

Report of the Survey on Ethnic Minorities and Asylum Seekers in Seeking Private Accommodation Rentals

This survey was carried out in collaboration with Hong Kong Refugee Ministry Group and Hong Kong Unison, comprising support of different local churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong. This survey was designed and carried out to understand the discriminations faced by EMs and ASs while seeking private accommodation rentals. The data was collected between August and November 2018. Total number of respondents were 140.

Survey Findings

Quantitative Survey Data

1. Demographic Information

A. Age

<u>18-29</u>	<u>30-49</u>	<u>50 and above</u>	<u>Total</u>
43	87	10	140

B. Gender

<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>
75	65	140

C. *Current marital status*

<u>Single (never married)</u>	<u>Married/Cohabit</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Widow/Widower</u>	<u>Total</u>
39	92	5	4	140

D. Ethnicity

<u>African</u>	<u>Middle East & North African</u>	<u>South Asian</u>	<u>South East Asian</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
30	3	57	45	5	140

E. *HKID Card Holder*

<u>HKID Card Holder</u>	<u>Non-HKID Card Holder</u>	<u>Total</u>
85	55	140

F. *Total Length of stay in Hong Kong*

<u>Less than 1 year</u>	<u>1-2 years</u>	<u>3-5 years</u>	<u>6-10 years</u>	<u>Over 10 years</u>	<u>Total</u>
6	12	29	38	55	140

G. *Education Level*

<u>Primary school or below</u>	<u>Secondary school</u>	<u>College or vocational school</u>	<u>University degree</u>	<u>Postgraduate degree or above</u>	<u>Total</u>
20	50	20	44	6	140

H. *Level of Cantonese*

<u>Basic</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Fluent</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Total</u>
64	24	13	39	140

I. *Level of English*

<u>Basic</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Fluent</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Total</u>
30	44	59	7	140

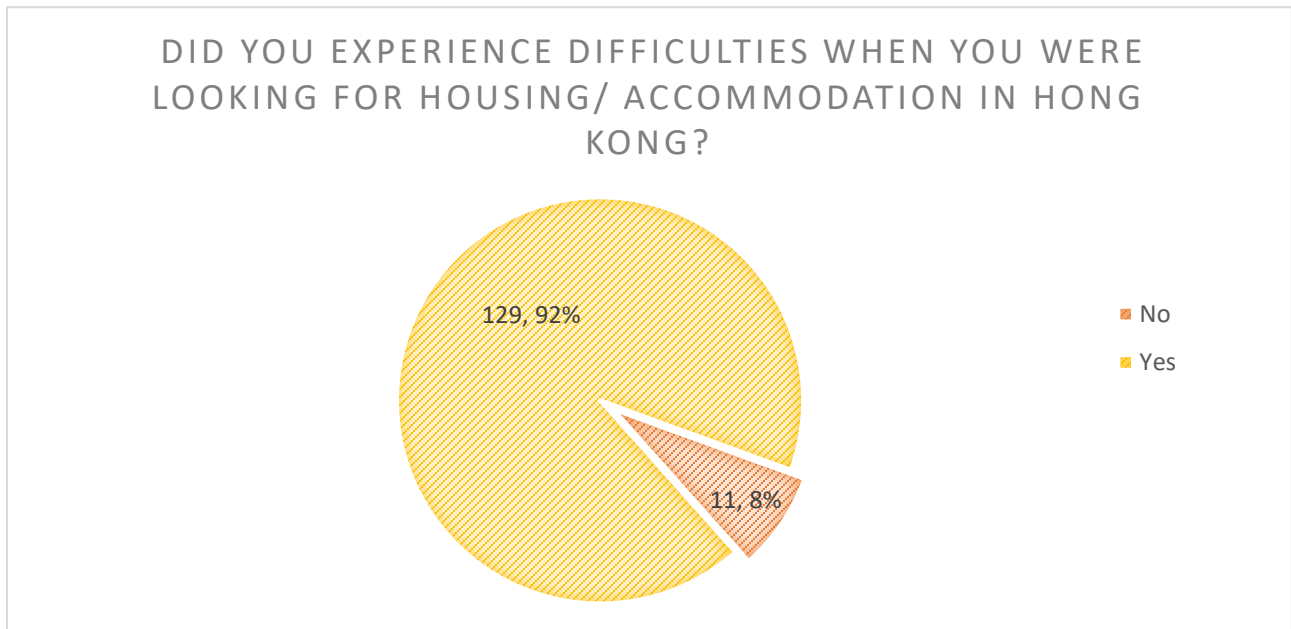
J. *Total number of family members in Hong Kong and the number of people they are living with in Hong Kong*

- 80% of the respondents reported that they have family members in Hong Kong and 75% of the respondents with family members in Hong Kong are HKID card holders, number of family members ranging from 2 to 14. Approximate 23% of them live in subdivided units, and 55% of them live in flats.
- For non-HKID card holders, the number of family members in Hong Kong range from 3 to 6; those without family members in Hong Kong generally live with 2 to 6 people (with an unverified extreme case of 27) in a unit. 68% of them live in subdivided units; 18% live in flats and 10% live in squatters.
- Those without family members in Hong Kong are all non-HKID card holders. 54% of them live in subdivided units; 27% of them in squatters and 8% in flats.

