



掌握青年脈搏：建立香港青年指標

Tuning in to Youth

The Setting Up of Hong Kong Youth Indicators

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English Summary

Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To set up comprehensive youth indicators in Hong Kong which include youth statistics indicators and youth value indicators;
2. To understand youth development and values in Hong Kong through the setting up of youth indicators; and
3. To examine policy and service implications through analysis of data collected from youth statistics and value orientations of the study.

Methodology

Part I: Youth Statistics Indicators

The youth statistics indicators in Part I are compiled from extensive literature reviews of existing original and secondary data. These include census statistics, government reports and departmental figures, journals, books, newspaper clippings, service statistics, research and surveys conducted by non-governmental organizations and also relevant literature from various countries. Data collected are arranged according to major census and by-census years such as 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 1996. The latest statistics and figures have been employed if available. However, readers should be cautious that a basis for comparison of data for different years might not be available due to incompatible definitions or categorization of data from various sources.

Altogether 48 youth statistics indicators have been developed which are grouped into six major areas:

- A. Population and health;
- B. Education;
- C. Employment and the economy;
- D. Social participation and the environment;
- E. Deviant behaviours;
- F. Youth crimes.

For easier comprehension, each indicator of the six major areas will be composed

of (a) tabulation of statistics and figures and (b) discussion and elaboration of the tables. For convenience, figures are rounded up and footnotes are added when necessary for clarification. Data are sub-categorized into five age groups for comparison of trends and difference. These age groups are 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and 35-39.

Part II: Youth Values Indicators

The youth values indicators are set up through data collected from a Hong Kong-wide opinion survey of those aged from 15 to 39 years old. The questionnaire is designed in such a way as to collect opinions on seven areas: family, friendship, education, personal life, the economy, politics and societal attitudes. Telephone surveys were conducted from 20 February 1997 to 4 March 1997 and 1,029 young people were successfully interviewed. Data collected were analyzed statistically by factor analysis and reliability test from which seven areas and sixteen factors have been developed as the framework for analysis and discussion. The structure of youth values indicators are tabulated below:

	Areas of Youth Values Indicators		Related Factors
I.	Family	1.	Family Concept
		2.	Marriage and Having Children Concept
II.	Friendship	3.	Support System from Friends
III.	Education	4.	Perception of Education
IV.	Personal	5.	Conformity
		6.	Ethnic Identity
		7.	Attitude to Sex
		8.	Sense of Achievement
		9.	Facing the Future
V.	Economy	10.	Work Ethic
		11.	Attitude towards Consumption
		12.	Economic Confidence
VI.	Politics	13.	Assessment of Government
		14.	Attitude to Political Participation
VII.	Societal Attitudes	15.	Attitude to Corruption
		16.	Credibility of Mass Media

(a) Research Design

Standard public opinion programme sampling procedures were adopted. Telephone numbers were provided by the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong. Telephone numbers were first randomly selected from the

telephone directories as seed numbers. Subsequently, by employing the plus or minus single digit method, additional numbers were generated from seed numbers to capture possible unlisted numbers. All numbers were then mixed at random to give the final telephone sample.

(b) Selection of Respondents

When contact was successfully established with a target household, one person aged from 15 to 39 was selected using the next birthday rule. This part of the study successfully surveyed 1,029 young people, with an overall success rate of 40.7 per cent and standard error less than 1.6.

(c) Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed by the HKFYG. In addition to questions for sampling requirements and tapping basic demographic data, there were 55 questions in the main part. The aim was to understand youth values for the selected areas and related factors.

(d) Data Analysis

In this report, responses are summarized in one-way tabulations by frequencies of answer categories. Due to limitation of space, two-way tabulations are not shown but asterisks mark those in which statistically significant (Chi-square, $p < 0.01$) relationships between two variables were observed. Data were further analyzed by factor analysis and reliability tests from which seven areas and sixteen related factors were developed as the framework for analysis and discussion on youth values indicators.

