A Study on Public Attitudes towards Female Political Leadership

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Glossary

ASB	Advisory and Statutory Bodies
LegCo	Legislative Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPO	Nonprofit organisation
PRC	People's Republic of China
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	The United Nations
US	The United States

Executive Summary

1. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) commissioned the research team from the Gender Research Centre (GRC) in Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to conduct "A Study on Public Attitudes towards Female Political Leadership".

2. The research team adopted a mixed methods research design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The research team conducted a territory-wide representative telephone survey of the general public aged 15 or above in Hong Kong, a web-based survey and in-depth interviews with political leaders from the Government, the Legislative Council, District Councils, political parties, and other organisations.

3. The telephone survey collected 1,003 responses from 17 December 2018 to 11 January 2019 (response rate: 38.4%). The web-based survey collected 383 online responses from 1 April to 17 May 2019. The research team also conducted 32 in-depth interviews between 30 November 2018 and 31 May 2019.

Objectives of the study

4. The study aimed:

   • To provide a review of the local and overseas literature and studies documenting public attitudes towards female political leadership and the difficulties faced by women in attaining political leadership;
   • To study the public views of the desired qualities of political leaders in Hong Kong;
   • To examine the perceptions of female political leaders among the general public in Hong Kong;
   • To gauge public opinions on gender equality and the political status of women in Hong Kong;
   • To identify the perceived structural barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership in the Government and in participating in the committees of Advisory and Statutory Bodies; and
   • To solicit stakeholders' views on different policies (e.g. quota systems) to increase female representation in political leadership in Hong Kong and giving concrete recommendations to eliminate the difficulties encountered by women in climbing to the highest level of politics.

Key findings from the telephone survey

Desired qualities of political leadership

5. The telephone survey collected opinions from the general public about the important leadership characteristics of men and women, including being "competent", "compassionate", "visionary", "persuasive", "prioritising the public interest", "collaborative and working out compromises", "hard-working", "honest and ethical", and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure".

6. Most respondents indicated that there are no gender differences regarding leadership traits. Regarding all the traits, over 60% of the respondents answered "equally true for both (men and women)". "Competent" (84.3%), "prioritising the public interest" (77.9%), "hard-working" (77.3%), and "honest and ethical" (75.2%) were the four highest-ranking traits, with percentages exceeding 70%.

7. Perceptions significantly varied by the gender of respondents regarding "visionary", "persuasive", "prioritising the public interest", and "hard-working"; a higher proportion of females believed that women are better in these aspects, while a higher proportion of male respondents believed that men are better in these aspects.

8. Younger respondents were more likely to indicate that there are no gender differences in most leadership traits, the exceptions being "collaborative and working out compromises" and "honest and ethical". Respondents with higher education were more likely to posit that there are no gender differences in most leadership traits except "persuasive" and "collaborative and working out compromises".

Performance of male and female leaders

9. Respondents were asked whether male or female leaders are more capable of dealing with the following policy areas: economics, finance and trade; security affairs; social welfare; infrastructure and development; environment; education; political reforms; and labour issues.

10. In most of the policy areas, more than half of the respondents said that there are no gender differences in leaders' capabilities, the exceptions being "security affairs"

(26.4%) and "economics, finance and trade" (45.0%).

11. Among respondents who believed that there are gender differences, they were more likely to evaluate men as more capable in certain policy areas, specifically: security affairs (71.6%); economics, finance and trade (51.9%); infrastructure and development (44.3%); political reforms (28.3%); and labour issues (19.5%). Meanwhile, they were more likely to believe that women do better in other policy areas: social welfare (42.9%); education (31.5%); and environment (20.5%).

12. Perceptions about the capabilities of male and female leaders in various policy areas varied significantly by the gender of respondents regarding "economics, finance and trade", "education", and "political reforms". Female respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in these policy areas.

13. Younger respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences regarding the policy areas of "infrastructure and development", "environment", and "labour issues".

14. Respondents with higher education were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences regarding the policy areas of "infrastructure and development", "environment", and "labour issues".

Perceptions of gender equality and political leadership in Hong Kong

15. The majority of respondents (over 70%) reported that they have the same level of confidence in men and women at different levels of political leadership. Among respondents who reported different levels of confidence in male and female leaders, they were more likely to regard men as better political leaders (13.4% for male leaders and 8.2% for female leaders) and Legislative Council and District Council members (10.1% for male leaders and 6.3% for female leaders). As for community or grassroots leaders, 16.0% believed that women perform better, while 8.7% had greater confidence in men's performance.

16. Slightly more than half of the respondents postulated that women and men encounter a similar level of challenges in attaining higher political leadership positions. Among those who believed that there is a difference, more perceived that female leaders face greater challenges in attaining higher political positions (36.5% for "women face more challenges"; 10.2% for "men face more challenges"). Women, younger respondents, and those with higher education were

more likely to believe that women face more challenges than men.

Barriers in attaining political leadership

17. The survey asked respondents to choose from a list of factors and to suggest whether they are obstacles to attaining higher political leadership: mainly for women, mainly for men, for both men and women, or for neither men nor women. These obstacles included: "traditional attitudes towards gender roles", "domestic responsibilities", "lack of confidence", "lack of experience", "lack of support from political parties and organisations", "lack of support from family", "lack of social network and connections", and "double standards between genders to prove themselves". Some obstacles were perceived by many respondents as affecting both men and women, including "lack of experience" (47.3%), "lack of social network and connections" (42.8%), and "lack of support from political parties and organisations" (41.6%).

18. Some obstacles were more likely to be regarded as specific to women leaders: "domestic responsibilities" (64.0%), "traditional attitudes towards gender roles" (55.9%) and "double standards between genders to prove themselves" (46.8%).

19. Only a small proportion of respondents regarded the obstacles listed in the questionnaire as specific to male leaders (ranging from 2.8% to 7.1%).

Policies to increase female political leadership

20. Around half of the respondents (51%) held that there is no need to increase the proportion of women in political leadership. At the same time, 36.0% of the respondents agreed with the need to increase women's representation in leadership. Female respondents and younger respondents were more likely to agree with the need to increase the proportion of women in political leadership.

21. Regarding policies to increase female political leadership, the most popular options were "implement family-friendly policy" (77.8%), "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (75.2%), "provide training for potential female leaders" (74.6%), and "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality" (73.6%).

22. In terms of views towards a gender quota system, 34.6% of the respondents

supported and 40.4% were against the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women", while 33.7% supported and 42.2% were against the measure to "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units".

23. Respondents also shared their thoughts about the suitable percentage of women in a gender quota system if one is to be adopted. Women and younger respondents were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women.

Key findings from the web-based survey with political leaders

Desired qualities of political leadership

24. Respondents who were current, former, or potential leaders in the government, councils, political parties, etc. were asked whether men or women leaders perform better in an identical list of traits to the telephone survey used with the public.

25. Most respondents indicated that there are no gender differences in terms of being "competent" (88.5%), "honest and ethical" (84.9%), "prioritising the public interest" (81.5%), "hard-working" (80.7%), and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure" (80.2%).

26. Perceptions varied significantly by the gender of respondents regarding "competent", "compassionate", "visionary", "prioritising the public interest", and "collaborative and working out compromises". Similar to the results of the telephone survey, male and female respondents were more likely to have a more positive impression of their own genders in certain aspects.

27. Older respondents were more likely to believe that men are more "visionary" as leaders. Respondents with a bachelor's degree or above were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in being "visionary" and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure".

Performance of male and female leaders

28. More than half of the respondents indicated that there are no gender differences in leaders' capability in all of the policy areas listed in the survey (including

economics, finance and trade; security affairs; social welfare; infrastructure and development; environment; education; political reforms; and labour issues). In particular, more than 80% of the respondents suggested that there are no gender differences in "labour issues" (81.7%) and "political reforms" (80.4%).

29. Among respondents who perceived differences between male and female leaders in their capabilities, they were more likely to evaluate men as more capable in the following policy areas: security affairs (46.5%); infrastructure and development (34.2%); economics, finance and trade (29.0%); political reforms (16.7%); and labour issues (10.4%). Meanwhile, they were more likely to believe that women perform better in other policy areas: social welfare (33.4%); education (21.1%); and environment (15.1%).

30. Compared with the telephone survey results of the public, the web-based survey respondents of political leaders were more likely to suggest that there are no gender differences in these policy areas.

Perceptions of gender equality and political leadership in Hong Kong

31. The majority of respondents (over 80%) reported that they have the same level of confidence in men and women at different levels of political leadership. Among respondents who reported different levels of confidence in male and female leaders, they were more likely to believe men to be better political leaders (9.0% for male leaders and 6.5% for female leaders) and Legislative Council and District Council members (10.1% for male leaders and 6.8% for female leaders). As for community or grassroots leaders, 11.8% believed that women perform better, while 7.6% had greater confidence in men's performance. This pattern was similar to the telephone survey results but with a higher proportion of respondents believing that there are no gender differences.

32. Slightly more than half of the respondents postulated that women and men encounter a similar level of challenges to attaining higher political leadership positions. Among those who believed that there is a difference, more respondents believed that female leaders face more challenges in attaining higher political positions (36.6% for "women face more challenges" and 7.6% for "men face more challenges"). Female respondents tended to agree that women leaders face more challenges than men. The pattern was similar to the telephone survey results, but this perception did not vary significantly by age and education in the web-based

survey with political leaders.

33. In general, the presence of women in political leadership positions and women's right in participating in political leadership were viewed positively. Among the respondents, 78.3% agreed or strongly agreed that women and men should have an equal role in running the government. More than half of the respondents supported the claims that women's political participation and empowerment are necessary and beneficial.

Barriers in attaining political leadership positions

34. About 15.5% regarded their gender as having a positive influence on their political career (12.8% in men and 19.9% in women), while 5.5% regarded it as having a negative effect (2.8% in men and 8.5% in women).

35. Similar to the telephone survey findings, political leaders regarded some obstacles as affecting both men and women, including "lack of social network and connections" (64.6%), "lack of experience" (61.0%), and "lack of support from political parties and organisations" (59.8%). The proportions were higher compared with the telephone survey results.

36. Some obstacles were more likely to be regarded as specific to women: "domestic responsibilities" (61.6%), "traditional attitudes towards gender roles" (43.9%), and "double standards between genders to prove themselves" (33.5%).

37. Only a small proportion of respondents viewed the listed obstacles as specific to male leaders in attaining higher political leadership positions (ranging from 2.1% to 4.0%). The pattern was similar to the telephone survey results.

38. Compared with their general attitudes towards these obstacles, their self-reported obstacles showed a similar pattern but with a different magnitude. Some obstacles were more likely to be reported by female respondents, such as "domestic responsibilities" (14.2% among women and 3.9% among men). Some obstacles were more likely to be reported by male respondents, such as "lack of social network and connections" (9.2% among women and 12.3% among men).

Policies to increase female political leadership

39. Half (49.5%) of the respondents suggested that the proportion of women in political leadership should be increased, and the proportion was higher than that of the telephone survey results (36.0%). Female respondents were more likely to agree that the proportion of women in political leadership should be increased.

40. Across different political areas, around half of the respondents suggested that it would be good to see more women in the Legislative Council (53.1%) and District Councils (50.8%), followed by senior government officials (49.5%), officials in the judiciary system (48.9%) and party leaders (48.9%).

41. When respondents were asked for their opinions regarding what measures would facilitate their successful advancement in their organisations, the most popular options were "provide training to those with potential" (68.6%), "mentoring and experience sharing" (59.8%), "provide chances for me to lean in for opportunities" (50.0%), "implement family-friendly policies" (48.2%), and "improve promotion pipelines" (47.6%).

42. When respondents were asked about what measures they would support to increase women's political leadership, the most popular answer was "implement family-friendly policies" (70.4%), followed by "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (66.4%), and "provide training for potential female leaders" (60.9%). The ranking was mostly similar to public opinion in the telephone survey.

43. In terms of their views towards a gender quota system, 21.2% of the respondents supported and 44.3% were against the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women", while 19.2% supported and 45.6% were against the measure to "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils and Government units". The support rates were lower than public opinion in the telephone survey.

44. Respondents also shared their thoughts about the suitable percentage of women if a gender quota system was to be adopted. Female respondents were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women.

Key findings from the in-depth interviews

Leadership qualities

45. At the beginning of our dialogues, many interviewees did not stress gender but

emphasised capability and personality (including being tough, willing to contribute to a team, willing to accept challenges, charismatic, and ethical) as more important in political leadership. But later, they revealed how their experiences had been related to their gender.

46. Some women leaders described their leadership styles as different from men, with an emphasis on cooperation and teamwork. Some female interviewees perceived themselves as supporters rather than leaders. Some emphasised that, as a female leader, they need to be very confident and willing to sacrifice.

Political journeys and leadership styles

47. Interviewees recalled their journeys in the political field. The majority of both men and women mentioned that volunteering with an organisation and joining as a rank-and-file staff member were the two most common starting points of their political careers.

48. In the Government or sizeable organisations, career paths were more institutionalised and visible for young leaders. However, in general, very few interviewees (and particularly women) described their political career paths as having been planned.

Challenges and barriers

49. Male and female respondents reported facing some common challenges and barriers, such as limited access to resources, weak networks, and difficulties in attaining a work-life balance.

50. Female leaders placed greater emphasis on stress owing to family responsibilities. They not only faced a difficult trade-off between career and family but also suffered from a sense of guilt related to their deviation from conventional gender role expectations and ideal family roles such as mothers. Although some male leaders also reported stress related to childbearing decisions and family life, they admitted that men are less likely to be blamed for neglecting their families.

51. Small organisations and grassroots community groups struggle to retain their female staff effectively and ensure a stable and promising career, according to both female and male interviewees. Given the gendered social expectations and the lack

of support from organisations, women may adopt self-exploitation at the grassroots level or quit their jobs.

52. Some female leaders felt that they encounter different standards to prove themselves. Indeed, they have to make extra effort to gain trust from stakeholders, especially in male-dominated working environments, traditional parties, or large organisations with hierarchical bureaucracy.

53. Both male and female interviewees mentioned unwanted public attention towards female leaders. Certainly, the tendency of the public and the media to focus on young female leaders' body shape and appearance made them annoyed and anxious.

Policies to increase female political leadership

54. Interviewees reported capacity building as the most important form of support for women leaders. Such capacity-building activities can take the form of mentorship, peer support, and training. In the Government and political parties, interviewees suggested the importance of support from their mentors, seniors, and peer groups.

55. Similar to the results of the telephone and online surveys, male and female leaders in the in-depth interviews mentioned that family-friendly policies would facilitate women, in particular grassroots women's political participation, in moving upward along the political career path. They also indicated that flexible working hours would be helpful for both men and women.

56. Some interviewees also suggested that organisations need to give women opportunities to explore their ideas rather than setting limits based on experience and training, in order to increase the number of women leaders at the grassroots level.

57. Many interviewees agreed that women's positive roles in the public sphere need to be promoted in the media to the general public.

58. Diverse opinions existed regarding the introduction of a gender quota system. Most interviewees, regardless of gender, were hesitant about the adoption of a gender quota system in Hong Kong. Some doubted the legitimacy of a gender quota system or worried about the feasibility of setting a quota, while others suggested that it would not be an effective way to amend and eliminate gender

inequalities without fundamental social and cultural changes also taking place.

Major findings

59. Regarding leadership qualities, more than 60% of the telephone and web-based survey respondents believed that men and women have equally good leadership qualities. However, gender stereotypes still existed to some extent: women were more likely to be perceived as compassionate or collaborative and men as more visionary. Such stereotypes were also reflected in evaluating the performance of male and female leaders across policy areas and at different levels of political leadership. Women were more likely to be regarded as performing better in the policy areas of social welfare, education, and environment; and in the role of community and grassroots leaders rather than top leaders (senior government officials, Legislative Council members, and party leaders).

60. Regarding barriers, more respondents believed that female leaders face more challenges to attaining higher political positions than their male counterparts. Some obstacles were more likely to be considered affecting both men and women, such as "lack of social network and connections", "lack of experience", and "lack of support from political parties and organisations". In interviews, limited access to financial and human resources was mentioned by both female and male political leaders and nascent leaders in particular.

61. Some obstacles were more likely to be regarded as specific to women: "domestic responsibilities", "traditional attitudes towards gender roles", "double standards between genders to prove themselves", and "lack of support from family". Although both men and women leaders in in-depth interviews mentioned that extended working hours hindered their work-life balance, women were reported to face greater stress due to traditional gender role expectations and a lack of organisational support allowing them to accommodate both, particularly for women working at the grassroots level and in small organisations. Female interviewees also shared receiving unwanted public attention, especially regarding their body shape and appearance. Fewer men-specific obstacles were reported.

62. Regarding policies, 36.0% of the general public respondents and 49.5% of the political leader respondents suggested that there should be more female leaders. Respondents in both surveys identified the same three policies as crucial to supporting women in attaining political leadership positions: "implement family-

friendly policies", "encourage women to lean in for opportunities", and "provide training for potential female leaders".

63. Respondents were more sceptical of gender quota systems than other measures. Around one third of the general public respondents and one fifth of the political leader respondents supported the implementation of gender quotas in nomination/candidacy lists or reserved seats in governments and councils. In in-depth interviews, some doubted the legitimacy and the feasibility of adopting gender quotas, while others suggested that they would not help solve the problem of gender inequalities in the political field.

64. Logistic models suggested that such scepticism was related to: (1) people's less favourable perceptions of female leaders, i.e. gender stereotypes; and (2) the advantageous socioeconomic backgrounds of the survey respondents, such as income, potentially increasing their abilities to solve such problems on their own and reduce their need to rely on institutional support. This may not be the situation for women working at the grassroots level and in small organisations, who have limited organisational support and family support to "have it all".

Recommendations

65. Public education: In order to address gender stereotypes and structural constraints, it is necessary to bring gender back into public attention as a social phenomenon, rather than merely focusing on personal obstacles. To tackle gender stereotypes and unwanted public attention towards the appearance of female leaders, public education to enhance gender awareness should be adopted. The media as a means of representing women should focus on the performance and ability of female political leaders instead of excessively reporting their body shape and appearance, sometimes with sexist connotations. Meanwhile, public education should be provided to facilitate changes towards more egalitarian gender role beliefs in both public and domestic spheres. It is also important to advocate shared family responsibilities against traditional gender divisions of labour.

66. Family-friendly policies: The promotion of flexible working hours may bring substantial benefits to potential political leaders who are working parents or at an early stage of the career but lack family or organisational support. Extended parental leave may not only help working mothers to accommodate their family duties or fertility desires but also allow both men and women to become more

involved in family responsibilities and child-rearing. Nevertheless, such gender role negotiations and adjustments cannot be guaranteed by the provision of family-friendly policies; they would work best alongside the implementation of public education to alter gender role beliefs.

67. Training and mentorship: Capacity-building initiatives, including that of leadership skills, campaign management, public speaking and political knowledge, are crucial for potential political leaders. These training and mentorship programmes may enhance women's capacity, facilitate experience sharing from senior political leaders, and encourage women to compete for decision-making positions. Training and mentoring programmes may improve and demonstrate individual leadership qualities and connections, which can help to alter gender stereotypes in political spheres.

68. Organisational support: Support for potential female political leaders and first-time candidates in elections may be provided by the Government such as through the Women's Commission. Not only do small organisations often fail to provide support for women to "have it all", but large organisations and Government Bureaux and Departments often suffer from a limited pool of female candidates. Financial support, voluntary candidate nominations, and a network for female leaders may be used to provide institutional support for potential leaders.

69. Gender targets: Due to the low level of support shown for a statutory gender quota system, the adoption of voluntary gender quotas and targets is recommended, along with other measures to improve gender awareness and address gender bias in social and cultural practices. A voluntary political party quota could be supported by financial incentives offered by the Government. The gender benchmark, which operates as a voluntary quota target, has been implemented in the Advisory and Statutory Bodies in Hong Kong. To implement such voluntary quota targets in the Government Bureaux and Departments and councils, further evaluations and transformations of social and cultural practices in these organisations are needed.

Chapter 1 Background and Objectives

Women in general make up a smaller proportion of political leadership than men. In 2005, there were 15.7% of women in parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015) and 14.2% in a ministerial-level positions across the world (The World Bank, 2020). Given the increase in women's representation in political spheres in the past decades, the world average rose to 24.5% for women in parliaments in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019a) and to 21.0% for women in ministerial positions in 2018 (The World Bank, 2020). In Hong Kong, women's proportion among government officials has increased over time, but women remain under-represented in the top tiers of Government units (Wong & Lee 2006). Furthermore, our knowledge regarding public views of gender equality and female political leadership remains limited and mixed.

1.1 Gender ratio of government officials in Hong Kong

Regarding the composition of civil servants in general, the percentage of men decreased from 74.4% in 1981 to 61.6% in 2019, while that of females increased from 25.6% in 1981 to a peak of 38.4% in 2019 (Figure 1.1.1).

Figure 1.1.1 Percentages of civil servants by sex
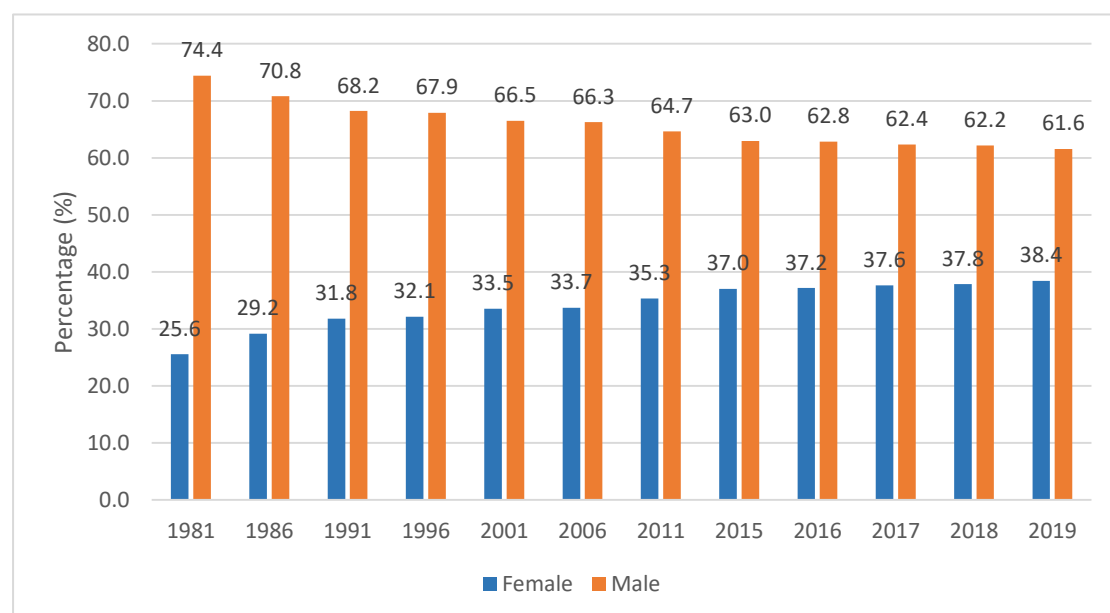
Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2013, 2017, 2019, 2020.

Regarding the composition of directorate officers in the civil service, the percentage of men decreased from 95.1% in 1981 to 72.1% in 2006. This reduction then slowed down

in the 2010s, with a drop from 67.1% in 2011 to 61.6% in 2019. The proportion of female senior government officials was only 4.9% in 1981, increasing to 27.9% in 2006. It increased more slowly from 32.9% in 2011 to 38.4% in 2019 (Figure 1.1.2).

Figure 1.1.2 Percentages of directorate officers in the civil service by sex
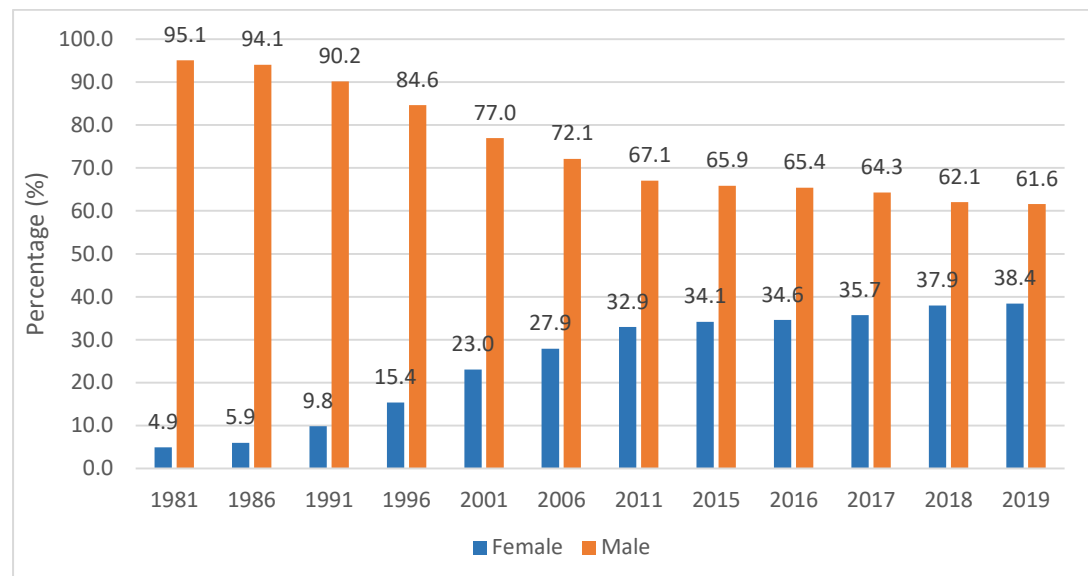
Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2013, 2017, 2019, 2020.

1.2 Gender ratio at different levels of councils in Hong Kong

1.2.1 Legislative Council

Compared with the gender ratio among government officials, women's proportion is much lower in the Legislative Council (LegCo). In 1991, 94.9% of LegCo members were men and only 5.1% were women. The percentage of male LegCo members dropped to 88.3% in 1995 and 83.3% in 1998. It further declined to 81.7% in 2004 and stagnated at this level in the mid-2000s. The number of male members increased again slightly in the 2012 election and has remained above 80% ever since.

The proportion of female LegCo members rose from 5.1% in 1991 to 18.3% in 2004. The figure remained unchanged in 2008, then slightly dropped to 15.7% in 2012 and bounced back to 17.1% in 2016 (Figure 1.2.1).

Figure 1.2.1 Elected members in the Legislative Council by sex
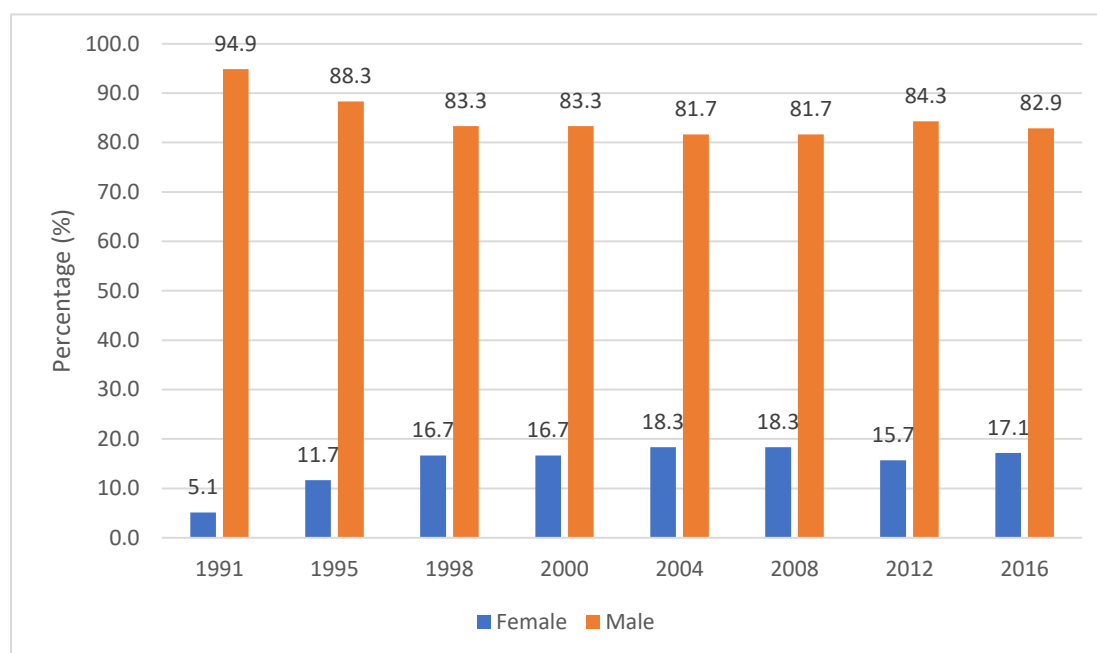
Source: Louie & Shum, 1995; Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2007, 2012, 2016, 2019.

1.2.2 District Councils

Among the 18 districts in Hong Kong, the percentage of male District Council members (elected) declined from 89.6% in 1994 to 80.7% in 2007, then increased to 80.8% in 2011 and 81.7% in 2015. The figure dropped to 80.5% in 2019. In the 1990s and 2000s, the number of female District Council members (elected) increased gradually from 10.4% in 1994 to 19.3% in 2007, before dropping to 18.3% in 2015 and increasing to 19.5% in 2019 (Figure 1.2.2).

