

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG (HKU)
PUBLIC OPINION PROGRAMME (POP)**

Survey on South China Sea Disputes

19 November 2018

Highlights of Major Findings

- **Most Hong Kong people hope to see different Governments follow the opinion of the people in settling the South China Sea disputes;**
- **70% were aware of the disputes;**
- **16% claimed to have extensive/adequate knowledge of the disputes;**
- **58% considered it important for a government to follow its people's opinion in settling these disputes;**
- **47% considered it important for a government to follow public opinion in the world in settling these disputes;**
- **51% were aware of the ruling of an international tribunal in 2016 regarding the South China Sea disputes.**

Survey Background

In August 2018, Mr Albert del Rosario of the Philippines commissioned the Public Opinion Programme (POP) of The University of Hong Kong to conduct an independent public opinion survey in Hong Kong on the South China Sea Disputes, which is generally called the West Philippine Sea Disputes in the Philippines. The major objective of the survey was to investigate Hong Kong people's awareness and views on the disputes, and to compare them with public opinion gathered in the Philippines.

In order to make such comparisons, POP studied a survey conducted by the top opinion research

organization in the Philippines, Social Weather Stations (SWS) in late June of 2018, and after consulting SWS, decided to run five opinion questions to measure Hong Kong people's awareness level of the disputes, and how much importance they give to public opinion in settling the disputes. POP was aware that SWS would run another round of survey in mid-September, to be released in mid-November, but in order to maintain POP's independence, its research team neither read the questionnaire nor any preliminary findings of the September survey before designing the Hong Kong survey. POP did not consult Mr Albert del Rosario when designing the questionnaire. Meanwhile, fieldwork operations, data collection and data analysis were also conducted independently by the POP Team without interference from any party. In other words, POP was given full autonomy to design and execute the survey. POP thus take full responsibility for all the findings reported herewith.

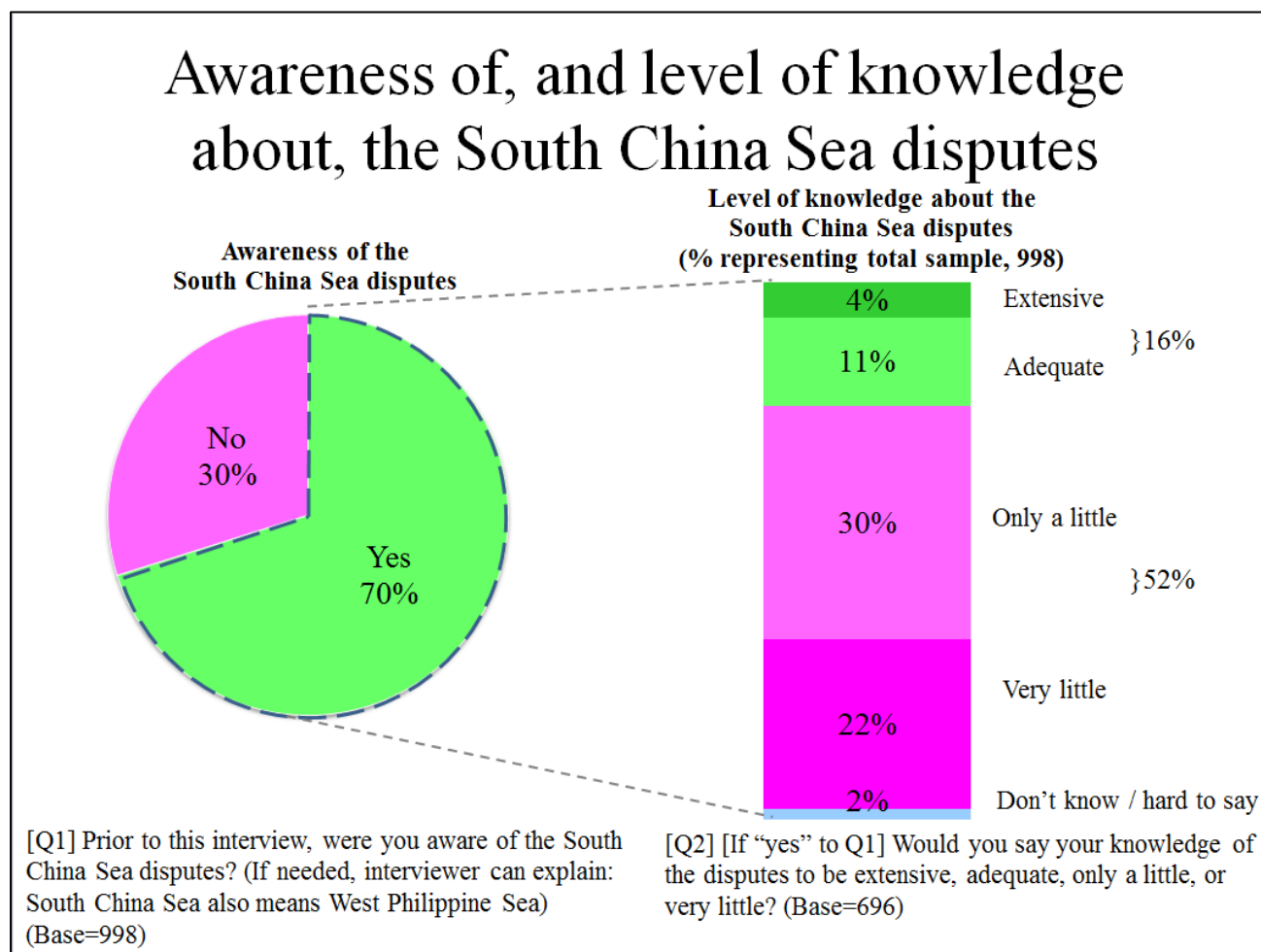
The target population of this survey was Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above who spoke Cantonese. Telephone interviews were conducted during the period of 1 to 6 November 2018. Exactly 1,000 eligible subjects were successfully interviewed, including 617 landline and 383 mobile samples, and POP's prevailing standard of mixing landline and cell phone numbers in the ratio of 2:1 has been followed. The effective response rate of the survey was 59.4%, and the standard sampling error for percentages based on this sample was less than 1.6 percentage points. In other words, the sampling error for all percentages using the total sample was less than plus/minus 3.2 percentage points at 95% confidence level.

