

Benchmark Study on Civic Engagement and Social Networks of Youths in Hong Kong

Report

**Prepared for
Commission on Youth**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 This study is part of a research to systematically and comprehensively track the accumulation and development of social capital of youths in Hong Kong. The research comprises two phases, with Phase 1 being the benchmark survey and Phase 2, a panel study. The objectives of the benchmark study are as follows:

- a) To establish a baseline for future study of civic engagement and social networking of youths;
- b) To understand and identify effect of family relationships and factors in the family settings that affect youths' participation in the community;
- c) To understand and identify the mechanism(s) provided in the community through which social capital are developed and sustained;
- d) To gauge youths' own perceived expectations and outcome of their participation in civic engagement and social networks;
- e) To assess the levels and forms of civic engagement and social networks of three target groups of youths — (i) youth engaged in gainful employment; (ii) youths engaged in formal education; (iii) youths engaged neither in (i) nor in (ii);
- f) To develop a set of civic engagement and social networking indicators to evaluate youth services in Hong Kong.

1.2 Organization of the report

1.2.1 This report presents the findings of the survey and is organized into the following sections.

- a) Methodology;
- b) Profile of respondents;
- c) Civic engagement and social networks;
- d) Use of community services and social support network;
- e) Personal well-being and family functioning;
- f) Causes and consequences of civic engagement and social networks;
- g) Observations and recommendations.

2. Methodology

2.1 The conceptual framework

The concept of social capital

2.1.1 Social capital comprises two main elements, social structures and actions between people within the social structures, based on trust and expectation of reciprocal treatment. It is an attribute of individuals as well as communities. The existence of social capital is exhibited by networks, norms and trust among individuals, which enable them to work together to pursue common goals.

2.1.2 Furthermore, social capital represents ties between family members as well as ties between members of a community or between communities, serving as a cohesive force holding families and communities together. Thus, social capital is not only an important attribute essential for the wellbeing of individuals, it is also a valuable resource within any community.

Components of social capital: civic engagement and social networks

2.1.3 A number of attempts have been made to define the concept of social capital, putting it in operational terms and measure it. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), social capital is defined as “networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate co-operation within and among groups”.

2.1.4 The Australian Bureau of Statistics further distinguishes different dimensions of social capital, including network quality which refers to trust and reciprocity, network structure which refers to participation in social networks and network transactions which refer to integration into the community, volunteering, etc. In other words, social capital is manifested through different aspects of civic engagement and social networks.

2.1.5 According to the World Bank, there are three categories of social capital indicators, namely structural social capital which refers to such aspects as civic leadership and associational involvement and faith-based engagement, cognitive social capital which covers such aspects as social trust and diversity of friendship, and outcome measure which includes political participation, giving and volunteering, informal social ties, etc.

2.1.6 Adopting the OECD’s definition of social and the World Bank’s framework of social capital indicators, 8 areas of civic engagement and social networks can be identified, which represent three different dimensions of social capital. The conceptual framework for the present study is depicted in the table below.

| Dimensions of social capital | Areas of civic engagement and social networks | Types of social capital indicators |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Network Qualities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social trust | Cognitive social capital |
| Network Structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associational involvement • Diversity of friendship • Informal socializing | Structural social capital |
| Network Transactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional politics • Civic rallies • Giving and volunteering • Faith-based engagement | Output measure |

Determinants and impact of social capital

2.1.7 According to the framework developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, social capital is one of the four categories of resources of a community, and the other three categories are natural capital, economic capital and human capital. These four categories of resources have an impact on the wellbeing of individuals as well as the community.

2.1.8 A number of studies conducted in other countries also show that there is significant relationship between social capital and socio-economic outcomes for individuals, such as mental health, self esteem, educational attainment and employment conditions, as well as the nation as a whole such as economic development and crime. Interpersonal trust, for example, has been found to have a direct positive effect on confidence in government.

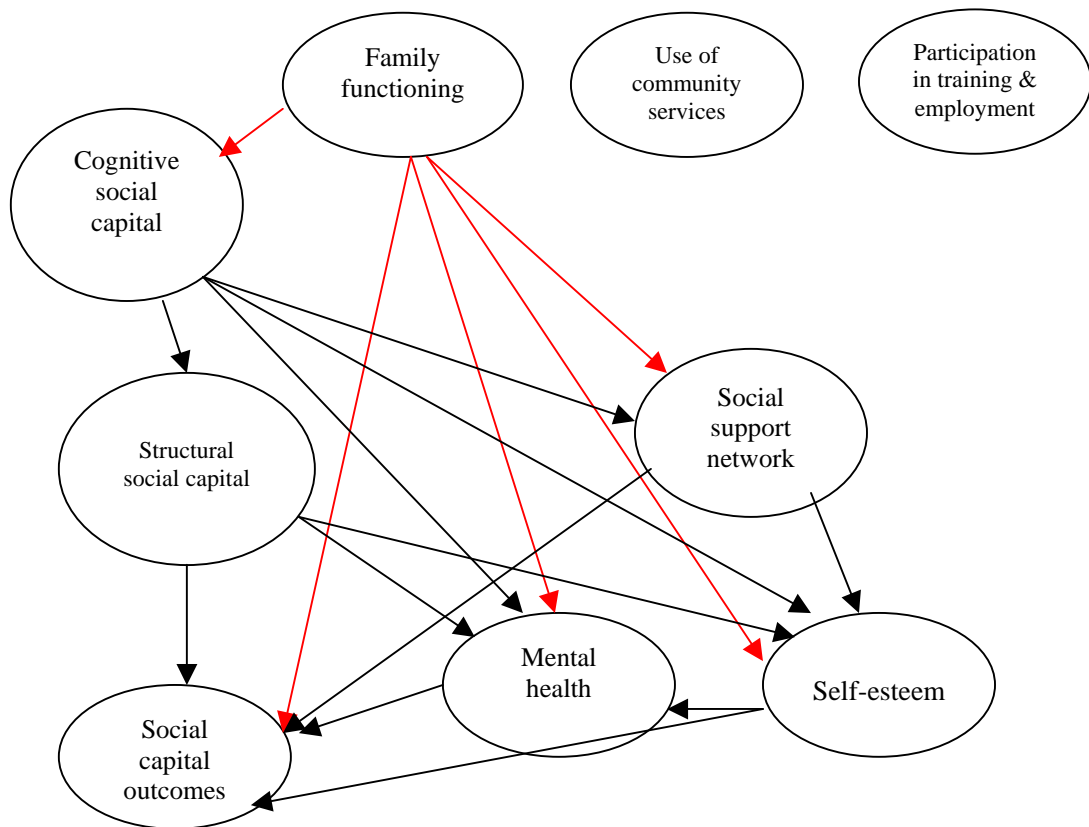
2.1.9 A number of factors, on the other hand, affect social capital. For example, family life is one of the most important factors that help the accumulation of social capital. Family life helps the construction of bonding social capital within the family networks, which in turn is important in the development outcomes of youths. Family life also helps develop bridging social capital that extends outside the family networks, into formal and informal networks in the economic, community and political arenas. In addition, intervention measures by government (e.g. employment and training programmes) and community services provided by welfare agencies may also have an impact of social capital.

2.1.10 To analyze the relationship between different dimensions of, factors affecting and the impact of social capital, a causal model is developed in the present study, as follows:

- a) Determinants of social capital
 - 1) Use of community services;
 - 2) Participation in employment or training programmes;
 - 3) Family functioning;
- b) Measures of social capital
 - 1) Cognitive social capital (or network qualities);
 - 2) Structural social capital (or network structure);

- c) Outcomes of social capital
- 1) Social capital outcomes (or network transactions)
 - 2) Social support network;
 - 3) Mental health;
 - 4) Self-esteem.

2.1.11 The causal model is depicted in the path diagram below. As an illustration, it is postulated that family functioning has a direct impact on cognitive social capital, social capital outcomes, social support network, mental health and self-esteem. Each of the variables affected by family functioning also has a direct impact on each others. In other words, the total impact of family functioning on say self-esteem comprises the direct effect on self-esteem as well as indirect effects mediated through variable social capital variables and other variables which have an impact on self-esteem.



2.1.12 Furthermore, family functioning, intervention measures by government and welfare organizations, social capital of youths may also have an impact on their personal economic wellbeing. In this study, an analysis of the impact of these factors on the economic activity status of youths (i.e. whether studying/employed or not-at-school/not-at-work) is conducted using logistic regression analysis.

2.2 Survey methodology

Methods of data collection

2.2.1 Both quantitative and qualitative information were sought in the study to develop comprehensive understanding of civic engagement and social networks of youths in Hong Kong.

Focus group discussions

2.2.2 To obtain in-depth, qualitative information about the civic engagement and social networks of youths, 9 focus group discussions were held in February 2004 with 64 youths from different target groups, including those who were in gainful employment, those engaged in formal education and those who were neither in gainful employment and formal education. Two focus group discussions were also held with providers of civic engagement opportunities and activities for youths. Information obtained from these focus group discussions was used in designing the survey questionnaire for the household survey.

Household survey

2.2.3 Quantitative information was obtained through face-to-face household interviews of a representative sample of 3 556 youths. Information on the various components of social capital, as well as factors that might affect the accumulation of social capital of youths was gathered in the household survey. The questionnaire used is given in the [Appendix](#).

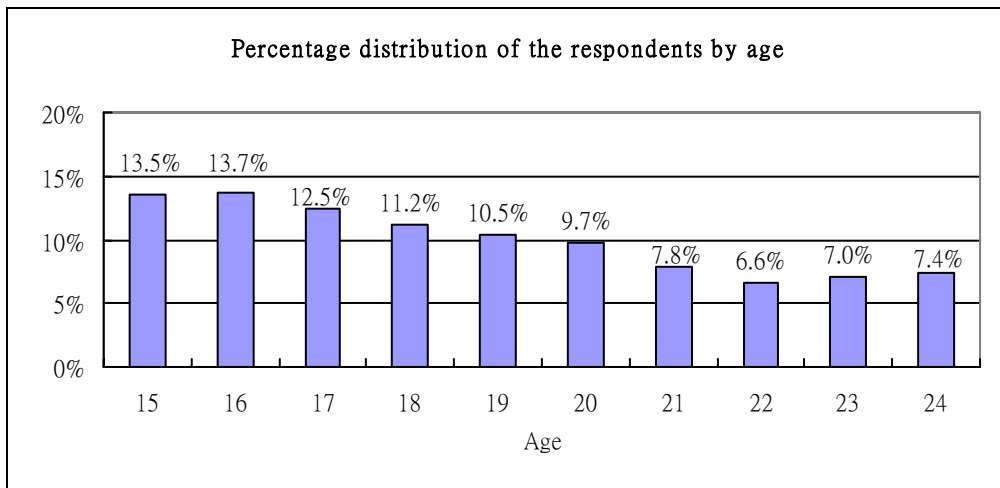
2.2.4 The survey was conducted during the period from 25/9/04 to 24/03/05. A total of 20 297 living quarters were randomly selected from the Frame of Quarters maintained by the Census & Statistics Department. After excluding 1 455 living quarters found to be unoccupied or non-residential or without household members who could speak Cantonese, a total of 14 341 out of 18 842 eligible living quarters were successfully enumerated, representing a household response rate of 76%. Among the living quarters enumerated, 3 556 respondents aged 15 – 24 were interviewed. Details on the enumeration results are appended below:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| a) Total number of living quarters sampled | 20 297 |
| b) Number of living quarters excluded from the sample | 1 455 |
| c) Number of living quarters eligible for inclusion | 18 842 |
| d) Number of living quarters successfully enumerated | 14 341 |
| e) Number of living quarters refused to be interviewed | 2 560 |
| f) Number of living quarters not contacted | 1 941 |
| g) Household response rate | 76.1% |
| h) Number of living quarters with youth enumerated | 2 511 |
| i) Number of youths interviewed | 3 556 |

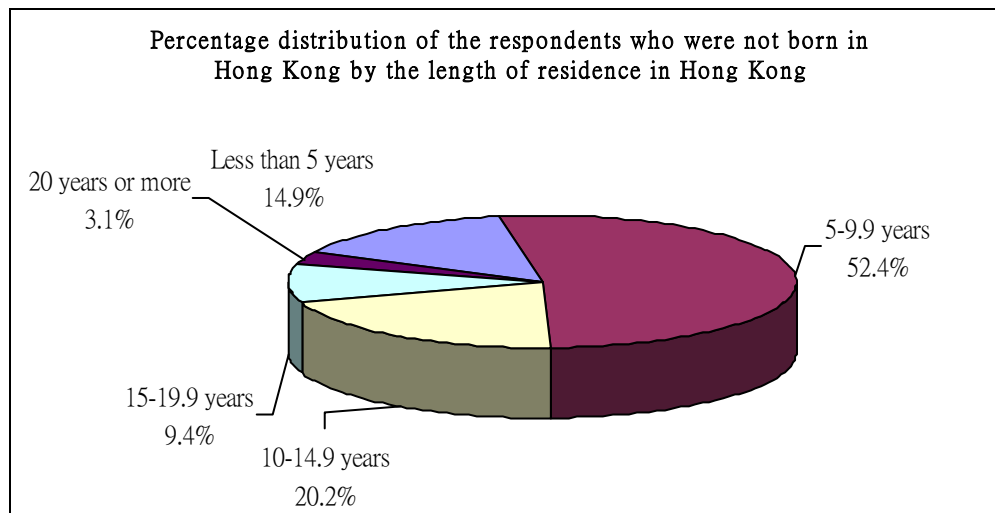
3. Profile of respondents

3.1 Demographic characteristics

3.1.1 About 48% of the respondents were female and the balance of 52%, male. About 40% of the respondents were aged 15 – 17 and a further 22% aged 18 – 19.

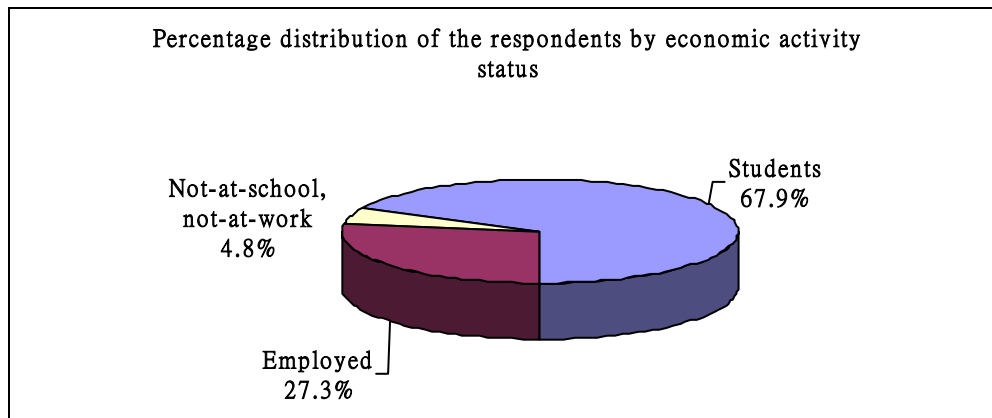


3.1.2 The great majority (98%) of the respondents were not married. About 79% of the respondents had been living in Hong Kong since birth. For the remaining 21%, more than half (52%) of them had been living in Hong Kong for 5 – 9.9 years, and about 15% had been living in Hong Kong for less than 5 years.

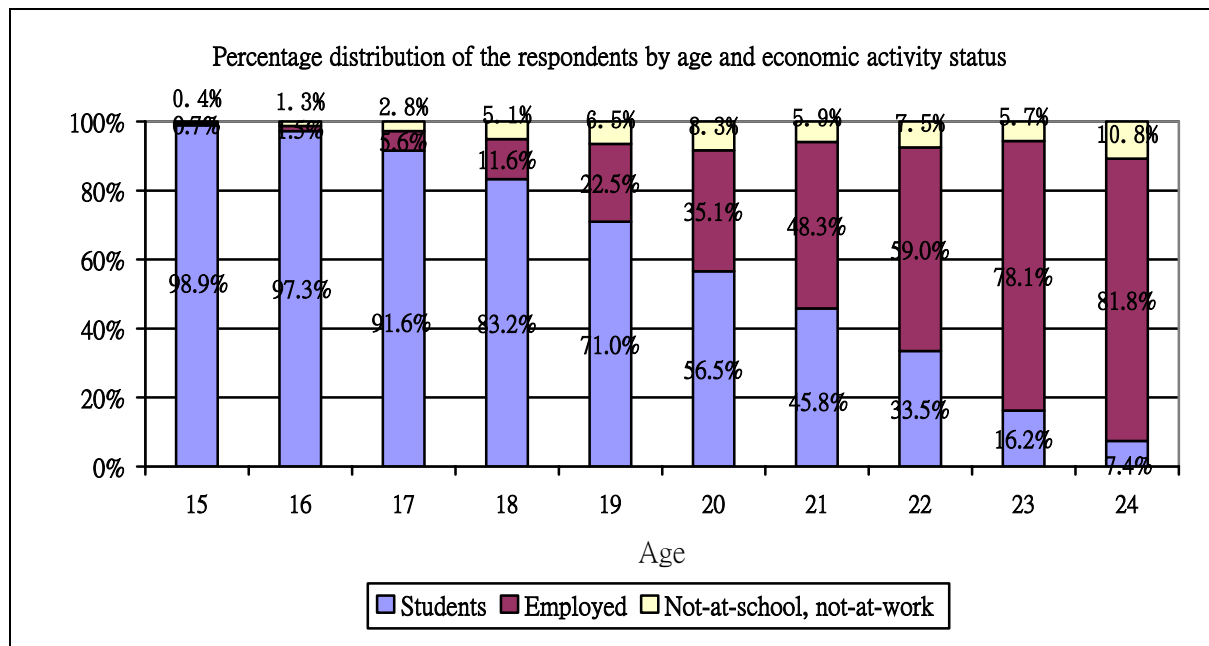


3.2 Economic activity status

3.2.1 More than half (68%) of the respondents were students and a further 27% were employed. Only about 5% were not-at-school and not-at-work.



3.2.2 When analyzed by age, the percentage of the respondents who were not-at-work and not-at-school ranged from 0.4% for those who were aged 15 to 11% for those who were aged 24. Youths who were not-at-school and not-at-work were mainly in the age range of 19 to 24, accounting for 76% of all youth aged 15 – 24 who were not-at-school and not-at-work.



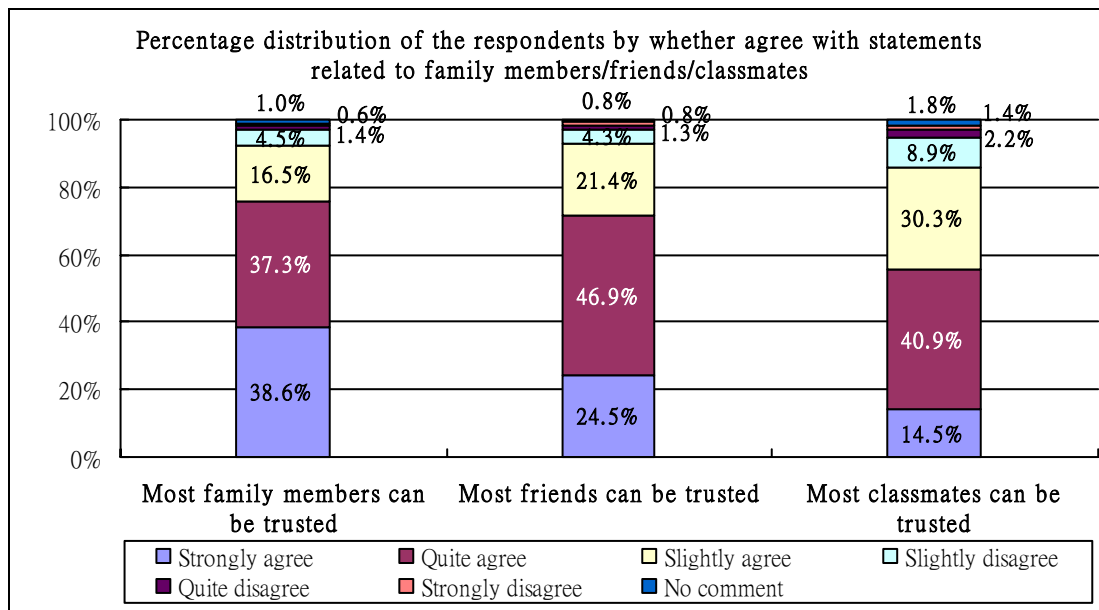
4. Civic engagement and social networks

4.1 Network qualities

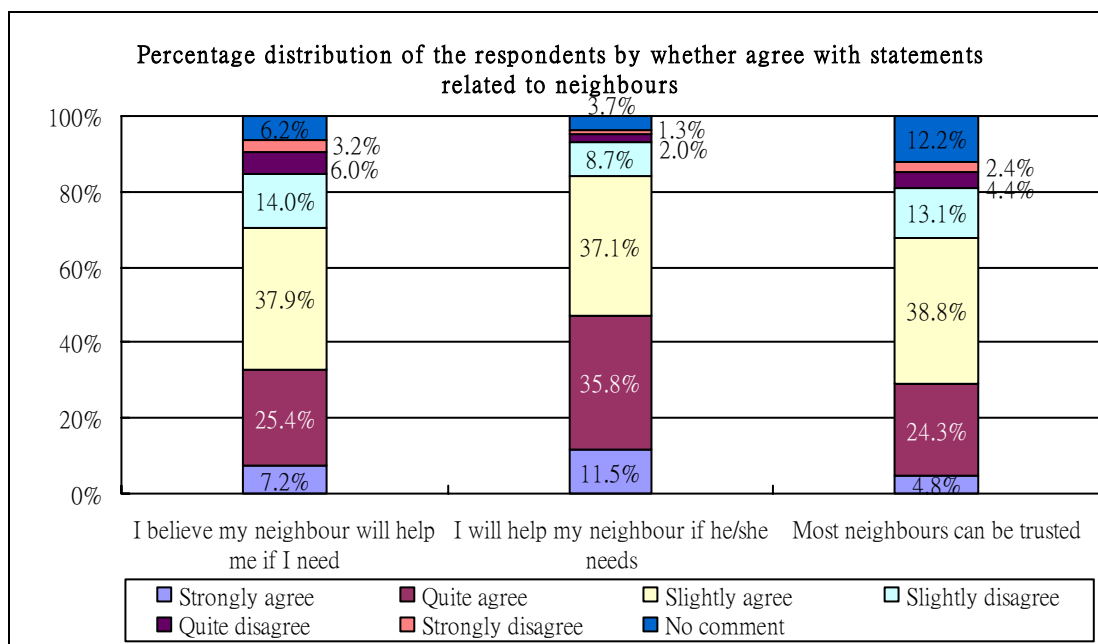
4.1.1 Network qualities refer to the extent of social trust youths have on the community. A total of 33 items were used in the survey to tap the respondents' perception of trust in and attachment to different segments of the community, including their families, colleagues, classmates, friends, neighbours and other people in Hong Kong, government officials, politicians, institutions, the political system and the society in general.

Families, friends, neighbours and others in Hong Kong

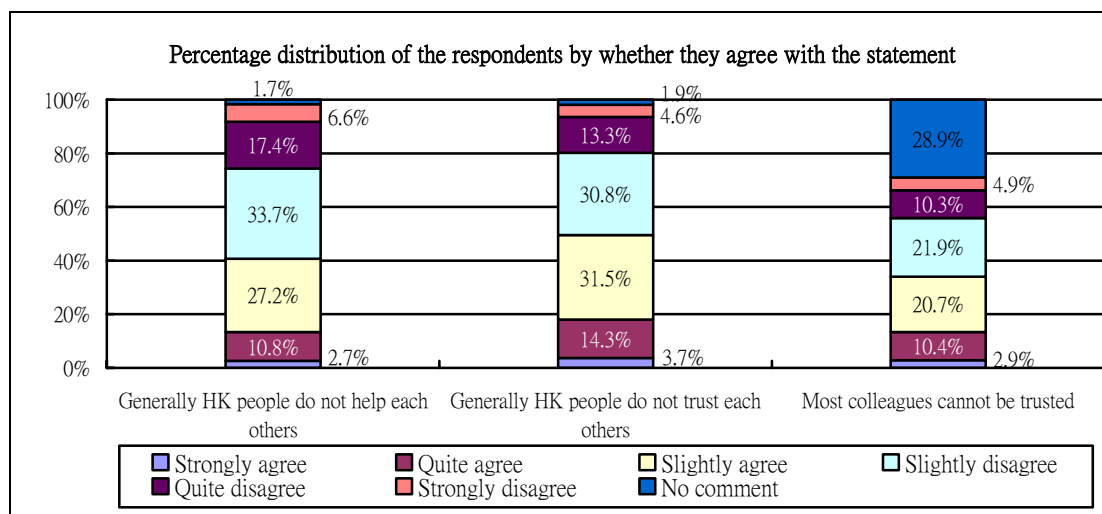
4.1.2 Researchers believe that trust in family members, colleagues, classmates, friends, neighbours and others in the same ethnic group is characterized by strong ties and is a kind of bonding social capital. The survey findings show that the great majority of the respondents agreeing that “most family members can be trusted” (accounting for 92% of all respondents) that “most friends can be trusted” (93%), and that “most classmates can be trusted” (86%).



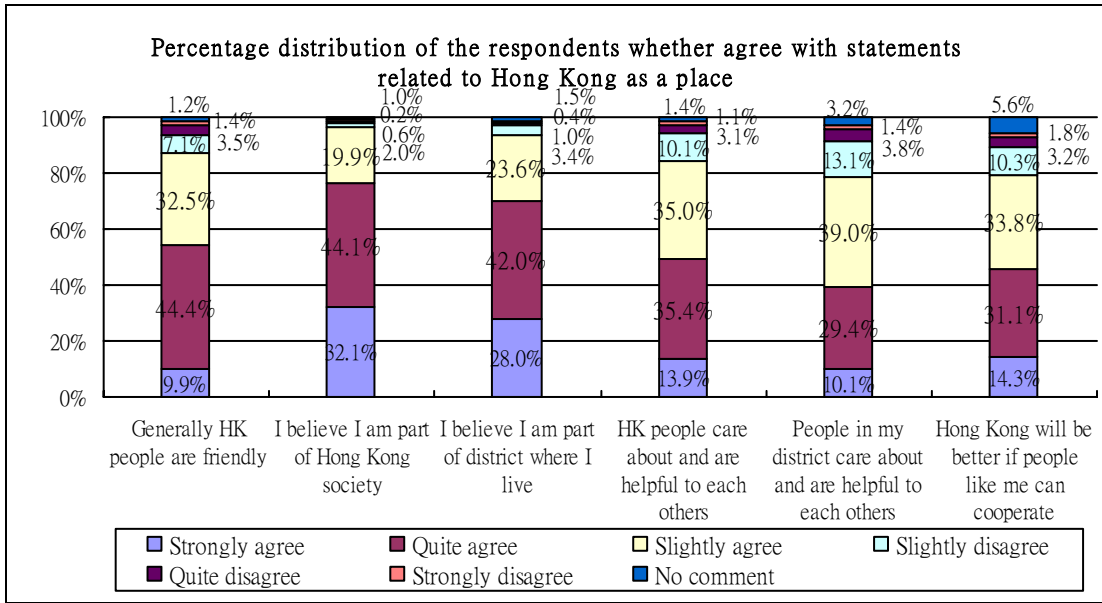
4.1.3 Furthermore, the majority (71%) of the respondents believed that if required their neighbours would help them. A higher proportion (84%) of them also indicated that they would help their neighbours if necessary. The percentage of the respondents who considered that “most neighbours can be trusted” was lower, at 68%.



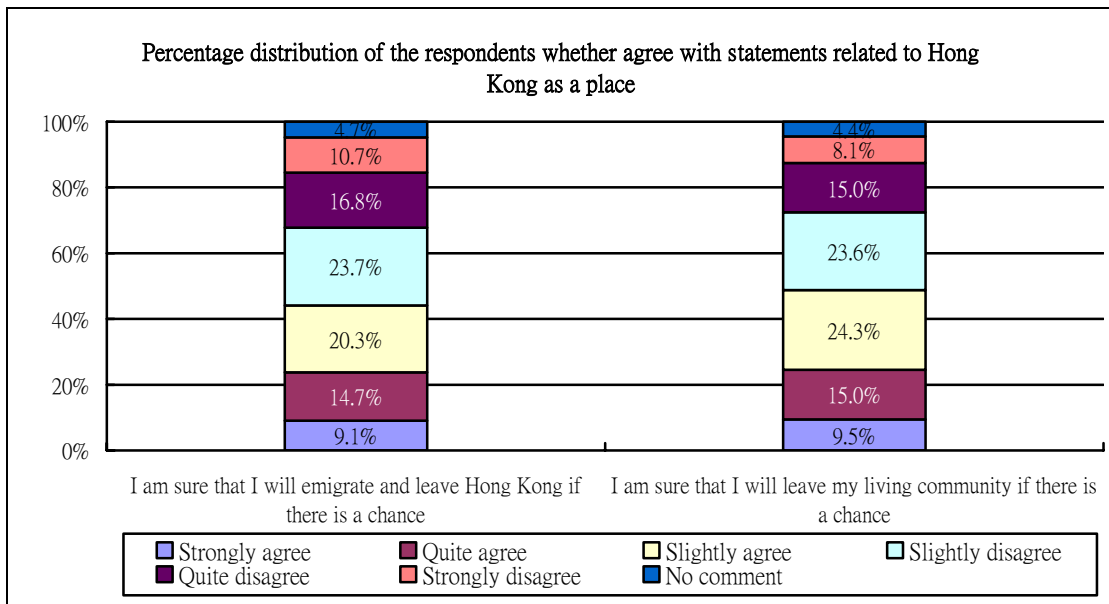
4.1.4 On the other hand, a sizable proportion of the respondents agreed that “Generally Hong Kong people do not trust each others” (accounting for 50% of all respondents), that “Generally Hong Kong people do not help each others” (41%) and that “most colleagues cannot be trusted” (34%). This indicates that the strength of bonding capital became much weaker when extended from family members and friends to neighbours, colleagues and other people in Hong Kong.



4.1.5 As regards Hong Kong as a place, the majority of the respondents believed that they are part of Hong Kong society (96%). A lower proportion believed that in general Hong Kong people were friendly (87%) and that Hong Kong people cared about and were helpful to each others (84%). The percentages related to trust in their districts of residence was lower, with 94% believed that they were part of the districts they were living in, and only about 79% considered that people in their districts cared about and were helpful to each others. About 79% considered that Hong Kong would be better if people like them could cooperate and work together.



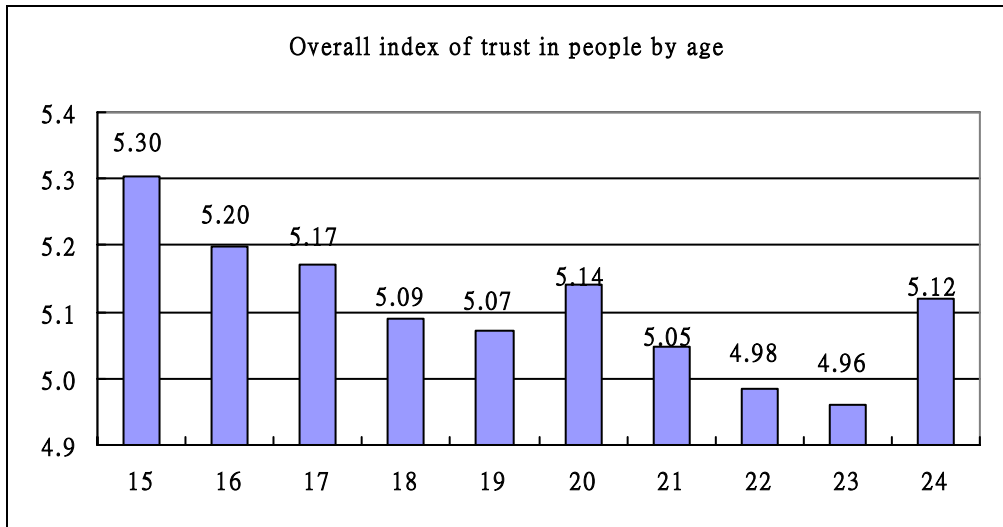
4.1.6 Less than half of the respondents were sure that they will emigrate and leave Hong Kong if there is a chance (44%) and that they will leave their living community if there is a chance (49%).