Figure 1.2.2 Elected members in District Councils by sex
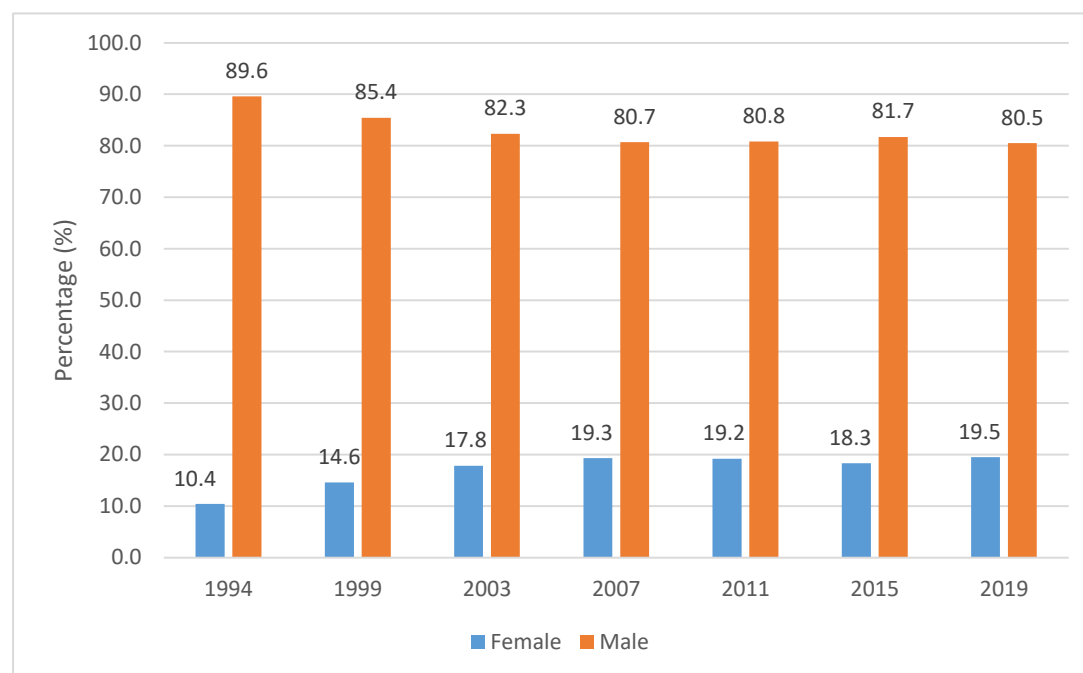
Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2001, 2018, 2020.

1.3 Gender ratio in Advisory and Statutory Bodies in Hong Kong

For Advisory and Statutory Bodies (ASBs), the Hong Kong Government set a 25% gender benchmark in 2004; in 2005 the target was achieved that at least 25% of appointed non-official members be men or women (Home Affairs Bureau, 2019). The target was raised from 25% to 30%, which was achieved in 2011 (ibid.). In 2015, the target was revised to 35%. Women's proportion subsequently continued to grow from 25% in 2005 to 33% in 2012, before fluctuating between 2013 and 2019. The 35% gender benchmark has yet to be achieved (Table 1.3.1).

Table 1.3.1 Proportion of female and male members in the public sector Advisory and Statutory Bodies (2004–2019)

	Male	Female	Total
2004	3,586 (76%)	1,144 (24%)	4,730
2005	3,660 (75%)	1,236 (25%)	4,896
2006	3,678 (74%)	1,289 (26%)	4,967
2007	3,822 (73%)	1,381 (27%)	5,203
2008	3,886 (72%)	1,484 (28%)	5,370
2009	4,168 (73%)	1,567 (27%)	5,735
2010	4,051 (71%)	1,663 (29%)	5,714
2011	3,966 (69%)	1,805 (31%)	5,771
2012	3,871 (67%)	1,866 (33%)	5,737
2013	4,038 (68%)	1,936 (32%)	5,974
2014	4,154 (68%)	1,951 (32%)	6,105
2015	4,434 (69%)	1,999 (31%)	6,433
2016	4,374 (68%)	2,033 (32%)	6,407
2017	4,497 (68%)	2,156 (32%)	6,653
2018	4,632 (67%)	2,307 (33%)	6,939
2019	4,657 (66%)	2,373 (34%)	7,030

Sources: Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2018; Home Affair Bureau, 2019, 2020.

1.4 Gender equality and female political leadership in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, both women and men can register to be voters and candidates of elections, but traditional gender role expectations continue to assume politics as men's sphere and to relate women with the domestic sphere (Choi & Ting, 2009; Chu, 1998; Halpern & Cheung, 2008). Women leaders have been found to face long working hours, double standards to prove themselves, and traditional gender responsibilities (Halpern & Cheung, 2008).

Therefore, women political leaders need to make a greater effort in the workplace while also fulfilling their family role. These challenges force them to manage their time more efficiently as they may be compelled to make difficult choices to prioritise various tasks in the private and public spheres (Halpern & Cheung, 2008). Many women need to face

the elderly care and childcare burden, and their career aspirations are often discouraged by their families and are regarded as threatening to cultural expectations (Lam, Fung & Lo, 2012). As such, remaining single and/or childless is more common among female leaders than male leaders (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

When women in Hong Kong devote themselves to political leadership, they are more often engaged in community work at the grassroots level. Compared with women, many male political leaders have been from the business and professional sectors (Cheung & Lee, 2012). As suggested by the above-mentioned statistics in Hong Kong, the higher the leadership position, the lower the proportion of women. The glass ceiling effect and the lack of role models and mentors have further added to the barriers faced by women to reach the top (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

This study aims to expand our understanding of public attitudes towards female political leadership and the difficulties faced by women in attaining political leadership positions.

1.5 Objectives of the research

In this context, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) commissioned the research team to conduct a comprehensive study of public attitudes towards female political leadership in Hong Kong. The research team carried out a systematic study on views, characteristics, experiences, and barriers regarding female political leadership. As stated in the EOC study brief, the specific objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To provide a review of the local and overseas literature and studies which document public attitudes toward female political leadership and difficulties faced by women in attaining political leadership;

2. To study the public views of desired qualities of political leaders in Hong Kong;

3. To examine the perceptions of female political leaders among the general public in Hong Kong;

4. To gauge public opinions on gender equality and political status of women in Hong Kong;

5. To identify perceived structural barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership in the Government and in participating in the committees of Advisory and Statutory Bodies; and

6.   To solicit stakeholders' views on different policies (e.g. quota systems) to increase female representation in political leadership in Hong Kong and giving concrete recommendations to eliminate difficulties encountered by women in climbing to the highest level of politics.

1.6 Structure of the report

This report consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 (this chapter) presents a broad picture of women's leadership in Hong Kong and the research objectives. Chapter 2 introduces the design of the research methods, including a telephone survey, a web-based survey, and in-depth interviews. Chapter 3 provides a literature review on existing studies of women leadership. Chapters 4 to 6 present the research results: chapter 4 regarding the telephone survey used with the general public; chapter 5 concerning a web-based survey of political leaders; and chapter 6 on in-depth interviews with political leaders. These three chapters present the findings of people's perceptions of gender and political leadership, the barriers faced by both female and male leaders, and related policies and measures. Chapter 7 – the last chapter – focuses on policy suggestions to deal with gender inequalities as well as various barriers faced by female and male leaders.

Chapter 2 Research Methods

A mixed methods research design was employed to explore public views and opinions on gender equality and women's political leadership. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted for comprehensive data collection. The data collection included four main parts:

1. Literature research
2. A telephone survey with the general public
3. A web-based survey with political leaders
4. In-depth interviews with political leaders

2.1 Literature research

The literature research aimed to summarise data from existing research and synthesise various situations and policy suggestions concerning women's political leadership. This part of the research provided background information for the project by reviewing extensive studies worldwide on perceptions of gender equality in political leadership, the desired qualities of leaders and of men and women, and the barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership positions. The existing theories and data were essential in understanding female political leadership in a global perspective over time and enabled the research team to capture a board range of rich data to prepare for the interviews and surveys.

2.2 Telephone survey

The telephone survey collected public opinions about gender equality and political leadership, perceptions of leadership traits, attitudes towards women and men as leaders, perceptions of barriers faced by women and men in attaining political leadership positions, and views on policies to increase female political leadership. A structured and bilingual (Chinese and English) questionnaire was designed based on the literature review (Appendix I). The research team designed questions focusing on:

- Gender role beliefs and perceptions of gender equality situations and trends;
- Perceptions of leadership characteristics and expectations;
- Attitudes towards women and men as leaders;
- Perceptions of barriers faced by women and men in attaining political leadership positions;
- Views on policies to increase female political leadership;
- Sociodemographic status (age, education, occupation, marital status, family

background, etc.)

The target population of the telephone survey was Hong Kong residents aged 15 or above. The telephone survey was conducted based on random sampling. Between 17 December 2018 and 11 January 2019, 1,003 responses were collected, with a response rate of 38.4%. The data were weighted based on the updated age-sex distribution (aged 15 or above and excluding foreign domestic helpers) in the mid-year of 2018 provided by the Census and Statistics Department.

2.3 Web-based survey

The web-based survey collected responses from political leaders. This target group was reached through certain contact points via official email addresses. The web-based questionnaire allowed for flexibility in filling out the self-administered survey questionnaires, as the respondents could answer the questions at their own pace and time. The questionnaire was available in both Chinese and English (Appendix I). The link to the online survey was delivered through the survey software Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com/).

The target population of the web-based survey was political leaders in Hong Kong, comprising those in the Government, councils, political parties, and the community. The research team recruited former, current and potential political leaders for the web-based survey. The web-based survey recruited both male and female leaders from the Government, councils, political parties, and organisations (Table 2.3.1). Although the study aimed to investigate the experiences and barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership positions, it would have been unwise to ignore men's voices, as they are also key stakeholders. Indeed, male leaders may witness the experiences of and difficulties faced by their female colleagues, working partners, and family members.

An email invitation was sent to our target population through a set of mailing lists, including government officials, LegCo members, District Council members, Advisory and Statutory Bodies' members, party leaders and leaders of community subgroups and organisations (1,293 government officials, 102 party leaders, 69 LegCo members, 458 District Council members).[1] Email invitations were sent to the secretaries of ASBs through their shared email addresses, to be circulated to their members (4,500

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[1] Home Affairs Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, District Administration, District Councils. Retrieved 7 June 2019, from https://www.had.gov.hk/tc/public_services/district_administration/dbmain.htm

members).[2] In addition, we sent invitations to 173 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and invited their leaders and subgroup leaders to participate. We also used the EOC's newsletter to publicise the study and recruited more respondents who are former, current or potential political leaders. In the invitation, a hyperlink was included to the web-based survey. Between 1 April and 17 May 2019, 383 responses were received.

Table 2.3.1 The target population of the web-based survey

Categories	Position (former, current, and potential)	
	Grassroots/ intermediate-level leaders	Top-level leaders
Government	- Advisory and Statutory Boards (ASBs)	- Chief Executive (CE) - Members of the Executive Council - Principal Officials - Politically Appointed Officials (PAOs): ■ Secretaries of Departments ■ Directors of Bureaux ■ Under Secretaries of Bureaux ■ Political Assistants to Directors
Councils	- District Council	- Legislative Council (LegCo)
Political parties and organisations	- Leaders of community subgroups and organisations	- Party chairpersons - Party vice-chairpersons

2.4 In-depth interviews

Apart from the telephone and web-based surveys, the research team conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with political leaders to understand their perceptions and attitudes as well as their journeys to political leadership. The research team conducted 32 in-depth interviews from 30 November 2018 to 31 May 2019.

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[2] Home Affairs Bureau. Home Affair Bureau – Policy Responsibilities – District, Community and Public Relations – Advisory and Statutory Bodies. Retrieved 7 June 2019, from https://www.hab.gov.hk/en/policy_responsibilities/District_Community_and_Public_Relations/advisory.htm

The team aimed to recruit leaders with diverse experience in order to generate rich data about political leadership in Hong Kong. The goal was to collect political leaders' first-hand experience and knowledge about female political leadership. Purposive sampling was adopted to capture variations among leaders' positions, sectors, and leadership experiences. The research team was mindful of the possibility of recruiting many similar cases and views due to the close connection among stakeholders in the political field. Therefore, snowball sampling was avoided in this study. Political leaders from different backgrounds were recruited by sending their publicly available contacts invitations with a link to the web-based survey attached.

Initially, the team invited interviewees individually at different levels of political leadership, including top leaders and grassroots/intermediate-level leaders. These individuals could be from different political sectors, including Government Bureaux and Departments, the LegCo, District Councils, parties, community groups, and so on. Indeed, it was important to acknowledge that across different sectors and organisations, their environments, culture norms, and resources may give rise to different leadership styles and barriers. The interviewees could also be former, current or potential leaders. Such recruitment strategies allowed us to collect a wide range of perspectives.

The interview invitation was also attached to the web-based survey at the end of the web-based questionnaire. Respondents could opt to accept the invitation to share their opinions regarding gender and political leadership in greater detail. Sixty-one respondents to the web-based survey provided their contact information for further discussion. The team contacted them for a follow-up discussion; four accepted to do so. Given that these informal discussions were not as structured as if we had been following an interview guide, these respondents were not included as our interviewees, but their opinions were also incorporated into the qualitative analysis.

The interviews were conducted from 30 November 2018 to 31 May 2019 in Hong Kong. Thirty-two interviewees were recruited, including 22 female interviewees (68.8%) and 10 male interviewees (31.3%) from grassroots/intermediate and top leadership levels. The length of each interview was approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.

Each interview was conducted by an experienced researcher. An interview guide (see Appendix II) was provided to the interviewer to ensure that the interviews were conducted following the same procedure and format. Interviewers were well trained in social science and qualitative research methods and were sensitive to gender equality

issues. They also captured non-reflective listening and non-verbal communication.

Thirty interviews were audio-recorded with the informed consent of the interviewees. Two interviewees declined to have the interview recorded, so the discussion points were jotted down by the interviewer. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed for qualitative data analysis.

Seven transcribers were recruited to assist the research team in the production of the verbatim transcripts. The transcribers followed a set of confidential arrangements. Training was provided by the research team members. The research team members cross-checked the content and quality of the transcripts.

A thematic analysis approach was adopted. A pre-analysis coding framework was developed based on the field notes. The research team also identified more themes by reviewing the qualitative data. These themes were refined throughout the ongoing analysis of data.

The full interview guide is attached in Appendix II.

Chapter 3 Literature Research

Women's under-representation in political leadership is a global issue. This chapter begins with a review of the literature regarding women's political participation and female political leadership and discusses the barriers and policies observed worldwide. Based on the global literature and policy review of gender inequalities and related cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional factors, this project will discuss measures facilitating women's political participation and female political leadership in Hong Kong (see Chapter 7).

3. 1 Current women leadership problem: a global perspective

According to a public opinion survey conducted in the United States (US), many people agree that women leaders not only contribute to improving all women's quality of life but also all people's quality of life (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, gender equality has not gained sufficient attention in parliaments worldwide according to parliamentarians in different countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009). Women's representation remains low among cabinet ministers and government heads (Norris & Inglehart, 2000) and where women are represented, they tend to be involved in the less prestigious positions of culture, family, education, and women's affairs (Davis, 1997; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1999).

In Hong Kong, scholars have argued for increasing women's leadership not only to represent women's values and interests, but also to serve political goals and public interests in justice, democracy, and equal opportunities (Lee, 2000; 2004). However, many people believe that men understand and perform better in politics; moreover, men tend to have less confidence in female council members than women (Lee, 2000; Women's Commission, 2011). It remains to be studied whether such perceptions have changed or diversified over time and across groups in Hong Kong.

3.2 Desired qualities of political leaders and related gender differences

Existing empirical research has shown that gender differences in leadership are perceived to be small, but debates remain regarding whether and how gender still matters in leadership (Pew Research Center, 2015). With more women attaining political leadership positions, the desired qualities of political leaders and related gender differences have been extensively discussed between the two camps of "gender matters" and "gender makes no difference".

Three common theoretical perspectives have been used to explain the relationship between gender and leadership: intrapsychic, interpersonal and social structural perspectives (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The intrapsychic perspective focuses on the intrapersonal traits of leaders. Concerning their leadership, many psychological studies point to men's confidence (Kling et al., 1999), "self-congratulatory" trends (Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996), and reluctance to take criticism (Roberts, 1991), whereas women's perceived traits are to be more modest (Wigfield et al., 1996), to underestimate their own intelligence (Beloff, 1992; Furnham & Rawles, 1995), and to be affected by negative comments (Roberts, 1991).

The interpersonal interaction perspective considers the interaction between leaders and other people (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Compared to male leaders, female leaders are more likely to interact with their followers by encouraging participation, sharing power and information, and energising others (Rosener, 2011).

The social structural perspective discusses different social roles that relate gender to leadership, such as women's and men's expected career paths (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Rosener, 2011). Women have been gender-stereotyped to engage in occupations that require them to be supportive, cooperative, and caring, hence community volunteers, teachers and nurses are the most common occupations for them. As a result, the roles of men are more congruent with leadership compared to those of women, resulting in prejudice against women leaders (Egaly & Karau, 2002).

However, leadership style may not correspond to the leader's gender; not all men leaders are masculine whereas not all women leaders are feminine (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Korabik, 1990; Korabik & Ayman, 1987; Park 1996). Rather, leaders may practise androgynous leadership and combine masculinity (instrumental and agentic attributes) and femininity (expressive and communal attributes) (Kirchmeyer, 1996; Korabik 1990; Park, 1996). By mixing leadership styles, androgynous leadership may help women to overcome stereotype-based obstacles and allow greater policy flexibility (Korabik, 1990; Park, 1996). In reality, perceived gender differences have diminished over time in some Western countries (Walker, 1994).

Despite their increasing commonalities, men and women may remain different in some other aspects, and these do not prevent them from being equally good leaders. Public opinion in the US suggests that men and women make equally good leaders regarding the traits necessary to be a leader (Pew Research Center, 2015). This study suggests a strong belief in women's key leadership traits, such as being intelligent, innovative,

compassionate, and organised (Pew Research Center, 2015). Furthermore, women are perceived to have advantages in some aspects, such as working out compromises, being honest and ethical, and standing up for their beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Nevertheless, men and women continue to face "gendered" expectations when they are involved in politics. Although women are expected to bring different views and talents to politics, their expertise is seen as focusing on family well-being, gender equality, poverty, health, and environment, while men are regarded as being more active in finance, trade, and security affairs (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2015). Some studies suggest that women are believed to be more "gentle" and conservative in politics (Almond & Verba, 1963; Randall, 1982), especially given that women's aggressiveness in politics may lead to negative feedback (Lee, 2004).

In Hong Kong, opinions about gender and leadership are similarly divided (Women's Commission, 2011). Some studies have documented people's confidence in the soft skills of women leaders, such as being a good listener and working on consensus (Lam, Fung, & Lo, 2012). Some women leaders perform masculinity by having short hair and being decisive, while others may choose to behave like a "godmother" to gain followers' trust (Lee, 2004; Wong & Lee, 2006). The overgeneralisation of supposedly essential feminine characteristics often masks women's diversity in terms of class, race and sexual orientation (Lee, 2004). Given different understandings of the qualities of female and male leaders worldwide, this project examines current public views about the qualities of political leaders and related gender differences in Hong Kong.

3.3 Structural and other barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership positions

The barriers faced by women in attaining political leadership positions are not mainly due to women's skill sets but can be traced back to the socialisation process as well as perceptions of what kinds of opportunities are open to women (Astin, 1984; Pew Research Center, 2015). In general, women politicians worry more about negative advertising and privacy, and are less optimistic about being taken seriously and gaining career development than their male counterparts. Such a gender gap in ambition partly owes to the socialisation process (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015).

3.3.1 Gender role beliefs and gender stereotypes
Gender role beliefs and social role expectations for men and women are internalised in the process of socialisation, in which traditional ideologies and customs for both

genders are cultivated. As discussed above, **gender stereotypes** include preconceptions regarding how women and men should behave, such as that women are affectionate, gentle, kind, nurturing and sympathetic, while men are aggressive, ambitious, assertive, dominant, independent, self-confident and self-sufficient (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

With respect to traditional sex-role expectations, **role congruity theory** explains why men's roles are often perceived to be more congruent with leadership and thus why the perceived incongruity of gender roles may lead to prejudice against women leaders (Bakan, 1966; Eagly & Karau, 2002). The "lack of fit" model (Heilman, 1983) suggests that women's leadership may violate gender norms, with competent women leaders perceived as aggressive (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Furthermore, women and men leaders are associated with different gender traits and expertise (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000): female leaders are expected to be more competent in familial affairs, social welfare and education, while male leaders are perceived to be more effective in security affairs, diplomatic issues, finance and economy (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Such stereotypical segregation makes it difficult for women to enter male-dominated fields (Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011) and they face tremendous obstacles to succeed in such occupations (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Johnson, Murphy, Zwedie, & Reichard, 2008).

To some extent, gender roles are used to explain and justify status differences (Ayman & Korabik 2010; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). Such gender stereotypes may affect how leaders are perceived and evaluated (Eagly & Karau, 2002), hurting women leaders in the processes of selection, placement, promotion, and recognition. The related double standard problem is also reinforced by social expectations on women in public and private spheres, especially regarding domestic responsibilities.

3.3.2 Family roles and domestic responsibilities
Cross-culturally, domestic responsibility is more of an obstacle for women than for men in political participation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009). Family responsibilities, the motherhood penalty, and the disproportionate family burden are significant barriers faced by women as legislators and politicians (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015). Women's political careers depend more heavily on family support; men are more likely to run for office despite their family's discouragement (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015). In Hong Kong,

women face various obstacles to realising their career ambitions, including long working hours in the workplace, the elderly care burden in addition to childcare due to the ageing problem, and the possible threat posed to cultural expectations with their greater career success than their husbands (Lam, Fung, & Lo, 2012). In short, domestic power in the use of time and money within family unions is closely related to different levels of political power outside the home (Lee, 2000; Schlozman, Burns, Verba, & Donahue, 1995).

3.3.3 Limited access to various resources and networks

Perceptions of gender differences in political spheres are also related to the backgrounds and resources of men and women in terms of political participation. In different countries and societies, women and men in politics are found to have various backgrounds and access to resources. A survey of legislators in 84 countries found that a higher proportion of women formerly worked as civil servants or teachers, while men were more likely to develop their political career from leadership positions in law and business (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015). As such, support from political parties is crucial for women candidates (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). For female politicians in many countries, income from their parliamentary post is more important than for their male counterparts, who often have alternative income and investments (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015).

Therefore, limited access to financial resources and networks is a big concern (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). Female political leaders have been found to receive fewer private donations than men and rely heavily on party support (Women in Parliaments Global Forum & the World Bank, 2015). In the US, women are believed to receive less support from party leaders (Pew Research Center, 2015). In Hong Kong, the Executive Council has been dominated by men from business and professional sectors; such business and professional sectors have not been effective channels to nurture women's leadership (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Given their limited resources and networks, it is crucial for women to gain organizational and social support to become leaders.

Women's under-representation in formal political leadership goes hand in hand with the invisibility of their political participation at the grassroots level (Lee, 2000; Schlozman et al., 1995). In Hong Kong, women are more active in community, private, charitable and religious activities and their political roles are more often related to their domestic and voluntary roles. Men's political participation is more likely to be related to their career and leadership in the workplace, labour unions, and business and professional

associations (Lee, 2000). In Hong Kong, men may be recruited into the political system based on their involvement in local business and community leader networks, while such opportunities are limited for women (Wong & Lee, 2006).

3.3.4 Lack of institutional and organisational support

Despite the protection of women's representation in legal regulations, men often dominate the formulation of informal rules and the definition of evaluation standards in a masculine political culture (Sun, 2005). Female politicians in many countries have reported that hostile attitudes towards women's political participation represent one of the most important obstacles to them running for parliament (Norris & Inglehart, 2000). By contrast, the Nordic countries witness relatively high levels of representation of female parliamentarians, due to a political culture that emphasises gender equality (Bystydzienski, 1995). Depending on political culture, women are often found to withdraw when they feel gender bias in government and in public life (Fox & Lawless, 2011; Naff, 1995).

In East Asia, women's representation is restricted by prevalent patriarchal traditions in governments and economic organisations (Jaqutte, 2001). Related party culture may discourage women from aspiring higher positions (Sun, 2005) or force them to rely on male sponsorship for career advancement, like in Japan and South Korea (Jaqutte, 2001). In Taiwan, women are often excluded from informal political networks of kinship, faction, and patronage relations; they usually enter political administrations to play supporting roles for men rather than moving ahead of them, and their jobs are more likely to be affected when the public sector is downsized (Sun, 2005). The lack of useful networks and helpful mentors not only contributes to the leaking pipeline problem for women (Hill, Miller, Benson, & Handley, 2016) but also adds to discrimination and strict moral standards faced by women in political systems (Sun, 2005).

In the male-dominated domain of politics, women have limited time and opportunities to gain civic skills (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009). In Hong Kong, women's political participation has been constrained by the patriarchal nature of social organisations and their limited access to participation channels (Wong & Lee, 2006). Inferior preparation and experience may further reinforce gender stereotyping, prejudice and related cultural perceptions. As such, women have to do more to prove themselves. In the US, people regard a higher standard and a lack of readiness as key barriers to women taking political leadership (Pew Research Center, 2015). This contributes to the double standard problem and women parliamentarians often find themselves with a heavier workload than men (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009).

In sum, existing research has identified different barriers faced by women to enter politics, such as individuals' preparations and ambitions, cultural perceptions, domestic responsibilities, financial resources, and support from political parties. Although men have reported similar barriers regarding finances, experience, confidence, and party support, they are regarded as less substantial than those encountered by women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009). This project will examine how such barriers and their effects on men and women are perceived in Hong Kong.

3.4 A global review of policies and affirmative actions

To support women's participation in the political field, different measures and affirmative actions have been created to set gender targets and to enhance equal opportunities (Eagly & Heilman, 2016; Sojo, Wood, Wood, & Wheeler, 2016). Some measures focus on the demand side to require certain quotas or percentages among leadership positions to be occupied by a particular gender; some others adopt supply-side strategies to enhance opportunities through mentoring, networking, and capacity building (Sojo et al., 2016).

3.4.1 Quotas

Gender quotas are percentages or numbers of men or women to be achieved in leadership positions (Sojo et al., 2016). Depending on enforcement mechanisms, quotas can be divided into mandatory quotas and voluntarily implemented quotas (UN, 2014).

Mandatory quotas are enacted in legislation and enforced by specific measures (UN, 2013a, 2014). Following the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as of 2013, 64 countries had enacted legislation on electoral quotas (UN, 2013a, 2014). Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest rates of adopting electoral quotas (UN, 2013a). Electoral quotas comprise two categories: candidate nomination quotas and reserved seats.

Candidate quotas require that females constitute a certain percentage or a minimum number on candidate lists (UN, 2013a). There are various ways to enforce candidate quota, such as checking nomination lists and rejecting those that fail to meet the quota requirements (UN, 2013a). Drawing on data from countries where information is available, 31 countries have legislated candidate quotas in the lower or single house (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020), such as Chile, Ireland, Italy, and Vietnam. On average, the proportion of women elected under

candidate quota systems is 23.5% (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

In contrast to candidate quotas, the system of **reserved seats** allocates a certain number of seats for women only to contest (UN, 2013a). Reserved seats (in the lower or single house) have been adopted in 24 states, such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020), usually with allocations ranging from one quarter to one third of representatives (UN, 2013a). On average, the proportion of women elected under reserved seat systems in these states is 25% (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

In addition to mandatory quotas (including candidate quotas and reserved seats), quotas can also be voluntarily implemented (UN, 2014). Without enforcement mechanisms, **voluntary quotas, or targets,** can also set goals for the percentage or number of women to be nominated as candidates or to occupy seats (Whelan & Wood, 2012; Sojo et al., 2016). In Australia, Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (UK), gender quotas are introduced by political parties on a voluntary basis (International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). When candidate quotas are voluntarily implemented by political parties, internal party rules play an important role in increasing women's political representation (Dahlerup, 2005). Voluntary party quotas have been adopted in 54 countries (UN, 2015).

3.4.2 Local-level decision making as an entry point

Local governance can be a vital arena for female political participation (UN, 2014). Women can use their experience in the local community when running for election at the level of local governance. Local election campaigns are often less costly, and there are more seats available (UN, 2014). Local government positions may also provide a shorter commute and a more flexible working schedule, which are potentially friendly to women. However, women may still face local obstacles such as informal patriarchal networks and traditional elites (UN, 2014). Quota systems at the local level are still rare, but have been adopted in Rwanda and Burundi (UN, 2013a). They can be a starting point to call for globally consistent measures to promote female participation in local governance.

3.4.3 Financial instruments and aids from governments and international institutes

Running for political positions can be costly, particularly for women with limited connections in the political and business spheres. In response, financial support from

governments and parties are important resources for female candidates and leaders. Some countries[3] have allocated public funding to political parties for campaign expenditures, training, and other party activities according to gender equality results (UN, 2013a).

Public funding can be used to enforce the quota system. Governments can provide financial incentives or sanctions to motivate political parties to nominate or select women candidates. In Burkina Faso, France, Ireland, and Portugal, parties may face a cut in public financing allocation if they fail to reach a certain numerical threshold in the candidate list (UN, 2013a).

International institutes and NGOs also play a crucial role in boosting female political leadership in less developed countries by rendering financial aids and supporting nascent female political leaders (UN Women, 2015). For example, the Norwegian Government and the Asia Foundation helped to initiate the Women's Local Governance Program in Timor-Leste to promote women's contributions in decision making (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

3.4.4 Capacity building and family-friendly measures by governments, parties and NGOs

Some governments have initiated capacity-building strategies to support women's political participation (UN, 2014). Such leadership programmes, some of which are cross-party mentoring programmes, provide training for nascent office holders, add to women's leadership skills, and expand their knowledge about political systems (UN, 2014). Some countries have also introduced initiatives to promote gender equality and gender awareness in elections (UN, 2014). In countries like Spain, some parties organise training activities of leadership skills for women (Verge, 2011). The provision of capacity building by international agencies such as the UN primarily covers less developed countries.