To ensure representativeness of the findings, the raw data collected have been rim-weighted according to figures provided by the Census and Statistics Department. The gender-age distribution of the Hong Kong population came from "Mid-year population for 2017", while the educational attainment (highest level attended) distribution and economic activity status distribution came from "Women and Men in Hong Kong - Key Statistics (2018 Edition)". All figures in this report are based on the weighted sample.

Key Findings

The survey first asked about respondents’ general awareness of the South China Sea disputes, results showed that 70% were aware of the South China Sea disputes while 30% were not. Besides, 16% of the total sample claimed to have knowledge of the disputes, of which 4% claimed to have extensive knowledge while 11% claimed to have adequate knowledge. On the other hand, 52% claimed to have little knowledge of the disputes, of which 30% claimed to have only a little knowledge while 22% claimed to have very little knowledge. It means about 5/6 of the Hong Kong population were somewhat ignorant of the situation (Chart 1).

Chart 1

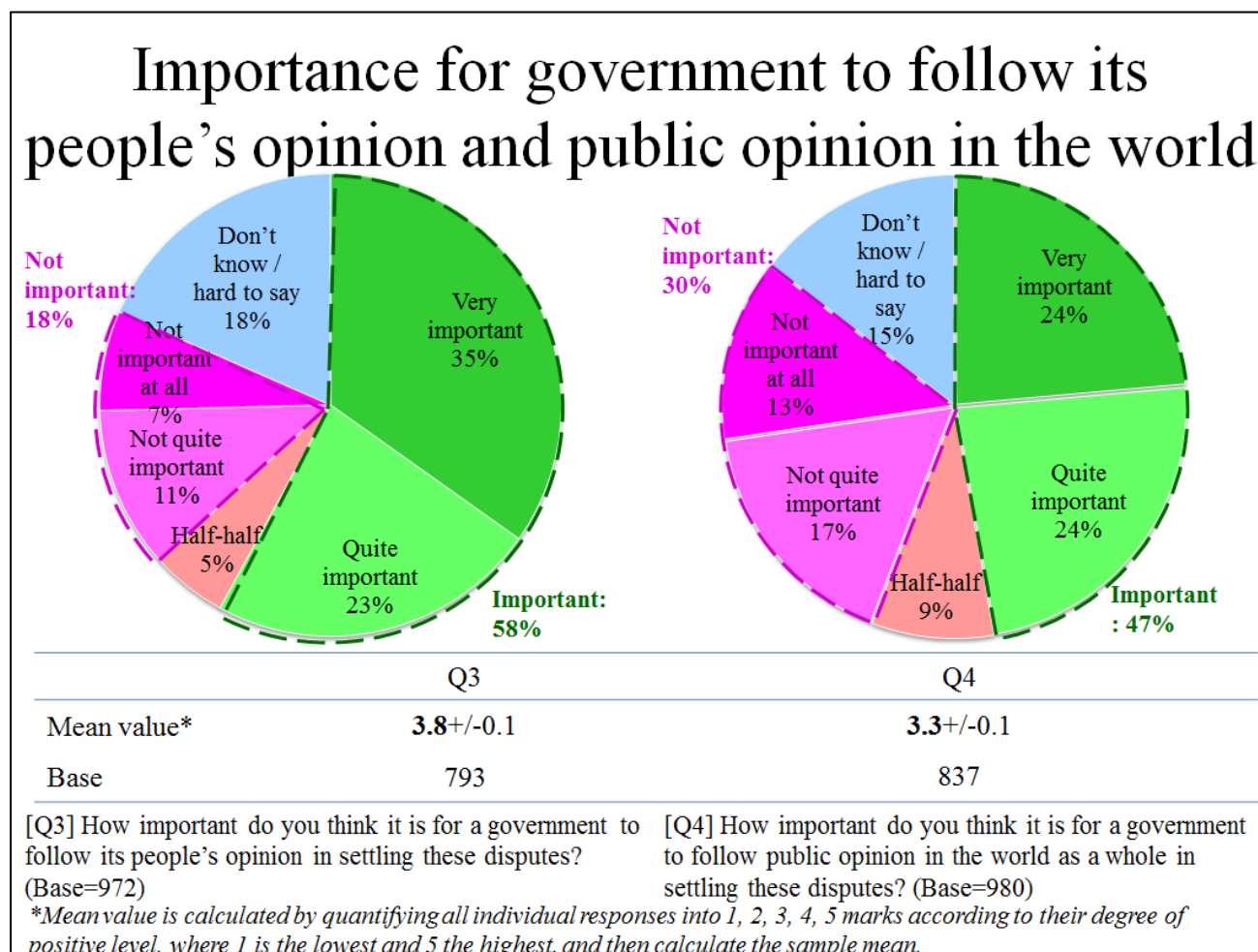


When asked the views about a Government to follow its people’s opinion in settling the South

China Sea disputes, 58% considered it important for a Government to follow its people’s opinion in settling these disputes, presumably applicable to both the Chinese and the Philippine Governments, 18% considered it not important, giving a net importance of 40 percentage points. Together with the mean score of 3.8 +/-0.1 (ranging from 1 to 5), this view is no doubt the majority view (Chart 2).

As for the public opinion in the world, 47% considered it important for a Government to follow public opinion in the world, which is 11 percentage points lower than that of public opinion in one’s country. This shows the relative weight of the two types of opinion. 30% considered public opinion in the world not important, giving a net importance of 18 percentage points. Together with the mean score of 3.3 +/-0.1 (ranging from 1 to 5), this view is no doubt the dominant view (Chart 2).

