

# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey



# 2008

A Summary of Research Findings

Sponsored by



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Community Business is a unique membership based non-profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to continually improve their positive impact on people and communities. Community Business provides training, facilitation and advice to some of the world's largest companies in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its major areas of focus include CSR strategy and policy, corporate community investment and diversity in the workplace. Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong, Community Business currently works with a number of organisations, small, medium and large, committed to CSR. For more information, visit [www.communitybusiness.org.hk](http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk)

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# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third “The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey” conducted in 2008 has revealed the following significant findings:

### A. Working and Living Patterns

#### 1. Employees in Hong Kong work long hours, despite a marginal decrease since 2007

- The average number of hours worked per week is 48.8 hours. This is a statistically insignificant decrease from 49.2 hours in 2007 and 51.3 hours in 2006.
- This is still 22% higher than the recommended number of hours as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that workers should work no more than 40 hours per week with occasional paid overtime of up to 12 hours per week.

#### 2. Employees in Hong Kong spend less time on their personal life in 2008

- Employees spend less time on personal activities in 2008 compared to previous years. The average amount of time spent on personal activities per week has decreased from 12.0 hours in 2007 to 10.4 hours in 2008.
- Over 70% of employees spend less than 2 hours per day on personal or private activities - this is consistent with 2007 and 2006. 10% do not spend any time on personal activities at all.

#### 3. Work-life balance has worsened since 2007 and it is still a far cry from what employees think is ideal and realistic

- The actual work-life ratio is 84:16 in 2008 compared to 83:17 in 2007.
- The preferred work-life ratio of employees has changed from 60:40 in 2007 to 62:38 in 2008 reflecting employees' willingness to work longer hours.

### B. Satisfaction with Work and Life

#### 4. Employees give their employers a lower score than ever before on their efforts to promote work-life balance

- Employees give their employers a score of 4.6 out of 10 in 2008 for efforts and resources spent to promote work-life balance. This is a decrease from 4.7 in 2007 and 2006.

### C. Problems with Current Work-Life Balance and Desired Solutions

#### 5. Employees in Hong Kong still have a long way to go to achieve their ideal work-life balance but this has improved slightly since 2007

- Employees rate the degree to which they have achieved their ideal work-life balance 5.7 out of 10 in 2008. This is an improvement from last year's score of 5.6.

- 6. Poor work-life balance is having a greater negative impact on productivity, family life and health**
  - Similar to previous years, over 60% of employees state that they are suffering from prolonged fatigue and extreme tiredness as a direct result of poor work-life balance.
  - The percentage of employees who report that their productivity and work quality has reduced dramatically due to long working hours has risen significantly from 32.8% in 2007 to 37.7% in 2008. This should be a major concern to businesses.
  - Those who say they have no time for their partner and family has also increased significantly from 43.7% in 2007 to 49.3% in 2008.
  - Since 2006 there are worrying trends to note which have resulted from poor work-life balance. These include a progressive reduction in time spent with partner and family, increase in insomnia and poor diet of employees and negative impact on relationships with friends.
  
- 7. Long working hours has overtaken the need for financial security as the most difficult work-life balance challenge this year**
  - In 2008, the greatest obstacle to work-life balance is long working hours (2008: 17.5%; 2007:15.3%) whereas last year, the main obstacle was the need for financial security (2008: 14.9%; 2007: 18.6%).
  - The top three most difficult work-life balance challenges in 2008 are long working hours (17.5%), financial wellbeing/ wealth management (14.9%) and leaders' attitude (13.3%).
  - Taking care of children did not feature in the top 3 challenges in 2008, whereas in 2007 it did (2008: 5.1%; 2007:9.3%).
  - Leaders' attitude as a work-life balance challenge for employees has increased steadily over the last three years (2006:8.0%; 2007:8.7%; 2008:13.3%).
  - Encouragingly, employees who do not find work-life balance a challenge has increased from 4.9% in 2007 to 8.0% in 2008.
  
- 8. Employees say that a 5-day work week and more paid annual leave would most help them to achieve better work-life balance**
  - The largest percentage of employees (27.2%) cite that a 5-day work week would most assist them with work-life balance. This finding is consistent with the findings in 2006 and 2007.
  - More paid annual leave (19.7%) and career breaks (9.9%) rank second and third respectively.
  - Flexible working fell from the third most desirable work arrangement in 2007 to the fourth and career breaks jumped from the fifth in 2007 to the third this year.
  
- 9. Almost one third of employees in Hong Kong would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance elsewhere**
  - This question was introduced for the first time in 2008 and interestingly as many as one third of respondents (32.6%) say that they would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance.
  - A significant percentage (20.5%) of employees in Hong Kong continue to say they would consider leaving Hong Kong for better work-life balance. Although the percentage has decreased from last year (26.9%), it remains significant and reinforces the need for work-life balance to be addressed as a serious business issue by companies in Hong Kong.

## 2. OBSERVATIONS

Although working hours are down slightly, employees in Hong Kong state that they have less work-life balance in 2008 than they did in 2007 and the actual work-life ratio has worsened from 83:17 last year to 84:16 this year. Employees now spend only 10 hours per week on their personal life compared to over 12 hours last year.

As in 2007, there are gender variations in our study. Women tend to work fewer hours than men but also have less personal time. Although the survey did not explore reasons for the longer working hours of men, this situation may arise because men and women define personal time differently and may be a reflection of women taking care of children in non-work time and not classifying this time as personal time. It may also be because women are sleeping more than men.

Those at lower income levels continue to be most adversely affected by poor work-life balance. Employees earning \$10,000 or less per month have a work-life ratio of 88:12 compared to the average of 84:16. Lower income employees also have the least personal time and score lower than other income groups when asked about the degree to which they have achieved their ideal work-life balance. This is not surprising given that individuals earning the least generally have less control over their workload and their working hours are often dictated by their managers.

Hong Kong employees remain as pragmatic as ever - in light of the worsening global financial situation and rising prices, they have adjusted their ideal yet realistic work-life ratio accordingly, from 60:40 in 2007 to 62:38 in 2008. This reflects their willingness to work longer hours in trying times. As such, employees' primary obstacle for achieving work-life balance is long working hours. This year, significantly more employees cite their leaders' attitude as an obstacle in achieving work-life balance (13.3%) compared to last year (8.7%).

It is therefore not surprising that employees in Hong Kong say that employers can do much more to promote work-life balance and rate their employers efforts in promoting work-life balance lower than they did last year. Since 2006, employees say that a 5-day work week would help them most - this is followed by more annual leave and career breaks. All three of these most desired solutions point to employees wanting more personal time. Flexible working time, although not one of the top 3 most desired solutions for employees this year, is still important and very much desired by those at higher income levels.

The impact of poor work-life balance is taking a toll on business both directly and indirectly. Similar to last year, over 60% of employees report prolonged fatigue and extreme tiredness, over 40% cite not enough time with their partner and their family and over 40% cite insomnia and a poor diet. Compared to previous years, more employees say that their productivity and work quality has reduced dramatically due to long working hours and that they have less time for their partner and family.

Companies concerned with staff turnover should view work-life balance as an important tool to retain staff. Our survey shows that almost one third of employees would consider leaving their current job for a better work-life balance and over 20% would consider leaving Hong Kong in search of a better work-life balance elsewhere. This reflects what Community Business is finding in the marketplace - that work-life balance is key to competitive advantage - at a company level and at a Hong Kong country level.

This report speaks loudly to the business case for work-life balance and companies committed to a better work-life balance for their staff should begin to benchmark their performance against leaders in their industry. After all, the better the work-life balance of your staff, the more likely you are to retain your talent.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008 (also referred to as “the 2008 Survey”) is the third study on work-life balance initiated by the Community Business Leadership Team (CBLT). The CBLT is a unique group of business leaders representing different business sectors in Hong Kong who are committed to advance the development of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Hong Kong. The 2008 Survey was designed as a tracking survey, adopting the same methodology and similar sample size but a subsection of the original questions.

Undertaken by the Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the main purpose of the survey is to provide the corporate sector with the necessary data to assist them with their work-life balance policies and initiatives. It is also designed to raise awareness of the importance of work-life balance and the direct impact on business and employees.

Using a consistent methodology year and year, it strives to assess the extent to which the state of work-life balance is improving in Hong Kong by determining the following:

- Employees’ working and living patterns
- Employees’ satisfaction with work and life
- Problems employees face in achieving a healthy work-life balance and their desired solutions to overcome such challenges

This report summarises important findings from 2008, seeks to highlight significant differences from the 2007 Survey and identifies trends from the studies conducted in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

This report presents the views of Community Business. The views expressed in this report do not represent those of Community Business members, CBLT members, sponsors of this report or the POP.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The 2008 Survey was commissioned by Community Business and undertaken by the POP. It is a tracking survey developed from the full studies conducted in 2006 and 2007. Given the random selection of interviewees and the sample size, the survey responses are representative of the working population of Hong Kong.

### Target Population

The target population was defined as full-time workers of all levels in Hong Kong of age 15 or above who speak Cantonese, English or Mandarin. A full-time worker is defined as an employee who works at least 5 days a week or who has a total working time of not less than 40 hours per week.

### Sample Size

The sample size of the 2008 Survey was 1,011 respondents (in 2006 and 2007 it was 1,519 and 1,014 respondents respectively). The large sample size allows us to make inferences about the Hong Kong working population as a whole.

### Telephone Interviews

Using a computer-assisted technique, more than 1,000 random telephone interviews were conducted from 17 to 29 July 2008.

### Questionnaire

The 2008 Survey is an extracted version of its previous studies in 2006 and 2007 and includes 10 questions (in 2006 and 2007 there were 20 questions). A taskforce made up of CBLT members and staff from Community Business was set up to review and agree the questions. Professional advice was also sought from POP to ensure that the selected questions were appropriate and allowed valid comparisons to be made year on year. The taskforce selected 9 questions from the previous studies and added a new question to this year's survey. The 2008 Survey also included 8 questions relating to demographics. The full list of questions is available in the Appendix.

### Summary of Research Findings

In this report we examine the responses for each of the 10 questions asked in the 2008 Survey. For each question we highlight the mean response for 2008 and 2007 and identify trends, if any, observed from the data from 2006 to 2008. For 2008, where statistically significant differences have arisen due to gender , industry , income level  these are highlighted. When this arises, this component is then reviewed for significant variations since 2007 and if trends are observed since 2006, these are mentioned.

Statistically significant variations have been identified by the researchers at the POP. A difference is said to be significant when the chi-square value (p-value) is smaller than 0.05 and 0.01. Therefore in some cases, to the lay observer it may appear from our graphs that there is a significant variation. However, our text may not make reference to this. Readers should be guided by the words in the text which state clearly when a statistically significant variation has occurred. It should be noted that where we use the words "more employees" or "less employees" we are referring to more or less in terms of percentages when compared to the results of the 2007 Survey.

It is also important to note that comparisons between the 2007 Survey and 2008 Survey can generally be made. Comparisons should however be treated with some degree of caution due to changes in methodology and wording of questions. The full report of the 2008 Survey findings written by the POP is available at [www.communitybusiness.org.hk](http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk). The full report of the 2007 and 2006 Surveys can also be found on this website.

