

# Survey on Public Perception of the 'Middle Class'

4 September 2013

# Study Objectives

1. To better understand the public perception of the 'middle class'
2. To examine the criteria for defining the 'middle class' and their importance
3. To provide data for our future studies, such as on demographic structure, social mobility



# Survey Methodology

BFRC commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct the survey

Date of survey:	2 - 15 July 2013
Target population:	Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above
Sampling method:	Random sample telephone survey
Successful samples:	1,005 samples
Successful response rate:	46.1%
Sampling error:	$\pm 3.09\%$ at 95% confidence level
Weighting figures:	Figures weighted based on the population aged 18 or above by sex and age released by the Census and Statistics Department at the end of 2012

# Survey Findings (I): Criteria for Defining the 'Middle Class'

The criteria can be roughly divided into the following 5 aspects:

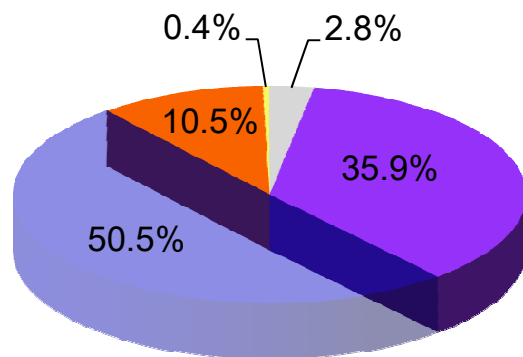
<b>Economic / Asset Aspect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Owning Private Property"</li><li>• "Owning Certain Amount of Assets"</li><li>• "Having High Level of Income"</li></ul>
<b>Human Resources Aspect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Having High Academic Qualifications"</li><li>• "Engaging in Professional or Managerial Work"</li></ul>
<b>Social Aspect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Having a Good Family Background"</li><li>• "Having Social Connections"</li></ul>
<b>Cultural Aspect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Being Culturally Enriched"</li><li>• "Having 'Taste' in Lifestyle"</li></ul>
<b>Political Aspect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Concerned about Social Issues"</li><li>• "Participating in Social or Political Issues"</li></ul>

# Economic / Asset Aspect

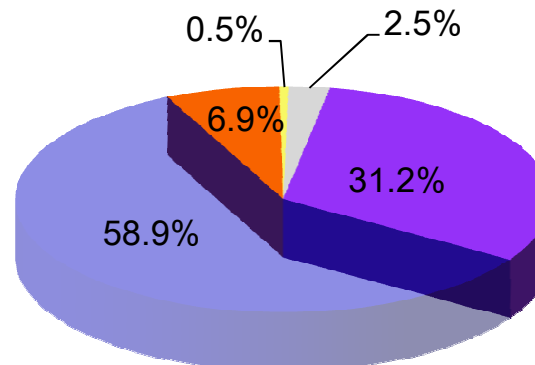
Among 1,005 respondents, **over 80%** indicated that criteria of economic / asset aspect are important / very important for defining the 'middle class'

- "Owning Private Property" - **86.4%** (868 respondents)
- "Owning Certain Amount of Assets" - **90.1%** (906 respondents)
- "Having High Level of Income" - **88.9%** (894 respondents)

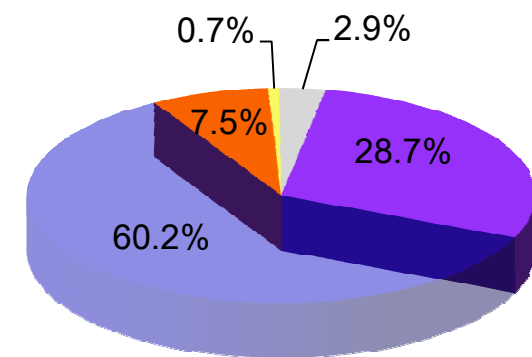
"Owning Private Property"



"Owning Certain Amount of Assets"



