

Poverty & Social Exclusion in Hong Kong

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by

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Abbreviations

BHPS	British Household Panel Survey
BSA	British Social Attitudes
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSSA	The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme
DA	Disability Allowance Scheme
DB	District board
EC	The European Communities
EEC	European Economic Communities
Eurostat	The European Statistical Office
FBU	The Family Budget Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHS	General Household Survey
HBAI	Households below average income
HES	Household Expenditure Survey
HIB50%	Households with income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution
HIB60%	Households with income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution
HLIQ	Households living in the lowest income quintile for the whole equivalised distribution
HKCSS	The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IEQ	The Income Evaluation Question
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research
LCA	Low-cost but acceptable level
LPL	Leyden Poverty Line
LS Survey	The survey of living standards in Hong Kong
MASoL	Minimum Acceptable Standard of Living
MBA	Modest-but-adequate level
MIQ	Minimum Income Question
MPF	Mandatory Provident Fund
MTR	Mass Transit Railway
MUD	Moral Underclass Discourse
NPI	New Policy Institute
NT	The New Territories
OAA	Old Age Allowance Scheme
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPS	Old-age Pension Scheme
PA	Public Assistance Scheme
PDI	Proportional deprivation index
PRC	The People's Republic of China
PRH	Public rental housing
PSA	Department of Public and Social Administration
PSE Survey	The 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey
RA	Research Assistant
RED	Redistribution Discourse
RQ	Register of quarters
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SB	Supplementary Benefit
SDI	Social Development Index
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SG	Steering Group
SID	Social Integrationist Discourse

Abbreviations

SPL	Subjective Poverty Line
SPRU	Social Policy Research Unit
SSA	Social Security Allowance Scheme
SSAIP	Social Security Assistance Index of Prices
TPS	Tenants Purchase Scheme
The 1% sample	The 1% sample data of the 2001 Population Census
UN	The United Nations
WFI	The Welfare Function of Income

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to develop and test new methods of studying poverty and investigate the extent and prevalence of poverty in a changing society and give insights to policy makers for allocating resources to those people who are in real need. The thesis has 4 main elements – (1) analysis of the relevant Hong Kong and British literature; (2) a secondary data analysis the 1% sample of the *2001 Population Census* (the 1% sample); (3) analysis of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong (LS survey); and (4) a comparison of similarities and differences of the key results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the *1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey* (the PSE survey) of the United Kingdom.

The development of a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong has utilized ideas from Britain and other European countries since poverty studies have had a long history in these countries. The relevance of western categorisations or approaches to a very different society needs to be explored and examined. The present study provides more up-to-date information on definitions and measurement of poverty and social exclusion by utilizing ideas from the United Kingdom and other European countries and hopes to contribute to the development of an improved theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. In addition, those previous local poverty studies were useful as showing clearly where poverty research in Hong Kong has got to, its achievements and limitations and form the base of the focus of the LS survey in Hong Kong. They give insights as to how the LS survey might fill some of the gaps of the existing poverty research.

There are three research elements in the thesis. *First*, a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample from the *Hong Kong 2001 Population Census* was undertaken to provide an updated profile of low-income households in Hong Kong. The sample was drawn from the most recent Population Census by a random sample selection to ensure data accuracy. This study was the first attempt to adopt Bradshaw & Middleton's equivalised income measure (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000: 86-87) to identify the number of low-income households with reference to various definitions of low-income, and also examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these low-income households in Hong Kong.

Second, the LS survey, which aimed at investigating public views on issues of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong, was conducted to gain a more complete

picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong. This survey not only focused on the inadequacy of the financial resources of vulnerable groups, but also explored the non-affordability of socially perceived necessities and subjective measure of poverty so as to reflect various elements of hardship and their interrelationships. Owing to limited time and resources, the LS survey only focused on Shatin, where is one of 18 District Board (DB) districts in Hong Kong. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number and limited the analysis. Although there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample. The study should perhaps be seen as a *pilot study*. The area/approach was new and the sample was inevitably small so it did have key elements of a pilot study. What this study can do is point up issues for further exploration.

Third, comparison of similarities and differences of the key results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the PSE survey were conducted. The comparative study alerted us a wide range of variables, such as culture, history, climate and living standards that affects the definition, understanding and meaning of poverty. Differences in socio-economic, cultural, climate related issues offer explanations of how and why the differences and similarities exist. The results of the LS and PSE survey indicated that different perceptions of necessities were culturally and locally related in Hong Kong and Britain. For example, British people perceived 'heating to warm living areas of the home, 'damp-free home' and 'carpets in living rooms and bedrooms' as necessities whereas Hong Kong people regarded 'a fan' and 'an air-conditioner' as necessities. These were examples of climate-related perceptions. Having 'a small amount of money to spend each week', 'regular savings for 'rainy days', as well as giving 'red pocket money during Chinese New Year' were perceived as typical culture-related necessities in Hong Kong. What we see from the two studies is agreement about basic necessities, such as food and the culturally differentiated definitions of other necessities varying in different societies.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this research for further policy actions. The basic finding was that there were still many vulnerable groups living in poverty and that those groups can be identified. The key findings of these linked studies demonstrate that there are higher proportions of poor people in certain types of households, including (1) single parent families with children aged below 15; (2) single elderly people aged 60+; (3) households with more dependent household members (i.e. children aged below 15 and elderly persons); (4) households with no working household members; (5) People with low educational attainment; and (6) households with members working in part-time or low-paid jobs.

Historically, the lack of government concern about poverty in Hong Kong has been the result of a number of factors – a growing economy and full employment, the willingness and ability of families to support family members in short term need, the small number of elderly people. There has also been deep seated concern about the potential impact of more generous social security policies on economic competitiveness. In recent years, rapid economic, social and demographic changes have radically altered the situation. No longer is there full employment. Families are less about to care for dependent members. There are increasing numbers of elderly people. In the past, Hong Kong has managed with only limited formal social security systems. These research findings show the need for a review of the role and responsibilities of government in this field. There seems also to be a measure of public support for more generous policies. On the other hand, however, concern about the impact of rising CSSA expenditure largely as a result of higher rates of unemployment has led to cut in benefit levels. The pressures are complex and to a degree conflicting.

The issue for the policy makers can no longer be a debate as to whether or not poverty exists but is now about how to tackle it. Public views on what constituted necessities, what people should not have to go without, why people are in need, the willingness of the public to pay more taxes to help those people in need, and the effectiveness of the government to help vulnerable groups do seem to offer potential public support for more positive anti-poverty policies, such as investing in job creation, increasing the Old Age Allowance/Disability Allowance, establishing pensions, improving provision of child care services. It suggests that the government's newly established Commission on Poverty should initiate various anti-poverty policies for three different target groups in low-income households, including (1) children; (2) the unemployed (i.e. young people with low skills and low educational attainment, and low-skilled workers), working poor and single parent families with dependent children; and (3) elderly people.

1

Introduction

**Socio-economic and demographic changes and
poverty in the 1990s in Hong Kong**

*Economic restructuring and economic
downturn*

*Aging population and changing family
structures*

Aims and scope of the thesis

Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1

Introduction

Socio-economic and demographic changes and poverty in the 1990s in Hong Kong

Economic restructuring and economic downturn

Between the early 1970s and the late 1990s, there has been steady economic growth in Hong Kong. Per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the population also increased significantly from HK\$6,559 in 1971/72, to HK\$32,942 in 1981/82, and HK\$206,718 in 1997/98 (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1995; The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Census & Statistics Department, 1998). Nonetheless, the buoyant economy did not automatically bring about an improvement in living standards for all because economic development was accompanied by unequal income distribution in society. Some segments of the population did not enjoy the benefit of the economic prosperity. According to *2001 Population Census*, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. This situation can be demonstrated by the Gini-coefficient and analysis of income distribution among various income groups. The Gini-coefficient was 0.53 in 2001, in comparison with 0.48 in 1991 and 0.52 in 1996 respectively. The serious income disparity is also reflected in the income distribution according to deciles. The income share earned by the lowest 20% of income households decreased from 4.3% in 1991, to 3.7% in 1996 and further dropped to 3.2% in 2001, whereas the income share earned by the highest 20% of income households increased from 42.8%, to 56.3% and 56.5% respectively (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 2001).

Since 1997, there have been negative impacts of the Asian Financial Crisis on economic development in Hong Kong. As a consequence, an increasing number of workers were laid off because of the closure of both small and large companies and this resulted in a high unemployment rate¹. (*China Development Briefing*, 11 June 1998:3).

¹ According to the Census & Statistics Department, the unemployed population comprises all those persons aged 15 and over who fulfil the following conditions: (1) have not had a job and have not performed any work for pay or profit during the 7 days before enumeration; and (2) have been available for work during the 7 days before enumeration; and (3) have sought work during the 30 days before enumeration. In addition, the following types of persons are also categorized as unemployed: (1) persons

According to the Census & Statistics Department, the unemployment rate was 7.9% in 2003. People who keep their jobs have suffered from taking a drop in salary or having long working hours, especially those workers who are low-skilled/low-educated. In 2002, there were 18.0% of people living in low-income households with monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income of the corresponding household size, compared with 11.7% in 1991 and 15.0% in 1996 (Chua, *et al.*, 2002 & 2004, in press; Estes, 2000).

Table 1.1: Number of persons engaged by industry sector (1991~2002)

Industry	<i>(in thousands)</i>											
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Mining & quarrying	0.44	0.56	0.50	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.42	0.40	0.35	0.15	0.18	0.12
Manufacturing	629.2	565.1	483.6	423.0	375.8	325.1	288.9	245.5	244.7	226.2	203.0	184.5
Electricity & gas	11.8	11.8	12.0	11.6	11.8	11.2	9.7	9.3	8.6	8.2	8.1	8.4
Construction	59.3	59.5	55.9	63.1	68.5	81.7	83.3	72.3	71.8	83.9	76.6	66.4
Transport, storage & communication	134.1	145.7	154.1	164.2	172.2	181.5	178.1	168.6	172.0	176.9	181.7	175.7
Wholesale, retail & import/export trades, restaurants & hotels	871.9	914.8	948.9	1021.9	1018.2	1056.1	1003.1	913.1	1002.3	1009.1	997.0	983.0
Financing, insurance, real estate & business services	295.9	314.5	338.1	369.6	378.2	395.9	411.0	390.5	415.3	434.1	433.9	441.3
Community, social & personal services	267.3	268.1	278.6	299.3	302.0	320.1	317.7	326.4	336.5	354.5	385.1	402.6
Total	2269.8	2280.1	2271.7	2353.1	2327.1	2372.1	2292.1	2126.0	2251.5	2293.2	2285.5	2261.9

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various issues

Hong Kong has become a knowledge-based economy. Manufacturing industry in Hong Kong lost its competitiveness in the global market in the late 1970s². It gave way to the service sector. The number of people engaged in manufacturing industry dropped significantly, while there were increasing numbers of people who worked at financing and business services, as well as in the wholesale and retail sectors. While the number of people who worked in manufacturing industry declined significantly from 629,200 in 1991 to 325,100 in 1996 and to 184,500 in 2002, the number of persons engaged in the

without a job, have sought work but have not been available for work because of temporary sickness; and (2) persons without a job, have been available for work but have not sought work because they have made arrangements to take up a new job or to start business at a subsequent date; or were expecting to return to their original jobs (http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/hkstat/concepts_methods/cm_labour_index.html, accessed on 21 February 2005).

² A decline in manufacturing industry was due to economic reform in mainland China since 1979. The reform offered foreign investors a massive labour force and industrial areas. The low production cost in mainland China attracted more Hong Kong investors to relocate their factories to the mainland. In addition, the open door policy also has resulted in an increasing number of visitors from the mainland to Hong Kong and it facilitated the growth of the service sector in Hong Kong.

service sectors³ increased tremendously from 1,569,100 in 1991, to 1,953,600 in 1996 and to 2,002,500 in 2002 (Table 1.1). The industry's share of GDP declined significantly from 25.3% in 1990, to 15.5% in 1996 and 12.3% in 2002. It resulted in a significant decline in manufacturing sector's share of GDP. The contribution of tertiary industries to GDP grew steadily from 74.4% in 1990, to 84.4% in 1996 and 87.5% in 2002 (Table 1.2 & figure 1.1).

Table 1.2: Percentage contribution to GDP by economic activities at current prices (1990~2002)

Industry	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<i>Agriculture and fishing</i>	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Industry	25.3	23.0	21.0	18.4	16.4	16.0	15.5	14.7	15.0	14.3	14.2	13.4	12.3
Mining & quarrying	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Manufacturing	17.6	15.4	13.7	11.1	9.2	8.3	7.3	6.5	6.1	5.7	5.8	5.2	4.5
Electricity & gas	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.9	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4
Construction	5.4	5.5	5.1	5.2	4.9	5.4	5.8	5.8	6.0	5.6	5.2	4.9	4.4
Services	74.4	76.8	78.8	81.4	83.4	83.9	84.4	85.2	84.9	85.6	85.7	86.5	87.5
Transport, storage & communication	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.5	9.7	10.1	9.8	9.2	9.4	9.5	10.2	10.2	10.6
Wholesale, retail & import/export trades, restaurants & hotels	25.2	25.9	26.2	27.0	26.2	26.6	26.6	25.4	24.6	24.7	26.4	26.7	26.9
Financing, insurance, real estate & business services	20.2	22.7	24.5	25.8	26.7	24.4	25.2	26.2	24.1	23.4	23.7	22.5	22.2
Community, social & personal services	14.5	14.9	15.2	15.7	15.9	17.3	17.6	17.9	19.9	21.4	20.5	21.8	22.2
Ownership of premises	10.6	10.9	10.7	11.0	12.2	13.3	13.0	13.9	14.6	14.7	12.6	13.1	13.2
Less: Adjustment for financial intermediation services indirectly measured	-5.5	-7.3	-7.6	-7.6	-7.2	-7.9	-7.9	-7.3	-7.6	-8.1	-7.8	-7.9	-7.7

Note: # less than 0.05%

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various issues

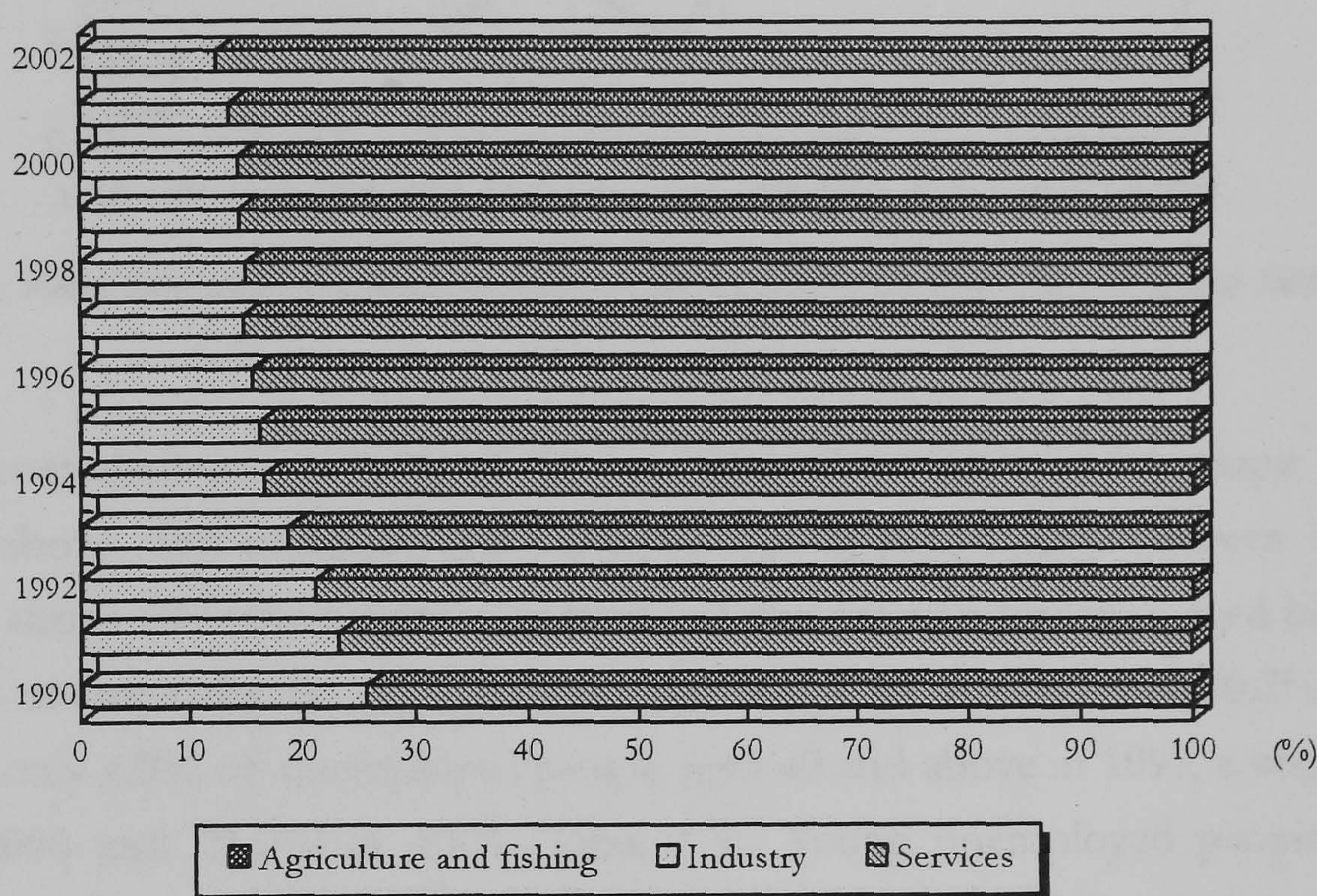
An increasing number of semi-skilled or non-skilled workers have suffered from the relocation of manufacturing production to mainland China and from economic restructuring. The Asian financial turmoil in October 1997 further adversely affected the economic situation in Hong Kong. As shown in figure 1.2, GDP growth decreased from 14.8% in 1991, to 10.7% in 1996, and further dropped to -0.8% in 2002, while per capita GDP growth decreased in these years from 13.8%, to 8.0% and finally dropped to -1.7%. Consequently, many large companies were shut down and thus there was an increasing number of people dismissed and unemployed. The unemployment rate increased significantly from 1.3% in 1990 to 6.2% in 1999, and further rose to 7.9% in 2003. The number of the unemployed who received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance⁴

³ They include 'transport, storage & communication', 'wholesale, retail & import/export trades, restaurants & hotels', 'financing, insurance, real estate & business services', and 'community, social & personal services'.

⁴ The CSSA Scheme, which is mean-tested, provides a safety net for those who cannot support themselves financially. This scheme is designed to bring the income of those individuals and families up to a prescribed level to meet their basic needs.

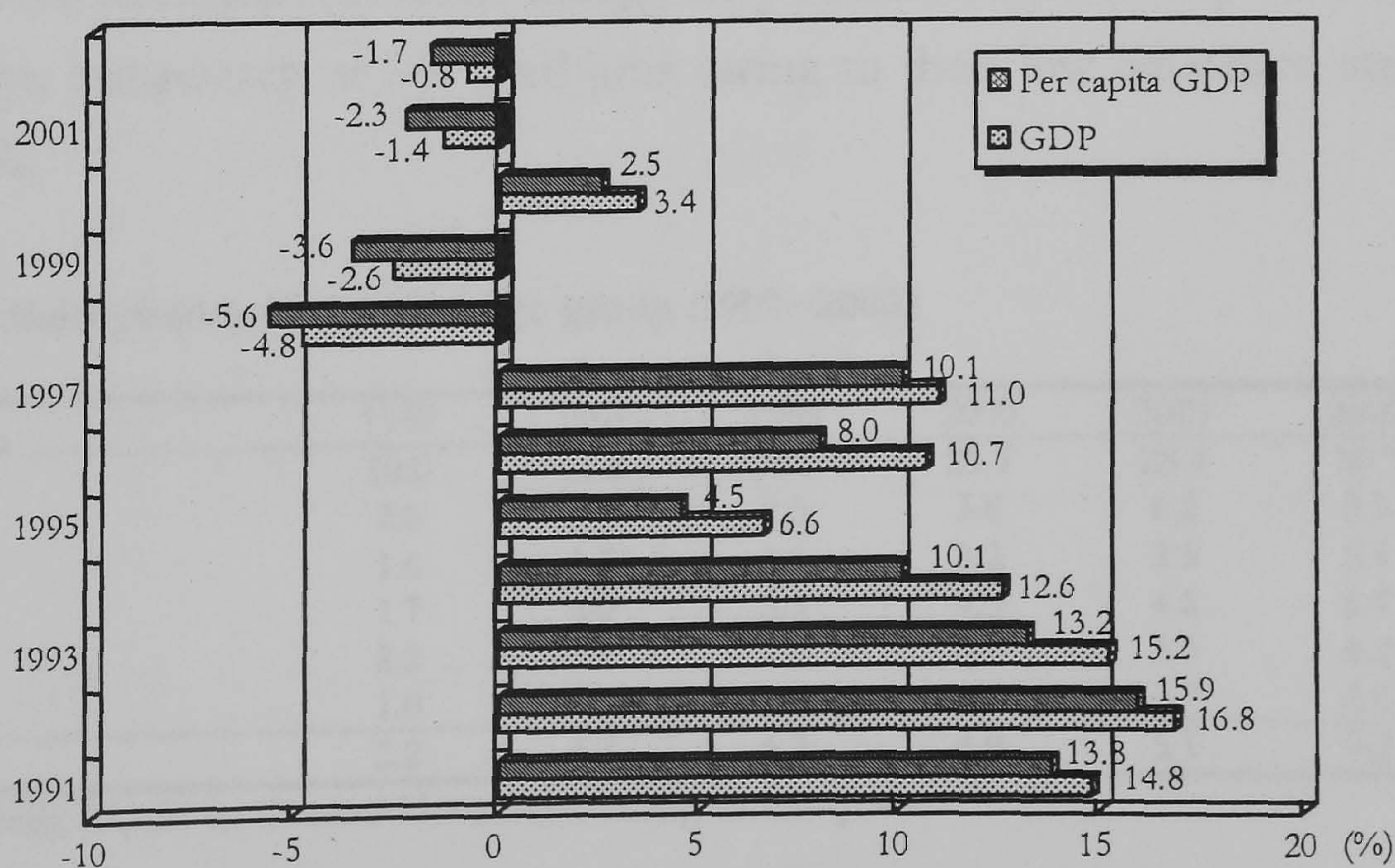
(CSSA) as a percentage of the total number of CSSA recipients has increased significantly since 1994. It increased from 4.8% in 1994, to 11.5% in 1999 and further rose to 12.7% in 2003 (Figure 1.3). The significant increase in the unemployment rate and the number of CSSA unemployed in 2003 were directly related to the negative impacts of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) on the economies of Hong Kong and regional Asian countries (<http://www.gov.hk/fso/eec/eng/pdf/3EEC-Paper%20IN4-04.pdf> , accessed on 21 February 2005).

Figure 1.1: Percentage contribution to GDP by economic activity at current prices (1990~2002)



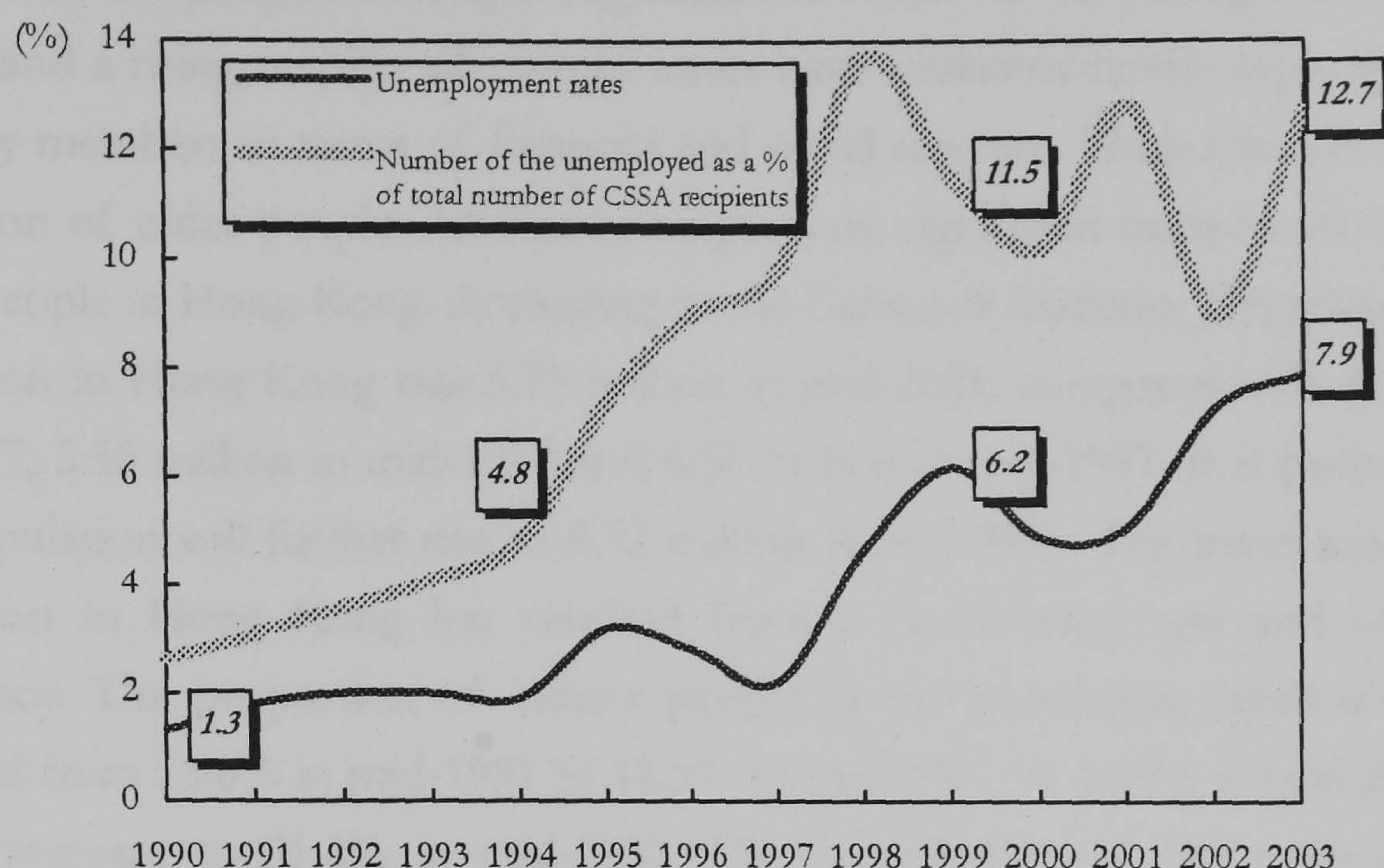
Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department.

Figure 1.2: GDP and per capita GDP (Year-on-year rate of change in real terms) (%) (1991~2002)



Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various issues.

Figure 1.3: Unemployment rates and number of the CSSA unemployed as a percentage of total number of CSSA recipients (1990~2003)



Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various years.

An overwhelming majority of the unemployed are either young people or people aged 40 or above. The unemployment rates for young people aged between 15 and 19 have stayed above 20% since 1998. One-tenth of the young population aged between 15 and 19 was unemployed in 1997, compared with 23.7% in 2000 and 30.2% in 2003. There were only 4.9% of unemployed people aged 40 and above in 1997, compared with 13.2% in 2000 and 21.2% in 2003 (Table 1.3). Young unemployed people typically obtained low education attainment and did not have much working experiences, while those unemployed aged over 40 were non-skilled or semi-skilled workers with low education attainment. They found difficulty in looking for another jobs once they were laid off or were unemployed. Even though they could find jobs, they were more likely to find part-time, temporary or low-paid jobs owing to their low education attainment and working skills.

Table 1.3: Unemployment rates by age group (1997~2003)

Age group	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
15-19	10.0	20.4	26.8	23.7	23.4	30.7	30.2
20-29	2.8	5.7	7.5	5.8	6.2	8.2	8.8
30-39	1.6	3.3	4.3	3.2	3.5	5.4	6.0
40-49	1.7	4.0	5.3	4.3	4.6	6.7	7.3
50-59	2.2	5.0	7.2	6.0	5.6	8.2	9.4
60 and above	1.0	2.3	3.5	2.9	2.7	5.0	4.5
Overall	2.2	4.7	6.2	4.9	5.1	7.3	7.9

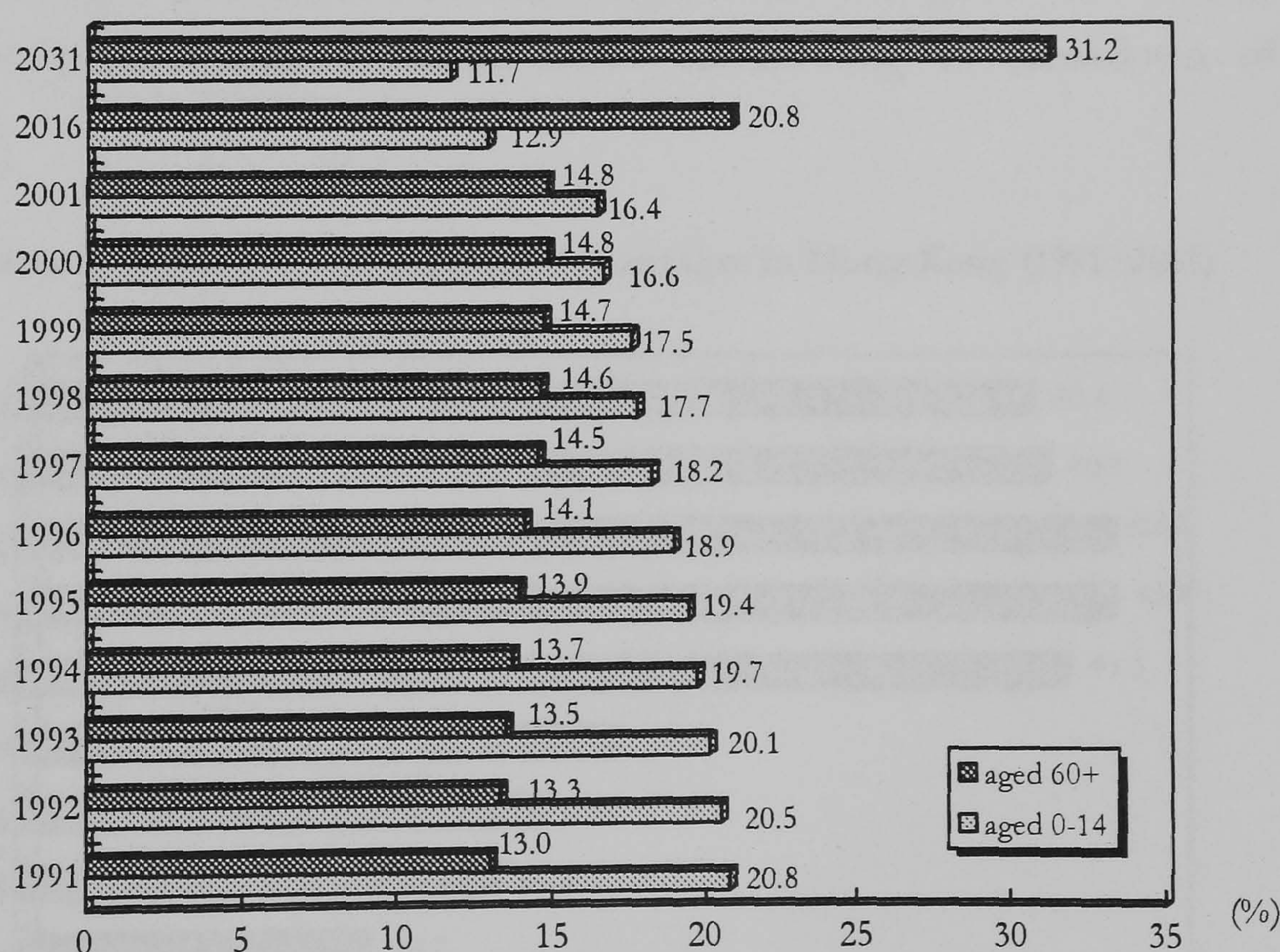
Source: Quarterly Report on General Household Survey, various years.

Aging population and changing family structures

Apart from significant impacts of economic restructuring, the Asian Financial

Crisis and SARS, social and demographic changes have had significant impacts on the livelihood of the people in Hong Kong since the 1990s. An increasing number of nuclear families and a rising number of divorce cases have weakened family capacity to take care of family members in terms of financial and social support. There has also been a rising population of older people. All these changes have significant impacts on the livelihood of the people in Hong Kong. According to the Census & Statistics Department, the total population in Hong Kong was 6.73 million in mid-2001, compared with 4.58 million in mid-1977, 5.58 million in mid-1987 and 6.56 million in mid-1997. It is projected that the total population will further rise to 8.72 million in mid-2031. The trend toward an aging population in Hong Kong has resulted from a low fertility rate and increasing life expectancy. The proportion of elderly people in the population (aged 60 and above) increased from 13.0% in mid-1991 to 14.5% in mid-1997, to 14.8% in mid-2001, and will further increase to 31.2% in mid-2031. On the other hand, the proportion of the population aged 0-14 decreased from 18.2% in mid-1997 to 16.4% in mid-2001, and it will further drop to 11.7% in mid-2031 (Figure 1.4). A rising elderly population will result in a corresponding increase in need for social and medical care since an older person becomes frail.

Figure 1.4: Proportion of population aged 0-14 and aged 60+ (1991~2031)



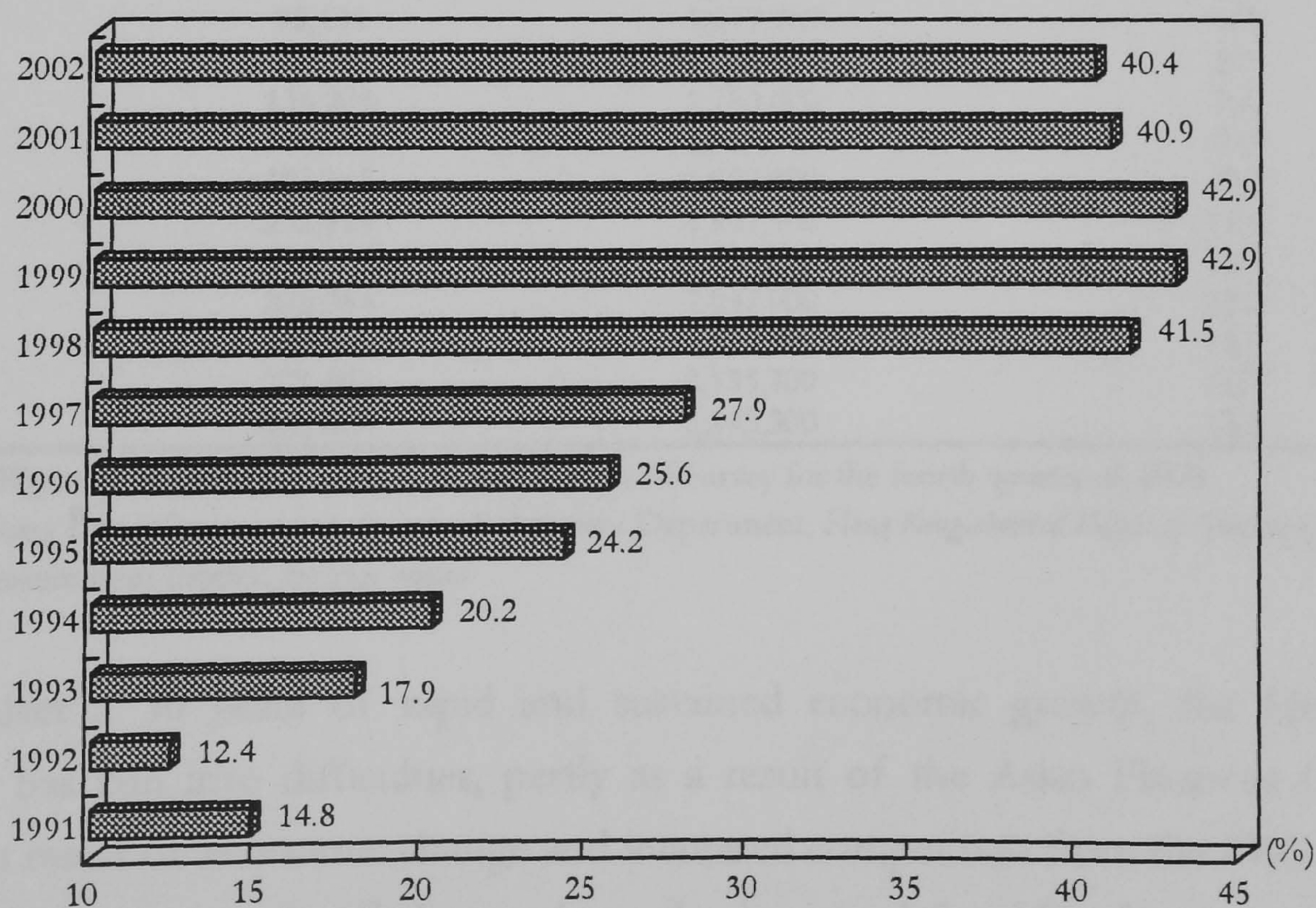
Note: The population projections were based on available information on fertility, mortality and migration patterns of the population.

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (2002), *Hong Kong Population Projections 2002-2031*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various issues.

On the other hand, changing family structures have undermined the caring-giving function of the extended family. According to the Census & Statistics Department, average domestic household size decreased from 3.4 in 1991, to 3.3 in 1996 and further dropped to 3.1 in 2001. In the future, there will be fewer young people available to provide financial assistance and caring support to their parents. Furthermore, divorce rates have also been rising with 32,070 divorce decrees granted in 2002, compared with 6,295 in 1991 and 9,473 in 1996. As shown in figure 1.5, divorce decrees as a percentage of marriages increased from 14.8% in 1991, to 25.6% in 1996, and further rose to 40.4% in 2002. There have been some crucial factors contributing to a significant increase in divorce decrees as a percentage of marriages since 1997. First, there has been a mass migration among middle-class/professionals because of political uncertainty after hand-over the sovereignty of Hong Kong to China and Tiananmen Square Incident (1989) in China. It has weakened family relationships since many couples might need to be separated from Hong Kong and other countries (such as Canada and United States) for a long period. Second, an increasing number of marriages with across the boundary between Hong Kong and the Mainland, as well as the current policy of admitting 150 One-way Permit Holders per day have intensified the relationships between the couples with different living custom and expectations. Finally, economic hardships resulting from the negative effects of economic restructuring (i.e. increasing number of unemployed and low-paid jobs) is also a crucial factor contributing to breakdown of family relationships.

Figure 1.5: Divorce decrees as a percentage of marriages in Hong Kong (1991~2002)



Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various issues.

According to the Census & Statistics Department, the proportion of CSSA single parent families with dependent children increased from 5.8% in 1991, to 8.8% in 1997, and further rose to 11.9% in 2001. These families, especially those single parent families with dependent children, are more likely to encounter financial difficulties. It could be explained by the fact that female/male-head single parents to find full-time jobs because of caring responsibilities. These changes may have significant impacts on the ability of families to fulfill the obligations of filial piety.

Nevertheless, there is no comprehensive retirement protection scheme for the elderly in Hong Kong. Even though the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme has been implemented, it will not benefit those people who have already retired or will retire in the near future. An increasing number of Old Age Allowance (OAA) cases and old aged receiving CSSA demonstrates that a rising number of senior citizens encounter financial difficulties. The number of OAA cases increased from 63,110 in 1977 to 252,256 in 1987, and further rose to 440,814 in 1997 and 458,041 in 2001. More than 50% of CSSA recipients are elderly. Owing to the impacts of socio-economic and demographic changes, there were an increasing number of families living on CSSA in the 1990s. CSSA cases as a percentage of the number of domestic households increased from 4.6% in 1991, to 9% in 1996 and further rose to 13.3% in 2003 (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: CSSA cases as a percentage of the number of domestic households (1991~2003)

Year	CSSA cases	Number of domestic households	CSSA cases as a percentage of the number of domestic households
1991	72,969	1,582,200	4.6
1992	81,975	1,633,500	5.0
1993	95,104	1,677,700	5.7
1994	109,461	1,729,100	6.3
1995	136,201	1,783,000	7.6
1996	166,720	1,855,500	9.0
1997	195,645	1,922,800	10.2
1998	232,819	1,961,500	11.9
1999	228,015	1,998,900	11.4
2000	228,263	2,037,000	11.2
2001	247,192	2,053,400	11.9
2002	271,893	2,133,700	12.7
2003	290,705*	2,185,300	13.3

Note: * Figure is obtained from the General Household Survey for the fourth quarter of 2003

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, Hong Kong: Government Printer, various issues.

After a 30 years of rapid and sustained economic growth, the Hong Kong economy has run into difficulties, partly as a result of the Asian Financial Crisis, and partly as a result of economic change and increased competition from the PRC and other countries in the region. Social changes have also increased the risks of poverty for certain social groups. Measuring the extent, nature and meaning of poverty has become more important.

Aims and scope of the thesis

The aim of this thesis was to develop and test new methods of studying poverty and investigate the extent and prevalence of poverty in a changing society and give insights to policy makers for allocating resources to those people who are in real need. The thesis has 4 main elements – (1) analysis of the relevant Hong Kong and British literature; (2) a secondary data analysis the 1% sample of the *2001 Population Census* (the 1% sample); (3) analysis of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong (LS survey); and (4) a comparison of similarities and differences of the key results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the *1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey* (the PSE survey) of the United Kingdom.

The development of a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong has utilized ideas from Britain and other European countries since poverty studies have had a long history in these countries. The relevance of western categorisations or approaches to a very different society needs to be explored and examined. The present study provides more up-to-date information on definitions and measurement of poverty and social exclusion by utilizing ideas from the United Kingdom and other European countries and hopes to contribute to the development of an improved theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. In addition, those previous local poverty studies were useful as showing clearly where poverty research in Hong Kong has got to, its achievements and limitations and form the base of the focus of the LS survey in Hong Kong. They give insights as to how the LS survey might fill some of the gaps of the existing poverty research.

There are three research elements in the thesis. *First*, a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample⁵ was undertaken to provide an updated profile of low-income households in Hong Kong. This study was the first attempt to adopt Bradshaw & Middleton's equivalised income measure (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000: 86-87) to identify the number of low-income households with reference to various definitions of low-income, as well as the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these low-income households in Hong Kong.

Second, the LS survey, which aimed at investigating public views on issues of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong, was conducted to gain a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong. This survey not only focused on the

⁵ The analysis adopted three different definitions of low-income households, including households living in the lowest income quintile (HLIQ), households with income below 50% of the mean (HIB50%), as well as households with income below 60% of the median (HIB60%) for the whole equivalised distribution.

inadequacy of the financial resources of vulnerable groups, but also explored the non-affordability of socially perceived necessities⁶ and subjective measure of poverty so as to reflect various elements of hardship and their interrelationships. As Halleröd argued, 'the basic reason for defining poverty is to measure and analyse the prevalence of poverty and ultimately to do something about it. That goal will only be achieved if the definition has broad public support and is accepted by the political establishment' (Halleröd, 1994:11).

Third, comparison of similarities and differences of the key results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the PSE survey were conducted. The comparative study alerted us a wide range of variables, such as culture, history, climate and living standards that affects the definition, understanding and meaning of poverty. Differences in socio-economic, cultural, climate related issues offer explanations of how and why the differences and similarities exist.

Owing to limited time and resources, the LS survey only focused on Shatin, where is one of 18 District Board (DB) districts in Hong Kong. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number and limited the analysis. Although there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample. The study should perhaps be seen as a *pilot study*. The area/approach was new and the sample was inevitably small so it did have key elements of a pilot study. What this study can do is point up issues for further exploration.

Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 has reviewed socio-economic and demographic changes and explained why there was an increasing number of families living in poverty in the 1990s in Hong Kong. This chapter has also presented the aims and scope of the thesis, as well as pinpointed the three key elements in the thesis. **Chapter 2** outlines and examines the definition and measurement of poverty, as well as the problems of various explanations. It also defines the notion of social exclusion and examines the relationship between concepts of poverty and social exclusion. The discussion will contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong.

⁶ Items defined as necessities by more than 50% of the population but which people went without because of non-affordability were then used to determine deprivation.

Before examining poverty studies in Hong Kong since the early 1980s, **Chapter 3** reviews the landmarks in the development of social security in Hong Kong under the rule of the British colonial government to offer a better understanding of government policy responses to poverty issues in the past few decades. It outlines the general philosophy of the British colonial government's social welfare commitment in Hong Kong, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of CSSA and Social Security Allowance (SSA) Schemes, which are the core components of social security for the vulnerable groups, to alleviate poverty in Hong Kong. Exploring the development of social security helps towards an understanding of poverty and attitudes to poverty.

Chapter 4 reviews past research on poverty in Hong Kong since the 1980s. The discussion presents and examines the findings of these studies and their implications for poverty studies, as well as government policy responses in Hong Kong. It also attempts to link these studies to the typology of various poverty approaches. These previous research studies form the base of the focus of the LS survey and give insights as to how the LS survey fills the gaps left by existing poverty studies.

In order to provide the updated profile of the low-income households in Hong Kong, a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample, using the conventional income threshold measurement of poverty, will be discussed in **Chapter 5**. As mentioned earlier, the previous poverty studies mainly focused on the inadequacy of financial resources of the vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, there was lack of multidimensional indicators reflecting different elements of hardships and their interrelationships. In addition, there have been a number of studies concerning public opinions on poverty, welfare issues as well as subjective well-being in Hong Kong since the 1990s. However, there was a lack of a comprehensive empirical study of poverty issues and social exclusion using the public opinion approach in Hong Kong. In order to grasp a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong, the LS survey, which aimed at identifying the characteristics of the poor and having a better understanding of public perceptions of issues related to poverty (i.e. UN's definitions of absolute and overall poverty) and social exclusion (i.e. labour market exclusion, service exclusion and exclusion from social relations), was conducted. **Chapter 6** explains the rationale for conducting the LS survey in Hong Kong. The details of sample selection, design of the questionnaire, data collection and fieldwork procedures, as well as the limitations of the LS survey will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 7 presents and analyzes the results of the LS survey in Hong Kong, which attempts to measure poverty in terms of the absence of socially perceived

necessities and the definition of deprivation. A poverty threshold was calculated and it involved looking at people's incomes and their deprivation levels and what were socially perceived necessities. After having presented and discussed the findings of the LS survey, **Chapter 8** discusses similarities and differences of the key findings of the 1% sample and the LS survey, as well as comparing the key findings of the LS survey and the PSE survey. **Chapter 9** discusses the lessons to be drawn, such as the cultural nature of need, for a bigger poverty study in the future in terms of methods of studying poverty, as well as examining its relevance to government policies.

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The relationship between poverty and social exclusion

Chapter 2

Methods of studying poverty: Defining and measuring poverty and social exclusion

Poverty means going short materially, socially and emotionally. It means spending less on food, on heating, and on clothing than someone on an average income. But it is not what is spent that matters, but what isn't. It means coping with the stress of managing on very little money, often for months or even years. It means having to withstand the onslaught of society's pressure to consume. It impinges on relationships with others and with yourself. Above all, *poverty takes away the tools to create the building blocks for the future – your 'life chances'*. It steals away the opportunity to have a life unmarked by sickness, a decent education, a secure home and a long retirement. It stops people being able to plan ahead. It stops people being able to take control of their lives (Oppenheim, 1993:4; Oppenheim & Harker, 1996:4-5).

There is a lot of literature dealing with the crucial question of how 'the poor' are to be identified. It is important to know who is experiencing poverty since it will let us know which particular groups are more likely to suffer from poverty. The identification of particular groups who are experiencing poverty may suggest that policies should be focused on them in particular (Alcock, 1993:23). Townsend pointed out that 'a clear definition allows the scale and degree as well as the nature of the problem of poverty to be identified and therefore points to the scale as well as the kind of remedial action that might be taken' (Townsend, 1974:16).

In the West, poverty studies have a long history. In Hong Kong there have only been some 20 years of work in this area. The aim of this chapter is to explore the relevance of western approaches to poverty studies in Hong Kong and develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion. It begins with a review of various definitions of poverty and also outlines the strengths and problems of various explanations. It also presents and discusses various ways of measuring poverty adopted by various academic institutes and research units in European countries. The discussion also examines the issues/problems involved in measuring poverty (Bradshaw, 1997, 2001a & 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001a, 2001b & 2003; Byrne, 1999; Callan, Nolan & Whelan, 1993; Gordon, 1998a; Halleröd, 1994, 1995a & 1995b; Layte, Nolan & Whelan, 2000; Nolan & Whelan, 1996a & 1996b; Ringen, 1987 & 1988; Whelan & Whelan, 1995). The discussion also explains the notion of social exclusion and examines the relationship between concepts of poverty and social exclusion (Levitas, 1996, 1998a

& 1998b; Room, 1995a , 1998 & 2001; Silver, 1994).

Definitions of poverty can be interpreted differently with respect to the number of requirements, and the quantity and the quality of each of these requirements. The definition of poverty along a 'continuum of want' begins with starvation, moves on to subsistence, then to social coping and ends with social participation (George & Howards, 1991:1). However, as Callen and Nolan (1991) argued, definitions of poverty face thorny problems at conceptual and empirical levels, and thus no single approach is likely to dominate. A review of different approaches to defining poverty, including their strengths and problems, follows.

Definition of poverty

Starvation

The first definition of poverty concerned with starvation lists only one requirement -- food -- to be met at a minimal level in terms of both quantity and quality. According to this definition, a person is in poverty if he or she does not have enough money or adequate resources to obtain the amount of food so as to prevent undernourishment. It is widely used in societies with very low levels of economic conditions. Therefore, this definition of poverty has been widely used by researchers in third world countries (Townsend, 1993). However, the starvation approach to poverty is *not* applicable to advanced industrial societies. Even though the increase of resources may not be shared equally by the whole population, rapid economic growth contributes to an improvement of living standards of the ordinary people in general. In other words, the starvation approach is not applicable since undernourishment, even though not totally abolished, is not a serious problem in these affluent societies.

State provision of social security also plays a significant role to avoid starvation in affluent societies, such as Britain and America. Sen argued that,

The social security arrangements are particularly important in the context of starvation. The reason why there are no famines in the rich developed countries is not because people are generally rich on the average. Rich they certainly are when they have jobs and earn a proper wage; but for large numbers of people this condition fails to hold for long periods of time, and the exchange entitlements of their endowments in the absence of social security arrangements could provide very meagre commodity bundles indeed. With the proportion of unemployment as high as it is, say, in Britain or America today, but for the social security arrangements there would be widespread starvation and possibly a famine. What prevents that is not the high average income or wealth of the British or the general opulence of the Americans, but the guaranteed minimum values of exchanges entitlements owing to the social security system (Sen, 1981:6-7).

However, it is arguable what should be the level of the guaranteed minimum standard of living for those people in need in affluent societies. It is necessary to define poverty not only in terms of food, but also to consider clothing, housing and household necessities in the list of minimum requirements. The definition of poverty thus shifts from starvation to subsistence level once a society reaches a certain level of economic development.

Subsistence

The second main definition equates poverty with subsistence. A definition of poverty in subsistence terms seeks to describe poverty in terms of the income or resources needed to maintain the minimum necessities of life. In the subsistence definition, the minimum standard of living is based upon a person's biological needs for food, clothing, water and shelter. It emphasises only basic physical needs rather than social and cultural needs. Rowntree was the first researcher to attempt a systematic study on the basis of a definition of poverty in subsistence terms. In his three studies of poverty in the city of York, Rowntree identified the families living in poverty when their total earnings were insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency (Rowntree, 1901, 1941 & 1951). His list of requirements was not confined to food but also included clothing, housing and a few household necessities. But food accounted for the greatest share of subsistence. All these necessities were to be met at a minimal level in terms of both quantity and quality so that they could permit those poor people to maintain a state of physical efficiency.

A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a half penny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbour which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket money for dolls, marbles, or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco, and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or for her children, the character of the family wardrobe as for the family diet being governed by the regulation, 'Nothing must be bought but that which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of physical health, and what is bought must be of the plainest and most economical description'. Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally, the wage-earner must never be absent from his work for a single day (Rowntree, 1901:167-168).

However, it is difficult to define nutritional requirements since 'there are significant variations related to physical features, climatic conditions and work habits'. Variations in dietary customs and consumption habits of people further complicated the

measurement of basic need for food (Mack & Lansley, 1985: 41-42; Sen, 1981:12; Townsend, 1979:34 & 1993:3). Different people have different interpretations of the meaning of minimum standards. It is difficult to secure agreement on the meaning of minimum standards so that the development of standards can establish a clear dividing line between the poor and the non-poor.

Townsend also criticised Rowntree's definition of poverty on the grounds that a minimum subsistence standard treats human beings as physical beings rather than social beings. People have obligations to perform socially demanding roles, such as citizens, workers, parents and friends which they themselves want to meet and which they are expected to meet. By defining poverty in terms of a standard of physical subsistence, people's real needs in their capacity as members of society, including performing the roles and fulfilling the relationships imposed upon them, are neglected (Townsend, 1962:218; 1979; 1983:68; 1984:9 & 1993:31). Instead, Townsend defined the poverty level in terms of 'the absence or inadequacy of those diets, amenities, standards services and activities which are common or customary in society. People are deprived of the conditions of life which ordinarily define membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfil membership of society, they are in poverty' (Townsend, 1979:915).

Many researchers and commentators shared similar views and argued that keeping people in subsistence poverty for a long period of time might not be tolerable in a flourishing economy since their living standard will fall markedly below that of the rest of society. 'Needs' should be defined as more than just the physical necessities of life, merely physical efficiency is not enough and poverty should also have a social meaning (Bradshaw, 1993b, 1993c & 1993d; Bradshaw et al, 1987:167; MacPherson, 1994b; MacPherson and Chan, 1996; MacPherson & Lo, 1997; Oppenheim, 1993:7; Oppenheim & Harker, 1996:9; Veit-Wilson, 1987:167).

Social coping

The third definition of poverty is not in terms of starvation or subsistence but in terms of social coping. According to this definition, 'people are in poverty if their incomes or resources are not sufficient to provide them with those goods and services that will enable them to live a life that is tolerable according to working class life styles' (George & Howards, 1991:6). Thus, the social coping definition arrives at a modest level of requirements in terms of both quantity and quality. The modest level of requirements refers to the minimum number plus a few others which, even though not necessary for subsistence, are necessary for a person to cope socially in society. For example, although

it is not necessary for subsistence to go to simple and cheap restaurants once a week, it may be socially necessary because of the fact that it is universally customary in a particular society. In the case of clothing it means being able to change one's clothing without too much difficulty or not having to rely on second-hand clothing. Basically, the 'social coping' definition sees poverty in terms of the living standards of the working class and it aims to meet needs at a modest level of requirements in terms of both quantity and quality.

In the 1940s, the US Bureau of Labour Statistics attempted a definition of poverty in terms of social coping which estimated 'what it costs a worker's family to live in the large cities'. The report stated that 'the expenditure that was necessary not merely for subsistence but for a level of adequate living to satisfy prevailing standards of what is necessary for health, efficiency, the nurture of children and for participation in community activities' (Bradshaw, *et al.*, 1987:169-170).

Social participation

This concept is concerned with the position of income groups relative to each other. Since society is seen as a series of stratified income groups, poverty is considered to reflect how the bottom layers fare relative to the rest of society. Hence, the concept of poverty must be seen in the context of society as a whole. In other words, poverty is a situation in which people not only lack resources to obtain the types of diet and participate in the activities, but also are excluded from the customs of the community.

Townsend defined poverty as the state in which individuals, families and groups in society lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities (Townsend, 1979:31). In other words, the 'social participation' definition of poverty goes beyond basic biological needs and is based upon the living standards of the whole society and also takes more account of the needs of membership of society.

The foregoing discussion raised two critical issues when researchers attempted to calculate the poverty line. They included first, where to establish the cut-off points which distinguishes those in poverty from the rest of the population and second, which non-economic conditions should be taken into account -- such as prestige and social services (Rein, 1970:47). It also reflected the idea that the definition of poverty along a

'continuum of want' began with starvation, moved on to subsistence, then to social coping and ends with social participation. It was realized, however, that poor people's full membership of society should not be neglected. Thus, the definition of poverty should not simply be interpreted in terms of subsistence levels but it should take more account of the meaning and responsibilities of membership of society.

There are some important issues involved in measuring poverty. *First*, the identification of 'the poor' involves whether the decisions should be made by a panel of experts or the general public. *Second*, knowledge of a person's income is not necessarily sufficient to determine if he/she is poor when poverty is defined as relative deprivation. Other relevant resources, such as skills, thrift and support networks should also be taken into account.

Four different methodological approaches have been used to calculate the poverty line: *the professional or expert approach* (Bradshaw, 1993b, 1993c & 1993d; Parker, 1998; Rowntree, 1901, 1941 & 1951; Department of Social Security & Government Statistical Survey, various issues; Saunders, *et al.*, 1998), *the relative deprivation approach* (Townsend, 1979 & 1993), *the public opinion or social consensus approach* (Danziger, *et al.*, 1984; Dubnoff, 1985; Frayman, 1991; Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977; Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a & 1997b; Gordon, *et al.*, 2000; Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997; Mack & Lansley, 1985) and *the relative income standard approach* (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1993; Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992; Saunders, *et al.*, 1999; The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, 1998, Townsend, 1979 & 1997). The application of these types of measurement to any one of the four definitions of poverty will arrive at different poverty lines.

Measurement of poverty

Professional/expert approach

According to the professional or expert approach, a group of experts is required to make professional judgements about what needs to be spent for food, clothing, transport, social activities, health care and so on. Then, the budget is priced and used as an income standard. Anyone whose living standard falls below this standard is in poverty. This idea was pioneered by Rowntree in his three studies of poverty in York (Rowntree, 1901, 1941 & 1951). The data was used by Beveridge (1942) in establishing the level of National Assistance in Britain.

According to his definition of minimum requirements for maintaining physical efficiency, Rowntree used the findings of the nutritionists who had estimated minimum

necessary caloric intakes and then decided the amount of food needed. Various requirements by different ages and sex were also taken into consideration. He converted these needs into quantities of different foods and then translated the results into the cheapest cost of purchasing those foods on the market. Besides, he also added minimum sums for clothing, fuel and household facilities according to the size of family. A family income that fell short of the poverty standard was defined as poor. The families living in poverty were divided into two groups, including 'primary' poverty and 'secondary' poverty. 'Primary' poverty refers to those families whose total income earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency. Those families living in a state of 'secondary' poverty were defined as 'families whose total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful' (Rowntree, 1901:117 & 148).

The United States of America has a sustained tradition of budget standards work. In 1946, the Bureau of Labour Statistics was commissioned 'to find out what it costs a worker's family to live in the large cities in the US' (Bradshaw, *et al.*, 1987:169-170). This comprehensive budget included the expenditure required for an adequate living standard. The budget was not narrowly confined to food, clothing and housing, but the expenditure items also included transport, house furnishing and leisure activities. This was not a minimum subsistence living standard.

However, the professional approach encounters difficulties. *First*, there are inevitable problems associated with the use of baskets of goods and services determined by experts since this involves the imposition of judgements by those who may have no experience of living in poverty (Alcock, 1993:64). *Second*, the proponents of this approach have had much difficulty in producing acceptable criteria for the choice and definition of items included. In the case of food, for example, the reason for this is that a strict biological definition of necessity ignores the dietary customs and cultural background of poor people. *Third*, it is difficult regularly to update the list of goods and services since the budget standards are labour intensive.

Establishing a budget standard inevitably involves judgements that include decisions about what items should be included, about what quantity and quality should be required, and about what price should be fixed (Bradshaw, 1993c:7; 1993d:62; Bradshaw, Mitchell & Morgan, 1987:169; Parker, 1998). However, each of these judgements can be tempered with survey data. The strength of this approach is the transparency of the budget standard. Items can easily be put into or taken out of the list

of commodities (Bradshaw, 1993b; Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). There were distinctions between Rowntree's study and the budget standards produced by the Family Budget Unit (FBU). Rowntree restricted his budgets to core costs, such as food, clothing and shelter, at a poverty level and only relied on a 'margin' to take other needs into consideration whereas the FBU budgets covered all the compositions of a typical family budget at a modest-but-adequate (MBA) level and at a low-cost but acceptable (LCA) level (Bradshaw, 1993c & 1993d; Parker, 1998).

Bradshaw produced budget standards at a 'modest-but-adequate' and at a 'low-cost' level in Britain in 1993⁷. The modest-but-adequate budget is defined as a standard which is both 'well above the requirements for survival, but well below the levels of luxury'. Household items are included if more than 50% of the population have that commodity. The low-cost budget includes household items that more than 75% of the population actually have and only the cheapest items are included (Bradshaw, 1993c:3 & 1993d:63-64 & 69). After constructing budgets for various household types, comparisons between the budgets and actual expenditure patterns measured by annual Family Expenditure Survey were made. But it was not used to determine the budgets (Bradshaw, 1993d:66). For the low-income cost budget, food formed the largest proportion of consumption and it accounted for one-third of expenditure excluding housing cost. Besides, comparison between the low-cost budget and the benefit rates paid by Income Support indicated that the low-cost budgets for families with children were one-third higher than 1992/93 Income Support rates. Two adults with two children who were Income Support recipients required an extra £36 per week to meet the low-cost standard (Bradshaw, 1993c:28).

The findings of Parker's study (1998) concerning the needs and living costs of families with children coincided with Bradshaw's study. These families included two-parent and lone-parent families, each with a boy aged 10 years and a girl aged 4 years, at a LCA living standard. The findings showed that the income support was below LCA level for both families. The gap between LCA level and the income support guaranteed amounts were £32 for two-parent families and £24 for the lone-parent families at January 1998 prices respectively (Parker, 1998).

⁷ The modest-but-adequate budgets were drawn up for six kinds of household. They included: single pensioner (aged 72 years); single man (aged 30 years); two adults (man aged 34, woman 32 years); two adults and two younger children (man 34, woman 32, girl 4 and boy 10); two adults and two older children (man 37, woman 35, boy 10 and girl 16); and lone mother and two children (woman 32, girl 4 and boy 10). The low-cost budgets were drawn up for three household types. They included: single female pensioner aged 72 years (fairly healthy and independent without suffering serious disability); two adults and two children aged under 11 (man aged 34, woman aged 32, girl aged 4 and boy aged 10); and lone parent and two children aged under 11 (woman aged 32, girl aged 4 and boy aged 10) (Bradshaw, 1993c: 8 & 28; 1993d:63 & 70).

Table 2.1 shows the recent LCA budget standards derived by the FBU, which are compared with the Income Support scales payable to the same households⁸. The findings indicated that LCA budgets for both lone parents with 2 children and a couple with 2 children were slightly higher than 2002 Income Support rates (Parker, 2001 & 2002). It could be explained by the fact that the Labour Government made a commitment to the abolition of child poverty over a 20-year period.

Table 2.1: Comparisons between the low-cost budget and the benefit rates paid by Income Support (2001~2002)

		Lone parent plus 2 children under 11		
		Income Support	LCA	Shortfall
East end of London budget	February 2001	£119.50	£126.37	- £6.42
	April 2002	£135.70	£129.53	+ £6.17
York budgets	April 2002	£135.70	£129.12	+ £6.58
		Couple plus two children under 11		
		Income Support	LCA budget	Shortfall
East end of London budget	February 2001	£149.90	£158.16	- £8.26
	April 2002	£166.40	£162.11	+ £4.29
York budgets	April 2002	£166.40	£163.30	+ £3.10

Sources: Parker, H. (2001) *Low Cost but Acceptable: A Minimum Income Standard for Households with Children in London's East End*, FBU/UNISON.

Parker, H. (2002) *Low Cost but Acceptable: A Minimum Income Standard for Households with Children in Wales*, FBU/UNISON.

Relative deprivation approach

The relative deprivation approach focuses on how people live, what they purchase, how much they spend on various items and what their consumption patterns are rather than what the experts decide about how much people need or how they should spend their money. Townsend's study, *Poverty in the United Kingdom*, which was carried out in 1968-69 with a sample of 2052 households, best exemplifies this methodological approach. His approach was to define certain indicators, examine their relationship with income and discern a 'threshold' of income. Townsend drew a poverty line on the basis of the ways in which people of different socio-economic groups live and what their consumption patterns are. He also pointed out two steps to be taken towards 'the objectification of the measurement of poverty'. They included,

One is to endeavour to measure all types of resources, public and private, which are distributed unequally in society and which contribute towards actual standards of living. This will tend to uncover sources of inequality which tend to be proscribed from public and even academic discourse. It will also lay the basis for comparisons between

⁸ The most recent LCA budget standard for East end of London was to estimate the incomes required to avoid poverty in February 2001 and updated to April 2002, by one-parent and two-parent households, each with a boy aged 10 and a girl aged 4 and living in the East London boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. The April 2002 budgets for York was derived as part of the work for constructing a LCA budget for one-parent and two-parent households, each with a boy aged 10 and a girl aged 4, living in the city of Swansea, South Wales.

conditions in different societies. The other is to endeavour to define the style of living which is generally shared or approved in each society, and find whether there is, as I have hypothesized, a point in the scale of the distribution of resources below which, as resources diminish, families find it particularly difficult to share in the customs, activities and diets comprising their society's style of living (Townsend, 1979:60).

In order to minimize the involvement of personal value judgements, he collected a comprehensive range of data on individuals' resources not only in terms of cash income, but also income from capital assets, the value of employment benefits in kind, the value of public social services in kind, and private income in kind (Townsend, 1979:89). A list of sixty indicators of the 'style of living' was built up. They included diet, clothing, fuel and light, home amenities, housing and housing facilities, the immediate environment of the home, security, general conditions and welfare benefits of work, family support, recreation, education, health and social relations (Appendix 1). These indicators could be expressed as indicators of deprivation. Townsend's deprivation index, which covered major aspects of dietary, recreational and social deprivation, was compiled on the basis of twelve out of sixty indicators (Townsend, 1979:250). They included:

- Has not had a week's holiday away from home in last 12 months;
- Adults only. Has not had a relative or friend to the home for a meal or snack in the last 4 weeks;
- Adults only. Has not been out in the last 4 weeks to a relative or friend for a meal or snack;
- Children only (under 15). Has not had a friend to play or to tea in the last 4 weeks;
- Children only. Did not have party on last birthday;
- Has not had an afternoon or evening out for entertainment in the last two weeks;
- Does not have fresh meat (including meals out) as many as four days a week;
- Has gone through one or more days in the past fortnight without a cooked meal;
- Has not had a cooked breakfast most days of the week;
- Household does not have a refrigerator;
- Household does not usually have a Sunday joint (3 in 4 times); and
- Household does not have sole use of four amenities indoors (flush WC; sink or washbasin and cold-water tap; fixed bath or shower; and gas or electric cooker).

Referring the indicators to individuals and families, a 'score' for various forms of deprivation could be added up: the higher the score, the lower the participation.

Townsend argued that one would expect some indicators to be less highly correlated with low level of resources. In other words, low-income might not prevent someone from 'having an evening out once a fortnight or more', 'going to friends' or relatives' houses' and so on. However, the findings revealed that 'the correlation between nearly all these indicators and different measures of resources is highly significant' (Townsend, 1979:251).

For each household, Townsend obtained a deprivation index by adding up the number of items that the household did not have. Then he looked at the relationship between the deprivation index for each household and its net income for each of fourteen different household types⁹. After studying different patterns, he tried to identify adjusted incomes for different household sizes in terms of proportions of Supplementary Benefit (SB) scale rate. All households falling within a certain range were grouped together and their deprivation index was summed up by the 'modal value'. After plotting these 12 modal values of deprivation against the income/SB level, Townsend found that there was a poverty threshold separating the poor from the non-poor and he argued,

As income diminishes from the highest levels, so deprivation steadily increases, but below 150% of the supplementary benefit standard, deprivation begins to increase swiftly. Above and below this point the graph falls into distinct sections (Townsend, 1979:260-261).

However, the central issue to Townsend's identification of poverty was on the question of whether there was a poverty threshold below which people disproportionately withdraw from participation in the community's style of living. Piachaud argued that Townsend had not used any statistical test that would establish whether such a threshold exists (Piachaud, 1981:420). Desai (1986) used regression analysis to find out whether there was a discontinuity in the relationship between deprivation scores and income level. In other words, the statistical tests tried to show whether a fall in income meant a much sharper rise in deprivation at a lower income level than happened at a higher income level. The regression analysis revealed both the nature and the strength of the deprivation/income relationship. An equation not only provided a measure of the extent to which there was a faster or a slower change in deprivation as income rises, but also demonstrated whether the relationship was significant or not. The statistical tests revealed that there was a break between deprivation score and income (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a:22-26). Desai concluded the results showed that,

⁹ Fourteen types of household included: single person aged under 60; single person aged over 60; man and woman both over 60; man and woman one over 60; man and woman both under 60; man, woman and 1 child; man, woman and 2 children; man, woman and 3 children; man, woman, 4 and more children; 3 adults; 3 adults plus children; 4 adults; others without children; and others with children (Townsend, 1979: 290).

The reciprocal pattern between deprivation and income turns out to be different for the five lowest income levels from that for the seven higher income levels. For the lower levels, it is much steeper, i.e. reduction in income increases deprivation sharply. For the higher income levels, extra income registers only a minor drop in what is already a low deprivation level. The two separate patterns explain the data better than a single pattern. There is thus a break in the relation between the mean (average) deprivation score and income and the break occurs at the value of Townsend located – above 150% of SB level (Desai, 1986:14).

Townsend also ignored the matter of taste as an explanation of the lack of a particular item from the 'deprivation index' (Piachaud, 1981:420 & 1987:153). The indicators used, such as having a cooked breakfast every day, might indicate choice rather than constraint. Townsend did not try to separate those who could afford but did not want from those who could not afford but did want. Piachaud argued that:

what surely matters most is the choice a person has, and the constraints he or she faces. To choose not to go on holiday or eat meat is one thing: it may interest sociologists, but is of no interest to those concerned with poverty. To have little or no opportunity to take a holiday or buy meat is entirely different (Piachaud, 1981:421).

