

# Hong Kong slashes quota for mainland babies

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Hong Kong on Friday announced a sharply reduced quota for mainland Chinese women allowed to give birth in its public hospitals, as it struggles to cope with the tens of thousands arriving yearly.

"There is a surge of demand for Hong Kong's obstetric services by non-local residents, in particular mainland women, in recent years," the city's health chief York Chow said in a statement.

Places for non-local women to deliver in [public hospitals](#) will be reduced to 3,400 in 2012 subject to the availability of maternity ward beds, [health authorities](#) said, to curb the influx of expectant mothers.

"We have decided in 2012, the Hospital Authority will only accept bookings for non-local women when spare capacity is available," Chow told reporters.

Mainland mothers reportedly accounted for nearly half of the 88,000 births in the glitzy financial hub in 2010.

Women from mainland China are keen to give birth in Hong Kong -- a city of seven million that has had semi-autonomous status within China since it ceased to be a British colony in 1997 -- because it entitles their child to rights of abode and education.

Public hospitals have been giving priority to local mothers for several years, a Hospital Authority spokesman told AFP. In 2010 the number of

foreign women giving [birth](#) in local hospitals was restricted to 9,899.

Chow said that 10 private hospitals with maternity units had also agreed to cut next year's allocation, with a total of of 31,000 places to be available for foreign [pregnant women](#).

The government has come under pressure in recent months after doctors made a rare public call for a cap on the number of babies delivered in the city as resources for local mothers are stretched thin.

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