

Results of 2004 Civic Education Opinion Survey released

The following is issued on behalf of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education:

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education today (June 1) announced the results of a survey on civic education.

The survey, conducted between October and December 2004, is part of an on-going series of biennial public opinion surveys conducted by the committee since 1986. It is the first time the survey has included an extensive assessment of the Hong Kong community's sense of national identity and pride.

Policy 21 Ltd and the Centre for Civil Society and Governance of the University of Hong Kong were commissioned to jointly conduct this survey, which was conducted through face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,054 people aged between 15 and 69 in domestic households in Hong Kong. The response rate was 70.2%.

The survey's major objectives were to assess the community's sense of national identity and pride; sense of belonging to and confidence in Hong Kong; civil behaviour and values system as well as civic engagement and participation.

The survey revealed that the majority of respondents identified themselves as Chinese. They are proud of being Chinese, concerned about affairs in Mainland China, respect the interests of China, and confident about the future development of China.

Results also showed that the general public has a very strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong. There is also a strong positive correlation between the community's sense of belonging to Hong Kong, and their sense of national pride.

Presenting the major findings of the survey, the Chairman of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, Mr Heung Cheuk-kei, said it was encouraging to see that Hong Kong people had a strong sense of national identity and pride, despite the long colonial history and that China had resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong for

a relatively short period of eight years.

"The survey findings indicate that the Hong Kong community takes a liberal view towards what behaviour is 'unpatriotic'. Hong Kong people possess a rather strong sense of global citizenship, and are generally in support of certain major common values shared by the international community, such as human rights, civil liberties and democracy. This clearly reflects that Hong Kong people's national attachment and pride are embedded in the values and culture underpinning Hong Kong as an open, free and multifarious community.

"The committee will carefully take into account the results of this survey in formulating our future plans in promoting national education in Hong Kong," Mr Heung said.

"The survey results indicate that despite continual improvements, the civil behaviour of the Hong Kong community has room for further improvement, and the community has a low to moderate level of social engagement and civic responsibility. We will pay particular attention to these issues in planning our promotion work on civic education in the days to come."

The major findings of the survey are set out as follows:

As far as the community's sense of national identity and national pride are concerned, more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "I am proud of being Chinese" (73%); "Glad to be a citizen of China (51%)," "I believe that working hard myself will help the development of China" (51%). Most of the respondents took pride in China's achievements and were very concerned about affairs in Mainland China.

The majority of respondents were quite proud or very proud of China's specific achievements relating to the nation, including achievements in sports (89%), literature and arts (73%), history and culture (80%) and territory, mountains and rivers (85%). Most of the respondents were quite proud or very proud of China's achievements in science and technology (70%), political influence in the world (64%), economic achievements (68%) and army (58%). Only a small proportion of respondents were quite proud or very proud of China's democratic conditions (23%) and social welfare system (17%).

Slightly more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Should match up macroeconomic adjustment plan of China regardless of whether it will benefit Hong Kong" (51%). The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Hong Kong's economic and political development should not hurt national interest" (69%).

Generally speaking, the survey results revealed that respondents who were older and who had had more frequent physical contact with China displayed a relatively stronger sense of national identity and pride.

On actions to show allegiance to China, less than half (38%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Public schools in Hong Kong should conduct daily ceremonies of hoisting national flag".

Regarding actions that were considered by some as unpatriotic, only a small proportion (13%) agreed or strongly agreed that "criticising the Central Government" was not patriotic; 20% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "asking foreign governments to put pressure on China to promote democracy and human rights" was not patriotic, and about 23% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "criticising China affairs in front of foreign governments" was not patriotic.

As regards views about different conditions in Mainland China, the majority of respondents (74%) were quite satisfied or very satisfied with the economic development of Mainland China; 46% were quite satisfied or very satisfied with the daily living conditions of Mainland China; and 42% were quite satisfied or very satisfied with the employment opportunities in Mainland China. Only a small proportion of respondents were quite satisfied or very satisfied with the rule of law (15%), freedom of speech (16%), law and order (12%) and incorruptibility of officials (7%) in Mainland China. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the international status of China was improving continuously in politics (88%), economy (93%), military (80%), sports (94%) and arts (75%).

The survey results indicated that people had a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong. The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "I am very concerned about Hong Kong society" (86%), an increase of 12% over the previous survey conducted in 2002; "Hong Kong is my home" (96%), an increase of 4% over 2000 and 2002 surveys; "Hope that my children regard Hong Kong as their home" (79%), up by 8% over 2002 survey. More than half of the respondents (56%)

indicated they would not consider emigrating even though they were able to do so.

Concerning public confidence in Hong Kong, more than half of the respondents (58%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I have confidence in Hong Kong's economy in the coming two years", while 48% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I have confidence in Hong Kong's political situation in the coming two years". The figures represent an increase of 39% and 30% respectively over the 2002 survey.

The majority of respondents hold positive views regarding different responsibilities of being global citizens. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Hong Kong have moral responsibility to provide economic aid to poorer countries" (84%), "Should abide by universal values such as human rights" (90%), "friendships should not be affected by race and religious beliefs" (94%), and "UN should take intervention measures against countries infringing human rights" (85%).

More than half of the respondents (54%) considered that the state of social morality in Hong Kong had improved in recent years. However, 20% to 30% of respondents always or most of the time encounter uncivil behaviour in Hong Kong.

On the values system of the Hong Kong community, more than half of the respondents (66%) agreed or strongly agreed that family and friends were more important than career and money. Nearly half (48%) agreed or strongly agreed that environmental protection was more important than economic development. The minority of respondents (19%) agreed or strongly agreed that material life is more important than spiritual life.

As regards the public perception of the rule of law and human rights condition in Hong Kong, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "human rights protection is satisfactory" (73%), "rule of law is upheld in Hong Kong" (92%) and "press freedom is protected in Hong Kong" (80%). Over half of the respondents are supportive of the development of democracy. 83% agreed or strongly agreed that "freedom of public demonstrations should be guaranteed even though it may cause inconvenience", while 59% agreed or strongly agreed that "the Chief Executive and the Legislative Councillors should be elected through universal suffrage as soon as possible. Half of the respondents (50%) considered that the human rights conditions in Hong Kong had worsened after the handover.

As far as civic engagement is concerned, about 40% of the respondents had participated in at least one category of civic organisations. The percentage shares are relatively higher for those who had participated in parent/teacher associations, school boards, alumni associations and other educational bodies (19%), and lower for those who participated in political parties, pressure groups and other interest groups (3%). About 80% of respondents had participated in different kinds of informal social activities organised among friends and colleagues, while only 28% participated in community related activities and 38% participated in activities conducted over the Internet, most of whom did so frequently on a weekly basis.

In respect of civic responsibilities, about 25% of the respondents had participated in volunteer work and more than half of them had worked as volunteers less than 10 times in the past 12 months. More than half of those 75% respondents who had not participated in volunteer work cited not having time to participate as the reason for not doing so. About 60% of the respondents indicated that they had made donations in the past 12 months, with 80% of them having donated to social services or charitable organisations and 37% having donated to schools or school sponsoring bodies. 45% of those who had made donations donated less than \$100 while another 30% donated \$100 to \$500 in the past 12 months.

The 2004 Civic Education Opinion Survey report will be available for public reference in the Civic Education Resource Centre at 2/F Tung Sun Commercial Centre, 200 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai. The executive summary of the report has been uploaded onto the website of the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (www.cpce.gov.hk).

Ends/Wednesday, June 1, 2005