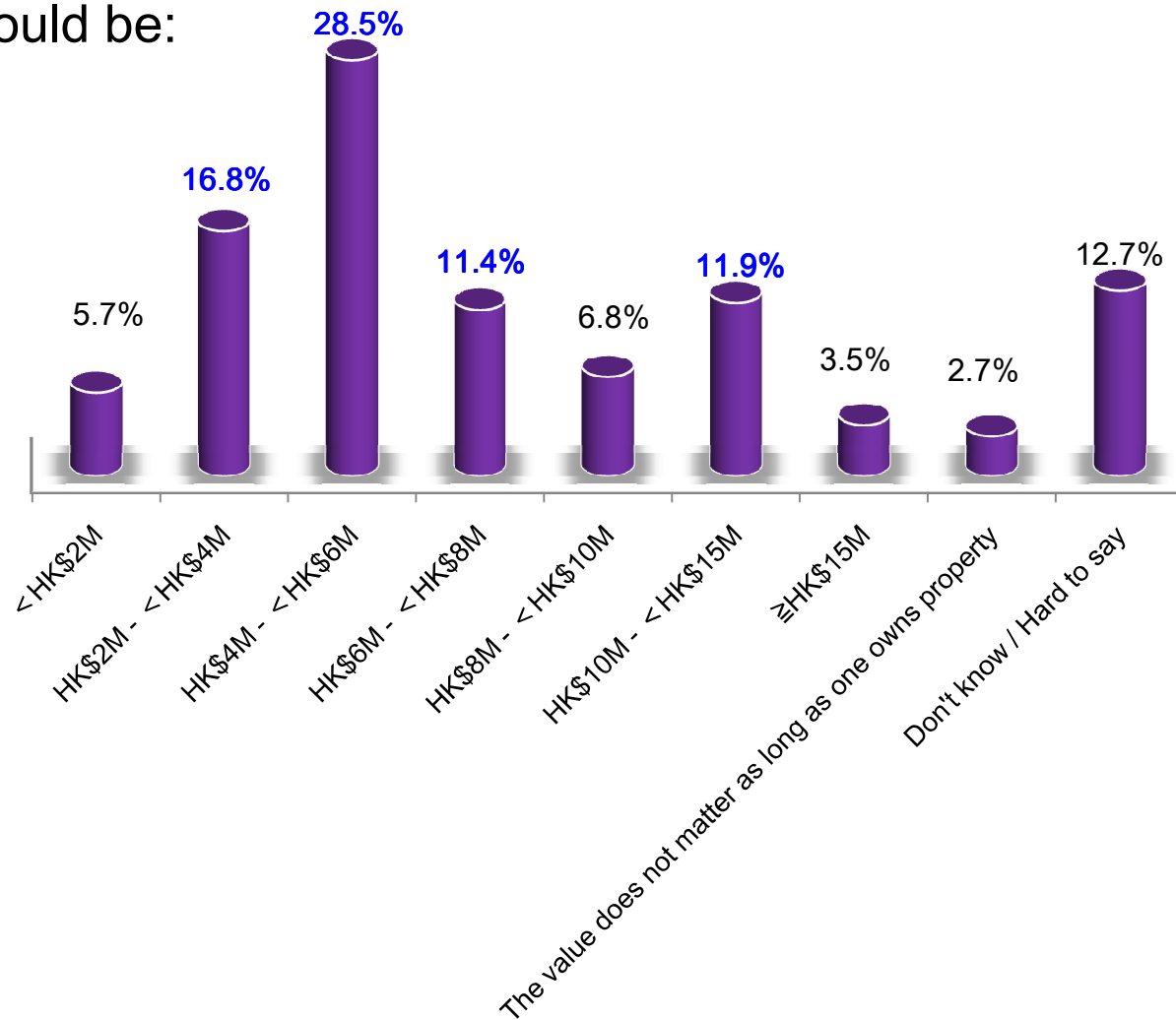
"Having High Level of Income"



Very important   Important   Not important   Very unimportant   Fifty-fifty / Don't know / Hard to say / Declined to answer

