



SURVEY STUDY ON HONG KONG RESIDENTS RECENTLY ARRIVED IN CANADA

FIRST REPORT

(June 12, 2023)

Prepared by the Project Team:

Dr. Miu Chung Yan
Dr. Sheila Marshall
Dr. Barbara Lee
Cherry Ng
Bruce Ngan

With the support of Dr. Mooly Wong

© Permission is required for citation or reference of this report and materials reported in this report. Please contact Dr. Miu Chung Yan at miu.yan@ubc.ca for permission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The influx of a new wave of Hong Kong residents to Canada has been a noticeable phenomenon in Vancouver, Toronto and a few other cities in Canada. In the last two years, the University of British Columbia (UBC) School of Social Work received many applications from social workers in Hong Kong who wanted to pursue our Master of Social Work (MSW) program. Indeed, several of our research team members are from the current cohort of six MSW students from Hong Kong. Their stories echo the stories of many Hong Kong residents newly arrived in Canada. While being grateful to have the opportunity to be in Canada, many of these newly arrived Hong Kong residents, including those Canadian citizens who re-returned to Canada after residing in Hong Kong for a long period of time, have faced many challenges in their settlement and integration process. However, these stories are very often told and shared only through social media within the Hong Kong immigrant community.

Out of our obligation as social work professionals and academic curiosity as applied social researchers, my colleagues, students and I decided to conduct a survey study to fill the knowledge gap of the settlement and integration conditions of this group of newcomers to Canada. We believe that if our country has decided to open the door to welcome this group of newcomers, our government and the society at large should know their challenges and support them to have a smooth process to settle and integrate in the Canadian society.

To study this group of newcomers who are residing across the country was not easy. How to reach them and gain their trust can be very difficult. My team is very grateful to the support of many individuals who trusted and helped us to promote and disseminate the information of this survey in the early stages. We sincerely thank all our respondents for taking part in the survey, particularly those who helped forward the survey link and encourage their friends and families to participate. We also would like to thank Dr. Mooly Wong for her generous feedback to the survey design and data analysis.

While grateful to the supports of many organizations and groups that have helped us through the process, we particularly would like to thank Vancouver Hong Kong Forum Society and Community Family Services of Ontario for promoting our survey through their networks and connections. They are also our community partners helping us to disseminate the results of this survey. Last but not least, our sibling unit, UBC Hong Kong Studies Initiative, has been instrumental in this study; many participants of this survey have been its keen supporters.

Miu Chung Yan, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Executive Summary	5
Background:	8
Methodology:	8
Part I: Profile of respondents:	9
Part II: Settlement Conditions	13
Health and Settlement	14
Housing and Settlement	15
Employment and Settlement	16
Higher Education and Settlement	18
Schooling and Settlement	20
General Settlement Conditions	21
Summary on Settlement Conditions	22
Part III: Preliminary Integration Conditions	24
Family, Friendship and Social Network	24
Community Involvement	26
Identity and Perception	27
Part IV: Observations and Conclusion	31
References	33

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Type of travel document when entering Canada	9
Table 2: Profile of respondents	10
Table 3: Highest level of education completed	11
Table 4: English proficiency	11
Table 5: Annual income before tax	11
Table 6: Current housing and needs	15
Table 7: Employment conditions	17
Table 8: Self-perceived identity	28
Table 9: Reading news	28
Table 10: Perceived relationship with Canada	28

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Financial preparation	13
Figure 2: Information Searched Before Returning/Arriving in Canada	13
Figure 3: Knowledge and access to health care service	14
Figure 4: Health services difficulties	14
Figure 5: Information sources of Canadian health services	15
Figure 6: Housing difficulties	16
Figure 7: Information sources of housing in Canada	16
Figure 8: Employment Difficulties	17
Figure 9: Major strategies in job search	18
Figure 10: Difficulties in applying post-secondary education	19
Figure 11: Difficulties in Post-secondary education	19
Figure 12: Sources of help when having educational difficulties	20
Figure 13: Difficulties in enrolling children at school	20
Figure 14: Children at School Difficulties	21
Figure 15: Sources of help when children having educational difficulties	21
Figure 16: Stressors of settlement experience	22
Figure 17: Experiences living in Canada met expectations	22
Figure 18: Family and friend connection	24
Figure 19: Contact with family and friends in and outside Canada	24
Figure 20: Difficult to make non-Hong Kong friends	25
Figure 21: Value of friendship in Canada	25
Figure 22: Friendship preference	26
Figure 23: Participation in civic activities	27
Figure 24: Volunteering for an organization or group	27
Figure 25: Perceived discrimination	29
Figure 26: Reasons why being discriminated	30

Executive Summary

Since 2015, Canada has experienced a new wave of influx of Hong Kong residents moving to Canada. However, their settlement and integration conditions are not known outside the Hong Kong immigrant community. The purposes of this study are to fill this knowledge gap and to provide empirical evidence to inform government policies to support this group of newcomers to successfully settle and integrate in the Canadian society. To reach this widely spread population, an online survey was conducted from December 19, 2022 to February 28, 2023. We targeted the survey to people who a) resided in Hong Kong consecutively for over five years in the 10 years prior to their recent return/move to Canada; b) returned to or arrived in Canada on or after January 1, 2015; c) lived in Canada consecutively for over six months at the time when they responded to the survey; d) are currently living in Canada; and e) 19 or over years old. A total of 1053 people attempted the survey and 660 completed responses were recorded and analyzed.

In this report, we provide a descriptive summary of the general profile, settlement and integration conditions of this group of respondents.

1. General Profile

At the time when they filled out the survey, close to 60% of the respondents were residing in Vancouver and 30% in Toronto. In terms of gender, a higher percentage (60%) of female respondents took part in the survey. Generally speaking this group of respondents were mostly born in Hong Kong (89%), under 50 years old (82%), highly educated (90% with a bachelor degree or above), and proficient in English (67%). Over 65% came to Canada under the Permanent Residence Pathways for Hong Kong Residents (aka. Life-boat Project) and 16% with a Canadian passport. Most have an annual income (before tax) lower than the Canadian average in 2022, i.e., \$61,119.24. Many (31%) have at least one child.

2. Settlement Conditions

- a. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they came to Canada with enough savings (24% and 59%) and financial resources to meet their current monthly expenses (32% and 30%).
- b. Many also agreed or strong agreed that they searched for information about the health care system (27% and 17%), housing market (27% and 42%), and labour market (25% and 23%) of Canada prior to their return or arrival.
- c. Many respondents indicated that they faced different challenges in accessing Canadian health care, housing, labour market and education.
 - i. In terms of accessing health care service, “unable to find a doctor accepting new patients” (73%), “long waiting list to see a health care professional” (59%), and “don’t know where to get health care” (35%) topped the list of challenges in .
 - ii. When accessing the housing market, the top three challenges are “financial constraints” (53%), “don’t have reference or credit rating” (48%), and “not family with the city or town” (40%).
 - iii. A total of 517 respondents indicated that they did search for job in Canada. They are relatively split in their answers of the questions of “how easy it is to

- get their first job in Canada” and “whether they are currently working in a position that matches their educational qualification”. In terms of difficulties in accessing the job market, “lack of work experience in Canada” (79%) and “lack of social network” (52%) are the two most common answers, followed by “lack of English proficiency” (27%) and “lack of relevant work experience” (26%).
- iv. A total of 258 respondents indicated that they have tried to enroll in Canadian higher education programs. Among them, a large number of them (42%) reported no difficulties. However, many reported “financial constraints” (33%) as a challenge. At school, the most common difficulties reported by the respondents are “adjustment to cultural difference in teaching and learning” (40%), followed by “language barrier” (27%) and “financial issues” (25%).
 - v. A total of 215 respondents reported that they have children enrolled in K to 12 school. While most (58%) of them reported that they had “no difficulty” in the enrollment, a few reported challenges of “lack of space in the local school district” (17%) and “transportation constraints” (16%). At school, the major difficulties that their children have experienced are “adjustment difficulties” (30%, n=64) and “language problems” (26%).
- d. When asked about the source of help or information that they sought to overcome their challenges in different life domains, respondents consistently pointed to “internet”, “online groups and platforms”, and “relatives and friends in Canada. For those who are or have children at school, teachers and classmates are a major source of support.
 - e. Among the many possible stressors in the settlement process, “financial condition” (54%), “employment condition” (43%), “finding adequate/affordable housing” (33%) and “accessing health care” (30%) topped the list.
 - f. Despite all the many different difficulties, a majority of respondents agreed (44%) or strongly agreed (14%) that their experiences living in Canada met their expectations.

3. Integration conditions

- a. Majority of respondents (67%) are living in Canada by themselves or with their family. Some (33%) have family in Canada but are not residing with them. A great majority (91%) still have immediate family members living outside Canada. Most have often or very often kept contact with immediate family both inside (23% and 53%) and outside of Canada (29% and 38%).
- b. A great majority (95%) of respondents have made new friends after returning to or arriving in Canada. While 27% respondents disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed that cultural differences prevent them from interacting with people who are not from Hong Kong, 36% of them agreed and 32% strongly agreed that they feel more comfortable to be in a social context where people speak their mother tongue, i.e., Hong Kong style Cantonese.
- c. In terms of civic activities, respondents participated often or very often in chat groups through social media (22% and 17%) or social/cultural/activist groups (13% and 5%) within the Hong Kong immigrant community. Although being relatively new to Canada, at least a few respondents have sometimes (17.3%), often (9%) or very often (5%) volunteered for some organizations and groups.

- d. Participants have often and very often read news about Hong Kong (46% and 27%) as well as Canada (23% and). They overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that they believe that “it is important to be informed of issues of the Canadian society” (38% and 44%), “they can contribute to the Canadian society” (47% and 30%).
- e. A great majority have also agreed or strongly agreed that “they have desire to stay in Canada for good” (37% and 43%). Many agreed and strongly agreed that “they believe they are important in the Canadian society” (27% and 11%) and “they felt like they belong in Canada” (27% and 10%).
- f. Our respondents overwhelmingly strongly agreed that they identified themselves as “Hong Konger” (88%), while a majority disagreed (18%) or strongly disagreed (45%) that they identified themselves as “Chinese”. Despite being new to Canada, a few have already agreed (13%) and strongly agreed (16%) that they identified themselves as “Canadian”.
- g. A great majority of respondents seldom or not at all felt discriminated in different contexts. However, among those that did experience discrimination, many attributed “language and accent” (36%), “race or skin colour” (30%), and “ethnicity and culture” (22%) as key reasons.

In short, based on the results of the survey, this group of Hong Kong residents, who arrived Canada in this new wave of influx, are high functioning and have great potential and strong commitment to contribute to the Canadian society. Their profile matches very well with the expected characteristics of potential immigrants that the Canadian immigration policy has long targeted. However, their settlement and integration conditions are not without challenges. Only a small group of them, who came in Canada with a permanent resident status, are eligible for government funded settlement service. So far, most of them can only rely on their own skills and informal networks to resolve the many difficulties in the settlement process. While offering a Lifeboat Project to Hong Kong residents, Canadian government may need to consider offering more resources and support in their settlement process so they are better able to integrate and contribute to our society.

