1   INTRODUCTION

Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation" and that "Everyone has the right to the protection of law against such interference or attacks".   Without a doubt, the protection of personal data and the maintenance of privacy are fundamental human rights for people around the world.   It is believed that a society wherein people respect personal data and privacy facilitates its process of civilisation and economic development.

In Hong Kong, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCO) is an independent statutory body, established in 1996, to oversee the enforcement of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Hong Kong Law Article 486).   The Ordinance aims at protecting personal data of an identifiable living individual.   According to the PCO, personal data are recorded information, which is organized in such a way that it can be processed or retrieved. This information could include, one's name, telephone number, address, sex, age, occupation, marital status, salary, financial status, nationality, photo, identity card number, medical or even employment records, including assessments of a person's employment performance[1].

It is an important step to garner the views and attitudes of young people in Hong Kong towards promoting a culture of protection of personal data and maintenance of privacy in the Hong Kong society in the future.   Therefore, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and the PCO jointly conducted a survey on the 9th, 10th and 12th September 2002 to examine the views and attitudes of the Hong Kong youth towards this issue.   A total of 529 young people, aged between 12 and 34, were successfully polled, yielding a response rate of 32%, with a standard error of $\pm$ 2.2%.

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[1] For details, please visit: http://www.pco.org.hk/chinese/publications/aboutoff_privay2.html
(download on 17/7/2002).

2   RESEARCH METHOLODOGY

2.1. Telephone Sampling

Standard Public Opinion Program sampling procedures developed by the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong were adopted. Telephone numbers were first randomly selected from the telephone directories as seed numbers. Subsequently, by employing the plus/minus single digit method, additional numbers were generated from seed numbers to capture possible unlisted numbers. All the numbers were then mixed at random to give the 'final telephone sample'.

2.2. Selections of Respondents

When contact was successfully established with a target household, one person aged between 12 and 34 was selected using the 'next birthday' rule.

2.3. Questionnaire Design

The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and the PCO jointly designed the questionnaire. In addition to questions for tapping basic demographic data, the questionnaire was also composed of 40 opinion questions.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this report, responses are summarized in either one-way or two-way tabulations. The former describes the frequencies of the responses; the latter includes the statistically significant (Chi-square, $p<0.01$) relationships between two variables.

3   GENERAL PROFILE

The general profile of respondents interviewed was comparable to that of the total Hong Kong population within the selected age-bracket, in relation to the statistics of 2001 as provided by the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.   In order to obtain an effective sample, the demographic profiles and responses have been weighted statistically by age, as stipulated in Table 1.

The weighted sample showed that the proportion of female respondents (53.9%) was slightly higher than their male counterparts (46.1%).   With regard to age distribution, older respondents constituted a larger portion. Those who had attained an educational level of Form Four or Form Five, constituted the largest proportion (35.8%).   Slightly more than half (52.8%) of the respondents worked, while one-third were still at school.   Housewives and the unemployed constituted several percentage points of the total.

Table 1. Sex, Age, Education, Occupation Distribution

	Sample		Weighted	Hong Kong 2001 Aged 12-34	
	Frequency	Percent	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Sex					
Male	249	47.1%	46.1%	1 090 646	47.6%
Female	280	52.9%	53.9%	1 199 892	52.4%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**2 290 538**	**100.0%**
Age					
12-14	70	13.5%	11.5%	261 564	11.4%
15-19	157	30.4%	19.6%	450 319	19.7%
20-24	92	17.8%	20.5%	470 126	20.5%
25-29	76	14.7%	23.0%	525 872	23.0%
30-34	122	23.6%	25.4%	582 657	25.4%
Total	**517**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**2 290 538**	**100.0%**
Education					
F.3 or below	147	28.3%	25.6%	--	--
F.4-F.5	194	37.3%	35.8%	--	--
Matriculation	58	11.2%	10.1%	--	--
Post secondary	121	23.3%	28.5%	--	--
Total	**520**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**--**	**--**
Occupation					
Professionals & Semi-professionals	69	13.3%	16.9%	--	--
Clerical and Service Workers	125	24.1%	29.0%	52.8	--
Production workers	32	6.2%	6.9%	--	--
Students	230	44.3%	33.8%	--	--
Housewives	29	5.6%	6.4%	--	--
Others	1	0.2%	0.1%	--	--
Unemployed	33	6.4%	6.7%	--	--
Total	**519**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**--**	**--**

4   RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings were grouped into four parts:

4.1   What items did respondents consider to be private?

4.2   What situations would respondents consider to be an invasion of privacy?

4.3   Did respondents think that privacy was something that was respected?

4.4   What did respondents think about the protection efforts of personal data privacy in Hong Kong?

4.1   Items considered to be private

The Survey listed twenty items and invited respondents to rate each of them on a scale of 0 to 10 in accordance to their own understanding of personal privacy.

