

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 世風日下

*shi4 feng1 ri4 xia4*

Sex offences on trains and in MTR stations are rising. Railway Police District recorded 270 cases of indecent assaults and “under skirt photo-taking” last year, an increase of over 20 percent year-on-year. The youngest offender was just 13-year-old, and the oldest was 65.

The problem is showing no signs of abating – there were already 47 such cases in the first quarter of 2017 alone. This is one of those situations which would prompt people to shake their head and say “世風日下” (*shi4 feng1 ri4 xia4*):

“世” (*shi4*) is “the world,” “an age,” “a generation,” “風” (*feng1*) is “風氣” (*feng1 qi4*) “common practice,” “the tone of thoughts or feelings,” “日” (*ri4*) “the sun,” “day,” and “下” (*xia4*) “down,” “downward,” “lower.”

Literally, “世風日下” (*shi4 feng1 ri4 xia4*) is

“the ways of the world are going down day after day.” The idiom means “public morality is deteriorating.”

“世風日下” (*shi4 feng1 ri4 xia4*) is often followed by “人心不古” (*ren2 xin1 bu4 gu3*). “人心” (*ren2 xin1*) is “people’s hearts,” “不” (*bu4*) “no,” “not” and “古” (*gu3*) “ancient times,” “antiquity.” “人心不古” (*ren2 xin1 bu4 gu3*) is “people’s hearts are not like ancient times.” The idiom means “public morality is not what it used to be.”

The two idioms can be used individually or together. In either case, they mean the same, which is an observation that the society’s morality is worsening.

But the rising crime figures may just be due to trains getting more crowded, which makes it easier to commit the perverted acts.

### Terms containing the character “風” (*feng1*) include:

風波 (*feng1 bo1*) – disputes; tempests

風氣 (*feng1 qi4*) – general mood; fashions

風景 (*feng1 jing3*) – scenery

風格 (*feng1 ge2*) – a style