Nonetheless, the use of a deprivation index was pioneered by Townsend's study of *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (1979) and the techniques were further developed by *Breadline Britain Surveys* in 1983 (Mack & Lansley, 1985), in 1990 (Frayman, 1991; Gordon & Pantazis, 1997) and in 1999 (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). *Breadline Britain 1983* had a significant impact on the ongoing poverty research in the European countries. The European Statistical Office (Eurostat) has used a similar set of questions to measure standards of living in Britain and the 14 other member states (Eurostat, 1994 & 1996). The construction and use of a deprivation index to measure the standards of living has also been adopted by various poverty studies in Sweden (Halleröd, 1994, 1995a, 1995b & 1998), Ireland (Callan, Nolan & Whelan, 1991 & 1993), Belgium (Van den Bosch, 1998) and Finland (Kangas & Ritakallio, 1998).

Public opinion/social consensus approach

The public opinion or social consensus approach tries to define poverty by reference to the views of the general public rather than the judgement of a group of experts. Alcock (1993) suggested that the arbitrary tendency in expert judgements could be reduced by increasing community residents' participation in determining the poverty line. Piachaud also stated that this approach was 'to cast aside self-appointed, self-opinionated experts' and 'let the people decide' (Piachaud, 1987:149). Halleröd (1994) shared similar view that a widely accepted poverty definition would have a significant impact on policy decisions. As he argued,

The basic reason for defining poverty is to measure and analyse the prevalence of poverty and ultimately to do something about it. That goal will only be achieved if the definition has broad public support and is accepted by the political establishment. Poverty has usually been defined by experts and the weakness of most of these definitions is that they do not necessarily meet the requirement of public support. Experts may have a great deal of theoretical and technical knowledge on which they can base a definition. However, there are no ultimate reasons to accept their value judgements as the only valid ones (Halleröd, 1994:11).

There are a number of different variants of the public opinion approach. The value of involving public opinion in the definition of poverty and the value of exploring popular attitudes to the role of government in welfare and popular perceptions of poverty is regarded as a help to a better understanding the context of policy making. A number of British studies concerning public perceptions of the living standards of benefit claimants, government welfare spending and poverty issues were conducted in the past two decades (*British Social Attitudes*, various issues; European Commission, 1990; Frayman, 1991, Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a; Mack & Lansley, 1985) and some of these questions have been adopted and modified by other poverty studies in Britain and European countries. In addition, there were those which obtained views about hypothetical families (Rainwater, 1974), and those which focused on respondents' views about their own situation or how much income they need (Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977). Another approach consisted of asking which components of living standards were necessary (Frayman, 1991; Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a & 1997b; Gordon, *et al.*, 2000; Mack & Lansley, 1985). Generally, an approach on these lines consisted 'in asking people how much income needs to be' or 'in asking which items or components of living standards are necessary' (Piachaud, 1987; Veit-Wilson, 1987; Walker, 1987).

Public attitudes to poverty issues and welfare in Britain

Public attitudes towards causes of poverty

Social and Community Planning Research has conducted a series of British Social Attitudes (BSA) surveys concerning public attitudes to causes of poverty, and to conceptions of poverty in Britain since 1983. From the BSA studies it was clear that an increasing proportion of people did not think that the poor were responsible for their own plight. There seemed a growing awareness that socio-economic changes might bring about difficulties that were out of people's personal control. As shown in table 2.2, an increasing proportion of the British people thought that there were people who were living in need 'because of injustice in our society' between 1976 and 1989. It increased from 16% in 1976 to 30% in 1989, compared with 26% in 1976 and 33% of respondents of the European Economic Communities (EEC) in 1989 respectively. On the other hand, a decreasing proportion of people thought that there were people living in need 'because

of laziness or lack of willpower'. According to the European Commission Report (1990), forty-three per cent of the British respondents thought that people who were living in need were doing so because of individual failure in 1976. It dropped significantly to 18% in 1989, compared with 25% in 1976 and 17% of respondents of the EEC in 1989 respectively. The findings of the two *Breadline Britain* studies (1983 & 1990) and the BSA Surveys also indicated that an increasing proportion of respondents agreed that people were living in need because of 'injustice in our society' rather than because of 'laziness or lack of willpower'. According to the findings of the two *Breadline Britain* studies, the figure increased steadily from 32% in 1983 to 40% in 1990. Referring to BSA studies, one quarter of respondents thought that people were living in need because of injustice in our society in 1986, in comparison with 30% in 1994 and 21% in 2000. The findings also showed that an increasing proportion of respondents agreed that people were living in need since they have been unlucky.

Table 2.2: Causes of needs

	(%)									
	1976 ¹ EEC	1976 ¹ Britain	1983 ²	1986 ³	1989 ¹ EEC	1989 ¹ Britain	1989 ³	1990 ²	1994 ³	2000 ³
% who think there are people who live in need										
Because it is an inevitable part of modern life	14	17	25	37	18	24	34	19	33	34
Because of injustice in our society	26	16	32	25	33	30	29	40	30	21
Because of laziness or lack of willpower	25	43	22	19	17	18	19	20	15	23
Because they have been unlucky	16	10	13	11	18	15	11	10	15	15

- Notes: 1. The figures in 1976 and 1989 are drawn from European Commission 1990.
 2. The figures in 1983, and 1990 are drawn from *Breadline Britain 1983* and *Breadline Britain 1990s* respectively.
 3. The figures in 1986, 1989, 1994 and 2000 are drawn from *British Social Attitudes*, various years.

Sources European Commission (1990) *Perception of Poverty in Europe*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, pp.36-37 & p.91.
 Frayman, H. (1991) *Breadline Britain 1990s: The Findings of the Television Series*, London: Domino Films and London Weekend Television, pp.12-13.
 Gordon, D. & Pantazis, C. (1997a) 'Measuring Poverty Breadline Britain in the 1990s', in D. Gordon & C. Pantazis, *Breadline Britain in the 1990s* (eds.) Aldershot: Ashgate, p.39.
British Social Attitudes, various issues.

The findings of the two *Breadline Britain* studies also revealed that people's ownership rates of necessities affected their views. In 1983, only 5% of those lacking five or more necessities blamed laziness, compared with 25% of those lacking none of the necessities. On the other hand, forty per cent of those without five or more necessities blamed injustice, compared with 32% of those with all the necessities (Mack & Lansley, 1985:207). Regarding the public's view of why people were living in need by deprivation groups in 1990, it showed that only 9% of long-term poor believed laziness and lack of willpower to be the cause of poverty, compared with 21% of the less deprived group. 48% of long-term poor blamed injustice, in comparison with 39% of the less deprived group (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a:39-40).

Regarding the European Commission's study (1990), the findings showed that 60% of the British people explained that the poor 'are victims of long-term unemployment', compared with 53% of respondents in the EEC. On the other hand, one-fifth of British people thought the ground of poverty was 'laziness' (Table 2.3). The findings were consistent with the results of the BSA Survey concerning public attitudes to welfare in various years.

Table 2.3: Grounds for poverty connected to the overall economic environment in the EEC and Britain in 1989

Reasons	EEC ¹	Britain ²
They are victims of long-term unemployment	53	60 (1)
They fell into alcoholism or drug abuse	38	22 (4)
Sickness	30	18 (6)
Family breakups	27	38 (5)
They were brought up in deprived conditions	23	23 (2)
The social welfare cuts	20	33 (7)
This goes back to their own laziness	17	21 (3)
Loss of a spirit of community in our society	14	12 (9)
They have too many children	13	16 (10)
They live in a poor area	12	15 (8)
The educational system not catering for them	10	11 (11)
The lack of concern among neighbours	5	3 (12)

Notes: 1. The figure include the 12 members of EEC, namely Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Britain.

2. The rank orders are shown in the brackets.

Source: European Commission (1990) *Perception of Poverty in Europe*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, pp.40-41 & 90.

On the one hand, one-third of people agreed with the statements: 'the welfare state makes people nowadays less willing to look after themselves' and 'the welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other'. On the other hand, the general public also perceived the socio-economic changes contributed to difficulties that were out of people's control. In 1989, over half of people (52.1%) agreed with the statement: 'Around here most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one', compared with 38.2% in 1995 and 53.8% in 1998. The general public's sympathy with unemployed people appeared to be related to the economic climate of the time. Over one-third of respondents disagreed that 'most people who get social security don't really deserve any help' between 1989 and 1998 (Table 2.4).

Although an overwhelming majority of respondents defined poverty in term of minimum subsistence level between 1986 and 2000, there was an increasing proportion of people who defined poverty in term of a relative basis. It increased from 25% in 1986 to 27% in 2000. The findings also revealed that an increasing proportion of respondents perceived the necessities of life not only in terms of the basic material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing and fuel, but also take into account the needs involved in membership of society (Table 2.5). Detailed discussion on the conception of poverty

will be presented in the section 'asking people what they perceive as necessities'. An increasing proportion of respondents perceived that 'there is quite a lot of real poverty in Britain today'. The proportion increased from 55% in 1986, to 63% in 1989 and further rose to 70% in 1994. However, there has been a drop between 1994 and 2000. The proportion of people who perceived that 'poverty in Britain will increase over the next ten years' slightly dropped from 45% in 1986 to 44% in 1989, and further to 41% in 2000 (Table 2.6).

Table 2.4: Attitudes to welfare

	(%)									
	1983	1984	1985	1986	1989	1991	1993	1995	1996	1998
The welfare state makes people nowadays less willing to look after themselves										
Strongly Agree / Agree	49.0	51.0	43.5	49.7	N/A	32.7	40.6	47.2	44.1	49.6
Neither agree Nor Disagree	20.0	16.0	23.3	19.6	N/A	26.2	24.1	21.0	24.3	23.0
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	25.0	31.0	31.7	29.8	N/A	39.2	34.0	29.2	29.6	25.5
The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other										
Strongly Agree / Agree	35.0	38.0	32.5	N/A	N/A	27.1	31.9	35.7	31.3	36.1
Neither agree Nor Disagree	26.0	22.0	29.6	N/A	N/A	28.5	29.2	26.7	33.2	31.9
Strongly Disagree / Disagree	31.0	38.0	35.9	N/A	N/A	42.5	37.2	35.3	33.7	29.8
Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one										
Strongly Agree / Agree					52.1	38.4	27.0	38.2	39.1	53.8
Neither agree Nor Disagree					18.8	18.6	19.9	21.6	22.1	22.2
Strongly Disagree / Disagree					28.1	41.4	51.5	38.1	37.0	21.8
Many people who get social security don't really deserve any help										
Strongly Agree / Agree					27.7	26.2	23.7	29.7	28.4	32.1
Neither agree Nor Disagree					26.6	24.9	24.7	24.3	28.0	29.4
Strongly Disagree / Disagree					44.6	46.9	50.1	43.2	41.7	36.3

Source: *British Social Attitudes*, various issues.

Table 2.5: Conceptions of poverty

	(%)			
	1986	1989	1994	2000
% would say someone in Britain was in poverty if				
.... They had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted (Relative)	25	25	28	27
.... They had enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed (Breadline)	55	60	60	59
.... They had not got enough to eat and live without getting into debt (Below minimum subsistence)	95	95	90	93

Source: *British Social Attitudes*, various issues.

Table 2.6: Perceptions of the level of poverty

	(%)			
	1986	1989	1994	2000
There is quite a lot of real poverty in Britain today	55	63	70	62
Poverty in Britain has been increasing over the last ten years	51	50	68	37
Poverty in Britain will increase over the next ten years	45	44	54	41

Source: *British Social Attitudes*, various issues.

Public perceptions of government's responses to poverty and willingness of the public to help alleviate poverty

According to the two *Breadline Britain* studies, public perceptions of the government's responses to poverty have also changed between 1983 and 1990.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents considered that the government is doing too little to help in 1983, compared with 70% in 1990. On the other hand, there was a significant decline in the proportion of the respondents who thought that the government was doing about the right amount to help. It decreased from 33% in 1983 to 18% in 1990 (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997b:81; Mack & Lansley, 1985:214). The findings also revealed that there was a relationship between the perception that the government was doing 'too little' and respondents' experience of poverty. An overwhelming majority (91%) of respondents, considering that they were genuinely poor 'all the time now', perceived that the government was doing 'too little' to help, compared with 64% of those considering that they were 'never' genuinely poor now. A lower proportion of respondents who have 'never' been poor considered that the government was doing 'too little' to help the poor than those poor 'often' and 'most of the time' in the past (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997b:82-83 & 272).

Concerning the willingness of the public to help alleviate poverty, an increasing proportion of people said they were willing to pay more taxes to help people who could not afford 'necessities'. Approximately three-quarters of people (74% in 1983 and 75% in 1990) were prepared to pay an extra 1p in the £1 to help people who could not afford the items that they regarded as 'necessities'. There has been a remarkable shift in public attitudes amongst those agreeing to pay an extra 5p in the £1. In 1983, only 34% supported such a large income tax increase, compared with 43% in 1990 (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7: Change in public opinion about income tax increases to help alleviate poverty between 1983 and 1990

	(%)			
	Opinion on a 1p in the £ income tax increase		Opinion on a 5p in the £ income tax increase	
	1983	1990	1983	1990
Support	74	75	34	43
Oppose	20	18	53	44
Don't know	6	7	13	13

Sources: Frayman, H. (1991) *Breadline Britain 1990s: The Findings of the Television Series*, London: Domino Films and London Weekend Television, p.7.

Gordon, D. & Pantazis, C. (1997b) 'The Public's Perception of Necessities and Poverty', in D. Gordon & C. Pantazis, *Breadline Britain in the 1990s* (eds.) Aldershot: Ashgate, p.86.

Mack & Lansley (1985) *Poor Britain*, London: George Allen & Unwin, p.258.

Asking people directly about the adequacy or inadequacy of given income levels

A survey question in this tradition was the one in Gallup Polls in which the respondents were asked 'what is the smallest amount of money a family of four needs to get along in your community?' (Danziger, *et al.*, 1984:501; Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977:506). Rainwater (1974) extended this question to different levels of living and family sizes. Such minimum income questions asked respondents to suggest an income amount for

families in circumstances which they might or might not share and of which they may lack experience.

Dubnoff presented a new technique that was a variant on the hypothetical family technique developed by Rainwater (1974). This method asked respondents to rate the level of living of hypothetical families with varying income and other characteristics. It was to present a sample of respondents with a set of hypothetical families of different composition and then asked the respondents to judge the standard of living of those families according to a scale as follows: Poor, Nearly Poor, Just Getting Along, Living Reasonably Comfortably, Living Very Comfortably, and Prosperous (Dubnoff, 1985:287-8). Instead of asking people to suggest income amounts for various families with different components, this method only asked them to assess the standard of living of those hypothetical families (Dubnoff, 1985:287).

The advantage of studies that obtained views about hypothetical families was that each respondent's opinion about the needs of various household types could be obtained. However, people may find difficulty in translating a certain standard of living into income level (Van den Bosch, 1998:136). Besides, this approach cannot ensure that each respondent shares similar experience at particular standards (Callen, *et al.*, 1991:251; Van den Bosch, *et al.*, 1993:238). Saunders & Matheson (1992) also highlighted this stubborn problem:

The problem lies in expecting respondents to estimate an appropriate income for someone whose circumstances and/or preferences may be completely unlike their own. They have to judge what a given income level would mean for someone else (Saunders & Matheson, 1992:25).

Subjective poverty line (SPL) and the Leyden poverty line (LPL) were 'both subjective in that they were based on responses to survey questions which tried to elicit either a respondent's evaluation of income levels or her/his judgement about minimum needs' (Kapteyn, *et al.*, 1988:222).

The SPL, which was introduced by Goedhart, *et al.*, (1977) was based on responses to questions on what income levels the respondents consider to be the minimum they themselves need to make ends meet. This method was on the basis of a one-level attitude question: the Minimum Income Question (MIQ) (Flik, *et al.*, 1991:313). Examples of SPL questions are as follows:

In the 1979 Income Survey Development Program Research Panel, the respondents were asked : Living where you do now and meeting the expenses you consider necessary, what would be the very smallest income you (and your family) would need to make ends meet? (Danziger, *et al.*, 1984:501).

Which after tax monthly income do you, in your circumstances, consider to be absolutely minimum? That is to say that with less you could not make ends meet.

Absolutely minimal per month \$ _____

Don't know _____ (Kapteyn, *et al.*, 1988:223).

In your opinion, what would be the very lowest net weekly income (that is, income after tax but before payment of any bills) that your household would have to just make ends meet? (Saunders, *et al.* 1994:6)

A respondent's answer to this MIQ was much influenced by their actual after tax income and other factors, such as family composition. In other words, the respondents required different amounts of money to make ends meet if their families had different characteristics, such as family size and composition, age as well as housing situation (Kapteyn, *et al.*, 1988: 223-4; Saunders & Matheson, 1992:28; Van den Bosch, *et al.*, 1993:239).

The LPL was based on the Welfare Function of Income (WFI), which was derived from the income evaluation question (IEQ). This approach adopted Watts' definition of poverty which was 'a property of the individual's situation'. This viewpoint led to a definition of poverty as 'a situation in which the consumption set of the individual is severely constricted, while affluence is defined as a situation in which there is little constriction of the consumption set'. In other words, poverty was defined as 'a situation where command over resources falls below a certain level, the poverty line' (Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977:504).

The questionnaire included the income-evaluation question, questions with respect to the composition and size of net family income as well as the respondent's minimum income. With regard to the income-evaluation question, the respondents were asked the individual welfare function of income, which described the welfare evaluation of income levels by an individual and was measured by asking him the following questions: (Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977:507; Kapteyn, *et al.*, 1988:225).

In answering the following question it is advisable to start with the underlined words.

Try at any rate to fill in all amounts asked for to the best of your judgement.

Taking into account my (our) present living circumstances, I would regard a net weekly/monthly/yearly family income as:

excellent	if it were above _____
<u>good</u>	if it were between _____ and _____
amply sufficient	if it were between _____ and _____
sufficient	if it were between _____ and _____
<u>barely sufficient</u>	if it were between _____ and _____
insufficient	if it were between _____ and _____
very insufficient	if it were between _____ and _____
<u>bad</u>	if it were between _____ and _____
very bad	if it were below _____

Apart from the IEQ, the respondent's views about a minimum income were also asked:

We would like to know which net family income would, in your circumstances, be the absolute minimum for you. That is to say, that you would not be able to make both ends meet if you earned less.

In my (our) circumstances I consider the following net family income the absolute minimum: _____ per week/per month/per year (Goedhart, *et al.*, 1977:510).

However, there are some difficulties of establishing the minimum standard through the concept of minimum income. *First*, different responsibilities may contribute to different estimates of minimum income levels even though different individuals may have in mind the same minimum income levels (Mack & Lansley, 1985:43; Saunders & Matheson, 1992:21). For example, parents with children will need more financial support than those parents without children to cover the cost of taking care of their children.

Second, the use of a subjective poverty definition to establish the minimum standard requires an assumption that all respondents share a common understanding of those terms, such as 'sufficient income' or 'enough to make ends meet'. The respondents may express dramatically different answers with small changes in wording (Hagenaars & De Vos, 1988; Van den Bosch, *et al.*, 1993:244; Walker, 1987:216).

Third, even though every person may have in mind a certain standard of living, they will wrongly estimate the income levels needed when they lack experience of living at that standard (Bryson, 1997). Nonetheless, it is useful to adopt the self-perceived poverty method to ask respondents how they perceive their own situations. Also, it is helpful to ask how they perceive different definitions of poverty so that they can be compared. Townsend *et al* (1997) tried to adopt different notions of poverty and asked the respondents to estimate the amount for three different concepts of poverty, namely simple poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty and this proved fruitful.

Finally, it is questionable whether the method really does manage to avoid the expert input and instead 'let the people decide' since the precise wording of the MIQ will have an important influence on the responses it provokes (Saunders & Matheson, 1992:31). In other words, the expert input can still have a very significant impact on the results since the consensual method still requires them to design the sampling methods and decide the actual wording of the Minimum Income Question as well as interpret the results. Piachaud observed that a general problem with this approach is that 'the experts are not so easily disposed of. In defining what is the minimum standard of living laid down by society, someone must define the questions' (Piachaud, 1987:149-150).

Nonetheless, the findings of the Bristol Statistical Monitoring Unit report showed that there was coincidence of both public opinion and expert opinion on the amount of money needed to avoid poverty (Townsend, *et al.*, 1997). The findings of *Absolute and Overall Poverty in Britain in 1997* demonstrated that 'both public opinion and expert opinion in Britain on the amount of money required to avoid poverty appear to coincide' (Townsend, *et al.*, 1997:17). This self-perceived poverty tried to explore what income people said was needed to live out of absolute and overall poverty. The respondents of this study were asked 'how many pounds a week they needed in their households to live out of poverty'. This 'unspecified' question provided an indicator of understanding how people interpreted the questions about absolute and overall poverty. The United Nations' (UN) definitions of absolute and overall poverty were adopted to obtain the estimates of the amount of poverty in Britain¹⁰. The findings revealed that the estimates of the amount of overall poverty for small families (one or two groups) were close to the 'modest but adequate budgets' which were family budget standards drawn up by Bradshaw and his colleagues in 1993. The figures have been updated to October 1997 prices. But the estimates of the 'modest but adequate budgets' for three or more people families were higher than the overall poverty estimates. Also, both 'absolute' and simple poverty estimates were lower than the 'modest but adequate budgets' for every household type. Townsend *et al* argued that 'these average poverty line estimates are both socially realistic and also correspond with the views of 'expert'' (Townsend *et al.*, 1997:16).

Asking people what they perceive as necessities

The use of social indicators pioneered by Townsend's study (1979) was further developed by Mack and Lansley (1985). The survey was carried out in February 1983 with a quota sample of 1174 respondents aged 16 and over from throughout Britain. The essence of Mack and Lansley's study was to identify a minimum acceptable way of life in Britain in the 1980s not by reference to the views of experts, nor by reference to observed patterns of expenditure or observed living standards, but by reference to the

¹⁰ Absolute poverty was defined by the UN as 'a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services'. Overall poverty was defined as a condition characterised by 'lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets' (UN, 1995:57).

views of society as a whole. Mack & Lansley defined deprivation in terms of 'an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities' and poverty was 'a situation where such deprivation has a multiple impact on a household's way of life' (Mack & Lansley, 1985). A list of thirty-five items, including food, heating, household durables, clothing, housing conditions, transport and leisure and social activities, was selected. The items chosen were intended as indicators of 'not only the basic essentials for survival (such as food) but also access, or otherwise, to participating in society and being able to play a role' (Mack & Lansley, 1985:50) (Appendix 2). Then, the respondents were asked questions related to items which they regarded as necessities and to distinguish those items which they had and could not do without and those they had and could do without. Mack & Lansley also dealt with the issue of taste in measurement of poverty in their study. They identified both those households/people who 'don't have but don't want' and those who 'don't have and can't afford' an item (Mack & Lansley, 1985:52-53).

The findings revealed that respondents viewed necessities not only in terms of subsistence but also in terms of quality of life and enjoyment. For example, over two-thirds of respondents identified as necessities goods that added to one's comfort (such as carpets) and those that added to one's enjoyment (celebrations or a roast joint) (Mack & Lansley, 1985:56). In addition, there was a relationship between those who did not have an item because they could not afford it and their net equivalent household income. The absence of twenty-two out of thirty-five items which were classified as 'necessities' by the respondents was negatively correlated with income (Mack & Lansley, 1985:103). The findings showed that not being able to afford the necessities was indeed sharply related to income: those on lower incomes were very much more likely to go without necessities because they could not afford them than were those on higher incomes (Mack & Lansley, 1985:100). The findings indicated that a level of lack of three or more necessities was overwhelmingly enforced¹¹. Mack & Lansley identified people who could not afford three or more necessities as in poverty, and those on low-incomes who were unable to afford one or two necessities as on the margins of poverty. Mack & Lansley classified those who could not afford five or more necessities to be sinking deeper into poverty and those who unable to afford seven or more necessities as in intensive poverty (Mack & Lansley, 1985:183-184).

Piachaud (1987) argued that it was difficult to identify what items should be regarded as 'necessities' and what as 'non-necessities' owing to a degree of variation in

¹¹ Mack & Lansley set up two criteria to determine at what point multiple deprivation was likely to be causing poverty. First, those who lack certain level of necessities should have low-incomes in the bottom half of the income range. Second, their overall spending patterns should reflect financial difficulty rather than high spending on other goods (Mack & Lansley, 1985:175-176).

ways of living among the whole population. It was also difficult to justify Mack & Lansley's choice of three specific deprivations as defining the cut-off point between the poor and non-poor. If the items were regarded as 'necessities', the absence of even one item might surely be said to constitute poverty (Halleröd, 1994:18; Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997:215-216; Piachaud, 1987:149; Veit-Wilson, 1987:203).

Furthermore, Halleröd and Van den Bosch also argued that Mack & Lansley neglected people in different circumstances, such as different age groups and household types, who needed different things to reach a minimum living standard (Halleröd, 1994; Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997:215; Van den Bosch, 1998). As Van den Bosch stated:

These 'horizontal' differences do not seem to be the result of divergent views about how stringent or generous the minimum standard of living should be, but, rather, reflect the fact that some items are more important for some kinds of people than for others (Van den Bosch, 1998:163).

Finally, the purpose of Mack & Lansley's study was to reduce the influence of expert decisions in the definition. Halleröd argued that 'there is, nevertheless, a great deal of expert input and several arbitrary decisions left in their [Mack & Lansley's] approach. These decisions were on the one hand connected with the design of the survey and, on the other hand, connected with the interpretation of data' (Halleröd, 1994:15). The respondents only decided which items were to be regarded as 'necessities' but Mack & Lansley made the final decision about which items from the list were necessary (Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997:214). It was suggested to use the 'proportional deprivation index' (PDI) to avoid arbitrary classifications of necessary and non-necessary items since it dealt with shortcomings in Mack & Lansley's deprivation index and also strengthened the relationship between preferences of consumption held by the general public and a direct definition of poverty. The idea of this method was that each item was attached a weight in term of the proportion of the population that regarded it as a necessity (Halleröd, 1994:23-24 & 1995b:119; Nolan & Whelan, 1996a:228; Van den Bosch, 1998:163-164). Halleröd *et al.*, summarised the strengths of the PDI approach as:

the PDI is more theoretically appealing than the deprivation index (Majority Necessities Index) used by Mack and Lansley because it is less sensitive to the consumer items included in the list, does not make arbitrary classifications of necessary and non-necessary consumption, decreases the sensitivity to individual preferences and take account of significant differences in preferences between demographic and social categories (Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997:218).

The original 1983 study was replicated in Britain in *Breadline Britain 1990* with a quota sample of 1831 adults aged 16 and over being interviewed. After the survey, the data were weighted by age, household type, tenure and housing type to be representative

of the population of Great Britain (Frayman, 1991). Poverty was defined according to the approach developed by Mack & Lansley in *Breadline Britain 1983* as 'enforced lack of socially perceived necessities' (Mack & Lansley, 1985:9). In the 1990 survey, respondents were asked about a list of 44 items that cover the range of possessions and activities that people might consider important. An item was identified as a socially perceived necessity if more than 50% of the respondents considered it to be a necessity. Piachaud's criticism, relating to the separation of choice from constraint, was dealt with by the two *Breadline Britain* studies, which identified both those people who 'don't have but don't want' and those who 'don't have but can't afford' an item. Respondents were asked about the 44 items to determine if they: (i) had and could not do without (an item); (ii) had and could do without; (iii) did not have and did not want; and (iv) did not have and could not afford. A deprivation index score was given each time when the respondents answered that they did not have and could not afford an item that was regarded to be a necessity by at least 50% of respondents. Those respondents who lacked three or more of the necessities because they could not afford them, rather than from choice, were identified to be 'poor' (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a).

The findings of *Breadline Britain in the 1990s* indicated that more than three-quarters of respondents regarded sixteen items as necessities, whereas seven items were considered as necessities by more than two-third of respondents. More than fifty percent of respondents regarded thirty-two out of forty-four items as necessities (Appendix 2). The study also reflected that the respondents defined poverty in terms of a relative basis. The list of necessities included items such as 'presents for friends or family once a year' and 'a washing machine' (Frayman, 1991).

The findings of the two *Breadline Britain* studies revealed that the single parent families and the unemployed who lacked three or more necessities, as in 1983, were most at risk of being poor (Halleröd, *et al.*, 1997:232). Regarding households lacking three or more necessities, more than one-third of households with children reported that 'they did not have enough for food at some time during the previous year' (Frayman, 1991:10-11). For children, the social effects of going without necessities are serious since social development and psychological adjustment are affected by the inability to take part in normal activities in the community.

The PSE survey originated as a follow-up of the *Breadline Britain* Surveys of 1983 and 1990. The study attempted to identify the number of people living in poverty with reference to being unable to afford socially perceived necessities. The PSE survey adopted a similar method to measure the proportion of respondents identifying items as

necessities which all adults should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without in 1999. The survey also dealt with other issues on poverty and social exclusion in Britain¹² (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000).

Out of fifty-four adult items and activities, thirty-five items were considered by 50% or more respondents as necessities for an acceptable standard of living in Britain in 1999. The findings indicated that the respondents who perceived items or activities as the necessities of life not only focused on basic material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing and fuel, but also took more account of the needs of membership of society. For instance, 83% of respondents regarded 'celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas' as a necessity. The survey also revealed that the proportion of people in poverty was higher amongst:

- lone-parent households;
- household dependent on Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance;
- households with no paid workers;
- local authority and housing association tenants;
- large families;
- separated/divorced households;
- families with a child under 11;
- adults living in one-person households;
- children;
- young people;
- those who left school at 16 or under; and
- women

In general, people's attitudes were strongly influenced by their social class. For instance, in Britain the middle class put less emphasis on household items than the working classes (Mack & Lansley, 1985:62). The family structure and household circumstances also affected their perception of needs. For example, households with children were more likely to see the items specifically for children as essential than were those who did not have responsibility for children (Mack & Lansley, 1985:75-6). In other words, as Mack & Lansley observed, 'people's views on what is a necessity do to some extent reflect their own personal circumstances. What is important is not so much whether they do or do not possess a particular item but more the extent to which that item is central to their particular lifestyle' (Mack & Lansley, 1985:78). Saunders and Matheson also found that the responses to the question were subject to different

¹² The PSE survey identified four dimensions of exclusion, including exclusion from adequate income/resources, labour market exclusion, service exclusion and exclusion from social relations.

interpretations since different people lived their lives in specific socio-economic contexts, and their actual experiences were likely to influence their perceptions in relation to a range of issues including those concerning minimum income levels (Saunders & Matheson, 1992:11).

Although it was still largely dependent on experts, in term of adoption of various approaches to poverty measurement, the consensual definition of poverty attempted to shift the value judgements from experts to the general public. As Halleröd stated, 'the influence of public opinion on consensual definitions of poverty is, therefore, limited but the approach has, nevertheless, several advantages compared with the traditional expert definitions. The most important one is that a consensual definition can truly be seen as relative to conditions in the community and, therefore, it will reflect poverty as a social phenomenon in a more appropriate way' (Halleröd, 1995b:116).

Relative income standard approach

The relative income standard approach has been widely adopted by national governments and international organisations including the European Communities (EC) or Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Poverty is measured in terms of a point on the distribution of equivalent income which is normally 40, 50 or 60 percent of the mean or median (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1993 & 2002; Deleeck, *et al.*, 1990 & 1992; Hagenaars & Zaid, 1994; O'Higgins & Jenkins, 1990; Saunders, *et al.*, 1999; Teekens & Zaid, 1990; The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, 1998, Townsend, 1979 & 1997). The strength of this approach is its simplicity since it is not necessary to collect data on the living standards of the population. In the evaluation report of the first European Action Programme to combat poverty, the European Commission estimated the number of poor people in the Community in 1975 and defined poverty as having less than 50% of the average disposable income per equivalent adult in the country (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1993). In Britain, the *Households Below Average Income* (HBAI) series also made estimates of the percentages of households below various percentages of average incomes (Department of Social Security & Government Statistical Survey, various years).

The relative income standard approach has been widely used in international comparative studies, such as OECD and EC. Most European states have collected income and expenditure data which were available for analysis and could be compared on a standardised basis (Atkinson, *et al.*, 2002; Bradshaw, 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001c; Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992; Townsend, 1997:61). The relative income standard method yielded more or less comparative poverty lines for countries with different levels of economic

and social development. Therefore, it seemed to be more suitable for international comparative studies (Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992:4).

However, the limitation of this approach is the arbitrariness of the choice of any particular percentage of the mean or median of the income distribution (Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992; Townsend, 1979 & 1997). The selection of a measure of central tendency of the income distribution (i.e. mean or median) and the choices of cut-off points has a direct impact on the conclusion drawn (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1993; The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, 1998; Townsend, 1997:61-62). In a study on *Comparing Poverty in France and the United Kingdom*, Atkinson *et al.*, argued that 'apparently innocuous differences in definitions can make a major difference to the conclusions. The degree of poverty in two countries such as France and Britain can be made to appear quite different depending on the choice of central tendency, on whether we count in terms of households or individuals, on the equivalence scale, and on the treatment of housing costs and housing benefits' (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1993:33). A report on *Recommendations of the Task Force on Statistics on Social Exclusion and Poverty* (1998) also indicated that the choices of cut-off points led to various results in measurement of the extent of poverty.

Besides, the relative income approach identifies the 'poor' as those with a low income irrespective of the level of their actual living standards. However, it is not necessarily sufficient to determine whether he/she is poor with reference to his/her income when poverty is defined as relative deprivation. Also, there is no direct relationship between economic resources and standards of living. The actual living standards may be different among different households with identical economic resources because of different expenditure pressures and differences in the ability for transforming money into living standards (Halleröd, 1995a & 1995b; Ringen, 1987 & 1988).

The foregoing discussion reveals that each methodological approach, including the professional or expert approach, the relative deprivation approach, the relative income standard approach and the public opinion or social consensus approach, encountered a number of difficulties in measuring poverty. Many researchers and commentators argued that a widely accepted definition of poverty has a significant impact on policy decisions (Cook, 1979; Frayman, 1991; Jeffry, 1993; Halleröd, 1994 & 1995b; Mack & Lansley, 1985; Townsend, *et al.*, 1997).

Both 'direct methods' and 'indirect methods' have been widely used to measure poverty but neither one of them was adequate on their own (Callan, Nolan & Whelan,

1993; Gordon, 1998a; Halleröd, 1994, 1995a & 1995b; Nolan & Whelan, 1996a & 1996b; Ringen, 1987 & 1988; Whelan & Whelan, 1995). The former approach is in terms of observation of actual consumption, whereas the latter is on the basis of the measurement of economic resources, such as income. Knowledge of a person's income is not necessarily sufficient to determine if he/she is poor when poverty is defined as relative deprivation (Ringen, 1987:159). Ringen argued that 'income is not the only resource that determines what we get, other relevant resources are skills, thrift, 'connections' and the like' (Ringen, 1988:358).

Halleröd also shared a similar view that it was difficult to make a correct estimation of a household's economic resources regarding 'which resources should be included in the analysis' and 'how they should be valued'. For instance, apart from money income, there are different kinds of other economic resources, including fringe benefits and informal resources. Besides, there is no direct relationship between economic resources and standards of living. The actual living standards may be different among different households with identical economic resources owing to different expenditure pressures and variations in the ability of transforming money into living standards (Halleröd, 1995a: 176 & 1995b:113-4). Thus, it was suggested that a combination of both indirect and direct approaches was what 'a theoretically coherent and an empirically reliable measure of poverty requires' (Gordon, 1998a:5 & 1998b; Halleröd, 1995b:111). Callan *et al* argued that:

Poverty defined as exclusion due to lack of resources – understood as a state of generalised deprivation – is characterised by both a low standard of consumption/deprivation and a low level of income. The poor must therefore be identified using both a consumption/deprivation and an income criterion: exclusion is to be measured directly, together with an income criterion to exclude those who have a low standard of living for reasons other than low-income (Callan, Nolan & Whelan, 1993:142).

Whelan & Whelan also argued that: 'the combination of the income and deprivation indicator approach offer the opportunity both to measure poverty more accurately and to provide a more complete picture of the life-style of the poor' (Whelan & Whelan, 1995:48). Both studies conducted by Halleröd (1995b) and Nolan & Whelan (1996a) provided support for the case that using both income and deprivation indicators, rather than income alone, contributed to better understanding of poverty measurement. Thus, it is useful to measure poverty in terms of multi-dimensional indicators rather than financial resources only. The findings of recent studies also revealed that it was more secure using more than one poverty measure. It was suggested that the combination of poverty measures needed to include income data, subjective measures as well as social indicators (Bradshaw, 2001a & 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001a, 2001b & 2003; Layte,

Nolan & Whelan, 2000).

Relationship between poverty and social exclusion

Notion of social exclusion

The concept of social exclusion originated in France in the 1970s. However, different school of thoughts had different interpretations of the concept (Silver, 1994). Gordon argued that what constituted social exclusion was therefore dependent upon judgements both within and about society in assessing the accepted way of life and adequate participation (Gordon, 1998a:12). Duffy defined the notion of social exclusion as 'a broader concept than poverty, encompassing not only low material means but the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political, and cultural life, and in some characteristics, alienation and distance from the mainstream society' (Quoted in Walker, 1997:8). In other words, as Oppenheim stated, 'social exclusion offers breadth, encompassing a range of factors that lead to social exclusion and therefore a richer set of goals. Economic security is therefore not an end in itself but part of the achievement of a greater sense of well-being, active participation or common membership of our society' (Oppenheim, 1998:14-15).

Researchers argued that the traditional view of poverty only distinguished a person as poor or non-poor and defined poverty in terms of state rather than dynamics and process (Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992; Duncan, *et al.*, 1993; Gordon, 1998a; Leisering & Walker, 1998; Oppenheim, 1998; Walker, 1994 & 1999; Walker & Ashworth, 1994:18; Walker & Park, 1998). Walker & Ashworth argued that the traditional definitions of poverty ignored 'the inextricable link between the distribution of poverty and the experiences of the poor' (Walker & Ashworth, 1994:18). Ellwood distinguished the differences between static and dynamic poverty as:

Static analysis asks about the who and what of today. Dynamic thinking asks about the past and the future and, at its best, it helps to answer the question of why. As a tool for policy, dynamic analysis is especially potent, for it inevitably points towards helping people to reshape the events in their future. By contrast, static analysis more commonly leads to remediation of the overt manifestations of the current situation. Put differently, dynamic analysis gets us closer to treating causes, where static analysis often leads us towards treating symptoms.

Room suggested five key elements to pin down the concept of social exclusion (Room, 1998 & 2001). *First*, multi-dimensional indicators are required to explain various elements of hardships and their interrelationships. It was argued that financial indicators are not sufficient to reflect general hardships (Deleeck, *et al.*, 1992:2-3; Gordon, 1998a: 13; Room, 1998: 4). As Room argued, 'financial indicators such as low-income, are

insufficiently reliable as proxies for general hardship; and it is important for policy and for explanatory purposes to disentangle different elements of hardship and to identify their interrelationship' (Room, 1995a:235).

Second, it was argued that the analysis of the disadvantaged involved dynamic and processes aspects. It is insufficient to identify the number and the characteristics of the vulnerable groups. It is also important to explain why the poor trigger entry or exit from the disadvantage situation, how the duration of poverty is experienced, and what the consequences of the disadvantaged situation are (Room, 1998:5). Walker also shared a similar view and stated that:

Any comprehensive explanation of poverty has to take account not only of the probability that any particular event occurs but also of the probability that the event triggers a spell of poverty (Walker, 1995:121 & 1997:62).

Third, it is insufficient to study poverty in terms of individual or household resources only. Deprivation results not only from lack of personal resources but also the non-availability of community facilities. In order to have a better understanding of the vulnerable groups, it is important to collect information on personal resources, as well as the availability and non-availability of community resources (Room, 1998:7).

Fourth, the notion of poverty is focused upon a lack of resources while the notion of social exclusion is focused on a lack of power and social integration. In other words, social exclusion allows us to capture crucial aspects of poverty such as loss of power, status and self-esteem (Oppenheim, 1998:15). As Room stated, 'the notion of poverty is primarily focused upon distributional issues: the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or a household. In contrast, notions such as social exclusion focus primarily on relational issue: in other words, inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power' (Room, 1995a:5; 1995b:105 & 1998:9). Bergham also stated that the traditional concept of poverty was focused on the lack of disposable income and the notion of social exclusion referred to 'a breakdown or malfunctioning of the major societal systems that should guarantee full citizenship' (Bergham, 1995:20). According to the 'Poverty 3' programme for the understanding of poverty, the concept of poverty focused on a lack of resources, while the notion of social exclusion was more comprehensive, and was about "much more than money" (Bergham, 1995:18).

Fifth, Room regarded social exclusion as meaning and marking 'a catastrophic discontinuity in relationships with the rest of society' (Room, 1998:13). He pointed out that the notion of social exclusion implied people who suffered from multi-dimensional disadvantages and were detached from the major societal system. He stated that:

To use the notion of social exclusion carries the implication that we are speaking of people who are suffering such a degree of multi-dimensional disadvantage, of such duration, and reinforced by such material and cultural degradation of the neighbourhoods in which they live, that their relational links with the wider society are ruptured to a degree which is in some considerable degree irreversible (Room, 1998:13).

The relationship between poverty and social exclusion

Room pointed out five key aspects of the notion of social exclusion. But he failed to mention that poverty studies dealt with some aspects that he mentioned. Townsend's study of poverty in Britain in 1979 defined poverty from various perspectives, ranging from diet to clothing, housing, environmental conditions, working conditions, social support and integration and so on. He widened the definition of poverty from income to resources, and from consumption to participation (Bradshaw, *et al.*, 2000; Burchardt, 2001; Burchardt, *et al.*, 1999; Levitas, 1998 & 2001). As Levitas argued, 'the whole thrust of Townsend's argument was that poverty resulted in exclusion from social participation, but he did not use the term 'social exclusion' (Levitas, 1998b:10). The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas also stated that definition of poverty not only focused on financial issues but also other aspects and thus poverty was defined in terms of multi-dimensional indicators. It was stated that:

Poverty is not only about shortage of money. It is about rights and relationships; about how people are treated and how they regard themselves; about powerlessness, exclusion and loss of dignity. Yet the lack of an adequate income is at its heart (quoted in Bradshaw, 1997a:48).

Levitas identified three competing discourses concerning the notion of social exclusion in Britain (Table 2.8). *First*, there is a redistributive discourse (RED), which focuses on the way in which poverty prevents people from social participation or exercising full citizenship. As Townsend (1979) argued, poverty should not be defined in terms of subsistence, but in terms of people's ability to take part in the customary life of society. Social exclusion is characterized as the multi-dimensional disadvantages and involves dynamic processes (Levitas, 1998a:39 & 2001:359). As Walker argued, poverty was seen as 'a lack of the material resources, especially income, necessary to participate in British society', whereas social exclusion is regarded as 'a more comprehensive formulation which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political, and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society' and 'social exclusion may be seen as the denial (or non-realisation) of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship' (Walker, 1997:8). According to RED, exclusion is exclusion from participation in terms of economic, political, social or cultural systems (Levitas, 1998b:168 & 2001:359). As the

RED emphasizes social exclusion as a consequence of poverty, raising benefit levels to reduce poverty is crucial to reducing exclusion.

Second, there is the social integrationist discourse (SID), which puts emphasis on 'social inclusion or integration through paid work'. But the concept glosses over the values of unpaid work. In addition, it also neglects that paid work may not prevent exclusion. Insecure and low paid work, long working hours and the nature of the work may prevent people from social participation (Levitas, 1998a:39-40 & 2001:359-360). Gordon argued that focusing the notion of social exclusion on unemployment and exclusion from paid work was restrictive usage. It suggests that the alleviation of social exclusion can only be addressed through employment policy rather than through improved welfare provision. He stated that:

Although unemployment is a major cause of poverty, and thus of social exclusion, this usage is far more restrictive. It also has political implications, since it suggests that social exclusion can be addressed only through employment policy and not through improved welfare provision or through initiatives aimed directly at increasing a range of forms of social participation (Gordon, 1998a:13).

Third, there is moral underclass discourse (MUD), which emphasises 'moral and cultural causes of poverty and is much concerned with the issue of dependency' (Levitas, 1998a:40 & 2001:360). The shift of the focus from the structural basis of poverty to the moral and cultural character of the poor themselves was partly due to economic changes in Britain in the early 1980s. The unemployment rates and the number of the poor increased significantly and thus social security spending rose. The government's response was to restrict eligibility for social security benefits, deny the existence of poverty and blame the poor for their plight.

On the whole, the relationship between notions of poverty and social exclusion was intertwined. Room attempted to clarify the notion of social exclusion by teasing out the different perspectives involved in the concept. However, earlier poverty studies have pinpointed some aspects that he identified. Levitas' work, which distinguishes three competing discourses of social exclusion in Britain, reflected that the impacts of socio-economic and political changes in Britain have shifted the definitions of social exclusion from RED to MUD, and SID in the past two decades.

Overall, in the context of New Labour policy and discourse, ideas of social exclusion owe more to SID and MUD than to RED..... The shift away from a redistributive agenda was accompanied by a reconstruction of the problems of unemployment and job insecurity in terms of 'employability' (Levitas, 2001:362).

Some analysis attempted to identify indicators to measure social exclusion in

Britain, such as reports from the New Policy Institute¹³ (NPI) and the Institute of Public Policy Research¹⁴ (IPPR) in 1998. However, the relevant data was collected from existing data sets. It was argued that ‘there are serious limitations in starting from existing sets of statistics which have not been designed to measure social exclusion, especially given the lack of clarity in defining social exclusion itself’ (Levitas, 2001:376).

Table 2.8: A summary of the characteristics of the three competing discourses of social exclusion

A Redistributionist Discourse (RED)	A Social Integrationist Discourse (SID)	A Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It emphasizes poverty as a prime cause of social exclusion. ■ It implies a reduction of poverty through increases in benefit levels. ■ It is potentially able to valorize unpaid work. ■ In positing citizenship as the obverse of exclusion, it goes beyond a minimalist model of inclusion. ■ In addressing social, political and cultural, as well as economic, citizenship, it broadens out into a critique of inequality, which includes, but is not limited to, material inequality. ■ It focuses on the processes which produce that inequality. ■ It implies a radical reduction of inequalities, and a redistribution of resources and of power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It narrows the definition of social exclusion/inclusion to participation in paid work. ■ It squeezes out the question of why people who are not employed are consigned to poverty. Consequently, it does not, like RED, imply a reduction of poverty by an increase in benefit levels. ■ It obscures the inequalities between paid workers. ■ Since women are paid significantly less than men, and are far more likely to be in low-paid jobs, it obscures gender, as well as class, inequalities in the labour market. ■ It erases from view the inequalities between those owning the bulk of productive property and the working population. ■ It is unable to address adequately the question of unpaid work in society. ■ Because it ignores unpaid work and its gendered distribution, it implies an increase in women’s total workload. ■ It undermines the legitimacy of non-participation in paid work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It presents the underclass or socially excluded as culturally distinct from the ‘mainstream’. ■ It focuses on the behaviour of the poor rather than the structure of the whole society. ■ It implies that benefits are bad, rather than good, for their recipients, and encourage ‘dependency’. ■ Inequalities among the rest of society are ignored. ■ It is a gendered discourse, about idle, criminal young men and single mothers. ■ Unpaid work is not acknowledged. ■ Although dependency on the state is regarded as a problem, personal economic dependency – especially of women and children on men – is not. Indeed, it is seen as a civilizing influence on men.

Sources: Levitas (1998b) *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*, London: Macmillan.

Levitas (2001) ‘What is social exclusion’, in D. Gordon & P. Townsend (eds.) *Breadline Europe: The Measurement of Poverty*, Bristol: Policy Press.

¹³ The NPI report, *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion: Labour’s inheritance*, was composed of 46 key indicators which concerned about various aspects, including income, health, education, as well as access to services. The study divided the population by age group, including children (aged below 16), young adults (aged 16-24), adults and older people. This study also addressed poverty and low income, as well as communities (Howarth, *et al.*, 1998).

¹⁴ The IPPR report, *Social exclusion indicators*, consisted of four areas, which were drawn from the concerns of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (i.e. unemployment, poor skills, low incomes poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown) (Robinson & Oppenheim, 1998).

Burchardt *et al.* (1999 & 2002) attempted to operationalize a working definition of social exclusion¹⁵ on the basis of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). The concept was sub-divided into four dimensions, including consumption (i.e. the capacity to purchase goods and services), production (i.e. participation in economically or socially valuable activities), political engagement and social interaction. However, the analysis was subject to data availability since not all the questions needed to construct the indicators of social exclusion were either collected in BHPS or asked at every year of data collection.

The match between dimensions and indicators is imperfect. Since expenditure data are not collected in BHPS, we rely on income as a measure of consumption capability, rather than measuring consumption directly. The threshold, half mean income, is one commonly used in the UK, in the absence of an official poverty line. The production dimension would ideally include voluntary work as an economically or socially valuable activity, in addition to the standard categories, but that information was not available. The indicators of involvement in decision-making we include stand only as proxies for the wide variety of ways in which people may exercise influence over their environment or the future of some institution or policy they care about. Finally, on the social interaction dimension, we have good indicators of availability of support from family and friends, but lack an indicator of wider cultural participation (Burchardt, *et al.*, 2002:33).

In order to address the causes and extent of social exclusion directly, the PSE survey extended the *Breadline Britain Surveys* to cover social exclusion. It identified four dimensions of exclusion: *first*, exclusion from adequate income/resources which refers to poverty itself; *second*, labour market exclusion (non-participation in paid work) which not only leads to financial difficulties, but also exclusion from social contact and social interaction; *third*, utility disconnection and restricted consumption, as well as lack of access to public/private services because of unaffordability and unavailability constitute service exclusion; *fourth*, non-participation in common social activities, isolation and lack of support lead to exclusion from social relations (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). The findings of the PSE survey will be discussed in details in Chapter 8.

In summary, poverty studies in Hong Kong gained insight into the research on defining and measuring poverty from academic institutes and research units in Britain and other European countries. *First*, various poverty studies revealed that poor people's full membership of society should not be neglected. Thus, the definition of poverty should not simply be interpreted in terms of subsistence levels but it should take more account of membership of society.

¹⁵ The notion of social exclusion was defined as 'an individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives' (Burchardt, *et al.*, 2002:30).

Second, local poverty studies utilized ideas from various different methodological approaches, namely the professional or expert approach, the relative deprivation approach, the relative income standard approach and the public opinion or social consensus approach, to measure poverty (Chow, 1982b & 1983b; Chua, *et al.*, 2002; Estes, 2000; MacPherson, 1994b; Leung, 1999; Mok & Leung, 1995; Wong, 1995; 1997; 1998a & 1998b; Wong, *et al.*, 1998; Wan, 2001). These previous research studies are useful to know clearly where poverty research in Hong Kong has got to, its achievements and limitations and form the base of the focus of the LS survey in Hong Kong. They give insights as to how the LS survey fills the gaps of the existing poverty research. The past research on poverty in Hong Kong will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Third, various issues of BSA surveys concerning public attitudes to causes of poverty and to conceptions of poverty in Britain also provided references to explore the public attitudes to poverty issues in Hong Kong.

Fourth, the findings of various poverty studies reflected that using both income and deprivation indicators, rather than income alone, contributes to better understanding of poverty measurement. Thus, it is useful to measure poverty in terms of multi-dimensional indicators rather than financial resources only. The findings of recent studies in Britain also revealed that it was more secure using more than one poverty measure. It was suggested that the combination of poverty measures needed to include income data, subjective measures as well as social indicators (Bradshaw, 2001a & 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001a, 2001b & 2003; Layte, Nolan & Whelan, 2000). As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of a comprehensive empirical study identifying indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion using the public opinion approach in Hong Kong. In order to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong nowadays, the current study adopts the public opinion approach to explore what aspects of living patterns are thought to constitute poverty and social exclusion, as well as their impacts on people's livelihood.

Chapter 4 reviews past research on poverty in Hong Kong and attempts to link these poverty studies to the typology of various approaches. It also presents and discusses the findings of these studies and their implications for poverty studies, as well as government policy responses to poverty studies in Hong Kong. In order to have a better understanding of government policy responses to poverty issues in the past few decades, the development of social security in Hong Kong will be examined in Chapter 3.

3

Development & non-development of social security in Hong Kong

**General philosophy of the British colonial
Government's social welfare commitment in
Hong Kong**

**Development and non-development of social
security in Hong Kong before the hand-over
of the sovereignty**

*The retirement protection policy debates in
Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 1990s
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and
Social Security Allowance Schemes in Hong
Kong*

**Effectiveness of the social security system under
the rule of the British colonial government**

*Classification of cases of Comprehensive
Social Security Assistance Scheme
Living standards of CSSA recipients in Hong
Kong*

Chapter 3

Development and non-development of social security in Hong Kong

According to Article 107 of the *Basic Law*, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) shall follow the principle of keeping expenditure within the limits of revenues in drawing up its budget, and strive to achieve a fiscal balance, avoid deficits and keep the budget commensurate with the growth rate of its gross domestic product. The general philosophy of social welfare provision of the HKSAR followed the basic principle of the British colonial government.

Exploring the development of social security helps towards an understanding of poverty and attitudes to poverty. This chapter reviews the landmarks in the development of social security in Hong Kong to explain why and how government has regarded and defined poverty and how government policies have responded to poverty issues in the past few decades. The discussion, *first*, begins with outlining the general philosophy of the British colonial government's social welfare commitment in Hong Kong before the hand-over of sovereignty in 1997¹⁶. *Second*, it reviews the development of social security in Hong Kong under the rule of the British colonial government. *Third*, it examines the effectiveness of the social security system to alleviate poverty under the rule of the British colonial government. It looks into the living standards of public assistance recipients and compares their living standards with those of the ordinary people in Hong Kong from the 1970s until 1997.

General philosophy of the British colonial government's social welfare commitment in Hong Kong

Different types of welfare approaches are associated with different beliefs about the causes and the extent of poverty, and also based upon various assumptions about how resources should best be allocated for economic and social development (Coughlin, 1980;

¹⁶ After the defeat of the First Opium War, the Ching Dynasty conceded Hong Kong to the British government. It explains why there were frequent demands by later Chinese governments for the return of Hong Kong. The British rule lasted for 156 years and came to an end in June 1997. After 30 June 1997, the British colonial government transferred the sovereignty of Hong Kong to the Chinese government. The HKSAR government was set up (Miners, 1995; Tang, 2000).

Esping-Anderson, 1990; George & Wilding, 1985 & 1994; Mclaughlin, 1993; Mishra, 1981; Parker, 1975; Romanyshyn, 1971; Titmuss, 1974). Values and power have a great impact on the allocation of resources among competing social needs. Thus, it is important to examine the ideologies that lie behind policies to understand their policy implications. As Romanyshyn argued,

The way welfare is defined has political consequences. Our welfare vocabulary influences our attitudes toward recipients and helps to determine both the goals and the allocation of resources for program development. Welfare may be seen as emergency assistance to the poor and the handicapped or essential services from which we may all benefit, direct or indirectly. It may be thought of as a tax burden or as an investment in human beings, as benevolence or as a citizen right (Romanyshyn, 1971:79).

Extolling the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, the British colonial government adopted the principle of positive non-intervention and a minimal economic role. The belief in *laissez-faire* did not mean the absence of government but the use of government to create the conditions for economic initiative and the development of the economy. In order to promote economic prosperity and maintain social stability, the government provided some services to alleviate the suffering of the victims of market competition. However, it objected to the establishment of a social insurance scheme since it believed it would contribute to the imposition of higher tax rates and thus undermine the operation of the economy (Mclaughlin, 1993; Ngan & Kwok, 1993; Romnanyshyn, 1975). The parameters of the Hong Kong Government's social welfare commitment were clearly drawn to promote the economic well-being of the colony rather than the social welfare of its people (Appelbaum & Henderson, 1992; Castells *et al.*, 1992; Lo-Cheng, 1990; Mclaughlin, 1993:107; Tang, 2000; Wilding, 1996a & 1996b; Wilding & Mok, 2001). It has been demonstrated, for example, that the rehousing programme in Hong Kong in the 1950s was not simply a welfare operation.

Squatters are not settled simply because they need, or deserve, hygienic and fireproof houses; they are resettled because the community can no longer afford to carry the fire risk and threat to public order and prestige which the squatter areas represent and because the community needs the land of which they are in illegal occupation. And the land is needed quickly (Quoted in Mclaughlin, 1993:112).

The philosophy of the Hong Kong government emphasised self-reliance and family responsibility and regarded social welfare as a 'safety net' for vulnerable groups. The family, the free market and the voluntary sector were primary systems of delivering welfare to meet individuals' welfare needs. Thus, government assistance to the needy was regarded as a last resort when the traditional institutions of society break down. The provision of free meals to the destitute in the 1960s was a good example since the government's limited involvement aimed at discouraging dependency.

In its 1965 policy paper on social welfare services in Hong Kong, the government reiterated that the family should be bolstered to carry out its welfare function. It was emphasised that welfare should be provided by the family, kin, voluntary agencies and the market. It was assumed that the family could provide social welfare and thus reduce government expenditure. The official view on the provision of social welfare was stated in the 1975 Report: 'Hong Kong is not, in the full sense, a welfare state. People are expected to stand on their own feet, a principle which accords with their proud and independent spirit' (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1975:6). The general philosophy of social welfare provision was reiterated in *The Five Year Plan for Social Welfare Development in Hong Kong* in 1993:

The welfare programmes of Hong Kong have been designed and developed with cognizance of the innate local values of concern for the family, commitment to self-improvement, self-reliance, mutual support and generosity, reluctance to be dependent upon 'welfare', high respect for social order and a combination of ingenuity and resourcefulness (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1993b:3).

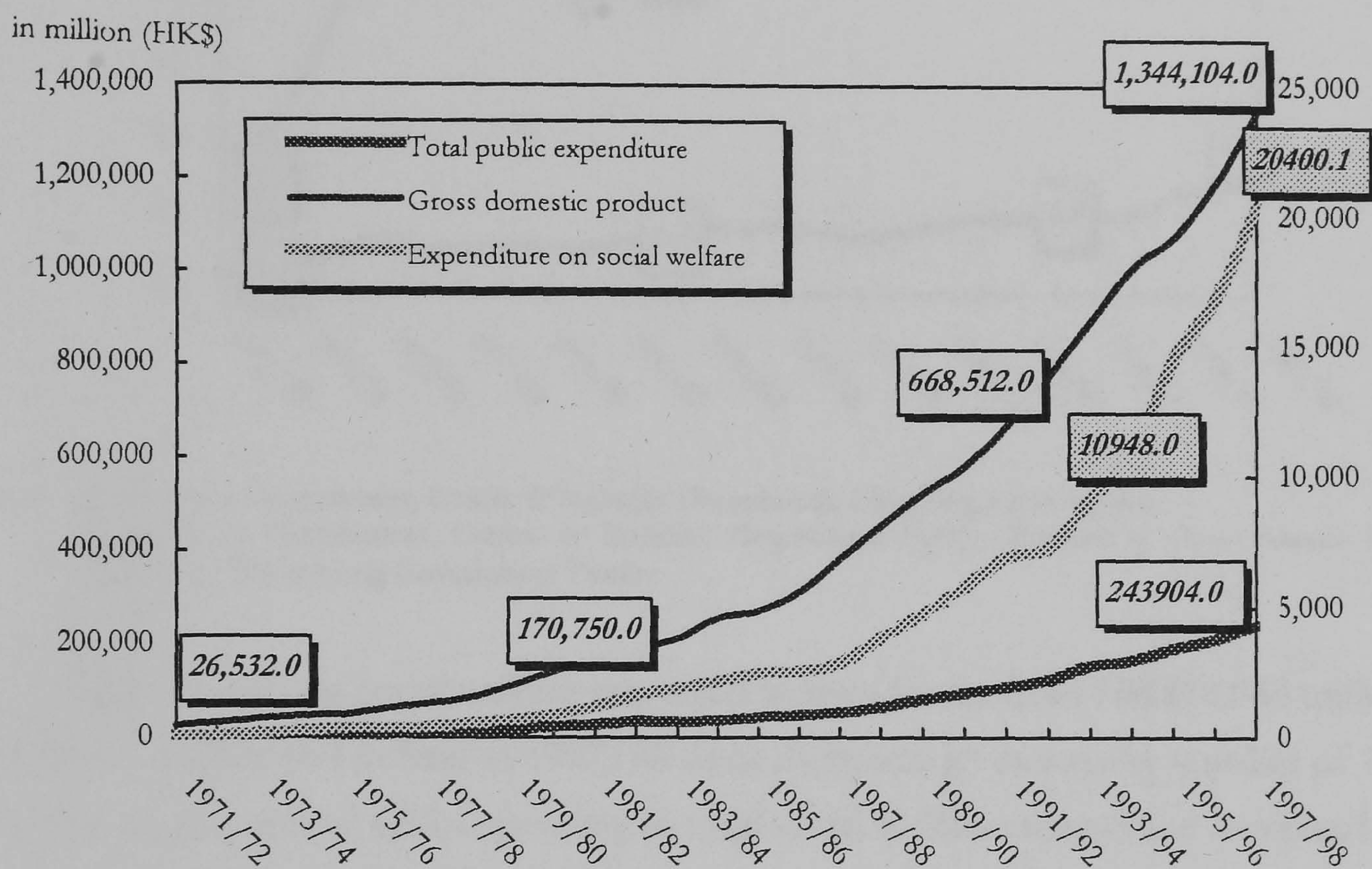
Although social expenditure has increased substantially, it has not been realized through the imposition of high rates of taxation. As Lo-Cheng (1990) argued, policy makers were unwilling to raise taxes since they believe that the low tax rate on net profit serves as an impetus for economic development in Hong Kong. The expansion of social welfare provision has been directly linked to economic progress. Thus, it was clear that welfare expansion should not interfere with the economic development of Hong Kong. This subordinate image of social services was influenced by the belief of the government that social development must be an appendage to economic growth. Sir Murray MacLehose clearly stated that the provision of social welfare should be directly linked to the state of Hong Kong's economy rather than financed by raising high rates of taxation (Chow, 1985b:478 & 486; 1986b:143 & 1986c:411; Hodge, 1976:11; Lo-Cheng, 1990; Walker, 1988).

The former Financial Secretary, Sir Philip Haddon-Cave 'emphasized in many budget speeches that expansion of social services should not hinder Hong Kong's economic growth; thus social services could be developed only so far as the public coffers could afford'. His successor, Sir John Bremridge also stated that: 'there is always a temptation to forget that only a strong and growing economy and sensible reserves can underwrite the provision of growing Government services, including, naturally, social welfare services' (quoted in Chow, 1986b:144).

The former Governor Chris Patten reiterated the government position on the provision of social welfare at the opening of the 1992/93 session of the Legislative

Council. He stated that "Hong Kong is not a welfare state, but we are a society that cares deeply about the state of welfare" (Hong Kong Government, 1992:12). Although the government placed greater emphasis on social services between the 1980s and the 1990s, development has still depended on Hong Kong's economic progress (Chow, 1986:143; Mclaughlin, 1993:117; Tang, 2000; Walker, 1986:5; Wilding, 1996a & 1996b; Wilding & Mok, 2001). On the whole, when public revenue rose in an economic boom, social services would be allocated more funds for development. Otherwise, social services would remain stagnant when government revenue was reduced owing to economic recession.

Figure 3.1: Social welfare expenditure in Hong Kong (1971/72~1997/98)



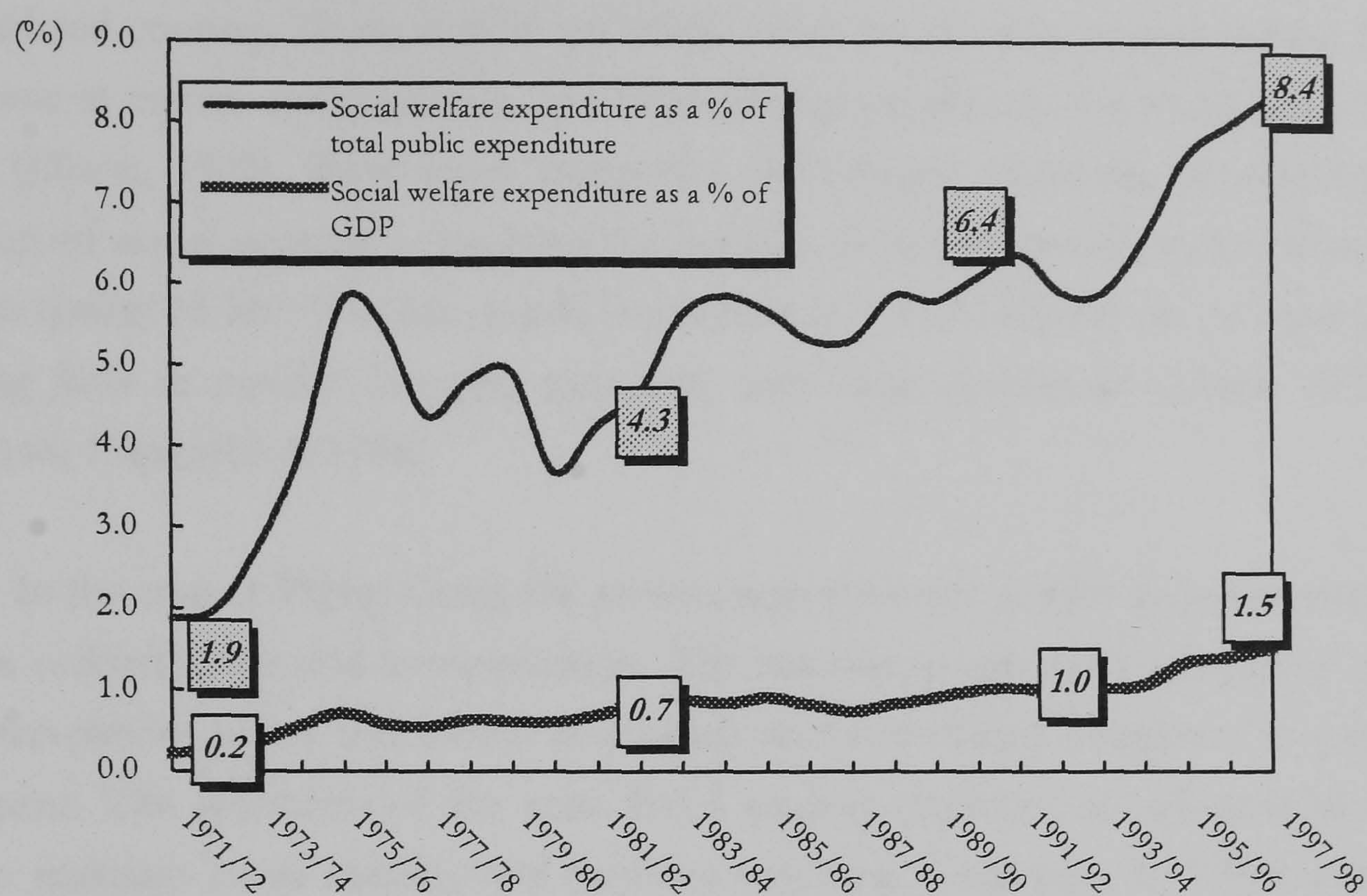
- Notes:
1. Social welfare expenditure includes expenditure on social security (i.e. Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, Social Security Scheme and Accident Compensation Schemes), services for offenders, family & children welfare, the elderly, young people and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, as well as medical social services and professional back-up & support services.
 2. The scale on the left-hand side is for data on Gross domestic product and total public expenditure while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on expenditure on social welfare
 3. US\$1 is equivalent to HK\$7.8

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong*, various years.
 Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1995), *Estimates of Gross Domestic Product, 1961-1994*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

As shown in figure 3.1, there has been an upward trend in social welfare expenditure in Hong Kong since the 1970s. The proportion of social welfare expenditure to total public expenditure increased from 1.9% in 1971 to 4.3% in 1981. It further increased from 6.4% in 1991 to 8.4% in 1997. Nonetheless, the ratio of social welfare expenditure to GDP was less than 1.5% between the periods of 1971/72 and 1997/98. Figure 3.2 presents social welfare expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure and as a percentage of GDP. It reflects that government's expenditure on social welfare stuck to the principle that growth in public expenditure should not exceed the trend

growth in GDP.

Figure 3.2: Social welfare expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure and GDP in Hong Kong (1971/71~1997/98)



Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong*, various years.
 Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1995), *Estimates of Gross Domestic Product, 1961-1994*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Expenditure on social welfare increased tremendously from HK\$10,948 million in 1994/95 to HK\$20,400 million in 1997/98 since there was an increasing number of CSSA cases. The proportion of CSSA spending to total social welfare expenditure increased from 31.3% in 1994/95 to 46.3% in 1997/98. The number of CSSA old aged, unemployed and single parent family with children increased significantly because of socio-economic and demographic changes. There was a high proportion of CSSA old aged recipients since there was lack of comprehensive retirement protection under the rule of the colonial government. Economic restructuring and the increasing number of divorce decrees granted would bring an increasing number of the unemployed and single parent families asking for financial assistance.

Development and non-development of social security in Hong Kong before the hand-over of the sovereignty

The retirement protection policy debates in Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 1990s

Social security has a potential for redistributing resources towards the more

deprived sections of the community and of contributing to the reduction of inequality¹⁷ (Chow, 1981b; Dixon, 1993; International Labour Office, 1984; Midgley, 1984; UNESCAP, 1992) (Appendix 3). There is a close relationship between social security systems and overall development strategies. There are many functions of a social security system in an industrialized country. These include protection from social risks, compensation for loss of income in certain contingencies, and reintegrating people into a normal way of life in society (Dixon, 1993). Since social disruption will hamper economic development, the provision of social security is intended to facilitate economic growth rather than simply improve quality of life. In other words, the notion of social security can be regarded as *a stabilizing factor* in rapidly changing economic and social conditions (Chow, 1982a:147; 1986b:148; 1986c:413 & 1995).

In the case of Hong Kong, the government put more weight on social integration than on redistribution and compensation. The colonial government adopted a 'positive non-intervention' policy that aimed at creating an environment conducive to profitable investment. The objectives of the state social security payments of subsistence income were to maintain social stability and facilitate economic prosperity. In other words, the social security scheme is regarded as a means of economic and social control. Thus, it serves an 'integrative function' so as to maintain political and social stability. Social welfare provision in Hong Kong attempted to care for the vulnerable groups in society alongside these other purposes and functions (Chow, 1995:408; Lau & Kuan, 1990:767; Tang, 2000; Wilding, 1996a & 1996b; Wilding & Mok, 2001). The definition of social security was stated in the White Paper on *Aims and Policy for Social Welfare in Hong Kong* in 1965,

social security is the protection which may be provided by society against those contingencies of urban life -- sickness or chronic ill health, unemployment, old age and industrial accidents -- against which the individual cannot be expected to protect himself and his family fully by his own ability and foresight (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1965:1).