## 5. DEMOGRAPHICS

In this survey, respondents were asked a number of demographic questions, including: gender, age, education attainment, position, industry and district of residence. For the purpose of this summary report, we focus on three demographic variables only: gender, industry and income level and analyse whether these have a statistically significant impact on employees' work-life balance.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses from different industries in Hong Kong. The category Other Personal Services refers to personal services provided by individuals generally paid on an hourly basis such as private tutors and freelance workers. Similar to previous surveys, the 2008 Survey does not include domestic helpers. The category Others in this survey refers to Security Work, Agriculture, Manual Work and Environment. However, as this Others category only includes a total of 6 people from a wide range of industries, it does not represent a single industry per se. We have therefore chosen to ignore this group in our analysis.

Items marked with an asterisk (\*) in Figure 1 represent a sub-sample size which means there were 30 or less respondents from this industry. Statistically speaking, the smaller the sample size, the larger the sampling error. Findings for these industries are therefore for indication only. These industries include: Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services, Media, Telecommunication, Insurance, Property, Film/Entertainment, Warehouse Duties, Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities and Others.

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Industry (2008)

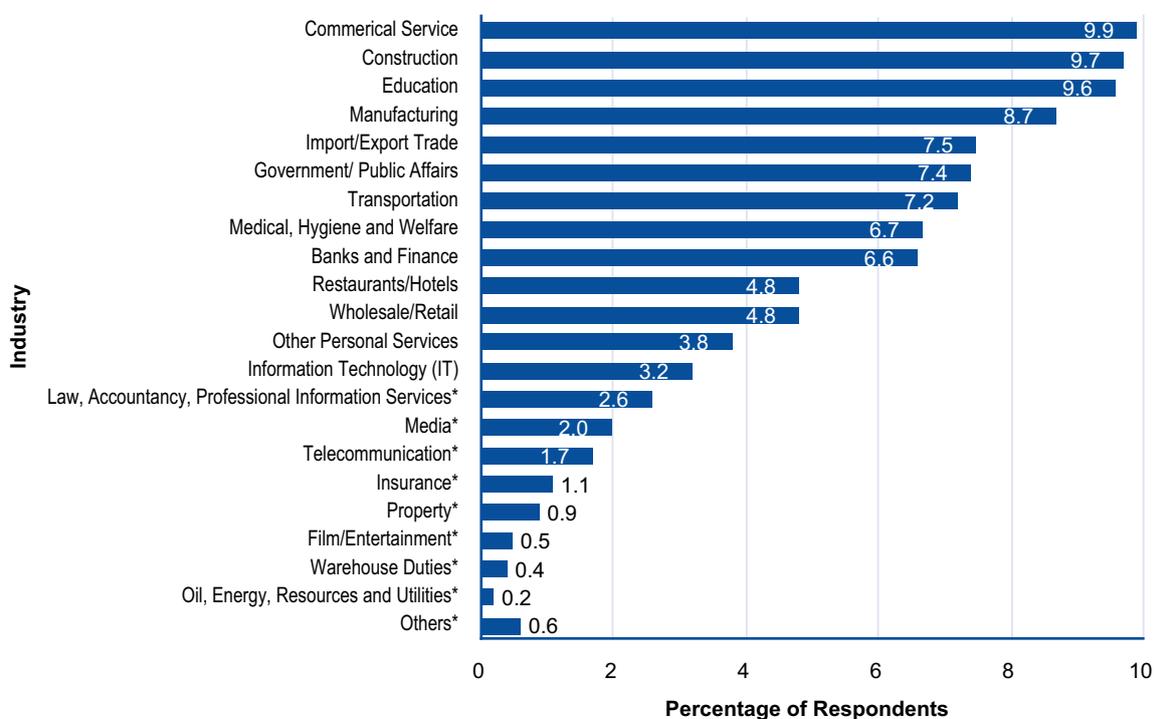


Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents by gender and Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents by income level.

Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender (2008)

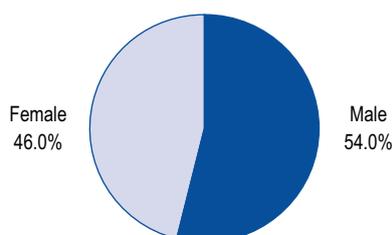
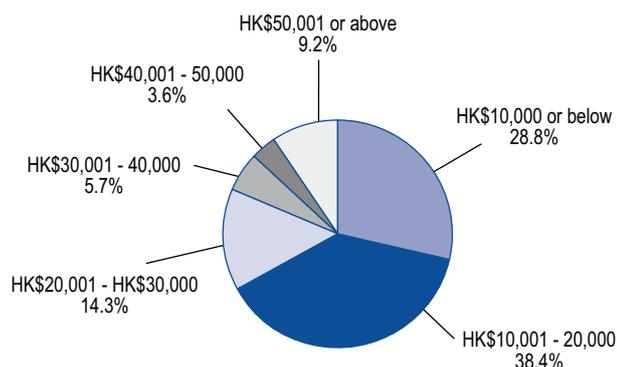


Figure 3. Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Income (Including Bonus) (2008)



## 6. OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

In reviewing the findings of the 2008 Survey, we identify the following for

- the overall mean response for 2008 and where applicable, a comparison with the 2007 findings, whether or not statistically significant. In addition, where there is an upward or downward trend since 2006 this is highlighted.
- statistically significant variations by gender ♀, industry 🏢, income level 💰 for 2008. When this arises, this component is then reviewed for significant variations since 2007. In addition, where there is an upward or downward trend since 2006 this is highlighted.

The findings are presented in the following sections:

- Working and Living Patterns
- Satisfaction with Work and Life
- Problems with Current Work-Life Balance and Desired Solutions

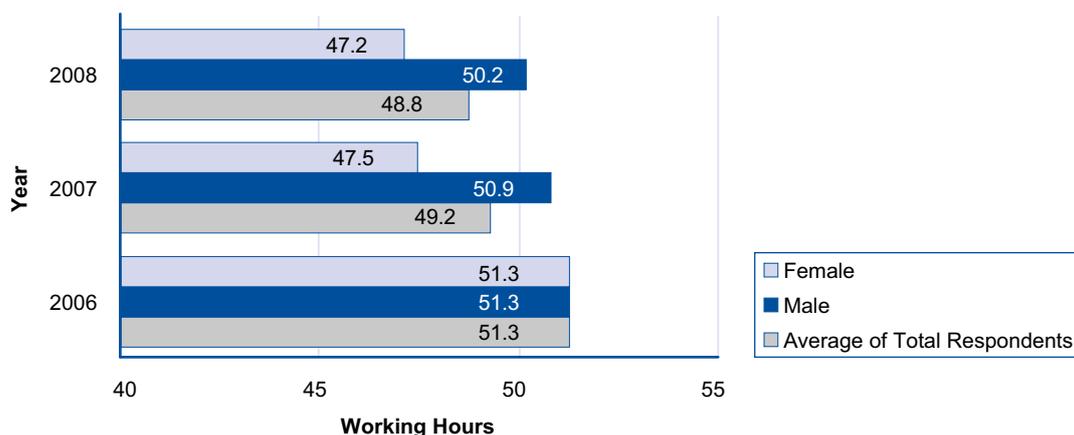
## A. Working and Living Patterns

### Finding 1: Employees in Hong Kong work long hours, despite a marginal decrease since 2007

Figure 4 shows that the respondents' average actual working hours per week is 48.8 hours in 2008. This is a statistically insignificant decrease from 49.2 hours in 2007 and 51.3 hours in 2006.

Despite the slight improvement, the hours worked by Hong Kong employees still exceed the standard set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which recommends that workers should work no more than 40 hours per week with occasional paid overtime, paid at a premium of up to 12 hours per week.

Figure 4. Actual Working Hours Per Week by Gender (2006 to 2008)



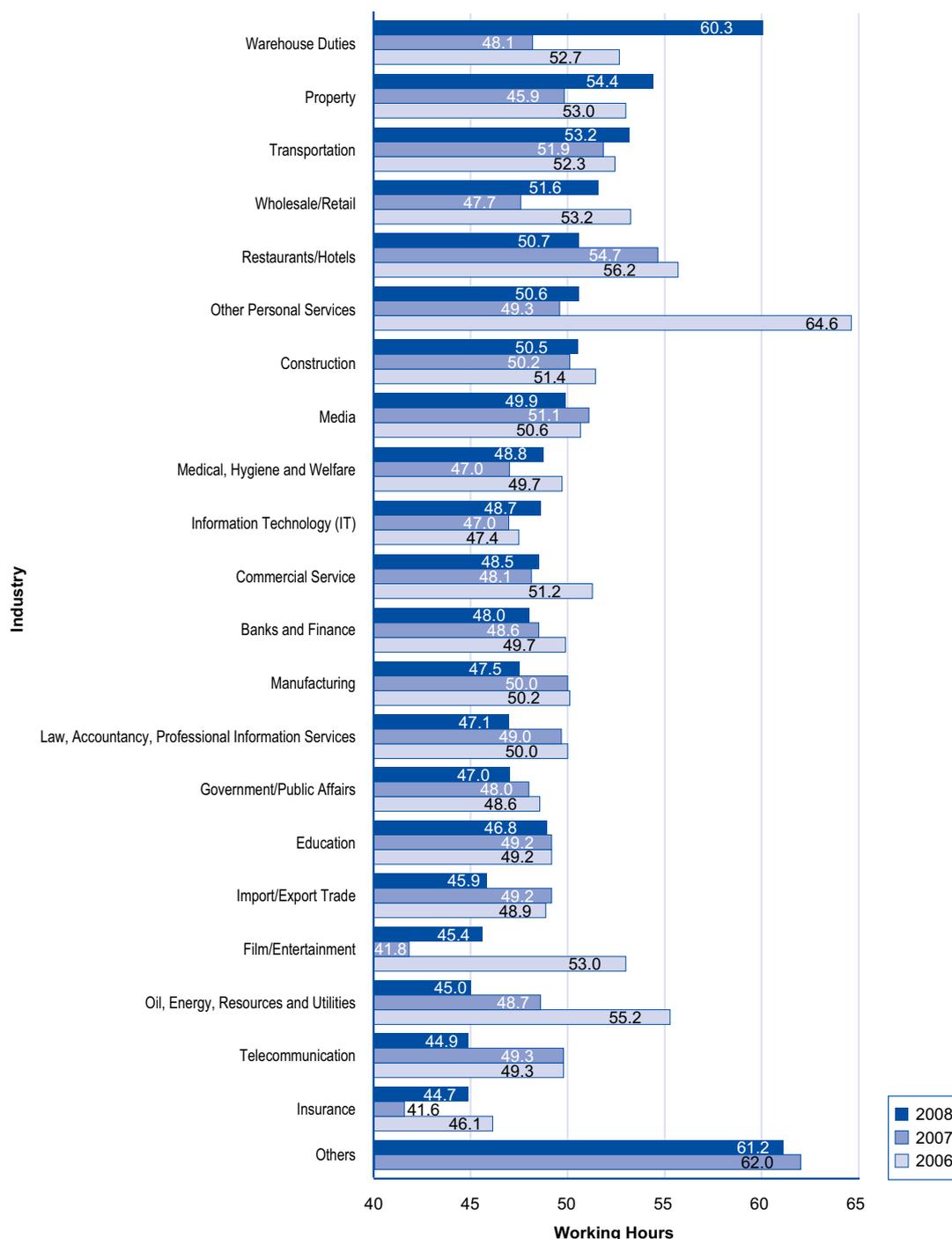
Similar to 2007, men work longer hours (50.2 hours) than women (47.2 hours) in 2008 as shown in Figure 4.

