

Women's Commission
**“What do Women and Men in Hong Kong Think about the
Status of Women at Home, Work and in Social Environments?”**
Survey Findings

**Part Two: What do Women and Men in Hong Kong Think about the
Status of Women in Social Environments?**

Background

With a view to understanding the current status of women in the aspects of family contribution, economic participation and community engagement and the different perceptions between women and men towards women's status in Hong Kong, the Women's Commission (WoC) commissioned Policy 21 Limited to conduct a large-scale survey which was carried out between February and May 2010. A total of 3 002 Hong Kong residents within a scientifically selected sample were successfully enumerated through home visit interview survey, constituting a response rate of 66%.

2. The target respondents of this survey were Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above (excluding foreign domestic helpers). Among the 3 002 respondents, 43.3% (1 299) were males and 56.7% (1 703) were females, with age distribution as follows: 18-34 (24.7%), 35-54 (37.8%) and 55 or above (37.5%).

3. Further to the release in late November of the survey findings on the perception of women and men in Hong Kong towards women's status at home, WoC hereby announces the second part of the findings on the perception of women and men in Hong Kong towards women's social status.

4. The survey findings released in this section will focus on what women and men in Hong Kong think about the status of women in social environments as well as their community engagement and political participation. This executive summary sets out the major findings on women's social status under the four headings as follows –

- Women's concern towards public and current affairs
- Views on women's political participation
- Engagement of females in community activities
- Supporting network and social status of women

5. The data below had been adjusted proportionally with reference to gender, age, location of residence, type of housing as well as completion of/refusal to interview. As such, the gender and age profiles of the sample were in line with the population data of Hong Kong compiled by the Census and Statistics Department in 2009 and can reflect the general profile of Hong Kong's population aged 18 or above.

I. Women's concern towards public and current affairs

Fewer women received information on current affairs from radio or newspaper in comparison to television

1.1 In this era of information explosion, people may receive information from various media. The survey has invited members of the community to compare the media (i.e. television, radio, newspaper and internet) from which they customarily receive information. The findings revealed that television was the major channel through which the majority of people (99.2%) obtained information on current affairs.

- *Nearly 100% of people expressed that they obtained news and information on current affairs from television, showing that the penetration rate of television was very high. No gender disparity was found in the subgroup analysis.*

1.2 About 90% of people said that they obtained news and information on current affairs from newspaper. The percentage of men obtaining information from newspaper was 5.8% higher than women (male: 95.0% and female: 89.2%).

- *When analyzed by subgroups of age, academic qualifications and economic activity status, it was found that the cohort of retired elderly men and women (aged 55 or above) with low education levels (primary level or below) was the least likely to obtain information on current affairs from newspaper. Among them, elderly women in retirement or with low education levels were even less likely than their male counterparts to obtain information from newspaper.*
- *When analyzed by marital status, it was found that the cohort of "divorced/separated or widowed" men and women had the lowest percentage in obtaining information on current affairs from newspapers. Again, in this cohort, women were even less likely than men to obtain such information from newspaper.*
- *Among those who said that they had never read newspaper to obtain information on current affairs, 73.4% were persons with zero income (male: 53% and female: 80.8%).*

1.3 On another front, 86% of people indicated that they obtained information on current affairs from radio. Among them, the percentage of men was almost 5% higher than women (male: 88.2% and female: 83.3%).

The percentage of people obtaining information on current affairs from internet decreased with increase of age: the older the female, the lower the percentage

1.4 On average, only 63.1% of people indicated that they would obtain information on current affairs from internet. Among them, the percentage of men was 65.9% and women 60.7%.

