

社會資本之慈善捐獻、義務工作及社會參與的狀況研究  
A Study on Social Capital with regard to Giving, Volunteering and Participating

青  
少  
年  
問  
題  
研  
究  
系  
列

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups  
Youth Study Series No.26**

**A Study on Social Capital with regard to  
Giving, Volunteering and Participating**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. Introduction**

To evaluate a society's development and the living standards of its people, account should be taken, not only of the "economic capital", but the "social capital" as well. This is because social capital is seen as a crucial element for the prosperity and stability of a society.

In the past, economic data was normally used for analysing the capital of a given place. Such data often included the financial status of a government, its investment in infrastructure projects, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures, as well as the average income of the people. Over the past two decades, the concept of social capital was introduced as a means by which to evaluate society's cohesiveness in terms of responsible citizenship and focus on relationships based on mutual respect and trust, as a means of coping with adversity.

Economic globalisation brought about keen competition, resulting in a great many challenges and problems faced by societies. The Government alone cannot deal with such challenges and there is a need for assistance from other sources, including the private and third sectors. The active participation of citizens is also crucial, as it can promote confidence and good will in times of difficulties as all strive to achieve a common goal. Thus, it is of great importance to examine the significance of social capital within societies.

This study has made reference to surveys conducted overseas and examined three aspects of social capital, namely "charitable giving", "volunteering" and "social participation". It is hoped that by studying other surveys, useful data may be collected which could help towards establishing similar work in Hong Kong.

It is also anticipated that the regular updating and monitoring of data may create a solid framework on the concept and issues surrounding social capital. This could then provide good reference material to policy makers in order to facilitate their formulation of policy relevant to the stability and progress of society.

This study was conducted during the period from 19 November to 5 December 2001. 2032 persons were successfully interviewed, of which 1008 were between the ages of 15 and 29 and the remainder, 1024 were over 30 years old. The rate of response was 42% and 51% respectively. The two sample groups were merged for this study. To avoid an uneven age distribution, the study adopted the weighting method to adjust the proportion in respondents' ages to keep them in line with the age proportion in the 2001 Census.

## **Discussion**

- (1) Hong Kong is still at an early stage regarding studies on “social capital”. The data with regard to “charitable giving”, “volunteering” and “participating” is very raw and scattered. Should Hong Kong wish to pursue this concept further, there needs to be a systematic collection of data. This current study on social capital, therefore, marks just a beginning.**

The discussion on social capital has received great attention in Hong Kong. Since social capital covers a wide area of relationships and networks based on trust and respect, there is still no fully clear understanding of which elements needed to be included in such a study.

As the analysis of social capital counts on a wide set of data and indicators for measurement, this study has borrowed from surveys done overseas, in particular the National Survey conducted in Canada. In this Hong Kong study, three areas, namely “charitable giving”, “volunteering” and “participating” were looked at in detail. It is hoped that this will help in the establishment of indicators useful to the Hong Kong context.

Data currently available in Hong Kong is rather limited. For example, financial donations to voluntary organizations in Hong Kong are tax-exempt for both donors and recipients. However, figures from the Inland Revenue Department are not a good source of financial donations, as one might presume. This is because:

- (1) the figures include only amounts donated to “recognized organizations”
- (2) tax-exemption applies only to donations of HK\$100 or above and the figures fail to show donations below that minimum amount
- (3) for various reasons, some people may not have reported their donation to the Inland Revenue

As for volunteer work, the Social Welfare Department regularly updates its figures of volunteers. According to Government statistics, in the year 2000, the total service time done by volunteers in Hong Kong totalled 7,201,048 hours. Such information again has its limitation, since the reporting of such figures is a voluntary one and also involves certain registration procedures.

With regard to social participation, there are detailed figures on registered voters and rate of voting. However, social participation is not limited to elections alone, but includes participation in non-profit or voluntary organizations as well. Unfortunately, information about these organizations is quite limited, an issue that will be addressed in this study.

## **(2) “Charitable Giving” – Discussion and Analysis**

This study focuses on financial donations, as well as examining the habits of respondents in donating other resources, for example, giving blood or pledging to donate their organs after death.

In this study, charitable giving refers to the voluntary act of respondents to give financial support to those in need, or financial donations to social service organizations and groups.

Financial donations in the Hong Kong context can be classified into two categories: (1) Giving money directly to the receiving party, such as relatives, friends, neighbours and street people (“direct donations”). Those not for charity purposes would not be taken into account. (2) Giving financial donations through voluntary or non-profit organizations, to be given to the needy either locally or overseas (“indirect donations”).