Background:

Canada is an immigrant country which receives hundreds of thousands of newcomers from all over the world every year. From the 1960s to 1990s, there were at least two noted waves of newcomers from Hong Kong settling in Canada. They are often known as flexible migrants who frequently travel across the Pacific Ocean. Since 2015, we noticed another wave of Hong Kong resident moving to Canada. It is estimated that before 2019, at least 300,000 Canadians originally from Hong Kong returned to reside in Hong Kong (Yan, 2021). Recently due to the political instability in Hong Kong and many other reasons, some of them chose to re-return to Canada particularly after 2014 (Wong and Yan 2023). At the same time, the number of Hong Kong people's applications of permanent resident has steadily increased although the number is still relatively low compared to the ones in previous waves. In June 2021, to support the democratic movement in Hong Kong, the Canadian government introduced a temporary public policy, i.e., the Permanent Residence Pathways for Hong Kong Residents (aka. Life-boat Project). This new policy has opened a door to many highly educated young people in Hong Kong.

With the arrival of this new wave of residents from Hong Kong there has been a noticeable increase of social groups, particularly chat groups on different social media platforms, in the Hong Kong immigrant community. These groups have served as a hub for exchanging information and advices to Hong Kong newcomers. Meanwhile, among the Hong Kong immigrant community, there has also been a growing concerned about the lack of formal supports to address their settlement needs (Wong, 2022). However, little is known about the (re)settlement and (re)integration experience of this new wave of Hong Kong residents to Canada. With the support of UBC Hong Kong Studies Initiative, we conducted an online survey from December 19, 2022 to February 28, 2023.

This survey was aimed to serve the purposes of:

1. filling the knowledge gap of this new wave of Hong Kong residents to Canada;
2. offering a better understanding of the settlement and integration experience of this new waves of Hong Kong residents to Canada; and
3. providing impartially generated evidence to inform government policies and services of community organizations serving newcomers to Canada.

In this report, a descriptive summary of the results of the survey is provided that includes the general profile of the respondents, and their settlement and integration conditions. This report focuses on the general conditions of this new wave of Hong Kong residents to Canada. We understand that respondents who came in Canada with different entry documents may have different experience in settlement and integration. This will be the focus of our second report which will be published in the coming summer.

Methodology:

It is difficult to tell the actual size of the population of this study. According to Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), from 2015 to 2022, a total of 13,730 permanent

residents arrived Canada from Hong Kong. In 2021 and 2022, 20,685 study permits and 13,555 open work permits were granted to applicants from Hong Kong. The total sum of people in these three groups by the end of 2022 is 46,970¹. However, there is no accurate information of the actual number of returnees from Hong Kong because some are Canadian citizens and their return would not be captured by the current entry record system of the Canada Border Service Agency.

To reach this population which is spread across Canada in different cities, we employed the UBC Survey Tool provided by Qualtrics to conduct an online survey from December 19, 2022 to February 28, 2023. Without a population frame, we adopted a convenience sampling strategy by reaching out to different online chat/message groups via various information and communication technology (ICT) platforms, mainly Facebook, WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram. A snowballing process was also used by encouraging respondents to forward the survey information and link to their friends and families who also met the sampling criteria: a) resided in Hong Kong consecutively for over five years in the 10 years prior to their recent return/move to Canada; b) returned to or arrived in Canada on or after January 1, 2015; c) lived in Canada consecutively for over six months at the time when they responded to the survey; d) are currently living in Canada; and e) 19 or over years old.

A total of 1,053 people attempted the survey, however, 185 did not meet the eligibility criteria. Among the 868 who met all the sampling criteria, 660 (76%) completed the survey. Data were analyzed by using SPSS Statistics 25. For the purpose of this report, we only focused on descriptive statistical analysis.

Part I: Profile of respondents:

Since this survey is specifically focused on Hong Kong residents who recently returned to or arrived in Canada, it is important to first understand their travel documentation upon entry which indicates the immigration category thus determines their access to formal support services. Among the 660 respondents who completed the survey, 433 (62.5%) came in through the Lifeboat Project Stream A (study permit) or Stream B (open work permit). Both streams tend to favour recent (5 or less years) post-secondary graduates. Meanwhile, there are 107 (16.2%) respondents who entered Canada with a Canadian passport. They are most likely returnees to Hong Kong who recently re-returned to Canada. The percentage of respondents holding a permanent resident card is only 9.5% (n=63). They are the only group of respondents who is IRCC funded settlement services (See Table 1).

	n	%
Study permit	160	24.2%
Open work permit	251	38.0%

¹ These numbers are based on: a) Canada – Study permit holders with a valid permit on December 31st by country of citizenship, 2000 – 2022; b) Canada – International Mobility Program work permit holders by country of citizenship and year in which permit(s) became effective, January 2015 - March 2023; and c) Canada - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Country of Citizenship, January 2015 - March 2023. They are available on <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/f7e5498e-0ad8-4417-85c9-9b8aff9b9eda>.

Open work permit and study permit	22	3.3%
Other work permits	25	3.8%
Permanent Resident Card (Economic class including skilled worker, provincial nominees, startup, and self-employed)	20	3.0%
Permanent Resident Card (Family class / Family reunification)	43	6.5%
Refugee or Asylum seeker	3	0.5%
Tourist visa	23	3.5%
Canadian passport	107	16.2%
Other	5	0.8%
Missing (No answer)	1	0.2%

In terms of age, only 5% (n=33) are 60 years old or over. Close to 30% (n=188) are between 19 to 29 years old and 53.6% (n=354) are between 30 to 49. Among the respondents, 60% (n=396) of them self-identified as female and 38.6% (n=255) as male. A great majority (89.1%, n=588) were born in Hong Kong. Very few (1.2%, n=8) were born in Canada. Although we did not specially ask their marital status, 41.4% (N=273) indicated that they have at least one child. Among them, 231 have all their children currently residing with them. About 60% of the respondents are currently residing in Metro Vancouver, 30% in Metro Toronto and 10% in other cities including Calgary. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Profile of respondents		
<i>Age</i>		
	n	%
19 - 29 years old	188	28.5%
30 - 39 years old	175	26.5%
40 - 49 years old	179	27.1%
50-59 years old	85	12.9%
60 or over years old	33	5.0%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	255	38.6%
Female	396	60.0%
Non-binary / third gender	1	0.2%
Prefer not to say	8	1.2%
<i>Place of birth</i>		
Hong Kong	588	89.1%
Canada	8	1.2%
Mainland China	56	8.5%
Other countries	8	1.2%
<i>Number of children residing with them in Canada</i>		
0	385	58.3%
1	117	17.7%
2	138	20.9%
3	16	2.4%
4 and more	2	0.3%

<i>Current residence</i>		
Vancouver	392	59.4%
Toronto	199	30.2%
Calgary	17	2.6%
Other Canadian cities	52	7.9%

In terms of educational level, as required by the Special Public Policy Program, a majority of the respondents are highly educated with over 90% having completed a Bachelor degree or above (See Table 3). Their self-rated English proficiency level was also relatively high with 40.3% (n=266) at advance or proficient levels (26.4%, n=174) and 28.5% (n=188) at intermediate level (See Table 4).

Table 3: Highest level of education completed		
	n	%
Secondary school (7-12 years of schooling – no diploma or certificate)	15	2.3%
Trade or vocational school certificate	7	1.1%
High school diploma (12 years of schooling with diploma including A levels)	21	3.2%
Associate degree or polytechnic diploma	23	3.5%
Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	304	46.1%
Master’s degree or equivalent	228	34.5%
Professional degree beyond a Bachelor’s degree (e.g. MD, DVS, DDS, LLB, JD, MSW)	27	4.1%
Ph.D. or equivalent	18	2.7%
Missing (No answer)	17	2.6%

Table 4: English proficiency		
	n	%
Beginner	10	1.5%
Elementary	21	3.2%
Intermediate	188	28.5%
Advance	266	40.3%
Proficient	174	26.4%
Missing	1	0.2%

Despite their high qualification and proficiency in English, the before tax annual income of over half of the respondents (71.9%) is lower than the Canadian average income in 2022, i.e., \$61,119.24² (See Table 5).

Table 5: Annual income before tax		
	n	%

² Source: <https://www.jobillico.com/blog/en/the-average-canadian-salary-in-2022/>

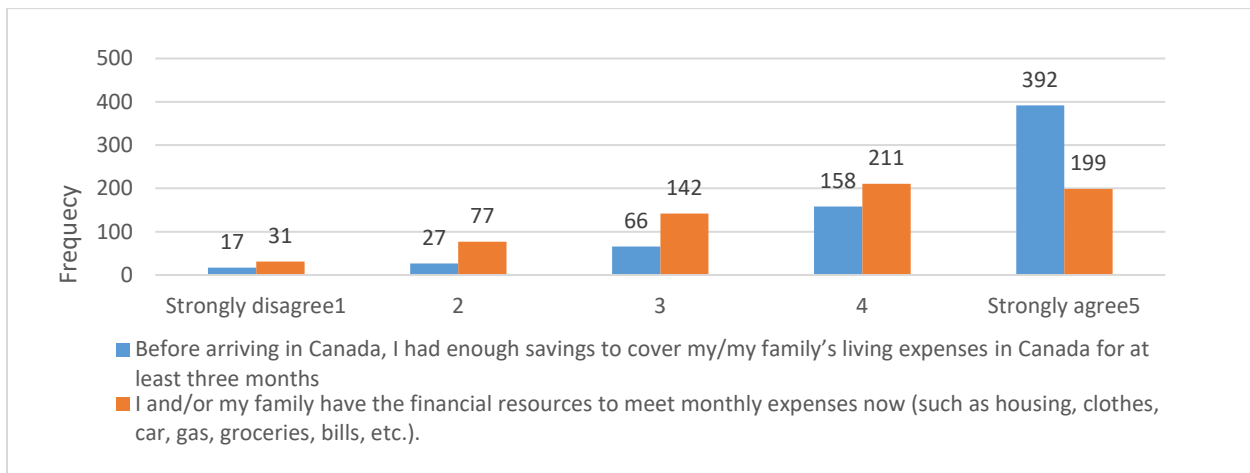
Less than \$12,000	178	27.0%
\$12,001 – 24,000	58	8.8%
\$24,001 – 36,000	57	8.6%
\$36,001 – 48,000	102	15.5%
\$48,001 – 60,000	79	12.0%
\$60,001 – 84,000	78	11.8%
\$84,001 – 96,000	29	4.4%
Above \$96,000	53	8.0%
Missing	26	3.9%

In short, the profile of this group of respondents may reflect the general nature of Hong Kong residents recently returned to or arrived in Canada: relatively young, highly educated and proficient in English. Many also came with assets, albeit small, to sustain themselves and their family at least at the settlement phase. They are also highly skilled in using ICT as reflected in the sources of information (i.e., internet and online groups and platform) from which they used to prepare for their returning/arriving Canada. They have the exact qualities of immigrants that the Canadian immigration policies have tried to attract.