- *When analyzed by age, it was found that the percentage of people using internet to obtain information decreased as age increased, i.e. the younger the age, the higher the percentage of going online to obtain information. The percentages of young men and women aged 18-34 who indicated that they obtained information on current affairs from the internet were very high at 96.4% and 96.5% respectively. In opposite, elderly people (aged 55 or above) had the lowest percentage in obtaining information from internet (male: 23.3% and female: 15%). Coming next was the age group of 35-54 (male: 76% and female: 65.7%). It was worth noticing that among the two age groups of 35-54 and 55 or above, the percentages of women using internet were significantly lower than those of men.*
- *When analyzed by academic qualifications, it was found that the higher the qualifications, the higher was the percentage of obtaining information on current affairs from internet. Among the people using internet to obtain such information, 13% had primary education or below, 70% had finished secondary education and around 90% were of matriculation level or above.*
- *The survey also revealed that retired men (16.9%) and retired women (13.3%) were the least likely to obtain information on current affairs from internet. It was believed that their age and education level might be among the contributing factors.*
- *When analyzed by personal income, it was found that over 60% of those who indicated that they had never obtained information on current affairs from internet had no income (male: 50.7% and female: 69.4%). It was deduced that their financial status was one of the factors that affect their inclination to obtain information on current affairs from internet.*

Women tended to express their views on public affairs in the media less than men, and were more inclined to do so through internet

1.5 The survey has also sought to find out the tendency of people in expressing their views on current or public affairs through television, radio, newspaper and internet. The findings revealed that among those who obtain information through television, radio or newspaper, less than 2% of women had used these media to express their views. Although men's percentages of expressing their views through television (2.2%), radio (3.2%) and newspaper (3.4%) were also low, they were nevertheless slightly higher than those of women.

1.6 Among the various media indicated by the people to have been used for expressing their views, internet was the channel with the highest percentage of use.

- *Among those who indicated that they had obtained information from internet, 17.9% of men and 12.3% of women said that they had expressed their views through internet.*
- *There were a plethora of platforms such as discussion forums and blogs on internet for members of the community to express their views. Besides, netizens were usually not required to provide real names or personal information when voicing their views on internet. They thus need not worry about disclosure of their identity.*

Women tended to express their views and demands in a more quiescent manner

1.7 The survey findings revealed that women mostly chose to express their views by way of participating in signing petitions (23.2%), followed by rallies (4.2%) and parades or demonstrations (2.3%) in the previous 12 months, reflecting that women tended to express their views and demands in a more quiescent manner.

- *A male-female comparison revealed that men's participation rates in rallies (male: 6% and female: 4.2%) and parades or demonstrations (male: 3.7% and female: 2.3%) were higher than female. While neither the participation rates of male nor female was high, the findings showed that men were more active than women in joining such activities for voicing their demands.*

1.8 On district consultations, only 4% of people said that they had participated in seminars/briefings/residents meetings regarding policies or livelihood issues, while 2.4% of people indicated participation in consultation activities by local bodies. Again, the participation rate of men was higher than that of women.

II. Views on Women's Political Participation

Nearly half of women said they had never heard of Government advisory and statutory bodies

2.1 WoC believed that engaging women in the public decision making process would help advance women's status, and taking women's views and concerns into full consideration would benefit the society as a whole. Participation in Government advisory and statutory bodies would be one of the channels to engage women in public decision making. However, the community's awareness of Government advisory and statutory bodies was still low. The survey revealed that 46.5% of people said they had never heard of a Government advisory and statutory body, and there were more women (50.4%) than men (42%) among them.

2.2 For those who indicated that they had heard of but had never participated in any Government advisory and statutory bodies, the main reasons for not participating were: "not interested" (male: 58.3% and female: 60.3%) and "no time/too many procedures" (male: 29.3% and female: 26.6%). Only 9.3% of men and 7% of women indicated that they would accept an invitation to participate in a Government advisory and statutory body.

2.3 When asked whether they thought that less women than men had been invited to participate in Government advisory and statutory bodies, nearly half of the men and women (male: 43.7% and female: 47.3%) indicated neutrality. Those who disagreed with this statement (male: 28.9% and female: 25.4%) slightly outnumbered those agreed (male: 24.6% and female: 25.2%).

