

A Baseline Survey on Public Attitudes towards Persons with a Disability (Highlights)

Introduction

In early 1998, The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) commissioned the market research firm of ACNielsen to conduct a baseline survey of the general public's attitudes towards persons with a disability.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Gauge the attitudes of the general public towards persons with a disability in the fields of employment, public access, services and facilities, social interaction, and education and training;
- Establish baseline indicators for equal opportunities or discrimination in respect of specific disabilities; and
- Collect information about the general public's awareness of the EOC and Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO)

A total of 2,018 door-to-door interviews were conducted between February 24 to April 9, 1998. Approximately 50% of respondents had contacts with persons with a disability and 1% of them considered themselves to be a person with a disability.

The survey was structured to elicit the views of public towards persons with a disability in six disability groups, namely, physical handicap (PH), sensory disability (SD), mental handicap (MH), mental illness (MI), chronic illness (CI) and HIV/AIDS. Questions were posed in six major areas: general views, employment, public access, services and facilities, social interaction, and education and training. A section entitled 'equal opportunities' was included to gauge the public's awareness of the EOC and the DDO.

As a result of this survey, Disability Equality Indices (DEIs) have been constructed for the purposes of comparison or trend analysis in subsequent years.

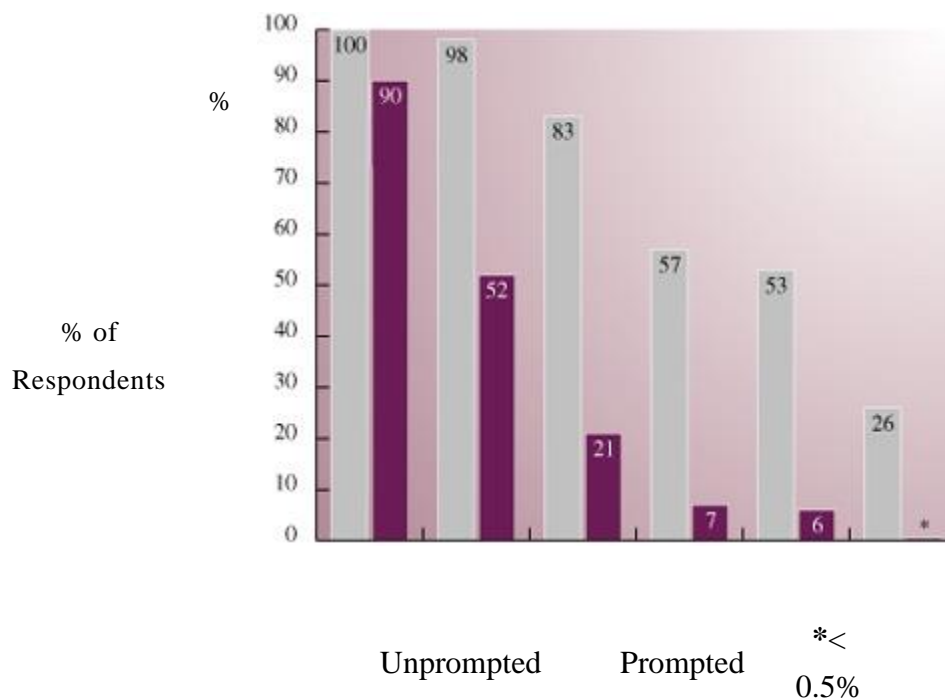
General Views

What is "Disability"?

Most respondents immediately associated disability with physical handicap. However, when prompted, over half of them acknowledged the five disability groups, i.e. PH, SD,

MH, MI and CI, as being disabilities. HIV/AIDS was only regarded as a disability by a small proportion of respondents, even when prompted (Fig. 1).

