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Hong Kong Climate Awareness:
Public Understanding, Risk Perception, and Readiness for a Low-Carbon Future

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The Research Centre for ESG Advancement ("RCESGA") and the School of Accounting and Finance at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU"), in collaboration with Bank of China (Hong Kong) ("BOCHK"), released a joint research report titled *Hong Kong Climate Awareness: Public Understanding, Risk Perception and Readiness for a Low-Carbon Future*.

Public understanding of climate-related issues and public participation are critical as Hong Kong advances towards its carbon neutrality goals. The research report draws on an online survey of 2,000 adult residents from all 18 districts in the Hong Kong, with quotas applied across age, gender, broad geographical area, education and housing type. It provides an in-depth analysis of public awareness of climate change, perceptions of local climate risks, behavioural responses in daily life, and views on climate policies and green finance.

Based on the survey data, the research team developed and launched the Hong Kong Climate Awareness Index (HKCAI), a composite indicator for assessing climate awareness among Hong Kong residents across three dimensions, including foundational understanding of climate change, awareness of local climate impacts, and perceptions of climate-related risks. Rather than serving as a tool for assessing factual knowledge, the HKCAI provides a structured baseline for identifying differences across population groups, tracking changes over time, and providing data-driven support for public education and policymaking. The HKCAI recorded a mean score of 74.67 out of 100, indicating a certain level of general awareness of climate issues among Hong Kong residents. The index provides a quantitative framework for assessing climate awareness, while highlighting areas where further improvement is needed, underscoring the importance of continued public education and capacity building.

This report highlights:

- **Climate awareness is widespread but uneven.** Around 95% of respondents believe climate change is happening. However, HKCAI scores vary across population groups. Respondents aged 55–64 recorded the lowest mean score among all age groups, while those with a primary education or below recorded the lowest mean score among education groups. These findings suggested that targeted communication for low-scoring groups could help narrow awareness gaps across the population.
- **There is a clear gap between awareness and regular action.** Although around 87% of respondents are concerned about climate change, only 53% say they always or often take action to reduce their personal carbon footprint. The main reported barriers are cost, inconvenience and doubts about the impact of individual actions. Efforts to encourage change should therefore focus on making lower-carbon choices more affordable and convenient, while clearly demonstrating that individual actions can contribute to meaningful outcomes.
- **Support for climate policies is broad, but affordability matters.** Respondents view climate action as a shared responsibility across government, businesses and individuals. Each of the seven policy measures examined received support from 77% to 85% of respondents. However, support shifts when policies are perceived to entail even a modest increase in living costs, with only around 62% support among households earning below HK$15,000 per month, compared with 89% among those earning HK$120,000 or above. This disparity underscores the importance of designing climate policies that balance affordability with social equity.
- **Residents are generally aware of and interested in green finance, but product knowledge remains limited.** While around 87% of respondents are aware of green financial products, their understanding of such products remains limited. Despite 79% indicating that they would be very or somewhat likely to use such products offered by banks, this reflects respondents' stated willingness to consider such products rather than confirmed demand or actual adoption. Bridging the gap between awareness and action will require clearer information on product features and environmental benefits, together with convenient access and competitive terms, to help customers make informed choices.

Professor Wing-tak Wong, Deputy President and Provost of PolyU, said, "Public understanding and participation are essential to the success of Hong Kong's green transition.

This joint study provides evidence that can help turn climate awareness into action. By combining the research capabilities of universities with the expertise and reach of the financial sector, we can support practical, inclusive and trusted pathways towards a low-carbon future."

Stephen Chan, Deputy Chief Executive of BOCHK, said, "Banks play a vital role in advancing ESG development. As many as 80% of respondents considering banks' ESG investment important, while about 70% believe that banks can make an even greater contribution to addressing climate change. This underscores the high expectations that society places on financial institutions. BOCHK will continue to play a leading role by offering a broader range of innovative green finance solutions, promoting greater transparency and disclosure, and strengthening its role in climate education. We remain committed to supporting a more sustainable future."

Professor Qiang Wu, Director of RCESGA and Professor and Associate Head (Research) of the School of Accounting and Finance at PolyU, said, "Public climate awareness should not be viewed as a single score or a fixed condition. It develops through personal experience, access to information, and changes in policy and financial choices. The value of this study lies in providing a basis for observing these changes over time and helping future education, policy and market initiatives respond more closely to Hong Kong's evolving needs."

Professor Nan Yang, Associate Professor of Finance at the School of Accounting and Finance, PolyU, said, "Only 23% of respondents selected banks or financial institutions as a preferred source of climate information, while 8% selected schools or universities. These figures point to an important opportunity. Universities generate climate knowledge and educate future professionals, while banks connect climate issues with financing decisions and green financial products. Both can play a stronger role in climate communication by making reliable information more accessible, deepening public understanding and encouraging climate-friendly action."

For more information and to download the full report, please visit:
https://www.bochk.com/dam/esg/download/Research-Paper/Hong-Kong-Climate-Awareness-Public-Understanding-Risk-Perception-and-Readiness-for-a-Low-Carbon-Future.pdf

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Research Centre for ESG Advancement at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The Research Centre for ESG Advancement (“RCESGA”) is an interdisciplinary research centre under the PolyU Academy for Interdisciplinary Research at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). It brings together researchers from across the University to address environmental, social and governance challenges relating to finance, logistics, energy and society. In addition to conducting interdisciplinary research, RCESGA shares research insights with industry stakeholders and policymakers to support ESG practices and informed policy development. It also promotes talent development, knowledge transfer and professional exchange through educational initiatives, industry-engaged projects and public-facing research communication. Through these efforts, RCESGA seeks to translate academic knowledge into practical impact and contribute to the long-term sustainability of Hong Kong, the Nation and the world. For more information, please visit: https://www.polyu.edu.hk/rcesga/

School of Accounting and Finance at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The School of Accounting and Finance (“AF”) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is a leading school of accounting and finance education in Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific region. It brings together the disciplines of accounting, finance, economics and law, and offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs that combine academic training with professional application. Its programs include the MSc in ESG and Sustainability, jointly offered with the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, the first master’s program of its kind in Hong Kong.

AF also conducts high-quality research, disseminates research findings through knowledge-transfer initiatives, and collaborates with professional bodies, financial institutions, and the wider business community. For more information, please visit: https://www.polyu.edu.hk/af/

Bank of China (Hong Kong)

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