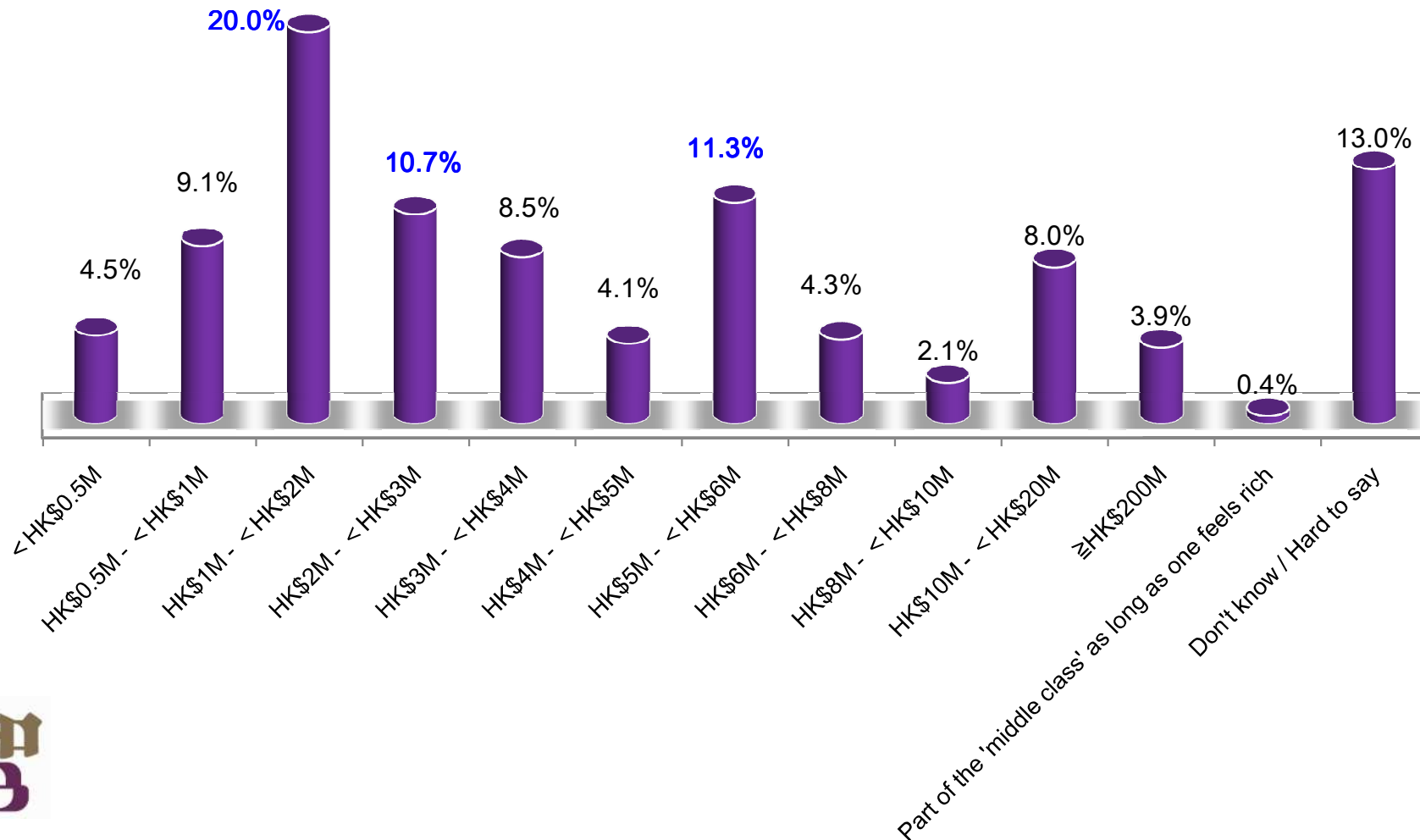
# Value of Private Property Owned by the 'Middle Class'

Respondents (868) who regarded "Owning Private Property" as important / very important for being the 'middle class' considered value of private property should be:



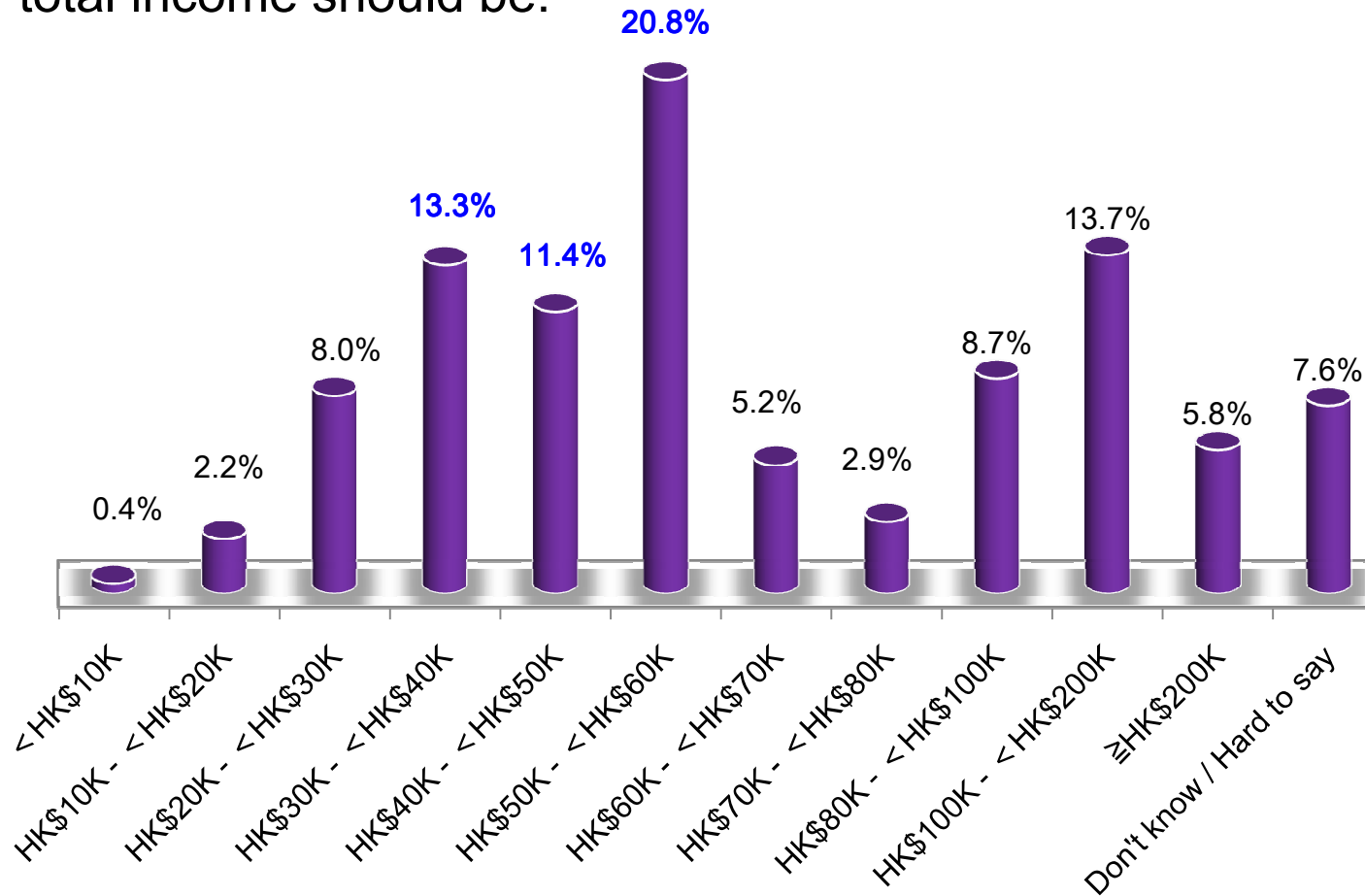
# Amount of Assets Owned by the 'Middle Class'

