



“I Am NOT Leaving Home”: Post-80s’ Housing Attitudes and Aspirations in Hong Kong

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Urban Research Group – CityU on Cities Working Paper Series, WP No.2/2014

1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong's younger generation is facing increasing housing pressure. The previous decade has witnessed an unrelenting upswing of property prices since the trough in 2003. According to the Census and Statistical Department (C&SD), residential prices surged by 21% in 2010 and 29% in 2011, while real GDP growth rates increased just 7.1% in 2010 and 8.9% in 2011. The rising price-to-income ratio indicates an intensifying housing affordability problem among Hong Kong residents. There is also a growing gap in housing supply and demand. As reported by the Rating and Valuation Department (R&VD), housing completion fell from 13405 units in 2010 to 9449 units in 2011, partly due to the HKSAR government's limited housing land supply policy. Past literature has paid more attention to housing issues of the elderly and the poor, while overlooking the pivotal role housing plays in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Hit by the financial tsunami when they began to work, Hong Kong's post-80s generation has fewer career opportunities, declining real earnings, delayed marriage status, and heterogeneous political orientation (Wu, 2010). Despite the current economic downturn and the shrinking job market, young people in general are optimistic about their career prospects, probably because they are better educated and live in a more information-rich era. Yet housing remains one of the central barriers to their independence and development.

Under such circumstances, what are Hong Kong post-80s' opinions about independent living? Do they have different home experiences when compared to their parents? Have family ties played a key role in determining their housing choices? Do they expect their housing conditions to improve or deteriorate? Are there varying attitudes towards housing across different age groups? Through analysing two surveys, this working paper investigates the housing attitudes and aspirations of Hong Kong's post-80s generation in their transition from living with parents to living independently. The discussion aims to help understand the economic, social, cultural and behavioural underpinning for changes in housing market dynamics and housing policy shifts in Hong Kong.

2. DATA DESCRIPTION

As part of a larger research project on the housing aspirations and expectations of the post-80s generation in Hong Kong, 1,008 individuals aged 18 to 35 were randomly interviewed in January 2013. All interviews were by telephone. Among the interviewees, 493 had full-time work and 44 part-time; 174 were studying full time and 13 part time; 82 had full-time work while studying part time; 134 were studying full time while working part time; 64 were not in education, employment or training; and 4 chose not to answer the question. A second round of interviews of the same group (but with only 700 individuals) was conducted subsequently in May 2013 to compare and validate the findings.

In terms of age group, in the 2nd round of interviews, 50 per cent of those surveyed were aged between 18 and 24, and the other 50 per cent were 25 to 35; this distribution of survey population was not necessarily identical with that of the census population (see Table 1). Yet the proportion of "middle young" (25 to 29) to "older young" (30 to 34) in the 2nd survey (1: 1.18) was very close to that in the census (1: 1.19). In terms of gender, the male-to-female ratio in the 2nd survey was 16 per cent higher than that in the census. In terms of home structure, the 1st and 2nd survey were quite consistent in the distribution of household members.

Table 1 Breakdown of Hong Kong Census and Survey Populations

Gender	Census Population		Survey Population	
	male	female	male	female
Age 18-35	615230	602903	327	373
male: female	1: 0.98		1: 1.14	
Age band	Census Total		Survey Total	
A1 (18-24*)	446133		351	
A2 (25-29)	351900		160	
A3 (30-35**)	420100		189	
A1:A2:A3	1: 0.79: 0.94		1: 0.46: 0.54	
No. of household members	%	Overall census***	1 st survey	2 nd survey
	1	27.6	6.1	6.0
	2	30.6	27.8	28.6
	3	20.3	37.8	39.0
	4	13.9	19.3	19.1
	5	5.8	5.5	4.9
6+	1.9	2.6	1.6	

* This number for the overall census population was obtained by using 40 % of Group 15-19 plus Group 20-24. Source of Data: "Population by Sex, Age Group and Place of Birth, 2011".

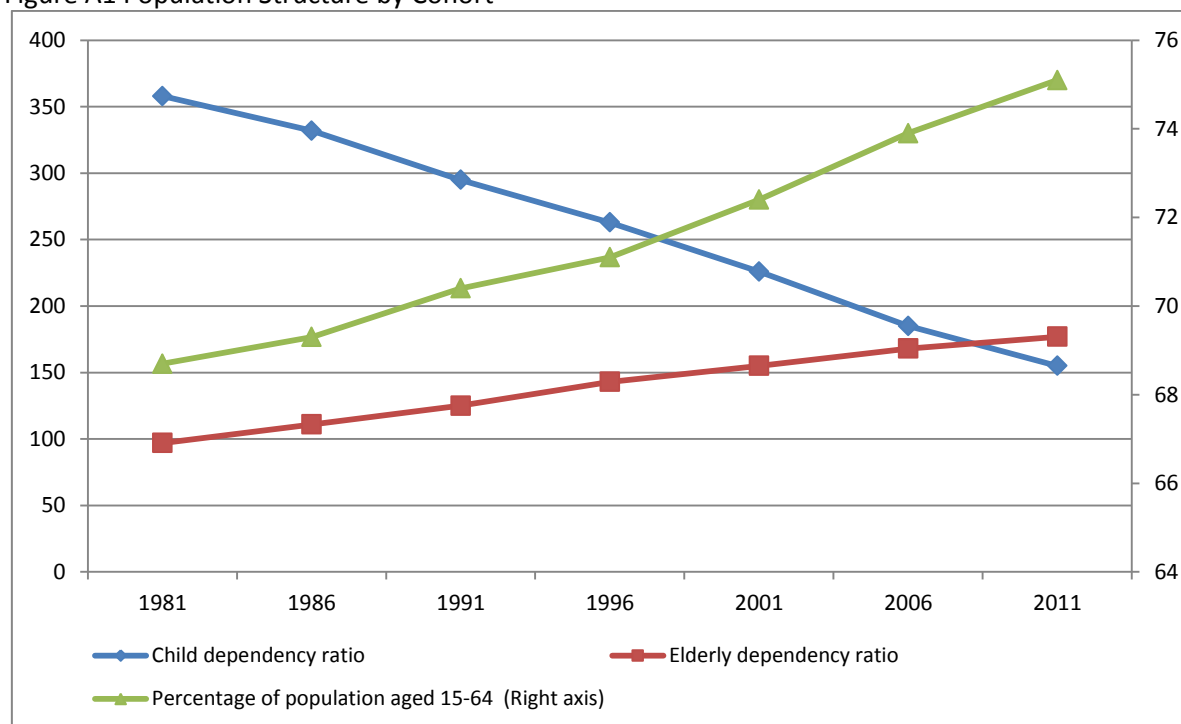
** This number for the overall census population was obtained by using Group 30-34 plus 20 % of Group 35-39. Source of Data: "Population by Sex, Age Group and Place of Birth, 2011".

