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Press Release on February 23, 2021

POP releases social and freedom indicators

Special Announcement

The predecessor of Hong Kong Public Opinion Program (HKPOP) was The Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP). “POP” in this release can refer to HKPOP or its predecessor HKUPOP.

Abstract

POP successfully interviewed 1,018 Hong Kong residents by a random telephone survey conducted by real interviewers in early February. Our survey shows that, on a scale of 0 to 10, people’s ratings on the five core social indicators ranked from the highest to the lowest are “freedom”, “stability”, “prosperity”, “rule of law” and “democracy”. Their scores are 5.02, 4.99, 4.96, 4.50 and 4.27 respectively. Compared with a month ago, all social indicators have increased significantly. As for the seven non-core social indicators, ratings of “corruption-free practices”, “equality” and “fairness” are relatively lower. Compared with the last survey, rating of “public order” has increased significantly, while ratings of “social welfare sufficiency”, “efficiency” and “equality” have all registered all-time lows since records began in 1997. As for the ten freedom sub-indicators, freedom of “academic research”, “speech”, “publication”, “press”, “freedom to strike”, “association” and “procession and demonstration” all score lower than 5 marks. Freedom of “entering or leaving Hong Kong” has dropped significantly when compared to the last survey, while freedoms of “entering or leaving Hong Kong”, “academic research” and “association” have registered all-time lows since records began in 1997. In the area of rule of law sub-indicators, both “impartiality of the courts” and “fairness of the judicial system” continue to score below 5 marks. The first-ever support rating of Chief Justice Andrew Cheung Geoffrey Ma after he took office is 42.5, which is significantly lower than the last rating of Geoffrey Ma before he stepped down, also representing an all-time low since record began in 2001. The effective response rate of the survey is 62.9%. The maximum sampling error of ratings is +/-2.9 at 95% confidence level.

Contact Information

Date of survey	: 2-5/2/2021
Survey method	: Random telephone survey conducted by real interviewers
Target population	: Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above
Sample size ^[1]	: 1,018 (including 514 landline and 504 mobile samples)
Effective response rate	: 62.9%
Sampling error ^[2]	: Sampling error of ratings not more than +/-2.9 at 95% conf. level

Weighting method : 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 2019”, while the educational attainment (highest level attended) distribution and economic activity status distribution came from “Women and Men in Hong Kong - Key Statistics (2019 Edition)”.

- [1] This figure is the total sample size of the survey. Some questions may only involve a subsample, the size of which can be found in the tables below.
- [2] All error figures in this release are calculated at 95% confidence level. “95% confidence level” means that if we were to repeat a certain survey 100 times with different random samples, we would expect 95 times having the population parameter within the respective error margins calculated. Because of sampling errors, when quoting percentages, journalists should refrain from reporting decimal places, whereas one decimal place can be used when quoting rating figures.

Latest Figures

Herewith the latest figures of the five core social indicators:

Date of survey	<u>19-22/10/20</u>	<u>9-13/11/20</u>	<u>7-10/12/20</u>	<u>4-8/1/21</u>	<u>2-5/2/21</u>	<u>Latest change</u>
Sample size	575-632	579-634	602-609	594-604	650-657	--
Response rate	62.2%	63.9%	70.0%	58.5%	62.9%	--
Latest findings	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding & error	--
Degree of freedom	4.60 ^[3]	4.60	4.68	4.45	5.02+/-0.25	+0.57^[3]
Degree of stability	4.15 ^[3]	4.15	4.17	4.04	4.99+/-0.22	+0.94^[3]
Degree of prosperity	4.30	4.57 ^[3]	4.11 ^[3]	4.09	4.96+/-0.19	+0.87^[3]
Compliance with the rule of law	3.82 ^[3]	4.05	4.01	3.80	4.50+/-0.24	+0.70^[3]
Degree of democracy	3.61	3.74	3.85	3.56	4.27+/-0.27	+0.71^[3]

- [3] The difference between the figure and the result from the previous survey has gone beyond the sampling error at 95% confidence level, meaning that the change is statistically significant prima facie. However, whether the difference is statistically significant is not the same as whether they are practically useful or meaningful, and different weighting methods could have been applied in different surveys.

