

**What do Women and Men in Hong Kong
Think about the Status of Women at
Home, Work and in Social Environments?**

香港的女性及男性對婦女在家庭、職場及社會地位的看法

調查結果

摘要

**Highlights of
Survey Findings**



婦女事務委員會
Women's Commission

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

Highlights of Survey Findings

Submitted by

Policy 21 Limited

September 2011

OBJECTIVES

1. The objectives of the survey are: 1) to study the public's perception of women's status at home, in the workplace and in social environments in Hong Kong, 2) to understand the factors affecting the full development and advancement of women in Hong Kong and, 3) to establish baseline reference reflecting women's status in Hong Kong.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2. To obtain a balanced public view on the issues, the survey covers both female and male respondents aged 18 or above.

3. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted in the study, namely focus group discussions and a territory-wide household survey. Information obtained from six focus group discussions was used on the questionnaire design for the household survey. The territory-wide household survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews. A representative sample of 3,002 persons aged 18 or above was successfully enumerated during the period from February to May 2010, with a response rate of 66%.

4. Unless otherwise specified, the data below have been adjusted proportionally with reference to gender, age, location of residence, type of housing as well as completion of/refusal to interview. The gender and age profiles of the sample are 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.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

5. 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%).

6. Over half of females (59.0%) and males (59.4%) were married/cohabiting.

7. 72.3% of females had attained secondary education or above. The corresponding percentage of males was higher (81.0%).

8. The percentages of females engaged in different economic activities (such as employed, student, retired, neither at work nor at school) were respectively lower than those of their male counterparts with the exception of the corresponding percentage of female home-makers (females 37.6% and males 1.2%).

WOMEN AT HOME

Division of Family Duties

9. Over 80% of women and men agreed that “both women and men should contribute to the household income”, and the percentage of females showing agreement was higher than their male counterparts (males: 80.4% and females: 83.7%). The findings showed that the traditional concept that men should be the sole breadwinners of families with the primary duty of dealing with external affairs had changed. The society had generally accepted the change in women’s economic role.

10. Findings of the survey showed that less than half (48.4%) of the society considered that “men should take up a larger share of household duties than they do now”, while women outnumbered men significantly in showing agreement with this statement (females: 52.3% and males: 43.9%).

11. Over half of the females (51.2%) agreed that “men should take on more responsibility in childcaring than they do now” while only 43.0% of males agreed with this statement.

12. The survey result also revealed that women remained largely responsible for various kinds of household duties such as childcaring, cleaning and doing laundry, grocery shopping and preparing meals, taking care of elderly, disabled or chronically ill family members. 70.6% of females were indeed taking up the responsibility for childcaring. This reflected that it was generally accepted by the community that household duties were still women’s responsibility.

13. Gender stereotypes were still found in division of household work. Women were mainly responsible for the chores of daily life (such as childcaring, cleaning and doing laundry, grocery shopping and preparing meals, taking care of elderly, disabled or chronically ill family members) and that they assumed the role of a carer whereas men were mainly responsible for some minor repairs at home.

Decision Making and Money Management

Decision making in family matters

14. According to the survey, most people said they would decide together with their spouses/ cohabitants in family matters like major financial decisions (e.g. investment), location of residence, family (childbirth) planning, family activities and taking care of elderly family members who lived in the same household.

15. Women made decisions mostly on daily routines such as household decisions, daily childcare and education, extracurricular activities arrangement for child(ren), meaning that it was still common for women to assume the role of family carer.

Money management

16. As regards family financial management, about 43.6% of men and women indicated that they and their spouses/ cohabitants had savings together and had equal rights of using all or a portion of the money. Almost one fifth of them (19.1%) said that they were completely independent from their spouses/ cohabitants financially. According to the survey, almost one fifth of the people (18.7%) said that the male spouse was responsible for managing and allocating money; 86.3% of these women had no income at all. In comparison, only 14.5% of the society stated that the female spouse was responsible for managing and allocating money, which suggested that the authority of family financial management still lied mostly in the hands of men.