Some countries nurture female leaders and candidates through networking. In some societies, women parliamentarians or women's organisations form networks or cross-party caucuses to address women's practical needs, enhance their voices, and mainstream gender issues (Asian Development Bank, 2014; Powley, 2008). Women's

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[3] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Haiti, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Romania, South Korea and Togo (UN, 2013a).

committees and organisations in the UK and Australia provide training and mentoring, encourage women to run for public positions, and monitor agendas and decision-making processes with a gender lens (Australian Local Government Women's Association, 2009; Stokes, 2011). In countries like Argentina, Croatia, Saint Lucia, and Portugal, women's wings have been established in some political parties as reserved forums to deal with women's issues (UN, 2013a). Feminist organisations in Taiwan have organised regional and international forums to mobilise women, share experiences, and push for changes (Yang, 2004).

Capacity-enhancing strategies often go hand in hand with family-friendly measures to provide women equal opportunities to run for public positions and participate in political affairs. Other than offering training on leadership skills, some parties in Spain also adopt family-friendly measures such as providing childcare services during meetings and limiting the number of meetings (Verge, 2011). Such measures aim to help women to overcome their structural disadvantages.

3.5 Cases of policies and outcomes worldwide

The above-mentioned measures to increase women's political representation usually work best when they complement each other and are compatible with existing political institutions. For example, quota systems work best when the quota design suits the electoral system (UN, 2014). Previous studies have shown that a combination of legislated electoral quotas and proportional representation systems (as compared to first-past-the-post majority or plurality systems) are most effective at increasing women's representation (UN, 2013a, 2014). In recent decades, the proportion of women in parliaments has increased from 11.3% in 1995 to 24.5% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015, 2019a). For single or lower houses, the proportions of women are 44.0% in Nordic countries, 30.6% in the Americas, 28.1% in Europe (Nordic countries excluded), 20.1% in Asia, and 17.7% in the Middle East and North Africa (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019a).

The UK has not legislated gender quotas but it has adopted voluntary political party quotas (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). In 1918, some women began to be allowed to vote in elections and in 1928, women were granted equality with men regarding the parliamentary franchise (Johnston, 2013). In 2019, the proportion of women is 32.0% in the lower house and 26.4% in the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

The US has not legislated gender quotas (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). In 2019, the proportion of women is 23.5% in the lower

house and 25.0% in the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

The PRC has adopted reserved seats for women in the parliament (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). The PRC government has also issued laws and policies to enhance women's leadership at grassroots levels, such as that at least one third of the villager representatives should be women, and village committees should have "an appropriate number of women" (Howell, 2006, p. 607; Song, 2018). In 2019, women accounted for 24.9% in the National People's Congress (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

Taiwan has adopted reserved seats for female parliamentarians since the 1950s and realized quota reforms in the 1990s. In 1996, the Democratic Progressive Party introduced a voluntary one-fourth party quota for both sexes, followed by constitutional reforms and reforms in the Nationalist Party (Huang, 2015). In 2007, the Civil Servants Election and Recall Act stipulated that political parties should nominate at least 50% of women for legislators-at-large and overseas compatriot legislators (Department of Gender Equality, Executive Yuan, 2019). In 2018, women accounted for 38.7% of parliamentary seats (Department of Gender Equality, Executive Yuan, 2020).

South Korea has introduced a legal quota that applies to party lists. Since 2004, parties are required to place a female in every other position on party lists in a "zipper" pattern and are encouraged (but not required) to have a minimum of 30% women district candidates (Mobrand, 2019). In 2019, 16.7% of parliamentary seats were occupied by women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

Singapore has enacted a quota system on an ethnic basis instead of gender, under the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) scheme since 1988, to protect the minorities' representation in the parliament. The scheme opened up opportunities to include more women in order to make the multi-member team more balanced; indeed, women's percentage among parliamentarians increased from 5% in 1988 to 21.8% in 2011 (Tan, 2014) and 23.0% in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

Japan has not legislated gender quotas. Political parties have been using the inclusion of more women strategically to attract votes and symbolise changes, but such changes have not been sustainable and no party has institutionalised gender quotas (Gaunder, 2015). In 2018, the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in Political Field urged to make numbers of female and male candidates "as even as possible" for national and local elections. In 2019, the proportion of women was 10.1% in the lower house and 22.9% in the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019b).

In general, quota systems have greatly contributed to women's representation in many areas, seeing an around 10% rise since 1995 in Latin America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab states (UN, 2013b, 2014). In areas where quotas are less widespread (Asia and the Pacific), advancement has been slow (UN, 2014).

However, such demand-side policies often rely on changes in the supply side. Furthermore, the success of quota systems is contingent on support from parties and the public, the political will of leaders, enforcement rules and sanctions, and monitoring by institutions and civil society (UN, 2013b, 2014). In some societies, quota systems are established in the rebuilding of institutions after years of political conflict and unrest (UN, 2013b). In others, cultural norms and social organisations have led to resistance against policies for gender equality. Such socio-cultural backgrounds may discourage women's initiatives in political representation and lead to male political elites' low commitment to prioritise gender equality (Sun, 2005). In South Asia, cultural factors of gender stereotypes have been interwoven with race, ethnicity and religion concerns. In East Asia, women's domestic roles in contrast to men's public roles are especially dominant, with related social and gender practices hindering women's political participation (True, George, Niner, & Parashar, 2014).

Given each country's unique historical and socio-cultural context, we opted to examine how these measures and quota systems are perceived in Hong Kong. To discuss their possible influences in Hong Kong, we needed to understand how people understand gender and leadership situations in Hong Kong and how they interpret these measures. Before a demand-side policy can be implemented, it is necessary to evaluate if the supply side should also be reformed, potentially requiring changes in education, gender norms, culture and social mobilisation (True et al., 2014).

Chapter 4 Telephone Survey with the General Public

The telephone survey collected public opinions about gender equality and political leadership, perceptions of gender and leadership traits, attitudes towards women and men as leaders, perceptions of barriers for women and men in attaining political leadership positions, and views on policies to increase female political leadership. The target population of the telephone survey was Hong Kong residents aged 15 or above. The telephone survey was conducted based on random sampling. Between 17 December 2018 and 11 January 2019, 1,003 responses were collected, with a response rate of 38.4%. The data were weighted based on the updated age-sex distribution (aged 15 or above and excluding foreign domestic helpers) in the mid-year of 2018 provided by the Census and Statistics Department.

4.1 Demographic characteristics

Table 4.1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, education, marital status, employment status, income level and political tendency. Of the respondents, 52.7% were women and 47.3% were men; moreover, 26.2% were aged 15–34, 34.5% were aged 35–54 and 39.3% were 55 or over. Most of them had upper secondary school education (31.2%) or an educational level of tertiary or above (48.2%). A total of 31.9% had never been married and 21.0% had young children (aged below 18). As many as 56.6% of the respondents were currently working and 27.8% had a monthly income level of HK$10,000–19,999. Regarding their political tendencies, 11.6% of them were pro-establishment, 29.1% were non-establishment and 59.3% were moderate.

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents in telephone survey[4]

Variables		
Gender	N	%
Male	475	47.3
Female	528	52.7
Total	(1,003)	100.0
Age		
15–34	263	26.2
35–54	346	34.5
55 or above	394	39.3

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[4] Due to the rounding effect when data are weighted, the sample total and the aggregated total percentage may not add up to 100%. For example, after weighting, 209.7 respondents had young children and 788.6 respondents had no young children, with the sum of observations therefore being 998.3 (not by adding 210 and 789, which is 999).

Total	(1003)	100.0
Level of education[5]		
Lower secondary (Form 1 to Form 3) or below	206	20.6
Upper secondary (Form 4 to Form 7)	312	31.2
Tertiary non-degree	131	13.1
Bachelor's degree or above	351	35.1
Total	(999)	100.0
Marital status		
Never married	318	31.9
Ever married	677	68.1
Total	(995)	100.0
Have young children		
With children under 18 years old	210	21.0
Without children under 18 years old	789	79.0
Total	(998)	100.0
Employment[6]		
Employed	566	56.6
Unemployed	30	3.0
Housekeeping	105	10.5
Retired	214	21.4
Student	84	8.4
Other	3	0.3
Total	(1000)	100.0
Monthly income		
Less than HK$10,000	37	7.0
HK$10,000–19,999	146	27.8
HK$20,000–29,999	140	26.7
HK$30,000–49,999	108	20.5
HK$50,000 or above	82	15.5
Unstable income	13	2.5
Total	(526)	100.0
Political tendency[7]		
Pro-establishment	114	11.6
Moderate groups	584	59.3
Non-establishment	286	29.1
Total	(984)	100.0

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[5] "Tertiary non-degree" and "Bachelor's degree or above" are grouped into "Tertiary or above" in the following sections for analytical purposes.

[6] "Student", "Housekeeping", "Retired" and "Unemployed" are categorised into "Non-employed" in the following sections for analytical purposes.

[7] Political tendency was categorised into "pro-establishment" (including "pro-establishment"), "moderate groups" (including "moderate/middle-line", "neutral", "no political stand", "non-localists", "non-democrats and localists" and "don't know"), and "non-establishment" (including "pan-democrats", "localists" and "non-pro-establishment").

4.2 Desired qualities of political leaders

The research collected opinions from respondents about important leadership characteristics between genders. Most respondents suggested that there are no gender differences in being "competent" (84.3%), "prioritising the public interest" (77.9%), "hard-working" (77.3%), and "honest and ethical" (75.2%) (Table 4.2.1). For all leadership traits, more than 60% of the respondents believed that there are no gender differences between female and male leaders.

However, men and women were believed to perform differently in some key leadership characteristics. The top-ranking traits for women were being "collaborative and working out compromises" (25.9%), "compassionate" (25.1%), and "persuasive" (25.0%), while for men they were being "visionary" (29.1%) and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure" (23.0%). In short, women tended to be seen as more compassionate (25.1% for women vs 8.6% for men), and men as more visionary (29.1% for men vs 4.0% for women). In these aspects, perceptions of differences between male and female leaders were most evident.

Table 4.2.1 Public perceptions that leadership characteristics are "more true for men or women"

	More true for women (%)	More true for men (%)	Equally true of both (%)
Competent	4.4	11.3	84.3
Compassionate	25.1	8.6	66.3
Visionary	4.0	29.1	66.9
Persuasive	25.0	13.9	61.1
Prioritising the public interest	10.7	11.5	77.9
Collaborative and working out compromises	25.9	12.3	61.8
Hard-working	15.5	7.2	77.3
Honest and ethical	19.9	4.9	75.2
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	7.9	23.0	69.1

Gender differences between female and male respondents were evident in their opinions concerning some key leadership qualities. Indeed, gender differences were significant in "visionary", "persuasive", "prioritising the public interest", and "hard-working", in which female respondents were more likely to claim that women are better in these traits, whereas male respondents were significantly more likely to suggest that men are

better in these aspects (Table 4.2.1a, Figure 4.2.1a, Table 4.2.1b, Figure 4.2.1b, Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10 in Appendix III).[8]

Figure 4.2.1 Public perceptions that leadership characteristics are "more true for men or women"
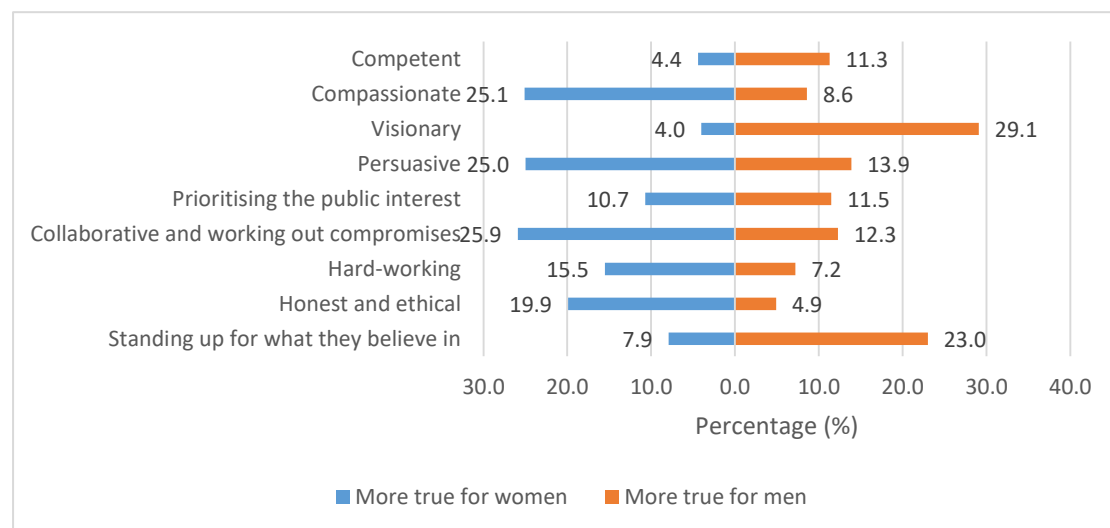
Table 4.2.1a Proportion of respondents who suggested that "women are better than men in the following traits" (by gender)

	Females' perspectives (%)	Males' perspectives (%)
Competent	4.7	4.0
Compassionate	26.3	23.7
Visionary	5.8	2.1
Persuasive	26.9	22.9
Prioritising the public interest	13.2	7.9
Collaborative and working out compromises	25.7	26.1
Hard-working	19.4	11.2
Honest and ethical	18.0	22.0
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	6.9	9.1

Figure 4.2.1a Proportion of respondents who suggested that "women are better than men in the traits" (by gender)

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[8] Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level, applicable to all of the analyses presented in this report.
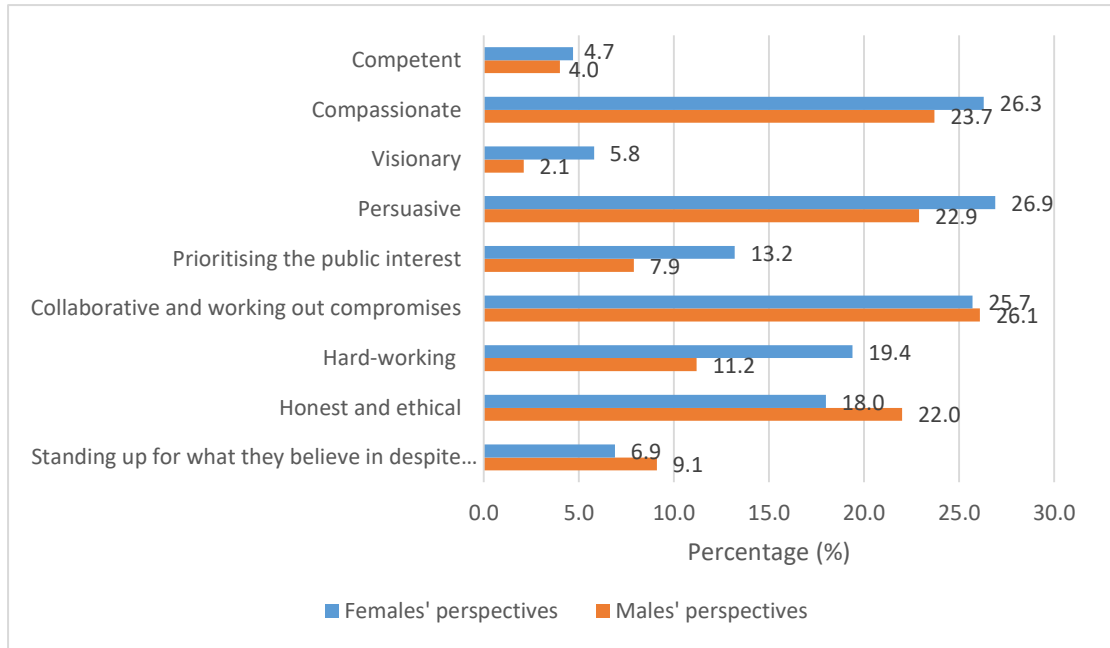
Table 4.2.1b Proportion of respondents who suggested that "men are better than women in the traits" (by gender)

	Females' perspectives (%)	Males' perspectives (%)
Competent	9.5	13.3
Compassionate	6.8	10.6
Visionary	25.3	33.2
Persuasive	10.3	17.7
Prioritising the public interest	8.5	14.8
Collaborative and working out compromises	12.5	12.1
Hard-working	6.2	8.4
Honest and ethical	5.0	4.8
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	20.7	25.5

Figure 4.2.1b Proportion of respondents who suggested that "men are better than women in the traits" (by gender)
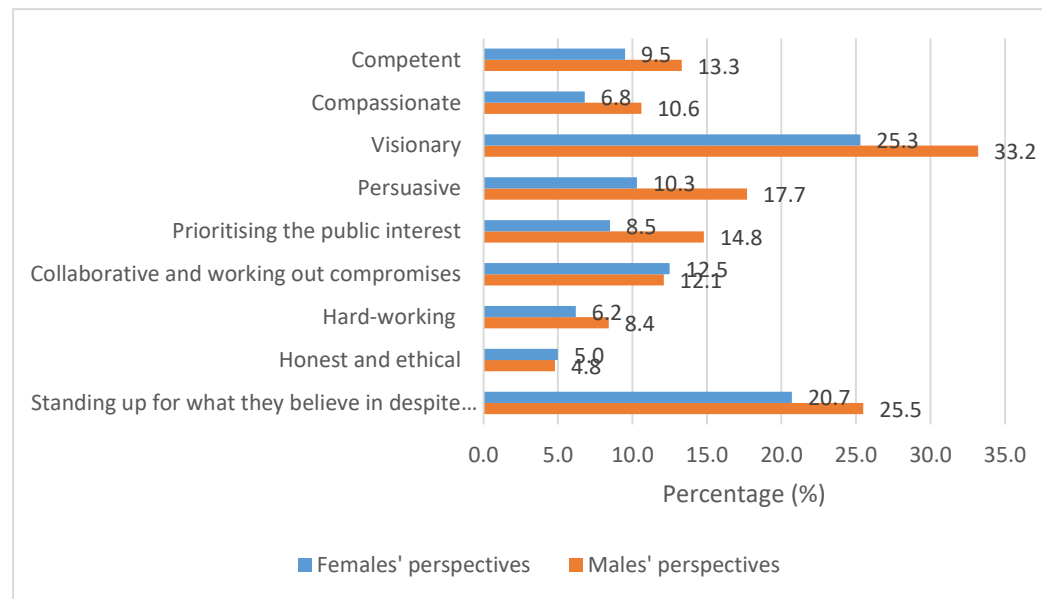
Public opinions regarding leadership qualities also varied by age group, education level, family status, employment status and political tendencies. There was a significant age difference in public perceptions of all of the leadership traits except "collaborative and working out compromises" and "honest and ethical". In general, younger people were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences, but there were also exceptions (Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10 in Appendix III). Variations by education level were also significant, except for "persuasive" and "collaborative and working out compromises". In general, highly educated groups were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in most leadership traits (Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10). Differences based on family status were significant except for "standing up for what they believe in". In general, never married respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences (Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10).

Variations by employment status were significant, except for "persuasive", "collaborative and working out compromises", "honest and ethical" and "standing up for what they believe in". In general, currently working respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in the other leadership traits (Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10). Variations across political tendencies were significant, except for "compassionate" and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure". In general, pro-establishment respondents were more likely to believe that women are better in certain leadership traits, while respondents of other political camps were more

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likely to believe that there are no gender differences, although there were exceptions (Figures 4.2.2–4.2.10).

4.3 Performance of female and male leaders in policy areas

In addition to perceptions regarding the leadership characteristics of male and female leaders, the survey asked respondents about their opinions of the performance of female and male leaders: first about leaders' performance in policy areas (horizontal) and then about their performance at different levels of political leadership (vertical).

The policy areas in which female and male leaders were evaluated included "economics, finance and trade", "security affairs", "social welfare", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "education", "political reforms", and "labour issues". More than half of the respondents said there are no gender differences in most of the key policy areas listed in the survey, the exceptions being "security affairs" (26.4%) and "economics, finance and trade" (45.0%). However, when one considers specific policy areas, respondents varied in their proportions of believing that women or men are more capable. More respondents suggested that men are more capable in dealing with issues in: security affairs; economics, finance and trade; infrastructure and development; political reforms; and labour issues (71.6%, 51.9%, 44.3%, 28.3% and 19.5%, respectively). By contrast, confidence in women leaders was greater in the areas of social welfare, education and environment (42.9%, 31.5% and 20.5%, respectively). Nevertheless, with the exceptions of "security affairs" and "economics, finance and trade", more than half of the respondents evaluated the performance of male and female leaders similarly in the main policy areas.

Table 4.3.1 Female or male leaders are more capable in the following areas

	Women more capable (%)	Men more capable (%)	No difference (%)
Economics, finance and trade	3.1	51.9	45.0
Security affairs	1.9	71.6	26.4
Social welfare	42.9	3.8	53.3
Infrastructure and development	1.4	44.3	54.4
Environment	20.5	8.0	71.5
Education	31.5	5.2	63.3
Political reforms	5.6	28.3	66.1
Labour issues	11.6	19.5	68.9

Figure 4.3.1 Female or male leaders are more capable in the following areas
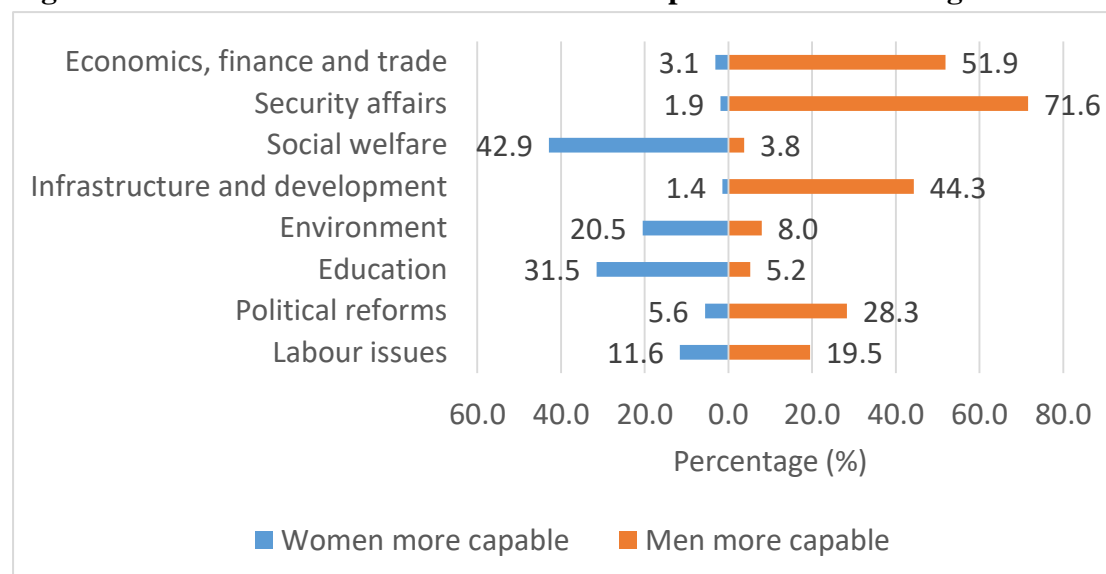
Regarding subgroup differences in perceptions regarding the performance of male and female leaders in different policy realms, gender differences were significant for "economics, finance and trade", "education" and "political reforms". Female respondents tended to believe that there are no gender differences (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9 in Appendix III). Variations across age groups were significant for "infrastructure and development", "environment", and "labour issues". Young people were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9). Variations by education levels were significant for "social welfare", "infrastructure and development", "environment", and "labour issues". In general, highly educated groups were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences, but there were exceptions (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9).

Differences based on family status were significant for "infrastructure and development", "environment" and "labour issues". Never-married people were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9).

Differences based on employment status were significant for "security affairs", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "education" and "labour issues". Currently working people were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9). Variations across political tendencies were significant for "economics, finance and trade", "security affairs", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "political reforms" and "labour issues". In general, respondents of non-establishment and moderate groups were more likely to believe that there were no gender differences (Figures 4.3.2–4.3.9).

4.4 Performance of female and male leaders at different levels of leadership

Regarding perceptions of male and female leaders' performances at different levels of political leadership (vertical), the survey asked whether respondents had greater confidence in male or female leaders (1) as better political leaders in general, (2) as community or grassroots leaders, and (3) as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils.

The survey also asked respondents whether male or female leaders have greater influence on social and political issues and whether men or women face greater challenges in attempting to attain a higher political leadership position.

Many respondents reported similar levels of confidence in men and women at different levels of political leadership, with a slight male advantage, except for community or grassroots leaders: 16.0% believed that women perform better in community or grassroots leadership compared with 8.7% who had greater confidence in men's performance. Overall, more than 75% of the respondents believed that there are no gender differences (1) as political leaders, (2) as community or grassroots leaders and (3) as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils (Table 4.4.1 and Figure 4.4.1).

Despite the general belief in the comparable capabilities of male and female leaders at different levels, 31.9% of the respondents believed that male leaders have greater influence on social and political issues, in contrast to 6.9% of the respondents who believed in women's greater influence (Table 4.4.1 and Figure 4.4.1). Meanwhile, more respondents believed that women face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions than men (36.5% for "more challenges for women" and 10.2% for "more challenges for men") (Figure 4.4.2).

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to believe that women face more challenges, while male respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences or that men face more challenges (Figure 4.4.7 in Appendix III). Younger people were more likely to believe that there are no differences in the performance of male and female leaders (significant for "political leaders" and "Legislative Council and District Council members"), but they also tended to believe that men have greater influence on social and political issues (Figures 4.4.3–4.4.6 in Appendix III). Younger respondents were more likely to believe that women face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions (Figure 4.4.7 in Appendix III).

Highly educated people were more likely to believe that there are no differences in the performance of male and female leaders (significant for "political leaders" and "Legislative Council and District Council members") (Figures 4.4.3–4.4.6 in Appendix III). Highly educated respondents were more likely to believe that women face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions (Figure 4.4.7 in Appendix III).

Never-married respondents tended to believe that there are no differences in the performance of male and female leaders (significant for "political leaders", "community/grassroots leaders", and "Legislative Council and District Council members"), but they also tended to believe that men have greater influence on social and political issues (Figures 4.4.3–4.4.6). Never-married respondents were more likely to believe that women face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions (Figure 4.4.7). Respondents with employment were more likely to believe that there are no differences in the performance of male and female leaders (only significant for "political leaders" in general), compared with respondents who were not employed (Figures 4.4.3–4.4.6 in Appendix III).

Pro-establishment respondents were more likely to believe that women are better political leaders, while the respondents of other political camps were more likely to claim that there are no gender differences in general and at different levels. Pro-establishment respondents were less likely to believe that men and women leaders in Hong Kong have equal influence on social and political issues, while the respondents of other political camps were more likely to believe that male leaders have a greater influence (Figures 4.4.3–4.4.6 in Appendix III). Non-establishment respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in people's difficulties in attaining higher political positions, while moderate groups were more likely to believe that women face more challenges in this regard (Figure 4.4.7 in Appendix III). All of these subgroup differences were statistically significant.

Table 4.4.1 Perceptions of male and female leaders

	Women (%)	Men (%)	No difference (%)
In Hong Kong, who do you think generally make better political leaders?	8.2	13.4	78.5
In Hong Kong, who do you think generally perform better as community/grassroots leaders?	16.0	8.7	75.3
In Hong Kong, do you have greater confidence in the performance of female or male members in the Legislative Council and District Councils?	6.3	10.1	83.6
Do you think men or women leaders in Hong Kong have greater influence on social and political issues?	6.9	31.9	61.3
In Hong Kong, who face more challenges when attempting to attain higher political leadership positions?	36.5	10.2	53.3

Figure 4.4.1 Confidence in female and male leaders
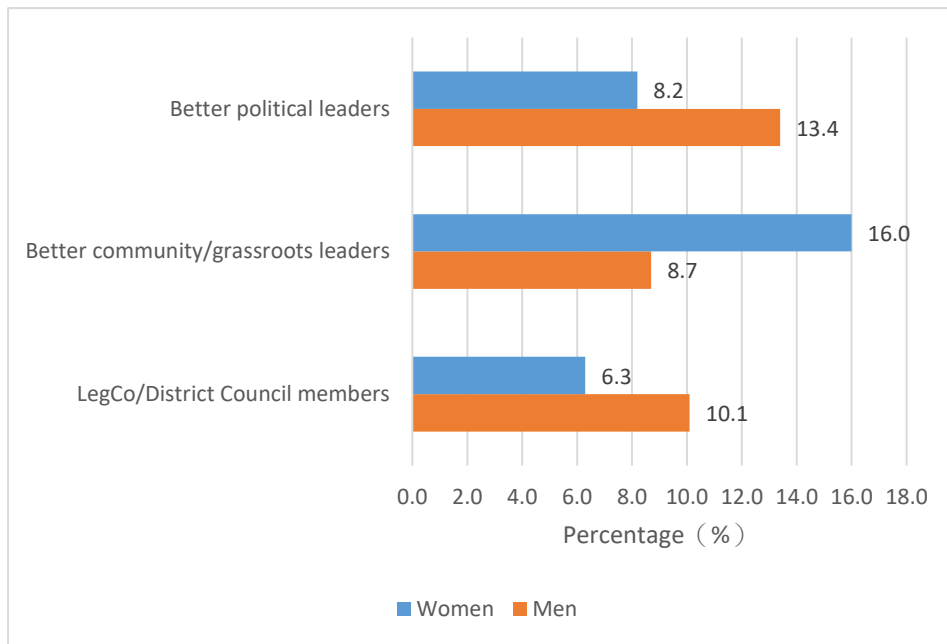
Figure 4.4.2 Who face more challenges when attempting to attain higher political leadership positions?
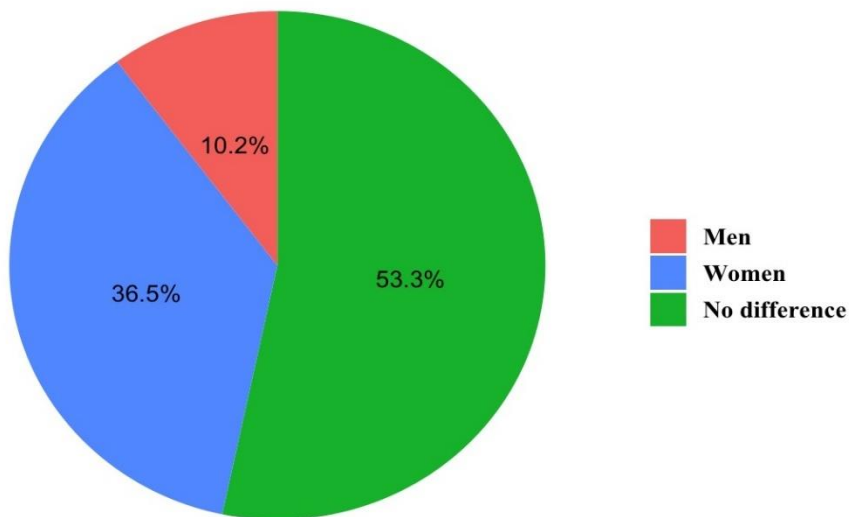
4.5 Barriers in attaining political leadership

The survey asked respondents to choose from a list of factors and to suggest whether they were obstacles to attaining higher political leadership: mainly for women, mainly for men, for both men and women, or for neither men nor women. The factors included "traditional attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. 'women are to take care of the family while men are to work outside')", "domestic responsibilities", "lack of confidence", "lack of experience", "lack of support from political parties and organisations", "lack of support from family", "lack of social network and connections", and "double standards between genders to prove themselves".