Index of trust in people

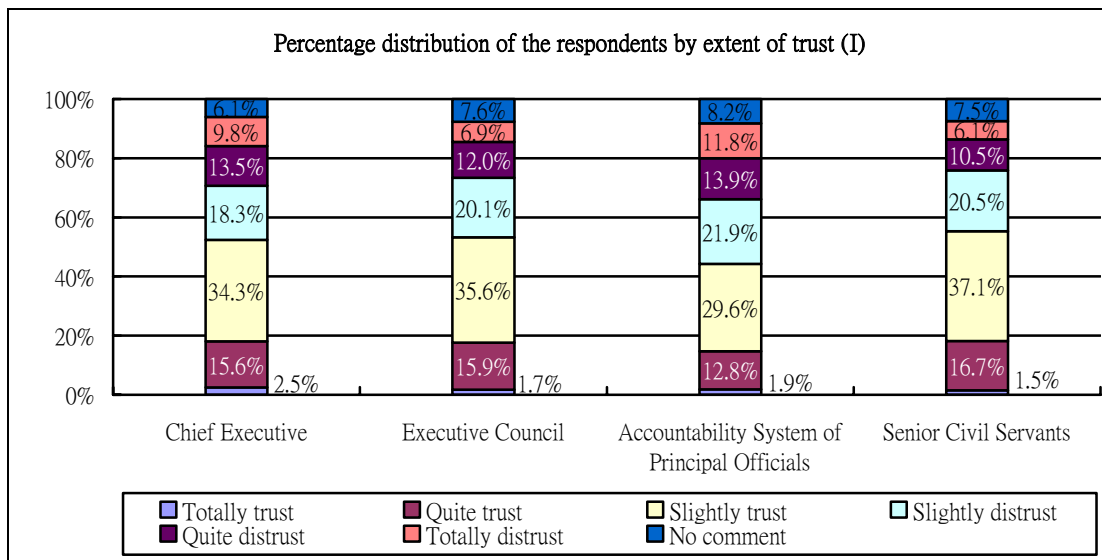
4.1.7 An overall index of trust in people may be compiled covering the 15 items above. The index of trust in people, at 5.1 in a Likert scale of 7, was quite high. The index was relatively higher for those respondents who were students (5.2), and was lower for those who were employed (5.0) and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work (4.8).

4.1.8 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of trust in people was relatively higher for those in the younger age groups. A “double dip” pattern may also be observed from the chart, with the index relatively lower in the 18 – 19 and 22 - 23 age groups.

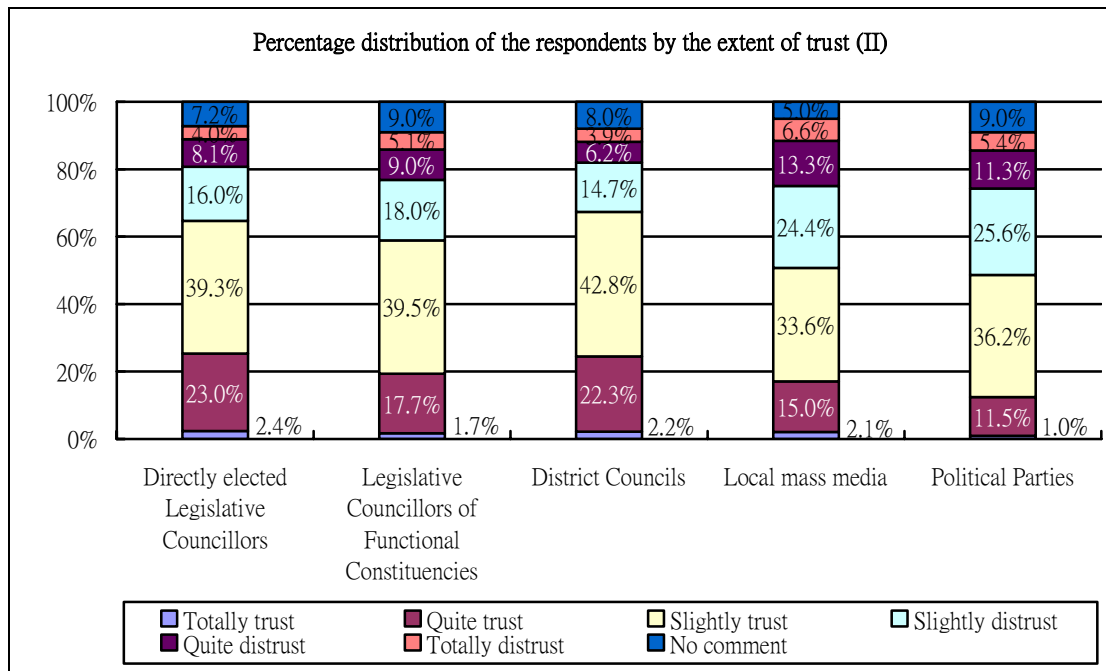


Government officials, politicians and institutions

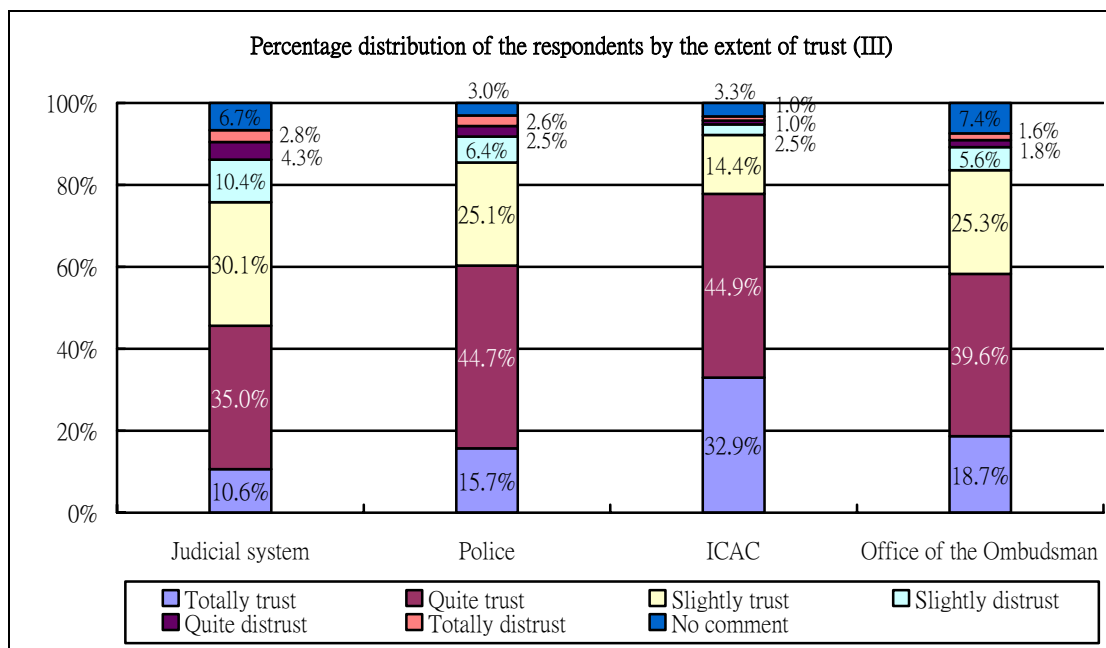
4.1.9 Trust in government officials, politicians and institutions is typical of linking social capital. Survey findings show that linking social capital was not low, with more than half of the respondents having trust in the senior civil servants (accounting for 55% of all respondents), the Executive Council (53%), the Chief Executive (52%). Trust in the Accountability System of Principal Officials was however lower, at 44%.



4.1.10 Trust in directly elected politicians and District Councils was higher. More than half of the respondents had trust in the District Councils (67%), directly elected Legislative Councillors (65%) and Legislative Councillors of Functional Constituencies (59%). Trust in local mass media and political parties were lower, at 51% and 49% respectively.



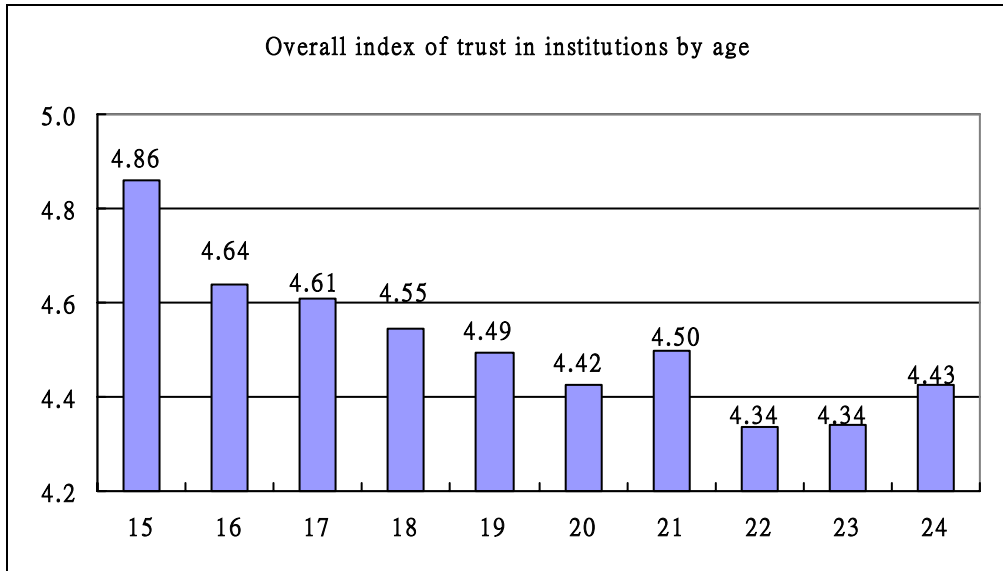
4.1.11 Trust in the judicial system, police, ICAC and Office of the Ombudsman was much higher. The majority of the respondents had trust in the ICAC (92%), Police (86%), the Office of the Ombudsman (84%) and the judicial system (76%).



Index of trust in institutions

4.1.12 An index of trust in institutions may be compiled covering the 13 items above. The index, at 4.6 in a Likert scale of 7, was above average. The index was higher for those who were students, at 4.7, as compared with those respondents who were employed (4.3) and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work (4.2).

4.1.13 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of trust in institutions was relatively higher for those in the younger age groups. A “double dip” pattern may also be observed from the chart, with the index relatively lower for those aged 20, 22 and 23.



Overall index of social trust

4.1.14 An overall index of social trust may be compiled by averaging the index of trust in people and index of trust in institutions. The overall index of social trust, at 4.8, was quite high in a Likert scale of 7. The overall index was relatively higher for those who were students (4.9), and lower for those employed (4.7) and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work (4.5).

Sense of control and efficacy

4.1.15 Closely related to trust in institutions is the feeling of control and sense of efficacy, as far as government affairs are concerned. Respondents were quite divided as to whether they believed that people like them could have a say in government policies. While about 49% believed considered that they did not have a say in government policies, 47% did not think so.

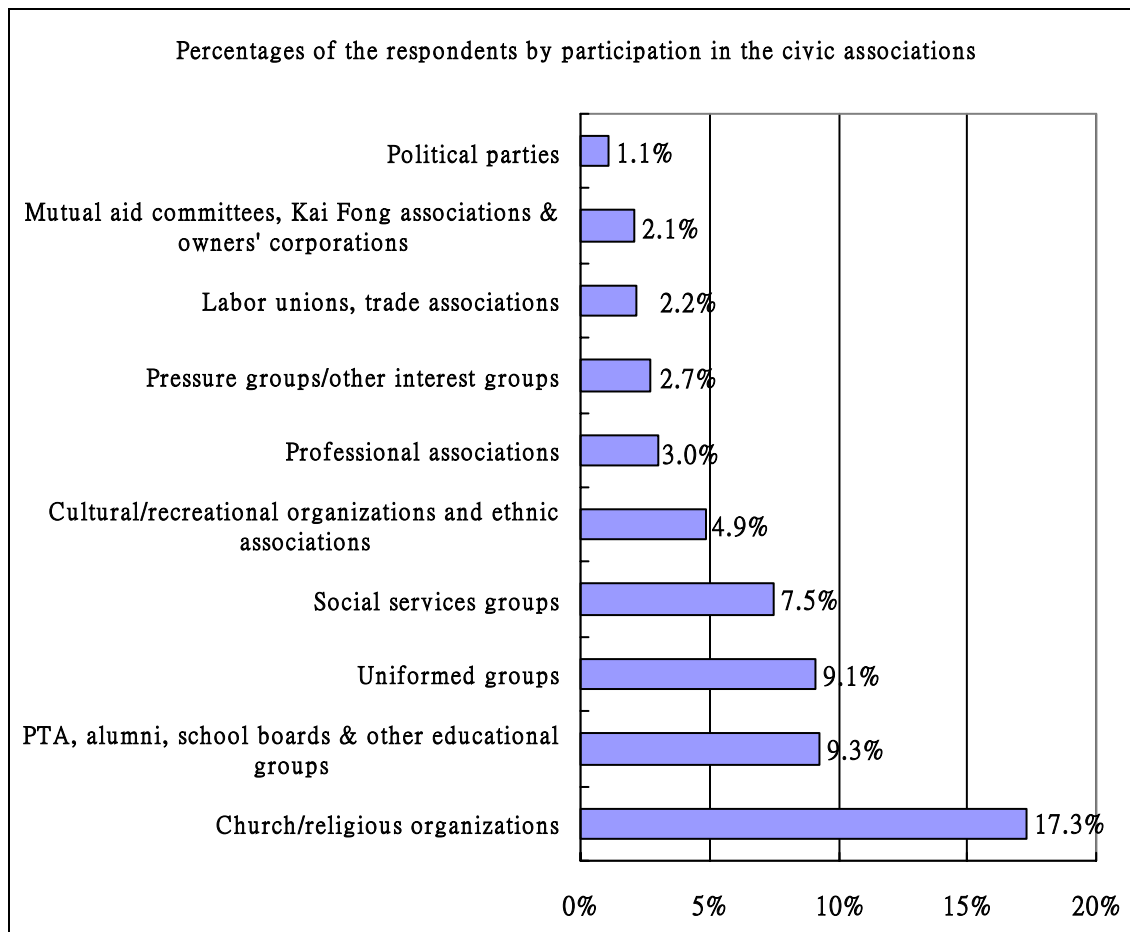
4.1.16 On the other hand, while about 41% considered the people like them could not possibly understand government policies, a higher proportion (54%) of the respondents did not think so. Furthermore, more than half (65%) considered that the government treated them fairly.

4.2 Network structure

4.2.1 As discussed above, network structure encompasses three areas of civic engagement and social networks, namely associational involvement, diversity of friendship and informal socializing. In the following paragraphs, survey findings in respect of these three areas are presented.

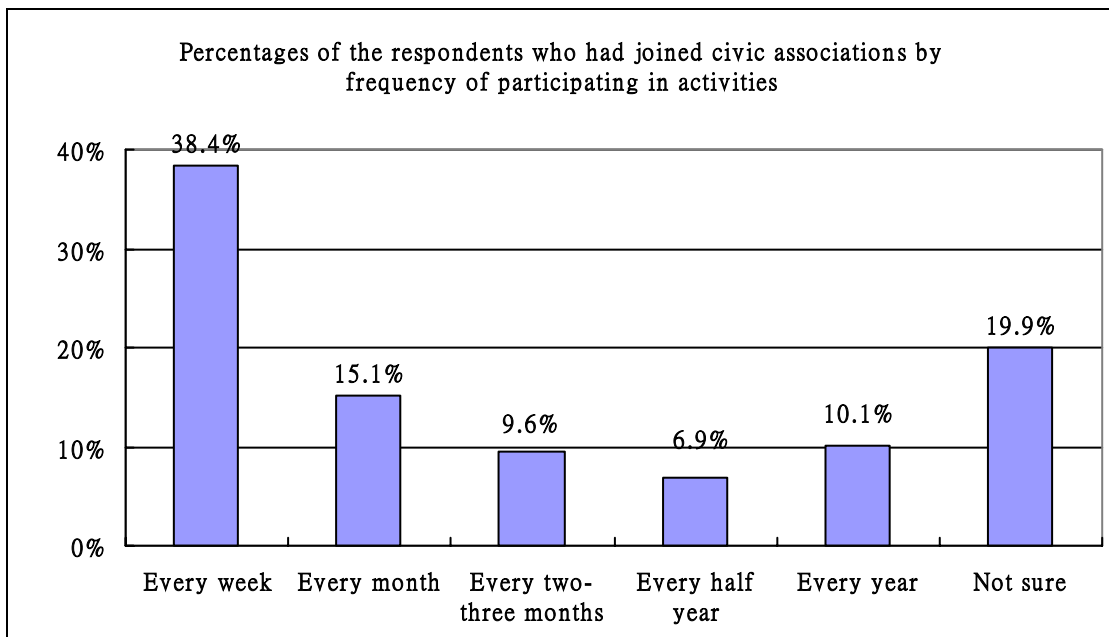
Associational involvement

4.2.2 A relatively higher proportion of the respondents had joined church/religious organizations (accounting for 17% of the respondents), parent/teacher associations (PTA), alumni, school boards and other educational groups (9%), uniformed groups (9%) and social services groups (8%). A much lower proportion of the respondents were members of cultural/recreational organizations and ethnic associations (5%), professional associations (3%), pressure groups/other interest groups (3%), labor unions and trade associations (2%), mutual aid committees, Kai Fong associations and owners' corporations (2%) and political parties (1%).

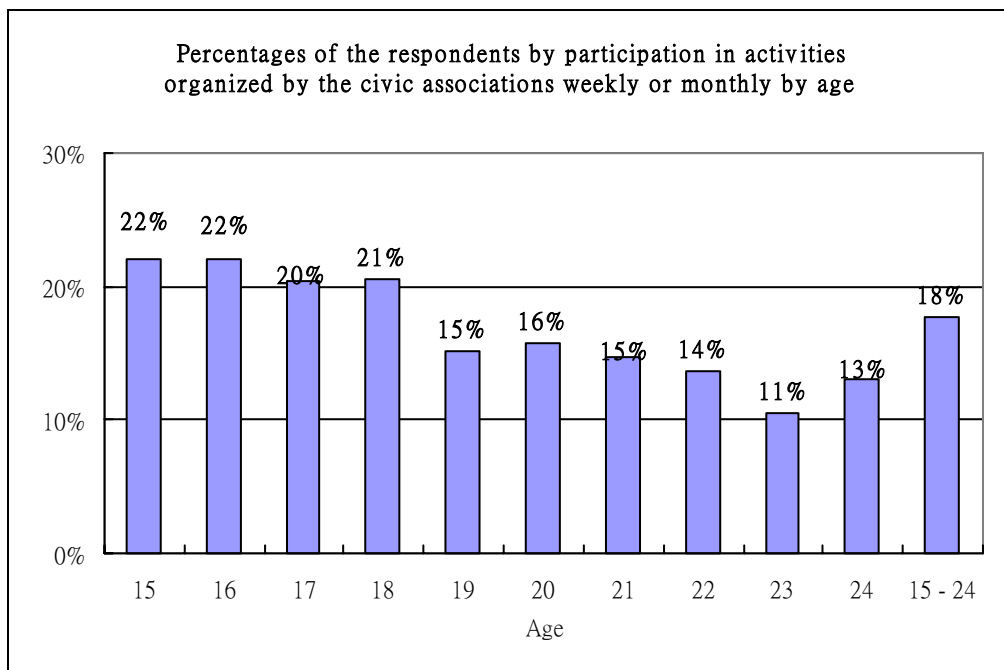


4.2.3 Taking all civic associations together, about 33% of the respondents had participated in civic associations. The percentage was the highest for students (38%), lower for those who were employed (24%) and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work (17%).

4.2.4 Among those who had joined civic associations, about 38% participated in activities of these associations every week and a further 15% every month. In other words, about half participated regularly in activities of civic associations.

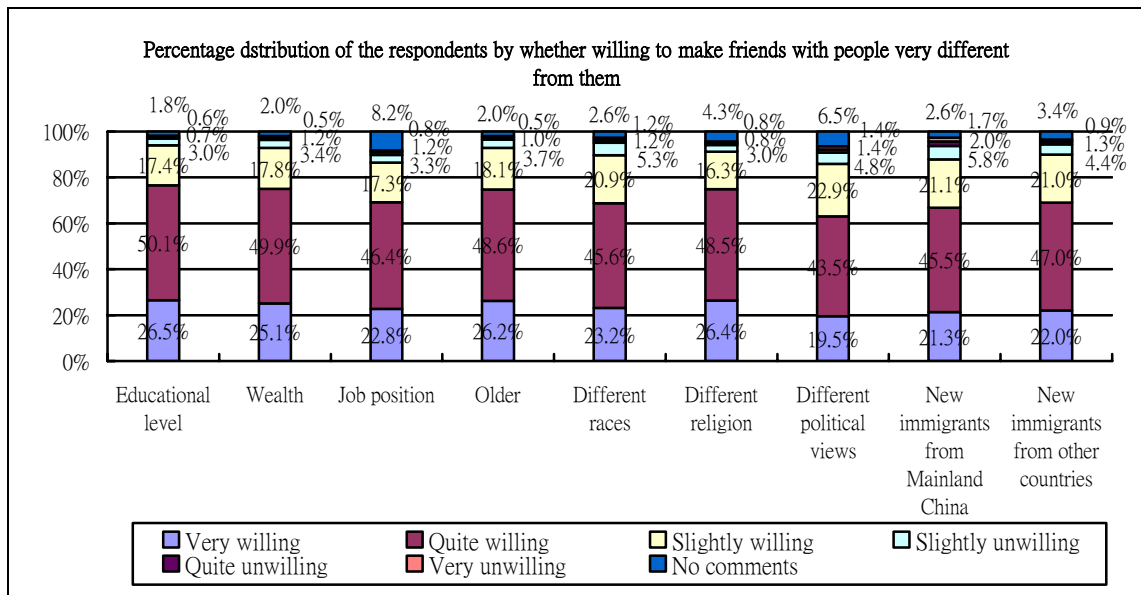


4.2.5 When analyzed by age, a relatively higher proportion of those in the younger age groups had joined civic associations and participated in associations' activities weekly or monthly. The percentage was relatively lower for those aged 19 – 24 age groups and was the lowest for those aged 23.

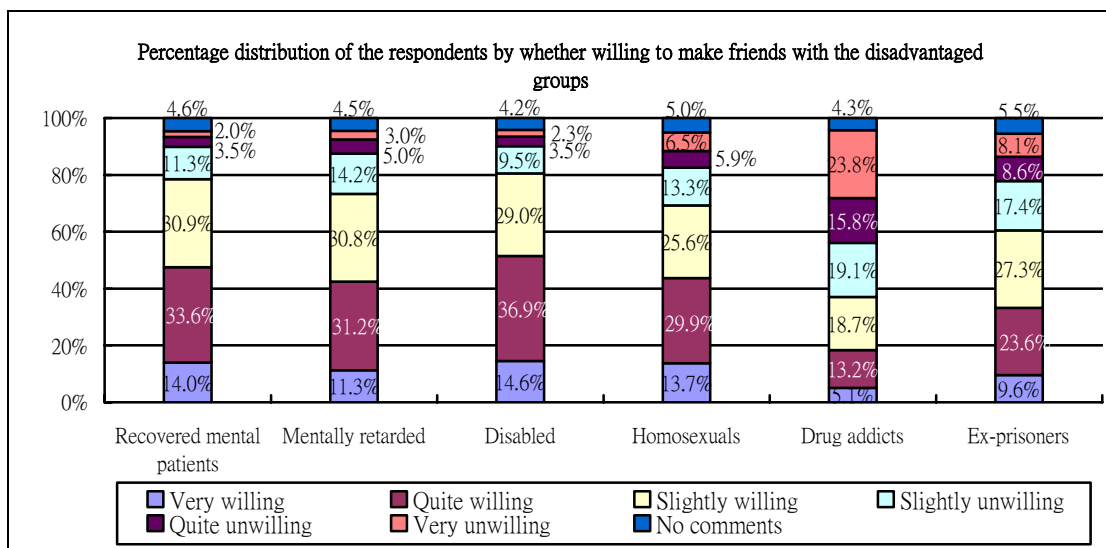


Diversity of friendship

4.2.6 The great majority of the respondents indicated that they were willing to make friends with people with educational levels very much different from theirs (accounting for 94% of the respondents), having very different amount of wealth (93%), of an older age (93%), of a different race (90%), with a different religion (91%), newly immigrated from other countries (90%), newly immigrated from Mainland China (88%), occupying very different job positions (87%) and holding different political views (86%).

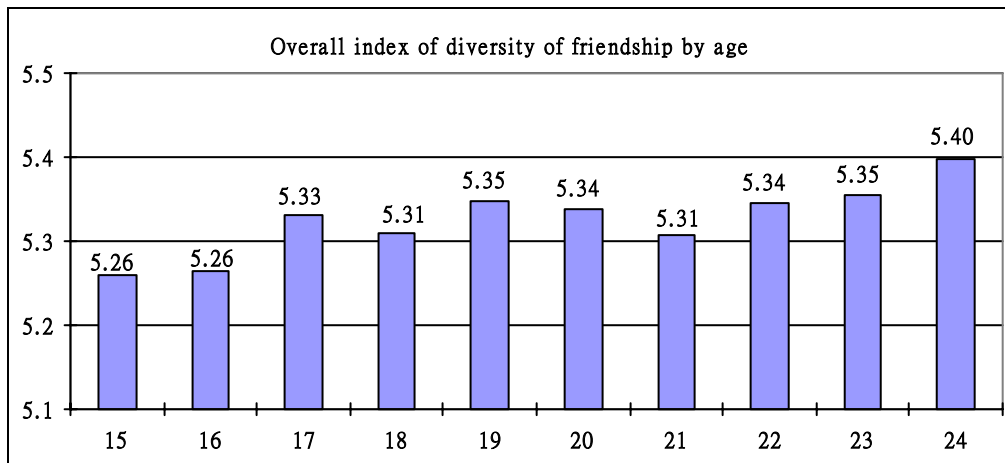


4.2.7 As regards disadvantaged groups, the majority of the respondents indicated that they were willing to make friends with the disabled (accounting for 81% of the respondents), people who had recovered from mental illness (79%), the mentally retarded (73%) and the homosexuals (69%). A lower proportion of the respondents were willing to be friends of ex-prisoners (61%), and the corresponding percentage for the drug addicts was even lower, at 37%.



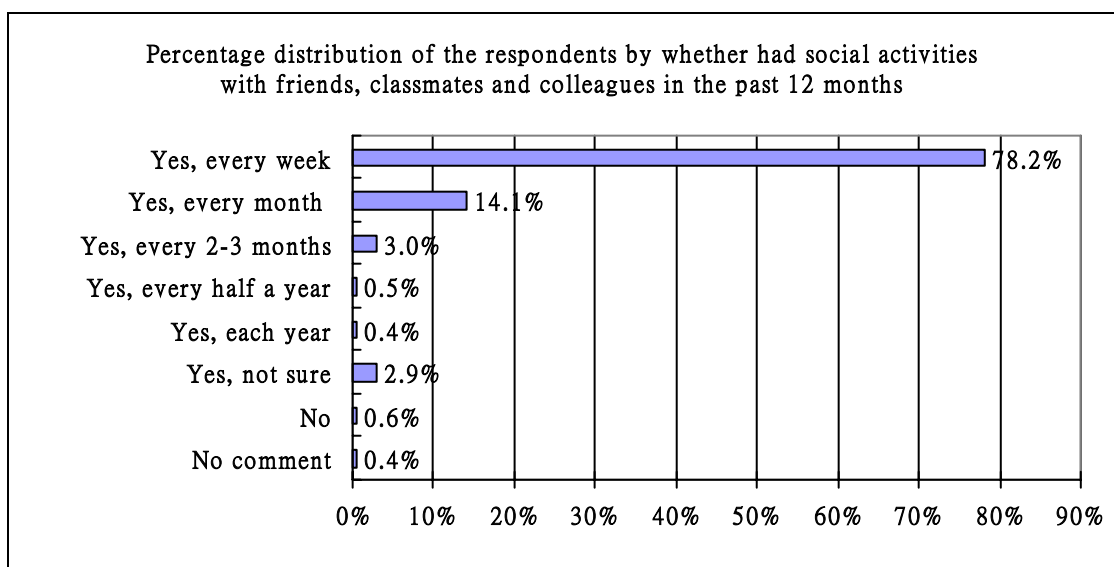
4.2.8 An index of diversity of friendship may be compiled incorporating respondents' willingness to make friends with different segments of the community. The index, at 5.3 in a Likert scale of 7, is considered fairly high. The index was slightly higher for those who were students and employed, both at 5.3, as compared with that for those respondents who were not-at-school and not-at-work (5.2).

4.2.9 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index on diversity of friendship was relatively higher for those in the older age groups. The index was lower for those aged 15 and 16.

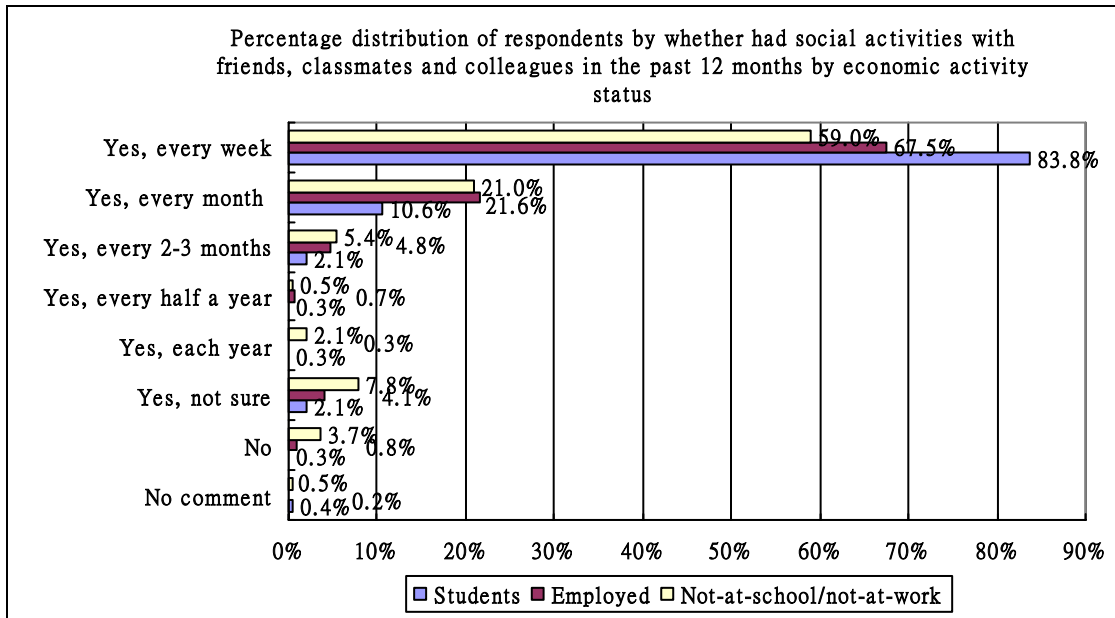


Informal socializing

4.2.10 Informal socializing refers to informal social activities with friends, classmates, co-workers. The majority of the respondents (78%) had social activities with these groups every week, and a further 14% did so every month. Less than 1% did not have social activities with these groups in the past 12 months. In other words, most respondents had social activities with friends, classmates and colleagues at work on a regular basis.



4.2.11 When analyzed by economic activity status of the respondents, the percentage of the respondents who had social activities with friends, classmates or colleagues every week was higher for students (84%) and lower for not-at-school/not-at-work youths (59%). The proportion who did not have social activities with friends, classmates or colleagues was higher for not-at-school/not-at-work youths (4%) when compared to that for students (0.3%) and the employed (0.8%).



4.3 Network transactions

4.3.1 As discussed above, network transactions encompass four areas of civic engagement and social networks, including conventional politics, civic rallies, giving and volunteering and faith-based engagement. In the following paragraphs, survey findings in respect of these four areas are presented.

