

PORI

HONG KONG PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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公民實踐培育基金
project citizens
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“Anti-Extradition Bill” Youth Opinion Follow-up Study

Presentation on Findings

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Background

In July 2019, Project Citizens Foundation commissioned the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute (HKPORI) to compile the 《Anti-extradition Bill - People's Public Sentiment Report》. The first stage telephone survey was completed from July 24 to 26 and the results were then release. According to the survey findings, 90% of young people opposed the extradition bill, while the CE, the Central Government and the Police were perceived as the key contributing factors of the current governance crisis. Majority of the young people were dissatisfied with the Police's overall performance in handling the incidents. Views on whether the protesters have performed restrainedly or have resorted to excessive violence are divided, where more young people regarded the protestors' overall behaviour as restrained.

All the five demands of the anti-extradition movement were supported by at least 60% of the young people, and among these demands, setting up an independent commission of inquiry and complete withdrawal of the bill receive the most support. The survey also revealed that young people's dissatisfaction mainly stems from their distrust of the Government and the system, as well as their pursuit of democracy and freedom, but not housing or economic development issues.

In order to understand the reasons behind young people's participation of the movement, their views and demands, HKPORI continued to carry out a Stage 2 study, i.e. this young follow-up study, which included two focus groups and a deliberative meeting.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held on the evenings of August 14 and 15. A total of 20 participants of age 19 to 30 attended. Participants were recruited through random telephone surveys, and followed up by further invitation via WhatsApp. Two members of PORI led the participants to express and share their views following a discussion outline.

The results showed that overwhelming majority of the young people supported the Anti-Extradition Bill movement and sustained high levels of interest in information related to the Anti-Extradition Bill movement. Key information sources included mainstream media outlets, social media, Telegram, and LIHKG forum. Some participants also paid special attention to people with different stances. The participants often shared information about the movement, participated in discussions, and engaged in various ways in the movement, such as participating in assemblies, rallies, strikes, petitions, donating money or supplies, and writing on Lennon Walls.

- “In my friends circle, basically when we see each other we talk about these things. Often when we meet up on Saturdays or Sundays, it’s... Saturdays and Sundays clash with different rallies.... My friends in this age group, we all know what’s going on, so our conversations essentially revolve around these events/issues”

Focus Groups

- “Around me... Of course a majority of people at my age are “yellow”, or would support this movement. People in my age group who don’t support... actually I... at the moment, in my circle I don’t see any. But what I do see are people who seem indifferent to the issues ...as if they are living in a parallel universe....they would not mention anything related to what has happened in the past two months.”
- “There was a period where I kept watching every night, even if there is no protest out there, the online discussions just don’t stop, so I would keep following. It really tires you out, so I just... I don’t know if you know about Telegram. There are some channels that keep popping up. I would just turn off all notifications so that I can escape for a while.”
- “Aside from reading from sources that align with my views, actually I am really curious, like what was said just now, some people have said the protesters were paid. Some people started asking what resulted in the injury in the woman’s eye. Actually I was really curious. Why would they think of that? So I would sometimes check out their pages to read.”

Focus Groups

Young people felt that the support of older people in the movement were less evident than young people. Some older people thought the movement would not succeed, so would persuade them to not participate, while others would oppose the movement. Disagreements over the movement between young people and their families has led to problems in maintaining relations.

- “I may try to change channels, as actually some of their comments are very uncomfortable to take in. Sometimes it’s really irritating, some makes my heart pounding, and I would want to get away from it by going to the washroom, or going out for a walk.”

Young people participated in the movement first because of the opposition of the extradition bill, while later the reasons expanded to their dissatisfaction of the government’s disregard of the public’s voice, and then their discontent with the police force, along with broadly highlighting constitutional issues. Compared to other issues, responses to police violence and negligence evoked the strongest emotional reactions.

- “Until later, until this moment, the reason why we keep coming out is because our bottom line is being trampled upon one after another. It’s not just the government in power who’s trampling on this bottom line but also the law enforcers. They are bending the rules to their liking, to the point they absolutely disregard the law.”