17. Analyzed by economic activity, although there were 27.8% of working women and 29.3% of female homemakers indicated that they and their spouses/ cohabitants had savings together and had equal rights of using all of the money, about 29.2% of female homemakers expressed that their male spouse was responsible for managing money and allocated their share, which showed a much higher proportion as compared to working women (6.6%).

18. Excluding those persons who had no income, although the percentage of males responsible for allocating money (15.3%) was still higher than that of females (14.2%), the discrepancy had slightly narrowed. This reflected that where men and women were both contributing to household income, women's say in money management had increased correspondingly.

Perceptions and Attitude towards Marriage and Child Birth

Major considerations for marriage

19. More women considered objective factors such as education level and social status to be among the major considerations for choosing a spouse (females: 51.8% and males: 42.0%). When analyzed by personal income, the income group of \$20,000 or above (females: 63.9% and males: 52.6%) had the highest number of persons agreeing with this view. When analyzed by age, it was found that the number of persons who considered objective factors to be among the major considerations for marriage decreased as their age increased.

Same-sex relationship

20. Concerning the acceptability of same-sex relationship, about 72.5% of people said they found same-sex relationship unacceptable. In comparison, more women (13.7%) than men (8.5%) accepted same-sex relationship. A relatively higher proportion of women (22.6%) and men (11.6%) aged 18 to 34 years old indicated acceptance of same-sex relationship. This notwithstanding, 65.9% of males and 63.9% of females in this age group indicated that they did not accept same-sex relationship.

Married people are usually happier than the unmarried

21. More men (37.6%) than women (32.5%) agreed that married people were generally happier than the unmarried. On the other hand, more women (34.1%) than men (27.4%) disagreed with this view.

Acceptance towards singlehood

22. Over 40% of people (irrespective of gender) felt comfortable with being single and had no plans of getting married (males: 42.3% and females: 41.5%). It outnumbered those who disagreed with this view (males: 31.4% and females: 32.3%).

Life without a child

23. More women than men agreed that life without having a child was empty (males: 37.9% and females: 44.7%). Most of those agreeing were married/cohabiting; and among them those with child(ren) displayed the highest percentage of agreement (males: 47.1% and females: 54.3%). The never-married cohort had the lowest percentage of agreeing with the statement (males: 21.5% and females: 22.1%).

Single mothers

24. A higher percentage of women (53.9%) than men (45.6%) found it unacceptable for a woman to give birth to a child and had no intention to get married. Only the younger age group (aged 18-34) had greater acceptance for single mothers, with 39.9% men and 34.8% women. However, there were still 33.3% of males and 47.9% of females in this age group who found the statement unacceptable. It showed the social acceptance of single mothers was rather low.

Cohabitation

25. Over half of the males (53.6%) stated that “cohabitation without the intention of getting married” was acceptable, but only 38.2% of females found it acceptable. About 71.0% of never-married males stated that “cohabitation without the intention of getting married” was acceptable, but only 45.1% of never-married females found it acceptable. On the precondition that marriage would be an eventuality, the idea of “cohabitation before marriage” gained a slightly higher level of acceptance (46.2%) among never-married females but a slightly lower level of acceptance (66.0%) among never-married males.

Attitude towards divorce

26. On attitude towards divorce, the survey found that both men and women tended to agree that divorce was the best solution for a married couple who could not live together harmoniously provided that they did not have children. Among them, more women (56.1%) than men (47.3%) supported divorce as a solution. However, where a married couple had children, people tended to disagree that divorce was the best solution (males: 49.1%, females: 50.3%) whereas only 26.8% of males and 28.6% of females agreed.

Perception of Women's Status at Home

Male supremacy

27. According to the survey, more than half of the society considered that male supremacy did not exist within a family context nowadays, while 35.0% of them considered otherwise. More women than men agreed that male supremacy existed within a family context nowadays (males: 32.8% and females: 36.8%).