The study interviewed 2032 persons aged 15 or above. Among them, 93.7% or 1903 persons had donated money during the one-year period preceding this survey. From the study three kinds of respondents who made charitable donations were identified:

- (1) indirect donations through organizations only - most respondents belonged to this group (62.7%, 1274 persons)
- (2) direct and indirect donations (30%, 609 persons)

- (3) direct donations only (1.0%, 20 persons)

Among the 1903 respondents who made financial donations during the one-year period preceding this study, over 50% said that they donated money to show concern for the needy (53.7%), while others said that they had the ability to help (42.8%). 76.6% of the respondents said they would not increase their donation amount for tax exemption purposes.

## A. Overall Situation

- a. Over 90% of respondents gave donations through organizations during the one-year period preceding the survey

It was found that among the 2,032 respondents aged over 15, a very large majority had made donations through organizations during the one-year period preceding the survey (92.7%, 1,883 persons).

Of these 1,883 persons, the most common way to make a donation was to buy flags, which accounted for 96.8%. The second common means was to buy charity coupons (65.4%). These examples show that people better able to make donations if it did not take too much effort. About 45% said they made donations through the purchase of charitable items (e.g. cookies, rice and Christmas cards). Around 40% had given financial donations in cash boxes placed in shops, or sponsored a third party's participation in charity events, for example, Walkathons (36.7%).

- b. Over 90% of respondents gave donations through organizations, regardless of their employment situation, education or religious backgrounds, indicating that donations through organizations was a common practice and was not related to social status

The study identified 6 categories of organizations, and the 1,883 donors were asked to give details about their donation habits. These organizations included, local charitable organizations, international charitable organizations, religious bodies, schools or educational organizations, professional bodies, social groups or donations through a newspaper's social service page.

Respondents were categorized in accordance with their employment status, education background and religion. It was found that over 90% of the respondents made donations through organizations, regardless of their social status, employment situation and background. 88.7% of the respondents in the unemployed category also made donations during the one-year period preceding the survey. Although donations to charity

included small scale, passive activities like buying a flag, it showed that the act was a voluntary one, and was for the good of others. The above findings shows that donations through organizations are behaviour that cuts across all trans-social statuses.

- c. Among respondents who made financial donations through organizations, the annual average donation amount was HK\$827. Most of this money went to local charitable organizations, which accounted for about 37% of the total donations. Another 33% went to international charitable organizations

Of the 1,883 respondents, the average donation amount was HK\$827, and was on the lower side when compared to the Canadian average of HK\$1,256. However, as the social mechanism and lifestyle are somewhat different between the two places, this figure should only serve as a reference.

96.2% of all respondents said they had made donations to local charitable organizations. In fact, figures show that the biggest portion of donations went to local charitable organizations (36.7%), followed by international charitable organizations (33.2%). 20.5% of the donations went to religious bodies.

Of the donations given, the highest average amount went to the social service pages of local newspapers. It is found that among respondents who made donation through this means, the average amount donated per person is HK\$853.

- d. 30% of the respondents had made direct donations

Among the 2032 persons aged over 15 years old, 629 of them made direct donations to the recipients (e.g. relatives, friends, neighbours and street people), representing a total of 31% out of all respondents. The results show that many respondents are willing the offer help to people in need around them.

- e. 60% of the respondents donated resources other than money

As for the donation of resources other than money, over 61.7% of the 2032 respondents, or 1254 persons, said they had donated items to charitable organizations during the one-year period preceding the survey. The items they donated included clothing (92.9%) and books (18.9%). Less than 10% (8.2%) of the respondents gave blood in the last 12 months. However, it seemed that youth in the group of 15 years old or above were more willing to give blood (18.3%), and was 12% higher than older respondents (25 years old or above).

## **B. Observations on Youth Sampling (15 to 24 years old)**

For financial donations, the two groups (15 to 24, and aged 25 or above) resembled each other in 4 areas: (1) over 90% of the respondents in both groups had donated money in the last 12 months. (2) The two most common charitable activities in which they had participated were buying of flags and buying tickets for charity. (3) Both groups had made donations to local charity organizations. (4) They were more inclined to donate their money to organizations both local and overseas.

There was, however, one major differentiation between the two groups: the group aged between 15 and 24 donated an average amount of HK\$425, while the group aged over 25 made a bigger donation, averaging HK\$906.

### **(3) “Volunteering” – Discussion and Analysis**

In this study, “volunteering” refers to any person who voluntarily contributes his/her own time and effort (not for material rewards) to provide service to those who need help, and to improve the society.

Many organizations in Hong Kong are dedicated to promoting volunteer work, in order to lift both the quality and quantity of voluntary work through mobilizing, organizing, training and managing volunteers. This study looks at the pattern of volunteers who offer their help to the needy, either directly by themselves, or indirectly through organizations.