Herewith the latest figures of the seven non-core social indicators:

Date of survey	<u>6-9/5/19</u>	<u>16-19/9/19</u>	<u>14-17/4/20</u>	<u>6-9/7/20</u>	<u>2-5/2/21</u>	<u>Latest change</u>
Sample size ^[4]	526-642	587-716	627-663	616-665	650-656	--
Response rate	63.2%	69.5%	64.5%	52.4%	62.9%	--
Latest findings	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding & error	--
Degree of public order	7.02 ^[5]	4.55 ^[5]	5.13 ^[5]	5.14	5.70+/-0.21	+0.56^[5]
Degree of civilization	6.78	5.68 ^[5]	6.00 ^[5]	5.42 ^[5]	5.58+/-0.21	+0.16
Degree of social welfare sufficiency	5.79 ^[5]	5.55	5.56	5.63	5.43+/-0.21	-0.20
Degree of efficiency	6.36 ^[5]	5.88 ^[5]	5.25 ^[5]	5.34	5.08+/-0.21	-0.26
Degree of corruption-free practices	6.43	5.12 ^[5]	4.98	4.98	5.00+/-0.22	+0.02
Degree of equality	5.69	4.71 ^[5]	4.87	4.62	4.50+/-0.22	-0.13
Degree of fairness	5.47 ^[5]	4.20 ^[5]	4.79 ^[5]	4.15 ^[5]	4.23+/-0.23	+0.08

- [4] Before March 2020, weighted count was used to report subsample size. Starting from March 2020, raw count was used instead.

[5] The difference between the figure and the result from the previous survey has gone beyond the sampling error at 95% confidence level, meaning that the change is statistically significant prima facie. However, whether the difference is statistically significant is not the same as whether they are practically useful or meaningful, and different weighting methods could have been applied in different surveys.

Herewith the latest figures of the ten freedom sub-indicators:

Date of survey	<u>6-9/5/19</u>	<u>16-19/9/19</u>	<u>14-17/4/20</u>	<u>6-9/7/20</u>	<u>2-5/2/21</u>	<u>Latest change</u>
Sample size ^[6]	525-651	609-700	579-643	583-664	605-656	--
Response rate	63.2%	69.5%	64.5%	52.4%	62.9%	--
Latest findings	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding & error	--
Degree of freedom (repeated listing)	6.60	6.00 ^[7]	5.58 ^[7]	4.84 ^[7]	5.02+/-0.25	+0.18
Freedom of religious belief	8.12 ^[7]	7.79 ^[7]	7.24 ^[7]	6.71 ^[7]	6.76+/-0.23	+0.05
Freedom to enter or leave Hong Kong	7.77 ^[7]	7.14 ^[7]	7.02	6.50 ^[7]	6.08+/-0.26	-0.42^[7]
Freedom to engage in artistic and literary creation	6.93	6.54 ^[7]	5.63 ^[7]	4.96 ^[7]	5.21+/-0.28	+0.25
Freedom to engage in academic research	6.78	6.46 ^[7]	5.59 ^[7]	4.98 ^[7]	4.88+/-0.28	-0.10
Freedom of speech	6.20 ^[7]	5.85 ^[7]	5.24 ^[7]	4.39 ^[7]	4.63+/-0.29	+0.24
Freedom of publication	5.76 ^[7]	5.81	5.10 ^[7]	4.40 ^[7]	4.57+/-0.27	+0.16
Freedom of press	5.81 ^[7]	5.72	4.94 ^[7]	4.27 ^[7]	4.38+/-0.28	+0.11
Freedom to strike	5.86 ^[7]	5.04 ^[7]	4.67 ^[7]	4.08 ^[7]	4.34+/-0.28	+0.26
Freedom of association	5.38 ^[7]	5.13	4.88	4.35 ^[7]	4.17+/-0.30	-0.17
Freedom of procession and demonstration	6.15 ^[7]	4.68 ^[7]	4.13 ^[7]	3.31 ^[7]	3.31+/-0.29	--

[6] Before March 2020, weighted count was used to report subsample size. Starting from March 2020, raw count was used instead.