Some obstacles were widely perceived to affect both men and women, including "lack of experience" (47.3%), "lack of social network and connections" (42.8%) and "lack of support from political parties and organisations" (41.6%) (Table 4.5.1). Some other barriers were more likely to be regarded as specific to women, especially "domestic responsibilities" (64.0%), followed by "traditional attitudes towards gender roles" (55.9%), and then "double standards between genders to prove themselves" (46.8%). Fewer respondents identified certain barriers as specific to men: "lack of social network and connections" ranked first among the perceived barriers mainly for men (7.1%), followed by "lack of confidence" (6.8%) (Table 4.5.1 and Figure 4.5.1).

In short, many people believed that both men and women face obstacles related to their experience, social networks and connections and support from political parties and organisations, pointing to the importance of providing necessary training, support and supervision for people regardless of their gender and to promote a level playing field in these aspects. Nevertheless, women were perceived to encounter specific and additional barriers to taking up political leadership positions. More support in the domestic sphere, attitudinal changes about gender roles, and the elimination of double standards are thus required to facilitate women's attainment of higher political leadership positions.

Table 4.5.1 Obstacles for women and men leaders in attaining higher political leadership positions

	Mainly for women (%)	Mainly for men (%)	Obstacle for both men and women (%)	Not an obstacle for either men or women (%)
Traditional attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. "women are to take care of the family while men are to work outside")	55.9	3.1	12.8	28.2
Domestic responsibilities	64.0	5.3	15.3	15.4
Lack of confidence	18.7	6.8	37.9	36.6
Lack of experience	14.4	2.8	47.3	35.5
Lack of support from political parties and organisations	20.1	5.3	41.6	33.1
Lack of support from family	35.8	3.7	29.5	31.0
Lack of social network and connections	18.8	7.1	42.8	31.2
Double standards between genders to prove themselves	46.8	3.9	20.6	28.7

Figure 4.5.1 Obstacles for women and men leaders in attaining higher political leadership positions
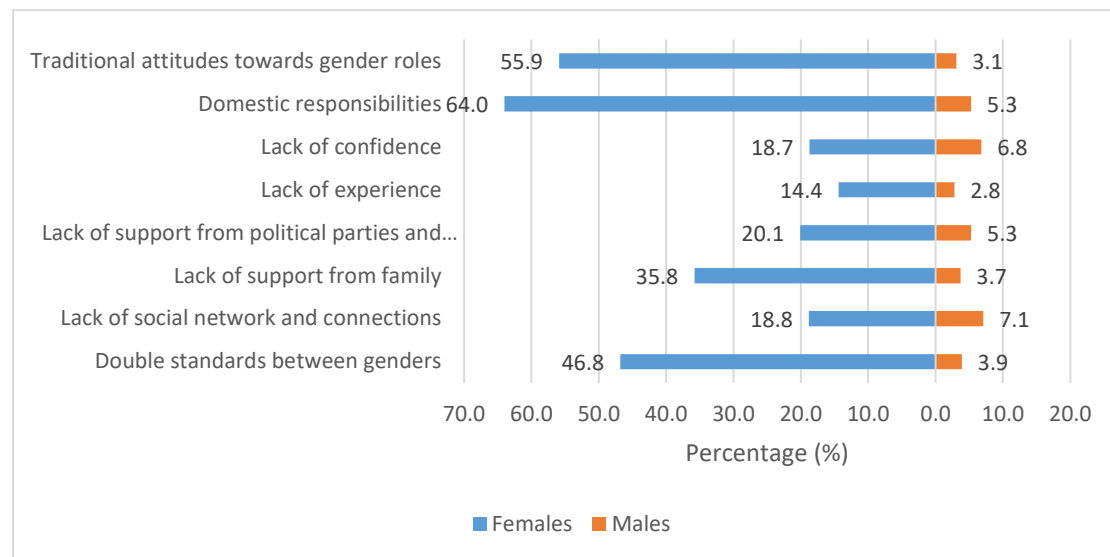
Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to believe that certain obstacles mainly affect women – including "traditional attitudes towards gender roles", "domestic responsibilities", "lack of experience", "lack of support from political parties and organisations" and "double standards" – compared with male respondents. However, compared with male respondents, a greater proportion of female respondents also believed that "lack of confidence", "lack of experience" "lack of support from political parties and organisations", "lack of support from family", "lack of social networks and connections", and "double standards" were obstacles for both men and women (Figures 4.5.2–4.5.9 in Appendix III).

Younger, highly educated and never-married respondents were more likely to believe that "traditional gender roles" mainly hurt women. Married respondents with young children were more likely to believe that "domestic responsibilities" and "lack of support from family" mainly hurt women. Younger and never-married people were more likely to believe that "lack of confidence", "lack of experience", "lack of support from political parties and organisations", and "lack of social network and connections" are obstacles for both men and women. Currently working respondents were more likely to see "lack of confidence" and "lack of experience" as no obstacle for men and women alike (Figures 4.5.2–4.5.9 in Appendix III).

Pro-establishment respondents were more likely to believe that "lack of support from family" and "double standards" are no obstacle for both men and women, while respondents of other political camps were more likely to regard them as hurting women.

Furthermore, pro-establishment respondents were more likely to see "lack of social network and connections" as an obstacle for women, whereas respondents of other political camps tended to regard this as an obstacle for both men and women (Figures 4.5.2–4.5.9 in Appendix III). The above-mentioned subgroup differences were statistically significant.

4.6 Views on policies

This section summarises respondents' opinions about the need to increase female political leadership and different measures to this end, particularly quota systems. In total, 36.0% of the respondents agreed that we should increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions, while 51.0% disagreed with this statement (Figure 4.6.1). Regarding subgroup differences, female respondents (39.1%) and young people (44.8% among those aged 15–34) were significantly more likely to agree that we should increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions (Figure 4.6.2 in Appendix III) .

Figure 4.6.1 Should we increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions?
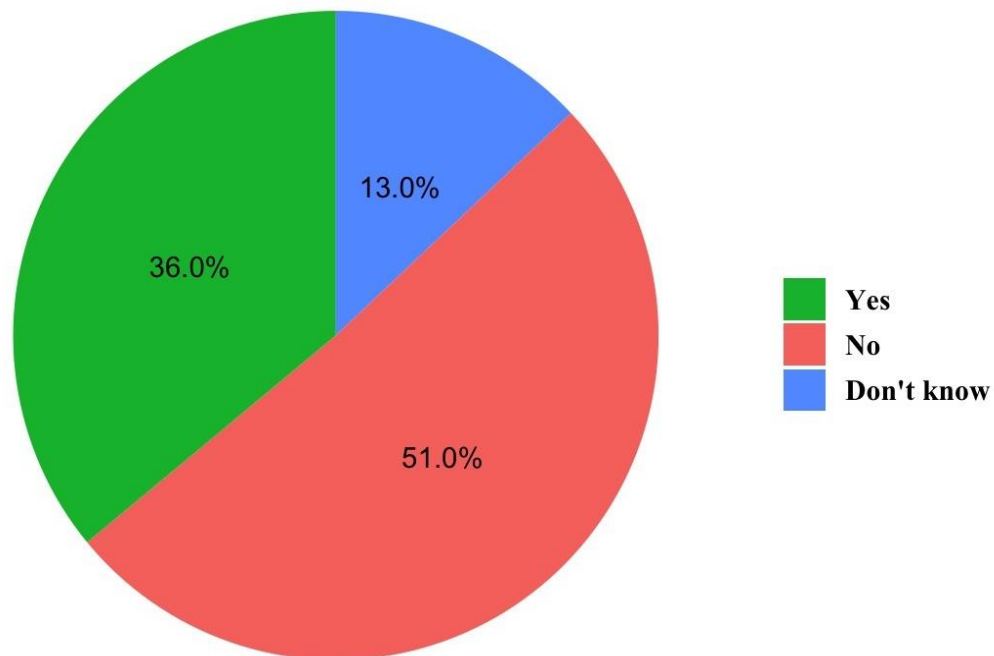
When asked about the measures that respondents would support to increase women's political leadership (Table 4.6.3 and Figure 4.6.3), "implement family-friendly policies" was the most popular answer (77.8%), followed by "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (75.2%), "provide training for potential female leaders" (74.6%), and "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality" (73.6%).

Opinions were more divided in the measures related to the "quota system": 34.6% of the respondents supported and 40.4% were against a measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women", while 33.7% of the respondents supported and 42.2% were against a measure to "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units".

Table 4.6. 3 What should be done to increase women's political leadership?

	Support (%)	Neither support nor against (%)	Do not support (%)
Make more female role models and mentors available	60.4	31.0	8.5
Provide training for potential female leaders	74.6	17.0	8.4
Implement family-friendly policies (e.g. maternity/parental leave, subsidised care services, flexible work arrangements)	77.8	13.3	8.9
Encourage women to lean in for opportunities	75.2	14.8	10.0
Improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality	73.6	18.2	8.2
Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women	34.6	25.0	40.4
Reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units	33.7	24.1	42.2

Figure 4.6.3 What should be done to increase women's political leadership?

Measure	Support	Do not support	Neither support nor against
Make more female role models and mentors available	60.4	8.5	31.0
Provide training for potential female leaders	74.6	8.4	17.0
Implement family-friendly policies	77.8	8.9	13.3
Encourage women to lean in for opportunities	75.2	10.0	14.8
Improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality	73.6	8.2	18.2
Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women	34.6	40.4	25.0
Reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Council, and…	33.7	42.2	24.1

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to support the measures to "provide training for potential female leaders", "implement family-friendly policies", "encourage women to lean in for opportunities", "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality", "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women", and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units" (Figures 4.6.4–4.6.10 in Appendix III).

Younger people were more likely to support the measures to "make more female role models and mentors available", "provide training for potential female leaders", "implement family-friendly policies", "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units". Older people were more likely to support the measure to "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (Figures 4.6.4–4.6.10 in Appendix III).

Respondents with an upper secondary school education level were more likely to support the measures to "implement family-friendly policies" and "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" compared with respondents with higher or lower education. Respondents with lower education levels were more likely to show support to "require

the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women" (Figures 4.6.4–4.6.10 in Appendix III).

Never-married respondents were more likely to support the measures to "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality", "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units". Married respondents with young children were more likely to support the measure to "implement family-friendly policies". Married respondents were more likely to support the measure to "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (Figures 4.6.4–4.6.10 in Appendix III). Respondents who were not working were more likely to support the measure to "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality" (Figures 4.6.4–4.6.10 in Appendix III). The above-mentioned subgroup differences were statistically significant.

The survey also asked for respondents' opinions regarding the gender quota system. A total of 19.9% of the respondents suggested that 50% or above is the ideal percentage allotted to women, 17.2% suggested a percentage of 40–49%, 17.4% suggested a percentage below 40% and 26.2% did not agree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women in Government Bureaux and Departments and councils (Figure 4.6.11).

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women, while male respondents were more likely to disagree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women. Younger people were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women, while older respondents were more likely to disagree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women. Highly educated groups (tertiary or above) and ever married respondents were more likely to disagree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women. Non-establishment respondents were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women. Pro-establishment respondents were more likely to disagree or have no opinion regarding whether a certain percentage should be allotted to women (Figure 4.6.12 in Appendix III). The above-mentioned subgroup differences were statistically significant.

Figure 4.6.11 What should be the percentage allotted to women?

Legend:
- 50% or above
- 40-49%
- Below 40%
- Do not agree
- Don't know

(19.9%, 17.2%, 17.4%, 26.2%, 19.3%)
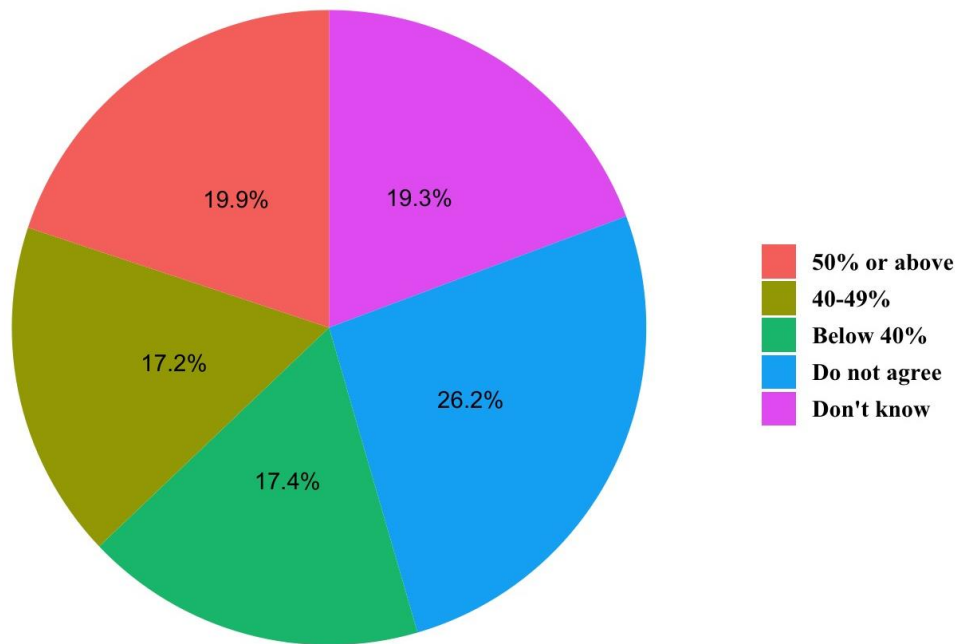
4.7 Who supports increasing female political leadership?

The previous sections have noted that women are said to face tremendous obstacles in attaining higher political leadership positions in general, some of which are gender-specific. Meanwhile, many respondents were not enthusiastic about increasing women's representation in political leadership and implementing quota systems. These seemingly conflicting tendencies may be related to people's socioeconomic background or their attitudes regarding male and female leaders.

This section examines people's different opinions concerning policies to increase female political leadership and how they are shaped by socioeconomic and demographic factors as well as people's attitudes towards the leadership traits of men and women, their performance in different policy areas, and their performance at different leadership levels. The section presents logistic regression models for three important outcome variables of people's attitudes: (1) whether we need more women leaders; (2) whether we should require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women; and (3) whether we should reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government Bureaux and Departments. The predictors included: (1) socioeconomic and demographic factors (gender, age, education, employment, income, family status, political tendency, etc.); and (2) views about men's and women's leadership qualities and performance[9] and whether respondents have greater confidence in men or women as better leaders in general, as better grassroots leaders, and as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils (dummy variables).

The first set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would agree to increase the proportion of women in political leadership. Regarding sociodemographic factors, female respondents were found to have a higher chance of supporting increased female political leadership, while older respondents (aged 55 or above) had a lower chance of doing so. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, there was a strong impact

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[9] These two attitudinal variables measured the extent to which respondents were "pro-women" regarding leadership qualities and leadership areas. The pro-women index for leadership qualities was constructed by: (1) recoding the variables about whether respondents regard leadership characteristics (competent, compassionate, visionary, persuasive, prioritising the public interest, collaborative and working out compromises, hard-working, honest and ethical, standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure) to be more true for men or women, by assigning "1" to those who regarded it as more true for women and "0" otherwise; and (2) adding up the values of these nine dummy variables with a possible range from 0 to 9. The pro-women index for leadership qualities had a mean of 1.36 and a standard deviation of 1.51. Similarly, the pro-women index for leadership areas was constructed for people's views about the performance of men and women in the following policy areas: "economics, finance and trade", "security affairs", "social welfare", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "education", "political reforms" and "labour issues", with a minimum value of 0 and a maximum value of 8. The pro-women index for leadership areas had a mean of 1.17 and a standard deviation of 1.27.

of attitudes: people who had a higher evaluation of women's leadership qualities or women's performance in different policy areas were more likely to support increasing women's political leadership. Meanwhile, respondents who had greater confidence in women as better leaders were more likely to support increasing women's leadership (Table 4.7.1).

The second set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would support the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women". Regarding sociodemographic factors, female respondents had a higher chance of supporting the implementation of this measure, while older respondents (aged 55 or above) had a lower chance of supporting it. Respondents with higher education (tertiary or above) or higher income (more than HK$30,000) were more likely to oppose it. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, there was a strong impact of attitudes: people who had a better evaluation of women's leadership traits or women's performance in different policy areas were more likely to support this measure. The same was true where people had greater confidence in women as better grassroots leaders (Table 4.7.2).

The third set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would support the measure to reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government Bureaux and Departments. Regarding sociodemographic factors, female respondents had a higher chance of supporting this measure, while older respondents (aged 55 or above) had a lower chance of supporting it. Respondents with higher education (tertiary or above) or higher income (more than HK$30,000) were more likely to oppose this measure. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, there was a strong impact of attitudes: people who had a better evaluation of women's leadership traits and women's performance in different policy areas were more likely to support this measure. The same was true where people had greater confidence in women as better leaders (Table 4.7.3).

In sum, women showed a greater degree of support to increase women's political leadership and to implement quota systems. By contrast, well-established groups such as high-income and highly educated people appeared more hesitant. Nevertheless, if people have a positive evaluation of female leaders' ability and competence, the attitudinal effect is strong in giving their support to measures to increase women's political leadership. These findings suggest two ways by which to alter people's attitudes toward women's leadership. First, people need to believe that women and men are equally capable leaders, otherwise women's under-representation will be taken for

granted due to their "lower" qualities. Second, even if people embrace egalitarian views about the leadership qualities of men and women, some people remain reluctant to promote women's political leadership at the institutional level because they are not women or they are well-established and therefore may be less interested in changing the rules of the game, instead expecting women to overcome the barriers by themselves. Gender stereotypes at the individual level and a lack of motivation to change the system at the institutional level need to be addressed in order to amend what are at present divided public attitudes towards the need to increase women's political leadership and measures to do so.

Table 4.7.1 Logistic models: "Should we increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions?"

	Should increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	0.239*	0.212	0.284**	0.250*	0.245*
Age: 35–54 (Ref = 15–34)	-0.112	-0.102	-0.041	-0.137	-0.107
Age: 55+ (Ref = 15–34)	-0.612**	-0.635**	-0.509*	-0.674**	-0.642**
Upper secondary (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.083	-0.016	-0.089	0.009	0.019
Tertiary or above (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.442**	-0.331	-0.398*	-0.361	-0.297
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	0.605	0.549	0.614	0.470	0.496
Income: More than HK$30,000 (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	0.056	0.113	0.085	0.130	0.152
Income: Unknown/unreported (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	-0.518	-0.512	-0.511	-0.387	-0.433
Ever married with children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	-0.288	-0.439*	-0.375	-0.437*	-0.501**
Ever married without children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	-0.314	-0.361	-0.389*	-0.291	-0.347
Pro-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	-0.043	-0.262	-0.140	-0.149	-0.283
Non-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	0.334**	0.334**	0.342**	0.424***	0.390**
Quality: Pro-women		0.282***			0.183***
Area: Pro-women			0.242***		0.075
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.773***	0.485*
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.368*	0.173
Greater confidence in female members in the Legislative Council and District Council members) (Ref = Otherwise)				0.969***	0.723**
Constant	-0.113	-0.488*	-0.470*	-0.365	-0.629**
Observations	974	974	974	974	974
AIC	1265.3	1230.2	1247.3	1235.7	1222.3

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 4.7.2 Logistic models: "Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women"

	Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	0.518***	0.504***	0.542***	0.509***	0.510***
Age: 35–54 (Ref = 15–34)	-0.283	-0.281	-0.246	-0.267	-0.252
Age: 55+ (Ref = 15–34)	-0.493*	-0.500*	-0.436	-0.482*	-0.462*
Upper secondary (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.280	-0.256	-0.285	-0.243	-0.243
Tertiary or above (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.604***	-0.554**	-0.580***	-0.573***	-0.548**
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	0.196	0.159	0.192	0.075	0.083
Income: More than HK$30,000 (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	-0.442**	-0.419*	-0.430*	-0.411*	-0.405*
Income: Unknown/unreported (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	-0.305	-0.294	-0.296	-0.201	-0.218
Ever married with children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	0.201	0.139	0.159	0.111	0.086
Ever married without children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	0.124	0.106	0.086	0.126	0.101
Pro-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	-0.197	-0.297	-0.247	-0.247	-0.299
Non-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	0.087	0.079	0.086	0.144	0.125
Quality: Pro-women		0.135***			0.073
Area: Pro-women			0.128**		0.044
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.372	0.243
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.489***	0.400**
Greater confidence in female members in the Legislative Council and District Councils (Ref = Otherwise)				0.178	0.059
Constant	-0.226	-0.398	-0.412	-0.382	-0.498*
Observations	974	974	974	974	974
AIC	1245.5	1238.8	1241.9	1239.2	1239.9

Note: *$p<0.1$; **$p<0.05$; ***$p<0.01$

Table 4.7.3 Logistic models: "Reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units"

	Reserve seats for women				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	0.350**	0.328**	0.390***	0.348**	0.347**
Age: 35–54 (Ref = 15–34)	-0.160	-0.156	-0.100	-0.167	-0.144
Age: 55+ (Ref = 15–34)	-0.498*	-0.517*	-0.408	-0.539**	-0.509*
Upper secondary (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.143	-0.100	-0.150	-0.063	-0.061
Tertiary or above (Ref = Lower secondary or below)	-0.562**	-0.483**	-0.528**	-0.504**	-0.462**
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	0.619	0.572	0.625	0.466	0.490
Income: More than HK$30,000 (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	-0.460**	-0.421*	-0.440**	-0.405*	-0.392*
Income: Unknown/unreported (Ref = Less than HK$30,000)	-0.791**	-0.788**	-0.787**	-0.657*	-0.696*
Ever married with children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	0.068	-0.041	-0.003	-0.069	-0.109
Ever married without children under 18 years old (Ref = Never married)	-0.092	-0.123	-0.153	-0.073	-0.112
Pro-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	-0.106	-0.284	-0.192	-0.217	-0.309
Non-establishment (Ref = Moderate)	0.134	0.125	0.136	0.217	0.187
Quality: Pro-women		0.227***			0.122**
Area: Pro-women			0.209***		0.071
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.851***	0.645**
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.475**	0.331*
Greater confidence in female members in the Legislative Council and District Councils (Ref = Otherwise)				0.566*	0.375
Constant	-0.127	-0.418	-0.433	-0.360	-0.555*
Observations	972	972	972	972	972
AIC	1231.4	1209.5	1218.9	1206.5	1201.6

Note: $^*p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Chapter 5 Web-based Survey with Political Leaders

The web-based survey collected responses from political leaders, including their opinions about gender equality and political leadership, perceptions of gender and leadership traits, attitudes towards female and male leaders, perceptions of barriers for men and women in attaining political leadership positions, and views on policies regarding gender equality and political leadership. The target population of the web-based survey was political leaders in Hong Kong, including those in the Government, councils, and political parties. Between 1 April and 17 May 2019, 383 responses were received.

5.1 Demographic characteristics

Table 5.1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, education, marital status, number of children, employment status, income and political positions. In total, 55.9% of the respondents were men and 44.1% were women. There were 15.7% of the respondents aged 15–34, 51.4% aged 35–54 and 32.9% aged 55 or above. Most had postgraduate (50.8%) or bachelor's degrees (37.9%). In total, 28.2% of the respondents had never been married and 23.0% had young children (aged below 16). As many as 90.0% of the respondents were currently working and 64.1% had a monthly income of HK$50,000 or above. Regarding political tendencies, 16.1% of them were pro-establishment, 19.8% were non-establishment, and 64.1% were moderate groups (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents to the online survey

Variables		
Gender	N	%
Male	209	55.9
Female	165	44.1
Total	(374)	100.0
Age		
15–34	60	15.7
35–54	197	51.4
55 or above	126	32.9
Total	(383)	100.0
Level of education[10]		
Lower secondary (Form 1 to Form 3)	2	0.7
Upper secondary (Form 4 to Form 7)	13	4.3
Tertiary non-degree	16	5.3
Bachelor's degree	114	37.9
Postgraduate (master's or doctoral degree)	153	50.8
Other	3	1.0
Total	(301)	100.0
Marital status		
Never married	85	28.2
Ever married	216	71.8
Total	(301)	100.0
Have young children		
With children under 16 years old	69	23.0
Without children under 16 years old	231	77.0
Total	(300)	100.0
Employment		
Employed	271	90.0
Housekeeping	4	1.3
Retired	11	3.7
Unemployed	3	1.0
Student	1	0.3
Other	11	3.7
Total	(301)	100.0
Monthly income		
Less than HK$10,000	1	0.3
HK$10,000–19,999	8	2.7
HK$20,000–29,999	20	6.6
HK$30,000–49,999	55	18.3
HK$50,000 or above	193	64.1

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[10] "Lower secondary (Form 1 to Form 3)", "Upper secondary (Form 4 to Form 7) and "Tertiary non-degree" are categorised into "Tertiary-non degree or below" in the following sections for analytical purposes.

Unstable income	24	8.0
Total	(301)	100.0
Political tendency		
Pro-establishment	48	16.1
Non-establishment	59	19.8
Moderate	191	64.1
Total	(298)	100.0
Political position		
Government	41	15.1
ASBs	105	38.6
Legislative and District Councils	44	16.2
Party leaders	20	7.4
NGO/NPO leaders	76	27.9
Other	154	56.6
Total	(272)[11]	
History of political career		
Current leader	250	91.9
Past leader	22	8.1
Total	(272)	100.0
Level of political leadership		
Top	57	21.0
Grassroots	215	79.0
Total	(272)	100.0

The sample included government officials, council members, party leaders, NGO and private organisation leaders. Within the sample, 15.1% were government officials, 38.6% were ASB members, 16.2% were from the Legislative Council and District Councils, and 7.4% were party leaders. There were 8.1% past leaders and 91.9% current leaders among those who identified their political positions. Among them, 21.0% were top leaders (government officials at the directorate levels or above, Legislative Council members, and party leaders) and 79.0% were intermediate and grassroots leaders (ASB members, District Council members, NGO and community leaders and so on) (Table 5.1).

5.2 Desired qualities of political leaders

The research collected opinions from respondents about important leadership traits between genders. Most respondents suggested that there are no gender differences in being "competent" (88.5%), "honest and ethical" (84.9%), "prioritising the public

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[11] Percentages here refer to those of cases (respondents could choose more than one option), so the sum of proportions presented is bigger than 100%. "Other" refers to community leaders, think tanks leaders, private corporate leaders, etc.

interest" (81.5%), "hard-working" (80.7%) and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure" (80.2%) (Table 5.2.1). Similar to the results of the public opinion survey, for all leadership traits, more than 60% of the respondents believed that there are no gender differences between female and male leaders.

Meanwhile, respondents tended to evaluate men and women differently, particularly in some key leadership characteristics. The top-ranking traits for women were being "compassionate" (30.8%), "collaborative and working out compromises" (24.3%) and "persuasive" (23.5%) and for men being "visionary" (25.8%). In short, women tended to be seen as more compassionate (30.8% for women vs 4.7% for men), while men as more visionary (25.8% for men vs 3.4% for women) (Table 5.2.1 and Figure 5.2.1). In these aspects, the perceived differences between male and female leaders were more evident. These findings from political leaders were similar to those of the public opinion survey.