2. Difficulties/Discrimination Encountered

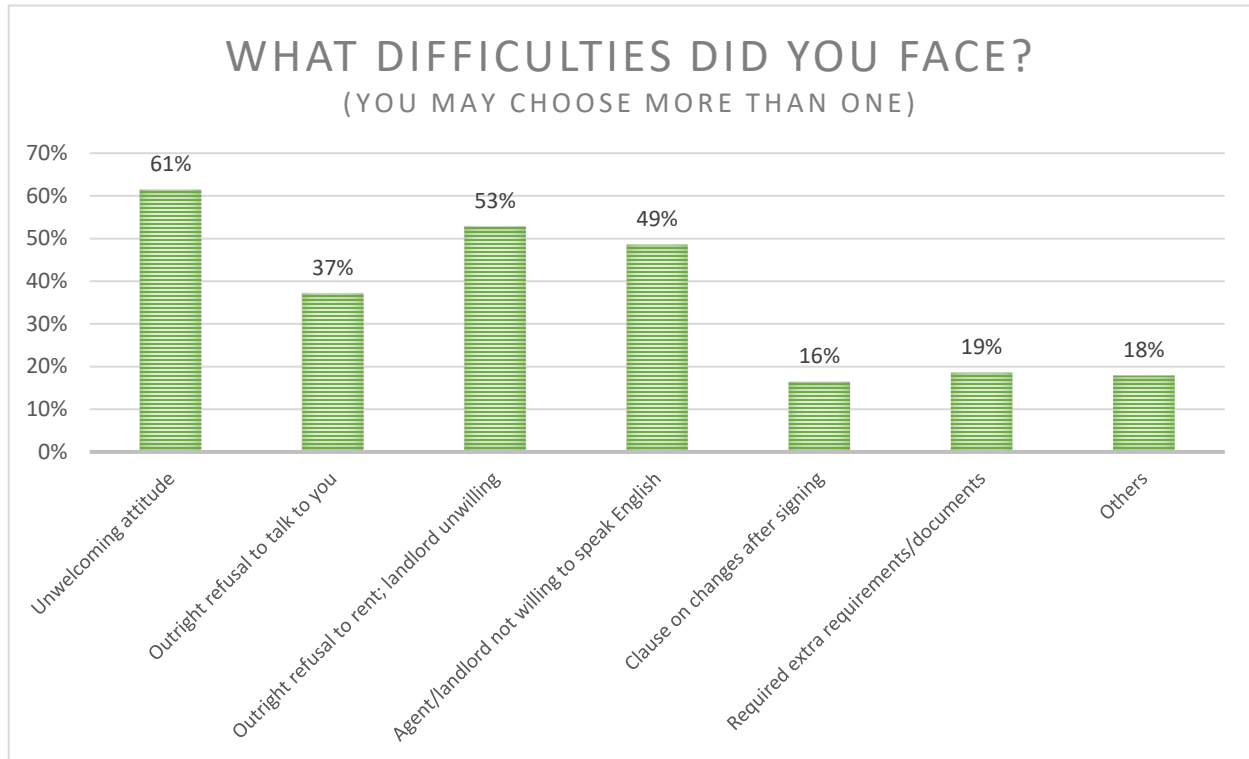
A. *Experienced difficulties when you looked for accommodation in Hong Kong*

Over 90% of respondents reported that they experienced difficulties when looking for accommodation in Hong Kong. Chi-squared tests were carried out and found no difference in different ethnic groups, no matter the respondents are female or male; whether they are more proficient in English or Cantonese; whether they have lived in Hong Kong for a longer time; or whether they are HKID holders. All the above-mentioned factors did not make a difference in their accommodation experience.



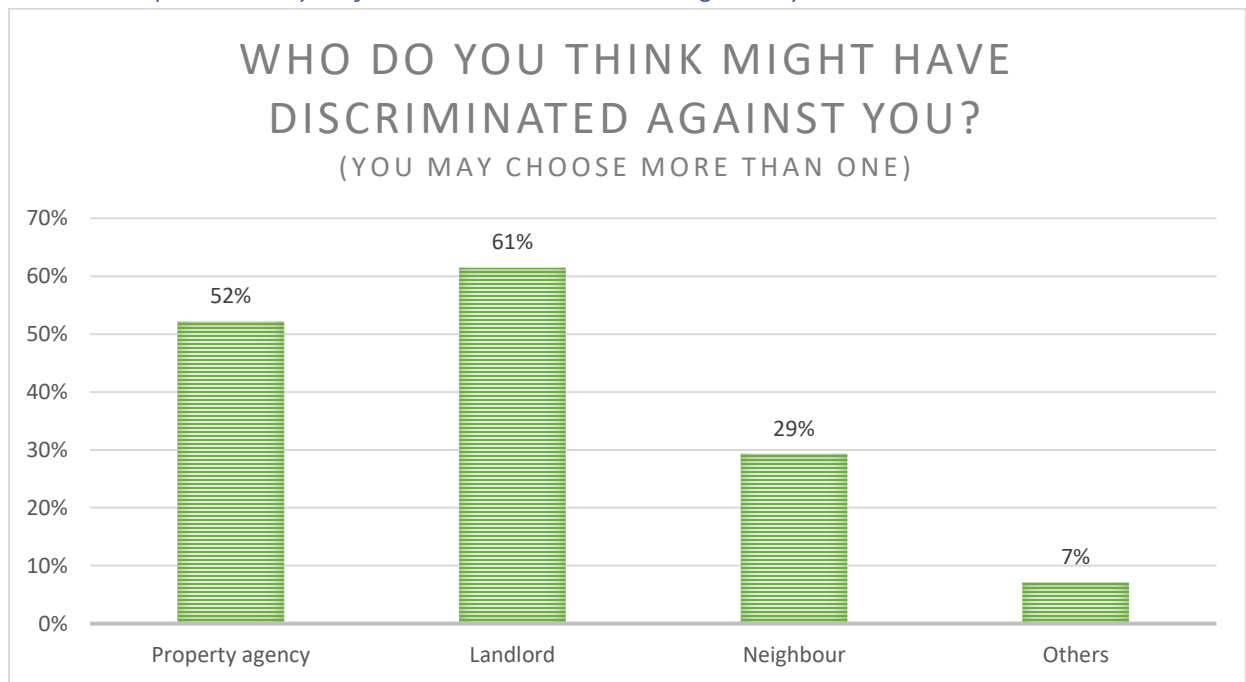
B. *The difficulties encountered during the search for accommodation in Hong Kong*

The following bar chart depicts the distribution of different difficulties the respondents have faced when they looked for accommodation.



