

# The University of Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme

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## Hong Kong Family Happiness Index Survey

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### Executive Summary

Jointly compiled by

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**27 June 2008**

*Everything in this publication is the work of individual researchers, and does not represent the stand of the University of Hong Kong. Dr Robert Chung is fully responsible for the work of the POP.*

## **Public Opinion Programme, the University of Hong Kong Hong Kong Family Happiness Index Survey**

### **Executive Summary**

1. In May 2008, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong (BGCA) commissioned the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong (POP) to conduct a "Hong Kong Family Happiness Index Survey". The research questionnaire was designed by the POP team after consulting BGCA, whilst fieldwork operations and data analysis were conducted independently by the POP team, without interference from any outside party.
2. The fieldwork was conducted during the period of May 7 to 15 and June 2 to 13, 2008<sup>1</sup>. A total of 1,516 successful telephone interviews were conducted with Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong citizens who fulfilled either one of the following criteria: 1) parents aged 18-year or above with at least one child aged 17-year or below; 2) young adults aged between 18 to 34-year with no children; and 3) children aged between 9 to 17-year.
3. A respective of 506 parents (33% of the overall sample), 506 young adults (33% of overall sample) and 504 children (33% of the overall sample) were successfully interviewed in this survey. The effective response rate of these three groups were 77.8%, 77.9% and 79.3% respectively, and the sampling error for all percentages based on each target group is less than 2.2%. In other words, the sampling error for all percentages is less than plus/ minus 4.5% at 95% confidence level.

### **I Views on Happiness**

4. Over the past few months prior to the interview, children were found to be the happiest group, followed by young adults and then parents. 74% of the children reported that they were happy, while the respective percentage for young adults and parents were 56% and 54%. 11% of the parents claimed that they were unhappy while 9% young adults and 3% children felt the same.
5. When asked to give a rating, out of 0-100, to describe how happy they were in the past few months, the mean score obtained from the children group was 76.7, while that for the young adults and parents were 67.2 and 64.8 respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the disastrous Sichuan earthquake happened on May 12, 2008 which killed hundreds of thousands of people and thus affected the mood of all Chinese people in the world (including Hong Kong people), the fieldwork operation was suspended for two weeks.

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6. The respondents were also asked to rate the degree of happiness of people around them. Results showed that the mean scores of the children, young adults and parents interviewed were 75.8, 66.3 and 64.8 in respective order. In other words, parents perceived people around as happy as themselves, while both young adults and children perceived others relatively less happy.
7. As high as 83% of the children group agreed to the statement “Happiness depends on how I deal with my life”, while the respective percentages for the young adults and parent groups were 91% and 85%.
8. “The richer I am, the happier I am” did not sound true to around half of the respondents, as 58% of the children, 39% young adults and 47% parents disagreed to it, while only 22% children, 32% young adults and 27% parents agreed to this statement.
9. A landslide majority of all three groups agreed to the statement, “The happier my family is, the happier I am”, with 94% children, 95% young adults and 96% parents.
10. Similarly, “The more happiness I can bring to the others, the happier I am” was agreed upon by 92% children, 89% young adults and 91% parents.
11. On the contrary, only 57% children, 34% young adults and 42% parents agreed that “Hong Kong is a place full of happiness”

## II Happiness and Relationship with Parents/ Children

12. Survey results showed that both the children and young adults were the happiest when being with their “friends/ schoolmates/ colleagues” (53%, 32%). On the other hand, parents said they were happiest to be with their “children” (51%). See table 1.

Table 1 Top 3 for “The person I am happiest to be with”

	Parents	Young adults	Children
1	Children (51%)	Friends/ schoolmates/ colleagues (32%)	Friends/ schoolmates (53%)
2	Spouse/ lover (25%)	Mother (25%)	Mother (21%)
3	Friends/ colleagues (6%) Other family members (6%)	Spouse/ lover (17%)	Siblings (10%)

13. When feeling unhappy, children and young adults preferred talking to “friends/ schoolmates/ colleagues” most (48%, 57%), whereas parents would run to their “spouse/ lover” (42%) to air their grievances. See table 2.

