

The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey

2007

A Summary of Research Findings

Sponsored by



LEHMAN BROTHERS



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October 2007

About Community Business

Community Business is a unique membership based non-profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to continually improve their positive impact on people and communities. Community Business provides training, facilitation and advice to some of the world's largest companies in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its major areas of focus include CSR strategy and policy, corporate community investment and diversity in the workplace. Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong, Community Business currently works with a number of organisations, small, medium and large, committed to CSR. For more information, visit www.communitybusiness.org.hk

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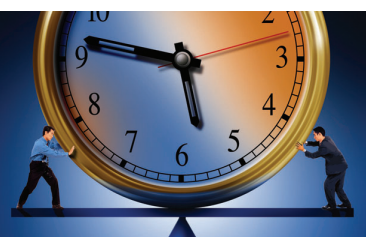
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second “The State of Work-Life balance in Hong Kong Survey” conducted in 2007 has revealed the following significant findings:

A. Working and living patterns

- 1. Employees in Hong Kong work long hours - but there is an improvement since 2006**
 - The average number of hours worked per week is 49.2 compared to 51.3 hours in 2006.
 - This is 6% higher than hours required in employee contracts and more than 23% higher than the recommended number of hours (40 hours per week) as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- 2. More employees in Hong Kong regularly work overtime - but this is mainly because contractual hours are down**
 - 65.5% of employees work overtime each week with 22.5% working overtime nearly everyday. This compares to 61.3% and 22.4% respectively for 2006.
 - This increase in overtime in part reflects a reduction of the number of hours that employees are contractually required to work per week - 46.5 in 2007 compared to 47.3 hours in 2006.
- 3. Too much work remains the top reason for overtime**
 - The top three reasons for working overtime on a regular basis are too much work, the need to support co-workers and requests from the boss. This is the same as in 2006.
- 4. Employers have reduced paid annual leave and over 35% of employees do not always take their annual leave entitlement**
 - Average paid annual leave is 13.9 days, down from 15.3 days in 2006.
 - 36.3% of employees do not always take their full annual leave.
- 5. More employees are not entitled to the statutory minimum of 7 days annual leave**
 - 9.3% of employees are not entitled to any annual leave compared to 7.2% last year.
 - 1.7% are not entitled to the 7 full days leave compared to 0.9% last year.
- 6. Employees in Hong Kong still have little time for personal life**
 - As in 2006, over 70% of employees spend less than 2 hours per day on personal or private activities. 8.5% spend no time at all on private activities.
- 7. Work-life balance has improved slightly but is still a far cry from what employees think is ideal and realistic**
 - The actual work-life ratio is 83:17 which represents a slight improvement on last year when it was 84:16.
 - The ideal but realistic work-life ratio has changed from 61:39 last year to 60:40 this year, reflecting employees' desire for a better work-life balance.

B. Satisfaction with work and life

- 8. More employees are unhappy at work and the main reason remains poor relationships with supervisors and colleagues**
 - The number of employees citing reasons for unhappiness has risen to 89.2% from 75.6% in 2006.
 - The top three reasons for unhappiness at work remain the same as 2006 and are relationship with supervisors and colleagues followed by pay benefits and workload.



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9. Fewer employees say their work and private lives are balanced

- The number of employees saying their work and lives are balanced has fallen to 41.9% from 44.1% last year. Those who believe it is not balanced has risen to 29.1% from 28.3% in 2006. This may be a reflection of enhanced expectations of employees for work-life balance.

10. More employees believe their work-life balance has improved over the last 12 months

- The number of respondents who believe that their work-life balance has improved over the past 12 months has increased to 24.6% (from 22.4% in 2006).

11. Employers still need to do more to promote work-life balance

- As in 2006, employees give their employers a score of 4.7 out of 10 for efforts and resources expended to improve work-life balance.

C. Problems with current work-life balance and desired solutions

12. Employees in Hong Kong have a long way to go to achieve their ideal work-life balance

- Employees rate the degree to which they have achieved their ideal work-life balance 5.6 out of 10. This is slightly lower than the previous year's rating of 5.7.

13. The need for financial security has overtaken long working hours as the most difficult work-life balance challenge for employees

- The largest group of respondents (18.6%) cite financial well-being and wealth management as the greatest work-life balance challenge they face. This figure has risen from 13.8% in 2006.
- Long working hours is ranked the second greatest challenge and having to take care of children or family members is ranked third.

14. Technology has a positive impact on work-life balance

- 61.5% of employees say that the latest technology has a positive impact on their work-life balance while only 12.3% think the impact is negative.

15. Poor work-life balance adversely impacts productivity, health and family life

- Over 60% of respondents report suffering from prolonged fatigue and extreme tiredness and this is the same as in 2006.
- The number of employees who state they do not have any private time for recreation activities or sports has increased to 35.6% this year from 28.2% in 2006. Those who say they do not have enough time with their partner and family has risen to 43.7% this year from 39.1% last year.
- For both years, approximately 33% of respondents say they have problems with productivity and that work quality has reduced dramatically due to long working hours.

16. Employees say that a 5-day work week and more paid annual leave would most help them to achieve better work-life balance

- 26.8% of employees report that a 5-day work week would most assist them with work-life balance. More paid annual leave is ranked second (18.3%).

17. Managers are important role models for work-life balance

- Over 60% of employees say it is very beneficial or quite beneficial if their line manager and other senior executives set an example for work-life balance.



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18. More employers are adopting a 5-day work week but over half of all employees have employers who are not even considering it

- 35% of employees say their company has adopted a 5-day work week. This figure is an increase from 28.1% last year. In the Banks and Finance and Government and Public Affairs sectors the increase has been most significant.
- Those who say their companies are not adopting or thinking of adopting a 5-day work week has fallen to 55.6% from 60.7% in 2006.

19. Hong Kong risks 27% of its workforce leaving the city if they can find better work-life balance elsewhere

- 26.9% of employees say they would consider leaving Hong Kong to pursue better work-life balance while 72.1% say they would not.

2. OBSERVATIONS

Companies in Hong Kong should be commended for making significant progress in work-life balance, particularly as it relates to working hours. Employees in Hong Kong are working less hours in 2007 compared to 2006 and contractual hours are also down. However, it is important to note that both actual and contractual hours continue to be greater than 40 hours per week recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Also, those on lower incomes tend to work the longest hours in Hong Kong. It is interesting to note that men in Hong Kong are required to work longer hours than women and actually do.

Hong Kong employees work overtime mainly because there is simply too much work to be done. Worryingly and similar to last year, over 25% of employees work overtime because they do not want to be seen to be the first to leave the office and cannot leave before their boss. We know from this research that poor work-life balance adversely impacts productivity with over 33% of employees citing a direct link between poor work-life balance and productivity and work quality. We also know from our research that over 22% of workers get sick easily and frequently due to the heavy workload - this can have a direct impact on absenteeism.

Employees are telling us that employers can do much more to promote work-life balance. The most desired work-life balance initiative that employers can provide is a 5-day work week. Although more companies are now adopting a 5-day work week (35% in 2007 versus 28% in 2006) and should be praised for doing so, over half of Hong Kong employees say that their employers are not and have no intention of doing so. These companies may wish to consider implementing a 5-day work week.

Another initiative that should be addressed by employers is annual leave entitlement - this has fallen significantly since last year. As companies consider reducing annual leave it is vital for them to remember that the second most desired corporate initiative that employees say would help them with work-life balance is more annual leave. On this note, companies can start by strongly encouraging employees to take the full amount of annual leave as stated in their contract - as currently roughly 6 out of 10 employees say they always take their annual leave. Employers should be aware that the Employment Ordinance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region states clearly that an employee is entitled to annual leave with pay after employment under a continuous contract for 12 months and the minimum amount of such leave is 7 days. Companies which fail to give this minimum leave entitlement are in breach of the law.

The greatest obstacle in 2007 to individuals obtaining work-life balance is financial well-being and wealth management. In 2006, individuals cited long working-hours as their greatest obstacle. What this means is that employees today are more concerned with rising asset prices and costs and therefore are more likely to work hard and long. This is particularly so with those at lower income levels. Employers of choice should consider how to address this and look at ways of educating its employees about good financial management. This greater financial awareness may help to reduce financial concerns of staff.



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The role of technology is often questioned in work-life balance. Our research has shown that over 61% of employees think that it has a positive impact on work-life balance. Those who are most likely to see its impact as negative are at the highest income levels - perhaps not surprisingly with the advancement of mobile technology devices. Companies need to ensure that technology continues to be a positive driver of work-life balance.

Corporate leaders and senior executives are role models for employees in work-life balance. By leadership taking steps such as leaving on time, employees feel that this would give them better work-life balance. This would empower those employees who are at work simply to “give face” to also leave and would certainly add credence to those companies who say work-life balance is important to them.

As we reflect on the overall results of this survey, we should acknowledge that employees in general say that their work-life balance has improved in the last 12 months. At the same time employees are telling us that their expectations of a better work-life balance have increased and therefore we find that overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance seems to have fallen. Companies need to understand that the goal posts continue to move in work-life balance and if they are committed to attracting and retaining the best talent, they must commit to continuously look at how to address this.

Of major concern for Hong Kong employers is that 27% of our workforce would consider moving out of Hong Kong in pursuit of better work-life balance. This is perhaps the greatest business case for work-life balance in Hong Kong. As economies around the globe compete for talent, work-life balance for employees must become a key component of Hong Kong's competitive advantage.

3. INTRODUCTION

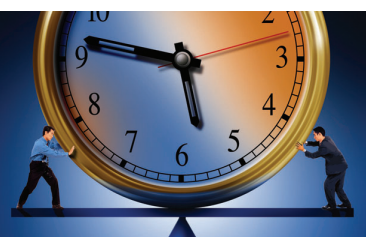
The State of Work-life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2007 (also referred to as “the 2007 Survey”) is the second study of its kind. The first survey was conducted in July 2006 and was an initiative of the Community Business Leadership Team (CBLT), a unique group of business leaders representing various industries in Hong Kong, united by a common commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Undertaken by the Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong the main aim of the survey is to provide the corporate sector with the necessary data to assist them with their work-life balance policies and initiatives. It is also designed to raise awareness of the importance of work-life balance and the direct impact on business and employees. Using a consistent methodology year on year, it strives to assess the extent to which the state of work-life balance is improving in Hong Kong by determining the following:

- employees' work and living patterns;
- employees' satisfaction with work and life; and
- problems employees face in achieving a healthy work-life balance and their desired solutions to overcome such challenges.

This report summarises important findings from the 2007 Survey and seeks to highlight significant differences from the 2006 Survey.

This report presents the views of Community Business. The views do not represent those of Community Business members, CBLT members, sponsors of this report or the POP.



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4. METHODOLOGY

About the 2007 Survey

As in 2006, this year's survey was commissioned by Community Business and undertaken by the POP. Given the random selection of interviewees and the large sample size, the survey responses are representative of the working population of Hong Kong.

Target population

The target population was defined as a full-time worker of age 15 or above who speaks Cantonese, English or Mandarin. A full time worker is defined as an employee who works at least 5 days a week or who has a total working time of not less than 40 hours per week.

Sample size

The sample size of the 2007 Survey was 1,014 respondents (in 2006 it was 1,519). The large sample size allows us to make inferences about the Hong Kong working population as a whole.




Telephone interviews

Using a computer-assisted technique, more than 1000 random telephone interviews were conducted from 17 to 31 July 2007.

Questionnaire

Like last year, the 2007 Survey included 20 questions. However, a taskforce was set up to review the questions from the 2006 Survey and a decision was made to replace four questions from last year with new ones. The 2007 Survey also included 8 questions relating to demographics. The full list of questions is available in the Appendix.

Summary of Research Findings

In this report, we examine the responses for each of the 20 questions asked in the 2007 Survey. For each question we highlight the mean response for 2007 and 2006. For 2007, where statistically significant differences¹ have arisen due to gender , industry , income level  these are highlighted. When this arises, this component is then reviewed for significant variations since 2006.

Statistically significant variations have been identified by the researchers at the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong. A difference is said to be significant when the chi-square value (p-value) is smaller than 0.05 and 0.01. Therefore in some cases, to the lay observer it may appear from our graphs that there is a significant variation. However, our text may not make reference to this. Readers should be guided by the words in the text which state clearly when a statistically significant variation has occurred.

It should be noted that where we use the words 'more employees' or 'less employees' we are referring to more or less in terms of percentages when compared to results of the 2006 Survey.

It is also important to note that comparisons between the 2006 Survey and 2007 Survey can generally be made. Comparisons should however be treated with some degree of caution due to changes in methodology and wording of questions. The full report of the 2007 Survey findings written by the POP is available at www.communitybusiness.org.hk.

¹ As advised by the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong



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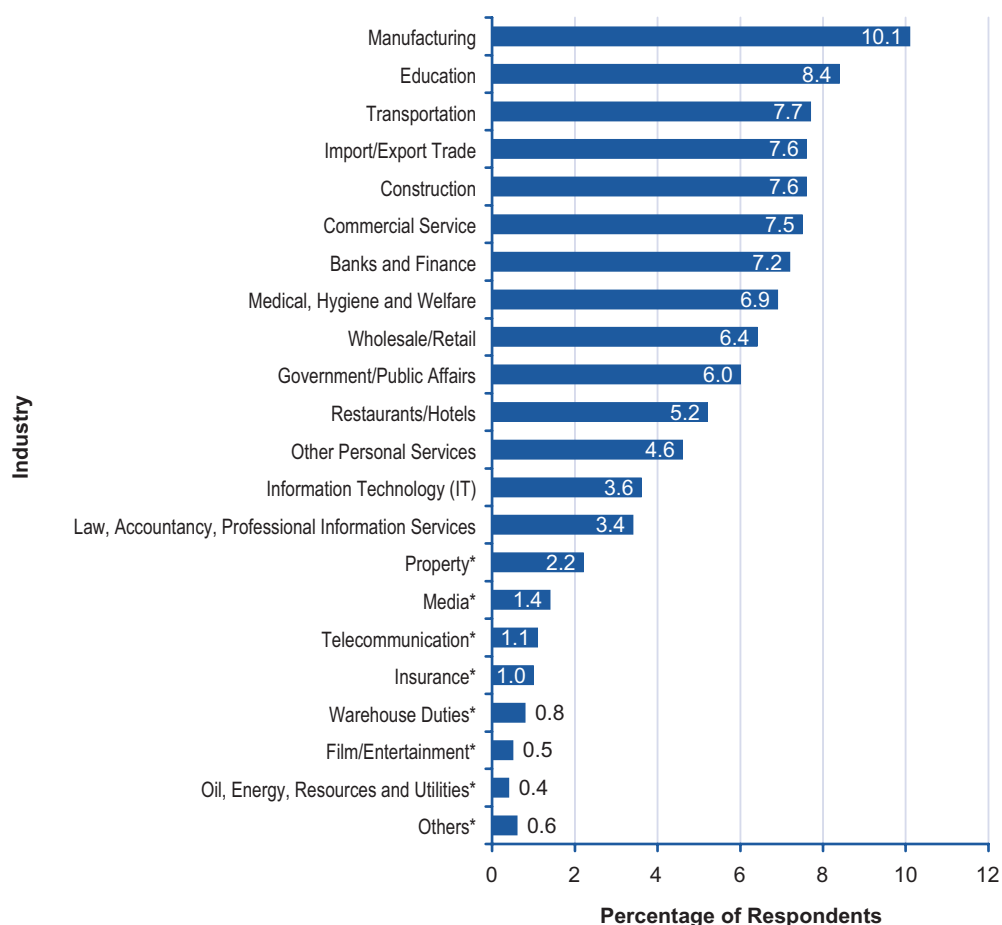
5. DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gather profiling data, respondents were asked a number of demographic questions, including their gender, age, education level, position, industry, marital status, number of children and district. In this summary report, we focus on three demographic variables only - gender, industry and income level - and analyse whether these have a statistically significant impact on employees' work-life balance.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses from different industries in Hong Kong. The category Other Personal Services refers to personal services provided by individuals generally paid on an hourly basis such as private tutors and freelance workers. The 2007 Survey, like the 2006 Survey, does not include domestic helpers. The category Others refers to Engineering, Security Work, Tourism, Planting Industry and Renovation. However, as this Others category only included a total of 6 people from a wide range of industries, it does not represent a single industry per se. We have therefore chosen to ignore this group in our analysis.

Items marked with an asterisk (*) in Figure 1 represent a sub-sample size which means there were 30 or less respondents from this industry. Statistically speaking, the smaller the sample size, the larger the sampling error. Findings for these industries are therefore for indication only. These industries include: Property, Media, Telecommunication, Insurance, Warehouse Duties, Film/Entertainment, Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities and Others.

Figure 1. Distribution of responses by industry (2007)





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Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses by gender and Figure 3 shows the distribution of responses by income level.