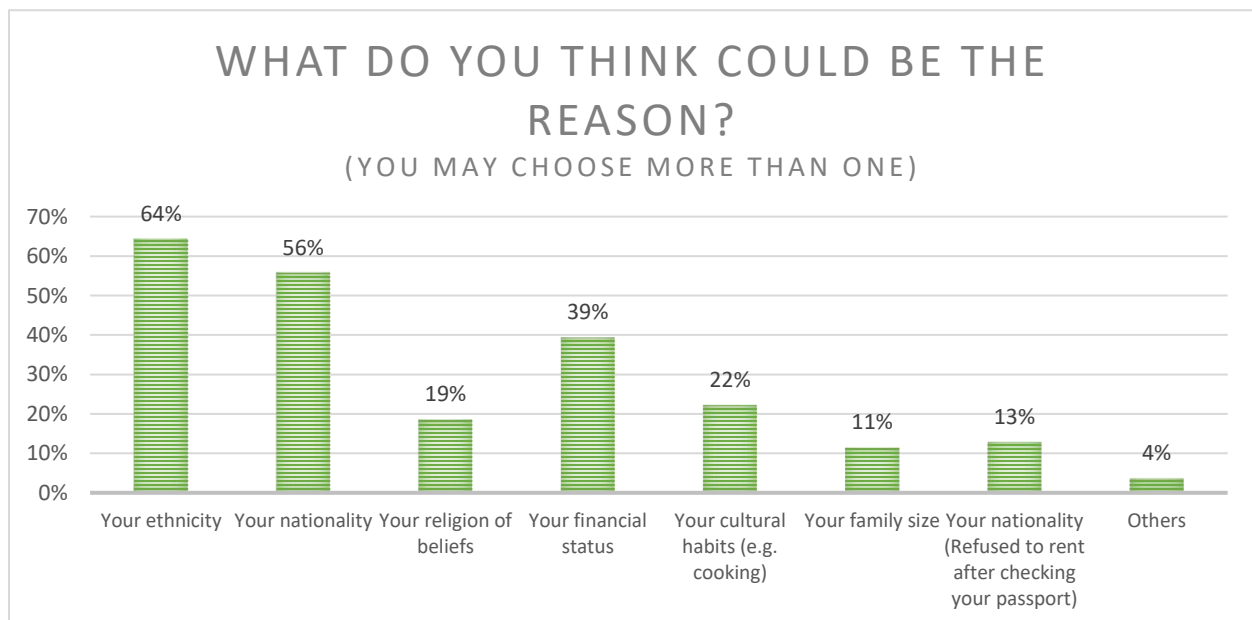
- 33% who faced unwelcoming attitudes are non-HKID holders; and 67% of them are HKID holders.
- 50% who faced outright refusal to talk to them are non-HKID holders and 50% are HKID holders.
- 36% who faced outright refusal to rent are non-HKID holders and 64% are HKID holders.
- 37% who faced agent/landlord unwilling to speak English are non-HKID holders and 63% are HKID holders.
- 43% who faced clause on changes after signing are non-HKID holders and 57% are HKID holders.
- 33% who faced extra documents required are non-HKID holders and 67% are HKID holders.

C. *People whom you felt have discriminated against you*

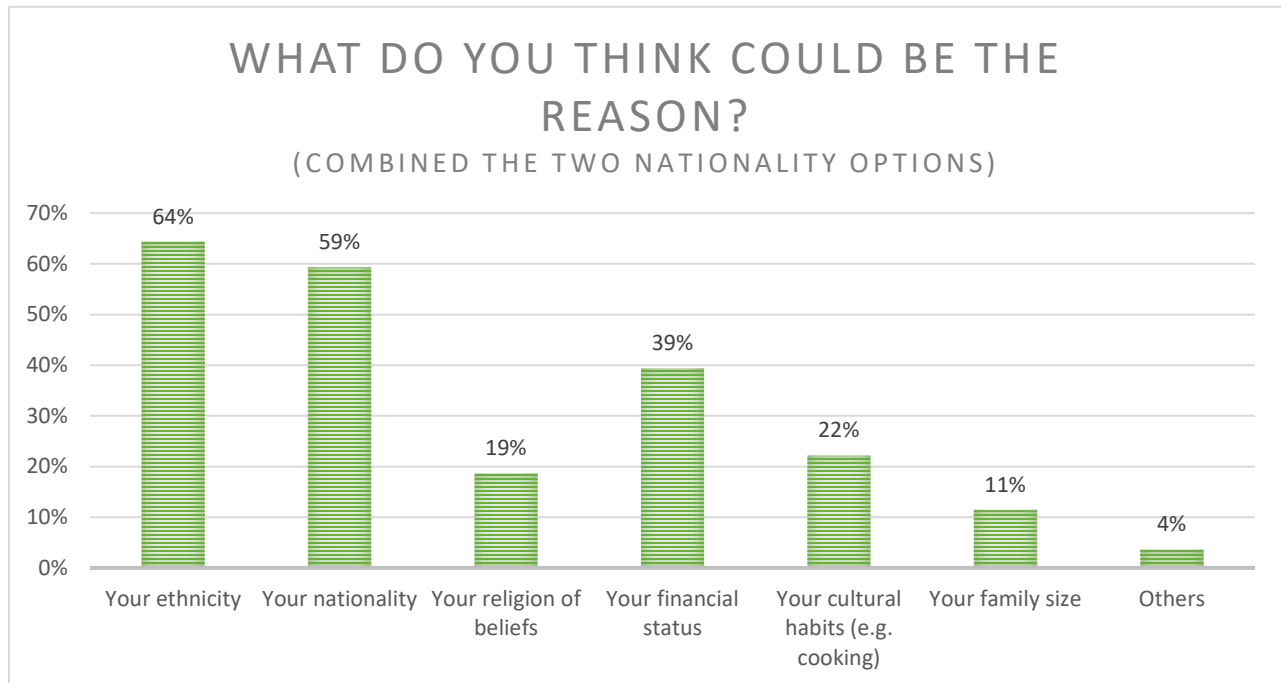


D. *Speculated reasons to be discriminated*

The participants were asked to speculate reasons of discrimination, and they were allowed to pick all that fit their speculations. Options included “Your ethnicity”, “Your nationality”, “Your religion of beliefs”, “Your financial status”, “Your cultural habits (e.g. cooking)”, “Your family size”, “Your nationality (Landlord/agent refused rental after checking your passport)”, and “Others”. Please see the bar chart below for the distribution of responses:



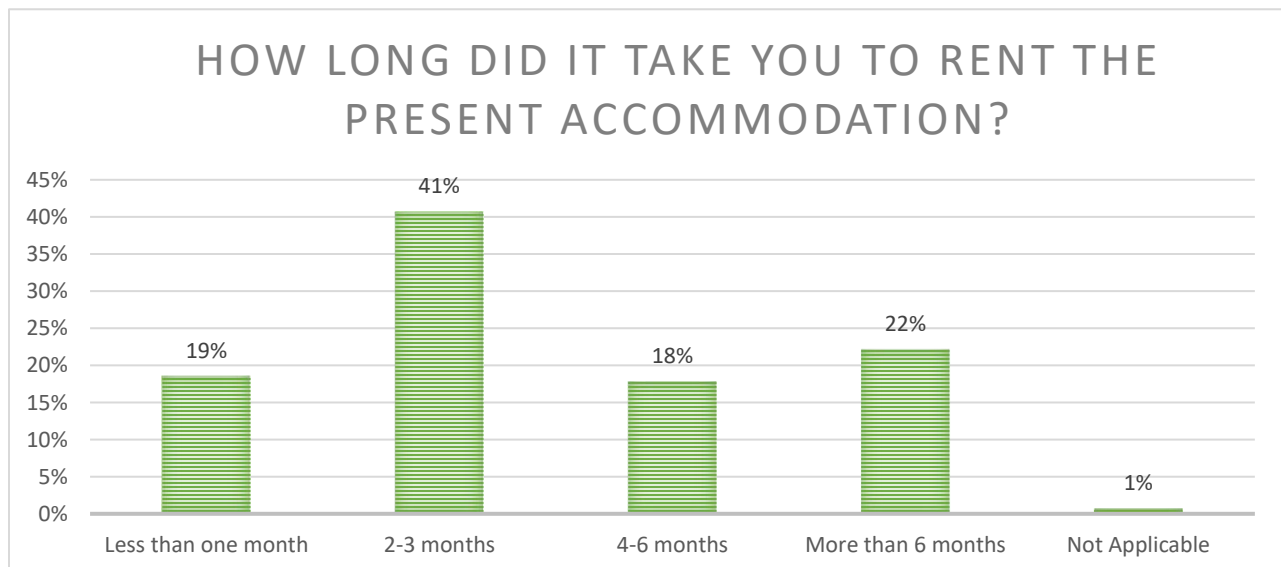
While the options “Your nationality” and “Your nationality (Landlord/agent refused rental after checking your passport)” are similar, a separate bar chart that combines both options is shown below:



3. [More information about their current rental situation](#)

A. *Time taken to rent the present accommodation*

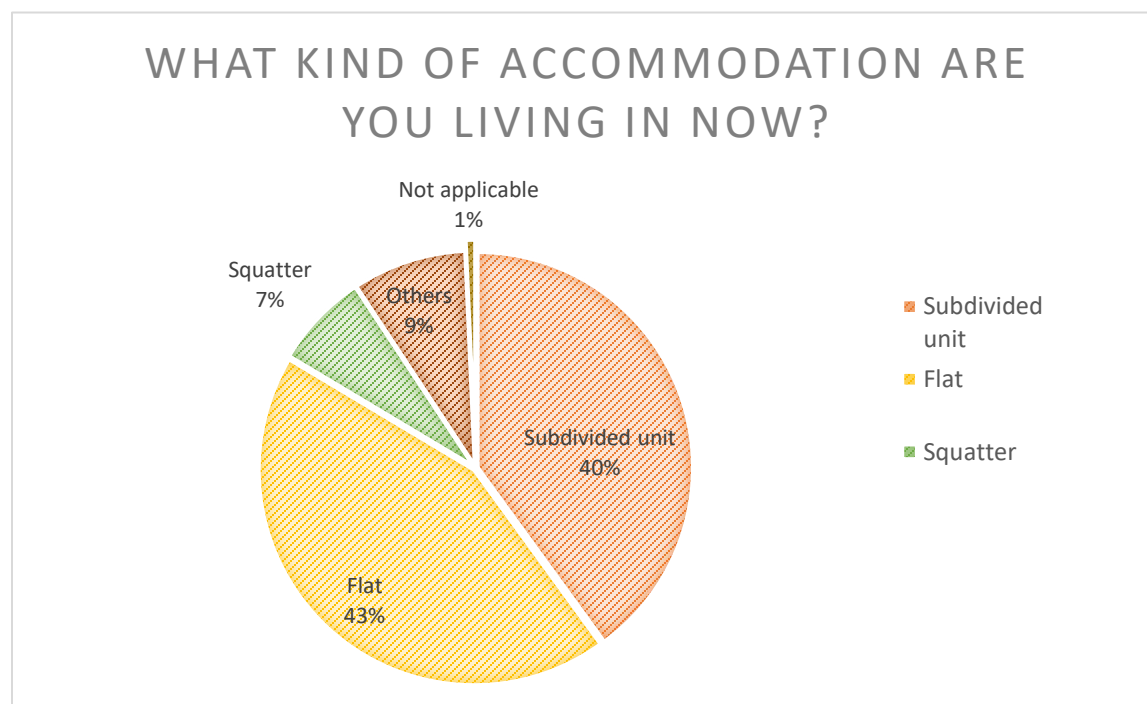
The following chart depicts how much time have been taken for respondents to rent the current unit. One of the respondents reported that s/he does not have room to stay at the moment, i.e. the 1% in the chart below.