There were two ways of doing volunteer work: (1) Organizations arranging volunteers to provide service for the needy; (2) volunteers who offer help to the needy without involving charitable organizations (e.g. helping neighbours take care of their younger children or the elderly; offering free private tuition, fixing computers, helping the old to cross the street, or offering removal services).

Among the 2032 respondents aged over 15 years old, 45.5% (924 persons) had volunteered in the last 12 months. Respondents in this study who had volunteered can be classified into 3 categories:

- (1) direct support for the needy without involving organizations - many of those interviewed belonged to this category (22.4%, 455 persons)
- (2) direct support and volunteering through organizations (12.5%, 254 persons)
- (3) volunteering through organizations only (10.6%, 215 persons)

Reasons for volunteering: of most of the 924 respondents who had volunteered, it was found that the act itself was “an origin for happiness” (67.8%), others said that they had the time (39.8%), and others claimed that they wanted to make good use of their talents and abilities (34.7%).

Types of volunteering: most of the 924 respondents provided household support (18.5%) who did cleaning, maintenance, delivery of meals, haircut service, interior decorations or removals, and visits/outreach (10.3%) to church friends, neighbours and elderly.

## A. Overall Situations

### a. Over 20% of all respondents do volunteering through organizations

Through the mobilizing, recruiting and training of volunteers, their quality improved and the quantity increased, contributing to the development and promotion of volunteering. There are many organizations which encourage volunteering, and in this study they are classified into 12 categories: social services, school or educational bodies, religious groups, district services groups, corporations or organizations, hospitals/Hospital Authority or medical and health groups, environmental protection groups, government departments or statutory bodies, political parties or offices of their members, cultural-recreational bodies, trade unions and professional bodies or social organizations. Respondents were asked about whether they did volunteer work through such organizations.

Among the 2032 persons aged over 15 years old, 469 of them had done volunteer through such organizations (23.1%), a percentage that was on the lower side when compared to their Canadian counterparts (26.7%). This figure included those who offered support directly to the needy, or worked through charitable or voluntary organizations.

### b. Most respondents who volunteered through organizations, on average, contributed 60 hours of service annually.

469 respondents had volunteered through organizations. Their efforts contributed to an annual average of 60 hours, which was much lower than the average, 162 hours, put in by Canadians.

According to this study, most respondents chose to work through social service organizations (41.8%), followed by schools and



educational bodies (34.8%), and religious bodies (29.4%). About one-tenth chose to work through their employers' companies or organizations (9.0%).

Social service organizations have the highest hour contribution (35.7%), followed by religious bodies (20.2%).

Looking at the average service hours provided by the volunteers, it was found that those who worked through district organizations were highly committed. Their annual average service hours amounted to 91. The annual average hour for working through social service bodies was 51, while through cultural-recreational bodies, it was 46.

c. 35% of all volunteers chose to offer direct support to the needy

This study attempted to look at those who preferred to give support to the needy directly, such as helping neighbours to look after children or old people, giving free private tutorials, providing free service to maintain computers and household removals.

Among the 2032 people aged 15 years or older, 34.9% of those who provided support to individuals directly, had volunteered during the one-year period preceding the survey. The figure was low when compared to 77% in Canada.

**B. Observations from the youth samples (15 to 24 of age)**

11.7% of youth volunteers claimed that volunteering work was a requirement by the school, and believed that it would be "useful to their academic career". According to a survey by the Canadian Government, there was a 15% increase in employment among younger Canadians, but there was also a 4 % decline in the rate of volunteering by this group. The study in Canada showed that many young people see volunteering as a means of obtaining employment, through increasing their experience and skills. Once they entered the job market, their volunteering was reduced. The case of Hong Kong is still to be investigated.

In terms of volunteer work, a comparison of youth respondents in the two age groups (those between 15 to 24, and those over 25) shows a great divergence.

- (1) 73.5% of respondents in the 15-24 age group did volunteer work during the one-year period preceding the survey, which is much higher than the 39.5% of the 25 or older group

- (2) 48% of the respondents in the 15-24 age group had volunteered through organizations, more than 1 time higher than the 25 or older group
- (3) Youth volunteers in 15-24 age group worked through environmental protection groups (12.7%) or government departments / statutory bodies (6.4%)
- (4) 57.2% of the respondents chose to offer support and voluntary assistance directly to the needy, a percentage much higher than the 29.9% of the 25 or older group

**(4) “Participating” – Discussion and Analysis**

Social participation is important for cementing human relationships, and it is also an important element in enabling social stability. This part of the study aims at exploring the participation of respondents in non-profit organizations, and whether they voted in the 2000 LegCo elections.