Part II: Settlement Conditions

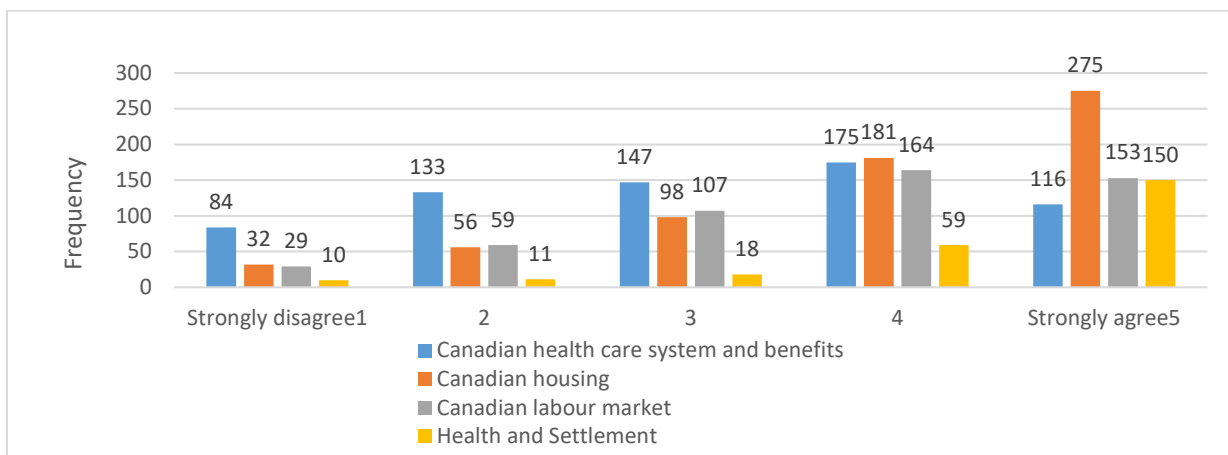
With the large number of respondents who arrived in Canada through the Life-boat Project in a relatively short period of time, we started our survey by examining how much they had prepared for the move before their departure. Financial preparation for this group of respondents, who are relatively young, may be the most challenging as they have not had as much time to work and save for this significant life change. However, a great majority of the respondents have agreed or strongly agreed respectively that they have savings to cover their living expenses in Canada for at least three months (24%, n=158 and 59%, n=392), and that have enough resources to meet monthly expenses now (32%, n=211 and 30%, n=199). Having said that, as reflected in their current income (see Table 5), over half (54%, n=356) have indicated their financial condition has contributed to their stress in settlement (see Figure 16 below).

Figure 1: Financial preparation



Other than financial preparation, many respondents had also researched information of different life domains before their returned to/arrived in Canada (see Figure 2).

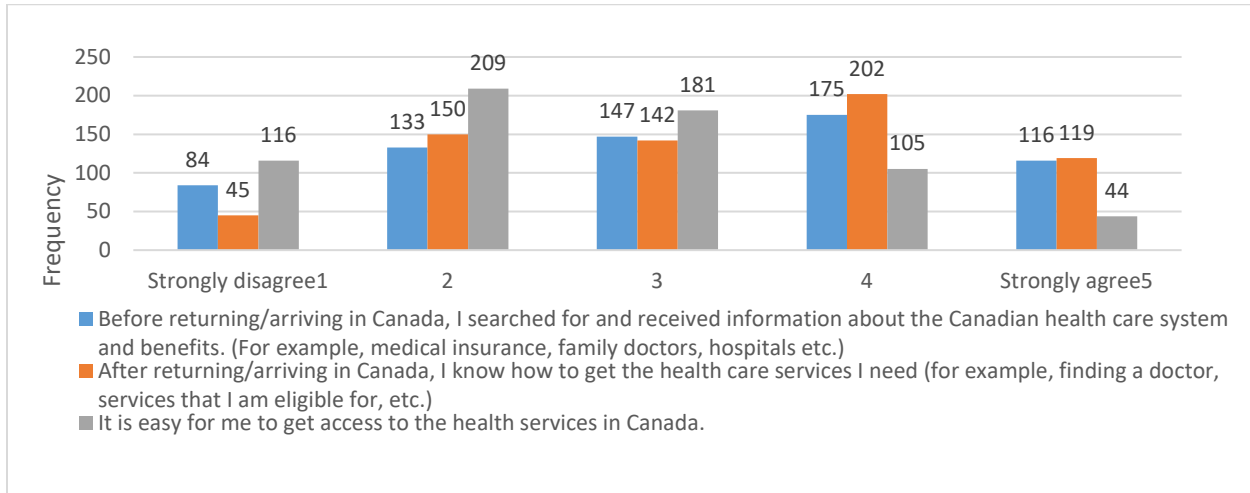
Figure 2: Information Searched Before Returning/Arriving in Canada



Health and Settlement

Although close to 50% (n=321) respondents agreed or strongly that they know how to get the health care services that they need, only 22.6% (n=149) agreed or strongly agreed that it is easy for them to get access to the health services in Canada (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Knowledge and access to health care service



Among all the difficulties for them to access health care services in Canada, “unable to find a doctor accepting new patients” (73%, n=479), “long waiting list” (59%, n=386) and “not know where to get health care” (35%, n=230) have topped the list (see Figure 4). To overcome these difficulties, they sought help mainly from relatives and friends in Canada (69%, n=452), online groups and platforms (64%, n=420), and internet (60%, n=397) and (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Health services difficulties

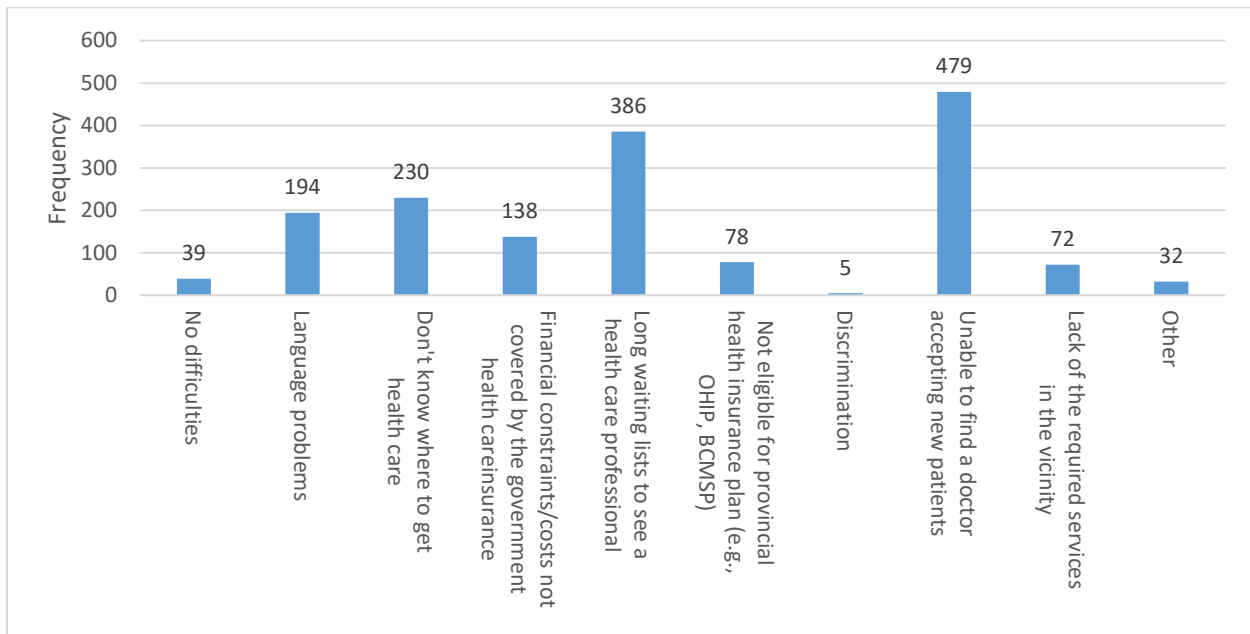
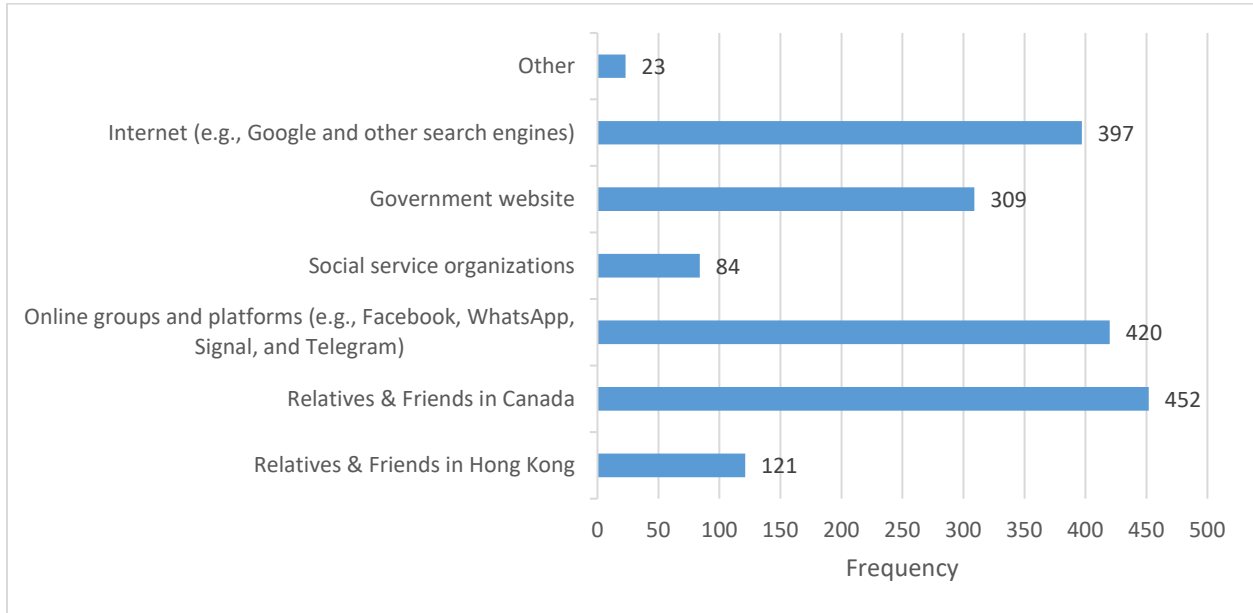


Figure 5: Information sources of Canadian health services



Housing and Settlement

Housing in Metro Vancouver and Toronto has been a notorious challenge even for local residents. However, coming from Hong Kong where the property market is even more expensive, a great majority of respondents (74%, n=486) agreed or strongly agreed that their current living condition meets their and their family’s needs. Even so, they have experienced many challenges (see Figure 6) in finding a suitable housing such as “financial constraints” (53%, n=350), “don’t have references or credit rating” (48%, n=319), “not familiar with the city or town” (40%, n=266) and “lack of suitable housing” (37%, n=244). To overcome these challenges, they sought help (see Figure 7) from the internet (75%, n=492), relatives and friends in Canada (67%, n=445), and online groups and platforms (67%, n=442).