Conventional politics and civic rallies

4.3.2 A number of questions were included in the survey to obtain information on respondents' participation in conventional politics and civic rallies, including voter registration, voting behaviour and attendance at public meetings or rallies. For those who were aged 18 -24, about 50% had registered as voters. The percentages were higher for those who were students and those who were employed, both at 51%. As regards those who were not-at-school and not-at-work, the percentage was much lower, at 36%.

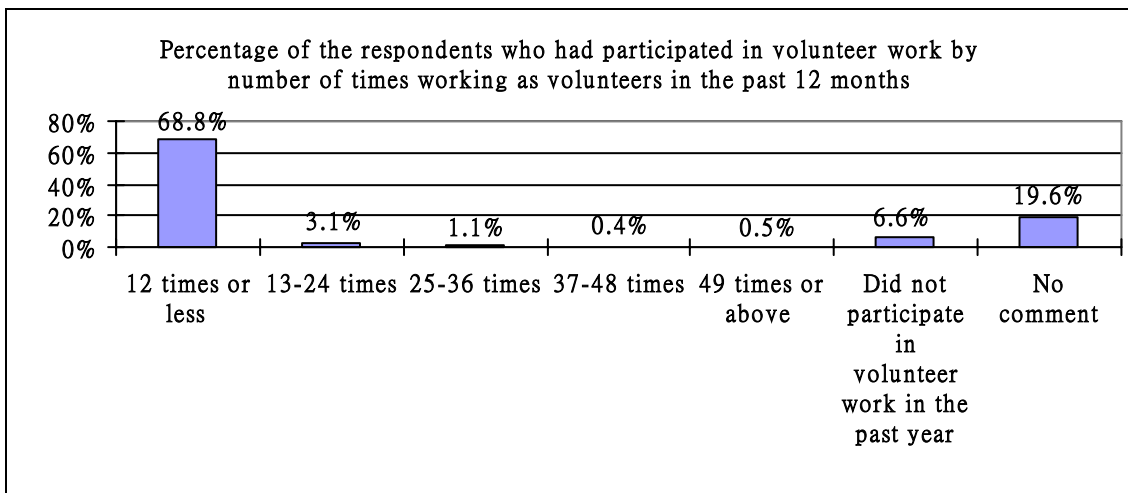
4.3.3 For the respondents who had registered as voters, about 42% voted in every round of Legislative Council elections, and a further 16% often did so. About 20% had never voted in Legislative Council elections. For District Councils election, about 33% voted in every election, and a further 13% often did so. About 33% had never voted in the elections.

4.3.4 About 16% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in signature campaigns, rallies, demonstrations and protests in the past 12 months. For those who had participated in these activities, the great majority of them (94%) had attended one to three times in the past 12 months. About 5% attended four to five times, and for the remaining 1%, five times or more.

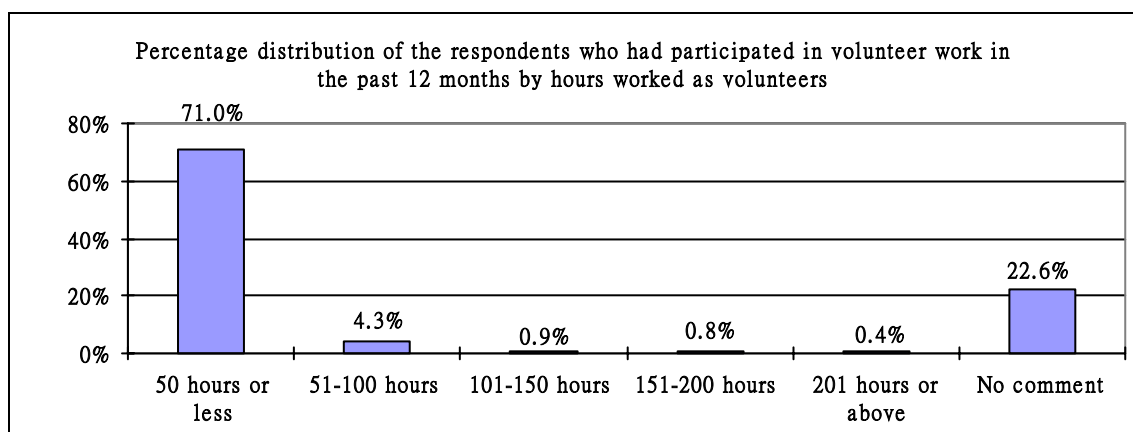
4.3.5 When analyzed by economic activity status, about 16% of the respondents who were students indicated that they had participated in signature campaigns, rallies, demonstrations and protests in the past 12 months. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed and for those who were not-at-school/not-at-work were 17% and 12% respectively.

Giving and volunteering

4.3.6 About 48% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in volunteer work. Of those, more than half (69%) had worked as volunteers 12 times or less during the past 12 months and about 7% did not participate in volunteer work in the past year.

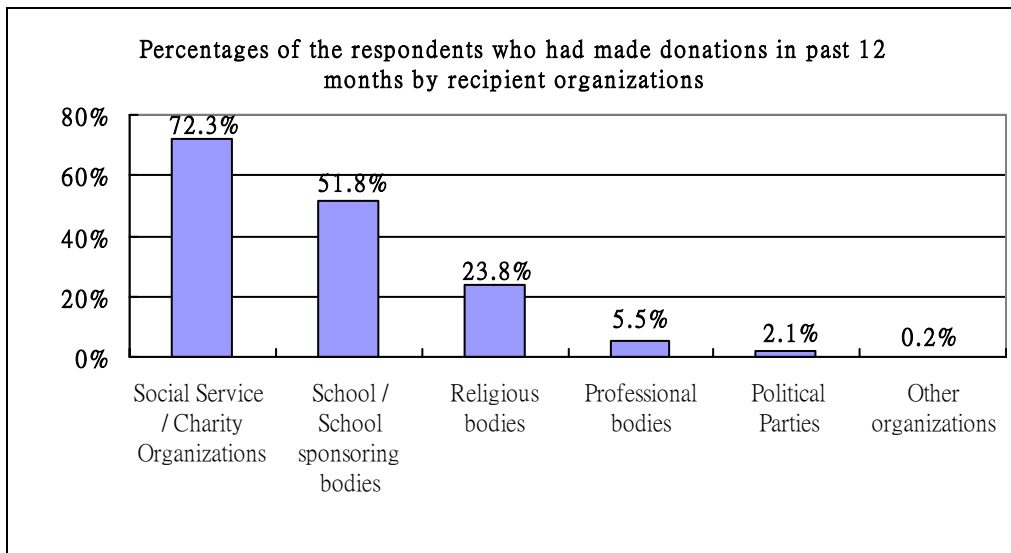


4.3.7 For the respondents who had participated in volunteer work in the past 12 months, the majority of them (71%) had worked as volunteers for 50 hours or less during the past 12 months.

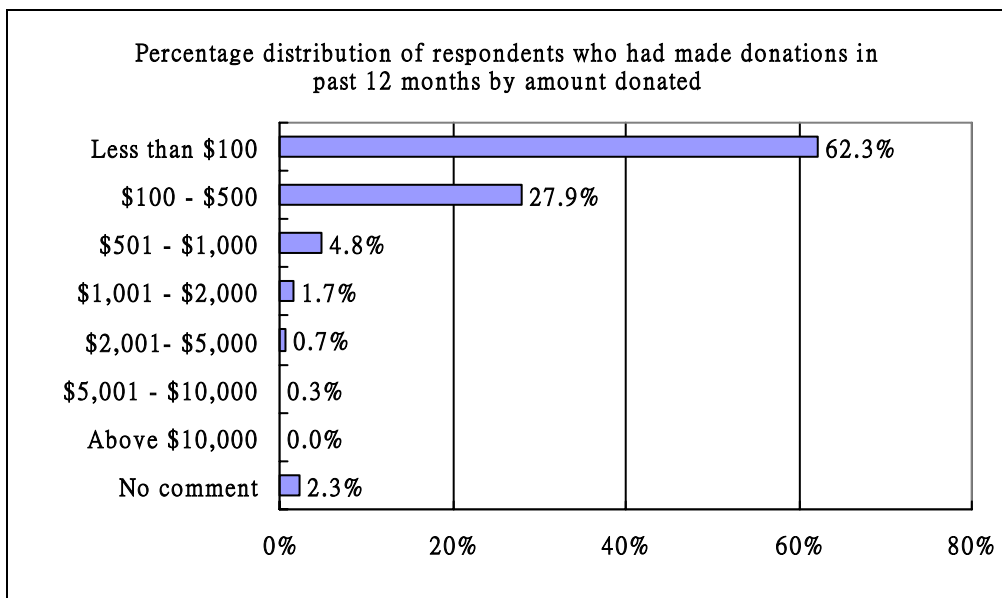


4.3.8 When analyzed by economic activity status, about 55% of the respondents who were students had participated in volunteer work. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed and not-at-school/not-at-work were much lower, at 33% and 32% respectively.

4.3.9 About 59% of the respondents indicated that they had made donations in the past 12 months. Of those, the majority (72%) had made donation to social services or charitable organizations and more than half (52%) had also made donations to schools or school sponsoring bodies.



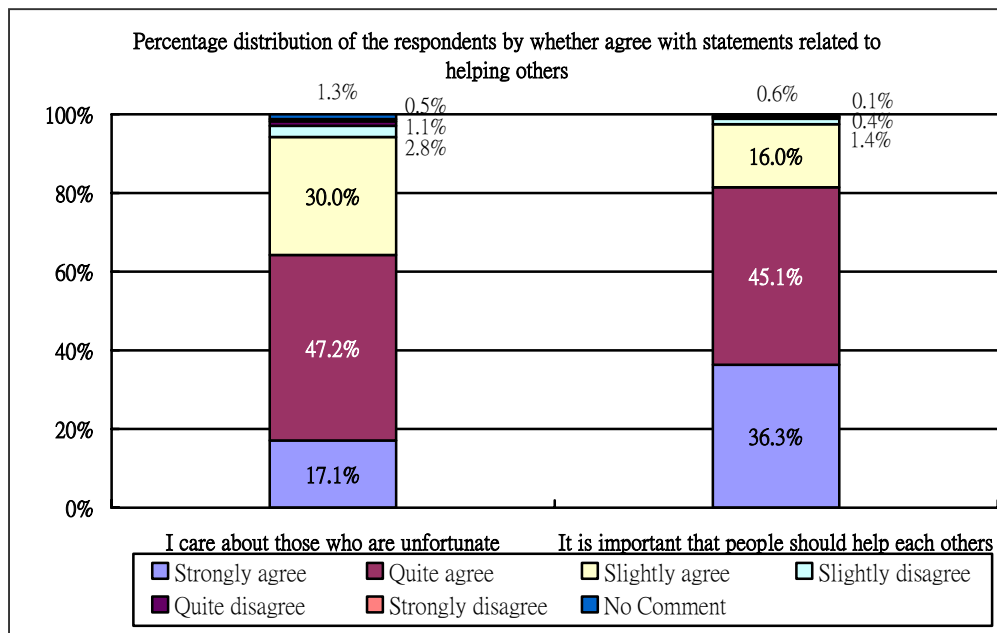
4.3.10 For the respondents who had made donations in the past 12 months, more than half of them (62%) had donated less than \$100, and a further 28% had donated \$100 - \$500.



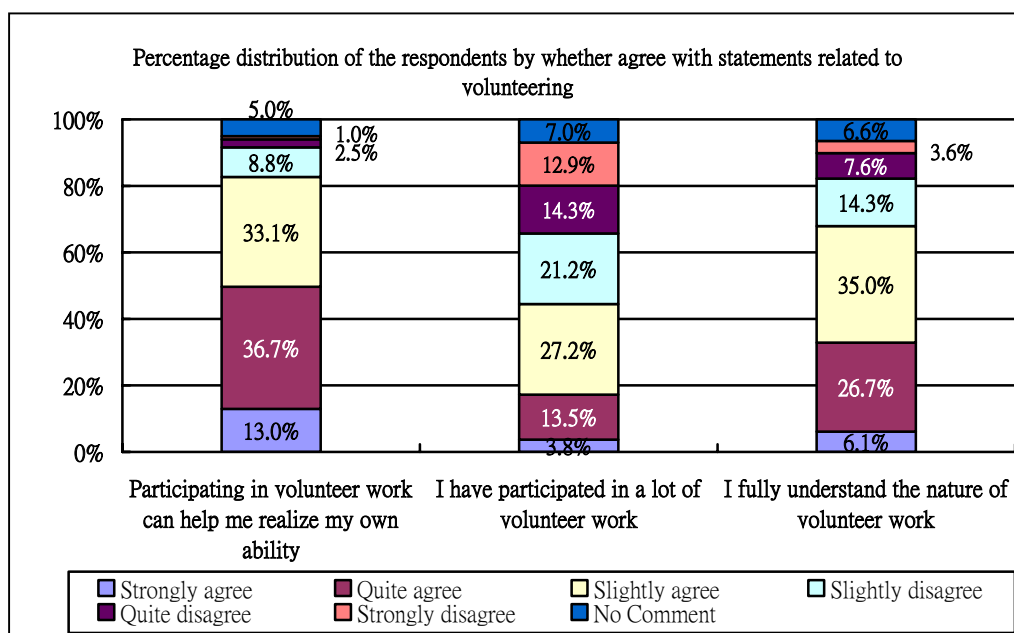
4.3.11 When analyzed by economic activity status, about 65% of the respondents who were students had made donations in the past 12 months. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed and not-at-school/not-at-work were much lower, at 47% and 40% respectively.

Attitudes towards volunteering

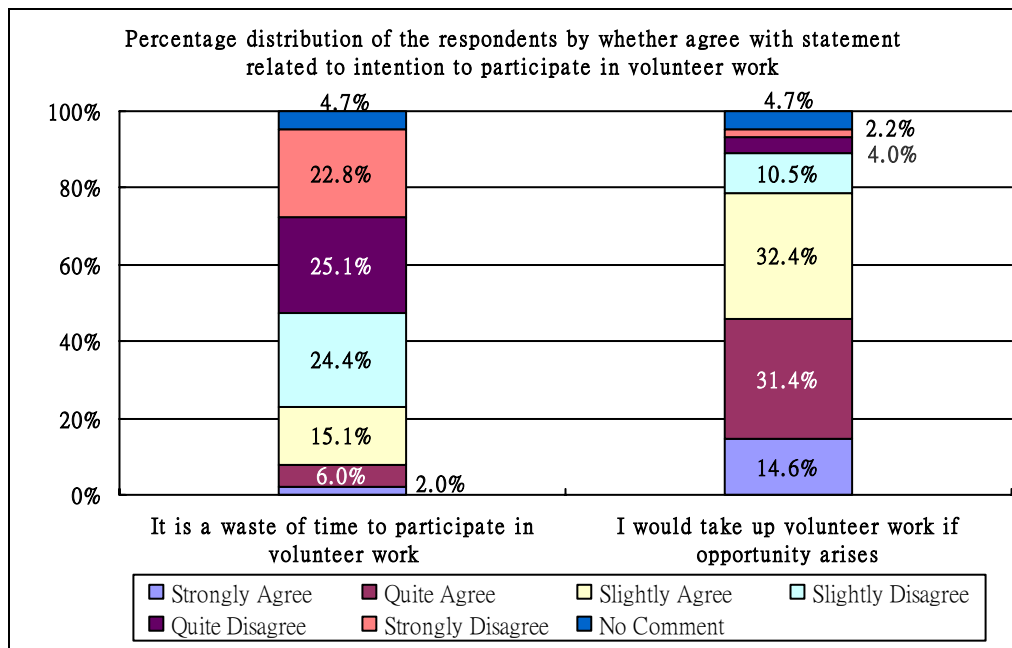
4.3.12 Although only 48% of the respondents had participated in volunteer work, the great majority of the respondents indicated that they cared about those who were unfortunate (94%) and were of the view that it was important that people should help each others (97%).



4.3.13 As regards attitude towards volunteer work, the majority of the respondents were of the view that participating in volunteer work could help realize one's own ability (83%) and that they fully understood the nature of volunteer work (68%). Consistent with the respondents' admittance of their participation in volunteer work, only about 45% of the respondents agreed that they had participated in a lot of volunteer work.

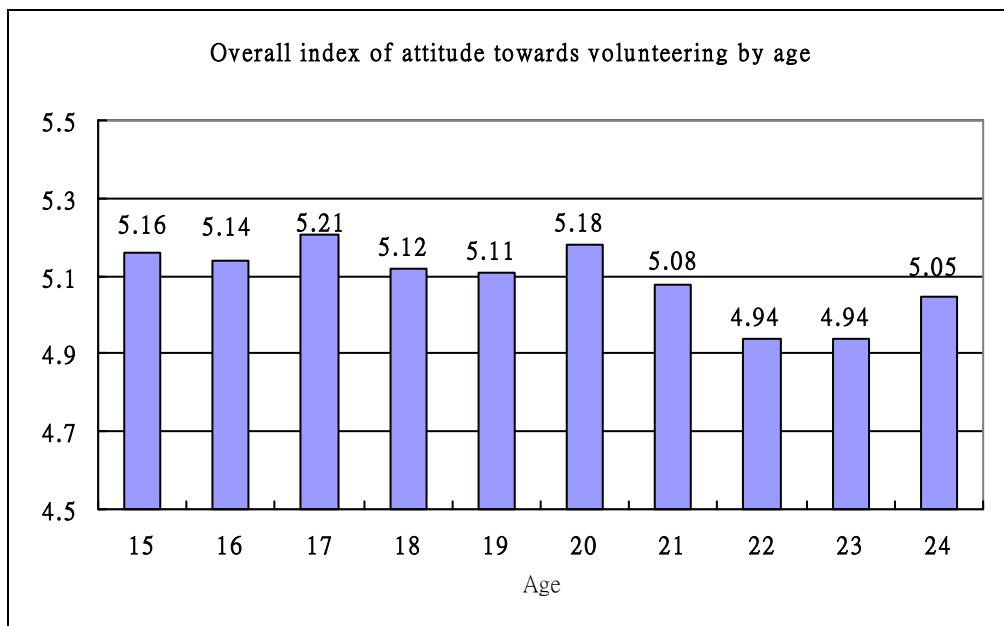


4.3.14 Only about 23% of the respondents agreed that it was a waste of their time to participate in volunteer work. On the other hand, the majority of them (78%) indicated that they would take up volunteer work if opportunity arose.



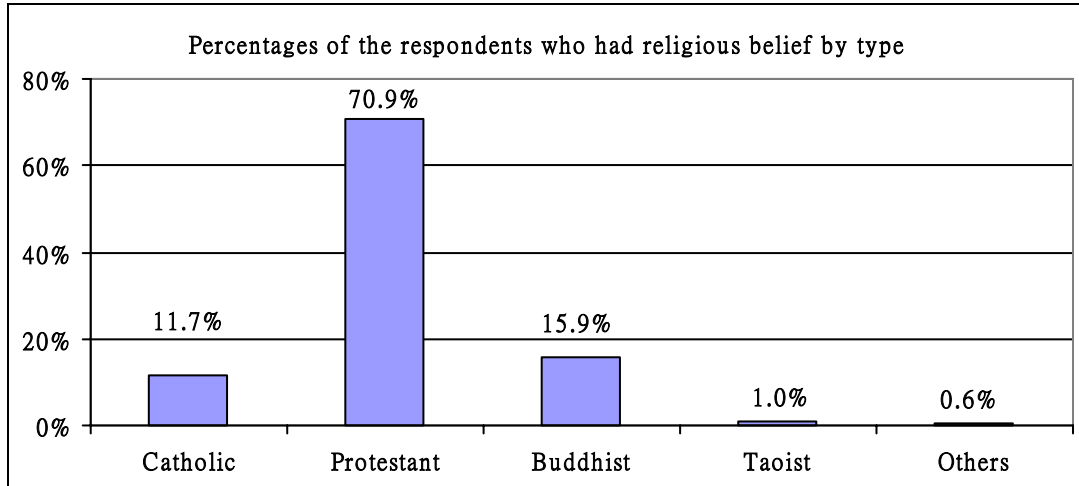
4.3.15 An index on attitude towards volunteering may be compiled from the survey findings, based on a Likert scale of 7. The index, at 5.1 in a Likert scale of 7, is considered fairly high. The index was higher for those who were students, at 5.2, as compared with that for those respondents who were employed (4.9) and not-at-school/not-at-work (4.8).

4.3.16 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index on attitude towards volunteering was relatively higher for those in the younger age groups. The index was the lowest for those aged 22 and 23.

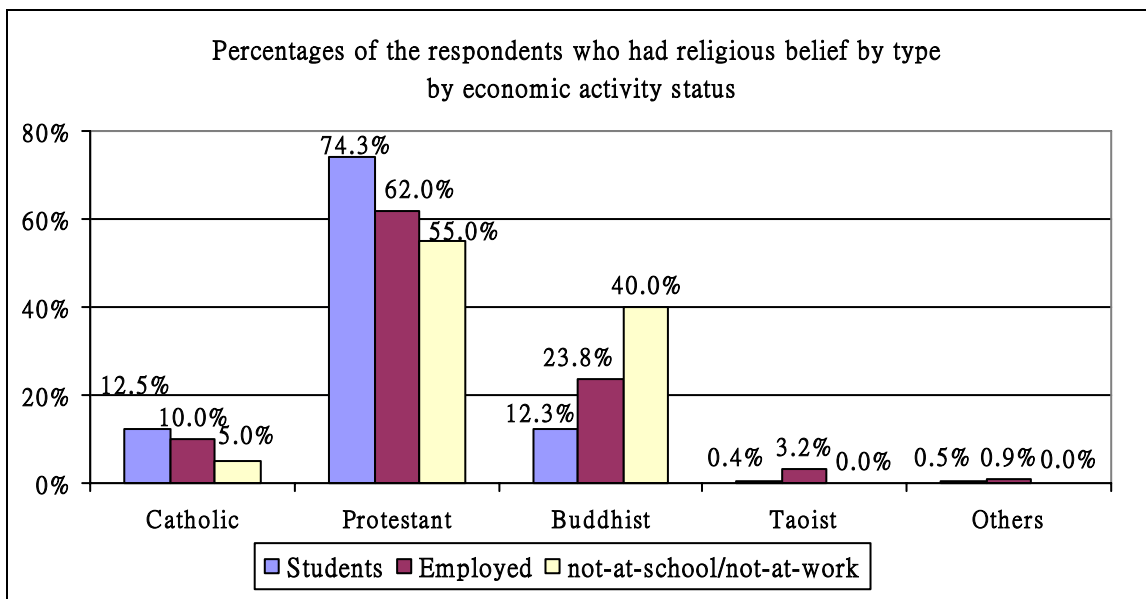


Faith-based engagement

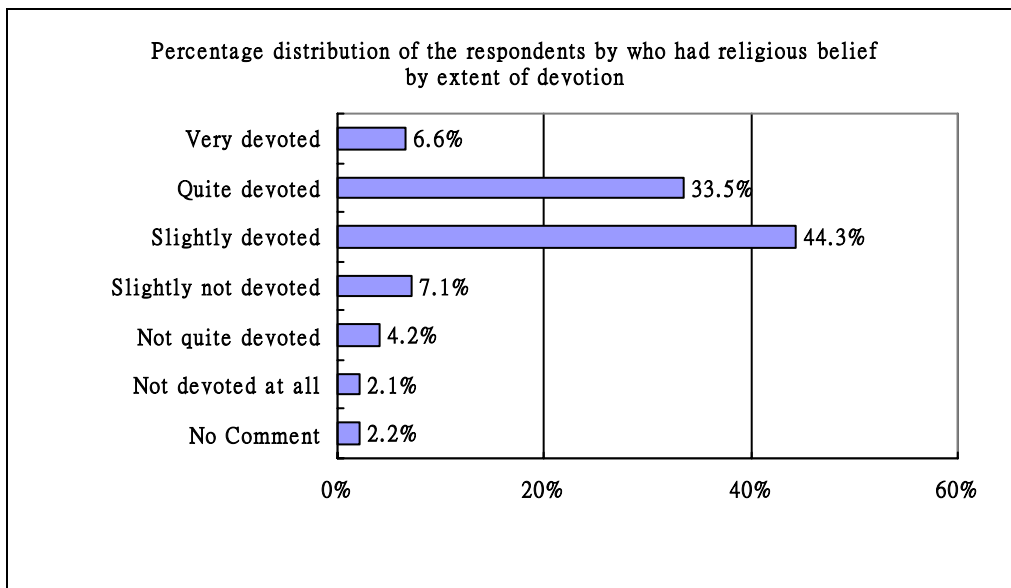
4.3.17 About 25% of the respondents indicated that they had religious belief. Among these 25% respondents, the majority (71%) were Protestant and a further 12% Catholics. About 16% indicated that they believed in Buddhism. About 16% indicated that they believed in Buddhism.



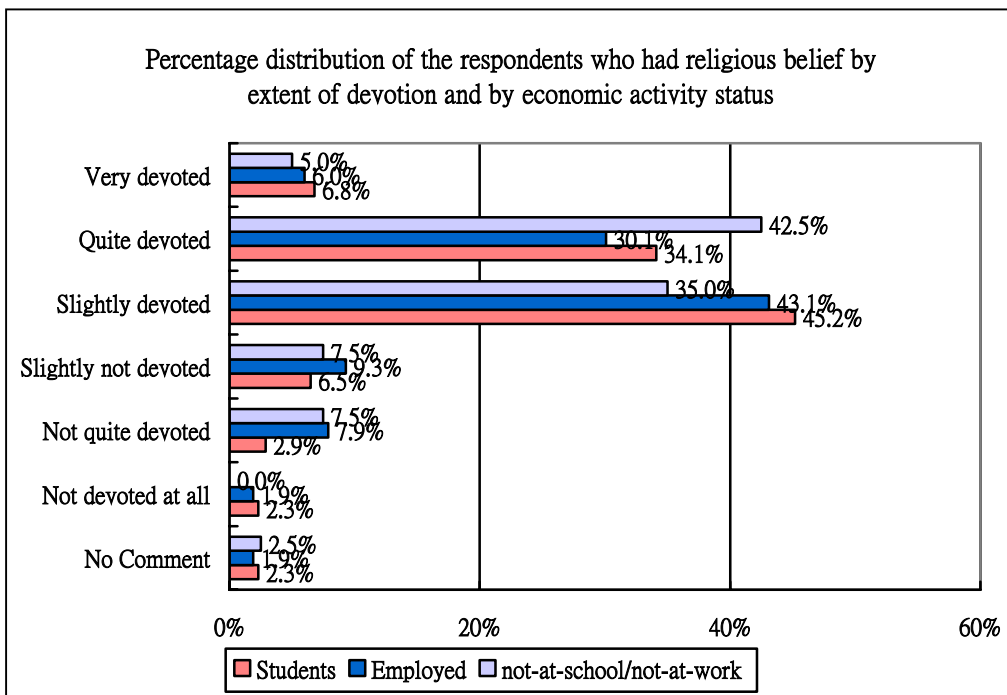
4.3.18 When analyzed by economic activity status, about 27% of the respondents who were students indicated that they had religious belief. The corresponding percentages for the employed and not-at-school/not-at-work were lower, both at 20%. Among those who had religious belief, the majority of those who were students (74%) were Protestant and a further 13% Catholic. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed were lower, at 62% and 10% respectively. For those who were not-at-school/not-at-work, a higher proportion of them believed in Buddhism (40%), as compared with 12% for students and 24% for the employed.



4.3.19 For those respondents who had religious belief, about 44% indicated they were only a bit devoted to their religion and a further 34% indicated that they were quite devoted. Only about 13% considered that they were not devoted.



4.3.20 When analyzed by economic activity status, it may worth noting that a relatively higher proportion of the respondents who were not-at-school/not-at-work (48%) considered they were very devoted or quite devoted, as compared with that for students (41%) and the employed (36%). The percentage who considered themselves as slightly not devoted, not quite devoted or not devoted at all was lower for students (12%), as compared with the corresponding percentages for those who were employed (19%) and not-at-school/not-at-work (15%).



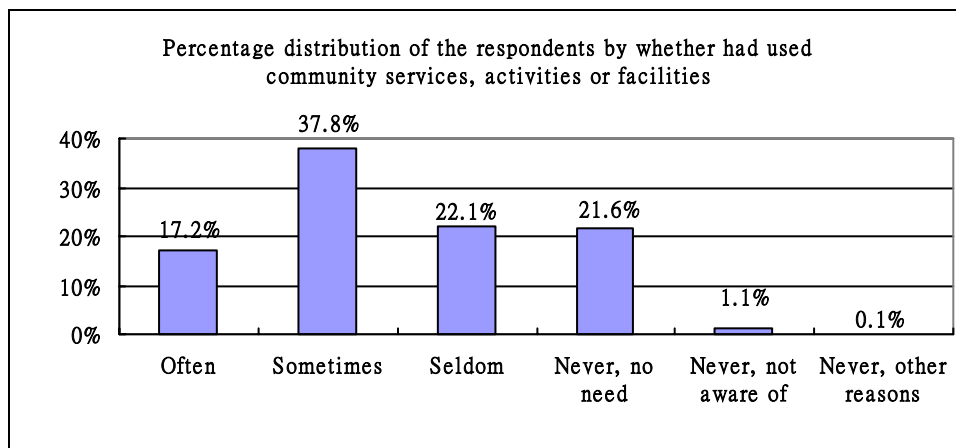
5. Use of services and social support network

5.1 Use of services

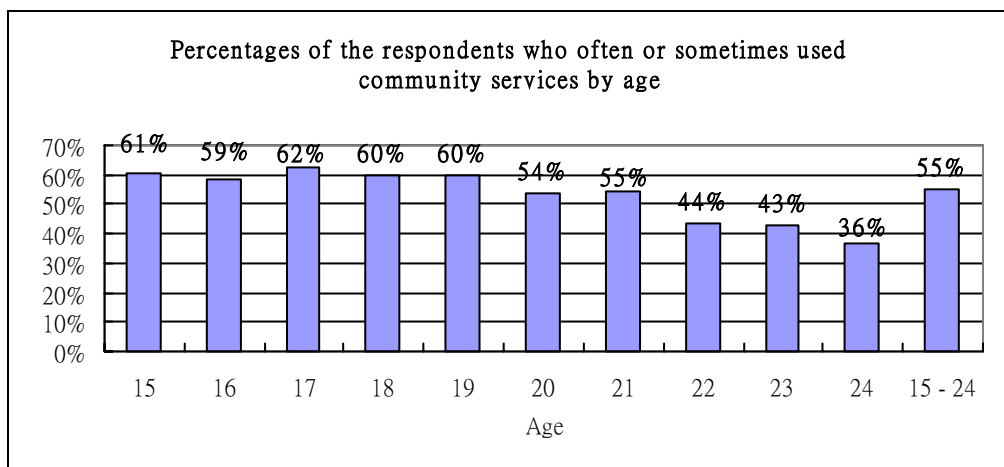
5.1.1 As discussed above, a variety of services targeted at youths are organized by different community organizations and government departments. This has helped enhance youths' civic engagement and raise their social capital. In this section, survey findings are presented on the use of services provided by community organizations and government departments by youths.

Use of community services

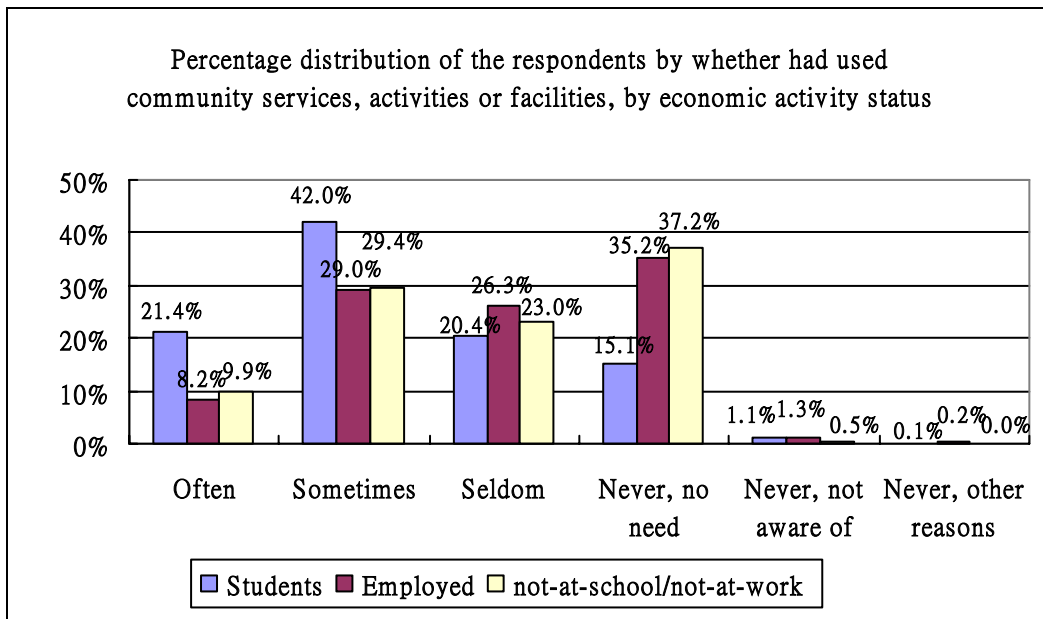
5.1.2 The majority (77%) of the respondents had used services or facilities provided by or participated in activities organized by community organizations. Only about 22% had not used such services because they considered them unnecessary and a further 1% had not done so because they were not aware of them.