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Figure 5 shows the average working hours varies across industries. It shows that employees from Warehouse Duties (60.3 hours) and Property (54.4 hours) work the longest hours in 2008 while those in Insurance (44.7 hours), Telecommunication (44.9 hours) and Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (45.0 hours) work the least hours.

Figure 5. Actual Working Hours Per Week by Industry (2006 to 2008)



## Finding 2: Employees in Hong Kong spend less time on their personal life in 2008

Employees were asked about the amount of time they spend on personal and private activities. 72.5% of employees say they spend less than 2 hours per day on personal or private activities as shown in Figure 6. This is a higher percentage than in 2007 (70.2%) and in 2006 (70.5%). Similar to previous studies in 2007 and 2006, the largest proportion of respondents (34.8%) spend less than an hour during the course of the day on private activities. There is still a significant proportion of employees (10.0%) that do not spend any time on private activities each day.

Figure 6. Time Spent on Private Activities Per Day (2006 to 2008)

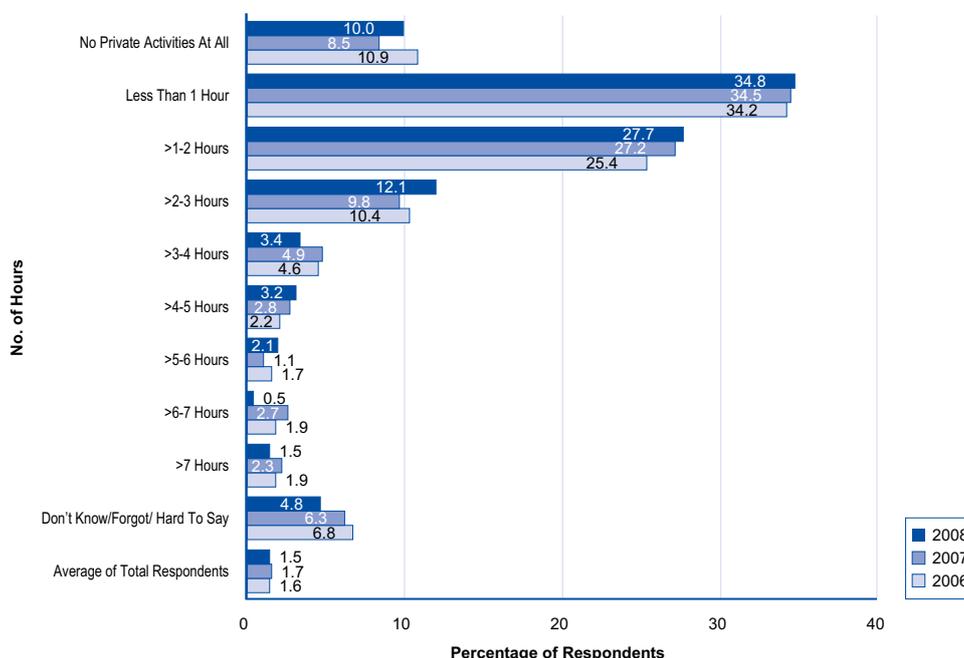
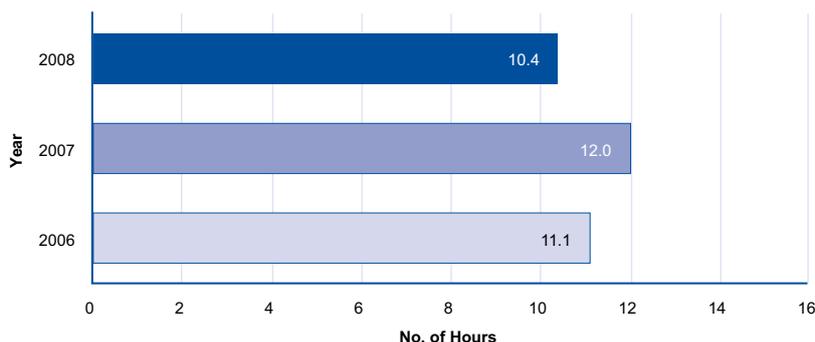


Figure 7 shows that the average amount of time employees spend on personal activities has decreased significantly from 12.0 hours in 2007 to 10.4 hours per week this year.

Figure 7. Time Spent on Personal Activities Per Week (2006 to 2008)

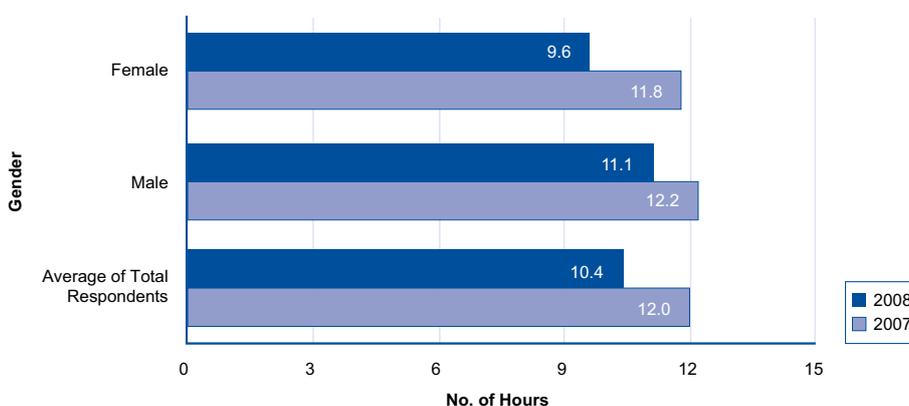




Although men work longer hours than women as Finding 1 reveals, they spend more time (11.1 hours) on leisure activities than women (9.6 hours) as shown in Figure 8. This could possibly imply that men generally sleep less than women. It may also mean that men and women define personal activities differently and women may be spending more time with their children which they do not define as a personal activity.

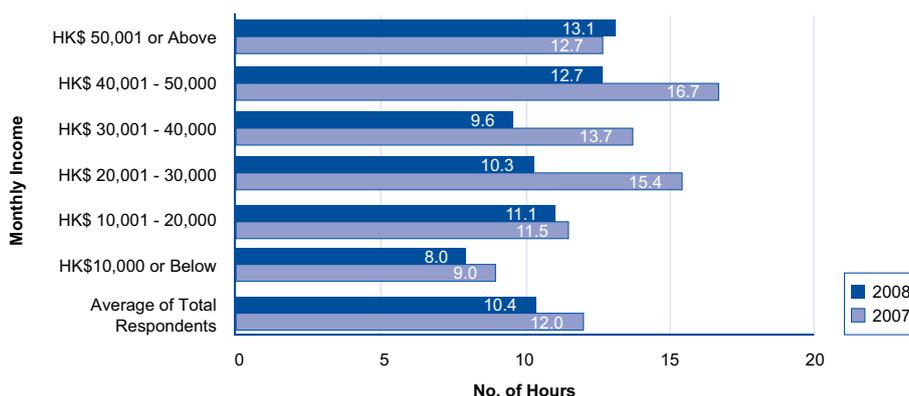
In addition, findings in Figure 8 show that female respondents spend significantly less time on personal activities this year (9.6 hours) compared to 2007 (11.8 hours).

Figure 8. Time Spent on Private Activities Per Week by Gender (2008 and 2007)



Employees in lower income groups tend to spend less time on private activities compared to those in higher income groups as shown in Figure 9. Comparing 2008 to 2007, there is a significant decrease in time spent on private activities for those in the income brackets HK\$20,001 - 30,000 (from 15.4 hours to 10.3 hours) and HK\$30,001 - 40,000 (from 13.7 hours to 9.6 hours) respectively.

Figure 9. Time Spent on Private Activities Per Week by Income (2008 and 2007)

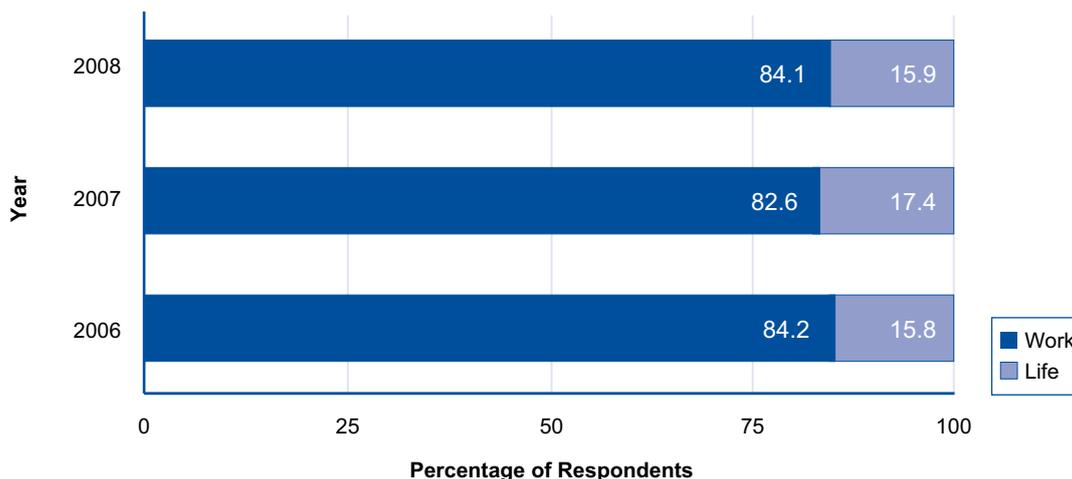


**Finding 3: Work-life balance has worsened since 2007 and it is still a far cry from what employees think is ideal and realistic**

Respondents were asked about their ideal split between work and personal life, which we call the preferred work-life ratio. The preferred work-life ratio for 2008 is 62:38. This compares to 60:40 in 2007 and 61:39 in 2006. This shows that employees' expectation of work-life balance has changed slightly as compared to last year and they are happy to spend more hours on work than previously.

Figure 10 shows that the actual work-life ratio is 84:16 in 2008 compared to 83:17 in 2007 and 84:16 in 2006. Despite the fact that employees are happy to spend more time at work in 2008 (their preferred work-life ratio has increased in favour of work), this is still a far cry from the actual work-life ratio.