[7] The difference between the figure and the result from the previous survey has gone beyond the sampling error at 95% confidence level, meaning that the change is statistically significant prima facie. However, whether the difference is statistically significant is not the same as whether they are practically useful or meaningful, and different weighting methods could have been applied in different surveys.

Herewith the latest figures of the two rule of law sub-indicators and the rating of the Chief Justice:

Date of survey	<u>6-9/5/19</u>	<u>16-19/9/19</u>	<u>14-17/4/20</u>	<u>6-9/7/20</u>	<u>2-5/2/21</u>	<u>Latest change</u>
Sample size ^[8]	527-688	642-690	641-658	584-643	538-657	--
Response rate	63.2%	69.5%	64.5%	52.4%	62.9%	--
Latest findings	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding	Finding & error	--
Compliance with the rule of law (repeated listing)	6.20	4.41 ^[10]	4.45	4.14	4.50+/-0.24	+0.36^[10]
Impartiality of the courts	6.20 ^[10]	5.52 ^[10]	4.60 ^[10]	4.24 ^[10]	4.42+/-0.21	+0.17
Fairness of the judicial system	5.63 ^[10]	4.37 ^[10]	4.41	4.07 ^[10]	4.27+/-0.23	+0.20
Support rating of Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal ^[9]	62.7 ^[10]	57.1 ^[10]	57.3	57.1	42.5+/-2.9	-14.6^[10]

[8] Before March 2020, weighted count was used to report subsample size. Starting from March 2020, raw count was used instead.

[9] The Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal before January 2021 was Geoffrey Ma, after that it was Andrew Cheung.

[10] The difference between the figure and the result from the previous survey has gone beyond the sampling error at 95% confidence level, meaning that the change is statistically significant prima facie. However, whether the difference is statistically significant is not the same as whether they are practically useful or meaningful, and different weighting methods could have been applied in different surveys.

On a scale of 0 to 10, people’s ratings on the five core social indicators ranked from the highest to the lowest are “freedom”, “stability”, “prosperity”, “rule of law” and “democracy”. Their scores are 5.02, 4.99, 4.96, 4.50 and 4.27 respectively. Compared with a month ago, all social indicators have increased significantly.

As for the non-core indicators, “public order”, “civilization”, “social welfare sufficiency” and “efficiency” got relatively higher ratings, with 5.70, 5.58, 5.43 and 5.08 marks respectively. Ratings of “corruption-free practices”, “equality” and “fairness” stand at 5.00, 4.50 and 4.23 respectively. Compared with the previous survey, rating of “public order” has increased significantly, while ratings of “social welfare sufficiency”, “efficiency” and “equality” have all registered all-time lows since records began in 1997.

As for the freedom sub-indicators, the top 3 items go to freedoms of “religious belief”, “entering or leaving Hong Kong” and “artistic and literary creation”, with 6.76, 6.08 and 5.21 marks respectively, followed by freedom of “academic research”, “speech”, “publication”, “press”, “freedom to strike” and “association”, with 4.88, 4.63, 4.57, 4.38, 4.34 and 4.17 marks respectively, while freedom of “procession and demonstration” ranks the last, scoring 3.31 marks only. Compared with the previous survey, freedom of “entering or leaving Hong Kong” has dropped significantly, while freedoms of “entering or leaving Hong Kong”, “academic research” and “association” have registered all-time lows since records began in 1997.

As for the two rule of law sub-indicators, “impartiality of the courts” got 4.42 marks, while “fairness of the judicial system” got 4.27 marks. As for Chief Justice Andrew Cheung, his support rating is 42.5 on a scale of 0 to 100, which is significantly lower than the last rating of Geoffrey Ma before he stepped down, also representing an all-time low since record began in 2001.