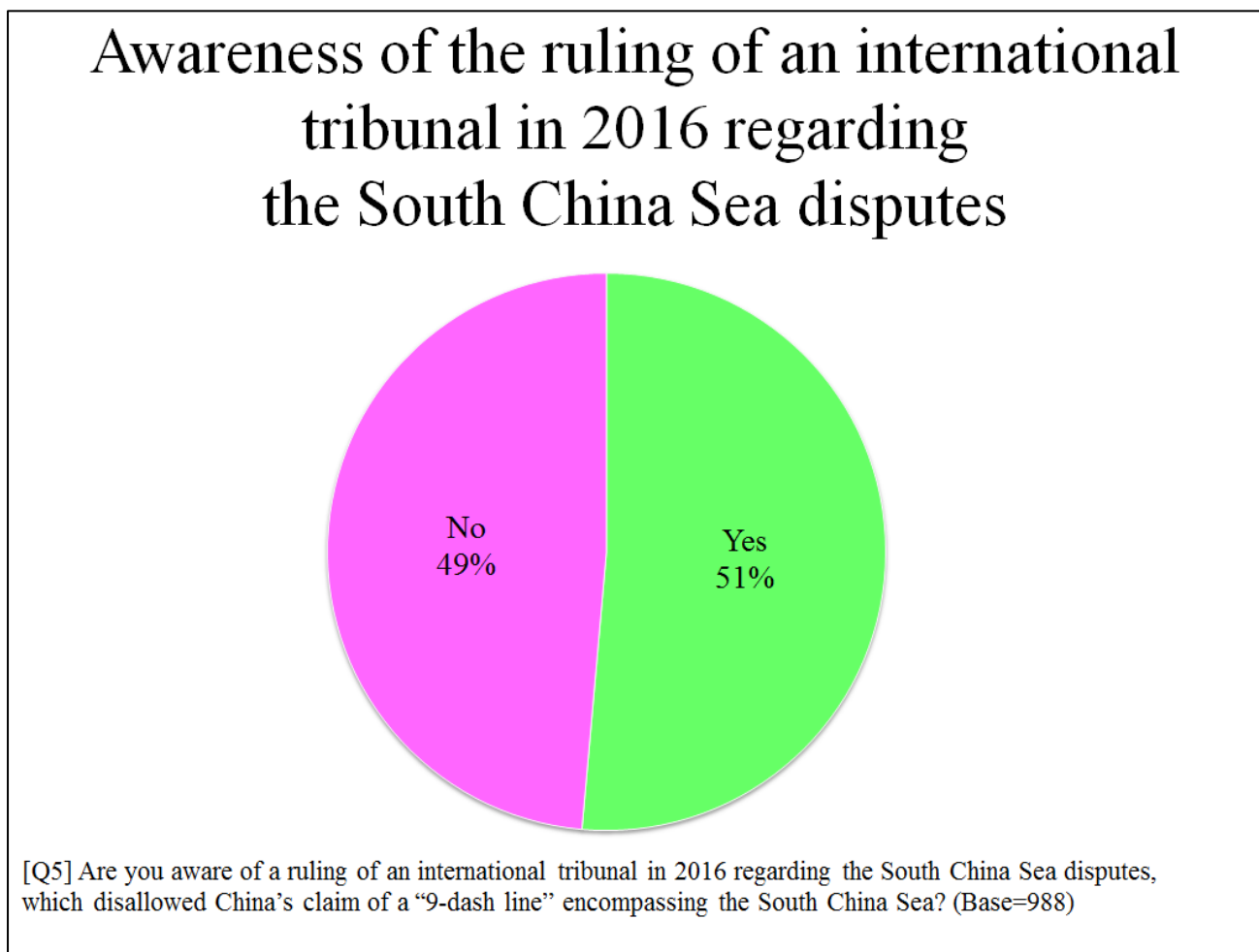
Chart 2



About half were aware of the ruling of an international tribunal in 2016 regarding the South

China Sea disputes, another half were not. Compared to the 70% who had heard of the South China Sea dispute, people are relatively less knowledgeable about the court case (Chart 3).

Chart 3



Putting all questions together, it seems that Hong Kong people are not quite knowledgeable about the details of the dispute. Although 70% have heard of it, most said their knowledge was shallow, and just half had heard of the court case. Against this background, most Hong Kong people hope to see different Governments follow the opinion of the people in settling the disputes.

Further analysis

To further study the relationship between Hong Kong people's knowledge of the disputes and their views of the importance of public opinion, Q3 and Q4 were cross-tabulated with Q1, Q2 and Q5, and independent samples t-tests were run for each response item excluding "don't know / hard to say". The following observations are made:

- 1) Those who were not aware of the dispute, although being the minority, are more likely to think it's important for the Government to follow its people's opinion in settling the disputes (Important: 83% not aware vs 67% aware), possibly because they wanted more opportunities for public deliberation;
- 2) Similarly, those who were not aware of the dispute are more likely to think it's important for the Government to follow the opinion in the world as a whole in settling the disputes (Important: 65% not aware vs 52% aware) possibly for the same reason, but their wish for deliberation by people around the world was relatively weaker;
- 3) No significant difference was found between respondents who were aware and not aware of the international tribunal ruling in their views about Government following its own people's opinions in settling the dispute, but for both groups, the majority wished the government could follow its people's opinion;
- 4) Those who were aware of the ruling were more likely to think it's not important for a government to follow the world's opinions in settling the disputes (Not important: 39% aware vs 30% not aware), possibly because they trust their government more than people's opinion around the world, but this group is a minority.