Respondents (906) who regarded "Owning Certain Amount of Assets" as important / very important for being the 'middle class' considered amount of assets (excluding value of private property) should be:



# Monthly Total Income of the 'Middle Class'

Respondents (894) who regarded “Having High Level of Income”<sup>\*</sup> as important / very important for being the ‘middle class’ considered level of monthly total income should be:



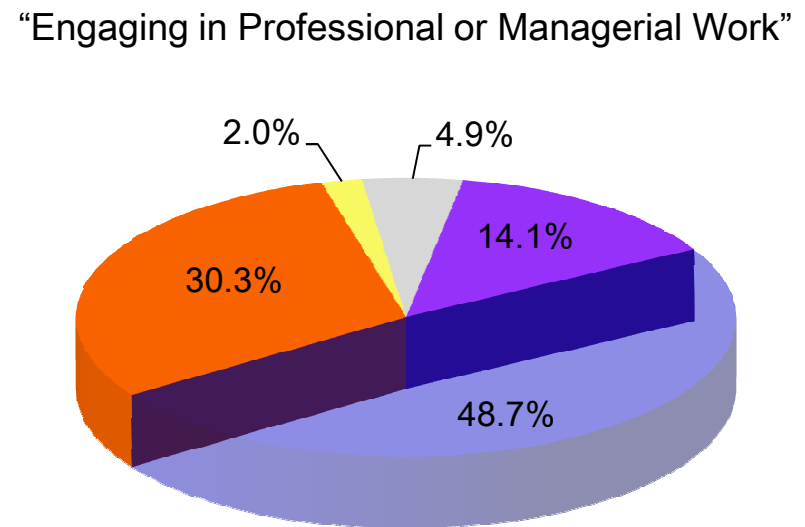
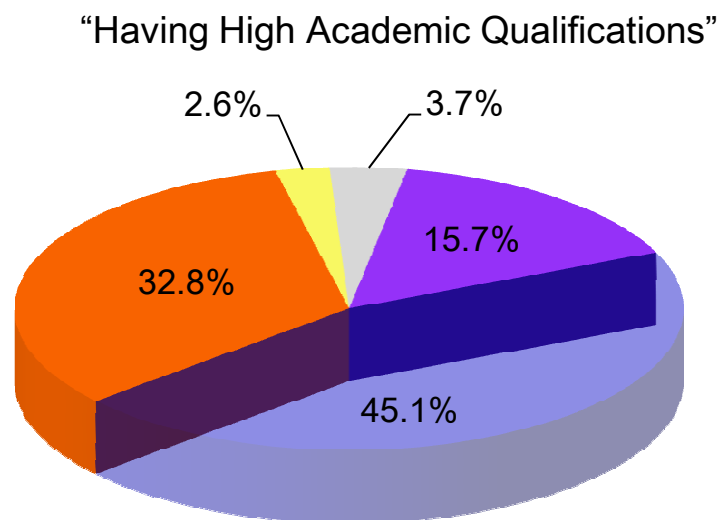
<sup>\*</sup>including salary, investment returns, and etc. 8



# Human Resources Aspect

Among 1,005 respondents, **over 60%** indicated that acquiring academic qualifications or career achievement by personal efforts is important / very important for being the 'middle class'