Figure 10. Actual Work-Life Ratio (2006 to 2008)

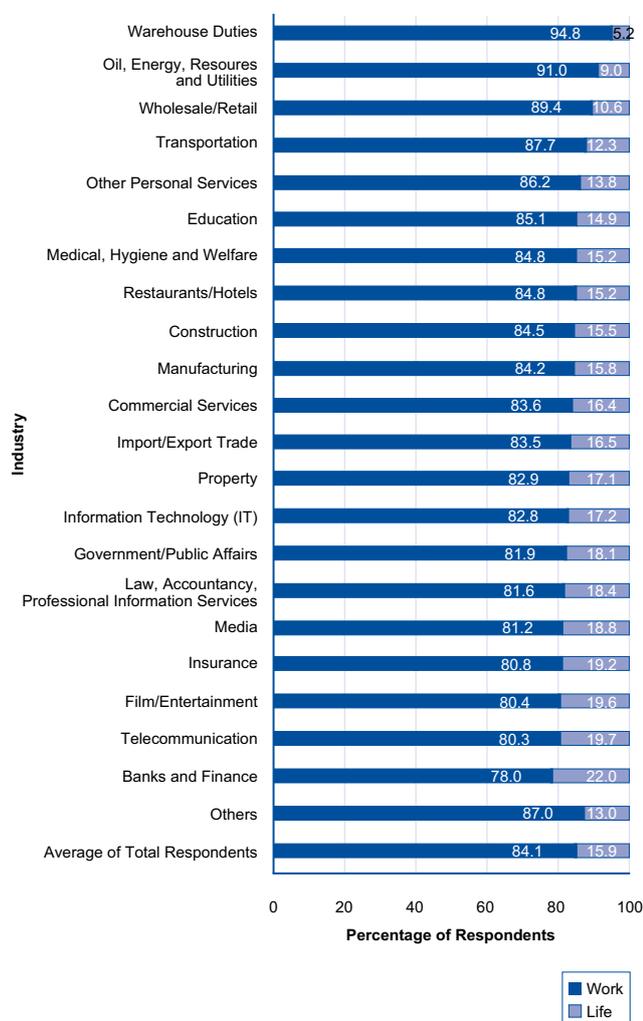


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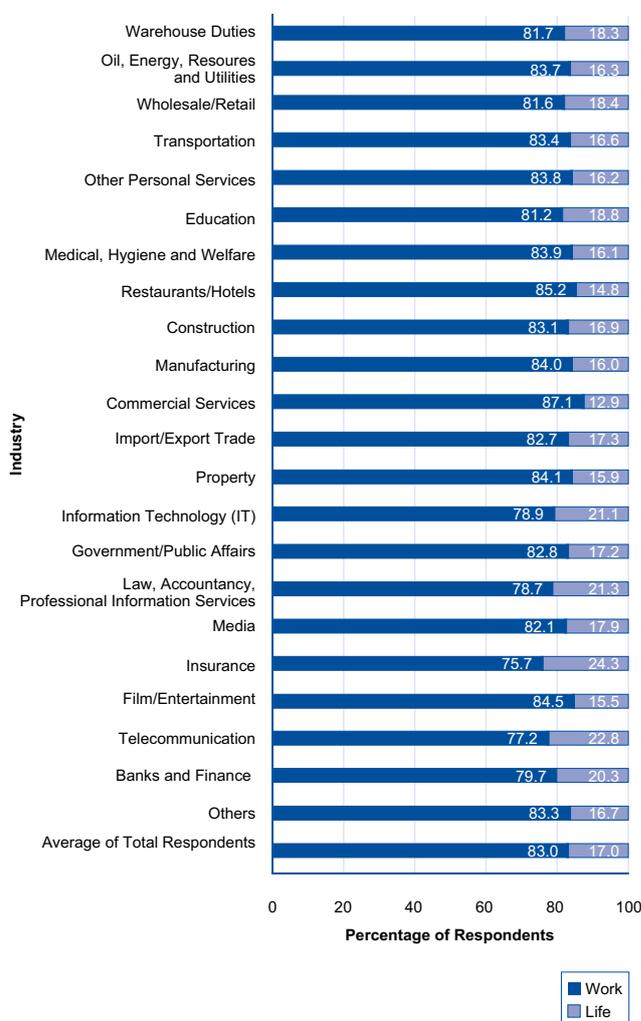


As shown in Figure 11a, the work-life ratio in 2008 is better for employees in Banks and Finance (78:22), Telecommunication (80:20) and Film/Entertainment (80:20). On the other hand, the work-life ratio for employees is worse in Warehouse Duties (95:5), Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (91:9) and Wholesale/Retail (89:11). Comparing the data in 2008 and 2007 as in Figures 11a and 11b, significant change is found in the actual work-life ratio in Wholesale/Retail where the percentage of work has increased from 81.6% in 2007 to 89.4% in 2008.

**Figure 11a. Actual Work-Life Balance Ratio by Industry (2008)**



**Figure 11b. Actual Work-Life Balance Ratio by Industry (2007)**





Similar to 2007, high income groups have a more balanced work-life ratio than low income groups. Figure 12a shows that the actual work-life ratio of employees in the income bracket HK\$40,001 - 50,000 and HK\$50,001 or above are both at 81:19 which is much better than those who earn HK\$10,000 or below whose ratio is 88:12.

This is perhaps not surprising as those in lower income groups tend to have less autonomy over their workload and tend to work around the schedules of their managers.

When comparing this with the results in 2007, respondents in the income brackets HK\$20,001 - 30,000 and HK\$30,001 - 40,000 have a significantly worsened work-life ratio in 2008.

Figure 12a. Actual Work-Life Ratio by Income (2008)

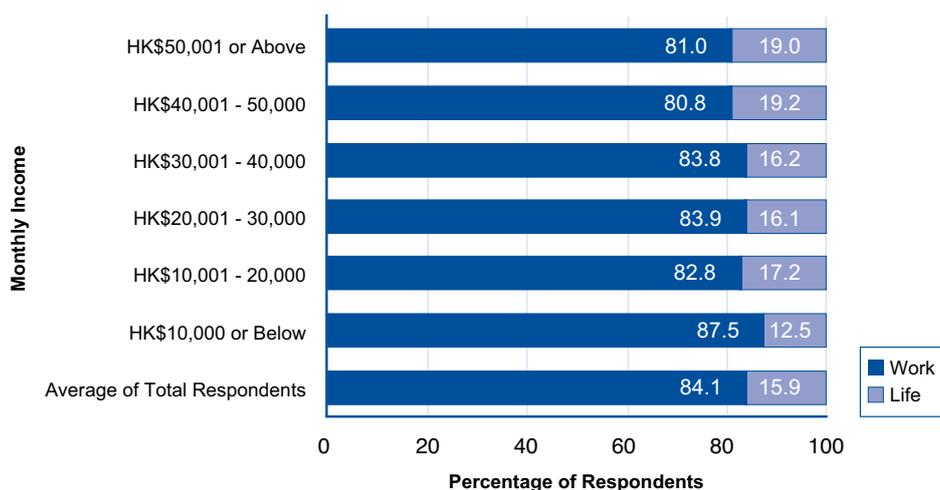
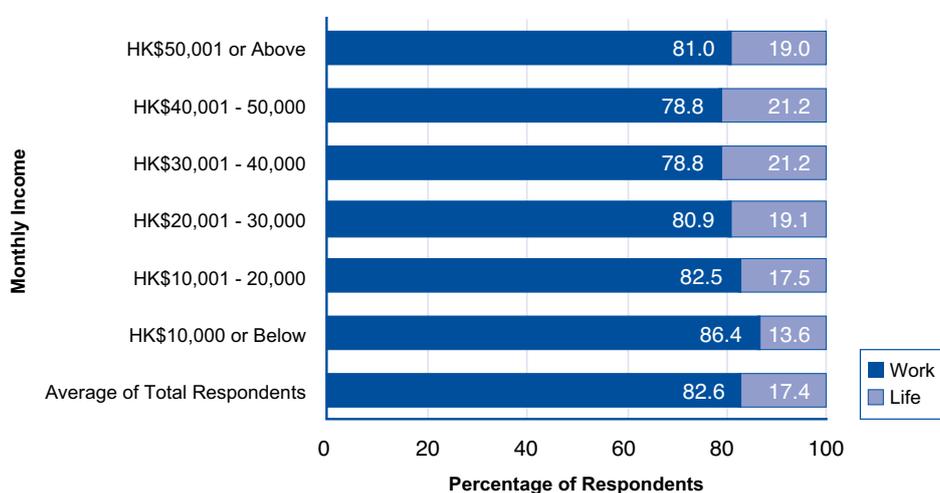


Figure 12b. Actual Work-Life Ratio by Income (2007)



## B. Satisfaction with Work and Life

### Finding 4: Employees give their employers a lower score than ever before on their efforts to promote work-life balance

Employees were asked how much they think their employer has contributed in terms of effort and resources to promote work-life balance. The scores range from 0 to 10 with 0 representing no effort being made, 10 being all possible effort being made and 5 being neutral.

Figure 13 shows that there has been a reduction in the score from 4.7 in 2006 and 2007 to 4.6 in 2008. This suggests that employers should do more to promote work-life balance of their employees.

Figure 13. Effort and Resources Spent to Promote Work-Life Balance (2006 to 2008)

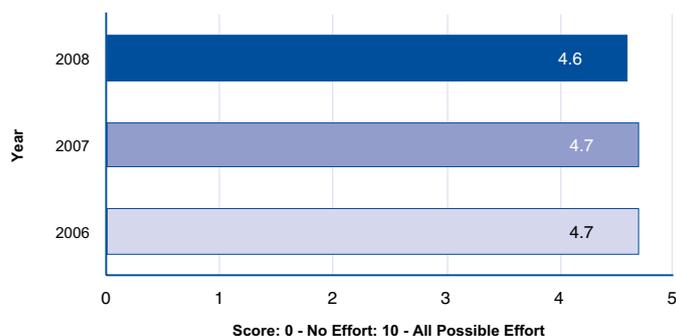
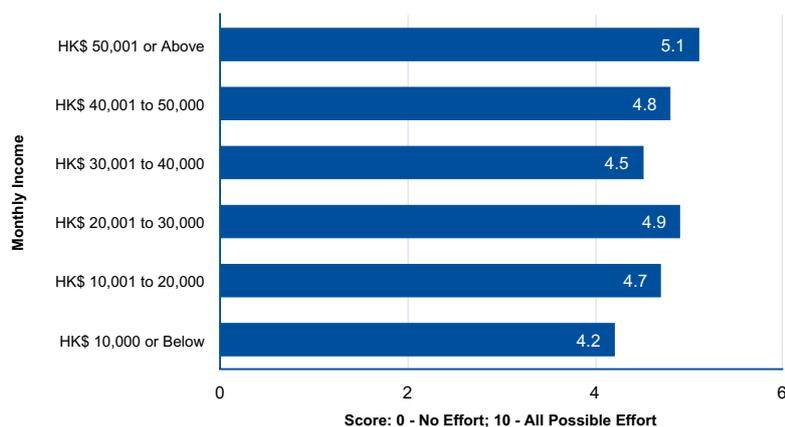


Figure 14 shows that the higher the income level the higher respondents score their employers in terms of effort and resources in promoting work-life balance. There is a direct link between effort and resources spent by companies on promoting work-life balance and employees actual work-life balance. Finding 2 and 3 above show clearly that respondents with a higher income level have a better work-life balance than those at a lower income level.