The Survey noted that respondents were most particular about keeping their Identity card numbers, as well as their address and telephone number private, with each scoring an average of 8.9, 8.1 and 7.3 points respectively (Table 2).   Statistically, older respondents were more likely to consider these three items as personal and private (Tables 3-5).

Although the average scores secured for other items, including personal body measurements, sexual orientation and age, were not as high as that secured for Identity card numbers, address and telephone number, female respondents seemed were more weary of making personal information public. 70.8% of the female respondents rated the importance of "sizes of bust, waist and hip" as private at 6-10 points, whereas men seemed not to care so much, with a rating of 28.8% (Table 6). Similarly, 60.6% of females rated the importance of "sexual orientation" as personal at 6-10 points, whereas males rated it at 41.3% (Table 7).   54.4% of females rated the importance of "age" as private at 6-10 points, whereas 35.4% males rated it as such (Table 8). 36.8% of females rated the importance of "weight" as personal at 6-10 points, whereas for 27.5% of males thought it be private (Table 9).

Table 2. *How would you rate the following in terms of privacy? Please rate each on a scale of 0-10.   0 points indicates that the information is not private at all; 10 points indicate a very high degree of privacy.*

	Mean■	No. of raters
ID card numbers	8.9	528
Address	8.1	529
Telephone Number	7.3	529
Personal Financial Situation	6.9	525
Family's Financial Situation	6.6	529
Salary	6.5	516
Medical Record	6.5	527
Employment Record	6.1	521
Sexual Orientation	6.0	526
Body Size (Bust, Waist, and Hip)	5.8	527
Age	5.6	528
Marital Status	5.3	521
Academic Performance	5.3	528
Educational Attainment	5.1	529
E-mail address/ ICQ Number	5.0	516
Chinese Name	4.9	527
Occupation	4.8	529
Weight	4.6	529
Parents' Occupations	4.6	529
Religion	3.1	528

* Data of this table has been weighted ■ Figures not included those who answered "don't know/ hard to say".   The higher the marks, the more important in respondents' views.

Table 3. *How would you rate "ID card numbers" in terms of personal privacy? (By age group)*

	Age Group					
	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
Points						
0-4	8	2	2	2	2	16
	13.8%	2.0%	1.9%	1.7%	1.5%	3.1%
5	7	5	2	3	6	23
	12.1%	5.0%	1.9%	2.5%	4.6%	4.5%
6-10	43	94	101	114	123	475
	74.1%	93.1%	96.2%	95.8%	93.9%	92.4%
Total	**58**	**101**	**105**	**119**	**131**	**514**
	100.0%	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 4. *How would you rate "Address" in terms of personal privacy?*
(By age group)

| Points | Age Group | | | | | |
	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
0-4	14	7	1	2	5	29
	23.7%	6.9%	0.9%	1.7%	3.8%	5.6%
5	3	15	14	2	20	54
	5.1%	14.7%	13.2%	1.7%	15.3%	10.4%
6-10	42	80	91	116	106	435
	71.2%	78.4%	85.8%	96.7%	80.9%	84.0%
Total	59	102	106	120	131	518
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 5. *How would you rate "Telephone Number" in terms of personal*
privacy? (By age group)

| Points | Age Group | | | | | |
	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	Total
0-4	12	23	7	8	11	61
	20.0%	22.8%	6.6%	6.7%	8.4%	11.8%
5	13	17	14	11	17	72
	21.7%	16.8%	13.2%	9.2%	13.0%	13.9%
6-10	35	61	85	100	103	384
	58.3%	60.4%	80.2%	84.0%	78.6%	74.3%
Total	60	101	106	119	131	517
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 6. *How would you rate "Personal Measurements, for example, size of*
Bust, Waist, and Hip" in terms of personal privacy? (By sex)

| Points | Sex | | |
	Males	Females	Total
0-4	105	39	144
	43.2%	13.7%	27.3%
5	68	44	112
	28.0%	15.5%	21.3%
6-10	70	201	271
	28.8%	70.8%	51.4%
Total	243	284	527
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 7. *How would you rate "Sexual Orientation" in terms of personal privacy? (By sex)*