- For respondents who took less than one month to rent the present accommodation, 77% of them are HKID holders and 23% are non-HKID holders.
- For respondents who took 4 to 6 months to rent, 40% of them are HKID holders and 60% of them are non-HKID holders.

B. Accommodation types

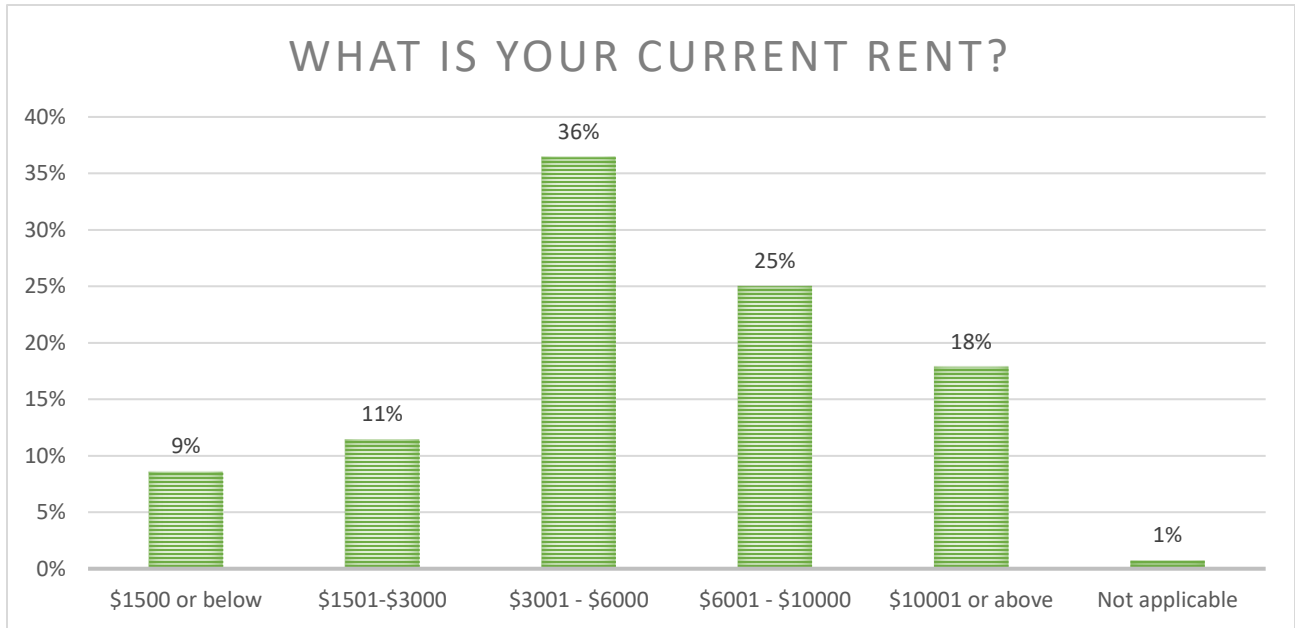
Close to half (47%) of the respondents are living in sub-par accommodations, i.e. squatters and subdivided units.



C. Current rent

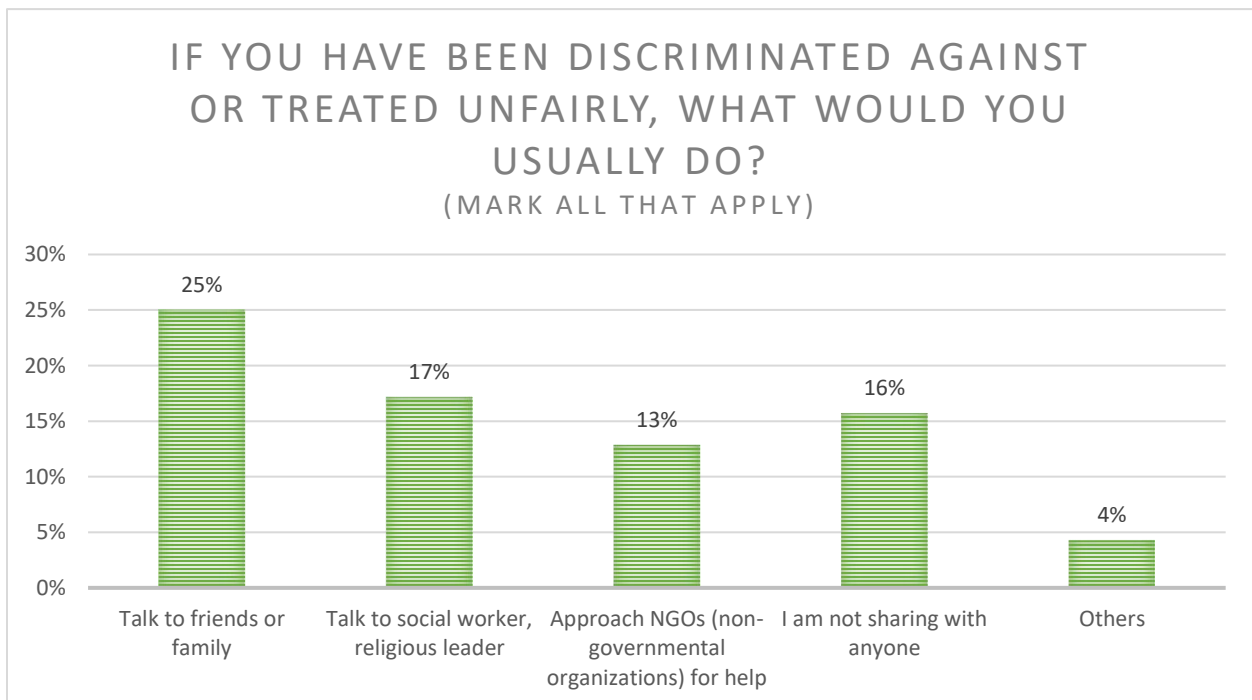
The following bar chart depicts the rent distribution among our respondents.