Figure 14. Effort and Resources Spent to Promote Work-Life Balance by Income (2008)



## C. Problems with Current Work-Life Balance and Desired Solutions

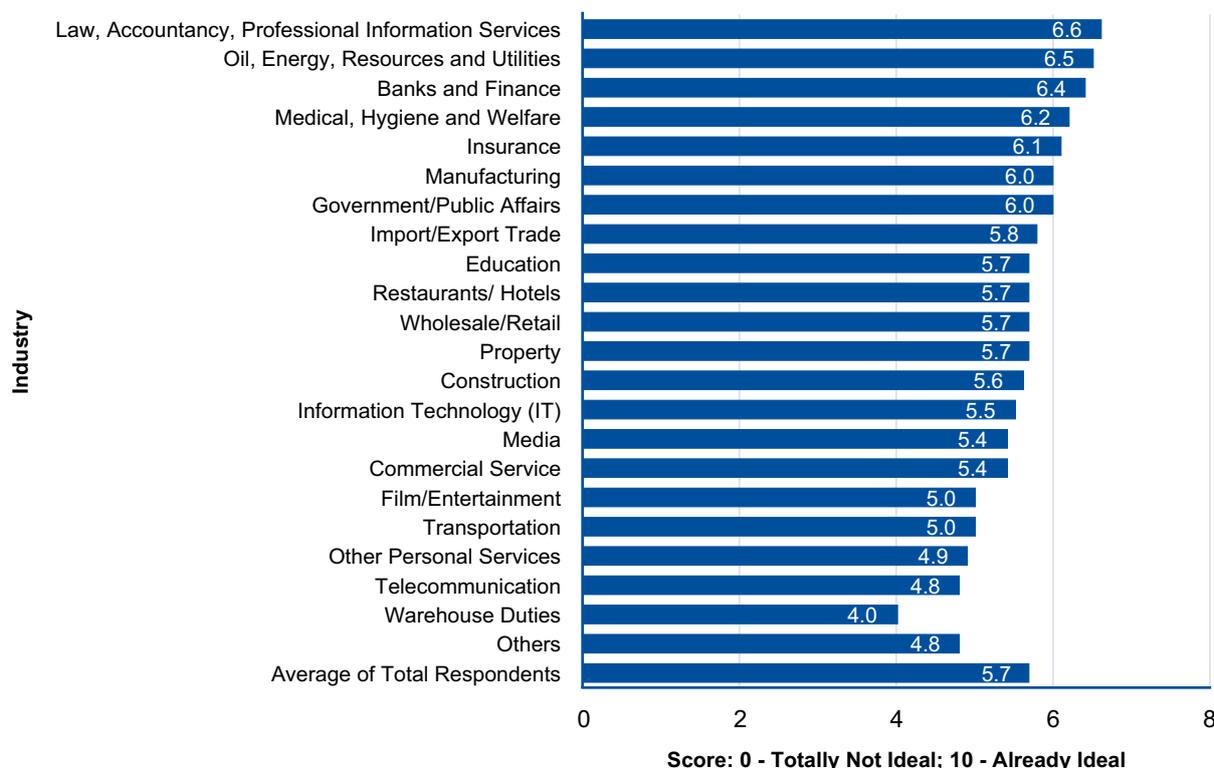
**Finding 5: Employees in Hong Kong still have a long way to go to achieve their ideal work-life balance but this has improved slightly since 2007**

Respondents were asked to rate how far they had achieved their ideal work-life balance on a scale of 0 to 10. The higher the score the closer they are to their ideal situation with the score of 5 being neutral. The average score of respondents is 5.7 for this year which is slightly better than 2007 (5.6) but consistent with 2006 (5.7).



Figure 15 shows the variation in scores between industries. Employees in Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services (6.6), Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities (6.5) and Banks and Finance (6.4) are closer to their ideal work-life balance than those in other industries. The two industries that score the lowest are Warehouse Duties (4.0) and Telecommunication (4.8).

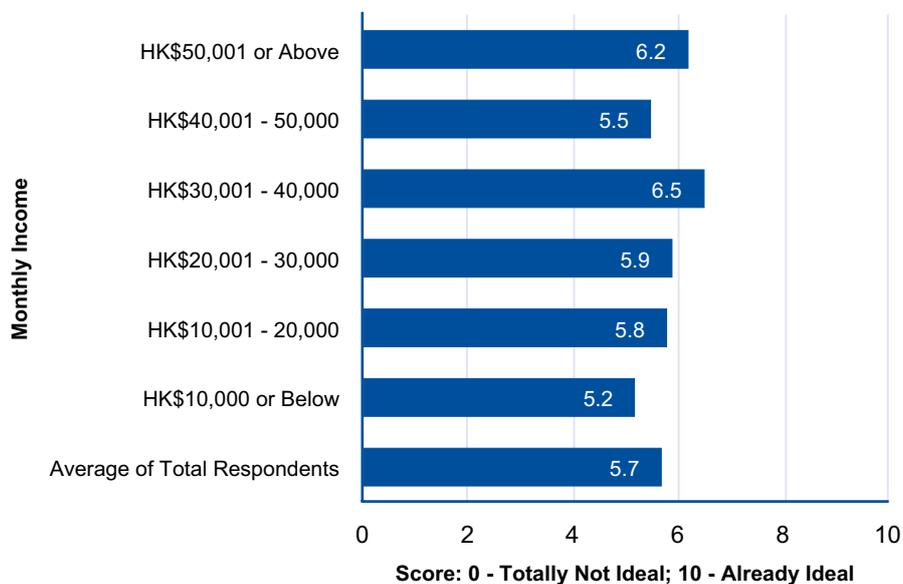
*Figure 15. Degree to Which Employees Have Achieved Their Ideal Work-Life Balance by Industry (2008)*





Employees from higher income groups are closer to their ideal work-life balance than those from the lower income groups as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Degree to Which Employees Have Achieved Their Ideal Work-Life Balance by Income (2008)



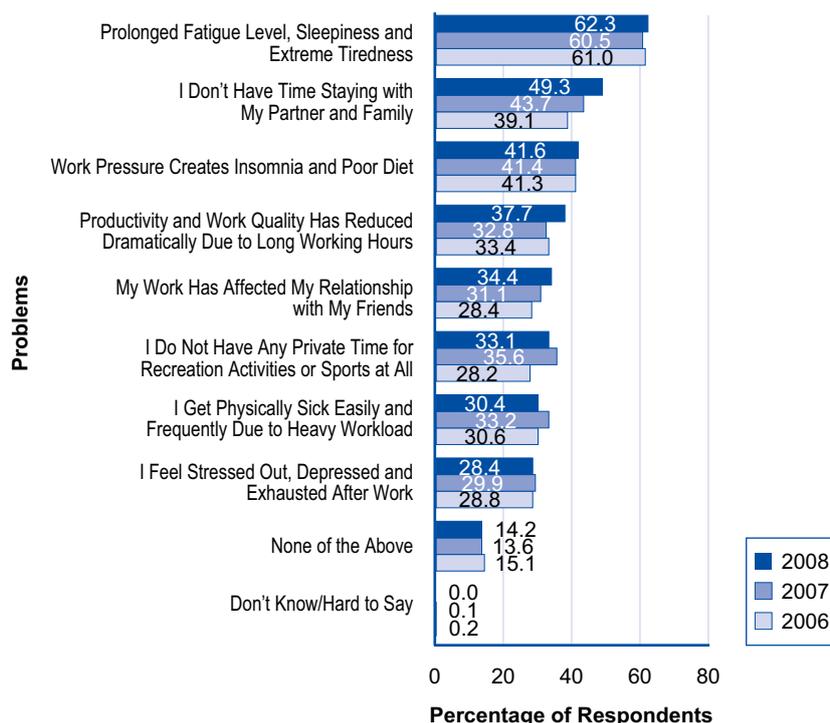
## Finding 6: Poor work-life balance is having a greater negative impact on productivity, family life and health

Respondents were asked what problems they have encountered as a result of their work-life balance and were given a list of options to choose from. They were able to choose more than one option as shown in Figure 17. The majority of respondents (62.3%) claim they suffer from prolonged fatigue, sleepiness and extreme tiredness. This is similar to 2007 (60.5%) (60.5%).

Of major concern to businesses is the increase in the percentage of employees who say that there is an adverse impact on their work productivity and work quality as a result of their long working hours and 37.7% of employees cite this in 2008 compared to 32.8% in 2007.

Worryingly, Figure 17 also shows an increase year on year from 2006 to 2008 in the percentage of respondents who say that they do not have enough time with their partner and family members, that they suffer from insomnia and a poor diet and that their work has an adverse effect on their relationship with friends. This trend is not just bad for business in Hong Kong but also for Hong Kong's social fabric and the health of our overall population.

Figure 17. Problems Resulting from Poor Work-Life Balance (2006 to 2008)



## Finding 7. Long working hours has overtaken the need for financial security as the most difficult work-life balance challenge this year

Respondents were asked to select the most difficult work-life balance challenge they face from a list of options. They were only allowed to choose one factor from the list given to them in Figure 18.

Figure 18 shows that long working hours (17.5%), financial well-being/wealth management (14.9%) and leaders' attitude (13.3%) are the most difficult work-life balance challenges.

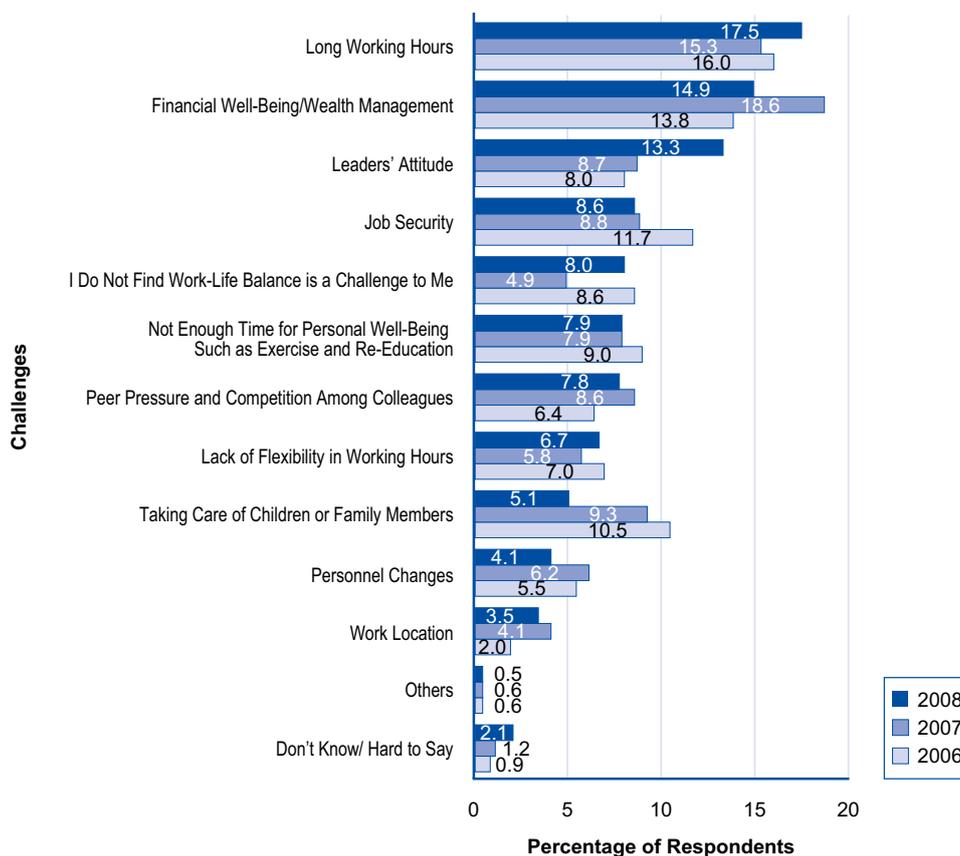
There is a significant decrease in percentage of respondents who state that financial well-being/wealth management (from 18.6% in 2007 to 14.9% in 2008), taking care of children or family members (from 9.3% in 2007 to 5.1% in 2008) and personnel changes (from 6.2% in 2007 to 4.1% in 2008) are their most difficult work-life balance challenges.

Of major importance to employers is the growing percentage of respondents who say their leaders' attitude is their greatest work-life balance challenge. This has increased significantly from 8.0% in 2006 to 8.7% in 2007 and 13.3% in 2008 and has become the third most difficult work-life balance challenge for employees in Hong Kong.

Interestingly, there is a consistent decrease in those who say that the most difficult work-life balance is taking care of children or family members: from 10.5% in 2006 to 9.3% in 2007 to 5.1% in 2008.

Encouragingly, there is also a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who say that work-life balance is not a challenge for them: from 4.9% in 2007 to 8.0% in 2008.