Since people aged 60 or over in the mid-1960s composed only 5.7% of the whole population, it was agreed that the care of the elderly had not yet become a major problem (Chow, 1983a:584; Chow & Kwan, 1986:7). Until the mid-1960s, the care of the elderly in Hong Kong was seen as the sole responsibility of the family. Therefore, the introduction of extremely restricted public assistance in kind was regarded as emergency relief. In the

¹⁷ Social security systems aim at alleviating and preventing poverty and also at securing a basic living standard. However, there is no universally accepted understanding of the notion of social security. It may differ in its meaning, or in the scope of social security programmes, or in the degree of state involvement and the comprehensiveness of social security schemes, or in the extent to which their administration is centralized. There are various approaches to social security, including social insurance, social assistance, social allowance, employer liability and provident fund.

1965 policy paper *Aims and Policy for Social Welfare in Hong Kong*, the government reiterated that the traditional values and obligations brought from various parts of China must be maintained (Chow, 1980:82; Hodge, 1973; 1976:11 & 1993:4; MacPherson, 1994b:291). The paper stated that:

it is of the greatest importance that social welfare services should not be organized in such a way as to make it easier for socially disruptive influences to gain a hold over the community, or to accelerate the breakdown of the natural or traditional sense of responsibility -- for example by encouraging the natural family unit to shed on to social welfare agencies, public or private, its moral responsibility to care for the aged or infirm (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1965:5).

When Lady Gertrude Williams was invited to Hong Kong in 1966 to examine social welfare provision, she concluded that the belief that 'the provision of social welfare services would accelerate the breakdown of the natural or traditional sense of responsibility was unfounded since social services for the elderly had not yet been provided on a large scale at a time when more and more families were already finding it difficult to take care of their elderly members' (Williams, 1966:21). Since the problem of old age would become an important issue in future, Williams suggested establishing a social insurance scheme on a contributory basis. It would not only deal with contingencies (i.e. illness and death), but also solve the problem of supporting people in their old age. As a result, an interdepartmental working party was set up to examine the development of social security in Hong Kong. The report stated that there should be a progressive development of social security. Besides, it also proposed to introduce an insurance scheme for sickness, injury and death on a contributory basis (Hong Kong Government, Interdepartmental Working Paper, 1967). However, the recommendation was rejected by the British colonial government on the ground that the proposal was financially impossible.

Instead of establishing a statutory retirement protection scheme, the British colonial government initiated a public cash-assistance scheme (later CSSA Scheme¹⁸) in 1971. The objective of the CSSA scheme is designed to meet the basic and special needs of those individuals and families in the community who are in need of financial and material assistance. However, only those persons who have resided in Hong Kong for not less than one year may be eligible if their income and other resources are below the prescribed levels. Each applicant is investigated and subjected to an income assessment known as a means test (Heppell, 1973:227 & 1974:116; Heppell & Webb, 1973). The scheme, instead of

¹⁸ From July 1993, the Public Assistance (PA) Scheme and special needs allowance schemes were transformed into CSSA scheme and Social Security Allowance (SSA) scheme. The new schemes attempted to simplify administrative procedures and thus consolidated the basic rates and benefits under the special needs allowance scheme into specific standard rates.

providing meals for the poor, became a guarantee of a basic living standard at the subsistence level. Nonetheless, the conditions of eligibility were very stringent and the levels of assistance were minimal (Brewer & MacPherson, 1997; Liu, *et al.*, 1996; MacPherson, 1993 & 1994b; Wong, 2000a; 2000b & 2000c).

In 1973, a 'Disability and Infirmity Allowances' Scheme (also known as Special Needs Allowances and later renamed Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme) was launched, with the payment of flat-rate, non-means-tested allowances to the severely disabled and the elderly infirm. The objectives of the SSA scheme were, *first*, to bring help to persons, or their families, who were put to significant extra expense as a result of disability or infirmity. *Second*, it could encourage care in the community and reduce residential care, such as hospital or care in homes for the aged (Chow, 1981a:125; Heppell, 1974:116). The objectives of the SSA scheme for the elderly aged 65 and above also demonstrate the limited role of government provision for social security since the provision of this allowance was intended to encourage care in the community and reduce residential care. It was also an inexpensive and manageable programme compared with a contributory social insurance scheme. In other words, the colonial government made no attempt to establish a contributory and comprehensive social insurance scheme, on the grounds of the limited resources for social welfare provision and the opposition of the general public (Mclaughlin, 1993:123).

The feasibility of a social insurance scheme was further examined in 1973. Nevertheless, the government claimed that a contributory social insurance scheme would not be acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. It would also bring about heavy financial burdens on the employers and impede economic development. In addition, setting up the administrative machinery would require a long preparatory period. A non-contributory public assistance scheme, however, could be introduced much more quickly since it is financed by general revenue, and it is not necessary to establish a new administrative structure (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1973). As a result, the proposal for establishing a social insurance scheme was turned down. Chow argued that resources must be allocated within society for its provision if the service proves to be necessary and worthwhile. Furthermore, the social insurance scheme would be mainly financed by regular contributions between employers and employees. The government only plays an administrative role rather than bears the whole financial burden (Chow, 1978:20-21 & 1981:120).

The government insisted that it would not introduce a compulsory social insurance scheme covering the whole population and this was reaffirmed in the 1977 social security

Green Paper, *A Programme for Social Security Development*, as well as in the 1979 White Paper, *Social Welfare into the 1980s*. The approach to social security in Hong Kong was stated clearly in *Social Welfare into the 1980s*:

The Public Assistance Scheme, should continue to be the mainstay of its social security system Help is concentrated on those least able to help themselves and this is felt to be the right approach to social security in Hong Kong The Special Needs Allowance Scheme is based on need established by reference to the circumstances of the individual and not by reference to low income. At present, it caters for two specific categories, the severely disabled and the elderly (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1979:10).

The overall objective of social security in Hong Kong was reiterated in the White Paper, *Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond*. It aimed to 'provide for the basic and particular needs of those groups in the community who are in need of financial or material assistance' (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1991b:35). The paper also stressed that 'social services should be improved without creating the sort of dependency culture which has emerged in some developed industrialized societies, a phenomenon that removes the incentive to work and undermines the productive engine of the economy' (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1991b:13-14).

However, it was evident that about two-thirds of the working population are not protected by any financial security or protection upon retirement and it is necessary to establish retirement protection schemes in Hong Kong (Brewer & MacPherson, 1997). The introduction of a publicly financed retirement protection scheme has been debated over the past three decades. In October 1992, the government proposed a consultation paper on retirement protection scheme in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1992). The government stated clearly at the beginning of the consultation paper that it preferred to establish a private retirement scheme on a voluntary basis (Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1992:2). The proposed scheme would be run by private bodies (i.e. banks, trustees, insurance companies or employers themselves) and is an employment-related retirement protection system. The coverage is for all employees in full-time employment¹⁹ under the age of 65 while it is on a voluntary basis for those employees who are aged 65 and over. In addition, it is not recommended that low-paid employees are exempted from making contributions to retirement protection schemes since it is arbitrary to set the minimum wage for exemption (Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1992). However, in February 1993, the proposed legislation was criticized by the Legislative Council on the basis that there was lack of financial guarantees in the proposed retirement protection scheme. Instead, the Legislative Council proposed to

establish a Central Provident Fund (CPF). This counter proposal was attacked by the business sectors, such as the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, who argued that the CPF scheme, which is the employment-related retirement protection scheme, ran counter to Hong Kong's social philosophy (Brewer & MacPherson, 1997; Tang, 2000).

In July 1994, the government put forward an alternative to the CPF and recommended the introduction of an Old-age Pension Scheme (OPS) for Hong Kong which is based on compulsory contributions by workers and employers (Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1994). The proposed scheme would provide a monthly benefit of HK\$2,300 at 1994 prices to all persons over 65. The government officials argued that the scheme can provide immediate benefits upon implementation and wide coverage, including elderly housewives, low-income employees and the infirm left unprotected by the CPF. The proposed scheme was supported by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Union, the Yin Ngai Societies and the Association for the Advancement of Feminism (Brewer & MacPherson, 1997; Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1995).

On the other hand, the opponents of the OPS scheme argued that the system mixed up the concept of social welfare and retirement protection. The joint declaration made by seventy-eight economists opposed the OPS scheme. They argued that the proposed scheme shifts the burden of old age protection from the individual and family to the community. It undermines work incentives and contributes to the breakdown of traditional Chinese values (i.e. family support and networks). Furthermore, five major chambers of commerce, including the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and the Employers Federation of Hong Kong, joined forces to oppose the proposed scheme. They argued that the OPS scheme is not fair since it is not means-tested and the benefit received is not related to the amount of contribution made. In addition, the contribution rate may rise to an unacceptable level because of demographic changes. Instead, they called for the enhancement of old age benefits by improving the existing social welfare system funded by taxation (Hong Kong Education & Manpower Branch, Government Secretariat, 1995). In January 1995, the government encountered strong pressure from business sectors, economists and criticism in the Legislative Council and finally the proposed OPS scheme was withdrawn. Instead, the government proposed a mandatory private provident fund as

¹⁹ It refers to a continuous contract of employment as defined by the Employment Ordinance.

an alternative to the OPS scheme. The Mandatory Provident Fund²⁰ (MPF) Bill endorsed by the Legislative Council in July 1995 and the MPF Ordinance came into operation on 1 December 2000. Table 3.1 shows landmarks in the development of social security in Hong Kong under the rule of the British colonial government.

Table 3.1: Landmarks in the development of social security in Hong Kong under the rule of the colonial government

Year	Issues
1948	The establishment of the Social Welfare Office in Hong Kong
1965	White Paper on <i>Aims and Policy for Social Welfare in Hong Kong</i>
1966	The examination of social welfare provision in Hong Kong by the interdepartmental working party led by Lady Gertrude Williams -- the government rejection of the proposed insurance scheme for sickness, injury and death on a contributory basis
1971	The introduction of cash-based and means-tested PA Scheme
1973	The introduction of flat-rate Disability and Infirmity Allowances Scheme
1973	White paper on <i>Social Welfare in Hong Kong: The Way Ahead</i> -- the government rejection of the feasibility of a contributory social insurance scheme
1977	Green paper on <i>Help for the Least Able to Help Themselves: A Programme of Social Security Development</i> -- the government would not introduce a compulsory social insurance scheme
1979	White paper on <i>Social Welfare into the 1980s</i> -- the government stressed that 'help is concentrated on those least able to help themselves and it is felt to be the right approach to social security in Hong Kong' (p.10)
1988	The introduction of Higher Disability Allowance for the severely disabled persons requiring constant attendance from others in their daily life, but are not receiving such care in a government or subvented institution
1991	White paper on <i>Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond</i> -- the government emphasized the improvement of social services without creating welfare dependency culture
Oct. 1992	The government's proposal for a community-wide retirement protection scheme run by the private sector for all full-time staff under 65 -- the government favoured the voluntary retirement protection scheme
Feb. 1993	The vote of the Legislative Council for establishing a CPF -- there was lack of financial guarantees in the government's proposals for employees who are required to participate in private retirement protection scheme. The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce's objection of establishing CPF since the government will become a provider of services, instead of as a regulator
Jul. 1994	The government's proposal for an OPS Scheme on the basis of compulsory contributions by employees and employers which was designed to be an alternative to a CPF -- Those persons, such as housewives and the infirm, who are unprotected by the CPF scheme would benefit from the OPS Scheme.
Oct. 1994	The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and the Employers Federation of Hong Kong's objection of the government proposed OPS Scheme
Jan. 1995	The withdrawal of the government proposed OPS Scheme because of pressure from the business sectors, academics, the Legislative Councilors and China
Jul. 1995	The MPF Bill endorsed by the Legislative Council
Mar. 1996	The release findings of the government review of the CSSA Scheme -- the findings found that the CSSA rates were inadequate and improvements were to take effect from April 1996. There were significant increases of 60% in the monthly standard rates for single parents and those claimants in ill-health. But there was only 33% of increase in the rate for the unemployed so as to maintain work incentive
Sources:	Brewer & MacPherson (1997) 'Poverty & social security' in P. Wilding, A.S.Huque & J.L.P. Tao (eds.) <i>Social Policy in Hong Kong</i> , Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. Tang (2000) <i>Social Welfare Social Development in Asia</i> , Boston: Kluwer Academic. Wilding & Mok (2001) 'Hong Kong: Between state and market', in P. Alcock & G. Craig (eds.) <i>International Social Policy: Welfare Regime in the Developed World</i> , Hampshire: Palgrave.

²⁰ The MPF is transferable but there is no assurance of the investment return on the contributions. Current elderly persons, housewives and low income workers will not benefit from the MPF scheme

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and Social Security Allowance Schemes in Hong Kong

Instead of establishing a statutory retirement protection scheme or unemployment insurance, the British colonial government introduced the cash-based and non-contributory public assistance in 1971. The means-tested PA scheme and flat-rate non-means-tested demogrants for the elderly and the severely disabled are the core social security programmes in Hong Kong. Table 3.2 outlines the eligibility criteria for the three main components of the social security schemes in Hong Kong, including CSSA Scheme, SSA Scheme and Accident Compensation Schemes. The CSSA Scheme consists of three main types of allowances. They include a range of standard rates for various categories of applicants, rent and special grants to meet individual needs, as well as long-term and single parent supplements. Standard rate refers to regular monthly payments given to the recipients. Long-term supplement is given annually only to those who have received CSSA continuously for 12 months so as to enable them to meet the cost of replacing durable goods and household wares. From April 1995, single parent supplement was introduced in recognition of the special difficulties that single parents face in bringing up families on their own. Besides, special grants are given to meet other needs such as travel expenses, medical fees, special diets and rent.

Table 3.2: Social Security Schemes in Hong Kong

	Means -tested	Non-m eans-tes ted	Flat-rate universal	Eligible recipients
CSSA Scheme	✓			Any person whose income and resources are below the prescribed CSSA level.
SSA Scheme				
Normal Old Age Allowance	✓		✓	Any person aged 65-69.
Higher Old Age Allowance		✓	✓	Any person aged 70 or above.
Normal Disability Allowance		✓	✓	Any severely disabled person.
Higher Disability Allowance		✓	✓	Any severely disabled person who requires constant attendance and not residing in government or subvented institution.
Accident compensation schemes				
Emergency Relief Services Allowance		✓		Any victim of natural and other disasters.
Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Scheme		✓		Any person injured, disabled or killed due to crime of violence or law enforcement.
Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme		✓		Any victim of traffic accident without regard to the means of the family or to the element of fault in causing the accident.

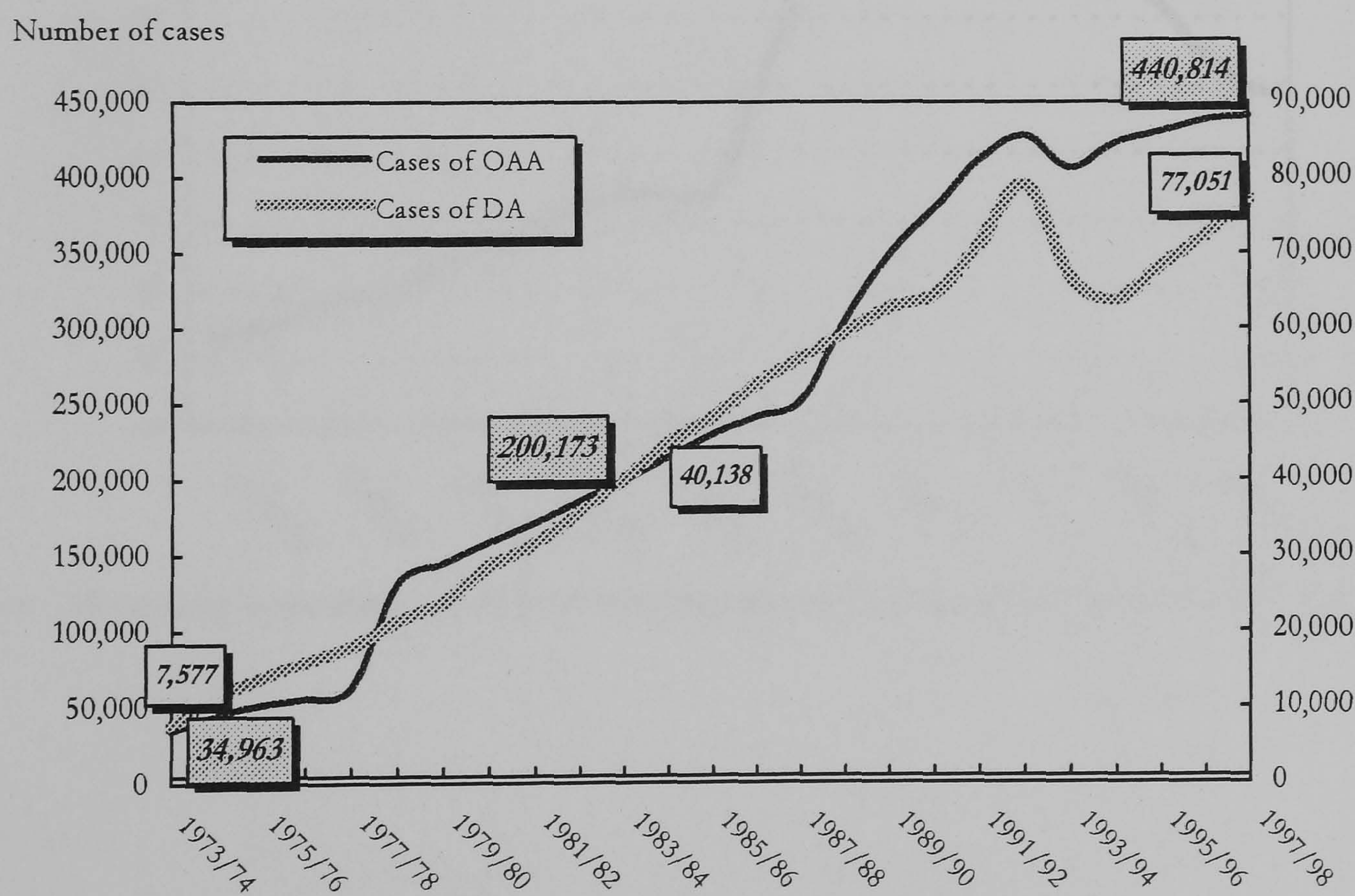
Source: E. Liu, S.Y. Yue & V. Lee (1996) *Research on the Determinants for the Social Assistance Scale in Hong Kong and Selected Countries*, Hong Kong: Research and Library Services Division Legislative Council Secretariat, pp.4-5.

The SSA Scheme comprises Disability Allowance (DA) and Old Age Allowance (OAA) Schemes. Any person who is certified to be severely disabled and who has resided continuously in Hong Kong for more than one year, is eligible for a normal disability allowance. A higher disability allowance, which is non-means-tested, is given to severely

disabled persons who require constant attendance from others in their daily lives but do not receive such care in government or subvented institution. (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996c:174). As shown in figure 3.3, there were 77,051 people receiving disability allowance in 1997/98, compared with 7,577 cases in 1973 and 40,138 cases in 1983 respectively.

Those aged 65 to 69 may be eligible for normal old age allowance if they *declare* that their income and assets do not exceed the prescribed levels. Nevertheless, it is *non-means-tested* for those aged 70 and above who have been residing in Hong Kong for more than 5 years. The rate of benefit for the normal old age allowance was HK\$625 and for the higher old age allowance was HK\$705 in 1998. At the end of 1997/98, 440,814 people were receiving such payments, compared with 34,963 people in 1973/74 and 200,173 people in 1983/84 respectively (Figure 3.3). The increase could be explained by the fact that the proportion of elderly population in Hong Kong increased tremendously in the past three decades. Figure 3.4 indicates that more than half of the elderly population aged 65 and over have received OAA since the early 1980s.

Figure 3.3: Cases of Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance (1973/74~1997/98)



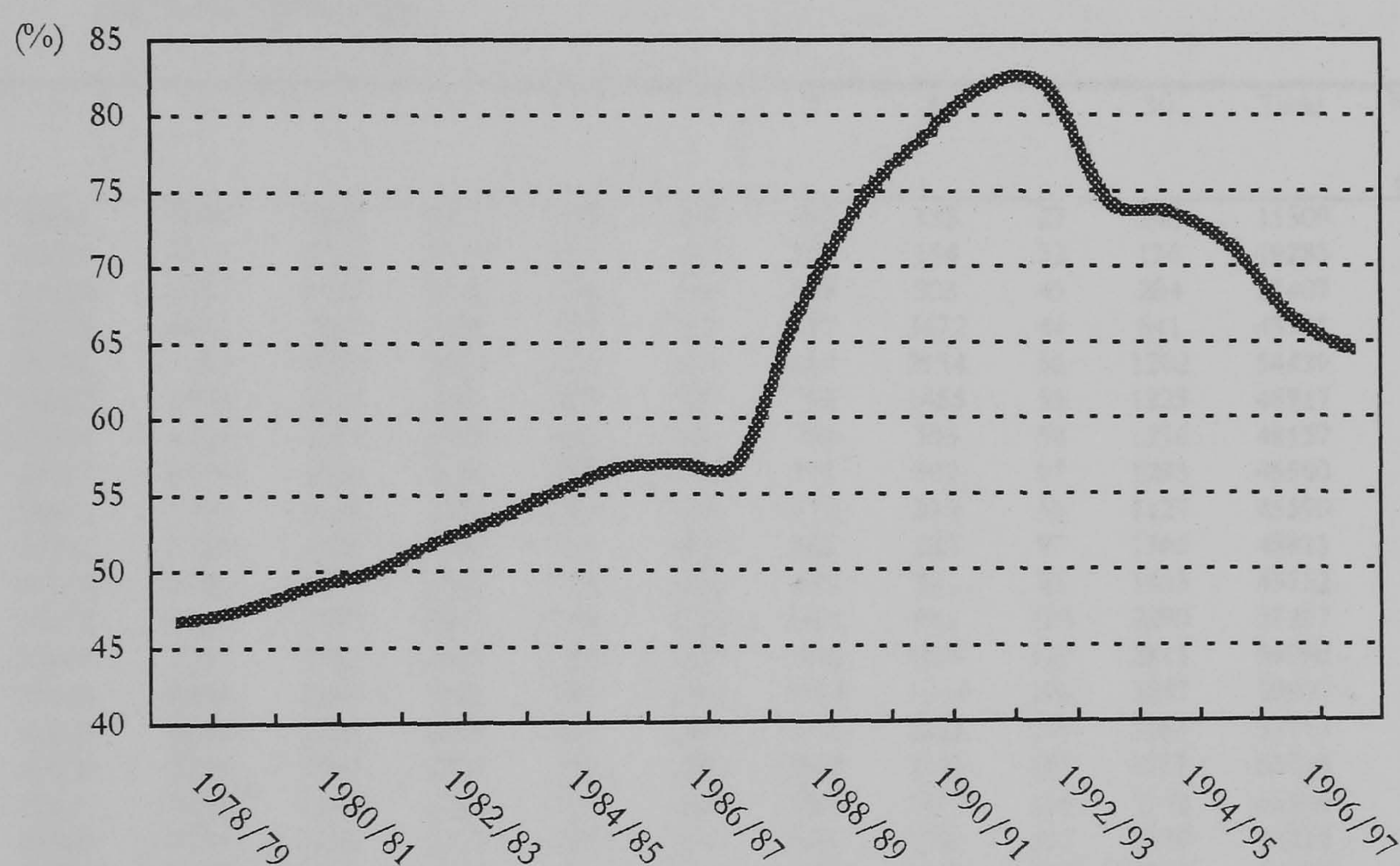
Note: The scale on the left-hand side is for data on OAA cases while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on DA cases

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various years.

According to the Census & Statistics Department, the proportion of old aged population (aged 65 and over) was only 2.8% in 1961 and rose to 8.7% in 1986; and it

further increased to 10.4% in 1997. It is projected that the proportion of elderly population will further increase to 25% by mid-2031. A rising population of senior citizens will lead to a corresponding increase in need of social and medical care since an older person becomes frail. There is concern about the living standards of the elderly, especially the single elderly, who encounter financial difficulties but do not apply to the CSSA scheme. Most of them spend a large amount of money on basic necessities but cannot afford to participate in leisure activities or visiting friends. Their standard of living is poorer than that of CSSA old age recipients since they can only spend their savings and monthly old age allowance for their daily expenses. The low living standards of those CSSA recipients also arouses public concern as to whether the CSSA Scheme is effective to raise those vulnerable groups out of poverty²¹. The effectiveness of the CSSA scheme in Hong Kong in terms of the living standards of CSSA recipients will be examined below.

Figure 3.4: Cases of Old Age Allowance as a percentage of the elderly population aged 65 and above in Hong Kong



Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various years.

²¹ In 1993, there was a call for a review of the adequacy of the PA rates by the Legislative Council Welfare Service Panel. Professor Stewart MacPherson was invited to undertake an independent study by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). In June 1994, the findings of MacPherson's budget standards study reveal that the CSSA rates are too low to provide a 'minimum acceptable level of living', especially for children and single parents. MacPherson suggested raising the CSSA rates. However, the government rejected the recommended CSSA rates since it regarded the budget standards approach as inappropriate and feared the financial implications. Instead, the government undertook a review of CSSA Scheme. The details of poverty studies in Hong Kong will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Effectiveness of the social security system under the rule of the British colonial government

Classification of cases of Comprehensive Social Security Allowance Scheme

As shown in table 3.3, there have been increasing numbers of applicants for the CSSA allowance since the 1970s. The total number of CSSA recipients increased from 48,157 in 1977/78 to 63,366 in 1987/88, and the figure increased significantly to 195,645 in 1997/98. According to the Census & Statistics Department, the total number of CSSA cases as a percentage of the total population increased slightly from 1.1% in 1977/78 to 1.1% in 1987/88, and further rose to 3.0% in 1997/98. However, the total number of CSSA recipients rose more than 4 times in the past two decades. In addition, the number of new applications has increased tremendously since the 1990s (from 19,338 in 1990 to 81,702 in 1997).

Table 3.3: Classification of cases of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (1971/72~1997/98)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Number of new application
71/72	6644	2344	1803	1407	474	334	195	135	27	146	13509	NA
72/73	10043	3379	2712	1670	495	404	238	154	52	136	19283	NA
73/74	14524	5001	3412	1948	594	568	528	503	45	284	27407	NA
74/75	23778	6847	7847	2438	595	592	537	2472	44	641	45791	NA
75/76	29780	7160	8786	2582	647	603	669	2954	56	1202	54439	NA
76/77	30007	6354	5623	2291	596	557	758	1455	53	1223	48917	NA
77/78	29614	6856	5284	2466	656	685	759	503	58	1276	48157	NA
78/79	29537	6579	4058	2478	658	796	778	302	97	1295	46580	16517
79/80	28801	7195	3169	2426	717	876	912	312	55	1127	45590	12842
80/81	29262	7522	2495	2188	665	989	946	283	97	1366	45813	12242
81/82	31154	6088	1377	2206	792	1101	965	521	95	1453	45752	11863
82/83	33910	6962	1655	2287	768	1120	1166	985	124	2290	51267	14328
83/84	35894	7731	1916	2561	784	1250	1442	1574	123	2815	56090	20084
84/85	37644	8346	2080	2541	891	1383	1794	1744	190	3287	59900	22353
85/86	40214	8878	1799	3635	806	1403	2051	2225	139	2563	63713	21161
86/87	40825	8215	1515	3806	768	1260	2348	2143	145	2263	63288	22687
87/88	42135	7438	1268	3762	710	1262	2628	1877	138	2148	63366	21548
88/89	43099	7176	1173	3714	757	1389	2890	1591	163	2270	64222	19412
89/90	44070	7657	1012	3977	808	1467	3272	1618	217	2190	66288	18497
90/91	44806	7294	918	3899	764	1422	3628	1754	216	1974	66675	19338
91/92	48020	7966	1036	4325	884	1644	4271	2248	270	2305	72969	21099
92/93	53397	8889	1007	4897	840	2079	4913	2957	219	2777	81975	29185
93/94	61026	10072	1407	6134	946	2644	5687	3876	338	2974	95104	36066
94/95	72468	11308	991	6453	444	1982	5832	5302	93	4588	109461	49906
95/96	84243	14450	1814	8982	460	2543	6912	10131	143	6523	136201	63154
96/97	98765	17948	3102	13303	495	3209	7913	14964	195	6826	166720	76350
97/98	112067	21364	4714	17161	522	3680	8735	19108	218	8076	195645	81702

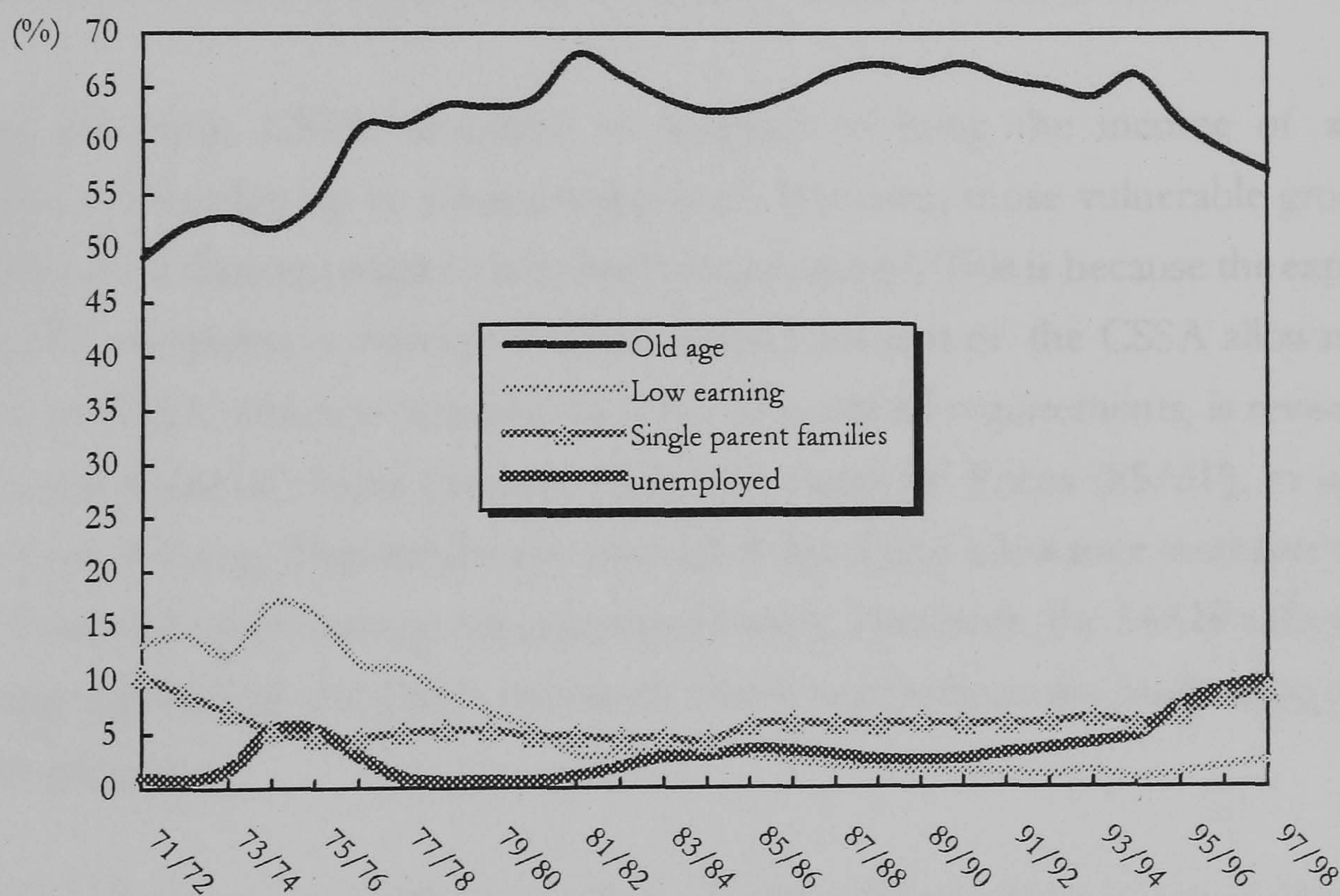
Note: 1 – old age; 2 – ill health; 3 – low earning; 4 – single parent family with dependent children; 5 – blind; 6 – physically disabled; 7 – mentally ill; 8 – unemployed; 9 – deaf; 10 – others

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, *Annual Departmental Report*, various years.
Hong Kong Government, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various years.

Figure 3.5 indicates that there were increasing numbers of CSSA old age, single parent family with dependent children, low earning, and unemployed cases in the past three decades because of dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes in Hong Kong. A trend toward an aging population has resulted from a low fertility rate and increasing life

expectancy. On the other hand, the changing family structures and economic restructuring has weakened the ability of individuals and families to provide support for their elderly members. In addition, since there has been no comprehensive retirement protection scheme, there is a high proportion of CSSA old age recipients. The proportion of CSSA old age recipients was more than 60% during the period of 1976/77 and 1995/96. In 1997, the percentage of CSSA old age recipients was 57.3%. According to *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, CSSA old age recipients represented one-tenth of the total population aged 65 and above until 1991, and it rose to 16.4% in 1997. According to the Census & Statistics Department, divorce rates have been rising with 6,295 divorce decrees granted in 1991, in comparison with 7,735 in 1994 and 10,492 in 1997. It would bring an increasing number of single parent families with dependent children applying for financial assistance. As shown in figure 3.5, the proportion of single parent families with dependent children as a percentage of the total number of CSSA cases increased from 5.9% in 1991, to 6.6% in 1995, and further rose to 8.8% in 1997.

Figure 3.5: Cases of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance as a percentage of the total number of CSSA cases (1971/72~1997/98)



Sources: Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, *Annual Departmental Report*, various years.
 Hong Kong Government, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, various years.

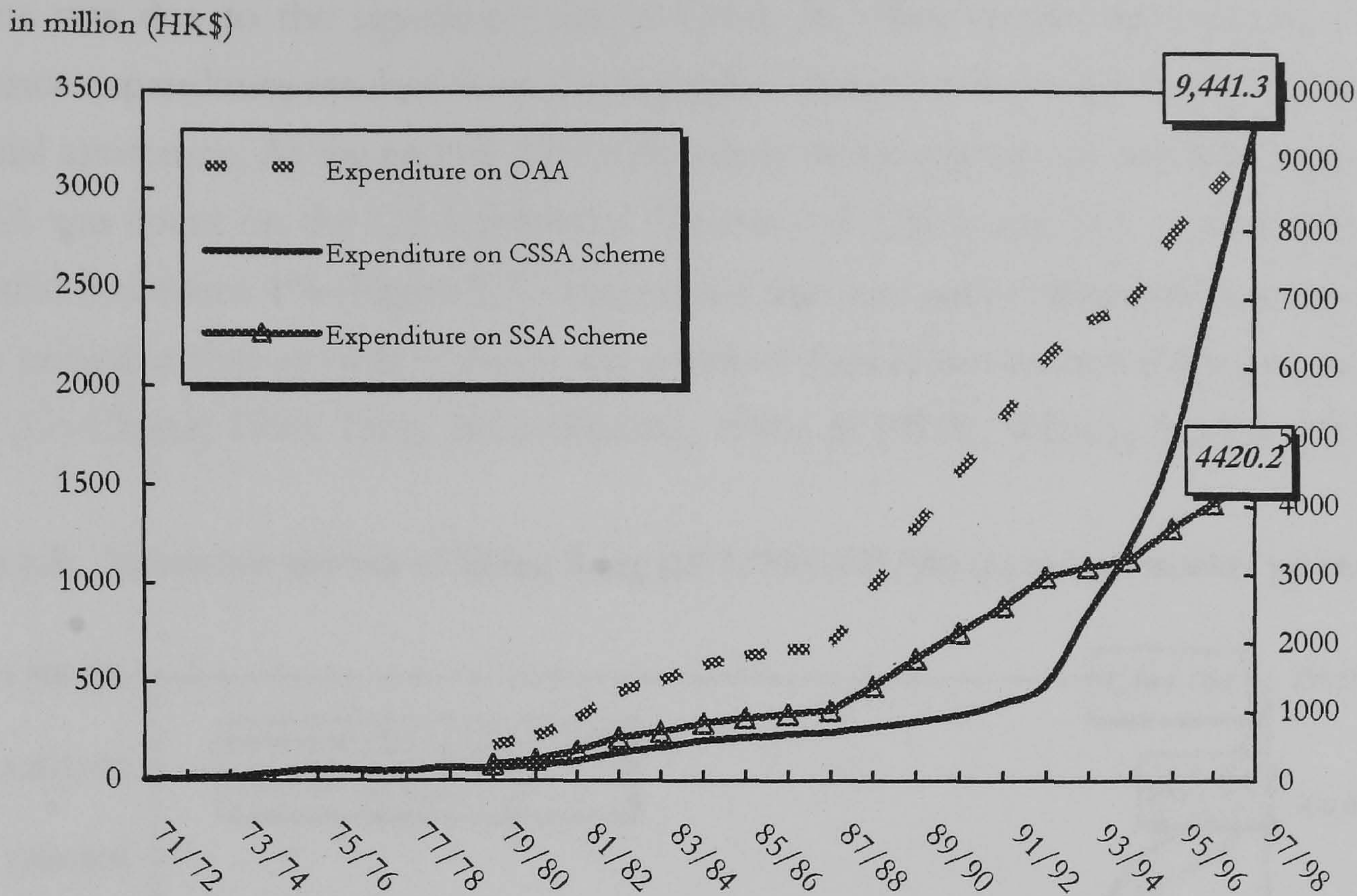
The number of CSSA low earning cases decreased from 8,786 in 1975/76 to 2,495 in 1980/81 and 918 in 1990/91. However, the number increased significantly from 1,814 in 1995/96 to 4,714 in 1997/98. Furthermore, the number of the CSSA unemployed has also increased tremendously since 1988/89. It increased from 1,591 in 1988/89 to 3,876 in 1993/94 and further rose to 19,108 in 1997/98 (Table 3.2). As shown in figure 3.5, the CSSA unemployed as a percentage of the total number of CSSA cases increased from

3.1% in 1991, to 4.1% in 1993 and 7.4% in 1995, and further rose to 9.8% in 1997. The increasing number of the unemployed has been due to economic restructuring in Hong Kong since the 1980s and the Asian Financial Crisis. The low production costs in Mainland China attracted more Hong Kong investors to relocate their factories to the mainland. There was also rapid growth of the service sector in Hong Kong and a decline in manufacturing employment. The rapid economic development in the mainland also facilitated import trade, transportation and financial services in Hong Kong. Besides, the open door policy has also contributed to an increasing number of Chinese visitors to Hong Kong and brought business to the hotel and retailing industries. According to the Census & Statistics Department, the proportion of persons engaged in the service sector increased from 48% in 1980, to 54% in 1985 and then 79% in 1996 (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1997a:38-39). The transformation of Hong Kong's economy from a manufacturing base to a service base has forced a number of workers to change jobs and many of them became unemployed. The Asian financial turmoil in 1997 has intensified the unemployment problem because of the closure of both small and large companies. The impacts of socio-economic and demographic changes in the late 1990s on people's livelihood will be examined in the second section of this chapter.

In principle, CSSA allowance is designed to bring the income of all needy individuals and families up to a basic living level. However, those vulnerable groups who receive the CSSA allowance have a very low living standard. This is because the expenditure of the CSSA recipients is restricted by the limited amount of the CSSA allowance. The basic rate of CSSA, which is intended to cover all essential requirements, is revised in line with the movement of Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP), to keep pace with the cost of living. That means the amount of the CSSA allowance increases when the price of food and other basic goods rises significantly. Therefore, the SSAIP safeguards the basic living standard of the CSSA recipients. But it only reflects the purchasing power of the CSSA allowance.

There has been a steadily increasing amount of expenditure on the CSSA Scheme and the SSA Scheme in the past two decades. At the end of 1997/98, the total expenditure on CSSA amounted to HK\$9,441.3 million, an increase of 32.5% over the previous year. However, the total number of CSSA recipients also increased from 166,720 to 195,645, an increase of 17.3% over the previous year in the same period of time. The proportion of CSSA spending to total social welfare expenditure has increased from 16.4% in 1990 to 46.3% in 1997. This can be attributed to the significant increase in the number of CSSA recipients during the same period of time (increased from 66,675 in 1990 to 195,645 in 1997) (Figures 3.6 & 3.7).

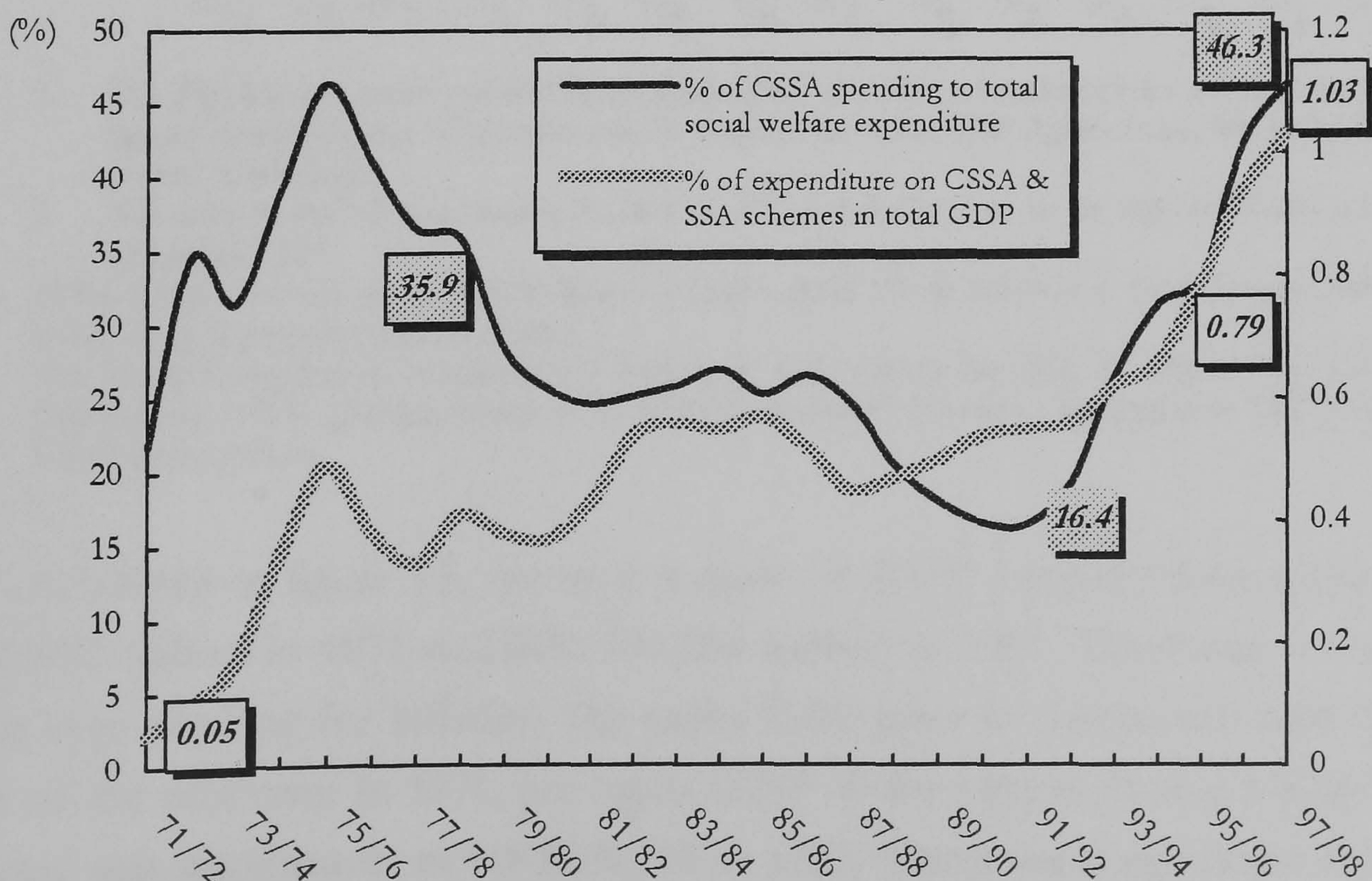
Figure 3.6: Expenditure on CSSA & SSA Schemes in Hong Kong (1971/72~1997/98) (at current market prices)



Note: The scale on the left-hand side is for data on expenditure on DA, OAA and SSA Scheme while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on spending on CSSA Scheme.

Source: Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, Hong Kong: Government Printers, various years.

Figure 3.7: Percentage of expenditure on CSSA and SSA Schemes to total GDP and CSSA to total social welfare expenditure in Hong Kong (1971/72~1997/98) (at current market prices)

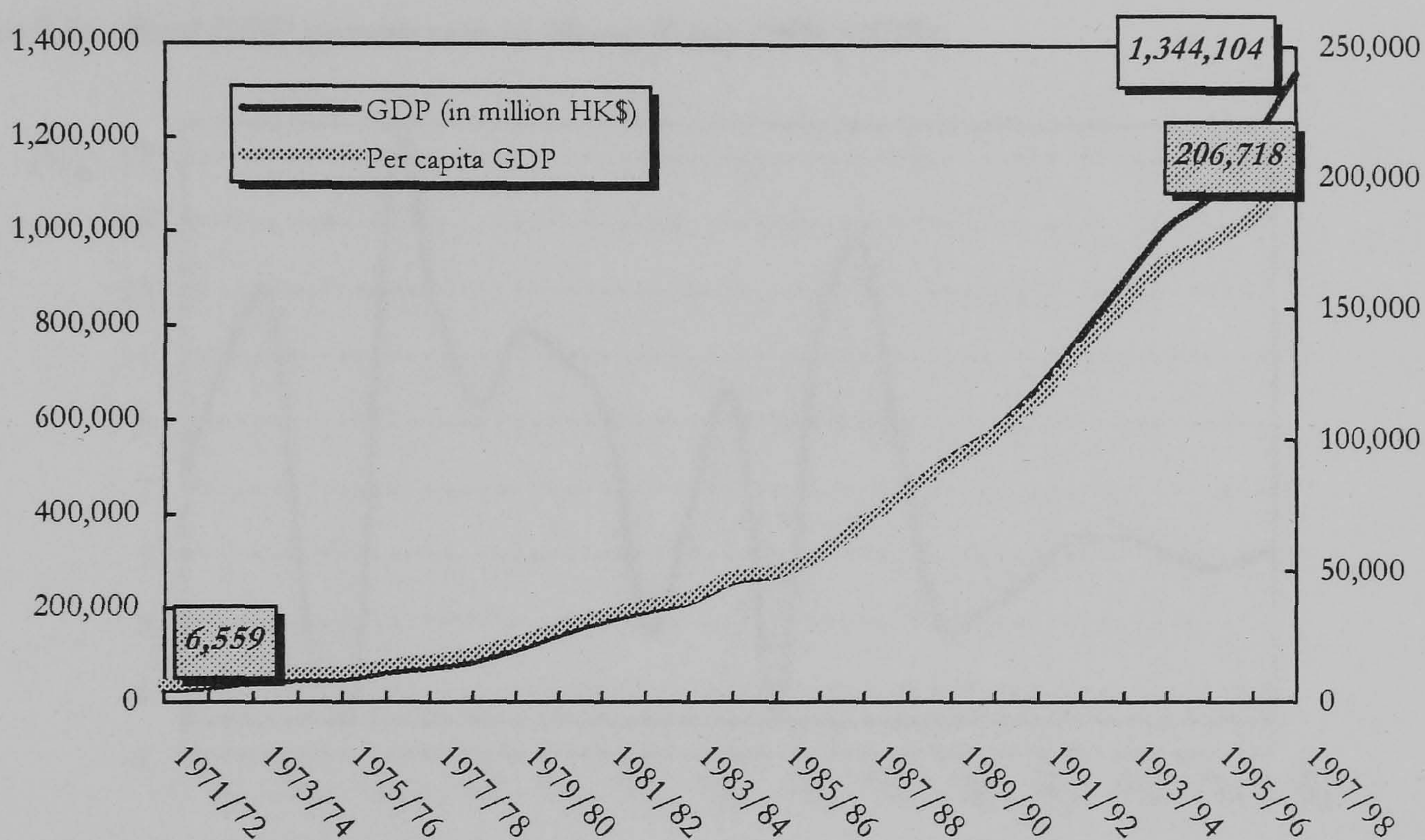


Note: The scale on the left-hand side is for data on % of CSSA spending to total social welfare expenditure while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on % of expenditure on CSSA & SSA schemes in total GDP.

Source: Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics*, Hong Kong: Government Printers, various years.

Figure 3.6 also indicates that expenditure on OAA increased tremendously owing to the increasing number of the elderly. A significant increase in expenditure on the SSA Scheme was due to the significant rise in OAA. In other words, the increase in social assistance expenditure resulted from demographic changes rather than changes in levels of financial assistance. At the end of 1997/98, nearly three-quarters of the total expenditure on SSA was spent on the OAA Scheme. The ratio of CSSA and SSA to total GDP is so small that it remains 1% (Figure 3.7). This shows that successive Financial Secretaries stuck to the principle that growth in public expenditure should not exceed the trend growth in GDP (Lo-Cheng, 1990; Tang, 2000; Wilding, 1996a & 1996b; Wilding & Mok, 2001).

Figure 3.8: Economic growth of Hong Kong (1971/72~1997/98) (at current market prices)



- Notes:
1. The Population Census conducted in March 2001 provides a benchmark for revising the Population figures compiled since 1996 population By-census. Per capita GDP figures from 1996 to 2000 have been revised accordingly.
 2. The scale on the left-hand side is for data on GDP while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on per capita GDP.

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1995) *Estimates of Gross Domestic Product 1961 to 1994*, Hong Kong Government Printer.
 The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Census & Statistics Department (1998) *Quarterly Report of Gross Domestic Product Estimates: Fourth Quarter 1998*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

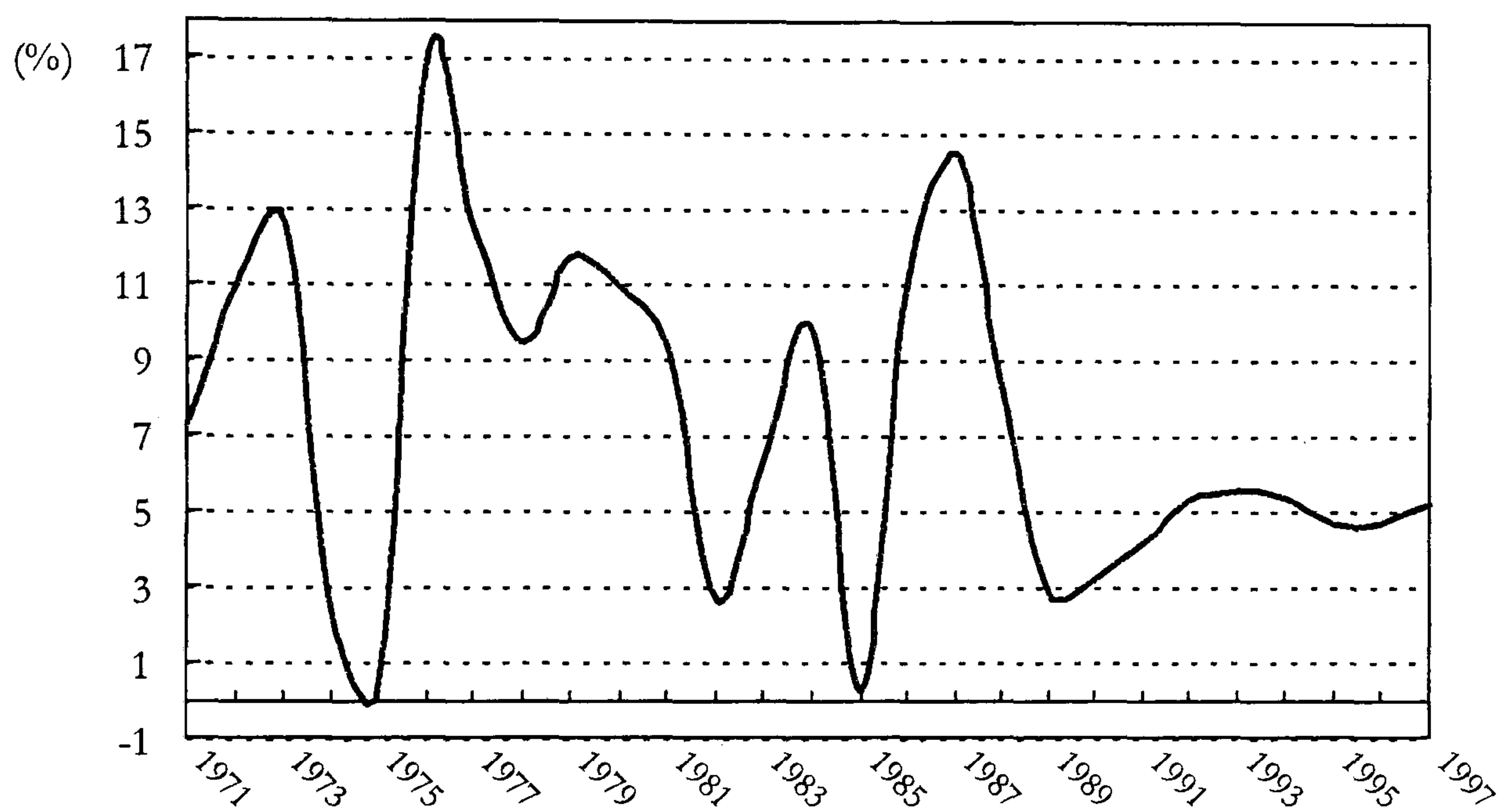
As shown in figure 3.8, the total volume of GDP increased tremendously from HK\$26,532 million in 1971 to HK\$1,344,104 million in 1997. There was a remarkable increase even allowing for inflation. Per capita GDP grew in conjunction with the rapid growth of the economy. In 1971, per capita GDP of the population was HK\$6,559, and this figure rose significantly to HK\$206,718 in 1997. There was a significant increase of almost 32 times. The average per capita GDP increase during 26 years was 14.3%. However, the CSSA recipients have not been allowed to enjoy the benefits of success despite a buoyant economy. Despite steady economic growth, there is uneven development in Hong

Kong. A small proportion of the population enjoy unprecedented prosperity while a number of low-income families continue to suffer from low level of living standards.

Living standards of CSSA recipients in Hong Kong

In 1997, the GDP grew moderately by 5.2%, compared with 4.7% in 1996. The average annual growth rate of GDP in real terms was 4.8% between 1990 and 1997 (Figure 3.9). While there has been rapid growth of the economy, poor people have not shared the benefit of economic progress. Growth has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small sector of the population and thus widened the gap between the poor and the rich (Castells, *et al.*, 1990:59; Mok, 1993b; Wong, 2000a; 2000b & 2000c).

Figure 3.9: Real GDP growth rate in Hong Kong (1970~1997)



Sources: Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department (1993) *Estimates of Gross Domestic Product 1966 to 1992*, Hong Kong Government Printer.
 Hong Kong, Census & Statistics Department, *Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Government Printer, various years.

This situation could be evidenced by the Gini Coefficient and income distribution between different income groups. As shown in table 3.4, the Gini-coefficient was 0.43 in 1971 and it rose slightly to 0.45 ten years later. The situation became worse in 1996 since the Gini-coefficient rose to 0.52. The serious income disparity is also reflected in the income distribution according to deciles. The 20% of the households with the lowest income in 1971 earned 6.2% of total household income and dropped to 3.7% in 1996. The 20% of the households with the highest income increased their share of total household income from 49.3% to 56.3% in the same period of time.

Table 3.4: Household income by ten income groups in Hong Kong (1971~1996)

Income group	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
Group 1	2.3	1.9	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.1
Group 2	3.9	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.0	2.6
Group 3	5.1	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.0	3.6
Group 4	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.0	4.6
Group 5	7.0	6.8	6.5	6.4	6.1	5.7
Group 6	7.3	8.1	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.0
Group 7	9.0	8.8	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.5
Group 8	11.0	11.3	11.5	11.4	11.4	10.6
Group 9	14.7	15.9	15.2	15.2	15.5	14.5
Group 10	34.6	33.6	35.2	35.5	37.3	41.8
Gini-coefficient	0.43	0.43	0.45	0.45	0.48	0.52

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1982) *1981 Census: Main Report (Volume 1: Analysis)*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1992c) *1991 Population Census: Main Report*, Hong Kong Government Printer, p.66.

Ming Pao, 8 January 1997 & 9 January 1997.

Furthermore, the poor living standard of CSSA recipients was also reflected in their expenditure pattern. As shown in table 3.5, expenditure patterns of CSSA allowance holders were calculated on the basis of the 1994/95 ratio of Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP). In 1996, each single CSSA recipient aged 60 and over received HK\$1,935 per month. However, he/she would spend more than HK\$1,337.1 of his/her allowance on foodstuffs. As a result, the single elderly spent less than \$145 per month on transport and services. The expenditure pattern of the single adult would be further restricted by the limited amount of the CSSA allowance. In 1996, a single non-elderly adult received \$1,615 per month. But he/she would spend more than HK\$1,116 on foodstuffs. As a result, he/she should reduce his/her expenditure on the other items. The inadequate rate is an extreme restriction on social activities and participation in the normal activity of ordinary people in Hong Kong.

Table 3.5: Expenditure pattern of CSSA recipients in 1996/97 -- Single adult and single elderly

Items	Social security assistance index of prices	Single adult (HK\$1,615)	Single elderly (HK\$1,935)
	1994/95 Ratio	Monthly	Monthly
Foodstuffs	69.1	1116.0	1337.1
Fuel & light	7.5	121.1	145.1
Alcoholic drinks and tobacco	3.6	58.1	70.0
Clothing & footwear	3.5	56.5	67.7
Durable goods	1.9	30.7	36.8
Miscellaneous goods	7.0	113.1	135.5
Transports	3.9	63.0	75.5
Miscellaneous services	3.5	56.5	67.7
Total	100.0	1615.0	1935.0

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department (1992) *Household Expenditure Survey on Public Assistance Recipients (1989/90)*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department (1993) *Five Year Social Welfare Development Plan 1992*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department (1996) *1994/95 Household Expenditure Survey and the Rebasings of the Consumer Price Indices*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

The Engel's Ratio also proved that the living standard of the CSSA was poor. The basic concept of Engel's Ratio is that the demand for foodstuffs will decrease relatively when the household's income increases. The larger the proportion of one's income spent on foodstuffs, the poorer the overall living standard will be. As shown in table 3.6, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed that generally expenditure on foodstuffs decreased from 56.6% in 1973/74 to 41.2% in 1989/90 and the proportion further dropped to 37.3% in 1994/95, compared with 70.3% in 1984/85. This indicated that the living standard of ordinary families improved significantly. On the contrary, the CSSA recipients spent 69.1% of their expenditure on the same item in 1994/95. The usual proportion is about 30% for poor households in developed societies (MacPherson, 1994b). Table 3.6 showed that the living standard of CSSA recipients in 1994/95 stayed consistently at the level of 1984/85.

Table 3.6: Items and weightings of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP) & the Consumer Price Index (CPI (A))

Items	SSAIP					CPI (A)				
	74/75	79/80	84/85	89/90	94/95	74/75	79/80	84/85	89/90	94/95
Foodstuffs	75.6	66.7	70.3	75.1	69.1	56.6	46.4	45.5	41.2	37.3
Housing	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	14.1	15.1	15.3	20.6	25.3
Fuel & light	5.3	8.2	6.6	5.3	7.5	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.4
Alcoholic drinks & tobacco	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.1
Clothing & footwear	2.7	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.8	5.0	5.2	4.6	5.1
Durable goods	0.1	1.0	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.4	6.7	5.7	4.9	4.3
Miscellaneous goods	7.4	9.1	8.2	7.4	7.0	4.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.0
Transports	2.0	2.4	2.5	3.2	3.9	4.4	5.3	6.8	7.2	7.2
Miscellaneous services	6.9	8.9	7.1	3.9	3.5	9.1	9.6	9.6	10.1	9.3

Note: According to the Census & Statistics Department, the rebased series of CPI(A) relates to about 50% of households in the relatively low expenditure range.

Sources: Hong Kong, Census & Statistics Department (1991) *1989/90 Household Expenditure Survey and the Rebasings of the Consumer Price Indices*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong, Census & Statistics Department (1996) *1994/95 Household Expenditure Survey and the Rebasings of the Consumer Price Indices*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

Hong Kong, Social Welfare Department (1992) *Household Expenditure Survey and the Public Assistance Recipients 1989/90*, Hong Kong Government Printer.

The forgoing discussion reflects that a buoyant economy did not automatically bring about an improvement in living standards for all since economic development could contribute to unequal income distribution in the community. Some segments of the population might not enjoy the benefit of economic growth (Midgley, 1984 & 1995). Midgley stated that 'social development cannot take place without economic development and economic development is meaningless unless it is accompanied by improvements in social welfare for the population as a whole' (Midgley, 1995:23). In other words, the aim of development is to promote the well-being of the whole population in conjunction with economic prosperity. The report of the Commission on International Development Issues also emphasized that 'development must mean improvement in living conditions, for which economic growth and industrialization are essential. But if there is no attention to the quality of growth and to social change one cannot speak of development' (quoted in Cockburn, 1980:338). The UN shared a similar view on the notion of development which

was defined as 'growth plus change'. It was recognized that,

development was a social as well as an economic process and that there was a continuous interaction of social and economic factors. The process was to be seen as one of balanced social and economic development where social improvement and economic growth supported one another (quoted in Cockburn, 1980:338).

Midgley argued that *the existing poverty issue in affluent countries is one of the most problematic issues in development today*. He referred to this phenomenon as '*distorted development*' and explained that 'the problem in most countries today is not that there has been no economic development, but rather that economic development has not been accompanied by improvements in social well-being for the population as a whole' (Midgley, 1995:73-74).

Social assistance has a significant impact on poverty problems by means of redistributing resources towards the most needy of the community if it is based on three prerequisites. *First*, there should be a progressive taxation system, which places the burden of the cost on the rich. *Second*, the level of benefit is sufficient to raise the poor out of poverty. *Third*, the vulnerable groups have easy access to the social assistance scheme and it does not deter them from seeking help (Midgley, 1984). The CSSA scheme in Hong Kong is a policy of minimum expenditure with minimum intervention in the market. In other words, the low rate of CSSA benefits in Hong Kong can be explained by the primary concern to maintain work incentives among the working class and family responsibility for the support of elderly people who can no longer work and the desire to hold down expenditure/taxation.

Thus, the government has not attempted to formulate an official definition for poverty in Hong Kong. On 22nd February 1995, Legislative Councillor Fred Li Wah-ming raised the question of how the government identify who are 'the poor' in Hong Kong and whether the government should attempt to formulate an official definition of the poverty line. The former Secretary for Health and Welfare responded that:

There appears to be a general consensus amongst experts that 'poverty' as such defies definition – whether in absolute or relative terms or by any other more subjective method. To seek to define it or a 'poverty line' for Hong Kong would, I believe, serve no useful purpose. We would, as has been the experience elsewhere, no doubt fail to reach a consensus since any definition would involve the exercise of subjective value judgements. the Government will not attempt to formulate an official definition of the 'poverty line'.
..... Since we have no agreed definition of poverty or who is poor, the Government does not 'classify' those eligible for CSSA as poor.

On the other hand, the poor living standard of CSSA recipients aroused some serious doubt as to whether the CSSA scheme provides a meaningful subsistence level in

Hong Kong. Wong criticized that 'the level of benefit of the CSSA Scheme is not adequate to raise the poor out of poverty but rather creates a poverty trap for the recipients it is the government's deliberate policy to 'label' the CSSA recipients and 'construct' the view that a dependency culture exists in Hong Kong to discourage the poor from getting help from the CSSA system' (Wong, 2000a: 1-2). Establishing a poverty line is important to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies to surmount poverty. In Hong Kong, social scientists and academic scholars attempted to use different levels of measurement to calculate the number of the poor and examine the extent of poverty in Hong Kong. These studies not only focused on the living standards of CSSA recipients, but also concerned low-income households' standards of living in Hong Kong (Chow, 1982b & 1983b; Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996a; Liu, Yue & Lee, 1996; Liu & Wu, 1998; Lui & Wong, 1995; MacPherson, 1994b; MacPherson & Chan, 1996; MacPherson & Lo, 1997; Wong, 2000a & 2000c; Wong & Chua, 1996; Wong & Lee, 2000). Poverty research in Hong Kong will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In short, the functions and purposes of the social security scheme are to compensate, redistribute and integrate the rapidly changing society. Whether these three functions will be fulfilled depends mainly on the government's philosophy, the ruling ideology and the prevailing attitudes in society. Dixon argued that 'the way a society views social security and its underlying dominant values is, then, a crucial factor in the evolution of a social security system within that society' (Dixon, 1993:7). In a study of social security provisions in Hong Kong and Singapore some years ago, Chow argued that the industrialisation process would not automatically bring about the development of a comprehensive social security system. The attitudes of the government towards the functions and roles of social security played a significant part in the development of social security (Chow, 1981b:366). In Hong Kong, the government regarded social security as a measure for 'those least able to help themselves'. In his October 1995 Speech, the former Governor Chris Patten asserted that 'there is also a deep-rooted conviction in Hong Kong that the welfare system should cater only for those who have no other means of support and that it should offer only basic support rather than a generous alternative to finding a job' (quoted in Wilding, 1996a:3). Furthermore, the role of the government in provision for retirement protection schemes was as *a regulator*, instead of providing a service or using fiscal and spending instruments (Chow, 1978 & 1981; Kwon, 1998).

4

Poverty studies in Hong Kong in a changing context

Chow's study (1982) – The Relative Deprivation Approach

MacPherson's study (1994) – The Budget Standards Approach

Review of CSSA Scheme & Liu *et al.*'s study (1996) – Expenditure patterns of CSSA recipients in Hong Kong

Liu & Wong's study (1995) – Qualitative research on low-income households in Hong Kong

Wong & Chua's study (1996) – Expenditure patterns of low expenditure households in Hong Kong

Wong & Lee's study (2000) – Defining marginal workers in terms of monthly household income

Increase in poverty in Hong Kong in the 1990s

Chapter 4

Poverty studies in Hong Kong in a changing context

After examining why and how the government social security policies responded to poverty issues in the past few decades in the last chapter, the aim of this chapter is to review past research on poverty in Hong Kong. These previous research studies are useful to know clearly where poverty research in Hong Kong has got to, its achievements and limitations and form the base of the focus of the LS survey in Hong Kong. They give insights into how the LS survey fills the gaps in the existing poverty research. The review focuses on four key areas. *First*, it explains the aims and nature of these studies. *Second*, it attempts to link these studies to the typology of various poverty approaches. *Third*, it discusses the findings of poverty research, as well as highlighting the extent of poverty in Hong Kong. *Finally*, it pinpoints the limitations of these poverty studies and explains how the current poverty studies provide a basis for the LS survey.

Chow's study (1982) - The Relative Deprivation Approach

The first attempt to explore poverty in Hong Kong was Chow's 1982 survey (Chow, 1982b). It focused on the needs and living styles of low-income families in Hong Kong so as to establish a poverty line. His study followed Townsend's approach (1979) in the UK but some of the items were modified to be more applicable to Hong Kong. This was a 2-stage research, including constructing indicators and identifying the needs of low-income families in Hong Kong. In order to establish a list of indicators reflecting different styles of living in Hong Kong, a detailed discussion with some social workers in the family service field was carried out. The list was composed of 34 items and these items were categorized into five areas (Appendix 4):

- clothing, food, housing and transportation;
- dwelling conditions and amenities;
- use of education and medical care services;
- living habits; and
- observation of social norms.

Then, the items were compiled into a simple questionnaire to ask the respondents whether the statements were descriptions of poor households in Hong Kong. A total of

326 persons who were students, factory workers, housewives and office clerks were invited to answer this questionnaire. Respondents regarded ten items as the most significant indicators of a poor household and these ten items were perceived as a guideline for constructing a deprivation index (Chow, 1982b:26 & 1983b:7). These items included situations in which a family which:

- could not afford supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling;
- could not afford to give out 'laisee' (red pocket money or lucky money) at Chinese New Year;
- could not afford a present for relatives' or friends' happy events;
- could not afford nutritious food for family members after serious illness;
- would ask children to work after receiving nine years' free education even though their academic achievements were good;
- had no refrigerator;
- had no toilet;
- had no kitchen;
- had no wireless set; and
- had no telephone.

The main survey was undertaken in 1981 with a sample of 797 respondents whose incomes were below HK\$4,500 a month. The sampling frame adopted in this study was based upon the 1976 *By-census*. The questionnaire consisted of five areas that were drawn up from the preliminary survey on perceptions of poverty. The deprivation index was constructed after considering the results of the preliminary survey on perception of poverty and the main survey. The index was categorized into four key areas, namely accommodation, amenities at home, social services and social practices (Chow, 1982b: 88 & 1983b:8). This index was composed of nine items²², including

- Do all members have a permanent bed for their own use?
- Does the household have a television set?
- Does the household have a refrigerator?
- Do members usually consult private practitioners when ill?
- Does the family go out to celebrate on special occasions?
- Does the family eat fresh poultry apart from festivals?

²² There were *three criteria for selecting items for constructing a deprivation index* and it should be, *first*, comprehensive enough to include the different aspects of a living style; *second*, universal in application and should not be applicable to only one sector of the population; and *third*, closely related to the activities commonly practised by the whole population (Chow, 1982b:87).

- Does the family present gifts to relatives or friends on days of celebration events?
- Do household heads give out lucky money (laisee) during the Chinese New Year?
- Do household heads take friends now and then to a teahouse or restaurant?

A score was assigned to those people who did not have one of these nine items. In other words, the more deprived a family, the higher the score it was given. The findings indicated that the mean deprivation score for the 759 households was 2.51. Households with scores of more than 2.51 were regarded as low-income households. The results reflected that households with a monthly income between HK\$2,000 and HK\$2,199 or less, as well as HK\$400 to HK\$499 for one-person household were more likely to be scored more than the average of 2.51. Furthermore, the results also showed that households with no working members/only one working member were more vulnerable to poverty. For instance, families with two or more children and those with elderly members were more likely to be living in poverty. In addition, the findings revealed that poor households not only had lower incomes, but also tended to have poorer housing facilities, possess fewer home appliances and be socially isolated.