Points	Males	Females	Total
	Sex		
0-4	77	57	134
	31.8%	20.1%	25.5%
5	65	55	120
	26.9%	19.4%	22.8%
6-10	100	172	272
	41.3%	60.6%	51.7%
Total	**242**	**284**	**526**
	100.0%	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 8. *How would you rate "Age" in terms of personal privacy? (By sex)*

Points	Males	Females	Total
	Sex		
0-4	93	48	141
	38.3%	16.8%	26.7%
5	64	82	146
	26.3%	28.8%	27.7%
6-10	86	155	241
	35.4%	54.4%	45.6%
Total	**243**	**285**	**528**
	100.0%	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

Table 9. *How would you rate "Weight" in terms of personal privacy? (By sex)*

Points	Males	Females	Total
	Sex		
0-4	116	95	211
	47.5%	33.3%	39.9%
5	61	85	146
	25.0%	29.8%	27.6%
6-10	67	105	172
	27.5%	36.8%	32.5%
Total	**244**	**285**	**529**
	100.0%	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted*; p<0.01*

The findings above seemed to suggest that the respondents held an array of items to be personal and therefore, private.   It would be of great interest to examine what particular items they would consider private in front of parents, colleagues and classmates.

When getting along with parents, 55.2% of respondents said that they would let their parents know everything about them, while the remaining 40.5% had some reservations, with most saying that they preferred to keep their parents in the dark about their personal financial situations, followed by their relationships and love affairs, as well as their salaries (Table 10).

When getting along with colleagues, employed respondents did not want their colleagues to be privy to their income, financial situation, or to their relationships and love affairs (Table 11), while respondents at school preferred to withhold such information as their family's financial situation, their ID card numbers, and relationships and love affairs from their classmates (Table 12). All this suggests that respondents were reluctant to make public, specific aspects of their personal data, such as their personal or family's financial situation, and their relationships and love affairs.

Table 10. What three pieces of personal data would you most prefer your parents did not know about? **N=529**

	Frequency	Per cent ■
Have given considerations to: 214		40.5%
Financial Situation	120	22.7%
Relationships and Love Affairs	95	17.9%
Salary	60	11.3%
Academic Performance	56	10.7%
Sexual Orientation	39	7.3%
Medical Record	35	6.7%
E-mail address/ ICQ Number	10	2.0%
Religion	10	2.0%
Others	14	2.6%
Not any	292	55.2%
All	5	0.9%
Don't know / hard to say	18	3.4%

* Data of this table has been weighted ■ Interviewees can have more than one choice to this question. The data in this column indicates the percentage of interviewees who chose each item, over the total number of those who answered the question

Table 11. *(Respondents at work N=274) What three pieces of personal data would you most prefer your colleagues did not know?*

	Frequency	Per cent ■
Have given considerations to:	197	71.9%
Salary	124	45.4%
Financial Situation	101	37.0%
Relationships and Love Affairs	37	13.6%
Medical Record	30	11.0%
ID card numbers	28	10.3%
Sexual Orientation	23	8.4%
Educational Attainment	20	7.3%
Personal Measurements, that is, bust, waist and hip size	18	6.6%
Age	15	5.5%
Employment Record	11	4.0%
E-mail address/ ICQ Number	2	0.7%
Religion	2	0.7%
Others	18	6.6%
Not any	58	21.2%
All	6	2.2%
Don't know / hard to say	13	4.7%

* Data of this table has been weighted ■ Interviewees can have more than one choice to this question. The data in this column indicates the percentage of interviewees who chose each item, over the total number of those who answered the question

Table 12. *(Respondents at school N=175) What three pieces of personal data would you most prefer your classmates did not know?*

	Frequency	Per cent ■
Have given considerations to:	111	63.4%
Family's Financial Situation	42	24.0%
ID card numbers	30	17.1%
Relationships and Love Affairs	25	14.3%
Academic Performance	21	12.0%
Weight	21	12.0%
Personal Measurements, that is, bust, waist and hip size	14	8.0%
Parents' Occupations	12	6.9%
Medical Record	11	6.3%
Age	7	4.0%
Sexual Orientation	5	2.9%
E-mail address/ ICQ Number	2	1.1%
Religion	--	--
Others	27	15.4%
Not any	56	32.0%
All	5	2.9%
Don't know / hard to say	3	1.7%

* Data of this table has been weighted ■ Interviewees can have more than one choice to this question. The data in this column indicates the percentage of interviewees who chose each item, over the total number of those who answered the question

4.2 Situations that considered to be an invasion of privacy

Apart from exploring various issues that respondents considered private and personal, the Survey also explored scenarios that respondents considered an invasion of privacy.   The Survey listed four scenarios and invited respondents to rate each of them on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 representing the most serious, in accordance with their severity of invasion of privacy.

