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Hong Kong has always been a pretty transient place for white collar immigrants (I hate the word expats) and foreigners get used to leaving dos.

But I feel like barely a week goes by now without me hearing of someone - both senior & middle management - deciding to head overseas

Of the anecdotal cases I've heard personally, Beijing's crackdown is a partial cause.

While it doesn't tend to personally effect the foreigners leaving, it has irrevocably changed the city & blanketed this once outspoken, freewheeling town in a very different atmosphere.

But the most constant reason I hear is Hong Kong's pandemic imposed isolation from the rest of the world — and the reality that this is unlikely to change any time soon.

This is not about weekends in Hoi An. Many foreigners haven't seen family for two years or more.

The impression I get — and this is all anecdotal — is foreigners in Hong Kong battened down the hatches like everyone else when the pandemic first hit last year. They accepted sacrifices would need to be made, especially as their own countries were ravaged by the coronavirus.

But as 2021 has progressed, there seems to be less tolerance for a never ending zero-Covid strategy that keeps them, yes safe from the virus, but cut off from the rest of the world and their loved ones.

While they of course occupy a privileged space, not all “expats” are loaded & can afford the money/time involved in a trip back home + three weeks QT on return. Business owners & those self-employed who can't work remotely can rarely afford to take two weeks off, let alone five.

So when opportunities come up either closer to home or back home many are taking a decision they perhaps never dreamed of making a couple of years ago: perhaps it's time to go.

Is this a problem? It all depends. If companies can easily hire replacements, both local, mainland and foreign, it may not be a big deal. Plenty more fish in the sea.

But I've definitely heard a few business folks complain they're struggling to attract talent to locate to HK.

Meanwhile some of the best and brightest local minds are leaving town because of the city's fading freedoms and new “staunch patriot” only political orthodoxy.

Hiring issues may be more industry specific.

I've heard schools & universities are definitely struggling to recruit talent, for example.

Meanwhile some big finance corps are very much expanding their footprint in HK.

Perhaps this phenomenon will end and Hong Kong will regain its status as a world class, internationally attractive and competitive business hub.

That's certainly the gov't's spin, even if they don't seem to offer much to businesses beyond “trust us” and “wait it out”.

With so many unvaccinated (only 43% of HKers have had double shots) the gov't clearly can't open the international travel gates and let the virus run wild.

Thousands would die, especially the elderly who, bafflingly, are the least vaccinated segment of the population.

I would love to be proved wrong, but I reckon mandatory QTs of some form & restricted international travel could be in place in Hong Kong for at least another year, possibly two.

That's something more foreigners + businesses are coming to accept & it influences their plans.

Like I say, this is all anecdotal. And I hope I'm wrong.

But I'd be interested hear from Hong Kongers, foreign and local, whether they have seen something similar.

Are foreign friends leaving at a higher rate? Are you or businesses you know struggling to hire?

Thanks for all the really thoughtful, eloquent replies to this thread y'all. Much appreciated ■

"While many parts of the world are taking steps forward – and at times backward — Hong Kong remains in stasis... Hong Kong is failing to come up with a viable, long-term coping strategy and risks losing even more public trust"

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