	Strongly Disagree = 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree = 5	NA
My current living conditions meet my and/or my family’s need (n=658)	18 (3%)	45 (7%)	109 (16%)	304 (46%)	182 (28%)	0

Figure 6: Housing difficulties

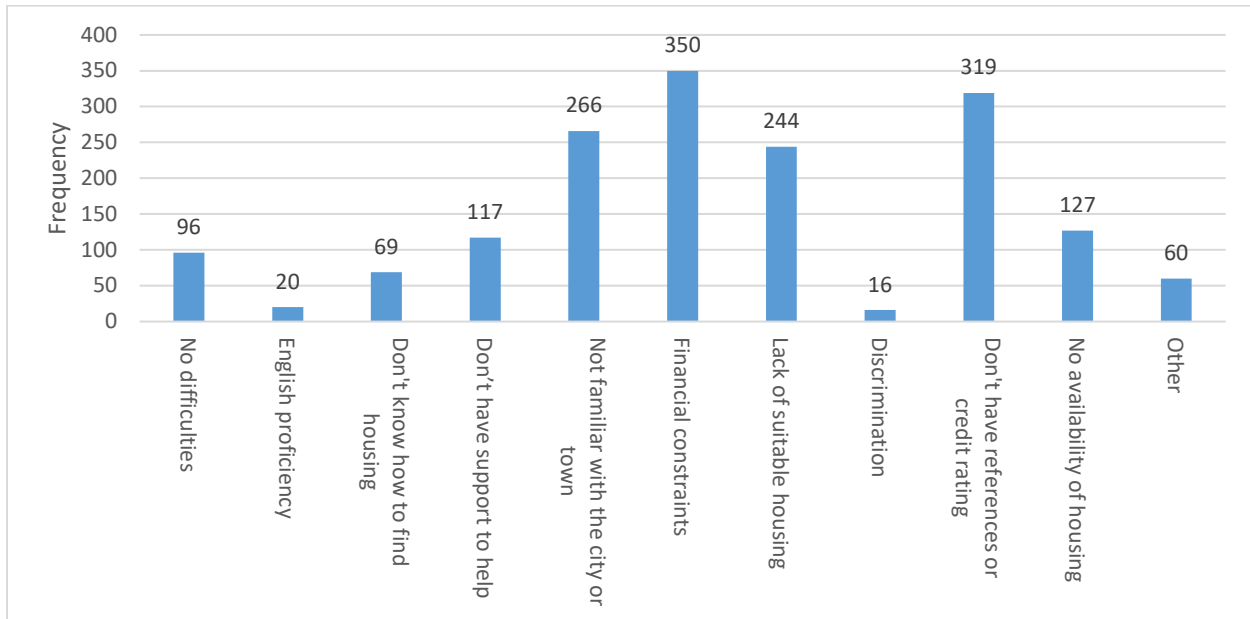
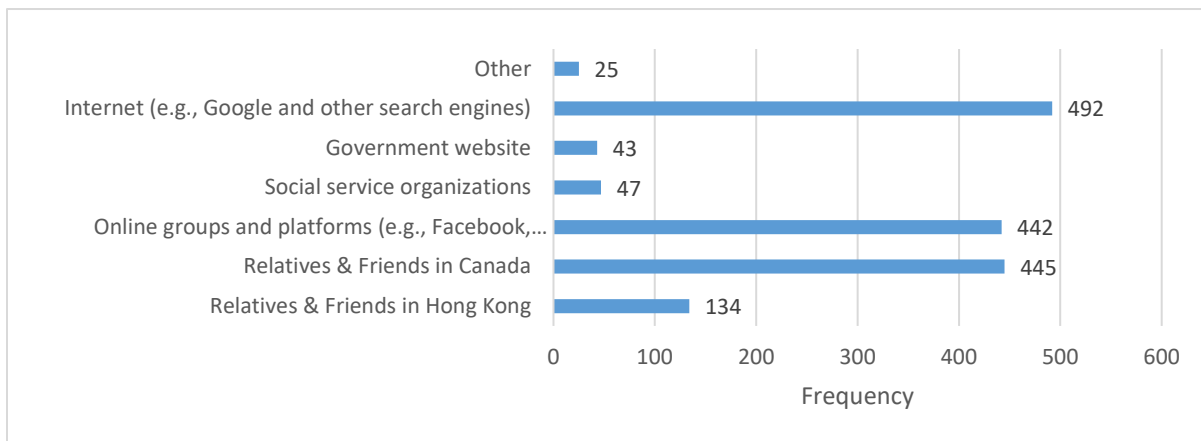


Figure 7: Information sources of housing in Canada



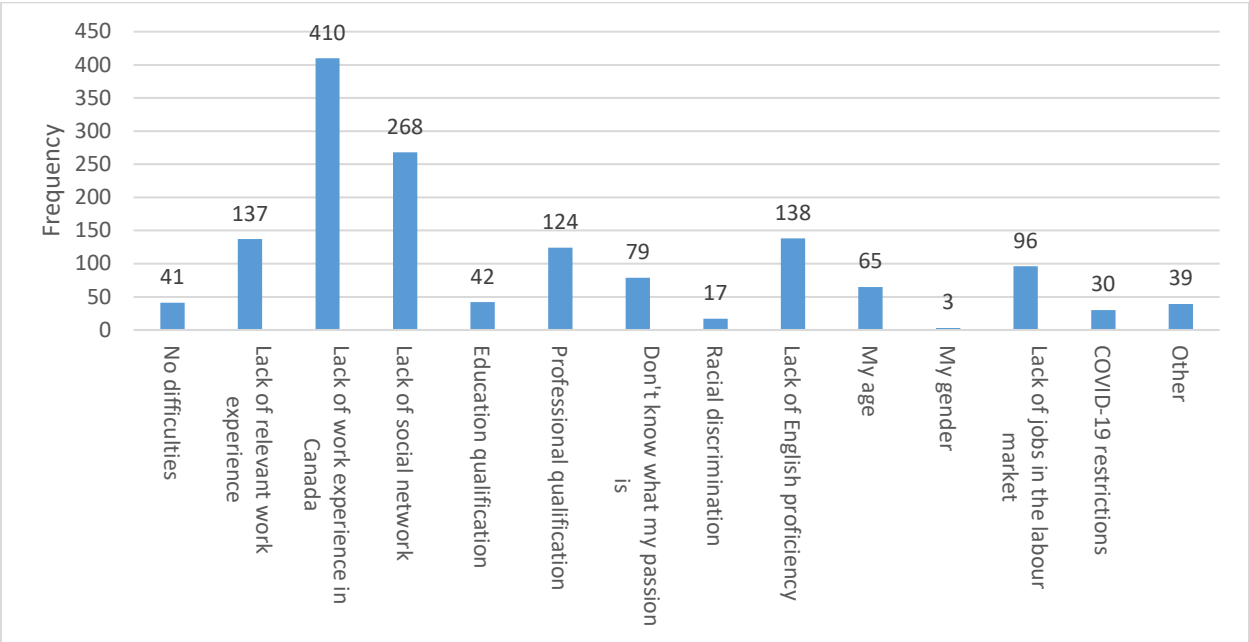
Employment and Settlement

Over three-quarters of respondents (78%, n=517) indicated that they have tried to find a job after their returned to/arrived in Canada. Over 40% (n=216) of respondents found it difficult to get their first job in Canada; while 37% (n=192) agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to obtain their first job in Canada. A similar split is also found among the respondents in terms of their disagreement (37%, n=193) and agreement (37%, n=192) with the match of current position and their educational qualification (see Table 7).

	Strongly Disagree = 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree = 5	NA
It is easy for me to get my first job in Canada. (n=517)	107 (21%)	109 (21%)	98 (19%)	130 (25%)	62 (12%)	11 (2%)
I am currently working in a position that matches my educational qualification. (n=516)	121 (23%)	72 (14%)	82 (16%)	99 (19%)	93 (18%)	49 (9%)

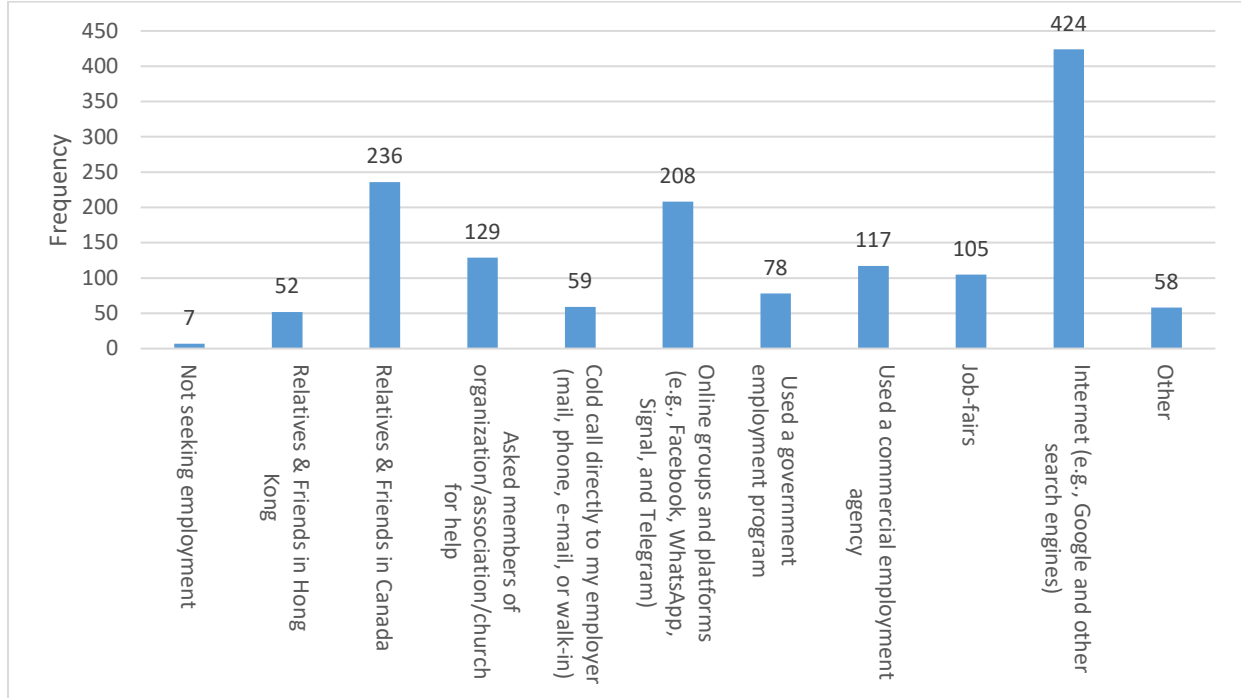
Among those who tried to find a job (n=517), the major difficulties that they have encountered in seeking employment include lack of work experience in Canada (79%, n=410), “lack of social network” (52%, n=268), “lack of English proficiency” (27%, n=138) and “lack of relevant work experience” (26%, n=137). (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Employment Difficulties



The major strategies that they used to find job are internet (82%, n=424), relatives and friends in Canada (46%, n=236), and online groups and platforms (40%, n=208). Many also asked members of organization/association/church (25%, n=129), used commercial employment agency (23%, n=117), and attended job fairs (20%, n=105) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Major strategies in job search



Higher Education and Settlement

Although only 160 respondents indicated that they came in Canada through a study permit, 258 indicated they have tried to enroll in Canadian post-secondary education institutions. Among those (n=258) that tried to enroll in Canadian post-secondary education, many obtained information from internet (84%, n=216), online groups and platforms (46%, n=118), and relatives and friends in Canada (35%, n=91). A great number of respondents (42%, n=108) indicated that they have no problems or difficulties in the application process. Financial constraints (33%, n=86) seems to be a major challenge to many respondents (see Figure 10). For those who have been in Canadian post-secondary education, “adjustment to the cultural differences in teaching and learning” has been the key problem and challenges (40%, n=104) while language barriers (27%, n=69) and financial issues (25%, n=64) were also mentioned (see Figure 11). When encountering problems and difficulties, teachers and classmates (50%, n=130), relatives and friends in Canada (33%, n=86), and online groups and platforms (25%, n=65) have been their major sources of help (see Figure 12).