Figure 1
Meaning of disability

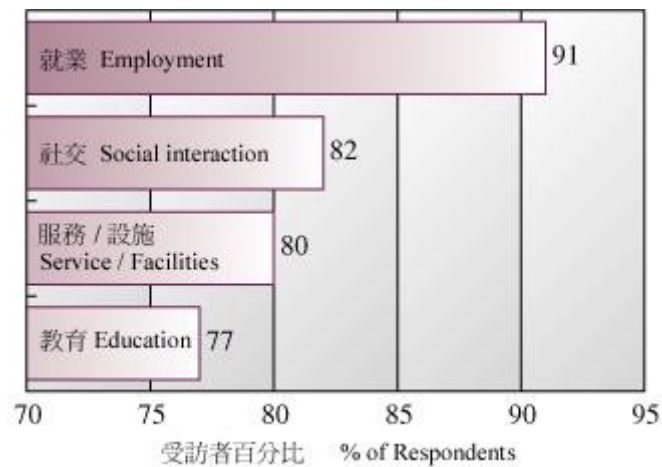


Do persons with a disability enjoy equal opportunities in Hong Kong?

The majority of respondents considered that persons with a disability do not enjoy equal opportunities in the areas of education, provision of services and facilities, social interaction and, in particular, employment (Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Perceived lack of equal opportunities for persons with a disability



Is Hong Kong a caring society as regards persons with a disability?

While 94% of respondents thought that society needs to be particularly concerned with and caring for persons with a disability, most of them did not consider Hong Kong as a caring society. They considered that there is no care or concern for persons with a disability, particularly in the areas of services and facilities, employment, and education and vocational training.

How much do persons with a disability contribute to society?

Over half of the respondents agreed that most people feel that persons with a disability make relatively smaller contributions to society. This reflected the perception that persons with a disability are generally not considered as assets to society.

Equal Opportunities in Employment

Are persons with a disability able to find work?

In general, respondents thought that employers are unwilling to employ people with a disability. In particular, they thought that employers are most reluctant to hire persons with a mental illness or persons with HIV/AIDS (Fig. 3a). They considered that the main reasons for this are work ability, special needs (such as sick leave / medical expenses) and safety considerations (Fig. 3b).

Figure 3a

Perceived employer's willingness to hire persons with a disability

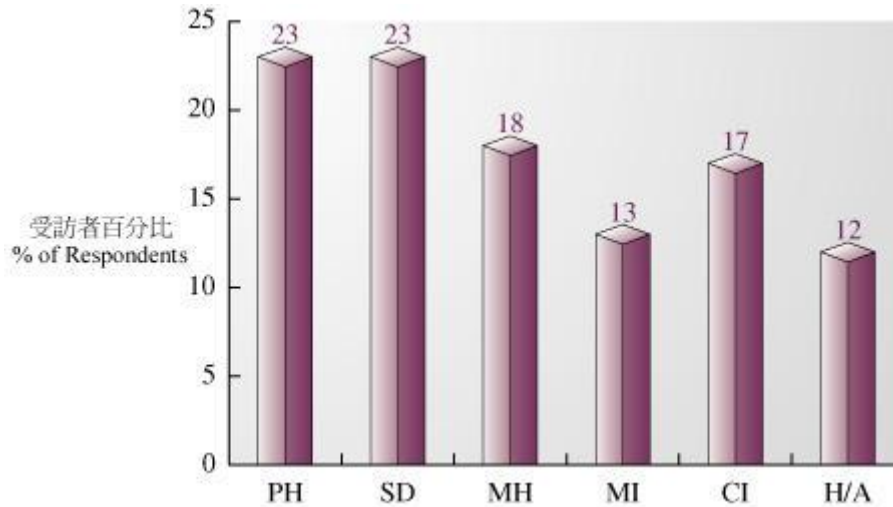


Figure 3b

Perceived reasons for non-employment

	PH	SD	MH	MI	H / A	CI
Nos. of respondents who thought employers are unwilling to hire persons with that disability	655	663	736	783	753	709
-	82% thought the main reason is WORK ABILITY	-	78% thought the main reason is WORK ABILITY	-	91% thought the main reason is SAFETY	-
-		78% thought the main reason is WORK ABILITY		75% thought the main reason is SAFETY		77% thought the main reason is SAFETY / MEDICAL EXPENSES

Are persons with a disability accepted as co-workers?

Most respondents thought that colleagues will accept persons with a physical handicap, a sensory disability or a chronic illness as co-workers, but not persons with a mental illness or HIV/AIDS (Fig. 4a). In their views, the main considerations are work ability, communication difficulties and safety (Fig. 4b).