Although this survey would encounter similar criticisms to those that Townsend's social indicators approach encountered (i.e. the matter of taste and choice), the significance of Chow's study was that the conception of poverty was not confined simply to a shortage of resources to obtain the types of diet and participate in social activities, but also to be excluded from fulfilling the customs of the community. Poverty was defined as 'the kind of life some people are compelled to live, because they are lacking in financial resources, which is characterised by the forfeiture of certain amenities, activities or obligations normally and customarily expected of them by the larger society' (Chow, 1982b:8). In order to differentiate the entire spectrum of life style, the study adopted a public opinion approach to collect views on people's perceptions of poverty.

Chow's study was not followed up. Rapid economic growth tended to keep the issue of poverty off the political agenda for a long time. On the other hand, there were some anti-poverty initiatives in Hong Kong. It was evident that low-income families did not receive a fair share of the benefit of economic progress while there had been rapid growth in the economy. Wealth has been concentrated in the hands of a small sector of the population, and thus the gap between the poor and the rich has widened. (Castells, *et al.*, 1990:59; Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1982; 1992c & 1997b; Mok, 1993a & 1993b; Wong, 2000a; 2000b & 2000c). The poor living standards

of CSSA recipients, however, did begin to arouse some serious doubt as to whether the CSSA Scheme provided an acceptable living standard in Hong Kong in the 1990s.

MacPherson's study (1994) - The Budget Standards Approach

In 1993, the Legislative Council Welfare Services Panel called for a review of the adequacy of the public assistance rates. MacPherson (1994b) was invited by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) to undertake an independent research study, which was carried out between mid-1993 and mid-1994. The aim of this research was to determine *what was the minimum acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong in the 1990s*. Two major linked studies were undertaken to probe into the adequacy of the CSSA rates against these minimum levels in Hong Kong. The *first* study was a survey of the actual living standard of CSSA recipients while the *second* study adopted the *Budget Standards* methods to calculate how much was enough to provide a minimum standard in terms of food, transport, clothing, social activities and other basic expenses.

The budgets were drawn up from professionals' opinions, data on consumption patterns, official recommended standards, and the experience of budget standards worked out in other countries (Bradshaw, 1993b). The budget standard required in this basket was more than the absolute subsistence minimum needed simply to maintain life and also allowed people to take part in social relationships and to follow customary behaviour in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, this was still a minimum standard in terms of food, transport, clothing and footwear, fuel costs, household goods, personal care goods, social activities, health care, furniture and electrical appliances, as well as utilities (MacPherson, 1994b).

In order to examine the living standard of CSSA recipients, a detailed survey was carried out on the basis of a stratified random sample of 683 households receiving CSSA in March 1994. The results indicated that the CSSA rates were inadequate to provide a 'minimum acceptable level of living', which was a level that allowed people to participate in social activities and follow customary behaviour for the vulnerable groups, especially for families with children. Even though CSSA recipients were spending more than 70% of their expenditure on foodstuffs, they were still spending less than sufficient on food. Food consumption accounted for the greatest share of their income and thus they needed to cut back on clothing, transport and household goods. Moreover, the inadequate CSSA rates restricted their participation in the normal activities of ordinary people in Hong Kong. For children, the social effects of inadequate CSSA rates were significant since social development and psychological adjustment were affected by the inability to take part in normal activities in the community.

Although there is no official poverty line in Hong Kong, a quasi-official poverty line on the basis of the level of social assistance has been adopted to identify the poor in Hong Kong. The findings of MacPherson's budget standards study revealed that the CSSA rates were too low, especially for children and single parents, to provide a 'minimum acceptable level of living', which was a level that allowed people to participate in social activities and follow customary behaviour. MacPherson's study was a study of the level of living of CSSA recipients rather than a study of poverty as such. What he found was that CSSA recipients were living in conditions which could reasonably be described as poverty. This study would also encounter similar critiques to those that Bradshaw's professional or expert approach encountered. For instance, it was time consuming for updating the list of goods and services. On the other hand, MacPherson's study offered a scientific analysis and a useful reference for new proposed rates.

Review of CSSA Scheme & Liu *et al.*'s study (1996) – Expenditure patterns of CSSA recipients in Hong Kong

The government neglected MacPherson's suggestion for raising the CSSA rates and stated that 'The Administration did not accept the recommendations in Dr. MacPherson's report because his approach in determining a 'minimum acceptable standard of living' was a radical departure from the philosophy and established policy of the CSSA Scheme' (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996a: paragraph 2.5). Instead, the government conducted a review of the CSSA Scheme in 1996. This review attempted to compare CSSA standard rates plus the monthly apportionment of the annual long-term supplement with the findings of the *Household Expenditure Survey* (HES) on the expenditure patterns of CSSA recipients and of the lowest 5% the non-CSSA group (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996).

A Steering Group (SG) was asked to review the CSSA Scheme. The SG adopted the Basic Needs Budget approach, which defined the adequacy of social security payments as 'the amount of money given as financial assistance which enables a person to sustain a standard of living where that person's basic needs can be met' (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996: paragraph 2.8). The SG constructed basic baskets of commodities and services which represent the basic needs of various categories of CSSA recipients. Then, the cost of the basket was compared with relevant CSSA standard rates plus monthly apportionment of the annual long-term supplement. Since the Basic Needs Budget approach was a baseline for a person to maintain a basic living standard, the findings of the HES provided an indication to recommend which categories of CSSA recipients might justify higher rates above the

Basic Needs standards. The SG argued 'where the CSSA standard rate plus the monthly apportionment of long-term supplement exceeds the HES expenditure and exceeds the Basic Needs budget, the CSSA benefits are generally adequate to meet the needs of the customers and do not justify any real increase' (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996: paragraph 2.16). The SG regarded CSSA as having the function of not letting recipients drop below the level of living of the bottom 5% of non-CSSA recipients. In other words, the SG regarded the bottom 5% as representing the level of living CSSA should aim at but the SG did not seek any more objective concept of poverty than that or attempt to make any assessment of the living conditions of the bottom 5%.

The review demonstrated that the monthly expenses of the lowest 5% of single elderly were HK\$1,235, compared with the CSSA rate of HK\$1,810 in 1996. It indicated, therefore, that the CSSA rate for the single elderly was more than sufficient. As a result, an annual review on the increase in the CSSA rate for the single elderly was only 7%. However, the SG did not explain in detail why the expenditure pattern of the lowest 5% of the non-CSSA income group was chosen to compare with CSSA recipients. The SG only explained that 'the lowest 5% income group level was considered the appropriate reference group for comparison' (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996: paragraph 2.7).

Nevertheless, the findings of the CSSA review in 1996 were not in harmony with the assessment of the scales of the CSSA scheme in Hong Kong undertaken by the research section of the Legislative Council (Liu, *et al.*, 1996). After the release of the *Report of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme*, the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services requested a study on the assistance scales of CSSA Scheme in Hong Kong. It was a comparative analysis of the income and expenditure of CSSA recipients (1995/96) and the households in the 1994/95 HES.

Table 4.1 presents the data on the 1995/96 estimated monthly financial assistance received by CSSA recipients relative to the 1995 median monthly household income, households with the lowest monthly expenditure in the 1994/95 HES and the largest group among the same size of households whose expenditure amounted to between HK\$3,700 and HK\$14,760 in 1994/95 HES. As shown in the table, the monthly financial assistance received by the CSSA recipients ranged from 29% to 52% of monthly median household income in 1995. The proportion was relatively low for one or two-person households. Although the financial assistance received by the CSSA recipients in 1995/96 was higher than the income of the households with the lowest

monthly expenditure in the 1994/95 HES, the lowest expenditure groups only accounted for a small percentage of the total number of households in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the findings reflected that 'CSSA assistance *cannot* be said as sufficient to cover the average monthly expenses of all CSSA recipients in Hong Kong' (Liu, Yue & Lee, 1996:12). This was because the estimated monthly financial assistance received by CSSA recipients, except for those CSSA households with 5 or more household members, was far below the monthly expenditure of the general public in Hong Kong. The results also showed that the income of single elderly people who depended on CSSA was just adequate to cover the minimum average monthly expenditure. The findings of these two studies revealed that the choices of cut-off points led to various results in attempts at the measurement of the extent of poverty in Hong Kong.

Table 4.1: A comparative analysis of income and expenditure of CSSA recipients (1995/96) and the households in 1994/95 HES

Household size	1995/96 estimated monthly CSSA assistance received (HK\$)	1995 median monthly household income (HK\$)	% share of monthly CSSA assistance to median monthly household income	Household with the lowest monthly expenditure in 1994/95 HES (below HK\$3,700)		Households whose expenditure amounted between HK\$3,700 and HK\$ 14,760 in 1994/95 HES	
				Average monthly expenditure (HK\$)	Share of households in the corresponding group	Average monthly expenditure (HK\$)	Share of households in the corresponding group
1	2,650	7,500-8,000	33-35%	2,402	33.6%	7,588	48.1%
2	4,400	13,000-15,000	29-34%	2,778	7.2%	8,754	55.9%
3	6,540	15,000-17,000	38-44%	2,946	1.9%	9,640	57.5%
4	8,610	16,500-18,500	47-52%	3,188	0.7%	10,142	51.0%
5+	11,210	21,500-23,600	48-52%	*	0.4%	>10,244	44.0%

Notes: 1. The assistance provided is on the basis of the number of eligible CSSA members.
 2. The amount includes standard rate, the supplements, special grant and rent allowance.
 3. * data suppressed because of small sample size.

Source: Liu, E., Yue, S.Y. & Lee, V. (1996) *Research on the Determinants for the Social Assistance Scale in Hong Kong and Selected Countries*, Hong Kong: Research and Library Services Division, Legislative Council Secretariat, p.11.

Lui & Wong's study (1995) – Qualitative research on low-income households in Hong Kong

The focus of this study by Lui & Wong was not confined to those living in sub-standard living conditions or totally dependent households, but also included those who have been displaced and marginalized in the process of economic restructuring. It was believed that those households fell into poverty because external conditions *disempowered* them to protect their standard of livelihood or utilize social resources, such as education and training, to participate in economic activities, to secure access to information, to which they were entitled. Thus, it was suggested that government policies

should attempt to *empower* them economically, socially and politically so as to lift them out of poverty (Lui & Wong: 3-5).

The objectives of the study were to analyse the underlying socio-economic causes of poverty and economic hardship among low-income households in Hong Kong. A one per cent sample was drawn from the 1991 Population Census to identify the socio-economic background of the low-income households for sample selection. In addition, social workers' and experts' views on sample selection were also solicited. Twenty-six *in-depth interviews* were conducted to provide a better understanding of the living conditions of the low-income households (Lui & Wong: 18-19). These 26 cases included single parent families, cage people²³, persons suffering from chronic illness and street sleepers. The findings indicated that four target groups were vulnerable to socio-economic changes.

First, those people who have worked in *traditional industries*, including five people working in the fishery and one in agricultural industries, who suffered from economic hardship because of the decline of the fishery and agricultural industries in Hong Kong. In order to reduce their living costs, the elderly fishermen and farmers have lived in rural areas. *Second*, three displaced workers were either unemployed or found difficulties in looking for other jobs because of economic restructuring. As a result, there were forced to look for low-paid and poor working conditions of service-oriented jobs. *Third*, twelve deprived households, including single parent families, new immigrants, single elderly, persons with chronic illness, found difficulties in getting reintegrated into economic activities or in utilizing social resources. For those single parents with young children, it was difficult for them to look for jobs because of caring responsibilities. Owing to their deteriorating physical health condition, the single elderly could no longer continue their manual labouring work. New immigrants normally would have difficulties in communication, employment and studying in a new environment. Some of them found difficulties in looking for schools for their children while some could only find low-paid jobs because of their disadvantaged positions. Persons with chronic illnesses would have fewer employment opportunities or find difficulties in taking part in economic activities because their poor health conditions. *Fourth*, those who have committed crimes or deviant behaviour would have difficulties in looking for jobs and getting support from friends and family (Lui & Wong, 1995: 19-29).

This exploratory study adopted a broad conception of poverty and it provided

²³ They live in steel-mesh cages stacked two and three high and are only big enough for a mattress.

in-depth discussion on how and why households living in poverty not only encountered financial difficulties, but were also excluded from social and political participation. The findings indicated that people suffered from economic hardship since they could not safeguard and utilize social resources, namely employment and training, education and getting access to information, to lift them out of poverty. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between the weak attachment to the labour market and the economic vulnerability of the working class. The results also demonstrated the structural causes that excluded some sections of the community from opportunities to improve their living conditions in Hong Kong.

Wong & Chua's study (1996) – Expenditure patterns of low expenditure households in Hong Kong

Apart from the poor living standards of CSSA recipients, poor living standards of low-income non-CSSA households in the 1990s also aroused public concerns. Oxfam Hong Kong and the HKCSS conducted a study, *Research on Expenditure Pattern of Low Expenditure Households in Hong Kong*, in 1996. This was a secondary data analysis of the *1994/95 Household Expenditure Survey* conducted by the Census & Statistics Department of Hong Kong. The purposes of the study were to analyze the expenditure patterns of the low expenditure households, identify the number of households living in 'abject poverty', as well as to evaluate their living conditions. The researchers divided a total of 5,591 non-CSSA households, who completed the 1994/95 HES survey, into eight expenditure groups according to their total household expenditure. They included:

- the lowest 0-5% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 5-10% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 10-15% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 15-20% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 20-30% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 30-40% of expenditure group;
- the lowest 40-50% of expenditure group; and
- the top 50% of expenditure group.

In this research, the concept of Engel's Ratio was adopted. Poverty was defined as 'the income of an individual or a household being not adequate to pay for basic and necessary expenditures' which was various according to time and culture of the community while abject poverty was defined as the income of the household being not adequate to pay for basic and necessary food expenses (Wong & Chua, 1996:ix). Expenditure on foodstuffs will decrease relatively when the household's income increases.

In other words, the larger the proportion of one's income spending on foodstuffs, the poorer the overall living standard is.

The findings revealed that poor households spent a large proportion of total expenditure on food and housing. For instance, the lowest 10% of one-person expenditure households spent almost 85% on foodstuffs and housing. As a result, they needed to cut back on their daily expenses on transport, fuel, clothing and miscellaneous items. In addition, the study also indicated the flexibility of expenditure on housing was much lower than that on food. Poor households living in private housing were relatively deprived, compared with those households living in public rental housing. Their expenses on housing were between 40% and 100% higher than those low expenditure households living in public rental housing.

Wong & Chua (1996) argued that those households who lived in 'abject poverty' were unable to meet basic and necessary food expenses. For instance, monthly expenditure of the lowest 10% of one-person households on foodstuffs was HK\$697 while the government's Basic Needs budget for one-person CSSA households' expenses on food was HK\$799. The findings indicated that the living standards of the lowest 10% of one-person households were lower than for one-person CSSA households. Furthermore, the findings also demonstrated that the food expenses of the lowest 5% expenditure groups of all sizes of households were at extremely low levels. It was shown that 76,000 households (or 263,800 people) spent less than HK\$630 per person per month on foodstuff. Although those low expenditure households did not suffer from starvation, their living standards were so low that they were in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities in society. The results aroused public concerns towards the poor living standards of the low-income non-CSSA households in Hong Kong.

Wong & Lee's study (2000) – Defining marginal workers in term of monthly household income

Wong & Lee's study on *The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong* was a secondary data analysis of *General Household Surveys* (GHS) between 1996-1999 (Wong & Lee, 2000). The aims of the study were, *first*, to identify the characteristics of the marginal workers, including the unemployed²⁴, underemployed²⁵ and the working poor²⁶ in terms

²⁴ According to the Census & Statistics Department, unemployed persons comprise all those persons aged 15 and over who (i) have not had a job and have not performed any work for pay or profit during the 7 days before enumeration; and (ii) have been available for work during the 7 days before enumeration; and (iii) have sought work during the 30 days before enumeration (accessed on 9 November 2003 and available at

of sex, age, industry and occupation; *second*, to explain the relationship between poverty and employment/underemployment; and *third*, to investigate the impacts of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 on the employment conditions of the marginal workers (Wong & Lee, 2000).

Apart from economic restructuring, the Asian Financial turmoil has further weakened economic development and thus brought out negative effects on the employment conditions of the marginal workers in Hong Kong. As shown in table 4.2, the number of marginal workers increased from 444,500 in 1996 to 643,000 in 1999. It accounted for 14.4% of the working population in 1996, compared with 18.5% in 1999. The findings also indicated that the number of unemployed persons increased from 86,100 in 1996 to 217,100 in 1999. Less than one-fifth (19.4%) of these marginal workers were unemployed in 1996, compared with 33.8% in 1999. The number of underemployed persons also rose significantly from 51,700 in 1996 to 103,300 in 1999. It accounted for 11.6% of the marginal workers in 1996, compared with 16.1% in 1999. Less than one-third of the marginal workers (31%) were unemployed and underemployed in 1996, compared with 49.8% in 1999.

Table 4.2: Number of marginal workers in Hong Kong (1996~1999)

<i>(in thousands)</i>					
Year	Unemployed persons	Underemployed persons	Working poor	Marginal workers	Number of marginal workers as a % of total working population
1996	86.1 19.4%	51.7 11.6%	306.7 69.0%	444.5 100.0%	14.4%
1997	71.3 15.1%	37.9 8.1%	361.5 76.8%	470.7 100.0%	14.6%
1998	157.6 26.5%	85.4 14.3%	352.8 59.2%	595.8 100.0%	17.7%
1999	217.1 33.8%	103.3 16.1%	322.8 50.2%	643.2 100.0%	18.5%

Note: The proportion of the unemployed/underemployed/working poor as a % of total marginal workers is shown in shaded areas.

Source: Wong, H. & Lee, K.M. (2000) *The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong* (in Chinese), Hong Kong: Hong Kong: Oxfam Hong Kong, p.14.

As shown in table 4.3, a majority of the unemployed and underemployed persons

http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/hkstat/concepts_methods/cm_labour.htm).

²⁵ According to the Census & Statistics Department, the underemployed persons comprise those employed persons who have involuntarily worked less than 35 hours during the 7 days before enumeration and have sought additional work during the 30 days before enumeration, or have not sought additional work but have been available for additional work during the 7 days before enumeration. Referring this definition, employed persons taking no-pay leave due to slack work during the 7 days before enumeration are also classified as underemployed if they worked less than 35 hours during the 7 days period (accessed on 9 November 2003 and available at http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/hkstat/concepts_methods/cm_labour.htm).

²⁶ The working poor is defined as the lowest 10% of working people (excluding underemployed persons) whose income less than half of median monthly income of the working groups in Hong Kong.

were male. Over two-thirds and three quarters of the unemployed and the underemployed persons were male. It could be explained by the fact that the male labour force participation rate was higher than their female counterparts in Hong Kong. As a consequence, an increasing number of male workers became unemployed or underemployed. Nonetheless, the results also showed that an overwhelming majority of the working poor were female workers. Besides, there was an increasing number of female underemployed persons. One quarter of the underemployed persons were female workers in 1999, compared with only one-fifth in 1996.

Table 4.3: Number of marginal workers in Hong Kong by gender (1996~1999)

(in thousands)

Year	Unemployed persons		Underemployed persons		Working poor		Marginal workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1996	58.0	28.1	41.3	10.4	59.6	247.1	158.9	285.6
	67.4%	32.6%	79.9%	20.1%	19.4%	80.6%	35.7%	64.3%
1997	45.7	25.6	29.0	8.8	74.9	286.6	149.6	321.0
	64.1%	35.9%	76.5%	23.5%	20.7%	79.3%	31.8%	68.2%
1998	105.0	52.7	66.7	18.7	70.2	282.6	241.9	354.0
	66.6%	33.4%	78.1%	21.9%	19.9%	80.1%	40.6%	59.4%
1999	149.4	67.7	76.9	26.4	54.5	268.3	280.8	362.4
	68.8%	31.2%	74.4%	25.6%	16.9%	83.1%	43.7%	56.3%

Note: The proportion of male (or female) unemployed/underemployed/working poor as a % of total number of unemployed/underemployed/working poor is shown in shaded areas.

Source: Wong, H. & Lee, K.M. (2000) *The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong* (in Chinese), Hong Kong: Hong Kong: Oxfam Hong Kong, p.16.

Even though the marginal workers could find jobs, they were more likely to find part-time, temporary or low-paid jobs. As mentioned earlier, over 50% of these marginal workers were the working poor whose monthly income was less than HK\$4,500. As shown in table 4.4, there were over 300,000 working people whose monthly income was less than HK\$4,500 between 1996 and 1999. Nonetheless, there was increasing number of the working poor working for more than 50 hours weekly. Almost 180,000 working poor have worked for more than 50 hours weekly in 1999, compared with 149,200 people in 1996. This study attempted to keep track of the number of marginal workers between 1996 and 1999 and illustrated the characteristics of these working poor, underemployed and unemployed. The study also reflected that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee to lift people out of poverty because of long working hours and low-paid jobs.

Table 4.4: Number of working poor by number of working hours and earning income (1996~1999)

(in thousands)

Number of working poor earned <i>less than HK\$3,000</i> monthly by working hours								
Year	Number of working hours weekly						Total	
	<35		35-49		50+		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
1996	38.7	57.2	16.7	24.7	12.3	18.2	67.7	100.0
1997	33.4	56.1	14.7	24.7	11.4	19.2	59.5	100.0
1998	40.4	59.8	16.0	23.7	11.2	16.6	67.6	100.0
1999	32.0	45.9	22.0	31.6	15.7	22.5	69.7	100.0

Number of working poor earned <i>between HK\$3,000-3,999</i> monthly by working hours								
Year	Number of working hours weekly						Total	
	<35		35-49		50+		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
1996	21.6	13.1	35.0	21.2	108.7	65.8	165.3	100.0
1997	20.7	13.0	24.7	15.5	113.7	71.5	159.1	100.0
1998	26.3	15.6	24.2	14.4	118.1	70.0	168.6	100.0
1999	15.8	8.9	28.6	16.2	132.6	74.9	177.0	100.0

Number of working poor earned <i>between HK\$4,000-4,500</i> monthly by working hours								
Year	Number of working hours weekly						Total	
	<35		35-49		50+		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
1996	16.8	17.7	50.0	52.6	28.2	29.7	95.0	100.0
1997	16.7	19.5	41.8	48.8	27.1	31.7	85.6	100.0
1998	18.3	21.3	37.0	43.1	30.6	35.6	85.9	100.0
1999	9.8	13.0	34.9	46.3	30.6	40.6	75.3	100.0

Source: Wong, H. & Lee, K.M. (2000) *The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong* (in Chinese), Hong Kong: Hong Kong: Oxfam Hong Kong, p.25.

Increase in poverty in Hong Kong in the 1990s

Apart from investigating the living standards of CSSA recipients and low-income households, various researchers also identified the number of the poor in Hong Kong in the 1990s in terms of different definitions and measurements of poverty (Estes, 2000; Chua, *et al.*, 2002; MacPherson & Lo, 1997; Mok & Leung, 1995; Mok, 1999; Wong & Chua, 1996; Wong & Lee, 2000a). The findings of these studies indicated that there were an increasing number of households living in poverty in Hong Kong in the 1990s. With reference to Wong & Chua's study, they estimated that 141,000 non-CSSA households were in abject poverty in 1994/95. Overall, 250,000 households were in a state of abject poverty, including 110,000 households who were in receipt of CSSA. This suggested that 15.5% of the population (640,000 people) were living in abject poverty in Hong Kong. In other words, the incomes of these households were not sufficient to pay for basic and necessary food expenditure (Table 4.5).

The Hong Kong Social Security Society identified the number of poor people whose household income per capita was less than half of the median household income (Mok & Leung, 1995; Mok, 1999). It was estimated that there were 856,700 people living in income poverty in 1996. It accounted for 14.1% of the population in 1996, compared

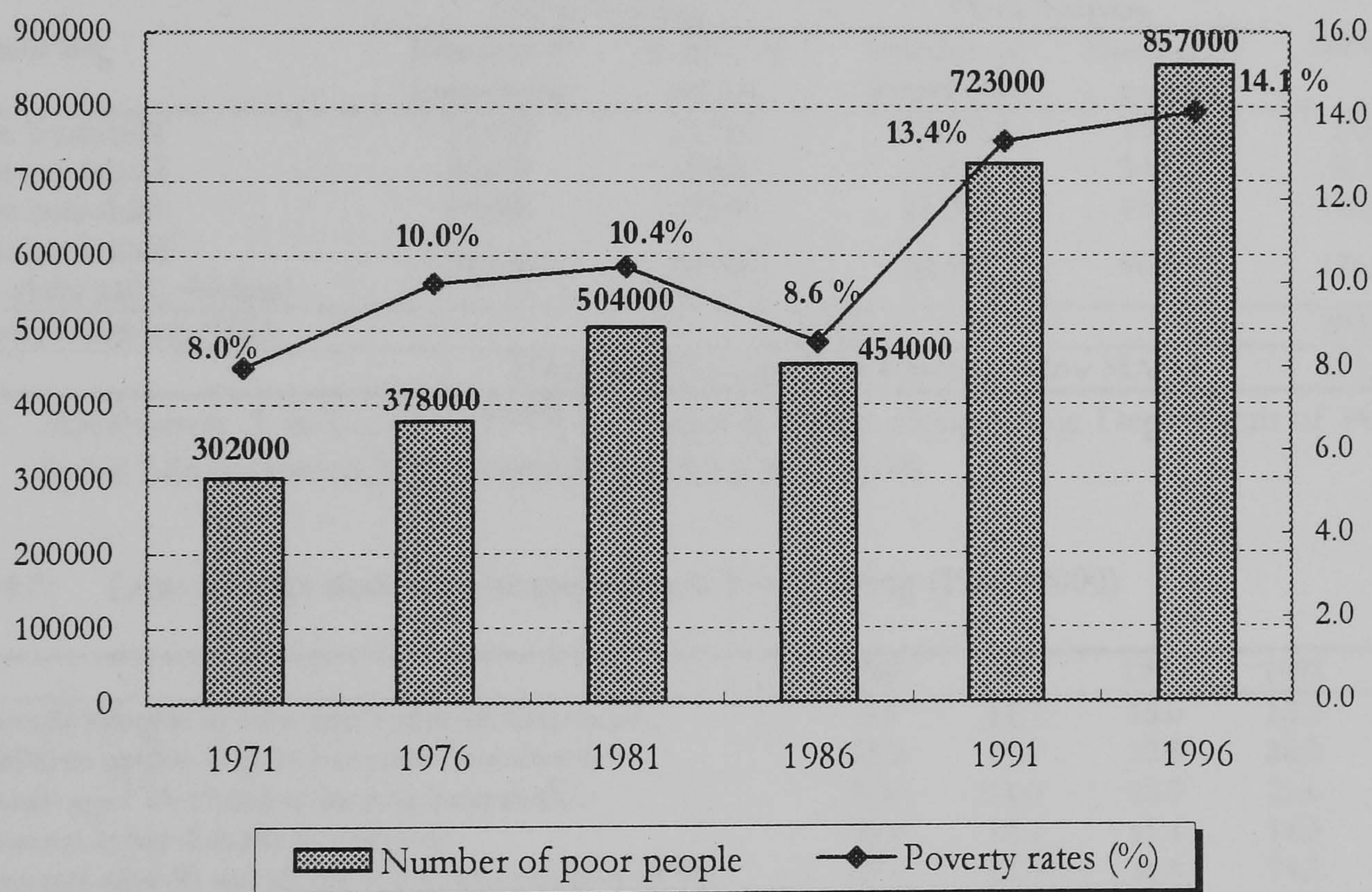
with 8% (301,900 people) in 1971 and 10.4% (504,500 people) in 1981 (Figure 4.1).

Table 4.5: Number of households and people living in abject poverty by household size (1994/95)

Household size	% of households living in abject poverty	Number of households	Number of people	Monthly food expenses	Monthly total expenses
1	12.5%	16,000	16,000	HK\$1,201	HK\$2,289
2	7.5%	20,000	39,000	HK\$1,976	HK\$4,025
3	7.5%	24,000	73,000	HK\$2,870	HK\$5,824
4	12.5%	53,000	213,000	HK\$4,132	HK\$8,509
5+	7.5%	28,000	145,000	HK\$3,953	HK\$8,802
Total		141,000	486,000		

Source: Wong, H. & Chua, H.W. (1996) *Research on Household Expenditure Patterns of Low Income Households in Hong Kong*, Research on Poverty in Hong Kong Series No. 1 (in Chinese), Hong Kong: Hong Kong Council of Social Service & Oxfam Hong Kong, p.xii.

Figure 4.1: Poverty rates in Hong Kong (1971~1996)



Note: The scale on the left-hand side is for data on the number of poor people while the scale on the right-hand side is for data on poverty rates.

Source: Mok, H.T.K. (1999) *A Study on Policies for Poverty Elimination in Hong Kong* (in Chinese), Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd, p.63.

MacPherson & Lo (1997) calculated the number of poor people in Hong Kong on the basis of the minimum acceptable standard of living and housing costs. The calculation took household composition and housing type into account. The result showed that there were at least 139,500 households who were non-CSSA recipients living in poverty. Among 375,000 poor people, 192,000 people lived in private housing and the rest of them lived in public rental housing. The CSSA rates were below 'the minimum acceptable standard of living', which was recommended by MacPherson in 1994. Thus,

the overall estimate of the number of people in poverty was at least 575,000, including about 200,000 CSSA recipients (Table 4.6).

Wong & Lee's study on *The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong* was not confined to unemployed persons in Hong Kong, but also included those underemployed and the working poor whose income was less than half the median monthly income of the working groups in Hong Kong. The results indicated that the number of marginal workers, including the unemployed, underemployed and the working poor, increased from 444,500 in 1996 to 643,000 in 1999. It accounted for 14.4% of the working population in 1996, compared with 18.5% in 1999 (Wong & Lee, 2000a).

Table 4.6: Estimated number of households with income below the Minimum Acceptable Standard of Living

Household Size	Private housing		Public housing		Sub-total
	Number of households	Number of people	Number of households	Number of people	
1 person household	11,000	11,000	14,000	14,000	25,000
2-person household	20,000	40,000	17,000	34,000	74,000
3-person household	19,000	57,000	15,000	45,000	102,000
4-person household (i.e. 2 adults and 2 children)	21,000	84,000	22,500	90,000	174,000
Households receiving CSSA	N/A				200,000
Total number of people with income below MASoL					575,000

Source: MacPherson, S. & Lo, O.Y. (1997) *A Measure of Poverty*, Hong Kong: Department of Public & Social Administration, City University of Hong Kong, p.26.

Table 4.7: Low-income domestic households in Hong Kong (1986~2000)

	1986	1991	1996	1998	2000
% of people living in low-income domestic households	9.5	11.7	15.0	18.1	18.3
% of children aged 0-14 in low-income households	13.2	17.1	22.8	26.2	25.9
% of youth aged 15-19 in low-income households	9.4	11.0	16.7	21.6	24.7
% of women in low-income households	10.4	12.4	15.4	18.3	18.4
% of persons aged 65 and above in low-income households	22.4	24.8	26.9	34.2	34.3
Unemployment rate in low-income households	8.6	5.7	8.6	18.5	20.9

Source: Chua, *et al.*, (2002) Social Development Index 2002 and Review of Social Development 1997-2002, Hong Kong: HKCSS, Appendix 1.8.

According to *Social Development Index (SDI) 2002*²⁷, there was an increasing number of people living in low-income households with monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income of households of the

²⁷ The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) launched the project on Social Development Index (SDI) for Hong Kong in 1999. It is composed of 14 core sectors of development and 5 population groups of special concerns to the HKCSS. The 14 sub-indices include strength of civil society, political participation, internationalisation, economic, environmental quality, arts and entertainment, sports and recreation, science and technology, education, health, personal safety, housing crime and public safety, family sub-indices. The 5 population groups include women, low-income, child, youth and elderly sub-indices. The number of people living in low-income households by 5 population groups was one of key indicators to assess their living conditions (Estes, 2000; Chua, *et al.* 2002).

corresponding size in 2000. As shown in table 4.7, there were in total 18.3% of people living in low-income households in 2000, compared with 9.5% in 1986 and 15% in 1996. One quarter of children aged 0-14 and young people aged 15-19 were living in low-income households in 2000, in comparison with 13.2% and 9.4% in 1986 respectively. Owing to the ageing population and no comprehensive retirement protection scheme for those who have retired, an increasing number of the elderly were living in low-income households in Hong Kong. More than one-third of elderly people aged 65 and over were living in low-income households in 2000, compared with 22.4% in 1986 and 26.9% in 1996. Owing to economic restructuring and economic downturn, the proportion of the unemployed persons living in low-income households rose significantly. One-fifth of the unemployed persons were living in low-income households in 2000, compared with 8.6% in 1986 and 1996 respectively.

This chapter has reviewed past research on poverty in Hong Kong. It explored the differing aims and nature of the studies and their differing approaches to poverty. It summarized their findings showing a significant amount of what can only reasonably be described as poverty in this rich society – a poverty which was not confined to those dependent on CSSA but also affected those in full-time but low-paid work. This body of research reflects a developing understanding of poverty and its many dimensions but shows that gaps in knowledge and understanding still exist. Table 4.8 summarizes past research on poverty in Hong Kong between 1982 and 2002.

As mentioned earlier, Hong Kong has undergone dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes in the late 1990s and there have been significant impacts on the people's livelihood in Hong Kong. The changes have created new patterns of poverty from the 1980s onwards and thus we need to be alert to the impacts of socio-economic and demographic changes if we are to understand the new poverty. In order to provide an updated profile of low-income households in Hong Kong, a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample data of the 2001 Population Census, using the conventional income threshold measurement of poverty, will be discussed in Chapter 5. As mentioned earlier, previous poverty studies mainly focused on the inadequacy of the financial resources of the vulnerable groups. There was a lack of multidimensional indicators reflecting different elements of hardships and their interrelationships. In addition, although there have been a number of studies concerning public opinion on poverty, welfare issues and subjective well-being in Hong Kong since the 1990s, there is a lack of a comprehensive empirical study of poverty and social exclusion using the public opinion approach. In order to grasp a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong, the LS survey described in Chapter 7 was an attempt to develop methods of studying poverty,

which incorporated income data, social indicators (i.e. socially perceived necessities), as well as subjective measure of poverty (i.e. perceptions of UN definitions of absolute and overall poverty). The survey design of the LS survey will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

Table 4.8: A summary of past research on poverty in Hong Kong (1982 ~ 2002)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
<p>Chow (1982b) – <i>Poverty in an Affluent City: A Report of a Survey on Low Income Families in Hong Kong</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Townsend's social indicators approach</i> was adopted to explore the needs and living styles of low-income families in Hong Kong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low-income families whose monthly income between HK\$2,000 and HK\$2,199 or less were more likely to have a high deprivation score. ■ Households with no working members/only one working member were vulnerable to poverty. ■ Low-income households not only suffered from financial deprivation, but also tended to have poor living condition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A conception of poverty was not only confined to financial deprivation to obtain the types of diet and participate in the activities, but also to be excluded from fulfilling the customs of the community. ■ Public opinion approach was adopted to collect views on public perceptions of poverty.
<p>MacPherson (1994b) – <i>Report on the Adequacy of Public Assistance Rates in Hong Kong</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Budget Standards Approach</i> was adopted to determine what was the minimum acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and to examine the adequacy of the CSSA rates against these minimum levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CSSA recipients were spending more than 70% of their expenditure on food, but they were still spending less than sufficient on food. ■ CSSA recipients spent the greatest share of their income on food consumption and thus they needed to cut back on clothing, transport and household goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The study offered a scientific analysis of the minimum acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and provided a useful reference for new proposed rates.
<p>Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1996) – <i>Review of CSSA Scheme</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Basic Needs Budget Approach</i> was adopted. ■ It was a comparative analysis of CSSA standard rates plus the monthly apportionment of the annual long-term supplement with the findings of HES on the expenditure patterns of CSSA recipients and of the lowest 5% the non-CSSA groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The CSSA standard rate plus the monthly apportionment of long-term supplement exceeded the HES expenditure and exceeded the Basic Needs budget and the CSSA benefits were generally adequate to meet the needs of the claimants and did not justify any real increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It indicated that the choices of cut-off points led to various results of measurement of the extent of poverty.

Table 4.8 (Continued ...)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
Liu et al. (1996) – <i>A Research on the Determinants for the Social Assistance Scale in Hong Kong and Selected Countries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A comparative analysis of income and expenditure of CSSA recipients in 1995/96 and the households in 1994/95 HES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CSSA assistance could not regarded as sufficient to cover the average monthly expenses of all CSSA recipients in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It indicated that the choices of cut-off points led to various results of measurement of the extent of poverty.
Lui & Wong (1995) – <i>Disempowerment and Empowerment: An Exploratory Study on the Low Income Households in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-depth interviews were conducted to explore underlying socio-economic causes of poverty and economic hardship of low-income households in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workers from traditional industries, unemployed or underemployed persons, deprived households (i.e. single parent families, new immigrants and single elderly) as well as persons with deviant behaviours, were more likely to suffer from socio-economic changes were identified. ■ It was argued that the structural factors which excluded some sections of the community from opportunities to improve their living conditions in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A broad conception of poverty was adopted. Households living in poverty not only suffered from financial deprived, but also excluded from social and political participation. ■ It provided in-depth discussion on how and why households living in poverty not only encountered financial difficulties, but also excluded from social and political participation.
Wong & Chua (1996) – <i>Research on Expenditure Pattern of Low Expenditure Households in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The concept of the Engel's Ratio was adopted to analyze expenditure patterns of the low expenditure households and identify the number of households living in a state of abject poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Households who lived in 'abject poverty' were not able to meet basic and necessary food expenses. ■ It was argued that low expenditure households did not suffer from starvation, but their living standards were so low that they were in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A conception of poverty was not only confined to financial deprived to obtain the types of diet and participate in the activities, but also to be excluded from fulfilling the customs of the community. ■ The study aroused public concerns towards the poor living conditions of the low-income non-CSSA households in Hong Kong.

Table 4.8 (Continued ...)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
MacPherson & Lo (1997) – <i>A Measure of Poverty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor people whose income below the MASoL recommended by MacPherson in 1994. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were at least 139,500 households who were non-CSSA recipients living in poverty. The overall estimate of the number of people in poverty was at least 575,000, including about 200,000 CSSA recipients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It was an updating exercise of MacPherson's study in 1994 and the calculation of number of poor people took household composition and housing type into account.
Mok (1999) – <i>A Study on Policies for Poverty Elimination in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted and households with monthly income per capita less than half of the median household income were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were 856,700 people living in income poverty and it accounted for 14.1% of the population in 1996. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It was first attempt to adopt the relative income standard approach measuring poverty in terms of a point on the distribution of equivalent income.
Wong & Lee (2000) – <i>The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted. The marginal workers, including the unemployed, underemployed and the working poor whose monthly income less than half of the median monthly income of the working groups were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of marginal workers was 643,000 in 1999 and it accounted for 18.5% of the working population in 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The study illustrated the characteristics of these working poor, underemployed and unemployed. The results also reflected that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee to life out of poverty because of long working hours and low-paid jobs.
Estes (2000) & Chua, et al., (2002) – <i>Social Development Index (SDI) 2000 & 2002</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted. Households whose monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income of the corresponding household size were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were totally 18.3% of people living in low-income households in 2000, compared with 9.5% in 1986 and 15% in 1996. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach has been adopted so as to keep track of the number of low-income households by various household types since 1986.

Table 4.8: A summary of past research on poverty in Hong Kong (1982 ~ 2002)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
Chow (1982b) – <i>Poverty in an Affluent City: A Report of a Survey on Low Income Families in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Townsend's social indicators approach</i> was adopted to explore the needs and living styles of low-income families in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low-income families whose monthly income between HK\$2,000 and HK\$2,199 or less were more likely to have a high deprivation score. ■ Households with no working members/only one working member were vulnerable to poverty. ■ Low-income households not only suffered from financial deprivation, but also tended to have poor living condition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A conception of poverty was not only confined to financial deprivation to obtain the types of diet and participate in the activities, but also to be excluded from fulfilling the customs of the community. ■ Public opinion approach was adopted to collect views on public perceptions of poverty.
MacPherson (1994b) – <i>Report on the Adequacy of Public Assistance Rates in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Budget Standards Approach</i> was adopted to determine what was the minimum acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and to examine the adequacy of the CSSA rates against these minimum levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CSSA recipients were spending more than 70% of their expenditure on food, but they were still spending less than sufficient on food. ■ CSSA recipients spent the greatest share of their income on food consumption and thus they needed to cut back on clothing, transport and household goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The study offered a scientific analysis of the minimum acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and provided a useful reference for new proposed rates.
Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1996) – <i>Review of CSSA Scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Basic Needs Budget Approach</i> was adopted. ■ It was a comparative analysis of CSSA standard rates plus the monthly apportionment of the annual long-term supplement with the findings of HES on the expenditure patterns of CSSA recipients and of the lowest 5% the non-CSSA groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The CSSA standard rate plus the monthly apportionment of long-term supplement exceeded the HES expenditure and exceeded the Basic Needs budget and the CSSA benefits were generally adequate to meet the needs of the claimants and did not justify any real increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It indicated that the choices of cut-off points led to various results of measurement of the extent of poverty.

Table 4.8 (Continued ...)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
Liu et al. (1996) – <i>A Research on the Determinants for the Social Assistance Scale in Hong Kong and Selected Countries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A comparative analysis of income and expenditure of CSSA recipients in 1995/96 and the households in 1994/95 HES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CSSA assistance could not regarded as sufficient to cover the average monthly expenses of all CSSA recipients in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It indicated that the choices of cut-off points led to various results of measurement of the extent of poverty.
Lui & Wong (1995) – <i>Disempowerment and Empowerment: An Exploratory Study on the Low Income Households in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-depth interviews were conducted to explore underlying socio-economic causes of poverty and economic hardship of low-income households in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workers from traditional industries, unemployed or underemployed persons, deprived households (i.e. single parent families, new immigrants and single elderly) as well as persons with deviant behaviours, were more likely to suffer from socio-economic changes were identified. ■ It was argued that the structural factors which excluded some sections of the community from opportunities to improve their living conditions in Hong Kong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A broad conception of poverty was adopted. Households living in poverty not only suffered from financial deprived, but also excluded from social and political participation. ■ It provided in-depth discussion on how and why households living in poverty not only encountered financial difficulties, but also excluded from social and political participation.
Wong & Chua (1996) – <i>Research on Expenditure Pattern of Low Expenditure Households in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The concept of the Engel's Ratio was adopted to analyze expenditure patterns of the low expenditure households and identify the number of households living in a state of abject poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Households who lived in 'abject poverty' were not able to meet basic and necessary food expenses. ■ It was argued that low expenditure households did not suffer from starvation, but their living standards were so low that they were in effect excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A conception of poverty was not only confined to financial deprived to obtain the types of diet and participate in the activities, but also to be excluded from fulfilling the customs of the community. ■ The study aroused public concerns towards the poor living conditions of the low-income non-CSSA households in Hong Kong.

Table 4.8 (Continued)

	Research methodology	Key findings	The significances of past poverty studies in Hong Kong
MacPherson & Lo (1997) – <i>A Measure of Poverty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor people whose income below the MASOL recommended by MacPherson in 1994. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were at least 139,500 households who were non-CSSA recipients living in poverty. The overall estimate of the number of people in poverty was at least 575,000, including about 200,000 CSSA recipients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It was an updating exercise of MacPherson's study in 1994 and the calculation of number of poor people took household composition and housing type into account.
Mok (1999) – <i>A Study on Policies for Poverty Elimination in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted and households with monthly income per capita less than half of the median household income were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were 856,700 people living in income poverty and it accounted for 14.1% of the population in 1996. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It was first attempt to adopt the relative income standard approach measuring poverty in terms of a point on the distribution of equivalent income.
Wong & Lee (2000) – <i>The Recent Trends of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted. The marginal workers, including the unemployed, underemployed and the working poor whose monthly income less than half of the median monthly income of the working groups were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of marginal workers was 643,000 in 1999 and it accounted for 18.5% of the working population in 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The study illustrated the characteristics of these working poor, underemployed and unemployed. The results also reflected that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee to life out of poverty because of long working hours and low-paid jobs.
Estes (2000) & Chua, et al., (2002) – <i>Social Development Index (SDI) 2000 & 2002</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach was adopted. Households whose monthly household income less than or equal to half of the median monthly domestic household income of the corresponding household size were regarded as poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There were totally 18.3% of people living in low-income households in 2000, compared with 9.5% in 1986 and 15% in 1996. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relative income standard approach has been adopted so as to keep track of the number of low-income households by various household types since 1986.

5

Conventional income threshold measurement of poverty in Hong Kong

Objectives of the analysis of the 1% sample

The 2001 Population Census

*Objectives and design of the 2001 Population
Census*

*The 1% sample drawn from the Census &
Statistics Department of HKSAR*

Definitions of low-income households in Hong Kong

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample

Income distribution

Housing and rents

*Household composition and number of
working household members*

*Ethnic and gender dimensions of low-income
households*

*Number of low-income households by
household type*

*Socio-economic and demographic
characteristics of single elderly people aged
60+ living in low-income households*

*Socio-economic and demographic
characteristics of one-parent families with
children living in low-income households*

Chapter 5

Conventional income threshold measurement of poverty in Hong Kong

After reviewing past research on poverty in Hong Kong, a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample data of the 2001 Population Census was conducted to provide an updated profile of low-income households in Hong Kong. The discussion, *first*, explains the objectives of the current study. *Second*, it briefly discusses the objectives and design of the 2001 Population Census to ensure the data reliability of the 1% sample. It also explains how the 1% sample was randomly drawn from the 2001 Population Census. *Third*, it identifies the number of low-income households in terms of various definitions of low-income households. *Finally*, it probes into the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these low-income households.

Objectives of the analysis of the 1% sample

The present study, *first*, aimed at providing an updated profile of low-income households from the 1% sample, using the conventional income threshold measurement of poverty. This study was the *first attempt* to adopt Bradshaw & Middleton's equivalised income measure (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000: 86-87) to identify the number of low-income households in terms of various definitions of low-income households, as well as examine socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these low-income households in Hong Kong.

Second, the updated profile of low-income households from the 1% sample attempted comparisons with the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the sample in the LS survey, as well as identifying the similarities and differences of these two studies. A comparison of the findings of the 1% sample data and the LS survey will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The 2001 Population Census

Objectives and design of the 2001 Population Census

A population census is a survey of the whole population conducted on a

scientific basis. The 2001 Population Census was conducted during the 13 days from 15 to 27 March 2001. It attempted to collect data on population in Hong Kong according to its size, age and sex composition, geographical distribution, as well as socio-economic characteristics. The design of the 2001 Population Census, including units of enumeration, basic design and data collection methods, as well as the questionnaire contents, is summarized in appendix 5. It explains how the individual persons were enumerated from their housing units (quarters) and then drawn from a household according to particular of members in this household. The contents of both short form and long form questionnaire were also listed. In addition, two data collection methods, namely the 'self- enumeration approach' for short form and the 'interviewer method' for long form, were presented.

The 1% sample drawn from the Census & Statistics Department of HKSAR

The 1% sample was drawn from the 2001 Population Census and the random sample selection ensured the data reliability. This was a special sample that the author has purchased from the Census & Statistics Department at individual level. A letter, which explained the purposes of the LS survey and requested the 1% sample randomly drawn from the household population of the 2001 Population Census, was sent to the Census & Statistics Department on 21 February 2003. The requested data was made available in mid-March 2003. There were in total 20,584 households drawn for the 1% sample.

Definitions of low-income households in Hong Kong

As mentioned earlier, the relative income standard approach of measuring poverty in terms of a point on the distribution of equivalent income (i.e. 40%, 50% or 60% of the mean or median) has been widely adopted by national governments and international organizations, namely OECD and EU. A number of studies concerning low-income households in Hong Kong also adopted the relative income standard approach (Chua, *et al.*, 2002; Mok & Leung, 1995; Wong, 2000a, 2000b & 2000c). This secondary data analysis of the 1% sample data of the 2001 Population Census adopted the conventional income threshold measurement of poverty in terms of three different definitions of low-income households, including:

- households with income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution (HIB50%);
- households with income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution (HIB60%); and
- households living in the lowest income quintile for the whole equivalised distribution (HLIQ).

Equivalisation²⁸ is a process of adjusting household income by taking account of household size and composition. Since poverty estimates are sensitive to the use of equivalence scale, equivalisation presents one of the crucial problems when determining the poverty line/threshold (Bradbury, 1989; Gordon, 1997a; Weir, 1992; Whiteford, 1985). In the past, the British Government adopted the McClement equivalence scales for measuring poverty²⁹ but this scale has been criticized for calculating unrealistic allowances for the costs of children (Muellbauer, 1979).

This study was the *first attempt* to adopt Bradshaw & Middleton's equivalised income measure, which was used for the PSE survey. Its equivalisation scale was based upon the relativities of budget standards results (the PSE equivalisation scale) (Bradshaw, 1993; Parker, 1998 & 2000). Since the McClement equivalence scale does not assign sufficient weight to children, these relativities were modified to take account of more detailed budget standards results on the cost of children by gender and age (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000).

This study will first compare the PSE equivalisation scale with one based on the relativities of MacPherson's budget standards for Hong Kong (MacPherson's equivalisation scale) (MacPherson, 1994b) and then compare the equivalised income distribution of the whole population from the 1% sample using these two equivalisation scales. As shown in table 5.1, there were differences between the PSE equivalisation scale and MacPherson's equivalisation scale. The equivalence values of the PSE equivalisation scale were higher than MacPherson's equivalisation scale, except for 'partner' and 'if head of household as a lone parent'. The equivalised income using MacPherson's equivalence scale was higher than those using the PSE equivalence scale, (i.e. the differences were HK\$765 for HIB50%, HK\$484 for HIB60% and HK\$495 for HLIQ respectively (Table 5.2). It was understood that there were differences between the equivalised income distribution of the whole population from the 1% sample using these two different equivalisation scales. However the PSE equivalisation scale has been adopted to adjust income by household size and type for the 1% sample and the LS survey in order to conduct comparisons of the findings of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the key results of the LS survey and the PSE survey.

²⁸ The equivalised income is equal to the household's gross income divided by the equivalence value.

²⁹ From 2004/05, the British Government will adopt the Modified OECD equivalence scale used by Eurostat for the European Union for measuring child poverty (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004, <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2002/contents.asp>, accessed on 5 March 2005).

Table 5.1: PSE equivalisation scale and MacPherson's equivalisation scale

Type of household member	PSE equivalisation scale ¹	MacPherson's equivalisation scale ²
Head of household	0.70	0.56
Partner	0.30	0.44
Each additional adult	0.45	0.43
First child	0.35	0.28
Each additional child	0.30	0.22
If head of household as a lone parent	0.10	0.15

Notes: 1. Gordon, D., *et al.*, (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.86-87.
 2. MacPherson, S. & Lo, O.Y. (1997) *A Measure of Poverty*, Hong Kong: Department of Public & Social Administration, City University of Hong Kong (Table 6), p.21.

Table 5.2: Equivalised income distribution of the whole population from the 1% sample using PSE equivalisation scale and MacPherson's equivalisation scale

	PSE equivalisation scale ¹		MacPherson's equivalisation scale ²	
	% (N)	Income range	% (N)	Income range
Income below the mean of equivalised income				
Yes	69.0 (N= 14,199)	<HK\$18,845.9	69.7 (N= 14,347)	<HK\$20,376.31
No	31.0 (N= 6,388)	□ HK\$18,845.9	30.3 (N= 6,237)	□ HK\$20,376.31
Income below the median of equivalised income				
Yes	50.1 (N= 10,310)	<HK\$12,631.6	50.0 (N= 10,292)	<HK\$13,439.18
No	49.9 (N= 10,274)	□ HK\$12,631.6	50.0 (N= 10,292)	□ HK\$13,439.18
Income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution				
Yes	35.9 (N= 7,398)	<HK\$9,423.0	36.7 (N= 7,554)	<HK\$10,188.16
No	64.1 (N= 13,186)	□ HK\$9,423.0	63.3 (N= 13,030)	□ HK\$10,188.16
Income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution				
Yes	26.9 (N= 5,544)	<HK\$7,578.9	26.9 (N= 5,544)	<HK\$8,063.51
No	73.1 (N= 15,040)	□ HK\$7,578.9	73.1 (N= 15,040)	□ HK\$8,063.51
Income quintile for the whole equivalised distribution				
1 st quintile (lowest income)	20.0 (N= 4,117)	x □ HK\$6,190.48	20.0 (N= 4,120)	x □ HK\$6,686.05
2 nd quintile	20.0 (N= 4,117)	HK\$6,190.48 < x □ HK\$10,265.52	20.0 (N= 4,114)	HK\$6,686.05 < x □ HK\$10,923.08
3 rd quintile	20.0 (N= 4,114)	HK\$10,265.52 < x □ HK\$15,421.05)	20.0 (N= 4,116)	HK\$10,923.08 < x □ HK\$16,419.21
4 th quintile	20.0 (N= 4,123)	HK\$15,421.05 < x □ HK\$25,925.93)	20.0 (N= 4,118)	HK\$16,419.21 < x □ HK\$27,622.38
5 th quintile (highest income)	20.0 (N= 4,113)	x > HK\$25,925.93	20.0 (N= 4,116)	x > HK\$27,622.38

Notes: 1. Gordon, D., *et al.*, (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.86-87.
 2. MacPherson, S. & Lo, O.Y. (1997) *A Measure of Poverty*, Hong Kong: Department of Public & Social Administration, City University of Hong Kong (Table 6), p.21
 3. Total number of households drawn from the 1% sample is 20,584.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample

Income distribution

Table 5.2 shows equivalised income distribution for the whole population from the 1% sample in 2001. The mean and median of equivalised income of the whole equivalised distribution were HK\$18,845.9 and HK\$12,631.6 respectively. There was more than one-third of HIB50% with equivalised household income being equivalent to or less than HK\$9,423 (35.9%), compared with more than one quarter of HIB60% with equivalised household income being equivalent to or less than HK\$7,578.9 (26.9%). The highest income quintile for the whole equivalised distribution was equivalent to or more than HK\$25,925.93 in 2001, compared with equivalised income less than or equivalent to HK\$6,190.48 for the HLIQ. Households with income below the mean of equivalised income (i.e. HK\$18,845.9) was three times higher than those HLIQ.

Housing and rents

Table 5.3.1 presents socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample. As shown in the table, there were relatively a higher proportion of low-income households living in 'public rental housing' (i.e. 48.7% for the HIB50%, 49.5% for the HIB60% and 49.1% for the HLIQ). The findings indicated that households living in 'public rental housing' (i.e. 57.5% for the HIB50%, 43.8% for the HIB60% and 32.3% for the HLIQ), and 'temporary housing' (i.e. 62.7% for the HIB50%, 52.2% for the HIB60% and 43.1% for the HLIQ) were more likely to be poor.

Regarding type of accommodation, there was a majority of low-income households living in 'whole quarters' (i.e. unshared) (i.e. 92.5% for the HIB50%, 92.4% for the HIB60% and 92.0% for the HLIQ), compared with less than one-tenth of low-income households living in 'rooms/cubicles' and 'bedspaces' (i.e. 7.2% for the HIB50%, 7.1% for the HIB60% and 7.6% for the HLIQ). The results demonstrated that households living in 'rooms/cubicles' (i.e. 60.1% for the HIB50%, 46.3% for the HIB60% and 35.5% for the HLIQ), and 'bedspaces' (i.e. 71.9% for the HIB50%, 42.1% for the HIB60% and 40.4% for the HLIQ) were more likely to be living in low-income households (Table 5.3.1).

Concerning the number of domestic household sharing, there were less than one-tenth of the low-income households sharing their quarters with more than one other

domestic households (i.e. 7.6% for the HLIQ, and 7.2% for both the HIB50% and the HIB60%). Households who needed to share their quarters with more than one other domestic households were more likely to be poor (i.e. 60.9% for the HIB50%, 46.0% for the HIB60% and 35.8% for the HLIQ) (Table 5.3.1) The findings reflected that the low-income households tended to have poor living conditions in terms of types of accommodation and degree of sharing.

The findings also showed that more than one-third of the low-income households paid less than HK\$1,499 for monthly domestic household rent (i.e. 40.7% for the HLIQ, 39.7% for the HIB60% and 38.1% for the HIB50%). Nonetheless, about one-tenth of low-income households paid more than HK\$2,000 for monthly domestic household rent (i.e. 9.8% for the HLIQ, 12.0% for the HIB60% and 13.3% for the HIB50%) (Table 5.3.1). The monthly domestic household rent accounted for at least 21.2%, 26.4% and 32.3% of housing expenses for the HIB50%, the HIB60% and the HLIQ respectively. It illustrated that housing expenses of the HLIQ were high in terms of proportion of income going on housing.

Household composition and number of working household members

As shown in table 5.3.1, one-person households were more likely to be poor (i.e. 40.1% for the HIB50%, 33.6% for the HIB60% and 29.8% for the HLIQ). There was a high proportion of one-person households living in the low-income households since there were at least two-third of single elderly people living in the low-income households (i.e. 67.2% for the HIB50%, 73.2% for the HIB60% and 75.8% for the HLIQ). In other words, single elderly people aged 60 and over were more likely to be poor (i.e. 82.3% for the HIB50%, 75.1% for the HIB60% and 69.0% for the HLIQ).

The results also demonstrated the importance of the presence/absence of working household members to levels of income. There were more than one-third of low-income households with no working members (i.e. 35.6% for the HIB50%, 43.3% for the HIB60% and 51.1% for the HLIQ), compared with less than 5% of low-income households with three or more working household members (i.e. 3.6% for the HIB50%, 2.2% for the HIB60% and 0.8% for the HLIQ). The results indicated that households with no working members were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 83.4% for the HIB50%, 75.9% for the HIB60% and 66.6% for the HLIQ) (Table 5.3.1).

Furthermore, the greater the number of dependent household members, the more likely the households were to be low-income households. As shown in table 5.3.1, less than 10% of low-income households with three or more children aged below 15 (i.e. 5.3% for the HIB50%, 5.8% for the HIB60% and 6.2% for the HLIQ). Households with

three or more children aged below 15 in households were more likely to be poor (i.e. 68.1% for the HIB50%, 56.7% for the HIB60% and 44.8% for the HLIQ), in comparison with less than one-third of low-income households without children (i.e. 32.4% for the HIB50%, 24.5% for the HIB60% and 19.0% for the HLIQ). Dependency in the sense of the presence of larger than average number of children or the presence of non working elderly people was strongly associated with an increased risk of being a low income household.

Table 5.3.1: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample (2001)

Characteristics	Income below 50% of the mean			Income below 60% of the median			The lowest income quintile			All domestic households from the 1% sample	
	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%
Type of quarters											
Public rental housing	3,602	48.7	57.5	2,744	49.5	43.8	2,020	49.1	32.3	6,260	30.4
Government Subsidized flats	925	12.5	28.5	642	11.6	19.8	463	11.2	14.3	3,241	15.7
Private permanent housing	2,679	36.2	25.4	2,005	36.2	19.0	1,508	36.6	14.3	10,528	51.1
Temporary housing	160	2.2	62.7	133	2.4	52.2	110	2.7	43.1	255	1.2
Others	32	0.4	9.7	20	0.4	6.1	16	0.4	4.8	330	1.5
Type of accommodation											
Whole quarters	6,841	92.5	34.8	5,124	92.4	26.1	3,789	92.0	19.3	19,665	95.5
Rooms/cubicles	486	6.6	60.1	374	6.7	46.3	287	7.0	35.5	808	3.9
Cocklofts	3	0	60.0	3	0	60.0	2	0	40.0	5	0
Bedspaces	41	0.6	71.9	24	0.4	42.1	23	0.6	40.4	57	0.3
Accommodation in non-residential quarters with no area partitioned off for living purpose	9	0.1	37.5	5	0.1	20.8	2	0	8.3	24	0.1
Unsheltered accommodation	11	0.1	100.0	9	0.2	81.8	9	0.2	81.8	11	0.1
N.A. (for non-domestic households/for marine households)	7	0.1	50.0	5	0.1	35.7	5	0.1	35.7	14	0.1
Degree of Sharing¹											
1	6,867	92.8	34.8	5,143	92.8	26.1	3,805	92.4	19.3	19,712	95.8
2	167	2.3	54.9	137	2.5	45.1	108	2.6	35.5	304	1.5
3	141	1.9	65.9	101	1.8	47.2	76	1.8	35.5	214	1.0
4+	223	3.0	63.0	163	2.9	46.0	128	3.1	36.2	354	1.7
Monthly domestic household rent²											
\$1-999	1,125	15.3	65.6	914	16.6	53.3	750	18.3	43.8	1,714	8.4
\$1,000-1,499	1,677	22.8	57.4	1,274	23.1	43.6	919	22.4	31.5	2,921	14.3
\$1,500-1,999	737	10.0	51.1	518	9.4	35.9	359	8.8	24.9	1,441	7.0
\$2,000-3,999	738	10.0	46.4	526	9.5	33.0	339	8.3	21.3	1,592	7.8
\$4,000+	233	3.3	12.0	137	2.5	7.0	64	1.5	3.3	1,946	9.5
N.A.	2,857	38.8	26.3	2,151	39.0	19.8	1,666	40.7	15.4	10,844	53.0
Household size											
1	1,273	17.2	40.1	1,066	19.2	33.6	946	23.0	29.8	3,172	15.4
2	1,502	20.3	33.7	1,181	21.3	26.5	922	22.4	20.7	4,457	21.7
3	1,382	18.7	31.5	985	17.8	22.5	659	16.0	15.0	4,384	21.3
4	1,771	23.9	36.7	1,245	22.5	25.8	847	20.6	17.5	4,830	23.5
5+	1,470	19.9	39.2	1,067	19.2	28.5	743	18.0	19.8	3,750	18.2

Table 5.3.1 (Continued)

Characteristics	Income below 50% of the mean			Income below 60% of the median			The lowest income quintile			All domestic households from the 1% sample	
	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%
One-person households											
Single elderly aged 60+ in household	855	67.2	82.3 ³	780	73.2	75.1 ⁴	717	75.8	69.0 ⁵	1,039 ⁶	32.8
Non-single elderly aged 60+ in household	418	32.8	19.6	285	26.8	13.4	229	24.2	10.7	2,133	67.2
Number of working household members											
0	2,636	35.6	83.4	2,399	43.3	75.9	2,105	51.1	66.6	3,162	15.4
1	3,194	43.2	41.7	2,317	41.8	30.2	1,621	39.4	21.2	7,664	37.2
2	1,297	17.5	20.7	711	12.8	11.3	354	8.6	5.6	6,274	30.5
3	223	3.0	8.6	93	1.7	3.6	30	0.7	1.2	2,601	12.6
4	39	0.5	5.7	20	0.4	2.9	5	0.1	0.7	681	3.3
5+	9	0.1	4.5	4	0.1	2.0	2	0	1.0	202	1.0
Children aged below 15 in household											
0	4,365	59.0	32.4	3,301	59.5	24.5	2,561	62.2	19.0	13,452	65.4
1	1,440	19.5	36.3	1,031	18.6	26.0	685	16.6	17.3	3,971	19.3
2	1,204	16.3	46.5	888	16.0	34.3	615	14.9	23.7	2,590	12.6
3+	389	5.3	68.1	324	5.8	56.7	256	6.2	44.8	571	2.8
One-parent (either father/mother) family with one or more never married child											
Yes	249	3.4	69.6	209	3.8	58.4	153	3.7	42.7	358	1.7
No	7,149	96.6	35.3	5,335	96.2	26.4	3,964	96.3	19.6	20,226	98.3
Elderly persons aged 60+ in household											
0	3,799	51.4	28.1	2,670	48.2	19.7	1,858	45.1	13.7	13,543	65.8
1	2,279	30.8	48.4	1,822	32.9	38.7	1,451	35.2	30.8	4,706	22.9
2+	1,320	17.8	56.5	1,052	18.9	45.1	808	19.6	34.6	2,335	11.3
Total	7,398	100.0	35.9	5,544	100.0	26.9	4,117	100.0	20.0	20,584	100.0

- Notes:
1. Number of domestic households occupied in a quarter.
 2. Total number of cases is 7,367.
 3. Total number of single person in households whose income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution is 1,273.
 4. Total number of single person in households whose income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution is 1,066.
 5. Total number of single person in households living in the lowest 20% of income quintile is 946.
 6. Total number of one-person households from the 1% sample is 3,172.
 7. There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table owing to rounding.

The findings also demonstrated that less than 4% of low-income households were one-parent families with one or more never married child (i.e. 3.4% for the HIB50%, 3.8% for the HIB60% and 3.7% for the HLIQ). As shown in table 5.3.1, one-parent families with children were more likely to be poor (i.e. 69.6% for the HIB50%, 58.4% for the HIB60% and 42.7% for the HLIQ). It is because female/male-headed single parents found difficulties in looking for full-time jobs owing to caring responsibilities. There were less than one-fifth of low-income households with at least

two elderly persons in the household (i.e. 17.8% for the HIB50%, 18.9% for the HIB60% and 19.6% for the HLIQ), compared with about 50% of low-income households with no elderly persons aged 60 and over in households (i.e. 51.4% for the HIB50%, 48.2% for the HIB60% and 45.1% for the HLIQ). As shown in the table, households with at least two elderly persons in the household (i.e. 56.5% for the HIB50%, 45.1% for the HIB60% and 34.6% for the HLIQ) were more likely to be poor. The findings explained that labour market exclusion was a crucial factor to lead to poverty.

Table 5.3.2: Demographic characteristics of people in low-income households from the 1% sample (2001)

Characteristics	Income below 50% of the mean			Income below 60% of the median			The lowest income quintile			All domestic households from the 1% sample	
	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%
Sex											
Male	11,486	48.6	36.4	8,299	48.0	26.3	5,833	47.7	18.5	31,586	48.5
Female	12,125	51.4	36.2	8,993	52.0	26.9	6,399	52.3	19.1	33,478	51.5
One-parent families²											
Male-headed	86	34.5	74.1	65	31.1	56.0	46	29.9	39.7	116	32.4
Female-headed	163	65.5	67.4	144	68.9	59.5	108	70.1	44.6	242	67.6
Ethnicity											
Chinese	23,077	97.7	37.4	16,888	97.7	27.4	11,933	97.6	19.4	61,695	94.8
South Asian ¹	422	1.8	17.2	331	1.9	13.5	249	2.0	10.2	2,452	3.8
Others	112	0.5	12.2	73	0.4	8.0	50	0.4	5.5	917	1.4
Total	23,611	100.0	36.3	17,292	100.0	26.6	12,232	100.0	17.3	65,062	100.0

- Notes:
1. South Asian ethnic minorities refer to those come from the South and Southeast Asian, including Filipino, Indonesian, Indians, Nepalese, Thai, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri-Lankan.
 2. Total number of one-parent (either father/mother) family with one/more never married child for the HIB50%, for the HIB60% and for the HLIQ are 249, 209 and 153.
 3. There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table owing to rounding.

Ethnic and gender dimensions of low income households

As shown in table 5.3.2, there were relatively a higher proportion of women living in low-income households (i.e. 51.4% for the HIB50%, 52.0% for the HIB60% and 52.3% for the HLIQ) than men (i.e. 48.6% for the HIB50%, 48.0% for the HIB60% and 47.7% for the HLIQ). It was partly because these women lived in poor households and partly because resources were not shared equally in households. The findings also indicated that at least two-third of female-headed single parents living in low-income households (i.e. 65.5% for the HIB50%, 68.9% for the HIB60% and 70.1% for the HLIQ). The results showed that female-headed single parents were more likely to be poor (i.e. 59.5% for the HIB60% and 44.6% for the HLIQ).

There were a majority of Chinese people living in low-income households (i.e.

97.7% for the HIB50%, 97.7% for the HIB60% and 97.6% for the HLIQ), compared with about 2% of people from South Asian countries (i.e. 1.8% for the HIB50%, 1.9% for the HIB60% and 2.0% for the HLIQ) (Table 5.3.2). Although there was only a small proportion of South Asian ethnic minorities living in poverty, there has been a growing concern about young ethnic minorities' difficulties and limited opportunities for education and training (Commission on Youth, 2003). Persons who are low educational attainment and low skill are strongly associated with an increased risk of being a low-income household.

Number of low-income households by household type

Table 5.4 shows the number of low-income households by household type in 2001 and summarises the links between household type and low income. The findings indicated that one-person households with elderly members aged 60+ (i.e. 82.3% for the HIB50%, 75.1% for the HIB60% and 69.0% for the HLIQ), as well as one-parent families with children (i.e. 72.0% for the HIB50%, 60.3% for the HIB60% and 43.4% for the HLIQ) were the most vulnerable to living in low-income households. The findings illustrated that the greater the number of dependent household members, the more likely they were to be living in low-income households. In addition, it is difficult for female/male-headed single parents to look for full-time jobs owing to caring responsibilities. It demonstrated that labour market exclusion was a crucial factor to lead to poverty. As shown in the table, one-parent families with children below 15 were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 72.0% for the HIB50%, 60.3% for the HIB60% and 43.4% for the HLIQ) than those two-parent households with children below 15 (i.e. 42.5% for the HIB50%, 31.4% for the HIB60% and 21.8% for the HLIQ).

Table 5.4: Number of low-income households by household type (2001)

Household type	Income below 50% of the mean		Income below 60% of the median		The lowest income quintile		All domestic households from the 1% sample N
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	
One-person households aged 60+	855	82.3	780	75.1	717	69.0	1,039
One-parent family with one/more never married child	249	72.0	209	60.3	153	43.4	358
Households with elderly persons aged 60+	3,599	51.1	2,874	40.8	2,259	32.1	7,041
Households with children aged under 15	3,033	42.5	2,243	31.4	1,556	21.8	7,132
One-person households aged below 60	418	19.6	285	13.4	229	10.7	2,133
Total	7,398	35.9	5,544	26.9	4,117	20.0	20,584¹

- Notes: 1. It refers to the total number of domestic households from the 1% sample.
2. There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table owing to rounding.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of single elderly people aged 60+ living in low-income households

Table 5.5 presents socio-economic and demographic characteristics of single elderly people aged 60+ living in low-income households in 2001. As shown in the table, there were relatively a higher proportion of single elderly people aged 60+ in low-income households living in 'public rental housing' (i.e. 48.7% for the HIB50%, 48.8% for the HIB60% and 48.5% for the HLIQ). The findings indicated that single elderly people aged 60+ living in 'public rental housing' (i.e. 87.6% for the HIB50%, 80.2% for the HIB60% and 73.3% for the HLIQ), 'government subsidized flats' (i.e. 85.7% for the HIB50%, 78.6% for the HIB60% and 76.2% for the HLIQ), and 'temporary housing' (i.e. 91.7% for the HIB50%, 77.8% for the HIB60% and 75.0% for the HLIQ) were more likely to be poor.