Figure 10: Difficulties in applying post-secondary education

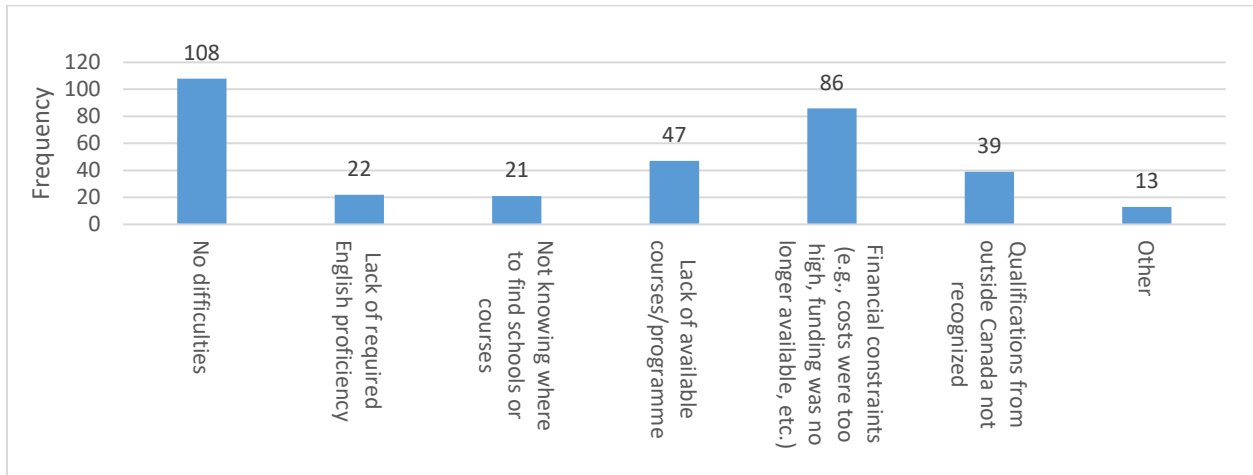


Figure 11: Difficulties in Post-secondary education

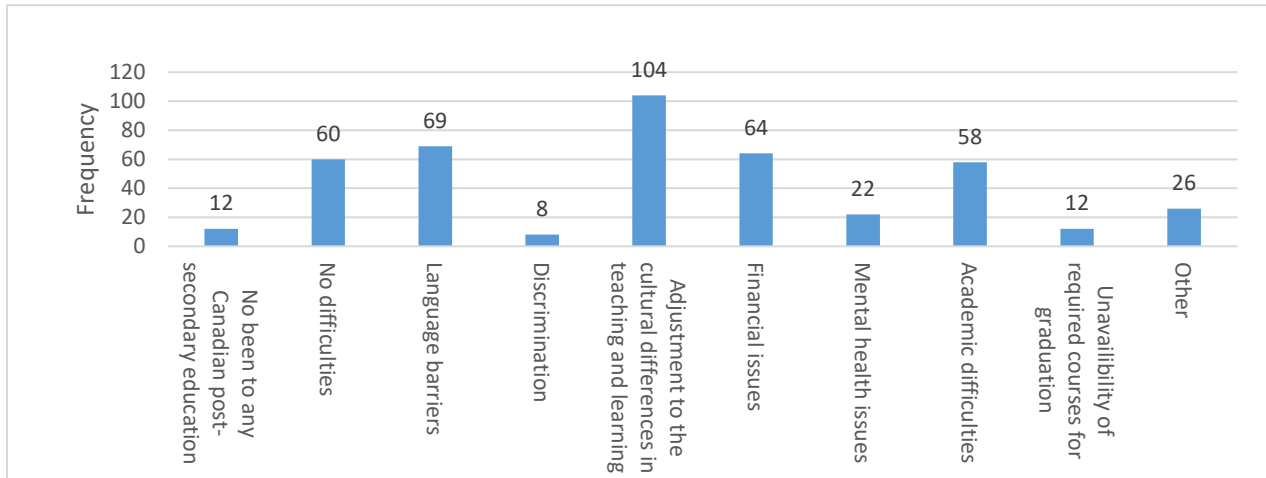
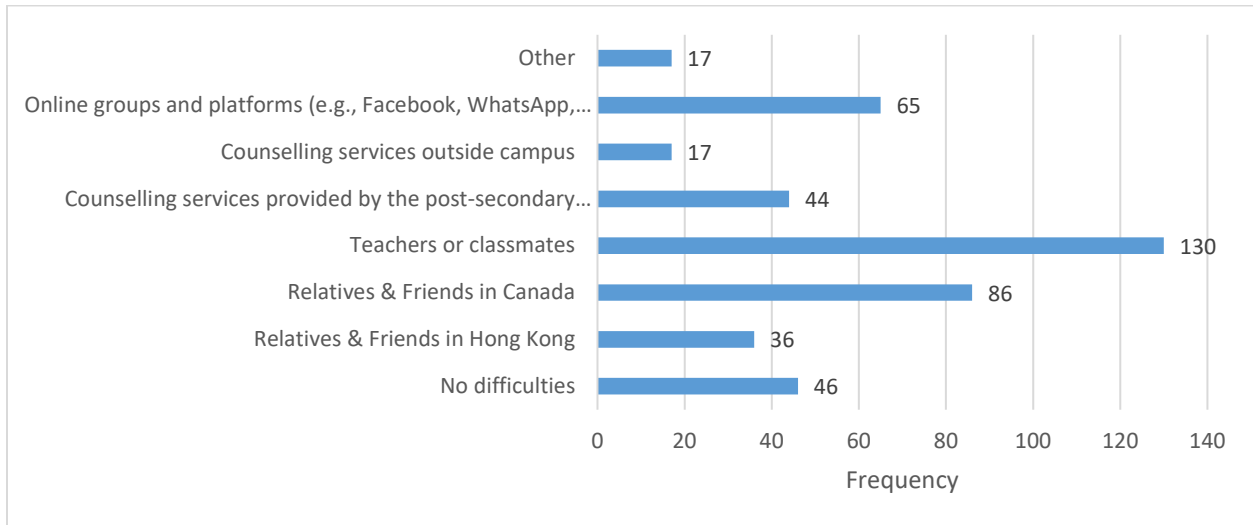


Figure 12: Sources of help when having educational difficulties



Schooling and Settlement

Out of the 215 respondents who have had school age children enrolled in kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) school after arriving Canada, close to 60% (n=125) indicated no problems or difficulties in the enrollment process (see Figure 13). To some, “lack of space” (17%, n=36) and “transportation constraints” (16%, n=34) are the two key difficulties. At school, 46% (n=99) respondents indicated their children have experienced no problem while some identified adjustment difficulties (30%, n=64) and language problems (26%, n=56) are problematic to their children (see Figure 14). To tackle their children’s educational difficulties, many turned sought helps from teachers or counselors at school (47%, n=100), relatives and friends in Canada (37%, n=79), and online groups and platforms (20%, n=42) (see Figure 15).

Figure 13: Difficulties in enrolling children at school

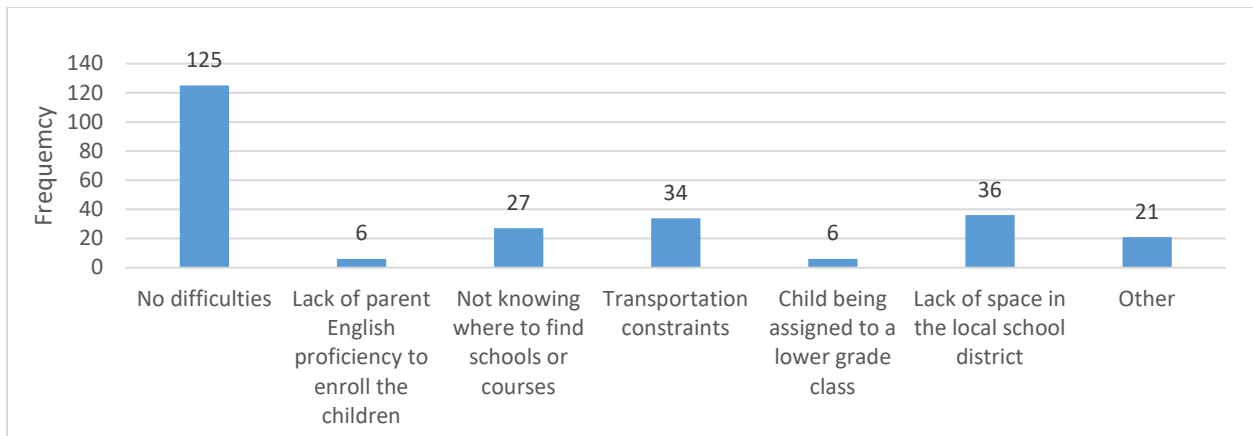


Figure 14: Children at School Difficulties

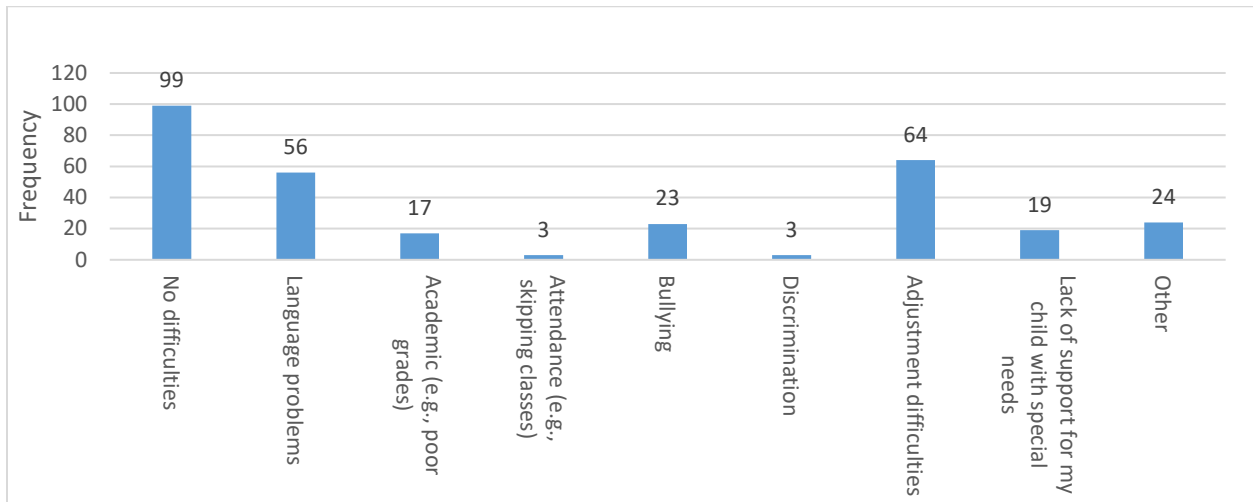
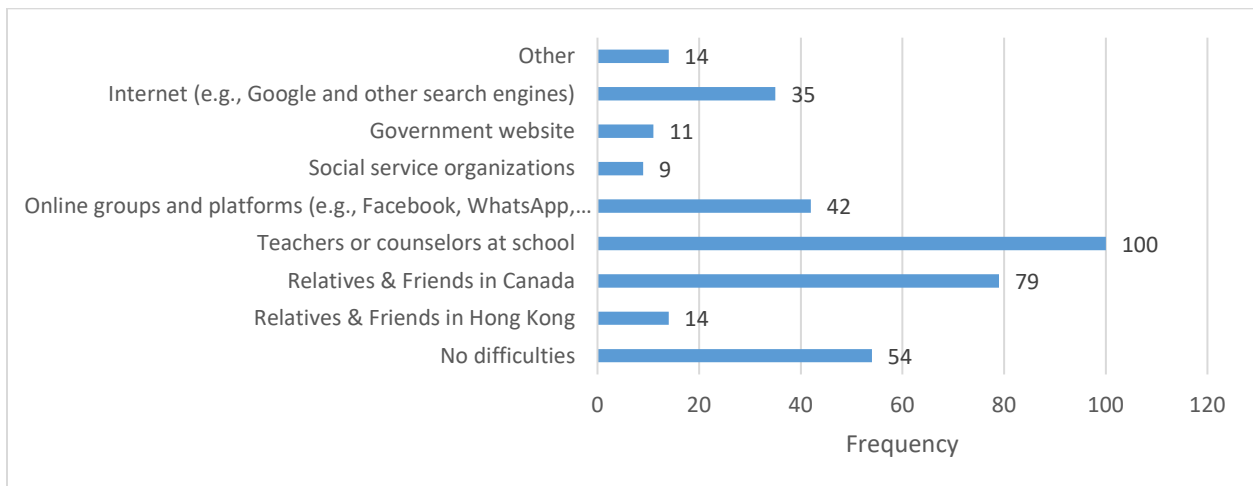