Figure 4a

Perceived Acceptance by Colleagues

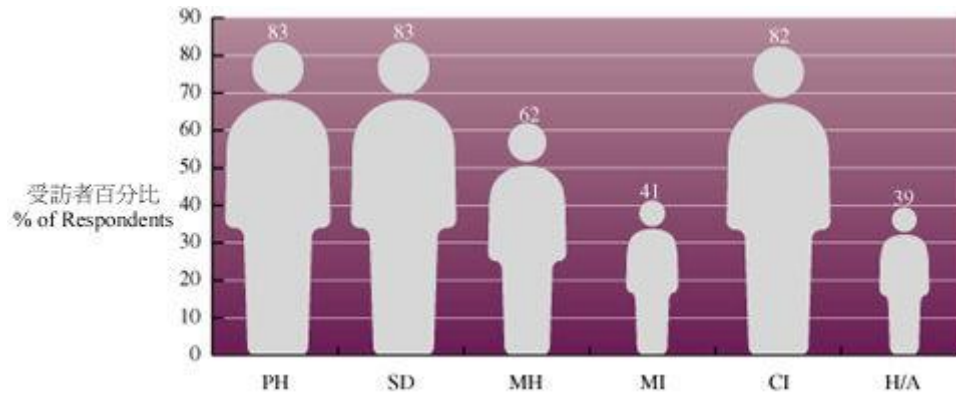


Figure 4b

Perceived reasons for non-acceptance

	PH	SD	MH	MI	H / A	CI
Nos. of respondents who thought colleagues are unwilling to accept co-workers with that disability	176	173	387	594	618	183
	64% thought the main reason is		62% Thought the main reason is		93% thought the main reason is SAFETY	

	PH	SD	MH	MI	H / A	CI
	WORK ABILITY		COMMUNICATION			
		<p>51% thought the main reason is WORK ABILITY</p> <p>52% thought the main reason is COMMUNICATION</p>		<p>88% thought the main reason is SAFETY</p>		<p>67% thought the main reason is WORK ABILITY</p>

Equal Opportunities in Public Access, Services and Facilities

Are there sufficient means of access for persons with a disability?

The questions on attitudes about public access were asked only of persons with visual impairment and persons with mobility difficulties. They considered the means for them to access buildings or public facilities and transportation services as inadequate (Fig. 5a) (Fig. 5b).

Figure 5a

Perceived inaccessibility to building / public facilities

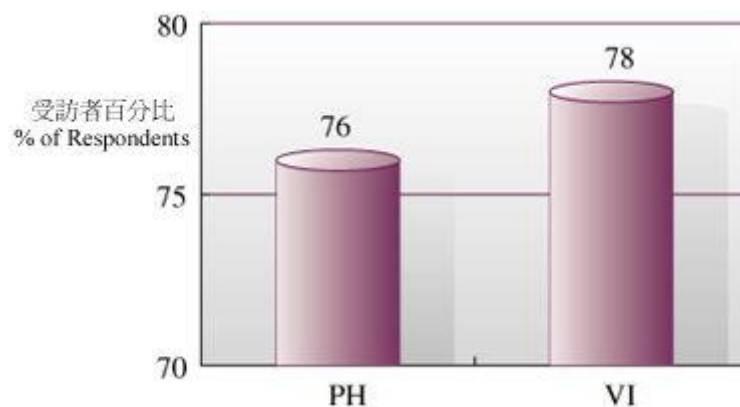
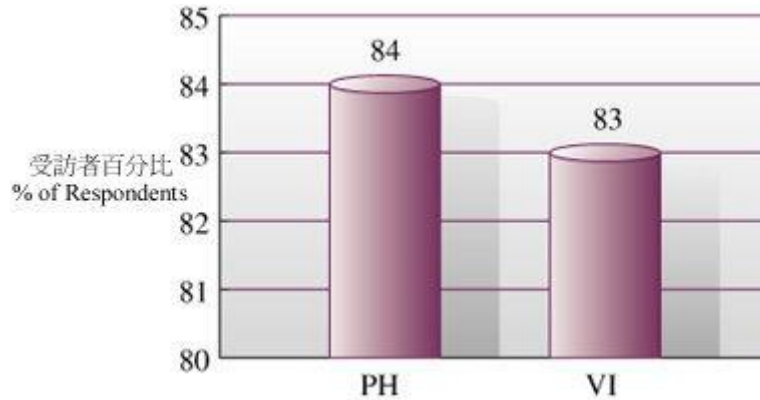