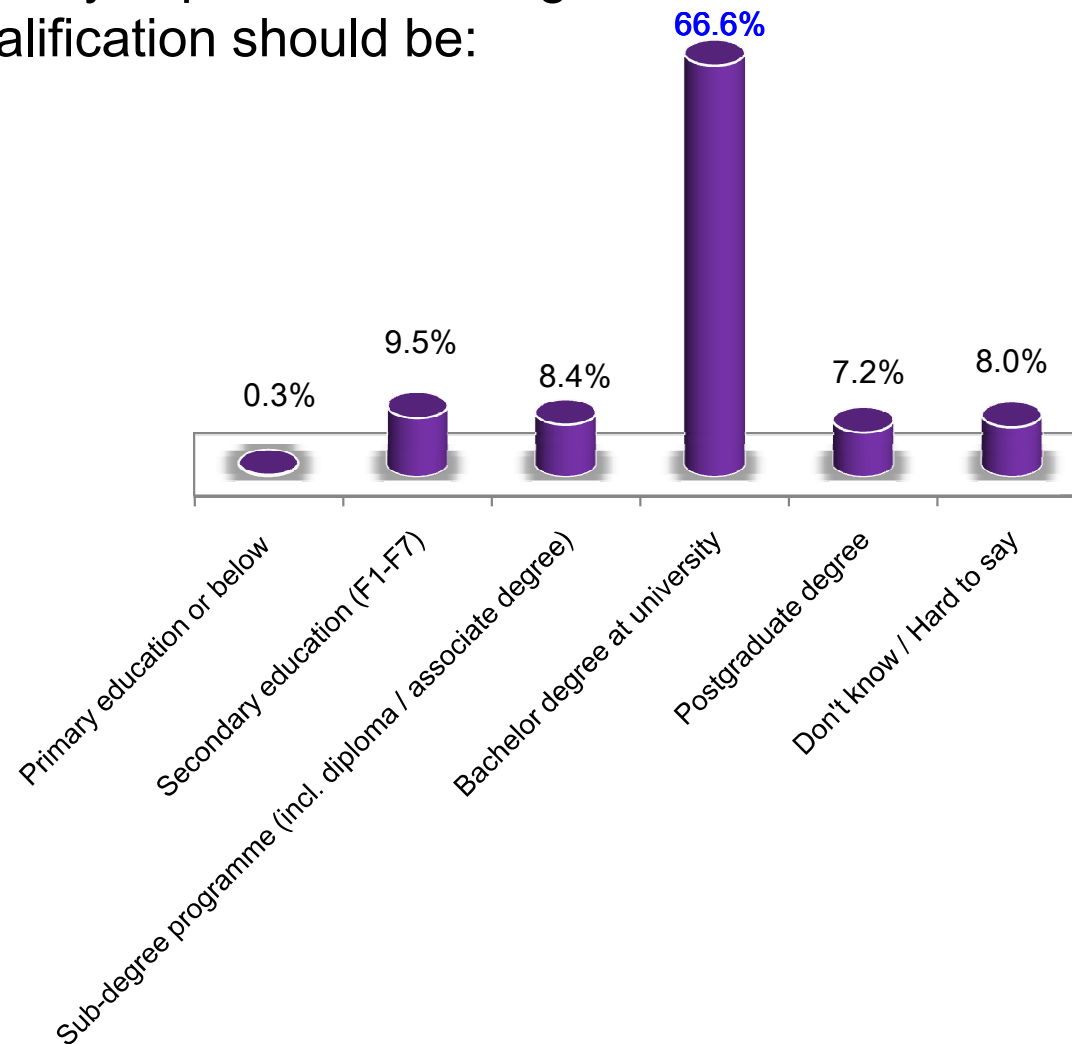
- “Having High Academic Qualifications” - **60.8%** (611 respondents)
- “Engaging in Professional or Managerial Work” - **62.8%** (632 respondents)



Very important   Important   Not important   Very unimportant   Fifty-fifty / Don't know / Hard to say / Declined to answer

# Academic Qualifications of the 'Middle Class'

Respondents (611) who regarded “Having High Academic Qualifications” as important / very important for being the ‘middle class’ considered level of attained qualification should be:

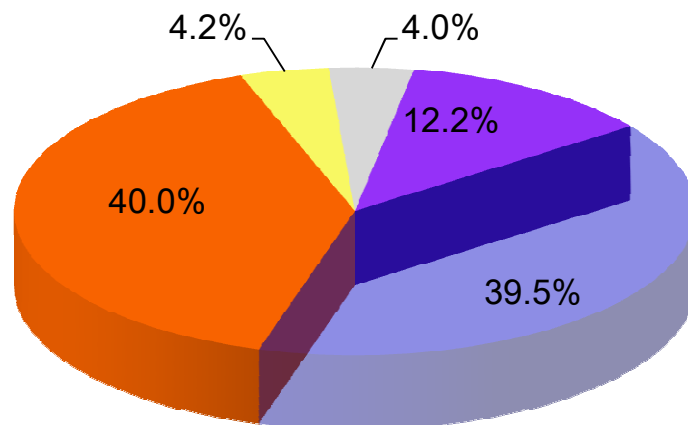


# Social Aspect

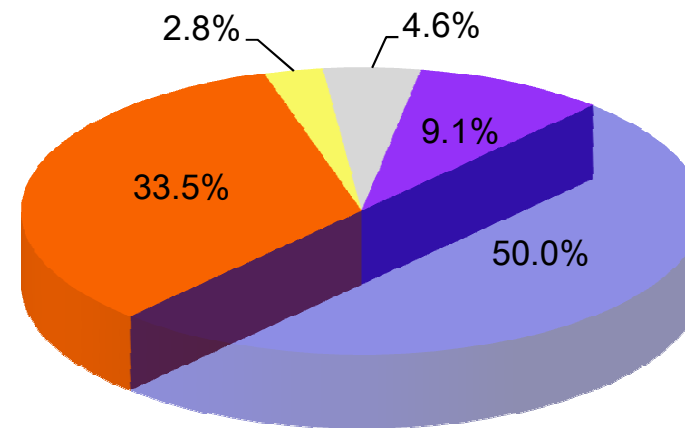
Among 1,005 respondents, **over 50%** indicated that benefits of social capital are important / very important for being the 'middle class'

- “Having a Good Family Background” - **51.7%** (520 respondents)
- “Having Social Connections” - **59.1%** (594 respondents)

“Having a Good Family Background”



“Having Social Connections”

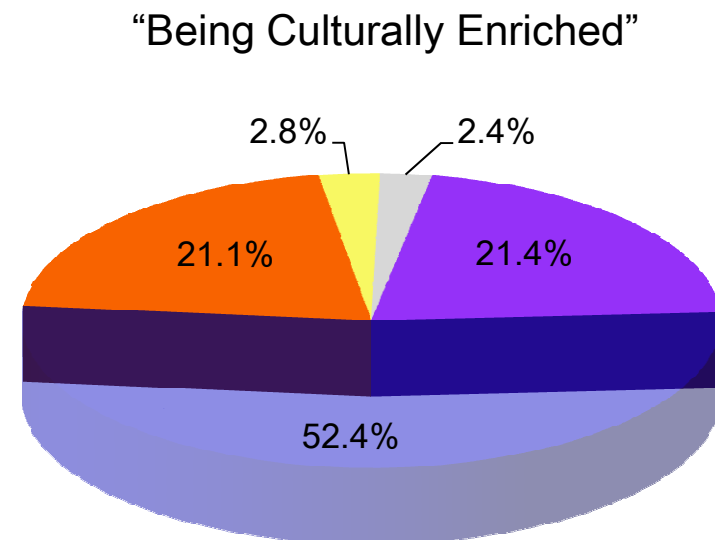
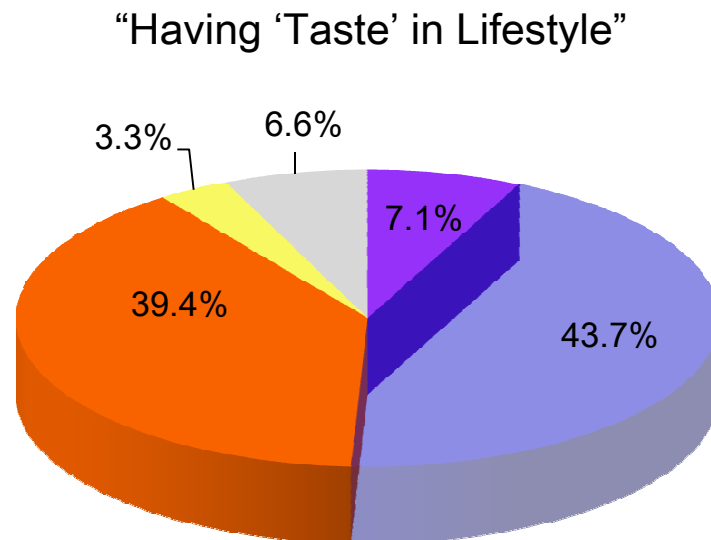


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# Cultural Aspect

Among 1,005 respondents, **from over 50% to 70%** indicated that criteria of culturally-related capital are important / very important for being the 'middle class'

- “Having ‘Taste’ in Lifestyle” - **50.8%** (510 respondents)
- “Being Culturally Enriched” - **73.8%** (742 respondents)