5.1.3 When analyzed by age, a relatively higher proportion of those in the younger age groups often or sometimes used community services, with the percentages hovering in the region of 59% to 62%. Starting from the age of 19, the percentage decreased steadily with age. The percentages were markedly lower for those aged 22 – 24, with the lowest at 36% for those aged 24.

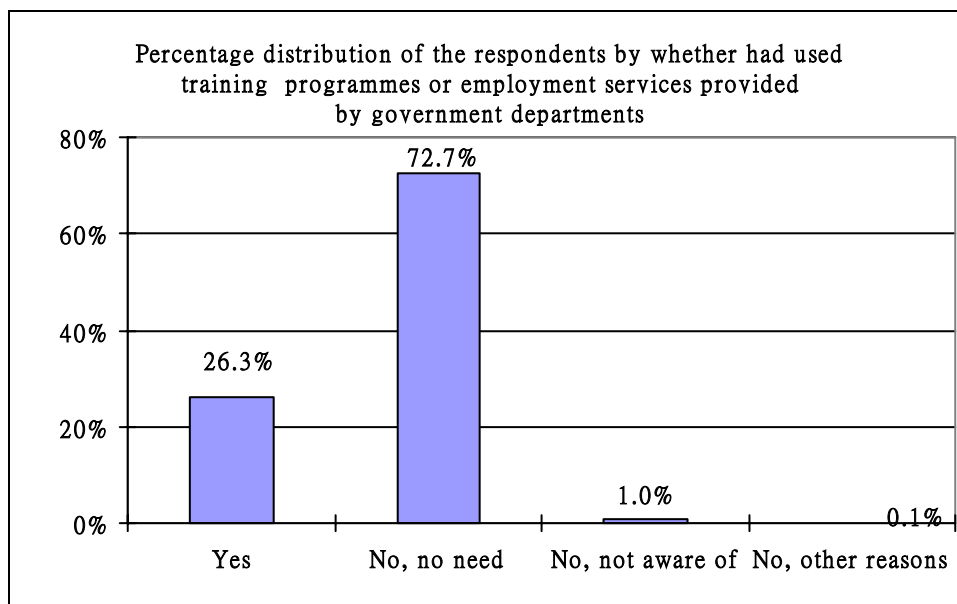


5.1.4 When analyzed by economic activity status, the majority (84%) of the respondents who were students had used services of community organizations. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed and not-at-school/not-at-work were lower, at 64% and 62% respectively.

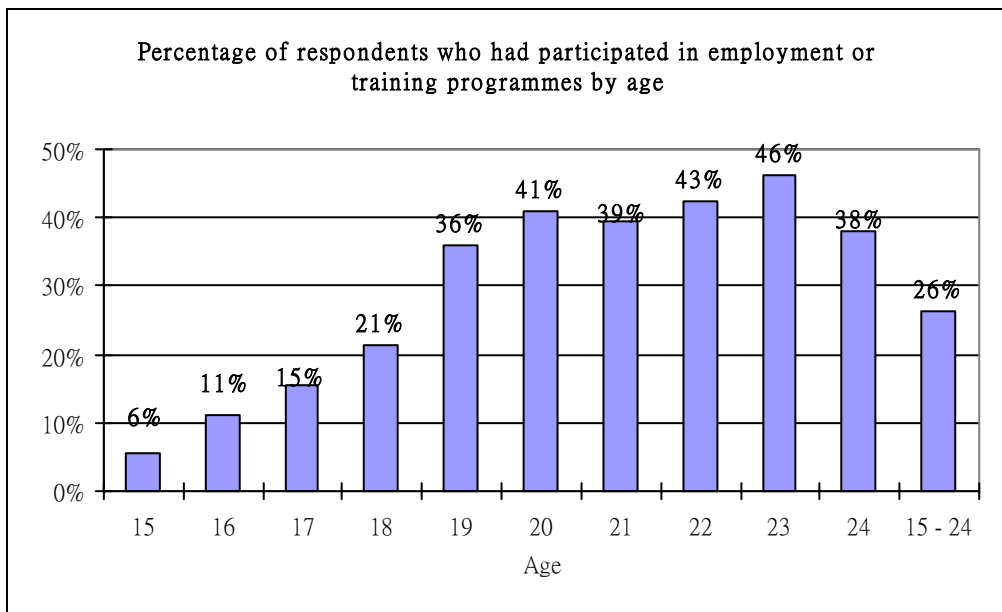


Participation in programmes organized by government

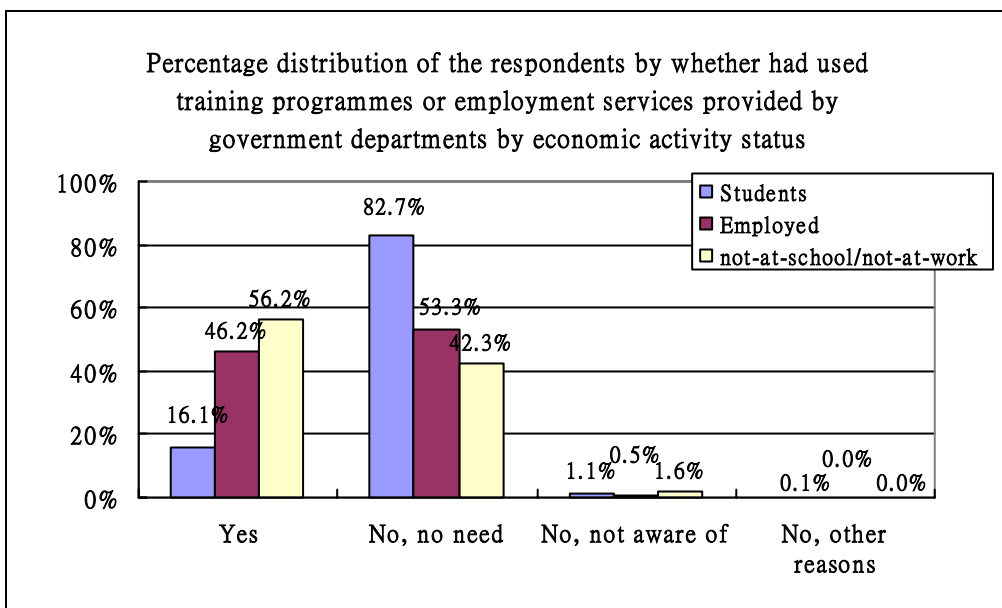
5.1.5 Only about 26% of the respondents had participated in employment and training programmes provided by government. The majority (73%) had not because they considered them unnecessary and a further 1% had not used because they were not aware of them.



5.1.6 When analyzed by age, a relatively higher proportion of those in the older age groups had participated in employment or training programmes, with the percentage reaching 46% for those aged 23. For those aged 24, the percentage was relatively lower.

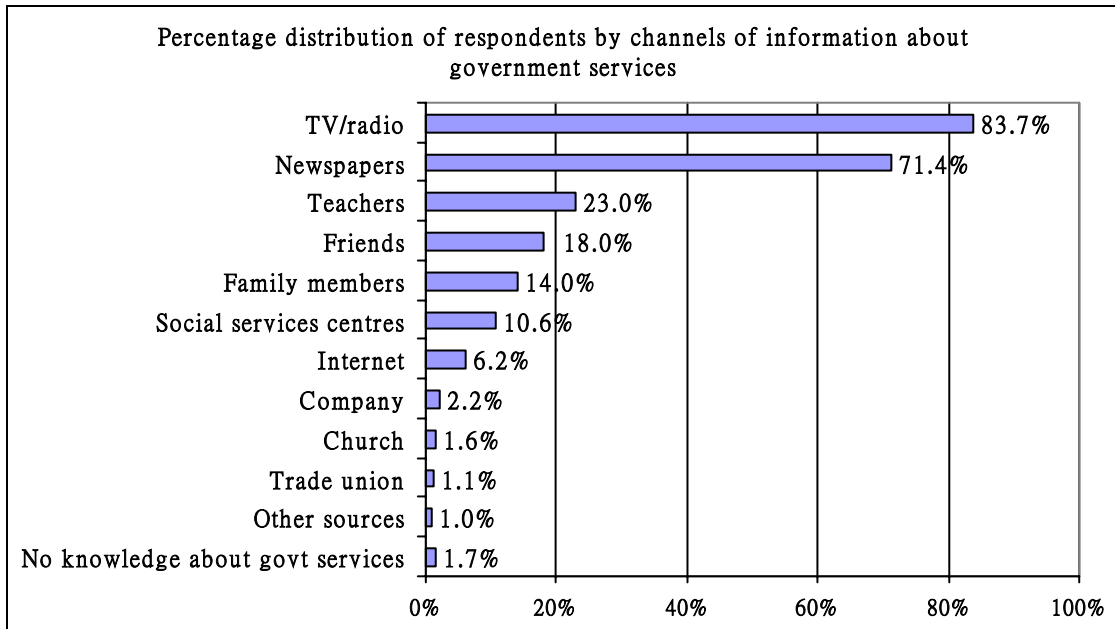


5.1.7 When analyzed by economic activity status, more than half (56%) of the respondents who were not-at-school/not-at-work had used employment services or training programmes provided by government departments. The corresponding percentages for those who were students and employed were lower, at 16% and 46% respectively. The majority of students (83%) had not used such services or programmes because they considered them unnecessary. This is not surprising as the employment services and training programmes are mainly targeted at those who do not continue further formal education. The corresponding percentages for those who were employed and not-at-school/not-at-work were lower, at 53% and 42% respectively.



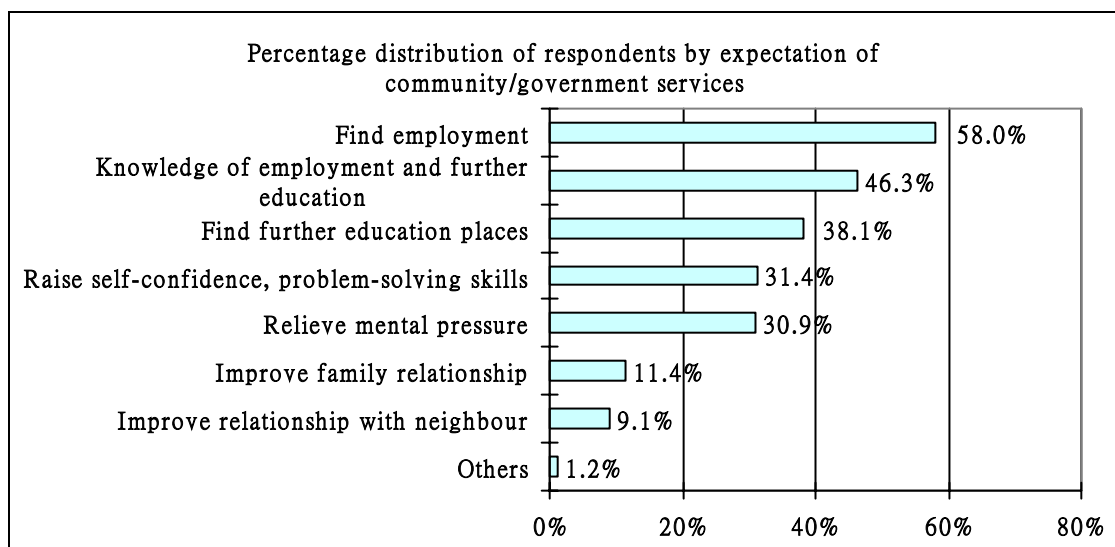
Channels of information about government services to the public

5.1.8 The majority of the respondents knew about services provided by the government to the public through television / radio (84%) and newspapers (71%). About 23% knew about government services from teachers. Only about 2% of the respondents admitted they had no knowledge about services provided by government.



Expectation of community/government services

5.1.9 More than half respondents (58%) hoped that services provided by the government could help them find employment. About 46% hoped the government services could help increase their knowledge about employment or further education opportunities. Slightly less than one third hoped that government could help them raise self-confidence, improve problem-solving skills (31%) and relieve mental pressure (31%).

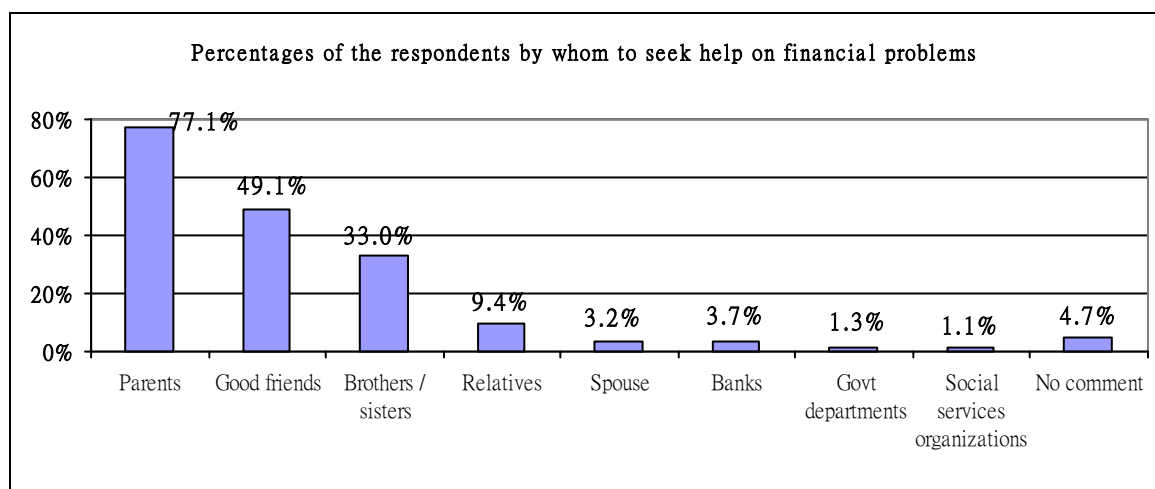


5.2 Social support network

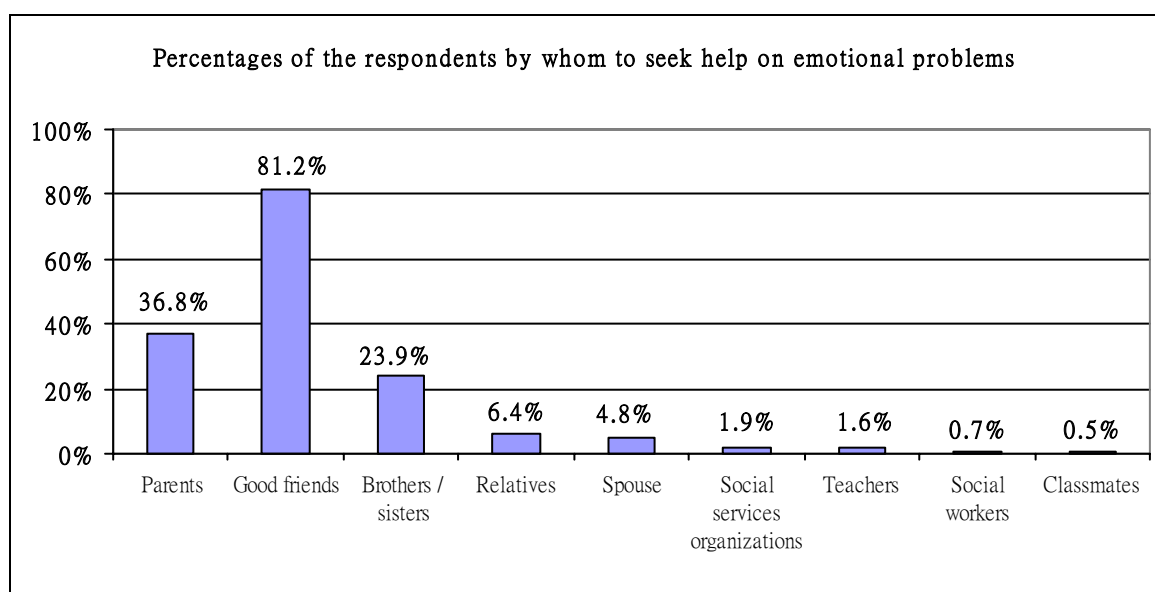
5.2.1 Social support network of youth is closely related to the bonding social capital of youth and their relationship with family members, friends and neighbours. It is also related to how youth make use of community and government services. In this section, survey findings are presented on different aspects of social support network of youth, including their help seeking behaviour and availability of help when in need.

Help seeking behaviour

5.2.2 When faced with financial problems, the majority of the respondents (77%) would seek the help of parents. Slightly less than half (49%) would seek the help of good friends and about one third would seek the help of brothers or sisters (33%).

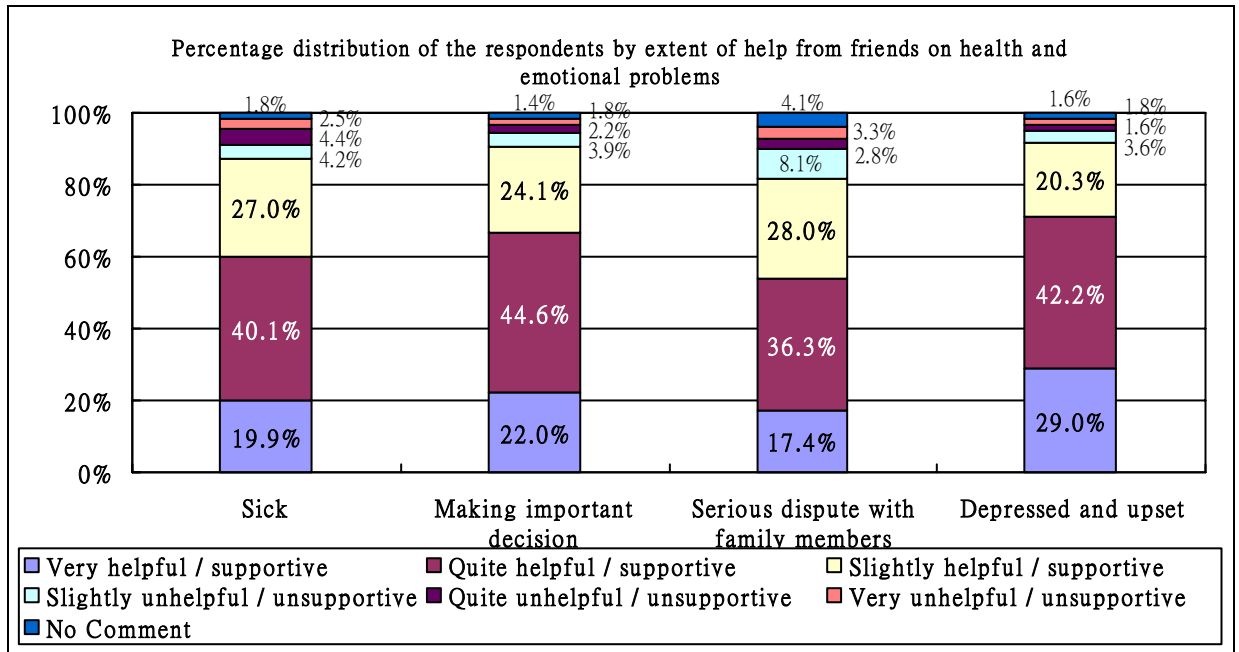


5.2.3 When faced with emotional problems, the majority of the respondents (81%) would seek the help of good friends. About 37% would seek the help of parents and about 24% would seek the help of brothers or sisters.

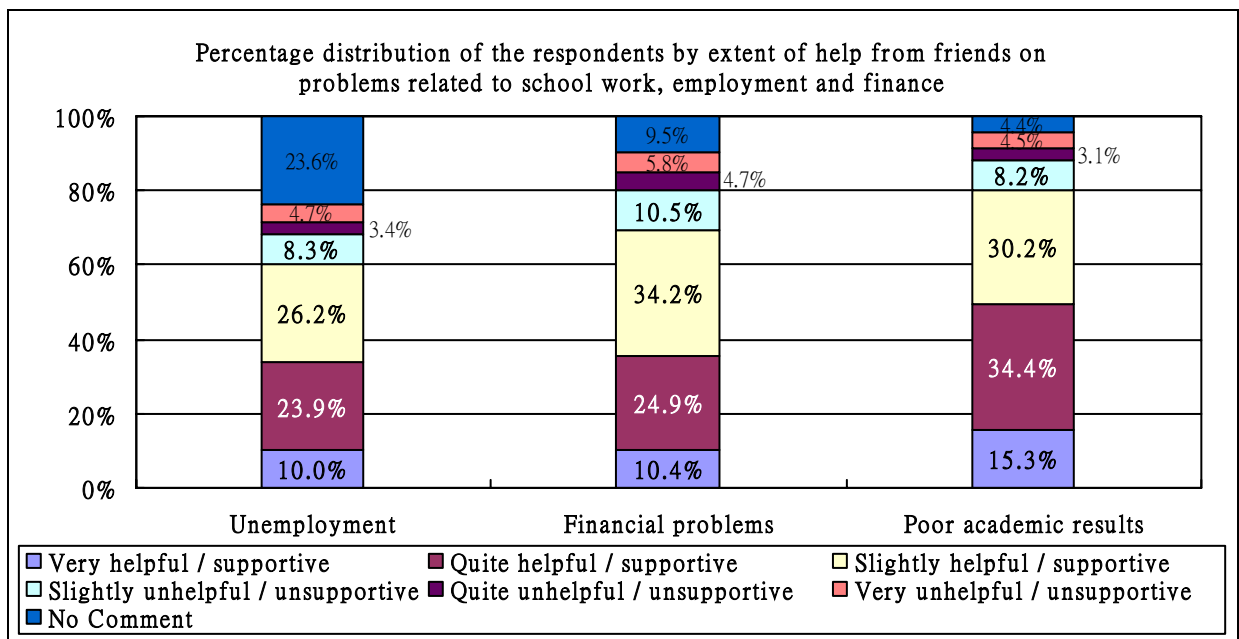


Availability of help from friends

5.2.4 The great majority of the respondents believed that they would be able to obtain the help and support from friends when they were sick (accounting for 87% of the respondents), making important decisions (91%), having serious disputes with family members (82%) and feeling depressed or upset (92%).

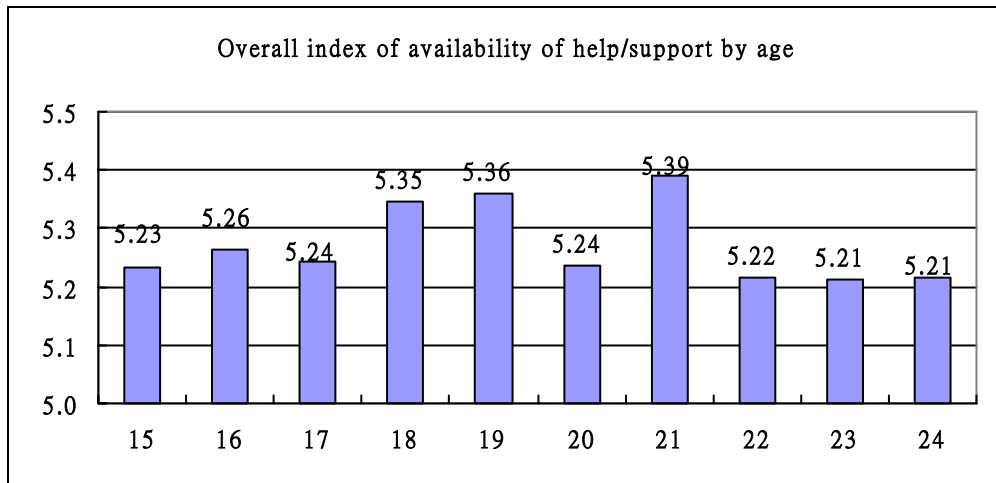


5.2.5 A relatively proportion of the respondents believed that they would be able to obtain the help and support from friends when they were unemployed (60%) or having financial problems (70%). The majority (80%) believed that they would be able to obtain the help and support from friends when they had poor academic results.



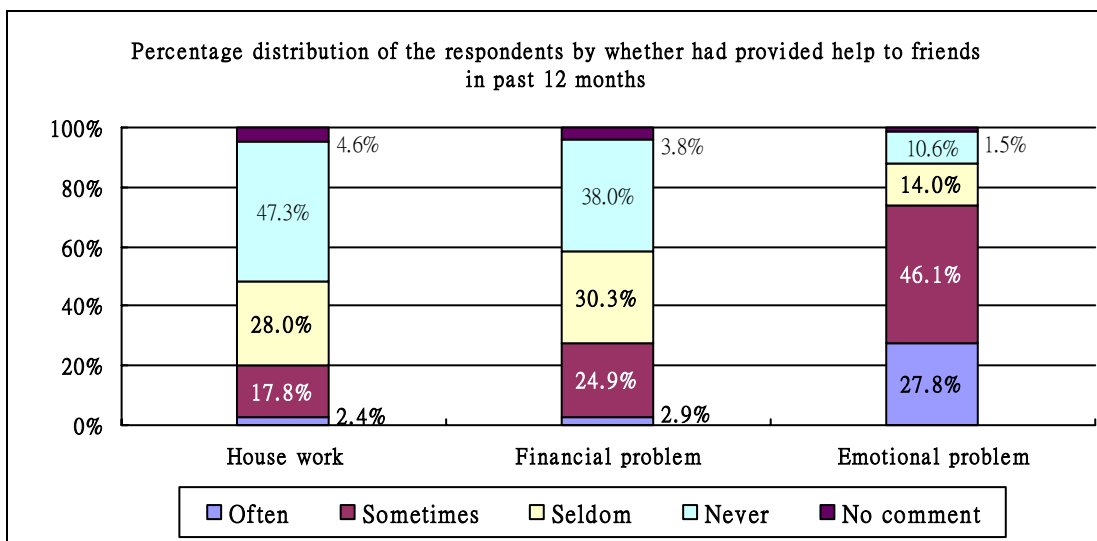
5.2.6 Based on a Likert scale of 7, an index on availability of help / support may be compiled from data obtained in respect of the 7 items above. The index was 5.3, in the Likert scale of 7, indicating that on the whole respondents were able to obtain help / support from friends. The index was slightly higher for those respondents who were students and employed (both at 5.3), as compared with that for those who were not-at-school and not-at-work (5.0).

5.2.7 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index on availability of help was relatively higher for those aged 18, 19 and 21. The index was lower for those in the younger and older age groups.

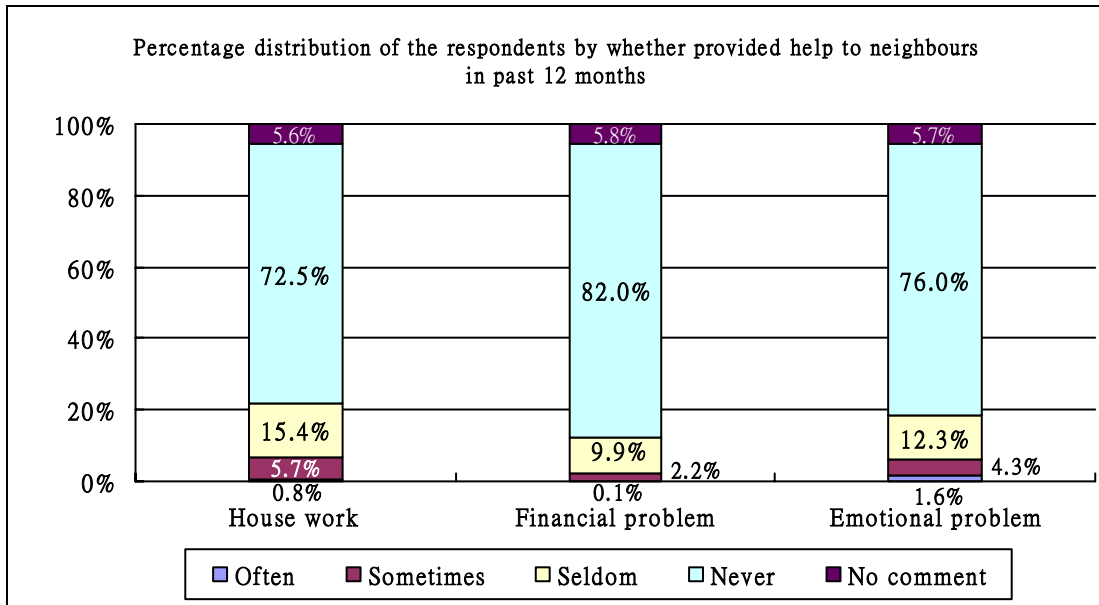


Rendering help to friends and neighbours

5.2.8 The great majority of the respondents (88%) had provided help to friends on emotional problems in the past 12 months. The proportion who had provided help to friends on financial problems was lower, at 58%. Slightly less than half (48%) had provided help to friends on matters related to house work (e.g. taking care of children and elderly, cooking and purchase of food).

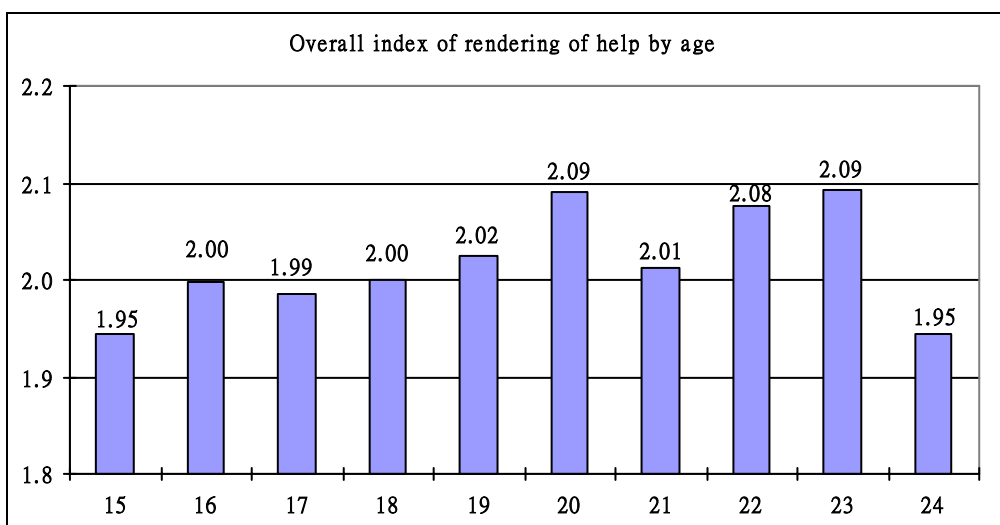


5.2.9 As regards help to neighbours, only a small proportion of the respondents (18%) had provided help to neighbours on emotional problems in the past 12 months. The proportion who had provided help to neighbours on financial problems was lower, at 12%. About 22% had provided help to neighbours on matters related to house work (e.g. taking care of children and elderly, cooking and purchase of food).