Figure 2. Distribution of responses by gender (2007)

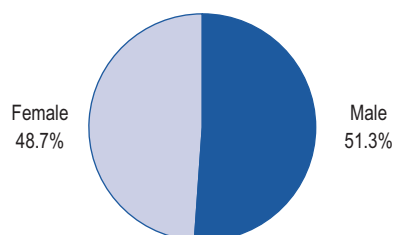
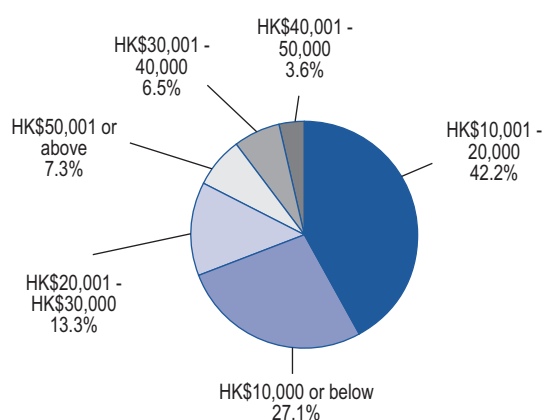





Figure 3. Distribution of responses by monthly income (2007)



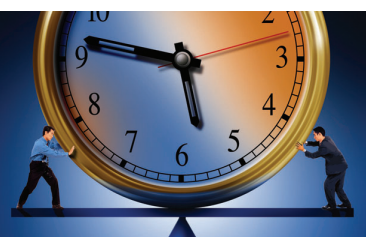
6. OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

In reviewing the findings of the 2007 Survey, we identify the following for each question:

- the overall mean response for 2007 and where applicable, a comparison with the 2006 findings, whether or not statistically significant;
- statistically significant variations by gender , industry , income level . When this arises, this component is then reviewed for significant variations since 2006.

The findings are presented in the following sections:

- Working and living patterns
- Satisfaction with work and life
- Problems with current work-life balance and desired solutions



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A. Working and living patterns

Finding 1: Employees in Hong Kong work long hours - but there is an improvement since 2006

Actual and contractual working hours

According to respondents, the average number of actual working hours per week has fallen to 49.2 this year from 51.3 in 2006 as shown in Figures 4a and 4b. Despite the slight improvement, the actual working hours of full-time employees in Hong Kong is nearly three hours more than what is stated in their contracts (in 2006 the average worker worked four hours more than stated in their contracts).

The hours worked in Hong Kong continue to exceed the standards set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which recommends that workers should work no more than 40 hours per week with occasional paid overtime, paid at a premium, of up to 12 hours per week.

Figure 4a. Average contractual and actual working hours per week by gender (2007)

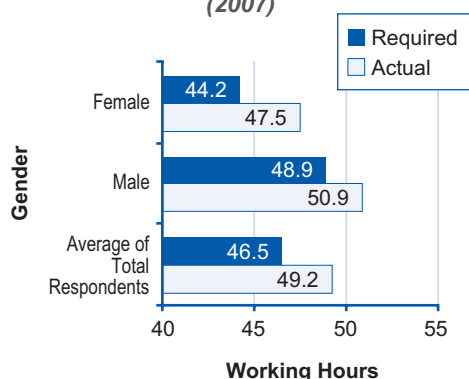
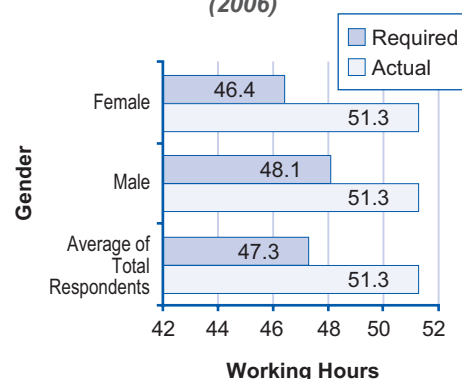


Figure 4b. Average contractual and actual working hours per week by gender (2006)



The 2007 Survey findings show that in general, the contractual working hours of employees have improved. The average number of contractual working hours for full-time employees drops to 46.5 per week this year from 47.3 in 2006 as shown in Figures 4a and 4b.



In addition, Figure 4a shows that in terms of actual hours, men are working longer hours (50.9 hours per week) than women (47.5 hours per week). The actual working hours per week for women has reduced noticeably from 51.3 hours in 2006 to 47.5 hours in 2007. Furthermore, contractual working hours for men (48.9 hours per week) is 10% higher than it is for women (44.2 hours per week). The average contractual hours per week for women has reduced significantly from 46.4 in 2006 to 44.2 in 2007.



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Figure 5a shows that the number of actual working hours varies across industry. The highest number of working hours pertains to those who work in Restaurants and Hotels (54.7 hours), Transportation (51.9) and Media (51.1). As in the 2006 Survey, those in Insurance (41.6) work the least hours.

Figure 5a also shows that the hours worked in 2007 have fallen across all sectors except for Media and Import/Export Trade. Other Personal Services shows the largest decrease (15.3) in working hours. Significant reductions in actual working hours have also been taken place in Commercial Service, Medical, Hygiene and Welfare, Other Personal Services, Property and Wholesale / Retail.

Figure 5a. Actual working hours per week by industry (2007 and 2006)

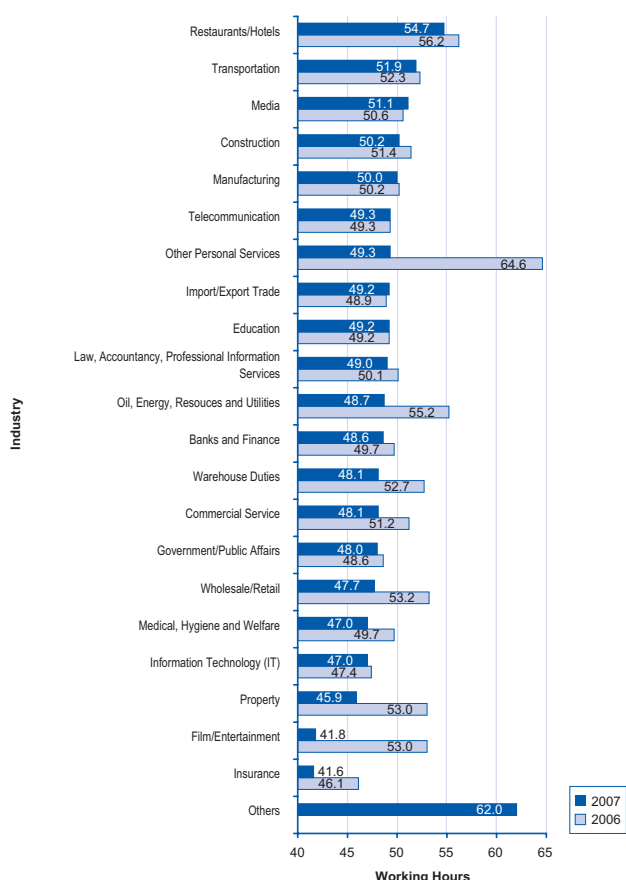
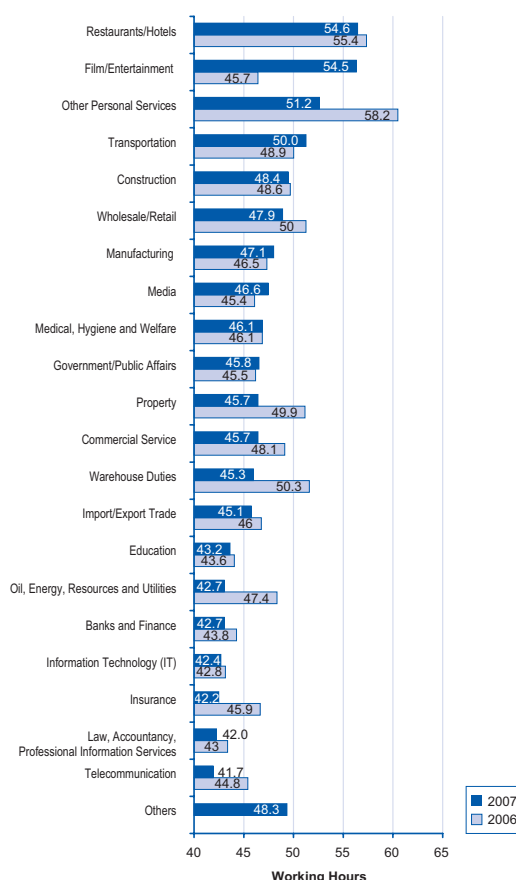


Figure 5b. Contractual working hours per week by industry (2007 and 2006)



Telecommunication has seen a reduction in contractual hours. It decreased notably from 44.8 hours to 41.7 hours as shown in Figure 5b.



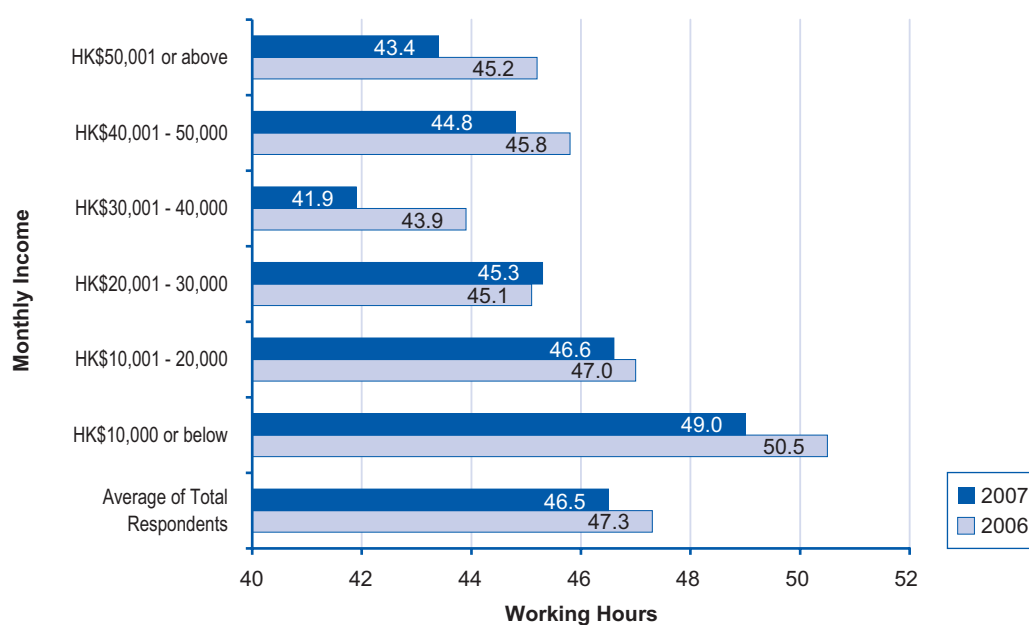
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The findings from the 2007 Survey show that those who earn less are required to work longer hours than the higher income groups as illustrated in Figure 6. Those who belong to the income bracket of HK\$10,000 or below and HK\$10,001 - HK\$20,000 are required to work for 49.0 and 46.6 hours per week respectively which is longer than what is required of those in higher income brackets: HK\$30,001 - HK\$40,000 (41.9 hours per week), HK\$40,001 - HK\$50,000 (44.8 hours per week), HK\$50,001 of above (43.4 hours per week) as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Contractual working hours per week by income (2007 and 2006)





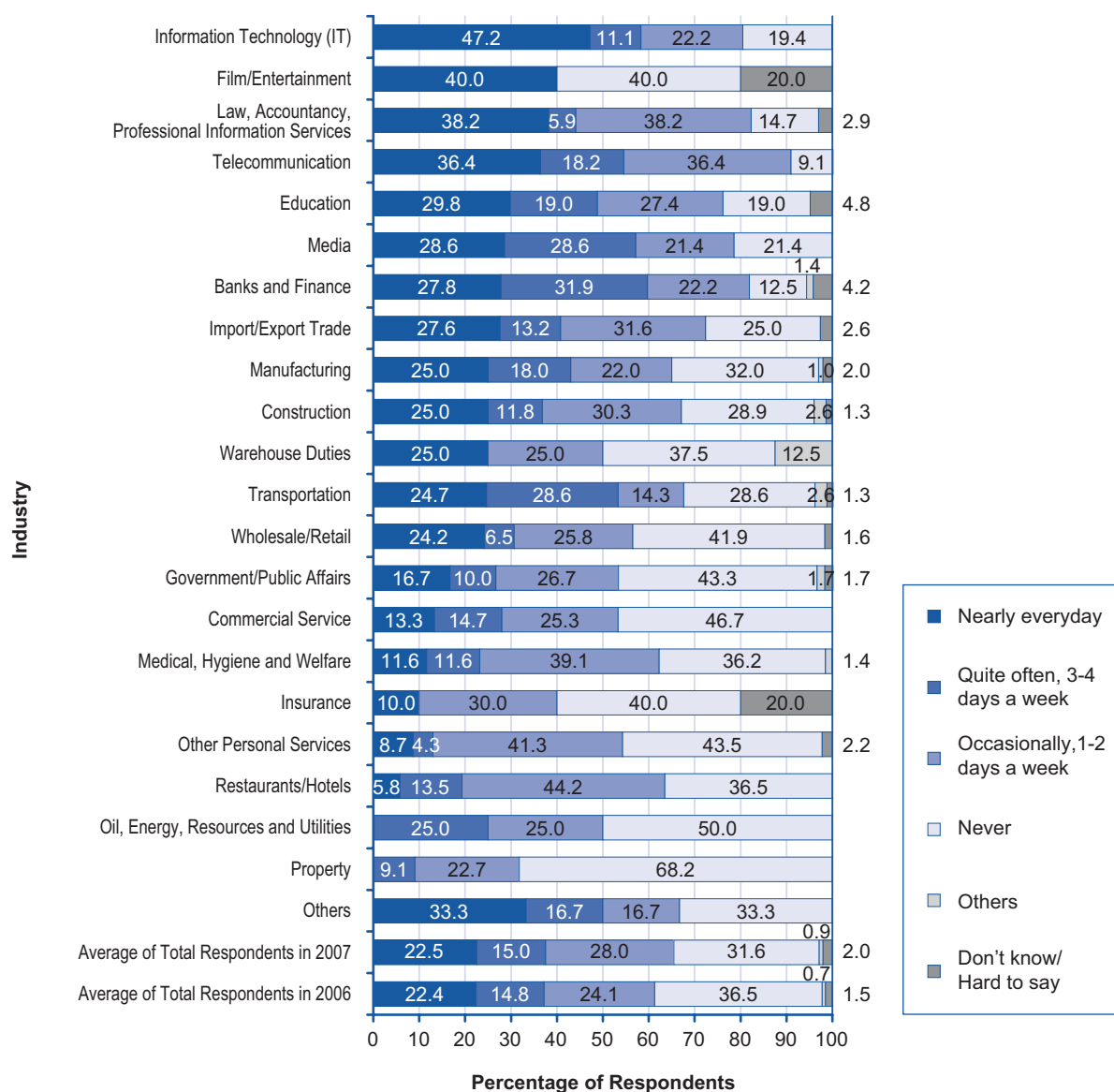
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Finding 2: More employees in Hong Kong regularly work overtime - but this is mainly because contractual hours are down

Figure 7 shows that 65.5% of employees work overtime - be it “nearly everyday”, “quite often” or “occasionally” each week. This compares to 61.3% in 2006. This figure must be seen in context because working hours have actually decreased in Hong Kong. The reason for this overtime is in part because of the shortened contractual working hours.

Figure 7. Frequency of overtime by industry (2007)





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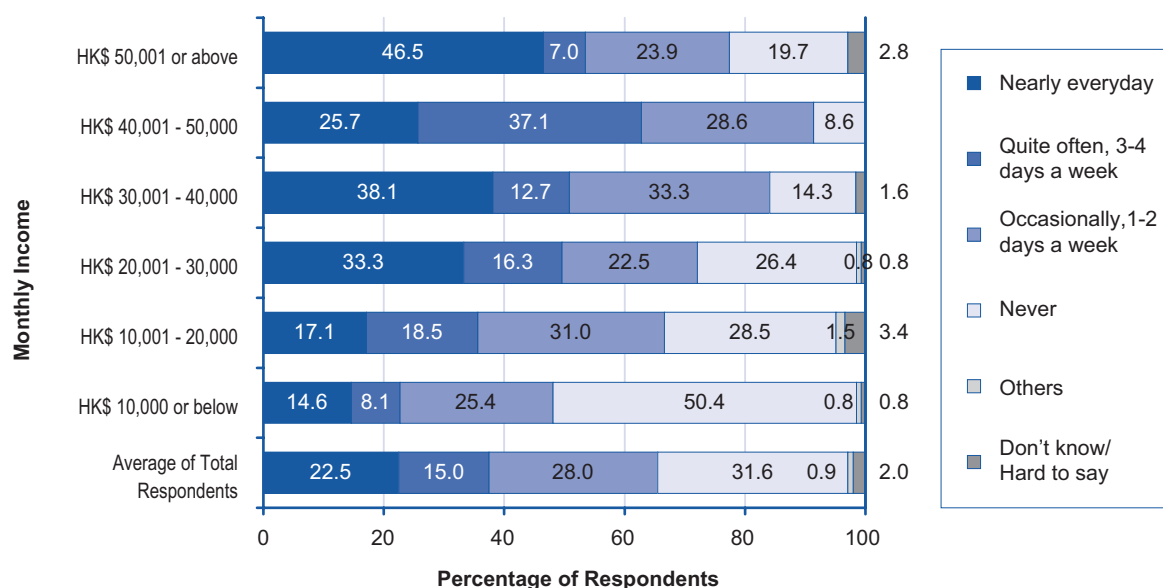


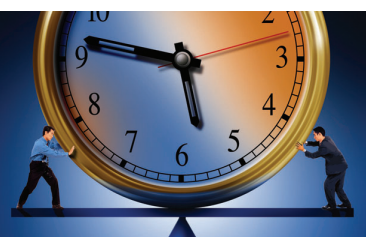
In certain industries, frequent overtime defined as “nearly everyday”, is more prevalent than in others. This is the case for the following industries: Information Technology (47.2%), Film/Entertainment (40.0%), Law, Accountancy, Professional Information (38.2%) and Telecommunications (36.4%). However a large proportion of people in the following industries say they never work overtime: Property (68.2%), Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (50.0%) and Commercial Service (46.7%).



