentage of Female (by Rank) in the Civil Service from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025



Percentage of Female Civilian Civil Servants (by Rank) in the Civilian Civil Service ^{Note}
from 2015-2016 to 2024-2025



Note: Excluding Officers on Police Pay Scale and Disciplined Services Pay Scales