WOMEN AT WORK

Perception of Women's Participation at Work

Women and career

28. Concerning social perception towards working women, the survey revealed that 82.2% of people agreed that “having a job is the best way for a woman to be independent”. It suggested that the public generally agreed that there was a direct relationship between participation at work and the independence of women.

29. About 57.1% of people agreed that “women have to sacrifice more than men in order to achieve career success” (males: 51.6% and females: 61.8%). On the other hand, about 37.4% of people agreed that “career development for women is limited, and it is more difficult for women than men to succeed in a career”.

Roles of women and men

30. Over half of the society (50.4%) considered that “women should focus more on family than work”, and about 38.9% of people agreed that “men's job is to earn money while women's job is to do household work and take care of the family”. The findings revealed that women were commonly stereotyped as family carers.

31. About 79.0% of people acknowledged home-makers' contribution to the family and agreed that their contribution was as important as that of the bread-winning family member(s).

Successful women

32. The survey found that 33.4% of people thought that staff members generally preferred not to be supervised by female managers/supervisors. This reflected that people had prejudice against women as managers or leaders to a certain extent as they were predisposed by the traditional concept that management should be largely male-dominated.

33. 66.3% of people agreed that “an increase in the number of successful women is a positive social phenomenon”, but there was a wide discrepancy between women and men in their responses to this statement. The percentage of women indicating agreement (72.1%) was higher than that of men (59.6%) by over 10 percentage points, which showed that men had a more traditional gender concept than women.

Sexual Discrimination against Women in the Workplace

Income disparity

34. Concerning sex discrimination in the workplace, it is unlawful discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance for an employer to treat an employee less favourably in respect of the terms and conditions of employment on the ground of his/her gender. Nevertheless, the survey findings revealed that more than 70% of people (71.7%) considered that men were better paid than women of the same rank/position. The percentage of men agreeing with this statement was higher than that of women (males: 73.2% and females: 70.5%).

Employment protection

35. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance also protects a woman from being treated less favourably on grounds of her pregnancy. The survey however revealed that 72.6% of the society considered that there were situations of employers choosing not to hire pregnant women. The number of those who thought that these cases “always happen” constitutes as much as 28.9%.

36. Although the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance provides legal protection to people having responsibility for the care of family members, the survey showed that the majority of people still thought that there were discriminations against persons due to their family status, as more than 70% of people (71.8%) thought that employers chose not to hire employees who could not work overtime because of the need to look after family members.

Sexual harassment

37. 27.0% of the society thought that sexual harassment against female employees was common in the workplace.

Glass ceiling and occupational segregation

38. “Glass ceiling” refers to the hidden obstacles for women to be promoted to senior positions, which was created by deep-rooted gender bias against women in the workplace. According to the survey, over 70% of people considered that men usually stood a better chance of promotion than women of similar age (70.7%) or with similar abilities (71.1%), which reflected a general view that women’s promotion prospect was still limited by the “glass ceiling”.

39. Occupational segregation between sexes still existed in employment. About 70.2% of people thought that being a woman was an obstacle to development and promotion in the workplace, with more women (71.9%) than men (68.2%) thinking this way.

Factors Hindering Women from Taking up Paid Work and Re-entering the Job Market

Family responsibility prevented women from joining the workforce

40. Statistics compiled by the Census and Statistics Department in 2009 showed that women's participation rate in the labour market of Hong Kong was only 53.1%, substantially lower than that of men (69.4%). The labour force participation rates of married women (51.5%) and divorced/separated or widowed women (28.6%) were lower than never-married women (67.5%).

41. The survey revealed that the percentage of women (8.4%) doing part-time job (i.e. working less than 30 hours per week on average) was distinctly higher than that of men (2.6%).

42. Out of married/cohabiting women who had never worked, 30.7% indicated "having to look after other family members" was their main reason for not working. This reflected that family responsibility was a major reason that kept women from seeking employment.