Table 5.2.1 The following characteristics were said to be more true for men or women

	More true of women (%)	More true of men (%)	Equally true for both (%)
Competent	6.5	5.0	88.5
Compassionate	30.8	4.7	64.5
Visionary	3.4	25.8	70.8
Persuasive	23.5	9.1	67.4
Prioritising the public interest	9.1	9.4	81.5
Collaborative and working out compromises	24.3	13.8	61.9
Hard-working	15.9	3.4	80.7
Honest and ethical	13.1	2.1	84.9
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	9.9	9.9	80.2

Figure 5.2.1 The following characteristics were said to be more true for men or women
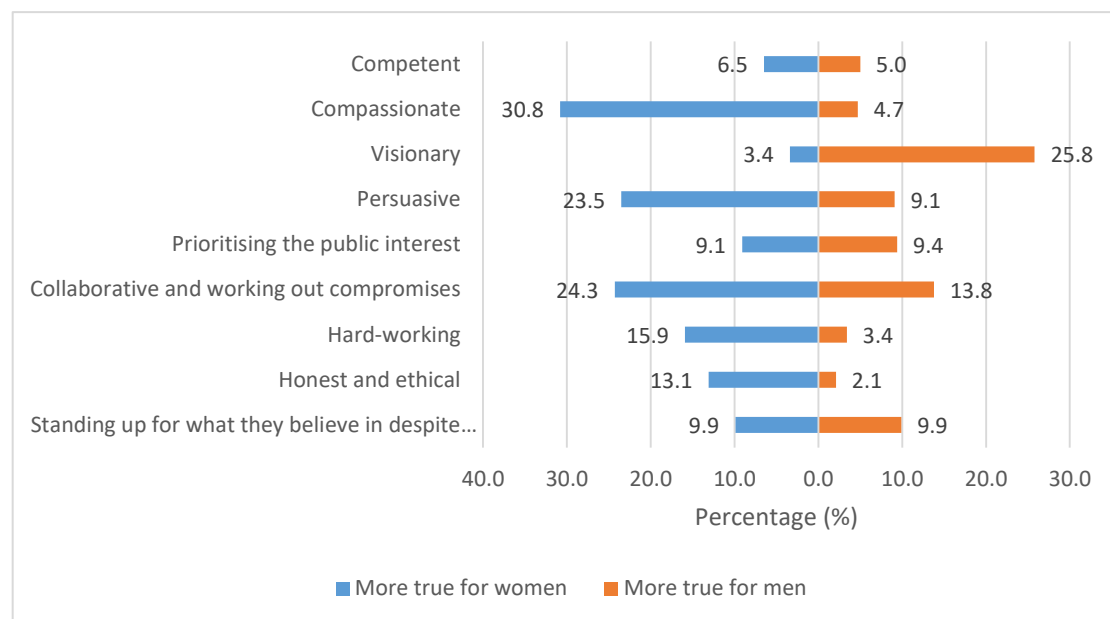
Gender differences between female and male respondents were evident in their opinions regarding some key leadership qualities. Indeed, gender differences were significant in "competent", "compassionate", "visionary", "prioritising the public interest", and "collaborative and working out compromises", in which female respondents were more likely to believe that women are better in these traits, while male respondents were more likely to suggest that men are better in these aspects.

Table 5.2.1a Proportion of respondents who suggested that "women are better than men in the following traits" (by gender)

	Females' perspectives (%)	Males' perspectives (%)
Competent	10.3	3.3
Compassionate	39.4	24.4
Visionary	5.5	1.0
Persuasive	26.7	21.5
Prioritising the public interest	15.8	3.8
Collaborative and working out compromises	35.2	16.3
Hard-working	21.8	11.5
Honest and ethical	16.4	10.5
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	12.7	7.7

Figure 5.2.1a Proportion of respondents who suggested that "women are better than men in the following traits" (by gender)
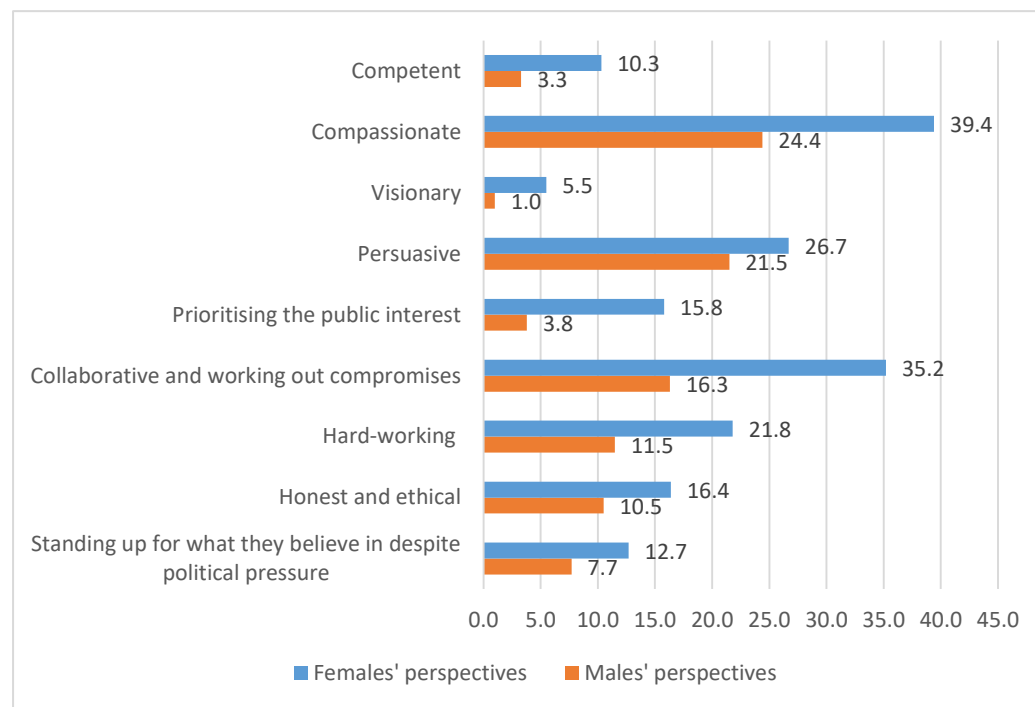
Table 5.2.1b Proportion of respondents who suggested that "men are better than women in the following traits" (by gender)

	Females' perspectives (%)	Males' perspectives (%)
Competent	1.8	7.7
Compassionate	3.0	6.2
Visionary	21.2	30.6
Persuasive	8.5	9.6
Prioritising the public interest	6.1	12.0
Collaborative and working out compromises	9.7	17.7
Hard-working	3.6	3.3
Honest and ethical	1.2	2.9
Standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure	9.1	11.0

Figure 5.2.1b Proportion of respondents who suggested that "men are better than women in the following traits" (by gender)
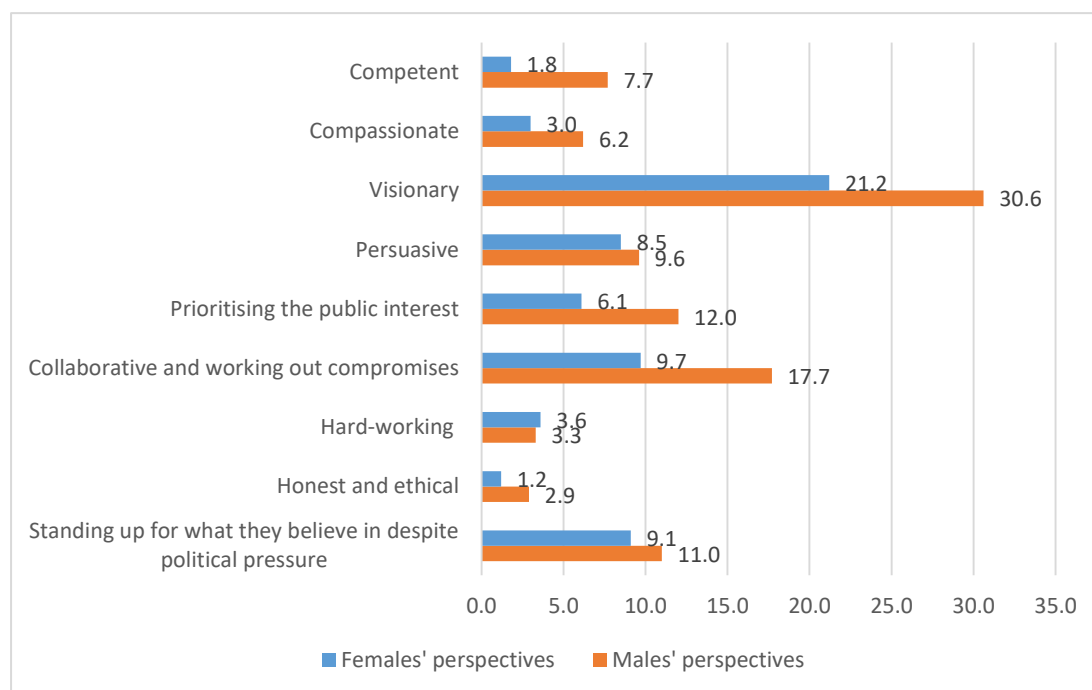

Subgroup differences in opinions regarding leadership qualities were also tested by age groups, education and income levels, family status, levels of political leadership, and political tendencies (Figures 5.2.2–5.2.10 in Appendix III). There was a significant age difference in public perceptions concerning who are more "visionary". In general, older people (aged 35 and above) were more likely to believe that men are better in this aspect. Variations across education levels were significant regarding people's opinions about the traits of being "visionary" and "standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure". People with a bachelor's degree or above were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in these leadership traits. Regarding income levels, respondents with higher incomes (HK$50,000 or above per month) were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in being "competent", but less likely to believe that women are more "visionary".

5.3 Performance of female and male leaders

In addition to perceptions of the leadership characteristics of male and female leaders, the survey asked respondents about their opinions of the performance of female and male leaders, first about leaders' performance in policy areas (horizontal) and then at different levels of political leadership (vertical).

The policy areas in which female and male leaders were evaluated included "economics, finance and trade", "security affairs", "social welfare", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "education", "political reforms", and "labour issues". The majority of respondents said there are no gender differences in some key policy realms, particularly "labour issues" (81.7%) and "political reforms" (80.4%). Nevertheless, more respondents suggested that men are more capable in dealing with issues in security affairs; infrastructure and development; economic, finance and trade; political reform; and labour issues (46.5%, 34.2%, 29.0%, 16.7% and 10.4%, respectively) than those who claimed that women are more capable. Confidence in women leaders was greater in the areas of social welfare, education, and environment (33.4%, 21.1% and 15.1%, respectively) (Table 5.3.1 and Figure 5.3.1). However, for all policy areas, more than half of the respondents suggested that there are no gender differences in female and male leaders' performance. In all of the listed policy areas, the survey of political leaders yielded a higher rate suggesting that there are no gender differences in female and male leaders' performance compared with the survey of the general public. It seems that political leaders are more likely to believe in the equal capabilities of men and women in different policy areas than the general public, or that they are more hesitant to report their gender-related prejudices.

Table 5.3.1 Female or male leaders are more capable in the following areas

	Women more capable (%)	Men more capable (%)	No difference (%)
Economics, finance and trade	2.1	29.0	68.9
Security affairs	2.1	46.5	51.4
Social welfare	33.4	5.0	61.6
Infrastructure and development	2.1	34.2	63.7
Environment	15.1	6.5	78.3
Education	21.1	5.2	73.6
Political reforms	2.9	16.7	80.4
Labour issues	7.8	10.4	81.7

Figure 5.3.1 Female or male leaders are more capable in the following areas
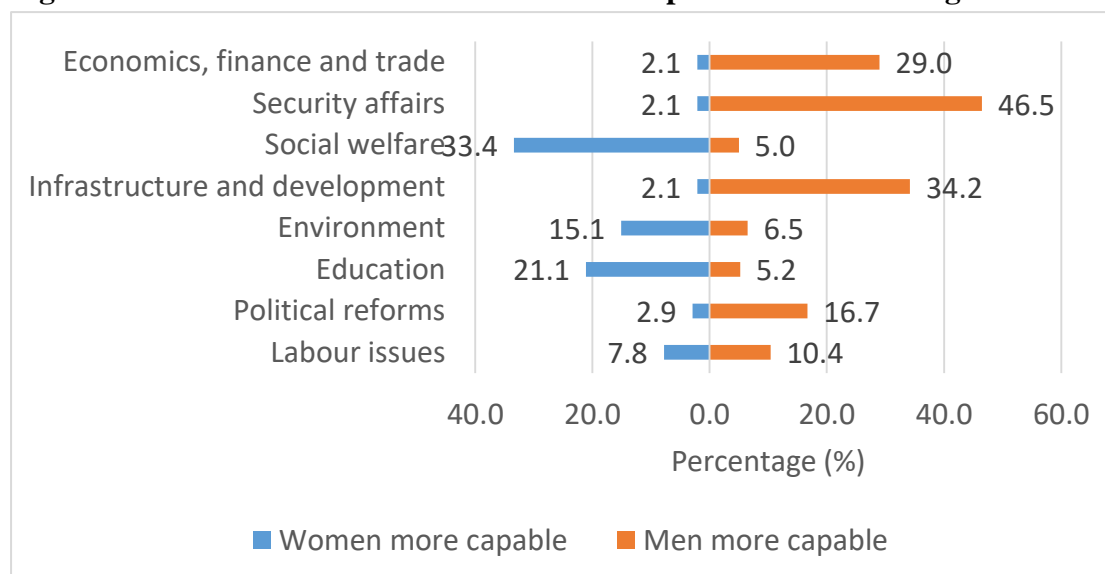
Perceptions concerning whether female or male leaders are more capable in different policy realms were not significantly different between male and female respondents, different age groups, education groups, respondents of different family status, and between top leaders and leaders at the grassroots and intermediate levels (Figures 5.3.2–5.3.9 in Appendix III). Respondents with higher income levels (HK$50,000 or above per month) were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in performing in the realm of "environment", while low-income respondents were more likely to believe that women perform better in this area (Figures 5.3.2–5.3.9 in Appendix III). Pro-establishment respondents were more likely to believe that male leaders are more capable in "infrastructure and development", while respondents of the other political camps were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in this area (Figures 5.3.2–5.3.9 in Appendix III).

Regarding perceptions of male and female leaders' performance at different levels of political leadership (vertical), the survey asked whether respondents had greater confidence in male or female leaders (1) as better political leaders in general, (2) as community or grassroots leaders, and (3) as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils.

Many respondents reported similar levels of confidence in men and women as different levels of political leaders, with a slight male advantage, except for community or grassroots leaders: 11.8% believed that women perform better in community or grassroots leadership compared with 7.6% who had greater confidence in men's performance. This pattern was similar to the findings from the public opinion survey,

but political leaders in general reported a higher level of confidence that men and women are equally good leaders in general and as grassroots leaders. Overall, more than 80% of the respondents believed that there are no gender differences (1) as better political leaders, (2) as community or grassroots leaders, and (3) as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils (Table 5.3.10 and Figure 5.3.10).

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to believe that women are better political leaders, but the gender difference was not significant in their confidence in men and women as community and grassroots leaders or council members. The subgroup variations based on age, family status, income, and political position (top or grassroots) were not statistically significant. However, highly educated respondents (bachelor's degree or above) were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in being better political leaders or performing as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils. Regarding their political tendencies, non-establishment and moderate groups were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences in being better political leaders (Figures 5.3.11–5.3.13 in Appendix III).

Table 5.3.10 Perceptions of male and female leaders

	Women (%)	Men (%)	No difference (%)
In Hong Kong, who do you think generally make better political leaders?	6.5	9.0	84.5
In Hong Kong, who do you think generally perform better as community/grassroots leaders?	11.8	7.6	80.6
In Hong Kong, do you have greater confidence in the performance of female or male members in the Legislative Council and District Councils?	6.8	10.1	83.1

Figure 5.3.10 Confidence in female and male leaders
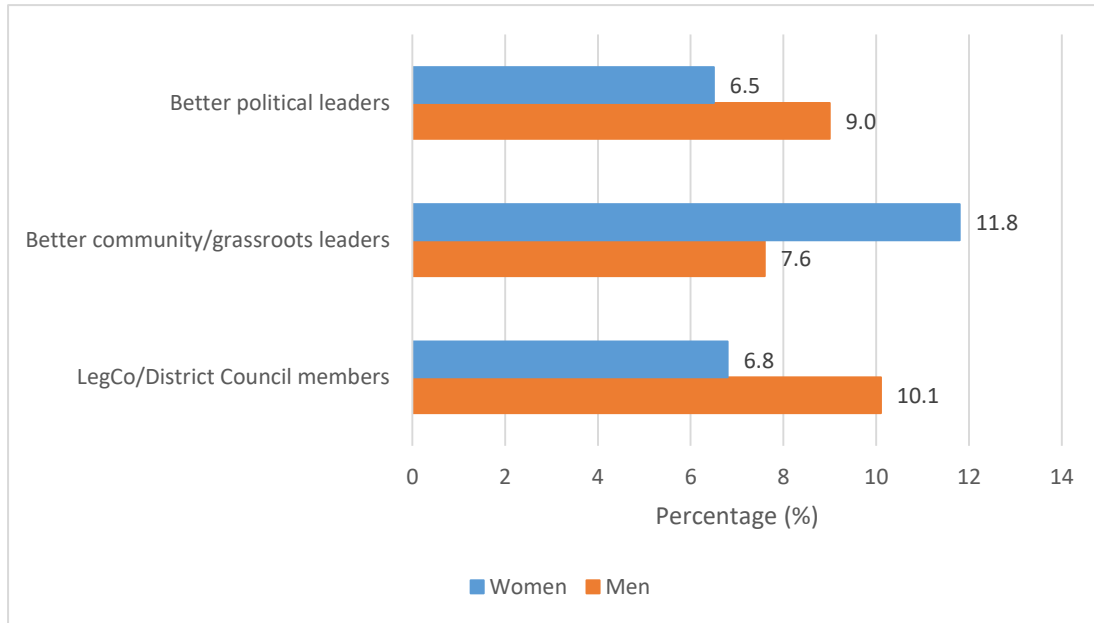
5.4 Perceptions of gender equality and political leadership in Hong Kong

This section reports respondents' perceptions of whether men or women face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions and their attitudes towards whether women's political participation and empowerment are necessary and beneficial.

More people believed that female leaders face more challenges when attempting to attain higher political positions (36.6% for "more challenges for women", compared with 7.6% for "more challenges for men") (Figure 5.4.1). Female respondents were more likely to believe that women face more challenges, while male respondents were more likely to believe that there are no gender differences or that men face more challenges (Figure 5.4.2 in Appendix III). These findings were similar to the results of the public opinion survey.

Figure 5.4.1 Who face more challenges in attempting to attain higher political leadership positions?
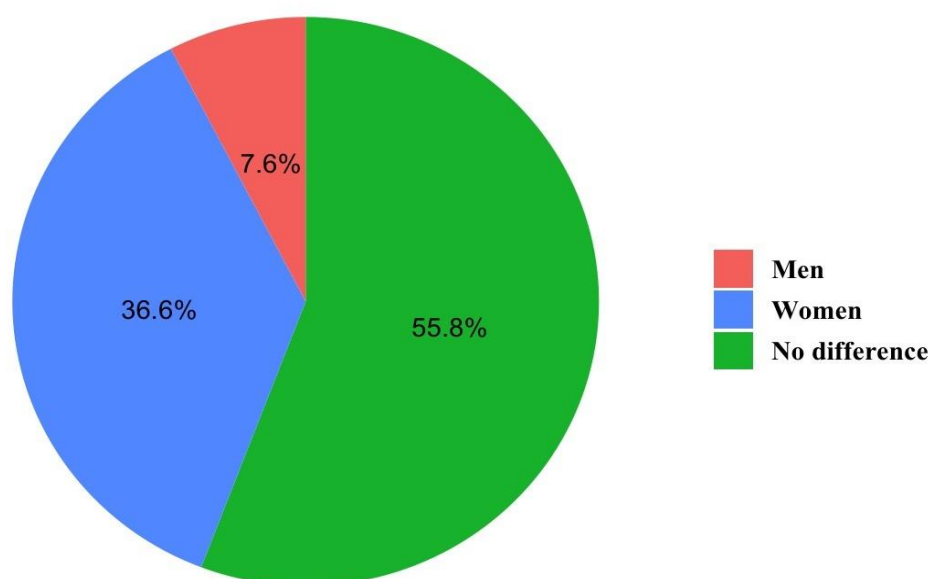
Regarding whether women's political participation and empowerment are necessary and beneficial, the survey asked respondents two sets of attitudinal questions. The first group of questions pertained to whether women can represent themselves and other groups and participate in politics effectively, specifically: whether men and women should have an equal role in running the government, whether female and male leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of their own genders, whether they can sufficiently represent the interests of the other genders, and whether women's enhanced presence will increase their influence on political priorities and policy. The second group of questions asked about the legal, political and social justifications behind women's political participation and empowerment and whether respondents agreed or disagreed with such statements.

Regarding the first group of questions, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women and men should have an equal role in running the government (78.3%). Of the respondents, 36.9% agreed or strongly agreed that female leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of women, and 27.3% agreed or strongly agreed that male leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of men. Of the respondents, 15.2% agreed or strongly agreed that male leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics and 18.3% agreed or strongly agreed that female leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of men. Of the respondents, 49.8% agreed or strongly agreed that "the more women leaders there are in government and councils, the greater influence they will have on political priorities and policy" (Table 5.4.1).

In general, more respondents believed that female leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of women than the inverse (male leaders representing the interests of men); furthermore, fewer respondents believed that male leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of women than the inverse (female leaders representing the interests of men). This may reflect long-standing assumptions that male leaders focus more on "general" issues and lack a gender lens, whereas female leaders specifically focus on gender, whether their own or that of others. Such gendered perceptions of leadership coexist with the general belief that women and men should have an equal role in running the government.

Most of these attitudes did not vary significantly among subgroups (Figures 5.4.3–5.4.8 in Appendix III). However, male respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that "the more women leaders there are in government and councils, the greater influence they will have on political priorities and policy", while middle-aged respondents (35–54) were less likely to disagree or strongly disagree with

this statement. Female respondents and older respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that "male leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics". Non-establishment respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that "male leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of men in society at large" (Figures 5.4.3–5.4.8).

Regarding the second group of questions, more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the legal, political and social justifications for women's political participation and empowerment. Of the respondents, 54.9% agreed or strongly agreed that women should be as equally represented as men in decision-making positions as they constitute half of the population. Almost two thirds of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (65.4%) that "women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics". 61.6% agreed or strongly agreed that the empowerment of women will lead to the development of society at large. The proportion of respondents who supported the statement "including more women will increase the electoral appeal of political parties or groupings" was 51.3%, while that of "women's presence will increase the political legitimacy of government and councils" was 51.8% (Table 5.4.1). In general, more than half of the respondents supported the claims that women's political participation and empowerment are necessary and beneficial.

Regarding subgroup variations, these perceptions did not vary significantly across education levels, incomes, political positions and political tendencies (Figures 5.4.9–5.4.13 in Appendix III). Nevertheless, female respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that "women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics" and that "the empowerment of women will lead to the development of society at large". Male respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that "including more women will increase the electoral appeal of political parties or groupings". Young people and never-married respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that "the empowerment of women will lead to the development of society at large" (Figures 5.4.9–5.4.13 in Appendix III).

Table 5.4.1 Perceptions of gender equality in political leadership

	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Women and men should have an equal role in running the government.	44.5	33.8	13.2	3.9	4.5
Female leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of women in society at large.	13.5	23.4	36.1	17.7	9.3
Male leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of men in society at large.	9.0	18.3	42.0	20.8	9.9
The more women leaders there are in government and councils, the greater influence they will have on political priorities and policy.	12.1	37.7	29.3	14.6	6.2
Male leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of women in politics.	3.1	12.1	45.4	32.1	7.3
Female leaders can sufficiently represent the interests of men in politics.	3.1	15.2	46.8	27.9	7.0
Women are 50% of the population and should be as equally represented as men in decision-making positions.	22.8	32.1	31.0	7.6	6.5
Women's presence will increase the political legitimacy of government and councils.	17.2	34.6	33.8	9.0	5.4

Women should be represented in decision making because this right is enshrined in laws.	25.4	41.1	25.6	3.4	4.5
Women bring different views, perspectives and talents to politics.	23.1	42.3	27.3	2.8	4.5
The empowerment of women will lead to the development of society at large.	20.8	40.8	29.6	3.4	5.4
Including more women will increase the electoral appeal of political parties or groupings.	17.2	34.1	36.6	6.5	5.6

5.5 Barriers in attaining political leadership

The survey also asked respondents whether they regarded their gender as having a positive or negative impact on their political careers. Subsequently, respondents were asked to choose from a list of factors concerning whether they are obstacles to attaining higher political leadership positions: mainly for women, mainly for men, for both men and women, or for neither men nor women. The factors included "traditional attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. 'women are to take care of the family while men are to work outside')", "domestic responsibilities", "lack of confidence", "lack of experience", "lack of support from political parties and organisations", "lack of support from family", "lack of social network and connections", and "double standards between genders to prove themselves".

Regarding the overall impact of gender, most respondents suggested that gender has made no difference in their political careers. About one-sixth (15.5%) regarded their gender as having a positive effect (12.8% in men and 19.9% in women) and 5.5% regarded it as having a negative effect (2.8% in men and 8.5% in women) (Table 5.5.1). The gender difference was significant at the 0.05 level (Figure 5.5.2 in Appendix III). In general, men were less likely to report that their career has been affected by gender, whether positively or negatively; gender seemed to be a more influential factor for women in their political careers. Overall, more than 70% of all respondents (regardless of gender) believed that gender has made no significant difference in their political careers.

Table 5.5.1 Has gender helped or hurt men's or women's political career (by gender)?

|	Helped my political career (%)	Hurt my political career (%)	No difference (%)
Female	19.9	8.5	71.6
Male	12.8	2.8	84.4

Although most respondents did not believe that gender has affected their own political career, they did think that gender matters a lot for people's political careers in the society in general. When asked about the factors that hinder people from attaining higher political positions, some obstacles were widely perceived as affecting both men and women, such as "lack of social network and connections" (64.6%), "lack of experience" (61.0%), and "lack of support from political parties and organisations" (59.8%). However, some other obstacles tended to be regarded as more gender-specific. For example, "domestic responsibilities" ranked first in the perceived barriers mainly for women (61.6%), followed by "traditional attitudes towards gender roles" (43.9%) and then "double standards between genders to prove themselves" (33.5%). Fewer respondents named certain barriers as specific to men: "lack of confidence" ranked first among the perceived barriers mainly for men (4.0%), while for all the other barriers, the proportions of respondents who regarded them as specific to men were 3.0% or below (Table 5.5.3 and Figure 5.5.3).

These findings echo the results of the public opinion survey in that two kinds of barriers were identified: some were regarded as affecting both men and women, while others were seen as more specific to women. One the one hand, both men and women were perceived to face obstacles related to their lack of social networks, connections, experience, and support from political parties and organisations. This calls for training and supportive measures for both men and women to attain higher political positions. On the other hand, women were perceived to be particularly troubled by certain barriers, including domestic responsibilities, traditional attitudes towards gender roles, and double standards between genders. Not only for these women-specific obstacles, but also for all the other named obstacles in the list, the reported levels of "mainly for women" were higher than those of "mainly for men". Indeed, women are not only disadvantaged due to their family obligations, but also facing barriers in society related to gender stereotypes. This suggests a need to support women regarding both women-specific and more gender-neutral obstacles, such as a lack of social connections, experience, and support from political parties and organisations.

Table 5.5.3 Obstacles for women and men leaders in attaining higher political leadership positions

	Mainly for women (%)	Mainly for men (%)	Obstacle for both men and women (%)	Not an obstacle for either men or women (%)
Traditional attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. "women are to take care of the family while men are to work outside")	43.9	2.4	25.3	28.4
Domestic responsibilities	61.6	3.0	19.8	15.5
Lack of confidence	12.5	4.0	57.6	25.9
Lack of experience	9.1	3.0	61.0	26.8
Lack of support from political parties and organisations	9.1	3.0	59.8	28.0
Lack of support from family	25.0	2.1	52.1	20.7
Lack of social network and connections	9.8	2.4	64.6	23.2
Double standards between genders to prove themselves	33.5	3.0	38.4	25.0

Figure 5.5.3 Obstacles for women and men leaders in attaining higher political leadership positions
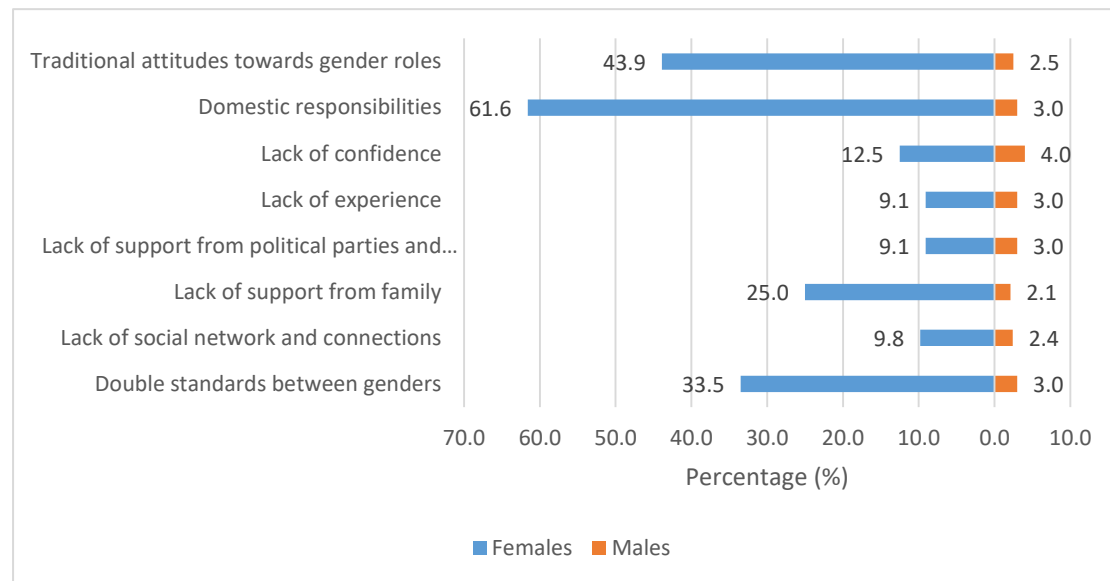
Perceptions of obstacles that affect men, women, both or neither did not vary significantly by gender, age, family status, employment status, income level or political position (Figures 5.5.4–5.5.11 in Appendix III). However, ever married respondents with young children were more likely to report "traditional attitudes" as mainly an obstacle for women. Respondents with a bachelor's degree or above were more likely to report "lack of support from family" as mainly an obstacle for women.

