



A Temperature Testing Survey on the Government Quarantine of Children in Hong Kong

Foreword



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Overall AmCham members are grateful for the Hong Kong Government's safe containment of Covid-19, including the recent widening of access to vaccines. However, the sudden and mandatory quarantining of entire school classes, including toddler playgroups, has alarmed many people. It has also raised more concerns about transparency over policies on quarantines and procedures overall.

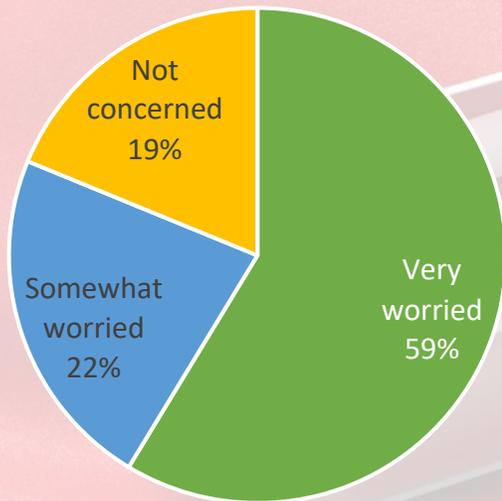
Summary

- The international business community has undergone an unsettling weekend with children from several schools under threat of being sent to mandatory government quarantine facilities after mandatory testing due to COVID outbreaks. In view of the concerns, the Chamber conducted a quick poll to gauge members' views to understand the issues.
- This is an anonymous temperature survey led by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong between March 15 6PM and March 16 1PM.
- A total of 239 responses were received as at March 16 1PM – about 17% of all of our members.

Key points

- A majority of those surveyed said they were worried or somewhat worried about entire school classes being sent to government quarantine facilities, and that the policy is unjustified when it comes to the health of children.
- Just over half of those surveyed said that if this policy became routine it would factor into their decision about staying in Hong Kong.
- Several comments showed a strong disagreement with the majority.
- It is not the Chamber's intention to lobby for any exemption from rules applied to all members of Hong Kong society.
- Based on the survey findings, AmCham suggests more clarity and transparency of information around quarantine arrangements for minors be given to schools and parents while the government does its best to control the pandemic.

1. How worried are you about entire school classes being sent to government quarantine facilities?



"No parents feel comfortable having their children, especially little ones (primary students), stay with strangers in a camp."

"Isn't that the right thing to do?"

"Would want to know details about adult supervision."

"It is psychologically not good for children to be locked up like this."

"I don't have children myself, but the quarantine regulations here (hotel or government) are incredibly damaging to mental health, and for children it would be especially traumatic. I don't see why they can't isolate in their homes if they have tested negative."

"Showing no regard for psychological harm of minors caused by trauma."

"Depends on what to worry about, children getting affected by virus or being sent to quarantine? As I know kids can be accompanied by parents. It's what citizens are obliged to do to protect the greater population."

"The trauma, disruption and emotional stress inflicted on children by unnecessary and excessive quarantining far exceeds the potential public health benefits."

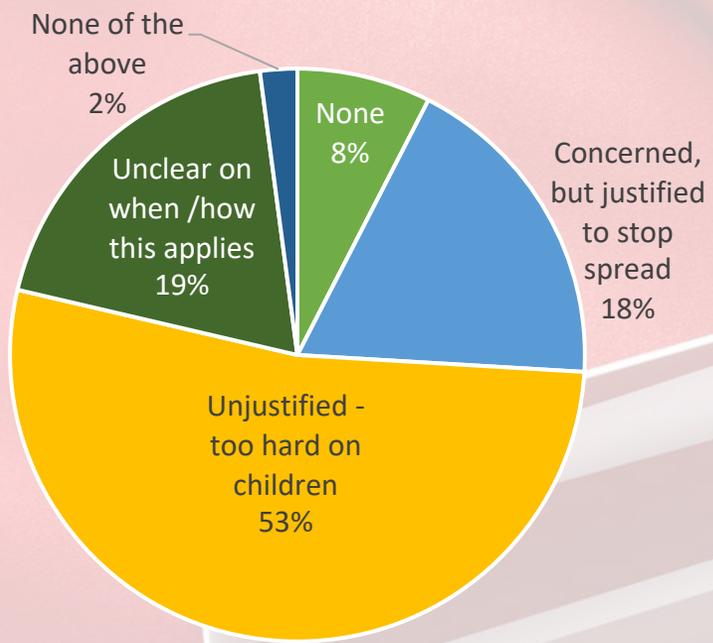
"These facilities are not adequate for supporting young children."