Figure 5b

Perceived inaccessibility to transportation services

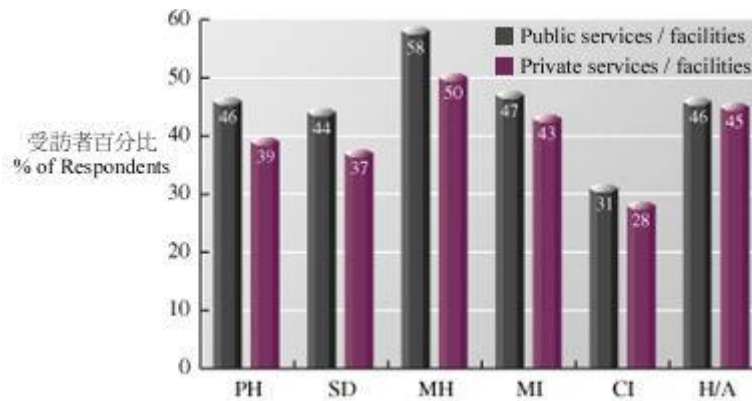


Are services and facilities discrimination-free?

Respondents felt that society should cater for the needs of persons with a disability. Generally speaking, they thought that persons with a disability are quite often discriminated against when using public or private services and facilities. This phenomenon was considered to be more obvious for persons with a mental handicap (Fig. 6)

Figure 6

Perceived discrimination against persons with a disability in use of services and facilities



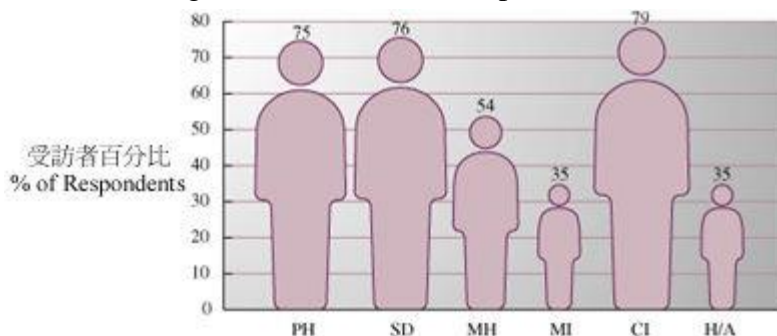
Equal Opportunities in Social Interaction

Do people want to befriend persons with a disability?

Respondents felt that people are more willing to be friends with persons with a chronic illness, sensory disability or physical handicap. This perceived willingness was significantly lower in respect of persons with a mental handicap, mental illness or

HIV/AIDS (Fig 7). Respondents considered that appearance, physical concerns, communication problems, safety and infection are the main factors hindering them in making friends with persons with a disability.

Figure 7
Perceived willingness to be friends with persons with a disability



Are persons with a disability being fully understood by society?

Only a small proportion of respondents (12%) thought that society has adequate knowledge and understanding of persons with a disability. To increase this knowledge and understanding, most respondents (67%) thought that both parties (persons with and without a disability) should take proactive steps.

Equal Opportunities in Education and Vocational Training

Is the current education system open to persons with a disability?

About two-thirds (64%) of respondents thought that persons with a disability are discriminated against in the current education system in Hong Kong. They considered persons with a disability are being discriminated against as a result of entry difficulties, lack of suitable curriculum, isolation and because their needs in terms of access, facilities and aids are not catered for by establishment.

Is vocational training good for persons with a disability?