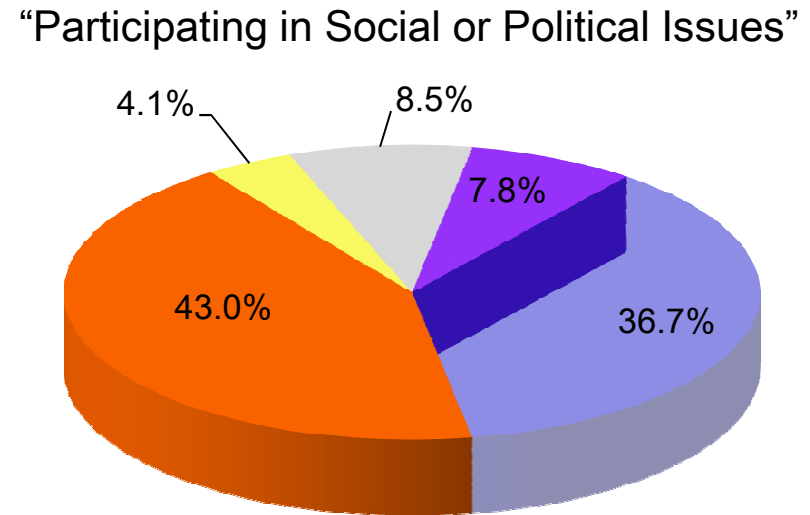
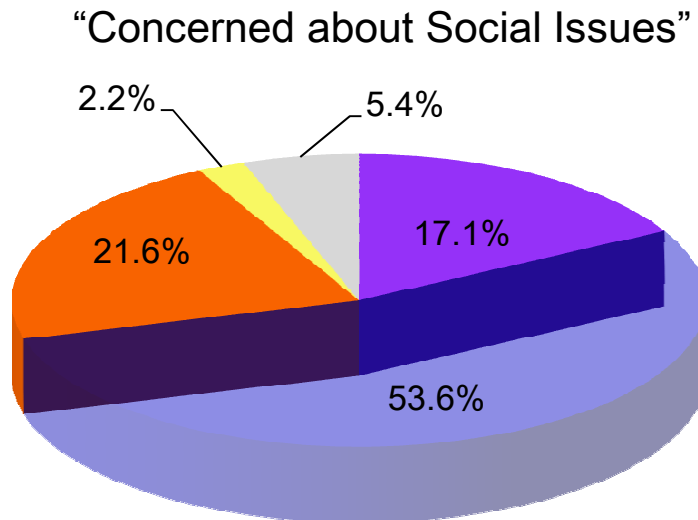


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# Political Aspect

Among 1,005 respondents, **from over 40% to 70%** indicated that criteria related to social or political issues are important / very important for being the 'middle class'

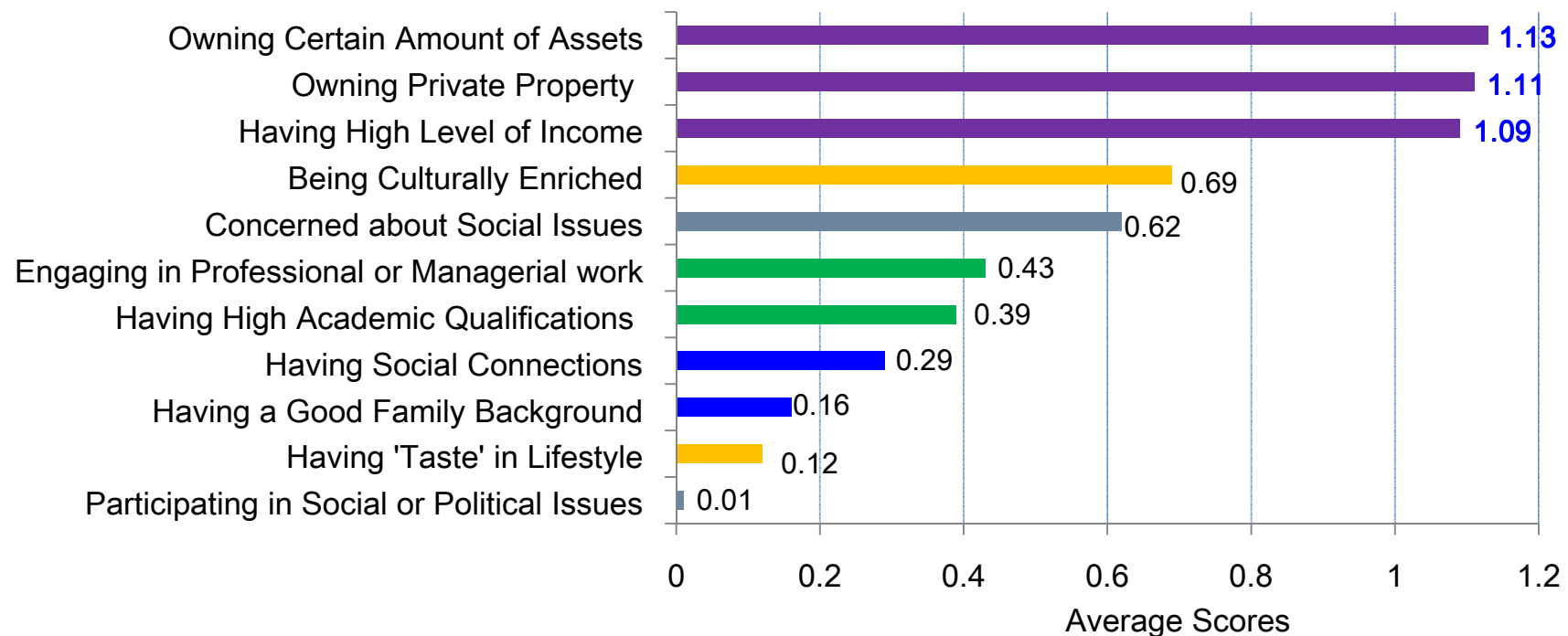
- “Concerned about Social Issues” - **70.7%** (710 respondents)
- “Participating in Social or Political Issues” - **44.5%** (448 respondents)