Leaving the workforce after giving birth

43. According to the survey, 29.8% of married/cohabiting females with child(ren) indicated that they did not (or had no intention to) return to work after giving birth and 25.4% of married/cohabiting males with child(ren) indicated that their spouses/cohabitants did not return to work after giving birth, reflecting that it was common for women to choose to leave the workforce after giving birth.

44. Among married/cohabiting men with child(ren), the major reasons for their spouses/cohabitants not returning to work after giving birth were "she has to look after other family members" (63.5%), "she has to do housework" (57.7%) and "we were unable to find someone to look after our children" (41.0%).

45. Among married/cohabiting women with child(ren), the major reasons for not returning to work after giving birth were "I have to look after other family members" (76.8%), "I have to do housework" (59.3%) and "I prefer to spend more time with child(ren)" (43.1%).

Married women were treated less favourably on their return to the workplace

46. Less than one-third of married/cohabiting females (29.8%) had tried to get back to work after quitting the job market for a long time.

47. 36.4% of women resuming work stated that their new post/rank was less favourable than their previous ones, and 40.1% of them said that their remuneration was lower than before.

Family-friendly employment practices

48. About 71.0% of people in the society agreed that employers or supervisors were willing to allow their staff to take leave or time off to handle family matters; and about 69.1% agreed that employers would allow staff to work flexitime upon mutual agreement.

49. Nevertheless, the majority considered that such situations “do not always happen” or “happen occasionally”, whereas those who indicated that both situations “always happen” account for only 4.1% and 7.0% respectively of the total.

Career expectation

50. On women’s career expectation, the survey found that 26.6% of women did not wish to be very successful in their career. Their major reasons were “I have to look after other family members” (65.1%) and “I have to do housework” (55.6%). About one third (37.7%) indicated that “I prefer to spend more time with my child(ren)”. Among women of all marital status, about 40.7% of married/cohabiting women with child(ren) shared this view, which was significantly higher than women of other marital status. Besides, more than one-fifth of married/cohabiting men (23.2%) said that they did not want their spouses/cohabitants to be very successful in their career. Their main reasons were “she has to look after other family members” (60.3%) and “she has to do housework” (52.6%).

51. On the contrary, slightly more than half of the women (52.1%) wished to be successful in their career whereas nearly two-thirds of married/cohabiting men (64.5%) wanted their spouses/cohabitants to be very successful in their career. It was noted that about 64% of widowed women refused to indicate their career aspiration and the reasons for this were unknown.

WOMEN IN SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

Views on Women's Political Participation

Participation in Government advisory and statutory bodies

52. The survey revealed that 46.5% of people said they had never heard of Government advisory and statutory bodies, and there were more women (50.4%) than men (42.0%) among them. 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" (males: 58.3% and females: 60.3%) and "no time/too many procedures" (males: 29.3% and females: 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.

53. 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 (males: 43.7% and females: 47.3%) indicated neutrality. Those who disagreed with this statement (males: 28.9% and females: 25.4%) slightly outnumbered those who agreed (males: 24.6% and females: 25.2%).

Registration as voters

54. The survey found that 58.6% of people indicated that they had registered as voters. Among those self-claimed registered voters, there were 49.7% males and 50.3% females. The Registration and Electoral Office showed the number of registered voters in 2010 was 3,431,592 (males: 50.2% and females: 49.8%).

55. On voting participation, the survey found that among those who had not registered as electors, 56.2% of women gave the reason that they were "not interested" in getting registered. The other reasons given were "no time/too many procedures" (17.5%) and "not eligible" (17.4%).

Engagement in Community Activities

Participation in community activities in the past 12 months

56. 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. The rate of participation in community activities was directly proportional to educational attainment, i.e., the higher the educational levels, the more the indication of participation in community activities over the past year.

Participation in volunteer work

57. 19.5% of women had indicated participation in volunteer work in the previous 12 months, while only 11.2% of men indicated the same. For those 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 was 6 hours compared with 5 hours for men. Except for home-makers, women of different cohorts of age, marital status, economic activities and educational attainment had a greater participation than men in volunteer work in the previous 12 months.