Findings reveal that as the income level of employees increases they are more likely to work overtime nearly everyday as shown in Figure 8. This may be a reflection of the increased level of responsibility and associated workloads.

Figure 8. Frequency of overtime by income (2007)





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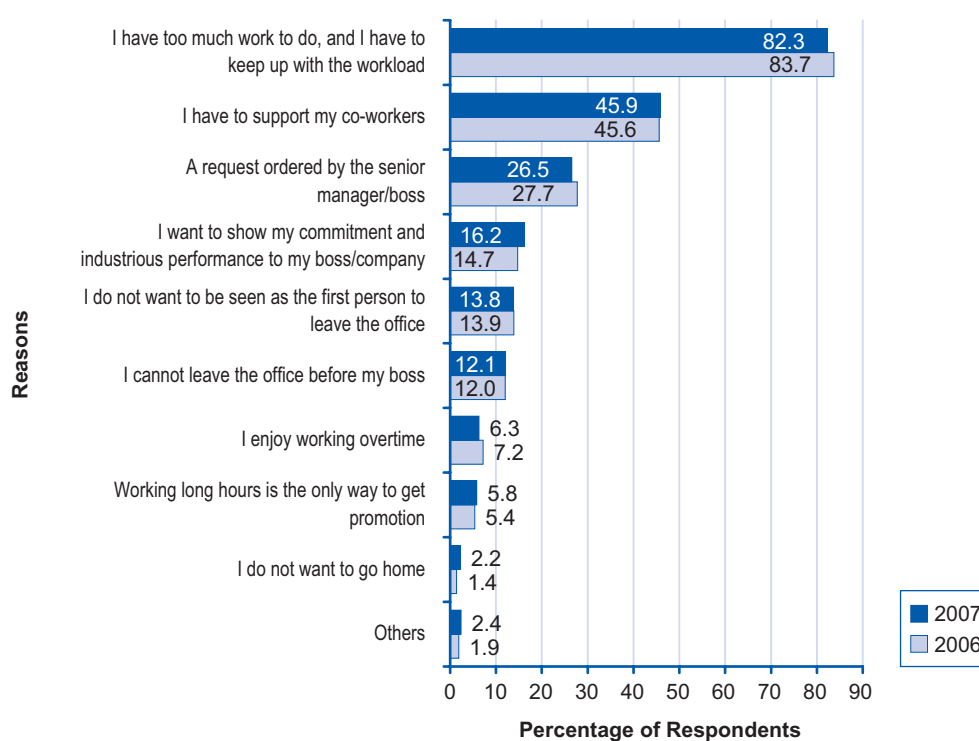
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Finding 3: Too much work remains the top reason for overtime

Respondents were asked to select the main reasons they work overtime and findings reveal that the reasons are ranked in exactly the same order as in the 2006 Survey as shown in Figure 9. The top three reasons for working overtime continue to be too much work (82.3%), the need to support co-workers (45.9%) and requests from senior management (26.5%).

The number of employees who say they enjoy working overtime has fallen from 7.2% last year to 6.3% this year.

Figure 9. Reasons for overtime (2007 and 2006)





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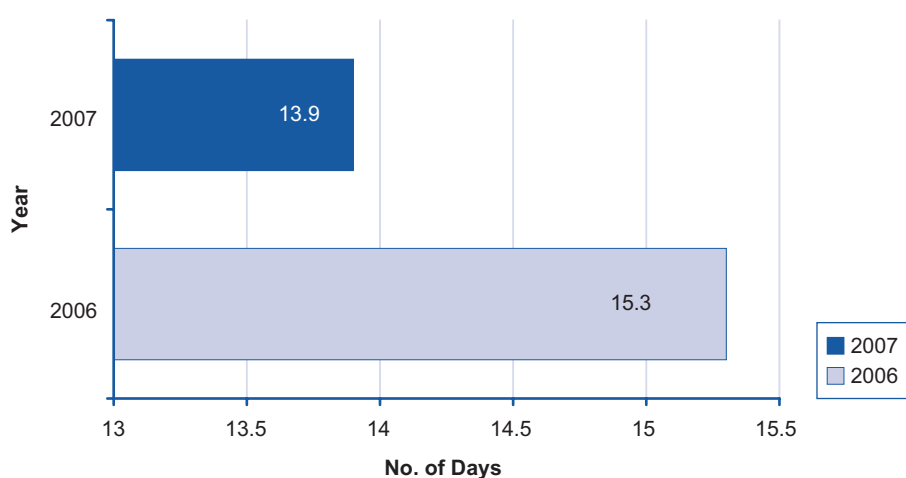
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Finding 4: Employers have reduced paid annual leave and over 35% of employees do not always take their annual leave entitlement

Leave entitlement

This year, the average number of days of paid annual leave that employees are entitled to has fallen to 13.9 as shown in Figure 10. This is down 10% from 2006 when employees were entitled to 15.3 days.

Figure 10. Average number of days of paid annual leave (2007 and 2006)



As Figure 11 shows, employees in some industries are entitled to more leave than others. The industries in which employees receive the greatest number of days of annual leave are: Government/Public Affairs (25.2 days), Media (23.6 days) and Education (23.5 days). The industries in which employees receive the least number of days of annual leave are: Other Personal Services (7.9 days), Insurance (8.5 days) and Restaurants/Hotels (8.7 days).

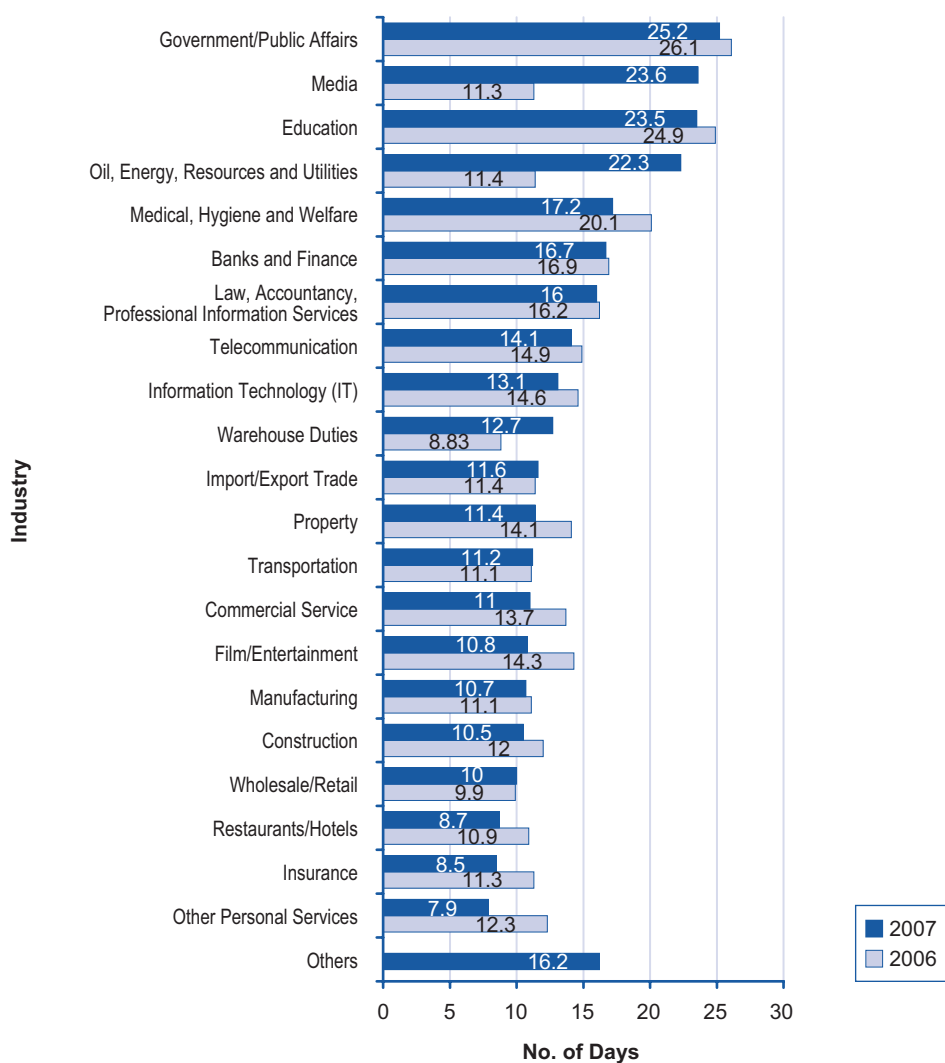
Comparing findings from 2007 and 2006 by industry, significant decreases in paid entitled annual leave can be seen in Commercial Service (from 13.7 to 11.0 days) and Other Personal Services (from 12.3 to 7.9 days).



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Figure 11. Paid annual leave entitlement by industry (2007 and 2006)





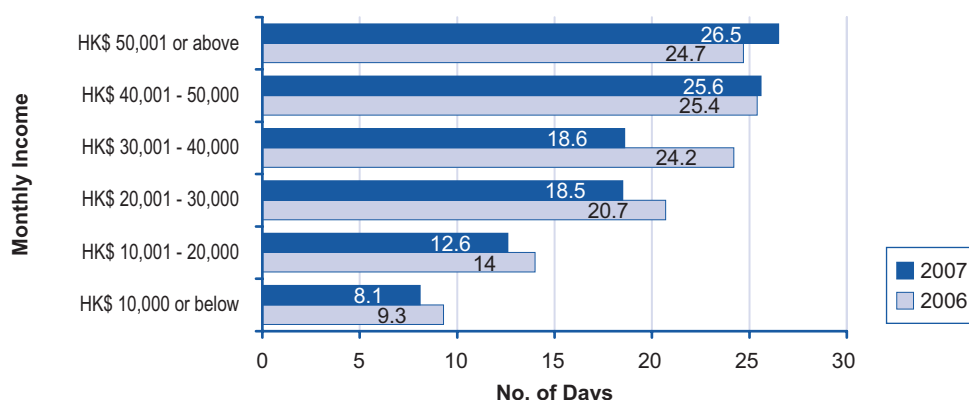
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Findings from the 2007 Survey reveal that those in higher income brackets have more leave entitlement than those in lower income brackets as shown in Figure 12. However, those who earn HK\$30,001 - HK\$40,000 seem to have experienced the sharpest decline in their leave entitlement from 24.2 days in 2006 to 18.6 days this year.

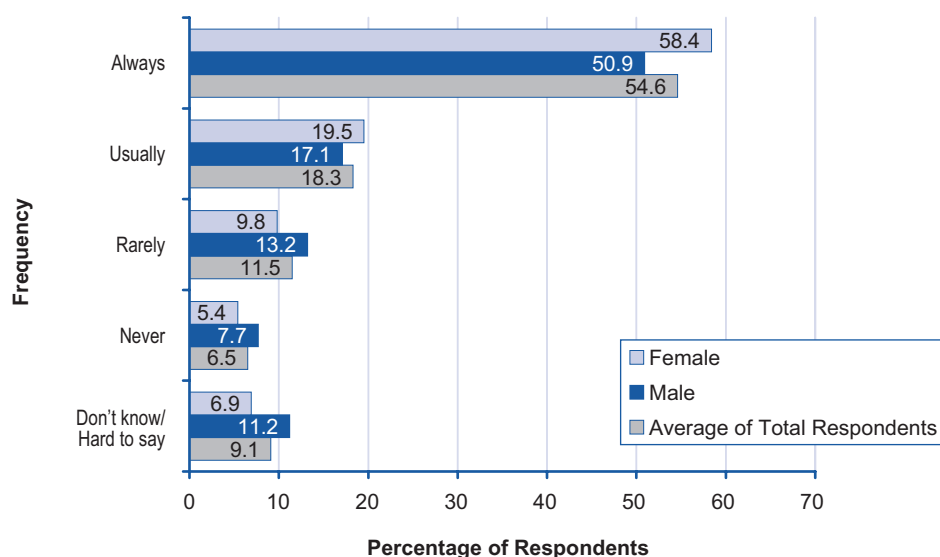
Figure 12. Paid annual leave entitlement by income (2007 and 2006)



Leave taken

Respondents were asked a new question this year regarding whether they take all their annual leave entitlement each year. Figure 13 shows that only 54.6% say they always take all their annual leave each year. 18.3% of respondents usually take all their annual leave but as much as 18.0% rarely or never take all their leave.

Figure 13. Frequency of paid annual leave taken each year by gender (2007)





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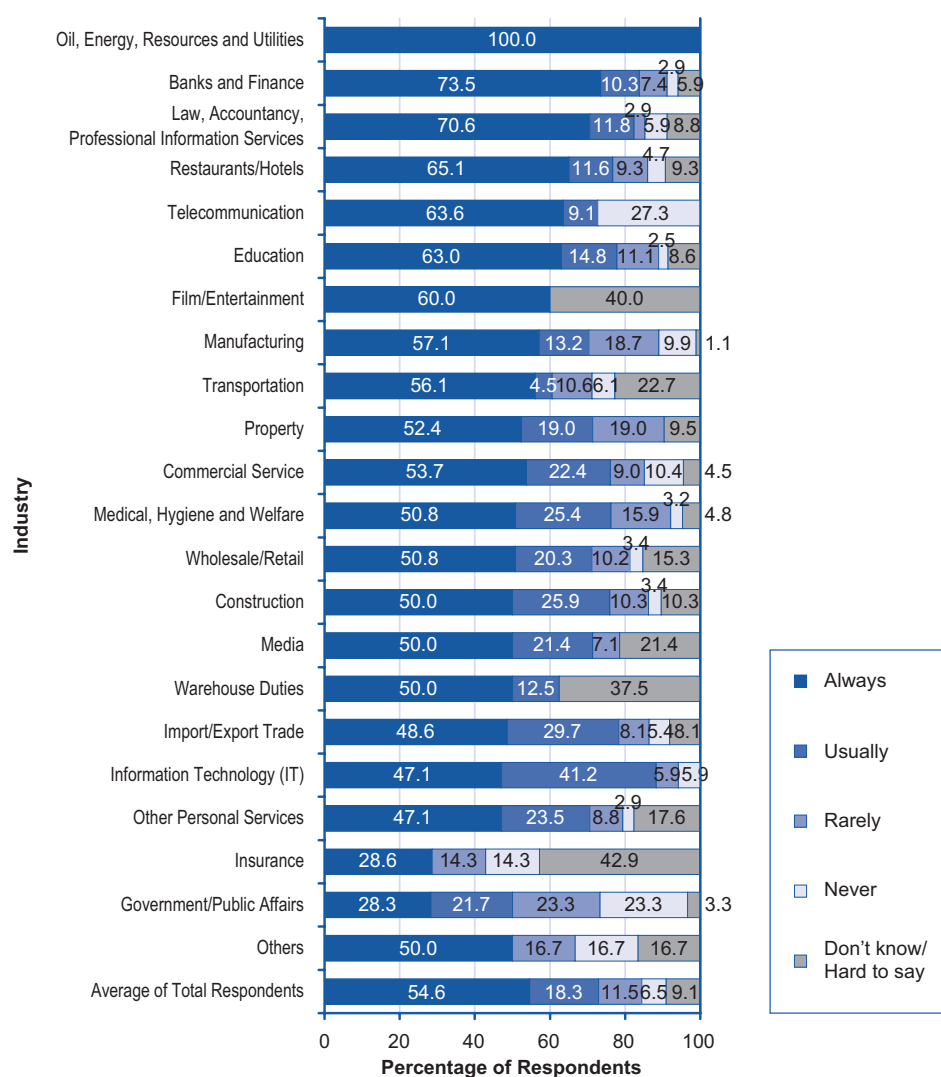
Further analysis shows that women are more likely to take their annual leave than men. For example Figure 13 reveals that more women (58.4%) always take their paid annual leave than men (50.9%).