*** This number for the overall census population was obtained by using 28 % of Group 25 plus Group 25-29 plus Group 30-34 plus 20 % of Group 35-39. Sources of Data: "Population by Sex, Age Group and Place of Birth, 2011".

3. DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

Demographic restructuring underpins social transformation, which in turn leads to changes of market dynamics and shifts in government policies. This process is in line with the life cycle formation for working population's consumption patterns: As young adults, people minimize their spending on durable goods such as housing but prefer other nondurable goods. Once married, they increase spending on home rent/purchase in order to raise their children. Their total spending increases as their children grow up, but peaks when their children leave home. Some people then make more housing investments in the form of villas and vacation housing to enhance their living conditions. Afterwards, their spending decreases while saving increases in preparation for retirement. This demographic pattern has resulted in major changes in the UK and the US property markets, with the baby-boom generations reaching peaks of housing consumption in the late 1980s (in the UK) and the early 2000s (in the US), followed by the bursting of the housing bubble and the collapse of the financial markets (Dent, 2011). Such drastic ups and downs make young people less secure about the housing market, which has significant impact on their conceptions of and behaviour towards housing. This may provide an additional explanation for various developed economies' congruent trends of children living longer with parents.

Figure A1 Population Structure by Cohort

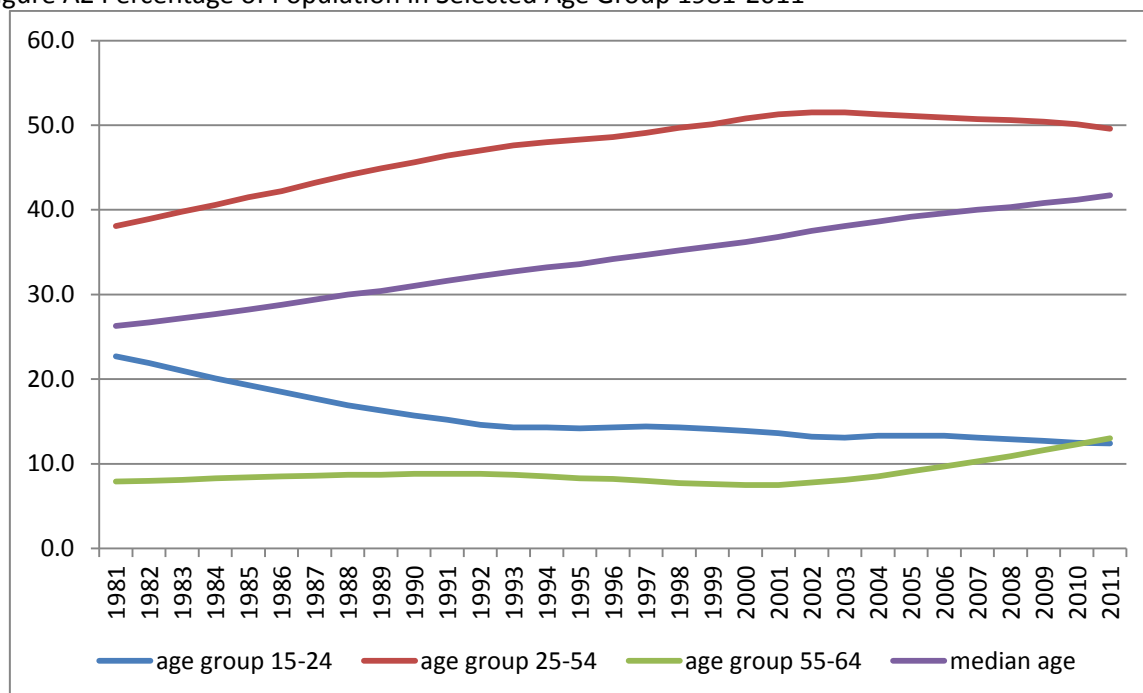


Source: *Demographic Trends in Hong Kong 1981-2011*

In Hong Kong, the proportion of working population (aged between 15 and 64) to aggregate population has steadily increased over time from 68.7 per cent in 1981 to 70.4 in 1991 to 72.4 per cent in 2001 to 75.1 per cent in 2011 (Figure A1). This “olive” population structure should indicate increases in disposable income and purchasing power, yet whether it means more household spending than saving requires analysis of the microstructure of the entire population. From 1981 to 2011, elderly dependency ratio increased from 97 per mill to 177 per mill, while child dependency ratio declined sharply from 358 per mill to 155 per mill. In aggregate, the dependency ratio of elders and children decreased from 455 per mill to 332 per mill. Linked with household’s life cycle consumption pattern, this indicates that the working population group has seen decreased raising/caring burdens over the past three decades.

The segment of the population comprised by the younger working age group (15 to 24) declined from 22.7 per cent in 1981 to 12.4 per cent in 2011. The middle working age group (25 to 54) peaked at 51.5 per cent in 2003, and slowly decreased to 49.6 in 2011. The older working age group (55 to 64) was relatively stable around 8 per cent in the 1980s and 1990s, started to rise in 2005 and climbed to 13.0 per cent by 2011. In parallel with this continuous increase in aggregate working population over the past 30 years, Hong Kong also faces an aging population. The median age in the census has increased steadily, from 26.3 years old in 1981 to 41.7 years old in 2011 (Figure A2). The shift of population nexus may indicate a more balanced consumption structure between housing and non-housing in Hong Kong (HKMA, 2011). Still, the younger generation is less able to afford housing purchases than is the middle-aged group, which is at the peak of both housing and non-housing consumption.