In this study, “participation in non-profit organizations” refers to membership or the taking up of voluntary duties. To make the definition clearer and easier to understand, this study asked respondents if they carried any membership, or whether they held any position in any group or organization.

In the study, researchers listed 15 non-profit organizations on and off campus, and asked the 2032 respondents if they had participated in those organizations. There were 5 in-campus organizations: groups /departmental societies, leaders/prefects, in-school social service membership, officers in student unions or uniform groups. There were 10 off-campus organizations: religious groups/churches, social service organizations, family discipline/education groups, professional bodies/social organizations, district organizations, trade unions, uniform groups, political parties/political groups, cultural-recreational and environmental groups.

- a. About 25% of the respondents were members, officers or volunteers in non-profit organizations

Among the 2032 respondents, 24.2% had participated in one or more non-profit organization(s) as members, officers or volunteers during the one-year period preceding the survey. In the youth group aged between 15 and 24, the rate of participation in organizations was 54.5%, higher than the 18.2% of the group of respondents aged 25 or above.

- b. If respondents were students, their rate of participation in the 5 on-campus organizations ranged from 10 to 40%

15 categories of organizations were listed, and respondents were asked if they had participated in any of them. Findings show that in the 5 on-campus organizations, student-respondents' rate of participation ranged from 10.9% to 38.7%.

Among the 10 off-campus organizations, social service organizations had the highest participation rate (11.3%), followed by churches/religious groups (9.7%). The results show that schools are a major venue for cultivating and accumulating participation experience. Once respondents left schools, there was a decline in social participation.

In the group of Canadian respondents aged 15 and above, the rate of participation in one or more social organizations was 51%. Hong Kong has a comparatively lower rate.

- c. Figures show that respondents who participated in non-profit organizations had a relatively higher voting rate

The results of this part of the study show that those who participated in non-profit organizations had a comparatively higher rate of voting in elections. Among the respondents who participated in non-profit organizations, 67.5% said that they had voted in the 2000 LegCo Elections, 12.6% more than the group of respondents who were not involved in organizations.

## **(5) Power of Civilians**

Major Findings: The Hong Kong economy is currently facing a downturn and many people are out of work. Nevertheless, the act of charitable giving is still very common among the people, with over 90% of respondents giving a financial donations, either by giving directly to those in need, or indirectly through charitable / non-profit organizations.

In "volunteering", it was found that around 45% of respondents had participated in volunteer work, which included networking with the needy through organizations, or getting directly in touch with individuals in order to render them assistance.

In terms of participation, around 25% of respondents participated in one or more non-profit organization(s) as members, officers or volunteers, during the one-year period preceding the survey.

This survey is the first of its kind to tackle this topic. Without sufficient data as backup, it was hard to figure out how much the three areas have actually been affected by economic changes. However, the result of the study shows that even while the economic downturn may reduce the amount of financial donations, respondents were still willing to do volunteer work. The survey also reflected that with mutual trust and support, with a sense of giving and participating. Hong Kong already had a good ground for developing social capital. This requires further investigation.

What deserves special attention is the finding that schools had a major role in promoting all three areas of activity, and its role should not be underestimated. In the aspect of “charitable giving”, 20% of respondents who donated through organizations actually donated via schools or educational institutions. In “volunteering”, 35% of respondents who did volunteer work through organizations did so through schools. As for “participating”, it was found that between 10 to 40% of student-respondents had participated in the five on-campus organizations. The findings show that schools have great potential for encouraging and promoting the development of the involvement in the three areas.

## Recommendations

- 1. Both economic and social capitals are essential to the prosperity and progress of a society. To study the development and changes of social capital, there is a need for a good data base system, to be regularly updated and to serve as a foundation for analysis and discussion.**

**The study of social capital in Hong Kong is still at a preliminary stage, and the Government should work to promote the concept, get the public concerned about its development, encourage discussion on the topic and make it better understood by the people. To facilitate the development of social capital, it is advised that a systematic database should be set up with regular monitoring.**

**It is worth noticing that the coverage of “social capital” is not limited to “charitable giving”, “volunteering” and “participating”. Other aspects, such as mutual trust, neighbourhood ties and community networking should also be included in future studies.**

- 2. The findings of this study show that there is room for development in the areas of “charitable giving”, “volunteering” and “participating”.**

**The impact of schools should not be underestimated in the three areas. Social organizations and business corporations also have their role to play in their promotion. With the effort of all parties concerned, it is believed that society can be made to be caring.**

- 3. This study shows that the donation habits of respondents are common and transcend social status. Such a spirit of mutual support and giving is a valuable asset of Hong Kong society, and should therefore be recognized and appreciated. Citizen participation at all levels will benefit the entire community of Hong Kong.**