Focus Groups

- “(Regarding July 21) At the time, I still had a bit of hope in the police. At least in some emergency situations, we could seek their help. If I ever get attacked, at least they would help and protect me. However after this incident, I realized the police would not do that. ... (Regarding August 11) I saw the guy who was clearly pinned to the ground. There was also a pool of blood., but he was still pinned by them... by the police who pressed against his head. At that moment I thought, is that necessary? (Began crying) I was disheartened about the police. I realized not only that the police could not protect us, they would even hurt us. I was disheartened by this. Why has Hong Kong become like this? We are talking about kids of my age would still say, ‘When I grow up, I want to be a police’. But now, Hong Kong people would view the police with shame.”
- “I think the thing that makes me most angry is that what you do bears no consequences. For protesters, what you face is a maximum of ten years imprisonment under rioting charges. But then, the police have had done many things, but there is nothing that can overrule them....what can you do to ensure that they receive the equivalent treatment under law, or some consequences? There aren’t any.”

Focus Groups

The acceptance of different demonstrations and protests by young people participating in the focus groups has become quite high. Many people believe that as long as protestors do not harm civilians or innocent people, they can accept all kinds of force and will not distance from them. They also strongly agree for not having any central stage to lead the movement.

- “Till death (atomic bomb) do us part”
- “I do not mind you shooting the police with real gun, but I am rather against using violence against those innocent citizens. I can accept whatever actions if they are directing right towards the regime or the police.”
- I somewhat agree that, after occupying Legco building, there was a statement “It is you who told me peaceful marches did not work” written on the pillar there. I think it got the point, I went to the demonstration peacefully, but you ignored me, and used tough means to suppress me. Then I have no other choice, you forced me to do so.”
- I think it is good not to have a “central stage”, because it can happen in any form anywhere. But then, at the same time, we have to keep reviewing. Without a “central stage”, there need to be continuous feedback, ideas and everyone has to think of solution and suggest for improvement.

Focus Groups

Young people in general are pessimistic about the result of Anti-extradition Bill movement, they think the government will not accept the five demands. Regarding the “five demands are indispensable”, they have different thoughts, and they have different opinions on how they are going to accept the government’s response.

- “If we do not grasp the momentum of the movement to get our demands answered, we may not have another chance to fight for these demands again. This is why ‘five demands are indispensable’. I personally think that this the only opportunity to improve Hong Kong.
- “I do not agree on ‘five demands are indispensable’, because it is an ‘Utopia’, the most ideal situation is fulfilling all the demands. Of course the government will not do so.”
- I think setting up independent commission of inquiry is the most basic thing to do, then people will think what to do next. However, this is just one of the five demands, I doubt whether the movement will be stopped even if this demand is answered.
- “Let’s see what the investigation will reveal, people will continue to observe the situation. Of course people will be relieved a bit and do not need to go to demonstration every week.”

Focus Groups

Young people are pessimistic about the future of Hong Kong, quite some of them hope the political situation in China will be changed, and some are also considering emigrating to other countries.

- “I am quite pessimistic, the most pessimistic thing is that the result of this movement is not in Hong Kong people’s hands. Facing such a strong enemy – the Communist Party, Hong Kong people’s power is not strong enough to have a decisive battle.”
- “I hope the Communist Party will be collapsed by 2047. Of course, we, Hong Kong cannot do much to end it. I hope that it will be ended by itself, or maybe someone from USA fight against it. If the Communist Party still exists in 2047, I believe Hong Kong will become a municipal or something like Hong Kong province.”
- “It is normal to think about emigrating to other countries. It is because in Hong Kong, even now, I feel like I am no difference from a second-class citizen, ... I become a second-class citizen if I move to other countries, I’m a second-class citizen even I stay in Hong Kong then why not move to other countries?”

Deliberative Meeting

A deliberative meeting was held on 24 August, 9:30am to 3:30pm. A total of 98 young citizens of age 18 to 30 attended, 94 of them participated in the whole meeting. All participants were recruited through random telephone survey, then were further invited via SMSs, emails or WhatsApp. They were also provided with a package of background information on the Extradition Bill. Details of the meeting are as follows:

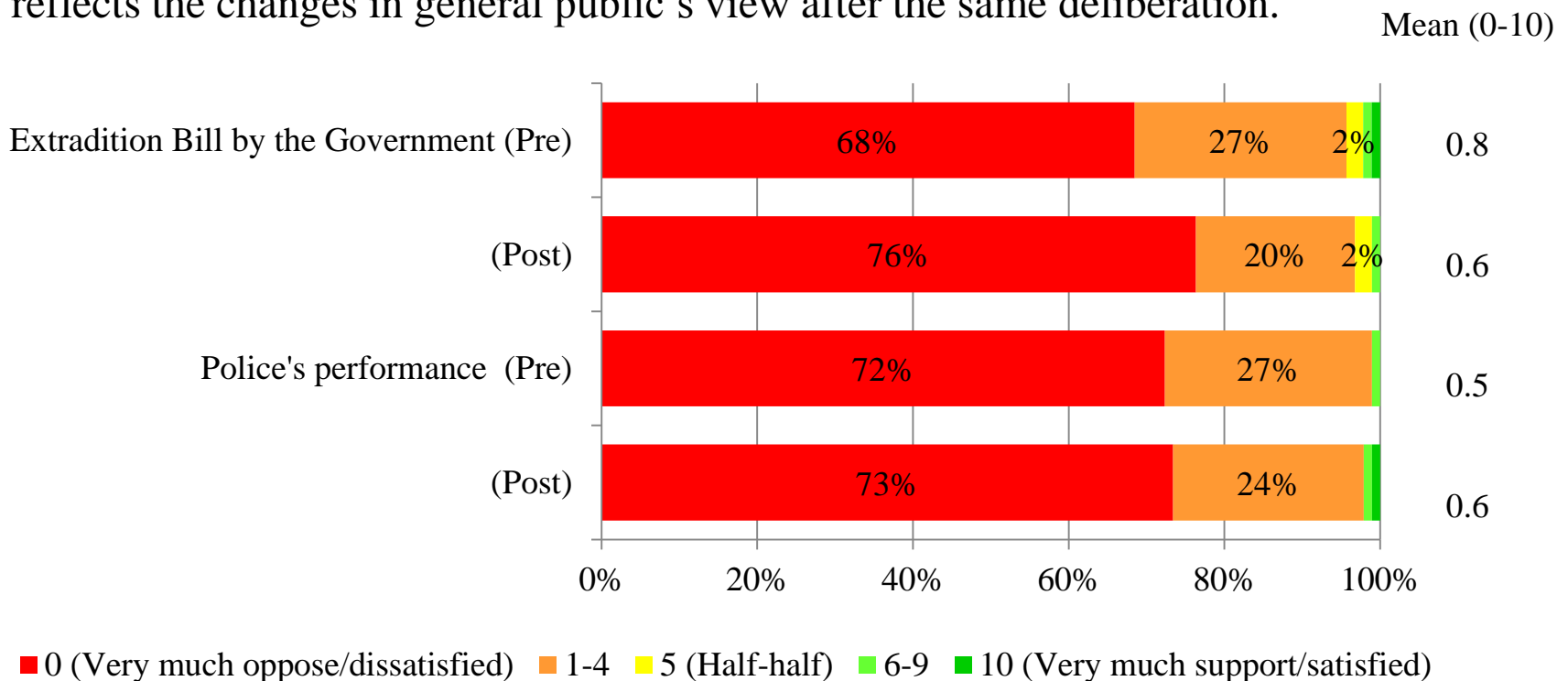
Rundown: 09:30-10:00 Participant registration and Pre-deliberative Survey
10:00-10:30 Plenary session (1) (Panelist interpretation)
10:45-11:15 Small gp discussion (1) (9 groups of discussion led by trained moderators)
11:30-12:30 Plenary session (2) (Small group representative asked question(s) raised within their groups for panelists to respond)
12:30-13:30 Lunch
13:30-14:30 Small group discussion (2)
14:45-15:30 Plenary session (3) (Wrap up and post-deliberative survey)