Figure A2 Percentage of Population in Selected Age Group 1981-2011



Source: Demographic Trends in Hong Kong 1981-2011

This survey of the post-80s generation (the sample actually included interviewees born from 1978 to 1995) has demonstrated a strong tendency of young people to live with their parents until marriage. Among all respondents, 76 per cent were now living with their parents, 21 per cent with their partners, and less than 1 per cent with their friends or on their own (Table 2). For the 18-24 and 25-29 age cohorts, the living-with-parents figures were higher than 80 per cent. Even for the 30-35 age cohort, more than 60 per cent of respondents were still living with their parents. In many countries, delayed departure from parental home has become a predominant feature, and our survey suggests that Hong Kong is not an exception.

Table 2 Current Housing Preference of Young People

Living with (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
Parents	75.7	89.2	83.2	60.5
Partners	20.9	8.5	14.3	35.7
Friends	0.3	0.0	0.6	1.1
Alone	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.5
Other	2.3	1.4	1.2	2.1
No. of Respondents	1004	351	160	189
Prefer to live (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
With parents	95.5	96.8	94.8	93.9
Somewhere else	29.3	29.3	26.6	35.5
No. of Respondents	1004	351	160	189

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Moreover, our survey suggests that the younger generation may have higher economic status than their parents: 24 per cent of the respondents were managers, administrators or professionals, while only 18 per cent of their fathers were in the same category. Even if we assumed a similar proportion

of high income level among the retired group, 26 per cent of the respondents' fathers would be in the high income group – still not much more than the younger generation. In contrast, only 9 per cent of respondents said they were among the low-middle or low income groups, compared to 30 per cent of their fathers. International experience has recorded the key role of wealthy parents in supporting their children to establish new households at an earlier age (Ray and Yip, 2012). Those not born in rich families need to wait longer, until they are able to deposit enough for down payments and apply for mortgage loans. The global financial tsunami also deferred the process by making institutional investors more risk averse, excluding more young people from home purchase financing.

Table 3 Occupation Distribution of the Interviewees

Occupation groups (%)	Your Father (%)	Your Mother (%)	And You (%)	Income level indicated
Managers & administrators	13.5	3.9	9.6	High
Professionals	4.8	1.8	14.7	
Associate professionals	3.2	2.5	14.8	Upper-middle
Clerical support workers	4.0	6.6	25.8	Middle
Service & sales workers	10.3	10.2	22.7	
Crafts & related workers	12.2	1.1	3.1	Lower-middle
Plant & machine operators	9.0	0.1	2.2	
Skilled agricultural & fishery workers	0.9	0.6	0.5	
Elementary occupations	7.4	7.2	2.9	Low
Unemployed	1.8	1.5	3.7	Economically inactive
Retired	29.1	18.8	n/a	
Domestic Helper	0.2	44.4	n/a	
Others	3.4	1.4	n/a	
No. of respondents	611	660	700	--

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Unlike their parents, who were born in post-war reconstruction times but experienced the subsequent boom in the local economy, the post-80s generation in Hong Kong were born in a peaceful living environment but are facing fiercer competition in their career paths. This is largely due to more university graduates over the past decade. Having higher life expectations than their parents but facing more uncertainties, young people tend to be more conservative in housing consumption to bridge the gap between dreams and reality.

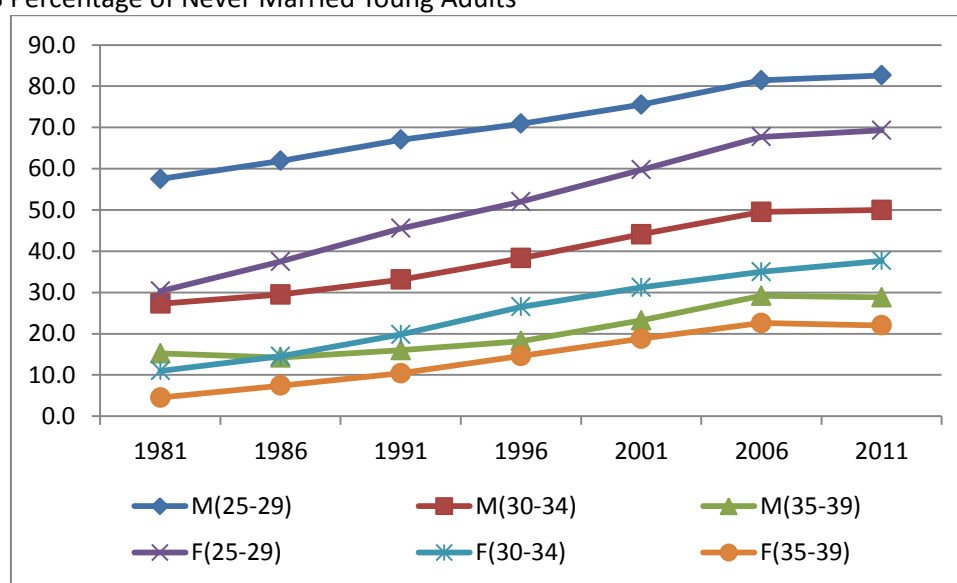
Table 4 Levels of Education Pursued/Completed

Education Level (%)	Survey		Census 2011*	
	Pursued	Completed	Completed (age 36-54)	Completed (age 55-74)
No schooling / Pre-primary	0.2	10.0	12.2	10.5
Primary	1.5		12.8	37.0
Lower Secondary	8.6		22.3	20.6
Upper Secondary / Craft-level education	39.0		36.7	20.3
Diploma / Certificate	12.5	18.2	4.7	3.2
Sub-degree course	4.6	13.5	3.5	1.2
Degree course	27.7	47.6	18.8	12.1
Postgraduate and above	5.9	6.2	--	--
Other	--	4.5	--	--
No. of respondents	692	308	--	--

*Data Source: Population Census 2011

Such precautionary behaviour has led to young people delaying marriage. Figure A3 depicts the percentage of young people aged 25-39 who have never been married before, and a clear rising trend is observed among different cohorts from 1981 to 2011. For example, less than 30 per cent of males aged over 30 years old were not married in 1981, while in stark contrast 50 per cent of the same group were not married in 2011. For young females aged below 30, in 1981 only 30 per cent were not married, while in 2011 the figure rose sharply to 70 per cent.