Table 2 Top three for “The person I would run to when I feel blue”

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	Spouse/ lover (42%)	Friends/ schoolmates/ colleagues (57%)	Friends/ schoolmates (48%)
2	Friends/ colleagues (23%)	Spouse/ lover (17%)	Mother (28%)
3	Children (9%)	Mother (11%)	Siblings (8%)

14. When asked to rate the current relationship with parents, the average score given by the children and young adults were 80.0 and 74.3 respectively. Meanwhile, the mean score obtained from the parents when asked to evaluate the relationship with their children was 79.0.
15. In order to make their parents happy, interestingly, majority of the children said they would “study hard/ work hard” (80%) while most young adults would “spend more time with parents” (83%). On the other hand, more than two-third of parents would make their children happy by “doing outdoor activities together with them” (72%). See table 3.

Table 3 Top three for “Things I do to make my parents/ children happy”

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	Outdoor activities together (72%)	Spend more time with them (83%)	Study hard (80%)
2	Have fun at home (58%)	Study hard/ work hard (62%)	Spend more time with them (66%)
3	Chatting/ telling stories (53%)	Live a happy life (46%)	Doing chores for them (51%)

### III Happiness and Relationship with Other People

16. On interpersonal relationships, 42% of the children reported that relationship with “friends” would affect their mood most. Young adults were most concerned about relationship with “parents” (35%) whilst parents cared about relationship with “spouse/ lover” (37%) most. See table 4.

Table 4 Top three for “The relationship that affect my mood most”

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	Spouse/ lover (37%)	Parents (35%)	Friends (42%)
2	Children (26%)	Friends (23%)	Parents (39%)
3	Colleagues (8%)	Spouse/ lover (20%)	Schoolmates (9%)

17. When someone around felt unhappy, more than half of all the three groups believed “talking to him/ her /telling jokes” (68% children, 59% young adults and 56% parents) would be the best tactic to make that person feel better. See table 5.

Table 5 Top three for “What I would do to make my upset friends/ family feel better”

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	Talk to him/her/ Tell jokes (56%)	Talk to him/her/ Tell jokes (59%)	Talk to him/her/ Tell jokes (68%)
2	Listen to him/her (23%)	Keep him/her company/ Do what he/she likes with him/her (24%)	Listen to him/her (23%)
3	Leisure activities (e.g. karaoke, eating, drinking) (14%)	Listen to him/her (24%)	Keep him/her company/ Do what he/she likes with him/her (17%)

#### IV Happy Activities/ Events

18. When asked what kind of activities/ events would make oneself happy, children (44%) and young adults (40%) found themselves the happiest when engaging in “personal leisure activities”, while parents opted for “leisure activities with family” instead (37%). See table 6.

Table 6 Top three for “Activities/ events that make me happy”

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	Leisure activities with family (37%)	Personal leisure activities (40%)	Personal leisure activities (44%)
2	Personal leisure activities (24%)	Leisure activities with friends (29%)	Leisure activities with friends (31%)
3	Leisure activities with friends (14%)	Leisure activities with family (15%)	Satisfaction at school/ workplace/ appreciation by others (16%)

19. With respect to volunteer work participation, 45% of the children reported they volunteered usually, while 33% young adults and 24% parents claimed the same. Among those volunteers, the average number of hours they spent on volunteer work in the year past were 27.4, 67.2 and 72.3 for children, young adults and parents respectively. Meanwhile, more than 80% of the volunteers across all three groups found themselves happier after volunteering [86% children (base = 228), 83% young adults (base = 169) and 89% parents (base = 122)].