- The majority of them are paying HKD3,001 - 6,000 monthly. 63% of them live in subdivided unit and 10% of them (all non-HKID holders) live in squatters.
- Those paying HKD6000 – 10,000 and more than HKD10,000, mostly local HKID holders, also face various difficulties (as mentioned above) when renting accommodation. Only about 20% of them were able to rent a place in less than one month.
- In the group paying HKD1,500 or below, over 80% of them are living with at least two other family members in Hong Kong. One of the respondents (non-HKID holder) reported that s/he lives with 27 people in a unit that is of monthly rent HKD1,500 or below. If s/he is not receiving any generous help from the locals, we can speculate that the living for this family is awfully packed and undesirable. However, as we did not collect data on actual living space dimensions, we are unable to confirm the above assumption until further follow up with the respondent is conducted.



4. [Coping Strategies](#)

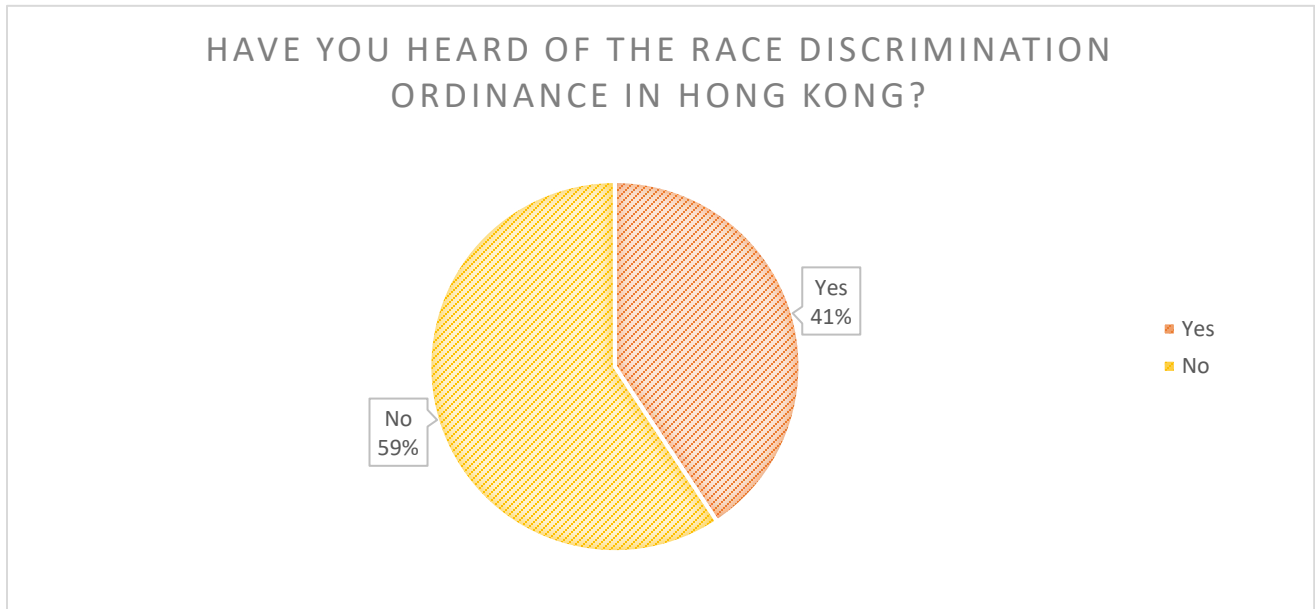
The following is the distribution of the coping strategies that the respondents reported to have adopted when they experienced discrimination or felt being treated unfairly.



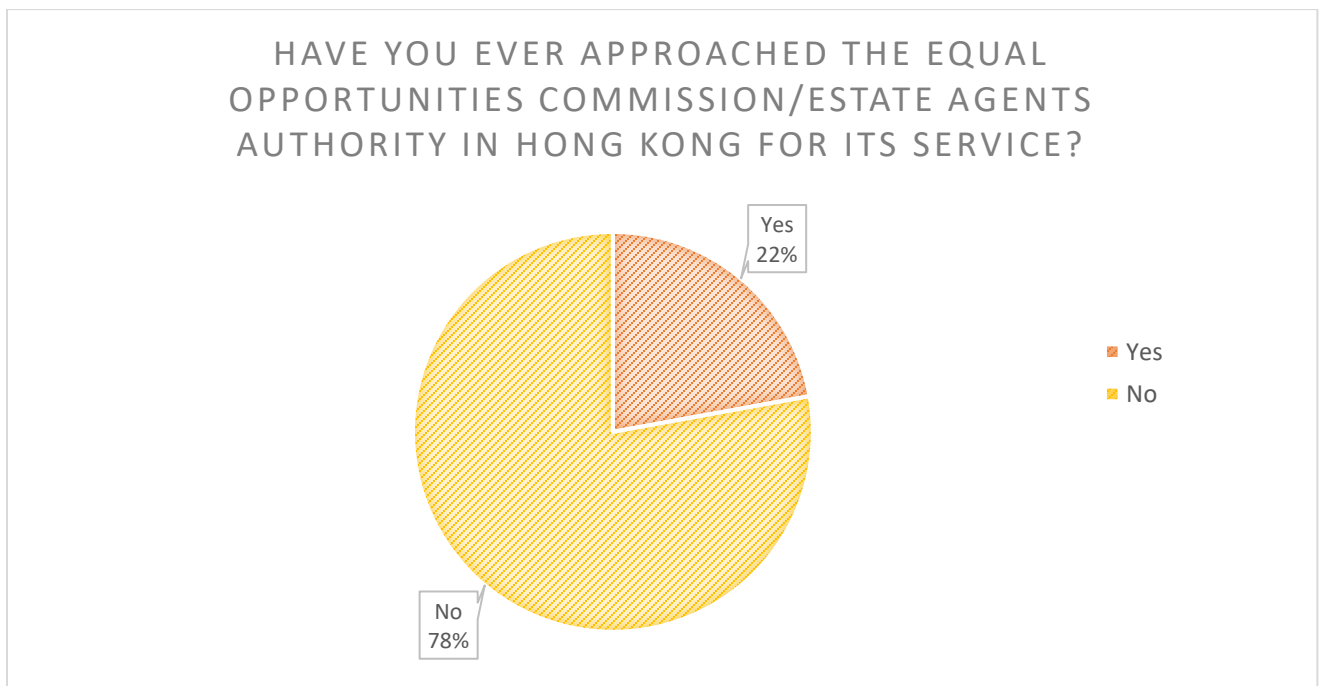
5. Seeking Official/Legal Help in Hong Kong

A. *The Race Discrimination Ordinance*

Less than half of the respondents have heard of the Race Discrimination Ordinance in Hong Kong and 77% of those who have heard are HKID holders.