Figure A3 Percentage of Never Married Young Adults



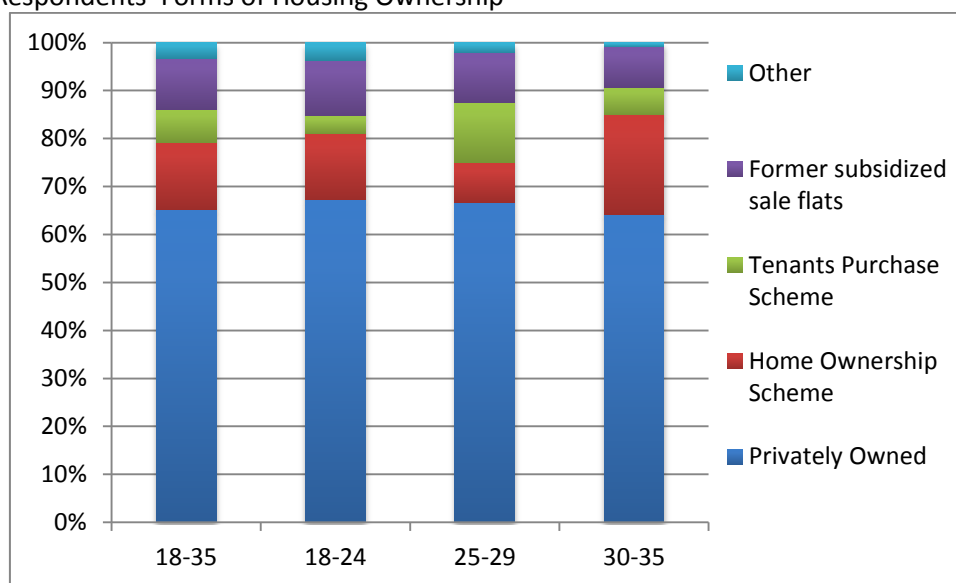
Data Source: Demographic Trends in Hong Kong 1981-2011. M stands for number of unmarried young males, F stands for number of unmarried young females.

4. HOUSING ATTITUDE

As the world’s freest economy for 19 consecutive years (HFI, 2013), Hong Kong has been famous for its laissez-faire policies, liberating individual entrepreneurship through strictly protecting private property rights. Housing ownership stands out as a pivotal tool for personal wealth deposit and accumulation.

Among all our respondents, 65 per cent lived in privately owned housing. Yet 74 per cent of these dwellings were owned by the young people’s parents, while only 11 per cent were owned by young people themselves (3 per cent by their partners, and 4 per cent jointly owned by the couple). International evidence has demonstrated that this reduced level of homeownership in Hong Kong among young people is similar to that in other industrialized economies, such as the United Kingdom and Japan. A mainstream explanation for this key social change is that young people cannot afford to own a house in the early stages of their career development. In the urban literature, the housing affordability problem has been commonly quoted as a deterministic barrier to young people being able to live independently. Our survey concurs: 65 per cent said they could not afford to live anywhere else; indicating that housing was inherently too expensive for these young people in their early housing careers. 75 per cent said they lived with their parents to save money to spend on other things.

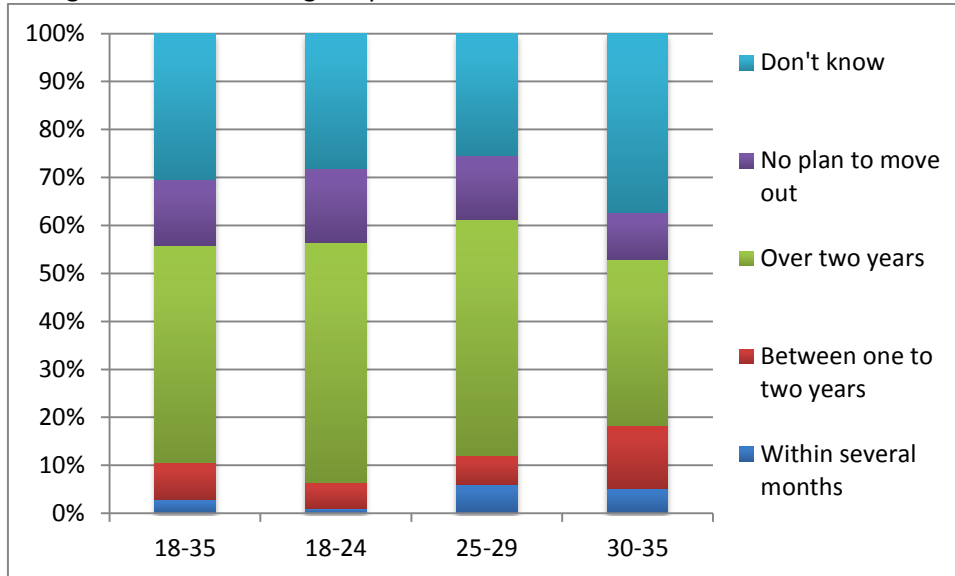
Figure 1 Respondents’ Forms of Housing Ownership



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

This is why, when asked about their perceptions, 69 per cent of these young people said they are satisfied with their current housing situation. Traditionally, housing has been regarded as part of one’s assets, but recent years have witnessed a decline in the proportion of young people seeking owner occupation. Nearly half of our respondents aged 18 to 29 said they will stay more than two years with their parents. Almost 40 per cent of those aged 30 to 35 don’t know how long they will stay living at home. The reasons can be multi-faceted: Housing prices in Hong Kong have escalated to record highs; the financial crisis has led to unstable employment; longer education and rising costs have increased the burden of debt repayment once they graduate; inadequate space for independent living contradicts their ambitious self-evaluation of life standards; and perhaps above all, the transition to adulthood has become more complicated today – independent living may no longer be a necessary step towards being mature.