The Survey noted that the respondents found all the four scenarios to be invasions of privacy (Table 13), with the reading of personal letters being considered the most serious (9.2 points).   This was followed by the reading of e-mails (8.9 points). Companies or persons with whom one had no personal contact using personal information for business purposes (7.9 points) was next on the list, rounded out by newspapers or magazines printing photographs taken in public without permission (7.7 points).

Table 13. *According to your point of view, how far do you think the following situations are an invasion of privacy? Please rate the severity on a scale of 0-10, 0 point indicates not an invasion of privacy at all; 10 points indicate a very severe invasion of privacy.*

	Mean■	No. of raters
Someone reading your personal letters	9.2	527
Someone reading your e-mails	8.9	524
A company, or person, with whom you have no business relationship, using your correspondence information and approaching you for a business contact	7.9	528
A newspaper or magazine printing a picture of you taken in a public area without your consent	7.7	516

* Data of this table has been weighted   ■ Figures not included those who answered "don't know/ hard to say".

What was the attitude concerning seeking employment?   In Hong Kong, according to the Code of Practice on Human Resource Management of the PCO, an employer should not collect personal data from job applicants unless that data is absolutely necessary and not in excess of the purpose of recruitment, and an employer should not collect the copy of a job applicant's identity card during the recruitment process, unless and until the individual has accepted an offer of employment[2].

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[2] For details, please visit: http://www.pco.org.hk/english/ordinance/files/hrdesp.pdf
   paragraphs 2.2 2 and 2.2.4.

To garner the views of respondents regarding the invasion of privacy while looking for a job, the Survey, similarly, listed four issues and invited respondents to rate each of them in accordance with the severity of invasion of privacy. They were, details of one's identity card, one's age, marital status and providing photographs.

The Survey found that respondents did not find it an invasion of privacy if requested to supply potential employers with their ID card numbers, marital status, proof of age, or with photographs, with each scoring a relative low point of invasion of privacy (Table 14).

Table 14. In your point of view, how far would you think it to be an invasion of privacy should a potential employer require you to submit the following information?   Please rate the severity on a scale of 0-10, 0 point indicates not an invasion of privacy at all; 10 points indicate a very severe invasion of privacy.

	Mean■	No. of raters
ID card numbers	4.3	526
Marital Status	3.8	528
Age	3.5	528
Photographs	3.5	528

Data of this table has been weighted   ■ Figures not included those who answered "don't know/ hard to say".

4.3   Awareness of maintaining personal privacy

On an individual level, how important did respondents consider the issue of maintaining personal privacy, and how did they evaluate their performance in respecting the personal privacy of others?

The Survey found that respondents believed that they placed a high value on the importance of maintaining personal privacy, rating themselves 8.3 points out of a possible 10 (Table 15).   Respondents also thought that they were as respectful of other people's privacy, rating themselves at 7.5 points out of 10 (Table 15).

In addition, nearly all the respondents (97.8%) claimed that they would reject a request by any organization to provide the correspondence information of their friends in return for either a special offer or discount before getting the consent of their friends (Table 16).   Similarly, 90.5% of respondents felt it was equally unacceptable if their friends provided their own correspondence information to any organization in return for special offers or discount before receiving their consent (Table 17).

Table 15. Please rate your answer on a scale of 0-10. 0 points indicates not important at all/ very low respect; 10 points indicate very important/ extremely high respect.

	Mean■	No. of raters
How important do you consider the issue of maintaining personal privacy?	8.3	528
How far do you respect the personal privacy of others?	7.5	528

* Data of this table has been weighted

■ Figures not included those who answered "don't know/ hard to say".

Table 16. If an organization asked you to provide your friends' correspondence information in return for a special offer or discount, would you do so before getting consent from your friend?

	Frequency	Per cent
Yes, I would	7	1.4%
No, I would not	518	97.8%
Don't know / hard to say	4	0.7%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted

Table 17. Would you find it acceptable if your friends provided your correspondence information for an organization in return for special offers or discounts prior to your consent?