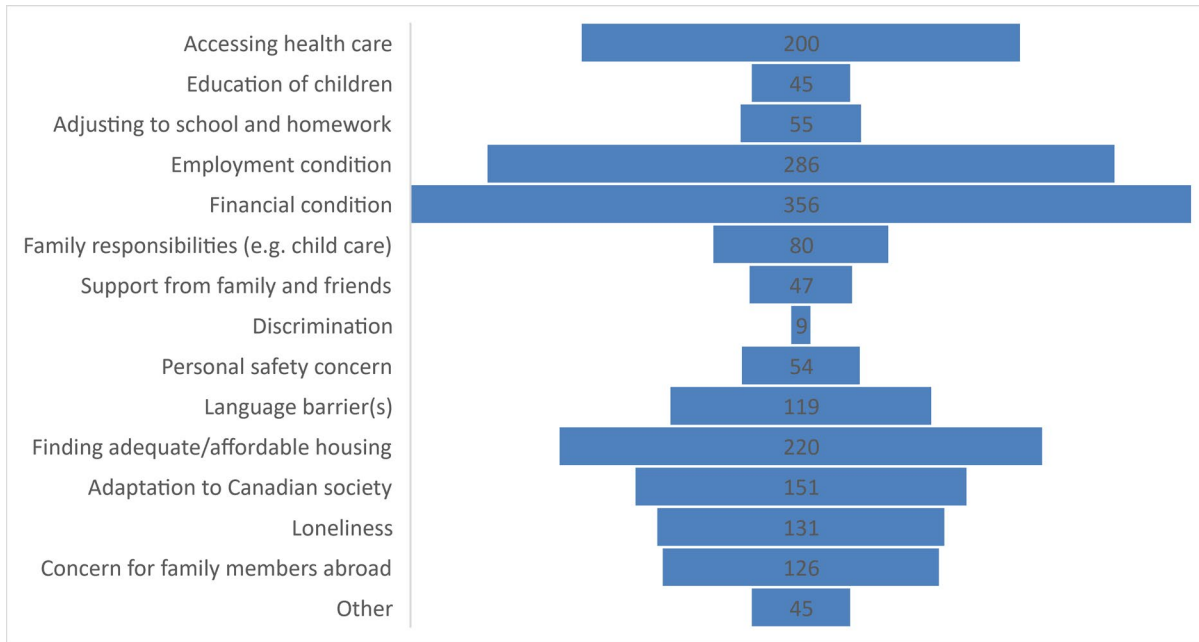
Figure 15: Sources of help when children having educational difficulties



General Settlement Conditions

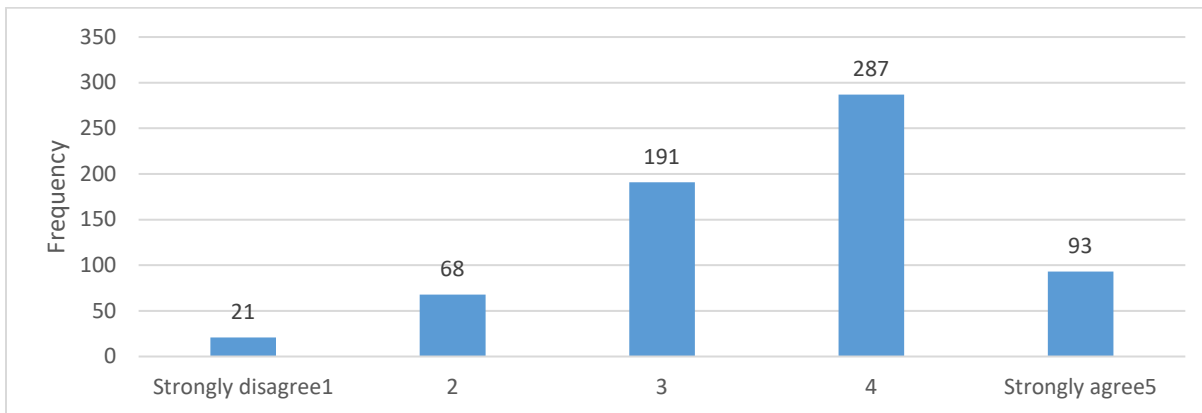
The settlement process and condition of each respondent may vary in different life domains. When asked to list the top three stressors contributing to their stress, respondents indicate that financial condition (54%, n=356), employment condition (43%, n=286), finding adequate/affordable housing (33%, n=220), accessing health care (30%, n=200) have topped the list (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Stressors of settlement experience



Despite experiencing difficulties in various domains of settlement, a great majority of respondents (58%, n=380) agreed or strongly agreed that their experiences living in Canada have met their expectation and only 11% (n=89) disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Experiences living in Canada met expectations



Summary on Settlement Conditions

The settlement experience and conditions of these respondents have consistently echoed the ones of many newcomers to Canada. While many felt positive in their settlement experience in terms of their expectation, their settlement process is without challenges. Like many newcomers, financial condition which is closely tied to their employment opportunity has been a key stressor.

They have limited source of information and supports to overcome the challenges. Often they have to rely on the internet to search for information and support. Many have used online group and platform which, as reflected later in the Integration Section, is largely confined to Hong Kong immigrant community. In addition, relatives and friends in Canada are another major source of information and support. In other words, they have to rely either on themselves or their informal networks. Consistent with previous longitudinal study on newcomers to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005), social service organizations have not been a major source of information or support for them. However, under the current service provision policy, only a small portion of our respondents who came in Canada as permanent residents are eligible for IRCC funded settlement programs. A great majority are left out from the current service system. This may have hampered the settlement process of many respondents as shown in the findings of Community Family Services of Ontario's Hong Kong Pathway Application study (2022).

Part III: Preliminary Integration Conditions

This survey also examined respondents' self-perception of social integration to the Canadian society in terms of their social networks, community involvement, sense of being welcomed, and their identity. However, while all respondents should have returned to or arrived in Canada after December 31, 2014, 62% of them came in Canada through special public policy, the Permanent Residence Pathways for Hong Kong Residents, initiated in June 2021. Thus, their integration to the Canadian society may still be at a preliminary stage.

Family, Friendship and Social Network

Majority of respondents (67%, n=445) are living in Canada by themselves or with their own family. Only 215 respondents (32.6%) have other family members in Canada and not residing with them, with whom many of them have often (23%, n=50) and very often (53%, n=113) contacted. Meanwhile, a great majority (91%, n=600) have family outside Canada with whom they have often (29%, n=173) or very often (38%, n=230) contacted. (see Figure 18 & 19).

Figure 18: Family and friend connection

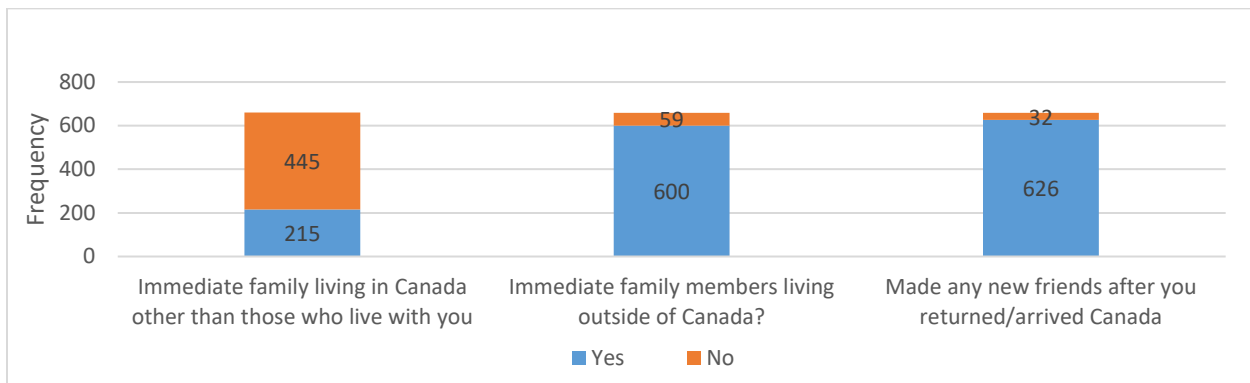
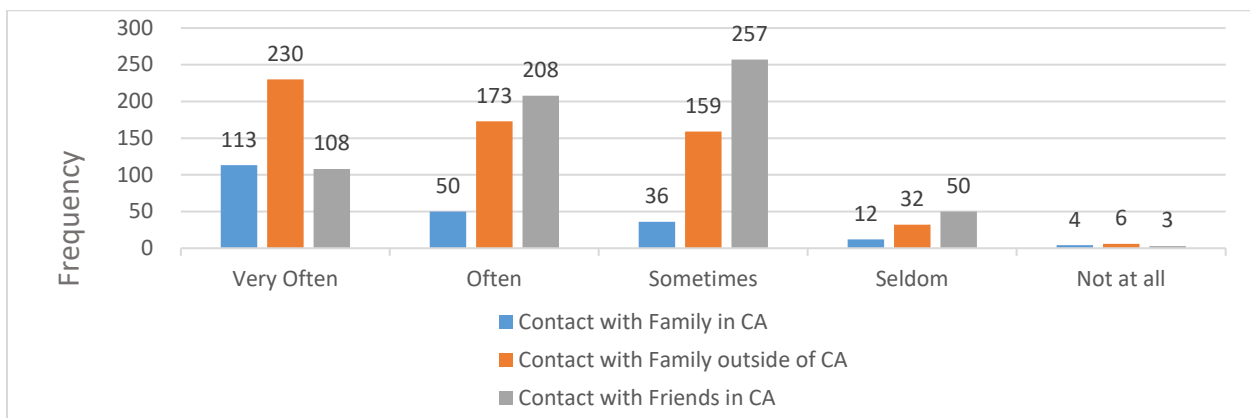
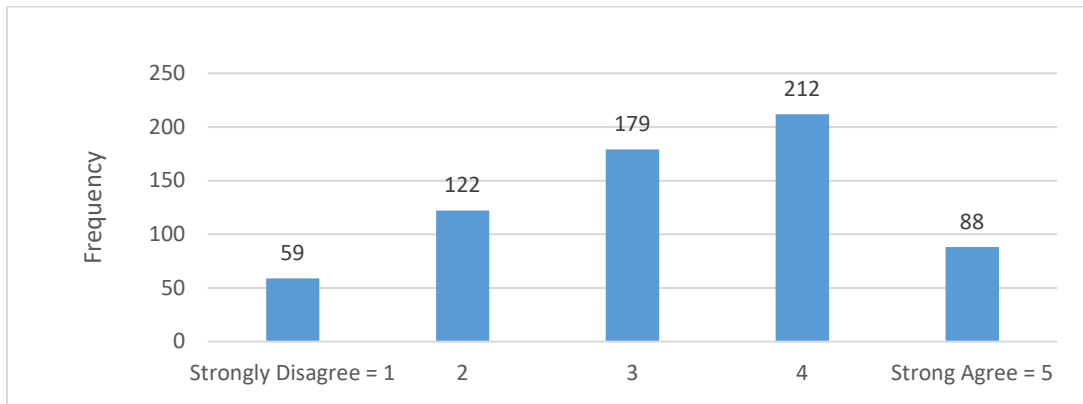