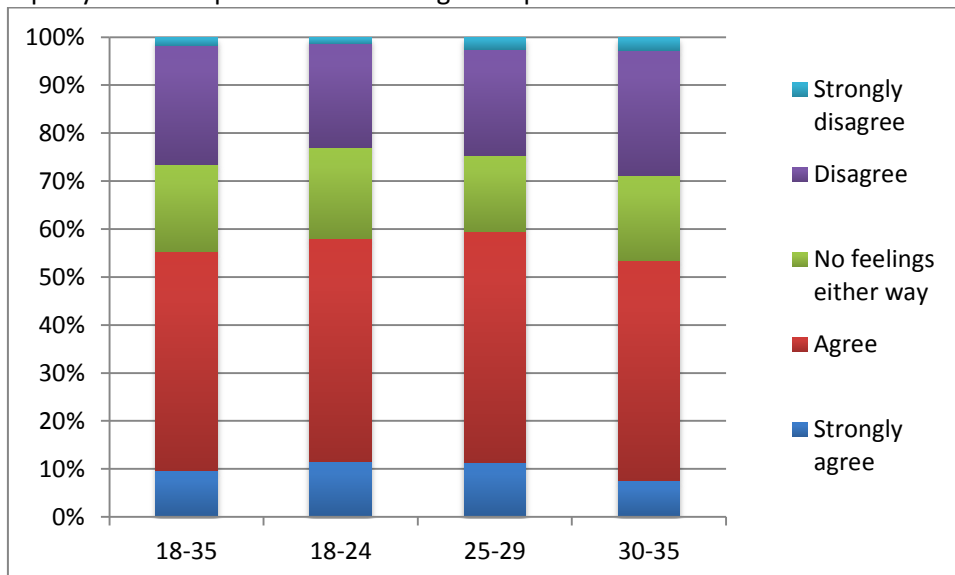
Figure 2 Moving Intentions of Young People



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Yet marriage still is. Although later marriage has been a trend in other parts of the world, in the East the linkage between marriage and housing purchase is much stronger than in the West. According to our respondents, marriage ranks as the top motivation for the young generation to leave their parents' home for independent living: 79 per cent said they will move out of home once getting married or having a partner. This is consistent with East Asian cultural norms and expectations, where independent living typically coincides with marriage. Over 55 per cent of our respondents said that people who have properties have an advantage in looking for a partner (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Property Ownership Enhances Marriage Prospect



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Following marriage, other causes for young people to leave home include earning and saving enough money (43 per cent), studying elsewhere (32 per cent), reaching a certain age (29 per cent), living in school dormitory (27 per cent), and finding a job far away from home (27 per cent).

Table 5 Likely Reasons for Wanting to Leave Home

Depart Home because (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
Getting married or having partner	79.0	77.0	80.6	74.8
Living in school dormitory	26.7	36.1	15.7	20.0
Studying elsewhere	31.8	39.0	26.1	21.7
Earn/save enough money	43.0	42.2	44.0	43.5
Reaching a certain age	28.7	33.2	22.4	23.5
Find a job far away from home	26.9	30.4	23.1	33.0
No. of respondents	1004	351	160	189

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Although independent living with a partner marks the transition to adulthood, the post-80s generation do not seem to have been well prepared for this change. More than 70 per cent did not have any experience of living away from home. Among those who had lived away from home, 46 per cent lived in Hong Kong boarding schools, 5 per cent with friends, and 3 per cent with other relatives. The reasons for them to live away from their parents included study (29 per cent), employment/close to working place (13 per cent), and space (7 per cent). Lacking any experience of independent living leads to another distinguishing feature of the young generation – individualism. Working from polyvalent expertise and competing against rivals with distinctive skills, this generation's independence takes the form of individual possessions rather than collective sharing. When asked about if they have ever thought about sharing a flat with friends, 90 per cent of the respondents said no. Without any experience of living with peers, it is difficult for this generation to evolve a sense of belonging to a particular social network or to devote themselves to a specific interest group. Varieties in lifestyles further increase the diversity in young people's housing choices.

Table 6 Previous Living Experience Away from Home

Have lived away from home (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
With parents or partners	5.4	6.2	12.8	2.2
With friends	5.4	3.8	10.3	2.2
With relatives	2.7	1.2	0.0	8.7
For study	28.5	30.0	33.3	23.9
For employment	12.7	2.5	17.9	19.6
For more space	6.8	3.8	5.1	15.2
No. of respondents	1004	351	160	189

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

5. FAMILY TIES

Another reason for young people's failure to launch is close family ties. Our survey reveals that individualism has shaped the post-80s' lifestyle in a more materialistic way. However, individualism does not equal independence; on the contrary, the younger generation is sheltered under parental wings. Our survey shows that 96 per cent of these post-80s say that they preferred to continue living with their parents. This preference does not vary much across different age bands. More than 70 per cent said their parents could take care of them; 86 per cent said they could take care of their parents, indicating that family ties remain a primary concern for the younger generation. When being asked about whether Chinese people should preserve close family ties, 85 per cent said yes.

Table 7 Reasons for Living with Parents

Live with parents because (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
I can't afford anywhere else	65.4	65.4	65.4	68.5
I have more money to spend on other things	74.8	71.9	82.6	80.0
They can take care of me	72.6	76.5	69.2	61.8
I can take care of them	86.3	83.2	90.9	88.6
Most people of my age do so	61.3	58.1	64.1	64.9
They would not allow me to move out	16.2	17.4	13.6	16.5
No. of respondents	1004	351	160	189

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Young people's dependence on their parents not only includes living with them after growing up, but also receiving financial assistance for establishing households. Only 11 per cent of the surveyed respondents said they were homeowners. Even among those aged 30 to 35, the figure was only 14 per cent. Almost three-quarters of homeowners were the respondents' parents or parents-in-law, who were also mainly responsible for repaying the mortgages.