Very important Important Not important Very unimportant Fifty-fifty / Don't know / Hard to say / Declined to answer

## Survey Findings (II): Comparison of Importance of Criteria for Defining the 'Middle Class'

- Overview of how respondents rated the importance of criteria for defining the 'middle class'

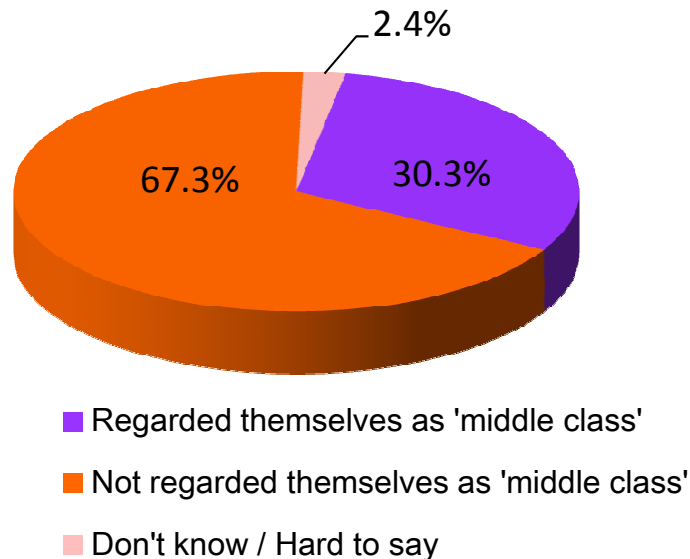


- Above chart shows the average scores of the 11 criteria under 5 major aspects in descending order
- The closer the score is to positive 2, the higher is the importance of the criterion in defining the 'middle class'. Conversely, the closer the score is to negative 2, the less important it is in defining the 'middle class'

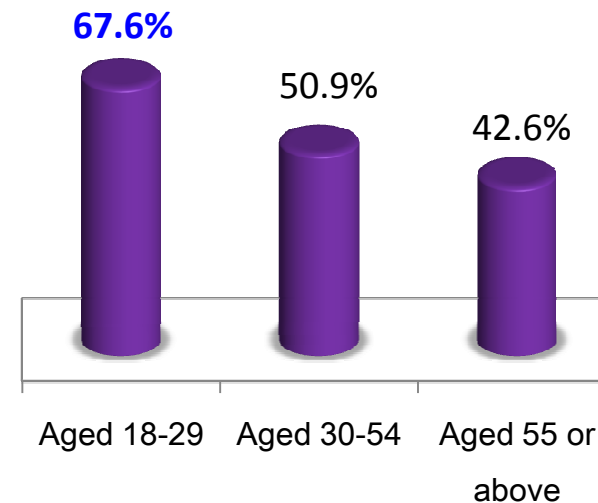
## Survey Findings (III): Whether Regarding themselves as 'Middle Class' / Having Desire to be the 'Middle Class'

- Among 1,005 respondents, **67.3%** (676 respondents) did not regard themselves as 'middle class'
- According to the Chi-square test results, only age and respondents' desirability of being middle class are found to be statistically significant. Of those respondents aged 18 to 29 who self-claimed 'non-middle class', **67.6%** indicated a desire to be the 'middle class' which is higher than those aged 30-54 (50.9%) and aged 55 or above (42.6%)

Regarded themselves as 'Middle Class'



Desired to be the 'Middle Class'



# Conclusion

- Hong Kong people tend to have a traditional perception of the 'middle class' and consider financial capitals like assets, high level of income (especially ownership of private property and other assets) as more important than educational qualification and occupation which are commonly used for determining socioeconomic status
- Instead of family support or social connections, people believe in acquiring the 'middle class' status by personal efforts (through education and work)
- “Being Culturally Enriched” and “Concerned about Social Issues” can be regarded as characteristics of the 'middle class' implying that people have expectations on the 'middle class' which are similar to that on intellectuals





# Conclusion

- Determining the 'middle class' by “Having ‘Taste’ in Lifestyle” or considering the 'middle class' will probably be “Participating in Social or Political Issues” may be controversial
- People generally tend not to claim themselves as 'middle class'. Among those self-claimed 'non-middle class' respondents, younger generation (aged 18 -29) have a stronger desire to become the 'middle class' which reflects that the 'middle class dream' is generally shared by the youth

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Q & A



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Thank You!