Figure 18. The Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenges (2006 to 2008)



# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008



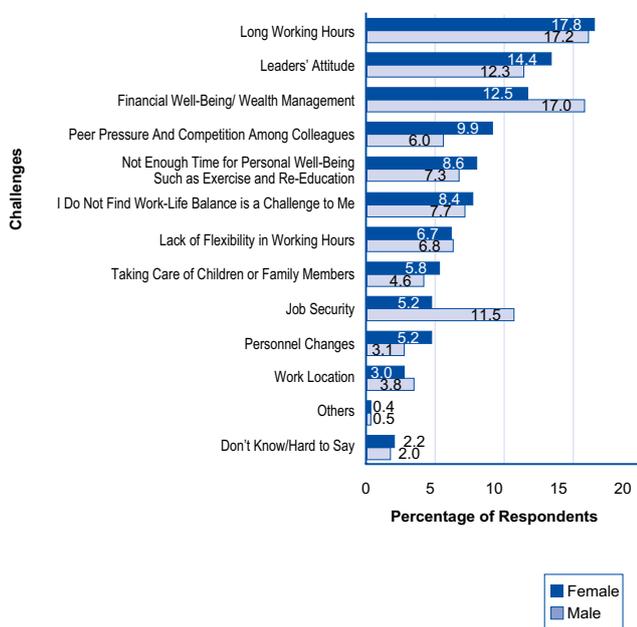
Figure 19a shows that other than long working hours, men (17.0%) regard financial well-being/wealth management as a greater challenge to their work-life balance than women (12.5%). On the other hand, more women (14.4%) than men (12.3%) regard their leaders' attitude as the most difficult obstacle to achieve a better work-life balance.

Comparing this year's data with the data in 2007 in Figure 19b, significant changes are noted for both male and female respondents in leaders' attitude as a work-life balance challenge.

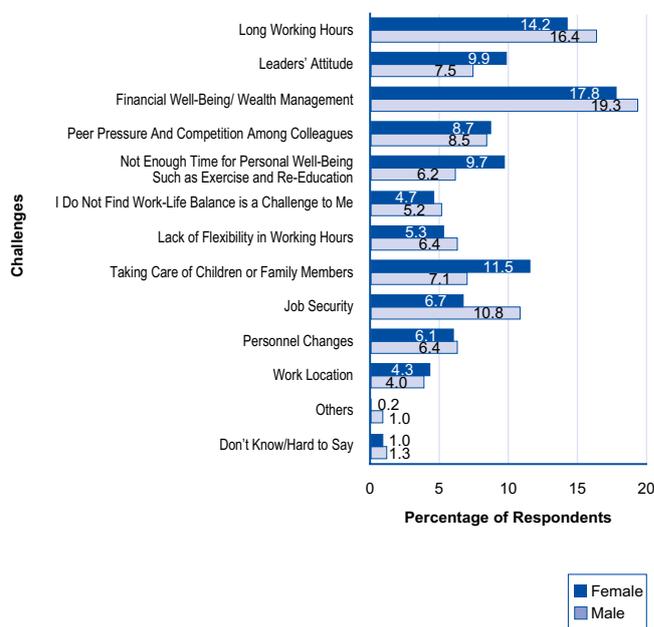
A significant decrease is also observed by gender in challenges like taking care of children or family members, financial well-being/wealth management and personnel changes.

The percentage of both men and women who do not find work-life balance a challenge has increased significantly for both genders from 5.2% in 2007 to 7.7% in 2008 for men and from 4.7% in 2007 to 8.4% for women as shown in Figures 19a and 19b.

**Figure 19a. The Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenges by Gender (2008)**



**Figure 19b. The Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenges by Gender (2007)**

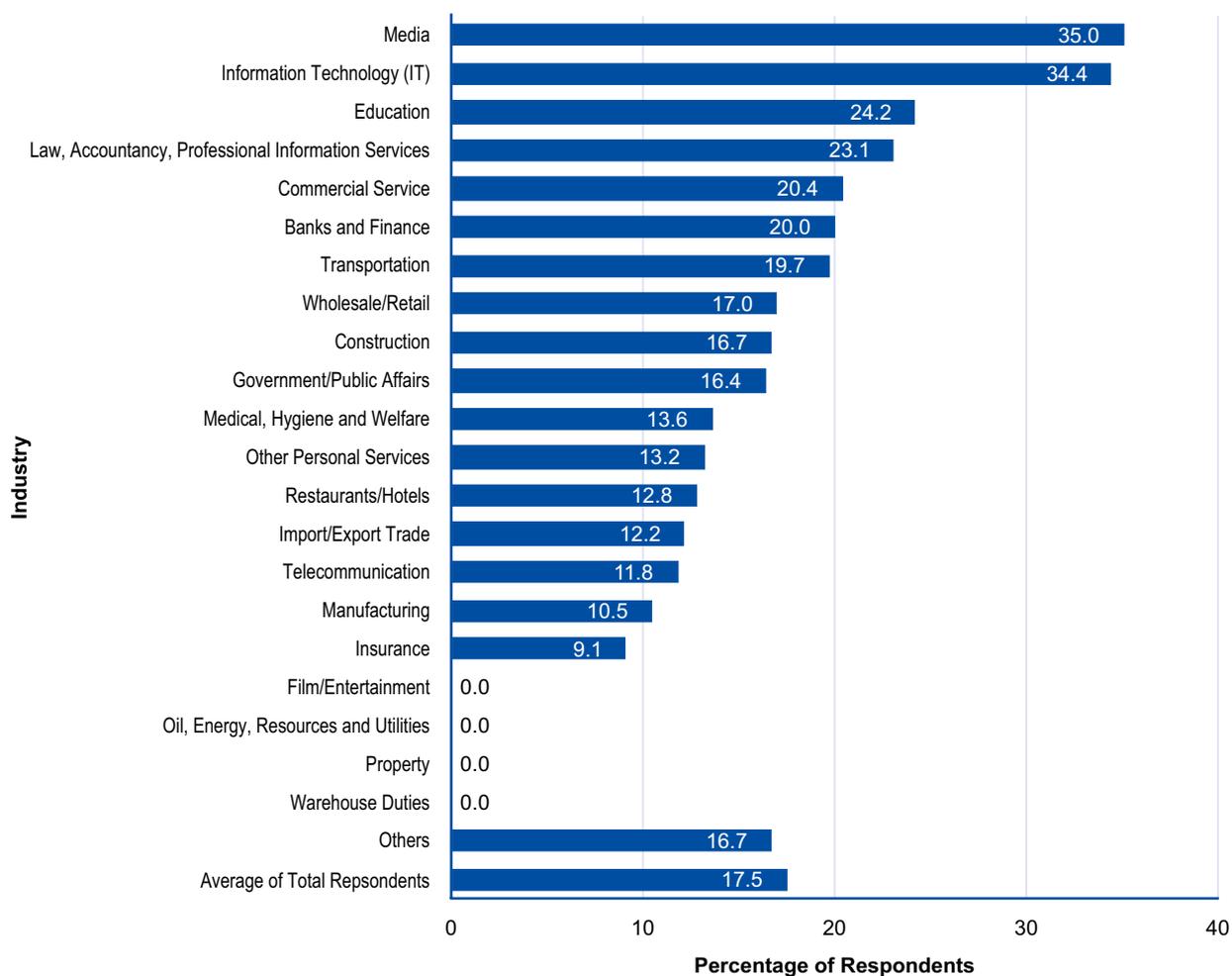


# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008



Employees in some industries cite long working hours as the most difficult work-life balance challenge. This is particularly true for Media (35.0%), Information Technology (34.4%), Education (24.2%), Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services (23.1%), Banks and Finance (20.0%), Transportation (19.7%) and Wholesale/Retail (17.0%) as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20. Long Working Hours as the Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenge by Industry (2008)

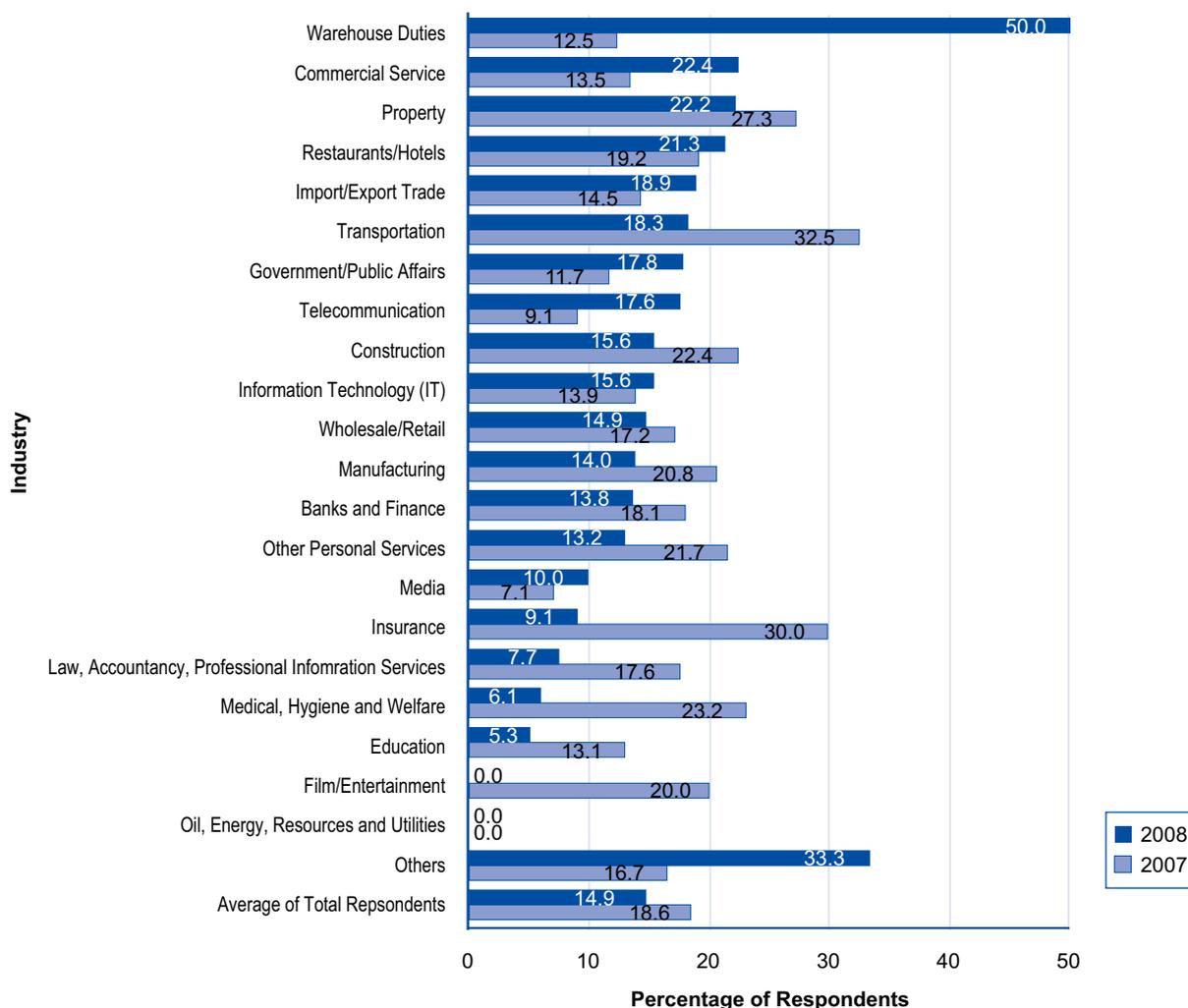


# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008

For employees in some industries, financial well-being/wealth management are the most difficult work-life balance challenge. As shown in Figure 21, these employees are from Warehouse Duties (50.0%), Commercial Service (22.4%), Property (22.2%), Restaurants/Hotels (21.3%), Import/Export Trade (18.9%), and Government/Public Affairs (17.8%).