The respondents also reported the perceived barriers for themselves. Compared with their attitudes concerning obstacles faced by others, their "own" reported obstacles showed a similar pattern but with a smaller magnitude. Some obstacles were reported at a similar rate among male and female respondents, while others were more gender-specific (Table 5.5.12). Some obstacles were more likely to be reported by female respondents, such as "domestic responsibilities" (14.2%). Some obstacles were more likely to be reported by male respondents, such as "lack of social network and connections" (12.3%) (Figure 5.5.12). The gender gap, reflected by the proportions of respondents regarding some obstacles as men-specific or women-specific, was smaller when respondents reported situations about themselves than in general. This finding may reflect a selectivity issue, specifically that female leaders in the sample felt that gender barriers persist in the society in general, but that they personally have managed to avoid or overcome them. From another perspective, female leaders may have tended to minimise the gender-specific barriers they face whereas male leaders showed a

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greater tendency to convey information about more gender-neutral barriers, such as a lack of social network and connections.

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to report "traditional attitudes", "domestic responsibilities" and "double standards between genders to prove themselves" as obstacles (Figures 5.5.13–5.5.20 in Appendix III). Highly educated respondents (postgraduate) were more likely to report "lack of social network and connections" as an obstacle (Figures 5.5.13–5.5.20 in Appendix III). Respondents with lower income (lower than HK$50,000 per month) were more likely to report "traditional attitudes" as an obstacle (Figures 5.5.13–5.5.20 in Appendix III). Pro-establishment respondents were more likely to report "lack of confidence" as an obstacle, while non-establishment respondents were more likely to report "domestic responsibilities" (Figures 5.5.13–5.5.20 in Appendix III). The above-mentioned subgroup differences were statistically significant.

Table 5.5.12 Perceived barriers for respondents themselves (by different genders)

	All respondents (%)	Females (%)	Males (%)
Traditional attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. "women are to take care of the family while men are to work outside")	7.3	11.3	4.5
Domestic responsibilities	8.2	14.2	3.9
Lack of confidence	7.0	8.5	6.1
Lack of experience	9.1	10.6	8.4
Lack of support from political parties and organisations	8.8	9.2	8.9
Lack of support from family	7.3	7.8	7.3
Lack of social network and connections	10.7	9.2	12.3
Double standards between genders to prove themselves	6.7	11.3	3.4

Figure 5.5.12 Perceived barriers for respondents themselves (by different genders)
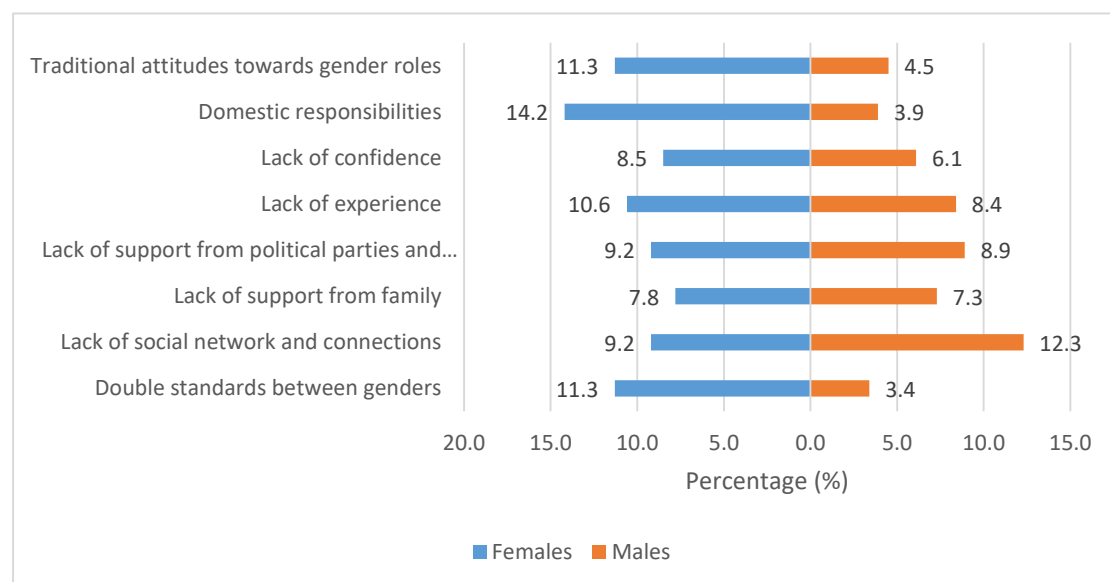
Respondents were asked about measures that should be adopted in order to contribute to their successful advancement in their organisations. The most popular answer was "provide training to those with potential" (68.6%), followed by "mentoring and experience sharing" (59.8%), "provide chances for me to lean in for opportunities" (50.0%), "implement family-friendly policies" (48.2%) and "improve promotion pipelines" (47.6). Only 12.2% of the respondents supported the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of seats based on genders" and 11.3% supported the measure to "reserve a certain number of seats at the leadership and managerial levels based on genders" (Table 5.5.21 and Figure 5.5.21).

Regarding subgroup variations, male respondents were more likely to support the measures of "mentoring and experience sharing", "provide trainings to those with potentials", "improve promotion pipelines" and "provide chances for me to lean in for opportunities" (Figure 5.5.22-5.5.30 in Appendix III). Young people were more likely to support the measure of requiring the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of seats based on genders (Figure 5.5.22-5.5.30 in Appendix III). High-income respondents (HK$50,000 or above per month) were more likely to support the measures of "mentoring and experience sharing" and "improve promotion pipelines" (Figures 5.5.22–5.5.30 in Appendix III). Leaders at the grassroots or intermediate levels were more likely to support the measure to reserve a certain number of seats at the leadership and managerial levels based on genders (Figures 5.5.22–5.5.30 in Appendix III).

Table 5.5.21 What would contribute to the respondent's successful advancement in his/her organisation?

	Should adopt (%)
Mentoring and experience sharing	59.8
Provide training to those with potential	68.6
Improve promotion pipelines	47.6
Implement family-friendly policies (e.g. maternity/parental leave, subsidised care services, flexible work arrangements)	48.2
Provide chances for me to lean in for opportunities	50.0
Improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality	33.2
Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of seats based on genders	12.2
Reserve a certain number of seats at the leadership and managerial levels based on genders	11.3
Other, please specify	2.7
None of the above	9.8

Figure 5.5.21 What would contribute to the respondent's successful advancement in his/her organisation?
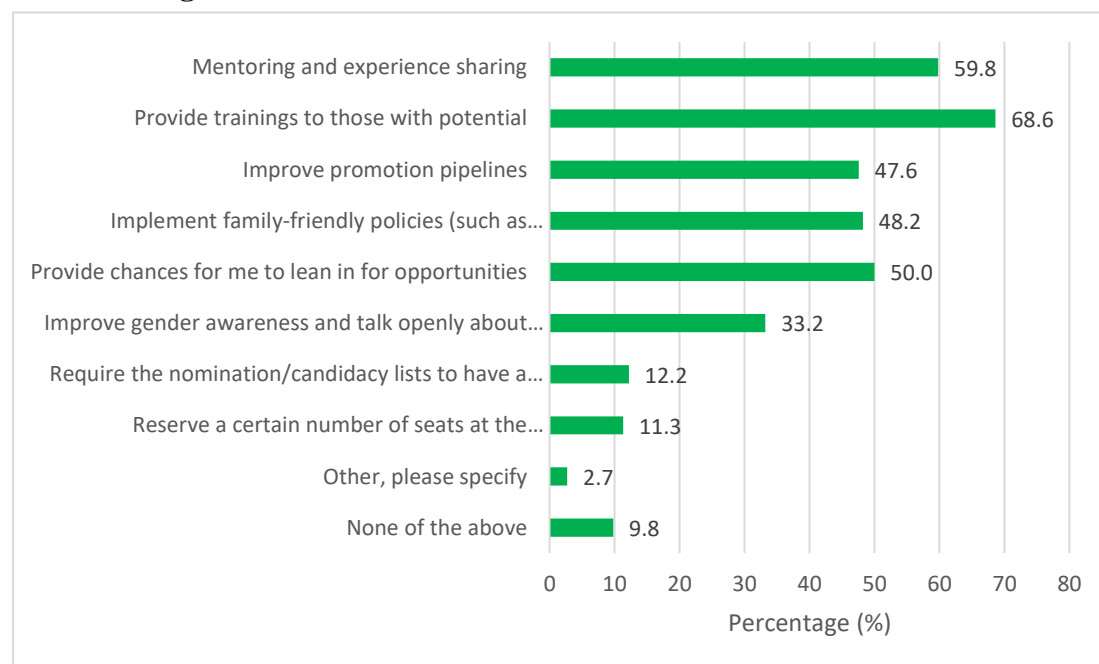
5.6 Views on policies

This section summarises respondents' opinions about increasing female political leadership and women's presence in different political areas, and regarding different measures to serve this end, including quota systems. In total, 49.5% of the respondents agreed that we should increase the proportion of women in political leadership, while around half of the respondents disagreed with this statement (Figure 5.6.1). Regarding subgroup differences, female respondents (62.0%), older respondents (aged 55 and above) (59.8%), low-income respondents (59.5%), and non-establishment respondents (64.4%) were more likely to agree that we should increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions (Figure 5.6.2 in Appendix III).

Figure 5.6.1 Should we increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions?
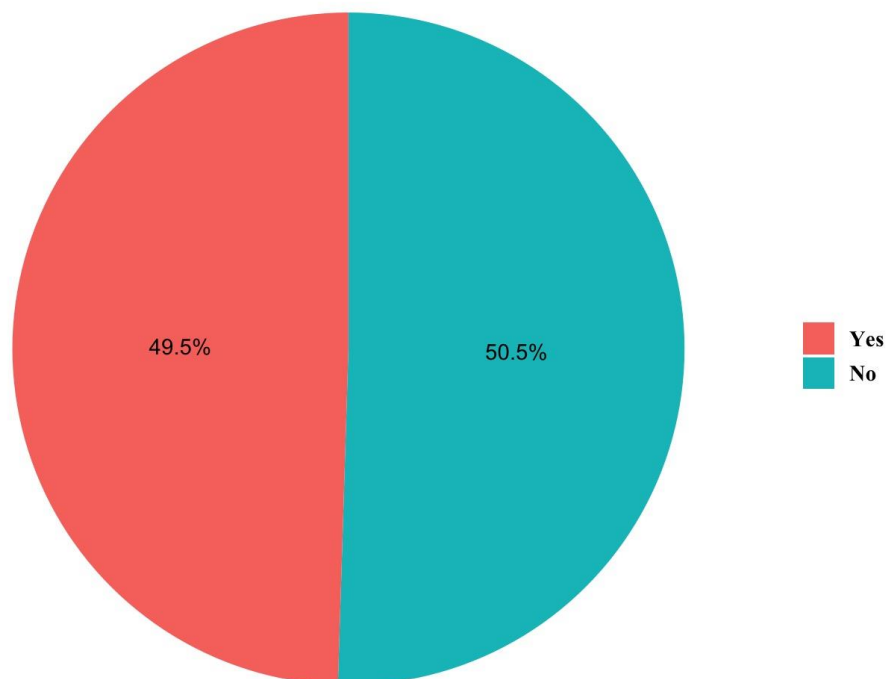
The survey then asked whether it would be good to see more women in the following areas: Government Bureaux and Departments, the Legislative Council, District Councils, the judiciary system, and as party leaders. Across different political areas, around half of the respondents suggested that it would be good to see more women in the Legislative Council (53.1%) and District Councils (50.8%), followed by as senior government officials (49.5%), in the legal system (48.9%) and as party leaders (48.9%). Across all areas, the proportion of women who supported increased female presence was consistently higher than that of men (significant except for District Councils). Of the respondents, 31.3% suggested that there is no need to increase women's representation in any of these areas (Table 5.6.3).

Table 5.6.3 It would be good to see more women in the following areas

	All respondents (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Senior government officials (e.g. secretary for a bureau)	49.5	62.0	40.4
Legislative Council	53.1	62.8	46.8
District Councils	50.8	56.6	46.8
The legal system	48.9	58.1	42.7
Party leaders	48.9	58.1	42.1
None of the above	31.3	21.7	38.0

When asked about the measures that respondents would support to increase women's political leadership, "implement family-friendly policies" was the most popular answer (70.4%), followed by "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (66.4%) and then "provide training for potential female leaders" (60.9%).

Opinions were more divided in the measures related to the "quota system". Indeed, 21.2% of the respondents supported but 44.3% were against the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women", and 19.2% of the respondents supported but 45.6% were against the measure to "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Council and Government units" (Table 5.6.4 and Figure 5.6.4).

Compared with their opinions about what should be adopted in their own organisations to contribute to their personal career advancement, when respondents voted for measures for the society in general, they exhibited a higher level of support for family-friendly policies, measures to encourage "lean in" and to improve gender awareness, and quota systems. These measures were less likely to be regarded as important for their own career development. Although these respondents did not require such supportive measures to be implemented for their own benefit, they believed that such measures are important in helping other social groups to overcome these barriers in attaining political leadership positions.

Table 5.6.4 What should be done to increase women's political leadership?

	Support (%)	Neither support nor against (%)	Do not support (%)
Make more female role models and mentors available	56.4	37.8	5.9
Provide training for potential female leaders	60.9	33.6	5.5
Implement family-friendly policies (e.g. maternity/parental leave, subsidised care services, flexible work arrangements)	70.4	24.8	4.9
Encourage women to lean in for opportunities	66.4	30.3	3.3
Improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality	53.1	41.4	5.5
Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women	21.2	34.5	44.3
Reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units	19.2	35.2	45.6

Figure 5.6.4 What should be done to increase women's political leadership?
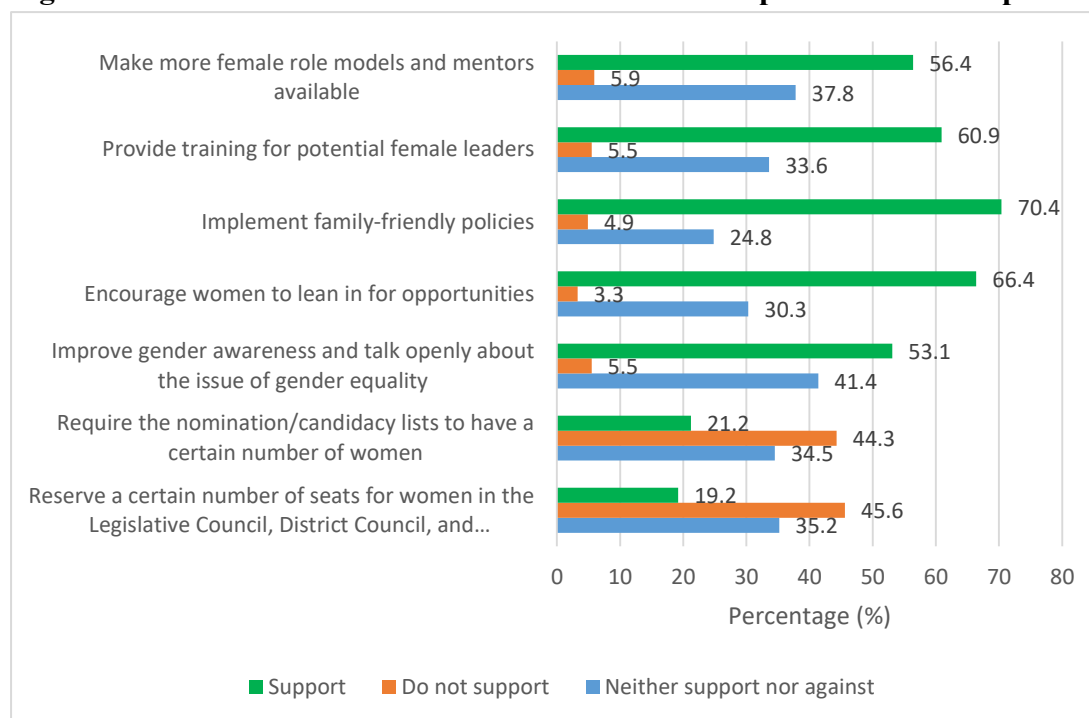
Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to support the measures to "require the nomination/candidacy list to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units" (Figures 5.6.5–5.6.11 in Appendix III). Middle-aged respondents (35–54) were less likely to support the measure to "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" (Figures 5.6.5–5.6.11 in Appendix III). Never-married respondents were more likely to support the measures that "require the nomination/candidacy list to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units" (Figures 5.6.5–5.6.11 in Appendix III).

Low-income respondents were more likely to support the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy list to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units" (Figures 5.6.5–5.6.11 in Appendix III). Leaders at the grassroots or intermediate levels were more likely to support the measures to "improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender equality", "require the nomination/candidacy list to have a certain number of women" and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units". Non-establishment respondents were more likely to support the measures to "require the nomination/candidacy list to have a certain number of women"

and "reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units" (Figures 5.6.5–5.6.11 in Appendix III). The above-mentioned subgroup differences were statistically significant.

The survey also asked for respondents' opinions regarding the gender quota system. A total of 65.8% of the respondents did not agree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women in the Government and councils. Of the respondents, 8.1% suggested that 50% or above is the ideal percentage allotted to women, 10.7% suggested a percentage of 40–49%, and 15.4% suggested a percentage below 40% (Figure 5.6.12).

Regarding subgroup variations, female respondents were more likely to suggest a higher percentage to be allotted to women, while male respondents were more likely to disagree that a certain percentage should be allotted to women (Figure 5.6.13 in Appendix III).

Figure 5.6.12 What should be the percentage allotted to women?
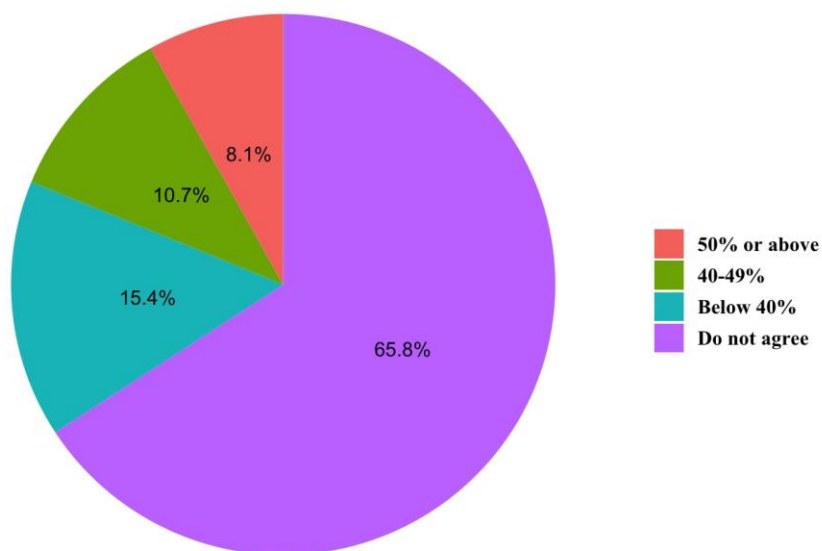
Table 5.6.14 Views regarding the use of gender quotas

	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Quotas are a necessary measure to address the under-representation of women and increase their numbers in governments and councils.	6.5	11.7	30.9	32.6	18.2
Quotas should only be implemented on a temporary basis.	4.6	21.8	50.8	14.0	8.8
Voluntary quotas adopted by political parties are preferable to quotas legislated by governments and councils.	7.5	29.6	40.1	13.4	9.4
Quotas that are legislated must be accompanied by enforcement provisions.	4.6	14.7	26.7	28.3	25.7
Quotas are useful but not sufficient and must be accompanied by other measures, such as awareness programmes.	11.7	26.4	47.9	6.8	7.2
Quotas are not useful and lead to tokenism for women. Quotas are not necessary.	14.0	23.1	45.9	13.4	3.6
Quotas are not necessary. Women should be elected on merit.	37.5	30.3	23.5	4.9	3.9
Quotas are discriminatory.	17.9	35.8	32.2	9.4	4.6
Leaders who gain their mandate through reserved seats, political party quotas or appointments are viewed differently from other leaders.	15.3	35.2	42.7	4.2	2.6

Regarding their perceptions about the quota system, 50.8% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "quotas are a necessary measure to address the under-representation of women and increase their numbers in governments and councils". A total of 18.2% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Of the respondents, 54.0% opposed the statement that "quotas that are legislated must be accompanied by enforcement provisions". As many as 67.8% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "quotas are not necessary; women should be elected on merit". More than half of the respondents (53.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that quotas are discriminatory. Half (50.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that leaders who gain their mandate through reserved seats, political party quotas or appointments are viewed differently from other leaders (Table 5.6.14). These findings suggest that the quota system remained controversial among respondents and many of them hesitated to accept it as a solution to promote gender equality in political leadership, worrying about its negative implications.

Regarding subgroup differences, male respondents were more likely to oppose the statements "quotas are a necessary measure" and "quotas that are legislated must be accompanied by enforcement provisions", while they were more likely to support "quotas are not necessary; women should be elected on merit", "quotas are discriminatory", and "leaders who gain their mandate through reserve seats, political party quotas or appointments are viewed differently from other leaders" (Figures 5.6.14–5.6.22 in Appendix III). Low-income respondents were likely to support the statements "quotas are a necessary measure to address the under-representation of women and increase their numbers in governments and councils" and "quotas are useful but not sufficient and must be accompanied by other measures, such as awareness programmes" (Figures 5.6.14–5.6.22 in Appendix III). Non-establishment respondents were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that "quotas are not useful and lead to tokenism for women". Pro-establishment and moderate respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that "quotas are not necessary; women should be elected on merit" (Figures 5.6.14–5.6.22 in Appendix III).

5.7 Who supports increasing female political leadership?

The previous sections have presented the findings concerning respondents' perceptions of men's and women's leadership qualities, the barriers faced by male and female leaders, and policies related to gender equality and leadership. Similar to the results of the public opinion survey, it was generally recognised that women face greater difficulties in attaining higher political leadership positions, including both gender-neutral and gender-specific barriers, yet many respondents were reluctant to call for measures to favour women at the institutional level. These seemingly conflicting findings need to be examined in the context of people's socioeconomic background and their perceptions of men and women (or their gender stereotypes).

This section examines people's different opinions regarding policies to increase female political leadership and how they are affected by socioeconomic and demographic factors, as well as their attitudes towards the leadership traits of men and women, their performance in different policy areas, and their performance at different leadership levels. The section presents logistic regression models for three important outcome variables of people's attitudes: (1) whether we need more women leaders; (2) whether we should require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women; and (3) whether we should reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government Bureaux and Departments. The predictors included: (1) socioeconomic and demographic factors (gender, age, education, employment, income, family status, political tendency, etc.); and (2) views about men's and women's leadership qualities and performance[12] as well as whether respondents had greater confidence in men or women as political leaders in general, as grassroots leaders, and as members in the Legislative Council and District Councils.

The first set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would agree to increase the proportion of women in political leadership. Regarding sociodemographic factors, female and older respondents were more likely to support increasing women's

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[12] These two attitudinal variables measured the extent to which respondents were "pro-women" regarding leadership qualities and leadership areas. The pro-women index for leadership qualities was constructed by: (1) recoding the variables about whether respondents regarded leadership characteristics (competent, compassionate, visionary, persuasive, prioritise the public interest, collaborative and working out compromises, hard-working, honest and ethical, standing up for what they believe in despite political pressure) to be more true for men or women, by assigning "1" to those who regarded it as more true for women and "0" otherwise; and then (2) adding up the values of these nine dummy variables with a possible range from 0 to 9. The pro-women index for leadership qualities had a mean of 0.86 and a standard deviation of 1.62. Similarly, the pro-women index for leadership areas was constructed for people's views about the performance of men and women in the following policy areas: "economics, finance and trade", "security affairs", "social welfare", "infrastructure and development", "environment", "education", "political reforms" and "labour issues", with a possible range from 0 to 8. The pro-women index for leadership areas had a mean of 0.54 and a standard deviation of 1.06.

leadership. People with postgraduate education were more likely to support increasing women's leadership, whereas people with higher income levels were less likely to support it. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, a strong impact of attitudes was identified: people who had greater confidence in women as better grassroots leaders were more likely to support increasing women's leadership (Table 5.7.1).

The second set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would support the measure to "require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women". Regarding sociodemographic factors, female respondents were more likely to support this measure, while ever married respondents without young children were less likely to support it. Top leaders were also less likely to support this measure. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, there was a strong impact of attitudes: people who had a higher evaluation of women's leadership traits were more likely to support this measure (Table 5.7.2).

The third set of models predicted the likelihood that respondents would support the measure to reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government Bureaux and Departments. Regarding sociodemographic factors, female respondents were more likely to support this measure, while ever married respondents without young children were less likely to support it. Respondents with higher income and top leaders were also less likely to support this measure. Regarding individuals' views on men and women, there was a strong impact of attitudes: people who had a higher evaluation of women's leadership traits were more likely to support this measure. They were also more likely to support it when they had greater confidence in women as grassroots leaders (Table 5.7.3).

In sum, the suggested policies to increase women's political leadership, including the introduction of a quota system, were viewed more positively among women than among well-established groups (top leaders and high-income groups). These findings suggest that well-established groups do not feel a need to strive for institutional changes to improve gender equality. However, if people have a positive evaluation of female leaders' ability and competence, the attitudinal effect is strong in promoting people's support for measures to increase women's political leadership. These findings point to two possible explanations for the low support rate to increase women's political leadership or to implement a quota system. One is related to attitudes: some people are not convinced that women are capable and suitable for political leadership positions. The other explanation is different: after controlling for individuals' views about

women's leadership qualities, people may still be reluctant to promote women's political leadership at the institutional level, as they expect women to overcome the barriers by themselves. This finding is partly reflected in some respondents' tendency to minimise gender in the survey and echoes the finding from the in-depth interviews that people may pay more attention to individual success to "have it all" and rely on their own individual efforts to overcome the barriers, rather than being concerned about structural constraints, as will be reported in Chapter 6.

Table 5.7.1 Logistic models: "Should we increase the proportion of women in political leadership positions?"

	Should increase the proportion of women in political leadership				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	1.078***	0.949***	1.066***	1.057***	0.975***
35 to 54 (Ref = 15–34)	0.262	0.206	0.261	0.214	0.146
55 or above (Ref = 15–34)	1.775***	1.710***	1.765***	1.724***	1.674***
Ever married without young children (Ref = Never married)	-0.718*	-0.745*	-0.716*	-0.680*	-0.691*
Ever married with young children (Ref = Never married)	-0.158	-0.194	-0.172	-0.125	-0.077
Bachelor's degree (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	0.223	0.337	0.234	0.259	0.329
Postgraduate (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	0.942*	1.016*	0.945*	0.967*	1.035*
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	-0.603	-0.579	-0.579	-0.455	-0.515
Income: HK$50,000 or above (Ref = Less than HK$50,000)	-0.868**	-0.834**	-0.852**	-0.836**	-0.859**
Top leader (Ref = Grassroots leader)	-0.217	-0.159	-0.213	-0.209	-0.167
Non-establishment (Ref = Pro-establishment)	0.797*	0.850*	0.803*	0.961*	0.988**
Moderate (Ref = Pro-establishment)	0.097	0.113	0.091	0.163	0.200
Quality: Pro-women		0.137			0.143
Area: Pro-women			0.034		-0.129
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				1.168	1.192
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.942*	0.998*
Greater confidence in female leaders (the Legislative Council and District Councils) (Ref = Otherwise)				-0.559	-0.734
Constant	-0.891	-1.089	-0.927	-1.115	-1.190
Observations	249	249	249	249	249
AIC	323.8	323.7	325.7	323.5	325.5

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Table 5.7.2 Logistic models: "Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women"

	Require the nomination/candidacy lists to have a certain number of women				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	0.827**	0.598	0.830**	0.719**	0.580
35 to 54 (Ref = 15–34)	-0.274	-0.389	-0.274	-0.249	-0.383
55 or above (Ref = 15–34)	-0.124	-0.263	-0.121	-0.160	-0.279
Ever married without young children (Ref = Never married)	-0.997**	-1.044**	-0.998**	-1.134**	-1.172***
Ever married with young children (Ref = Never married)	-0.275	-0.343	-0.270	-0.451	-0.371
Bachelor's degree (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	-0.323	-0.007	-0.326	-0.278	-0.032
Postgraduate (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	0.133	0.341	0.133	0.093	0.281
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	-1.025	-0.933	-1.031	-0.838	-0.945
Income: HK$50,000 or above (Ref = Less than HK$50,000)	-0.534	-0.428	-0.539	-0.487	-0.519
Top leader (Ref = Grassroots leader)	-1.165**	-1.033*	-1.166**	-1.208**	-1.068*
Non-establishment (Ref = Pro-establishment)	-0.047	0.028	-0.047	0.084	0.224
Moderate (Ref = Pro-establishment)	-0.016	0.007	-0.013	0.076	0.210
Quality: Pro-women		0.209**			0.238**
Area: Pro-women			-0.008		-0.265
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.412	0.548
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.687	0.838
Greater confidence in female leaders (the Legislative Council and District Councils) (Ref = Otherwise)				0.558	0.292
Constant	-0.377	-0.806	-0.370	-0.504	-0.760
Observations	249	249	249	249	249
AIC	256.5	253.7	258.5	258.0	256.5

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Table 5.7.3 Logistic models: "Reserve a certain number of seats for women in the Legislative Council, District Councils, and Government units"

	Reserve seats for women				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Female (Ref = Male)	1.042***	0.778*	0.971**	0.934**	0.749*
35 to 54 (Ref = 15–34)	-0.241	-0.366	-0.252	-0.233	-0.360
55 or above (Ref = 15–34)	0.316	0.195	0.269	0.249	0.144
Ever married without young children (Ref = Never married)	-0.865*	-0.928**	-0.864*	-0.988**	-0.979**
Ever married with young children (Ref = Never married)	0.022	-0.053	-0.068	-0.134	-0.102
Bachelor's degree (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	-0.110	0.322	-0.051	-0.069	0.266
Postgraduate (Ref = Tertiary non-degree and below)	0.601	0.909	0.620	0.549	0.824
Non-employed (Ref = Employed)	-1.010	-0.860	-0.879	-0.786	-0.748
Income: HK$50,000 or above (Ref = Less than HK$50,000)	-0.913**	-0.811*	-0.819*	-0.863**	-0.812*
Top leader (Ref = Grassroots leader)	-1.675**	-1.520**	-1.668**	-1.752**	-1.561**
Non-establishment (Ref = Pro-establishment)	0.170	0.251	0.156	0.355	0.431
Moderate (Ref = Pro-establishment)	0.122	0.154	0.056	0.248	0.283
Quality: Pro-women		0.234**			0.203*
Area: Pro-women			0.157		-0.045
Generally, women are better leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.381	0.357
Women are better grassroots leaders (Ref = Otherwise)				0.960*	0.852
Greater confidence in female leaders (the Legislative Council and District Councils) (Ref = Otherwise)				0.287	-0.011
Constant	-1.198	-1.747*	-1.342	-1.362	-1.787*
Observations	249	249	249	249	249
AIC	227.9	224.4	228.4	229.1	229.7

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Chapter 6 In-depth Interviews with Political Leaders

In addition to the web-based survey, the research team conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with political leaders to understand their perceptions and attitudes as well as their journeys to political leadership. The research team conducted 32 in-depth interviews from 30 November 2018 to 31 May 2019 and collected narratives and expressions from both male and female leaders. Thirty-two interviewees were recruited, including 22 women (68.8%) and 10 men (31.3%) from grassroots/intermediate and top leadership levels. The length of each interview was approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.