Regarding type of accommodation, there were more than three quarters of single elderly people aged 60+ in low-income households living in 'whole quarters' (i.e. unshared) (i.e. 81.5% for the HIB50%, 81.8% for the HIB60% and 82.0% for the HLIQ), compared with more than one-tenth living in 'rooms/cubicles' and 'bedspaces' (i.e. 17.8% for the HIB50%, 17.7% for the HIB60% and 17.8% for the HLIQ). In addition, there were less than one-fifth of single elderly people aged 60+ in low income households sharing their quarters with at least one other domestic households (i.e. 18.1% for the HIB50%, 18.1% for the HIB60%, and 19.7% for the HLIQ). Single elderly aged 60+ who needed to share their quarters with more than one other domestic households were more likely to be living in low-income households (Table 5.5) The findings reflected that single elderly people aged 60+ in low-income households tended to have poor living conditions in terms of types of accommodation and degree of sharing.

As shown in table 5.5, there was an overwhelming majority of single elderly people aged 60+ in low-income households were not working (i.e. 92.5% for the HIB50%, 95.6% for the HIB60% and 96.5% for the HLIQ). The findings reflected that single elderly people aged 60+ who did not participate in the labour market were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 86.9% for the HIB50%, 82.0% for the HIB60% and 76.0% for the HLIQ).

Table 5.5: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of single elderly aged 60+ living in low-income households in Hong Kong (2001)

Characteristics	Income below 50% of the mean			Income below 60% of the median			The lowest income quintile			All domestic households from the 1% sample	
	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%
Type of quarters											
Public rental housing	416	48.7	87.6	381	48.8	80.2	348	48.5	73.3	475	45.7
Government Subsidized flats	36	4.2	85.7	33	4.2	78.6	32	4.5	76.2	42	4.0
Private permanent housing	364	42.6	77.3	334	42.8	70.9	307	42.8	65.2	471	45.3
Temporary housing	33	3.9	91.7	28	3.6	77.8	27	3.8	75.0	36	3.5
Others	6	0.7	40.0	4	0.5	26.7	3	0.4	20.0	15	1.4
Type of accommodation											
Whole quarters	697	81.5	82.1	638	81.8	75.1	588	82.0	69.3	849	81.7
Rooms/cubicles	136	15.9	84.0	124	15.9	76.5	113	15.8	69.8	162	15.6
Cocklofts	3	0.4	100.0	3	0.4	100.0	0	0.3	0.0	3	0.3
Bedspaces	16	1.9	94.1	14	1.8	82.4	14	2.0	82.4	17	1.6
Accommodation in non-residential quarters with no area partitioned off for living purpose	2	0.2	33.3	1	0.1	16.7	0	0	0.0	6	0.6
Unsheltered accommodation	1	0.1	100.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	1	0.1
N.A.	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Degree of Sharing											
1	700	81.9	81.7	639	81.9	74.6	588	80.3	68.6	857	82.5
2	54	6.3	88.5	53	6.8	86.9	48	6.7	78.7	61	5.9
3	37	4.3	92.5	33	4.2	82.5	32	4.5	80.0	40	3.8
4+	64	7.5	79.0	55	7.1	67.9	49	6.8	60.5	81	7.8
Number of working household members											
0	791	92.5	86.9	746	95.6	82.0	692	96.5	76.0	910	87.6
1	64	7.5	49.6	34	4.4	26.4	25	3.5	19.4	129	12.4
Total	855	100.0	82.3	780	100.0	75.1	717	100.0	69.0	1039	100.0

Note: There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table owing to rounding.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of one-parent families with children living in low-income households

Table 5.6 presents socio-economic and demographic characteristics of one-parent families with children living in low-income households in 2001. As shown in the table, there was a high proportion of one-parent families with children in low-income households living in 'public rental housing' (i.e. 53.8% for the HIB50%, 55.5% for the HIB60% and 66.7% for the HLIQ). The findings indicated that one-parent families with children living in 'public rental housing' were more likely to be poor (i.e. 88.2% for the HIB50%, 76.3% for the HIB60% and 67.1% for the HLIQ).

There were at least one-tenth of one-parent families with children living in low-income households with four or more household members (11.2% for HIB50%,

13.4% for HIB60% and 15.7% for HLIQ). The findings also indicated that one-parent families with two or more children below 15, which accounted for 54.6% for the HIB50%, 57.4% for the HIB60% and 58.9% for the HLIQ, were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 84.5% for the HIB50%, 74.5% for the HIB60% and 55.9% for the HLIQ) (Table 5.6). It illustrated that the greater the number of dependent household members, the more likely they were to be living in low-income households.

The findings also showed that there were at least 60% of one-parent families with children living in low-income households with no working household member. One-parent families with children without working household member were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 84.8% for the HIB50%, 78.1% for the HIB60% and 62.9% for the HLIQ). Nonetheless, attachment to the labour market did not guarantee relief from poverty owing to low-paid jobs. As shown in table 5.6, there were at least one quarters of one-parent families with working household members living in low-income households (i.e. 39.4% for the HIB50%, 34.0% for the HIB60% and 26.8% for the HLIQ).

There was at least two-third of female-headed single parents with children living in low-income households (i.e. 65.5% for the HIB50%, 68.9% for the HIB60% and 70.1% for the HLIQ). There were only less than one-fifth of female-/male-headed single parents have resided in Hong Kong less than 7 years living in low-income households (i.e. 18.1% for the HIB60%, 19.1% for the HIB50% and 17.5% for the HLIQ). However, female-/male-headed single parents have resided in Hong Kong less than 7 years were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 77.6% for the HIB60%, 69.0% for the HIB50% and 46.6% for the HLIQ). A number of local studies argued that feminization of poverty in Hong Kong resulted from inadequate support from social welfare and social services (Chan, 1999; Lee & Edwards, 1998; Leung, 1999a & 1999b). For instance, insufficiency and inflexibility of child care service provisions hinder the single mothers to find out full-time jobs. In addition, eligibility criteria of applying CSSA³⁰ and public rental housing³¹ hinder those low-income groups from receiving financial assistance and service in kind and make their integration into society much more difficult.

³⁰ From 1 January 2004, to be an eligible CSSA recipient, an applicant must have been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years, and he/she must have resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 2004).

³¹ One of the eligibility criteria of applying public rental housing for ordinary families includes 'At the time of allocation, at least half of the family members included in the application must have lived in Hong Kong for seven years and are still living in Hong Kong' (Hong Kong Housing Authority, <http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/residential/prh/housingfamilies/0,,00.html>, accessed on 5 March 2005).

Table 5.6: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of one-parent families with children living in low-income households in Hong Kong (2001)

Characteristics	Income below 50% of the mean			Income below 60% of the median			The lowest income quintile			All domestic households from the 1% sample	
	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%	Rate	N	%
Type of quarters											
Public rental housing	134	53.8	88.2	116	55.5	76.3	102	66.7	67.1	152	42.5
Government Subsidized flats	14	5.6	43.8	11	5.3	34.4	8	5.2	25.0	32	8.9
Private permanent housing	95	38.2	57.2	78	37.3	47.0	41	26.8	24.7	166	46.4
Others	6	2.4	75.0	4	1.9	50.0	2	1.4	25.0	8	2.3
Type of accommodation											
Whole quarters	225	90.4	68.6	191	91.4	58.2	142	92.8	43.3	328	91.6
Rooms/cubicles	22	9.6	73.3	18	8.6	60.0	11	7.2	36.7	30	8.4
Household size											
2	113	45.4	57.4	89	42.6	45.2	63	41.2	32.0	197	55.0
3	108	43.4	81.8	92	44.0	69.7	66	43.1	50.0	132	36.9
4+	28	11.2	96.6	28	13.4	96.6	24	15.7	82.8	29	8.1
Number of children aged under 15 in household											
1	113	45.4	57.4	89	42.6	45.2	63	41.2	32.0	197	55.0
2+	136	54.6	84.5	120	57.4	74.5	90	58.9	55.9	161	45.0
Number of working household members											
0	151	60.6	84.8	139	66.0	78.1	112	73.2	62.9	178	49.7
1	98	39.4	54.4	71	34.0	39.4	41	26.8	22.8	180	50.3
Sex											
Male-headed	86	34.5	74.1	65	31.1	56.0	46	29.9	39.7	116	32.4
Female-headed	163	65.5	67.4	144	68.9	59.5	108	70.1	44.6	242	67.6
Male-/female-headed single parents' duration of residence in Hong Kong											
< 7 years	45	18.1	77.6	40	19.1	69.0	27	17.5	46.6	58	16.2
7 years and over	204	81.9	68.0	169	80.9	56.3	127	82.5	42.3	300	83.8
Total	249	100.0	69.6	209	100.0	58.4	153	100.0	42.7	358	100.0

Note: There may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table owing to rounding.

To sum up, with reference to numbers of low-income households by household type, one-person households with elderly members aged 60+ and one-parent families with children were the most vulnerable to living in low-income households. The findings also indicated that the fewer the number of working household members, the more likely they were to be living in low-income households. The number of working household members varied by number of children aged below 15, as well as elderly persons aged 60+ in households. The data illustrated that the greater the number of dependent household members, the more likely the members were to be living in low-income households. The results also reflected that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee them escape out of poverty owing to low-paid or part-time jobs.

6

Survey design of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

Aims of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

Sample design

Sampling procedure

Types of quarters in Hong Kong
Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population in Hong Kong
A sample drawn from the Census & Statistics Department of HKSAR

Content of questionnaire

Pilot interviews

Finalized questions for the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

Necessities for children and adults
Absolute and overall poverty
Perception of poverty
Public perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion

The content of questionnaire

Child & adult necessities in Hong Kong
Absolute and Overall poverty
Perception of poverty
Poverty over time
Public perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion
Demographic information

Data collection

Recruitment of interviewers

Data collection

Overall response rate of the survey interviews

Limitations of the study

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the sampled respondents and the whole population in Hong Kong

Chapter 6

Survey design of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

After reviewing past research on poverty in Hong Kong, as well as analyzing data from the 2001 Population Census to examine the profile of low-income households in Hong Kong in 2001, this chapter discusses the survey design of the survey of living standards (LS survey) in Hong Kong. The *first* section of this chapter explains the aims of the LS survey. The *second* section discusses the sample design of the LS survey, the design of the questionnaire, procedure of data collection, the overall response rate of the survey, as well as the inevitable limitations of the study. The *third* section presents socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents of the LS survey in Hong Kong. The findings are discussed in Chapter 7.

Aims of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

There have been a lot of debates on how to construct a scientific and systematic study identifying indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion. The ultimate goal of poverty definition is to better measure and analyze the prevalence of poverty and then to find out solutions. The goal will only be achieved if the definition has broad public support (Halleröd, 1995b:116). Thus, apart from tapping the experts' views on the living standards of the poor, it is crucial to map public opinion on a range of issues associated with poverty and social exclusion.

Although there were a lot of research studies concerning poverty in Hong Kong in the 1990s, many of them focused on the adequacy of the CSSA scheme and the living standards of low-income households. There was no systematic poverty study using the public opinion approach in Hong Kong. The discussion in the previous chapter reflected that multi-dimensional indicators were important to explain various elements of hardship and their interrelationships. Therefore, it is valuable to explore what aspects of living patterns are seen by public opinion to constitute poverty and social exclusion and their impact on people's living standards.

The discussion on definitions of poverty and social exclusion in previous chapters revealed that keeping people in subsistence poverty for a long period of time might not be tolerable in a prosperous economy since their standards of living fell markedly below that of the rest of society. Needs it was suggested should be included beyond the physical necessities of life since securing mere physical efficiency was not sufficient and poverty should also have a social meaning. It is crucial to measure poverty based upon multi-dimensional aspects in order to secure a total picture of the living standards of the vulnerable groups and the true meaning of poverty (Bradshaw, 1997; Hagenaars & De Vos, 1988; Ringen, 1987 & 1988; Townsend & Gordon, 1991).

In addition, income is not necessarily sufficient to determine whether he/she is poor with reference to his/her income when poverty is defined more broadly as relative deprivation. There is not always a direct relationship between economic resources and standards of living. The actual living standards may be different among different households with identical economic resources because of different expenditure pressures and differing ability to transform money into living standards (Gordon, 1998b; Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a & 1997b; Halleröd, 1995a & 1995b; Ringen, 1987 & 1988). Therefore, using both income and deprivation indicators offers the opportunity to measure poverty more accurately and to provide a more complete picture of the living standards of the poor. The findings of recent studies also revealed that the results were more reliable when using more than one poverty measure. The combination of poverty measures need to include income data, subjective measures as well as social indicators (Bradshaw, 2001a & 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001a, 2001b & 2003; Layte, Nolan & Whelan, 2000). Therefore, poverty measures need to focus not only on low material means, but also the ability to participate effectively in economic, social, political, and cultural life, as well as degree of integration or alienation and distance from mainstream society.

Poverty studies in Hong Kong really began with Chow's 1982 study, *Poverty in an Affluent City: A Report of a Survey on Low Income Families in Hong Kong*, aimed at investigating the needs and the living styles of low-income families in Hong Kong in the early 1980s. Nonetheless, his study was not followed up. Hong Kong's record of rapid economic growth pushed the issue of poverty into the background. It re-emerged in the 1990s with MacPherson's study of the living standard of CSSA recipients. It was this issue which became the focus of concern and inspired a clutch of poverty studies in the 1990s (Chua, *et al.*, 2002; Estes, 2000; Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1996; Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 1998; Liu, *et al.*, 1996; MacPherson & Chan, 1996; MacPherson & Lo, 1997; Mok & Leung, 1995; Wong & Chua, 1996 & 1998; Wong & Lee, 2000). However, there is a lack of comprehensive empirical study identifying

indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion using the public opinion approach in Hong Kong. Although there have been a number of studies concerning public opinion on poverty, welfare issues as well as subjective well-being in Hong Kong since the 1990s (Leung, 1999; Wong, 1995; 1997; 1998a & 1998b; Wong, *et al.*, 1998; Wan, 2001), there is a lack of research on multi-dimensional indicators reflecting various elements of hardship and their interrelationships. It is valuable to explore what aspects of living patterns constitute poverty and social exclusion and their impacts on people's livelihood. Furthermore, Hong Kong has undergone dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes in the late 1990s and there have been significant impacts on people's livelihood. It is important to look into the extent and prevalence of poverty in Hong Kong so that policy makers allocate resources to those people who are in real need.

The objective of the LS survey was to develop methods of studying poverty. In order to grasp a more complete picture of the life-style of the poor. The LS survey combined income data, social indicators (i.e. lack of socially perceived necessities), as well as subjective measures of poverty (i.e. perceptions of UN definitions of absolute and overall poverty). This study, *first*, attempted to explore what aspects of living patterns constitute poverty and social exclusion, as well as their impacts on people's living standards in Hong Kong drawing on the approach of the two studies *Breadline Britain* (1983 & 1990) and the PSE survey in 1999 (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). The LS survey included different income groups so as to differentiate their views on a range of issues associated with poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. *Second*, the study also attempted to probe into the living conditions of various kinds of household of different size and composition. *Third*, it also tried to find out about movement in and out of poverty, as well as look at age and gender differences in experiences of and responses to poverty. *Fourth*, it attempted to conduct a comparative study of public perception of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain. It tried to find out the similarities and differences between the two territories and explain why they exist.

Sample design

Sampling procedure

The public views on issues to do with poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong were collected by face-to-face interviews with structured questionnaire. The sample for the LS survey was obtained from the Census & Statistics Department of HKSAR of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The whole territory of Hong Kong is composed of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories (NT). There are in total eighteen

District Board (DB) districts in Hong Kong³² (Appendix 6). Owing to limited time and resources, the sample for this survey was drawn from Shatin, where is one of the 18 DB districts in Hong Kong, taking account of socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Although there was only one DB chosen, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample.

In this survey, *stratified sampling* was used in order to ensure that an appropriate number of elements was drawn from homogeneous subsets of the population (Agresti & Finlay, 1997: 26-27; Babbie, 1990: 85-87; 1992; 1998b: 216-219; 1999: 194-197; De Vaus, 1996; Folz, 1996; Gilbert, 1993; O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1995). Then, the sample was drawn by random number tables from each stratum. The sampling frame of the present study was based on *Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census*. In order to reflect the living conditions and housing costs of different households in Hong Kong, the sample was classified by *types of quarters*. Then, the sample was selected on a *weighted basis* within each strata. According to *the 1999/2000 Household Expenditure Survey*, the shares of household expenditure on housing for three different expenditure household groups, including Consumer Price Index (CPI) (A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 29.1%, 29.7% and 31.2% respectively³³. The result indicated the fact that 'housing' accounts for a dominant share of overall household expenditure in Hong Kong. The following sections explain how and why Shatin district in the NT was chosen in terms of the presence of various kinds of housing types, as well as the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population in Hong Kong.

Types of quarters in Hong Kong

The sample was, first, derived from the register of quarters (RQ)³⁴ and then the geographical areas and the types of quarters were specified so as to select a sample of quarters. The geographical coverage of the sample was specified by the DB. According to the Census & Statistics Department, various types of quarters can be specified in selecting

³² Central and Western district, Wan Chai district, Eastern district and Southern district are located in Hong Kong Island. Yau Tsim Mong district, Sham Shui Po district, Kowloon City district, Wong Tai Sin district, Kwun Tong district are situated at Kowloon. Kwai Tsing district, Tsuen Wan district, Tuen Mun district, Yuen Long district, North district, Tai Po district, Shatin district, Sai Kung district, Islands district are located in the NT. The DB demarcation system is developed for district administration and election purposes.

³³ According to the Census & Statistics Department, the rebased series of CPI (A) relates to about 50% of households, in the relatively low expenditure range. During the period of October 1999 to September 2000, these households spent between HK\$4,500 and HK\$18,499. The rebased series of CPI (B) relates to about 30% of households, in the medium expenditure range. Their monthly expenditure was between HK\$18,500 and HK\$32,499 in the same period of time. The rebased series of CPI (C) relates to about 10% of households, in the relatively high expenditure range. Their average monthly expenditure was between HK\$32,500 and HK\$65,999 (The Census & Statistics Department, *The 1999/2000 Household Expenditure Survey*, (http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/chinese/whatsnew/hes/hes99_00result.htm), accessed on 9 May 2001.

³⁴ It is a list of addresses of permanent quarters (i.e. housing) in built-up areas including urban areas, new towns and major developments in the NT.

a sample from the RQ. They included:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Housing Authority rental flats (Group A); ■ Housing Authority rental flats (Group B); ■ Housing Society rental flats; | <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | <p><i>Public rental flats</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Housing Authority subsidized sale flats; ■ Housing Society subsidized sale flats; | <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | <p><i>Government subsidized sale flats</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ private residential flats; | <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | <p><i>Private residential flats</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ villas/bungalows/modern village houses; ■ simple stone structure/traditional village houses; ■ staff quarters; ■ non-domestic quarters; ■ public temporary quarters; and ■ private temporary structures. | <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 120px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | <p><i>'Other'</i></p> |

In this survey, the occupied quarters were grouped into four categories, including public rental flats; government subsidized sale flats; private high-rise residential flats; and an 'other' category. *Public rental flats* include Housing Authority Rental Blocks – Group A, Housing Authority Rental Blocks – Group B and Housing Society Rental Blocks. *Government subsidized sale flats* include Housing Authority Subsidized Sale Flats and Housing Society Subsidized Sale Flats. According to the General Household Survey (GHS) Section of the Census & Statistics Department, subsidized sale flats include those built under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme and the Middle Income Housing Scheme of the Hong Kong Housing Authority. Those flats sold under the Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) of the Hong Kong Housing Authority were also included. Flats built under the Flats for Sale Scheme and the Sandwich Class Housing Scheme of the Hong Kong Housing Society are also put under this category (Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1999:11). Villas/bungalows/modern village houses, simple stone structure/traditional village houses, non-domestic quarters, public temporary quarters and private temporary structures were grouped into the 'other' category.

Table 6.1 presents the occupied quarters by type of quarters in Hong Kong. More than one-third of the Hong Kong population (36.6%) was living in public rental flats in the whole territory, compared with two-fifths of the population (42%) living in private high-rise residential flats and one-tenth of the population (11.2%) living in government subsidized sale flats respectively. There was more than two-fifths of the resident population living in the NT in 1996, compared with 21.8% in Hong Kong Island and 32% in Kowloon. There was a small proportion of occupied quarters (21.8%) in Hong Kong

Island since there was a large proportion of commercial buildings and offices located there. Thus, there were only 4.3% of public rental flats in Hong Kong Island as a percentage of total occupied quarters in Hong Kong, compared with 13.6% in Kowloon and 18.8% in the NT. Forty-two per cent of people were living in public rental flats in Shatin, compared with 21.6% living in government subsidized sale flats, and 25.4% living in modern village houses, simple stone structure/traditional village houses and non-domestic quarters. The distribution of the occupied quarters by type of quarters in Shatin was similar to those in the NT. Shatin was one of the early new towns and was the second largest new town situated around the southern end of the Tolo Harbour. There were old public housing estates, as well as a number of newly built government subsidized sale flats and private high-rise residential flats in Shatin. It is valuable to explore the views on poverty and social exclusion of people in Hong Kong from all walks of life, such as new immigrants from Mainland China and nuclear family households.

Table 6.1: Occupied quarters by type of quarters in Hong Kong (1996)

	Public rental flats	Government subsidized sale flats	Private high-rise residential flats	Others	Total
The Whole Territory	36.6	11.2	42.0	10.2	100.0
HK Island	4.3 (19.7)	1.4 (6.4)	15.1 (69.3)	1.0 (4.6)	21.8 (100.0)
Kowloon	13.6 (42.5)	2.5 (7.8)	14.7 (45.9)	1.2 (3.8)	32.0 (100.0)
NT	18.8 (40.7)	7.2 (15.6)	12.1 (26.2)	8.1 (17.5)	46.2 (100.0)
Shatin	3.9 (41.9)	2.0 (21.6)	2.4 (25.4)	1.1 (11.2)	9.4 (100.0)

Note: The percentage of occupied quarters by type of quarters as total occupied quarters in HK Island, Kowloon and the NT are shown in brackets.

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1997) *Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census: Main Report*, Hong Kong: Government Printer, pp.178-179.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population in Hong Kong

The total resident population in Hong Kong was 6,207,366 in 1996. Since the 1970s, the government has developed new towns in the rural areas in the NT so as to meet demand for growth of population and housing needs. There was more than one-fifth of the resident population aged below 14 (21.5%) but only one-tenth of old aged population (11.3%) living in the NT, compared with 18.6% and 14.3% in the whole territory of Hong Kong. A large proportion of the younger population in the NT accounted for an increasing number of nuclear families living in the new towns, such as Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Shatin, Ma On Shan and Tin Shui Wai. On the contrary, there was almost one-fifth of the elderly (18.3%) living in Kowloon. It could explain why there was a low labour force participation rate of both sexes in Kowloon (60.9%), compared with 62.7% in the NT, 65.8% in Hong Kong Island and 62.8% in the whole territory. In 1996, the median monthly household income was HK\$16,000 in Kowloon, compared with HK\$23,000 in Hong Kong Island and HK\$16,500 in the NT (Table 6.2).

As shown in table 6.2, the number of young people aged between 6 and 18 attending schools in the three different parts of Hong Kong was similar. It can be explained by the fact that government provides nine-year free and compulsory education from primary one to secondary three in Hong Kong. Young persons who are of the right age should be sent to school. There were 92.8% of young people aged between 6 and 18 attending schools in the whole territory, compared with 93.8% in Hong Kong Island, 93.0% in Kowloon and 92.4% in the NT, as well as 93% in Shatin. On the other hand, there were only 11.5% of the non-student population aged 20 and over having tertiary education in the NT, compared with 12.8% in Kowloon and 23.8% in Hong Kong Island. A large proportion of the non-student population aged 20 and over having tertiary education in Hong Kong Island could be explained by the fact that there were a large number of well-off families living there. It was evident that the median monthly household income in Hong Kong Island (HK\$23,000) was higher than in the whole territory (HK\$17,500). These well-off families could invest more resources in education for their children. They could let their children enter a school where there were better facilities and a better learning environment. On the contrary, there was a small proportion of the non-student population aged 20 and over having tertiary education in the NT. It was partly because there was an increasing number of new immigrant families from the Mainland China moving into new towns in the NT. It was partly because there was a larger proportion of young population aged below 14 living in the NT (21.5%), compared with those in Kowloon (15.7%) and Hong Kong Island (16.4%).

According to *Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census*, there were 582,640 people living in Shatin³⁵. There was 9.4% of the total population living in Shatin and it was the third highest population density in Hong Kong. The youth and old aged population were 19.8% and 11.2% in Shatin respectively. The proportion of people aged 60 and over in Shatin (11.2%) was similar to that in the NT (11.3%) but smaller than in the whole territory (14.3%). The percentage of the non-student population aged 20 and over having tertiary education was 14%, compared with 14.6% in the whole territory (Table 6.2). In summary, Shatin was chosen as a place to draw a sample since it was reasonably typical of Hong Kong in terms of population size, household income, education attainment and labour force characteristics.

³⁵ According to Census & Statistics Department, Shatin consists of Shatin Town Centre, Lek Yuen, Wo Che Estate, City One, Yue Shing, Wong UK, Sha Kok, Pok Hong, Jat Min, Chun Kam, Sun Chui, Tai Wai, Lower Shing Mun, Fo Tan, Ho Tung Lau, Ma On Shan, Wu Kai Sha, Saddle Ridge, Kam Ying, Yiu On, Heng On, Tai Shui Hang, Bik Woo, Kwong Yuen, Tsang Tai UK, Sun Tin Wai, Keng Hau, Hin Ka, Mei Tin, Tin Sum, and Chui Tin.

Table 6.2: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of population in Hong Kong (1996)

	The whole territory	HK Island	Kowloon	NT	Shatin
(%)					
Demographic characteristics					
Resident population	6207366 (100%)	1312637 (21.2%)	1987996 (32%)	2906733 (46.8%)	582640 (9.4%)
Under age 5	5.5	5.0	4.8	6.2	5.4
Aged 5-14	13.1	11.4	10.9	15.3	14.4
Aged 60 and over	14.3	15.1	18.3	11.3	11.2
Percentage of population born in Hong Kong	60.3	57.0	55.8	64.8	65.7
Education attainment					
Percentage of persons aged 6-18 attending school	92.8	93.8	93.0	92.4	93.0
Percentage of non-student population aged 20 and over having tertiary education	14.7	23.8	12.8	11.5	14.0
Labour force participation rate					
Male	76.6	77.8	74.4	77.7	77.7
Female	49.2	54.9	47.2	47.8	49.0
Both sexes	62.8	65.8	60.9	62.7	63.0
Household characteristics					
Percentage of households occupying quarters they owned	44.5	53.5	39.5	43.7	43.2
Median monthly household income (HK\$)	17500	23000	16000	16500	18500

Note: Figures include all land areas only.

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1997) *Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census: Basic Tables for District Board Districts*, Hong Kong: Government Printer, pp.28-29.

A sample drawn from the Census & Statistics Department of HKSAR

A letter, which explained the purposes of the survey interview and requested a random sample of 1,000 household addresses in Shatin district, was sent to the Census & Statistics Department on 7 September 1999. There are some general problems of doing interview based research in Hong Kong³⁶. It was necessary to oversample so as to allow for ineligibility and refusal. It was also time-consuming to request another set of household addresses. Thus, a thousand household addresses were requested and they were collected on 27 October 1999. Eight cases which consisted of university stores and dormitories for indoor extra-activities were excluded. The total of 992 quarters included 373 public rental flats, 251 government subsidized sale flats, 325 private high-rise residential flats and 43 quarters in the "other" category. In order to ensure an appropriate number of elements drawn from homogeneous subsets of the population, stratified sampling was used in this survey. The survey sample was drawn by a random number table from each stratum and was selected on *a weighted basis* within each strata. In other words, the random sample was probability weighted by the proportion of population living in each type of occupied quarters. Table 6.3 presents the hundred occupied quarters by type of quarters drawn from 992 sampled households in Shatin. The hundred completed household interviews were

³⁶ *First*, it is difficult to get access to people's apartments since everyone has to enter an entry code to gain access to the building. Visitors will be checked by the security guards. *Second*, some people, especially older people and persons living in low-income households, are reluctant to agree to interviews and voice their opinions. It is partly because some of them are illiterate and partly because some people think that the study cannot help improving their poor living conditions. *Third*, people also feel too tired to do the interviews after long working hours a day. *Fourth*, the time for interviews also affects the response rates since people go out

divided into 37 cases of public rental flats³⁷, 26 cases of government subsidized sale flats, 33 cases of private residential flats and 4 cases of the “other” category.

Table 6.3: Hundred occupied quarters by type of quarters drawn from thousand sampled households in Shatin

Type of quarters	The whole territory		Shatin		A sample drawn from the population in Shatin		Interview sample
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Public rental flats	651007	37	69055	42	373	37	37
Government subsidized sale flats	198764	11	35631	22	251	26	26
Private high-rise residential flats	747068	42	41877	25	325	33	33
Others	182579	10	18386	11	43	4	4
Total	1779418	100	164949	100	992	100	100

Source: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (1997) *Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census: Main Report*, Hong Kong: Government Printer, pp.178-179.

Content of questionnaire

The survey questionnaire entitled, *Survey of Living Standards in Hong Kong*³⁸, was designed to examine public views on issues of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. It was designed after reviewing questions that have been used in other surveys and reports on similar topics (Bradshaw, *et al.*, 1998; Bryson, 1997; *British Social Attitudes*, various issues; Chow, 1982b; Eurostat, 1994, 1996 & 1997; Frayman, 1991; Gordon & Pantanzis, 1997; Howarth, *et al.*, 1998; Jarvis & Jenkins, 1998b; Liu & Wu, 1998; Mack & Lansley, 1985; MacPherson, 1994b; The HKSAR of the PRC, Census & Statistics Department, 1999; The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, 1998, Townsend, 1979; Townsend, *et al.*, 1997). In order to conduct a comparative study of public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain, questions used by the PSE survey were repeated where possible. Owing to differences in culture, climate and living customs, some questions used by the PSE survey, were excluded from or modified for the LS survey. Furthermore, some relevant questions were added. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and the survey interview was conducted in Cantonese.

Pilot interviews

The aims of the pilot interviews were to identify and resolve any problems with the questionnaire before finalising it and conducting the formal interviews. A letter, which

during weekends and are not at home.

³⁷ One interview which was selected from public housing category was grouped into the category of Government subsidized sale flats. It is because the respondent has bought her flat under the TPS of the Hong Kong Housing Authority.

³⁸ The original title of the survey questionnaire was *Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Hong Kong*. The sampled households rejected the pilot interviews when they learnt about the title of the survey questionnaire. They explained that they were not familiar with the issue. But some respondents accepted the interviews after

explained the purposes of the survey interviews and asked for cooperation of the sampled households, was sent to each sampled household. Information about the likely length of interview was provided. The respondents were told that the data was only to be used for research purpose and would be kept strictly confidential. A phone number was provided and potential respondents were invited to make an appointment for interviews (Appendix 7). There would be a maximum of three visits at an address before recording a non-contact. The interviewer would leave a note, which recorded the date and time of the visit, to notify the respondent about the survey interview and invite her/him to make an appointment. A respondent was the person in the household who agreed to answer the questionnaire (i.e. not a randomly selected adult in the household).

The author conducted all the pilot interviews which were held in January 2000. The total number of the pilot interviews was four, including two cases in public housing estates, one in a private residential flat and one in a government subsidized sale flat. It was found that respondents found difficulty in understanding some terms and phrases. For instance, the respondents encountered difficulties in answering the questions about the UN definitions of poverty which aimed at measuring respondents' assessments of absolute and overall poverty. Apart from conducting the pilot interviews, the author also sought advice from colleagues³⁹ in the Department of Public and Social Administration (PSA) at the City University of Hong Kong. Finally, some questions were rephrased for clarity or excluded. New categories for certain questions were added.

Finalized questions for the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

The pilot study, *first*, revealed that the respondents found difficulty in answering questions about the UN definitions of poverty which aimed at measuring respondents' assessments of absolute and overall poverty as defined at the UN World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. Instead, the questions were revised to include all aspects involved in defining absolute and overall poverty but the terms were not mentioned. *Second*, there was no self-completion section because of concern about the literacy of the respondents. Respondents needed to answer all questions. However, they sometimes felt embarrassed when they answered some sensitive questions, such as the section on 'finance and debts'. The author explained that all information provided would be kept confidential

the author has explained the purposes the survey.

³⁹ The author would like to thank Professor Ian Holliday who is Professor of Policy Studies and the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Ms. Barbara Ho, who has worked as Senior Research Assistant in Governance in Asia Research Centre and has completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, as well as Mr. Tim Tam, who has completed his Masters degree at Stanford University in the United States of America and has worked as Senior Research Assistant in the Department of PSA, for their helpful advice in finalizing the survey questionnaire.

in order to make them feel comfortable to answer the questions. *Third*, interviewees also found difficulty in answering questions that required a lot of thought or involved difficult concepts, including sections on 'absolute and overall poverty', 'effective ways to help the vulnerable groups' and 'government responsibilities towards the vulnerable groups'. Problems arose because respondents were being asked to consider things they would normally take for granted. Respondents were being asked to think about things they would not usually take into consideration, such as 'how much money do they need to keep their household out of poverty'. *Fourth*, some illiterate elderly persons found difficulty in answering questions on 'effective way to reduce poverty' while the others felt bored and irritated by questions on 'general health' (Lam, *et al.*, 2003; Li & Fielding, 1995). *Finally*, respondents were willing to express their views on issues related to 'causes of poverty' and 'government responsibilities towards the vulnerable groups'.

As indicated earlier, questions used by the PSE survey in Britain were repeated where possible in order to allow for comparisons. Details of changes in four sections of the questionnaire for the LS survey, including child and adult necessities, absolute and overall poverty, perception of poverty, as well as public perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion, will be discussed as follows.

Necessities for children and adults

As shown in table 6.4.1, eight items defined as necessities for children in British study were excluded from the LS survey in Hong Kong. These items were excluded because of differences in living environment, living space, climate, as well as hobbies and activities. On the other hand, eight items for child necessities were modified or added into the questionnaire for the LS survey. The items defined as child necessities in the UK study, including 'a garden to play in' and 'enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his or her own bedroom' were excluded on account of the densely populated nature of Hong Kong⁴⁰. There are an overwhelming majority of households living in small apartments in Hong Kong. Besides, the 1999/2000 HES also indicated that the expenditure weight of 'housing' accounted for a dominant share of the overall household expenditure in Hong Kong. It is not available for everyone to have his/her own bedroom on account of small living space and high housing costs. Instead, the question was modified as 'partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space'. With regard to climate difference, the items for child necessities, including 'a carpet in their bedroom' and 'a warm waterproof coat', were excluded.

⁴⁰ Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world. According to the Censu & Statistics Department, the land area is 1,098 square kilometers and the land population density per square kilometers as at mid-2000 stood at 6,320.

Concerning leisure activities for children, the questions were modified and these items included 'participation in out-of-school activities' and 'an outing for children once a week'. Also, parents in Hong Kong always spend extra money on their children to let them learn more after school so as to achieve good academic performance. These items included 'supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling', 'pay for tutorial lessons after school' and 'paying for special lessons'.

Furthermore, although parents do not want their children to have too much fast food, it was part of normal living to bring their children to McDonalds for meals at least once a month. It was a significant indicator to distinguish those families who 'do not have but do not want' from those who 'do not have but cannot afford' in Hong Kong.

Regarding items for adult necessities in Hong Kong, six items were deleted on account of differences in climate. These items included 'damp-free home', 'carpets in living rooms and bedrooms in the home', 'a warm waterproof coat', 'heating to warm living areas of the home if it is cold', 'a dishwasher' and 'tumble dryer'. Two new items were added, including 'a fan' and 'an air-conditioner'. In Hong Kong, the highest temperature is over 30°C in summer while the coldest temperature is between 10 and 20°C in winter. People quite often do not use a heater in winter. However, a majority of people have air-conditioners at home (Table 6.4.1).

In terms of differences in living customs, seven items for adult necessities were excluded from the LS survey. These included 'a roast joint or its vegetarian equivalent once a week', 'deep freezer or fridge freezer', 'a dressing gown', 'an evening out once a fortnight', 'going to the pub once a fortnight', 'holidays abroad once a year' and 'coach or train fares to visit family/friends in other parts of the country four times a year'. Instead, three items were added, including 'eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions', 'buy your children new clothes/shoes during the Chinese New Year' and 'Give red pocket money (laisee) during the Chinese New Year'. It is normally convenient to go to market or a supermarket every day so people can have fresh vegetables or meat and thus it is not necessary to have a freezer at home. The item of 'a car' for adult necessities was excluded from the LS survey since public transport has been well-established and transportation costs are much cheaper than in the United Kingdom. Since the problems of burglary or personal attack were not serious, items related to factors preventing people from doing adults' activities, including 'fear of burglary' and 'fear of personal attack' were excluded (Table 6.4.1).

Table 6.4.1: Details of the changes to the questionnaire for the survey of living standards in HK

Questions excluded from the LS Survey	New or modified questions for the LS Survey
Necessities for children (Questions 2-5)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A garden to play in ■ Enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his or her own bedroom ■ A carpet in their bedroom ■ A warm waterproof coat ■ A bike, new or second hand ■ A hobby or leisure activities ■ Swimming at least once a month ■ Play group at least once a week for pre-school aged child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space ■ Participation in out-of-school activities (e.g. sports, orchestral band, scouts/guides) ■ An outing for children once a week ■ Supplementary examination exercises for children schooling ■ A dictionary ■ Go to McDonald for a meal ■ Pay for tutorial lessons after schooling ■ Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)
Necessities for adults (Questions 6-9)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Damp-free home ■ Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms in the home ■ A warm waterproof coat ■ Heating to warm living areas of the home if it is cold ■ A dishwasher ■ Tumble dryer ■ A hobby or leisure activity ■ Satellite TV ■ A roast joint or its vegetarian equivalent once a week ■ Deep freezer or fridge freezer ■ A dressing gown ■ An evening out once a fortnight ■ Going to the pub once a fortnight ■ Holidays abroad once a year ■ Coach or train fares to visit family / friends in other parts of the country four times a year ■ A car ■ Insurance of contents of dwelling ■ Mobile phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A fan ■ An air-conditioner ■ A video-cassette recorder ■ All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner ■ When you are sick, you can see your private doctor ■ Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions ■ Buy your children new clothes/shoes during the Chinese New Year ■ Give red pocket money (laisee) during the Chinese New Year
Factors are important in preventing from doing adults' activities (Question 10)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fear of burglary / vandalism ■ Fear of personal attack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A

Absolute and Overall Poverty

Employees normally receive their salaries once a month in Hong Kong (Table 6.4.2). These two questions were therefore rephrased:

In order to avoid being deprived of basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things: adequate diet, housing costs /rent, clothing, water rates and prescription costs. How much (HK\$) a month, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, out of being deprived of basic human needs?

In addition to fulfillment of basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things: live in a safe environment, have a social life in your local area, feel part of the community, carry out your duties/activities in the family and neighbourhood, and at work, and meet essential costs of transport. How much (HK\$) a month, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, at the above situation?

Table 6.4.2: Details of the changes to the questionnaire for the survey of living standards in HK

Questions excluded from the LS Survey	New or modified questions for the LS Survey
Absolute and overall poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 'In order to avoid being deprived of basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things: adequate diet, housing cost / rent, clothing, water rates and prescription cost.' (Question 13) ■ 'In addition to fulfillment basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things: live in a safe environment, having a social life in your local area, feel part of the community, carry out your duties / activities in the family and neighbourhood, and at work, and meet essential costs of transport.' (Question 15) ■ How much <u>monthly</u> household income (instead of weekly household income) is necessary to keep a household out of POVERTY, ABSOLUTE POVERTY and OVERALL POVERTY? (Questions 11/13/15)
Perception of poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do you think that the Government is doing too much, too little or about the right amount to help these people? (Question 20) ■ Should the government take responsibilities to look after them (people in different circumstances) if they need help (Question 21) ■ If the Government proposed to increase tax by 1% and 5% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy? Reasons? (Questions 22-25) ■ Which of the following would be effective in reducing poverty? (Question 26) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing (instead of increasing) pension

Perception of poverty

In order to explore the willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those people in need and public views on the effectiveness of the Government to help vulnerable groups, six questions were added and one was modified. These questions included 'do you think that the Government is doing too much, too little or about the right amount to help these people?', 'should the government take responsibility to look after them (people in different circumstances) if they need help', 'if the government proposed to increase tax by 1% or 5% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy' and 'reasons?'. Since Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) was launched in Hong Kong in December 2000, the question on the effective way(s) of reducing poverty was modified (Table 6.4.2).

Public perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion

Apart from identifying a poor person as being deprived financially, public

perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion also included different aspects, namely intra-household poverty, social networks and support, living environment, health, local services, finance and debts, housing and crime. Concerning the length and duration of interview, the sections on activism, time and school were excluded from the LS survey in Hong Kong. In addition, the questions related to the frequency with which the respondents contact their family/friends and relatives were also modified as 'how often do you have contact with your family (friends/relatives)? By contact, I mean seeing, speaking to or writing to them' so as to shorten the length of interview (Table 6.4.3).

Finally, owing to differences in living custom and system operations, some questions or items were excluded from the LS survey in Hong Kong. These items included 'visit to the pub', 'Council Tax', 'mail order catalogue payments', 'TV license', 'road tax', 'DSS Social Fund loan' and 'child support/maintenance'. In addition, telephone services are charged monthly in Hong Kong and local calls are free. Two questions related to making less use of phone calls because of shortage of money were excluded. These included 'telephoning friends/family you personally cut last year because of shortage of money' and 'have you ever used less than you needed to in relation to telephone because you could not afford it?' (Table 6.4.3).

After taking all these problems into consideration, the questionnaire was finalized (Appendix 8). The questionnaire was divided into six sections and the content of questionnaire will be discussed as follows.

The content of questionnaire

Child & adult necessities in Hong Kong

It explored how the general public perceive which items and activities to be 'necessary and should not have to do without', as well as 'desirable but are not necessary'. The respondents were asked about those items and activities 'they did not have or did not do' and whether this was because they could not afford them. These questions attempted to answer the question as to what extent people possess these items and could afford to take part in those activities and perceive them as necessities. It also tried to examine the relationships between deprivation level, public perceptions of causes of poverty, willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those in need, as well as public perceptions of the deservingness of different groups.

Table 6.4.3: Details of the changes to the questionnaire for the survey of living standards in HK

Questions excluded from the LS Survey	New or modified questions for the LS Survey
Public perceptions of indicators measuring social exclusion	
(1) Intra-household poverty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Which of the following items you personally cut last year because of shortage of money? (Question 42) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephoning friends / family - Visit to the pub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A
(2) Social network & support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Factors prevent you from meeting up with your family or friends more often? (Question 47) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No vehicle - Fear of burglary or vandalism - Fear of personal attack - Too far away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How often do you contact with your family / friends / relatives? (Questions 44-46)
(3) Living environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can you tell me which of these is common in this area? (Question 50) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graffiti on walls and buildings - Homeless people and/or people begging - Homes and gardens in bad conditions - Vandalism and deliberate damage to property - Insults or attacks to do with someone's race or color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can you tell me which of these is common in this area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hawkers
(4) Health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have there been times in the past year when you have felt isolated and cut off from society for any of the following reasons? (Question 59) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of own transport - Racism - Homophobia (discrimination relating to homosexuality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A
(5) Local services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local public services for children: (Questions 62-63) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School meals - After school clubs ■ Local private services: (Questions 66-67) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A pub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local private services: (Questions 66-67) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass Transit Railway - Chinese restaurants
(6) Finance & debts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have there been times during the past year when you were seriously behind in paying within the time allowed any of these items? (Question 68) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council Tax - Mail order catalogue payments - TV license - Road tax - DSS Social Fund Loan - Child Support / Maintenance ■ Have you ever used less than you needed to in relation to telephone because you could not afford it? (Question 70) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have there been times during the past year when you were seriously behind in paying within the time allowed any of these items? (Question 68) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Property management fees
(7) Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do you have any of the following problems with your accommodation? (Question 76) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of adequate heating facilities - Leaky roof - Rot in window frames or floors - Mould - No place to sit outside (e.g. a terrace or garden) 	
(8) Crime	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Could you tell me how worried you are about the following situations? (Question 83) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being physically attacked because your colour, ethnic origin or religion ■ Sections on <u>Activism</u>, <u>Time</u> and <u>School</u> 	

Absolute & Overall Poverty

The questionnaire focused on public perceptions of poverty in terms of the UN poverty definitions, which were adopted by the study of *Absolute and Overall Poverty in Britain in 1997* (Townsend, *et al.*, 1997). The UN definitions of absolute and overall poverty tried to explore how the general public perceive how much was enough to live on to avoid absolute and overall poverty. At first, the respondents were asked how much a week they think is necessary to keep a household out of *poverty*. Then, the respondents were asked how much a week they think necessary to keep a household out of absolute poverty and overall poverty. In addition, the questions of 'how far above or below that level (general poverty, absolute and overall poverty) would you say your household is?' attempted to explore respondents' self-perception of their living standards. The findings compared with their actual monthly household income and their deprivation index so as to examine the relationship between self-perception of standards of living and public perception of poverty.

Perception of poverty

Questions included five aspects and they were:

- public opinions about poverty in Hong Kong;
- how the general public perceive causes of poverty in Hong Kong;
- how the general public perceive the deservingness of different groups in Hong Kong;
- willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those in need; and
- public opinion on the effectiveness of the Government to help people in need.

Referring to the willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those in need, it was useful to understand why people support or oppose increasing tax. People might oppose it since the current system was appropriate or they did not think that they were responsible for looking after the vulnerable groups.

Poverty over time

The survey attempted to explore the relationship between respondents' self-perception of their standards of living over time and their health conditions. These questions included self-perception of present level of poverty, history of poverty and their general health conditions.

Public perception of indicators measuring social exclusion

The indicators included eight aspects and they were:

- intra-household poverty;
- social networks and support;
- living environment;
- health;
- local services;
- finance and debts;
- housing; and
- crime.

First, the section on intra-household poverty tried to examine how resources were managed in a household and also showed which aspects of people's standards of living were most likely to go first because of shortage of money. *Second*, questions related to social networks and support were designed to measure the frequency with which they saw, spoke and wrote to their families, friends and relatives, as well as the amount of social support available to respondents. The questions also included what factors prevent respondents from meeting up with their friends and families. *Third*, the questions on living environment aimed to assess the respondents' views of their neighbourhood. *Fourth*, questions on health attempted to explore the relationship between health problems or disability and social exclusion. There were also respondents' own assessments of whether they were isolated or depressed, and whether the isolation and depression was caused by lack of money. *Fifth*, access to local services could affect people's standard of living. The questions were split into 'public' and 'private' services. The respondents were asked which services were 'essential and should be available' or 'desirable but were not essential'. The respondents were asked whether they did not use services 'because services were unavailable/unsuitable' or 'because they could not afford' to use them. *Sixth*, the finance and debts section provided information about poverty over time. *Seventh*, the respondents were asked to comment on the standard of their accommodation since the quality of housing someone experiences has an impact on his/her standard of living, such as health.

Demographic information

Questions were formulated to describe the sample population of the study and look at socio-economic and demographic differences in experiences of and responses to poverty and social exclusion.

Data collection

Recruitment of interviewers

The author conducted 35 completed interviews before recruiting the interviewers. Owing to financial difficulties, the author changed to be a part-time research student in the 1999/2000 academic year and worked as a full-time research assistant (RA) in the Department of Public & Social Administration at the City University of Hong Kong. However, the contract for the RA post could not be extended because of the tight budget of the research project. The author spent time looking for another full-time job and thus the progress of the survey interviews was slow. In order to speed up the survey interviews, the author discussed the issue with her supervisor, Professor Jonathan Bradshaw. He agreed to the recruitment of experienced interviewers and also provided financial support to pay the research expenses. The budget was only adequate to complete 65 further cases and thus the total number of interviews was 100.

Interviewers were recruited through advertisements on notice boards at the City University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The recruitment called for university students who were knowledgeable in the areas of social work and social policy, as well as experienced in doing survey interviews. The qualified applicants were first briefed about the purposes of the research study and were invited to attend the training session. The training sessions were held during the evenings and lasted for 1 hour. The training session first discussed the aims and importance of the research study. Then, the questionnaire content was presented. The author also shared the difficulties encountered during the pilot interviews so as to let the interviewers be aware of the difficulties. The remuneration for the survey interviews was also explained. Interviewers were paid HK\$150 for each completed interview plus a travel allowance. In order to save their travelling time and transportation expenses, interviewers were assigned those household addresses near their living areas. After the training sessions, four interviewers⁴¹ were selected to administer the survey interviews.

Data collection

The formal interviews were conducted between March and mid-September 2000. The author and the trained interviewers conducted the 17-page survey questionnaire by face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire used largely closed-ended questions to collect

⁴¹ Four of them were selected from the City University of Hong Kong. The first interviewer has completed her Master of Philosophy in the Department of PSA. The second one studies her final year of the Bachelor degree in the Department of PSA. The other two students study for the postgraduate certificate in Laws and higher diploma in accountancy respectively. All of them have experience in conducting survey interviews.

data on what constitute the necessities of life and issues related to poverty and social exclusion. The average length of interview took 40 minutes. With older persons or those who had literacy problems, the interview was about one hour.

Overall response rate of the survey interviews

The total number of interviews was 100. Thirty-seven respondents were public rental housing (PRH) tenants in Shatin whereas twenty-six interviewees were living in government subsidized sale flats. One-third of respondents were living in private residential flats. As shown in table 6.5, the overall response rate was 55.6%. One quarter of sampled PRH tenants (59 cases) rejected the interviews, compared with 15.3% (20 cases) and 22.8% (38 cases) of sampled interviewees living in government subsidized flats and private residential flats respectively.

The low response rate of PRH tenants could be explained by the fact that more than fourth-fifths of the rejecting sample households (83.1%) were drawn from the old public housing estates in the urban areas, compared with 16.9% of households living in the new town areas. The oldest public housing estate in the urban area was built in 1975 (Table 6.6). There was a large proportion of middle aged and old age population in these old public housing estates. Furthermore, there were a total of ten incomplete interviews, including nine PRH tenants and one living in government subsidized sale flats. Two of the PRH sampled respondents could not complete the interviews since they either spoke dialect or were getting deafer in their old age. The other two PRH sampled households were away during the period of interviews. Fifty per cent of the incomplete cases were because the respondents could not answer all questions. Sampled households living in either private residential flats or government subsidized sale flats who were not interested in the interviews called back for notification.

Table 6.5: Number of survey interviews by housing types

Reasons	Government subsidized sale flats	Public rental flats	Private residential flats	Others	Sub-total
Rejected	20	59	38	2	119
Incomplete cases	1	9	0	0	10
First visit	11	14	13	3	41
Second visit	2	4	4	0	10
Third visit	1	7	21	0	29
Apartment empty	3	18	5	0	26
Total number of cases were drawn for each housing type	34	86	55	5	180
Total number of complete cases	26	37	33	4	100
Response rate by housing type	76.5 %	43%	60%	80%	---
Overall response rate	55.6%				

Table 6.6: Public housing estates in Shatin by year of establishment at as the end of March 2001

Estates	Number of units*	Year*	Number of rejected cases
Urban areas			
Lek Yuen Estate	3215	1975	4
Wo Che Estate	6071	1977	5
Jat Min Chuen	N/A	N/A	5
Sha Kok Estate	6422	1980	7
Mei Lam Estate	4161	1981	1
Sun Tin Wai Estate	3432	1981	2
Pok Hong Estate	5479	1982	6
Lung Hang Estate	4382	1983	8
Sun Chui Estate	6696	1983	7
Chun Shek Estate	2189	1984	1
Hin Keng Estate	961	1986	3 (83.1%)
New town areas			
Heng On Estate	1317	1987	3
Yue On Estate	1237	1988	0
Kwong Yuen Estate	4569	1989	5
Lee On Estate	3632	1993	2
Chung On Estate	2097	1996	0 (16.9%)
Total			59 (100%)

Source: * Hong Kong Housing Authority.

The research topic and length of the interview affected the response rate. Those interviewees who rejected the interviews were not interested in the research topic and also thought that the survey could not help improve their standard of living, especially those unemployed and low-income families. The time and duration of the interview also affected the response rate. The interviews were arranged for the evenings and normally lasted for 40 minutes. However, average working hours of people in Hong Kong are between 8 and 12 hours every day. According to *the Hong Kong 1996 Population By-census*, there were 16.7% of working persons in Shatin working in Hong Kong Island, compared with 35.5% in Kowloon and 41.8% in the NT. They normally spend at least 10 hours on working plus transportation every day. Some sampled respondents were too tired to do the interviews after long working hours.

Limitations of the study

The objective of the LS survey was to probe into what aspects of living patterns constituted poverty and social exclusion, and the impacts of poverty and social exclusion on the living standards of vulnerable groups in Hong Kong. Owing to limited time and resources, the study only focused on one of 18 DB districts in Hong Kong. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number. Although there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample. *First*, Shatin district was chosen in terms of the presence of various types of quarters, as well as the way it was broadly representative of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population in Hong Kong. *Second*, the sample was categorized by *types of quarters* since housing cost is an important item of

living cost in Hong Kong. *Third*, the sample was drawn on a *weighted* basis within each strata so as to ensure that an appropriate number of cases was selected from homogeneous subsets of the population. The study should perhaps be seen as *a pilot study*. The area/approach was new and the sample was inevitably small so it did have key elements of a pilot study. What this study can do is point up issues for further exploration.

The use of 4 paid interviewers rather than the author doing all the interviews was not ideal. But constraints of time meant that there was no alternative. The interviewers were carefully selected and they were also trained as well as experienced interviewers. In addition, the interviewers were requested to report the progress of their interviews everyday and also let the author know whether they encountered problems during the interviews.

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the sampled respondents and the whole population in Hong Kong

Table 6.7 presents the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the sampled respondents and the population as a whole in Hong Kong. As shown in the table, the proportion of female respondents was 60%, compared with 40% of their male counterparts. The male population in the whole territory (49%) was slightly lower than their female counterparts (51%).

Referring to marital status, sixty-nine per cent of the sampled respondents were married whereas only 5% of respondents were either widowed or divorced/separated. For those households who had children, the majority only had one or two children. Compared with the marital status of the population as a whole, half of the population was married, whereas 7.3% of population was either widowed or divorced/separated (Table 6.7).

The proportion of the sampled young population aged 15-24 (10%) was lower than those of the whole population (13.7%) in Hong Kong. It could be explained by the fact that a person aged 18 and above was chosen within the household once the sampled household accepted the survey interview. Furthermore, the proportion of the elderly population (aged 55 and above) was doubled (18.5%), compared with 9% of the sampled respondents. It was because a number of the sampled elderly respondents from the old public housing estates rejected face-to-face interviews. They explained that they did not know much about the research topic while some of them were illiterate and refused the interviews (Table 6.7).

With reference to the education attainment of the sampled respondents, seventeen per cent of them had completed their primary level of schooling or below, compared with 28.9% of the whole population. As mentioned earlier, a number of illiterate elderly respondents did not accept the interviews. Fourth-fifths of the sampled respondents had completed matriculation level of schooling or more, in comparison with 83.6% of the whole population in Hong Kong (Table 6.7).

Concerning the working status of the sampled respondents, about two-third of them (65%) were employed persons. Four per cent of respondents were unemployed, compared with 5.1% in the whole population in 2001. More than one-fifth (21%) of the sampled respondents were doing domestic and caring activities but they were willing to voice their views and some of them had working experiences in the past. Seventy-eight per cent of sampled households included at least one worker or two workers, in comparison with two-thirds of the whole population. Six per cent of sampled households had no workers. They were either retired or unemployed persons, compared with 15.8% of the whole population. The median monthly household income of sampled respondents was between HK\$20,000 and 24,999, compared with HK\$18,705 in the whole population in 2001. Three per cent of respondents' monthly household income was below HK\$4,000, compared with 7.3% of the whole population in Hong Kong (Table 6.7).

Regarding the socio-economic background of those unemployed respondents, one of them was aged between 15 and 19 whereas two respondents were aged 50 and over. Two of the unemployed persons had completed their primary education and only one had completed his/her matriculation level (Table 6.7). The findings were consistent with the current employment situation in Hong Kong. Young unemployed people typically obtained low education attainment and did not have much working experiences, while those unemployed aged over 40 were non-skilled or semi-skilled workers with low education attainment. They found difficulty in looking for another jobs once they were laid off or were unemployed. Even though they could find jobs, they were more likely to find low-paid jobs owing to their low education attainment and working skills. These households' monthly income stayed consistently at the level of 1982. About one-tenth of respondents' monthly household income, compared with one quarter of the whole population in 2001, was below the level of the 1980s.

To sum up, the objective of the LS survey attempted to explore what aspects of living patterns constituted poverty and social exclusion, and the impacts of poverty and social exclusion on the livelihood of the vulnerable groups in Hong Kong. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number.

Although there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample. Shatin, which is one of 18 DC districts, was chosen as a place to draw a sample since it was reasonably typical of Hong Kong with reference to population size, household income, educational attainment and labour force characteristics. In order to ensure an appropriate number of elements drawn from homogeneous subsets of the population, stratified sampling was adopted. The survey sample was drawn by a random number table from each stratum and was selected on *a weighted basis* with each strata. The study should perhaps be seen as *a pilot study*. The area/approach was new and the sample was inevitably small so it did have key elements of a pilot study. What this study can do is point up issues for further exploration.

Table 6.7: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the sample and the whole population in Hong Kong

	Sample (Year 2000)	The whole population (Year 2001)
(%)		
Gender of respondent		
Male	40.0	49.0
Female	60.0	51.0
Age of respondent		
15-24	10.0	13.7 ¹
25-34	21.0	16.5
35-44	32.0	20.3
45-54	28.0	14.3
55 and above	9.0	18.6
Education attainment of respondent		
No schooling/primary	17.0	28.9
Secondary	49.0	45.2
Matriculation	13.0	9.4
Tertiary (Degree/non-degree courses)	21.0	16.4
Marital status of respondent		
Single	26.0	43.2
Married	69.0	49.6
Widowed/divorced/separated	5.0	7.3
Economic status of respondent		
Working	65.0	43.4 ²
Unemployed/retired	9.0	16.1
Domestic and caring activities/student	26.0	15.3 ³
Others	N/A	8.6 ⁴
Number of members in the household		
1	8.0	15.7
2	19.0	21.8
3	25.0	21.3
4	29.0	23.4
5+	19.0	17.7
Number of children in the household		
0	55.0	65.6
1	20.0	19.4
2+	25.0	15.0
Economic status of household		
1 worker	40.0	37.0
2 workers	38.0	30.4
3+ workers	16.0	16.7
No workers – retired/unemployed	6.0	15.8
Members of household in receipt of CSSA Scheme/SSA Scheme⁵		
Yes	4.0	3.6 ⁶
No	96.0	96.4

Table 6.7 (Continued)

	Sample (Year 2000)	The whole population (Year 2001)
Monthly household income		
Below HK\$10,000	11.0	24.77
HK\$10,000-13,999	19.0	14.1
HK\$14,000-19,999	18.0	15.1
HK\$20,000-29,999	22.0	18.3
HK\$30,000-39,999	13.0	10.5
HK\$40,000 and above	17.0	17.4
Median monthly household income	HK\$2,4999.5	HK\$18,705

- Notes:
1. There is 16.5% of the total population aged below 14.
 2. Economically active population comprises the employed (i.e. working population) and the unemployed.
 3. The data on students includes population aged 15 and over only.
 4. This group comprises persons who are economically inactive not elsewhere classified, such as unpaid religious worker and person who cannot work or do not seek work because of permanent sickness or disablement.
 5. CSSA – Comprehensive Social Security Allowance Scheme; SSA – Social Security Allowance Scheme
 6. The figure is the total number of CSSA cases as percentage of total population in 2001
 7. The data from the General Household Survey Section of the Census & Statistics Department.

Sources: Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (2000) *Population and Household Statistics Analyzed by District Council District*, Hong Kong: Government Printer.
 Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department (2001) *2001 Population Census: Basic Tables for Tertiary Planning Units*, Hong Kong: Government Printer.
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After discussing the survey design of the LS survey, as well as presenting the socio-economic characteristics of the sample and the whole population in Hong Kong, the findings of the LS survey in Hong Kong will be presented and analyzed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 discusses similarities and differences of the key findings of the 1% sample and the LS survey, as well as comparing the results of the LS and the PSE surveys.

7

Findings of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

Adult poverty in Hong Kong

What items constituted the necessities of modern life?

Relationship between ownership rates of particular items and judgements about necessities

How did judgements about necessities vary by socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents?

How many people were poor?

Characteristics of poor adults in Hong Kong

What did people in poverty experience?

Subjective assessments of poverty

Public perception of deservingness of vulnerable groups and public support to help those in need

Child poverty in Hong Kong

What items were considered to be necessities for children?

Which necessities did children lack?

How many children fell below the child poverty threshold?

Characteristics of poor children in Hong Kong

Social exclusion in Hong Kong

Exclusion from the labour market

Service exclusion

Exclusion from social relations

Non-participation in common social activities

Lack of support

Chapter 7

Findings of the survey of living standards in Hong Kong

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of the LS survey in Hong Kong. It is divided into *four* sections. *First*, it analyzes the views of respondents on what items constitute 'necessities of life' for adults in Hong Kong, as well as calculating the number of adults that live in households which cannot afford items that the majority of people regard as necessities. The analysis goes on to calculate how many people can be classified as poor in terms of being deprived of these items. Then, it probes into the characteristics of adults who are considered poor in these terms. It also deals with issues related to poverty, including public perceptions of absolute and overall poverty, as well as perceptions of poverty generally. *Second*, it discusses the perceptions of respondents on what items constitute 'necessities of life' for children, as well as calculating the number of children who live in households which cannot afford items that the majority of the public perceive as necessities. Apart from defining a poverty threshold, it also examines the characteristics of children who are regarded as poor on the basis of being deprived of these items. *Third*, in addition to exclusion from adequate income or resources, it also discusses social exclusion in Hong Kong in terms of labour market exclusion, service exclusion, as well as exclusion from social relations. *Finally*, it provides an overview of the LS survey in Hong Kong.

Adult poverty in Hong Kong

What items constituted the necessities of modern life?

A main task of this research study was to try to produce a measure of poverty in terms of socially perceived necessities and a definition of deprivation in Hong Kong. The respondents were asked about what items and activities they considered to define the living standards that everyone in Hong Kong ought to be able to reach. They were asked to classify 29 items and 9 activities relating to households, as well as 21 items and 9 activities relating to children⁴². Items defined as necessities by more than 50% of the population but

⁴² The questionnaire was designed after reviewing questions that have been adopted in other surveys and reports on similar topics (Bradshaw, *et al.*, 1998; Bryson, 1997; *British Social Attitudes*, various issues; Chow, 1982b; Eurostat, 1994, 1996 & 1997; Frayman, 1991; Gordon & Pantanzis, 1997; Howarth, *et al.*, 1998; Jarvis

which people went without because of shortage of money were then used to determine deprivation. A poverty threshold was calculated and it involved looking at people's incomes and their deprivation levels. Owing to there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, the number of cases will be presented in the following discussion rather than talking of percentages.

Table 7.1 shows the number of respondents identifying adult items in terms of food, household goods, clothes, obligations and activities, as well as living customs as 'necessities' in Hong Kong in 2000. Over 90 out of 100 respondents perceived 'a refrigerator', 'a television', 'a telephone', 'two meals a day', 'meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day', 'fresh fruit and vegetables every day', 'a fan', 'beds and bedding for everyone in the household', 'a small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family', 'a washing machine' and 'regular savings for "rainy days"' as items which adults should have in contemporary Hong Kong. Three items for food, including 'two meals a day' (N=95), 'meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day' (N=94) and 'fresh fruit and vegetables every day' (N=94), were regarded as necessities to maintain basic needs of physical subsistence in Hong Kong. Six items, namely 'a refrigerator' (N=98), 'a television' (N=97), 'a telephone' (N=97), 'a fan' (N=94), 'beds and bedding for everyone in the household' (N=94) and 'a washing machine' (N=93), were perceived as household necessities to maintain basic living conditions in Hong Kong. Two culture-related necessities, including 'a small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family' (N=94) and 'regular savings for "rainy days"' (N=91), demonstrated that many people in Hong Kong are still influenced by the traditional Chinese customs which expects people to be self-reliant and not depend on social welfare provisions.

All items, including 'two pairs of all weather shoes' (N=85), 'new, not second hand, clothes' (N=80), 'appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews' (N=77) and 'an outfit to wear for social or family occasions' (N=70) were perceived as necessities for clothing (Table 7.1). The results illustrated that items perceived by the respondents as necessities not only focused on basic material needs of clothing, but also took account of the needs of membership of society. People's real needs in their capacity as members of society are to perform the roles and obligations, as well as fulfill the relationships imposed on them by

& Jenkins, 1998b; Liu & Wu, 1998; Mack & Lansley, 1985; MacPherson, 1994b; The HKSAR of the PRC, Census & Statistics Department, 1999; The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, 1998, Townsend, 1979; Townsend, *et al.*, 1997). Questions used by the PSE survey were repeated where possible so as to conduct a comparative study of public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. Some questions used by the PSE survey were excluded from/modified and some relevant questions were added for the LS survey because of differences in culture, climate and living customs. Detailed discussion has been presented in Chapter 5.

custom and tradition.

This was also applicable to most culture-related items, as well as items for fulfilling obligations and necessary activities. Items, such as 'give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year' (N=86), 'celebrations on special occasions such as Chinese New Year' (N=84), 'presents for friends or family once a year' (N=74), as well as 'friends or family round for a visit, for a meal or snack or drink' (N=68), were regarded as culture-related necessities in Hong Kong. Furthermore, there were special events to do with food - 'eat fresh or frozen poultry for special occasions' (N=71), which extended the ideas of dietary needs well beyond the provision of basic calories required for physical efficiency. Chinese people have gatherings and prepare big meals for their families during the traditional Chinese festivals, such as Lunar Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival. In addition, some obligations and activities described as necessary were not just those which seemed on the face of it to satisfy individual physiological survival and individual occupation. They also included joint activities with friends and families, such as 'visiting friends or family' (N=75) and 'attending weddings, funerals and other occasions' (N=69) (Table 7.1).

In addition, the findings indicated that respondents perceived it as a necessity to see a private doctor when he/she is sick (N=76), while only half of respondents regarded all medicine prescribed by the Chinese practitioner as necessity. It can be explained by the fact that it takes a longer time to recover when taking Chinese medicine. It is also difficult to reimburse the medical fees and apply for sick leave without a formal medical certificate from the Chinese practitioners.

By contrast, four items for household goods and living customs, namely 'microwave' (N=48), 'access to the Internet' (N=47), 'a meal in a restaurant once a month' (N=47), and 'CD player' (N=44), were regarded as necessities by less than 50% of the interviewees. Various reasons can be suggested for these judgments. People have to pay a monthly service charge for getting access to the Internet at home. On the other hand, people can get access to the Internet in their offices, public libraries and schools. Microwaves are not popular in HK since people usually use town gas or Liquefied Petroleum gas (LPG) for cooking. More than two-third of the respondents (N=68) perceived 'friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink' as necessity, while only 47 out of 100 people regarded 'a meal in a restaurant once a month' as necessity. Chinese people often invite their friends for 'dim sum' in the Chinese restaurants when they go round for a visit. Furthermore, Hong Kong people usually have a meal outside during weekends nowadays. The 'don't have but don't want' and 'don't have and can't afford' categories will be discussed in detail in the section on 'relationship between

ownership rates of particular items and judgements about necessities'.

Table 7.1: Perception of adult necessities and how many people lacking them

Items	Necessary	Desirable but not necessary	Have/do	(Number)	
				Don't have but don't want	Don't have and can't afford
Food					
Two meals a day	95	5	96	4	0
Meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day	94	6	93	5	2
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	94	6	91	7	2
Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions	71	29	86	14	0
Household goods					
A refrigerator	98	2	100	0	0
A television	97	3	99	1	0
A telephone	97	3	100	0	0
A fan	94	6	97	3	0
Beds and bedding for everyone in the household	94	6	96	2	2
A washing machine	93	7	97	3	0
Replace or repair broken electrical goods (e.g. refrigerator / washing machine)	85	15	91	6	3
An air-conditioner	81	19	93	6	1
Replace any worn out furniture	78	22	87	9	4
A home computer	57	43	75	19	6
A video-cassette recorder	53	46	79	17	4
Microwave	48	51	69	26	5
CD player	44	55	71	24	5
Clothes					
Two pairs of all weather shoes	85	15	91	9	0
New, not second hand, clothes	80	20	91	9	0
Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews	77	23	81	16	1
An outfit to wear for social or family occasions (e.g. parties and weddings)	70	30	79	20	1
Obligations and activities					
Visit to friends or family	75	24	93	5	2
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	75	25	80	17	2
Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	69	29	77	19	2
Friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink	68	32	79	16	5
A holiday away from home for one week a year	52	48	65	26	7
Attending church or other places of worship	52	41	55	31	2
Living customs					
A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	94	6	96	2	2
Regular savings for 'rainy days'	91	9	88	6	6
Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	86	12	88	6	1
Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. Chinese New Year)	84	16	90	9	1
Having a daily newspaper	82	18	82	15	1
When you are sick, you can see your private doctor	76	23	82	14	2
Presents for friends or family once a year (e.g. birthday)	74	25	85	12	3
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	70	29	83	12	5
All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner	50	46	60	36	4
Access to the Internet	47	53	65	29	6
A meal in a restaurant once a month	47	52	75	20	4

Relationship between ownership rates of particular items and judgements about necessities

Statistical tests reflected that there was a direct relationship between ownership rates of items and judgements about necessities (Figure 7.1). In other words, people who had items were more likely to regard these items as necessities. Table 7.2 presents the relationship between respondents' ownership rates and judgements about necessities. Respondents' judgements about necessities were positively related to ownership rates, with a coefficient of $r = 0.620$, which was also significant at $p < 0.0001$. For instance, respondents who did 'give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year' (N=88) and had 'celebrations on special occasions' (N=90) were more likely to regard these two items as necessities. On the contrary, less than two-third of respondents claimed that they had 'a holiday away from home for one week a year' (N=65) and could buy 'all medicine prescribed by the Chinese practitioner' (N=60), whereas 52 and 50 respondents regarded these two items as necessities respectively. For the climate-related items, a majority of respondents who had 'a fan' (N=97) and 'air conditioner' (N=93) at home were more likely to regard these two items as necessities. There was a majority of people having air-conditioners at home. Nonetheless, the results also indicated that a higher proportion of respondents perceived 'a fan' (N=94) as necessity than 'an air-conditioner' (N=81). To a certain extent, the findings reflected that respondents can have different priorities for those similar climate-related items.