Opinion Daily

In 2007, POP started collaborating with Wisers Information Limited whereby Wisers supplies to POP a record of significant events of that day according to the research method designed by POP. These daily entries would then become “Opinion Daily” after they are verified by POP.

For some of the polling items covered in this press release, the previous survey was conducted from 6 to 9 July, 2020 while this survey was conducted from 2 to 5 February, 2021. During this period, herewith the significant events selected from counting newspaper headlines and commentaries on a daily basis and covered by at least 25% of the local newspaper articles. Readers can make their own judgment if these significant events have any impacts to different polling figures.

2/2/21	The government continues to lock down multiple areas for compulsory testing and says officials may break into flats.
1/2/21	The government locks down multiple areas for compulsory testing and lowers the threshold of imposing lockdowns.
29/1/21	The British government announces details of migration using BNO visa; the Chinese and Hong Kong governments announce they will no longer recognise BNO passports.
28/1/21	The government locks down Tung Fat Building in North Point for compulsory testing.
26/1/21	The government locks down areas around Pitt Street for compulsory testing.
24/1/21	Lockdown in Jordan ends with 13 cases found in over 7,000 people.
23/1/21	The government locks down designated areas in Jordan for compulsory testing.
15/1/21	Mandatory testing is ordered for residents of 20 buildings in Yau Ma Tei.

13/1/21	Brazil authority announces that the general efficacy of Sinovac vaccine is 50.4%.
6/1/21	Police arrests 53 democrats involved in the pro-democracy primaries who allegedly violated the national security law.
5/1/21	Geoffrey Ma says details and justifications are needed to call for judicial reform.
4/1/21	The government announces extension of anti-epidemic measures. Face-to-face classes are suspended in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools until the Lunar New Year holidays.
2/1/21	The government does not rule out mandatory use of the “LeaveHomeSafe” app.
2/1/21	The government expects to provide vaccinations to the public in February at the earliest.
31/12/20	The Court of Final Appeal grants leave to appeal to the Department of Justice. Jimmy Lai is remanded in custody.
30/12/20	Ten among the 12 Hong Kong people case are sentenced to 7 months to 3 years in prison, while two minors are transferred to Hong Kong.
28/12/20	Mandatory testing is ordered after coronavirus is detected in the sewage from a building.
25/12/20	Jimmy Lai is granted bail, but barred from leaving home, giving interviews and publishing articles.
23/12/20	The government sets up indemnity fund for vaccine and lets citizens choose which type of vaccine to take.
21/12/20	New strains of COVID-19 virus are found in the UK. The Hong Kong government bans passenger flights from the UK.
17/12/20	The government launches the fourth round of the Anti-epidemic Fund.
12/12/20	Jimmy Lai is additionally charged with “collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security”.
8/12/20	The government tightens anti-epidemic measures again and empower authorities to impose lockdown and mandatory testing.
3/12/20	Jimmy Lai is denied bail and remanded in custody.
2/12/20	Former Demosistō member Joshua Wong, Ivan Lam and Agnes Chow are sentenced to 7 to 13.5 months in prison.
30/11/20	The government tightens anti-epidemic measures and sets up a hotline for reporting violations.
26/11/20	The Education Bureau introduces reforms to liberal studies.
25/11/20	Carrie Lam delivers her Policy Address.
24/11/20	The government tightens anti-epidemic measures and orders public venues to display QR codes for “Leave Home Safe”.
21/11/20	Police arrests 3 people including an online radio host who allegedly violated the national security law by providing financial assistance to secession.
19/11/20	The High Court rules that police officers not displaying their identification numbers violated the Bill of Rights.
14/11/20	The government tightens anti-epidemic measures and imposes mandatory testing.
11/11/20	NPCSC disqualifies 4 democrats in LegCo.
1/11/20	Police arrests 6 democrats who allegedly violated the LegCo Powers and Privileges Ordinance.
31/10/20	Seven defendants accused of rioting on 31 August 2019 are found not guilty.
21/10/20	Cathay Pacific announces massive lay-offs and closes Cathay Dragon.
12/10/20	Carrie Lam postpones Policy Address.
10/10/20	Police arrests 9 people on suspicion of helping the 12 Hong Kong people now being detained in Shenzhen flee Hong Kong.
6/10/20	The Education Bureau deregisters a primary school teacher for professional misconduct.
1/10/20	Police arrests at least 86 protesters in various districts including Causeway Bay.
29/9/20	Democrats announce survey results on whether Legislative Councillors should stay or go.
22/9/20	Police changes the definition of “media representatives” under the Police General Orders.