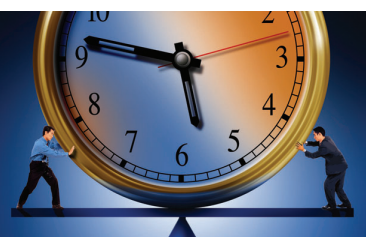


In certain industries a large majority of employees say they always take their annual leave. The top 3 industries in this regard are: Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (100%), Banks and Finance (73.5%) and Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services (70.6%) as shown in Figure 14.

The three industries with the largest group of employees who state they never take their annual leave are: Telecommunication (27.3%), Government/Public Affairs (23.3%) and Insurance (14.3%).

Figure 14. Frequency of paid annual leave taken each year by industry (2007)





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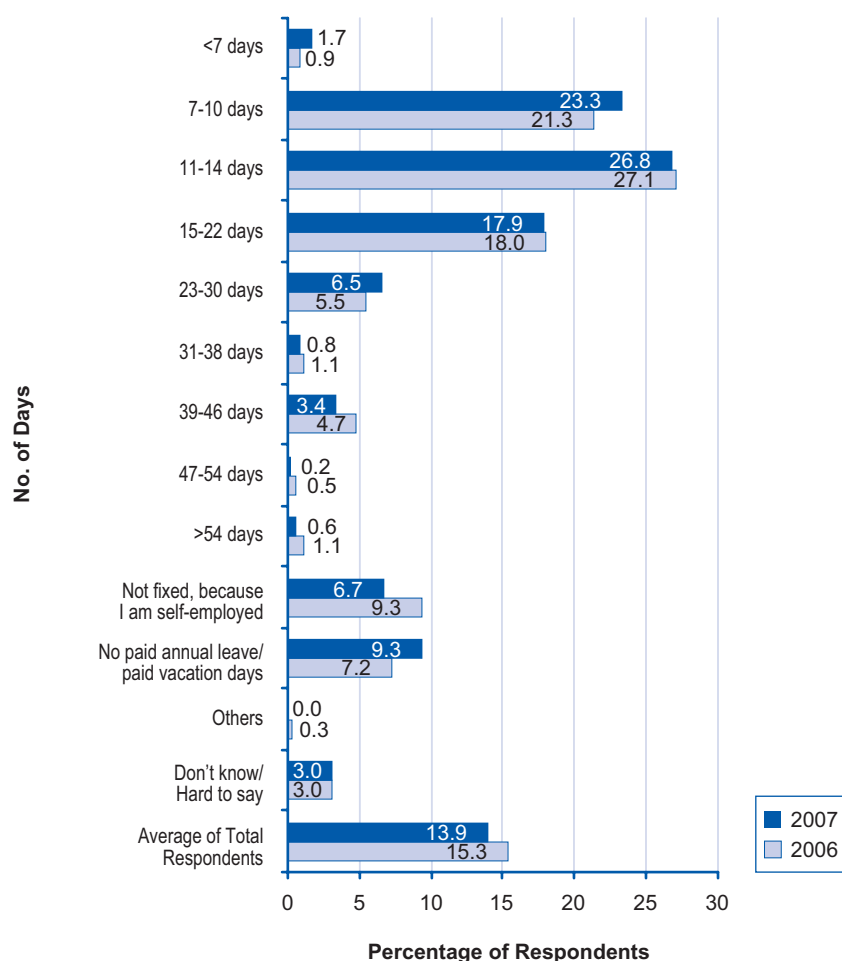
Finding 5: More employees are not entitled to the statutory minimum of 7 days annual leave

The Employment Ordinance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region states clearly that an employee is entitled to annual leave with pay after employment under a continuous contract for 12 months and the minimum amount of such leave is 7 days².

The 2007 Survey reveals that there is an increase in the number of employees who are denied the statutory minimum of 7 days annual leave. Figure 15 shows that the number of respondents who are not entitled to 7 full days of annual leave has doubled from 0.9% in 2006 to 1.7% this year. The number of employees who are not given any leave has increased from 7.2% last year to 9.3% this year.

The 2007 Survey does not reveal whether the employees who cite they are not entitled to the leave have been working for at least 12 months but if they have, this behaviour on the part of the employer is potentially unlawful.

Figure 15. Amount of paid annual leave (2007 and 2006)



² Adapted from Shalini Mahtani, "The State of Work-life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2006 – A Summary of Research Findings", Community Business, page 9



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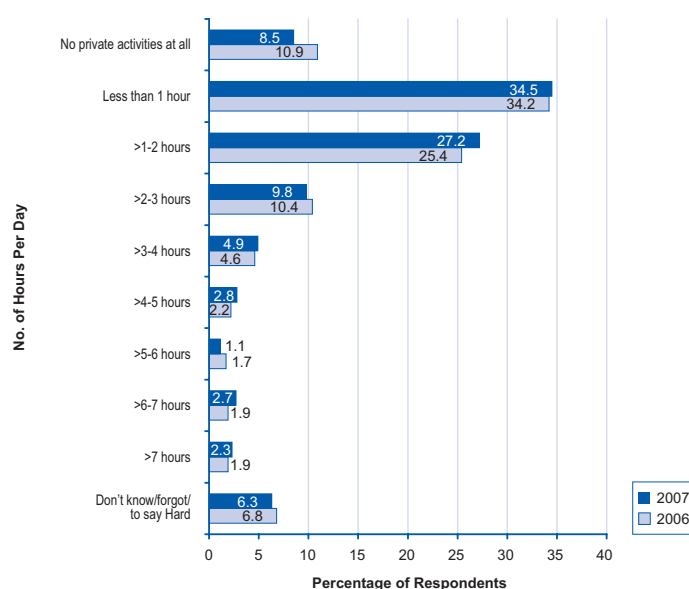
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Finding 6: Employees in Hong Kong still have little time for personal life

Employees were asked how much time they spend on personal and private activities. About 70% of employees say they spend less than 2 hours per day on personal or private activities as shown in Figure 16. The largest proportion of respondents (34.5%) spend less than 1 hour during the course of the day on private activities and this is consistent with the findings in 2006. In addition, this year, 8.5% spend no time at all on private activities - this represents a drop of 2.4% from 10.9% last year.

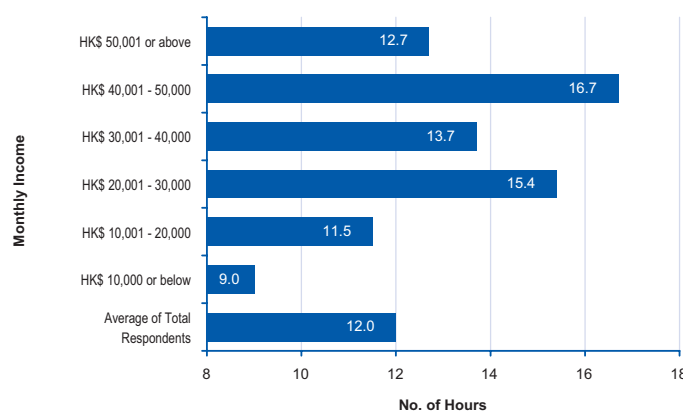
On average, each respondent spends 1.7 hours per day on personal activities compared to 1.6 hours in 2006.

Figure 16. Time spent on private activities per day (2007 and 2006)



Employees in low income groups tend to spend less time on private activities each week compared to those in higher income groups as shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Time spent on private activities per week by income (2007)





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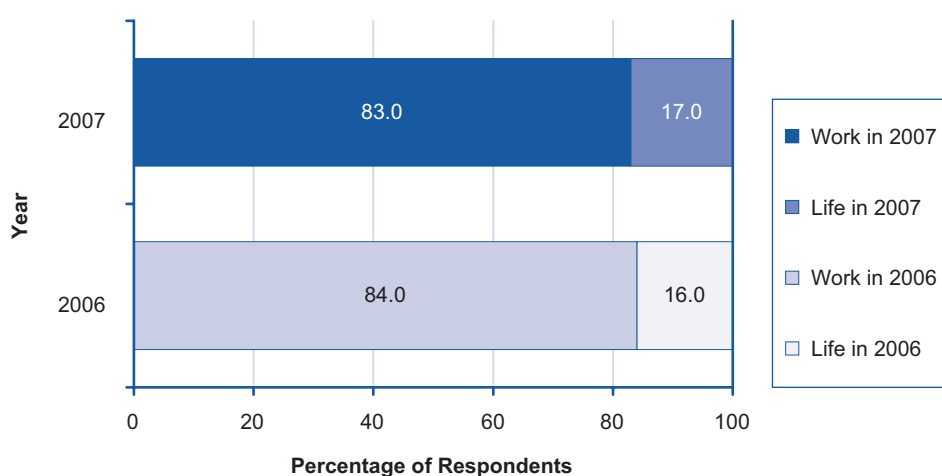
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Finding 7: Work-life balance has improved slightly but is still a far cry from what employees think is ideal and realistic

Respondents were asked what their ideal split between work and personal life is. We call this the “preferred” work-life ratio. The preferred work-life ratio for 2007 was 60:40 compared to 61:39 in 2006. This shows that employees’ expectations have changed slightly from last year and they now prefer fewer hours to be spent on work than previously.

In addition, findings in Figure 18 show that the actual work-life ratio is 83:17 in 2007. Although this is a slight improvement from 84:16 last year, it is still far from what employees say is their “preferred” work-life ratio.

Figure 18. Actual work-life ratio (2007 and 2006)

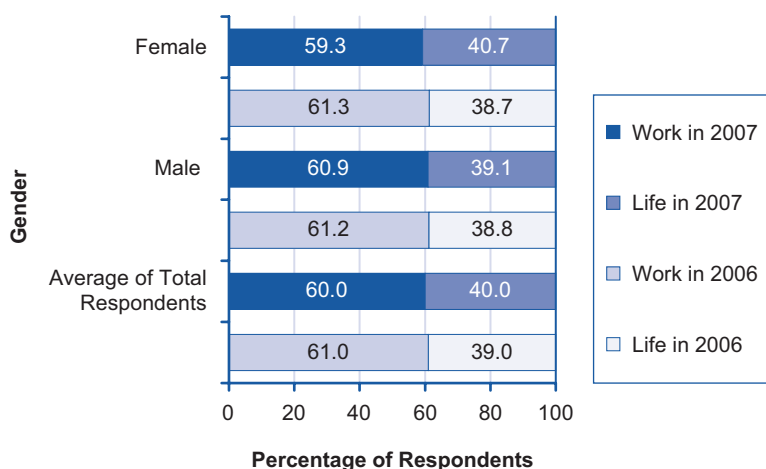


Preferred work-life balance



Women in the workplace prefer to have a more balanced work-life ratio (59:41) than men (61:39) as shown in Figure 19. In addition, the percentage of time women would like to spend at work has dropped from 61.3% in 2006 to 59.3% this year.

Figure 19. Preferred work-life ratio by gender (2007 and 2006)





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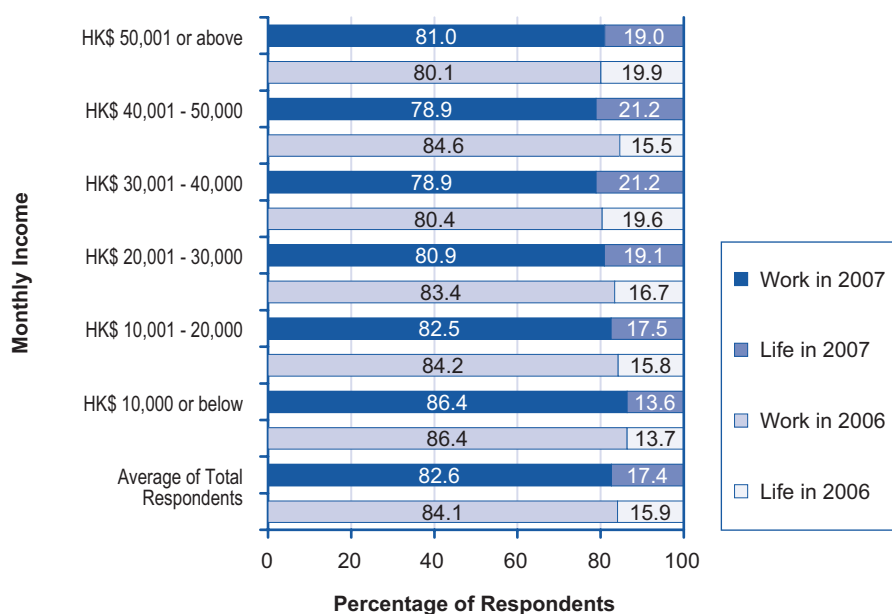
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As Figure 20 shows, high income groups have a more balanced work-life ratio than low income groups. This is not surprising as lower income employees tend to have to work around the schedules and demands of their bosses.

The most noticeable change by income group is in the income bracket HK\$40,001 - HK\$50,000, with an improvement in their work-life ratio from 85:15 in 2006 to 79:21 in 2007.

Figure 20. Actual work-life ratio by income (2007 and 2006)





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B. Satisfaction with work and life

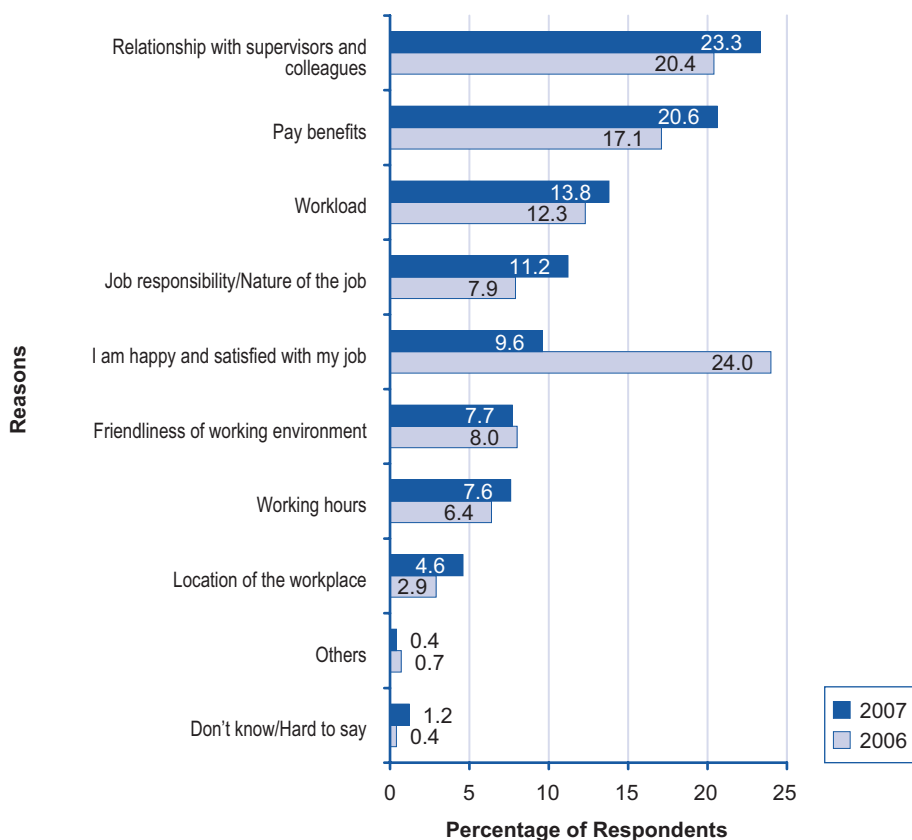
Finding 8: More employees are unhappy at work and the main reason remains poor relationships with supervisors and colleagues

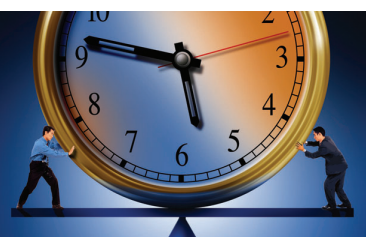
Respondents were asked to select the most important reason for unhappiness at work. They were given a range of options and asked to choose only one option. The list also included the option of being happy and satisfied with their work.

Worryingly, only 9.6% say they are satisfied and happy with their jobs as shown in Figure 21. This is a dramatic drop from 24% in 2006. This may be because this year the interviewer explicitly prompted this response. The total number of respondents who cite reasons for unhappiness increased to 89.2% from 75.6% last year.

Figure 21 shows the top 3 reasons they cite for unhappiness are relationship with supervisors and colleagues (23.3%), pay benefits (20.6%) and workload (13.8%). Interestingly, the number of respondents who cite pay benefits as the most important reason for their unhappiness increased the most from 17.1% to 20.6%.