Table 8 Who Owns and Who Pays the Mortgage

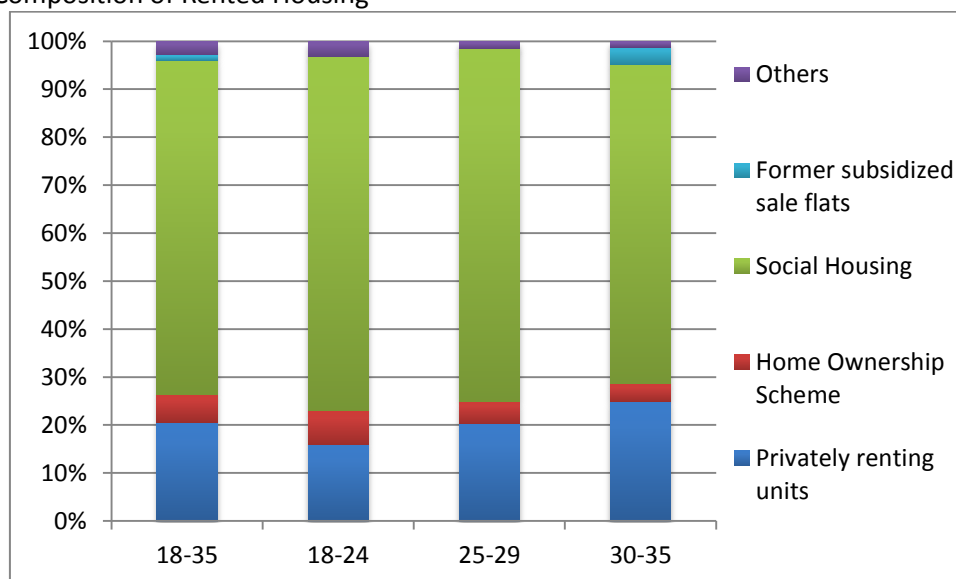
Age Band (%)	Age 18-35		Age 18-24		Age 25-29		Age 30-35	
	Owner	Payer	Owner	Payer	Owner	Payer	Owner	Payer
Myself	10.8	8.0	5.2	4.5	7.3	6.2	14.4	9.9
My parents (or in-law)	74.4	68.9	84.3	76.8	79.2	71.2	60.6	61.4
My partner	3.4	5.7	0.5	1.1	3.1	6.2	4.8	11.9
My parents and myself	1.2	3.3	1.6	4.5	1.0	3.8	2.9	2.0
My partner	2.3	3.9	2.6	2.3	2.1	1.2	10.6	6.9

and myself								
Others	3.5	10.2	5.8	10.7	7.3	11.2	6.7	7.9

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

For prospective renters among the younger generation, social housing was their primary choice (69 per cent), followed by privately rented units (20 per cent). Such preferences did not vary much among different age bands. Very few young people in the survey preferred the government's home ownership scheme (on average 6 per cent) or former subsidized sale flats (on average 1 per cent).

Figure 4 Composition of Rented Housing



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Even for housing rent, parents or parents-in-law remain the major financial supporters (59 per cent), although the ratio declines significantly for the older young age group. The observation substantiates our argument that young people are more pragmatic and materialistic nowadays. Premature consumerism prevails among young people for non-durable goods and services, such as upgraded electronic products, self-improvement courses and traveling around the world. This consumption culture has further changed their ways of thinking, attitudes about life, and value systems. When asked how many of their close friends were also living with their parents, over 80 per cent said yes.

Table 9 Who Pays the Rent

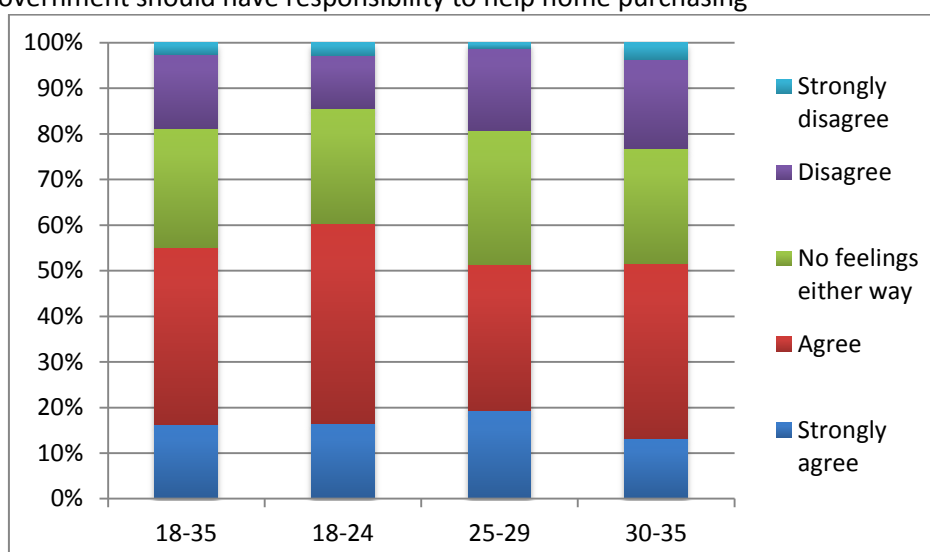
Who pays the rent (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
Only myself	17.5	11.2	12.9	24.7
Only my partner	7.8	2.6	11.3	14.8
My parents (or in-law)	58.5	77.6	61.3	38.3
Shared payment	5.2	3.3	8.1	6.2
Others	6.6	4.6	1.6	7.4
No. of respondents	1004	351	160	189

Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

6. HOUSING ASPIRATIONS

The motivations for independent living among young people vary widely, including getting married, moving away from parents or purchasing housing as an investment/saving vehicle. Empirical studies tend to support the hypothesis that housing being considered a symbol of wealth, autonomy, belonging, satisfaction and security has not changed for the younger generation. However, considering the increasing housing prices, Hong Kong’s post-80s do not expect to immediately set up long-term homes. Instead, our respondents strongly concurred that government should offer them more housing assistance.

Figure 5 Government should have responsibility to help home purchasing



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Specifically, 63 per cent of respondents said that government should provide more youth hostel-type accommodation; 64 per cent said that the government should provide more help getting into private home ownership; 73 per cent thought that the government should relax rules for access to public rental housing and home ownership scheme flats; about 50 per cent thought the government should provide subsidies for young people to private rental housing. These requests reflect their concern about being marginalized from the contemporary housing market, indicating that the Hong Kong government has not yet come up with systematic policies to deal with the youth housing-shortage problem.