Figure 19: Contact with family and friends in and outside Canada



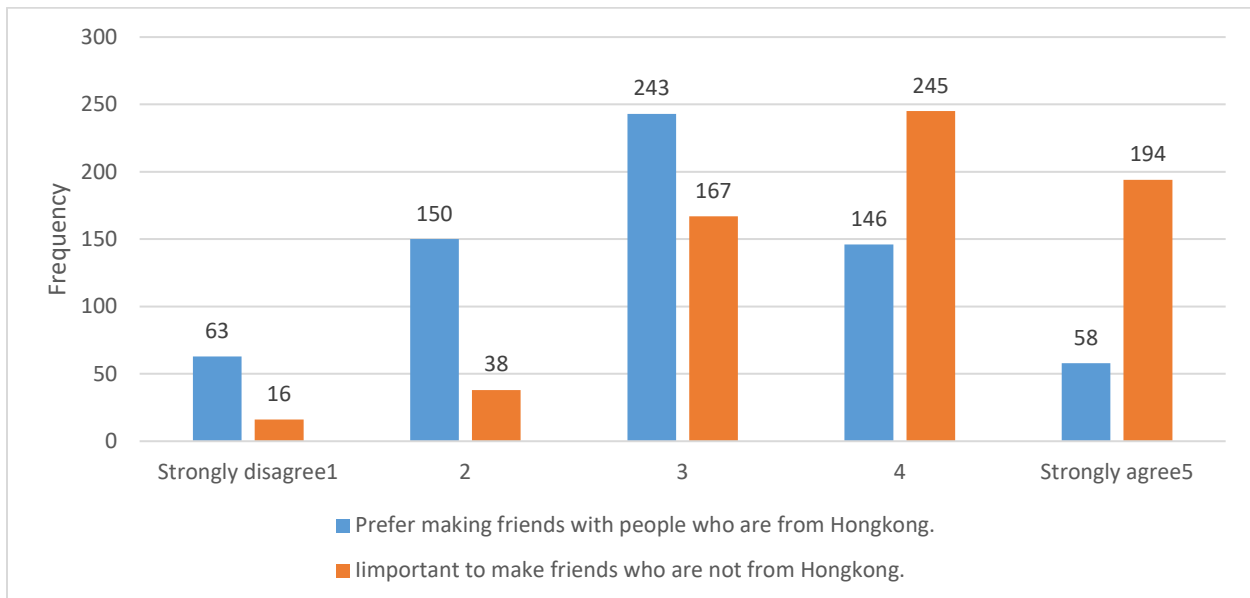
After they returned to/arrived in Canada, a great majority of respondents (95%, n=626) have also made some new friends. Their new friends seem to be very much confined within the Hong Kong newcomer circle. Most of the respondents indicated that their new friends are either all (16%, n=102) or mostly from Hong Kong (54%, n=354). Close to half of respondents have often (32%, n=208) or very often (16%, n=108) contacted friends in Canada including these new friends (see Figure 19). However, respondents tended to be split in their preference of making friends who are from Hong Kong. 32% (n=212) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they prefer making friends with people who are from Hong Kong while 31% (n=204) agreed or strongly agreed (See Figure 21).

Figure 20: Difficult to make non-Hong Kong friends



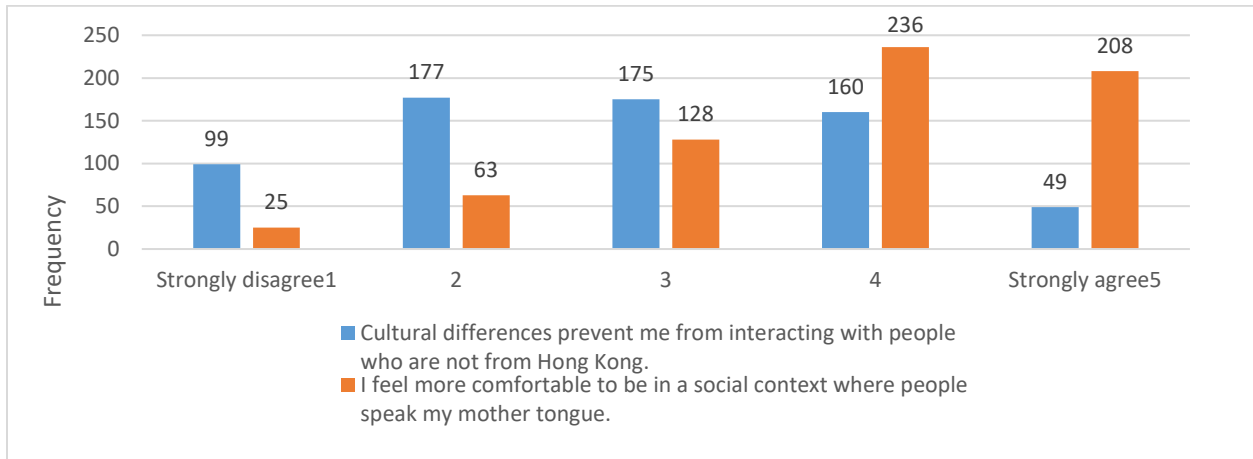
While respondents agreed (32%, n=212) or strongly agreed (13%, n=88) that it is not easy to make friends who are not from Hong Kong (see Figure 20), a majority (67%, n=439) agreed that it is important to make friends with people who are not from Hong Kong. (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Value of friendship in Canada



27% (n=177) respondents disagreed and 15% (n=99) strongly disagreed that cultural differences prevent them from interacting with people who are not from Hong Kong, 36% (n=236) of them agreed and 32% (n=208) strongly agreed that they feel more comfortable to be in a social context where people speak their mother tongue, i.e., Hong Kong style Cantonese (see Figure 22).

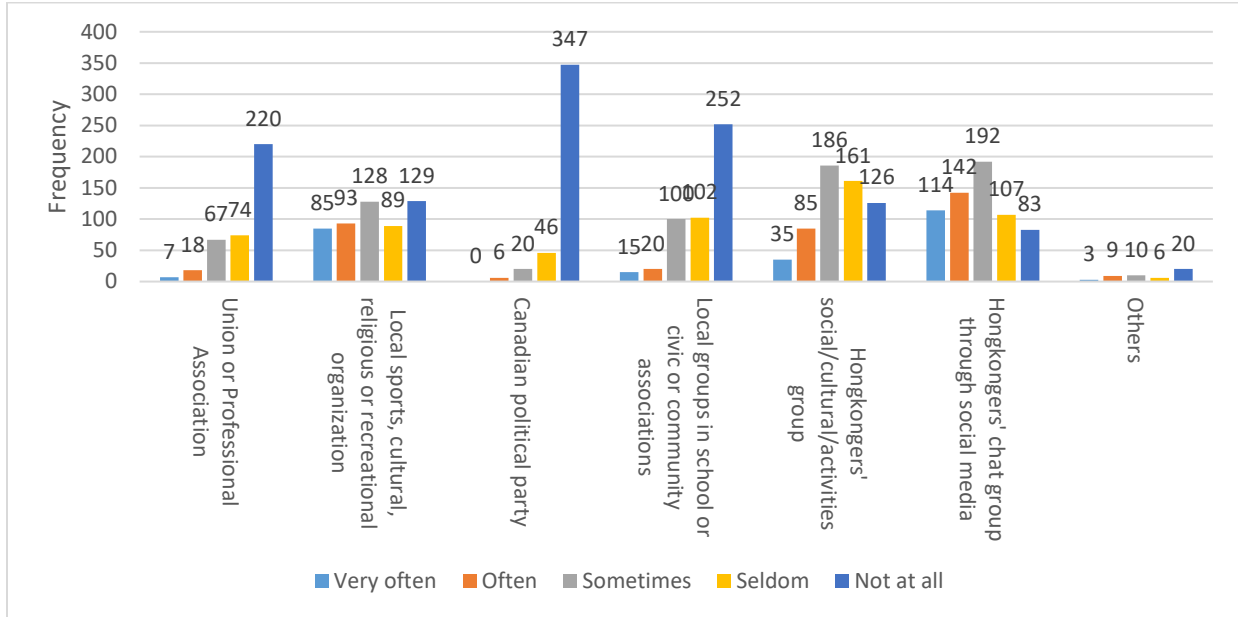
Figure 22: Friendship preference



Community Involvement

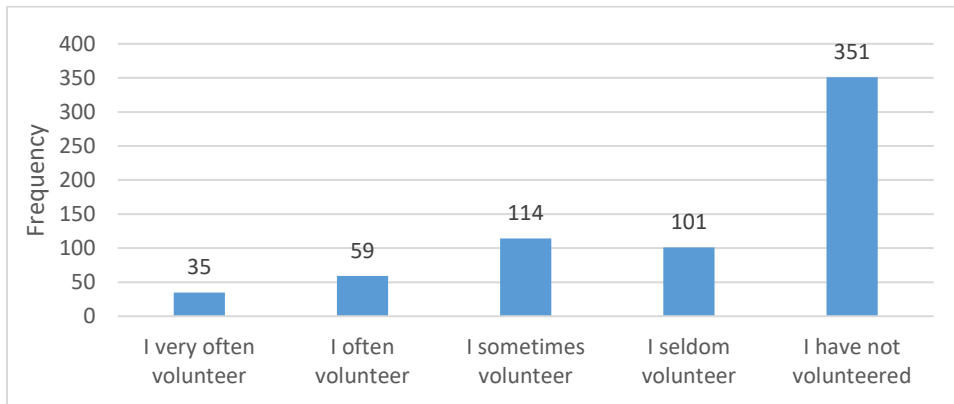
Respondents were also asked about their participations in different civic groups in the last six months. As Figure 23 shows, many respondents have very often (17%, n=114) or often (21%, n=142) participated in Hong Konger's chat group through social media group which, as reported above, is one of the major sources of information of their settlement. Meanwhile, some have also often or very often joined local sports, cultural religious or recreational organizations (27%, n=178) and Honkonger's social/cultural/activist groups (18%, n=120).

Figure 23: Participation in civic activities



We also asked respondents if and how often they do volunteer work in the past six months. Although being relatively new to Canada, at least 32% (n=208) respondents have sometimes or more often volunteered for some organizations and groups (see Figure 24). This may indicate their commitment to the Canadian civic life and to gain Canadian experience.