21/9/20	Stock price of HSBC Holdings hits 25-year low.
14/9/20	The Universal Community Testing Programme ends with 1.78 million people participated and 32 new cases found.
12/9/20	Twelve Hong Kong youngsters have been detained in Shenzhen for over two weeks. Their family members hold a press conference.
11/9/20	The jury in the Coroner’s Court returns an open verdict in the death of Chan Yin-lam.
11/9/20	Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon announce they will not apply for the second round of Employment Support Scheme.
10/9/20	Police arrests 15 people on suspicion of defrauding and money laundering by trading Next Digital shares.
27/8/20	China Coast Guard intercepted a speedboat to Taiwan on August 23 and arrested 12 young Hong Kong people.
26/8/20	Police arrests 13 people who were not “people in white” for rioting in the 7.21 incident.
19/8/20	Unemployment rate in Hong Kong rises to 6.1%.
18/8/20	The government announces the second round of Employment Support Scheme.
11/8/20	The NPCSC decides that the current Legislative Council shall continue to discharge duties for no less than one year.
10/8/20	Police searches Next Media and arrests Jimmy Lai, Agnes Chow and other people under national security law.
8/8/20	The Hong Kong government issues statement condemning US sanction on 11 Chinese or Hong Kong government officials.
7/8/20	The government announces mass voluntary coronavirus testing scheme.
31/7/20	The government postpones the Legislative Council election for a year.
30/7/20	Nominations of 12 democrats for Legislative Council election are invalidated.
29/7/20	All-day dine-in ban takes effect, forcing people to eat in the streets.
28/7/20	HKU Council decides to dismiss Benny Tai with immediate effect.
27/7/20	The government tightens restrictions of group gatherings to 2 people and imposes all-day dine-in ban.
19/7/20	The government announces that some civil servants will work from home and makes wearing of masks mandatory in indoor public places.
15/7/20	US President Donald Trump signs the Hong Kong Autonomy Act.
13/7/20	The government tightens restrictions of group gatherings to 4 people and imposes dine-in ban during nighttime.
6/7/20	The implementation rules for the national security law are gazetted by the government.

Data Analysis

The latest survey shows that, on a scale of 0 to 10, people’s ratings on the five core social indicators ranked from the highest to the lowest are “freedom”, “stability”, “prosperity”, “rule of law” and “democracy”. Their scores are 5.02, 4.99, 4.96, 4.50 and 4.27 respectively. Compared with a month ago, all social indicators have increased significantly.

As for the seven non-core social indicators, ratings of “corruption-free practices”, “equality” and “fairness” are relatively lower. Compared with the last survey, rating of “public order” has increased significantly, while ratings of “social welfare sufficiency”, “efficiency” and “equality” have all registered all-time lows since records began in 1997.

As for the ten freedom sub-indicators, freedom of “academic research”, “speech”, “publication”, “press”, “freedom to strike”, “association” and “procession and demonstration” all score lower than 5 marks. Freedom of “entering or leaving Hong Kong” has dropped significantly when compared to the last survey, while freedoms of “entering or leaving Hong Kong”, “academic research” and “association” have registered all-time lows since records began in 1997.

In the area of rule of law sub-indicators, both “impartiality of the courts” and “fairness of the judicial system” continue to score below 5 marks. The first-ever support rating of Chief Justice Andrew Cheung Geoffrey Ma after he took office is 42.5, which is significantly lower than the last rating of Geoffrey Ma before he stepped down, also representing an all-time low since record began in 2001.