	Frequency	Per cent
Yes, it is acceptable	36	6.8%
No, it is not acceptable	479	90.5%
Don't know / hard to say	15	2.8%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted

Nevertheless, only one-third of the respondents took the initiative to ask how their personal data would be used (Table 18), while 38.9% stated that those collecting the information took the initiative to explain the purpose. The remaining 25.4% said that data collectors neither informed them, nor did they ask the purpose for collecting data.

Table 18. *Which of the following is most appropriate in describing your situation when required to show personal data?   You take the initiative to ask for what purpose your personal data will be used. The collectors of the data explain their purpose in gathering the information. None of the above.*

	Frequency	Per cent
I take the initiative to ask for what purpose my personal data will be used	171	32.3%
The collectors of the data explain their purpose in gathering the information	206	38.9%
None of the above	134	25.4%
Don't know / hard to say	18	3.4%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted

4.4   Assessment of efforts of protecting personal data and maintaining privacy in Hong Kong

On the society level, 84.6% of respondents claimed to have known that an Ordinance which protected personal data and privacy in Hong Kong, was in existence (Table 19).   Close to 60% were of the view that the protection efforts of personal data and privacy had improved over the past five years (Table 20), with 31.4% believing that the situation was unchanged.   Only 4.7% took a negative view.

Finally, in the eyes of the respondents, the extent to which Hong Kong citizens valued the importance of maintaining personal privacy stood at 6.2 points out of a possible 10 (Table 21).

Table 19. *As far as you know, is there an ordinance that protects personal data and privacy in Hong Kong?*

	Frequency	Per cent
Yes, there is	448	84.6%
No, there is not	27	5.0%
Don't know / hard to say	55	10.3%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted

Table 20. *In general, do you think that the protection efforts of personal data privacy in Hong Kong have improved, deteriorated or remained unchanged over the past five years?*

	Frequency	Per cent
Improved	308	58.3%
Deteriorated	25	4.7%
Remained unchanged	166	31.4%
Don't know / hard to say	30	5.6%
Total	**529**	**100.0%**

* Data of this table has been weighted

Table 21. *Please rate on a scale of 0-10.   0 indicates do not value at all; 10 points indicate value highly.*

	Mean■	No. of raters
In general, do you think that Hong Kong citizens value the importance of maintaining personal privacy?	6.2	527

* Data of this table has been weighted ■ Figures not included those who answered "don't know/ hard to say".

5   CONCLUSION

5.1   Claim to value the importance of maintaining personal privacy; concrete actions are encouraged

Respondents gave themselves a remarkable rating at 8.3 points out of a possible 10 when asked to rate the extent to which they considered protection of personal privacy an important issue.   They also thought of themselves as being respectful of other people's privacy, rating themselves at 7.5 points.   In addition, an overwhelming majority, or 97.8%, of respondents claimed that they would reject a request by any organization to provide the correspondence information of their friends in return for either a special offer or discount before getting their friends' consent.   Similarly, 90.5% of respondents felt it was equally unacceptable if their friends provided their correspondence information to any organization in return for special offers or discount before receiving their consent.   All this suggests that respondents, theoretically, valued the importance of protecting personal privacy.

Nevertheless, only one-third of the respondents took the initiative to ask how their personal data would be used, while 38.9% stated that the data collectors took the initiative to explain the purpose.   The remaining 25.4% said that data collectors neither informed them, nor did they ask the purpose for collecting data.   All this suggests that young people need to be further encouraged to be pro-active in finding out how their personal data will be used.

5.2   One's Identity card numbers, address and telephone number are the three most important items of personal privacy

When shown a list of 20 items, respondents considered that the Identity card numbers, address and telephone number were the three most important items in terms of personal privacy, with each scoring an average of 8.9 points, 8.1 points and 7.3 points out of a possible 10.

Although the average scores secured for the other four items, including personal body sizes, sexual orientation, age and weight, were not as high as those secured for the three mentioned above, female respondents seemed to be more aware of considering these four items as personal, more than their male counterparts.

5.3   There is room for improving the efforts in the maintenance of personal privacy in society

Although a considerable portion (84.6%) of respondents knew that an Ordinance which protected personal data and privacy in Hong Kong was in existence, a sizable portion (31.4%) of respondents were of the view that the protection effort of personal data and privacy had remained unchanged.   In addition, in the eyes of the respondents, the extent to which Hong Kong citizens valued the importance of maintaining personal privacy stood at 6.2 points only, a figure lower than that secured for the young people (8.3 points).   All this suggests that respondents believed that there was room for improvement in the maintenance of personal privacy in society.