Question	Group1% w/ DKHS	Group2% w/ DKHS	Group1% w/o DKHS	Group2% w/o DKHS	Difference [Group2% -Group1%]	Sig.^
[Q3] How important do you think it is for a government to follow its people's opinion in settling these disputes?	Q1 Yes	Q1 No	Q1 Yes	Q1 No		
Important	59.0%	55.7%	67.1%	82.7%	16%	**
Half-half	5.6%	4.8%	6.3%	7.1%	+1%	
Not important	23.4%	6.9%	26.6%	10.2%	-16%	**
Don't know / hard to say	12.0%	32.7%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
[Q4] How important do you think it is for a government to follow public opinion in the world as a whole in settling these disputes?	Q1 Yes	Q1 No	Q1 Yes	Q1 No		
Important	46.7%	48.7%	52.0%	64.5%	13%	**
Half-half	8.7%	8.4%	9.7%	11.1%	+1%	
Not important	34.4%	18.4%	38.4%	24.4%	-14%	**
Don't know / hard to say	10.2%	24.5%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
[Q3] How important do you think it is for a government to follow its people's opinion in settling these disputes?	Q2 Extensive/ Adequate	Q2 Only a little/ Very little	Q2 Extensive/ Adequate	Q2 Only a little/ Very little		
Important	63.5%	58.4%	72.8%	65.7%	-7%	
Half-half	3.6%	6.2%	4.2%	7.0%	+3%	
Not important	20.1%	24.3%	23.0%	27.3%	+4%	
Don't know / hard to say	12.8%	11.1%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		

Question	Group1% w/ DKHS	Group2% w/ DKHS	Group1% w/o DKHS	Group2% w/o DKHS	Difference [Group2% -Group1%]	Sig.^
[Q4] How important do you think it is for a government to follow public opinion in the world as a whole in settling these disputes?	Q2 Extensive/Adequate	Q2 Only a little/ Very little	Q2 Extensive/Adequate	Q2 Only a little/ Very little		
Important	45.3%	47.3%	51.2%	52.1%	+1%	
Half-half	6.7%	9.6%	7.5%	10.5%	+3%	
Not important	36.5%	33.8%	41.3%	37.3%	-4%	
Don't know / hard to say	11.5%	9.4%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
[Q3] How important do you think it is for a government to follow its people's opinion in settling these disputes?	Q5 Yes	Q5 No	Q5 Yes	Q5 No		
Important	59.0%	56.7%	69.6%	72.2%	+3%	
Half-half	4.8%	6.0%	5.7%	7.6%	+2%	
Not important	20.9%	15.9%	24.7%	20.2%	-4%	
Don't know / hard to say	15.3%	21.5%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		
[Q4] How important do you think it is for a government to follow public opinion in the world as a whole in settling these disputes?	Q5 Yes	Q5 No	Q5 Yes	Q5 No		
Important	44.2%	50.3%	51.4%	59.4%	8%	*
Half-half	8.1%	9.1%	9.5%	10.7%	+1%	
Not important	33.6%	25.4%	39.1%	29.9%	-9%	**
Don't know / hard to say	14.0%	15.3%	--	--	--	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		

^ Independent Samples t Test are conducted, based on the %s excluding "Don't know / hard to say" (DK/HS).

* Statistically significantly at $p < 0.05$ level.

