

PRESS RELEASE

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Youth think tank MWYO survey finds that over 60% Hongkongers consider an independent commission of inquiry to be the prerequisite for cross-spectrum dialogue

Since the onset of the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill movement (the movement), community leaders and scholars have suggested defusing the crisis with dialogue, but to no avail. Local youth think tank MWYO commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a survey to explore the possibility of establishing a public dialogue platform. We have interviewed 701 Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above from 6 to 9 November 2019.

Hongkongers remain hopeful about public dialogue despite the failure of government efforts

Despite that protests related to the movement are approaching the half-year mark, more than 64 per cent of the respondents expected protests to persist for at least another three months (three months to under six months: 24.2%; six months to under one year: 22.2%; one year or above: 17.8%). Younger respondents expected protests to go on for more than six months, while those with higher educational qualifications gave similar predictions.

On 26 September, Chief Executive Carrie Lam held the first, and so far the only, community dialogue. Yet three out of four respondents viewed such efforts as ineffective in easing the social tension (very ineffective: 39.0%; ineffective: 37.2%). Only 4.9 per cent of the respondents said the dialogue was effective (very effective: 1.1%; effective: 3.8%), whereas 16.1 per cent went with "half and half".

On the whole, the respondents were relatively more positive about having dialogue among those with different political stances now than the 26 September CE-led dialogue. Although about half of the respondents disagreed that people with

different political stances can engage in dialogue, 31.8 per cent of them agreed and 13.5 per cent of them were neutral on the subject. Older respondents were more hopeful about dialogue across the political spectrum.

The Government may not be the ideal facilitator of public dialogue, but it is responsible for creating the conditions for it

Considering that about 32 per cent of the respondents remained positive about dialogue, establishing a public dialogue platform is still possible. However, more respondents stated "credible community leaders" (33.1%) than "the Government" (21.1%) as the ideal facilitator of dialogue.

Respondents were also asked to state the prerequisites for dialogue. The most stated conditions were the "establishment of an independent commission of inquiry" (63.8%), "comprehensive fulfilment of the five demands" (41.6%), and "stepping down of politically appointed officials" (38.0%). Incidentally, the Government is in the driving seat in initiating all three conditions.

Respondents opined that the most important objectives of dialogue include "rebuilding trust and communication" (44.4%), "quelling social unrest" (39.2%), and "urging the Government to deal with deep-seated social issues, such as political reform" (38.7%).

Mr. Lau Ming-wai, Director of MWYO, concludes: "The results of this survey and the recent District Council election give a strong indication of distress and dissatisfaction among Hongkongers. At the same time, many of us are eager to look for a way out. As the saying goes, every journey starts with taking the first step. We should start with engaging those who desire to talk now. However, cross-spectrum dialogue can only succeed in a society with the favourable ambience, and that requires earnest efforts from the Government and civil society."

ABOUT MWYO

MWYO is an independent think tank that focuses on youth issues in Hong Kong. Our work spans across research studies and surveys, advocacy and education, and training and capacity building. We actively engage and work with everyone who has a stake in the positive outcome of young people' s development: youths, parents, headmasters, teachers, social workers, employers, civil society leaders, governments, and political parties. Our mission is to be a thought leader in all aspects of youth development in Hong Kong.

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