Figure 21. Main reasons for unhappiness at work (2007 and 2006)





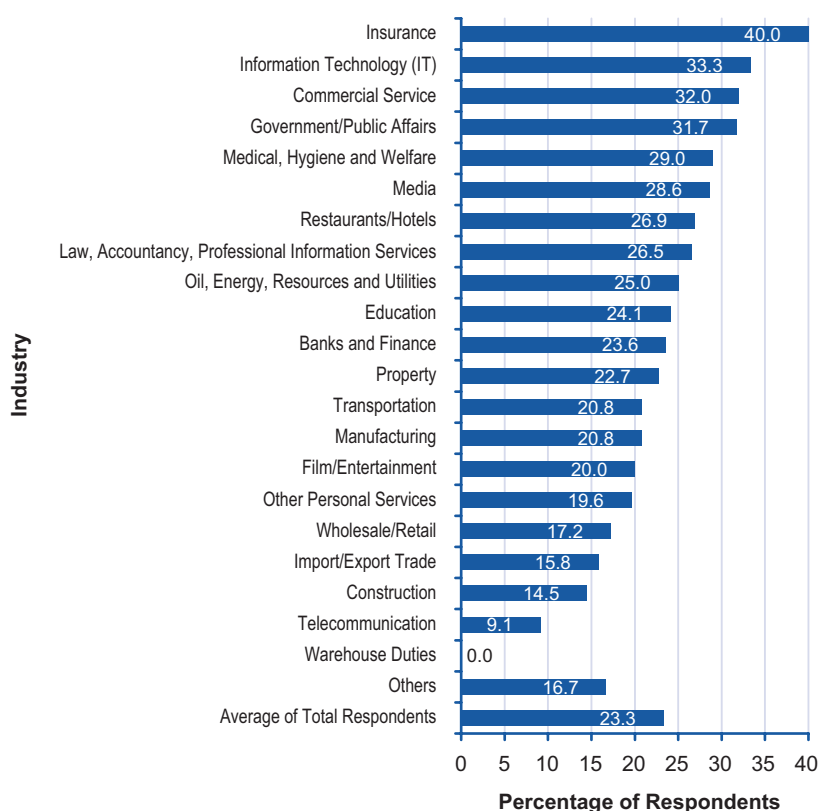
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Employees in some industries believe that the relationship with their supervisors and colleagues is the main reason for their unhappiness at work. This is true especially in the Insurance industry but also for those in Information Technology, Commercial Service and Government/Public Affairs. As shown in Figure 22, in all of these industries over 30% of employees cite relationship with supervisors and colleagues as the main reason for unhappiness.

Figure 22. Relationship with supervisors and colleagues as the main reason for unhappiness at work by industry (2007)



For other employees pay benefits are the main cause of their unhappiness at work and these employees come from a number of industries as shown in Figure 23. Over 28% of those who work in restaurants and hotels are particularly unhappy at work due to pay benefits.

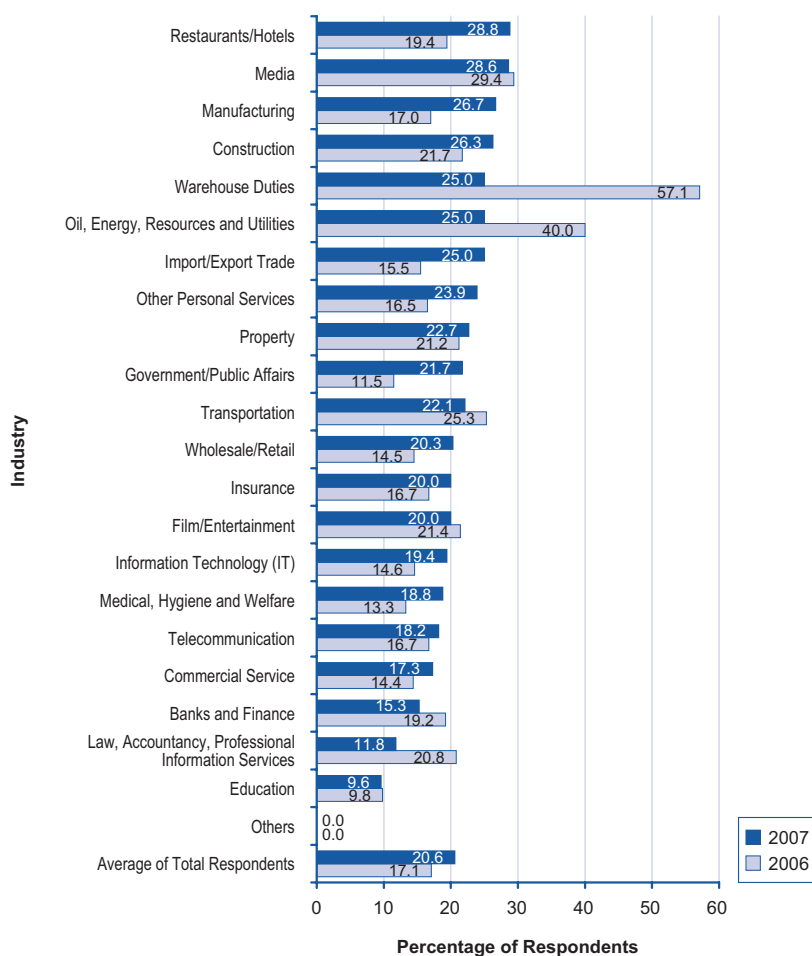
Comparing 2007 with 2006, pay benefits have become significantly more important to some industries particularly Government/Public Affairs and Manufacturing.



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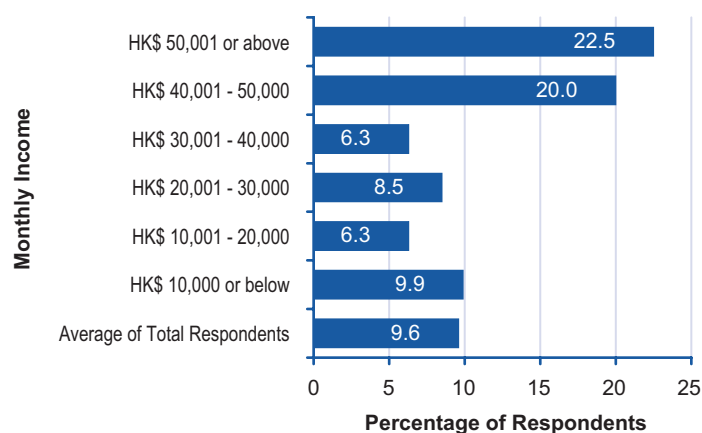
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Figure 23. Pay benefits as the main reason for unhappiness at work by industry (2007)



Significantly more employees at higher income levels are happy and satisfied with their job as shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Employees happy and satisfied with their job by income (2007)





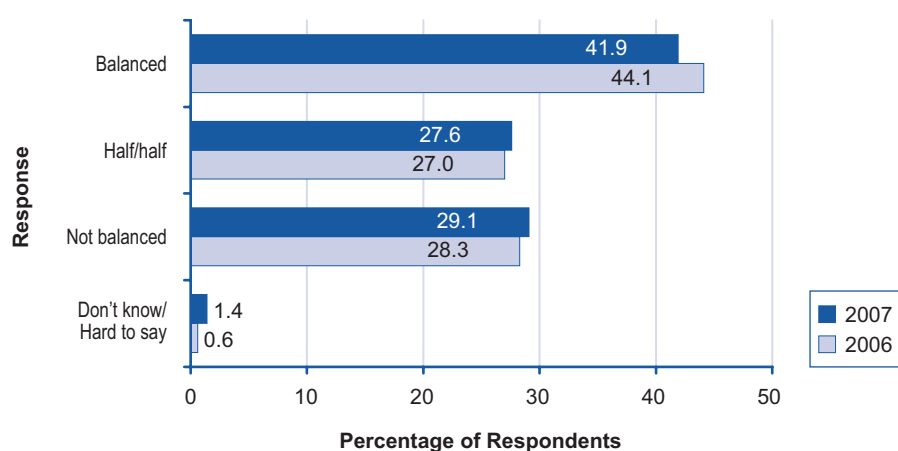
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Finding 9: Fewer employees say their work and private lives are balanced

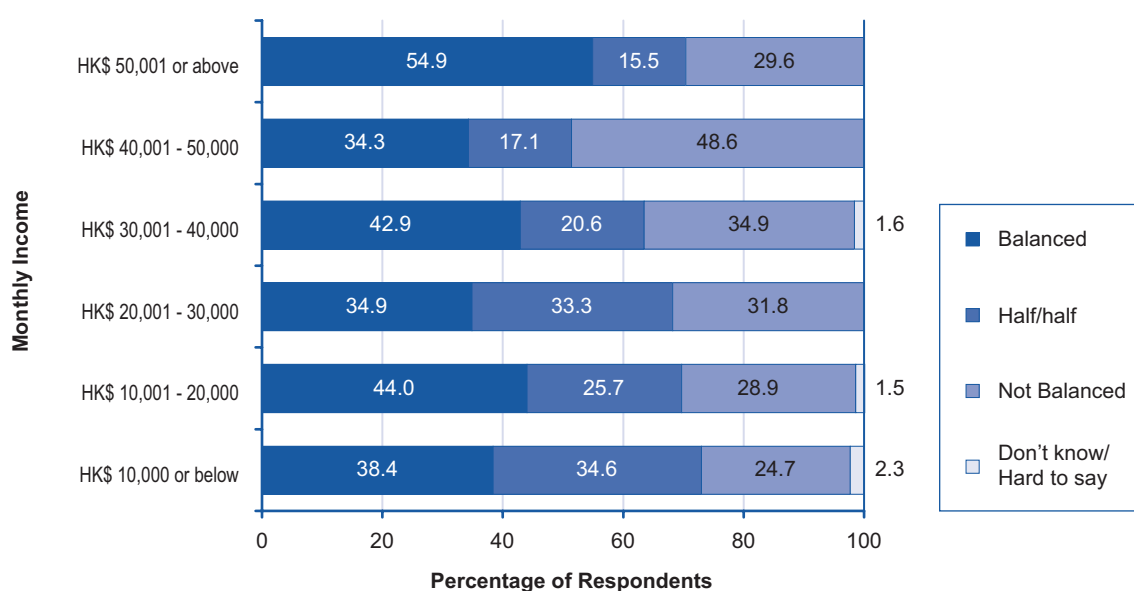
Questions were asked to seek respondents' views on whether they consider their work and lives balanced. Figure 25 shows that the number of respondents who believe their work and private lives are balanced falls from 44.1% in 2006 to 41.9% this year while those who believe their work and lives are not balanced rises from 28.3% to 29.1%. This is in line with Finding 7 which shows that over the last year, employees' expectations of work-life balance have risen and therefore, fewer people think their situation is balanced this year.

Figure 25. Extent to which current work and private lives are balanced (2007 and 2006)



As income levels increase, there is a greater percentage of employees who think their work and private lives are not balanced. This is true for all income levels except the highest income level of HK\$50,001 or above, as shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26. Extent to which current work and private lives are balanced by income (2007)





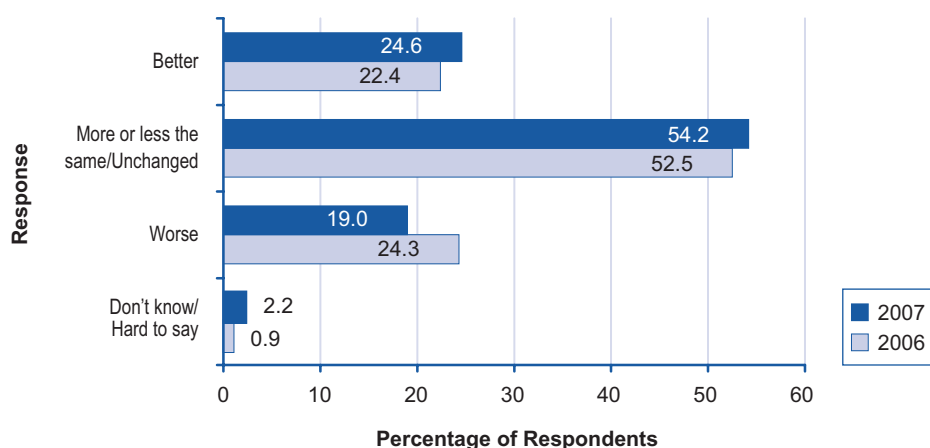
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Finding 10: More employees believe their work-life balance has improved over the last 12 months

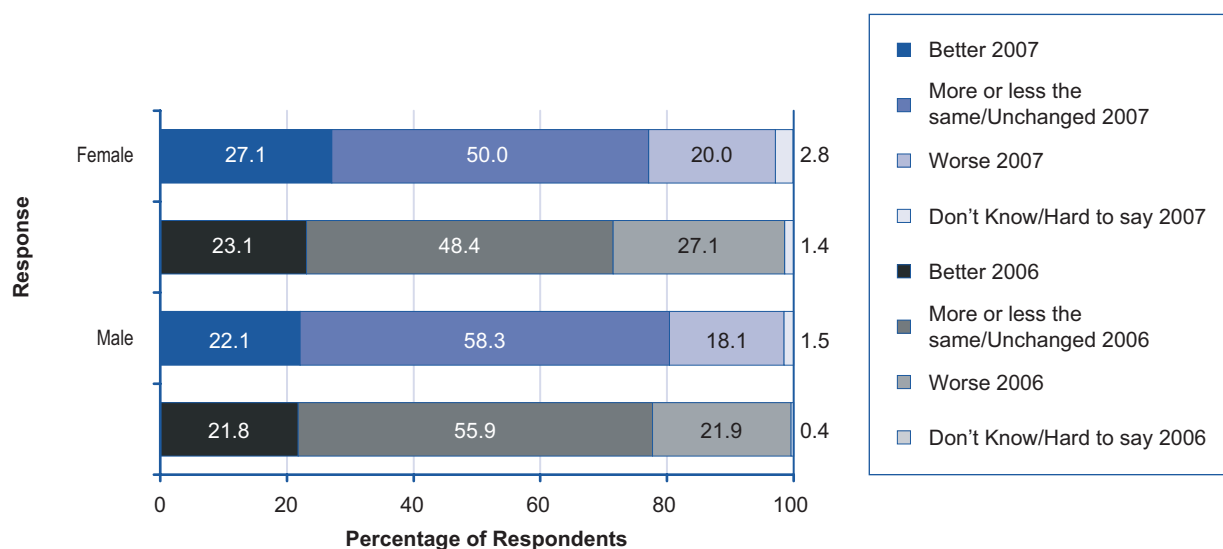
Despite Finding 9, a higher percentage of employees this year believe that if they compare their work-life balance with last year, things have improved - as shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27. Work-life balance this year compared to last year (2007 and 2006)



More females say their work-life balance has improved (27.1%) than males (22.1%) as shown in Figure 28. Also, significantly fewer men (from 21.9% in 2006 to 18.1% in 2007) than women (27.1% in 2006 and 20.0% in 2007) think their work-life balance had become worse.

Figure 28. Work-life balance this year compared to last year by gender (2007 and 2006)





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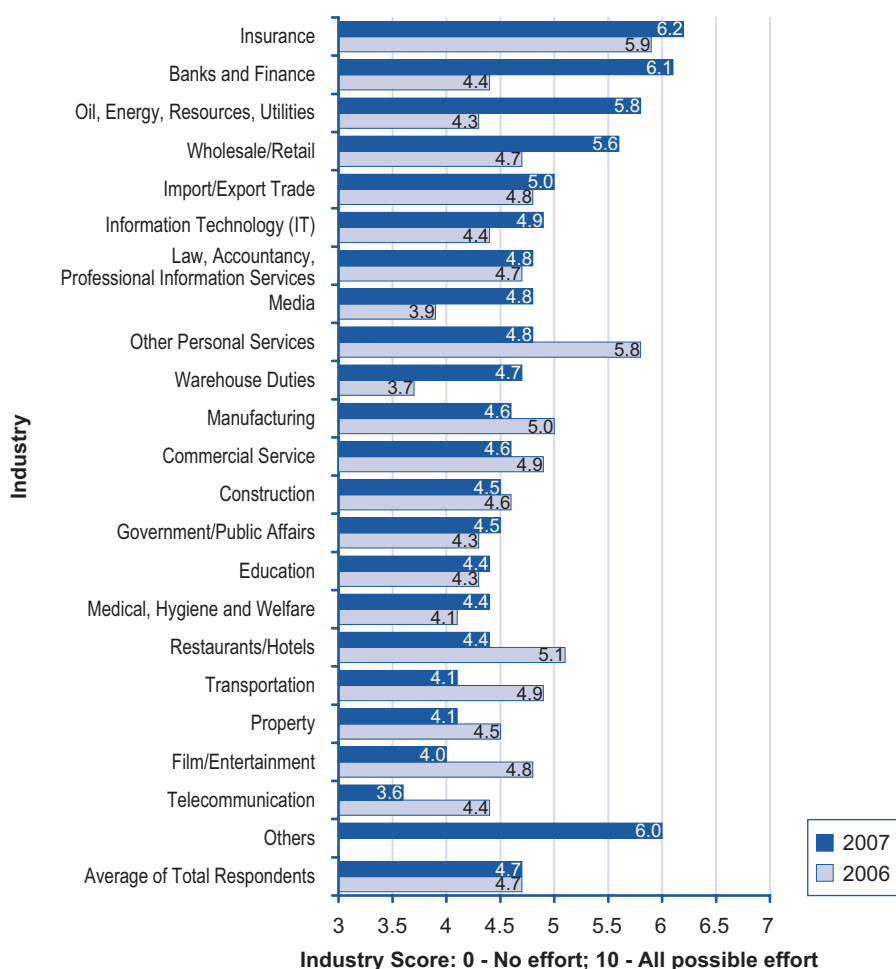
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Finding 11: Employers still need to do more to promote work-life balance

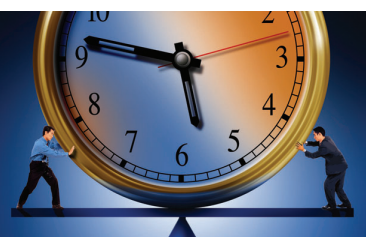
Employees were asked how much they think their employer has contributed, in terms of resources and efforts, to promote work-life balance. The scores range from 0 to 10 with 0 representing no effort being made, 10 being all possible effort being made and 5 being neutral.