Figure 21 shows a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents from Education who regard financial well-being as their primary work-life balance obstacle (from 13.1% in 2007 to 5.3% in 2008).

**Figure 21. Financial Well-Being/Wealth Management as the Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenge by Industry (2008 and 2007)**

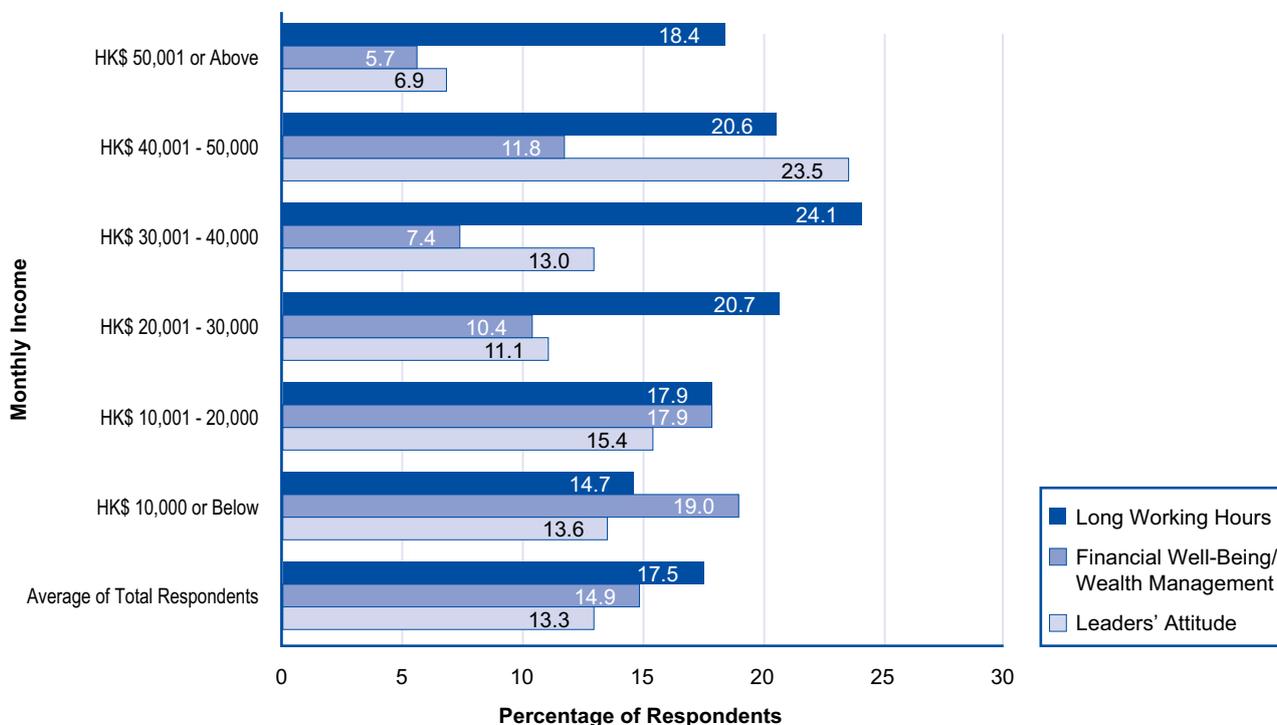




While respondents in the lower income groups tend to see financial well-being/wealth management as the most difficult work-life balance challenge, those in the middle income groups state long working hours as their primary challenge.

Respondents from higher income groups tend to be most concerned with their leaders' attitude and long working hours as shown in Figure 22.

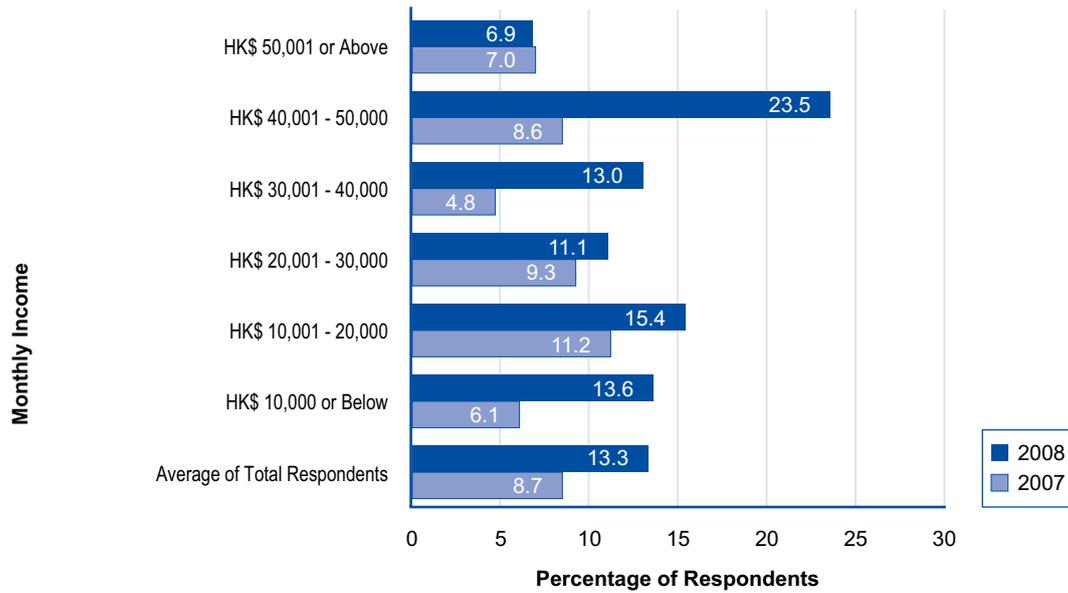
Figure 22. The Three Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenges by Income (2008)



# The State of Work-Life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008

Comparing 2008 to 2007, Figure 23 shows a significant increase in leaders' attitude as one of the greatest work-life balance challenges for the income bracket HK\$10,000 or below from 6.1% in 2007 to 13.6% in 2008.

**Figure 23. Leaders' Attitude as the Third Most Difficult Work-Life Balance Challenge by Income (2008 and 2007)**



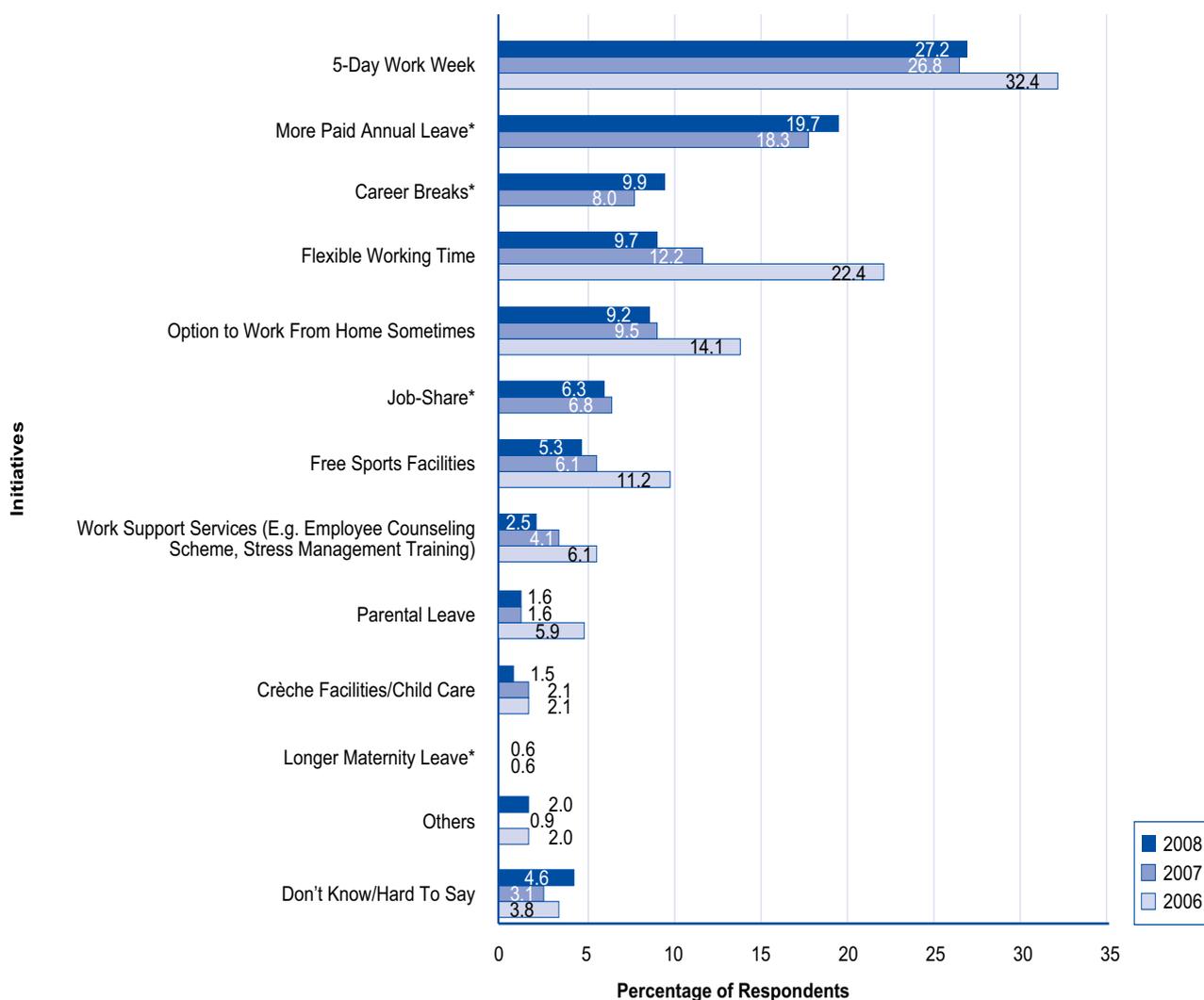
## Finding 8: Employees say that a 5-day work week and more paid annual leave would most help them to achieve better work-life balance

Respondents were asked what work arrangements or facilities they believe would most help them achieve better work-life balance. They were given a range of options to choose and were asked to select only one.

As shown in Figure 24, the largest group of employees (27.2%) cite a 5-day work week as the most desirable arrangement, followed by more paid annual leave (19.7%) and career breaks (9.9%). It is interesting to note that career breaks has jumped from the fifth most desirable work arrangement in 2007 to the third in 2008. Also interesting that the top three arrangements that employees say would most help them with work-life balance are, on face value, linked to more personal time.

In addition, Figure 24 shows a consistent decrease in popularity of some initiatives and these include flexible working hours (from 22.4% in 2006 to 12.2% in 2007 to 9.7% in 2008), option to work from home sometimes (from 14.1% in 2006 to 9.5% in 2007 to 9.2% in 2008), free sports facilities (from 11.2% in 2006 to 6.1% in 2007 to 5.3% in 2008) and work support services (from 6.1% in 2006 to 4.1% in 2007 to 2.5% in 2008).