Figure 24: Volunteering for an organization or group



Identity and Perception

The respondents have overwhelmingly (96%, n=634) agreed or strongly agreed that they identified themselves as Hong Konger. Only 20% (n=133) agreed or strongly agreed with their Chinese identity. Surprisingly, despite the fact that many respondents have not been long in Canada, close to 30% (n=189) agreed or strongly agreed with their Canadian identity. (see Table 8).

	Strongly Disagree = 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree = 5
Chinese	296 (45%)	122 (20%)	110 (17%)	74 (11%)	59 (9%)
Hong Konger	9 (1%)	3 (0.5%)	14 (2%)	53 (8%)	581 (88%)
Canadian	100 (15%)	154 (23%)	217 (33%)	85 (13%)	104 (15%)

Consistent with how they identified themselves, most respondents (73%, n=483) have still kept a very close eye on what happen in Hong Kong by reading news about Hong Kong. Meanwhile, many also often (33%, n=215) or very often (23%, n=149) read news about Canada (see Table 9).

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Not at all
About Hong Kong	303 (46%)	180 (27%)	140 (21%)	37 (6%)	0
About Canada	149 (23%)	215 (33%)	229 (35%)	64 (10%)	3 (0.5%)

Generally, respondents tend to have had a positive perspective of their relationship with Canada. A large majority agreed or strongly agreed respectively that it is important to be informed of issues of Canadian society (72%, n=541). Many also agreed or strongly agreed that can contribute to the Canadian society (76%, n=503), that they are important in the Canadian society (38%, n=248) and that they belong in Canada (37%, n=243). This positive perspective may also explain why a great majority (80%, n=528) of the respondents indicated their strong desire to stay in Canada for good (see Table 10).

	Strongly Disagree = 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree = 5
I believe that it is important to be informed of issues of Canadian society	8 (1%)	20 (3%)	91 (14%)	253 (38%)	288 (44%)
I believe I am important in the Canadian society	41 (6%)	119 (18%)	252 (38.2%)	175 (27%)	73 (11%)
I feel like I belong in Canada	46 (7%)	130 (20%)	239 (36%)	177 (27%)	66 (10%)

I believe I can contribute to the Canadian society	10 (2%)	33 (5%)	114 (17%)	307 (46%)	196 (30%)
I have desire to stay in Canada for good	8 (1%)	28 (4%)	96 (15%)	244 (37%)	284 (43%)

This positive perspective is also consistent with their relatively low level in perceived discrimination although the anti-Asian racism has been rapidly hastened in Canada since the COVID-19 pandemic. Many respondents indicated that they have never felt discriminated by people at their neighborhood, workplace, school, government office in Canada (see Figure 25). For those who have experienced discrimination, the most cited reason are “language and accent” (36%, n=238), “race or skin colour” (30%, n=198), and “ethnicity and culture” (22%, n=148) (see Figure 26).

Figure 25: Perceived discrimination

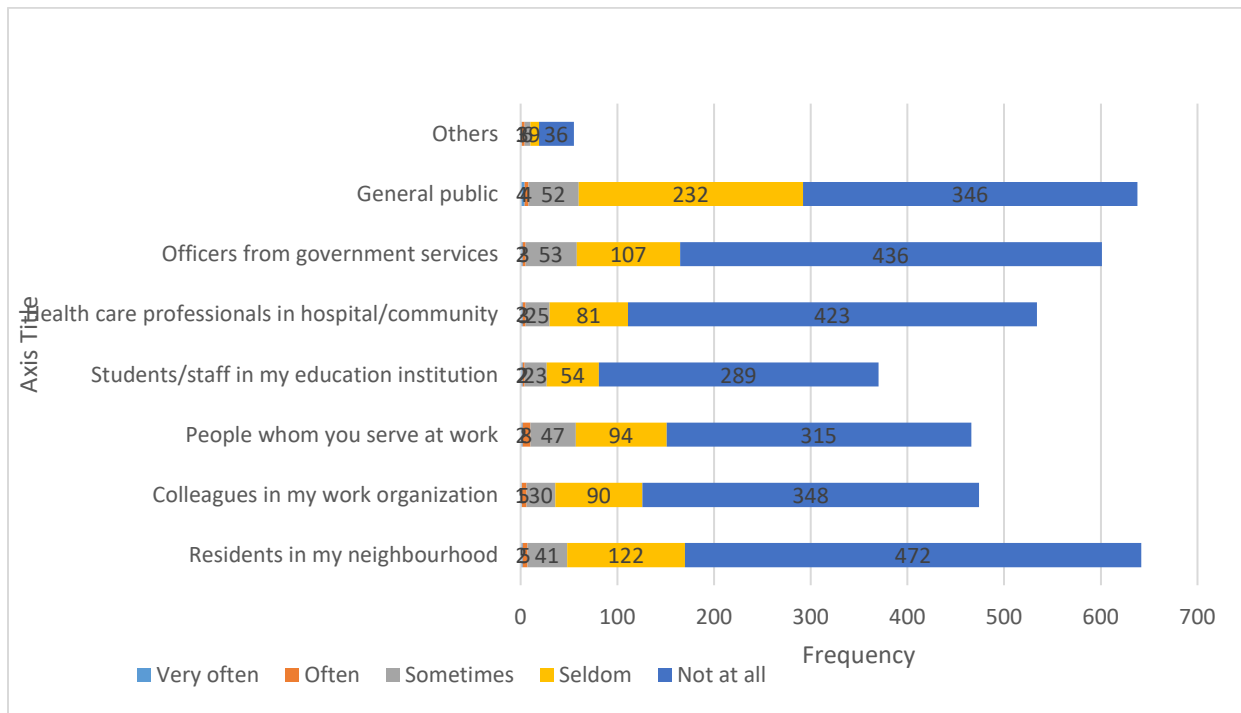
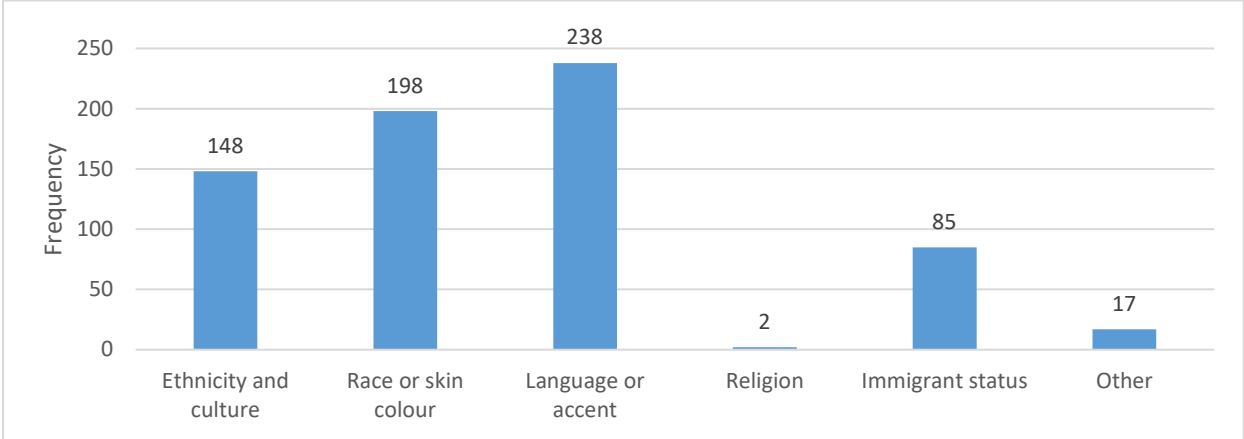


Figure 26: Reasons why being discriminated



Part IV: Observations and Conclusion

With an intention to assure the readability of the report, we decided to employ a descriptive approach to report the results of the survey. Here we offer several observations of the data.

Observations:

Based on the profile of our respondents, it seems that Hong Kong residents who returned to or arrived in Canada in recent years are relatively young, highly educated, productive and proficient in English. These qualities fit very well with the profile of economic migrants that Canadian immigration policy tends to target.

Most respondents prepared for their return/arrival to Canada before their departure, however, some might have left Hong Kong in a rush due to the potential political threats on their own safety. Their preparation was not limited to seeking information online. Many came with some financial resources, reflecting their intention of self-reliance while in Canada.

The respondents reported experiencing various challenges across different domains including access to health care services, housing, employment and education. Many of these challenges are shared by other newcomers to Canada. Even though many reported that they have prepared enough financial resource and income to support their family, financial conditions are still the main stressor of their settlement process. This stressor is further reinforced by difficulties in securing employment.

Use of ICT to seek information and support has been the major strategy for most respondents to prepare their return/arrival in Canada and to overcome their challenges during the settlement process. Additionally, informal support, mainly family and friends in Canada, is another source. Use of formal resources and supports is low among this group of respondents. Indeed, a great majority of them are excluded from current IRCC funded settlement services. As reflected in a study conducted by Community Family Services of Ontario (2022), those arriving in Canada through the Lifeboat Project faced many challenges that need to be supported through proper settlement services.

As newly returned to or arrived in Canada from Hong Kong many respondents in the survey have kept a very close connection with families and friends in Hong Kong and often read news about Hong Kong. A great many of them have also tended to keep their social interaction within the likeminded Hong Konger circle in Canada largely due to the shared culture and language.

Encouragingly there is a strong agreement among the respondents that it is important to make friends and connections with people who are not from Hong Kong. Many have also paid attention to the local news in Canada. A few have started to take part in various local civic organizations and activities including volunteering for organizations and groups. Both their positive perceptions and civic engagement reflect a growing commitment of these respondents to the Canadian society.

Respondents reported strong agreement that their living in Canada has met their expectations. Most respondents have a very positive perception of their relationship with Canada and very low sense of feeling discriminated against. Indeed, a great majority expressed their interest to stay in Canada for good and believe that they can contribute to the Canadian society.

Conclusion:

In this preliminary report, we provide a descriptive summary of the results of this online survey with the intention to fill the knowledge gap of this new wave of Hong Kong residents moving to Canada. Based on the results of this study, those who arrived Canada in this new wave have been well prepared, well equipped with the ICT skills to navigate the settlement process, and have a strong commitment to settle and integrate into Canadian society, and a great potential to contribute to the Canadian society. However, their settlement and integration process has been hampered not only by the challenges that many newcomers to Canada face but, more importantly, by not being able to access formal support services for newcomers. We hope this report can be useful for policy makers and service providers to reconsider the current policies to welcome and to provide more supports to this group of newcomers who are highly likely to be productive members of the Canadian society.

References

- Wong, A. V. (2022). *Hong Kong Pathway Applications: User Survey Findings & Recommendations*. Retrieved from Toronto, ON:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16txRTnZX155npyJWpgQ6C7OciB7n00wM/view>
- Wong, K.C.P & M.C. Yan (2023). Leaving the homeland again for my family's future: Post-return migration among Hong Kong Canadian. *International Journal of Migration and Integration*, 24:467-486. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-022-00955-0>
- Yan, M. C. (2021). Return of the Returnees?: Dual Citizenship and Hong Kong's Global Talent Base. Retrieved 17/09/2021, from Asian Global Institute, The University of Hong Kong
<https://www.asiaglobalonline.hku.hk/return-returnees-dual-citizenship-and-hong-kongs-global-talent-base>