Figure 7.1: Relationship between ownership rates of and judgements about necessities

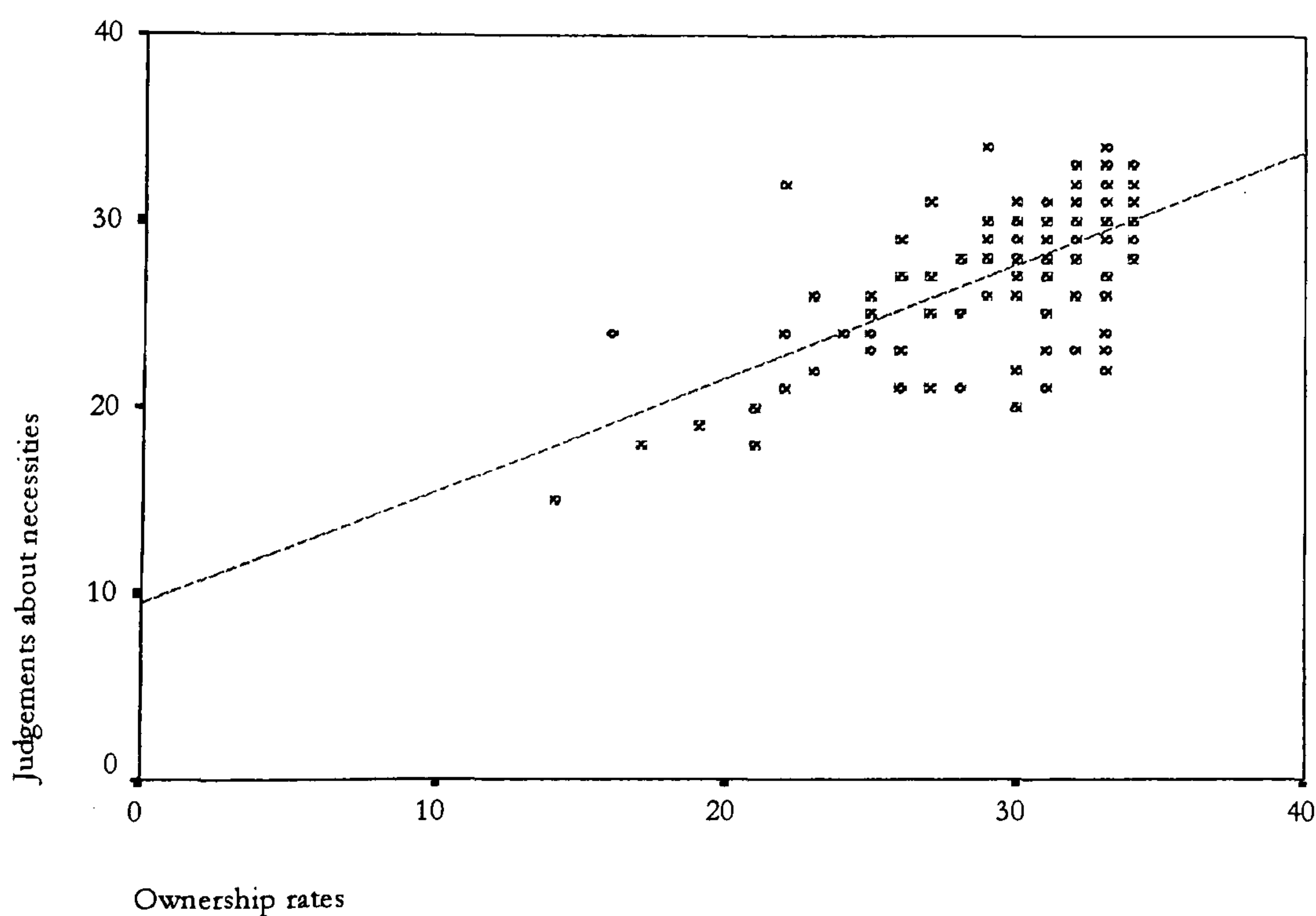


Table 7.2: Relationship between ownership rates and judgements about necessities

		Ownership rates	Judgements about necessities
Ownership rates	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.620**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	97	97
Judgements about necessities	Pearson Correlation	.620**	1.000
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	97	97

Note: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Although ownership rates of particular items affect judgements about necessities, there were a few exceptions. For instance, three quarters of the respondents had their own home computers but only 57 out of 100 respondents regarded having 'a home computer' as a necessity. Furthermore, two-third of the respondents could get access to the Internet (N=65) but less than 50% (N=47) perceived getting access to the Internet as a necessity in a high technology society. The findings reflected a digital divide in society, which is a gap between those who could effectively use new information and communication technology (ICT) and those who could not. Hong Kong people usually have a meal out during weekends nowadays. Nevertheless, only 47 out of 100 people regarded 'a meal in a restaurant once a month' as a necessity while three quarters of them have such a meal. Again, it reflected that respondents can have different priorities between similar obligations and activities.

How did judgements about necessities vary by socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents?

There were in total 34 adult items regarded as necessities by more than 50% of the population. An index ('necindex') was constructed by summing the number of items that respondents regarded as necessities. Three outliers were excluded from further data analysis. One respondent could only afford few necessities but regarded a majority of adult items as necessities while two of respondents had high ownership rates but regarded few adult items as necessities.

The findings indicated that there was no significant difference on judgements about necessities by sex ($F(1, 95) = 2.013, p < 0.159$), by age ($F(4, 92) = 1.361, p < .254$) and by quintile group ($F(4, 92) = .657, p < .624$) respectively. In contrast, judgements about necessities varied by economic status of respondents, number of workers in the household, as well as total number of household members⁴³ (Table 7.3).

⁴³ The SPSS Means procedure provides a useful tool for analyzing pairs of variables when the dependent variable is interval ('necindex') and the independent variable is either nominal, ordinal or dichotomous (i.e. age, sex, economic status of respondents, number of workers in household, total number of household members and equivalised income). It allows the impact of the independent variable on the dependent

As shown in table 7.3, judgements about necessities varied significantly by economic status of respondents. The results revealed that the number of items regarded as necessities by unemployed/retired persons was less than those regarded as necessities by working people, as well as people doing domestic and caring activities/student. In addition, judgements about necessities varied significant by number of workers in the household. The greater the number of workers in the household, the more the number of items likely to be regarded as necessities. Families with more working people could afford more household goods. It could be explained by the fact that the greater the number of workers in the households, the larger the amount of disposable household income.

Table 7.3: Means output for judgements about necessities by socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents

Sex of respondent					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cases		
Male	26.55	4.563	40		
Female	27.77	3.882	57		
Total	27.27	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	35.096	1	35.096	2.013	.159
Within Groups	1655.935	95	17.431		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .144		Eta Squared = .0021		
Age of respondent					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Number of cases		
<25	28.00	2.777	8		
25-34	27.62	3.788	21		
35-44	27.16	4.243	31		
45-54	27.86	4.161	28		
55 and above	24.33	5.568	9		
Total	27.77	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	94.456	4	23.614	1.361	.254
Within Groups	1596.575	92	17.354		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .236		Eta Squared = .056		
Quintile group					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cases		
First quintile (lowest)	26.44	5.360	18		
Second quintile	26.63	3.774	19		
Third quintile	27.14	3.732	21		
Fourth quintile	27.68	4.334	19		
Fifth quintile (highest)	28.35	3.856	20		
Total	27.27	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	46.939	4	11.735	.657	.624
Within Groups	1644.092	92	17.871		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .167		Eta Squared = .028		

variable to be examined. Eta-squared is computed to examine the amount of variation in the dependent (i.e. interval) variable that is accounted for by the independent (i.e. dichotomous, nominal or ordinal) variable.

Table 7.3 (Continued)

Economic status of respondent					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cases		
Working	27.78	3.676	65		
Unemployed/retired	23.11	5.578	9		
Domestic and caring activities/student	27.43	4.283	23		
Total	27.27	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	173.505	2	86.753	5.374	.006
Within Groups	1517.526	94	16.144		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .320		Eta Squared = .103		
Number of workers in household					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cases		
0	19.60	4.159	5		
1	27.13	3.821	38		
2	27.89	3.978	38		
3+	28.50	3.286	16		
Total	27.27	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	333.910	3	111.303	7.627	.000
Within Groups	1357.121	93	14.593		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .444		Eta Squared = .197		
Total number of household members					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cases		
1	24.38	5.236	8		
2	25.89	4.483	19		
3	26.95	4.281	22		
4	28.24	3.661	29		
5+	28.74	3.364	19		
Total	27.27	4.197	97		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups (Combined)	173.417	4	43.354	2.628	.039
Within Groups	1517.614	92	16.496		
Total	1691.031	96			
	Eta = .320		Eta Squared = .103		

How many people were poor?

A deprivation index was constructed by summing the number of deprivation items that respondents said they did not have and could not afford. Only deprivation items were chosen for the initial index when more than 50% of the population considered them as necessities and thought no individual or family should be without them. The reliability of each item in the index was tested using Cronbach's alpha⁴⁴. Table 7.4 summarizes the reliability result. Overall, the 34 adult items index had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7427, which was indicative of a reliable index.

⁴⁴ The reliability of a measure refers to its consistency. Internal reliability is important in connection with multiple-item scales. It concerns whether each scale is measuring a single idea and whether the items that make up the scale are internally consistent (Bryman & Cramer, 1997).

Table 7.4: Adults' items reliability analysis

Items	Corrected item – total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
Two meals a day	0.0053	0.7440*
Meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day	0.2004	0.7403
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	0.2748	0.7388
Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions	0.3939	0.7315
Two pairs of all weather shoes	0.2297	0.7385
New, not second hand, clothes	0.2063	0.7390
An outfit to wear for social or family occasions (e.g. parties and weddings)	0.1934	0.7393
Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews	0.2436	0.7376
A television	0.5354	0.7361
A telephone	0.5354	0.7361
A refrigerator	0.2335	0.7410
A washing machine	0.5120	0.7333
A fan	0.3872	0.7365
An air-conditioner	0.2327	0.7381
A video-cassette recorder	0.5071	0.7183
A home computer	0.2478	0.7369
Beds and bedding for everyone in the household	0.4186	0.7359
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	0.6806	0.7055
Replace any worn out furniture	0.5707	0.7258
Replace or repair broken electrical goods (e.g. refrigerator/washing machine)	0.4442	0.7319
All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner	0.2335	0.7483*
When you are sick, you can see your private doctor	0.4048	0.7261
Having a daily newspaper	0.3897	0.7330
Regular savings for 'rainy days'	0.2053	0.7398
A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	0.3496	0.7373
Presents for friends or family once a year (e.g. birthday)	0.5947	0.7123
Visit to friends or family	0.1788	0.7416
Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. Chinese New Year)	0.0552	0.7438*
A holiday away from home for one week a year	0.2429	0.7371
Friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink	0.4291	0.7298
Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	0.1778	0.7456*
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	0.2243	0.7382
Attending church or other places of worship	0.0906	0.7824*
Give red pocket money (<i>laisee</i>) during Chinese New Year	0.1042	0.7513*

Notes: 1. Overall alpha 0.7427
 2. Items marked with asterisk (*) did not contribute to the overall reliability of the index.

Following Gordon, *et al.* (2001), the validity of the deprivation index was tested by calculating the correlation between deprivation items and health variables (General health questions) and perceptions of poverty variables (i.e. income 'a lot below' the poverty line, income 'a lot below' the absolute and overall poverty lines)⁴⁵. As shown in table 7.5, the deprivation index appeared to be positively related to questions on general health conditions ($\rho = 0.305, p < 0.002$). In other words, the more necessities the respondents did not have and could not afford, the poorer their health conditions were. In addition, there were also positive relationships between the deprivation index and perception of poverty ($\rho = 0.256, p < 0.01$), absolute poverty ($\rho = 0.323, p < 0.001$) and overall poverty ($\rho = 0.353, p < 0.0001$). The more necessities the respondents did not have and could not afford, the more likely they were to claim that their actual income was lower than the amount they

⁴⁵ Rank correlation (Spearman's rho) was used to test the relationship between deprivation items (i.e. interval and independent variable) and general health variable (i.e. ordinal and dependent variable), as well as the relationship between deprivation items (i.e. interval and independent variable) and perceptions of poverty variables (i.e. ordinal and dependent variables).

needed to keep out of general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty.

Table 7.5: Relationships between deprivation items, general health conditions and perceptions of poverty

		Deprivation items	
Spearman's rho	General Health Questions	Correlation Coefficient	.305**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
		N	100
	Income 'a lot below' the poverty line	Correlation Coefficient	.256*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.010
		N	100
	Income 'a lot below' the absolute poverty line	Correlation Coefficient	.323**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
		N	100
	Income 'a lot below' the overall poverty line	Correlation Coefficient	.353**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	100

Notes: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

ANOVA⁴⁶ was used to determine the 'objective' poverty line. The first analysis was undertaken on groups defined by households lacking no items against one or more items (i.e. a deprivation score of one or more). The second analysis was undertaken on groups defined by households lacking one or no items, compared with households lacking two or more items, and so on. The dependent variable in the ANOVA model was monthly household income and the independent variables were deprivation group, the number of household members and the number of children in each household. As shown in table 7.6, the ANOVA model yielded the result that a score of two or more on the deprivation index was the optimum position for the poverty line.

Table 7.6: Brief summary table for ANOVA model of optimum position for the adult poverty threshold

Model	F Statistic for corrected ANOVA model
Deprivation score of 1 or more	18.408
Deprivation score of 2 or more	26.933
Deprivation score of 3 or more	20.437
Deprivation score of 4 or more	6.137

As mentioned earlier, thirty-four adult items were considered by 50% or more of respondents to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong. For each respondent, the number of items that each respondent did not have and could not afford was calculated. As shown in table 7.7, eighty respondents claimed that they were lacking no items because they could not afford them. Nine respondents were lacking only one of the items whereas eleven respondents were lacking two or more items. The greatest number of items lacking was 18, by one respondent.

⁴⁶ ANOVA (analysis of variance) is used to show how independent variables interact with each other and what effects these interactions have on the dependent variable (Field, 2001:248).

Table 7.7: Number of adult items respondents ‘don’t have and can’t afford’

Items lacking	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0	80	80.0	80.0
1	9	9.0	89.0
2	3	3.0	92.0
3	5	5.0	97.0
8	1	1.0	98.0
11	1	1.0	99.0
18	1	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Characteristics of poor adults in Hong Kong

Table 7.8 presents the characteristics of poor and non-poor adults in Hong Kong. The current study defined poor as those people who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities. Nonetheless, further analysis illustrated that twenty out of eighty households claimed that they were lacking no socially perceived items although being financially deprived. The findings illustrated the importance of using multidimensional indicators, including income data, social indicators (i.e. socially perceived necessities) and subjective measure of poverty (i.e. perceptions of UN definitions of absolute and overall poverty), to grasp a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong. The following discussion will focus on those people who were lacking two or more socially perceived necessities and were being financially deprived.

As mentioned earlier, there were in total eleven households lacking two or more items because they could not afford them. One of them was excluded for further analysis. As shown in table 7.8, there was a couple in this household. Both of them were working people and they were living in the fourth income quintile. In addition, the respondent has never been unemployed over the past ten years. This demonstrated the importance of using multidimensional indicators to grasp a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong.

The findings showed that all these ten poor households were living in the lowest income quintile. The findings also indicated that these poor households lived in old public rental housing (PRH) (N=8), which had been established for at least ten years, and were more likely to be lacking items because of lack of money, compared with those living in government subsidized sale flats (N=1) and private residential flats (N=1). In addition, the findings also revealed that female respondents were more likely to be poor (N=7). It was partly because these women live in poor households and partly because resources were not shared equally in households. Besides, people aged 35 and above (N=9) were more likely to be poor. It could be explained by the fact that it was difficult for those who are in middle age, of low education attainment and non-skilled/semi-skilled to look for jobs once they

become unemployed in the knowledge-based society. The results were similar to the current employment situation in Hong Kong. The findings also indicated that those poor households with more children but only 1 or 2 workers in the household were more likely to be lacking items because of shortage of money. Besides, the findings showed that the greater the number of dependent household members, the more likely the households were to be poor. It could be explained by the fact that there was a diminishing per capita household disposable income with a big family. Furthermore, the findings also demonstrated that persons not in the working population (i.e. home-makers/students) were more likely to be lacking essential items. In addition, persons in the working population who were either working in low-paid jobs or unemployed were more likely to be poor. It was evident that persons who have been unemployed for longer periods over the past 10 years were also more likely to be poor. Families with workers who worked in low-paid jobs could not lift themselves out of poverty. Six out of ten households with working members whose household income was below 50% of the mean and 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution were more likely to be poor (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8: The characteristics of the poor and non-poor adults in Hong Kong

Characteristics	Number of items lacking because of lack of money							
	All	0	1	2	3	8	11	18
Income quintile¹								
First quintile (Lowest income) (\leq \$6,701.2)	20	10		2	5	1	1	1
Second quintile ($\$6,701.2 < x \leq$ \$11,343.6)	10	10						
	(10)	(7)	(3)					
Third quintile ($\$11,343.6 < x \leq$ \$15,957)								
	(21)	(17)	(4)					
Fourth quintile ($\$15,957 < x \leq$ \$27,263.2)								
	(19)	(16)	(2)	(1)				
Fifth quintile (Highest income) ($x >$ \$27,263.2)								
	(20)	(20)						
Income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution (i.e. \$8,808)								
Yes	29	19		2	5	1	1	1
	(1)		(1)					
No	1	1						
	(69)	(60)	(8)	(1)				
Income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution (i.e. \$8,048)								
Yes	27	17		2	5	1	1	1
	(1)		(1)					
No	3	3						
	(69)	(60)	(8)	(1)				
Age of respondent								
<25	3	2			1			
	(7)	(6)	(1)					
25-34	1	1						
	(20)	(17)	(2)	(1)				
35-44	10	5		1	3			1
	(22)	(20)	(2)					
45-54	12	9			1	1	1	
	(16)	(14)	(2)					
55+	4	3		1				
	(5)	(3)	(2)					

Table 7.8 (Continued)

Characteristics	Number of items lacking because of lack of money							
	All	0	1	2	3	8	11	18
Sex of respondent								
Male	12 (28)	9 (27)	(1)	1	1		1	
Female	18 (42)	11 (33)	(8)	1 (1)	4	1		1
Education attainment of respondent								
No schooling/primary	12 (5)	4 (2)	(3)	2	3	1	1	1
Secondary	11 (38)	11 (34)	(3)	1 (1)				
Matriculation	6 (7)	4 (7)			2			
Tertiary	1 (20)	1 (17)	(3)					
Marital status of respondent								
Single	5 (21)	3 (19)	(2)		2			
Married	22 (47)	16 (41)	(5)	1 (1)	3		1	1
Widowed / divorced/separated	3 (2)	1	(2)	1		1		
Housing type								
Public rental housing	21 (16)	13 (14)	(2)	2	4		1	1
Government subsidized sale flats	6 (20)	5 (15)	(4)	1 (1)	1			
Private residential flats	3 (30)	2 (27)	(3)			1		
Others	(4)	(4)						
How long in total respondent has been unemployed over the past ten years								
Never	11 (42)	9 (37)	(4)	1 (1)	1			
Less than 2 months in total	5 (6)	4 (5)	(1)		1			
2 to 6 months in total	4 (9)	2 (9)			2			
7 to 12 months in total	(1)	(1)						
Over 12 months in total	4 (3)	2 (1)	(2)	1			1	
Not relevant	6 (9)	3 (7)	(2)		1	1		1
Economic status of respondent								
Working	15 (50)	12 (46)	(3)	1 (1)	2		1	
Unemployed/retired	4 (5)	1 (3)	(2)	1	1	1		
Domestic and caring activities/student	11 (15)	7 (11)	(4)	1	2			1
Number of members in the household								
1	1 (7)			1				
2	2 (17)	(7)			1	1		
3	7 (18)	4 (15)	(2)	1 (1)	2			1
4	8 (21)	8 (17)	(4)					
5+	12 (7)	8 (7)		1	2		1	

Table 7.8 (Continued)

Characteristics	Number of items lacking because of lack of money							
	<i>All</i>	0	1	2	3	8	11	18
Number of workers in the household								
No workers	4 (2)	(2)		1	1	1		1
1 worker	14 (26)	10 (21)	(5)	1	2		1	
2 workers	8 (30)	6 (27)	(2)	(1)	2			
3+ workers	4 (12)	4 (10)	(2)					
Number of children in the household								
0	10 (45)	6 (38)	(6)	1 (1)	3			
1	6 (14)	4 (13)	(1)			1		1
2+	14 (11)	10 (9)	(2)	1	2		1	
Household composition								
Single adult	1 (7)	(7)		1				
Lone parent with child	1					1		
Couple								
Couple with 1 child	3 (11)	2 (11)	(1)	(1)				1
Couple with 2+ children	7 (11)	4 (9)	(2)	1	2			
2 or more adult no child	4 (17)	2 (13)	(4)		2			
2 or more adult with children	1 (2)	1 (2)						
Couple with one or more adult no child	5 (7)	4 (6)	(1)		1			
Couple with one or more adult and 1+ children	8 (1)	7	(1)				1	
Total	30 (70)	20 (60)	(9)	2 (1)	5	1	1	1

- Notes:
1. Income quintiles are equivalised.
 2. People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults and they were marked in bold and shaded.
 3. People who were lacking no socially perceived necessities but were financially deprived were marked in bold while non-poor adults were shown in brackets. The total number of cases was shown in italics

What did people in poverty experience?

Data collected in the LS survey were also used to explore the relationship between being poor and other experiences. Table 7.9 shows respondents' subjective personal experience and expectations of poverty. The first two questions were concerned with subjective perceptions of the experience of poverty⁴⁷ now and in the past. Only one-tenth of the sampled respondents (N=10) said that they were 'poor all the time', compared with 42 never being poor. Only four out of ten people who said that they were 'poor all the time' were found in the survey actually to be poor. Two respondents who said that they have lived in poverty 'most of the time' were found to be poor. The findings indicated that the

⁴⁷ Questions simply asked people about whether they felt poor without defining the meaning of poverty.

more often people believed that they have been poor in the past, the more likely they were to be found to be poor at present.

The findings also reflected that people who have experienced either a reduction in their standard of living or their income in the past two years were more likely to say they were poor. Furthermore, people who were now poor had low expectations of improving their standard of living as well as their income in the next two years. Three out of ten poor people expected that there will be an improvement in their standards of living compared to five expecting a reduction, whereas two out of ten people expected an increase in their income and three a reduction (Table 7.9).

Table 7.9: Subjective personal experience and expectations of poverty

	Proportion of those answering this way who are poor	Number of poor people ¹ who answer this way	Number of people answering this way <i>(Number)</i>
Do you think that you can genuinely say you are poor?			
All the time	40	4	10
Sometimes	8	4	48
Never	5	2	42
Looking back over your life, how often have there been times in your life when you think you have lived in poverty by the standards of that time?			
Never	10	3	30
Rarely	0	0	11
Occasionally	6	3	49
Often	25	2	8
Most of the time	100	2	2
Has anything happened recently (in the last two years) in your life which has			
improved your standard of living?	9	3	35
reduced your standard of living?	17	5	29
increased your income?	4	1	26
reduced your income?	23	6	26
Is there anything that you expect to happen in the near future (in the next two years) in your life which will			
Improve your standard of living?	7	3	43
Reduce your standard of living?	24	5	21
Increase your income?	6	2	34
reduce your income?	17	3	18

Notes: 1. People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.
2. Proportions add to more than 100 because multiple response possible.

In general, the sampled respondents -- poor and non-poor -- shared similar views on their perception of poverty and its causes in Hong Kong. As shown in table 7.10, seventy-two respondents thought that poverty has been increasing over the past ten years while seven out of ten poor people thought that poverty has been increasing over the last ten years. Furthermore, two-third of the sampled respondents (N=66) expected poverty to increase over the next ten years. Seven out of ten poor people thought that poverty will increase over the next ten years.

In addition, a high proportion of the sampled respondents thought that economic restructuring and injustice in society were major causes of poverty in Hong Kong. Seven

out of ten poor people regarded modern progress and economic slowdown/high unemployment as the major causes of poverty in Hong Kong. Fifty-two out of the hundred sampled respondents said that the government was doing too little to help vulnerable groups, while five out of ten poor people thought that the government was doing too little. One-tenth of respondents thought that the government was doing too much but none of the poor people thought that the government has doing too much (Table 7.10).

Table 7.10: Perception of poverty and its causes in Hong Kong in general

	Proportion of those answering this way who are poor	Number of poor people who answer this way	Number of people answering this way <i>(Number)</i>
Over the last ten years, do you think poverty has been			
Increasing?	10	7	72
Decreasing?	0	0	8
Staying about the same?	17	2	12
Don't know	13	1	8
Over the next ten years, do you think poverty will			
Increase?	11	7	66
Decrease?	14	1	7
Stay about the same?	0	0	14
Don't know	15	2	13
Why, in your opinion, are there people who live in need?			
Because they have been unlucky	0	0	6
Because of laziness and lack of willpower	9	1	11
Because there is much injustice in our society	4	1	26
It is an inevitable part of modern progress	8	2	25
Because of economic slowdown / high unemployment rate	31	5	16
Because of low education attainment	50	1	2
Others	0	0	14
Do you think that the government is doing too much, too little or about the right amount to help these people?			
too much?	0	0	10
too little?	10	5	52
about the right amount?	13	3	23
Don't know	13	2	15

Note: People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.

As shown in table 7.11, poor people were not dissatisfied with the area in which they live. Two out of nine people were 'very satisfied' with the area as a place to live while five out of forty-nine people were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with the area as a place to live.

Four out of nine people who felt isolated and/or depressed as a result of lack of money during the last year were current poor (Table 7.12). The theme of isolation will be considered with respect to social exclusion in the section on 'social exclusion in Hong Kong'.

Table 7.11: Satisfaction with area you live in

	<i>(Number)</i>		
	Proportion of those answering this way who are poor	Number of poor people who answer this way	Number of people answering this way
How satisfied are you with this area as a place to live?			
Very satisfied	22	2	9
Fairly satisfied	9	3	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10	5	49
Slightly dissatisfied	0	0	8
Very dissatisfied	0	0	1

Note: People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.

Table 7.12: Impact of lack of money on well-being

	<i>(Number)</i>		
	Proportion of those answering this way who are poor	Number of poor people who answer this way	Number of people answering this way
Have there been times in the past year when, as a result of lack of money, you have felt isolated and cut off from society or depressed?			
Yes, isolated	44	4	9
No, not isolated	6	5	86
Yes, depressed	36	4	11
Not, not depressed	5	4	84

Note: People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.

Table 7.13: Monthly income needed to keep a household of your type out of general poverty, absolute and overall poverty

	<i>(Number)</i>		
	General poverty	Absolute poverty	Overall poverty
Actual income a lot above	32	33	30
A little above	37	35	32
About the same	19	16	14
A little below	8	9	16
A lot below	4	7	8
Total	100	100	100
Mean equivalised income needed	HK\$13,271	HK\$11,674	HK\$14,252

Subjective assessments of poverty

This section presents the findings of three subjective measures of poverty, including general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty. Respondents were asked to determine whether their income was 'below the level of income you think is necessary to keep a household such as yours out of 'general poverty', 'absolute poverty' and 'overall poverty'. Table 7.13 indicated that 16 out of 100 respondents said they had less income than the level they identified as being enough to keep a household like theirs out of absolute poverty. Twenty-four respondents said that their monthly income was below the level needed to keep a household like theirs out of overall poverty. The average monthly equivalised income, after tax, said to be needed to escape 'absolute' poverty averaged HK\$11,674 for all households, compared with HK\$13,271 for 'general poverty' and HK\$14,252 for 'overall poverty'. The results indicated that respondents were capable of distinguishing these three subjective measures of poverty.

Table 7.14: Number of households reporting their actual income as lower than the amount they needed to keep out of general poverty, absolute and overall poverty

	(Number)		
	General poverty	Absolute poverty	Overall poverty
Income quintile			
First quintile (lowest)	7	9	10
Second quintile	1	4	5
Third quintile	2	1	3
Fourth quintile	2	2	4
Fifth quintile (highest)	0	0	2
Income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution			
Yes	7	10	11
No	5	6	13
Income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution			
Yes	7	10	11
No	5	6	13
Household composition			
Single adult	1	1	1
Lone parent with child	0	0	1
Couple	0	1	3
Couple with 1 child	0	1	2
Couple with 2+ children	5	5	7
2 or more adults no child	2	4	6
2 or more adults with children	1	1	1
Couple with 1 or more adults no children	0	0	0
Couple with 1 or more adults and 1+ children	3	3	3
Number of children			
0	3	6	10
1	1	2	4
2+	8	8	10
Number of workers in household			
0	2	3	4
1	5	9	12
2	3	3	6
3+	2	1	2
All households	12	16	24

As shown in table 7.14, households living in the lowest income quintile were more likely to say that they had income below that needed to keep out of general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty. Households with income below 50% of the mean and those with income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution were more likely to say that they had less income than the level they identified as being enough to keep a household like theirs out of general poverty and absolute poverty. Households with children were more likely than any other type of household to report their actual income as lower than the amount they needed to keep out of general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty. As shown in table 7.14, a couple with 2+ children was more likely than any other type of household to say they had an income below that needed to keep out of absolute poverty. Next were couples with 1 or more adults and 1+ child and 2 or more adults with children. In other words, households with more children were more likely to report they had less income than the level they identified as being enough to keep a household like theirs out of general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty. The findings also indicated that households with no or only one working members were more

likely to claim their actual income as lower than the amount they needed to keep out of general poverty, absolute poverty and overall poverty.

Public perception of deservingness of vulnerable groups and public support to help those in need⁴⁸

Table 7.15 shows the public perception of the deservingness of different vulnerable groups. The respondents were asked whether the government should take responsibility to look after the vulnerable groups if they need help. Both *non-poor* and *poor* people supported the view that the government should offer help to those 'old age', 'blind', 'deaf', 'physically disabled', 'mentally ill' and families on low wages with children. On the other hand, there were divergent views on whether the government should offer help to those with 'temporary illness', or in 'single parent families'. Nine out of ten *poor* people supported the view that the government should take responsibilities to look after those with 'temporary illness', compared with only two-third of *non-poor* people (60 out of 90 *non-poor* people). Only two-third of *non-poor* people (60 out of 90 *non-poor* people) felt that the government should offer help to 'single parent families', compared with nine out of ten *poor* people. Nonetheless, both *poor* and *non-poor* supported that the government should offer help to single parent families with young children, as well as families with low wages with children. Both *poor* and *non-poor* agreed that those families on low wages without children should be self-reliant.

In addition, both *poor* (N=8) and *non-poor* (N=63) people felt that the government should offer help to those unemployed because of economic downturn. Nonetheless, they felt that the support should be temporary. In addition to provision of financial assistance, the government should also provide vocational training for the unemployed so as to let them earn their living and lift themselves out of poverty. Some respondents were also concerned about work incentives and believed that CSSA nurtures welfare dependency. Thus, they thought if welfare support was too generous to the unemployed, it might kill their initiative to support themselves. In other words, the respondents agreed that the government should take responsibility to look after families with young children if they needed help, while only offering minimum and temporary support to the unemployed persons. At the same time, the government should provide sufficient vocational training for them so as to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market (Table 7.15).

⁴⁸ Apart from answering the structured questionnaire, some respondents also expressed their views on deservingness of vulnerable groups and public support to those in need.

Table 7.15: Public perception of the deservingness of the vulnerable groups

	(Number)					
	Number of NON-POOR people who answer this way		Number of POOR people who answer this way		Number of people who answering this way	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Should the government take responsibilities to look after them if they need help?						
Old age	86	3	10	0	96	3
Blind	83	4	9	0	92	4
Deaf	78	5	9	0	87	5
Physically disabled	79	8	9	0	88	8
Mentally ill	81	4	9	0	90	4
Temporary illness	60	4	9	0	69	4
Single parent family	66	19	9	0	75	19
Families on low wages with children	80	9	9	0	89	9
Families on low wages without children	44	43	4	4	48	47
Unemployed	63	23	8	0	71	23

Note: People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.

Regarding the willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those in need, the respondents were also asked whether they were willing to pay 1% more tax to enable everyone to afford items that the majority of people regarded as necessities. Fifty-two out of ninety *non-poor* people supported it, compared with 4 out of ten *poor* people. On the other hand, a majority of both *poor* and *non-poor* people felt that it was not acceptable to pay 5% more tax to enable everyone to afford items that the majority of people regarded as necessities (Table 7.16).

Table 7.16: Willingness of the general public to pay more taxes to help those in need

	(Number)			
	Number of NON-POOR people who answer this way		Number of POOR people who answer this way	Number of people answering this way
	Yes	No	Yes	No
If the government proposed to increase tax by 1% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?				
Support	52		4	56
Oppose	23		4	27
Refusal/don't know	15		2	17
If the government proposed to increase tax by 5% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?				
Support	9		1	10
Oppose	70		7	72
Refusal/don't know	16		2	18

Note: People who were being financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor adults.

In addition, both *poor* and *non-poor* people shared similar views on their perception of effective anti-poverty policies. As shown in table 7.17, both *poor* and *non-poor* people agreed that 'investing in job creation' would be effective in reducing poverty. Besides, both *poor* and *non-poor* people also regarded that 'investing in skills training for the unemployed' and 'investing in education for children' would be effective anti-poverty strategies since these policies could enhance their competitiveness in the labour market.

Both *poor* and *non-poor* people regarded ‘establishing pensions’ and ‘increasing other benefit’ (i.e. Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance) as effective anti-poverty policies. But they did not regard that ‘increasing CSSA allowance’ would be effective in reducing poverty. It could be explained by the fact that the general public concerned about work incentives. Both *poor* and *non-poor* people agreed to support the most deserving groups, such as ‘old age’ and ‘families with children’, but not for those who could be self-reliance.

In addition, the findings also indicated that there were relatively a high proportion of *non-poor* people regarded ‘improving access to child care’ and ‘reducing discrimination’ as effective anti-poverty policies. It could be explained by the fact that ‘improving access to child care’ could release caring responsibilities, especially to those single parent families with dependent children. ‘Reducing discrimination’ could let those vulnerable groups enjoy equal opportunity of labour market participation and equal chance of access to social welfare and social services.

Table 7.17: Public perception of effective anti-poverty policies

	(Number)					
	Number of <i>NON-POOR</i> people who answer this way		Number of <i>POOR</i> people who answer this way		Number of people who answering this way	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
In your opinion, which of the following would be effective in reducing poverty?						
Establishing pensions	73	12	8	2	81	14
Increasing CSSA allowance	50	35	4	5	54	40
Increasing other benefits (e.g. Old Age Allowance/Disability Allowance)	80	8	7	2	87	10
Investing in skills training for the unemployed	78	9	10	0	88	9
Investing in education for children	76	6	10	0	86	6
Investing in job creation	81	5	10	0	91	5
Improving access to child care	71	11	10	0	81	11
Redistributing of wealth	45	30	6	3	51	33
Minimum wage	55	23	5	2	60	25
Better parenting	71	9	10	0	81	9
Reducing truancy from schools	62	18	9	1	71	19
Increasing trade union rights	65	16	5	3	70	19
Reducing discrimination	74	10	10	0	84	10
Requiring unemployed young people to work	81	5	10	0	91	5
Requiring unemployed lone parents to work	71	12	9	1	80	13

Note: Those people who were being financial deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities were regarded as poor.

Child poverty in Hong Kong

What items were considered to be necessities for children?

Table 7.18 represents the number of respondents identifying child necessities⁴⁹ in terms of food, clothes, participation and activities, as well as developmental and environmental aspects. All but two of the 30 children's items and activities in the LS survey were regarded as necessities by more than 50% of parents. These two items were 'a holiday away from home at least one week a year with his/her family' (N=15) and 'go to McDonalds for a meal' (N=3). It was interesting that parents did not regard 'going to McDonald for a meal' as a necessity for children. However, more than three quarters (N=27) have had meals with their children there. It indicated that for children to 'go to McDonald for a meal' has become part of normal living.

Twenty-two out of thirty items were regarded as necessities by at least 70%. Over 90% of the respondents perceived 'three meals a day' (N=34), 'fresh fruit and vegetables every day' (N=33), 'books of her/his own' (N=32), 'all the school uniform required by the school' (N=32), 'meal/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day' (N=31), 'buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year' (N=31) as items which children should have in Hong Kong. All food items were regarded as child necessities to maintain basic needs of physical subsistence in Hong Kong. Two items, including 'all the school uniform required by the school' and 'books of her/his own', were perceived as basic necessities of children's school learning. Buying children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year reflected that parents are still influenced by the traditional Chinese custom to buy presents (such as new clothes and shoes) for their children and wish them all the best in the coming year (Table 7.18).

Apart from those basic necessities of children's school learning, at least 70% of respondents perceived other items and activities related to children's school learning as necessities, including 'a dictionary' (N=30), 'new, properly fitted, shoes' (N=29), 'educational games' (N=29), 'paying for special lessons', 'supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling' (N=27), 'paying for tutorial lessons after schooling' (N=27), 'collect child from school' (N=27), 'going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children' (N=24), and 'visits to school' (N=24). In addition, the findings also indicated that for children to have 'celebrations on special occasion' (N=21), 'computer games' (N=21) and 'money spend on sweets/snack' (N=19), as well as to take part in out-of-school activities (N=20) were also regarded as parts of normal living (Table 7.18). The results reflected the point that respondents who perceived items or activities as

⁴⁹ There were thirty-four out of 100 sampled households with children aged 0-14.

necessities of life not only focused on basic material needs, but also took account of children's other needs in their capacity as members of the community.

Table 7.18: Perception of child necessities¹ and how many people lack them

Items	(Number)				
	Necessary	Desirable but not necessary	Have / Do	Don't have but don't want	Don't have and can't afford
Food					
Three meals a day	34 (100)	0 (0)	30 (88)	3 (9)	1 (3)
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	33 (97)	1 (3)	28 (82)	4 (12)	2 (6)
Meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	31 (91)	3 (9)	30 (88)	3 (9)	1 (3)
Clothes					
All the school uniform required by the school	32 (94)	2 (6)	32 (94)	1 (3)	0 (0)
New, properly fitted, shoes	29 (85)	5 (15)	32 (94)	2 (6)	0 (0)
Some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes	28 (82)	6 (18)	32 (94)	2 (6)	0 (0)
At least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms	26 (76)	8 (24)	28 (82)	4 (12)	2 (6)
At least 7 pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new	25 (74)	9 (26)	28 (82)	3 (9)	2 (6)
Environmental					
Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space	26 (76)	8 (24)	19 (56)	7 (21)	6 (18)
Developmental					
Books of her/his own	32 (94)	2 (6)	30 (88)	3 (9)	1 (3)
A dictionary	30 (88)	4 (12)	30 (88)	3 (9)	1 (3)
Educational games	29 (85)	5 (15)	28 (82)	5 (15)	1 (3)
Toy (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies)	27 (79)	7 (21)	33 (97)	1 (3)	0 (0)
At least 4 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts	22 (65)	12 (35)	27 (79)	5 (15)	2 (6)
Computer games	21 (62)	13 (38)	23 (68)	8 (24)	3 (9)
Participation in out-of-school activities (e.g. sports, orchestral band, scouts/guides)	20 (59)	14 (41)	22 (65)	10 (29)	2 (6)
Participation and activities					
Buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year	31 (91)	3 (9)	33 (97)	1 (3)	0 (0)
Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment or a bicycle)	28 (82)	6 (18)	29 (85)	4 (12)	1 (3)
Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)	28 (82)	6 (18)	26 (76)	4 (12)	4 (12)
Supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling	27 (79)	7 (21)	28 (82)	5 (15)	1 (3)
Paying for tutorial lessons after schooling	27 (79)	7 (21)	21 (62)	9 (26)	2 (6)
Collect children from school	27 (79)	7 (21)	21 (62)	11 (32)	1 (3)
Going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children	24 (71)	10 (29)	28 (82)	4 (12)	1 (3)
An outing for children once a week	24 (71)	10 (29)	29 (85)	4 (12)	1 (3)
Visits to school (e.g. sports day)	24 (71)	10 (29)	24 (71)	10 (29)	0 (0)
Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. birthday)	21 (62)	13 (38)	29 (85)	3 (9)	2 (6)
Friends around for tea or a snack	21 (62)	13 (38)	25 (74)	5 (15)	1 (3)
Money spend on sweets/snack	19 (56)	15 (44)	26 (76)	5 (15)	3 (9)
A holiday away from home at least one week a year with his/her family	15 (44)	19 (56)	21 (62)	11 (32)	2 (6)
Go to McDonald for a meal	3 (9)	31 (91)	27 (79)	6 (18)	1 (3)

Notes: 1. Thirty-four out of 100 sampled households with children aged 0-14.
2. Proportion of respondents identifying various items as child necessities were shown in brackets.

Which necessities did children lack?

As shown in table 7.18, only a small proportion of parents could not afford these socially perceived necessities for child because of lack of money. For instance, over four-fifths of parents regarded 'paying for special lessons after schooling' (N=28) as a child necessity, but only four out of 34 children did not have extra lessons because of lack of

money. More than three quarters thought that 'partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space' (N=26) was a necessity. Nearly one-fifth of children (N=6) did not have this since their parents could not afford it. Nearly 60% of parents (N=19) perceived 'money to spend on sweets/snack' as a child necessity. Nonetheless, one-tenth of children (N=3) did not have it because their parents could not afford it.

How many children fell below the child poverty threshold?

A deprivation index was constructed by summing the number of deprivation items that parents said their children 'do not have and cannot afford'. Only deprivation items were chosen for the initial index when more than 50% of the population considered them as necessities for children in Hong Kong. The reliability of each item in the index was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Table 7.19 summarises the reliability result. Overall, the 28 items index had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9913, which was indicative of a highly reliable index.

Table 7.19: Children items reliability analysis

	Corrected item – total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
Three meals a day	0.9891	0.9908
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	0.9790	0.9908
Meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least	0.9565	0.9908
Money spend on sweets/snack	0.9205	0.9909
New, properly fitted, shoes	0.9386	0.9908
Some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes	0.9341	0.9908
Books of her/his own	0.9724	0.9908
Educational games	0.9308	0.9908
Supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling	0.9133	0.9909
A dictionary	0.9447	0.9908
Toy	0.9238	0.9908
Leisure equipment	0.9449	0.9908
Computer games	0.9406	0.9908
Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space	0.9293	0.9908
At least 7 pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new	0.9305	0.9908
At least 4 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts	0.9161	0.9909
All the school uniform required by the school	0.9650	0.9908
At least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings	0.9375	0.9908
Celebrations on special occasions	0.9186	0.9908
Going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children	0.9452	0.9907
An outing for children once a week	0.9326	0.9908
Participation in out-of-school activities	0.9387	0.9908
Friends around for tea or a snack	0.9305	0.9908
Paying for tutorial lessons after schooling	0.6642	0.9926*
Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)	0.9427	0.9908
Buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year	0.9506	0.9908
Collect children from school	0.6779	0.9928*
Visits to school (e.g. sports day)	0.8946	0.9909

- Notes: 1. Overall alpha 0.9913
2. Items marked with asterisks (*) do not contribute to the overall reliability of the index.

The ANOVA model yielded the result that a score of two or more on the deprivation index was the optimum position for the poverty line (Table 7.20). As mentioned earlier, all but two of the children's items and activities were regarded by 50% or more of parents as child necessities. For each respondent, the number of items that each respondent did not have and could not afford was calculated. As shown in table 7.21, twenty-eight out of thirty-four households with children were lacking no socially perceived necessities. Two households with children were lacking two items. Four households lacked more than two necessities. The greatest number of items lacking was 19, by one respondent.

Table 7.20: Brief summary table for ANOVA model of optimum position for the child poverty threshold

Model	F Statistic for corrected ANOVA model
Deprivation score of 1 or more	9.6
Deprivation score of 2 or more	9.6
Deprivation score of 3 or more	7.7
Deprivation score of 4 or more	2.7

Note: The author cannot distinguish statistically if a score of 1 or 2 is the optimum poverty threshold as no family had a score of 1 on the children's deprivation index.

Table 7.21: Number of children items respondents 'don't have and can't afford'

Items lacking	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0	28	82.4	82.4
2	2	5.9	88.2
3	1	2.9	91.2
7	1	2.9	94.1
8	1	2.9	97.1
19	1	2.9	100.0
Total	34	100.0	

Note: Thirty-four out of 100 sampled households with children aged 0-14.

Characteristics of poor children in Hong Kong

Table 7.22 presents the characteristics of the poor and non-poor children in Hong Kong. The current study defined poor as those children who were financially deprived and lacking two or more socially perceived necessities. Nonetheless, further analysis illustrated that eight households with children claimed that they were lacking no socially perceived items but they were being financially deprived. The findings illustrated the importance of using multidimensional indicators to grasp a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong. The following discussion will focus on those households with children who were lacking two or more socially perceived items because they could not afford them.

As mentioned earlier, there were a total of 6 households lacking two or more items since they could not afford them. The findings illustrated that all these six households were

living in the lowest income quintile. In other words, the results showed predictably that children living in low-income households were more likely to be deprived of necessities. In addition, children with their families living in PRH were more likely to be lacking items because of lack of money (N=5). The number of children was directly associated with deprivation. The greater the number of children in the households, the more likely children were to be lacking items (N=4). In addition, the greater the number of workers in the households, the less likely children were to be deprived of necessities. It could be explained by the fact that the greater the number of workers in the households, the larger the disposable household income in comparison with people in jobless non-pensioner or pensioner households. The findings indicated that the number of children deprived of necessities was related predictably to the number of children in the household, number of workers in the household and monthly household income (Table 7.22).

Table 7.22: The characteristics of the poor and non-poor children in Hong Kong

Characteristics	(Number)						
	Number of items lacking because of lack of money						
	All	0	2	3	7	8	19
Income quintile							
First quintile (Lowest income) (\square \$6,701.2)	10	4	2	1	1	1	1
Second quintile ($\$6,701.2 < \$x \square$ \$11,343.6)	4	4					
	(3)	(3)					
Third quintile ($\$11,343.6 < \$x \square$ \$15,957)	(5)	(5)					
Fourth quintile ($\$15,957 \leq \$x \square$ \$27,263.2)	(8)	(8)					
Fifth quintile (Highest income) ($\$x > \$27,263.2$)	(4)	(4)					
Income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution (i.e. \$8,808)							
Yes	14	8	2	1	1	1	1
No	(20)	(20)					
Income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution (i.e. \$8,048)							
Yes	12	6	2	1	1	1	1
No	2	2					
	(20)	(20)					
Housing type							
Public rental housing	9	4	2		1	1	1
	(2)						
Government subsidised sale flats	2	2					
	(9)						
Private residential flats	3	2		1			
	(8)						
Others	(1)						
Number of members in the household							
2	1			1			
3	3	2					1
	(9)						
4	2	2					
	(8)						
5+	8	4	2		1	1	
	(3)						

Table 7.22 (Continued)

Number of children in the household							
1	4 (10)	2		1			1
2+	10 (10)	6	2		1	1	
Number of workers in the household							
0	2			1			1
1	9 (11)	7	1			1	
2	1 (9)				1		
3	2	1	1				
Total	14 (20)	8	2	1	1	1	1

Note: Number of poor children was marked in bold and shaded while number of the non-poor children was shown in brackets.

Social exclusion in Hong Kong

As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is insufficient to study poverty simply in terms of the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or a household. Deprivation also results from inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power. In order to grasp a complete picture of the life style of vulnerable groups, the LS survey not only collected information on exclusion from adequate income or resources, but also on three dimensions of exclusion, including exclusion from the labour market, publicly or privately provided services, and social relations. In other words, the discussion is more comprehensive and was about much more than money.

Exclusion from the labour market

As shown in table 7.23, thirty-five out of the 100 adults had no paid work, including persons not in the working population (i.e. retired, students and home-makers) and the unemployed). Four men were not in paid work whereas 31 women had no paid work. Three persons were unemployed. Half of respondents aged 35-44 (N=16) were not in paid work and 15 of them were engaged in domestic and caring activities. Furthermore, two-thirds of people (N=55) were in paid work without long-standing illness. It should not be ignored that ten out of sixty-five working people had a long-standing illness and this accounted for 62.5% of respondents with long-standing illness. It could be explained in terms of the impacts on employees' health of work for long hours every day. The findings were consistent with local studies on the impacts of long working hours on the health of employees. Although attachment to the labour market maintained a good social network with other people, there has been public concern about how long working hours undermined the health of employed people, as well as affected their social lives and relationships with their families (*Apple Daily*, 20 February 2001; *Wen Wei Pao*, 22 July 2001;

Wong & Lee, 2000 & 2001).

Table 7.23: Labour market participation by age, gender and health status

	Economic status of respondent					Total
	Working	Unemployed	Retired	Domestic & caring activities	Student	
<i>(Number)</i>						
Age of respondent						
<24	4	1	0	0	5	10
25-34	19	0	0	2	0	21
35-44	16	1	0	15	0	32
45-54	23	1	0	4	0	28
55+	3	0	6	0	0	9
Sex of respondent						
Male	36	1	3	0	0	40
Female	29	2	3	21	5	60
Has long-standing illness						
No	55	2	3	19	5	84
Yes	10	1	3	2	0	16
Total (poor and non poor)	65	3	6	21	5	100

Service exclusion

Lack of access to basic services, such as electricity, water supplies, telephone and financial services, is one aspect of social exclusion. People were asked whether they have experienced disconnection of water, gas, electricity and telephone and whether people have restricted their use of these services because of their affordability. Table 7.24 presents utility disconnection and restricted use experienced by respondents. The findings revealed that households with children were at greater risk of restricted consumption because they had used less than they thought they needed because they could not afford more. Women were more likely to have restricted consumption than men. Those in non-pensioner jobless households were at greater risk of utility disconnection than those in households with paid work. The results also showed that people who were unemployed were more likely than others to have been disconnected. Although the numbers are very small, this is after all really only an exploratory study and the results should be seen as indicators to further work.

In addition, respondents were also asked about access to a number of public services (such as libraries, public sports facilities, hospitals and museums) and private services (such as bus services, Mass Transit Railway (MTR) services and access to banks). They were asked whether they used the service, used it but regarded it as inadequate, did not use it because it was unavailable, did not use it and did not want to, or did not use it because they could not afford to. The classification helps to distinguish between 'collective exclusion' and 'individual exclusion'. The former refers to services which are simply not available or unsuitable, whereas the latter refers to people who cannot access a service. As shown in table 7.25, fourteen people were excluded from two or more services because

they were either unavailable or unaffordable. Seventy-nine people had access to a full range of public and private services. For both public and private services, lack of availability rather than lack of affordability was the main reason for not using the service. Lack of availability affected 21 respondents in relation to using both public and private services.

Table 7.24: Utility disconnection and restricted use experienced by respondents

	<i>(Number)</i>		
	Has experienced disconnection	Has restricted consumption	Total
Age of respondent			
25-34	0	1	1
35-44	1	2	3
45-54	1	1	2
Sex of respondent			
Male	1	0	1
Female	1	4	5
Has long-standing illness			
No	1	2	3
Yes	1	2	3
Household type			
Lone parent with child	1	1	2
Couple with 1 child	0	2	2
Couple with 2+ children	0	1	1
2 or more adults no child	1	0	1
Workers in household			
No worker	2	2	4
Workers	0	2	2
Economic status of respondent			
Working	0	1	1
Unemployed	2	1	3
Domestic and caring activities	0	2	2
Total	2	4	6

Table 7.25: Respondents lacking different numbers of services because unaffordable and/or unavailable

	<i>(Number)</i>		
	Number of services lacking		Total
	1	2 or more	
Public services			
Cannot afford	0	2	2
Unavailable	9	11	20
Cannot afford or unavailable	8	12	20
Private services			
Cannot afford	0	3	3
Unavailable	0	3	3
Cannot afford or unavailable	0	3	3
Both public & private			
Cannot afford	0	4	4
Unavailable	8	13	21
Cannot afford or unavailable	7	14	21

Substantial proportions who used individual services regarded these services as inadequate, such as libraries, public sports facilities, hospital with accident and emergency department, doctor and optician. Lack of affordability only affected 1 or 2 person(s). Nonetheless, the results reflected that these people could not afford fee charges for leisure activities (i.e. public sports facilities, museums & galleries and a cinema/theatre) and services for health services (i.e. doctor, dentist & optician, chemists), and transportation

fees (i.e. bus, train and MTR services) (Table 7.26).

Table 7.26: Which public and private services respondents used

	Use - adequate	Collective exclusion		Individual exclusion	
		Use – inadequate	Don't use – unavailable/ unsuitable	Don't use – can't afford	Don't use – don't want/not relevant
<i>(Number)</i>					
Public services					
Libraries	48	10	2	1	39
Public sports facilities	47	13	3	1	36
Museums and galleries	13	4	15	2	64
Evening classes	19	5	7	1	67
Public/community/village hall	37	5	5	0	51
Post Office	77	7	2	1	13
Hospital with accident and emergency department	47	11	2	1	39
Doctor	86	10	1	1	2
Dentist	62	8	3	1	26
Optician	44	10	3	1	41
Private services					
Places of worship	21	4	3	0	71
Bus services	89	6	0	1	4
A train station	92	3	0	1	4
Petrol stations	30	1	5	0	64
Mass Transit Railway services	64	4	7	1	22
Chemists	64	3	0	2	29
A corner shop	95	2	0	2	1
Access to medium to large supermarket	95	4	0	1	0
Access to banks	91	5	0	1	3
A restaurant	92	4	0	2	1
A cinema or theatre	69	4	3	2	21

Exclusion from social relations

Non-participation in common social activities

Exclusion from or restricted normal social relations can be examined in various ways, including through non-participation in common social activities and lack of social support. Eighty-eight respondents could afford to engage in a full range of social activities (Table 7.27). Table 7.28 presents the extent to which people participate in a range of common social activities and the proportion excluded by lack of money. Three people were excluded by lack of money from participating in three or more social activities, five from two or more. 'A holiday away from home' (N=7), 'friends or family round for a meal, snack or drink' (N=5) and 'a meal in a restaurant once a month' (N=4) were the activities which people did not do because they could not afford them. Small numbers were excluded from collecting children from school (N=3), visiting friends or family (N=2) and even when in hospital, attending funerals and weddings (N=2). Eighty-six respondents regarded 'give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year' as an essential social activity. Only 1 respondent could not afford to do this. It was also regarded as an important indicator of financial exclusion and exclusion from social relations in Chinese society.

Table 7.27: Number of common social activities that cannot be afforded

Number of common social activities that cannot be afforded	Frequency
0	88
1	7
2	2
3 or more	3
Total (poor and non-poor)	100

Table 7.28: Participation in common social activities

Activities	Essential	Do activity	Don't do / don't want	Don't do / cannot afford
Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	86	88	6	1
Celebrations on special occasions	84	90	9	1
Collect children from school	79	62	32	3
Visit to school, e.g. sports day	71	71	29	0
Visit to friends or family	75	93	5	2
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	75	80	17	2
Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	69	77	19	2
Friends or family round for a meal/snack/drink	68	79	16	5
A holiday away from home for one week a year	52	65	26	7
Attending church or other places of worship	52	55	31	2
<i>A meal in a restaurant once a month</i>	47	75	20	4

Note: 1. Item in italics was not considered to be necessities by more than 50% of the population.

Table 7.29 explains factors preventing people from taking part in common social activities. Nearly one-third of the population (N=32) explained that they could not participate in social activities because they could not afford to. However, lack of money was not the only factor preventing people from participating in the listed activities. As shown in table 7.28, factors preventing participation in common social activities included lack of time due to paid work (N=44), lack of time due to childcare responsibilities (N=31) and other caring responsibilities (N=8) and sickness or old age (N=3).

Table 7.29: Factors preventing participation in common social activities

	Non-participation
Lack of time due to paid work	44
Not interested	42
Can't afford to	32
Lack of time due to childcare responsibilities	31
No one to go out with	16
Poor public transport	8
Cannot go out due to caring responsibilities	8
Lack of time due to other caring responsibilities	3
Too old/ill/sick/disabled	3
Problems with physical access	3
Feel unwelcome (e.g. due to age/gender/disability)	0

Note: Multiple responses allowed

Lack of support

The amount of practical and emotional support potential available to individuals in times of need is one important indicator of functioning social relationships and networks. Respondents were asked how much support they would expect to get in six situations,

including support from other members of the family and friends, as well as other means of support. Two items related to emotional support and they were: 'if you were feeling a bit depressed and wanting someone to talk to' and 'if you needed advice about an important change in your life'. Four items related to practical support were asked about and they included: 'if you needed help around the home if you are in bed with flu', 'if you needed help with heavy household jobs that you cannot manage alone', 'if you needed someone to look after your children/an elderly/disabled adult you care for', and 'if you needed someone to look after your home or possessions when away'. As shown in table 7.30, less than one-third of the population (N=31) expected to be able to call on 'some' or 'a lot of' support in all six situations. Nearly one in ten (N=9) had 'some' or 'a lot of' support in no situations (N=5) or only one situation (N=4).

Table 7.30: Number of situations in which respondents reported 'a lot of', or 'some' support

Number of situations in which potential support available	Frequency
6	31
5	21
4	15
3	12
2	12
1	4
0	5
Total	100

Table 7.31 shows the number of respondents having potential support in each of six situations. Nearly one-third (N=31) of the population had little or no support in the case of looking after possessions. One-fifth and one quarter of the population had little or no support in the case of home help during personal illness and talking to if depressed respectively.

Table 7.31: Number of respondents having potential support in each of six situations

Type of support	(Number)	
	'None'/'Not much'	'Some'/'A lot'
Practical support		
Looking after personal possessions	31	62
Home help during personal illness	21	75
Help with heavy household jobs	19	79
Informal caring	9	50
Emotional support		
Talking to if depressed	25	72
Advice	18	77

Table 7.32 illustrates levels of overall support across six situations by selected key variables. The data was divided into those with *good* support (i.e. some or a lot of support in all six situations), *reasonable* support (i.e. lacking good support in one to three situations) and *poor* support (i.e. lacking good support in four or more situations). The results indicated men had poorer support networks than women. People with jobs were more

likely to receive support than those unemployed or outside the labour market. Those in retired and non-pensioner jobless households had poorer support networks than those in working households. It is because attachment to the labour market maintains a good social network with other people and it is easier to get support from them if needed.

Table 7.32: Levels of overall support across all key areas by selected key variables

	Level of support			<i>(Number)</i>
	Good	Reasonable	Poor	
Age of respondent				
<24	2	8	0	10
25-34	8	11	2	21
35-44	13	10	9	32
45-54	7	13	8	28
55+	1	6	2	9
Sex of respondent				
Male	8	22	10	40
Female	23	26	11	60
Has long-standing illness				
No	27	42	15	84
Yes	4	6	6	16
Household type				
Single adult	1	3	4	8
Lone parent with child	0	0	1	1
Couple	4	10	0	14
Couple with 1 child	8	5	1	14
Couple with 2+ children	6	5	7	18
2 or more adults no child	4	15	2	21
2 or more adults with children	1	2	0	3
Couple with 1 or more adults no children	3	5	4	12
Couple with 1 or more adults and 1+ child(ren)	4	3	2	8
Workers in household				
No worker	0	0	3	3
Workers	31	46	17	94
Retired	0	2	1	3
Economic status of respondent				
Working	19	36	10	65
Unemployed	1	0	2	3
Retired	0	5	1	6
Domestic and caring activities	10	3	8	21
Student	1	4	0	5
Total (poor and non-poor)	31	48	21	100

The foregoing discussion demonstrates the importance of using multidimensional indicators to measure poverty. The findings of the LS survey indicated that twenty out of eighty households were lacking no socially perceived necessities but they were financially deprived. It reflected that using only financial resources for poverty measures could not provide a complete picture of the life style of the poor. Instead, using both income and deprivation indicators contributed to a better understanding of the true extent and nature of poverty.

A global economic downturn has contributed to high unemployment rates in Hong Kong since 1997. It was coincident with the results of the LS survey. The findings demonstrated that labour market exclusion was an important factor leading to poverty and

social exclusion. The findings illustrated that persons not in the working population were more likely to be poor. In other words, the greater the number of workers in a household, the less likely people were to be deprived of necessities. On the other hand, attachment to the labour market did not guarantee a life free from poverty owing to long working hours and low-paid jobs.

The results also indicated that poor households were more likely to have restricted consumption or have experienced disconnection of basic services (i.e. water, gas, electricity and telephone) because of unaffordability. Lack of affordability also affected people's use of public or private services. The results reflected that these people could not afford fees charged for activities for leisure (i.e. public sports facilities, museums & galleries and a cinema/theatre) and services for personal health (i.e. doctor, dentist & optician, chemists), as well as transportation fees (i.e. bus, train and MTR services). Non-participation in common social activities is one kind of social exclusion. People who cannot 'give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year' were typical example of financial exclusion and exclusion from social relations in Chinese society. Apart from earning a living, attachment to the labour market also maintains a social network with other people. The findings reflect that people with jobs were more likely to receive support than those unemployed. Those in retired and non-pensioner jobless households had poorer support networks than those in working households.

In summary, the results of the LS survey illustrate that the poor households not only encountered financial deprivation, but also suffered from a small degree of service exclusion and non-participation in common social activities because of unaffordability. The findings also demonstrated that exclusion from the labour market resulted in poorer social relations and networks in such poor households.

8

Poverty & social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey

Income distribution

Housing

Household size and number of working household members

Rationale for conducting a comparative study on public perception of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

Adult poverty in Hong Kong and Britain

What items constituted the necessities of modern life?

Characteristics of poor adults

Child poverty in Hong Kong and Britain

What items were considered to be necessities for children?

Characteristics of poor children

Social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

Exclusion from the labour market

Service exclusion

Exclusion from social relations

Non-participation in common social activities

Lack of support

Chapter 8

Poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

Having presented and discussed the findings of the 1% sample analysis and the LS survey in Chapters 5 and 7, this chapter, *first*, examines similarities and differences between the key findings of the two surveys. *Second*, a comparative study on public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain will be conducted⁵⁰ (Appendix 9).

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey

The objective of this comparative study is to examine and compare the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households of the 1% sample and the LS survey partly to check their reliability. It also sets out to illustrate the limitations of only using conventional income threshold measurements of poverty. As mentioned earlier, the sample of the LS survey was inevitably small and the discussion here can only be suggestive since the findings might not be statistically significant.

Income distribution

Table 8.1 shows equivalised income distribution of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey. As shown in the table, the equivalised income distribution of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey was close. The mean and median of the equivalised income for the whole equivalised distribution from the 1% sample were HK\$18,846 and HK\$12,632 in 2001, compared with HK\$17,616 and HK\$13,413 from the LS survey in 2000. The lowest income quintile of the former group was equivalent to or less than HK\$6,191, compared with the latter group with income being equivalent to or less than HK\$6,701. In addition, there was more than one-third of HIB50% (36%) (i.e. HK\$9,423) and more than one quarter of HIB60% (27%) (i.e. HK\$7,579) from the 1% sample, in comparison with 30% (i.e. HK\$8,808) and 27% (i.e. HK\$8,048) from the LS survey respectively. The results

⁵⁰ The PSE survey was designed to update *the Breadline Britain surveys*, as well as to probe into public views on a range of issues associated with poverty and social exclusion (Mack & Lansley, 1985; Gordon & Pantazis, 1997a; Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). The survey design, sampling, data collection and fieldwork procedure of the PSE survey are summarized in appendix 8.

indicated that proportion of low-income households from the 1% sample was consistent with the make up of the LS survey sample. Furthermore, the findings also demonstrated that low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey shared similar living standards in terms of financial deprivation.

Table 8.1: Equivalised income distribution of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey

	The 1% sample (Year 2001)		LS survey (Year 2000)	
	Amount (HK\$)	%	Amount (HK\$)	%
Income below the mean of equivalised income	18,845.9	69	17,616.0	63
Income below the median of equivalised income	12,631.6	50	13,413.3	49
Income below 50% of the mean for the whole equivalised distribution	9,423.0	36	8,808.0	30
Income below 60% of the median for the whole equivalised distribution	7,578.9	27	8,048.0	27
Income quintile for the whole equivalised distribution				
1 st quintile (lowest income)	□ 6,190.48	20	□ 6,701.2	20
2 nd quintile	6,190.48 < x □ 10,265.52	20	6,701.2 < x □ \$11,343.6	20
3 rd quintile	10,265.52 < x □ 15,421.05	20	11,343.6 < x □ \$15,957.0	20
4 th quintile	15,421.05 < x □ 25,925.93	20	15,957.0 < x □ 27,263.2	20
5 th quintile (highest income)	x > 25,925.93	20	x > 27,263.2	20

Housing

Table 8.2 relates the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the two samples to their type of housing⁵¹. The findings of both the LS survey (i.e. 70.0% for the HIB50%, 74.1% for the HIB60% and 85.0% for the HLIQ) and the 1% sample (i.e. 48.7% for the HIB50%, 49.5% for the HIB60% and 49.1% for the HLIQ) showed that a higher proportion of the low-income households were living in public rental housing than those living in other type of quarters. The results of both the LS survey (i.e. 56.8% for the HIB50%, 54.1% for the HIB60% and 45.9% for the HLIQ) and the 1% sample (i.e. 57.5% for the HIB50%, 43.8% for the HIB60% and 32.3% for the HLIQ) indicated that households living in 'public rental housing' were more likely to be poor.

Household size and number of working household members

The results of both studies demonstrated that exclusion from the labour market

⁵¹ Detailed data on 'type of accommodation', 'degree of sharing' and 'monthly domestic household rent/mortgage' which provided further information on living conditions of the vulnerable groups in Hong Kong has not been collected from the LS survey.

was an important factor in poverty. It could be explained by the fact that the fewer the number of the working household members, the more likely the households were to be low-income households. As shown in table 8.2, households with no working members were more likely to be living in low-income households (i.e. 66.6% for the HLIQ, 75.9 % for the HIB60% and 83.4% for the HIB50% from the 1% sample, as well as 66.7% for the HLIQ, the HIB60% and the HIB50% from the LS survey). The findings of the LS survey further demonstrated that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee to lift those low-income households out of poverty owing to low-paid or part-time jobs (i.e. 3.6% for the HIB50%, 2.2% for the HIB60% and 0.8% for the HLIQ from the 1% sample, and 13.3% for the HIB50%, 14.8% for the HIB60% and 15.0% for the HLIQ from the LS survey)

Furthermore, the number of working household members varied by number of children aged below 15, as well as elderly person aged 60+ in households. The greater the number of the dependent household members, the more likely the households were to be low-income households. As shown in table 8.2, there were a higher proportion of one-person households from the 1% sample (i.e. 29.8% for the HLIQ, 33.6% for the HIB60% and 40.1% for the HIB50%) than those of the LS survey⁵² (i.e. 12.5% for the HLIQ, the HIB60% and the HIB50% respectively) living in low-income households. It could be explained by the fact that there were more than two-third of single elderly people living in low-income households from the 1% sample (i.e. 69.0% for the HLIQ, 75.1% for the HIB60% and 82.3% for the HIB50%). Besides, the more children aged below 15 in the household, the more likely the households were to be low-income households (i.e. 44.0% for the HLIQ and 56.0% for both the HIB60% and the HIB50% from the LS survey, and 27.6% for the HLIQ, 38.3% for the HIB60% and 50.4% for the HIB50% from the 1% sample). The results of these two studies helped to explain why exclusion from the labour market was an important factor leading to poverty.

The analysis of the 1% sample was an example of the conventional income threshold measurement of poverty. As mentioned earlier, income is not the only indicator measuring poverty. Looking at income is not necessarily sufficient to determine whether someone is poor when poverty is defined more broadly as relative deprivation. It is because there is not always a direct relationship between economic resources and standards of living. The actual living standards may be different among different households with identical economic resources because of different expenditure pressures and patterns and differing ability to transform money into living standards. Therefore,

⁵² The number of cases from the LS survey was 100 and it was obviously a relatively small number. There were about one-tenth of respondents (9%) aged 55 and above from the LS survey.

using both income and deprivation indicators offers the opportunity to measure poverty more accurately and to provide a more complete picture of the living standards of the poor. Because of the problems with the income threshold approach, the LS survey came as a pilot of complementary income indicators with an analysis of deprivation items. The results of the two surveys show a broadly similar pattern of low incomes and demonstrate broadly similar picture of the most vulnerable groups. The findings also illustrate that it is necessary to look beyond income to a broader picture.