More than half of the female non-registered electors did not register because they were “not interested”

2.4 On voting participation, the survey found that among those who had not registered as electors, 56% of the women gave the reason that they were “not interested” in getting registered. The reasons that follow were “no time/too many procedures” (female:17.5%) and “not eligible” (female:17.4%).

2.5 For those indicating that they were “not eligible”, only about 60% had resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years (an objective factor that constitutes non-eligibility). This showed that the remaining 40% or so who considered themselves “not eligible” may have been affected by subjective factors such as their interpretation of politics and knowledge of civic responsibility, etc.. It was worth noting that the percentage of female non-registered electors who indicated that they were “not eligible” was almost 10% higher than that of male non-registered electors.

Gender bias existed in terms of political participation in the community

2.6 The survey findings showed that about 40% of people agree that male performed better political leadership than female (38.7%) whereas women performed better in community services (43.8%). This reflected that gender stereotyping existed to a certain degree in our society between men and women in terms of political participation.

2.7 When analyzed by gender, more men than women considered that male political leaders performed better than female (male: 46.1% and female: 32.3%) while more women than men consider that women performed better than men in community services (female: 48% and male: 39%).

Male had less confidence in female councillors while female had more confidence in them

2.8 As illustrated under the previous sub-heading, the survey findings revealed the existence of gender stereotyping in the political division of labour between men and women. Nevertheless, the community’s confidence in District Councillors or Legislative Councillors did not hinge on the councillors’ gender. Over 40% of people indicated neutrality when being asked whether they had more confidence in female District Councillors (43.6%) and female Legislative Councillors (44.5%); the percentages were higher than those indicating agreement (20.5% and 19.6%) or disagreement (34.4% and 34.2%).

2.9 Among those who agreed that “the public has more confidence in female District Councillors / Legislative Councillors”, the proportion of male was lower than female. The results reflected that men had less confidence in female councillors than women.

III. Engagement of Females in Community Activities

Women were more active than men in community activities than men

3.1 28.5% of women said that they had participated in activities organized by local organizations like mutual aid committees/ Kai Fong associations/ labour unions/ churches/ political parties over the past year, while only 19.3% of men indicated that they had participated in such activities. This shows that women were more active than men in community activities.

- *Regardless of age, marital status, economic activity status and academic qualifications, women were more active than men in community activities.*
- *The younger the men, the more they participated in these kinds of community activities; as for women, those aged 35-54 participated the most (30.6%), followed by the elder ones aged 18-34 (28.6%).*
- *When analyzed by marital status, the cohorts with the highest percentages of indicated participation in these kinds of community activities were single men (24.7%) and single women (35.7%); those who participated the least were divorced or widowed men (14.8%) and married women without children (20.2%).*
- *Furthermore, male and female students indicated the highest percentages of participation in community activities over the past year (male:37.2% and female:54.6%); those indicating the least participation in such activities were non-engaged men (14.6%) and non-engaged women (22.8%).*
- *The survey also found that the rate of participation in community activities was directly proportional to academic qualifications; that is, the higher the academic qualifications, the more the indication of participation in community activities over the past year.*

More women participated in volunteer work than men

3.2 19.5% of women had indicated participation in volunteer work in the previous 12 months, while only 11.2% of men had worked as volunteers. For the men and women who had worked as volunteers in the previous 12 months, women's median hours spent on volunteer work in the previous month were 6 compared with 5 for men.

- *Except for home-makers, women of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activities status and academic qualifications had a greater participation than men in volunteer work in the previous 12 months.*
- *In comparison with female home-makers, male home-makers had a higher indication of participation in volunteer work in the previous 12 months. According to the household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the time spent on household work* by male home-makers*

* the time spent on taking care of family members, doing housework for themselves and their families, and shopping/acquiring services for themselves and their families.

every day (5.7 hours per day) was less than that by female home-makers (6.6 hours per day), and this may explain why they can be more flexible in doing volunteer work.