Discussion and Analysis

Youth Population and Trends

Observation 1: *The absolute number of young people has been increasing although their proportion has decreased. One of the major reasons is young immigrants coming from the Mainland.*

Over the last thirty-five years, the population of Hong Kong increased from 3.12 million in 1961 to 6.21 million in 1996. During this period, the crude birth rate decreased from 13 per thousand to 10 per thousand. Evidently, the influx of young immigrants from the Mainland are responsible for the absolute increase..

Further analysis indicated that the population aged from 15 to 29 had grown steadily from 1961 to 1981 when it topped at 32.7%. It then gradually declined to 22.6% in 1996. It is worth noting that the absolute number of young people in this age group jumped from 621,834 in 1961 to 1,402,360 in 1996. Evidence indicates that this is largely due to young immigrants arriving from the Mainland since the Hong Kong

government increased the quota in November 1993. As it is stated in the Basic Law that children of Hong Kong residents have the right to be permanent residents of Hong Kong after 1 July 1997, it is anticipated that the youth sector of Hong Kong's population will increase steadily.

The influx of young immigrants, most of whom are still students, will put much pressure on educational resources in Hong Kong. It is expected that the increased demand for education will be severe in the next five to ten years.

Observation 2: *The health and physical development of the young population has been changing. Both boys and girls are sexually mature at a younger age.*

Young people's physical development has changed a good deal in the last thirty years. The increase of average height and weight of youths aged from 15 to 18 usually indicates an improvement in the health of the general population. Boys and girls are sexually mature at an earlier age than their parents were. The Hong Kong Family Planning Association survey showed that ¹ over half of the female respondents under twelve had menstruated while nearly half of the boys under thirteen had had their first ejaculation..

The death rate of those aged 15 to 29 decreased from 1961 to 1994. The major causes of death are cancer, transport accidents and accidental poisoning. Since 1995, most students in Hong Kong have joined the Students Health Scheme.

Conformity and Ethnic Identity

Observation 3: *Young people conform more to societal norms and parental norms in the context of the family, but conform less for personal behaviour.*

Most respondents claimed that they were law-abiding and did not believe in the end justifying the means. In addition, a large proportion of the respondents also claimed that they were not rebellious despite regarding their parents as conservative. In fact, young people seemed likely to go along with their parents' opinions even if they disagreed with them.

There were more diverse opinions regarding personal behaviour. About half of the respondents were keen to go along with traditional ways while another half were not. Further research is needed here.

Observation 4: *Young people largely identify themselves as Chinese.*

The great majority of the respondents identify themselves as Chinese, probably because of the change of sovereignty in 1997. What being 'Chinese' means to the respondents needs further study to define and clarify.

¹ Refer to Indicator 9 on Chapter 2.

Youth and Family

Observation 5: *Young people strongly identify with traditional family values such as belief in marriage, family, having children and filial piety.*

Young people strongly identify with many traditional family values, although more with some than with others. Most respondents strongly identify with marriage, having children and filial piety. Many also indicated that the family was the most important thing in their lives. However, commitment to financial support for their parents was less strong because of practical difficulties.

Observation 6: *Vast majority of young people wish to buy a property. This aspiration is closely related to their plans to marry or have children.*

Over 95% of the respondents, regardless of their backgrounds, wish to buy a property.. Factor analysis showed that wishing to buy a property is highly related to young people's plans to marry and have children.

Observation 7: *Most respondents treasure having brothers and sisters which reflects their need for emotional support and companionship.*

The majority of the respondents say that they treasure having brothers and sisters. Evidently, young people are in need of emotional support and companionship. Children with and without siblings give the same response.

Observation 8: *Friends help most when young people have problems.*

Most respondents think that friends help most with problems even though most rate family most highly. There are numerous social policies in Hong Kong which are based on the assumption that the family, as the basic social unit, can provide support and solve young people's problems. However, the findings of this survey, suggest that the above assumption has little foundation. With the increasing number of nuclear families and single-child families, the supportive function of traditional extended families has been seriously weakened. The generation gap further discourages them from approaching their parents, whom they perceive as conservative, for assistance. Therefore, nowadays, formal supportive services should be provided for families in Hong Kong.