## V Happy Advice for Hong Kong People

20. What advice the respondents would offer to Hong Kong people in order to be happier? “Take things easy/ Not to be stubborn” topped the lists of both children (24%) and young adults (27%), while most parents think Hong Kong people should simply “reduce workload” (28%) to achieve this goal. See table 7

Table 7 Top five “Happy Advice to Hong Kong people”

	Parents	Young adults	Children
1	Reduce workload (28%)	Take things easy/ Not to be stubborn (27%)	Take things easy/ Not to be stubborn (24%)
2	Take things easy/ Not to be stubborn (15%)	Reduce workload (14%)	Smile/ laugh more (13%)
3	Treat others better/ Not to be selfish (11%)	Smile/ laugh more (10%)	Treat others better/ Not to be selfish (12%)
4	Treat oneself better/ Enjoy life more (10%)	Treat others better/ Not to be selfish (10%)	Reduced workload (10%)
5	Share happiness/ worries with others more (8%)	Not to demand too much/ Be contented (9%)	Go to play more often (8%)

21. Lastly, all respondents were asked how many times they would smile or laugh in one typical day. Findings revealed that children tended to smile or laugh the most frequently (24.4 times), while young adults (23.6 times) came next at a close distance, and followed by parents (20.1 times).

## Appendix 1: Demographic profile of respondents

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
Male	181	35.8	222	43.9	253	50.2
Female	325	64.2	284	56.1	251	49.8
Total	506	100.0	506	100.0	504	100.0

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
9-12	--	--	--	--	197	39.1
13-17	--	--	--	--	307	60.9
18-20	0	0.0	160	31.9	--	--
21-30	25	5.0	252	50.2	--	--
31-40	178	35.7	90	17.9	--	--
41-50	238	47.7	--	--	--	--
51-60	48	9.6	--	--	--	--
60 or above	10	2.0	--	--	--	--
Total	499	100.0	502	100.0	504	100.0
No answer	7		4			

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
Primary or below	66	13.2	3	0.6	181	35.9
Secondary	301	60.1	160	31.7	308	61.1
Matriculation	34	6.8	83	16.5	12	2.4
Tertiary, non-degree	17	3.4	67	13.3	3	0.6
Tertiary, degree	60	12.0	172	34.1	--	--
Postgraduate or above	23	4.6	19	3.8	--	--
Total	501	100.0	504	100.0	504	100.0
No answer	5		2			

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
Managers and executives	48	9.7	25	5.0
Professionals	31	6.3	63	12.5
Associate professionals	36	7.3	59	11.7
Clerks	82	16.6	93	18.5
Service workers and shop sales workers	59	11.9	37	7.4
Craft and related workers	21	4.2	10	2.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	15	3.0	3	0.6
Non-skilled workers	29	5.9	5	1.0
Student	1	0.2	169	33.6
Full-time housewife	145	29.3	8	1.6
Cannot be classified	0	0.0	3	0.6
Others (Please specify:)	28	5.7	28	5.6
Total	495	100.0	503	100.0
<i>No answer</i>	<i>11</i>		<i>3</i>	

	<u>Children</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%
Student	503	99.8
Non-student	1	0.2
Total	504	100.0

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
Hong Kong	330	65.6	417	83.1
Mainland China	163	32.4	80	15.9
Others	10	2.0	5	1.0
Total	503	100.0	502	100.0
<i>No answer</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>4</i>	



	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
No income	133	28.5	126	26.0
\$1 to \$5,000	36	7.7	67	13.8
\$5,001 to \$10,000	93	19.9	94	19.4
\$10,001 to \$20,000	110	23.6	144	29.8
\$20,001 to \$30,000	42	9.0	40	8.3
\$30,001 to \$50,000	33	7.1	10	2.1
\$50,001 or above	20	4.3	3	0.6
Total	467	100.0	484	100.0
<i>No answer</i>	39		22	

	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Young adults</u>	
	No. of Respondent	%	No. of Respondent	%
No income	8	1.7	4	0.8
\$1 to \$10,000	77	16.6	34	7.0
\$10,001 to \$30,000	195	41.9	200	41.4
\$30,001 to \$50,000	85	18.3	110	22.8
\$50,001 to \$70,000	42	9.0	39	8.1
\$70,001 to \$90,000	16	3.4	10	2.1
\$90,001 or above	21	4.5	15	3.1
DK/ HS	21	4.5	71	14.7
Total	465	100.0	483	100.0
<i>No answer</i>	41		23	