Table 10 Ways the Government should Help Young People with Their Housing

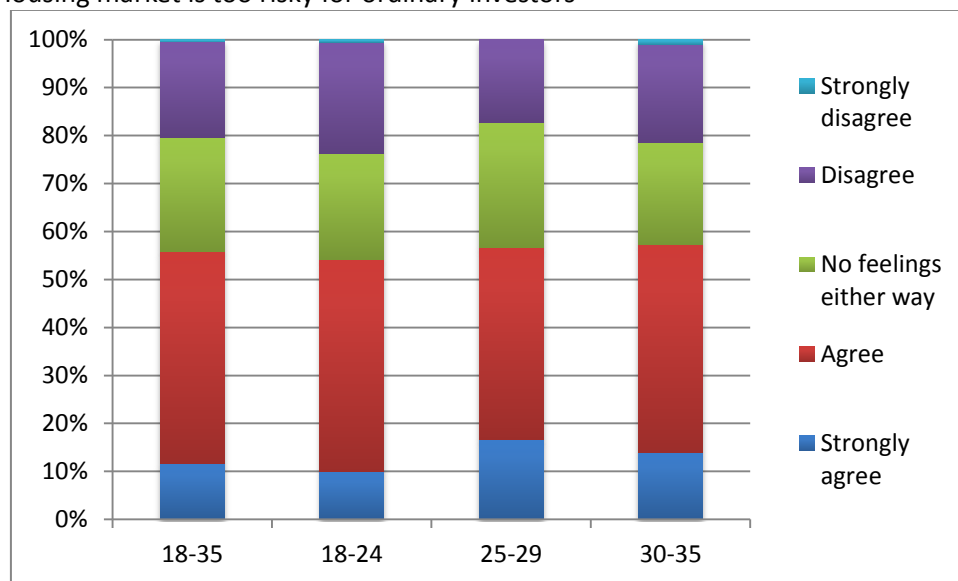
Government support in terms of (%)	Age 18-35	Age 18-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-35
Relax rules to access public rental housing	72.5	68.7	76.6	72.8
More HOS flats	73.1	70.1	78.6	75.0
More help for private home ownership	64.0	57.6	65.8	69.7
Subsidies for privately rental housing	50.1	47.1	50.6	48.8

No. of respondents	1004	351	160	189
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Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Controversial or not, the respondents on the one hand agree that government has the responsibility to help young people afford housing, while on the other hand seeing the housing market as too risky for ordinary people’s investment. This seeming contradiction may reflect a divide between institutional investors and individual buyers in attitudes towards housing purchase: Is it a saving pool or an investment vehicle? Does housing ownership reflect asset egalitarianism or embedded liberalism? Would the conflict between financial dependence and lifestyle independence alter young people’s homeownership choice? In their responses, the post-80s generation seem bewildered about the choice between Keynesian Welfarism and Neoliberal Globalization.

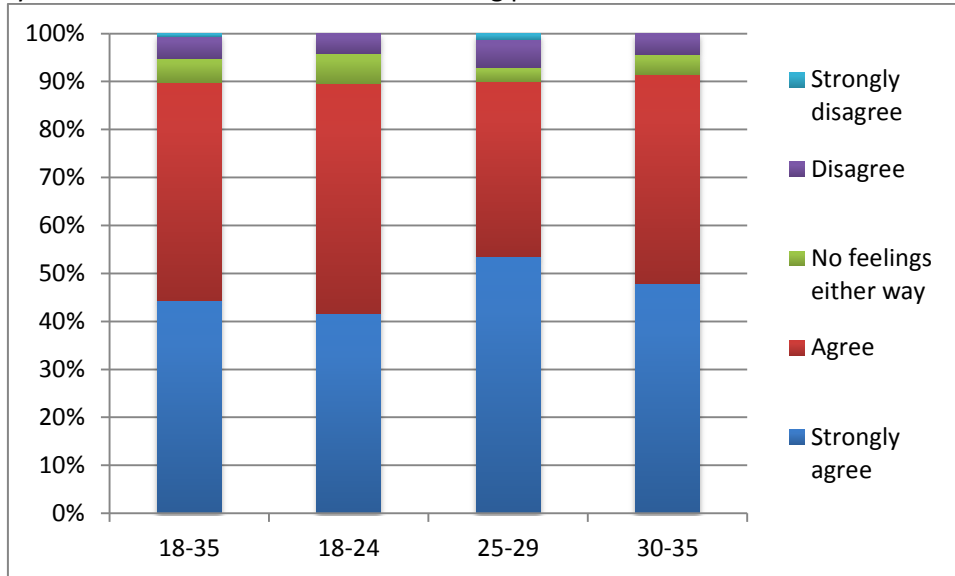
Figure 6 Housing market is too risky for ordinary investors



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Conflicts also exist in young people’s forecasts of their future. Almost 90 per cent said their income will not rise faster than that of housing prices. Pessimism prevailed across all aged bands surveyed, which is intriguing. Those aged 30-35 or even 25-29 should have clear memories of how the Asian financial crisis and the SARS epidemic brought Hong Kong’s housing market down to a trough, with housing prices collapsing more than 60% from 1998 to 2003. By the end of 2012, Hong Kong’s housing prices had surpassed their 1997 peak. In the current context – the United States and Europe are burdened by government debt – we cannot rule out the possibility of another property bust. Would it then be the right time for the younger generation to purchase housing? Otherwise, what makes them feel confident that the property market will not adjust?

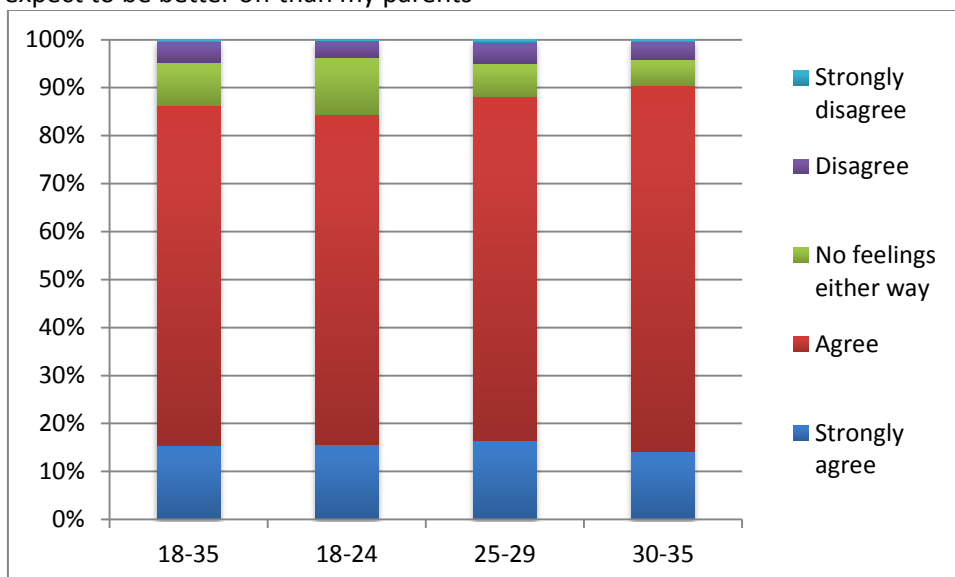
Figure 7 My income will not rise faster than housing prices