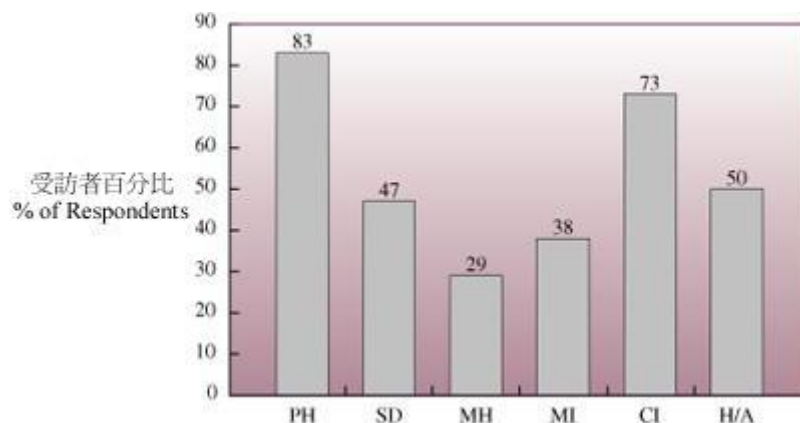
A majority of respondents (65%) considered that the current provision of vocational training for persons with a disability is inadequate. They considered some of the key reasons to be a lack of variety of courses, demand exceeding supply. the inability of courses to develop individual potential and to meet the needs of society. Nevertheless, most respondents (94%) maintained that vocational training could help develop the skills of persons with a disability and improve their employment opportunities.

Should persons with a disability be integrated into mainstream education?

The attitude towards integrating students with a disability into mainstream schools varied as regards different disability groups. In general, respondents thought that the public is more receptive to integrating students with a physical handicap or chronic illness in mainstream schools, and least receptive to students with a mental handicap or mental illness (Fig. 8).

Figure 8

Perceived acceptance of the integration of persons with a disability into mainstream schools



Respondents perceived that, the public have different reasons as to why persons from different disability groups should not be integrated into mainstream schools. The main considerations were believed to be certain special needs required by persons with a disability, worries about the effect on overall learning progress, mobility difficulties, poor physical and mental health and safety.

Awareness of and Attitudes towards Equal Opportunities

How should discrimination against persons with a disability be eliminated?

How should discrimination against persons with a disability be eliminated? Respondents generally considered that the most effective means of eliminating discrimination against persons with a disability is to strengthen civic education (cited by 87% of respondents). They also considered this as the priority work area for the EOC (cited by 83% of the respondents).

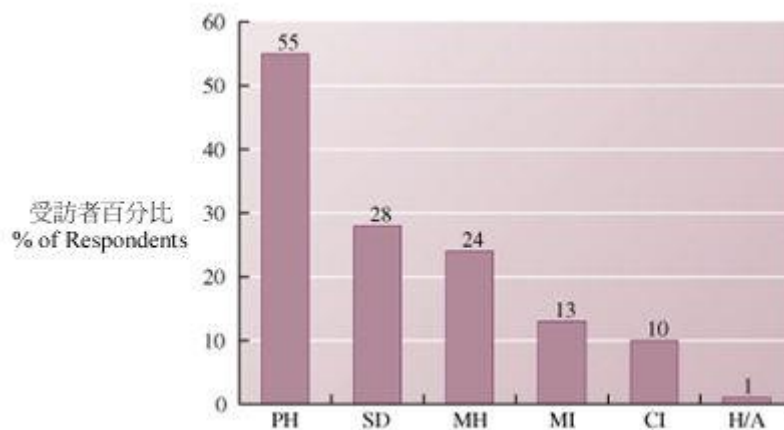
Do people know about the EOC and the DDO?

Generally speaking, the majority of respondents were aware of the EOC and the DDO. More respondents who were aware of the EOC(88%) than the DDO(63%).

Experience of contact with persons with a disability

About half of the respondents (51%) have friends, colleagues, relatives and service targets who are persons with a disability. Most respondents have contacts with persons with a physical handicap and the fewest have contact with persons with HIV/AIDS. (Fig. 9)

Figure 9
Types of disability that respondents have come across



Of those who have contact with persons with a disability, about half of them (55%) thought that the latter generally experience discrimination because of their disability in different areas.

Disability Equality Indices (DEIs)

The DEIs were derived from questions selected from the six fields. The DEI for general views was .5291. This represented an average of 52.91% of the public perceiving that there is disability equality in Hong Kong.

As revealed from the sub-indices (DEIs) for specific fields (Fig. 10), respondents perceived that disability discrimination against persons with a disability is more serious in the fields of employment and public access, and disability equality more evident in the fields of social interaction, and services and facilities.

Figure 10



The perception of disability equality was correlated with the respondents' backgrounds in terms of demographic characteristics. In general, respondents who have tertiary education, higher household income and are professional or in the white collar occupation group tended to feel that there is less disability equality in Hong Kong