** Statistically significantly at $p < 0.01$ level.

Appendix I – Questionnaire

Survey on South China Sea Disputes Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong

Questionnaire

30 October 2018

第一部分 自我介紹

喂，先生／小姐／太太你好，我姓 X，我係香港大學民意研究計劃嘅訪問員黎嘅，我哋進行緊一項有關南中國海嘅意見調查，我哋只會阻你大概 10 分鐘時間，你可以選擇拒答任何題目，甚至可以隨時終止訪問而唔會引致任何後果。請你放心，你嘅電話號碼係經由我哋嘅電腦隨機抽樣抽中嘅，而你提供嘅資料係會絕對保密嘅，並只會用作綜合分析。如果你對今次嘅調查有任何疑問，你可以打 xxxx xxxx 同我地嘅督導員聯絡。如果你想知多 D 關於參與研究嘅權利，你可以喺辦公時間致電 xxxx xxxx 向香港大學(全名為：香港大學研究操守委員會)查詢。為左保障數據嘅真確性，我地嘅訪問會被錄音，但只會用作內部參考。所有含個人識別資料嘅數據，同埋錄音會喺調查完成後六個月內銷毀。請問可唔可以開始訪問呢？

可以

唔可以 → 終止訪問，多謝合作，拜拜

[S1] 請問你嘅住宅電話號碼係唔係 xxxx-xxxx?

係 → S2 [Landline]／S4 [Mobile]

唔係 → 終止訪問，多謝，拜拜

Part I Self-introduction

Good afternoon/evening, Mr. /Ms. /Mrs., my name is X, an interviewer from the Public Opinion Programme (POP) at The University of Hong Kong. We are conducting a survey on people's views on South China Sea. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview which will take around 10 minutes, and you can choose to terminate the interview anytime without any consequences. I would like to stress that your number is randomly drawn from our database and your information provided will be kept strictly confidential and used for aggregate analysis only. If you have any questions about the research, you can call xxxx-xxxx to talk to our supervisors. If you want to know more about the rights as a participant, please contact The University of Hong Kong (full name: Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Hong Kong) at xxxx-xxxx during office hours. For quality control purpose, our conversation will be recorded for internal reference. All data containing personal identifiers and the recording will be destroyed within six months upon project completion. Is it okay for us to start this survey?

Yes

No → Interview ends. Thank you, bye-bye.

[S1] Is your telephone number xxxx xxxx?

Yes → S2 [Landline]／S4 [Mobile]

No → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.

第二部份 選出被訪者

[For landline samples]

[S2] 呢份問卷既訪問對象係 18 歲或以上嘅香港居民，請問你屋企宜家有幾多位屬於呢個組別既呢？【如果戶中有合資格既被訪者，訪問告終；多謝合作，收線】

- 有一位 → 開始訪問 [如合資格家庭成員不是接聽電話者，請邀請合資格家庭成員聽電話並重覆自我介紹]
- 有多過一位，____位 → 問 S3
- 有 → 訪問告終，多謝合作，拜拜!
- 拒答 → 訪問告終，多謝合作，拜拜!

[S3] 因為多過一位，我地希望所有合資格既家庭成員都有同等機會接受訪問，所以想請即將生日果位黎聽電話。(訪問員可舉例說明：「即係有冇 11 月或未來三個月內生日既人係度？」)【開始訪問前，訪問員必須讀出：為左保障數據既真確性，訪問可能會被錄音，但只會用作內部參考。】請問可唔可以呢？

- 可以 - 接聽電話的人士是被訪者 → 開始訪問
- 可以 - 其他家人是被訪者【訪問員請重覆自我介紹】 → 開始訪問
- 被選中的家庭成員不在家/沒空【訪問員請另約時間再致電】
- 唔可以 - 家人拒絕回答 → 訪問告終，多謝合作，拜拜!
- 唔可以 - 訪者拒絕回答 → 訪問告終，多謝合作，拜拜!

[For mobile samples]

[S4] 請問你係唔係 18 歲或以上嘅香港居民？

- 係 → 開始訪問
- 唔係 → 訪問告終，多謝合作，拜拜!

第三部份 問卷部份

Part II Selection of Respondent

[For landline samples]

[S2] The target population of this survey is Hong Kong residents of age 18 or above. May I know how many members in your household belong to this group? [If there is no respondent belonged to this group, the interview ends. Thank you, bye-bye.]

- One only → Start the interview [If the one answering the phone does not belong to the target group, invite the belonged respondent to pick up the phone and repeat 'self-introduction']
- More than one, _ → Go to S3
- No → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.
- Refuse to answer → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.

[S3] Since there is more than one available, we hope that all qualified family members have equal chance to be interviewed. I would like to speak to the one who will have his/her birthday next. (Interviewer can ask: "Is there anyone whose birthday is in November or the coming three months?") [Read out before the interview starts: 'For quality control purpose, our conversation will be recorded for internal reference only.'] Is it okay for us to start now?