Young People and Sex

Observation 10: *Attitudes of young people towards sex are more and more open .*

The attitudes of young people towards sex are more open than those of the older

generation. Over half of the respondents regarded premarital sex as acceptable. Close to one-third of the respondents are receptive to having more than one sexual partner at the same time. Over half of the respondents also accept abortion. These tended to be respondents without religious background, who were older age and with lower (below primary) or higher (post-secondary or above) education. Over seventy per cent of the respondents would not mind making friends with people of homosexual orientation.

The unintended consequences of open sex include diseases such as aids, and social problems such as unintended teenage pregnancy, young prostitutes or sex crimes. How to respond to these social problems proactively would be a major issue for youth workers and policy makers in Hong Kong.

Young People and Education

Observation 11: Young people view education positively. They believe education will be useful, are keen to go to school and to enter university.

Young people are very positive about education. A majority considered that education was beneficial. Over three-quarters of the respondents said they liked going to school. About four-fifth of the respondents were keen to enter university. They were also have fairly high expectations of themselves in education.

Observation 12: Young people have very diverse opinions about compulsory education.

Despite their positive views about education and teachers, young people in Hong Kong have very diverse opinions about compulsory education. About half of the respondents support compulsory education while another half expressed the opposite view. It would be a timely move to consider how to reallocate educational resources or restructure the curriculum to meet the changing needs of young people in education.

Young People and the Economy

Observation 13: Young people believed that taking advantage of opportunities and being responsive to change were the keys to success in personal economy. To start their own business was much better than working for others. Being work smart than working hard is the work ethic of young people today.

The work ethics of young people has changed in response to the changing economy in Hong Kong. This is reflected in how they perceive their economic well-being. Most of the respondents believed that starting their own business would be better than working for others. Over sixty per cent thought it better to be work smart rather than to work hard. About half also believed that ability is of equal importance as paper qualification for success. On one hand entrepreneurship was popular among young people, and on the other hand most of the respondents believed that Hong Kong

was an open society in which upward social mobility and personal success is possible.

Observation 14: *Despite the difficulties of job-seeking, young people were optimistic about the economic development of Hong Kong and China in the coming year.*

The recent upsurge in the unemployment rate and in under-employment has also put pressure on young people. Over half of the respondents said that job-seeking in Hong Kong was difficult, particularly those respondents whose education is below secondary level, or who are students and home makers. This appeared to be the result of the shrinking of primary production in Hong Kong and the fact that most production lines of manufacturing industries had moved north to the Mainland. Despite the employment situation, three-quarters of the respondents were not pessimistic about the future and over seventy per cent indicated that they would not consider emigrating. At a personal level, over sixty per cent of the respondents were satisfied with their present achievements. All the above reflect that young people are optimistic about the economy and the future. This optimistic assessment of the economic situation also coincides with young people's views about starting their own business.

Observation 15: *Young people claimed that their spending habits were rational and cautious.*

Over eighty-five per cent of the respondents disagreed with paying by credit even though they did not have enough money. A comparable proportion of young people regarded themselves as rational and cautious spenders.

Young People and Politics

Observation 16: *Most young people were fairly positive about the government which they regarded as trustworthy and not corrupt.*

Young people in Hong Kong were fairly positive about the government. They perceived government as trustworthy, as not corrupt and Hong Kong as a safe city. However, young people's views about political participation differed. Over eighty per cent of the respondents indicated they would vote in an election. At the same time, a similar percentage of respondents disagreed that young people of Hong Kong were concerned about political affairs. There are various reasons for these differing views. One might be due to a perception that voting in an election did not necessarily mean being concerned about political affairs. Another explanation was that young people might assess their personal voting behaviour differently from the political interest of the general public. Further research is indicated.

Observation 17: *Young people did not believe that citizens' opinions could influence government policy making. They were also unsure of the sincerity of government as regards public opinion.*

Over half of the respondents did not believe that citizens' opinions could influence government policy making. Another sixty per cent were also unsure of the sincerity of the government towards public opinion. The scepticism of young people is detrimental to their political participation. The government should consider more civic education and other measures to remedy this situation.

