



Giving a say on government spending

Proper use of public resources improves livelihoods and promotes progress. Do young people think that community involvement in decision-making for public spending is a good idea?

Hong Kong government coffers have been healthy for some years and have allowed for steady enhancement of public services. Yet, 50% of the respondents in a local 2018 survey were dissatisfied with the government's spending strategy,¹ up from 12% in 2008. Furthermore, the poverty gap has not improved.²

Given that taxes paid by today's young people will provide the revenue for public expenditure in future, the study asks what the younger generation think of the government's management of assets and what role would they like to take in the allocation and use of public funds.



Key points from respondents

- The government scored on average only 4.62 points and 4.22 points* for its reports on consultation exercises and heeding stakeholders views on public engagement in public finance management. [*On a scale of 0-10, where 5 indicates a pass.]
- 87.1% respond positively to government calls for opinions on the management of public finances.
- 83.1% are glad of opportunities to propose ideas.
- 62.9% do not trust the ability of the HKSARG to manage public finances.
- 60%, approximately, consider closer alignment with community needs to be the greatest benefit of involvement in decision-making for use of public funds.
- 48.5% consider their participation in decision-making for public funds to be important.
- 44.1% disagree, most saying that they have limited personal knowledge or influence in the field of public finance management.

Comments from Youth I.D.E.A.S. think tank members

Ray Poon, convener "Opportunities for public involvement in the use and allocation of public money could be better. With reference to overseas experience, we recommend that 1% of salaries tax revenue be spent on collecting ideas and that a corresponding amount be used to improve public services."

Ansel Lam, deputy convener "We recommend that the government's consultation exercise on the budget starts as early as possible to allow more time for handling opinions gathered and to improve the transparency of the procedure."

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Respondents 520 18-34 year-olds Five focus groups were held during the period of time with a total of 24 young people for discussion on the subject matter. Five scholars or experts were also interviewed.

More details [in Chinese] yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/2018/12/20/yi037/

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1. hkupop.hku.hk/english/release/release1518.html

2. Despite recurrent cash policy interventions, the poverty rate has stayed at 14.7% since 2016. info.gov.hk/gia/general/20181119/P2018111900623.htm?fontSize=3