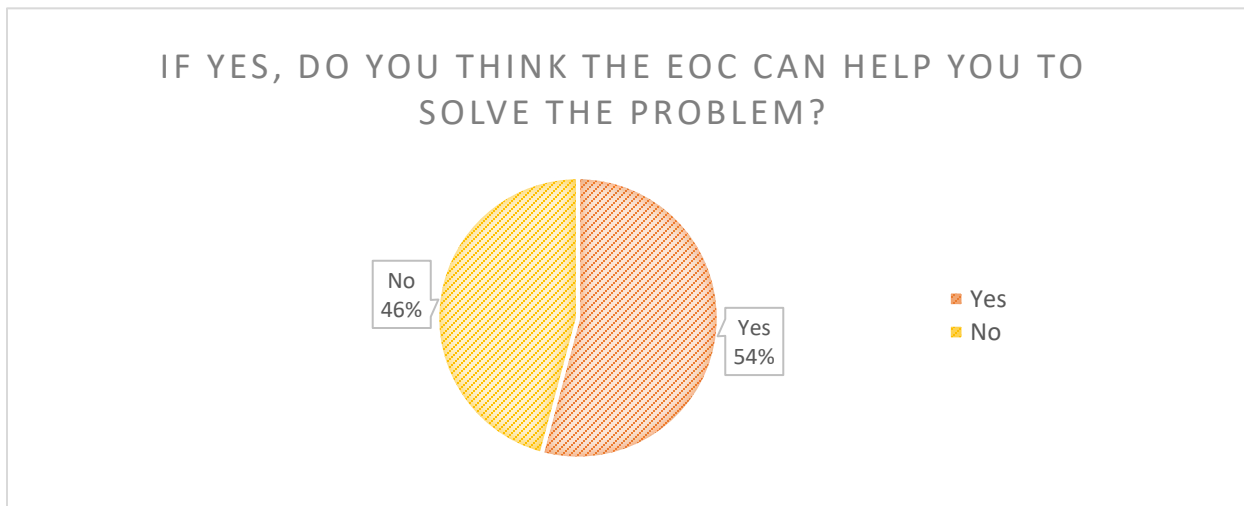


B. *Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) /Estate Agents Authority (EAA)*



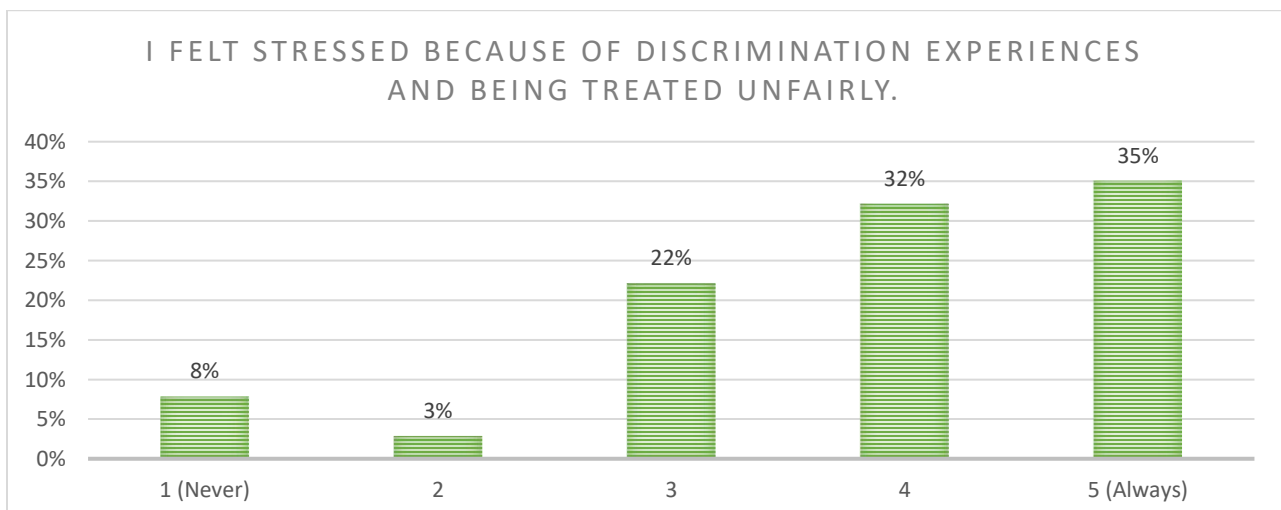
C. *EOC being helpful or not*

Among the 22% who reported that they have approached EOC in the past, 54% (all but one HKID holders) found EOC helpful in the experience, but the rest found otherwise.



6. Stress Level in face of Discrimination

Over half (67%) of the respondents rated 4 or above for the frequency they have felt stressed because of discrimination or unfair treatment in Hong Kong. In the question, choosing 1 indicated that the respondents never felt stressed because of discrimination or unfair treatment in Hong Kong, and choosing 5 indicated the other end of the spectrum, meaning that the respondents always felt stressed because of the discrimination or unfair treatment experienced. Simple analyses, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis H test, were run to see if there were any characteristic difference among the respondents' stress frequency. No significant difference was found in terms of the demographic characteristics such as gender, language proficiency, age groups, ethnicity, length of stay in Hong Kong, and HKID holders or not.