Figure 29 shows that the average score remains at 4.7 which means, employers still need do more to promote work-life balance in the workplace. This score is the same as that of last year.

Figure 29. Effort and resources spent to promote work-life balance by industry (2007 and 2006)



As shown in Figure 29, Insurance (6.2), Banks and Finance (6.1) and Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (5.8) perform the best in the views of the employees. On the other hand, employees give their employers the worst scores in the following industries: Telecommunication (3.6), Film/Entertainment (4.0) and Property and Transportation (4.1) each.



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C. Problems with current work-life balance and desired solutions

Finding 12: Employees in Hong Kong have a long way to go to achieve their ideal work-life balance

Respondents were asked to rate how far they had achieved their ideal work-life balance on a scale of 0 to 10. The higher the score the closer they are to their ideal situation with the score of 5 being neutral. The average score of respondents is 5.6. This compares to an average score of 5.7 last year.



Females claim to have achieved a better work-life balance than their male counterparts as shown in Figure 30.

Figure 30. Degree to which employees have achieved their ideal work-life balance by gender (2007)

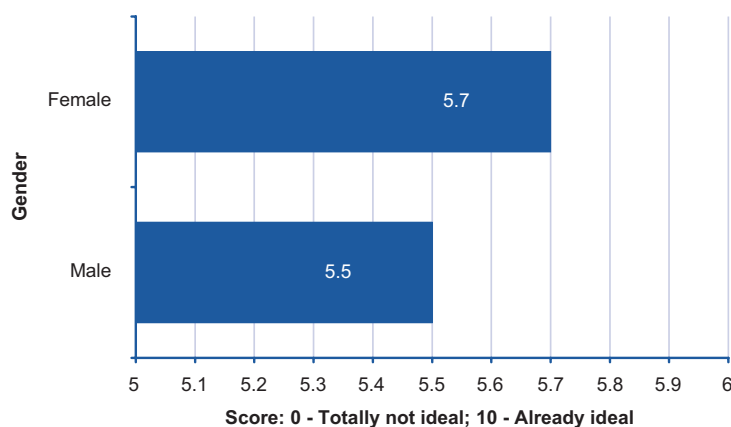
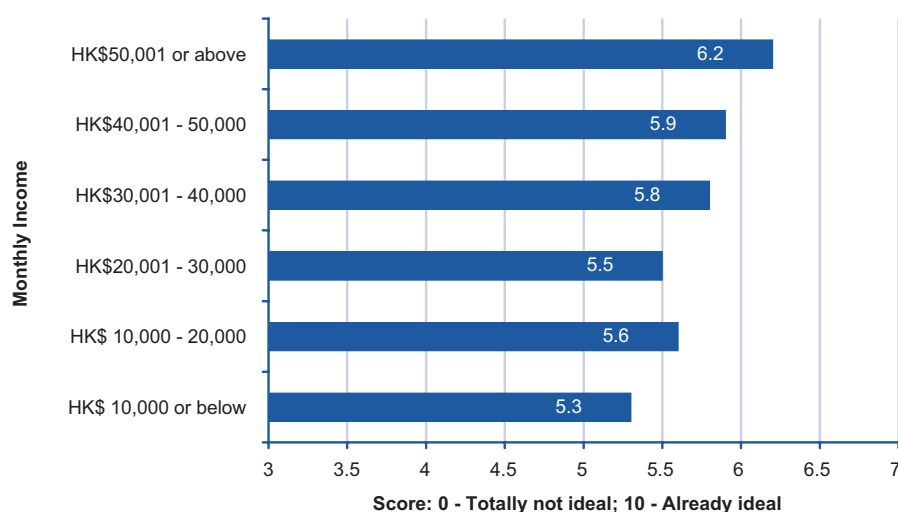


Figure 31 shows that the higher the income level the more likely employees have achieved their ideal work-life balance.

Figure 31. Degree to which employees have achieved their ideal work-life balance by income (2007)





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Finding 13: The need for financial security has overtaken long working hours as the most difficult work-life balance challenge for employees

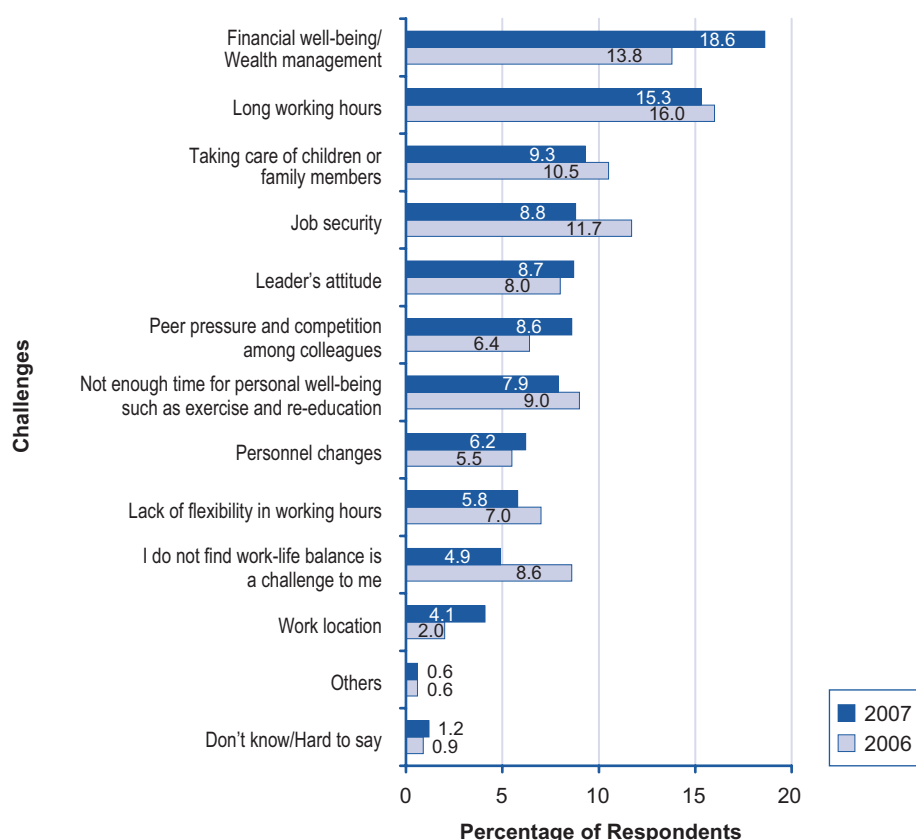
Respondents were asked to select the most difficult work-life balance challenge they face from a list of options. They were only allowed to choose one factor from the list.

Figure 32 shows that this year, the largest group (18.6%) of employees cited financial well-being and wealth management as the most difficult challenge to work-life balance. Financial well-being refers to respondents' financial condition while wealth management is how respondents manage their financial assets. Although the economy has improved, more people are worried about their financial well being.

Furthermore, Figure 32 shows that long working hours (15.3%) falls to second place followed by taking care of children or family members (9.3%). Job security which was ranked third last year, has moved down to number four as the number of respondents who cited it drops drastically from 11.7% in 2006 to 8.8% this year.

Only 4.9% of employees say they do not find that work-life balance is a challenge to them.

Figure 32. Most difficult work-life balance challenges (2007 and 2006)





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Those in the higher income groups see long working hours as the most difficult work-life balance challenge whereas those in the lower income groups find financial well-being and wealth management as their major challenges as shown in Figures 33 and 34.

Figure 34 also shows that financial well-being increased significantly from 2006 as a challenge for those in the lowest income groups.

Figure 33. Long working hours as the most difficult work-life balance challenge by income (2007)

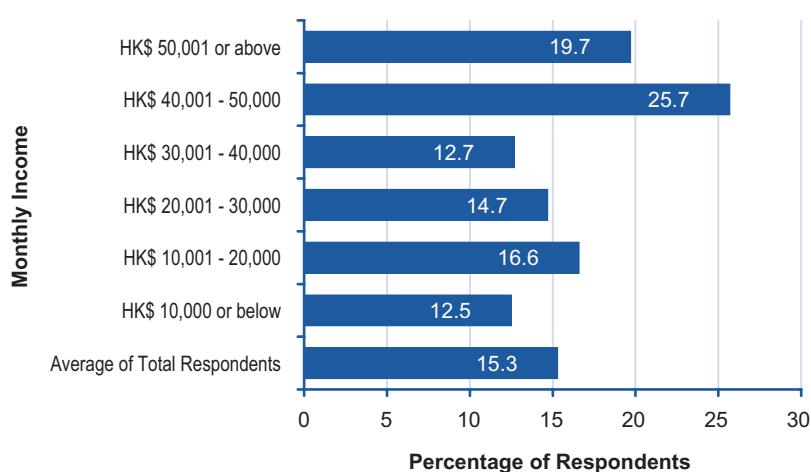
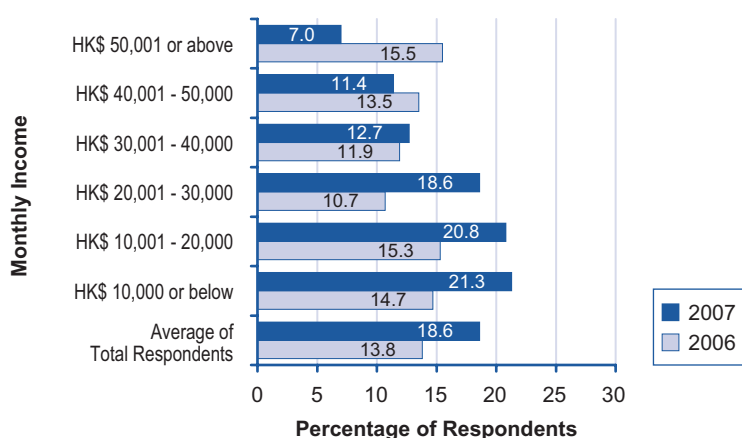


Figure 34. Financial well-being as the most difficult work-life balance challenge by income (2007 and 2006)





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Finding 14: Technology has a positive impact on work-life balance

One of the new questions asked in the 2007 Survey was whether employees think the latest technology has a positive or negative impact on their work-life balance. As shown in Figure 35, more than 6 out of 10 believe it has a positive impact while only 12.3% believe the impact is negative.

Figure 35. Impact of the latest technology on work-life balance by gender (2007)

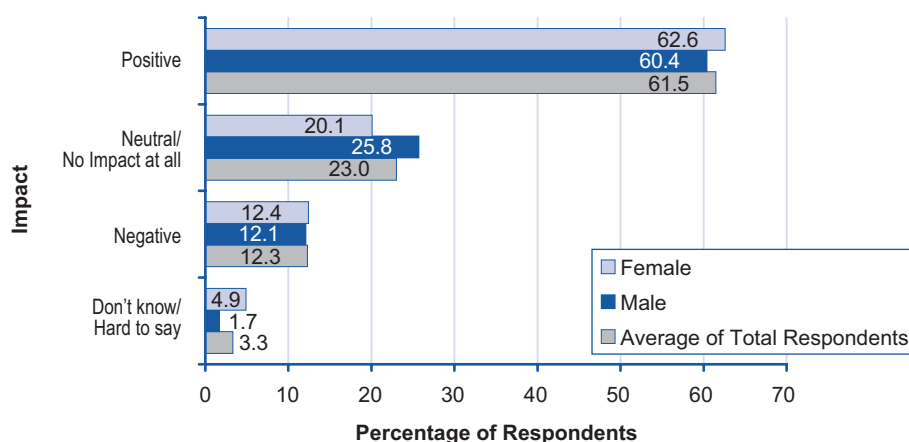


Figure 35 shows that more females (62.6%) say it is positive compared with males (60.4%). On the other hand, more males (25.8%) say the impact is neutral or there is no impact at all compared with females (20.1%).



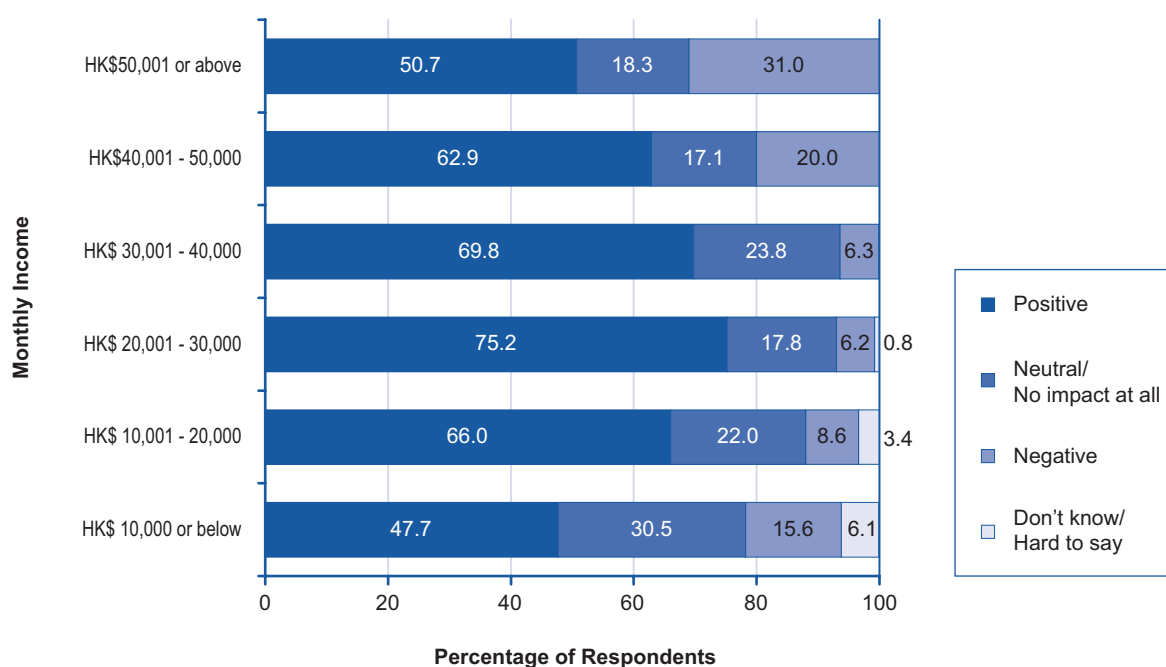
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Employees at all but the lowest income level say that the impact of technology is positive on work-life balance as shown in Figure 36.

Figure 36. Impact of technology on work-life balance by income (2007)



However, Figure 36 shows that there are more employees in the lowest and two highest income brackets who cite the negative impact of latest technology when compared with other income groups. At the higher income levels this may be because such employees are more likely to have technological devices (i.e. mobile phones and personal digital assistants), which makes it less possible for them to have a clear distinction between work time and private time. At the lowest income level, it may be because such individuals are less technology savvy and therefore less comfortable with technology.