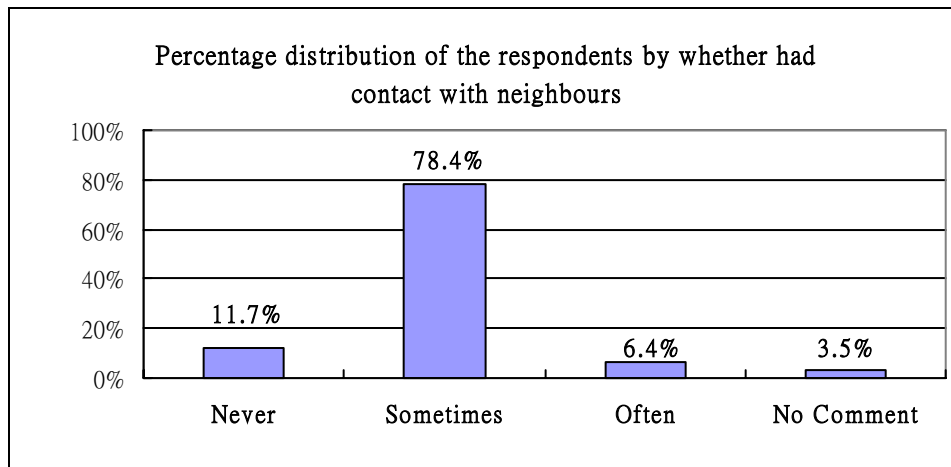
5.2.10 Expressed in a Likert scale of 5, an index on rendering of help to friends and neighbours may be compiled based on data obtained in the survey for the six questions above. The index was 2.0, in the Likert scale of 5, indicating that on average youth seldom or never rendered help to friends or neighbours. The index was slightly higher for those who were employed, at 2.1, as compared with that for those respondents who were students (2.0) and not-at-school and not-at-work (2.0).

5.2.11 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index on rendering of help was slightly higher for those in the older age groups and was relatively lower for those aged 15, 21 and 24.

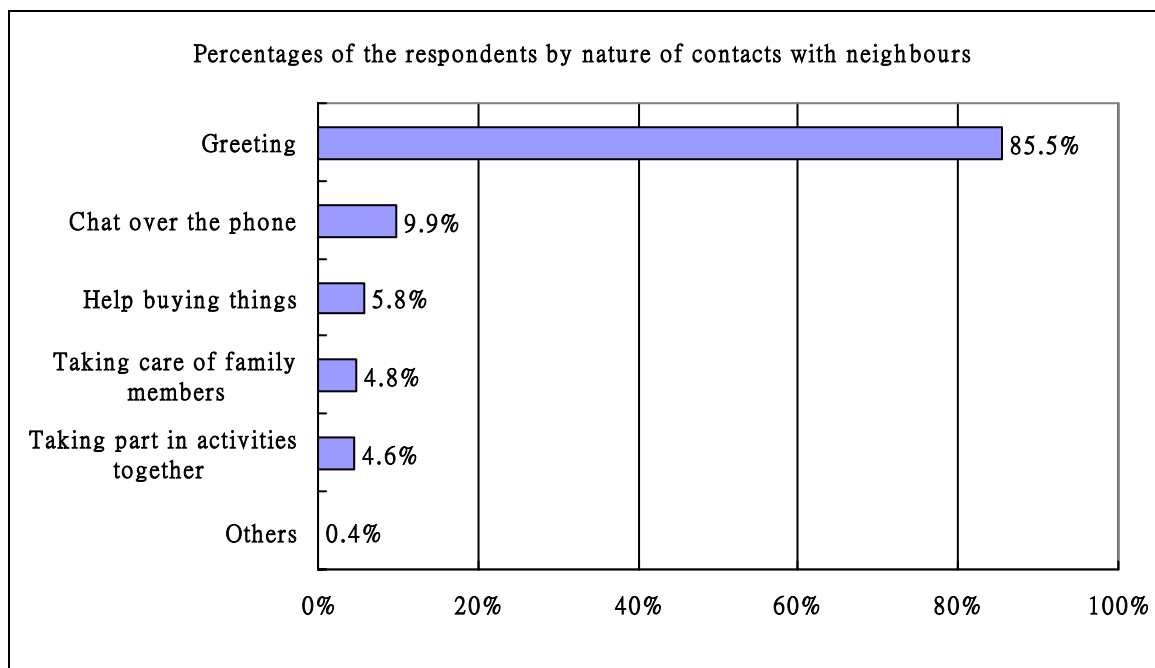


Contacts with neighbours

5.2.12 The great majority of the respondents (85%) had contacts with their neighbours. Only about 12% never had any contact with their neighbours.



5.2.13 As regards the nature of contacts with neighbours, the great majority of the respondents (86%) contacted their neighbours in the form of greeting, and about 10% through chatting over the phone. Only a small proportion of the respondents contacted their neighbours through instrumental assistance rendered to each others in the form of buying things (6%) or taking care of family members (5%).



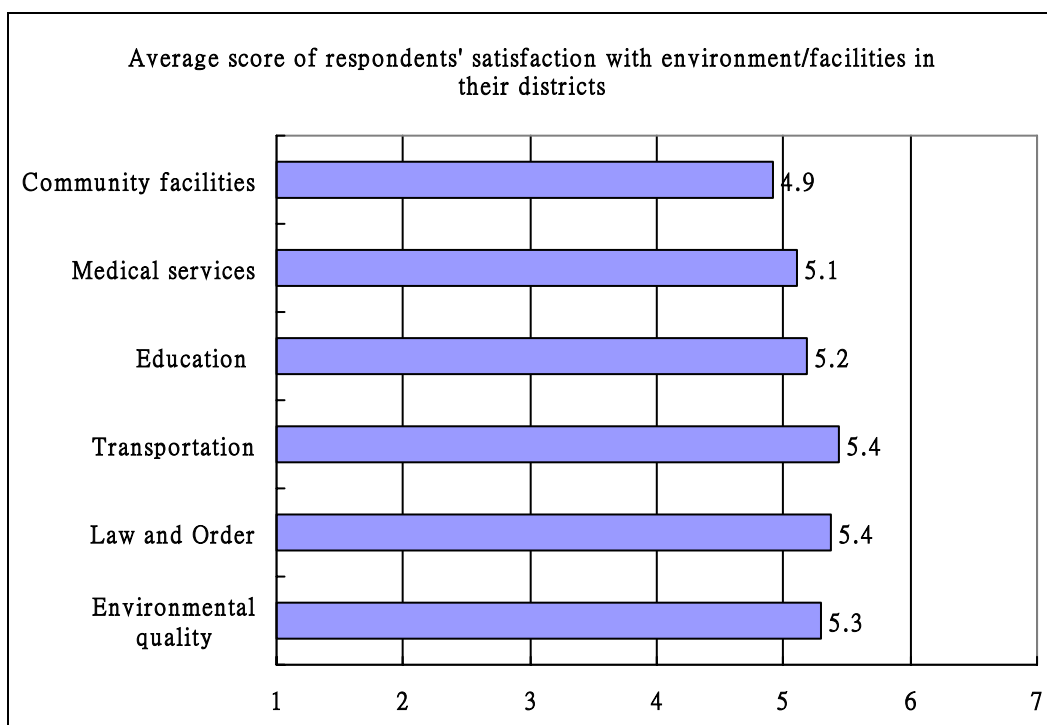
6. Personal well-being and family functioning

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 As discussed in above, social capital has an impact, positive or negative, on the personal well-being of individuals, including mental health and family functioning, or vice versa. In the survey, information on personal well-being including mental health, self-esteem and family functioning was collected and the data obtained are presented in this section. In addition, information on respondents' satisfaction with the environment and facilities in their districts of residence was also collated and presented below.

6.2 Satisfaction with the environment and facilities of the district

6.2.1 Respondents' extent of satisfaction with environment, services and facilities in their districts of residence may be expressed in a Likert scale of 7, with "1" denoting highly unsatisfied and "7", highly satisfied. The average score for different aspects of environment, services and facilities are depicted in the chart below. It may be noted that the respondents were relatively less satisfied with community facilities and more satisfied with transportation and law and order.



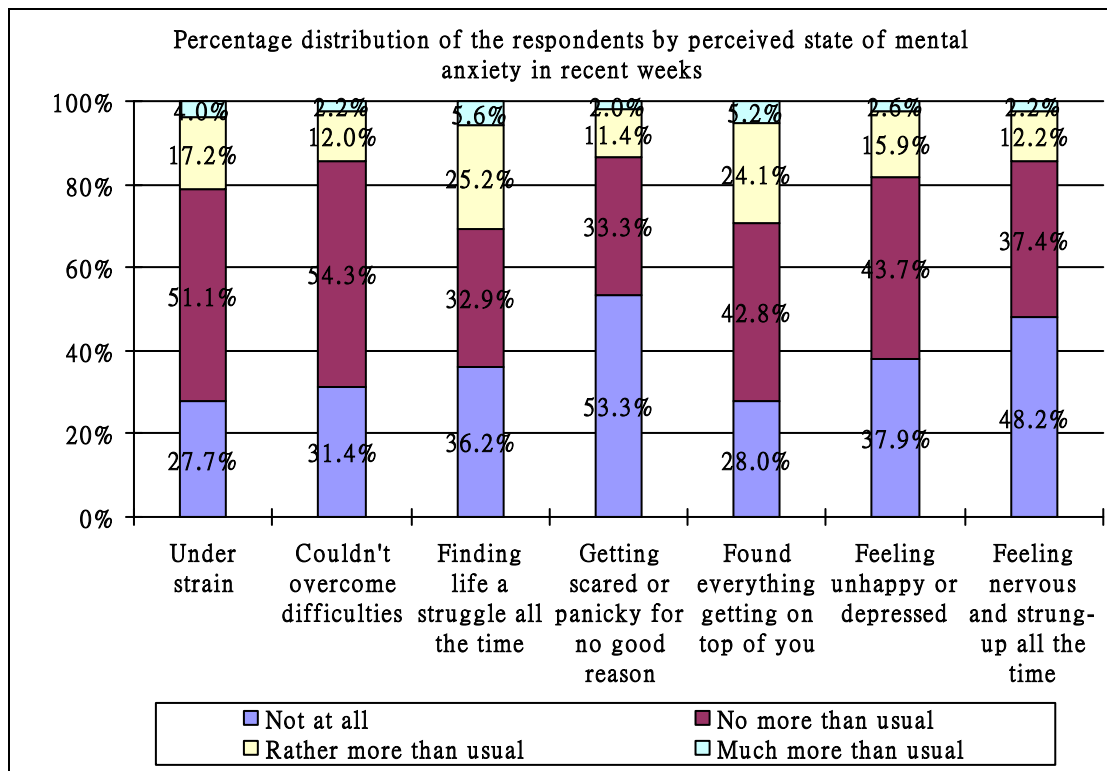
6.2.2 An index of satisfaction with district facilities and environment may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 6 items shown above. The index was 5.2, in a Likert scale of 7, indicating that the respondents were in general quite satisfied. The index was slightly higher for those who were students (5.3), as compared with those who were employed (5.0) and not-at-school/not-at-work (5.0).

6.3 Mental health status

Mental health

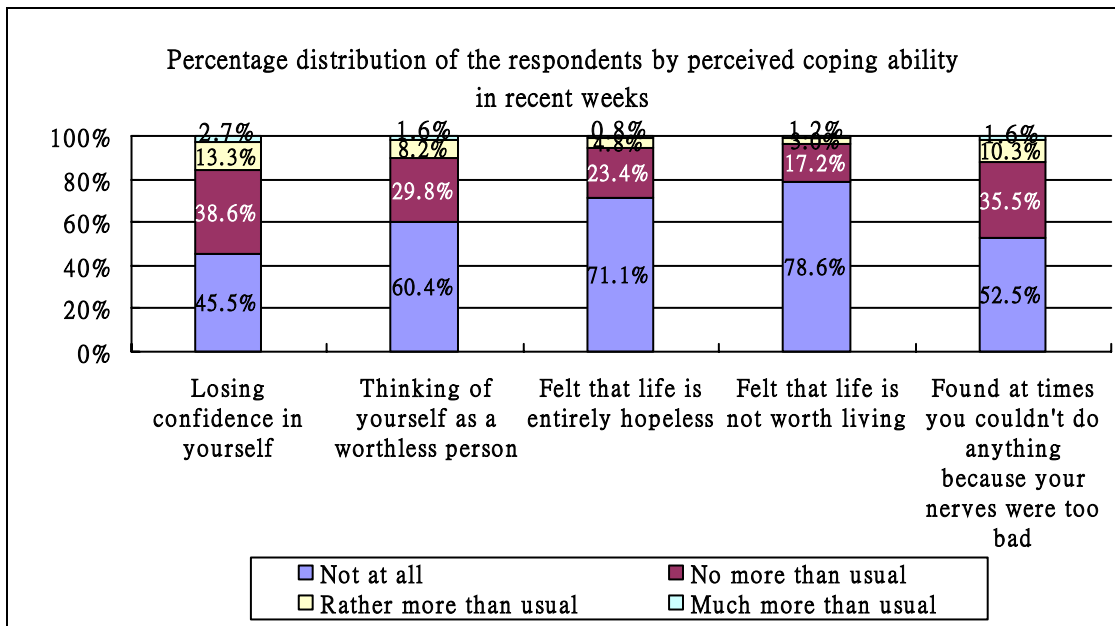
6.3.1 The Chinese version of the General Health Questionnaire was used in the survey to collect information on the status of mental health of respondents, covering aspects like anxiety, depression and inadequate coping. In addition, five questions were used to obtain information on respondents' perception of life.

6.3.2 The majority of the respondents were satisfied with their state of mental anxiety in recent weeks. They were of the view of either not at all or no more than usual that they were constantly under strain (79%), that they could not overcome difficulties (86%), that life was like a struggle all the time (69%), that they got scared or panicky for no good reason (87%), that they found everything getting on top of them (71%), that they felt unhappy or depressed (82%) and that they felt nervous and strung-up all the time (86%).

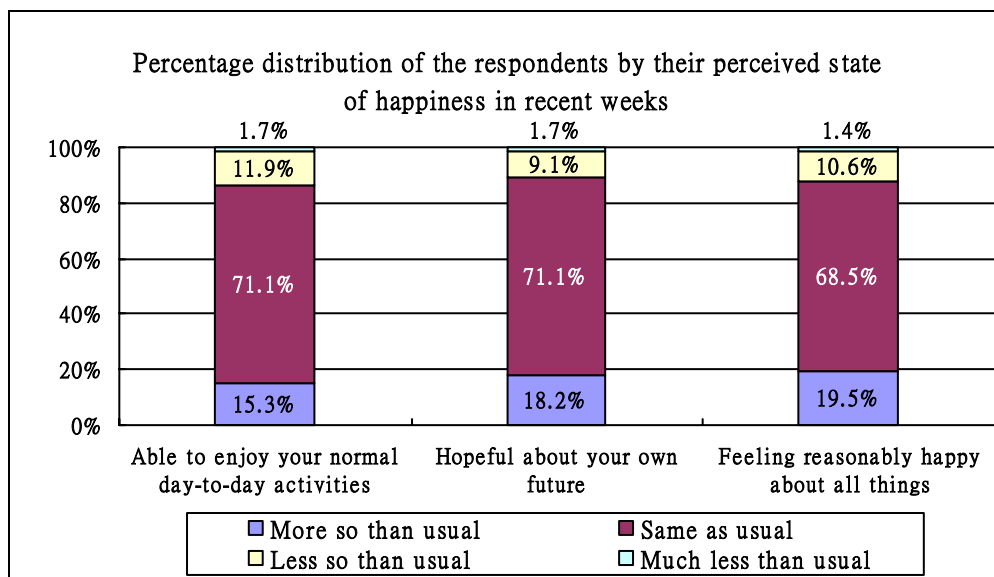


6.3.3 As regards the respondents' perception of coping ability, a relative higher proportion of the respondents were satisfied with their coping ability. The great majority were of the view that they had not lost their confidence or that their confidence was more or less as usual (84%), that they were not thought themselves as a worthless person or they thought themselves as a worthless person was more or less as usual (90%), that they did not feel life was entirely hopeless or their feeling of hopelessness was more or less as usual

(95%), that they did not feel life was not worth living or their feeling of worthiness of life was more or less as usual (96%), and that they never found at times they couldn't do anything or sometimes couldn't do anything because their nerves were too bad was more or less the same (88%).



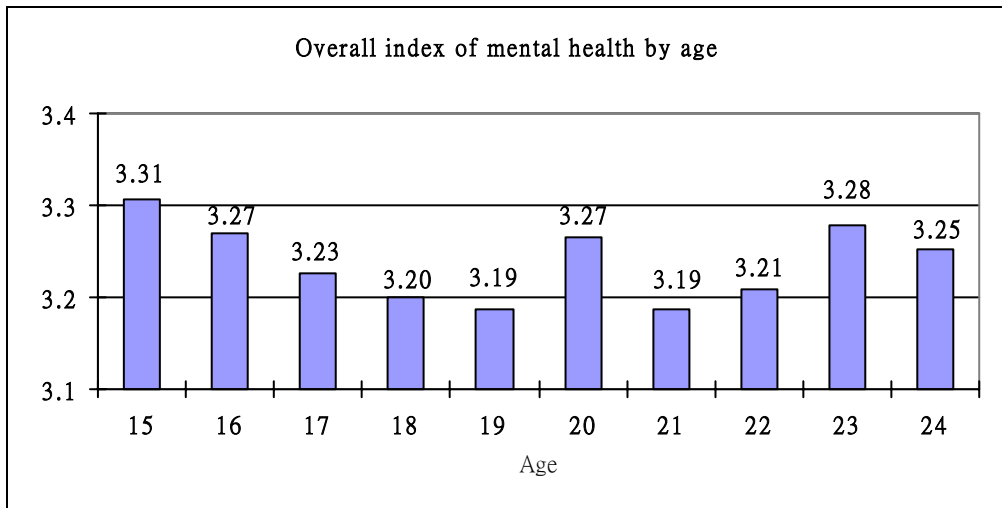
6.3.4 As regards the respondents' perception of happiness, the great majority were of the view that they were able to enjoy their normal day-to-day activities was more so than usual or same as usual (86%), that they were hopeful about their own future was more so than usual or same as usual (89%), and that they felt reasonably happy about all things was more so than usual or same as usual (88%).



6.3.5 Expressed in a Likert scale of 4, an index of mental health may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 15 items shown above. The index was 3.2, in a Likert scale of 4, indicating that the respondents were in general quite healthy mentally. The

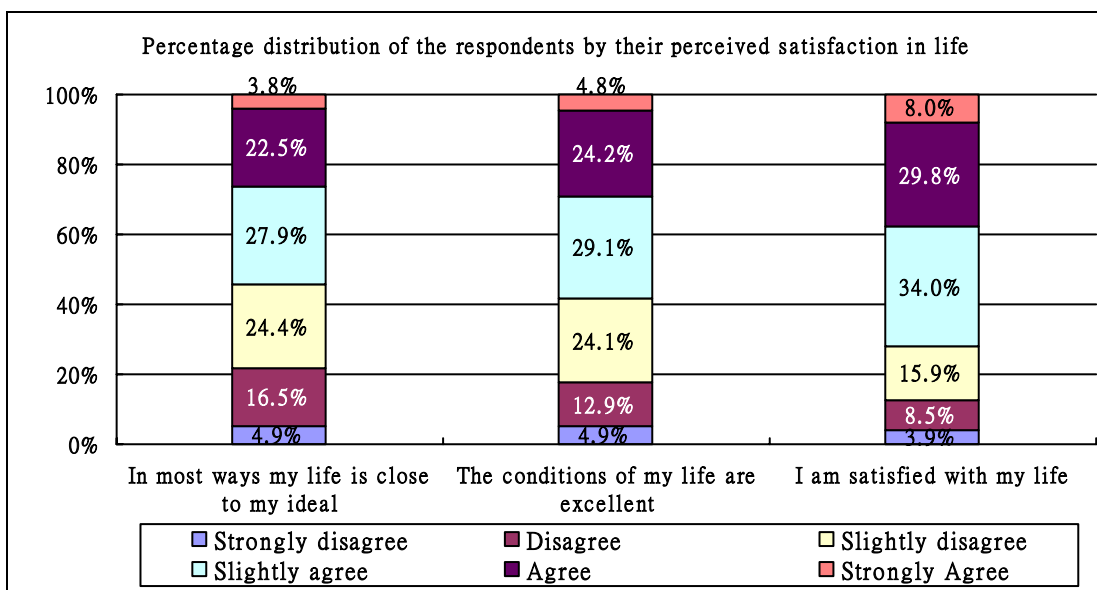
index was more or less the same for those who were students (3.2), employed (3.3) and not-at-school/not-at-work (3.2).

6.3.6 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of mental health was relatively higher for those in the younger and older age groups in the age range of 15 – 24 for youth. The index was lower for those aged 18, 19, 21 and 22. The “double-dip” pattern may also be observed from the chart below.

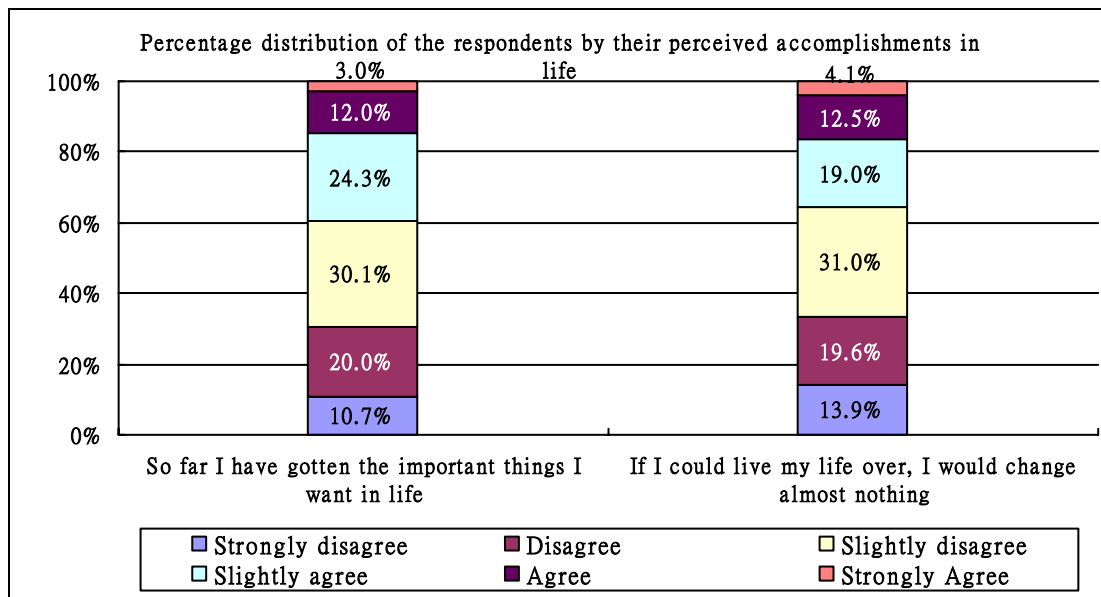


Perception in life

6.3.7 Five questions were asked in the survey on respondents’ perception of life in general. It may be noted from the chart below that respondents were in general quite satisfied with life. More than half of them considered that their life was close to ideal in most ways (54%), and that their living conditions were excellent (58%). A higher proportion indicated that they were satisfied with life (72%).

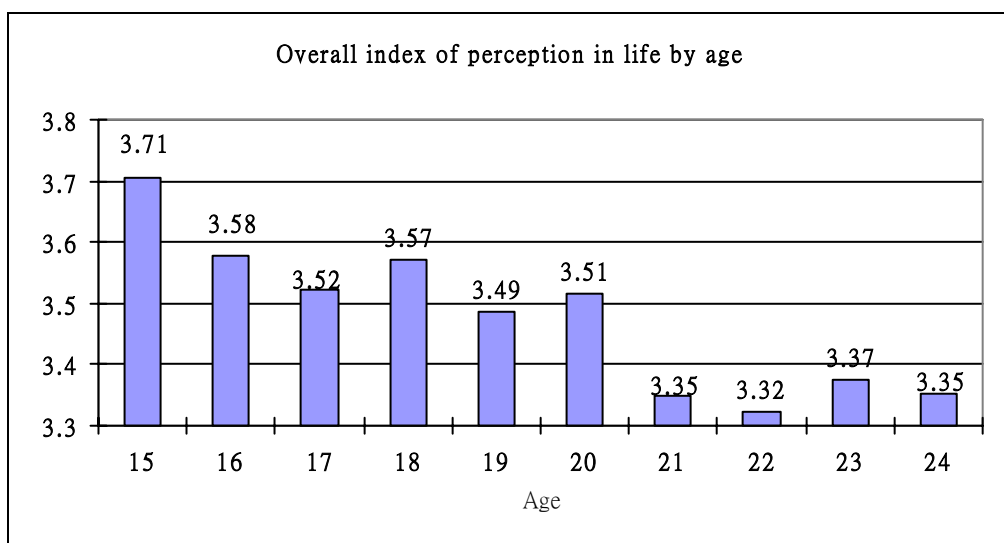


6.3.8 As regards perceived accomplishments in life, about 39% of the respondents were contented that they had already got the important things they wanted in life and about 36% did not want to change anything if they could live their life over.



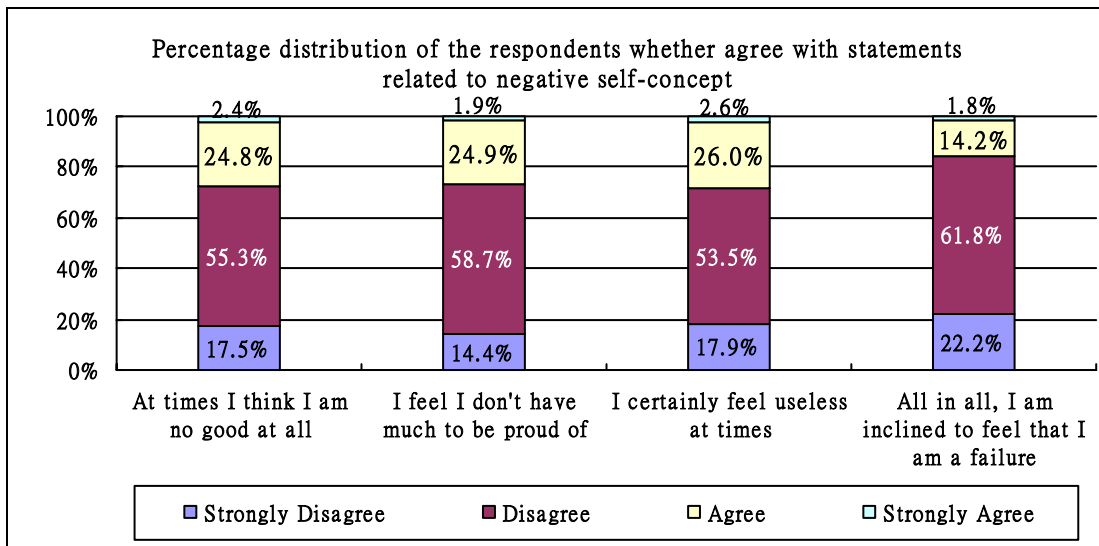
6.3.9 Expressed in a Likert scale of 6, with “1” denoting ‘strongly disagree’ and “6” denoting ‘strongly agree’, an index of perception of life may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 5 items shown above. The index was 3.5, in a Likert scale of 6, indicating that respondents’ perception in life was just average. The index was higher for those who were students (3.6), and lower for those who were employed (3.3) and not-at-school/not-at-work (3.1).

6.3.10 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of perception in life was relatively higher for those in the younger age groups. The index was lower for those aged 21 and 22.

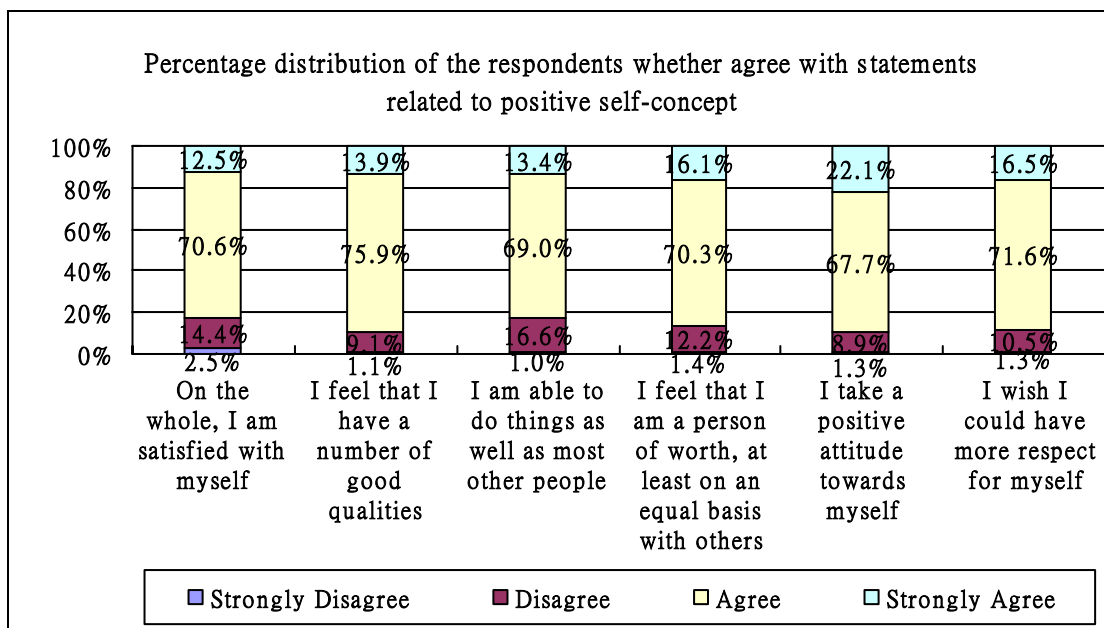


6.4 Self-esteem

6.4.1 The Chinese version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which comprises 10 items, was used to assess respondents' self-esteem. It may be noted from the chart below most respondents did not have a negative self-concept. The majority did not agree that they felt themselves no good at all sometimes (73%), that they did not have much to be proud of (73%), that they certainly felt useless at times (71%) and that they were inclined to feel they were failure (84%).

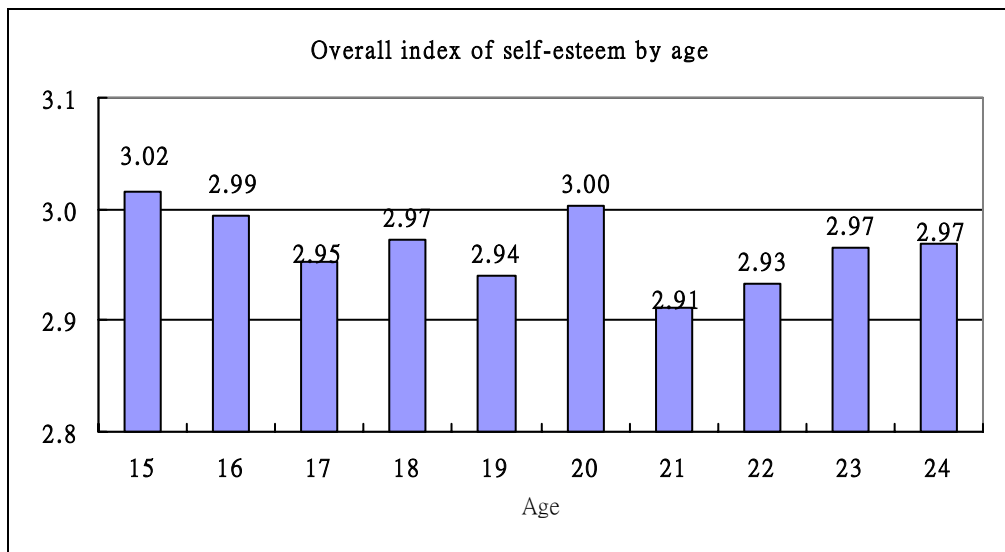


6.4.2 As regards respondents' perception of positive self-concept, the majority were satisfied with themselves (83%), felt that they had a number of good qualities (90%), were able to do things as well as most other people (82%), felt that they were a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others (86%) and took a positive attitude toward themselves (90%). The majority (88%) hoped they could have more respect for themselves.



6.4.3 Expressed in a Likert scale of 4, an index of self-esteem may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 10 items shown above. The index was 3.0, in a Likert scale of 4, indicating that respondents' self-esteem was quite high. The index was slightly higher those who were students (3.0) and was slightly lower for those who were employed (2.9) and not-at-school/not-at-work (2.8).

6.4.4 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of self-esteem was relatively higher for those in the younger and older age groups in the age range of 15 – 24 for youth. The index was also higher for those aged 15 and 20. The index was lower for those aged 17, 19, 21 and 22. The “double-dip” pattern may also be observed from the chart below.