- *When analyzed by age, the younger the men and women, the higher was the percentage of working as volunteers in the past 12 months (except that the men aged 55 or above surpass the men aged 35-54 by 0.5% in participation in volunteer work in the previous 12 months).*
- *When analyzed by marital status, the cohorts with the highest percentages of participation in volunteer work were single male (16.5%) and single female (24.5%). Besides, more married men and women with child(ren) worked as volunteers in the previous year than those without child(ren). It was believed that these parents seek to instill in their child(ren) the virtue of helpfulness through volunteer work, making the work a parent-child activity.*

3.3 When analyzed by different ages, academic qualifications, marital status and economic activities status, it was found that the median hours spent on volunteer work by following groups of females were longer than other cohorts:

- Aged 55 or above (9 hours) or 18-34 (8 hours);
- Attained primary level of education (10 hours) or matriculate and above (9 hours);
- Single (10 hours); and
- Studying (15 hours) or unengaged (16 hours).

3.4 For people who had worked as volunteers, the most common reasons they indicated for participation were “helping others” (54.6%) and “making life more fruitful and meaningful” (21%). More female than male volunteers said that they participated because they wanted to “kill time” and “do something meaningful” or they believed “voluntary work to be meaningful”.

3.5 For those who had not worked as volunteers, 53.6% of women and 49.9% of men gave the reason of having “no time”; more men (20.4%) than women (15.3%) indicated the reason of “no interest in volunteer work” for not participating in volunteer work.

3.6 Among the women indicating “no time” as the reason for not participating in any volunteer work, 53.3% were working women and 34% were home-makers. It was believed that they were too busy to participate in volunteer work owing to work or household commitments.

More women indicated that they had assisted in organizing activities or acted as leaders of community organizations
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3.7 Among those who had worked as volunteers, 33.3% of women indicated that they had assisted in organizing activities in the previous year, higher than the 26.8% of men.

- *Among the female volunteers, it was found that those who were in the older age (aged 55 or above) (40%), never married (36.7%), working (38.5%) or with matriculate education and above (35.2) had a higher level of*

participation in assisting the organization of activities in the previous year than in other groups.

- *With the exception of home-makers and those who were married or cohabited but without children, women of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activity status and academic qualifications had a higher proportion than men in assisting in organizing activities in the previous year.*

3.8 The situation of serving as executive/committee member/director/leader of community organizations was more or less the same as that of assisting in organizing activities, but the proportional difference between men and women has narrowed. 26.6% of female volunteers and 25.2% of male volunteers had taken up those positions.

- *It was found that female volunteers who are younger (18-34) (32%), married or cohabited but without children (34.4%), unengaged (39.6%) or with matriculate education and above (33.6%) had more experience in serving as leading positions.*
- *Among those who had worked as volunteers, working men outnumbered working women by 0.5 per cent in serving as executives/committee members/directors/leaders in the community organizations.*
- *Female volunteers of different cohorts had a generally higher rate than male volunteers of serving as leaders in community organizations in the previous year. However, in the older-aged (retired, aged 55 or above) or highly educated (matriculated or above) cohorts, male volunteers had a higher percentage of becoming such leaders than female volunteers.*

IV. Women's support network and status in the society

Women tended to seek assistance from “close friends” and “spouses”

4.1 According to the survey, most people indicated that they would seek help or advice from their “close friends” and “spouses” when they encountered difficulties. Among them, more women (60.6%) than men (57.1%) would seek help from close friends. Among married people, there was no significant difference between women and men in seeking help from their spouses (male: 59.1% and female: 58.2%).

4.2 Other most-chosen responses that followed was from “brothers/sisters” and “parents”. More women (27.6%) than men (22.3%) would seek help from their brothers/sisters. There was no significant difference between women and men in seeking help from their parents (male: 22.4% and female: 22.9%).

4.3 Also, an obviously higher number of women than men would seek help from “relatives” and “social services organizations”. On the other hand, only 2.1% of men and 2.8% of women indicated that they would seek help from “government departments”.