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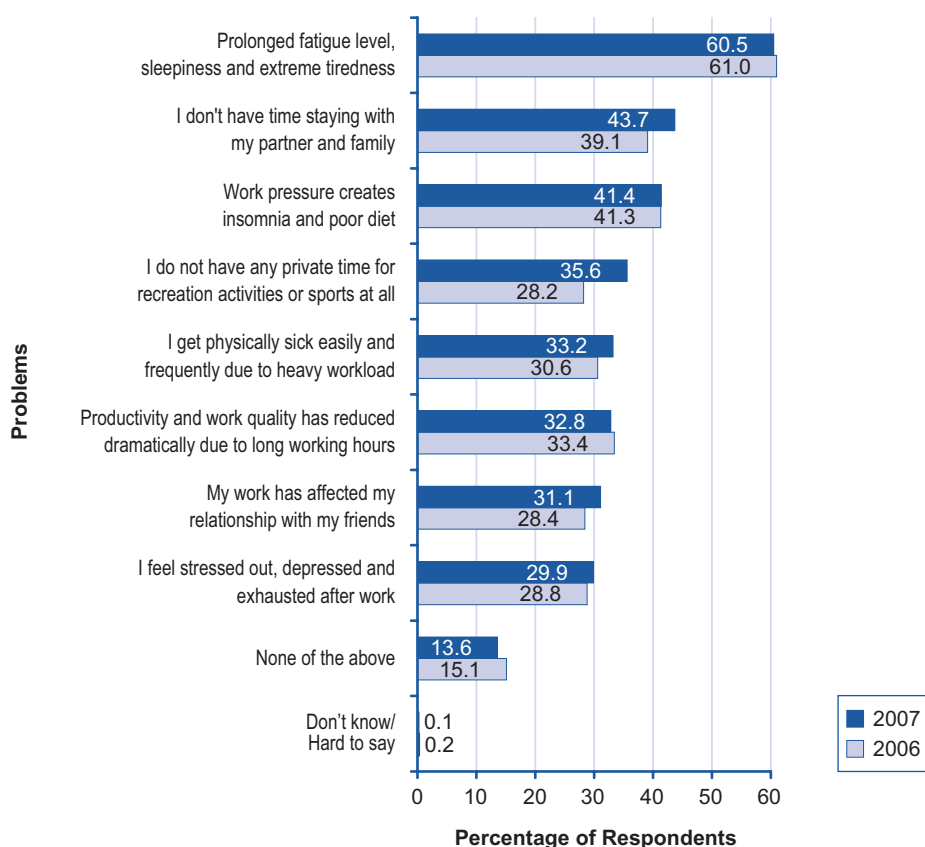
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Finding 15: Poor work-life balance adversely impacts productivity, health and family life

Respondents were asked what problems they have encountered as a result of their work-life balance and were given a list of options to choose from. They were able to choose more than one option. As shown in Figure 37, a majority (60.5%) claim they suffer from prolonged fatigue, sleepiness and extreme tiredness. This figure is similar to that of last year (61.0%).

The number of those who cite that they do not have enough time for their partner and family has increased from 39.1% in 2006 to 43.7% this year. Those who stated that they do not have enough time for recreation or sports has risen from 28.2% last year to 35.6% this year. This can potentially result in a surge in family and health problems - both which would be a high cost for Hong Kong society to bear.

Figure 37. Problems resulting from poor work-life balance (2007 and 2006)





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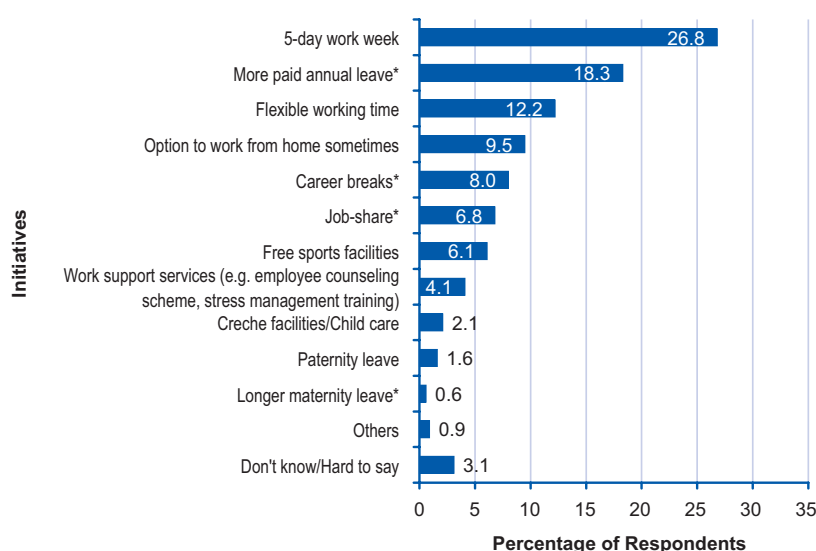
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Finding 16: Employees say that a 5-day work week and more paid annual leave would most help them to achieve better work-life balance

Respondents were asked what work arrangements or facilities they believe would most help them achieve better work-life balance. They were given a range of options to choose from but could only choose one. This year, four new options were added to the list: more paid annual leave, career breaks, job-share and longer maternity leave. It is therefore, not appropriate to make year-on-year comparisons. The results are shown in Figure 38a and 38b.

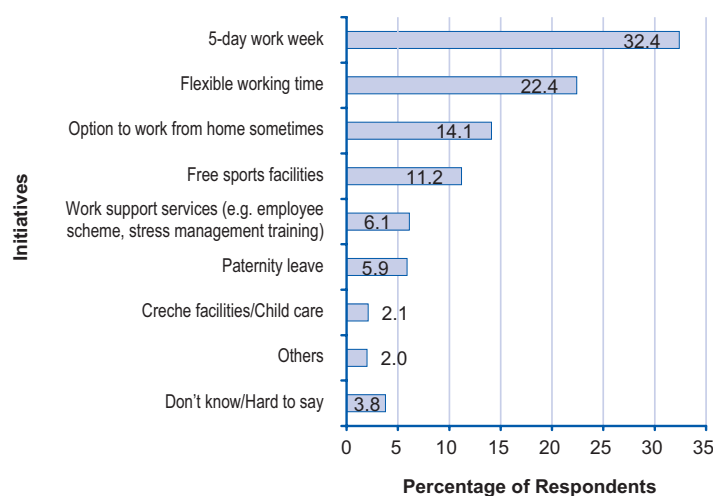
In the 2007 Survey, the largest group (26.8%) identifies a 5-day work week as the most desirable arrangement. The most significant finding is that the second most desired solution chosen by employees is more paid annual leave (18.3%) which is a new option for this question. The third most desired solution is flexible working hours (12.2%) followed by the option to work from home (9.5%).

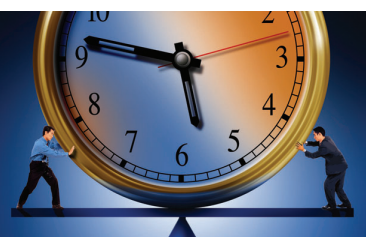
Figure 38a. Initiatives provided by employer that would most help work-life balance (2007)



* New options introduced in 2007 Survey.

Figure 38b. Initiatives provided by employer that would most help work-life balance (2006)





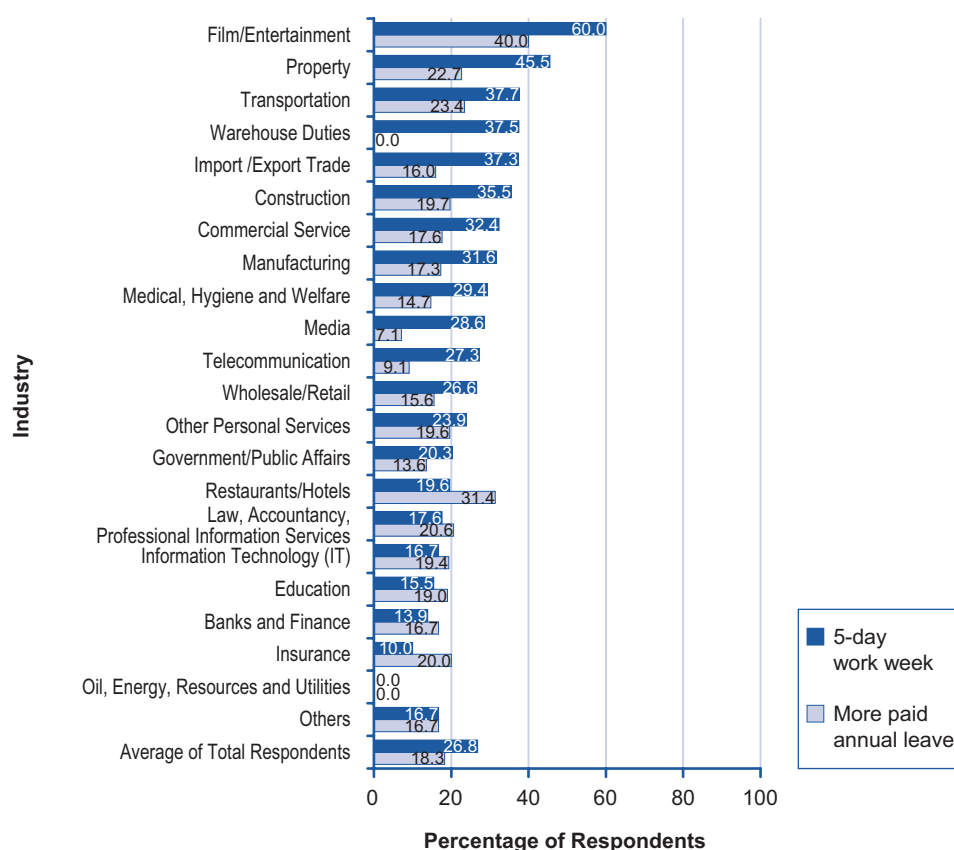
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Figure 39 examines by industry the 5-day work week and more annual leave in terms of employees' preferences for these to help improve work-life balance.

Figure 39. 5-day work week and more annual leave as initiatives that would most help employees' work-life balance by industry (2007)



In some industries, employees say that a 5-day work week would help them most to achieve better work-life balance. Examples of these industries are Film/Entertainment (60.0%), Property (45.5%) and Transportation (37.7%).

Employees in some sectors have a greater desire for more annual paid leave and they are Restaurants/Hotels (31.4%), Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services (20.6%), Insurance (20.0%), Information Technology (19.4%), Education (19.0%) and Banks and Finance (16.7%).



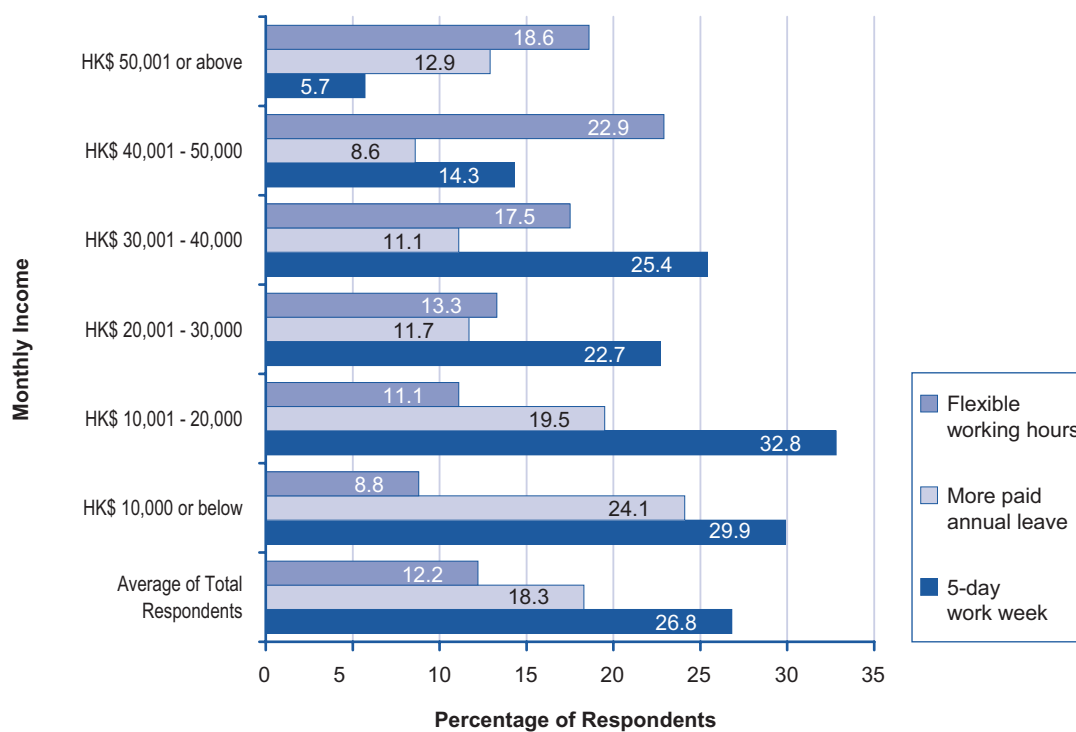
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Figure 40 shows that a 5-day work week is the top initiative to assist with work-life balance for those who earn up to HK\$40,000 per month. For those who earn HK\$40,001 per month or above, flexible working hours is the most preferred initiative.

Figure 40. Initiatives by employers that would most help work-life balance by income (2007)





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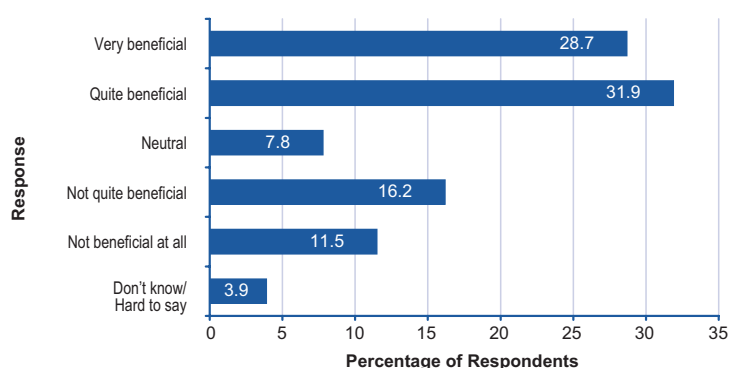
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Finding 17: Managers are important role models for work-life balance

Respondents were asked for the first time this year, how beneficial they think it is if their line managers and other senior executives set an example of good work-life balance by leaving work on time everyday and taking their annual leave each year.

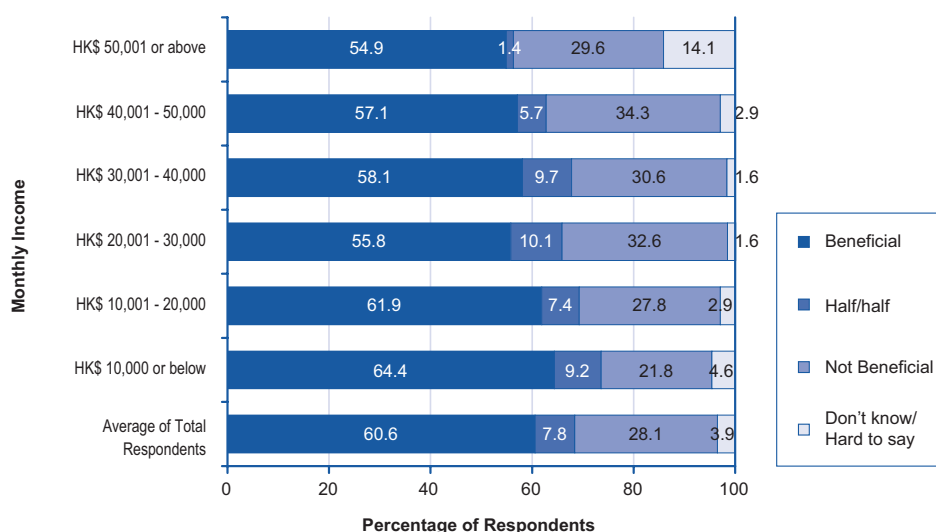
Figure 41 shows that over 60% of employees say this would be very beneficial (28.7%) or quite beneficial (31.9%). 7.8% are neutral about this and only 16.2% say it is not quite beneficial or not beneficial at all (11.5%). There is therefore, strong evidence to support the need for management as role models for work-life balance.

Figure 41. How beneficial it is for managers and senior executives to set a good example in work-life balance (2007)



Perhaps not surprisingly, Figure 42 reveals a general trend that the lower the income level, the more beneficial it is for employees to have their managers set a good example.

Figure 42. How beneficial it is for managers and senior executives set a good example in work-life balance by income (2007)





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Finding 18: More employees are working a 5-day work week but over half of all employees have employers who are not even considering it

Respondents were asked if their employers have adopted or are considering adopting a 5-day work week. Figure 43 shows that 35% of employees say their companies have adopted this practice and this figure is an increase from 28.1% last year.

Those who say their companies are not adopting it or are thinking of adopting a 5-day work week has fallen from 69.9% last year to 62.6% this year.

Figure 43. Adoption of 5-day work week (2007 and 2006)

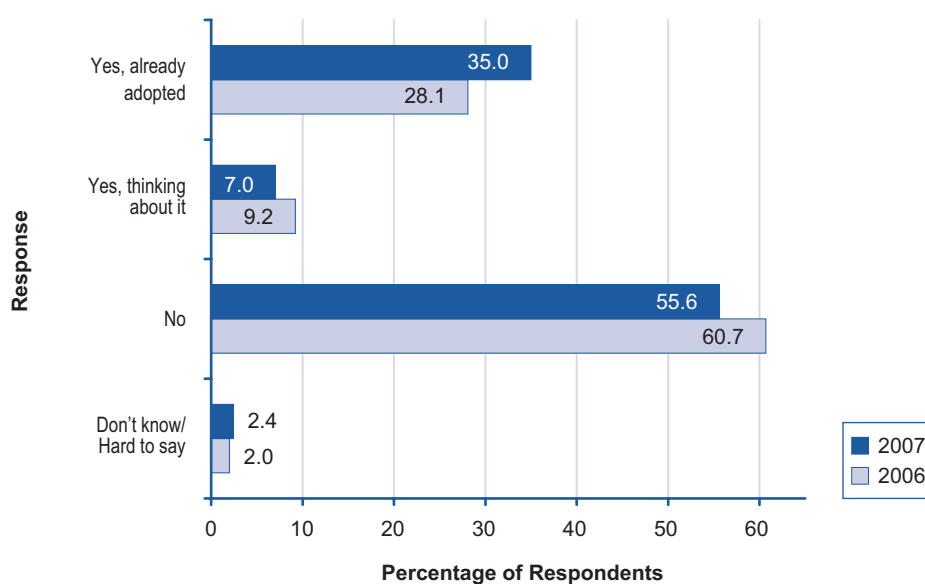


Figure 44 shows that in some industries, significantly more people are working a 5-day work week, including Banks and Finance, Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities and Government/Public Affairs. When compared to 2006, more respondents in Banks and Finance (76.4% compared to 51.9%) and Government/Public Affairs (73.3% compared to 46.9%) enjoy a 5-day work week.