Guest speakers: Roy Kwong, Derek Yuen

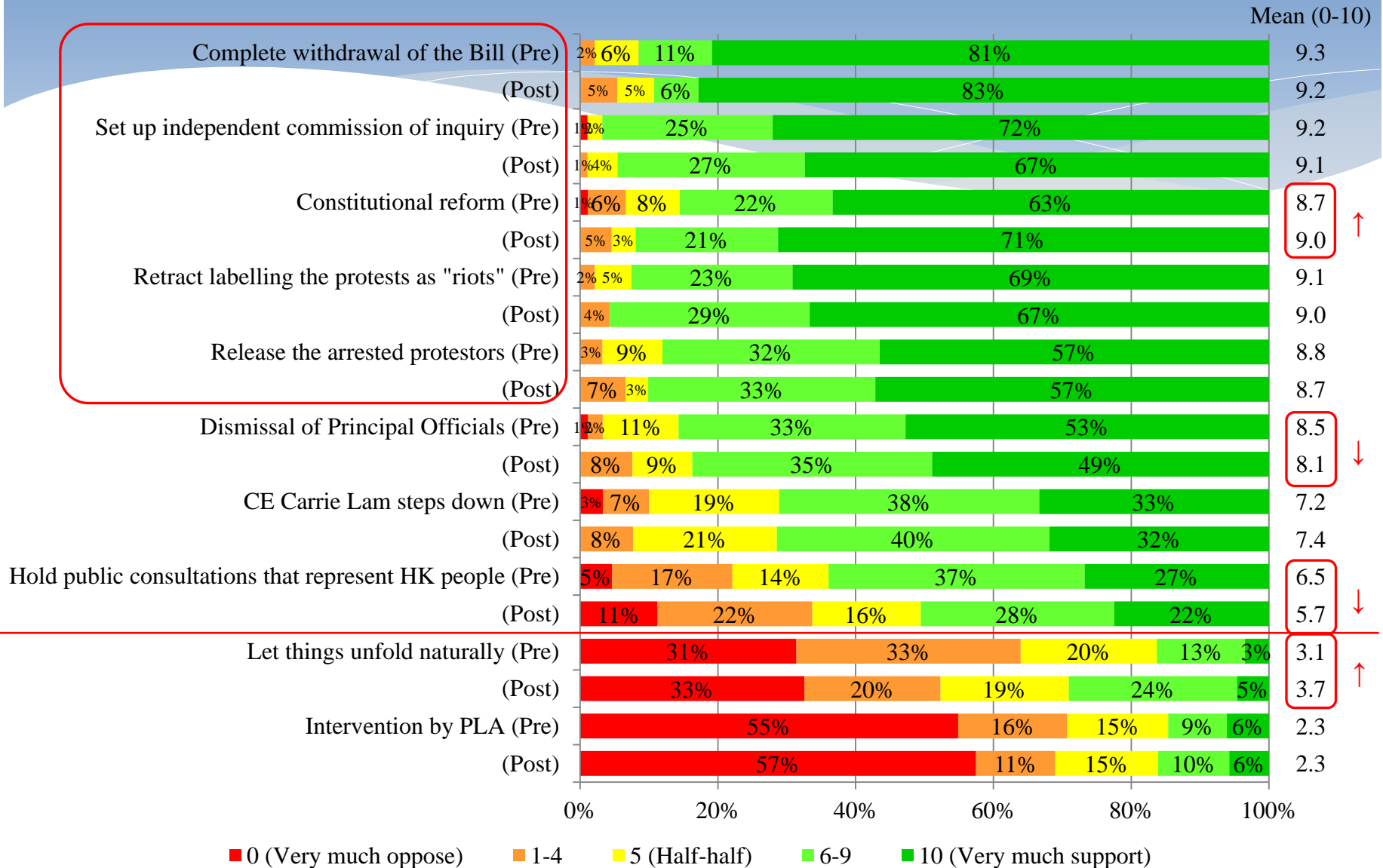
Plenary session moderator: So King-hang

Deliberative Meeting

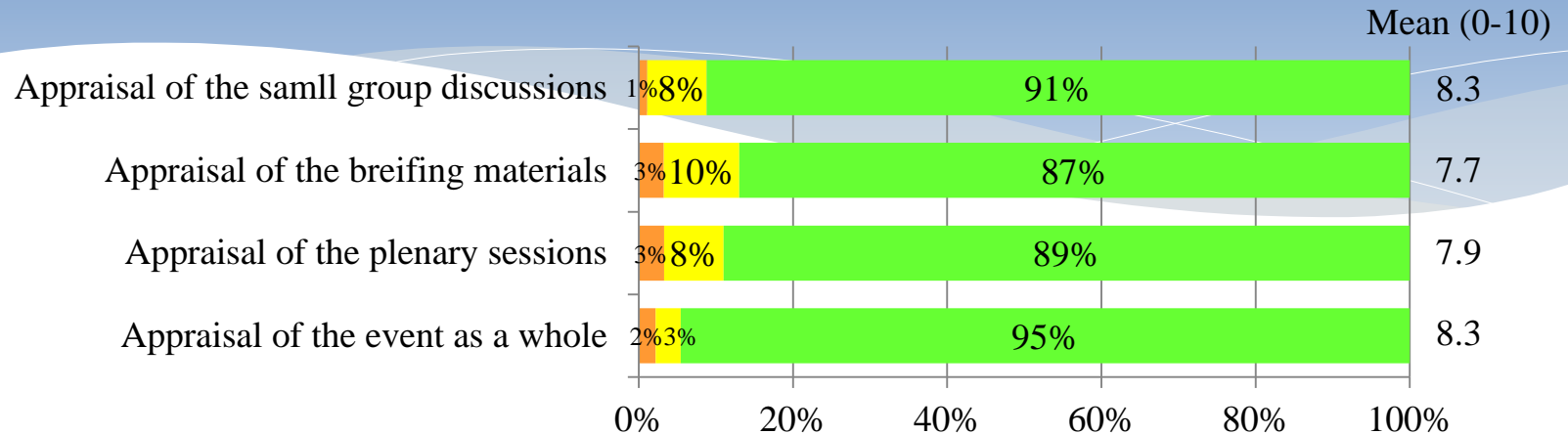
The design of the deliberative meeting made reference to “deliberative polling” developed at Stanford University in the US, which enables the collection of a well-informed and deliberated opinion while also preserves the representativeness just as other public opinion surveys. The changes in participants’ views after the deliberation reflects the changes in general public’s view after the same deliberation.