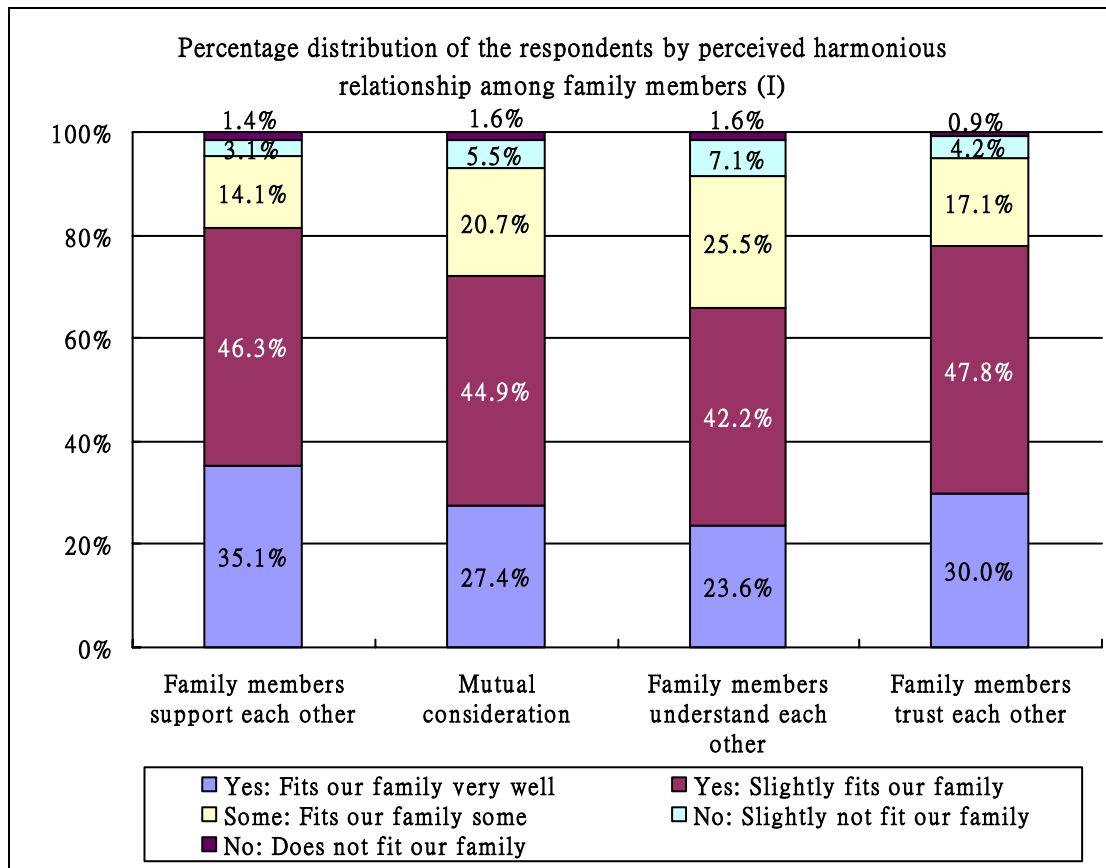


6.5 Family functioning

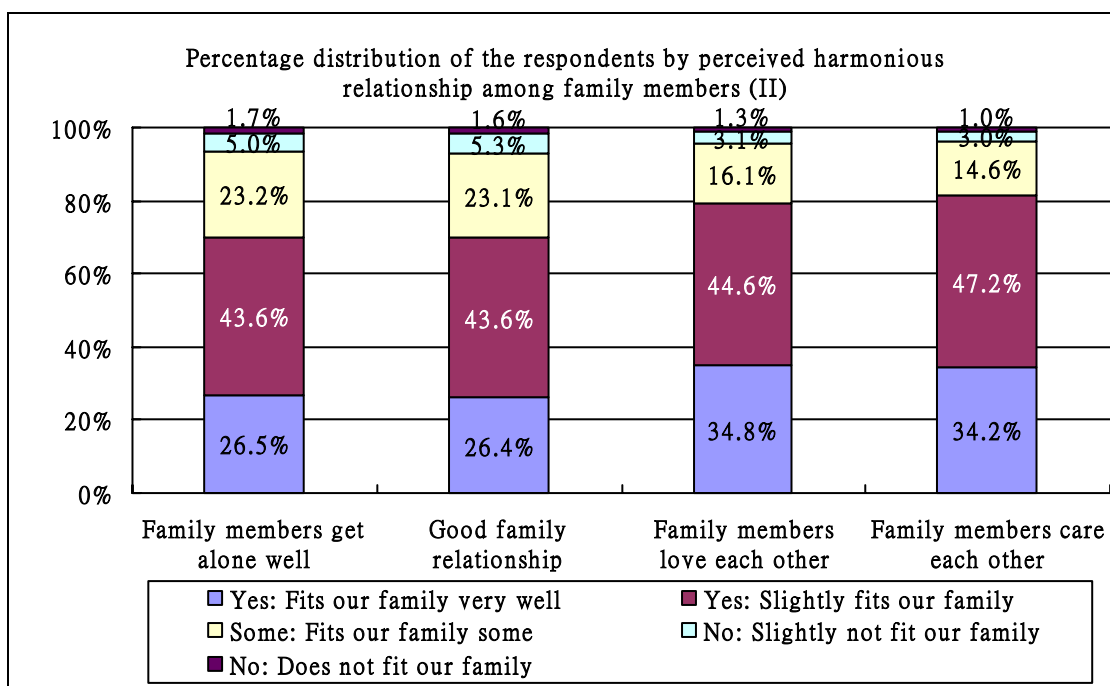
6.5.1 The 33-item Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (C-FAI) developed and validated by Professor Shek was used in the survey to assess family functioning of youth. In the following paragraphs, survey findings on different aspects of family functioning are presented.

Family relationship

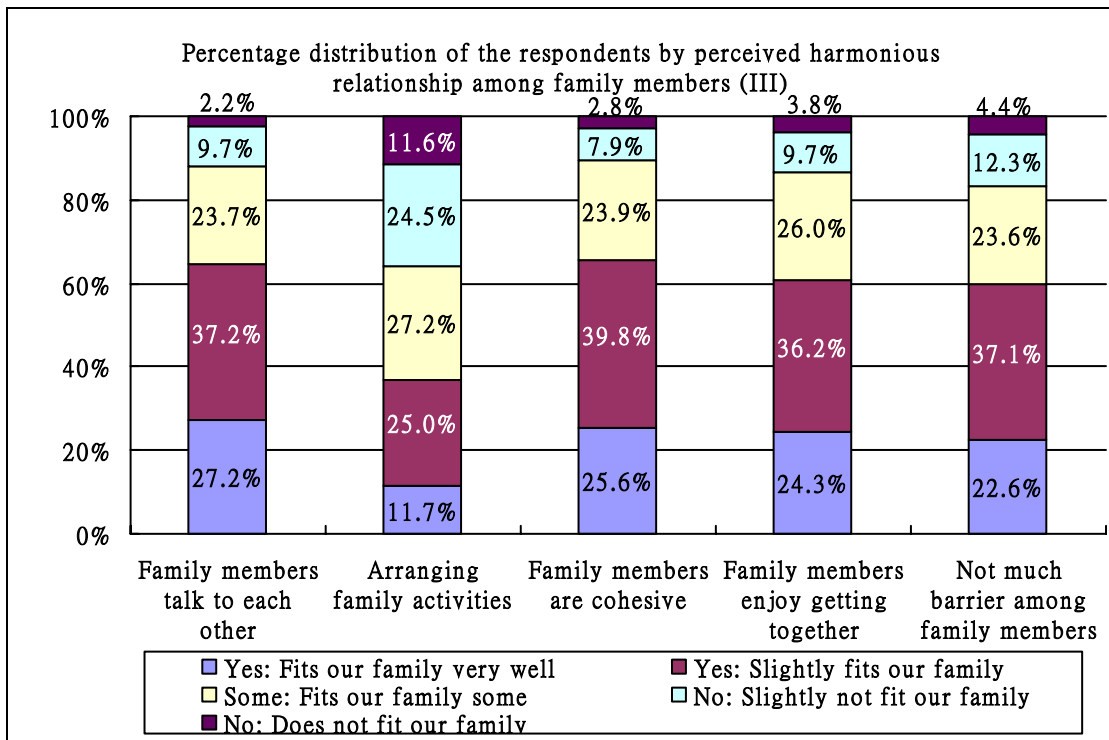
6.5.2 The majority of the respondents considered that the relationship among family members was harmonious. Most of them indicated that their family members supported each other (accounting for 81% of the respondents), were mutually consideration (72%), understood each other (66%) and trusted each other (78%).



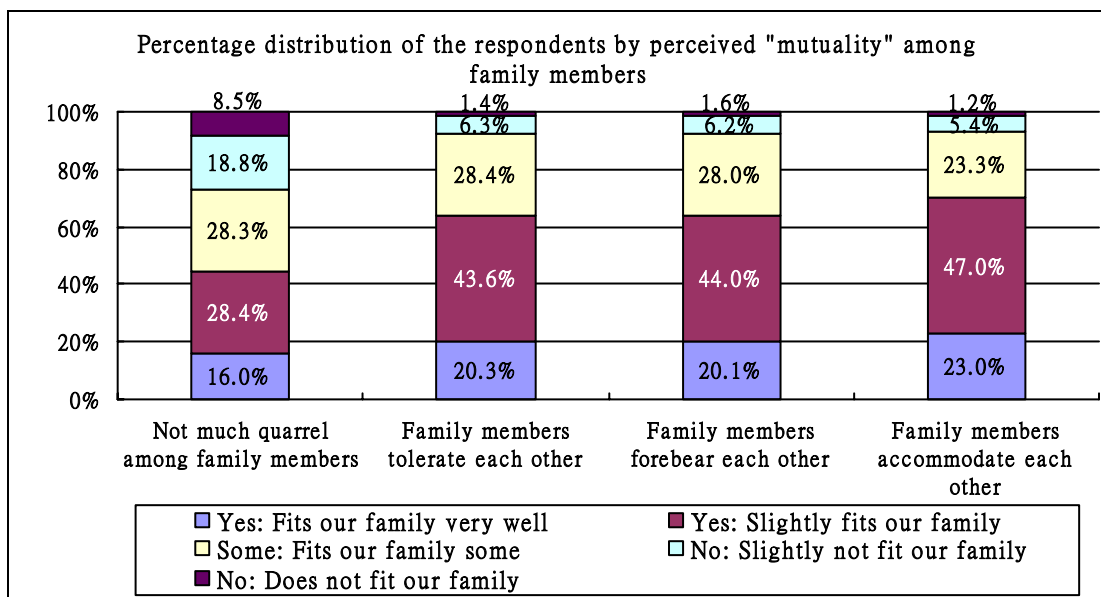
6.5.3 In addition, the majority of the respondents also considered that the family members got along well (accounting for 70% of the respondents) and the relationship between family members was very good (70%), and family members loved each other (79%) and cared each other (81%).



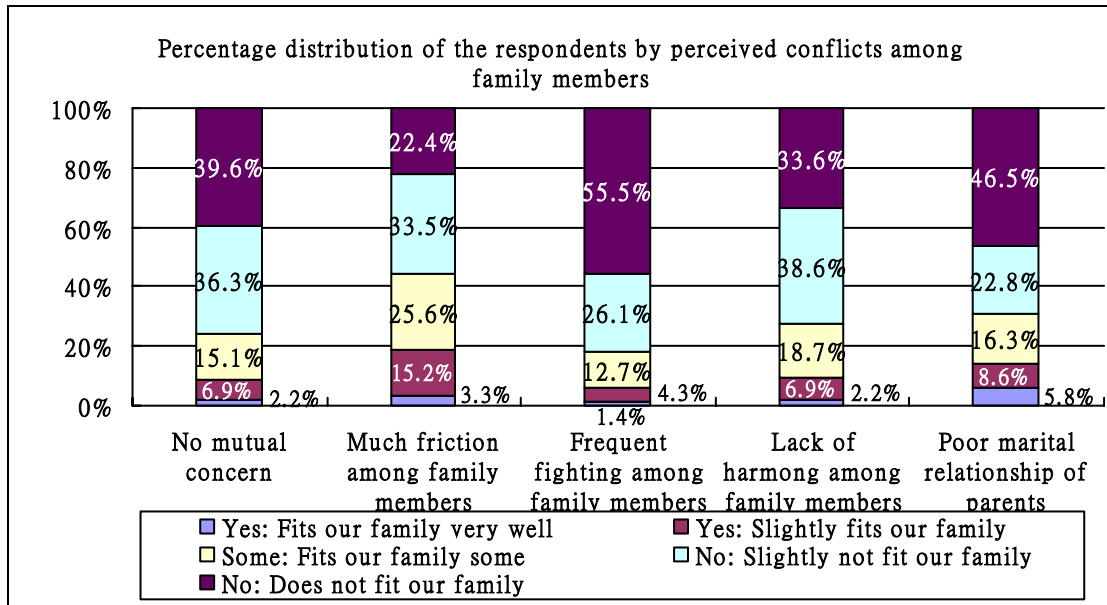
6.5.4 Furthermore, more than half of the respondents also considered that their family members talked to each other (accounting for 64% of the respondents), were cohesive (65%), enjoyed getting together (61%) and there were not much barrier among family members (60%). About 37% said that they had arranged family activities.



6.5.5 More than half of the respondents indicated that family members were tolerant each other (accounting for 64% of the respondents), forbore each other (64%) and accommodated each other (70%). About 44% said that there were not much quarrel among family members.

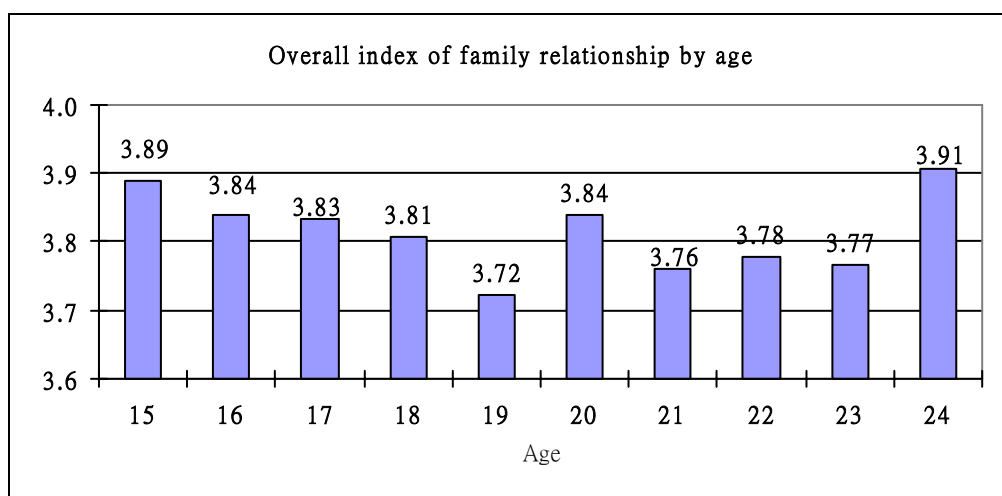


6.5.6 As regards conflicts among family members, only a small proportion of the respondents indicated that family members were no mutual concern (accounting for 9% of the respondents), frequented fighting among family members (6%) and that there were much friction among family members (19%) and lack of harmony among family members (9%). Only 14% said that the marital relationship between their parents was poor.



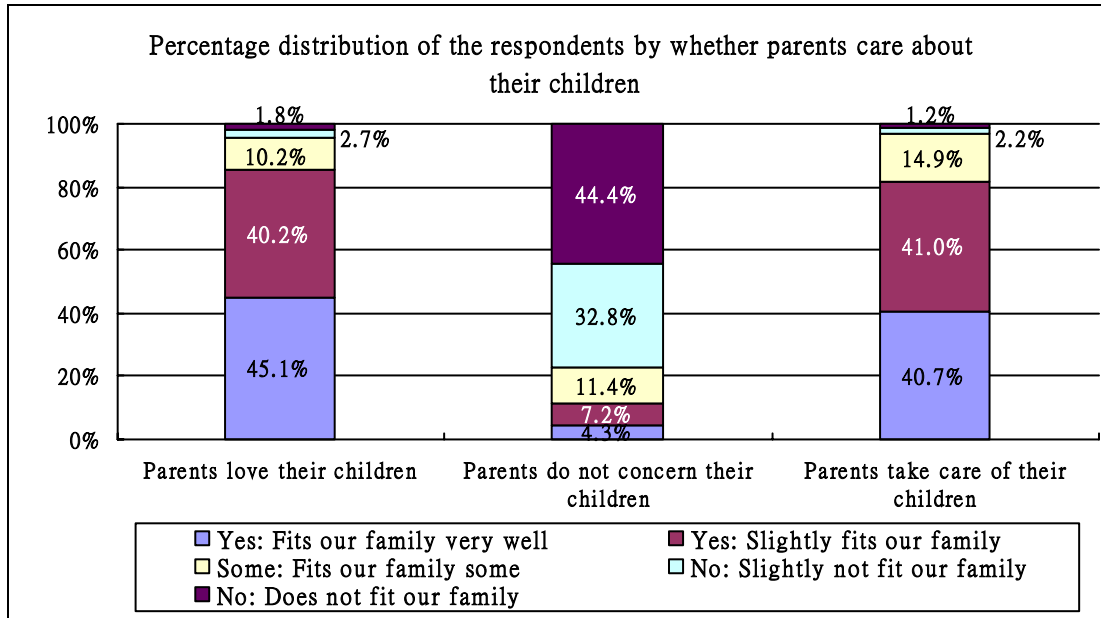
6.5.7 Expressed in a Likert scale of 5, an index of family relationship may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 22 items shown above. The index was 3.8, in a Likert scale of 5, indicating that respondents' perception of their family relationship was quite good. The index was more or less the same for those who were students (3.8) and employed (3.8), but was slightly lower for those who were not-at-school/not-at-work (3.6).

6.5.8 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of family relationship was relatively higher for those in the younger and older age groups in the age range of 15 – 24 for youth. The “double-dip” is also observed from the chart below.

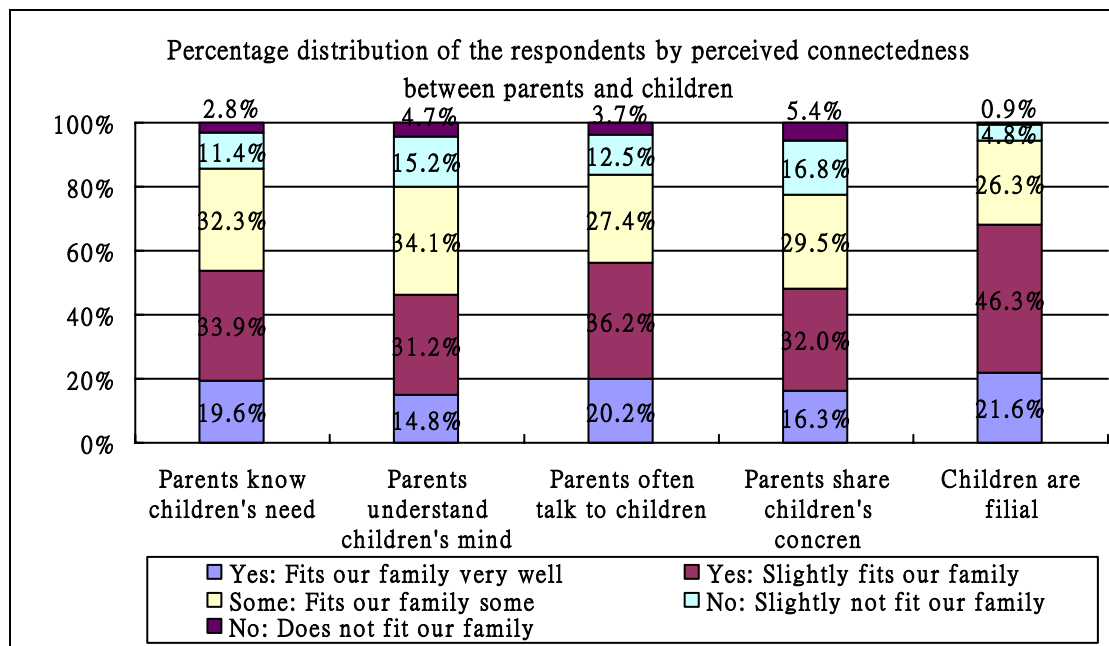


Parent-child relationship

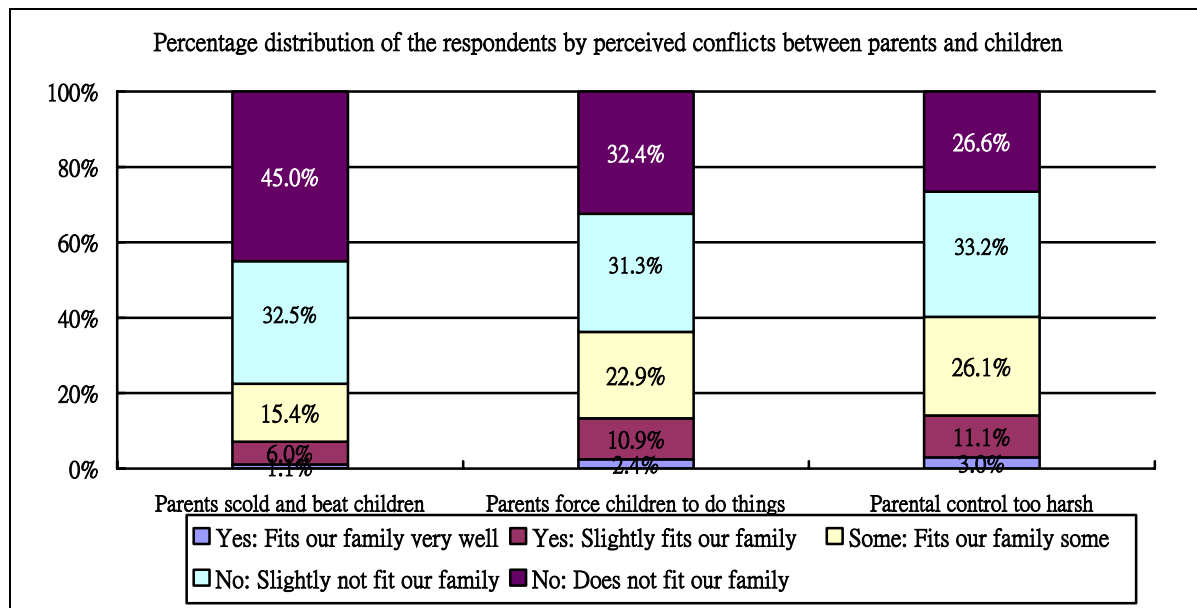
6.5.9 The majority of the respondents considered that their parents loved their children (accounting for 85% of the respondents) and took good care of their children (82%). Only about 12% said that their parents did not concern their children.



6.5.10 As regards connectedness between parents and children, slightly more than half of the respondents considered that their parents knew children's need (accounting for 54% of the respondents) and often talked to children (56%). Slightly less than half considered their parents understood children's mind (46%) and shared children's concern (48%). More than half (68%) of the respondents indicated that children were filial.

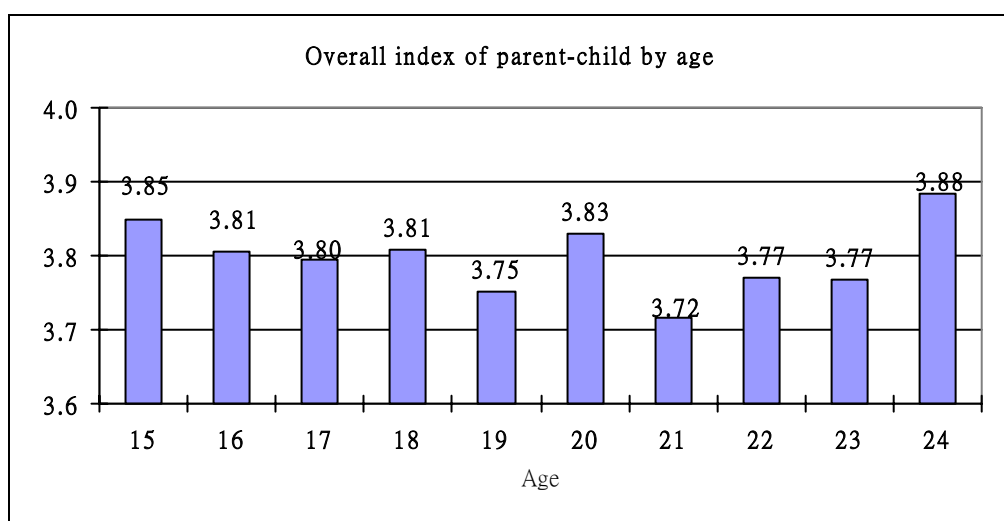


6.5.11 Concerning conflicts between parents and children, only a small proportion of the respondents indicated that their parents scolded and beat children (accounting for 7% of the respondents), forced children to do things (13%) and controlled too harsh (14%).



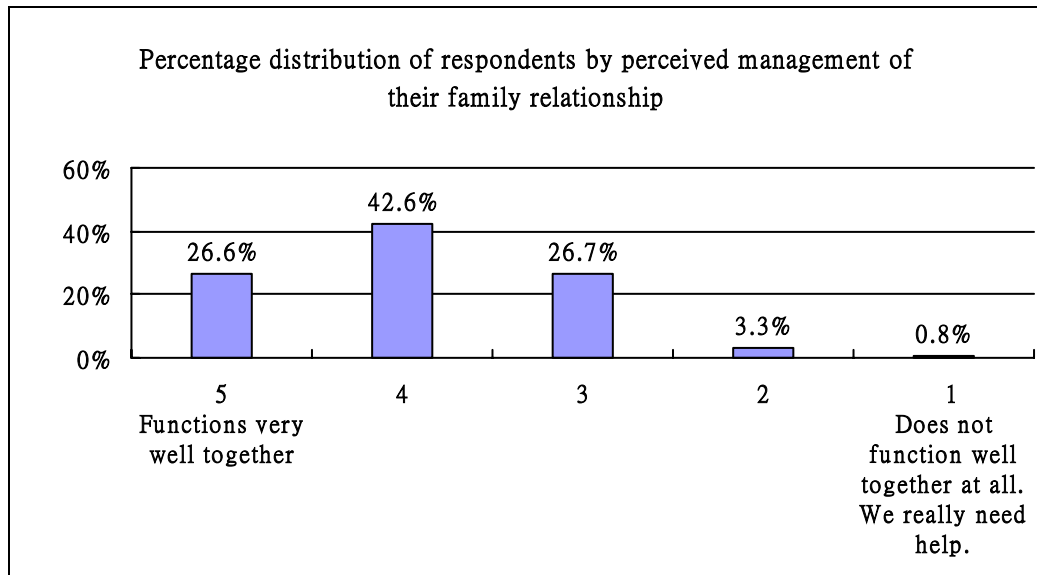
6.5.12 An index of parent-child relationship may be compiled from data obtained in the survey on the 11 items shown above. The index was 3.8, in a Likert scale of 5, indicating that respondents’ perception of their parent-child relationship was quite good. The index was more or less the same for those who were students (3.8) and employed (3.8), but was slightly lower for those who were not-at-school/not-at-work (3.6).

6.5.13 When analyzed by age of the respondents, it may be seen from the chart below that the overall index of parent-child relationship was relatively higher for those in the younger and older age groups in the age range of 15 – 24 for youth. The “double-dip” pattern is also observed from the chart below.

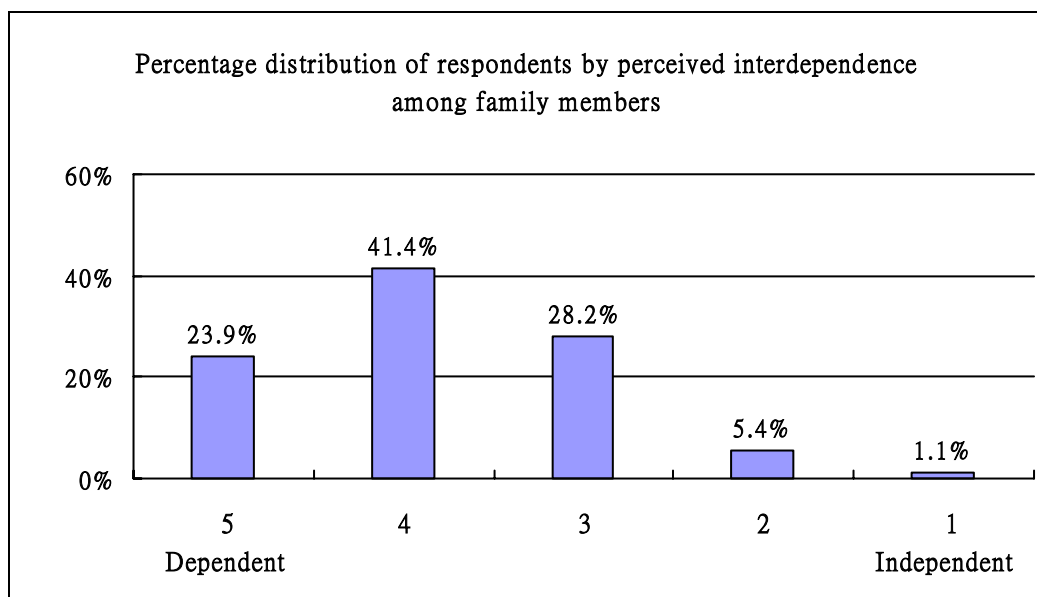


Family functioning in general

6.5.14 Respondents were asked in the survey to indicate their perceived management of relationship in their families, using a Likert scale of 5, with “5” indicating functioning very well together and “1” indicated not functioning well together and the respondents required help. The majority of the respondents (69%) gave a score of 5 or 4, indicating that they considered their family relationship was functioning very well.



6.5.15 Respondents were also asked in the survey to indicate their perceived interdependence among family members, using a Likert scale of 5, with “5” indicating dependent and “1” indicating independent. The majority of the respondents (65%) gave a score of 5 or 4, indicating that they considered that there were close interdependence among family members.



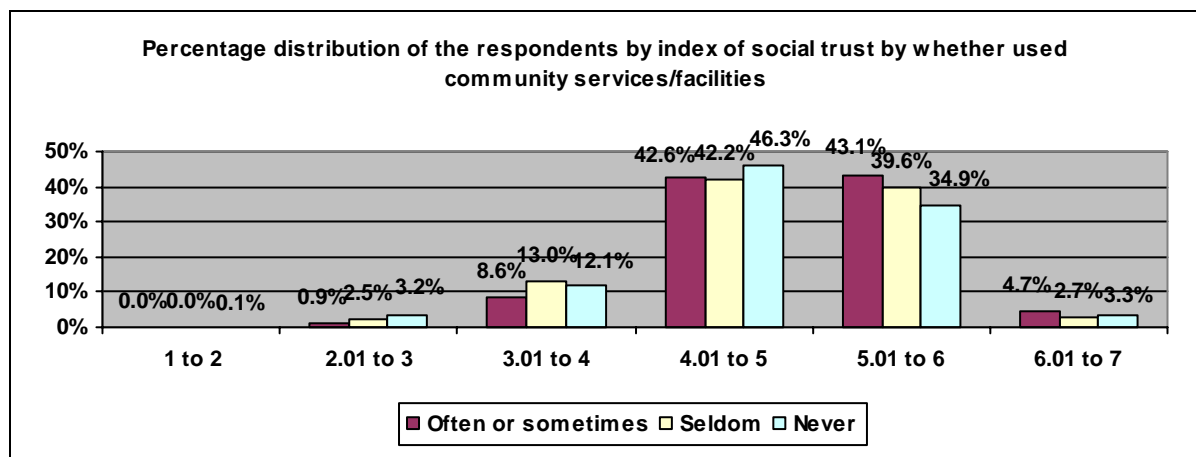
7. Causes and consequences of civic engagement and social networks

7.1 Use of community services

7.1.1 In Section 7, analysis is presented on the relationship between use of services provided by community organizations and government departments, selected social capital variables, social support network, family functioning, mental health and self-esteem. It should be noted that establishing a significant correlation between any two factors does not necessarily imply there is cause-and-effect relationship.