Equality between two sexes

58. About two-thirds of people (67.7%) considered that the power of both genders was equal in the society nowadays, with more men agreeing with the statement than women (males: 70.1% and females: 65.7%).

59. About three quarters of people (73.8%) agreed that the opportunities for development of both genders were equal in the society nowadays (males: 75.8% and females: 72.1%), but women disagreeing with the statement was 2.2 percentage points higher than men (males: 9.7% and females: 11.9%).

Women were independent and autonomous

60. The majority of people (85.0%) agreed that women nowadays were independent and autonomous, and the percentage of women showing agreement was 5 percentage points higher than men (males: 82.3% and females: 87.3%).

Attitudes towards Women in Politics

Performance of female political leaders

61. The survey findings showed that about 40% of people agreed that male performed better in political leadership than female (38.7%) whereas women performed better in community services (43.8%). When analyzed by gender, more men than women considered that male political leaders performed better than female (males: 46.1% and females: 32.3%) while more women than men considered that women performed better than men in community services (males: 39.0% and females: 48.0%).

Confidence in female Councillors

62. 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 (20.4% and 19.6%) or disagreement (34.4% and 34.2%).

63. 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 also reflected that men had less confidence in female councillors than women.

STATUS OF WOMEN AT HOME, WORK AND IN SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

64. Men were invited to rate the status of their spouses/cohabitants at home, work and in social environments while women were also asked to rate their own status expressed in a Likert scale of 5, with “1” denoting very low and “5” denoting very high.

65. In rating the level of satisfaction concerning women’s status at home, work and in social environments, the same Likert scale of 5 (with “1” denoting very dissatisfied and “5” denoting very satisfied) was adopted.

Women’s status at home

66. The findings showed that both men’s evaluation on the status of their spouses/cohabitants at home and women’s self-evaluating on their status at home were not particularly high (the overall average was 3.60). The findings also revealed that the evaluation of men on their spouses/cohabitants (3.66) was higher than the self-evaluation of women (3.57).

Satisfaction level of women’s status at home

67. The findings revealed that the self-evaluation from women on the satisfaction level concerning their own status at home (average score was 3.86) was the same as men’s evaluation on the satisfaction of the status of their spouses/cohabitants at home.

68. It was worth noting that the overall average satisfaction level concerning women’s status at home was 3.86 while the overall average score concerning women’s status at home was just 3.60. The results indicated that people tended to accept the mediocre status of women at home.

Women’s status at work

69. The overall average score rated by both men’s evaluation of the status of their spouses/cohabitants at work and women’s self-evaluation on their status at work was 3.32 (all females: 3.32 and married/cohabiting males: 3.33). The findings showed that the overall women’s status at work was lower than that of their status at home (3.60).

Satisfaction level of women's status at work

70. The overall average score of men and women in this respect was 3.56. The findings revealed that men's evaluation on satisfaction of the social status of their spouses/cohabitants at work (3.57) was slightly higher than the self-evaluation of women (3.55).

71. The overall average of satisfaction level concerning women's status at work was 3.56 which was relatively higher than that on women's status at work (3.32). It revealed that the public were inclined to accept the mediocre status of women at work.

Women's status in social environments

72. The findings showed that both women's self-evaluation of their own social status and men's evaluation of the social status of their spouses/cohabitants were not particularly high, with the overall average score rated by both women's self-evaluation and men's evaluation at 3.35 (all females: 3.36 and married/cohabiting males: 3.35). This score was lower than that for the overall women's status at home (3.60) but slightly higher than the overall women's status at work (3.32).

Satisfaction level of women's status in social environments

73. The overall average score of both genders in this aspect was 3.55 (all females: 3.54 and married/cohabiting males: 3.57). The findings revealed that men's evaluation on satisfaction of the social status of their spouses/cohabitants in social environments (3.57) was slightly higher than the self-evaluation of women (3.54).

74. The overall average of satisfaction level concerning women's social status was 3.55 which was relatively higher than that on women's social status (3.35). The findings indicated that people tended to accept the mediocre status of women in the society.