The research team coded and analysed data from the 32 formal interviews and four informal discussions. We then examined multi-dimensional accounts encompassing public and private experiences related to political leadership. These narratives demonstrated various ways of understanding and reasoning about gender in relation to the interviewees' leadership roles and illustrated their options, aspirations, and frustrations in their journeys towards leadership positions. Men and women at different political leadership levels and various organisations had diverse experiences and adopted different strategies in their leadership tasks. They also shared thoughts concerning necessary support for political leaders.

Table 6.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents in in-depth interviews

Variables		
Gender	**N**	**%**
Male	10	31.3
Female	22	68.8
Age		
15–34	12	37.5
35–54	9	28.1
55 or above	7	21.9
Don't know/refused to answer	4	12.5
Level of education		
Tertiary non-degree or below	2	6.3
Undergraduate	10	31.3
Postgraduate	18	56.3
Don't know/refused to answer	2	6.3
Marital status		
Never married	14	43.8
Ever married	15	46.9
Don't know/refused to answer	3	9.4
Have children		
Yes	8	25.0
No	8	25.0
Don't know/refused to answer	16	50.0
Income		
Below HK$10, 000	6	18.8
HK$10,000–19,999	2	6.3
HK$20,000–29,999	5	15.6
HK$30,000–49,999	7	21.9
HK$50,000 or above	7	21.9
Don't know/refused to answer	5	15.6
Level of political leadership		
Top	9	28.1
Intermediate/grassroots	23	71.9
Political career status		
Current/future leaders	20	62.5
Former leaders	12	37.5
Political leadership position		
Government and ASBs	5	15.7
Legislative and District Councils	10	31.3
NGO leaders	8	25.0
Community group leaders	4	12.5
Activists	5	15.6
Total	**(32)**	**100.0**

Many leaders took minimum notice of the relationship between gender and political leadership at the beginning of the interview and stressed that gender was not a significant concern that they associated with their political leadership. However, many of them gradually recalled and revealed how their experiences were affected by their gender.

Female interviewees generally showed a higher sensitivity to gender issues than male interviewees, particularly regarding the barriers and difficulties they have faced in their political careers. Some male interviewees also noticed specific obstacles to career advancement faced by women.

In connection with the related policies to support men and women leaders, the interviewees shared their ideas about different measures regarding their effectiveness, including quota systems. The main findings are presented in this section.

6.1 Gender differences in leadership qualities and styles?

According to the telephone and web-based surveys, many of the respondents believed that men and women are equally good leaders, but many also felt that male and female leaders have different areas of expertise and qualities. Accordingly, they expressed different levels of confidence in male and female leaders in different policy areas and at various leadership levels. Through the qualitative data collected here, we were able to attain a better understanding of experiences and perceptions of gender from the perspective of political leaders in Hong Kong. Some interviewees tried to minimise the effect of gender in their political leadership. By contrast, others attempted to highlight gender-specific qualities and styles. In general, many felt that men and women can be equally good leaders, albeit in different ways, with unique characteristics.

Gender matters

Some women leaders described their leadership styles as different from men. They usually saw teamwork and unity as the key to success and were more inclined to emphasise cooperation and cohesion. Meanwhile, they regarded their male counterparts as more authoritative and decisive, with a hardline attitude in management.

> *Solidarity is most important and is easily achieved by women. All of them have a certain status in the society: they are either accountants or officials in the education sector or Social Welfare Department, but why would they bother (to stand with each other)? The reason why they [female leaders] treat everyone in the same way is that women truly understand that solidarity is the real power. That*

is, if women become political leaders, their egos are not as big as their male counterparts. Therefore, women do have the ability as well as solidarity.
(Interviewee 11, female, age not specified, former/current government official)

Men are more high-handed. They are determined when expressing ideas; this might be the best decision after their deliberation. Therefore, they tend to speak imperatively and give commands politely...Women leaders tend to communicate, and their tone is not that stern. They may frequently seek suggestions from the group. Meanwhile, they usually pay more attention to the feelings of the team members and are able to manage some tedious things. For example, expressing appreciation and focusing on aesthetic sense, women leaders make more effort on these.
(Interviewee 10, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

On top of the association between gender and leadership style, some female interviewees were aware of the public expectations that were placed on them while they were climbing up the political ladder. They emphasised that, as female leaders, they need to be very confident on the one hand and willing to sacrifice on the other.

If you see a female coming out, I mean as far as I have seen it, if a female comes out, with a very confident voice, with a very confident statement and everything, it means she's been through some things, right?
(Interviewee 17, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

I think somebody has to take the lead in some working situations. Even if I am coordinating the tasks, I can't stand there with my arms folded and say 'Hey! You do this, and you do that'. I have to be part of the team, do my best first and ask them to work with me to achieve the best result. However, many people in this field are not like this.
(Interviewee 29, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)

These women interviewees suggested that they need to stand for what they believe in despite the pressures they face and to devote themselves to their careers. This feeling was emphasised less often by male interviewees.

Being able to take responsibility is very important. One must believe that she has the determination and that she has to follow this path with persistence even though she does not know when she will succeed. One must have strength and

determination. That is, no matter what difficulties one faces, nothing is insurmountable. No matter what difficulty is ahead, one can always fight against it. Hardship is just a kind of experience.
(Interviewee 01, female, age not specified, worked in NGO/grassroots organisation)

In addition, the women leaders often perceived their role as being one of supporters rather than leader. Even where they were in a leadership position, they believed that they were coordinating people rather than leading them. They perceived their role as a "manager", "organiser", or "coordinator" by placing members in positions suitable for their specific talents and potential so that they could contribute to their organisation. Instead of claiming to be a leader of the team, they described themselves as people who bring people together to work as a team, even if their positions and job titles signified that they were in fact leaders, such as members in the Legislative Council or the head of an organisation.

No gender differences
Although some interviewees pointed out how their political journey and leadership style have been gendered, others suggested that gender is not a key factor in their leadership and instead emphasised gender-neutral "personal qualities". When hinted on the connection between political leadership and gender role, most of the interviewees swiftly denied that such a relationship exists. They suggested that capability and personality are more influential in attaining a position of higher political leadership.

First of all, they emphasised people's capabilities in performing their political roles. Some even mentioned that attention to gender should be minimised in order to justify their leadership.

Gender is not the key to winning. It can't help you to get elected. Of course, the public pays more attention to you at first, or it helps in your election campaign. But, in my view, women should not…make others pay attention to (gender) qualities. Personal qualities should matter more.
(Interviewee 03, female, aged 35–44, former/current council member)

In addition to capability, many interviewees attributed participation in political leadership to one's personality. Personality, rather than gender, was considered a decisive factor to participate in political activities and to become a leader. The personality traits suggested by the interviewees to be "suitable to be a political leader"

included being tough, willing to contribute to a team, good temper, passionate, attentive, willing to accept challenges, charismatic and ethical.

> *I feel that (gender) does not matter…in fact I think character is important….that is, if you are not tough enough, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman. To become a leader, gender is not important, whereas one's character must be tough, and one must have enough experience. [One must] accumulate more (experience) and have broader horizons.*
> *(Interviewee 23, female, aged 55–64, worked in NGO/grassroots group)*

Similarly, in terms of the gender division of labour in the political field, the interviewees suggested that personality is often more important than gender.

> *Instead of differences in gender, I have noticed that differences in character matter more. Those who are introverts will usually take up administrative jobs, whereas those who are good at speaking will end up doing PR [public relations] tasks.*
> *(Interviewee 26, female, aged 35–44, former/current government official)*

> *(When asked what would contribute to a certain leadership style) Character, character…both men and women like to be big brothers and sisters.*
> *(Interviewee 29, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)*

In sum, male and female leaders had different tendencies in relating gender to political leadership. Some, particularly women, tended to minimise gender to justify their leadership. Some emphasised several gender-specific characteristics that were deemed necessary or at least recommended to take up political leadership as well as to justify women's status as equally capable leaders as men.

6.2 Political journeys

Most of the interviewees did not expect to develop their careers in the political field at the beginning. Regardless of whether they were grassroots, intermediate, or top leaders, most of them suggested that they did not have a specific plan of career development in the political field and did not expect to take up a leadership role.

There were two kinds of common starting points of political careers among the interviewees: volunteering with an organisation and joining as an ordinary rank-and-file staff member. The leaders described how they joined organisations or political parties as volunteers or ordinary staff and gradually became more active within them.

Some were involved in providing social services in grassroots and intermediate organisations and were invited to become members of the executive committee. Some had been volunteers and staff in political parties and were recruited as candidates in elections after gaining several years of experience.

Nevertheless, in the Government or sizeable organisations, career paths were more institutionalised and visible for young leaders. Opportunities for upward mobility were also more realistic and robust. The interviewees in these organisations were able to foresee themselves reaching a certain leadership level at specific time points depending on their experiences and efforts.

Very few of the interviewees described their political career paths as having been planned. No female leaders reported that they had a planned journey towards political leadership.

> *Actually I had already chosen this direction when I was at school. Ever since I decided to study public administration for my associate degree and to continue my university studies in politics related to international relations and government and international studies…in fact I did want to see myself contributing more to society and to fight for a better environment for the next generation, to a certain extent…that is why I would like to move a step forward and spend more time on….government and international studies.*
> *(Interviewee 07, male, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

6.3 Challenges and barriers

Male and female leaders reported facing similar challenges and barriers in general, such as limited access to resources (including financial and human resources), weak networks, and difficulties in attaining a work-life balance. Nevertheless, male and female leaders also stressed different aspects of the challenges and barriers they faced in their political careers, such as family responsibilities, different standards to prove themselves, and unwanted public attention.

6.3.1 Juggling multiple roles as leaders and long working hours

All of the interviewees highlighted how political leaders do not have regular working hours and holidays. In contrast to other professions, work routines and practice in the political field make it difficult to achieve a work-family balance, according to many of the interviewees.

Many interviewees mentioned that in Hong Kong, "politician" is not regarded as a career. Instead, most political leaders have a regular job such as NGO staff member or community worker, or a professional career, such as lawyer, barrister, social worker, accountant, or engineer. In election campaigns, many candidates have followed a non-political career path before stepping into the political arena.

Both male leaders and female leaders suggested that extended working hours are typical given the nature of their work.

> *I have got to find my own team and deal with it myself. I fight for certain issues for a long period of time and respond to related issues spontaneously. For example, I was working on PowerPoint slides last night and only managed to leave at around 2 o'clock in the morning and it was already 4 am once I'd showered and was ready to close my eyes. This morning I had piles of work again. I spent my energy on replying to and discussing stuff.*
> *(Interviewee 06, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)*

> *This year is the election year! I work with a packed itinerary. All my street stations…one cannot call them an election team, but a support team. What I am doing now is checking the calendar every day and being sure to show up at the designated times like a robot. My baby is taken care of by my mother-in-law and stays at her place. We only take him back during the weekends. I haven't seen my son for more than a week.*
> *(Interviewee 07, male, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

Specifically, the work-family balance was said to be difficult for individuals who perform their political role as a volunteer or an affiliate. As discussed above, for some people, political leadership is not their full-time or formal job. Their political participation and service in their communities or mutual-help groups are usually focused on policy advocacy and take place during the off-time of their formal jobs. In other words, their leisure time is used for their political life:

> *I guess the most challenging thing is lack of time. We are torn among several different commitments. We are formally working (full-time) in an organisation, but not the political party. I have to use my spare time to do so. Therefore, I have to fulfil job duty first, which is already very intensive. The working hours are very long. But I still have to squeeze some time for the political party after work. It is hard to balance and it requires some flexibility, or I need the trust from the*

organisation. You need to make people understand that even you work on party issues during office hours, you are not wasting time or slacking off. I think if you want to have some autonomy in arranging your work and political activities, you definitely need to be prepared for the impossibility of a work-life balance. Indeed, it is a dilemma.
(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Therefore, both men and women may face a tight time budget and are torn between different obligations, particularly when they are engaged in political participation as their second job, when they need to deal with community needs, and when they are in the election season. Responsive and flexible engagement on their part is crucial to their success in the political arena. However, some are able to devote more time to their political careers, whereas others are more distracted and face more constraints due to other social expectations.

6.3.2 Family responsibility is a significant concern for women leaders
Many female interviewees mentioned that it is particularly difficult for women to go "all-in", or fully involved, in their political careers, primarily due to the unstable and long working hours involved. However, this is a common issue that cannot be transformed easily. Given the intersection of long working hours and family responsibilities, it is tough for women to climb to top leadership positions.

The way Hongkongers work is that for the batch of most capable people…they continue to work from 9 am to 9 pm even in their sixties…but overseas experience has told us that one should insist on working 9 to 5. If one needs to work (overtime) for a long period of time, extra staff should be hired. Therefore, I feel that the whole society is not very encouraging in terms of allowing a woman to fight for a high position.
(Interviewee 10, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Women more often emphasised family responsibilities as a significant concern in their career plans. Women leaders must make personal choices between their political development and family life in order to deal with the burden of family responsibilities. These choices are compromises: they need to retract on one side to achieve more on the other.

Career or family: Women leaders' decisions

Regarding the double burden of career and family, some women prioritised their domestic responsibilities and gave up career ambitions that they would otherwise have pursued.

> *I believe that it's more difficult for women…their careers are comparatively more affected by marriage, family, and childbirth. They are easily affected by many things and more considerations are needed, too. As for men, they are comparatively less affected. Therefore, it's usually more difficult to nurture a female leader. (Interviewee 13, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)*

> *That is, if a female colleague is moving towards 30, she will consider her own life plan: planning to get married. After getting married, if she considers having children, it actually affects both males and females, but obviously the influence on the female colleague is much greater.*
> *(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

Some other women leaders chose to prioritise their career rather than their family and reported spending more time on it as a result. One interviewee claimed to have been negligent of her son, as she had no idea about his study progress and performance in preschool.

> *In terms of work, I spend all my efforts for my organisation. After all, every day is about taking my child to school, then going to work, I work until late at night and then pick up my child late. I feed my child with meal boxes or anything else as long as he has something to eat. Sometimes I don't even have time to check his school bag.*
> *(Interviewee 01, female, age not specified, worked in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

Thus, women leaders not only face a difficult trade-off between career and family but also suffer from a sense of guilt if they deviate from conventional gender role expectations or if they are perceived as failing to fulfil the ideal family role of the mother. Such difficult choices and emotional suffering were less often reported by the male interviewees.

Reproductive choices by women leaders
For female leaders, childbearing and childrearing add complications to their working

schedules in order to fulfil their promises in the political arena and to demonstrate their abilities to their supporters and colleagues. Female leaders with young children were said to be compelled to spend considerable time performing caring duties. If they became pregnant while they were climbing up the career ladder, they felt that their work would be severely affected for months and years to "recover" from their life changes. Consequently, they claimed that they needed to watch their "biological life clock" and their "political life clock" simultaneously.

Such life events may affect women who are running for election campaigns and serving on community work because they need to interact with the general public or be on standby so that they can quickly respond to community issues. To win an election campaign, candidates need to have sufficient exposure to the public and to meet and respond to voters. To serve the community, leaders also need to work 24/7 and to be ready all the time. One former/current council member shared her experiences of life planning:

> *We are all slightly over 30, I think having babies after getting married is what's going to happen around these years. But I would say this is not a good time to have babies because it is the election year and there is no point getting pregnant at such a time. After the election ends, I will quickly get married, but it's not easy to get pregnant. If you plan to get married after this election in 2020 or 2021 and you plan to get re-elected in 2023, you won't force yourself to get pregnant so soon. We can only have babies after the 2023 election and then work towards re-election in 2027.*
> *(Interviewee 15, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)*

When women make fertility decisions and manage domestic responsibilities, age also plays an important role. However, the reproductive age overlaps with the seedling stage of political leadership development, in which a lot of effort and time are needed.

As a result, childlessness is another option for women leaders. Some female leaders gave up on having children in order to expedite their political career development. They chose to be childless to avoid the care burden.

> *I don't have a child…and I always think that given I have to launch campaigns and outreach and that I am worried about having children. I once got pregnant and was very anxious about that and maybe because of that [stress], it [the baby] was miscarried. After that, I never thought about it [having a child] again. I have*

always believed that it is impossible for me to have a child as I have got so many campaigns to run.
(Interviewee 28, female, aged 45–54, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Reluctant choices and unhappy endings

As the women interviewees reflected on their choices, some regretted not spending enough time with their families. Some did not have long-lasting marriages, ending in divorce, while others felt that they were not doing a good job as mothers.

Two interviewees, one a former/current government official and the other a former/current council member, reflected on their reluctant choices, believing that they had not had the option to have it all.

It is challenging to take care of both [a career and a family] and some get divorced with such an excuse…women have choices these days.
(Interviewee 11, female, age not specified, former/current government official)

Don't ever believe that you can maintain a good family life and a successful career at the same time. If you have a family, your career can never be that great, which is a fact. No one can have an outstanding career by just working eight hours a day. Too bad? You have got to choose. This is my greatest regret. It is too difficult to take care of both and you would collapse (unable to balance and sustain) and end up losing both.
(Interviewee 29, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)

How about male leaders?

To some extent, male leaders faced similar stress regarding their family responsibilities. One male interviewee described his concerns in balancing his political participation and responsibilities to his family. He hesitated on making the decision to have a child given the upcoming hectic schedule of election preparation.

You may have saved some money to spend and are fully immersed in community work or at the council without having an income for one or two years…but it is hard to imagine how can you survive by committing yourself to such work if you have a family and children. The bar is high to me and it requires heavy time input. Therefore, if you are responsible for taking care of your family, you have to consider all the factors. I have an impression that…the younger you are…the better it is, as younger people usually shoulder fewer family responsibilities and

the cost of sacrifice would be smaller, too.
(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

However, he agreed that men are privileged in that they have an easy escape route available: they can ask their partners/spouses to take up family duties. Thus, men were said to be less likely to be forced to choose between career and family.

Women colleagues suffer much more than men under such expectations. Male colleagues also suffer to some extent. Frankly, a man can escape by asking his spouse to take up domestic responsibilities. So the effect is not that serious even after marriage. Having children might affect the working performance of men, but the effect is not as significant and direct as that for women. According to my observation, we cannot retain our female colleagues and they will leave the organisation if they get married and consider having children.
(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

The most obvious difference is that for males, the more they leave their families behind and the more fully they devote themselves to work, the more praise they get. On the contrary, females have to excel in both aspects in order to be a successful political leader, which is very unfair.
(Interviewee 27, male, aged 45–54, current/former council member)

A young female leader, who was married but did not have children, delineated her thoughts on the inequality between men and women in terms of taking care of a family and children:

This of course is another type of prejudice. Why is it that males who are husbands and dads are evaluated in a different way from females? Given that social culture and attitudes are like this, I believe that no matter whether it is external or our own internal cultural bias, fewer females will take up key leadership positions.
(Interviewee 08, female, aged 25–34, worked in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Social expectations reinforce the double burden and role conflict issues. Unlike female leaders, men are less likely to be blamed for neglecting their families. Alternatively, if men spend time with their families and children, their contributions will be more greatly appreciated. By contrast, the female leaders found that they are expected to take good care of their families regardless of their leadership roles. Some male leaders also shared a strong feeling about the intense stress of the family burden on women. Although they

suggested that male leaders should also spend more time with their families and children, they did not feel obligated to take care of the family.

6.3.3 Limited organisational support to leaders in grassroots organisations
The above-mentioned social expectations regarding gender roles were said to have significantly shaped women's experiences in their political careers, but their experiences varied across different organisations.

Quite often, political participation involves an unstable stipend and uncertainties at the grassroots level and in small political organisations. In the section on leadership style, it was noted that some interviewees took up a leadership role as a volunteer or as a part-time job rather than being fully paid. Such organisations and community groups struggle to retain their female staff and to offer a stable and promising career. For this reason, many women in small organisations did not regard political leadership as a profession for them; only those who could support themselves with established careers and networks could afford to have a sustainable political career.

By contrast, the male interviewees often reported being well-prepared for such an unstable political career, in part because their partners/spouses would take up family responsibilities. They observed that their female colleagues would usually stay at the grassroots level as volunteers or part-time workers without seeing further career development. Moreover, these women would often choose to quit their jobs when they encountered difficulties and lacked support from their organisations.

Some women working in grassroots and small political organisations, which were often lacking in funding and staffing, would adopt "self-exploitation" and give up their personal time or benefits because they were aware that their organisations would experience a heavy burden on finances and human resources in providing them support.

One male leader shared a story of a female colleague in his organisation: she resigned of her own accord before her maternity leave so that she could help her organisation to save the salary during her leave and keep that lump sum to seek and pay for a replacement.

Limited resources do not necessarily imply that women leaders are at a disadvantage in resource allocation in small political organisations. Instead, women are often disadvantaged because of the difficult balance they feel they must make between pursuing a career and having a family. This makes them versatile in fitting into one of

the roles expected by society, because small organisations cannot provide support for them to accommodate both. Where resources in small organisations are unlikely to provide comprehensive support, women will usually feel compelled to leave their career role and "return" to their family role.

6.3.4 Double standards of competence for females and males
The female leadership literature has become aware of the double standards that exist in assessments and expectations concerning the performance of female candidates and politicians (Pew Research Center, 2015). The double standards theory for competence has provided a framework for understanding the manifestation of status-related perceptions and expectations of performance and ability. Indeed, in studying women's leadership, the theory has outlined the situation that gender is a basis for the double standards of ability perception, bringing disadvantages to those who are in the group with a lower status, that is, females (Foschi, 1989, 2000). Women therefore need to work harder to be presented with comparable appraisal to men.

Some interviewees suggested that there are different standards for females and males in performing their tasks and achieving career success. Some female leaders commented that they need to work harder in their capacities as leaders in order to gain the trust of stakeholders. The interviewees mentioned the occurrence of this barrier in several situations: working in a male-dominated working environment, working in traditional parties, or working in large organisations with hierarchical bureaucracy.

For instance, one female leader shared her experiences of negotiating with business sectors: she was challenged by male attendees in meetings, who doubted whether she possessed the relevant knowledge on the topic and did not take her opinions seriously. Therefore, she needed to pay extra effort based on what she had already prepared and actively voiced out in the communication, in order to be "visible" in the dialogue.

> *Nowadays society is like this. If you do not show up, you are considered to be lazy or stealing a living. Such a way of thinking must change. If this mind-set were to change, female councillors would be able to prove themselves through other performances and would not have to go to work within the first month after having a baby.*
> *(Interviewee 27, male, aged 45–54, former/current council member)*

Not only did some female leaders find that it is more difficult for them to win trust and respect and that they need to be assertive to defend themselves, but also some male and

female interviewees agreed that the society is more lenient to male than female leaders. Both male and female leaders observed that when a male leader makes a mistake, the society has a higher level of tolerance and shows less hostility. For a female leader, the public tend to be harsh in giving comments. These negative comments can be personal, pinpointing the leader without focusing on the facts.

> *Everybody is doing the same thing…[and] wants to achieve the best result. But in the eyes of others, women are judged in a personal way (such as personal life and appearance). Men are judged differently: 'You did not handle this task well, and you need to change the way you handle it next time'. Women are usually evaluated differently, the critiques are related to her private matters and the comments are personal.*
> *(Interviewee 15, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)*

6.3.5 Public attention and media coverage

Furthermore, women may receive some unwanted public attention because of their gender. Although some interviewees suggested that young female leaders draw more attention during election campaigns, the attention placed on "neophytes" (「素人」)– young female leaders—can have negative impacts.

Attention to appearance

Both male and female interviewees mentioned that considerable public and media attention is placed on young female leaders' body shape and physical appearance. Therefore, young female leaders have to be very alert to their outfits and attire. For example, one young female interviewee shared her experience of receiving sexist comments in media coverage and online discussions. Specifically, a photo of her wearing a white t-shirt was published online and raised a discussion about her body shape.

> *The criticism is harsher and sometimes one's outlook is ridiculed, and nicknames are invented, too.*
> *(Interviewee 08, female, aged 25–34, worked in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

> *Usually bad comments are made towards government officials (both male and female)…but it is mostly about female officials and they can be criticised in their other aspects as well…as for male officials…I feel that there are less…maybe the public curse them with swear words. If the subject of criticism is a male leader, one will usually say that he is mean and cunning, but the focus is not on his body*

(i.e. how he dresses and looks).
(Interviewee 10, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

When you talk about a female senior official, the policies she is advocating will always be criticised as well as her outlook and her spousal relationship. It is actually the same for males and therefore I believe that there is not much difference. However, why does everyone focus on a female's appearance or outlook? This is because when a woman comes out, if she is a political character, everyone's attention is on her appearance, outlook, face, body, etc. Therefore everybody feels, 'How come people always talk about her face and body?' But actually, it is because everyone cares about these things and therefore they are magnified.
(Interviewee 09, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)

The tendency to focus on the appearance of female political leaders made them annoyed and anxious. The female political leaders said that they want the media and the public to pay attention to their ability and vision instead of their clothing, hence they tend to be very careful in choosing their clothes and make-up, to add to and defend their positive image in public and to avoid giving rise to discussions about gender roles and sexual appeal.

Unwanted attention to personal relationships
Some young leaders and potential leaders found that their dating or marital relationships attract considerable public attention, too.

Sometimes you are only going out with a male for work, but others wonder whether he is your boyfriend. For male politicians, people also think this way, but the chance is smaller.
(Interviewee 15, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)

It means they will target your role as a female…e.g. saying you are fat or you are promiscuous, etc. As for males, they are seldom attacked in these ways.
(Interviewee 22, male, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Public perceptions as a double-edged sword
In certain cases, some female interviewees managed to use public attention to achieve their political goals, such as to navigate their interactions with local residents through their community and district work, or to alter public impressions of new candidates or elected leaders.

One female interviewee described how she prepared to run a campaign to become a District Council member: when she first arrived in her new district, she tried to become familiar with the local environment and local citizens. Compared with the previous male district council member, who had been working in the district for 12 to 13 years, she was a newcomer and was perceived by local residents as less mature and reliable. In contrast, the male council member received a lot of attention and care from local residents and was regarded as their "son". The female interviewee felt that she was not welcome at first and that she was considered too young and lacking in experience. However, at the same time, she also found that female leaders could establish a new relationship more efficiently:

> *One really has to spend a lot of effort dealing with the public…be cautious when talking to them…one has to treat them as mums…and get half a dozen more "mums and dads". When handling people's matters, [female councilors] are usually more amiable than males.*
> *(Interviewee 15, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)*

It took her a while to develop a friendly relationship with local residents and to illustrate her ability. Nevertheless, the female interviewee suggested that she could work on the affinity related to her female identity or use her charm to win the support of local residents.

6.4 Support received by leaders

Leaders touched upon the support they received or needed in their political careers. Capacity building was the most crucial form of support, which could be provided in the form of mentorship, further education, or training in organisations.

Mentors were found to play an important role in the development of one's political leadership. Most political parties in Hong Kong adopt mentor-mentee training practice as a training mechanism for new blood. Mentors can provide coaching for young members in two major ways: first, to pass on the community network to the young generations of the party; second, to train young leaders through role modelling.

Both male and female interviewees generally believed that support from mentors is essential. The mentors mentioned by interviewees included both male and female seniors in their professional field, the organisation, and the party. These individuals taught them a multitude of leadership styles and techniques by working with them. The

interviewees shared that it is common for an organisation to pair up a potential leader with a senior member, in a kind of mentor-mentee training scheme. It was said to be common to pair a young female leader with a female mentor, usually because female leaders and male leaders are perceived as facing different problems in their lives.

Female role models were said to be very crucial in the career paths of young women political leaders. Some of the female role models mentioned are famous names in politics and the interviewees elaborated how they learned from their role models' working styles and observed their efforts and hardship in nurturing women leaders. Some female role models were senior members of the same party or organisation. Some young women benefited greatly from their day-to-day interactions with them.