"Families with children should be able to quarantine from home. There is no absolutely no benefit and a great deal of trauma to be had from pursuing this policy."

"The lack of transparency about quarantine measures for children and their family is very concerning and is making us really considering moving our kids out of HK to pursue their education."

"Understand the need to react quickly, but we lack understanding about why these classes are being treated in this way and why home quarantine is not an option."

2. If any, what concerns do you have about this policy?



“There must be a way to allow small children (primary and below) to be quarantined at home.”

“This policy applies equally to local and international schools. Being part of the community, international school should not be carved out from the public health policy. This is reasonable and justified for the sake of the entire community.”

“I think their communication needs to improve but the policy is justified to protect the population.”

“While we need to quarantine the children, different measures should be adopted to ensure that the children are taken care of.”

“We should make cautious measures but it should not be a punishment. This policy simply punishes everyone who involuntarily got in contact with a case. And on children it's just unacceptable.”

“Not only children but in general this is not a good policy. Invest in better control of home quarantine and scaling vaccines instead.”

“Why not have an option to quarantine at home with all family members.”

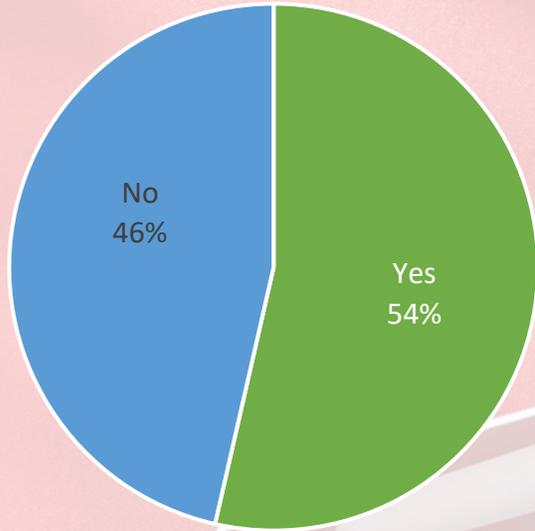
“Application seems somewhat random and there's no clarity on parents being allowed or not allowed to go.”

“The children are unlikely to be the ones to violate quarantine, it's the people around them. There are a number of other equally effective methods to ensure a family unit remains quarantined until cleared; breaking apart a family is probably not the best way to accomplish it. Relaxed rules which would permit one parent to accompany them is a reasonable compromise, but again, there are other ways to approach this problem that should be considered.”

“It would ease the concerns if there is more transparency of who gets sent to the quarantine camps and why especially relating to the kids below age of 18.”

“The only real concern is implementation details, such as who might be able to accompany the children. Sending them alone is far from optimal, but as long as they can be accompanied by a family member it can be mitigated.”

3. If this policy becomes routine, would this factor into your decision about staying in Hong Kong?



“While we all appreciate the efforts to stop the virus, the measures need to be based in science and applied in a practical way. Zero cases is not realistic. The government's unclear policies are causing anxiety needlessly. It is not even clear how "close contact" is defined.”

“Acting with strict policies for the betterment of community is fine, but not at the expense of small children and their mental state.”

“We would consider leaving Hong Kong as a result of unnecessary and draconian quarantine policies.”

“This is a general policy and has been in place for over a year since the beginning of the pandemic. Hong Kong government has been efficient in containing the spread of the pandemic, compared to other countries, despite improvements can be seen in certain areas. As a permanent resident, I feel safe and lucky that I am staying in Hong Kong since the Covid-19 outbreak in the city.”

“We will not endanger our children for unjustified blanket policies like this. We don't even know what the aim is with Hong Kong and COVID, the govt has not made it clear they are focusing on a realistic target.”

“So far, HK has been far too lax and seems to have been trying to walk the middle road by having more freedom than other well controlled countries such as Singapore, Australia, NZ, Taiwan, Macau and PRC. However as the experience has shown in HK, there doesn't appear to be a middle road and it would be better for HK to simply bite the bullet, lock down for a short period with universal testing and then we can all get on with normal life as long as the borders remain well controlled.”

“Absolutely, we have already discussed options.”

“ I lived in China throughout this pandemic and they were never this harsh. Even mandatory quarantine was way more humane. They would allow people (foreign and nationals) to return home to continue their quarantine after a few days in a hotel and a negative test.”

“We already have employees and their family members who have left HK as a result of this policy.”

“It is difficult to live and work in a place where children can be put in such a difficult situation unnecessarily.”