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Robust housing demand from Mainland China may be a cause, yet the Hong Kong government has already taken restrictive measures to prevent cross-border investment. The unrelenting money printing of the U.S. Federal Reserve may be another reason, but Hong Kong is a place where hot money enters easily and retreats fast. If it is not because young people expect housing prices to increase faster, it must be that they think their incomes will increase more slowly. Again, conversely, our survey shows that young people are optimistic about their job prospects. Over 85 per cent of the respondents believed strongly that they would be better off than their parents. A key reason is perhaps that young people no longer value housing ownership as much as their parents do. In fact, our survey shows that respondents are quite neutral about the idea that owning a property equals being middle class.

Figure 8 I expect to be better off than my parents



Source: Survey of Young People in Hong Kong

Another reason may relate to the expansion of higher education, which has led to higher expectations among of the younger generation. Our survey shows that post-80s believe that they have the potential to climbing further up the career ladder. However, a longer span of education may also indicate less working experience than their parents, making the younger generation less certain about the opportunities and challenges they face in the job market: They tend to be overly optimistic in their expectations, but overly pessimistic about reality.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This working paper provides preliminary insights into the housing attitudes and aspirations of Hong Kong's post-80s generation. In particular, the concern is why Hong Kong's younger generation faces a similar situation to that of many other countries: a failure to launch (i.e., from parental home to independent living) among young adults. A number of factors contribute to this phenomenon, such as demographic structure, social cognition, and behavioural characteristics. Yet our survey suggests that economic constraints are probably the major reason to account for young people's late departure from parental home.

Concerning demographic structure, census data shows that while child dependency ratio has decreased by 57 per cent, elderly dependency ratio has increased by 82 per cent from 1981 to 2011. There are many factors causing this trend, such as labour market conditions, living standards, housing prices and the cost of raising children or caring for the elderly. This phenomenon on the one hand indicates that the younger generation have grown up with more parental care, which partly accounts for their delayed departure from home and late establishment of their own family. On the other hand, a young couple will shoulder more responsibility for keeping an eye on two sets of parents in the near future. Although initially the four elderly would take care of the young couples' child(ren), by the time the couple reach their 40s, they will be facing the greatest pressure – raising teenage children while caring for retired parents. This is consistent with the life-cycle expenditure curve. Whether housing will by then be an additional burden to the post-80s thus requires policy attention. Similar problems may occur in mainland China, whose one-child policy over the past three decades has generated an aging population with its peak around 2020 – about when Hong Kong's post-80s will reach their 40s. An age-period-cohort analysis to compare Hong Kong and China's housing policies for young people is necessary in subsequent research.

Regarding the social aspect, marriage remains young people's top motivation for owning a home. Owning property facilitates the finding of a partner, according to our respondents – in other words, this Eastern doctrine of family formation has not changed. However, delayed marriage is prevalent among the younger generation, with precautionary consideration for uncertainties largely accounting for this social change. Close family ties play another key role in keeping young people in their parents' homes. Yet as a coin with two sides, this postponed departure may result in a lack of self-financing motivation for young people who seek their own property. Parent-supported home purchase is prevalent when post-80s start to form their own households. Whether this trend has something to do with intentional protection from these young people's parents is unknown. Our survey, at least, does not support this argument, for the respondents have better education and economic status than their parents. Still they choose to stay with their parents, probably because family indeed means so much to them: Our survey also suggests that most young people do not fancy the idea of sharing a house with their friends, indicating that individualism as a distinctive feature of the post-80s may have a salient impact on young people's housing tenure choices.

Behavioural characteristics can be multi-faceted; this paper only refers to post-80s' materialism, over-optimism and over-pessimism. Materialism in some sense equals realistic and conservative consumption. Over-optimism and over-pessimism are perhaps an unavoidable consequence of the

expansion in higher education. Unlike their parents, who grew up with less education but started working at an earlier age, the post-80s have grown up with more familial cares and better educational resources but less job market experience. They may be less sensitive to the current financial chaos compared to their parents, who have suffered the drastic property cycles and the ups and downs of Hong Kong's economy over the past few decades.

In conclusion, economic constraints seems to be the major impediment to post-80s' transition to independent living. Although home ownership provides self-cognition and sense of dignity, and may be an extra asset for young people to look for a partner, this paper demonstrates that it is not necessarily associated with post-80s' purchasing power. Instead, it probably reflects parental financial situation. Hence, for the majority of the post-80s, whose parents are not in higher social and economic strata, housing aspirations have evolved into a pattern of longer home stay before being property owners themselves. Moreover, most respondents think that their income growth will not catch up with increases in housing prices. Even though Hong Kong has low mortgage rates for housing purchase, the down payment ratio is as much as 30 per cent for small/middle-sized housing and 40 to 50 per cent for large-sized housing or villas (HKMA, 2012). Thus, without strong parental support, it would be extremely difficult for the majority of the younger generation to save enough for down payment or earn enough for instalment. This probably explains why young people tend to follow the American cultural trend of preferring to live in rented housing longer, before they are able to move into a property they own. As indirect evidence, our survey suggests that young people are neutral about the idea that paying rent is wasting money. Whether the government should relax financial constraints to support younger generation's housing purchase requires further discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to acknowledge the financial support of the Research Grant Council of Hong Kong , Housing and Hong Kong's Post-80s Generation: Attitudes, Aspirations and Future Trajectories (project number: 9041696) for the fieldwork of this paper.