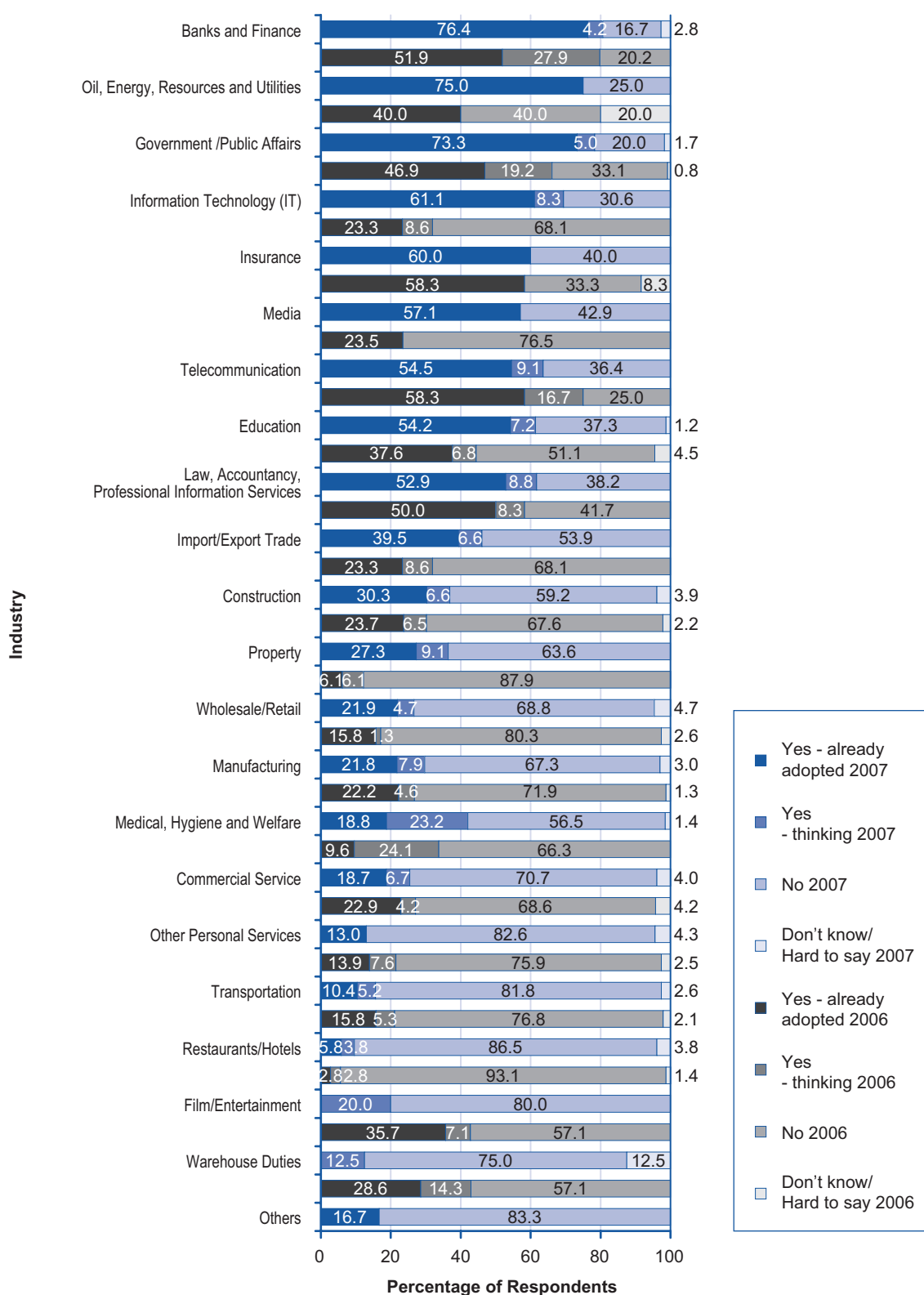
Those in Restaurants/Hotels, Other Personal Services and Transportation are much less likely to enjoy a 5-day work week.



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Figure 44. Adoption of 5-day work week by industry (2007 and 2006)





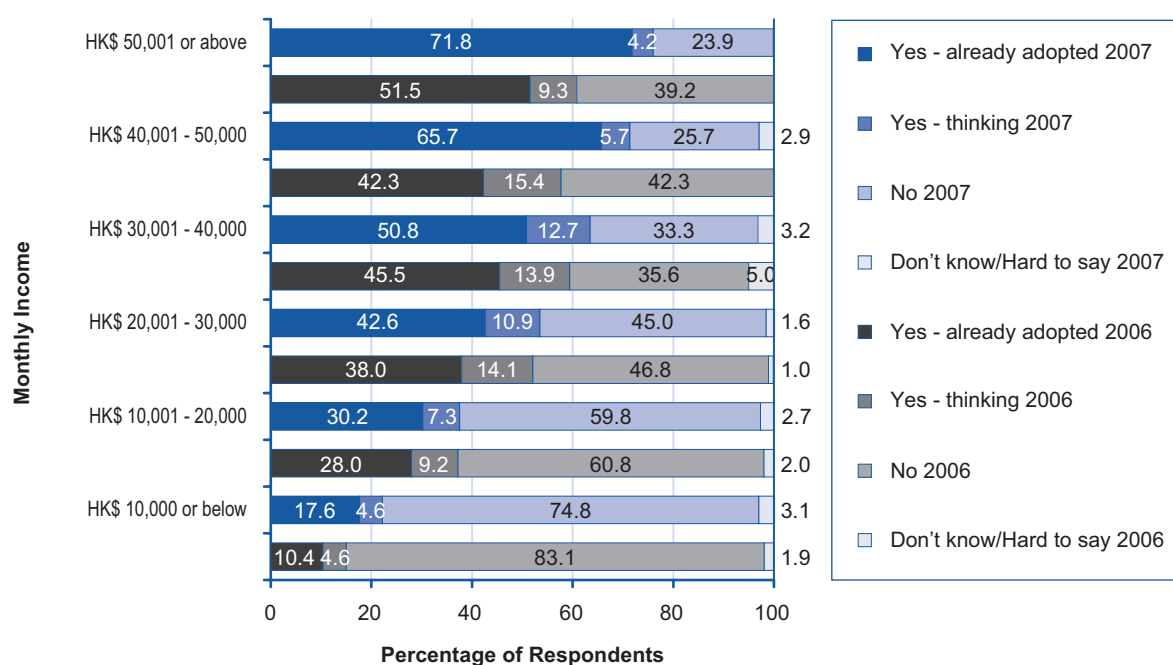
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As shown in Figure 45, the higher the income level the more the employees are working a 5-day work week. In addition, a larger percentage of respondents with income “\$10,000 or below” (from 10.4% in 2006 to 17.6% in 2007) and “HK\$50,001 or above” (from 71.8% in 2006 to 51.5% in 2007) have employers who have adopted a 5-day work week.

Figure 45. Adoption of 5-day work week by income (2007 and 2006)



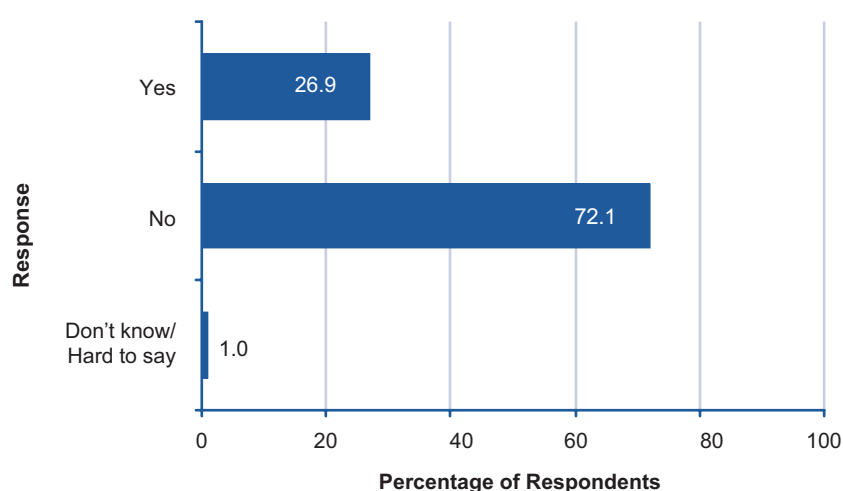


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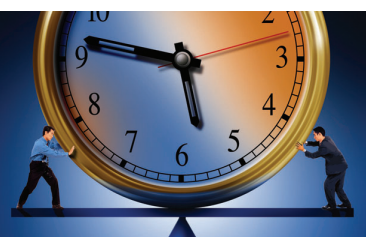
Finding 19: Hong Kong risks 27% of its workforce leaving the city in order to achieve better work-life balance elsewhere

Hong Kong risks approximately 27% of its workforce leaving the city for work-life balance reasons as shown in Figure 46. When respondents were asked if they would consider leaving Hong Kong in order to achieve better work-life balance elsewhere, 26.9% of them say they would, 72.1% say they would not and 1.0% of them could not decide.

Figure 46. Considering leaving Hong Kong for better work-life balance (2007)



As Hong Kong faces a tight labour market and the war for talent continues globally, employers should strongly consider improving the work-life balance of their employees.



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7. APPENDIX

A. Working and living patterns

Q1 How many hours a week are you required to work for your full time job, according to your employment contract?

_____ hours (*Insert exact figures*)

Self-employed: no required working hours specified

Don't know / forgot

Refuse to answer

Q2 Take the last month as an example, how many hours a week do you actually work on average for your full time job?

_____ hours (*Insert exact figures*)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q3 Take the last month as an example, how often do you have over-time work for your full time job?

Nearly everyday

Quite often, 3-4 days a week

Occasionally, 1-2 days a week

Never (*Skip to Q5*)

Others (*Please specify*)

Don't know/Hard to say (*Skip to Q5*)

Refuse to answer (*Skip to Q5*)

Q4 Why do you have to work overtime? (You may choose multiple answers)

I enjoyed working overtime

I do not want to go home

A request ordered by the senior manager / boss

I do not want to be seen as the first person to leave the office

I cannot leave the office before my boss

I have too much work to do, and I have to keep up with the workload

Working long hours is the only way to get promotion

I have to support my co-workers

I want to show my commitment and industrious performance to my boss / company

Others (*Please specify*)

Refuse to answer

Q5 How many days of paid annual leave(s) or paid vacation day(s) per year are you entitled to at your workplace for your full time job?

_____ days (*Insert exact figures*)

Not fixed, because I am self-employed

No paid annual leave/paid vacation days

Others (*Please specify*)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer



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Q6 How often do you take all your entitled annual leave each year?

- Always
- Usually
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

Q7 Take the last month as an example, how many hours a week do you actually spend on doing some personal or private activities, like meeting friends and engaging in activities for leisure such as sports and travelling?
_____ hours (*Insert exact figures*)

- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

Q8 In your view, what would be the preferred but realistic ratio between the time you want to spend on working and the time you want to spend on personal or private activities? Please based on your realistic number of working hours and exclude sleeping time (the ratio must add up to 100%)
_____ % on work and _____ % on private life

- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

B. Satisfaction with work and life

Q9 Which of the following is the most important factor that makes you feel unhappy with your job? (Choose one answer only)

- Working hours
- Workload
- Relationship with supervisors and colleagues
- Pay benefits
- Job responsibility / Nature of the job
- Location of the workplace
- Friendliness of working environment
- I am happy and satisfied with my job
- Others (*Please specify*)
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

Q10 To what extent do you think your current routine full time work and private life are balanced?

- Very balanced
- Quite balanced
- Half / half
- Not quite balanced
- Not balanced at all
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer



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Q11 Has your work-life balance become better, worse or remained unchanged as compared with last year?

Better

Worse

More or less the same / Unchanged

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q12 In terms of the effort and resources required to balance work and life, how much effort do you think your workplace / boss has paid to promote work-life balance? Please use a scale of 0-10 to measure it, with 0 representing no effort at all, 10 representing all possible efforts have been made, and 5 being half-half.

_____ (Exact figure from 0-10)

Don't know/Hard to say

Refuse to answer

C. Problems with current work-life balance and desired solutions

Q13 Using 0-10 again, how much have you achieved in terms of an ideal work-life balance? 0 represents the worst case possible, 10 represents already ideal, and 5 being half-half.

_____ (Exact figure from 0-10)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q14 Which of the following would you consider to be the most difficult work-life balance challenge for yourself? (Choose one answer only)

Job security

Long working hours

Lack of flexibility in working hours

Work location

Leader's attitude

Peer pressure and competition among colleagues

Personnel changes

Taking care of children or family members

Not enough time for personal well-being such as exercise and re-education

Financial well-being / Wealth management

I do not find work-life balance is a challenge to me

Others (Please specify)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q15 Do you think the latest technology has positive or negative impact to your work-life balance?

Positive

Negative

Neutral / No impact at all

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer



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Q16 Have you ever encountered any of the following problems due to a disturbed work-life balance?

(You may choose multiple answers)

Productivity and work quality has reduced dramatically due to long working hours

Prolonged fatigue level, sleepiness and extreme tiredness

I get physically sick easily and frequently due to heavy workload

I do not have any private time for recreation activities or sports at all

My work has affected my relationship with my friends

I don't have time staying with my partner and family

I feel stressed out, depressed and exhausted after work

Work pressure creates insomnia and poor diet

None of the above

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q17 In order to help you achieve a better work-life balance, which of the following work facilities / arrangements would you desire MOST? (Choose one answer only)

Flexible working time

5-day work week

Option to work from home sometimes

Free sports facilities

Crèche facilities / Child care

Work support services (e.g. employee counseling scheme, stress management training)

Paternity leave

Longer maternity leave

Job-share

Career breaks

More paid annual leave

Others (*Please specify*)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q18 How beneficial it is to your work-life balance if your line manager and other senior executives could set an example, e.g. by leaving office on time every day and taking their annual leave each year?

Very beneficial

Quite beneficial

Half / half

Not quite beneficial

Not beneficial at all

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Q19 Is your company adopting or thinking of adopting a 5-day work week?

Yes - already adopted

Yes - thinking

No

Don't know/Hard to say

Refuse to answer



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Q20 Would you consider leaving Hong Kong in order to try to achieve a better work-life balance?

Yes

No

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

Demographics

Q21 Gender

Male

Female

Q22 Age

_____ (Exact age)

Do not want to tell

Q23 [For those who do not want to tell their exact age] Age interval (Interviewer can read out the intervals)

15-19

20-24

25-29

30-34

35-39

40-44

45-49

50-54

55-59

60 years old or above

Do not want to tell

Q24 Education Attainment

Primary school or below

Secondary school

Matriculated

Tertiary, non-degree course

Tertiary, degree course

Master's degree

Doctor's degree

Refuse to answer

Q25 Position (Please refer to attached "occupation" sheet for detailed categorizations)

White collar:

Professional / Manager / Executive

Trader / Proprietor

Office: skilled

Office: unskilled

Blue collar:

Factory / Shop / Outdoor: skilled manual worker

Factory / Shop/ Outdoor: unskilled manual worker

Refuse to answer



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Q26 Industry

Banks and Finance
Commercial
Construction
Education
Film / Entertainment
Government / Public Affairs
Import / Export Trade
Information Technology (IT)
Insurance
Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services
Manufacturing
Media
Medical, Hygiene and Welfare
Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities
Other Personal Services
Property
Restaurants / Hotels
Telecommunication
Transportation
Warehouse Duties
Wholesale / Retail
Others (*Please specify*)
Refuse to answer

Q27 Your marital status is: _____

Single (*Skip to (DM8)*)
Married
Divorced / Widow
Refuse to answer

Q28 Do you have children? If yes, how many?

Yes, _____ child (ren)
No children
Refuse to answer

Q29 Your personal monthly income, including bonus, is... ?

HK\$ 10,000 or below
HK\$ 10,001 - 20,000
HK\$ 20,001 - 30,000
HK\$ 30,001 - 40,000
HK\$ 40,001 - 50,000
HK\$ 50,001 or above
Refuse to answer

COMMUNITY BUSINESS



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