

Equal Opportunities Awareness Survey 2012

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has conducted surveys on public perception about the awareness of equal opportunities (EO) and EOC's work in 1998, 2003 and 2007. Mercado Solutions Associates Ltd. was commissioned to conduct the survey in 2012 to obtain an updated picture from the general public and users of the EOC. During the fieldwork period between June and August 2012, 1 504 general public who aged 15 or above and 341 EOC users were successfully enumerated by means of telephone interview and self-administered questionnaire survey respectively. This summary highlighted the major findings of the two surveys.

Major Findings of the General Public Survey

2. Overall speaking, the general public demonstrated positive attitude towards EO. The overall index of anti-discrimination attitude was 63 (in a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 denotes the lowest tendency and 100 denotes the highest).

3. The general public showed better knowledge on the existing legislations for race, disability and sex discrimination (62% - 71%), while relatively few could correctly indicate that anti-discrimination ordinance on the ground of family status was enacted, and sexual orientation and age have not been legislated (30% - 51%).

4. When people were asked whether adequate public's concerns had been found with respect to persons of different background in receiving EO, their perceived levels of adequacy were not high (27% - 55%).

5. It was found that 6% of the general public experienced incidents of discrimination, harassment or vilification in the past year. Yet, the majority (84%) of the victims did not take any action against such act.

6. When people were asked if they were aware of any organization in Hong Kong that was involved in promoting EO and eliminating discrimination, 52% of the general public could name EOC spontaneously and it came up to 95% upon prompting, which was as high as that in the 2007 survey. Besides, the majority of general public (84%) were aware of one or more EOC's educational, promotional or publicity activities in the past 12 months before enumeration.

7. Most of the general public agreed that EOC has enhanced public understanding of EO and discrimination (72%) and carried out promotion and education work appropriately

(65%), while relatively fewer recognized its work in handling enquiries and complaints fairly and efficiently (55%; a considerable proportion of respondents (30%) did not give opinion). The average mean score for the 3 aspects was 6.52 (in a scale of 1 – 10) (6.91 in the 2007 survey).

8. Public's view on the overall performance of EOC tended to be positive. In a scale of 1-10, 65% gave favourable scores of 6 – 10 and 29% gave lower scores of 1 – 5 (mean score was 6.33).

9. To deliver EO messages to the general public, apart from TV, radio and newspapers / magazines, advertisements in public transport, outdoor banners and internet were perceived effective for people with lower level of anti-discrimination attitude.

10. For the forthcoming EO issues, while 56% of the general public considered the existing facilities and services provided for people with disabilities inadequate, slightly lower proportion considered the existing situation of age (41%) and sexual orientation (43%) discrimination in the Hong Kong society serious. For the forthcoming areas of work, the general public attached importance to the work on "achieving universal accessibility in different aspects for people with disabilities", "setting up the standard of female-to-male toilet closet ratio (>2:1) for newly completed large public venues" and "introducing paternal leave for all employees".

Major Findings of the User Survey

11. Overall, EOC's users demonstrated a direction towards high tendency of anti-discrimination attitude. The overall index was 73 (in a scale of 0 – 100, where 0 denotes the lowest tendency and 100 denotes the highest), which was higher than that of the general public (63).

12. The users showed better understanding on disability vilification (93%), sexual harassment (58% - 87%) and the definition of family status (68% - 88%), while relatively few gave correct answers relating to racial vilification (10%) and the definition of disability (30% - 64%). The overall index of knowledge / understanding of EO was 61 (in a scale of 0 – 100).

13. The majority of users appreciated EOC's training courses, seminars or activities which brought benefits to them (70% - 94%) (76% - 88% in the 2007 survey) and were useful (88%) (84% in the 2007 survey).

14. The agreement levels on the statements which described the work of EOC among users (69% - 92%) were distantly higher than those of the general public (55% - 72%). The average mean score for the 3 statements was 7.46 (in a scale of 1 – 10), which was

higher than that of the general public (6.52) as well as that of the users in the 2007 survey (7.11).

15. Users' evaluation on the overall performance of EOC was higher than that of the general public. 92% gave favourable scores of 6 – 10 and 4% gave lower scores of 1 – 5 (vs. respective 65% and 29% for the general public). The mean score was 7.46 (vs. 6.33 for the general public).

16. Users' perceived top 3 important areas of work on the forthcoming EO issues were consistent with those of the general public (refer to paragraph 10).

17. To enhance public's understanding of EO or the work of EOC, the top 3 channels which users considered useful were schools / teachers, internet and seminars / talks / exhibitions. The similarity with the general public was that internet was one of the top 3 useful / effective channels (86% for users and 50% for the general public).

Conclusion and Recommendations

18. In conclusion, the survey revealed that both the general public and EOC's users demonstrated positive attitude towards EO. The overall index of anti-discrimination attitude was 63 for the general public and 73 for the users, which illustrated that EOC's training courses, seminars and activities were effective in raising the awareness and understanding of EO. In fact, the majority of users considered that EOC's training courses, seminars or activities were useful and brought benefits to them.