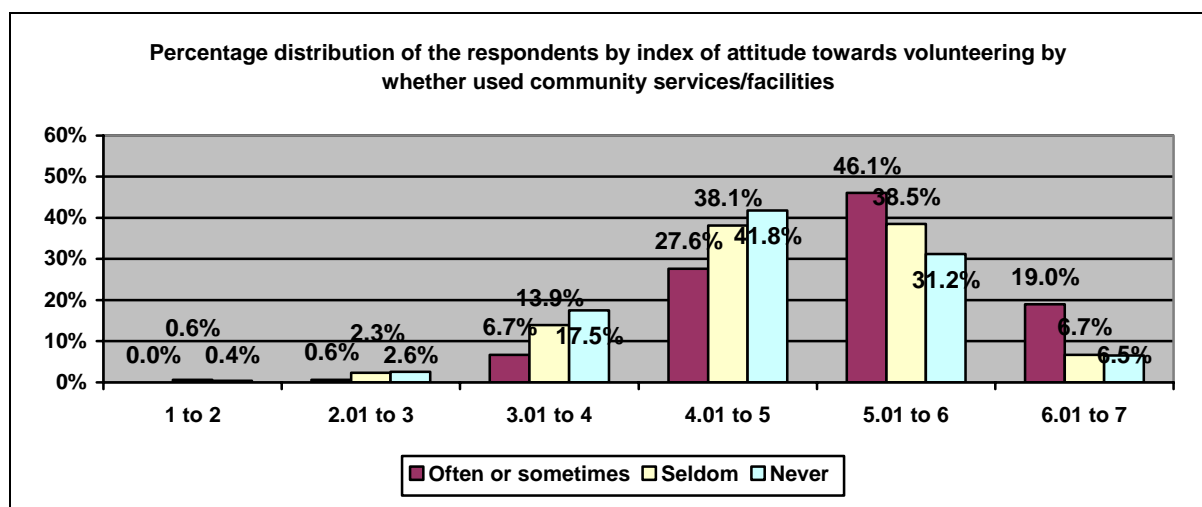
Social trust

7.1.2 When analyzed by use of community services or facilities, it may be seen from the chart below that those who often or sometimes used community services had a relatively higher level of social trust.



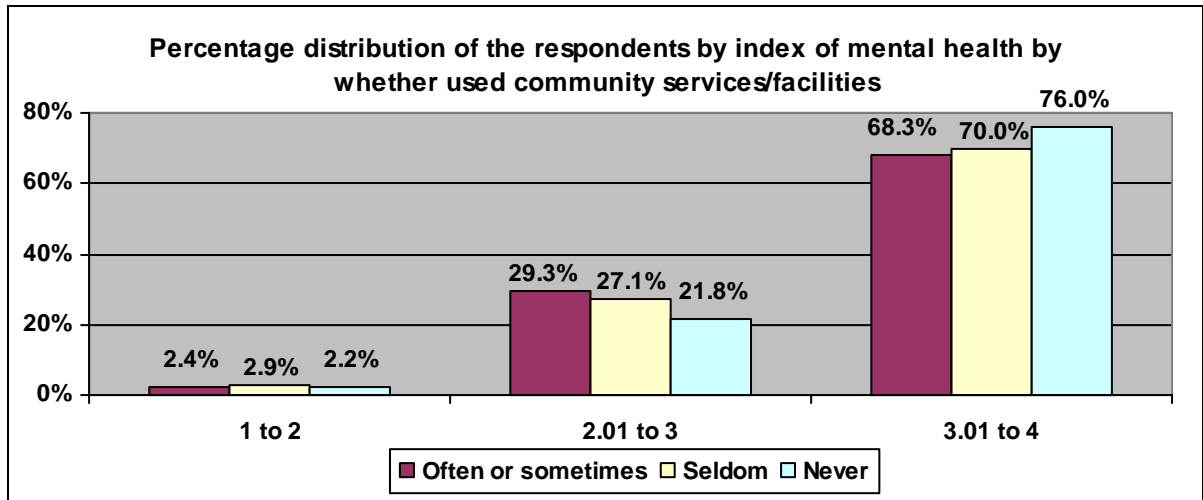
Attitude towards volunteering

7.1.3 When analyzed by use of community services or facilities, it may be seen from the chart below that those who often or sometimes used community services had markedly higher index of attitude towards volunteering.



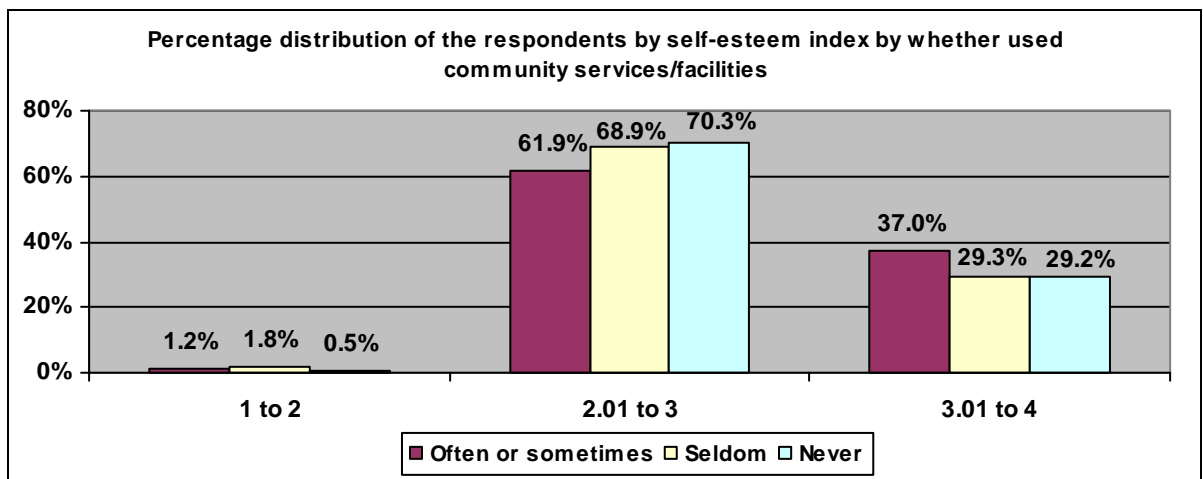
Mental health

7.1.4 Respondents who often or sometimes used community services had a slightly lower index of mental health, when compared with those who seldom or never used community services.



Self-esteem

7.1.5 On the other hand, the respondents who often or sometimes used community services had a higher index of self-esteem. For those who seldom used community services, their index of self-esteem was more or less the same as that of those who had never used community services.



7.2 Participation in programmes organized by government

Social trust

7.2.1 By relating participation in these programmes to the social trust of youth, those respondents who had participated in employment or training programmes had a slightly lower index of social trust (at 4.75) than those who had not (4.87).

Attitude towards volunteering

7.2.2 The index of attitude towards volunteering was more or less the same for those respondents who had participated in employment or training programmes (at 5.11) and those who had not (also at 5.11).

Mental health

7.2.3 The index of mental health was slightly lower for those respondents who had participated in employment or training programmes (3.18), as compared with those who had not (3.26).

Self-esteem

7.2.4 The self-esteem index was slightly lower for those who had participated in employment or training programmes (2.92), as compared with those who had not (2.99).

7.2.5 In short, while compared with use of community services is significantly related to enhancements in social capital and self-esteem of youths, participation in employment or training programmes is related to lower mental health and self-esteem of youths.

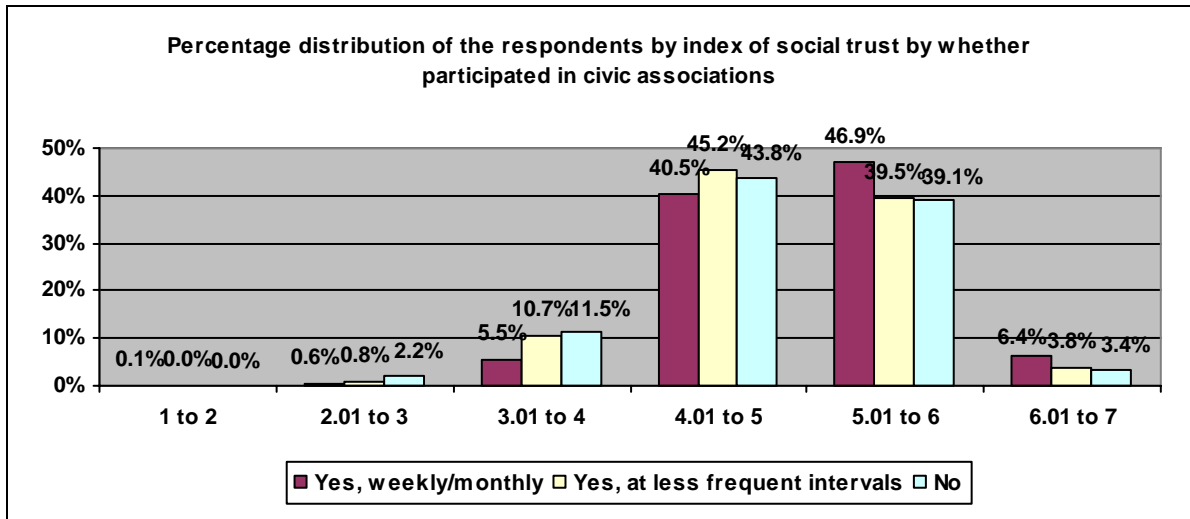
7.3 Associational involvement

7.3.1 In Section 4, different areas of civic engagement and social networks of youth are examined. While they constitute the social capital of youth and are in turn influenced by other factors like use of community services or facilities and participation in employment or training programmes, each area of civic engagement and social networks is also directly or indirectly affected by other areas. In particular, associational involvement, as described in Section 4.2, which is an element of structural social capital, resembles closely use of community services or facilities and participation in employment and training programmes, in so far as it represents another form of participation in community activities. In this section, its relationship with other facets of social capital and mental health status is examined.

7.3.2 The survey findings also reveal that 9.1% of the respondents had joined uniformed groups and 7.5% joined social services groups. The relationship of this particular kind of associational involvement with other areas of social capital and mental health status is also examined and presented in this section.

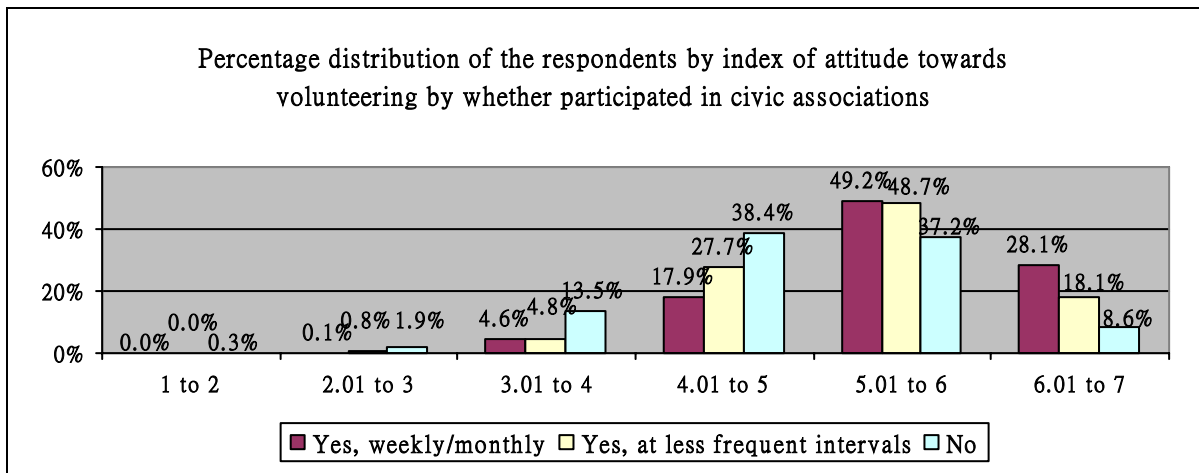
Social trust

7.3.3 Respondents who had joined civic associations and participated in associations' activities weekly or monthly had a higher index of social trust than those who had not joined civic associations as well as those who participated in associations' activities on a less frequent interval. For those respondents who had participated in uniformed or social services groups, they had a slightly higher index of social trust (4.98) than those who had not (4.82).



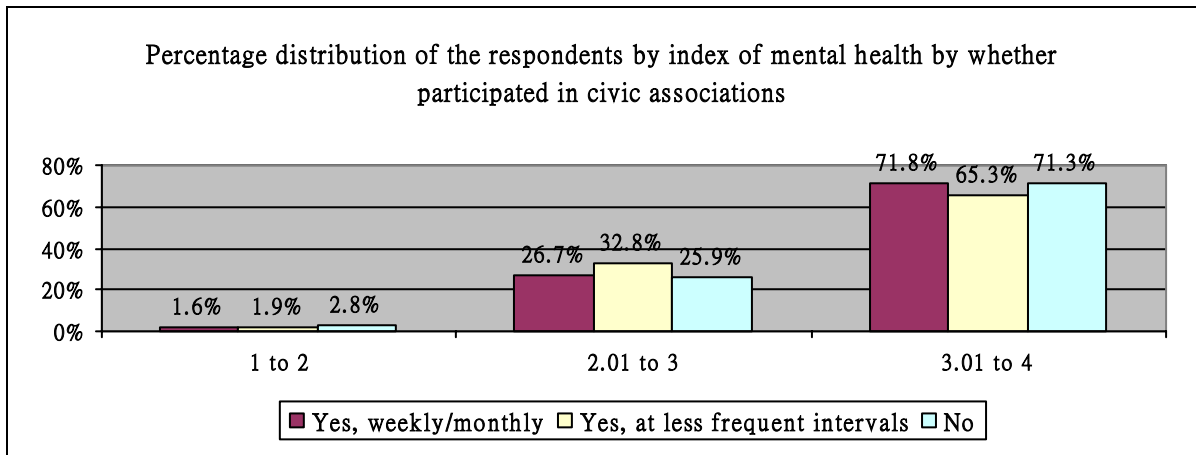
Attitude towards volunteering

7.3.4 Respondents who had participated in civic associations had a markedly higher index of attitude towards volunteering, as compared to those who participated in associations' activities on a less frequent interval, and those who did not join civic associations. For those respondents who had participated in uniformed or social services groups, they also had a markedly higher index of attitude towards volunteering (5.66) than those who had not (5.02).



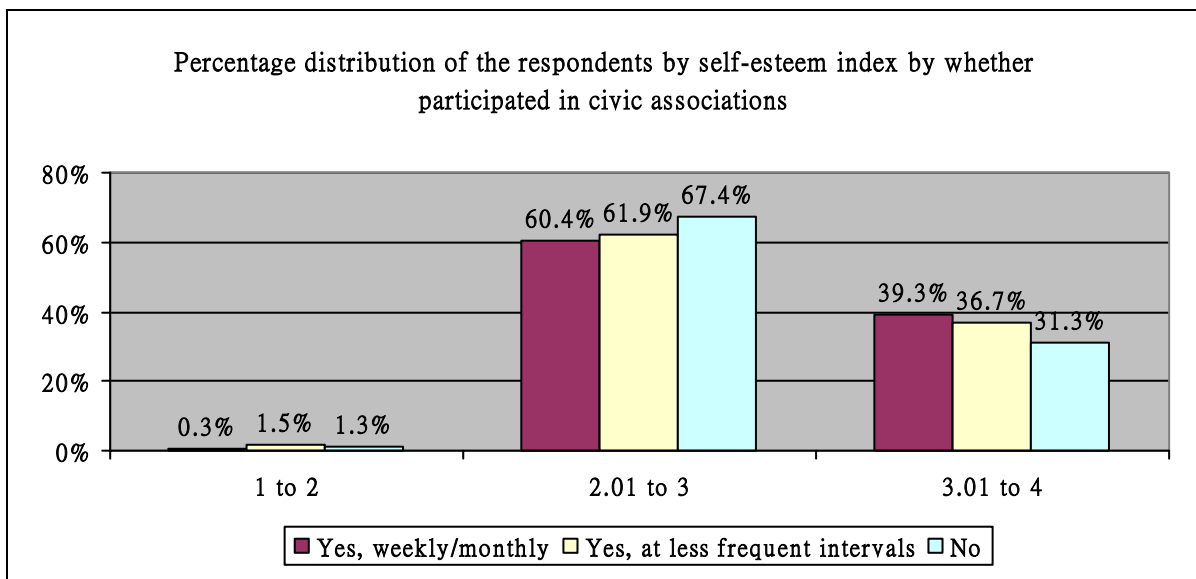
Mental health

7.3.5 Respondents who had participated in civic associations’ activities at less frequent intervals had a slightly lower index of mental health, when compared to those who had participated in associations’ activities weekly or monthly and those who did not join civic associations. For those respondents who had participated in uniformed or social services groups, they had a slightly lower index of mental health (3.21) than those who had not (3.25).



Self-esteem

7.3.6 Respondents who had participated in associations’ activities weekly or monthly had a higher index of self-esteem, as compared to those who participated in associations’ activities on a less frequent interval, and those who did not join civic associations. For those respondents who had participated in uniformed or social services groups, they had a slightly higher index of self-esteem (3.00) than those who had not (2.97).



7.4 Faith-based engagement

Social trust

7.4.1 Respondents who had religious belief and considered themselves as very or quite devoted had a higher index of social trust (5.01) than those who were only a little devoted or not devoted (4.73) as well as those who did not have religious belief (4.84).

Attitude towards volunteering

7.4.2 Respondents who had religious belief and considered themselves as very or quite devoted had a higher index of attitude towards volunteering (5.49) than those who were only a little devoted or not devoted (5.30) as well as those who did not have religious belief (5.02).

Mental health

7.4.3 Respondents who had religious belief and considered themselves as very or quite devoted had a slightly higher index of mental health (3.24) than those who were only a little devoted or not devoted (3.12), but slightly lower index of mental health than those who did not have religious belief (3.26).

Self-esteem

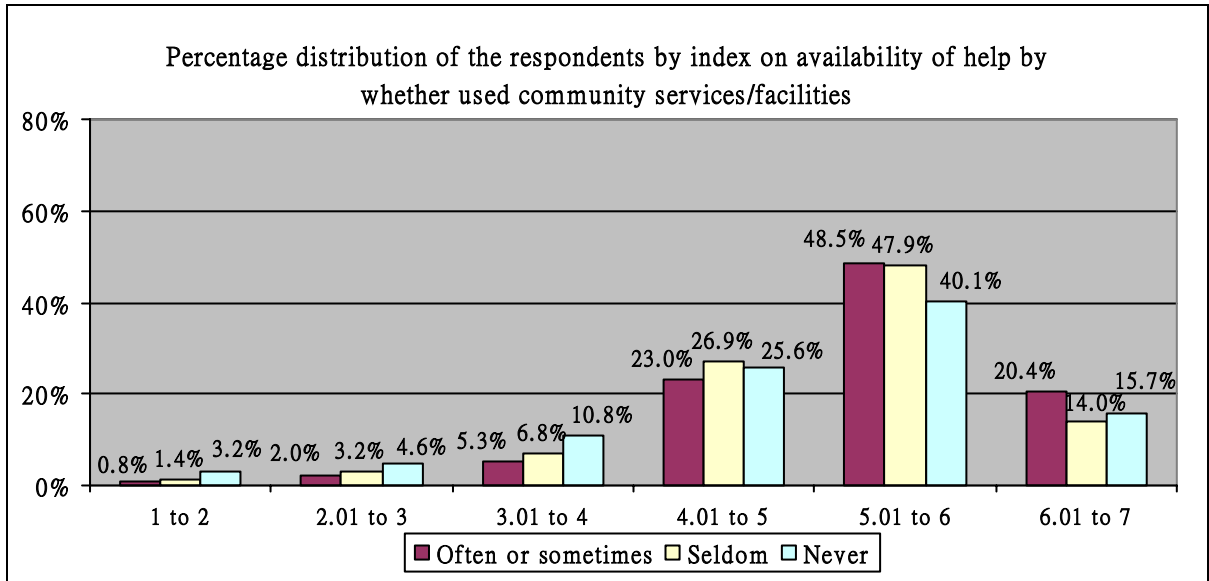
7.4.4 Respondents who had religious belief and considered themselves as very or quite devoted had a slightly higher index of self-esteem (3.02) than those who were only a little devoted or not devoted (2.93) as well as those who did not have religious belief (2.97).

7.5 Social support network

7.5.1 Social support network of youth is closely related to bonding social capital of youths and their relationship with family members, friends and neighbours. It is also related to how youths make use of community and government services. In this section, analysis is presented on the relationship between availability of help from friends and social capital, use of community services and participation in programmes organized by community organizations and government departments.

Use of community services

7.5.2 Respondents who often or sometimes used community services had a slightly higher index on availability of help, as compared to those who seldom used community services as well as those who did not used community services.

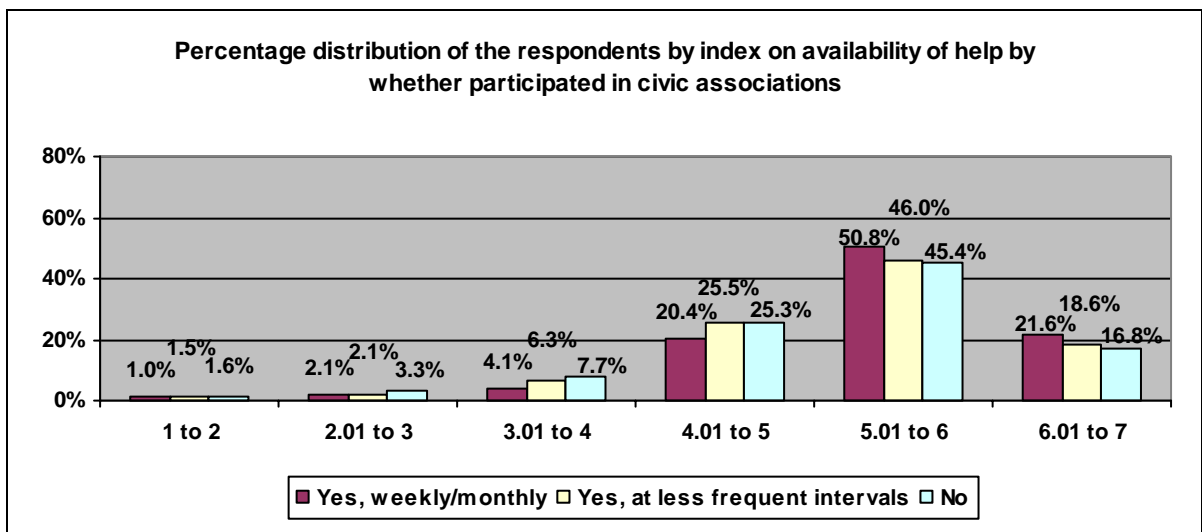


Participation in employment/training programmes

7.5.3 Respondents who had participated in employment or training programmes also had a slightly higher index of availability of help (5.31), as compared to those who had not participated (5.26).

Associational involvement

7.5.4 Respondents who had joined civic associations and participated in activities on a weekly or monthly basis had a higher index on availability of help, as compared to those who had joined civic association but participated in activities at a less frequent interval as well as those who had not joined civic associations. The index was also higher for those who had joined uniformed or social services groups (5.44), as compared with those who had not (5.25).



Faith-based engagement

7.5.5 Respondents who had religious belief and considered themselves as very devoted or quite devoted had a slightly higher index of availability of help (5.45) than those who had religious belief but were a little devoted or not devoted (5.22), as well as those who did not have any religious belief (5.26).

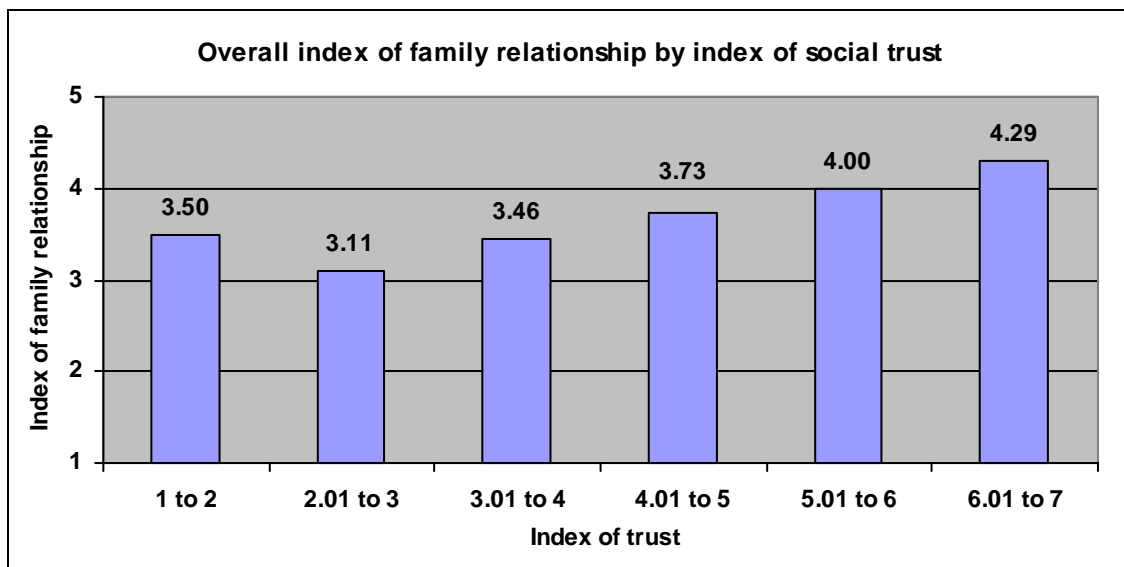
7.6 Family functioning

7.6.1 The family functioning of youths is believed to have an impact on the social capital, social support network, mental health and self-esteem of youths. In this section, analysis is presented on the relationship between two components of family functioning (i.e. family relationship and parent-child relationship) and social capital, social support network, mental health and self-esteem of youth.

Family relationship

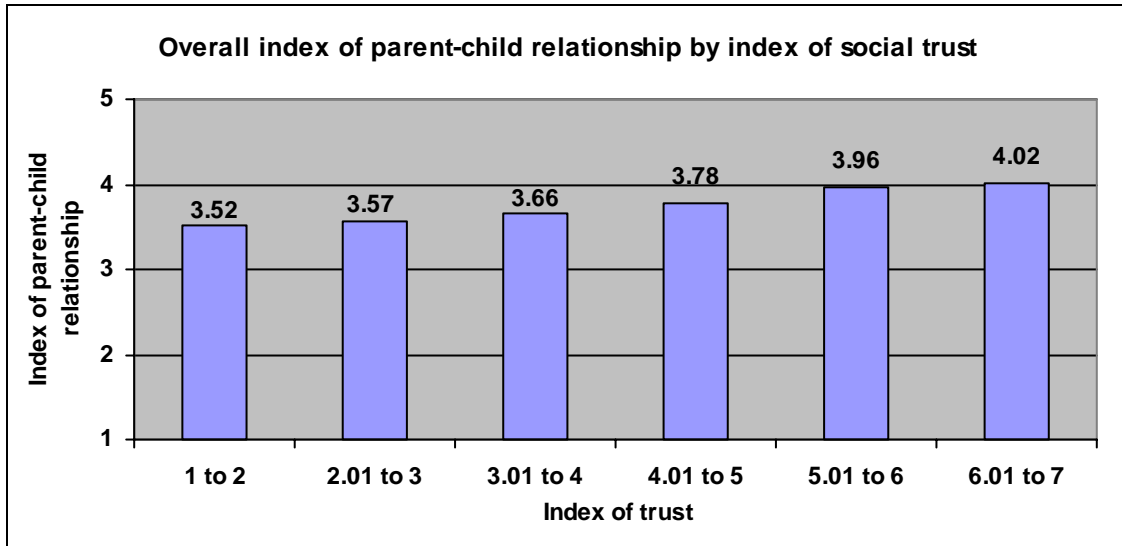
Family relationship and social trust

7.6.2 Respondents with higher index of family relationship also had a higher level of social trust. The index of family relationship is positively correlated with the index of social trust.



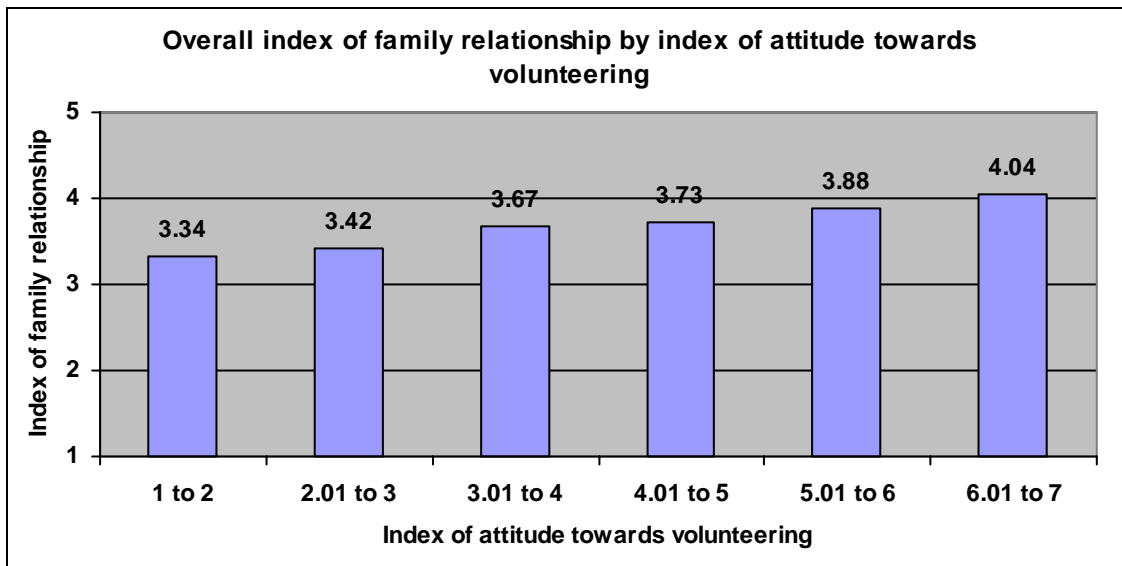
Parent-child relationship and social trust

7.6.3 When analyzed by parent-child relationship, it may be seen from the chart below that respondents with higher index of parent-child relationship also had a higher level of social trust. The index of parent-child relationship is positively correlated with the index of social trust.



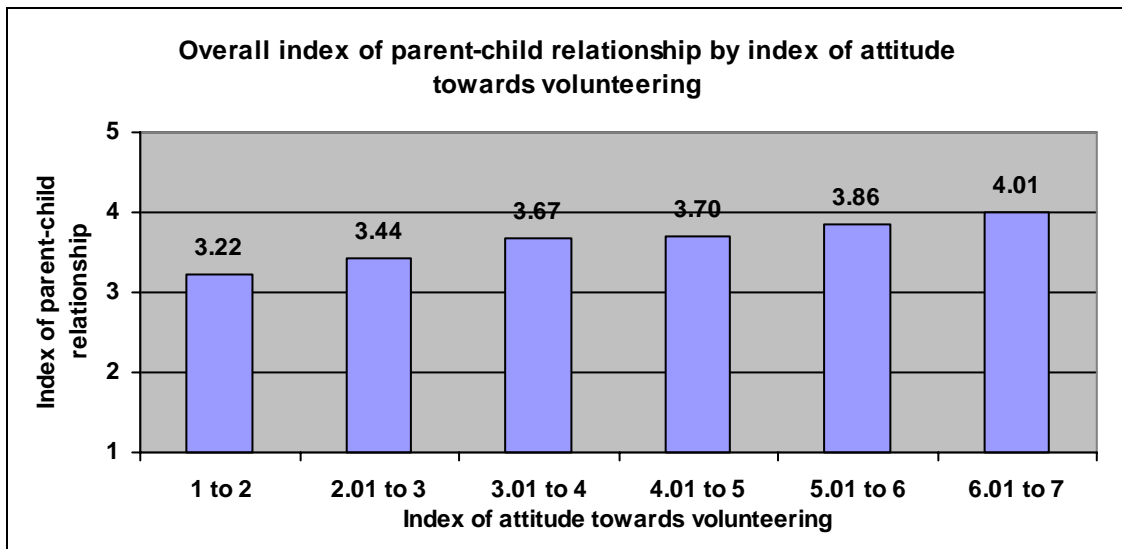
Family relationship and volunteering

7.6.4 When analyzed by the overall index of family relationship, it may be seen from the chart below that respondents with higher index of family relationship also had a higher index of attitude towards volunteering. The index of family relationship is positively correlated with the index of attitude towards volunteering.