- Yes-The one answered the phone is the selected respondent
- Yes-Another family member is the selected respondent【Repeat self-introduction】 → Start the interview
- The qualified family member is not at home / not available【Make appointment for interview】
- No-Family member refuses to answer → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.
- No-Respondent refuses to answer → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.

[For mobile samples]

[S4] Are you a Hong Kong resident of age 18 or above?

- Yes → Start the interview
- No → Interview ends. Thank you for your cooperation. Bye-bye.

Part III Survey Questions

- [Q1] 喺呢個訪問前，請問你有冇聽聞過南海爭議？
- 有
有 (跳至 Q3)
拒答 (跳至 Q3)
- [Q1] Prior to this interview, were you aware of the South China Sea disputes?
- Yes
No (Skip to Q3)
Refuse to answer (Skip to Q3)
- [Q2] [如聽過] 咁你認為自己對有關爭議知道幾多？
- 好廣泛
足夠
知道少少
知道好少
唔知／難講
拒答
- [Q2] [If “yes” to Q1] Would you say your knowledge of the disputes to be extensive, adequate, only a little, or very little?
- Extensive
Adequate
Only a little
Very little
Don’t know / hard to say
Refuse to answer
- [Q3] 你認為政府根據市民嘅意見去解決呢啲爭議有幾重要？
- 好重要
幾重要
一半半
唔啱幾重要
完全唔重要
唔知／難講
拒答
- [Q3] How important do you think it is for a government to follow its people’s opinion in settling these disputes?
- Very important
Quite important
Half-half
Not quite important
Not important at all
Don’t know / hard to say
Refuse to answer
- [Q4] 你認為政府根據全世界嘅民意去解決呢啲爭議有幾重要？
- 好重要
幾重要
一半半
唔啱幾重要
完全唔重要
唔知／難講
拒答
- [Q4] How important do you think it is for a government to follow public opinion in the world as a whole in settling these disputes?
- Very important
Quite important
Half-half
Not quite important
Not important at all
Don’t know / hard to say
Refuse to answer
- [Q5] 你有冇聽聞過 2016 年國際仲裁庭就南海爭議裁定中國不得以「九段線」標誌其南海主權？
- 有
有
拒答
- [Q5] Are you aware of a ruling of an international tribunal in 2016 regarding the South China Sea disputes, which disallowed China’s claim of a “9-dash line” encompassing the South China Sea?
- Yes
No
Refuse to answer

第四部份 個人資料

為咗方便分析唔同背景人士嘅睇法，想問你一啲簡單嘅個人資料。你嘅資料只會用作呢次調查分析之用，而且係會絕對保密嘅，請放心。

[DM1] 性別

男
女

[DM2] 年齡

拒答

[DM3] 教育程度

小學或以下
初中 (中一至中三)
高中 (中四至中七/DSE/毅進)
專上教育:非學位課程 (包括文憑/證書/副學位課程)
專上教育:學位課程 (包括學士學位/研究院)
拒答

[DM4] 就業狀況

行政及專業人員
文職及服務人員
勞動工人
學生
料理家務者
其他 (包括退休人士/失業/待業/其他非在職)
拒答

訪問結束 - 問卷已經完成，多謝您接受我哋嘅訪問。拜拜。

Part III Personal information

I would like to ask you some personal particulars in order to facilitate our analysis. Please rest assured that your information will be recorded anonymously and kept strictly confidential.

[DM1] Gender

Male
Female

[DM2] Age

Refuse to answer

[DM3] Education attainment

Primary or below
Lower secondary (Secondary 1 to Secondary 3)
Upper secondary (Secondary 4 to Secondary 7 / DSE / Yi Jin)
Tertiary: non-degree course (Including diploma / certificate / sub-degree course)
Tertiary: degree course (including bachelor's degree / postgraduate course)
Refuse to answer

[DM4] Employment status

Executives and professionals
Clerical and service workers
Production workers
Students
Home-makers / housewives
Retired
Unemployed / seeking jobs / other non-working status
Others
Refuse to answer

Interview ends - The interview is completed, thank you for your time and cooperation, bye-bye.