

## Race poll reveals 'terrible' attitudes

Survey carried out by Hong Kong Unison finds many people in 'Asia's world city' regard those with darker skin less favourably, disappointing campaigners

A survey of how Hongkongers view *ethnic minorities* has revealed that the darker your skin, the less favourably you are perceived.

Carried out between 2007 and 2012 by a non-governmental organisation that helps *ethnic minorities*, the survey found that respondents, of whom more than 99 per cent were *ethnic* Chinese, had negative views of people from Southeast Asia and Africa. Some associated them with words like "violent," "dirty" and "Chungking Mansions", referring to the notorious building in Tsim Sha Shui.

"Some of the words the participants used to describe *ethnic minorities* are quite terrible," said Fermi Wong Wai-fun, executive director of Hong Kong Unison, the organisation behind the poll.

The findings are an embarrassment for Hong Kong, which calls itself "Asia's world city", she added.

Just over 6 per cent of Hong Kong's population is non-*ethnic* Chinese, according to the 2011 Census, with the most represented *minorities* being Indonesian and Filipino. Gone are the days when people would leave their seat on the MTR if an African got on, but many instances show attitudes have been slow to evolve.

"Hong Kong is not assimilating foreigners the way it should, even when they were born here," said Louis Ajonuma, a Nigerian businessman at a press conference organised yesterday by Hong Kong Unison.

More than half of the 1,862 respondents were police officers-in-training at the Hong Kong Police College, 10 per cent were secondary school teachers and the remainder secondary school pupils and university students.

All respondents were participants in workshops on cultural sensitivity organised by Hong Kong Unison and took the survey before the workshop started.

The first part asked for their impressions of *ethnic minorities*. The second consisted of multiple choice questions, asking whether they would accept *ethnic minorities* in their neighbourhood, workplace or personal life. Respondents were given nine *ethnic* groups or countries of origin to tick, such as "Indian,"

"African," "Japanese," or "American."

Some 62.6 per cent said they would accept a Pakistani in their neighbourhood; 63.4 per cent would accept an African; while *ethnic* Chinese, Europeans, Americans and Japanese all received more than 80 per cent approval. Americans and Japanese scored the highest percentages again when it came to acceptance in schools and classrooms.

"I am disappointed and saddened to see such results, as it showed that *ethnic minorities* are stereotyped," said Wong. "Discrimination is usually caused by ignorance, which then produces fear and prejudice."

A spokesperson for the Hong Kong Police said that regular and auxiliary police officers are provided with training to raise their "awareness of the diversity of the community they serve and also equip them with the knowledge and skills in carrying out their duties as well as providing services in a fair and impartial manner."

More striking are results relating to personal life. Asked whether they would be friends with, marry or have children with other groups, Africans received only 44 per cent approval.

Ada Harroy, a ten-year old Nigerian girl born in Hong Kong, said that even though she speaks fluent Cantonese and goes to a local school in Yau Ma Tei, she still feels that Hong Kong people sometimes look down on her. Recently, she sat down to eat lunch and saw the girls next to her moving away from her.

"Discrimination is a learnt condition. So to prevent it, we have to start with educating our younger generations," said Fermi Wong Wai-fun.

SOCIETY

# RACE POLL REVEALS 'TERRIBLE' ATTITUDES

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Helene Franchineau and Jennifer Ngo

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