Young People and Information Technology

Observation 18: *Young people appear to be critical and to have the ability to be selective about news reporting and advertisement in the mass media.*

It is worth noting that over forty-five per cent of the respondents thought that news reporting in Hong Kong might not be reliable. This figure was alarming despite the fact that over half of the respondents held the opposite view. In addition, around eighty-five per cent of the respondents also indicated that advertisements might not be trustworthy. The findings suggest that young people in Hong Kong appear to be critical and to have the ability to be selective about news reporting and advertisements in the mass media.

Observation 19: *Using personal computer was most popular for young people in the older age group and for those in the workforce.*

Over sixty per cent of the respondents were able to use a personal computer, particularly young people between 25 to 29 years of age. A significant proportion of the respondents use personal computers at work. These figures suggest that using a personal computer would be a fundamental indicator of the general standard of knowledge of information technology. How to allocate more resources in human resources and manpower training in information technology is an important educational issue for the coming century.

Young People and Deviant Behaviour

Observation 20: *Deviant behaviour of young people has increased, most significantly non-violent crimes, drug abuse and premarital sex.*

Deviant behaviour of young people were often the central focus of juvenile issues. At present, deviant behaviour with significant growth were observed mostly in the areas of non-violent crimes such as shoplifting or criminal damages, drug abuse and premarital sex. The widespread phenomenon of casual sex and teenage pregnancy is

supported by recent research figures of The Hong Kong Family Planning Association.² However, the truancy rate of students has declined gradually over the last three years.³ Smoking among the student population is increasing.⁴ The average number of suicides among young people stayed at 10 to 20 per year.⁵ From 1990 to 1995, the official figures of reported runaways decreased gradually,⁶ but the stop-out phenomenon of young people increased. A huge number of youths stayed away from home overnight. Conviction of juvenile offenders remained between 1,700 to 2,200 over the past five years. The number of young offenders under the Police Superintendent Caution Scheme increased from 2,365 in 1990 to 3,884 in 1996.⁷ This might reflect the fact that more emphasis has been placed on the understanding of the psycho-socio characteristics of juvenile delinquents. It also relates to the expansion of the Scheme to young offenders below 18 in 1995.

Summary

Young people in Hong Kong today seem to have the following characteristics:

The absolute youth population has been increasing as a result of new immigrants from the Mainland, putting much demand on educational resources. In family life, young people strongly identify with traditional family values: marriage, the family, having children and filial piety. Young people conform more to societal norms and to those of their parents, but conform less in personal behaviour. Most respondents treasure having brothers and sisters showing their need for emotional support and companionship.

At a personal level, attitudes of young people towards sex are more and more open. Deviant behavior of young people has increased, most significantly non-violent crimes, drug abuse and premarital sex. The vast majority of young people wish to buy a property. This aspiration is closely related to their plans to marry or have children. Young people largely identify themselves as Chinese.

Young people are positive about education which they believed will be useful, and are keen to go to school and to enter university. Young people have very diverse opinions about compulsory education.

In economy, young people believe that taking advantage of opportunities and responding to change were the keys to success in personal economy. To start their own business was much better than working for others. Being work smart rather than working hard is the work ethic of young people today. Despite difficulties of job-

² Refer to Indicators 30, 31 and 32.

³ Refer to Indicator 29.

⁴ Refer to Indicator 33.

⁵ Refer to Indicator 34.

⁶ Refer to Indicator 35.

⁷ Refer to Indicators 39 and 40.

seeking, young people are optimistic about the economic development of Hong Kong and China in the coming year. Young people claimed that their spending habits were rational and cautious.

In politics, most young people had a fairly positive view of the government which they regarded as trustworthy and not corrupt. Young people did not believe that the citizens' opinions could influence government policy making. They were also unsure as to the sincerity of government about public opinion. The government should consider more civic education and other measures to remedy this situation.

In information technology, using personal computer was the most popular for young people of older age and for those in the workforce. Young people appeared to be critical and had the ability to be selective about news reporting and advertisements in the mass media.

In sum, this study on youth indicators has revealed many areas which are worthy of further research. Research findings need to be accumulated so that we are able to tune in to young people in Hong Kong.