Table 8.2: Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of low-income households from the 1% sample and the LS survey

Characteristics	(Rate)											
	Income below 50% of the mean				Income below 60% of the median				The lowest income quintile			
	The 1% sample		LS survey		The 1% sample		LS survey		The 1% sample		LS survey	
	%	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate	%	Rate
Type of quarters												
Public rental housing	48.7	57.5	70.0	56.8	49.5	43.8	74.1	54.1	49.1	32.3	85.0	45.9
Government Subsidized flats	12.5	28.5	20.0	23.1	11.6	19.8	18.5	19.2	11.2	14.3	10.0	7.7
Private permanent housing	36.2	25.4	10.0	9.1	36.2	19.0	7.4	6.1	36.6	14.3	5.0	3.0
Others	2.6	32.8	0	0	2.8	26.2	0	0	3.1	21.5	0	0
Household size												
1	17.2	40.1	3.3	12.5	19.2	33.6	3.3	12.5	23.0	29.8	3.3	12.5
2	20.3	33.7	6.7	10.5	21.3	26.5	6.7	10.5	22.4	20.7	6.7	10.5
3	18.7	31.5	23.3	28.0	17.8	22.5	18.5	20.0	16.0	15.0	15.0	12.0
4	23.9	36.7	26.7	27.6	22.5	25.8	25.9	24.1	20.6	17.5	20.0	13.8
5+	19.9	39.2	40.0	63.2	19.2	28.5	44.4	63.2	18.0	19.8	50.0	52.6
Number of working household members												
0	35.6	83.4	13.3	66.7	43.3	75.9	14.8	66.7	51.1	66.6	20.0	66.7
1	43.2	41.7	46.7	35.0	41.8	30.2	44.4	30.0	39.4	21.2	40.0	20.0
2	17.5	20.7	26.7	21.1	12.8	11.3	25.9	18.4	8.6	5.6	25.0	13.2
3+	3.6	7.8	13.3	25.0	2.2	3.4	14.8	25.0	0.8	1.1	15.0	18.8
Children aged below 15 in household												
0	59.0	32.4	33.3	18.2	59.5	24.5	33.3	16.4	62.2	19.0	25.0	9.1
1	19.5	36.3	20.0	30.0	18.6	26.0	14.8	20.0	16.6	17.3	20.0	20.0
2+	21.6	50.4	46.7	56.0	21.8	38.3	51.9	56.0	21.1	27.6	55.0	44.0
Total	100.0	35.9	100.0	30.0	100.0	26.9	100.0	27.0	100.0	20.0	100.0	20.0

Rationale for conducting a comparative study on public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

There were a number of motivations for conducting a comparative study of Britain and Hong Kong. *First*, comparative study can contribute to a better understanding of poverty in Hong Kong by applying to Hong Kong the greater body of British theory and research since poverty studies are more advanced in the United Kingdom. The colonial government was always seen as among the most laissez-faire in the world before the hand-over of sovereignty to China with little concern for concerted action against

poverty. Rapid economic growth also tended to keep the issue of poverty off the political agenda. Nevertheless, there had been some anti-poverty initiatives in Hong Kong. A number of local studies and reports showed that the gap between the rich and the poor has widened (Castells, *et al.*, 1990; Hong Kong Government, Census & Statistics Department, 1982; 1992c & 1997b; Mok, 1993a & 1993b; Wong, 2000a; 2000b & 2000c). The hand-over and the effects of the Asian Financial Crisis made this an intriguing time to open up the question of poverty in Hong Kong. The colonial link also made for some shared understandings that might not be available anywhere else in the world. This study could hopefully contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong by utilizing ideas from the United Kingdom and other European countries.

Second, the essence of comparative study is the study of differences and similarities and why they exist. Comparative study alerts us to a wide range of variables, such as culture, history, politics, climate and living standards that affect the definition, understanding and meaning of poverty. Differences in socio-economic, cultural, climate related issues offer explanations of how and why the differences and similarities exist. This creates was a challenge to a clarification of definitions, theories, approaches and policy responses.

Third, a comparative study can challenge the taken for granted assumptions about the nature, meaning and causes of poverty which tend to be inevitable in a single nation study. Comparison helps us to transcend a narrow ethnocentric approach.

The analysis of the PSE data was based upon the published report on *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain* (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000). It provides a useful analytical framework for discussing the LS survey and conducting a comparative study on public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain. Nonetheless, there were inevitable limitations to the comparative study of public perceptions of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain. *First*, it was not possible to re-group data, such as age and household composition, as well as cross-tabulate data for further analysis according to the published report. Nonetheless, questions used by the PSE survey were repeated where possible for the Hong Kong survey so as to ensure comparable data. *Second*, owing to limited time and resources, the LS survey focused on only one DB district in Hong Kong and only 100 cases which was obviously a relatively small number. But the comparative study alerts us to the way, socio-economic, cultural and climate differences, for example, affect the definition, understanding and meaning of poverty. Therefore, the results should be seen as indicators for further exploration. It should be

noted that the discussion here is only suggestive because the results might not be statistically significant.

Adult poverty in Hong Kong and Britain

In order to identify and explain the similarities and differences in poverty related issues in these two different societies, the discussion focuses on four key areas. *First*, it not only focuses on public perceptions of what items constitute ‘necessities of life’ for adults and children in Hong Kong, but also examines the relationship between ownership rates of particular items and judgements about necessities. *Second*, it identifies the characteristics of adults and children who are considered poor on the basis of being deprived of socially perceived necessities⁵³. *Third*, it looks in more detail at public perceptions of poverty and the causes of poverty, as well as perceptions of the UN’s poverty definitions (i.e. absolute and overall poverty). *Fourth*, it explores social exclusion in terms of labour market exclusion, service exclusion, as well as exclusion from social relations.

What items constituted the necessities of modern life?

Table 8.3 presents the proportion of respondents from Hong Kong and Britain identifying different adult items as ‘necessities’ in terms of food, household goods, clothes, living customs, as well as obligations and activities. It also shows the proportion of respondents who have/do these socially perceived necessities and who could not afford to have them. As shown in the table, both Hong Kong and British people perceive that ‘two meals a day’, ‘meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day’, and ‘fresh fruit and vegetables every day’ are basic food necessities for adults. The findings indicate that a higher proportion of Hong Kong people perceived meat or fish, as well as fresh fruit or vegetables as necessities. It could be explained by the fact that Hong Kong is a densely populated place and its land population density per square kilometres as at mid-2000 stood at 6,320. People can more easily get access to the market every day by public transport. In addition, there are a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables imported from Mainland China and other Asian countries every day because of physical proximity. Owing to differences in living customs in both societies, people in Hong Kong regarded ‘eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions’ whereas British people perceived ‘roast joint/vegetarian equivalent once a week’ as necessities. There were a small proportion of adults who could not afford these basic food necessities in these two societies.

⁵³ Items defined as necessities by more than 50% of the population but which people went without because of shortage of money were used to determine deprivation.

Regarding household goods seen as necessities, at least three quarters of respondents from Hong Kong and Britain regarded 'a refrigerator', 'beds and bedding for everyone in the household', and 'a washing machine' as necessities. Concerning the affordability of socially perceived necessary household goods, only a small proportion of adults could not afford socially perceived necessities in these two societies. Nonetheless, more than one-tenth of British adults could not afford to 'replace or repair broken electrical goods' (12%) and 'replace any worn out furniture' (12%), in comparison with 3% and 4% of Hong Kong adults respectively (Table 8.3).

An overwhelming majority of respondents perceived that 'a television' (97%) and 'a telephone' (97%) were items which adults should have in Hong Kong, compared with 56% and 71% of their British counterparts. The differences could be explained perhaps by the fact that there are differences in regulations and service charges in these two societies. All television sets in private ownership or on hire must be licensed in Britain. Besides, telephone services at home are charged monthly and there is no charge to make a call in Hong Kong while British people have to pay for each call. In addition, owing to differences in climate, British people regarded 'heating to warm living areas of the home' (94%) and 'damp-free home' (93%) as necessities whereas Hong Kong people perceived 'a fan' (94%) as a necessity. Nonetheless, there were still a small proportion of adults who could not afford these two basic living household goods in Britain (Table 8.3).

A much higher proportion of Hong Kong respondents (57%) regarded having a home computer as a necessity than their British counterparts (11%). The differences could be explained perhaps by the fact that there were relatively higher proportions of personal computer penetration and Internet connectivity in households in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is also more advanced electronically than Britain. There were 62% of households with a personal computer (PC) at home in Hong Kong while 53% of households with a PC at home were connected to the Internet in Hong Kong in 2002 (<http://www.info.gov.hk/digital21/eng/milestone/download/itsurveysummary2002.pdf>, accessed on 27 November 2003). In 2002, more than half of all British households (54%) had a home computer while 42% of British households with a PC at home were connected to the Internet (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lib0304.pdf>, accessed on 4 September 2004). This may explain why a higher proportion of Hong Kong people perceived 'a computer' as a necessity than their British counterparts. This could be an example of ownership making people more likely to see an item as a necessity. On the other hand, a relatively high proportion of British people (15%) could not afford to have a home computer, compared with 6% of their Hong Kong counterparts (Table 8.3). This might be because British people saw it as a lower priority than Hong Kong people.

Referring to necessities for clothes, the findings demonstrated differences in living customs in these two societies. More Chinese people regarded new/appropriate clothes to wear for interviews, as well as for family and social gatherings as part of normal living in society. Thus, respondents perceived 'two pairs of all weather shoes' (85%), 'new, not second hand, clothes' (80%), 'appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews' (77%) and 'an outfit to wear for social or family occasions' (70%) as necessities in Hong Kong. It seems much more common for British people to buy or accept the buying of second-hand clothes and it is not necessary to wear special outfit for social or family occasions. Only half of British people perceived 'new, not second hand, clothes' (48%) and 'an outfit to wear for job interviews' (50%) as necessities. The right clothes are clearly more important in Hong Kong. Concerning affordability of clothes, there were relatively high proportions of British adults who could not afford to have these socially perceived necessities compared with their Hong Kong counterparts (Table 8.3).

The findings also reflected that both Hong Kong and British respondents who perceived items or activities as necessities of life did not confine the concept of necessities to basic material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing and fuel, but also took into consideration the needs involved in membership of society. For instance, two-third of respondents from Hong Kong and Britain perceived 'friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink' as a necessity. Almost 70% of Hong Kong people regarded 'attending weddings, funerals and other occasions' as a socially perceived necessity, compared with 80% of their British counterparts. In addition, three quarters of Hong Kong people perceived 'visit to friends or family' and 'visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions' as necessities, in comparison with 84% and 92% of British people respectively. However, only half of respondents from Hong Kong and Britain regarded 'a holiday away from home for one week a year' as a necessity. Comparatively speaking, there were significant proportions of both Hong Kong and British adults who could not afford to have a meal/snack/drink or friends or family round for a visit, as well as to have a holiday (Table 8.3).

Concerning socially prescribed living customs, respondents from these two societies regarded 'celebration on special occasions' (i.e. Lunar Chinese New Year in Hong Kong and Christmas in Britain) as necessities. However, over 90% of respondents from Hong Kong perceived 'regular savings for 'rainy days' (91%) as something which adults should be able to do, compared with 66% of their British counterparts. It could be explained by the fact that there has been a lack of comprehensive retirement protection, unemployment and sickness insurance schemes in Hong Kong. Therefore, Chinese

people tend to try to have regular savings for rainy days. On the other hand, only 70% of respondents from Hong Kong regarded 'enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration' as a necessity, in comparison with 82% of their British counterparts. Less of life in Hong Kong is lived in the home than in Britain perhaps. One in twenty of Hong Kong adults could not afford to have enough money to keep home in a decent state of decoration, compared with 14% of their British counterparts. Eight per cent of British people could not afford to have 'insurance of contents of dwelling' even though more than three-quarters of the British regarded it as a necessity (Table 8.3)

As shown in table 8.3, Hong Kong respondents who possessed items were more likely to regard these items as necessities. For example, respondents who did 'give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year' and had 'celebrations on special occasions' were more likely to regard these as necessities. On the contrary, less than two-third of respondents claimed that they had 'a holiday away from home for one week a year' and could buy 'all medicine prescribed by the Chinese practitioner', whereas about 50% of respondents regarded these two items as necessities. For the climate-related items, a majority of respondents who had 'a fan' and 'air conditioner' at home were likely to regard these two items as necessities. Nonetheless, the results also indicated that a higher proportion of respondents perceived 'a fan' as necessity than 'an air-conditioner'. To a certain extent, the findings reflected that respondents could have different priorities for those similar climate-related items in Hong Kong. On the other hand, British people who had items were less likely to perceive these items as necessities for adults in society. Their judgements were mainly based upon whether these necessities could fulfil *basic* material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing fuel, as well as be vital for performing roles and obligations in the community. Having 'two meals a day', 'fresh fruit and vegetables every day', 'a refrigerator', 'beds and bedding for everyone in a household', 'heating to warm living areas of the home', 'hobby or leisure activity', 'celebrations on special occasions' and 'enough money to keep a home in a decent state of decorations' were examples of necessities for adults in Britain.

The foregoing discussion, *first*, reflects that different perceptions of necessities were culture and climate-related in Hong Kong and Britain. For instance, British people perceived 'heating to warm living areas of the home (94%)', 'damp-free home' (93%) and 'carpets in living rooms and bedrooms' (67%) as necessities whereas Hong Kong people regarded 'a fan' (94%) and 'an air-conditioner' (81%) as necessities. These were examples of climate-related perceptions. Having 'a small amount of money to spend each week' (94%), 'regular savings for 'rainy days' (91%), as well as giving 'red pocket money during Chinese New Year' (86%) were perceived as typical culture-related necessities in Hong

Kong. *Second*, the findings demonstrated that both Hong Kong and British respondents who perceived items or activities as necessities of life not only focused on basic material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing and fuel, but also took into consideration the needs involved in membership of society.

Table 8.3: Perception of adult necessities and how many people lacked them in Hong Kong and Britain

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% claiming items as necessity		Have/do		Don't have, can't afford	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Food						
Two meals a day	95	91	96	96	0	1
Meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day	94	79	93	93	2	3
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	94	86	91	89	2	4
¹ Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions	71	N/A	86	N/A	0	N/A
² Roast joint/vegetarian equivalent once a week	N/A	56	N/A	86	N/A	3
Household goods						
A refrigerator	98	89	100	98.9	0	0.1
A television	97	56	99	98	0	1
A telephone	97	71	100	98	0	1
¹ A fan	94	N/A	97	N/A	0	N/A
Beds and bedding for everyone in the household	94	95	96	98.8	2	1
A washing machine	93	76	97	96	0	1
Replace or repair broken electrical goods (e.g. refrigerator)	85	85	91	82	3	12
¹ An air-conditioner	81	N/A	93	N/A	1	N/A
Replace any worn out furniture	78	54	87	82	4	12
A home computer	57	11	75	43	6	15
A video-cassette recorder	53	19	79	91	4	2
Microwave	48	23	69	81	5	3
CD player	44	12	71	74	5	7
² Heating to warm living areas of the home	N/A	94	N/A	99	N/A	1
² Damp-free home	N/A	93	N/A	91	N/A	6
² Deep freezer/fridge freezer	N/A	68	N/A	95	N/A	2
² Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms	N/A	67	N/A	95	N/A	3
² Dictionary	N/A	53	N/A	89	N/A	5
² Tumble dryer	N/A	20	N/A	60	N/A	7
² Dishwasher	N/A	7	N/A	32	N/A	11
² Satellite television	N/A	5	N/A	37	N/A	7
Clothes						
Two pairs of all weather shoes	85	64	91	91	0	5
New, not second hand, clothes	80	48	91	91	0	5
Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews	77	69	81	83	1	4
An outfit to wear for social or family occasions	70	51	79	92	1	4
² Warm, waterproof coat	N/A	85	N/A	94	N/A	4
² Dressing gown	N/A	34	N/A	82	N/A	6

Table 8.3 (Continued....)

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% claiming items as necessity		Have/do		Don't have, can't afford	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Obligations and activities						
Visit to friends or family	75	84	93	95	2	2
Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	75	92	80	89	2	3
Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	69	80	77	94	2	3
Friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink	68	64	79	84	5	6
A holiday away from home for one week a year	52	55	65	68	7	18
Attending church or other places of worship	52	42	55	34	2	1
² Hobby or leisure activity	N/A	78	N/A	81	N/A	7
² Coach/train fares to visit friends/family quarterly	N/A	38	N/A	35	N/A	16
² Holidays abroad once a year	N/A	19	N/A	48	N/A	27
Living customs						
A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	94	59	96	84	2	13
Regular savings for 'rainy days'	91	66	88	68	6	25
¹ Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	86	N/A	88	N/A	1	N/A
Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. Chinese New Year/Christmas)	84	83	90	96	1	2
Having a daily newspaper	82	30	82	59	1	4
¹ When you are sick, you can see your private doctor	76	N/A	82	N/A	2	N/A
Presents for friends or family once a year (e.g. birthday)	74	56	85	94	3	3
Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	70	82	83	84	5	14
¹ All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner	50	N/A	60	N/A	4	N/A
A meal in a restaurant (/pub) once a month	47	26	65	62	4	18
Access to the internet	47	6	75	30	6	16
² Medicine prescribed by doctor	N/A	90	N/A	94	N/A	1
² Insurance of contents of dwelling	N/A	79	N/A	87	N/A	8
² Car	N/A	38	N/A	78	N/A	10
² An evening out once a fortnight	N/A	37	N/A	63	N/A	15
² Going to the pub once a fortnight	N/A	20	N/A	48	N/A	10
² Mobile phone	N/A	7	N/A	44	N/A	7

Notes: 1. Not included in the PSE survey.

2. Not included in the LS survey.

3. Adults' items and activities that were considered by less than 50% of respondents to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and Britain were marked in bold.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.14-15.

Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.1.

Characteristics of poor adults

As shown in table 8.3, 34 of 38 adult items were considered by 50% or more of respondents to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong, compared with 35 of the 54 items in Britain. A deprivation index was constructed by summing the number of deprivation items that respondents said ‘they did not have and could not afford’. A poverty threshold was calculated and it involved looking at people’s incomes and their deprivation levels. As shown in table 8.4, the ANOVA model yielded the result that a score of two or more on the deprivation index was the optimum position for the poverty line in Hong Kong and Britain.

Table 8.4: Brief summary table for ANOVA model of optimum position for the adult poverty threshold in Hong Kong and Britain

Model	F Statistic for corrected ANOVA model
LS survey	
Deprivation score of 1 or more	18.4
Deprivation score of 2 or more	26.9
Deprivation score of 3 or more	20.4
Deprivation score of 4 or more	6.1
PSE survey	
Null model	26
Deprivation score of 1 or more	45
Deprivation score of 2 or more	51
Deprivation score of 3 or more	45
Deprivation score of 4 or more	42
Deprivation score of 5 or more	36
Deprivation score of 6 or more	31

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.79.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.6.

As shown in table 8.5, for all respondents the overall proportion of people living in poverty was 25.6% in Britain, compared with 10% in Hong Kong. The findings of both LS and PSE surveys demonstrated that there were higher proportions of people lacking basic necessities in certain types of households. *First*, households living in the lowest income quintile were more likely to say they were deprived of socially perceived necessities in Hong Kong (50%) and Britain (59%). It was directly related to their economic status and the number of working members in the household.

Second, poverty was more common for women (29% and 12% for British and Hong Kong women respectively) than males (22% and 8% for British and Hong Kong men respectively) in these two places. It could be explained by the fact that the mode of females’ economic participation were not only affected by global economic restructuring, but also influenced by their marital status and caring responsibilities. More women worked part-time which not only affected their earnings but also had significant impacts on their retirement income protection in the future (Table 8.5).

Third, households living in public rental housing were more likely to be poor in Hong Kong, while there were higher proportions of local authority tenants and housing association tenants living in poverty in Britain. The results of the LS survey showed that 22% of households living in public housing were poor, compared with 3% of those living in private residential flats in Hong Kong. Poverty was especially high for those households living in old public housing which has been built for at least 10 years. The results coincided with the findings of the PSE survey. There were more than 50% of local authority tenants (61%) and housing association tenants (57%) living in poverty compared to 33% of private tenants in Britain (Table 8.5).

Fourth, persons with low education attainment were more likely to be poor in both Hong Kong and Britain. As shown in table 8.5, 47% of Hong Kong respondents who have completed their primary level of schooling or below were living in poverty, compared with 15% of those Hong Kong people with matriculation education level. The results of the LS survey were consistent with the findings of the PSE survey. It indicated that higher proportions of British people finishing education at 16 (33%) or below 16 (30%) were poor, whereas only 17% of those staying on to aged 19 or above were poor.

Fifth, the findings of both studies reflected that cohabiting/separated/divorced and widowed persons were more likely to be poor in Hong Kong (40%) and Britain (35%), in comparison with Hong Kong (9%) and British (20%) married persons. The results also demonstrated that lone parent families were more likely to be living in poverty in Hong Kong⁵⁴ (100%) and Britain (67%). It could be explained by the fact that it is difficult for female/male-headed single parents to find full-time jobs because of caring responsibilities (Table 8.5).

Sixth, households with more children were more likely deprived of socially perceived necessities in both Hong Kong and Britain. More obviously – more children means more mouths to feed and bodies to clothe (Table 8.5).

Seventh, households without workers were more likely to be deprived of necessities but the presence of workers did not guarantee freedom from poverty because of part-time and low-paid jobs. Particular groups were at higher risk of low pay – young workers without qualifications, older workers without skills who had lost their jobs. As shown in table 8.5, there were higher proportions of Hong Kong (67%) and British

⁵⁴ Owing to the limited sampled households of the LS survey, it was hard to draw a conclusion from the findings that lone parent families were more likely to live in poor households in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, it was evident that the proportion of single parent families with dependent children receiving CSSA increased from 11.9% in 2001 to 12.5% in May 2003. It indicated that single parent families with

(38%) households with no workers living in poverty. The findings also indicated that households with working members could not escape from poverty in both Hong Kong (4%) and Britain (16%) because of low-paid/part-time jobs. Younger persons aged below 25, as well as 45 and above were more likely deprived of socially perceived necessities in Hong Kong and Britain. It could be explained by the fact that for those people with non-skilled/semi-skilled and low education attainment found difficulty in looking for jobs once they were laid off or were unemployed. Even though they could find jobs, they were more likely to find low-paid or part-time jobs.

Table 8.5: The poverty rates and poverty proportions of the adults in Hong Kong and Britain

(%)

	Poverty rate ¹ (% in poverty)		Poverty proportion ² (% of all in poverty)		Number ³	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
All	10	25.6	100	100	100	1534
Gender of respondent						
Male	8	22	30	42	40	740
Female	12	29	70	58	60	794
Number of children in the household						
0	7	22	40	56	55	994
1	10	29	20	16	20	210
2+	16	35	40	29	25	330
Age of respondent						
<25	10	34	10	11	10	126
25-34	0	38	0	27	21	284
35-44	16	20	50	14	32	262
45-54	11	25	30	16	28	253
55+	11	21	10	32	9	611
Marital status of respondent						
Single	8	31	20	19	26	236
Married	9	20	60	45	69	894
Cohabiting/separated/ divorced/widowed	40	35	20	36	5	405
Age respondent completed education						
<16	N/A	30	N/A	30	N/A	344
16	N/A	33	N/A	31	N/A	311
17	N/A	27	N/A	9	N/A	120
18	N/A	24	N/A	8	N/A	111
19+	N/A	17	N/A	22	N/A	426
Education attainment of respondent						
No schooling/primary	47	N/A	80	N/A	17	N/A
Secondary	0	N/A	0	N/A	49	N/A
Matriculation	15	N/A	20	N/A	13	N/A
Tertiary (Degree/non-degree courses)	0	N/A	0	N/A	21	N/A
Housing Type						
Public rental housing	22	N/A	80	N/A	37	N/A
Government subsidized sale flats	4	N/A	10	N/A	26	N/A
Private residential flats	3	N/A	10	N/A	33	N/A
Others	0	N/A	0	N/A	4	N/A
Tenure						
Outright owner	N/A	15	N/A	17	N/A	464
Owner with mortgage	N/A	19	N/A	35	N/A	704
Private tenant/other	N/A	33	N/A	9	N/A	110
Housing association tenant	N/A	57	N/A	10	N/A	71
Local authority tenant	N/A	61	N/A	29	N/A	185

dependent children are more likely to encounter financial difficulties.

Table 8.5 (Continued...)

	Poverty rate ¹ (% in poverty)		Poverty proportion ² (% of all in poverty)		Number ³	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Household composition						
Single adult	13	32	10	22	8	274
Lone parent with child(ren)	100	67	10	10	1	59
Couple	0	15	0	18	14	485
Couple + 1 child	7	24	10	7	14	108
Couple + 2+ children	17	30	30	19	18	250
2 or more adults no children	10	34	20	6	21	71
2 or more adults with children	0	52	0	4	3	33
Couple with one or more adults no children	8	21	10	9	12	159
Couple with one or more adults and 1+ child	11	24	10	6	9	97
Employment status of household						
No workers (retired/sick/disabled/unemployed)	67	38	40	49	6	502
1 worker	10	28	20	26	40	361
2+ workers	4	16	40	27	54	661
Quintile of LS/PSE equivalent income						
5 (highest)	0	0.6	0	0.6	20	197
4	0	17	0	15	20	266
3	0	24	0	19	21	266
2	0	40	0	31	19	301
1 (lowest)	50	59	100	34	20	309

- Notes: 1. It shows how the poverty rate differs in terms of the characteristics of individuals/households.
 2. It gives the poverty proportion that is the percentage of all the poor with a particular characteristic.
 3. It presents the number of people answering the questions.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.19-22.
 Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.8.

Child poverty in Hong Kong and Britain

What items were considered to be necessities for children?

Table 8.6 presents the proportion of respondents from Hong Kong and Britain identifying various items as child necessities in terms of food, clothes, participation and activities, living customs, as well as developmental and environmental items. Regarding food necessities, at least three quarters of parents from both Hong Kong and Britain perceived that 'three meals a day', 'fresh fruit and vegetable every day' and 'meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day' as items which children should have. Nonetheless, there were still a small number of children living in poor households who could not afford these basic food necessities. Owing to differences in living customs and climate, parents from Hong Kong and Britain had different perceptions of clothes necessities for children. As mentioned earlier, Chinese people always regard new/appropriate cloths for family and social gathering as parts of normal living in society. More than 80% of parents perceived 'some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes' (82%) as a necessity for children in Hong Kong, compared with 67% of their British counterparts. Nonetheless, lower proportion of Hong Kong people regarded 'at least seven pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new' (74%)

and 'at least four jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts' (65%) as necessities for children, compared with 84% and 71% of their British counterparts respectively. In addition, owing to difference in climate, a majority of parents perceived a 'warm, waterproof coat' as an item which children should have in Britain (Table 8.6).

With reference to developing the potentiality of their children, the results indicated differences in culture in Hong Kong and Britain. Parents from Hong Kong paid more attention to those items related to their children's school learning to achieve good academic results. These items included 'educational games' (85%), 'paying for special lessons' (82%), 'supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling' (79%) and 'paying for tutorial lessons after schooling' (79%). Nonetheless, some parents could not afford to 'pay for tutorial lessons after schooling' (6%) and 'pay for special lessons' (12%) for their children in Hong Kong. Parents from Britain regarded 'educational games' (84%), 'construction toys' (66%) and a 'bike' (60%) as necessities for developing the potentiality of their children (Table 8.6).

There were significant differences in public perceptions of necessities in regard to the living environment for children because of differences in population density and climate in these two places. A high proportion of parents regarded 'a bed and bedding for self' (96%) as an item which children should have while three quarters of parents perceived a 'bedroom for every child of different sex over 10 years' (76%) as a necessity for children in Britain. Only 76% of parents from Hong Kong regarded 'partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space' as necessities but 18% of families did not have and could not afford. It can be explained by the fact that Hong Kong is one of the world's most densely populated places and apartments are very small. Housing accounts for a dominant share of overall household expenditure and it is too expensive to have a bedroom for every child in Hong Kong (Table 8.6).

The findings also indicated that there were differences in the living customs of children in these two places. Over 90% of parents regarded 'celebrations on special occasion, such as birthday' (92%) as necessity for children in Britain, in comparison with 62% of parents from Hong Kong. Nonetheless, more than three quarters of respondents (85%) have celebrated with their children on special occasions in Hong Kong. It reflected that for children to have 'celebrations on special occasions' was part of normal living in Hong Kong. Besides, parents perceived 'friends around for tea or a snack' (62%) and 'money spent on sweets/snack' (56%) as items which children should have in Hong Kong, compared with 53% and 45% of their British counterparts respectively. Again, less than two-thirds regarded these two items as necessities but three-quarters had these items for their children in Hong Kong. The results reflected that

for children to have money to spend on sweets/snack, as well as to have friends around for tea or a snack has become part of normal living in Hong Kong (Table 8.6).

The foregoing discussion, *first*, reflected that different perceptions of necessities were culture and climate-related, as well as related to living environment in Hong Kong and Britain. *Second*, the results also indicated that parents from both Hong Kong and Britain when considering necessities for children not only focused on basic material needs of a subsistence diet and clothing, but also considered the needs of membership of society for their children. For example, the value/need for educational success in Hong Kong underlies the way extra expenditure on children in education is seen as a necessity.

Table 8.6: Perception of child necessities and which necessities did children lack in Hong Kong and Britain

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% claiming items as necessity		Don't have, can't afford	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
(%)				
Food				
Three meals a day	100	91	3	0.9
Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	97	93	6	1.8
Meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	91	76	3	3.7
Clothes				
All the school uniform required by the school	94	88	0	2.0
New, properly fitted, shoes	85	96	0	2.3
Some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes	82	67	0	3.1
At least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms	76	74	6	3.1
At least 7 pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new	74	84	6	1.9
At least 4 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts	65	71	6	2.8
² Warm, waterproof coat	N/A	95	N/A	1.9
Participation and activities				
Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment or a bicycle)	82	57	3	3.1
Going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children	71	73	3	1.8
¹ An outing for children once a week	71	N/A	3	N/A
¹ Participation in out-of-school activities (e.g. sports, orchestral band, scouts/guides)	59	N/A	6	N/A
A holiday away from home at least one week a year with his/her family	44	63	6	21.8
² Hobby or leisure activity	N/A	88	N/A	3.2
² Swimming at least once a month	N/A	71	N/A	7.1
Developmental				
Books of her/his own	94	90	3	0.1
¹ A dictionary	88	N/A	3	N/A
Educational games	85	84	3	4.2
¹ Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)	82	N/A	12	N/A
¹ Supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling	79	N/A	3	N/A
Toy (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies)	79	85	0	0.5
¹ Paying for tutorial lessons after schooling	79	N/A	6	N/A
Collect children from school	79	75	3	2
Visits to school (e.g. sports day)	71	81	0	2
Computer games	62	13	9	13.2
² Play group at least once a week (pre-school age children)	N/A	89	N/A	1.3
² Construction toys	N/A	66	N/A	3.3
² Bike: new/second-hand	N/A	60	N/A	3.4
² Computer suitable for schoolwork	N/A	38	N/A	35.7

Table 8.6 (Continued....)

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% claiming items as necessity		Don't have, can't afford	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Environmental				
¹ Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space	76	N/A	18	N/A
² A bed and bedding for self	N/A	96	N/A	0.6
² Bedroom for every child of different sex over 10 years	N/A	76	N/A	3.3
² Carpet in bedroom	N/A	75	N/A	1.4
² Garden to play in	N/A	68	N/A	3.5
Living customs				
¹ Buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year	91	N/A	0	N/A
Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. birthday)	62	92	6	3.6
Friends around for tea or a snack	62	53	3	3.7
Money spend on sweets/snack	56	45	9	1.6
¹ Go to McDonald for a meal	9	N/A	3	N/A

Notes: 1. Not included in the PSE survey.
 2. Not included in the LS survey.
 3. Children's items and activities that were considered by less than 50% of respondents to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living in Hong Kong and Britain are marked in bold.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.34.
 Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.17.

Characteristics of poor children

A child poverty threshold is set at two or more necessary items that parents cannot afford in both Hong Kong and Britain. The number of children who lacked 2 or more items in Hong Kong was relatively smaller than British counterparts. The results of both LS and PSE surveys indicated that there were higher proportions of poor children in certain types of households. But it should be noted that the discussion here can only be suggestive because of the small size of the LS sample. *First*, children in households living in the lowest income quintile were more likely to say they were deprived of socially perceived necessities in Hong Kong (100%) and Britain (37%) (Table 8.7). The result was directly related to the economic status of their family members and the number of working members in households.

Second, children in households living in public rental housing were more likely to be poor in Hong Kong (46%) while a higher proportion of children in local authority households in Britain (41%) were poor (Table 8.7).

Third, the findings of both LS and PSE surveys reflected that children in lone parent families were more likely to be deprived of socially perceived necessities in Hong Kong (100%) and Britain (33%) (Table 8.7). Owing to caring responsibility, it is difficult for female/male-headed single parents to find full-time jobs and their earning capacity is often limited.

Fourth, children in households with no workers were more likely to be poor in Hong Kong (100%) and Britain (42%). Nonetheless, the results also showed that children

in some households with 2 workers did not always escape poverty in both Hong Kong (17%) and Britain (15%) when those household working members were in low-paid/part-time jobs (Table 8.7).

Fifth, the number of children in the family was directly associated with deprivation. The greater the number of children in the household, the more likely children was to be deprived of socially perceived necessities in Hong Kong (50% for 3 children) and Britain (25% for 3 children and 39% for 4+ children) (Table 8.7).

The factors associated with child poverty in Britain and Hong Kong are strikingly similar. It is clearly possible to outline those most at risk – they are in public housing, in lone parent families, in households without worker, in larger families. The findings also suggest that the better developed social security system in Britain did protect some children from poverty – and the absence of a developed system of social protection was a factor in child poverty in Hong Kong.

Table 8.7: The poverty rates of the children in Hong Kong and Britain

(%)

	Percentage of children lacking two or more items	
	LS survey	PSE survey
Tenure		
Own	N/A	11
Local	N/A	41
Other	N/A	34
Housing Type		
Public rental housing	46	N/A
Private residential flats	33	N/A
Household type		
Couple	16	11
Lone parent	100	33
Other	0	13
Number of children in household		
1	14	13
2	7	11
3	50	25
4+	0	39
Employment status of household		
2 full-time or more than 2 workers	17	15
1 full-time, 1 part-time	0	6
1 full-time	10	19
1 or more part-time	0	30
No workers	100	42
Income quintile		
4 and 5 (highest)	0	4
3	0	7
2	0	14
1 (lowest)	100	37
Member of household in receipt of Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance		
No	0	12
Yes	100	43
Total	6	18

Note: There were four out of hundred sampled households receiving CSSA for the LS survey.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.37-38.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.21.

Social exclusion in Hong Kong and Britain

Apart from exclusion from adequate income or resources, the vulnerable groups may also be excluded from the labour market, publicly or privately provided services, as well as social relations. In the following sections, comparisons between the findings of the LS and PSE surveys in relation to these three dimensions will be discussed.

Exclusion from the labour market

The findings of both studies reflected that persons not in the working population (i.e. retired, students and home-makers) and their households were more likely to be deprived of necessities. As shown in table 8.8, 35% of Hong Kong respondents had no paid-work, compared with 43% of their British counterparts. Persons not in the labour market are going to be dependent on their families, on social security benefits, on savings. For most people paid employment will provide a higher disposable income than dependence on social security benefits.

Table 8.8: Labour market participation in Hong Kong and Britain

	Economic status of respondent	
	LS survey	PSE survey
Working	65	57
Unemployed	3	3
Permanently unable to work	0	5
Retired	6	24
Domestic & caring activities	21	7
Student	5	3
Other inactive	0	2
Total (poor and non-poor)	100	100

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.54.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.22.

Service exclusion

Table 8.9 shows the proportion of utility disconnection and restricted use experienced by respondents in Hong Kong and Britain. The findings of these two studies demonstrate that a higher proportion of respondents have restricted consumption (4% and 11% for Hong Kong and British respondents respectively) than those experiencing utility disconnection (2% and 6% for Hong Kong and British respondents respectively) because of unaffordability.

Table 8.9: Utility disconnection and restricted use experienced by respondents in Hong Kong and Britain

	LS survey	PSE survey
Has experienced disconnection	2	6
Has restricted consumption	4	11

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.56.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.23.

Table 8.10: Respondents lacking different numbers of services because unaffordable and/or unavailable in Hong Kong and Britain

	Number of services lacking (%)					
	1		2 or more		Total	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Public services						
Cannot afford	0	3	2	1	2	4
Unavailable	9	20	11	8	20	28
Cannot afford or unavailable	8	21	12	10	20	31
Private services						
Cannot afford	0	4	3	2	3	6
Unavailable	0	15	3	11	3	26
Cannot afford or unavailable	0	16	3	14	3	30
Both public & private						
Cannot afford	0	5	4	4	4	9
Unavailable	8	23	13	18	21	41
Cannot afford or unavailable	7	22	14	24	21	46

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.57.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.24.

Table 8.11: Which public and private services respondents used in Hong Kong and Britain

	Collective exclusion						Individual exclusion			
	Use - adequate		Use - inadequate		Don't use - unavailable/unsuitable		Don't use - can't afford		Don't use - don't want/not relevant	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Public services										
Libraries	48	55	10	6	2	3	1	0	39	36
Public sports facilities	47	39	13	7	3	5	1	1	36	48
Museums and galleries	13	29	4	4	15	13	2	1	64	52
Evening classes	19	17	5	2	7	5	1	3	67	73
Public/community/village hall	37	31	5	3	5	9	0	0	51	56
Post Office	77	93	7	4	2	0	1	0	13	2
Hospital with accident and emergency department	47	75	11	13	2	2	1	0	39	10
Doctor	86	92	10	6	1	0	1	0	2	2
Dentist	62	83	8	5	3	1	1	0	26	11
Optician	44	78	10	3	3	1	1	1	41	17
Private services										
Places of worship	21	30	4	1	4	2	0	0	71	66
Bus services	89	38	6	15	6	6	1	0	4	41
A train station	92	37	3	10	3	10	1	1	4	41
Petrol stations	30	75	1	2	1	2	0	1	64	21
Mass Transit Railway services	64	N/A	4	N/A	4	N/A	1	N/A	22	N/A
Chemists	64	93	3	3	4	1	2	0	29	3
A corner shop	95	73	2	7	2	8	2	0	1	12
Medium to large supermarket	95	92	4	4	4	2	1	0	0	2
Access to banks	91	87	5	7	5	1	1	0	3	4
Pub	N/A	53	N/A	4	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	37
A restaurant	92	N/A	4	N/A	4	N/A	2	N/A	1	N/A
A cinema or theatre	69	45	4	6	4	10	2	5	21	33

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.58.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.25.

Respondents were also asked about access to public services (such as public libraries, hospitals, sports facilities) and private services (such as banking services and bus services). Almost one quarter of British people were excluded from two or more services

because they were either unaffordable or unavailable, compared with 14% of Hong Kong people. Nonetheless, the findings of these two studies indicated that lack of availability (i.e. collective exclusion) rather than lack of affordability (i.e. individual exclusion) was the main reason for not using privately or publicly provided services (Table 8.10). As shown in table 8.11, only a small proportion of both Hong Kong and British respondents said that they did not have access to publicly or privately provided services, such as public sports facilities, optician and access to public transport because they could not afford them. It was evident that 79% of respondents had access to a wide range of publicly and privately provided services in Hong Kong, compared with 54% of their British counterparts.

Exclusion from social relations

Exclusion from social relations will be examined in terms of non-participation in common social activities and lack of support as follows.

Non-participation in common social activities

Only a small proportion of Hong Kong people (5%) could not afford to take part in two or more common social activities, compared with 27% of their British counterparts (Table 8.12). As shown table 8.13, a higher proportion of British people could not afford to participate in common social activities, such as ‘attending weddings, funerals and other occasions’, having ‘friends or family round for a meal/snack/drink’ and ‘a holiday away from home for one week a year’, than their Hong Kong counterparts.

Table 8.12: Number of common social activities that cannot be afforded in Hong Kong and Britain

	LS survey	PSE survey
0	88	62
1	7	11
2	2	7
3 or more	3	20
Total	100	100

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.60.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.26.

As shown in table 8.14, unaffordability was not the only factor preventing people from participation in common social activities in Hong Kong and Britain. ‘Lack of time due to paid work’, ‘lack of time due to childcare responsibilities’ and ‘not interested’ were also key factors preventing participation in common social activities in these two societies. As shown in the table, a higher proportion of Hong Kong respondents claimed that they could not participate in common social activities because of ‘lack of time due to paid work’ (44%), compared with 14 % of their British counterparts. It was directly related to the long working hours of Hong Kong people. In Hong Kong, people normally spend at

least 10 hours on working plus transportation every day.

Table 8.13: Participation in common social activities in Hong Kong and Britain

Activities	(%)							
	Essential		Do activity		Don't do/don't want		Don't do/cannot afford	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	86	N/A	88	N/A	6	N/A	1	N/A
Celebrations on special occasions	84	83	90	96	9	2	1	2
Collect children from school	79	75	62	45	32	52	3	3
Visiting friends or family in hospital	75	92	80	88	17	9	2	3
Visits to friends or family	75	84	93	95	3	3	2	2
Visit to school, e.g. sports day	71	81	71	52	29	46	0	3
Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	69	80	77	94	19	3	2	3
Friends or family round for a meal/snack/drink	68	64	79	84	16	10	5	6
A holiday away from home for one week a year	52	55	65	68	26	14	7	18
<i>Attending church or other places of worship</i>	52	41	55	31	31	68	2	1
<i>An evening out once a fortnight</i>	47	39	75	61	20	23	4	16
Hobby or leisure activity	N/A	78	N/A	81	N/A	12	N/A	7
<i>Coach/train fare to visit friends/family quarterly</i>	N/A	38	N/A	30	N/A	55	N/A	18
<i>A meal in a restaurant/pub monthly</i>	N/A	26	N/A	60	N/A	21	N/A	19
<i>Going to the public once a fortnight</i>	N/A	20	N/A	47	N/A	43	N/A	10
<i>Holidays abroad once a year</i>	N/A	19	N/A	48	N/A	25	N/A	2

Note: Item in italics was not considered to be necessities by more than 50% of the population.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.60.

Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.27.

Table 8.14: Factors preventing participation in common social activities in Hong Kong and Britain

	(%)	
	LS survey	PSE survey
Lack of time due to paid work	44	14
Not interested	42	44
Can't afford to	32	47
Lack of time due to childcare responsibilities	31	18
No one to go out with	16	6
No vehicle/poor public transport	8	5
Cannot go out due to caring responsibilities	8	2
Lack of time due to other caring responsibilities	3	4
Too old/ill/sick/disabled	3	14
Problems with physical access	3	1
Feel unwelcome (e.g. due to age/gender/disability)	0	1
Fear of burglary or vandalism	N/A	3
Fear of personal attack	N/A	3
None of these	N/A	8

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.62.

Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.28.

Lack of support

Apart from non-participation in common social activities, lack of practical and emotional support available to individuals in times of need was also a key indicator of exclusion from normal social relations. As shown in table 8.15, fifty-four per cent of British people had 'some' or 'a lot of' support in all seven situations listed, whereas only one-third of Hong Kong people received 'some' or 'a lot of' support in all six situations. Only a small proportion of British people (1%) had 'some' or 'a lot of' support in no situations, compared with 5% of their Hong Kong counterparts.

Table 8.15: Number of situations in which respondents reported 'a lot of' or 'some' support in Hong Kong and Britain

Number of situations in which potential support available	LS survey		PSE survey	
7	N/A		54	
6	31		9	
5	21		8	
4	15		6	
3	12		12	
2	12		2	
1	4		8	
0	5		1	
Total (poor and non-poor)	100		100	

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.64.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.29.

Table 8.16: Proportion of respondents having potential support in each of six/seven situations in Hong Kong & Britain

Type of support	LS survey				PSE survey			
	'None'/'Not much'		'Some'/'A lot'		'None'/'Not much'		'Some'/'A lot'	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Practical support								
Looking after personal possessions*	31	11	62	89				
Home help during personal illness*	21	9	75	91				
Help with heavy household jobs*	19	13	79	87				
Informal caring*	9	29	50	71				
Help with relationship problems	N/A	23	N/A	77				
Emotional support								
Talking to if depressed*	25	11	72	89				
Advice*	18	13	77	87				

Note: * There were N/A cases and the total number of cases was less than 100.

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.64.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.30.

Table 8.16 presents the proportion of Hong Kong and British people having potential support in each of six/seven situations. At least one-fifth of British people have little or no support in the case of informal caring (29%) and helping with relationship problems (23%). Thirteen per cent of people have little or no support in the case of helping with heavy household jobs and giving advice. A higher proportion of Hong Kong people have little or no support in the case of 'home help during personal illness' (21%) and 'looking after personal possessions' (31%) than their British

counterparts. Men have poorer support networks than women. People with paid jobs were more likely to receive support than those unemployed or outside the labour market. People in pensioner and non-pensioner jobless households had poorer support networks than those in working households. The findings of the LS survey were consistent with the results of the PSE survey (Table 8.17).

Table 8.17: Levels of overall support across all key areas by selected key variables in Hong Kong and Britain

	(%)					
	Good support		Reasonable support		Poor support	
	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey	LS survey	PSE survey
Sex of the respondent						
Male	20	51	55	23	25	26
Female	38	56	43	24	19	20
Has long-standing illness						
No	32	54	50	23	18	23
Yes	24	52	38	25	38	23
Workers in household						
No worker	0	47	0	33	100	20
Workers	33	56	49	21	18	23
Retired	0	49	67	27	33	25
Economic status of respondent						
Working	29	58	55	21	16	21
Unemployed	33	45	0	31	67	24
Labour market inactive	34	48	38	27	28	25

Sources: Gordon, D. *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.64.
Lau, M.K.W. *Public Perceptions of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Hong Kong*, Table 7.31.

The foregoing discussion indicates, *first*, that different perceptions of necessities were culture and climate-related in Hong Kong and Britain. *Second*, both Hong Kong and British respondents who perceived items or activities as necessities of life not only focused on basic material needs of a subsistence diet, clothing and fuel, but also took into consideration the needs involved in membership of society. People's needs in their capacity as members of society were to perform the roles and obligations, as well as fulfil the relationship imposed on them. *Third*, particular groups who were more likely to be deprived of socially perceived necessities and had poorer support network, this was directly related to their economic status and the number of workers in the household.

9

Conclusion

The nature and contribution of the thesis

**Shortcomings of the thesis and directions for
future studies**

Relevance to policy makers

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Social scientists have agreed that the identification of the poor is crucial to let us know the extent of poverty and which particular groups are more likely to suffer from poverty. The identification of particular groups who are experiencing poverty gives insight to policy makers for allocating resources to those people who are in real need. As Townsend argued, 'a clear definition allows the scale and degree as well as the nature of the problem of poverty to be identified and therefore points to the scale as well as the kind of remedial action that might be taken' (Townsend, 1974:16).

There is no official poverty line in Hong Kong. The government has not attempted to formulate an official definition of poverty. It was argued that it was difficult to have an agreed definition of poverty or of who is poor and that any definition of poverty would involve the exercise of subjective value judgement. However, establishing a poverty line is important to evaluate the effectiveness of any current policy to surmount poverty. Hong Kong has undergone dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes since the late 1990s and there have been significant impacts on the people's livelihood. Less dramatic but very important economic and social changes created new patterns of poverty from the 1980s onwards and thus we need to be alert to the impacts of socio-economic and demographic changes if we are to understand the new poverty. Taking account of the socio-economic and demographic changes, as well as the new insights and methods of recent studies from Britain and European countries which have not been taken up in earlier studies of poverty in Hong Kong, we need to do a study building on these changes and the new insights which have developed since the 1980s.

The nature and contribution of the thesis

The aim of this thesis was to develop and test new methods of studying poverty, to investigate the extent and prevalence of poverty in a changing society and give insights to policy makers for allocating resources to those people who are in real need. The thesis has 4 main elements – (1) analysis of the relevant Hong Kong and British literature; (2) a secondary data analysis of the 1% Census sample; (3) analysis of the LS survey of Hong Kong; and (4) a comparison of similarities and differences of the key

results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the British PSE survey.

The development of a theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong has utilized ideas from Britain and other European countries since poverty studies have had a long history in these countries. The relevance of western categorisations or approaches to a very different society needs to be explored and examined. The present study provides more up-to-date information on definitions and measurement of poverty and social exclusion by utilizing ideas from the United Kingdom and other European countries and hopes to contribute to the development of an improved theoretical framework for the analysis of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong.

Local poverty studies have utilized ideas from various different methodological approaches to poverty definition, namely the professional or expert approach, the relative deprivation approach and the relative income standard approach, to measure poverty (Chow, 1982b & 1983b; Chua, *et al.*, 2002; Estes, 2000; MacPherson, 1994b; Leung, 1999; Mok & Leung, 1995; Wong, 1995; 1997; 1998a & 1998b; Wong, *et al.*, 1998; Wan, 2001). These previous research studies were useful as showing clearly where poverty research in Hong Kong has got to, its achievements and limitations and form the basis of the focus of the LS survey in Hong Kong. They give insights as to how the LS survey might fill some of the gaps of the existing poverty research.

The findings of various poverty studies from academic institutes and research units in Britain and other European countries reflected that using both income and deprivation indicators, rather than income alone, contributed to better understanding of poverty measurement. Thus, it is useful to measure poverty in terms of multi-dimensional indicators rather than financial resources only. The results of recent studies in Britain also revealed that it was more reliable to use more than one poverty measure (Bradshaw, 2001a & 2001b; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001a, 2001b & 2003; Layte, Nolan & Whelan, 2000). It was suggested that the combination of poverty measures needed to include income data, subjective measures as well as social indicators. As mentioned in previous chapter, there is a lack of a comprehensive empirical study identifying indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion using the public opinion approach in Hong Kong. The LS survey adopted the public opinion approach to explore what aspects of living patterns and deficits constitute poverty and social exclusion, as well as their impacts on people's livelihood.

The second main element in the thesis was a secondary data analysis of the 1% sample from the *Hong Kong 2001 Population Census*. This was undertaken to provide an updated profile of low-income households in Hong Kong. The sample was drawn from the most recent Population Census by a random sample selection to ensure data accuracy. This study was the first attempt to adopt Bradshaw & Middleton's equivalised income measure (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000: 86-87) to identify the number of low-income households with reference to various definitions of low-income, and also examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these low-income households in Hong Kong.

The third research element was the LS survey, which aimed at investigating public views on issues of poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong and was conducted to gain a more complete picture of the life style of the poor in Hong Kong. This survey not only focused on the inadequacy of the financial resources of vulnerable groups, but also explored the non-affordability of socially perceived necessities⁵⁵ and subjective measure of poverty so as to reflect various elements of hardship and their interrelationships. The results of the LS survey demonstrated the importance of using multidimensional indicators for poverty measure. Owing to limited time and resources, the LS survey only focused on Shatin, where is one of 18 District Board (DB) districts in Hong Kong. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number and limited the analysis. Although there was only one DB as well as only 100 cases, considerable efforts were made to secure a representative sample. The study should perhaps be seen as a *pilot study*. The area/approach was new and the sample was inevitably small so it did have key elements of a pilot study. What this study can do is point up issues for further exploration.

The final element in the study was comparison of similarities and differences in the key results of the 1% sample and the LS survey, and of the findings of the LS survey and the British PSE survey. The comparative study also alerted us to a wide range of variables, such as culture, history, climate and living standards that affect the definition, understanding and meaning of poverty. Differences in socio-economic, cultural and climate related issues offer explanations of how and why the differences and similarities exist. The results of the LS and PSE survey indicated that different perceptions of necessities were culturally and locally related in Hong Kong and Britain. For example, British people perceived 'heating to warm living areas of the home, 'damp-free home' and 'carpets in living rooms and bedrooms' as necessities whereas Hong Kong people

⁵⁵ Items defined as necessities by more than 50% of the population but which people went without because of non-affordability were then used to determine deprivation.

regarded 'a fan' and 'an air-conditioner' as necessities. These were examples of climate-related perceptions. Having 'a small amount of money to spend each week', 'regular savings for 'rainy days', as well as giving 'red pocket money during Chinese New Year' were perceived as typical culture-related necessities in Hong Kong. What we see from the two studies is agreement about basic necessities, such as food and the culturally differentiated definitions of other necessities varying in different societies.

Shortcomings of the thesis and directions for future studies

All PhD research is a compromise between usually over optimistic aspirations and the realities of limited time and resources. This was a complex study with its separate though complementary elements and a large amount of data to be handled and analysed. Inevitably there are a number of specific limitations/shortcomings. Three perhaps are worth mentioning specifically.

First, there were inevitable limitations in the LS survey. It only focused on one of 18 DB districts in Hong Kong which might be seen as raising questions about the representatives of the sample. The total number of completed cases was 100 which was obviously a relatively small number and limited the analysis. Expanding the sample size of the survey to between 500 and 800 so as to ensure data accuracy would be useful. It would be better to choose more than one DB district from the 18 DB districts to avoid potential problems about the nature of the sample for the survey interviews. In addition, it might be valuable deliberately to collect information from different kinds of household – different in terms of household size, socio-economic background, age of household members, with working and non-working members. Because of limited resources, the interviews had to be kept reasonably short and so issues were not always explored as fully as would have been desirable. The study should perhaps be seen as a pilot study.

Second, the analysis of the results of the PSE study was based on the published report *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, which provides a useful analytical framework for discussing the findings of the LS survey and conducting a comparative study on the LS and PSE surveys. Nonetheless, it was not possible to re-group data, such as age and household composition, as well as cross-tabulate data for further analysis from the published report. In order to ensure comparable data for comparative study, questions used by the PSE survey were repeated where possible for the survey. Because of the relatively small number of cases in the LS survey, comparison of the LS and PSE surveys could only be suggestive.

Third, survey interviews can be valuable but do have their limitations. It might have been useful to try to organize some group discussions to complement the survey interviews and to gain more detailed and reflective information. For instance, a discussion of what constitutes necessities might be very fruitful. The group could be random collections of 8-10 people or 8-10 lone parents, 8-10 parents of young children, groups of elderly people and so on.

Relevance to policy makers

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this research for further policy actions. The basic finding was that there were still many vulnerable groups living in poverty and that those groups can be identified. The key findings of these linked studies demonstrate that there are higher proportions of poor people in certain types of households, including:

- single parent families with children aged below 15;
- single elderly people aged 60+;
- households with more dependent household members (i.e. children aged below 15 and elderly persons);
- households with no working household members;
- People with low educational attainment; and
- households with members working in part-time or low-paid jobs.

Historically, the lack of government concern about poverty in Hong Kong has been the result of a number of factors – a growing economy and full employment, the willingness and ability of families to support family members in short term need, the small number of elderly people. There has also been deep seated concern about the potential impact of more generous social security policies on economic competitiveness. In recent years, rapid economic, social and demographic changes have radically altered the situation. No longer is there full employment. Families are less about to care for dependent members. There are increasing numbers of elderly people. In the past, Hong Kong has managed with only limited formal social security systems. These research findings show the need for a review of the role and responsibilities of government in this field. There seems also to be a measure of public support for more generous policies. On the other hand, however, concern about the impact of rising CSSA expenditure largely as a result of higher rates of unemployment has led to cut in benefit levels. The pressures are complex and to a degree conflicting.

The issue for the policy makers can no longer be a debate as to whether or not poverty exists but is now about how to tackle it. Public views on what constituted necessities, what people should not have to go without, why people are in need, the willingness of the public to pay more taxes to help those people in need, and the effectiveness of the government to help vulnerable groups do seem to offer potential public support for more positive anti-poverty policies, such as investing in job creation, increasing the Old Age Allowance/Disability Allowance, establishing pensions, improving provision of child care services. It suggests that the government's newly established Commission on Poverty⁵⁶ should initiate various anti-poverty policies for three different target groups in low-income households, including (1) children; (2) the unemployed (i.e. young people with low skills and low educational attainment, and low-skilled workers), working poor and single parent families with dependent children; and (3) elderly people.

Children in low-income households not only encounter financial deprivation, but also suffer from service exclusion and non-participation in common social activities because of their unaffordability. There has been growing public concern about the impacts of child poverty in Hong Kong (HKCSS, 2003; Society for Community Organization, 2001; The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, 2000 & 2004). The results of this research also implied that support for families with dependent children living in poverty was important to ensure children have an equal chance of growth and development and avoid being trapped in an individually and socially damaging cycle of deprivation. The government should not only ensure that all children go to school, but should also allocate more resources to schools and children and youth centres so as to enable them to strengthen support services and co-operation at the local level to organise suitable after-school learning and interest activities. They can provide the children with more learning opportunities, improved interpersonal skills and what is perhaps most important to the government, raise the quality of the future work force.

The research results also demonstrated that labour market exclusion is a crucial factor leading to poverty and broader social exclusion. Exclusion from the labour market resulted in narrower social relations and networks for these poor households. It is because people with attachment to the labour market not only earn their living, but also maintain social contacts and social interaction with other people in their work. Job-related training/on-the-job training is clearly important to enhance the employability and competitiveness of vulnerable groups, especially the young people and the

⁵⁶ The Chief Executive announced the decision to establish a Commission to alleviate poverty to be chaired by the Financial Secretary in January 2005 (Commission on Poverty, <http://www.cop.gov.hk/eng/aboutus.htm>, accessed on 17 March 2005).

unemployed with low-skilled and low educational attainment.

Nonetheless, the findings also demonstrated that attachment to the labour market did not guarantee a life free from poverty owing to the considerable problem of low-paid jobs. Thus, the government should study the possibility of setting minimum wages in particular industry, for particular jobs and for contracted out posts (such as cleaning services and security guards) in order to reduce the working poor. Besides, the findings indicated that it is difficult for female/male-headed single parents to look for full-time jobs owing to caring responsibilities. Insufficiency and inflexibility of child care service provisions hinder one-parent families with dependent children to hold down full-time job. Thus, provision of more flexible child care services and a more 'family friendly' working environment (i.e. job-sharing, part-time working and flexitime), for those employees who are parents/carers, is crucial for increasing their economic participation in the labour market – and so to tackle poverty.

The results of this research also implied the importance of comprehensive retirement income protection in Hong Kong. As mentioned in previous chapters, the existing CSSA scheme in Hong Kong is a policy of minimum expenditure with minimum intervention in the market. The primary concern of those setting the rates of CSSA benefits in Hong Kong is to maintain work incentives among the working class, to encourage family responsibility for the support of elderly people who can no longer work and to hold down public expenditure and taxation. There has been a rising elderly population and this will result in a corresponding increase in need for economic support and social and medical care since an older person becomes frail and dependent. On the other hand, smaller families and increasing nuclearization of families and a rising number of divorce and separation cases have weakened family capacity to take care of family members in terms of financial and social support. These important trends look set to continue and so to increase the problems. It is necessary, therefore, to review the adequacy of the existing CSSA Schemes in Hong Kong, including the issue of the rate of benefits, disregarded earnings and the establishment of regular review mechanisms. In addition, the government should re-consider the possibility of establishing an Old Age Pension Scheme so as to meet the basic needs of existing elderly people. The new Mandatory Provident Fund scheme will take many years to deliver worthwhile benefits so must not be used as an excuse for government inaction.

The existing social welfare and social service policies hinder the vulnerable groups from receiving services in cash and in kind, and make their integration into society much more difficult. Young members of ethnic minorities' encounter difficulties

arising from both family poverty and from discrimination on grounds of their race and so have limited opportunities for education and training. Besides, criteria for applying for public rental housing⁵⁷ and CSSA for those people who have resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years⁵⁸ make it difficult to deal with their financial problem and improve their living conditions. The government should introduce policies to ensure South Asian ethnic minorities and people having resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years can enjoy equal access to public services and labour market participation.

Research can contribute to more informed policy making directly and indirectly. It can indicate the need for government action and the necessary focus of such action. It can also contribute indirectly by creating a sense that – in this case – poverty is a public issue. More research needs to be done on poverty in Hong Kong both as guidance for government and to create a sense that the problem is real and that further action is necessary. But we now know much more than we did even a few years ago. Hopefully this research has contributed to that store of knowledge and understanding.

⁵⁷ One of the eligibility criteria of applying public rental housing for ordinary families includes 'At the time of allocation, at least half of the family members included in the application must have lived in Hong Kong for seven years and are still living in Hong Kong' (Hong Kong Housing Authority, <http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/residential/prh/housingfamilies/0...00.html>, accessed on 5 March 2005).

⁵⁸ From 1 January 2004, to be an eligible CSSA recipient, an applicant must have been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years, and he/she must have resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (Hong Kong Government, Social Welfare Department, 2004).

Appendices

- 1 Material deprivation and social deprivation**
- 2 The perception of necessities in 1983, 1990 and 1999**
- 3 Different approaches to social security**
- 4 Perception of poverty**
- 5 Design of the 2001 Population Census**
- 6 Hong Kong Map**
- 7 An invitation letter to the sampled households for the survey interviews of living standards in Hong Kong**
- 8 Questionnaire**
- 9 Survey design of the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion of Britain**

Appendix 1: Material deprivation and social deprivation

Dietary

- At least one day without cooked meal in last two weeks
- No fresh meat most days of week
- School child does not have school meals
- Has not had cooked breakfast most days of the week
- Household does not have a Sunday joint three weeks in four
- Fewer than three pints of milk per person per week

Clothing

- Inadequate footwear for both wet and fine weather
- Income unit buys second-hand clothes often or sometimes
- Income unit misses clothing club payments often or sometimes
- (Married women) No new winter coat in last three years

Fuel & light

- No electricity or light only (not power)
- Short of fuel sometimes or often
- No central heating
- No rooms heated (or only one)

Household facilities

- No TV
- No refrigerator
- No telephone
- No record player
- No radio
- No washing machine
- No vacuum cleaner
- No carpet
- No armchair

Housing conditions & amenities

- No sole use of four amenities (indoor WC, sink or washbasin, bath or shower, and cooker)
- Structural defects
- Structural defects believed dangerous to health
- Overcrowded (in terms of number of bedrooms)

Conditions at work (severity, security, amenities & welfare benefits)

- Works mainly or entirely outdoors
- Stands or walks at work at the time
- Working fifty or more hours last week
- At work before 8 a.m. or working at night
- Poor outdoor amenities of work
- Poor indoor amenities of work
- Unemployed for two weeks or more during previous twelve months
- Subject to one week's entitlement to notice or less
- No wages or salary during sickness
- Paid holidays of two weeks or less
- No meals paid or subsidized by employer
- No entitlement to occupational pension

Health

- Health poor or fair
- Sick from work five or more weeks last year

- Ill in bed fourteen days or more last year
- Has disability condition
- Has some or severe disability

Educational

- Fewer than ten years' education

Environmental

- No garden or yard, or shared
- If garden, too small to sit in
- Air dirty or foul smelling
- No safe place for child (1-4) to play
- No safe place (5-10) to play

Family

- Difficulties indoors for child to play
- Child not had friend in to play in last four weeks
- Child not had party last birthday
- Household spent less than additional £10 last Christmas

Recreational

- No afternoon or evenings out in last two weeks
- No holiday in last twelve months away from home

Social

- No emergency help available, e.g. illness
- No one coming to meal or snack in last four weeks
- Not been out to meal or snack with relatives or friends in last four weeks
- Moved house at least twice in last two years

Source: Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom*, Middlesex: Penguin, pp.1173-1176.

Appendix 2: The perception of necessities in 1983, 1990 and 1999

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% Claiming items as necessity		
	1999 (n= 1,534)	1990 (n=1,831)	1983 (n=1,174)
<i>^{1,2}A bed and bedding for self</i>	96	---	---
<i>^{1,2}New, properly fitted, shoes</i>	96	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Warm, waterproof coat</i>	95	---	---
Beds for everyone in the household	95	95	94
Heating to warm living areas of the home if it's cold	94	97	97
<i>^{1,2}Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day</i>	93	---	---
A damp-free home	93	98	96
<i>^{1,2}Celebrations on special occasions</i>	92	---	---
² Visiting friends or family in hospital	92	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Three meals a day</i>	91	90	82
³ Two meals a day	91	90	64
<i>^{1,2}Books of own</i>	90	---	---
² Medicines prescribed by doctor	90	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Play group at least once a week (pre-school age children)</i>	89	---	---
Fridge	89	92	77
<i>^{1,2}All required school uniform</i>	88	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Hobby/leisure activities</i>	88	---	---
⁴ Fresh Fruit and vegetables daily	86	88	---
<i>¹Toys for children, e.g. dolls or models</i>	85	84	71
Warm waterproof coat	85	91	87
² Replace or repair broken electrical goods	85	---	---
<i>^{1,2}At least 7 pairs of new underpants</i>	84	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Educational games</i>	84	---	---
² Visit to friends or family	84	---	---
Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas	83	74	69
⁴ A decent state of decoration in the home	82	92	---
<i>^{1,2}Visit to school, e.g. sports day</i>	81	---	---
² Attending weddings, funerals	80	---	---
⁵ Meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day	79	77	63
⁴ Insurance of contents of dwelling	79	88	---
Hobby or leisure activity	78	67	64
<i>Separate bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sexes</i>	76	82	77
<i>^{1,2}Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day</i>	76	---	---
Washing machine	76	73	67
<i>^{1,2}Carpet in bedroom</i>	75	---	---
² Collect children from school	75	---	---
<i>^{1,2}At least 4 pairs of trousers</i>	74	---	---
<i>^{1,2}School trip at least once a term</i>	73	---	---
<i>^{1,2}At least 4 jumpers/cardigans/sweatshirts</i>	71	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Swimming at least once a month</i>	71	---	---
Telephone	71	56	43
² Appropriate clothes for job interviews	69	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Garden to play in</i>	68	---	---
² Deep freezer/fridge freezer	68	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Some new, not second-hand, clothes</i>	67	---	---
Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms in the home	67	78	70
<i>^{1,2}Construction toys</i>	66	---	---
⁴ Regular savings of £10 a month for 'rainy days' or retirement	66	68	---
Two pairs of all-weather shoes	64	74	78
Friends/family for a meal monthly	64	37	32
<i>^{1,2}Holiday away from home at least one week a year</i>	63	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Bike: new/second-hand</i>	60	---	---
² A small amount of money to spend on self weekly not on family	59	---	---
<i>¹Leisure equipment for children, e.g. sports equipment or bicycle</i>	57	61	57
A television	56	58	51
⁵ A roast joint or its vegetarian equivalent once a week	56	64	67
Presents for friends/family once a year	56	69	63
An annual week's holiday away, not with relatives	55	54	63
² Replace worn out furniture	54	---	---

Appendix 2 (Continued)

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% Claiming items as necessity		
	1999 (n= 1,534)	1990 (n=1,831)	1983 (n=1,174)
<i>¹Children's friends round for tea/snack fortnightly</i>	53	52	37
² Dictionary	53	---	---
A 'best outfit' for special occasions	51	54	48
New, not secondhand, clothes	48	65	64
<i>^{1,2}At least 50p a week for sweets</i>	45	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Attending place of worship</i>	42	---	---
<i>^{1,2}Computer suitable for schoolwork</i>	38	---	---
A car	38	26	22
⁴ Fares to visit friends in other parts of the country 4 times a year	38	39	---
A night out fortnightly	37	42	36
A dressing gown	34	42	38
² Having a daily newspaper	30	---	---
⁴ Restaurant meal monthly	26	17	---
² Microwave oven	23	---	---
² Tumble dryer	20	---	---
² Going to the pub once a fortnight	20	---	---
⁴ A video	19	13	---
⁴ Holidays abroad annually	19	17	---
<i>^{1,2}Computer games</i>	13	---	---
² CD player	12	---	---
⁴ A home computer	11	5	---
⁴ A dishwasher	7	4	---
² Mobile phone	7	---	---
² Access to the internet	6	---	---
² Satellite television	5	---	---
⁶ Bath, not shared with another household	---	95	94
⁶ An inside toilet (not shared with another household)	---	97	96
⁶ Pack of cigarettes every other day	---	18	14
<i>^{1,6}Out of school activities, e.g. sports, orchestra, scouts</i>	---	69	---
<i>^{1,6}An outing for children once a week</i>	---	53	40
<i>^{1,7}Special lessons such as music, dance or sport</i>	---	39	---

- Notes:
1. Items in bold and italics are child necessities.
 2. Not included in the 1983 and 1990 surveys.
 3. Two hot meals in the 1983 survey.
 4. Not included in the 1983 survey.
 5. Vegetarian option added in 1990.
 6. Not included in the 1999 survey.
 7. Not included in the 1983 and 1999 surveys.

Sources: Frayman, H. (1991) *Breadline Britain 1990s: The Findings of the Television Series*, London: Domino Films and London Weekend Television, p.4.
 Gordon, D. & Pantazis, C. (1997) 'The Public's Perception of Necessities and Poverty' in D. Gordon & C. Pantazis, *Breadline Britain in the 1990s* (eds.) Aldershot: Ashgate, p.73.
 Mack & Lansley (1985) *Poor Britain*, London: George Allen & Unwin, p.54.
 Gordon, D., Adelman, L., Ashworth, K., Bradshaw, J., Levitas, R., Middleton, S., Pantazis, C., Patsies, D., Payne, S., Townsend, P. & Williams, J. (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.14-15 & p.34.

Appendix 3: Different approaches to social security

Social Security has a potential for redistributing resources towards the more deprived sections of the community and of contributing to the reduction of inequality. Five different approaches to social security programmes are classified and they include social insurance, social assistance, social allowance, employer liability and provident fund. These five different approaches to social security programmes outline briefly as follows.

First, social insurance is a kind of *employment-related approach* and benefits are funded by specific contributions normally shared by employees, employers and government. These contributions are usually compulsory for designated categories of employees and employers. It aims at protecting those employees and their families against a number of contingencies. The levels of benefits will be based upon their employment or contribution records. These scheme are often to provide income maintenance, medical care and employment injury (Chow, 1981b:361; Dixon, 1993:5; International Labour Office, 1984:3-4; Midgley, 1984:89-90).

Second, social assistance is a *means-tested approach* and benefits are only available to those vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, the sick and the unemployed, whose income fall below a defined minimum level of income. The payments are financed by taxation. In order to determine eligibility, the applicant is subject to an income and assets test known as a means test. (Chow, 1981b:361; Dixon, 1993:4-7; International Labour Office, 1984:4-5; Midgley, 1984:84-85 & 89).

Third, social allowance or demogrant scheme is a *universal benefit approach* which is provided to certain designated categories, namely the elderly and the physically handicapped. The flat-rate payments are irrespective of the beneficiary's income or assets. The source of funding is entirely financed by general revenues (Chow, 1981b:361; Dixon, 1993:7; International Labour Office, 1984:5; Midgley, 1984:100-102).

Fourth, employer liability is based upon a premise that the costs of meeting the risk of employment injury, sickness, maternity and death, should be borne by employers. Thus, it is an *employer-based approach*. In order to protect the worker's rights, legislation is enacted to place legal responsibility on the employer to provide certain kinds of protection which is defined by statute. The employees in designated categories and their dependents will be covered in this scheme. The payment will be based on earning-related periodic payments (Dixon, 1993:7; International Labour Office, 1984:6-7; Midgley, 1984:99).

Fifth, provident fund is financed by regular contributions between employees and employers. Usually, each individual members has a personal account to record his/her contributions and those are contributed by the employer. The benefits are based upon the employee's contribution record. An individual member will be repaid by a lump sum payment, including the accumulated contributions together with interest at retirement. Thus, it is described as *a compulsory savings approach* (Dixon, 1993:7; International Labour Office, 1984:6; Midgley, 1984:94-95).