Almost 70% of people agreed that both genders had equal power for development in the society with more women than men showed disagreement

4.4 67.7% of people considered that “the power of both genders were equal in the society nowadays”. When analyzed by gender, women was 4.4% higher than men in showing disagreement to this statement (male: 16.1% and female: 20.5%).

- *With the exception of male home-makers, men of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activity status and academic qualifications had a higher percentage than women in considering that the power of both genders were equal in the society nowadays.*

Over 70% of people agreed that both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society with more women than men showed disagreement

4.5 The attitude of people towards the statement of “both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society nowadays” was similar to that mentioned in item 4.4. 73.8% of people agreed that the opportunities of development for both genders were equal in the society nowadays, but women disagreeing with the statement was 2.2% higher than men (male: 9.7% and female: 11.9%).

- *Men of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activity status and academic qualifications had a higher (or equal) percentage as compared with women in considering that both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society nowadays.*
- *An analysis by gender and personal income revealed that less women than men with personal income of \$10,000-\$14,999 agree that “both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society nowadays” and the difference was about 10%.*
- *When analyzed by gender and occupation, it was found that female professionals (80.0%) and female associate professionals (83.1%) were more inclined to agree that both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society nowadays. On the contrary, female managers and administrators (21.5%) and female plant and machine operators and assemblers (25.9%) were the two cohorts indicating a relatively higher disagreement to the statement that both genders had equal opportunities for development in the society nowadays.*

85% of people agreed that women nowadays were independent and autonomous

4.6 The majority of people agreed that women nowadays were independent and autonomous, and the percentage of women showing agreement was 5% higher than men (male: 82.3% and female: 87.3%).

- *Except home-makers and retired persons, women of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activity status, academic qualifications and personal income were more inclined than men to think that women*

nowadays were independent and autonomous.

- *The cohorts of women with higher personal income had relatively higher percentages of agreement to the notion that women nowadays were independent and autonomous; as high as 95.6% of women earning \$20,000 or above show such agreement. It was noteworthy that women with personal income of \$5,000-\$9,999 displayed the lowest percentage of agreement among all cohorts. This reflected that women's independence and autonomy may have had something to do with their economic status.*

The majority of people tended to be satisfied with women's mediocre social status, which reflected that gender awareness in the society is not high enough

4.7 Men were invited to rate the social status of their spouses/companions while women were also asked to rate their own status (on a 5 point scale) in the society. The findings showed that both women's self-rating and men's evaluation of the social status of their spouses/companions were not particularly high. Men's evaluation of their spouses/companions scores 3.35, while the self-rating of single and married/cohabiting women scores 3.36; the difference between the two was insignificant.

4.8 In rating their level of satisfaction (on a 5 point scale) with women's social status, the findings revealed that men's satisfaction with their spouses/companions' social status scores 3.57, while the self-rating of single and married/cohabiting women scores 3.54. The satisfaction level of both genders in this respect (the overall average score being 3.55) was slightly higher than women's rating of their social status. The findings indicated that people tended to accept the mediocre status of women in the society, which suggested that gender awareness should be strengthened in our society.

- *When analyzed by cohorts, it was found that the rating of and satisfaction with women's social status would become lower as age increases; the higher the academic qualifications, the higher would be the rating of and satisfaction with women's social status. In all cohorts, however, the rating of women's social status was lower than the level of satisfaction with such status.*
- *As for economic activities, working men and women and female students[†] indicated the highest rating of and satisfaction with women's social status; and the satisfaction level of the retired people and unengaged people were relatively lower.*
- *When analyzed by occupation, it was found that female senior staff/professionals and male associate professionals had the highest rating and satisfaction level as regards women's social status.*
- *Personal income was not directly related to women's social status, but it had a relevance to the level of satisfaction. The analysis showed that the cohorts with higher income, irrespective of gender, had higher levels of satisfaction with women's social status.*

[†] Note: As there were no married/cohabiting male students in the survey's sample, no relevant data was available in the cohort.