Qualitative Survey Data

Suggestions to Improve the Situation

In this part, respondents generally shared their current situation and suggested what Hong Kong can do to change or improve the situation for them. Some could not think of any suggestions but desperately shared their current helpless situations and feelings in hope of making their situations better. This question, from some of the respondents' perspectives, might have served as an outlet for them to try to seek help. Before summarizing all the suggestions from our respondents, all the involved churches and NGOs may first take note of the desperate sharing of our respondents. Some are shared below: *(kindly note the language barrier of the respondents' sharing below)*

"I am a cancer of tumor in my left side head and I have heart pasnt or blood soaer high blood pauser, am feeling weekness every day I eat medicine. so I live here. so I very tense and upset."

"I live in Hong Kong alone and I have high blood pressure, long time I have fracture in my foot, so I am very upset and disturb feeling."

The following are some of the direct quotes of the EMs and ASs respondents' comments:

"...And moreover, the media have played a big role in influencing the thoughts; they should not be biased and further be more careful as it spreads information among the locals so quickly and they begin to assume all the negative things, giving rise to discrimination."

"I feel that the news channels or other departments, perhaps the government departments can report news on the positive things or acts done by South East Asians or other ethnicities in Hong Kong instead of focusing on the negative sides. Many of these reports do affect the image and reputation. Each nationality, religion and country have good people and bad sheeps."

"Government should educate the public about the ethnic in fact they give job to ethnic in the government level so public can feel them equal"

"...The current RDO is very weak and the EOC is very weak. Even EOC's recruitment policy of requiring Chinese proficiency for applicants is discriminatory. Thus, most institutions lack moral ascendancy and credibility to protect those discriminated against on the basis of race. I lost confidence in them already. They HEAR but they DON'T listen."

"Educate the public that Hong Kong is a city of different colors and cultures and they should treat everybody with respect because everybody pays tax and are law abiding citizens"

"They are also human treat us like a human."

Discussion

In general, respondents find themselves being discriminated in the process of renting houses in Hong Kong. The results do not indicate that resident status causes differential treatment in the process of renting a home. Both EMs and ASs find themselves facing outright discrimination on several fronts.

The respondents suggested that their ethnicity, nationality and/or financial status are the three key factors that obstruct them in the process of house-hunting. The house-hunting process also discloses the entrenched discrimination respondents felt against them in general. As respondents suggested that their ethnicity, nationality as the two primary indicators of discrimination, it shows that racism is a critical factor that stops the EMs and ASs to receive equal treatment in their daily lives.

The survey also suggested that respondents do not feel existing legislation has been helpful to eradicate racism or racist practice. And they do not receive information about how they could seek help using legislation, with only half of the respondents know about the RDO, and only 22% of the respondents sought help from the EOC. The EOC's effectiveness in supporting either the EMs or the ASs is considered to be marginally effective. Out of the 22% respondents (30 respondents) who have sought help from the EOC, only 54% (16) of the respondents find EOC helpful. The data suggested that EMs and especially ASs have not been well-informed about their rights and the EOC has not been doing a great job in informing the EMs and ASs of their rights in Hong Kong.

Over 67% of the respondents reported feeling stressed when facing discrimination, with 25% seek help by talking to family members and 30% talking to social workers, NGOs or religious leaders. The percentage is alarming as over half are feeling stressed. More psychosocial support is needed to release the tension the EMs and ASs are facing. At the same time, more support from NGOs and the government will be needed to facilitate both groups in their day-to-day living in Hong Kong.

The report's findings suggest that there is misguided bias over the EMs and the ASs. From looking into housing problem for the EMs and ASs as an example, the survey demonstrates that the respondents, both the EMs and the ASs have been feeling discriminated from their experience in Hong Kong. And the stress over discrimination also proves that discrimination cause both difficulties for the EMs and the ASs to cope with daily lives in the practical level as well as psychological and emotional level.

Conclusion

We have summarized and grouped the respondents' comments and suggestions into the following four groups:

1. Government/ Policymaking

- Government should consider family size of EMs when building public housing; there should be larger units to accommodate families of more than 4 members.
- Government should consider rent control in Hong Kong to stop the uncontrollable inflation of rent.
- Government should increase rental subsidies to ASs.
- Government (Inland Revenue Department) should reduce or exempt property tax for landlords as an incentive for renting their property to EMs and ASs.
- Government should allow ASs to work in Hong Kong (Ref. Article 23.1 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states). This allows ASs to earn their living and reduce government subsidies at the same time.
- Government should take the lead to accept EMs into civil service jobs. This can educate and demonstrate to the public that we all should treat EMs fairly.
- Government should work to improve the effectiveness of ISS in Hong Kong. The current services provided is poor in quality.
- EOC should work to change legislations to eliminate discrimination ASs. The current RDO is very weak.
- The Estate Agents Authority should implement more stringent regulations on agents (and landlords) who violate the RDO.
- Government should tighten regulations on subdivided units, including safety, hygiene conditions, and maximum number of subdivided units per given area.

2. Education

- Schools should take actions to eliminate discrimination and segregation on campus.
- Schools should educate students to value multiculturalism and to embrace different ethnicities and cultures, be an example for students to not judge an individual by his/her skin color, nationality, ethnicity, or class.
- Schools should consider implementing some multicultural exchange workshops and events to expose students to different ethnicities and cultures.

3. Media

- The media has been overemphasizing on reporting the crimes or undesirable acts of some of the EMs, which stigmatized the image and reputation of all EMs and ASs. The media should produce an unbiased view to the public.

4. Others

- Promote the value of inclusiveness and equality regardless of colour.

- Communicate with the local Hong Kongers directly to resolve any problems that arise.
- Do not label this group as “Ethnic Minority” but to call them as part of the local community, e.g. Pakistani Hong Kongers, or simply Hong Kongers. Take Britain as an example, everyone is called British regardless of skin color.