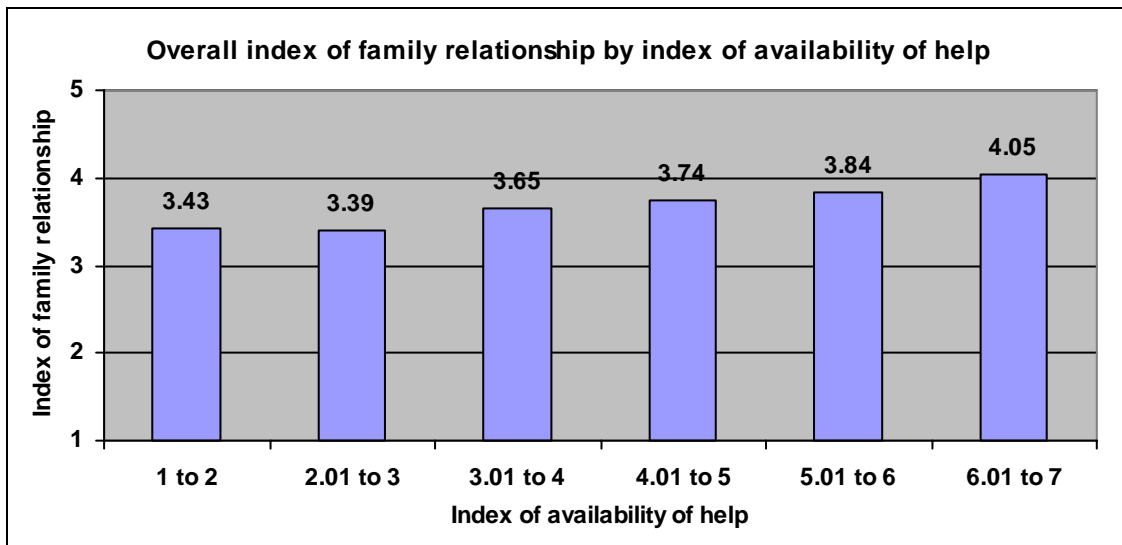
Parent-child relationship and volunteering

7.6.5 When analyzed by parent-child relationship, it may be seen from the chart below that respondents with higher index of parent-child relationship also had a higher index of attitude towards volunteering. The index of parent-child relationship is positively correlated with the index of attitude towards volunteering.



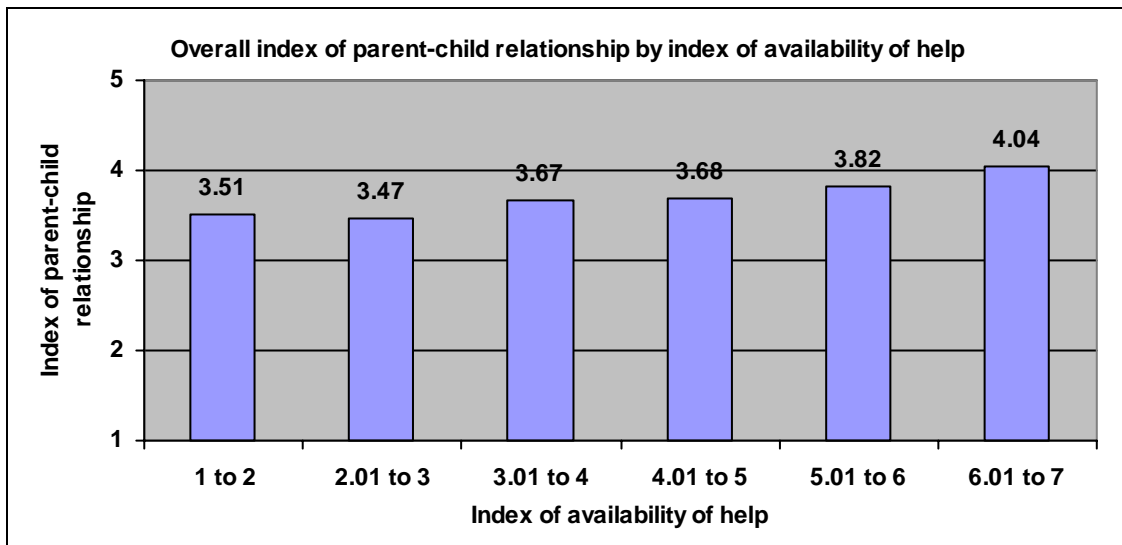
Family relationship and social support network

7.6.6 When analyzed by the overall index of family relationship, it may be seen from the chart below that respondents with higher index of family relationship also had a higher index on availability of help from friends. The index of family relationship is positively correlated with the index on availability of help.



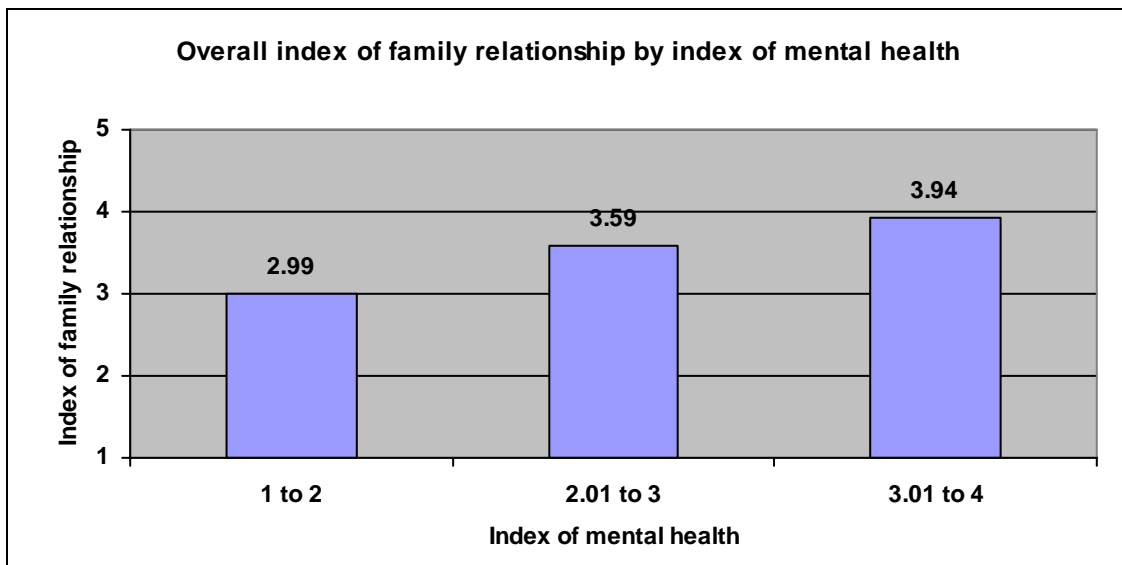
Parent-child relationship and social support network

7.6.7 When analyzed by parent-child relationship, it may be seen from the chart below that respondents with higher index of parent-child relationship also had a higher index on availability of help from friends. The index of parent-child relationship is positively correlated with the index on availability of help.



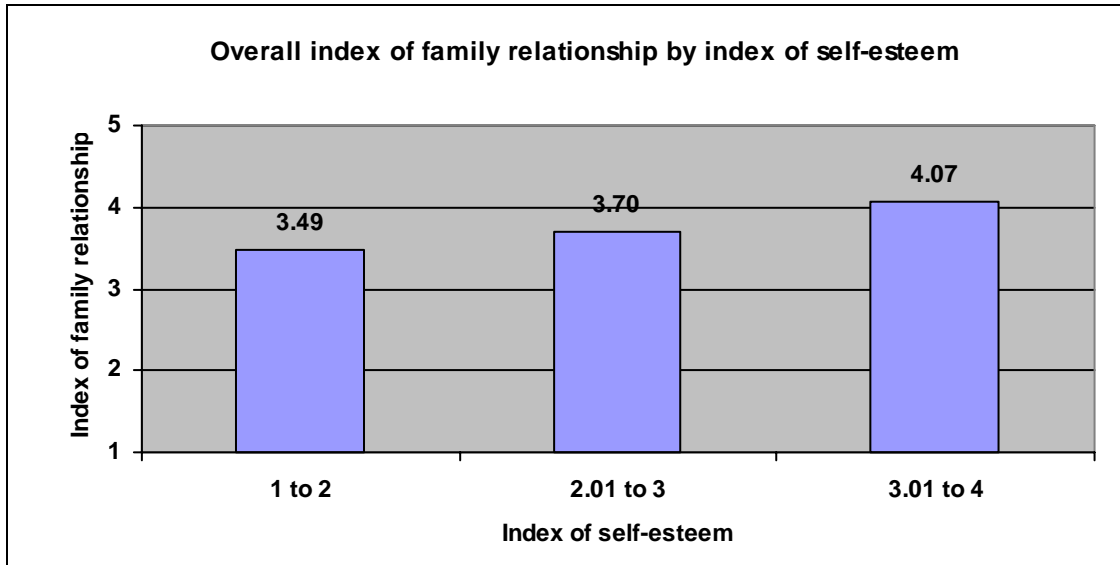
Family relationship and mental health

7.6.8 As shown in the chart below, respondents with higher index of family relationship also had a higher index of mental health. The index of family relationship is positively correlated with the index of mental health.



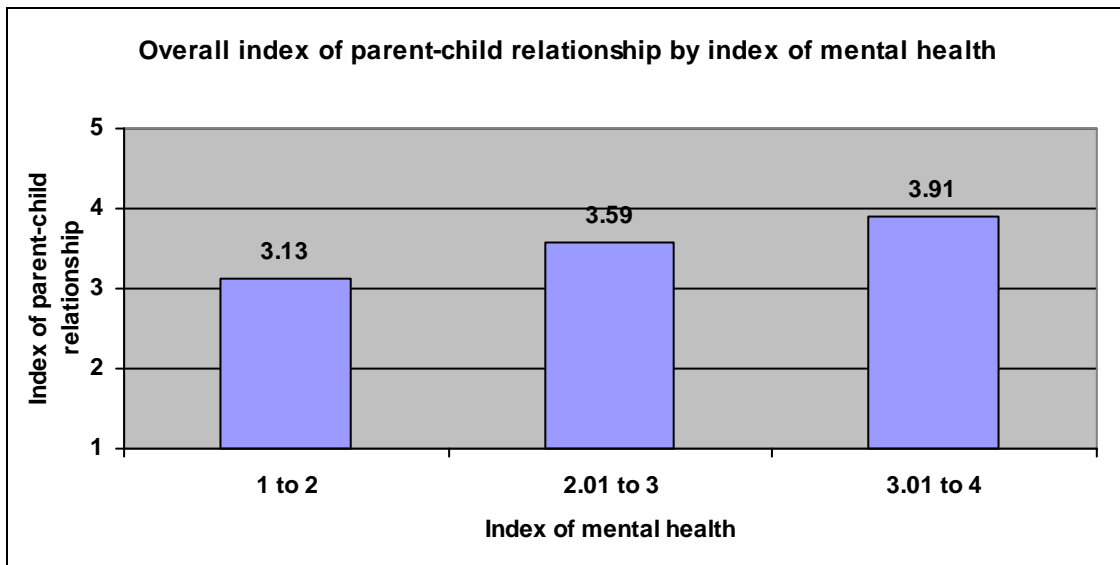
Family relationship and self-esteem

7.6.9 As regards the self-esteem of the respondents, those with higher index of family relationship had a higher self-esteem. The index of family relationship is positively correlated with the index of self-esteem.



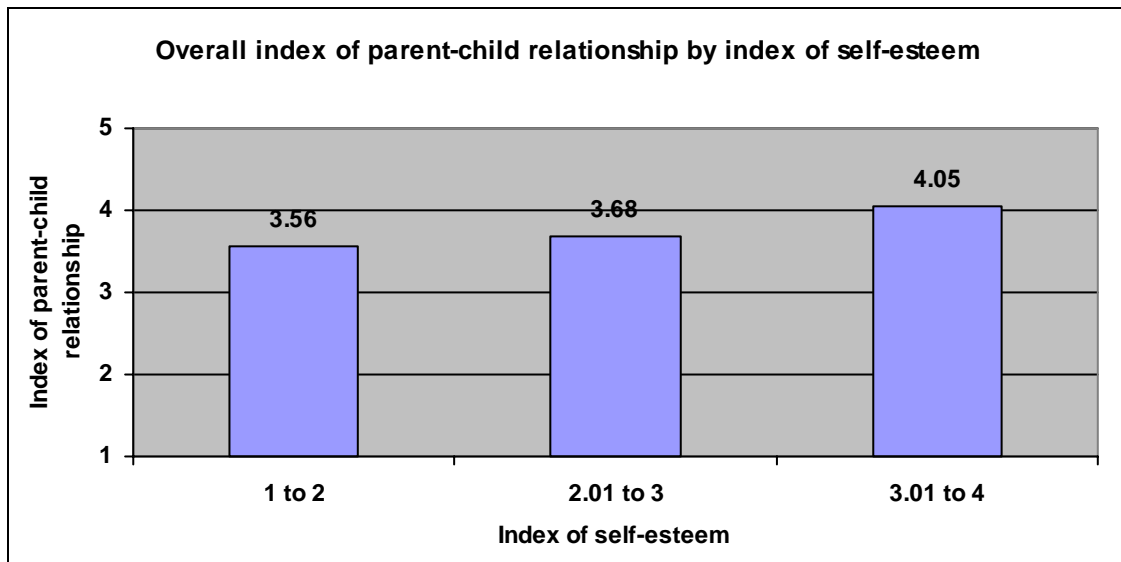
Parent-child relationship and mental health

7.6.10 As shown in the chart below, respondents with higher index of parent-child relationship also had a higher index of mental health. The index of parent-child relationship is positively correlated with the index of mental health.



Parent-child relationship and self-esteem

7.6.11 As regards the self-esteem of the respondents, those with higher index of parent-child relationship had a higher self-esteem. The index of parent-child relationship is positively correlated with the index of self-esteem.

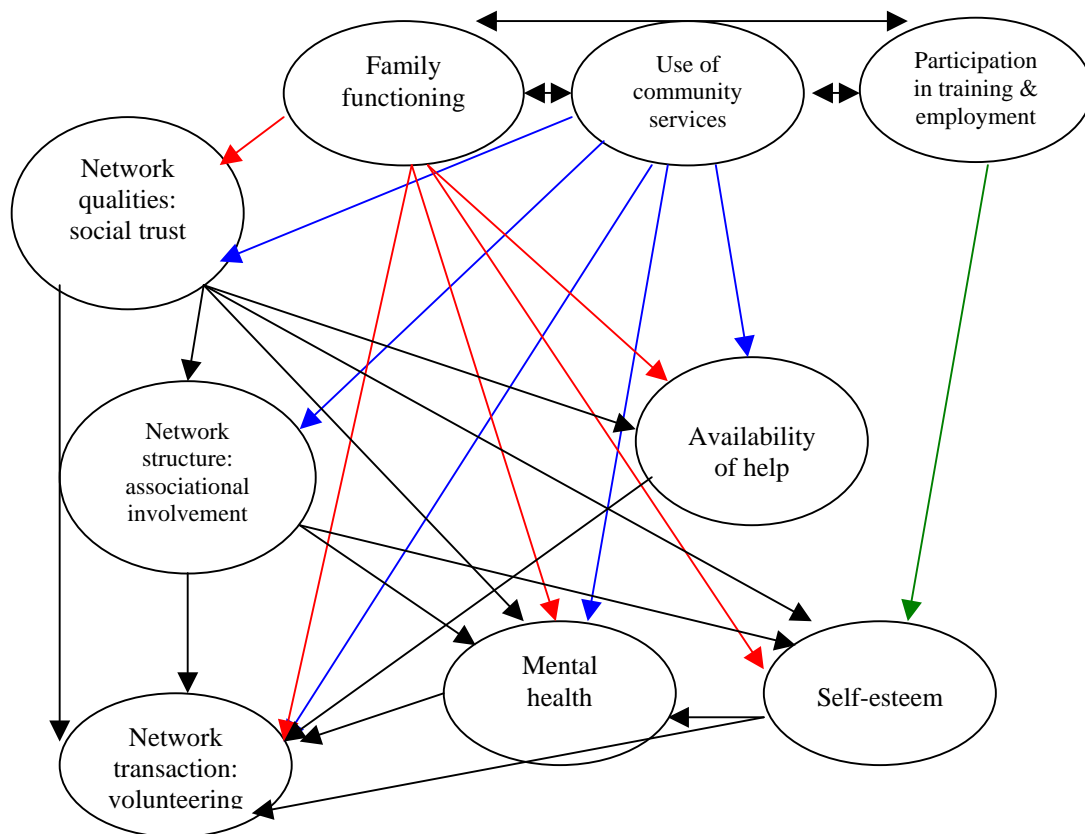


7.7 Towards a model of civic engagement and social networks

7.7.1 As discussed above, it is postulated that social capital is affected by use of community services, employment and training programmes, and family functioning. Social capital, together with the person's human capital, in turn would have an impact on the persons' general health status, self-esteem. To simplify model computation, the following indicators are used as proxy measures of the variables. In other words, 3 exogenous variables and 6 endogenous variables are used to develop the path model:

- a) Determinants of social capital
 - 1) Use of community services;
 - 2) Participation in employment or training programmes;
 - 3) Index of family functioning (which is a combination of the index of family relationship and index of parent-child relationship);
- b) Measures of social capital
 - 1) Index of social trust;
 - 2) Associational involvement;
- c) Outcomes of social capital
 - 1) Index of attitude towards volunteering;
 - 2) Index of availability of help;
 - 3) Index of mental health;
 - 4) Index of self-esteem.

7.7.2 The results of the path analysis depicted in the chart below:



7.7.3 It may have seen from the chart above family functioning had a direct effect on social trust, volunteering, availability of help, self-esteem and mental health. Use of community facilities had a direct effect on social trust, volunteering, associational involvement, availability of help and mental health. For participation in employment or training programmes, however, it only had a direct (negative) effect on self-esteem. The standardized path coefficients showing the direct effect of the 3 exogenous variables are shown below.

| Endogenous variables | Exogenous variables | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | Family functioning | Use of community services | Participation in employment or training programmes |
| Social trust | 0.352 | 0.072 | - |
| Associational involvement | - | 0.193 | - |
| Index of attitude towards volunteering | 0.091 | 0.133 | - |
| Availability of help | 0.137 | 0.096 | - |
| Index of self-esteem | 0.315 | - | -0.032 |
| Index of mental health | 0.174 | -0.114 | - |

7.7.4 The direct effects among the 6 endogenous variables are given in the table below. It may have seen that social trust had a positive impact on other 5 endogenous variables. Associational involvement also had direct effect on attitude towards volunteering, self-esteem and mental health.

| Endogenous variables | Endogenous variables | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| | Social trust | Associational involvement | Index of attitude towards volunteering | Availability of help | Index of self-esteem | Index of mental health |
| Social trust | - | | | | | |
| Associational involvement | 0.068 | - | | | | |
| Index of attitude towards volunteering | 0.225 | 0.237 | - | | | |
| Availability of help | 0.199 | - | 0.106 | - | | |
| Index of self-esteem | 0.124 | 0.046 | 0.128 | - | - | |
| Index of mental health | 0.143 | -0.058 | -0.103 | - | 0.339 | - |

7.7.5 The total effects of the 3 exogenous variables on the 6 endogenous variables may be obtained by summing up the direct effects and indirect effects (mediated through other endogenous variables). The standardized path coefficients representing the total effects of the 3 exogenous variables are given in the table below. It may be seen that family functioning had a positive effect on social trust, associational involvement, volunteering, availability of help, self-esteem and mental health. Use of community services also had a positive effect on social trust, associational involvement, volunteering, availability of help and self-esteem, but a negative effect on mental health. For participation in employment or training programmes, it had a negative effect on volunteering, self-esteem and mental health.

| Endogenous variables | Exogenous variables | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | Family functioning | Use of community services | Participation in employment or training programmes |
| Social trust | 0.352 | 0.072 | - |
| Associational involvement | 0.024 | 0.198 | - |
| Index of attitude towards volunteering | 0.208 | 0.221 | -0.003 |
| Availability of help | 0.207 | 0.11 | - |
| Index of self-esteem | 0.36 | 0.018 | -0.032 |
| Index of mental health | 0.344 | -0.109 | -0.011 |

7.8 Impact of civic engagement and social networks on economic wellbeing

Youths aged 15 – 19

7.8.1 As discussed in above, it is also postulated that civic engagement and social networks had an impact on economic wellbeing, and in particular, on whether youth were engaged in education/employment, or not-at-school/not-at-work. A logistic regression analysis was performed on the family functioning, use of community services, participation in employment or training and other social capital and outcome variables. Results of the step-wise logistic regression for youth aged 15 – 19 are shown in the table below. It may be seen that 5 variables, namely use of community services, participation in employment or training programmes, associational involvement, perception in life and

self-esteem were found to be significant, based on the usual 0.05 significance level. A negative coefficient (B) denotes that the use of community services, for example, is related to a reduced chance of becoming not-at-school and not-at-work. A positive coefficient (B) for participation in employment or training programmes, on the other hand, denotes that participation is related to increased chance of becoming not-at-school and not-at-work.

| Variables | B | Standard error | Wald statistics | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Exp(B) | 95% confidence interval for Exp(B) | |
|---|--------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|------------------------------------|--------|
| | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Use of community services | -1.169 | .266 | 19.287 | 1 | .000 | .311 | .184 | .523 |
| Participation in employment or training | 2.057 | .255 | 64.998 | 1 | .000 | 7.822 | 4.744 | 12.897 |
| Associational involvement | -.727 | .331 | 4.830 | 1 | .028 | .483 | .253 | .924 |
| Perception in life | -.325 | .136 | 5.740 | 1 | .017 | .723 | .554 | .943 |
| Self-esteem | -.885 | .343 | 6.667 | 1 | .010 | .413 | .211 | .808 |
| Constant | .570 | .949 | .361 | 1 | .548 | 1.768 | - | - |

Youths aged 20 – 24

7.8.2 As factors affecting the economic wellbeing of youths aged 20 – 24 are likely to be different from those for youths aged 15 – 19, a separate logistic regression analysis was performed. Results of the step-wise logistic regression on youths aged 20 - 24 are shown in the table below. It may be seen that 4 variables, namely associational involvement, self-esteem, availability of help and family relationship were found to be significant, based on the usual 0.05 significance level. A negative coefficient (B) denotes that improvement in family relationship, for example, is related to a reduced chance of becoming not-at-school and not-at-work.

| Variables | B | Standard error | Wald statistics | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Exp(B) | 95% confidence interval for Exp(B) | |
|---------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|------------------------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Associational involvement | -.584 | .246 | 5.613 | 1 | .018 | .558 | .344 | .904 |
| Self-esteem | -.834 | .276 | 9.119 | 1 | .003 | .434 | .253 | .746 |
| Availability of help | -.251 | .086 | 8.608 | 1 | .003 | .778 | .658 | .920 |
| Family relationship | -.346 | .149 | 5.387 | 1 | .020 | .707 | .528 | .948 |
| Constant | 2.616 | .887 | 8.699 | 1 | .003 | 13.683 | - | - |

8. Observations and recommendations

8.1 Social capital of youths

Levels of social capital

8.1.1 For cognitive social capital, the survey findings show that youths had a high level of trust in their family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues, indicating a strong bonding social capital, though the strength of bonding social capital became weaker as it was extended from family members to colleagues and other people in Hong Kong. The index of trust in people was quite high, at 5.1 in a Likert scale of 7. The index of trust in institutions, as an indicator of linking social capital, was relatively lower, at 4.6.

8.1.2 Other components of social capital, as perceived by youths, like diversity of friendship (at 5.3 in a Likert scale of 7), attitude towards volunteering (5.1 in a Likert scale of 7) were also fairly high.

8.1.3 As regards social capital “in action”, while the majority (78%) had weekly informal social activities with friends, classmates or colleagues, only about one third had participated in civic associations. About half of youths aged 18 – 24 had registered as voters and only 16% of youths had participated in civic rallies in the past 12 months prior to enumeration. Furthermore, less than half (48%) had participated in volunteer work and about 59% had made donation in the past 12 months prior to enumeration.

8.1.4 Apparently, for many youths in Hong Kong, they have yet to translate their social capital, at the cognitive level, into concrete actions, through participation in social capital related activities like participation in volunteering work.

Variations of social capital with age

8.1.5 A “double dip” pattern is observed when trust in people, trust in institutions and attitude towards volunteering are analyzed by age. While diversity of friendship increased with age, associational involvement decreased with age. The “double dip” reflects to a certain extent the challenges youths faced as during transition from school to work or further education, at the ages of 17 – 19 and 21 – 23, affecting their cognitive social capital and attitude towards volunteering.

Differences between youths of different economic activity status

8.1.6 For youths who were students, most of their social capital components were higher, including social trust, associational involvement, informal socializing, attitude towards and participation in volunteer work, making donation and faith-based engagement, as compared with those who were employed and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work.

8.1.7 For those who were not-at-school and not-at-work, on the other hand, most of their social capital components were lower, including social trust, associational involvement, diversity of friendship, informal socializing, conventional politics and civic rallies, attitude towards and participation in volunteer work and making donation, as compared with those who were students and those who were employed.

8.2 Use of services and social support networks of youths

Use of services

8.2.1 While the majority (77%) of youths had made use of services provided by community organizations, only about 26% had participated in employment or training programmes provided by government. A relatively higher proportion of students had used services provided by community organizations, as compared with those who were employed and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work. As regards the proportion who had participated in employment or training programmes, on the other hand, it was relatively higher for those who were not-at-school and not-at-work.

8.2.2 The relatively low participation of students in employment or training programmes is understandable given that such programmes are not designed for students. The low usage rate of community services by youths who were not-at-school and not-at-work is a definitely an area of concern as these services should be helpful to them in enhancing their social capital and social support networks.

8.2.3 Furthermore, when analyzed by age, the percentage of youths who had used services provided by community organizations was relatively lower for the older age groups. This may reflect that demand for such services from youths aged above 21 is relatively lower. This may also due to the fact that the kind of services organized by community organizations are not geared to the needs or cater for the interests of youths in their late adolescents.

Social support networks

8.2.4 It may be of interest to note that youths usually approached their parents for help with regards to financial problems, but approached their good friends for help in dealing with emotional problems. Only a very small proportion of youths would approach social services organizations, social workers or teachers for assistance in solving their financial or emotion problems. Obviously, much work remains to be done to build up rapport between youths on the one hand and social workers and teachers on the other, so that timely advice and assistance may be rendered to youths in need.

8.2.5 The availability of help, as perceived by youths, was quite high. The index of availability of help was 5.3 in a Likert scale of 7. Nevertheless, closer attention should be given to the fact that the index was relatively lower for those aged 15 – 17, 20 and 22 – 24, which are the ages when youths face critical life choices as they finish their compulsory schooling or secondary education (at the ages of 15 – 17), or complete non-degree further education courses (at the age of 20) or degree level courses (at the ages of 22 – 24).

8.2.6 Compared youths' perceived availability of help, youths' provision of help to friend or neighbours, on the other hand, was much lower. The index of rendering help was below average, at 2.0 in a Likert scale of 5.

8.3 Mental health status and family functioning

Mental health

8.3.1 The mental health status of youths, as perceived by them, was quite high. The index of mental health was quite high, at 3.2 in a Likert scale of 4. The index of self-esteem was also quite high, at 3.0 in a Likert scale of 4. The index of perception of life was lower but still about average, at 3.5 in a Likert scale of 6.

8.3.2 When analyzed by age, it is worth noting that the "double dip" pattern is also observed for mental health and self-esteem, probably due to the challenges youths face when they have to make important life choices on further education and employment. For perception in life, it was lower for youths in the older age groups.

8.3.3 For those who were not-at-school and not-at-work, their index of self-esteem and perception in life was lower, as compared with those who were students and those who were employed. For the index of mental health, it was relatively lower for those who were students and those who were not-at-school and not-at-work.

Family functioning

8.3.4 Youths in general were also quite satisfied with their family functioning. Both the index of family relationship and the index of parent-child relationship were quite high, at 3.8 in a Likert scale of 5. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the "double dip" pattern is observed for both family and parent-child relationship. Probably family functioning is strained as youths faced challenges in their transition from school to work or further education.

8.3.5 For those who were not-at-school and not-at-work, both their family and parent-child relationship lower, as compared with those who were students and those who were employed.

8.4 Causes and consequences of civic engagement and social networks

8.4.1 Analysis presented in this study shows that family functioning and use of community services have a significant, positive impact on social capital, social support network and mental health status (use of community services which has a negative impact on mental health) of youths. Various components of social capital, social support network and mental health status in turn are significantly correlated with the economic activity status of youths (i.e. whether engaged or not in formal education/training or gainful employment).

8.4.2 In view of the above findings, there is an obvious need to enhance the family and parent-child relationship of youths. The role of family is not only relevant in the home-school context, but also at the post-school stages as youths enter the world of work, interspersed with periods of employment, unemployment, full-time or part-time participation in post-school, continuing education or training.

8.4.3 For community services, in view of the fact that youths who were not-at-school and not-at-work had lower social capital, social support network and mental health, as compared with those who were students and those who were employed, there is apparently a need to have closer look at the kind of community services available to youths and the reasons why youths, especially late adolescents and those who are not-at-school and not-at-work, do not use such services.

8.4.4 As regards employment or training programmes, the study shows that such programmes had a negative impact on mental health and little impact on social capital (other than a small negative impact on volunteering) and social support network. It may be argued that those of poorer mental health status are more likely to participate in these programmes. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that interpersonal skills, which are closely related to components of social capital, are important for youths' to face the challenges of economic restructuring and an increasingly service-oriented economy, it is desirable to examine ways and means of achieving both skills training and social capital enhancements through changes to contents of these programmes or the way how such programmes are conducted or both, in the light of the positive impact on social capital by community services.

8.5 Recommendations

Further research

8.5.1 The present study is primarily fact-finding and exploratory in nature. The purpose is, inter alia, to establish the baseline for future study of civic engagement and social networking of youths. The study has also examined the effect of family relationships and other factors on social capital of youths, including their perceived and actual social capital outcomes. Separate statistics have also been compiled and analyzed for youths who are engaged in formal education or gainful employment as well as those who are not-at-school and not-at-work.

8.5.2 While causal relationship has been established among different components of social capitals, family relationships, mental health status, use of community services and participation in employment and training, more in-depth study is required to unravel the mechanisms through which these factors work, and to explore how interventions could be introduced to help youths develop and sustain social capital.

8.5.3 In addition, it would be useful to conduct research into the "double dip" pattern when components of social capital, family relationships and mental health are analyzed by age. This will help shed light on problems and challenges faced by youths, in their transition from school to work and/or continuing education. Prima face, this "double dip" pattern points to the need to more attention to be given to late adolescents, especially in view of the fact that youths at their late adolescent ages are less likely to use community services.

8.5.4 This is a territory-wide study and is not designed for district-level analysis. Though attempts have been made to analyze the survey findings by district, there are severe data limitations which prohibit meaningful interpretations. To examine the impact of various measures initiated by government and district organizations on the accumulation and sustainability of social capital of youths, a dedicated study geared to the special circumstances of individual districts is necessary.

Development of social capital indicators

8.5.5 In this study, a number of social capital indicators have been developed and their interrelationships tested. These indicators are summarized below, following the OECD and World Bank framework discussed in Section 2 above.

| Dimensions of social capital | Social capital indicators | Types of social capital indicators |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Network Qualities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of trust in people • Index of trust in institutions • Index of social trust | Cognitive social capital |
| Network Structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of diversity of friendship | Structural social capital |
| Network Transactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of attitude towards volunteering | Output measure |

8.5.6 Apart from the above, a number of indexes have also been used in this study as proxy indicators of factors affecting or affected by social capital. These indexes may also be used for future studies of social capital of youths. These indexes include the following:

| Factors | Indicators |
|------------------------|---|
| Family functioning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of family relationship • Index of parent-child relationship |
| Social support network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of availability of help • Index of rendering of help |
| Mental health status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of mental health • Index of perception of life • Index of self-esteem |