> *I managed to learn two important things from Ms XX (a senior member in the party). First, all the interests have to be declared clearly and then others won't be able to target your faults. Second, when you stand on the streets to raise money with her, it's from 12 noon to 8 pm and you cannot go to the bathroom! That is a full eight hours! …I was initially a newbie and therefore very scared…during public speaking I was so scared that I had drafted the speech beforehand and read directly from it. Ms XX said one must be direct in speaking. For example, one should say 'Fire! Run!', but not 'Hey! Now…at a location…something is on fire! It's dangerous! Leave quickly!'*
> *(Interviewee 29, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)*

In some well-established political parties or large organisations, internal women's groups have been formed to discuss social issues related to gender and to train potential young women leaders. In these women's groups, senior female members often serve as mentors to provide knowledge and psychological support. The related training helps to nurture successors in organisations or candidates for future elections in political parties. Such women's groups were also said to be a valuable source of moral support among peers.

> *We meet other female community officers from time to time to chat with them and see what difficulties they have encountered and what help we can offer them. Now I have this mission because the seniors have retired…I would be very nervous if I were to also stand down…is there anyone after me? Therefore, I have to look for newcomers and at the same time, I wish there were more female members in District Councils. We will call for a female party meeting to meet those female community officers and see what assistance we can provide.*

(Interviewee 13, female, aged 55–64, former/current council member)

Female colleagues [of the same rank] meet for lunch or dinner from time to time and these groups provide support to each other.
(Interviewee 16, female, age not specified, former/current government official)

In addition to mentorship and peer support, training courses are also arranged in some organisations and political parties to collect experiences in handling cases and to transfer knowledge to young members. Such training can convey a variety of knowledge, such as policy formulation processes, legal cases, and information about local communities.

6.5 Views on policies to support potential women leaders

The male and female leaders shared similar thoughts regarding measures that may help to facilitate their career development. Some policies were regarded as particularly helpful to support potential women leaders, such as flexible working hours, family-friendly policies, support from organisations and parties, and positive media coverage about women's roles in politics. However, both male and female interviewees were sceptical of a gender quota system.

6.5.1 Flexible working hours would be very helpful

Both men and women leaders mentioned that flexible working hours would facilitate their political participation in the first place. Such flexible working hours were considered particularly helpful for women who need to balance their domestic responsibilities.

In this study, the research team interviewed government officials, council members and candidates, policy advocates, and so on. Not all of them could adopt flexible working arrangements; indeed, only some government officials and NGO staff could enjoy a degree of flexibility depending on their formal employment.

Those interviewees whose job duties focus on policy advocacy were said to be more able to arrange flexible working hours. Working on policy advocacy involves a considerable amount of research, data collection, proposal development and communication with policy stakeholders, but fewer service-oriented tasks. This backstage role allows for more flexible time arrangements as there is less responsive frontline interaction with the public.

Conversely, candidates running for election are less likely to benefit from flexible working arrangements. They need to work 24/7 due to the nature of frontline interactions with the residents and there is no room for adjustability of working hours. Compared with policy advocacy, an election implies an extremely competitive atmosphere. Candidates have to compete among themselves to gain greater exposure to their voters. They tend to spend as much time as they can in the community and get in touch with people in order to gain their trust and recognition.

> *Mode of work…I believe that advocacy is still better as it is not round-the-clock and therefore it is easier for females to participate. But when you talk about politics and district elections, I think it's quite difficult.*
> *(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

Hence, some interviewees were said to be in greater need of flexible working time than others. They need to be supported in ways to be able to get around their tight working schedules.

6.5.2 Family-friendly policies are important to address gendered needs

The interviewees suggested that family-friendly policies and arrangements are essential to facilitate women's labour force participation. Family-friendly policies and arrangements such as quality childcare services, elderly care, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, home offices, bringing children to work and so on were all considered important measures in supporting women's participation in all walks of life, including the political field.

First, family-friendly policies were said to be important to addressing practical gendered needs. For example, childcare services can provide support to women directly by minimising the care burden of mothers with young children. Second, family-friendly policies should be adopted to tackle strategic gendered needs, aiming to involve both men and women in taking care of their families. For example, paternity leave and parental leave are intended to motivate men to share care work in the family.

> *Actually they [political leaders] should be entitled to statutory maternity leave and child care services should be provided to Legislative Council and District Council members, even elderly care service should be provided. For example, my family responsibility is to take care of two elders. But if I were to become a District Council member, the two elders would be left unattended. Therefore, the welfare and services that we have been providing in the community should be provided in*

the political field [within the scope of the work of leaders].
(Interviewee 27, male, aged 45–54, former/current council member)

The interviewees highlighted the importance of family-friendly policies for grassroots women's political participation in particular. This policy may not be necessary for middle-class families due to their superior access to support and resources. By contrast, ordinary women with fewer resources may not be able to afford to deal with family responsibilities and political duties at the same time. At the grassroots level, family-friendly policies and benefits will help to lower women's costs in participating in political activities and advancing in their careers.

6.5.3 Supportive measures by organisations and parties for female candidates
Some interviewees claimed that it is difficult to find sufficient women candidates and potential leaders. They emphasised the necessity to enhance the number of female candidates, noting that this kind of gender imbalance starts early in the promotion and selection processes. One male grassroots organisation committee member suggested that the fact of having a female candidate is very important, in order to convey the symbolic meaning of women's political participation. Parallel to the previous discussion on women's role as a supporter in political organisations, having a female candidate can show another possible role in political engagement.

We need a female candidate; the meaning is more than simply increasing female participation in the political party. But practically, the sex ratio in the party is not even and is seriously biased. Male party members highly outnumber female ones. The problem is that starting from college, we don't know why political positions only attract male students.
(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

In fact, even at the elementary level, there are more males than females. Since we are originally working at the grassroots level, the nature of the job requires physical labour and therefore many assistants who later become successful District Council members are males.
(Interviewee 31, male, aged 25–34, former/current council member)

The interviewees suggested that the Government and political parties should not only encourage women to participate in politics at the beginning but also provide training and support because women need to "sacrifice" a lot to pursue a political career path, which involves intensive duties over a long period. One interviewee visualised the

period as "at least five years" of accumulating work experience before participating in elections.

> *It must be related to resources…because we have to participate long-term and we have to observe if a person is devoted to grassroots level campaigns, we have to observe him long-term and he has to have at least five years of organisation work experience. Without a work-life balance, as a female organiser, if she doesn't only want to be an organiser but actually wants to participate in politics (i.e. work at the grassroots level and take part in elections), there may be hindrance. This is because she cannot quite follow the path and you have to devote so much and use up all of her personal time. Basically, it is hard. Are there female candidates? Yes, but really just a few.*
> *(Interviewee 19, male, aged 35–44, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

The interviewees also suggested that to enhance the pool of women leaders at the grassroots level, organisations need to give women opportunities to explore their ideas and judgements rather than setting limits based on experience and training.

6.5.4 Positive media coverage regarding women's roles in politics

The interviewees suggested the importance of gender mainstreaming in the mass media and public discourse. Some female interviewees suggested that news and social media do not do a constructive job in promoting positive images of women leaders in the public sphere. Furthermore, to change the stereotyping of women's gender roles, efforts are needed from the Government, education sectors, NGOs, and other parties.

Some male and female interviewees reflected on how to understand gender roles in leadership. Some suggested that women do not need to deny their feminine characteristics to be leaders, while others claimed that gender differences should be minimised and that one's gender should not be emphasised, in order to enhance gender equality.

> *I believe in the promotion of equality as well as a gender perspective…those who participate in politics or take up a leadership role believe that this is very appropriate. If you really believe in gender equality, you do not have to single out the fact that it is a "she", and you usually do not judge how much care or support to give her based on her gender, and then the environment would be one where both genders can feel free to do what they are supposed to do.*
> *(Interviewee 08, female, aged 25–34, worked in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

I think there is no big deal. That is, it [the political field] will be able to find the balance on its own. I believe that if you say there are more males than females and one female comes out then maybe she will receive privileges and feel more special. But if the number of females rises then males may become the more privileged ones. This is a state of equilibrium. As long as the balance point is found there will be no problems…Being male or female is not a problem…I think Hong Kong people are more into gender equality and don't feel there is any special problem. (Interviewee 22, male, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Such approaches revealed different perspectives to understanding gender roles in politics, by enhancing or reducing attention to the gender perspective and by recognising or denying gender differences. Nevertheless, the interviewees mostly agreed that women's positive roles in the public sphere need to be promoted in the media and general public discourse.

6.5.5 Gender quota system
Most of the interviewees, including both female and male leaders, did not agree with the adoption of a gender quota system. However, their disagreements were based on different rationales. Discussions with the interviewees on gender quotas also revealed that they may not comprehend the core ideas and the typology of a gender quota system in the same way.

Many female interviewees believed that setting a gender quota system is not legitimate. They suggested that voters' choices should be respected in an electoral system and should not be adjusted based on a quota. Having a gender quota may alter voters' decisions, hence the election system should not operate in this way.

I don't think one has to stress a male-female ratio…but the election result must come from the voters. The results that come out are the most direct outcome and you do not have grounds to overthrow them. 'Why are there so few females? That is not acceptable! I need more females in councils!' There is no such game. (Interviewee 09, female, aged 25–34, former/current council member)

These women suggested that although a gender quota is a straightforward and simple way to deal with a complex and historical gender inequality problem in the political system, it would not help to change the culture and social norms of gender inequality in the long run. Therefore, it was not perceived as a preferable option.

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A quota is an easy fix, but we want to, we're in favour of targets, measurable objectives, wholesale change. And that, that's how other countries have done it really well, like the UK or Australia. So if you have targets, you've got a regulatory framework, you, it changes the whole culture. If you do a quick fix, it might not be, you might not change the whole sort of culture.
(Interviewee 05, female, aged 45–54, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Many male interviewees doubted whether a gender quota would bring real justice. If a gender quota initially aims to increase women's participation in the political field so as to achieve gender equality, then setting a quota that lets more women enter a system is already an act violating the rule of equality.

Aren't we talking about the same ability for both sexes? Why should we set up this topic to treat females better? I really find it unnecessary. As a politician, one should be judged by her or his ability or whether she or he is supported by the voters to decide if she or he can join the council or be the president, etc., instead of being treated preferentially. The fact that you are female does not mean that your work performance is particularly bad and needs to be treated preferentially. And even if your ability at work is particularly bad, it does not mean that you need special treatment. Whether you manage to get elected or not is determined by whether the voters place their votes on you. If you have decided to participate in politics, then you need to present your agenda and mission to the voters for them to decide, I think.
(Interviewee 07, male, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Apart from the conceptualisation of a quota system, its actual implementation was another area of concern for the interviewees, that is, how to set up an effective gender quota system. The idea of a gender quota system may seem promising, but it is challenging to set an appropriate percentage for the ratio of men and women leaders.

The question is, 'Why that figure?'…I am also asking why it needs to be half-half. The birth rate of females is higher…there are more females in Hong Kong. Why isn't the ratio of females to males 6:4? You will never be able to find out a figure that can explain the whole thing. That is, unless it is the ratio of males to females in Hong Kong, but that ratio includes foreign domestic helpers as well. I believe that the intention [of gender quota]is good, but you cannot find out why the number is so.

Comparing different models of a gender quota, many interviewees would only accept a voluntary gender quota but not a statutory quota. According to them, legislated gender quotas would limit the flexibility of employment and candidate selection.

> *The Government takes up the role of pioneer…then this can encourage the business and other sectors...the situation is getting better. Nowadays, the image of the enterprise is an important concern. In every company, there are work ethics for different job types and work models. Therefore, if the Government asks people to do that voluntarily, I think it is feasible…and it is more ideal.*
> *(Interviewee 10, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)*

> *… In a council, for example, the gender quota is 40% of candidates… How can you change it [the system] to force some females who are not up to standard or even out of reach to take part in elections [in order to fill up that 40%]? Right? Similarly, when you employ staff, does your company really have to hire 40 females? Jobs like firefighters and police officers require a high level of physical labour and are demanding. There is no way you can expect females to battle with fierce thieves.*
> *(Interviewee 21, male, aged 25–34, former/current ASB member)*

Although both male and female interviewees doubted the legitimacy and the feasibility of a gender quota system, many male interviewees were concerned about the damage it would pose to a level playing field, whereas women tended to worry that it would not be a practical and justifiable way to amend existing gender inequalities. Some interviewees proposed that setting up a gender quota needed substantial support from other stakeholders.

For instance, political parties should cultivate a culture of gender equality and train more young female candidates. Government Bureaux and Departments (such as the Women's Commission) should promote public education to encourage women to participate in the political field. The Government may also assume a leading role in employing female staff to set a positive example for the business and political sectors. However, no policy would work effectively if traditional or patriarchal gender norms persist in society.

> *I hope that the functions of the Women's Commission can be enhanced, and more could be done in public education to encourage females to give it[politics] a*

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try…most of the election rules of the Hong Kong Government are already very fair and do not against any sex. I only think that it lacks some soft support, i.e. more public education is needed, and females' viewpoints should be emphasised. Even men can have female viewpoints.
(Interviewee 10, female, aged 25–34, working in NGO/grassroots organisation)

Similarly to the findings of the surveys with the general public and political leaders, the in-depth interviews suggested that political leaders in Hong Kong face gender-neutral obstacles and women-specific barriers. The interviewees shared their ideas about the most popular policies and measures to help support women to participate in political leadership and climb up the ladder. In particular, they addressed the importance of family-friendly policies, training, and mentoring, which were also found in the surveys with the general public and political leaders. Furthermore, they highlighted the need to provide institutional support to women who work in small organisations and at the grassroots level. They also raised the advantages and disadvantages of public attention to female leaders.

6.6 Conclusion: Facing barriers does not mean a lack of qualities and skills

However, no matter what policy is proposed, the essence of the problem hinges on gender stereotypes and the double bind faced by female leaders. Under traditional gender role beliefs, women are expected to be communal and friendly, but at the same time, public expectations of a leader are to be agentic and assertive. Therefore, when women are able to fulfil the requirements of a good leader, they may not be able to fulfil the requirements of a "good woman" at the same time. When women try to become good leaders in public eyes, they may face different penalties or difficulties in other aspects. As elaborated in the above discussion, women leaders are often accused of being incapable in the domestic sphere, with some receiving unwanted public attention to their personal relationships.

These are unique obstacles based on persistent gender stereotypes and a lack of mechanisms to address the tensions that women face between the public and private spheres. They cannot be easily addressed by individual capacity or skill.

Although both men and women may benefit from flexible working time, training, and mentoring, women face tremendous obstacles in attaining higher political leadership positions. Such barriers are partly embedded in social institutions, such as a lack of organisational support, double standards, and unwanted public attention.

These findings call for changes in attitudes regarding gender roles, investigations of the historical problem of women's exclusion from (or lack of participation in) the political arena, and actions to promote gender equality throughout society. On the one hand, leadership competence is a broad-based concept implying diverse skills and qualities and thus women's leadership qualities should be understood in a comprehensive manner. However, this does not necessarily and directly lead people to minimise gender or ignore gender differences. On the other hand, people need to recognise that some barriers cannot be addressed by improving individual qualities. More public attention should be devoted to the discussion of structural and cultural constraints rather than expecting an individual woman to overcome the related barriers, inspired by "role models" who have managed to "have it all".

Chapter 7 Discussion of Research Results and Policy Suggestions

Summary of findings

Based on mixed methods research, comprising a telephone survey with the general public, a web-based survey with political leaders, and in-depth interviews with political leaders, this report has presented major findings regarding perceptions of the qualities of female and male leaders in Hong Kong, the barriers faced by men and women in attaining political leadership positions, and different policies to increase female representation in political leadership and to eliminate the difficulties encountered by women and men.

Regarding qualities, more than 60% of the telephone and web-based survey respondents claimed that men and women have equally good leadership qualities, but gender stereotypes still existed regarding people's performance in different policy areas and at different leadership levels.

Regarding barriers, some obstacles were generally said to affect both men and women, such as a lack of social network and connections, experience, and support from political parties and organisations. In the interviews, limited access to financial and human resources was mentioned by both female and male political leaders and nascent leaders in particular.

However, some obstacles were more likely to be regarded as specific to female political leaders, such as domestic responsibilities, traditional attitudes towards gender roles and double standards between genders to prove themselves. Although both men and women leaders in in-depth interviews mentioned that extended working hours hinder their work-life balance, women were said to face greater tensions due to traditional gender role expectations and a lack of organisational support to allow them to accommodate both. This was particularly the case for women working at the grassroots level and in small organisations. Female interviewees further shared receiving unwanted public attention with a focus on their body shape and appearance. Meanwhile, fewer men-specific obstacles were reported.

Regarding policies, around 36% of the respondents in the telephone survey and around half of the respondents in the web-based survey agreed that the proportion of women

in political leadership positions should be increased. When respondents were asked about concrete measures to support women in political leadership, the most popular ones focused on family-friendly and capacity-building aspects, including "implement family-friendly policies", "encourage women to lean in for opportunities", and "provide training for potential female leaders", all supply-side measures.

The respondents were more sceptical of demand-side measures – such as gender quota systems – than other measures. We used logistic regression models to explore why opinions about increasing female political leadership and implementing gender quotas appear divided. First, we found that opinions are conditioned by people's perceptions of female and male leaders, i.e. gender beliefs and gender stereotypes. Second, some privileged groups such as highly educated or high-income people were found to be more reluctant to support gender quotas, possibly because they do not see a need to provide institutional support. To them, the leaking pipeline is an issue that may need to be solved with individual efforts, especially for those who are resourceful, but this may not be the situation for women working at the grassroots level and in small political organisations and who have limited organisational support and family support to "have it all". Gender stereotypes and structural constraints further reinforce the obstacles of double standards and double burden that were reported to be women-specific barriers.

Recommendations

To address these issues, we provide the following policy suggestions. From the supply side, we suggest enhancing capacities and opportunities for potential leaders, through providing public education, family-friendly policies, training, mentoring and organisational support. From the demand side, we suggest taking several flexible actions to promote gender targets rather than imposing mandatory gender quotas.

7.1 Public education on gender equality

Although most respondents believed that men and women are equally good political leaders, gender stereotypes were reflected in the results of both surveys and in-depth interviews. Women and men are expected to align with traditional gender roles that encourage men to participate in the public sphere, become high-ranking leaders, and be active in economic and security-related policy areas. At the same time, women are assumed to be homemakers and caregivers, leaders at the grassroots and community levels, and the ones in charge of education and social welfare. The latter need to make additional effort to gain the trust of stakeholders and the public and are in a passive position in eliminating unwanted public attention to their body shape and appearance.

Gender stereotypes in political leadership simplify the complexity of leadership traits by polarising them as "feminine" and "masculine" leadership styles. This makes political leadership easier to understand but overlooks the many possibilities and abilities within the broad range of leadership styles. In particular, the fact that many leaders possess both so-called feminine and masculine leadership styles simultaneously is overlooked.

Whereas some interviewees recognised gender differences and gender inequalities in their political journeys, others tried to minimise gender in justifying their leadership and capability. Compared with the general public, the web-based survey results with political leaders were more ambivalent about whether we should improve gender awareness and talk openly about the issue of gender (53.1% in the survey with political leaders compared with 73.6% in the survey with the general public). Such ambivalence was also observed among certain female interviewees, possibly because some leaders tended to minimise the effect of their gender on their political journey and emphasise their individual capacity instead. In order to address the double standards in the workplace, it is necessary to bring gender back into public attention as a social phenomenon rather than focusing on personal obstacles.

To challenge gender stereotypes and unwanted public attention to female leaders, public education to enhance gender awareness should be adopted. The media as a means of representing women should focus on the performance and ability of female political leaders instead of excessively reporting their body shape and appearance, sometimes with sexist connotations. Meanwhile, public education should be provided for both public and domestic spheres regarding traditional gender role beliefs and it is important to advocate shared family responsibilities against conventional gender divisions of domestic labour. In addition to promoting more egalitarian gender role beliefs within and outside of families, our society should provide family-friendly policies to support diverse family and career options for potential male and female leaders.

Instead of categorising leadership based on stereotypical feminine or masculine leadership styles, it should be interpreted comprehensively by styles of management of operation, engagement with subordinates, and development of future goals. For example, "transformational leadership", "transactional leadership", "laissez-faire leadership", and "inclusive leadership" are some leadership styles defined by leadership researchers in recent decades. A reinterpretation of leadership styles will support female and male leaders by relieving them from traditional gender roles.

7.2 Family-friendly policies

Although the results of the telephone and online surveys suggested that domestic responsibilities are mainly women's obstacles in attaining political leadership positions, the in-depth interviews with political leaders illustrated that both men and women need to deal with extended working hours if they want to progress in their careers and that many of them struggle with multiple jobs rather than merely focusing on political participation.

Nevertheless, the time budget is particularly tight for women regarding their expected family responsibilities. In the in-depth interviews, female political leaders further elaborated that they have limited time for childbearing and childrearing. The issue of the double burden often forces them to choose between work and family and between being a good leader and being a good wife and mother, reinforcing different gender role expectations as a result. The double burden issue thus also contributes to the double standard problem: that women's commitment to and capabilities in their political careers are questioned and doubted if these are considered "private" issues to be solved by the women themselves.

The promotion of flexible working hours may not be desperately needed among political leaders who have managed to balance work and life with their private resources, but may bring substantial benefits to potential political leaders who are working parents or at an early career stage but lack family or organisational support. Extended parental leave may not only help working wives and mothers to accommodate their family duties or fertility desires but also allow both men and women to become more involved in family responsibilities and childrearing. Nevertheless, such gender role negotiations and adjustments cannot be guaranteed by the provision of family-friendly policies; they will work best alongside the implementation of public education to alter gender role beliefs.

Furthermore, gender stereotypes can be altered by providing more capacity-building support. In contrast to family-friendly policies, which were often said to help women deal with double burden issues, capacity-building measures may enable both men and women to improve and demonstrate their individual leadership qualities, which can help to address more gender-neutral obstacles in attaining political leadership positions, such as those related to experience, connections, and confidence.

7.3 Training and mentorship

Other than family-friendly policies, the most popular measures according to the survey

results with both the general public and political leaders were to "encourage women to lean in for opportunities" and to "provide training for potential female leaders". In the in-depth interviews, many political leaders suggested that they have benefited greatly from mentorship, peer networking, and training. Furthermore, a lack of network, connections, and experiences were the top-ranking obstacles reported as affecting both men and women, according to the surveys with the general public and political leaders. Consequently, training and mentorship are not only important for potential female leaders but also beneficial for men seeking to climb up political career ladders.

Capacity-building initiatives – including leadership skills, campaign management, public speaking and political knowledge – were found to be crucial for potential political leaders. Such initiatives have been adopted in many societies to provide peer support and training for potential women leaders (UN, 2014). These training and mentorship programmes enhance women's capacity, provide experience sharing from senior political leaders, and encourage women to compete for decision-making positions.

These programmes further set examples in designing and promoting training programmes for potential leaders. As found in the results of both the telephone and web-based surveys, female political leaders were perceived as facing different challenges from men. As such, it will be helpful to pair young or potential female leaders with female role models and mentors. Apart from government-led, party-led and civil organisation-led training to enhance female political leaders' capacity, cross-party women's caucuses are found in several countries and regions (UN, 2014).

Training and mentoring programmes aim to improve and showcase individual leadership qualities and connections, which can help to alter gender stereotypes in political spheres. However, we also propose to address structural constraints by seeing women as candidates with equal potential and capability as men for political leadership positions. To this end, more organisational support needs to be provided to reduce gender inequalities at the institutional level to deal with the leaking pipeline issue, whether related to double standards or double burden.

7.4 Organisational support
In addition to the focus on individual experience, network, connections and confidence, respondents mentioned "lack of support from political parties and organisations" as an important obstacle affecting both men and women. By contrast, "lack of support from family" and "double standards" were more likely to be considered women-specific

obstacles.

The two issues of organisational support and family support were intertwined in the in-depth interviews, both resulting from and leading to double standards between genders to prove themselves in the workplace. Given that small organisations often struggle to provide support for women to "have it all", many feel compelled to quit their position and give up their career ambitions, unless they have sufficient family support. The intertwined insufficiency of family and organisational support may also lead to another consequence for large political organisations and Government Bureaux and Departments: the pool of female candidates is quite limited. These findings suggest that we should provide more institutional support for potential leaders to deal with their lack of resources and for women who work at the grassroots and community levels, who face family responsibilities, and who have limited connections to pool resources.

7.4.1 Financial support

Both female and male political leaders reported that limited financial and human resources are major obstacles that hinder individuals from attaining higher political positions. The election deposit is one example. In Hong Kong, running for positions in District Councils requires an election deposit of HK$3,000, while for the Legislative Council, it costs HK$50,000 and HK$25,000 for a candidate in a geographical constituency and a functional constituency, respectively (Electoral Affairs Commission, 2019a; 2019b). Running for a political position can be costly for women, who often have limited access to financial resources from parties and other organisations (UN, 2013b). To address such problems, the Democratic Party of Japan has launched a "Water and Seeds" programme to provide financial support for women so that they can start an election campaign (Gaunder, 2015). On top of the financial support provided by political parties, 117 states have rendered financial assistance to political parties regarding training activities and campaign expenses; such financial support is related to gender equality requirements in 27 states (UN, 2014).

7.4.2 Voluntary candidate nominations

By tradition, habit, and networks, male-dominated party leadership may be unaware of the difficulties faced by female candidates and end up nominating more male political leaders. We suggest that political parties enhance the pool of female candidates by adjusting the nomination requirements and nurturing more nascent female political leaders through training and mentorship programmes. Nominating a greater number of female political leaders will not only create more political opportunities for them; the parties will also gain more ballots. Indeed, according to the web-based survey of

political leaders, 51.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that "including more women will increase the electoral appeal of political parties or groupings". With more females on candidate lists and within leadership structures, there could be more role models for potential female political leaders. For instance, parties in Argentina, Australia, Cyprus, Finland, Romania, and Zimbabwe have adopted gender quotas on candidate lists or in leadership structures (UN, 2013a).

7.4.3 Setting up a network for female leaders

As mentioned above in the discussion of training and mentorship, setting up networks for female leaders both within and across parties helps women to provide mutual support and share experiences. Nascent female political leaders can gain knowledge and experience from senior leaders through coaching, training, mentoring, and networking. Cross-party women's caucuses allow female parliamentarians to develop collaboration on common concerns, connect themselves with civil society organisations, and become equipped with necessary political skills (UN, 2014).

7.5 Gender quotas and gender targets

Along with the aforementioned measures to enhance gender awareness and address gender bias, the adoption of voluntary gender quotas and targets are recommended. The results of the two surveys and in-depth interviews illustrated considerable scepticism of gender quota systems. Certainly, only around one third of the respondents from the general public survey and one fifth from the political leader survey showed support for quota systems. The in-depth interviews further illustrated different reasons against the implementation of gender quota systems, pertaining to their legitimacy and feasibility. Some male interviewees worried that gender quotas would harm the merit-based level playing field, while some female interviewees were concerned that gender quotas would not be effective in amending gender inequalities in political spheres. The former refused to admit the necessity of applying gender quotas; the latter felt that quota systems are not the best solutions if traditional gender role beliefs remain unchanged. Both situations suggest that gender quotas have to be deliberated and designed along with other measures to improve gender awareness and to address gender bias. Indeed, whether gender quotas can be received, interpreted, and implemented in effective ways depends on the transformation of social and cultural practices in the wider society.

The results of the logistic regression models also indicated that suspicion of gender quota systems was related to (1) gender stereotypes about women's qualities and (2) the advantageous socioeconomic backgrounds of respondents (potentially associated with their denial of structural constraints and emphasis on individual efforts to

overcome barriers in attaining political leadership positions). These findings suggest that it is better to promote quotas on a voluntary basis and as gender targets, depending on the transformation of structural constraints and public attitudes regarding gender stereotypes, double standards, and double burden for women. Although gender targets or quotas work best when paired with enforcement mechanisms such as sanctions and monitoring by other parties (Sojo et al. 2016), in an ill-prepared social environment, such enforcement may lead to strong resistance from the general public and politicians.

7.5.1 Quotas on a voluntary basis

Compared with mandatory candidate quotas and reserved seats, voluntary political party quotas ask political parties to include a certain number or percentage of women candidates in candidate lists. Such gender quotas depend on the willingness and internal regulations of political parties. Without sanctions, governments can provide financial incentives for parties to nominate more gender-balanced party lists.

7.5.2 Gender targets

In contrast to mandatory quotas, gender targets set a goal of gender representation in leadership positions, but with little enforcement (Sojo et al., 2016; Whelan & Wood, 2012). Furthermore, we suggest that gender targets be started at a local level as an entry point for Hong Kong women, such as district- and community-level leadership positions. The bottom-up approach can help to address the leaking pipeline issue and improve the supply-side shortage of female candidates, so that grassroots women leaders can sustain their political careers and see enhanced opportunities to compete for higher level leadership positions.

Research on affirmative action policies suggests the importance of designing appropriate numerical goals and timetables, as some societies have shown a tendency to set low targets depending on the quantity and quality of candidates (UN, 2014). The design of goals and targets needs to be built on the integration and mainstreaming of the gender perspective and the collection, analysis, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data. In Hong Kong, the gender benchmark for ASBs has been adjusted according to the achievement of previous goals, from 25% to 30% and later to 35%. Such incremental improvement has been monitored and facilitated by the adjustment of voluntary gender targets.

To sum up, public education should be a long-lasting measure along with changes in media representation regarding female political leaders' abilities and performance. Family-friendly policies, training, mentorship, and organisational support would

increase flexibility for nascent leaders regarding their work-life balance and enhance their opportunities and resources from the supply side. Such measures would also help to address gender stereotypes at the individual level and structural constraints at the institutional level. Depending on the transformation of social and cultural practices, voluntary gender quotas and gender targets should be introduced from the demand side, along with other measures to facilitate attitudinal changes, to improve gender awareness, to eliminate gender stereotypes and bias, and to address structural constraints regarding double standards and double burden issues in both public and private spheres.

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