Appendix 4: Perception of poverty

Housing, food, clothing & transport

- The whole family cannot eat out once per week
- Cannot afford fresh seafood even once per month
- Only eat fresh poultry on important dates (like festivals)
- All clothings are cheap merchandise
- Younger siblings have to wear their elders' old clothings
- Only takes a taxi on extreme emergency
- Very seldom takes the underground
- Absolutely no partitioning in the home
- Children has no desk of their own for schoolwork
- Some family members have to sleep in the living room over a long period

Facilities inside the home

- No toilet
- No kitchen
- No bathroom
- No television
- No refrigerator
- No telephone
- No wireless set
- No washing machine
- No air condition

Education & medical care

- Family members do not consult a doctor if slightly unwell
- Family members only consult a doctor in a government clinic when sick
- Family members cannot afford nutritious food to regain good health after serious illness
- Cannot afford supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling
- Will ask the children to work after receiving 9 years' free education even if their academic achievements were good.

Interest/hobbies

- Has to reduce miscellaneous expenses like smoking, drinking, playing mahjong...
- Do not often buy newspapers
- Do not even go to the cinema once per month
- Has never travelled abroad for a holiday
- Has never visited the Ocean Park

Way of living

- Has never taken the children to a tea house
- Cannot afford a present even on a close relative's birthday (e.g. parents)
- Cannot afford to give away lucky money (laisee) at new year's time
- Cannot afford a present when relatives celebrate happy events
- Has not asked a friend out to tea even once a week

Source: Chow, N.W.S. (1982b) *Poverty in an Affluent City: A Report of a Survey on Low Income Families in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, pp.125-127.

Appendix 5: Design of the 2001 Population Census

Unit of Enumeration

During the enumeration, information was recorded on a household basis, while individual persons were the ultimate targets of enumeration. Each unit of quarters might have more than one household and each household might have more than one member. All households within a unit of quarters were identified and particulars of every member in each household were recorded. Quarters in non-domestic buildings would also be enumerated since some persons might be living in these units, such as watchmen in industrial or commercial buildings.

Basic design and data collection methods

Two types of questionnaires were used in the 2001 Population Census, the short form and the long form. The *short form* was used to enumerate about six-sevenths of households on basic characteristics and the 'self enumeration approach' was adopted in this simple enumeration. They were mailed to the householders a few days before the Census period for them to complete. Enumerators visited the households during the Census period and collected the completed short forms after a quick check. The *long form* was adopted to enumerate the remaining one-seventh households on a broad range of socio-economic characteristics of household members and the 'interviewer method' was used for the detailed enumeration. Enumerators visited the households and directed questions to individual persons in the households to complete the questionnaires. The 2001 Population Census also covered the marine population, who were similarly enumerated using long form and short form.

The Census and Statistics Department has maintained a frame of quarters for conducting population censuses and household surveys. It is divided into two parts. *The Register of Quarters* is a list of addresses of permanent quarters in built-up areas including urban areas, new towns and major developments in the New Territories. Each unit of quarters is identified by a unique address with details on the house number, street name, building name, floor number and flat number. *The Register of Segments* is a list of area segments in non-built-up areas. Each area segment contains about ten quarters and is delineated by some physical or easily identifiable boundaries such as stream, footpath, lane and ditch. The use of the method of area segments for non-built-up areas is necessary because the quarters in these areas may not have clear addresses and cannot be easily identified. In addition to the frame of quarters, other supplementary lists have also

been drawn up for enumeration of some special groups of persons, such as the marine population in the 2001 Population Census.

Contents of the questionnaire

Short form questions

Concerning data required in the short forms, they were usually self-completed by the households and they included:

- Enumerating the number of persons in the household
- Relationship to head of household
- Sex
- Year and month of birth
- Whereabouts at the census moment
- Total amount of time spent in Hong Kong in the past six months
- Total amount of time to be spent in Hong Kong in the coming six months
- Usual accommodation in Hong Kong at present

Some information were filled in by the Census Officer, including

- Type of quarters
- Present status of quarters
- Occupancy of quarters
- Number of households in the quarters
- Type of household

Long form questions

Apart from all of those in the short form, the long form included the following data items:

Information on household and quarters

- Household income
- Number of living/dining rooms
- Number of bedrooms
- Number of kitchens
- Number of bathrooms/toilets
- Number of other rooms
- Tenure of accommodation

- Rent
- Rates, Government rent and management fee
- Outstanding mortgage or loan period
- Mortgage payment or loan repayment

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of household members

- Marital status
- Nationality
- Ethnicity
- Usual language
- Ability to speak other languages/ dialects
- School attendance
- Educational attainment (including highest level attended and highest level completed)
- Place of study
- Mode of transport to place of study
- Field of education
- Place of birth
- Duration of residence in Hong Kong
- Place of residence 5 years ago
- Economic activity status
- Industry
- Occupation
- Place of work
- Mode of transport to place of work
- Earnings from main employment
- Earnings from secondary employment
- Other cash income

Source: Extracted from *Introduction to the 2001 Population Census* --
www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/news/01c/chp1.htm)

Appendix 7: An invitation letter to the sampled households for the survey interviews of living standards in Hong Kong

Correspondence address in HK:

Ms. Maggie Lau
City University of Hong Kong
Department of Public & Social
Admin.
Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon

(Mobile : XXX-XX-XX)

Date:

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: The survey of standards of living in Shatin

I am a DPhil student in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York in Britain. I am now conducting the survey of standards of living in Hong Kong. The purpose of this study is to investigate public perceptions of necessities and views on a range of associated with poverty and social exclusion in Hong Kong. The findings of this study will compare with the findings of *the Survey of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain* since a comparative study can contribute to a better understanding of poverty in Hong Kong.

Owing to limited time and resources, the study focuses on one of eighteen District Board (DB) districts. Shatin was chosen in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics, as well as the presence of a variety of different housing types. Besides, Shatin is also one of the early development of new towns in the New Territories. It is valuable to explore what aspects of living patterns constitute poverty and social exclusion and their impacts on people's living standards under dramatic socio-economic and demographic changes in the 1990s.

A random sample was drawn from the Census & Statistics Department. The sampled households were selected randomly from the sample. The survey data will be collected by face-to-face interview with structured questionnaire. The length of interview will be lasted for 40 minutes. The interviews will be held between March and mid-September 2000. The interviewers will visit you between 7pm and 9.30pm (Monday to Friday) or between 12pm and 9.30pm (Saturday and Sunday). They will bring with this invitation letter for verification.

For enquiries, please feel free to contact me (Mobile: XXX-XX-XX). You are welcome to make an appointment for the interview.

This study is only for academic purpose. Any personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

LAU, K.W. Maggie

Appendix 8: Questionnaire

University of York

Department of Social Policy & Social Work

SURVEY OF LIVING STANDARDS IN HONG KONG

Reference Number:

Address :

Interview		First Visit	Second Visit	Third Visit
Date				
Time				
Result	1. Success			
	2. Rejected			
	3. No one responses			
	4. No suitable interviewee			
	5. Speak Dialect or other language			
	6. No such address			
	7. Apartment demolished			
	8. Apartment empty			
	9. Others (Please specify : _____)			
Date & time of next visit (if necessary)				

Remarks

I NECESSITIES

Child Q.1 Are there children aged 0-14 years in the household?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes → GO TO Q.2-Q.5 | 34% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | No → GO TO Q.6 | 66% |

Q.2 I would like you to indicate the living standards you feel all children should have in Hong Kong today by placing the cards in the appropriate box. Box A is for items which you think are necessary, which all children should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without. Box B is for items which may be desirable but are not necessary. *

		BOX A	BOX B	Unallocated
		Necessary	Desirable but not necessary	Doesn't apply
<i>ChNec1</i>	1. Three meals a day	100%	---	---
<i>ChNec2</i>	2. Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	97%	3%	---
<i>ChNec3</i>	3. Meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	91%	9%	---
<i>ChNec4</i>	4. Money spend on sweets/snack	56%	44%	---
<i>ChNec5</i>	5. New, properly fitted, shoes	85%	15%	---
<i>ChNec6</i>	6. Some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes	82%	18%	---
<i>ChNec7</i>	7. Books of her/his own	94%	6%	---
<i>ChNec8</i>	8. Educational games	85%	15%	---
<i>ChNec9</i>	9. Supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling	79%	21%	---
<i>ChNec10</i>	10. A dictionary	88%	12%	---
<i>ChNec11</i>	11. Toy (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies)	79%	21%	---
<i>ChNec12</i>	12. Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment or a bicycle)	82%	18%	---
<i>ChNec13</i>	13. Computer games	62%	38%	---
<i>ChNec14</i>	14. Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space	76%	24%	---
<i>ChNec15</i>	15. At least 7 pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new	74%	26%	---
<i>ChNec16</i>	16. At least 4 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts	65%	35%	---
<i>ChNec17</i>	17. All the school uniform required by the school	94%	6%	---
<i>ChNec18</i>	18. At least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms	76%	24%	---
<i>ChNec19</i>	19. Paying for tutorial lessons after schooling	79%	18%	3%
<i>ChNec20</i>	20. Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)	82%	18%	---
<i>ChNec21</i>	21. Buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year	91%	9%	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

Q.3 Could you please put the items into three Boxes C, D and E? Box C is for the items you have. Box D is for items you do not have but don't want. Box E is for items you do not have and can't afford.*

		BOX C	BOX D	BOX E	Unallocated
		Have	Don't have but don't want	Don't have and can't afford	Doesn't apply
<i>ChHave1</i>	1. Three meals a day	88%	9%	3%	---
<i>ChHave2</i>	2. Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	82%	12%	6%	---
<i>ChHave3</i>	3. Meat/fish/vegetarian equivalent at least twice a day	88%	9%	3%	---
<i>ChHave4</i>	4. Money spend on sweets/snack	76%	15%	9%	---
<i>ChHave5</i>	5. New, properly fitted, shoes	94%	6%	---	---
<i>ChHave6</i>	6. Some new, not second-hand or handed-on clothes	94%	6%	---	---
<i>ChHave7</i>	7. Books of her/his own	88%	9%	3%	---
<i>ChHave8</i>	8. Educational games	82%	15%	3%	---
<i>ChHave9</i>	9. Supplementary examination exercises for children's schooling	82%	15%	3%	---
<i>ChHave10</i>	10. A dictionary	88%	9%	3%	---
<i>ChHave11</i>	11. Toy (e.g. dolls, play figures, teddies)	97%	3%	---	---
<i>ChHave12</i>	12. Leisure equipment (e.g. sports equipment or a bicycle)	85%	12%	3%	---
<i>ChHave13</i>	13. Computer games	67%	24%	9%	---
<i>ChHave14</i>	14. Partitioning for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own space	55%	21%	18%	6%
<i>ChHave15</i>	15. At least 7 pairs of new underpants or knickers in good condition, bought new	82%	9%	6%	3%
<i>ChHave16</i>	16. At least 4 jumpers, cardigans or sweatshirts	79%	15%	6%	---
<i>ChHave17</i>	17. All the school uniform required by the school	94%	3%	---	3%
<i>ChHave18</i>	18. At least 4 pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms	82%	12%	6%	---
<i>ChHave19</i>	19. Paying for tutorial lessons after schooling	62%	26%	6%	6%
<i>ChHave20</i>	20. Paying for special lessons (e.g. music, dance or sports)	76%	12%	12%	---
<i>ChHave21</i>	21. Buy your children new clothes or shoes during the Chinese New Year	97%	3%	---	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14

Q.4 Now can you do the same for the following children's activities?*

			BOX A Necessary	BOX B Desirable but not necessary	Unallocated Doesn't apply
<i>ChAct1</i>	1.	Go to McDonald for a meal	9%	91%	---
<i>ChAct2</i>	2.	Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. birthday)	62%	38%	---
<i>ChAct3</i>	3.	A holiday away from home at least one week a year with his/her family	44%	56%	---
<i>ChAct4</i>	4.	Going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children	71%	29%	---
<i>ChAct5</i>	5.	An outing for children once a week	71%	29%	---
<i>ChAct6</i>	6.	Participation in out-of-school activities (e.g. sports, orchestral band, scouts/guides)	59%	41%	---
<i>ChAct7</i>	7.	Friends around for tea or a snack	62%	38%	---
<i>ChAct8</i>	8.	Collect children from school	79%	21%	---
<i>ChAct9</i>	9.	Visits to school (e.g. sports day)	71%	29%	---

Q.5 Could you please put the items into three Boxes F, G and H? Box F is for the activities you do? Box G is for the activities you can't do but don't want to do. Box H is for the activities you don't do and can't afford.*

			BOX F Do	BOX G Don't do but don't want	BOX H Don't do and can't afford	Unallocated Doesn't apply
<i>ChDoAc1</i>	1.	Go to McDonald for a meal	79%	18%	3%	---
<i>ChDoAc2</i>	2.	Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. birthday)	85%	9%	6%	---
<i>ChDoAc3</i>	3.	A holiday away from home at least one week a year with his/her family	62%	32%	6%	---
<i>ChDoAc4</i>	4.	Going on a school trip at least once a term for school aged children	82%	12%	3%	3%
<i>ChDoAc5</i>	5.	An outing for children once a week	85%	12%	3%	---
<i>ChDoAc6</i>	6.	Participation in out-of-school activities (e.g. sports, orchestral band, scouts/guides)	65%	29%	6%	---
<i>ChDoAc7</i>	7.	Friends around for tea or a snack	74%	15%	3%	9%
<i>ChDoAc8</i>	8.	Collect children from school	62%	32%	3%	3%
<i>ChDoAc9</i>	9.	Visits to school (e.g. sports day)	71%	29%	---	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

Q.6 I would like you to indicate the living standards you feel all adults should have in Hong Kong today by placing the cards in the appropriate box. Box A is for items which you think are necessary, which all adults should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without. Box B is for items which may be desirable but are not necessary.

			BOX A Necessary	BOX B Desirable but not necessary	Unallocated Doesn't apply
<i>AdNec1</i>	1.	Two meals a day	95%	5%	---
<i>AdNec2</i>	2.	Meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day	94%	6%	---
<i>AdNec3</i>	3.	Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	94%	6%	---
<i>AdNec4</i>	4.	Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions	71%	29%	---
<i>AdNec5</i>	5.	Two pairs of all weather shoes	85%	15%	---
<i>AdNec6</i>	6.	New, not second hand, clothes	80%	20%	---
<i>AdNec7</i>	7.	An outfit to wear for social or family occasions (e.g. parties and weddings)	70%	30%	---
<i>AdNec8</i>	8.	Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews	77%	23%	---
<i>AdNec9</i>	9.	A television	97%	3%	---
<i>AdNec10</i>	10.	A telephone	97%	3%	---
<i>AdNec11</i>	11.	A refrigerator	98%	2%	---
<i>AdNec12</i>	12.	A washing machine	93%	7%	---
<i>AdNec13</i>	13.	A fan	94%	6%	---
<i>AdNec14</i>	14.	An air-conditioner	81%	19%	---
<i>AdNec15</i>	15.	A video-cassette recorder	53%	46%	1%
<i>AdNec16</i>	16.	CD player	44%	55%	1%
<i>AdNec17</i>	17.	Microwave	48%	51%	1%
<i>AdNec18</i>	18.	A home computer	57%	43%	---
<i>AdNec19</i>	19.	Access to the internet	47%	53%	---
<i>AdNec20</i>	20.	Beds and bedding for everyone in the household	94%	6%	---
<i>AdNec21</i>	21.	Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	70%	29%	1%
<i>AdNec22</i>	22.	Replace any worn out furniture	78%	22%	---
<i>AdNec23</i>	23.	Replace or repair broken electrical goods (e.g. refrigerator)	85%	15%	---
<i>AdNec24</i>	24.	All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner	50%	46%	4%
<i>AdNec25</i>	25.	When you are sick, you can see your private doctor	76%	23%	1%
<i>AdNec26</i>	26.	Having a daily newspaper	82%	18%	---
<i>AdNec27</i>	27.	Regular savings for 'rainy days'	91%	9%	---
<i>AdNec28</i>	28.	A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	94%	6%	---
<i>AdNec29</i>	29.	Presents for friends or family once a year (e.g. birthday)	74%	25%	1%

Q.7 Could you please put the items into three Boxes C, D and E? Box C is for the items you have. Box D is for items you do not have but don't want. Box E is for items you do not have and can't afford.

			BOX C	BOX D	BOX E	Unallocated
			Have	Don't have but don't want	Don't have and can't afford	Doesn't apply
<i>HvNec1</i>	1.	Two meals a day	96%	4%	---	---
<i>HvNec2</i>	2.	Meat or fish (fresh/frozen) or vegetarian equivalent every other day	93%	5%	2%	---
<i>HvNec3</i>	3.	Fresh fruit and vegetables every day	91%	7%	2%	---
<i>HvNec4</i>	4.	Eat fresh/frozen poultry for special occasions	86%	14%	---	---
<i>HvNec5</i>	5.	Two pairs of all weather shoes	91%	9%	---	---
<i>HvNec6</i>	6.	New, not second hand, clothes	91%	9%	---	---
<i>HvNec7</i>	7.	An outfit to wear for social or family occasions (e.g. parties and weddings)	79%	20%	1%	---
<i>HvNec8</i>	8.	Appropriate clothes to wear for job interviews	81%	16%	1%	2%
<i>HvNec9</i>	9.	A television	99%	1%	---	---
<i>HvNec10</i>	10.	A telephone	100%	---	---	---
<i>HvNec11</i>	11.	A refrigerator	100%	---	---	---
<i>HvNec12</i>	12.	A washing machine	97%	3%	---	---
<i>HvNec13</i>	13.	A fan	97%	3%	---	---
<i>HvNec14</i>	14.	An air-conditioner	93%	6%	1%	---
<i>HvNec15</i>	15.	A video-cassette recorder	79%	17%	4%	---
<i>HvNec16</i>	16.	CD player	71%	24%	5%	---
<i>HvNec17</i>	17.	Microwave	69%	26%	5%	---
<i>HvNec18</i>	18.	A home computer	75%	19%	6%	---
<i>HvNec19</i>	19.	Access to the internet	65%	29%	6%	---
<i>HvNec20</i>	20.	Beds and bedding for everyone in the household	96%	2%	2%	---
<i>HvNec21</i>	21.	Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration	83%	12%	5%	---
<i>HvNec22</i>	22.	Replace any worn out furniture	87%	9%	4%	---
<i>HvNec23</i>	23.	Replace or repair broken electrical goods (e.g. refrigerator/washing machine)	91%	6%	3%	---
<i>HvNec24</i>	24.	All medicine prescribed by your Chinese practitioner	60%	36%	4%	---
<i>HvNec25</i>	25.	When you are sick, you can see your private doctor	82%	14%	2%	2%
<i>HvNec26</i>	26.	Having a daily newspaper	82%	15%	1%	2%
<i>HvNec27</i>	27.	Regular savings for 'rainy days'	88%	6%	6%	---
<i>HvNec28</i>	28.	A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family	96%	2%	2%	---
<i>HvNec29</i>	29.	Presents for friends or family once a year (e.g. birthday)	85%	12%	3%	---

Q.8 Now can you do the same for the following adult's activities?

			BOX A	BOX B	Unallocated
			Necessary	Desirable but not necessary	Doesn't apply
<i>AdAct1</i>	1.	Visit to friends or family	75%	24%	1%
<i>AdAct2</i>	2.	Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. Chinese New Year)	84%	16%	---
<i>AdAct3</i>	3.	A meal in a restaurant once a month	47%	52%	1%
<i>AdAct4</i>	4.	A holiday away from home for one week a year	52%	48%	---
<i>AdAct5</i>	5.	Friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink	68%	32%	---
<i>AdAct6</i>	6.	Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	69%	29%	2%
<i>AdAct7</i>	7.	Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	75%	25%	---
<i>AdAct8</i>	8.	Attending church or other places of worship	52%	41%	7%
<i>AdAct9</i>	9.	Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	86%	12%	2%

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

Q.9 Could you please put the items in to three Boxes F, G and H? Box F is for the activities you do. Box G is for the activities you can't do but don't want to do. Box H is for the activities you don't do and can't afford.

			BOX F	BOX G	BOX H	Unallocated
			Do	Don't do but don't want	Don't do and can't afford	Doesn't apply
<i>DoNec1</i>	1.	Visit to friends or family	93%	5%	2%	---
<i>DoNec2</i>	2.	Celebrations on special occasions (e.g. Chinese New Year)	90%	9%	1%	---
<i>DoNec3</i>	3.	A meal in a restaurant once a month	75%	20%	4%	1%
<i>DoNec4</i>	4.	A holiday away from home for one week a year	65%	26%	7%	2%
<i>DoNec5</i>	5.	Friends or family round for a visit, for a meal/snack/drink	79%	16%	5%	---
<i>DoNec6</i>	6.	Attending weddings, funerals and other occasions	77%	19%	2%	2%
<i>DoNec7</i>	7.	Visiting friends or family in hospital or other institutions	80%	17%	2%	1%
<i>DoNec8</i>	8.	Attending church or other places of worship	55%	31%	2%	12%
<i>DoNec9</i>	9.	Give red pocket money (laisee) during Chinese New Year	88%	6%	1%	5%

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

ASK IF THERE ARE ANSWERS IN BOXES G & H
 Q.10 Which of these factors are important in preventing you from doing these activities? **
 (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	Don't apply
<i>ImpFac1</i>	1.	Can't afford to	32%	68%	---
<i>ImpFac2</i>	2.	Not interested	42%	58%	---
<i>ImpFac3</i>	3.	Lack of time due to paid work	44%	21%	35%
<i>ImpFac4</i>	4.	Lack of time due to childcare responsibilities*	31%	69%	---
<i>ImpFac5</i>	5.	Lack of time due to other caring responsibilities	3%	42%	55%
<i>ImpFac6</i>	6.	Cannot go out due to caring responsibilities	8%	63%	29%
<i>ImpFac7</i>	7.	No one to go out with	16%	82%	2%
<i>ImpFac8</i>	8.	Poor public transport	8%	92%	---
<i>ImpFac9</i>	9.	Feel unwelcome (e.g. due to age/gender/disability)	---	98%	2%
<i>ImpFac10</i>	10.	Too old/ill/sick/disabled	3%	5%	92%
<i>ImpFac11</i>	11.	Problems with physical access	3%	5%	92%

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

** Thirty-eight percent of respondents (38%) can do all activities.

II ABSOLUTE AND OVERALL POVERTY

The following questions ask about the cost of living in Hong Kong

Amount Q.11 How much (HK\$) a month, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, out of POVERTY?

HK\$ _____ Mean = \$18,362; Median = \$15,000; Mode = \$10,000

PovAbB Q.12 How far above or below that level would you say your household is?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot above that level of income | 32% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little above | 37% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | About the same | 19% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little below | 8% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot below that level of income | 4% |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | --- |

AbsoPv Q.13 *In order to avoid being deprived of basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things: adequate diet, housing cost/rent, clothing, water rates and prescription cost.*

How much (HK\$) a month, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, out of being deprived of basic human needs?

HK\$ _____ Mean = \$16,190; Median = \$15,000; Mode = \$20,000

AbPvAB Q.14 How far above or below that level would you say your household is?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot above that level of income | 33% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little above | 35% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | About the same | 16% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little below | 9% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot below that level of income | 7% |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | --- |

OverPv Q.15 *In addition to fulfillment of basic human needs, a person needs enough money to cover the following things:*

- *live in a safe environment;*
- *have a social life in your local area;*
- *feel part of the community;*
- *carry out your duties/activities in the family and neighbourhood, and at work; and*
- *meet essential costs of transport*

How much (HK\$) a month, after tax, do you think are necessary to keep a household such as the one you live in, at the above situation?

HK\$ _____ Mean = \$19,720; Median = \$17,000; Mode = \$20,000

OvPvAB Q.16 How far above or below that level would you say your household is?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot above that level of income | 30% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little above | 32% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | About the same | 14% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A little below | 16% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | A lot below that level of income | 8% |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | --- |

III PERCEPTION OF POVERTY

LstYrs Q.17 Over the last 10 years, do you think that poverty in Hong Kong has been?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Increasing | 72% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Decreasing | 8% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Staying about the same | 12% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know/Refusal | 8% |

NxtYrs Q.18 Over the next 10 years, do you think that poverty in Hong Kong will?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Increase | 66% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Decrease | 7% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Stay at the same level | 14% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know/Refusal | 13% |

WhyNeed Q.19 Why, in your opinion, are there people who live in need? Which is the closest to your opinion?
(CODE ONE ONLY)

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Because they have been unlucky | 6% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Because of laziness and lack of willpower | 11% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Because there is much injustice in our society | 26% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | It's an inevitable part of modern progress | 25% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Increasing number of immigrants from the mainland
China | 3% |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Widening income disparities | 4% |
| 7. | <input type="checkbox"/> | economic slowdown/high unemployment rate | 16% |
| 8. | <input type="checkbox"/> | overpopulation | 1% |
| 9. | <input type="checkbox"/> | low education attainment | 2% |
| 10. | <input type="checkbox"/> | refusal/don't know | 6% |

GovtHelp Q.20 Still thinking about people who lack the things you have said are necessities for living in Hong Kong today, do you think that the Government is doing too much, too little or about the right amount to help these people?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Too much | 10% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Too little | 52% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | About the right amount | 23% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | 15% |

Q.21 I am going to read to you a list of people in different circumstances. For each, should the government take responsibilities to look after them if they need help? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	Don't know
<i>GovtRes1</i>	1.	Old age	96%	3%	1%
<i>GovtRes2</i>	2.	Blind	92%	4%	4%
<i>GovtRes3</i>	3.	Deaf	87%	5%	8%
<i>GovtRes4</i>	4.	Physically disabled	88%	8%	4%
<i>GovtRes5</i>	5.	Mentally ill	90%	4%	6%
<i>GovtRes6</i>	6.	Temporary illness	69%	24%	7%
<i>GovtRes7</i>	7.	Single parent family	75%	19%	6%
<i>GovtRes8</i>	8.	Families on low wages with children	89%	9%	2%
<i>GovtRes9</i>	9.	Families on low wages without children	48%	47%	5%
<i>GovtRes10</i>	10.	Unemployed	71%	23%	6%

Tax1 Q.22 If the Government proposed to increase tax by 1% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support | 56% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Oppose | 27% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | 17% |

Reason1 Q.23 Reason:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Suggested tax rate is reasonable | 35% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Suggested tax rate is too much | 23% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can help the vulnerable groups | 18% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tax rate should be progressive | 7% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know/refusal | 17% |

Tax5 Q.24 If the Government proposed to increase tax by 5% to enable to everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Support | 10% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Oppose | 72% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | 18% |

Reason2 Q.25 Reason:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Suggested tax rate is reasonable | 6% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Suggested tax rate is too much | 71% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can help the vulnerable groups | 1% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tax rate should be progressive | 3% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know/refusal | 19% |

Q.26 In your opinion, which of the following would be effective in reducing poverty? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	Don't know
RedcPv1	1.	Establishing pensions	81%	14%	5%
RedcPv2	2.	Increasing CSSA allowance	54%	40%	6%
RedcPv3	3.	Increasing other benefits (e.g. Old Age Allowance/Disability Allowance)	87%	10%	3%
RedcPv4	4.	Investing in skills training for the unemployed	88%	9%	3%
RedcPv5	5.	Investing in education for children	86%	6%	8%
RedcPv6	6.	Investing in job creation	91%	5%	4%
RedcPv7	7.	Improving access to child care	81%	11%	8%
RedcPv8	8.	Redistributing of wealth	51%	33%	16%
RedcPv9	9.	Minimum wage	60%	25%	15%
RedcPv10	10.	Better parenting	81%	9%	10%
RedcPv11	11.	Reducing truancy from schools	71%	19%	10%
RedcPv12	12.	Increasing trade union rights	70%	19%	11%
RedcPv13	13.	Reducing discrimination	84%	10%	6%
RedcPv14	14.	Requiring unemployed young people to work	91%	5%	4%
RedcPv15	15.	Requiring unemployed lone parents to work	80%	13%	7%

IV POVERTY OVER TIME

(1) FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

GenPoor Q.27 I would now like to ask you about your living standards any changes in your living standards over time. Do you think you could genuinely say you are poor now

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | All the time | 10% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes | 48% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Never | 42% |

LvInPv Q.28 Looking back over your life, how often there been times in your life when you think you have lived in poverty by the standards of that time?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Never | 30% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rarely | 11% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Occasionally | 49% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Often | 8% |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Most of the time | 2% |

Q.29 Has anything happened recently (in the last two years in your life which has? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
AnyImp1	1.	Improved your standard of living	35%	65%
AnyImp2	2.	Reduced your standard of living	29%	71%
AnyImp3	3.	Increased your income	26%	74%
AnyImp4	4.	Reduced your income	26%	74%

Q.30 Is there anything that you expect to happen in the near future (in the next two years) in your life which will? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	Don't know
ExpImp1	1.	Improve your standard of living	43%	53%	4%
ExpImp2	2.	Reduce your standard of living	21%	75%	4%
ExpImp3	3.	Increase your income	34%	61%	5%
ExpImp4	4.	Reduce your income	18%	77%	5%

(2) GENERAL HEALTH

GH1 Q.31 Have you recently been able to concentrate on whether you are doing?

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Better than usual | 8% |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Same as usual | 78% |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Less than usual | 11% |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Much less than usual | 3% |

			Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
<i>GH2</i>	Q.32	Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?	42%	34%	15%	9%
<i>GH3</i>	Q.33	Have you recently felt constantly under strain?	39%	37%	19%	5%
<i>GH4</i>	Q.34	Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	60%	30%	10%	---
<i>GH5</i>	Q.35	Have you recently been feeling unhappy and depressed?	51%	32%	14%	3%
<i>GH6</i>	Q.36	Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?	73%	18%	7%	2%
<i>GH7</i>	Q.37	Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	79%	15%	5%	1%

			More so than usual	Same as usual	Less so than usual	Much less useful
<i>GH8</i>	Q.38	Have you recently felt that you are playing a useful part in things?	8%	89%	3%	---
<i>GH9</i>	Q.39	Have you recently felt capable of making decisions about things?	6%	88%	6%	---
<i>GH10</i>	Q.40	Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	7%	84%	8%	1%
<i>GH11</i>	Q.41	Have you recently been able to face up to your problems?	7%	91%	2%	---

V PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INDICATORS MEASURING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

(1) INTRA-HOUSEHOLD POVERTY

Q.42 The following items which adults have told us that they sometimes cut their expenses when money is tight. I would like you to tell me on which of the following items you PERSONALLY cut last year because of shortage of money. (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	N/A
<i>GoneWt1</i>	1.	Clothes	44%	56%	---
<i>GoneWt2</i>	2.	Shoes	42%	58%	---
<i>GoneWt3</i>	3.	Food	30%	70%	---
<i>GoneWt4</i>	4.	Going out	44%	56%	---
<i>GoneWt5</i>	5.	Visiting friends/family	34%	65%	1%
<i>GoneWt6</i>	6.	Going to a restaurant	43%	55%	2%
<i>GoneWt7</i>	7.	A hobby or sport	39%	57%	4%
<i>GoneWt8</i>	8.	Cigarettes	8%	28%	64%
<i>GoneWt9</i>	9.	Money never tight	46%	54%	---

ASK ONLY IF THERE ARE CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Q.43 What about your child(ren), which of the following items did he/she cut to have/do last year because of shortage of money? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	N/A
<i>ChldWo1</i>	1.	Clothes	38%	62%	---
<i>ChldWo2</i>	2.	Shoes	38%	62%	---
<i>ChldWo3</i>	3.	Food	35%	65%	---
<i>ChldWo4</i>	4.	A hobby or sport	44%	53%	3%
<i>ChldWo5</i>	5.	A trip or holiday arranged by school	21%	74%	5%
<i>ChldWo6</i>	6.	A family holiday	38%	59%	3%
<i>ChldWo7</i>	7.	Pocket money	38%	47%	15%
<i>ChldWo8</i>	8.	Money never tight	32%	68%	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

(2) SOCIAL NETWORKS & SUPPORT

ContFam Q.44 How often do you contact with your family? By contact, I mean seeing, speaking to or writing to family.

1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyday	68%
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Every week	23%
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Every month	6%
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Several times every year	2%
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never have contact with family	1%

ContFrd Q.45 How often do you contact with your friends?

1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyday	32%
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Every week	41%
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Every month	15%
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Several times every year	10%
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never have contact with family	2%

ContRel Q.46 How often do you contact with your relatives?

- 1. Everyday 7%
- 2. Every week 37%
- 3. Every month 26%
- 4. Several times every year 27%
- 5. Never have contact with family 3%

Q.47 What factors prevent you from meeting up with your family or friends more often? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	N/A
<i>WhyNot1</i>	1.	I see them as often as I want to	59%	41%	---
<i>WhyNot2</i>	2.	Not interested	23%	77%	---
<i>WhyNot3</i>	3.	Can't afford to	11%	89%	---
<i>WhyNot4</i>	4.	Lack of time due to paid work	45%	23%	32%
<i>WhyNot5</i>	5.	Lack of time due to childcare responsibilities*	15%	19%	---
<i>WhyNot6</i>	6.	Lack of time due to other caring responsibilities	2%	43%	55%
<i>WhyNot7</i>	7.	Can't go out because of caring responsibilities	5%	59%	36%
<i>WhyNot8</i>	8.	Poor public transport	13%	87%	---
<i>WhyNot9</i>	9.	Problems with physical access	4%	4%	92%
<i>WhyNot10</i>	10.	Too ill/disabled	3%	4%	93%
<i>WhyNot11</i>	11.	Too old	4%	3%	93%

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

Q.48 How much support would you get in the following situation? (Include support from people you live with, other family and friends and other means of support)

			A lot	Some	Not much	None at all	N/A	Don't know
<i>Support1</i>	1.	If you needed help around the home if you are in bed with flu/illness	25%	50%	9%	12%	4%	---
<i>Support2</i>	2.	If you needed help with heavy household jobs that you cannot manage alone (e.g. moving furniture)	31%	48%	15%	4%	2%	---
<i>Support3</i>	3.	If you needed advice about an important change in your life (e.g. changing jobs, moving to another area)	21%	56%	11%	7%	5%	---
<i>Support4</i>	4.	If you were feeling a bit depressed and wanting someone to talk to	23%	49%	12%	13%	2%	1%
<i>Support5</i>	5.	If you needed someone to look after your children/an elderly/disabled adult you care for	15%	35%	1%	8%	41%	---
<i>Support6</i>	6.	If you needed someone to look after your home or possessions when away	18%	44%	11%	20%	7%	---

(3) LIVING ENVIRONMENT

The next questions ask about your living area
 AreaSat Q.49 How satisfied are you with this area as a place to live?

- 1. Very satisfied 9%
- 2. Fairly satisfied 33%
- 3. Neither satisfied or dissatisfied 49%
- 4. Slightly dissatisfied 8%
- 5. Very dissatisfied 1%

Q.50 Can you tell me which of these is common in this area? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>Common1</i>	1.	Noisy neighbours or loud parties	18%	82%
<i>Common2</i>	2.	Teenagers hanging around on the streets	32%	68%
<i>Common3</i>	3.	Rubbish/litter lying around	15%	85%
<i>Common4</i>	4.	Hawkers	20%	80%
<i>Common5</i>	5.	Dogs and dog mess in this area	25%	75%

Q.51 Can you tell me which of these things are a problem to you in this area? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>Problem1</i>	1.	Poor street lighting	8%	92%
<i>Problem2</i>	2.	Street noise (e.g. traffic, businesses, factories)	31%	69%
<i>Problem3</i>	3.	Pollution, grime or other environmental problems caused by traffic or industry	14%	86%
<i>Problem4</i>	4.	Lack of open public spaces	18%	82%
<i>Problem5</i>	5.	Risk from traffic for pedestrians and cyclists	17%	83%

(4) HEALTH

I would now like to ask some questions about your health.

Pain Q.52 Which of the following statements best describes your own health state today?

- 1. I have no pain or discomfort → GO TO Q.58*** 68%
- 2. I have moderate pain or discomfort 30%
- 3. I have extreme pain or discomfort 2%

LongIll Q.53 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By long-standing, I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time?

- 1. Yes → GO TO Q.54 50%
- 2. No → GO TO Q.58*** 50%

LimitAct Q.54 Does this illness or disabilities limit your activities in any way?

- 1. Yes → GO TO Q.55 44%
- 2. No → GO TO Q.58*** 56%

Q.55 Over the last 12 months, have you wanted to do any of the things mentioned on this card, but had great difficulty or been unable to do them because of your health problem or disability? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>DifAct1</i>	1.	Go to the cinema, theatre or concerts	14%	86%
<i>DifAct2</i>	2.	Go to the library, art galleries or museums	14%	86%
<i>DifAct3</i>	3.	Go shopping	14%	86%
<i>DifAct4</i>	4.	Eat out in a restaurant	14%	86%
<i>DifAct5</i>	5.	Go to a football match or other sporting event	---	100%

Q.56 Over the last 12 months, have you wanted to do any of the services mentioned on the card, but had great difficulty or been unable to do them because of your health problem or disability? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	N/A
<i>DifServ1</i>	1.	Arranging insurance	14%	72%	14%
<i>DifServ2</i>	2.	Using a bank	---	100%	---
<i>DifServ3</i>	3.	Using a public telephone	---	100%	---

IF YES TO Q.53 AND PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN [DifAct] AND/OR [DifServ], ASK

Q.57 Did you have any of the following difficulties? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>DifAccs1</i>	1.	Difficulty getting information in a suitable form (e.g. braille, large print, etc)	---	100%
<i>DifAccs2</i>	2.	Difficulty getting there	14%	86%
<i>DifAccs3</i>	3.	Difficulty getting into the place	14%	86%
<i>DifAccs4</i>	4.	Difficulty getting around inside	---	100%
<i>DifAccs5</i>	5.	Facilities lacking (e.g. parking spaces, special shopping trolleys, disabled toilet)	---	100%
<i>DifAccs6</i>	6.	Refused entry	---	100%
<i>DifAccs7</i>	7.	Refused service	---	100%
<i>DifAccs8</i>	8.	Asked to leave	---	100%

Q.58 Have there been times in the past year when you have felt isolated and cut off from society or depressed, because of LACK OF MONEY? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>IsoDep1</i>	1.	Yes – Isolated	9%	91%
<i>IsoDep2</i>	2.	No – Not isolated	86%	14%
<i>IsoDep3</i>	3.	Yes – Depressed	11%	89%
<i>IsoDep4</i>	4.	No – Not depressed	84%	16%

Q.59 Have there been times in the past year when you have felt isolated and cut off from society for any of the following reasons? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No	N/A
<i>IsoOth1</i>	1.	Paid work	13%	58%	29%
<i>IsoOth2</i>	2.	Childcare responsibilities*	11%	23%	---
<i>IsoOth3</i>	3.	Other caring responsibilities	5%	39%	56%
<i>IsoOth4</i>	4.	Irregular or expensive public transport	11%	89%	---
<i>IsoOth5</i>	5.	No friends	5%	95%	---
<i>IsoOth6</i>	6.	No family	2%	98%	---
<i>IsoOth7</i>	7.	Problems with physical access	2%	5%	93%
<i>IsoOth8</i>	8.	Sexism	---	99%	1%
<i>IsoOth9</i>	9.	Discrimination relating to disability	---	2%	98%

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

(5) LOCAL SERVICES

Q.60 The next questions are about services which may exist in your living area and which affect our standard of living. I am going to read out a number of services which are usually provided or subsidised by public bodies. Please could you tell me whether you think that these services are essential and should be available or whether they may be desirable but are not essential?

			Essential	Desirable	Don't know	N/A
<i>PubSrv1</i>	1.	Libraries	87%	8%	5%	---
<i>PubSrv2</i>	2.	Public sports facilities (e.g. swimming pools)	90%	7%	3%	---
<i>PubSrv3</i>	3.	Museums and galleries	34%	61%	---	1%
<i>PubSrv4</i>	4.	Evening classes	65%	31%	4%	---
<i>PubSrv5</i>	5.	Public/community/village hall	80%	15%	4%	1%
<i>PubSrv6</i>	6.	Post Office	96%	3%	1%	---
<i>PubSrv7</i>	7.	Hospital with accident and emergency department	95%	5%	---	---
<i>PubSrv8</i>	8.	Doctor	98%	2%	---	---
<i>PubSrv9</i>	9.	Dentist	91%	7%	2%	---
<i>PubSrv10</i>	10.	Optician	78%	17%	5%	---

Q.61 The following services are usually provided or subsidised by public bodies. Do you use? For each service you do not use please give the reason you do not use them.

			Use – adequate	Use – inadequate	Don't use – don't want/not relevant	Don't use – unavailable/ unsuitable	Don't use – can't afford	Don't know
<i>UsPbSv1</i>	1.	Libraries	48%	10%	39%	2%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv2</i>	2.	Public sports facilities (e.g. swimming pools)	47%	13%	36%	3%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv3</i>	3.	Museums and galleries	13%	4%	64%	15%	2%	2%
<i>UsPbSv4</i>	4.	Evening classes	19%	5%	67%	7%	1%	1%
<i>UsPbSv5</i>	5.	Public/community/village hall	37%	5%	51%	5%	---	2%
<i>UsPbSv6</i>	6.	Post Office	77%	7%	13%	2%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv7</i>	7.	Hospital with accident and emergency department	47%	11%	39%	2%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv8</i>	8.	Doctor	86%	10%	2%	1%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv9</i>	9.	Dentist	62%	8%	26%	3%	1%	---
<i>UsPbSv10</i>	10.	Optician	44%	10%	41%	3%	1%	1%

Q.62 ASK ONLY IF THERE ARE CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD*

			Essential	Desirable	Don't know
<i>ChldSrv1</i>	1.	Facilities for children to play safely nearby	100%	---	---
<i>ChldSrv2</i>	2.	Youth centre	85%	6%	9%
<i>ChldSrv3</i>	3.	Public transport to school	100%	---	---
<i>ChldSrv4</i>	4.	Nurseries, playgroups, mother and toddler groups	97%	3%	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

ASK ONLY IF THERE ARE CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD*

Q.63 Do your children use? For each service you don't use please give the reason you do not use them.

			Use – adequate	Use – inadequate	Don't use – don't want/not relevant	Don't use – unavailable/ unsuitable	Don't use – can't afford	Don't know
<i>UsChdSv1</i>	1.	Facilities for children to play safely nearby	67%	18%	9%	3%	3%	---
<i>UsChdSv2</i>	2.	Youth centre	38%	12%	32%	12%	---	6%
<i>UsChdSv3</i>	3.	Public transport to school	76%	6%	12%	3%	3%	---
<i>UsChdSv4</i>	4.	Nurseries, playgroups, mother and toddler groups	53%	9%	32%	3%	3%	---

* Thirty-four percent of respondents (34%) have children aged 0-14.

Q.64 ASK ONLY IF THE RESPONDENT IS OVER 65 YEARS OLD OR IF THEY HAVE SAID IN THE INTERVIEW THAT THEY HAVE A LONG-STANDING ILLNESS****

			Essential	Desirable	Refusal/Don't know
<i>RespOld1</i>	1.	Home help	57%	14%	29%
<i>RespOld2</i>	2.	Meals on wheels	72%	14%	14%
<i>RespOld3</i>	3.	Special transport for those with mobility problems	86%	---	14%

**** Ninety-three percent of respondents (93%) are aged below 65.

Q.65 Do you use? For each service you do not use please give the reason you do not use them.****

		Use – adequate	Use – inadequate	Don't use – don't want/not relevant	Don't use – unavailable/ unsuitable	Don't use – can't afford	Refusal/Don't know
<i>ReUsSrv1</i>	1. Home help	14%	---	72%	---	---	14%
<i>ReUsSrv2</i>	2. Meals on wheels	---	---	86%	---	---	14%
<i>ReUsSrv3</i>	3. Special transport for those with mobility problems	---	---	86%	---	---	14%

**** Ninety-three percent of respondents (93%) are aged below 65.

Q.66 I am going to read out a number of services which are usually private businesses. Please could you tell me whether you think these services are essential and should be available or whether they may be desirable but are not essential?

		Essential	Desirable	Don't know
<i>PruSrv1</i>	1. Places of worship	39%	48%	13%
<i>PruSrv2</i>	2. Bus services	97%	2%	1%
<i>PruSrv3</i>	3. A train station	95%	3%	2%
<i>PruSrv4</i>	4. Petrol stations	65%	28%	7%
<i>PruSrv5</i>	5. Mass Transit Railway services	97%	2%	1%
<i>PruSrv6</i>	6. Chemists	84%	14%	2%
<i>PruSrv7</i>	7. A corner shop	98%	2%	---
<i>PruSrv8</i>	8. Access to medium to large supermarket	95%	5%	---
<i>PruSrv9</i>	9. Access to banks	99%	1%	---
<i>PruSrv10</i>	10. A restaurant	94%	6%	---
<i>PruSrv11</i>	11. A cinema or theatre	71%	27%	2%

Q.67 The following services are usually private businesses. Do you use.....? For each service you do not use please give the reason you do not use them.

		Use – adequate	Use – inadequate	Don't use – don't want/not relevant	Don't use – unavailable/ unsuitable	Don't use – can't afford	Don't know
<i>UsPuSv1</i>	1. Places of worship	21%	4%	71%	3%	---	1%
<i>UsPuSv2</i>	2. Bus services	89%	6%	4%	---	1%	---
<i>UsPuSv3</i>	3. A train station	92%	3%	4%	---	1%	---
<i>UsPuSv4</i>	4. Petrol stations	30%	1%	64%	5%	---	---
<i>UsPuSv5</i>	5. Mass Transit Railway services	64%	4%	22%	7%	1%	---
<i>UsPuSv6</i>	6. Chemists	64%	3%	29%	---	2%	2%
<i>UsPuSv7</i>	7. A corner shop	95%	2%	1%	---	2%	---
<i>UsPuSv8</i>	8. Access to medium to large supermarket	95%	4%	---	---	1%	---
<i>UsPuSv9</i>	9. Access to banks	91%	5%	3%	---	1%	---
<i>UsPuSv10</i>	10. A restaurant	92%	4%	1%	---	2%	1%
<i>UsPuSv11</i>	11. A cinema or theatre	69%	4%	21%	3%	2%	1%

(6) FINANCE AND DEBTS

The next questions are about the types of bills you receive and other financial matters.

Q.68 Have there been times during the past year when you were seriously behind in paying within the time allowed for any of these items? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

		Yes	No	N/A
<i>InDebt1</i>	1. None of these	89%	11%	---
<i>InDebt2</i>	2. Rent	1%	8%	2%
<i>InDebt3</i>	3. Property management fees	4%	5%	2%
<i>InDebt4</i>	4. Gas	4%	7%	---
<i>InDebt5</i>	5. Electricity	1%	10%	---
<i>InDebt6</i>	6. Water	1%	10%	---
<i>InDebt7</i>	7. Goods on hire purchase	2%	5%	4%
<i>InDebt8</i>	8. Mortgage repayments	1%	4%	6%
<i>InDebt9</i>	9. Credit card payments	6%	5%	---
<i>InDebt10</i>	10. Telephone	2%	9%	---

Q.69 Have you ever been disconnected in relation to water, gas, electricity and the telephone because you couldn't afford it? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

		Yes	No
<i>Discon1</i>	1. None of these	98%	2%
<i>Discon2</i>	2. Water	2%	---
<i>Discon3</i>	3. Gas	2%	---
<i>Discon4</i>	4. Electricity	2%	---
<i>Discon5</i>	5. Telephone	1%	1%

Q.70 Have you ever used less than you needed to in relation to water, gas and electricity because you couldn't afford it?
(CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>UseLes1</i>	1.	None of these	96%	4%
<i>UseLes2</i>	2.	Water	3%	1%
<i>UseLes3</i>	3.	Gas	3%	1%
<i>UseLes4</i>	4.	Electricity	4%	---

Q.71 Have there been times during the past year when you have had to borrow money from pawnbrokers or money lenders, or from friends and family in order to pay for your day-to-day needs? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>Borrow1</i>	1.	None of these	93%	7%
<i>Borrow2</i>	2.	Pawnbroker	---	7%
<i>Borrow3</i>	3.	Money lender	2%	5%
<i>Borrow4</i>	4.	Friend(s)	5%	2%
<i>Borrow5</i>	5.	Family	2%	5%

(7) HOUSING

I would like to ask you some questions about your accommodation.

Tensure Q.72 In which of these ways do you occupy this accommodation?

- 1. Own outright 29%
- 2. Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan 27%
- 3. Rent from Housing Authority/Housing Society → GO TO Q.73 37%
- 4. Rent from private landlord 5%
- 5. Rent from staff quarters provided by the Government 2%

Rent Q.73 How much do you need to pay for rent/mortgage?

HK\$ _____

HseType Q.74 What is the housing type?

- 1. Public rental flat 37%
- 2. Government subsidised sale flat 26%
- 3. Private residential flats 33%
- 4. Others 4%

HseSat Q.75 How satisfied are you with this accommodation?

- 1. Very satisfied 9%
- 2. Fairly satisfied 35%
- 3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 45%
- 4. Slightly dissatisfied 9%
- 5. Very dissatisfied 2%

Q.76 Do you have any of the following problems with your accommodation? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

			Yes	No
<i>HsePrblm1</i>	1.	Shortage of space	37%	63%
<i>HsePrblm2</i>	2.	Too dark, not enough light	13%	87%
<i>HsePrblm3</i>	3.	Damp walls, floors, foundations, etc	20%	80%

HlthHse Q.77 Has your health or the health of anyone in your household been made worse by your housing situation?

- 1. Yes 7%
- 2. No 93%

(8) CRIME

Car Q.78 Do you have a car?

- 1. Yes → GO TO Q.79 – Q.80***** 13%
- 2. No → GO TO Q.81 87%

ASK THOSE WITH A VEHICLE*****

CarSteal Q.79 Have you or anybody else in this household had vehicle stolen or anything stolen off of or out of it?

1. Yes 15%

2. No 85%

CarDamage Q.80 Have you or anybody else in this household had a vehicle tampered with or damaged by vandals or people out to steal?

1. Yes 31%

2. No 69%

Q.81 In the last year, has anyone ?

			Yes	No
<i>BrknHse</i>	1.	Broken into or tried to break into your home to steal something	---	100%
<i>VanHome</i>	2.	Deliberately damaged or vandalised your home	2%	98%
<i>Stealbag</i>	3.	Stolen anything you were carrying – out of your hands or from your pockets or bag	4%	96%
<i>Defrdm</i>	4.	Defrauded you or cheated you out of money, possessions or property	3%	97%
<i>Missold</i>	5.	Missold any financial service such as a personal pension or an endowment mortgage to you	10%	90%

ImpFinan Q.82 ASK IF 'YES' TO [Missold]
How much of an impact do you consider that this has had on your financial situation?

1. A lot 30%

2. Some 60%

3. None 10%

Q.83 Most of us worry at some time or other about being a victim of crim. Could you tell me how worried you are about the following situations?

			Very worried	Fairly worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried
<i>Worry1</i>	1.	Having your home broken into and something stolen	2%	17%	69%	12%
<i>Worry2</i>	2.	Being mugged or robbed	4%	26%	54%	16%
<i>Worry3</i>	3.	Being missold any financial services such as a personal pension or an endowment mortgage	1%	17%	56%	26%
<i>Worry4</i>	4.	Having your vehicle stolen or things stolen from off of or out of it?	88%	5%	6%	1%

Q.84 I have already asked you some questions about how worried you are about particular crimes. I would now like to ask you about other worries. How worried are you about the following situation?

			Very worried	Fairly worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried	N/A
<i>OthWor1</i>	1.	Problems with family or close relatives	6%	44%	39%	11%	---
<i>OthWor2</i>	2.	A wage earner in your household losing their job	14%	40%	36%	5%	5%
<i>OthWor3</i>	3.	Changing your job	3%	19%	41%	7%	30%
<i>OthWor4</i>	4.	Having financial debts such as mortgage, loan, etc	5%	24%	53%	16%	2%
<i>OthWor5</i>	5.	Moving house	1%	8%	50%	39%	2%
<i>OthWor6</i>	6.	Problems at work	2%	15%	38%	13%	32%
<i>OthWor7</i>	7.	Problems with neighbours	---	9%	47%	44%	---
<i>OthWor8</i>	8.	Having a road accident	1%	25%	45%	29%	---
<i>OthWor9</i>	9.	Having an accident around the home (such as a fall, scalding, electric shock, or something like that)	1%	15%	57%	27%	---
<i>OthWor10</i>	10.	Having an accident or injury at work	1%	15%	39%	14%	31%
<i>OthWor11</i>	11.	Having an accident or injury in a public place (e.g tripping over a pavement)	---	21%	49%	30%	---
<i>OthWor12</i>	12.	Experiencing food poisoning	1%	14%	52%	33%	---
<i>OthWor13</i>	13.	Experiencing other serious injuries or illnesses	3%	21%	57%	19%	---
<i>OthWor14</i>	14.	Problems with your children*	21%	38%	38%	3%	---

VI DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

<i>Age</i>	Q.85	Age		
		1.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-19	3%
		2.	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-24	7%
		3.	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	7%
		4.	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-34	14%
		5.	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39	19%
		6.	<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44	13%
		7.	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-49	16%
		8.	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54	12%
		9.	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59	2%
		10.	<input type="checkbox"/> 60-64	---
		11.	<input type="checkbox"/> 65 and above	7%

<i>BirthPlc</i>	Q.86	Place of birth		
		1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong → GO TO Q.89	69%
		2.	<input type="checkbox"/> China → GO TO Q. 88	27%
		3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Indonesia	2%
		4.	<input type="checkbox"/> India	2%

StayHK Q.87 How long have you stayed in Hong Kong?
 _____ years

<i>Unemper</i>	Q.88	Looking back over the last ten years, for how long IN TOTAL have you been unemployed?	
		1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never 53%
		2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 2 months in total 11%
		3.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 6 months in total 13%
		4.	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 12 months in total 1%
		5.	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 12 months in total 7%
		6.	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A 15%
		7.	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know ---

Q.89 Details of each household member

No.:	Relationship to respondents	Sex	Nature of work	Age	Total household income (1999)
1.	Respondent				
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					

Q.90 Can you please tell me which kinds of income you and your household receive?

	No.:	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Earnings from employment (including wages and salaries, overtime payments, paid holidays, company shares, specific compensations – for tools, clothing, transport, accommodation), bonus (13 th and 14 th month salary)						
2.	Income from self-employment						
3.	Income from property (rent)						
4.	Housing allowance						
5.	Interest from savings, dividends, etc						
6.	Government Grant & Loan						
7.	Social Security Benefits						
8.	Pensions						
9.	Private transfers from other households (in cash/ in kind)						
10.	Other sources of income (e.g. consuming goods from own business)						

<i>Marital</i>	Q.91	Marital status	
		1. <input type="checkbox"/> Single	26%
		2. <input type="checkbox"/> Married	69%
		3. <input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting	----
		4. <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	3%
		5. <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	2%
		6. <input type="checkbox"/> Separated	---

<i>Educate</i>	Q.92	Education attainment	
		1. <input type="checkbox"/> No schooling/kindergarten	2%
		2. <input type="checkbox"/> Primary	15%
		3. <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary (F.1-3)	10%
		4. <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary (F.5)	39%
		5. <input type="checkbox"/> Matriculation	13%
		6. <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary University (non-degree)	6%
		7. <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary University (degree)	15%

Appendix 9: Survey design of the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain

The 1999 Poverty & Social Exclusion Survey of Britain was undertaken by the Social Survey Division of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The details of survey design, sampling, data collection and fieldwork procedure are extracted from *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain* and listed as follows (Gordon, *et al.*, 2000:85-91).

The PSE survey was designed to update *the Breadline Britain surveys* conducted by MORI in 1983 (Mack & Lansley, 1985) and in 1990 (Gordon & Pantazis, 1997). There were two parts to the PSE survey. *First*, the June 1999 Omnibus Survey, which was a representative sample of the population in Britain, was conducted to collect public views on what constitute the necessities of life in Britain. A similar question was asked with reference to necessities for children. *Second*, the PSE survey was designed as a follow-up survey of respondents to the 1998/99 General Household Survey (GHS). The respondents were interviewed in detail about their circumstances and their views on a range of issues related to poverty and social exclusion.

The objectives of the survey were: *first*, to update *the Breadline Britain surveys*; *second*, to estimate the size of groups of households in different circumstances; *third*, to explore movement in and out of poverty; *fourth*, to look at age and gender differences in experiences of and responses to poverty.

Sample design

The sample design was influenced by three main considerations, including (1) sufficient cases were required for the analysis of key variables by sub-groups; (2) sufficient cases were required for separate analysis of households and individuals in Scotland; and (3) sufficient cases of low-income households and respondents were required to examine their characteristics.

The sample design therefore provided a greater probability of selection to people in lower income groups and Scotland. Households in the lower income groups were identified by using a measure of equivalised income, which was developed by Jonathan Bradshaw and Sue Middleton in conjunction with the ONS. It is a measure of household income which takes account of household size and composition, as well as sufficient weight to children.

Selecting households from lower income groups using equivalised income measure

As shown in table A9.1, each household member was assigned a value. The values for each member of the household were added together to give the total equivalence value for that household. This number was then divided into the gross income for that household.

Table A9.1: Equivalised income scale

Type of household member	Equivalised value
Head of household	0.70
Partner	0.30
Each additional adult (anyone over 16)	0.45
Add for first child	0.35
Add for each additional child	0.30
If head of household is a lone parent, add	0.10

Equivalised income was grouped into quintiles, with the bottom quintile comprising households with the lowest incomes and the top quintile those households with the highest incomes. Table A9.2 lists the probability of selection for income quintiles.

Table A9.2: Probability of selection for income quintiles

Quintile group	Proportion sampled
Bottom quintile (lowest income)	40%
Fourth quintile	30%
Third quintile	10%
Second quintile	10%
Top quintile (highest income)	10%

Selecting areas, households and individuals for interview

Areas

Identifying individuals for interview involved a three-stage process. *First*, a number of areas were selected from all of those used for the 1998/99 GHS, which was chosen from 576 primary sampling units (PSUs) based on postcode sectors. In order to ensure sufficient representation of the population in the PSE sample, 70% of GHS areas in England and Wales were selected (360 areas from a total of 518). All of the 54 Scottish areas were sampled to provide sufficient cases for separate analysis of the Scottish data.

Households

Second, a number of households were selected from each of the areas.

Individuals

Third, one individual was chosen from each sampled household. To allow for variation in income within areas the list of primary sampling units (PSUs) was sorted on area and quintile group before any selections were made. One adult aged 16 or over was selected at random from each sampled household, using a Kish grid. This was done in preference to interviewing all eligible adults because individuals in households tend to be similar to one another. Where households differ markedly from one another, the resultant clustering can lead to a substantial increase in the standard error around survey estimates. This is particular true when asking opinion questions where household members may influence each other's answers. Only those who had given a full interview in 1998/99 were eligible for selection. Partial interviews and proxies were excluded from the eligible sample. In keeping with the aim of ensuring that sufficient interviews were carried out for analysis purposes, some reserves were selected, to be used if necessary.

If the selected adult was no longer resident in the household, interviewers were instructed not to substitute another household member for the sampled person, as that would adversely affect the representativeness of the sample. When the selected adult had moved house since the GHS interview, interviewers traced them to their new address if it was nearby and asked for an interview. Otherwise, the respondent was coded as having moved. In those households where the sampled individual agreed to the follow-up interview, interviewers updated the household composition, recording members who had moved out or died, and adding new members who had been born or moved into the household since the GHS interview. Table A9.3 indicates changes to household composition.

Table A9.3: Changes to household composition in responding households

Changes to household composition	Number	%
Still in household	3329	95.7
Moved out (including deceased)	58	1.7
New to household (including births since GHS)	82	2.4
Missing	8	0.2
Total (All household members)	3477	100.0

Questionnaire content

As one of the aims of the PSE was to update the Breadline Britain surveys, questions which had been used in the previous surveys were repeated where possible, to maintain continuity and allow comparisons over time. The PSE survey did, however, aim to measure a variety of concepts of poverty and social exclusion and this involved some redesign of the questionnaire and the development of new questions, such as measuring

respondents' assessment of UN's definitions of poverty (i.e. absolute and overall poverty) and measuring intra-household poverty. The questionnaire is composed of the following areas:

- housing;
- health;
- time;
- social networks and support;
- necessities;
- finance and debts;
- intra-household poverty;
- poverty over time;
- absolute and overall poverty;
- area deprivation;
- local services;
- crime;
- child's school;
- perceptions of poverty; and
- activism

Choosing a survey design based on a follow-up of the GHS meant that detailed information was already available on those topics covered by the GHS interview, and questions did not have to be included in the PSE. As the follow-up interviews took place between 6 and 18 months after the original interview, a small number of follow-up questions was included in the PSE questionnaire to record changes to the household composition, employment and income.

The sections that the respondents found most difficult to answer were those on absolute and overall poverty, social networks and support, local services and the necessities questions which involved the card-sorting exercise. For some sections of the questionnaire, problems arose because respondents were being asked to think about things they would normally take for granted, such as the goods or services they owned or had access to. For other sections, respondents were being asked to think about things they would not usually consider, such as how much money they would need to keep their household out of poverty and some found this very difficult to do. Respondents also found the questions on local services repetitive and became bored and irritated. The crime section made some elderly respondents feel uneasy.

Data collection and fieldwork procedures

Advance letters

Advance letters were sent to sampled individuals, reminding them of their participation in the GHS, explaining the purpose of the PSE and asking for their co-operation with the follow-up interview. As a named respondent had been selected before the interview, the advance letter was addressed to the selected respondent by name. Where a name had not been provided by the respondent during the GHS interview, the advance letter was addressed to 'the resident'.

Contacting the respondent

Where contact telephone numbers were available, interviewers made initial contact with the respondent by telephone. This method of contacting respondents was used to reduce costs. Once an appointment was made with the respondent, the interviews were conducted face-to-face. In the event of a broken appointment, interviewers were instructed to make a maximum of two visits at an address before recording a non-contact, unless they were already in the area and could make an extra call without driving out of their way.

Respondents who had moved house since taking part in the GHS were traced by interviewers if they had moved within the same area. Interviewers requested authorisation from their office-based supervisor before tracing respondents who had moved.

Data collection

Fieldwork took place between 1 September and 15 October 1999. There were three types of data collection: *face-to-face interviews*, *a self-completion module* and *a card-sorting exercise*.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). Interviewers recorded respondents' answers on laptop computers which had been programmed using Blaise software. Where applicable, a limited amount of proxy information was collected about the respondent's partner and child.

A Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) module was used to collect answers to sensitive questions. Where the respondent was reluctant or unable to complete the self-completion section on the lap-top the interviewer asked the

respondent's permission to ask these questions.

Respondents to the GHS follow-up were asked to a card-sorting exercise. In this case, the respondent was asked to place each card in a pile depending on whether they had the item; did not have it and could not afford it; or did not have the item and did not want it. Where problems with literacy or manual dexterity prevented the respondent from completing this exercise, the interviewer was permitted to read the cards and place them in the correct pile according to the respondent's answer.

Length of interview

The average length of interview was 60 minutes. With older respondents or those who had literacy problems, it took about 90 minutes. Questions requiring a lot of thought or those involving difficult concepts, such as assessment of absolute and overall poverty, were particularly taxing for some elderly respondents, a number of whom became quite tired during the interview. The length of the questionnaire affected the response rate. Some sampled individuals refused to take part on hearing that the interview was likely to last for an hour.

Table A9.4: Response to the PSE follow-up survey

Response category	Number of cases	Percentage of set sample	Percentage of eligible sample
Set sample	2846		
Household not traced, reserve not issued	210	7.4	
Selected adult no longer resident	83	2.9	
Selected adult deceased	19	0.7	
Other ineligible	103	3.6	
Total ineligible	415	14.6	
Total eligible sample	2431	85.4	
<i>Full interview</i>	1530		62.9
<i>Partial interview</i>	4		0.2
Total co-operating	1534		63.1
Non-contact	180		
Refusals			
<i>Refusal to HQ</i>	85		3.5
<i>Refusal by household</i>	113		4.6
<i>Refusal by selected individual</i>	470		19.3
<i>Incapable of taking part</i>	49		2.0
Total refusals	717		29.5

Response

Table A9.4 summarizes the response to the PSE follow-up interview. Of the 2,846 individuals selected, 415 (15%) were ineligible because the sampled individual had moved or died. The household could not be traced and thus it was not known whether the whole household had moved or because it was a reserve which was not issued to an interviewer. Of the 2,431 eligible individuals, 1,534 (63%) were interviewed, the vast

majority completing a full interview. Table A9.5 outlines reasons for refusal. The most common reasons for refusal were 'can't be bothered' (20%), 'genuinely too busy' (14%) and 'too old or infirm' (12%).

Table A9.5: Reasons for refusal (first reason given)

Reasons for refusal	%
Can't be bothered	19.6
Genuinely too busy	14.2
Too old/infirm	12.3
Other reason	11.9
No reason given	9.8
Temporarily too busy	6.2
Broken appointments	6.0
Personal problems	5.5
Bad experience with previous surveys	4.2
Invasion of privacy	3.4
Late contact, insufficient time	2.1
About to go away	1.7
Doesn't believe in surveys	1.5
Disliked survey matter	0.6
Concerns about confidentiality	0.4
Refusal to HQ	0.2
Not capable	0.2
Base	583

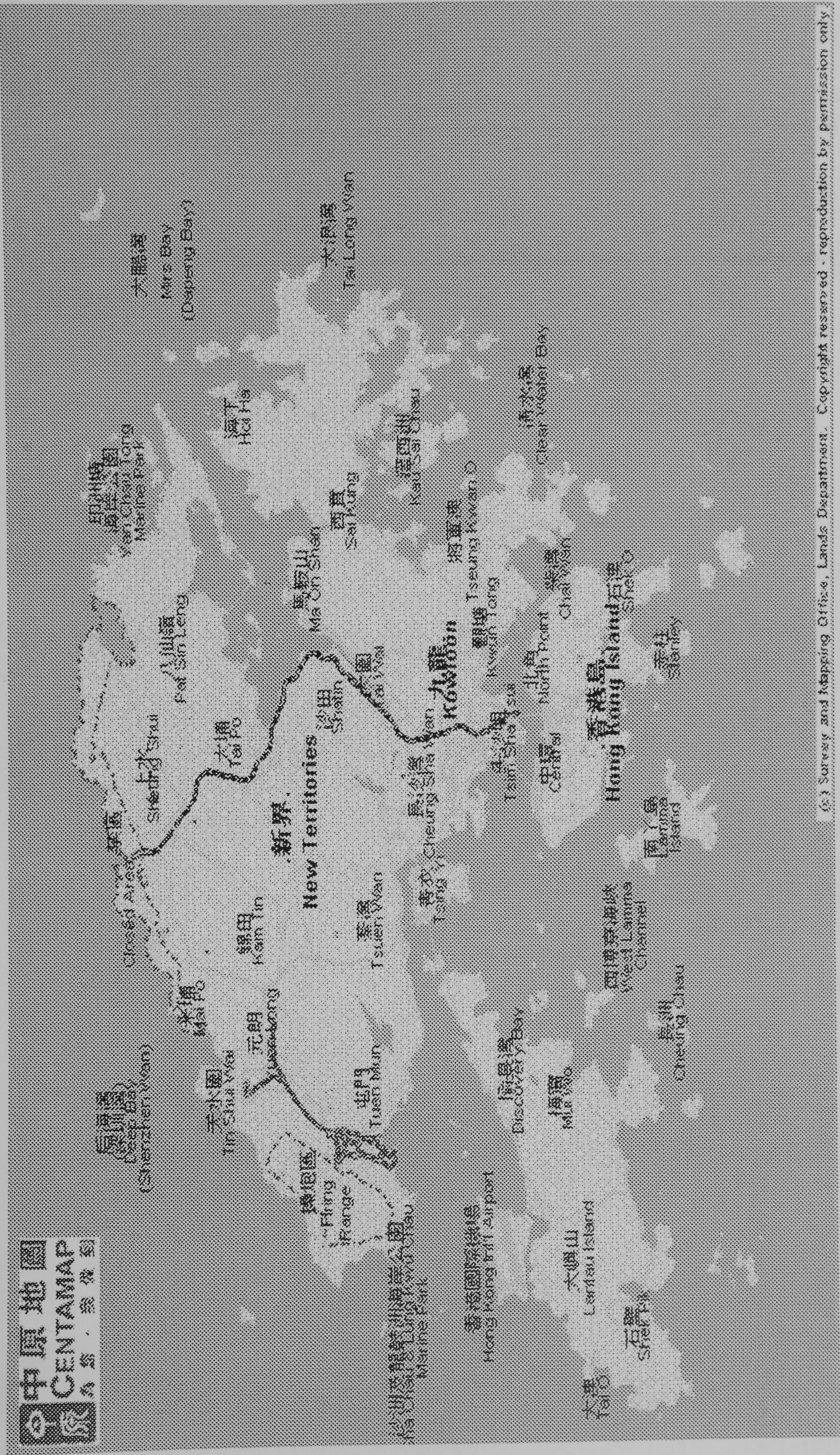
Table A9.6: Responses to the self-completion module

	Number	%
Respondent completed the section	844	55.0
Interviewer completed the section	683	44.5
Section refused or not completed	7	0.5
Base	1534	100.0

Table A9.6 shows response to the self-completion section. Fifty-five per cent of respondents completed the section themselves on the laptop, while an additional 45 per cent were asked the questions by the interviewer. The level of self-completion is lower than is normal on surveys of this type. The Health Education Monitoring Survey (HEMS), for example, regularly asks respondents to key their answers in on the laptop and about 85 per cent of eligible respondents do so. The low proportion self-completing this section of the PSE may reflect the age profile of the PSE sample. Other surveys requiring self-completion often have an age cut-off; the HEMS only asks those aged 16 to 54 to self-complete. Problems with eyesight, which are more common among older people, are often cited by those who decline to use the laptop. Willingness to self-complete could also have been affected by the position of the section at the end of the questionnaire, by which time respondents may have become fatigued. Evidence from interviewers suggests that this was the case, particularly for the elderly respondents.

Source: Extracted from Gordon, *et al.* (2000) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, pp.85-91.

Appendix 6: Hong Kong Map



Source: <http://www.centamap.com/cent/index.htm>, accessed on 26 June 2002.

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