19. The level of awareness of EOC (95%) was as high as that in the 2007 survey. Besides, the majority of general public (84%) were aware of one or more EOC's educational, promotional or publicity activities in the past 12 months before enumeration, mainly through traditional channels such as EOC's Announcement of Public Interests (APIs) on TV, TV programmes and the promotions on newspapers / magazines. The findings also revealed that other prevalent useful / effective channels included advertisements in public transport, outdoor banners and internet. The top 3 channels which users considered useful were schools / teachers, internet and seminars / talks / exhibitions. The similarity with the general public was that internet was one of the useful / effective channels.

20. The agreement levels on the 3 statements (EOC has enhanced public understanding of EO and discrimination, carried out promotion and education work appropriately, and handled enquiries and complaints fairly and effectively) which described the work of EOC among users (69% - 92%) were distantly higher than those of the general public (55% - 72%). The average mean score was 7.46 (in a scale of 1 – 10), which was higher than that of the general public (6.52) as well as that of the users in the 2007 survey (7.11). This matched with results of evaluating on the overall performance of EOC that the

users' mean score was 7.46 (in a scale of 1-10) which also far exceeded that of the general public (6.33). All these mean scores were well above the mid-point value of 5.5, which showed that EOC's work and overall performance was recognized by the general public and users.

21. It was found that 6% of the general public experienced incidents of discrimination, harassment or vilification on the grounds of EOC's ambit or age / sexual orientation in the past year. Among them, relatively more mentioned the areas relating to age (38%) and sex (22%); many were encountered in the working environment / when applying job (52%); and the majority (84%) did not take any action against such act.

22. Based on findings of the surveys on the general public and users, recommendations on the advancement of the EOC's work against discrimination within its ambit as well as strategic planning advice on forthcoming EO issues and other areas of anti-discrimination work the public expect the EOC to move onto are summarized below.

- (a) As relatively more of the general public are aware of EOC's APIs on TV, TV programmes and promotions in newspaper / magazines and the users consider schools / teachers and seminars / talks / exhibitions are useful channels, EOC is encouraged to keep on using these traditional media as means of promotion and education. Besides, EOC may consider using more advertisements in public transport and internet, as these channels are perceived as useful / effective among both the general public and the users.
- (b) More users considered adequate public's concerns about the disadvantaged groups than the general public. Such phenomenon may be due to the fact that users have received more EO messages and updated information than the general public. Limited by restricted resources and ever increasing needs of the community, more up-to-date channels of communication via internet should be employed in reaching the mass of people and proactively conveying EO messages of more substances than merely slogans. Apart from existing channels via EOC website and email, multiple means of communication should be employed: common social networking such as Facebook; multi-media sharing such as YouTube; and professional networking such as LinkedIn. All of the messages are transmitted away with great speeds and they can proliferate extensively through personal networking.
- (c) In connection with the afore-mentioned means of communication, EOC's training courses, seminars or activities should be adapted to provide different promotional and educational forms such as video clips, games, quizzes and competitions. Disseminated via multiple means of communication, they are utilized as self-help and user-friendly study programmes which aim to "train the trainers" and/or educate the target groups who can manage the learning process on one's own pace.

- (d) As the users showed poorer understanding in racial vilification and the definition of disability, promotional and educational programmes should be formulated to raise public's awareness and understanding in these areas. Furthermore, since relatively fewer people recognize how EOC handles enquiries and complaints fairly and efficiently, TV programmes such as "A Mission for EO" docu-drama series should be timely produced based on EOC's successfully handled complaint cases.
- (e) For the forthcoming EO issues, top 3 important areas of work considered by both the general public and the users are "achieving universal accessibility in different aspects for people with disabilities", "setting up the standard of female-to-male toilet closet ratio (>2:1) for newly completed large public venues" and "introducing paternal leave for all employees". The EOC should prioritize its works to advocate persistently on these areas so that relevant stakeholders will take necessary actions to redress the issues.
- (f) It reveals that in the past year, 6% of the general public have experienced incidents of discrimination, harassment or vilification which mainly occur in the workplace environment. Among them, discriminatory incidents on the grounds of age and sexual orientation are not within EOC's ambit. To combat the discrimination, over 60% of the general public and the users have viewed the importance of introducing legislation in these two areas. Therefore, in response to areas of anti-discrimination work the public expect the EOC to move onto, EOC is suggested to undertake research studies on introducing the legislation against discrimination on the grounds of age and sexual orientation.
- (g) Legislation of anti-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation has been debated for many years in Hong Kong. To tackle the issue, the Government has launched public education campaigns to confront sexual orientation discrimination, issued non-binding declarations against sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace, and established the Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Unit in handling complaints of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. However, both the general public and EOC users in this survey perceive that public concerns about people of different sexual orientation in receiving EO are inadequate, and the introduction of legislation against sexual orientation discrimination appears as a forthcoming EO issue of priority. In this respect, the Government might need to get an overhaul of its existing policies against sexual orientation discrimination, and furthermore, launch comprehensive consultation processes in order to measure public opinions on legislation to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.