Figure 24. Initiatives Provided by Employer that Would Most Help Work-Life Balance ( 2006 to 2008)

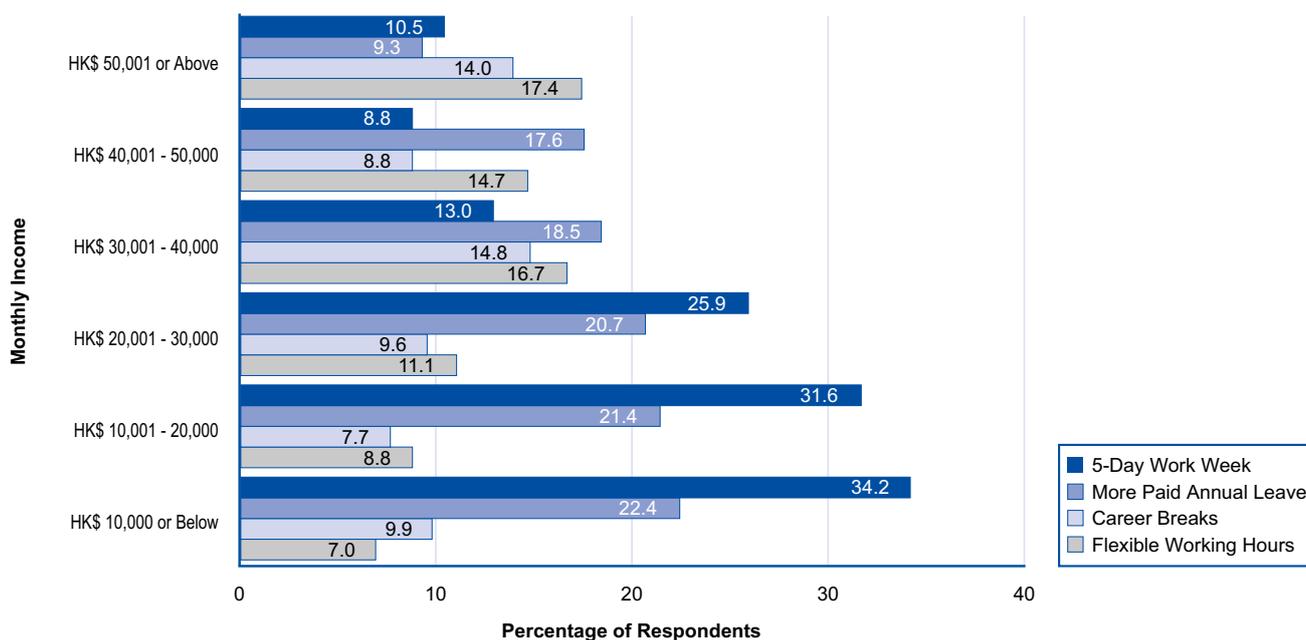


\*Options first introduced in 2007 Survey



Figure 25 shows that a 5-day work week is the top initiative to assist with work-life balance for those who earn a lower income. In contrast, employees who earn between HK\$30,001 and HK\$50,000 prefer more paid annual leave and those who earn HK\$50,001 or above prefer more flexible working hours.

Figure 25. Initiatives Provided by Employer that Would Most Help Work-Life Balance by Income (2008)

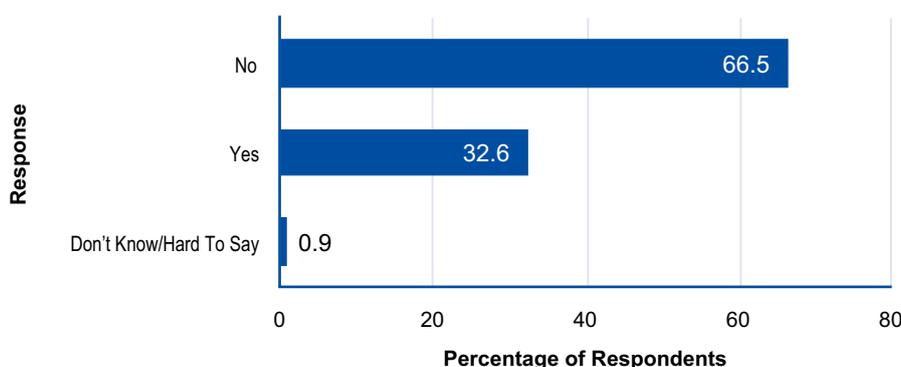


**Finding 9: Almost one third of employees in Hong Kong would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance elsewhere**

For the first time in 2008, respondents were asked if they would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance. Alarming, almost one third of the respondents (32.6%) say that they would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance elsewhere as shown in Figure 26.

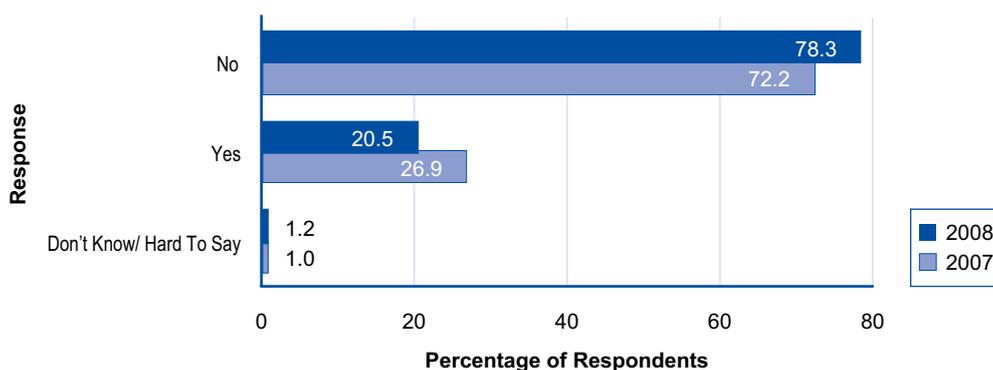
Employers often state that Hong Kong's staff turnover rate is high and if they are committed to managing staff turnover, it is important to understand that work-life balance is a major contributor to staff leaving their workplaces in search of jobs elsewhere.

Figure 26. Considering Leaving Current Job for Better Work-Life Balance (2008)



This year, once again, the survey asked respondents if they would consider leaving Hong Kong for better work-life balance. The number of respondents who said they would leave Hong Kong for better work-life balance decreased significantly from 26.9% in 2007 to 20.5% in 2008. Whilst this reduced percentage is positive, employers cannot afford to be complacent and should continue to address work-life balance to maintain Hong Kong's competitive advantage. Even with the new question introduced this year about whether employees would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance – an option that is not as drastic as leaving the country, over 20% of employees still said they would consider leaving Hong Kong for better work-life balance elsewhere.

Figure 27. Considering Leaving Hong Kong for Better Work-Life Balance (2008 and 2007)



## 7. APPENDIX

**Q1. Take the last month as an example, how many hours a week do you actually work on average for your full time job?**

\_\_\_\_\_ hours (*Insert exact figure*)

Don't know/ Hard to say

Refuse to answer

**Q2. Take the last month as an example, how many hours a week do you actually spend on doing some personal or private activities, like meeting friends and engaging in activities for leisure such as sports and traveling?**

\_\_\_\_\_ hours (*Insert exact figure*)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

**Q3. In your view, what would be the preferred but realistic ratio between the time you want to spend on working and the time you want to spend on personal or private activities? Please based on your realistic number of working hours and exclude sleeping time (the ratio must add up to 100%)**

\_\_\_\_\_ % on work and \_\_\_\_\_ % on private life

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

**Q4. Using 0-10, how much have you achieved in terms of an ideal work-life balance? 0 represents the worst case possible, 10 represents already ideal, and 5 being half-half.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Exact figure from 0-10*)

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

**Q5. Have you ever encountered any of the following problems due to a disturbed work-life balance? (You may choose multiple answers)**

Productivity and work quality has reduced dramatically due to long working hours

Prolonged fatigue level, sleepiness and extreme tiredness

I get physically sick easily and frequently due to heavy workload

I do not have any private time for recreation activities or sports at all

My work has affected my relationship with my friends

I don't have time staying with my partner and family

I feel stressed out, depressed and exhausted after work

Work pressure creates insomnia and poor diet

None of the above

Don't know / Hard to say

Refuse to answer

**Q6. Which of the following would you consider to be the most difficult work-life balance challenge for yourself? (Choose one answer only)**

- Job security
- Long working hours
- Lack of flexibility in working hours
- Work location
- Leader's attitude
- Peer pressure and competition among colleagues
- Personnel changes
- Taking care of children or family members
- Not enough time for personal well-being such as exercise and re-education
- Financial well-being / Wealth management
- I do not find work-life balance is a challenge to me
- Others (*Please specify*)
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

**Q7 In order to help you achieve a better work-life balance, what type of work facility/arrangement would help you best? (Choose one answer only)**

- Flexible working time
- 5-day work week
- Option to work from home sometimes
- Free sports facilities
- Crèche facilities / Child care
- Work support services (e.g. employee counseling scheme, stress management training)
- Paternity leave
- Longer maternity leave
- Job-share
- Career breaks
- More paid annual leave
- Others (*Please specify*)
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to say

**Q8 In terms of effort and resources required to balance work and life, how much effort do you think your workplace / boss has paid to promote work-life balance? Please use a scale of 0-10 to measure it, with 0 representing no effort at all, 10 representing all possible efforts have been made, and 5 being half-half.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (*Exact figure from 0 - 10*)

- Don't know/Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

**Q9 Would you consider leaving your current job for better work-life balance?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

**Q10 Would you consider leaving Hong Kong for better work-life balance?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Hard to say
- Refuse to answer

**Demographics**

**Q11 Gender**

- Male
- Female

**Q12 Age**

- \_\_\_\_\_ (*Exact age*)
- Do not want to tell

**Q12a [For those who do not want to tell their exact age] Age interval**

- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60 years old or above
- Do not want to tell

**Q13 Education Attainment**

- Primary school or below
- Secondary school
- Matriculated
- Tertiary, non-degree course
- Tertiary, degree course
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Refuse to answer

**Q14 Position**

**White collar:**

- Professional / Manager / Executive
- Trader / Proprietor
- Office: skilled
- Office: unskilled

**Blue collar:**

- Factory/Shop / Outdoor: skilled manual worker
- Factory/Shop / Outdoor: unskilled manual worker
- Refuse to answer

**Q15 Industry**

Banks and Finance  
Commercial Services  
Construction  
Education  
Film / Entertainment  
Government / Public Affairs  
Import/Export Trade  
Information Technology (IT)  
Insurance  
Law, Accountancy, Professional Information Services  
Manufacturing  
Media  
Medical, Hygiene and Welfare  
Oil, Energy, Resources and Utilities  
Other Personal Services  
Property  
Restaurants / Hotels  
Telecommunication  
Transportation  
Warehouse Duties  
Wholesale / Retail  
Others (*Please specify*)  
Refuse to answer

**Q16 Marital Status**

Single  
Married  
Divorced / Widow  
Refuse to answer

**Q17 Do you have children? If yes, how many?**

Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ child (ren)  
No children  
Refuse to answer

**Q18 Your personal monthly income, including bonus, is \_\_\_\_\_ ?**

HK\$ 10,000 or below  
HK\$ 10,001 - 20,000  
HK\$ 20,001 - 30,000  
HK\$ 30,001 - 40,000  
HK\$ 40,001 - 50,000  
HK\$ 50,001 or above  
Refuse to answer

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