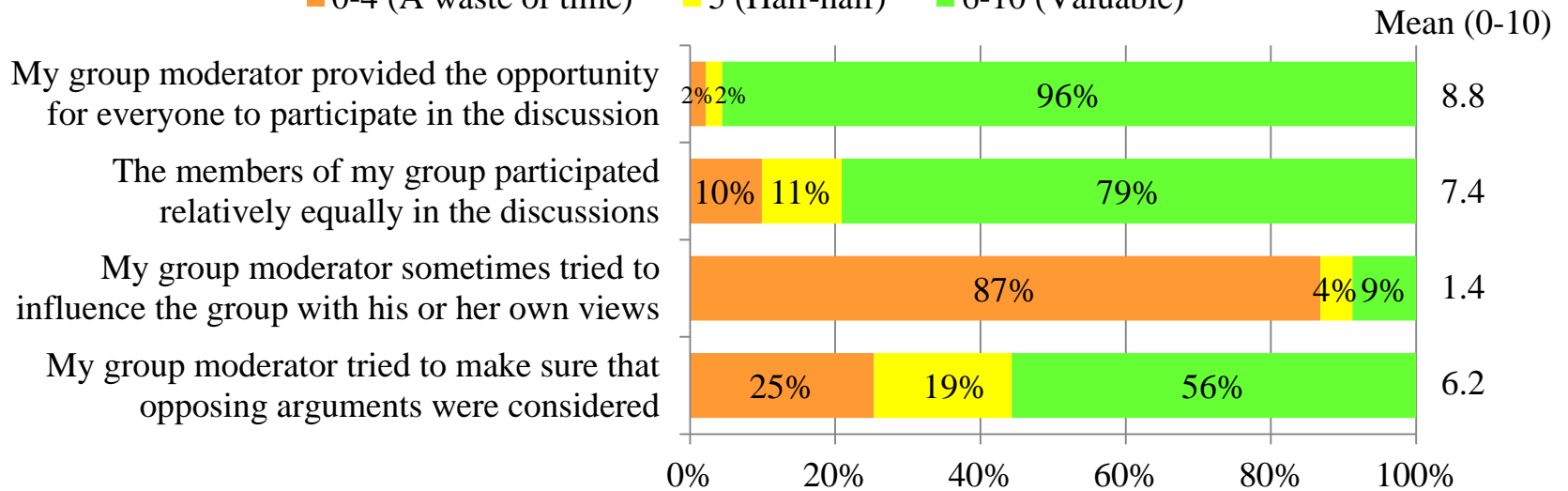
Deliberative Meeting



Deliberative Meeting



■ 0-4 (A waste of time)
 ■ 5 (Half-half)
 ■ 6-10 (Valuable)



■ 0-4 (Disagree)
 ■ 5 (Half-half)
 ■ 6-10 (Agree)

Deliberative Meeting

The results showed that, although the participants regarded the discussions meaningful, generally there were no significant changes to their views in most of the topics. This implied that young people's attitude towards the opposition of extradition bill, their dissatisfaction with police performance and their strong support to the five demands would not change much after they know more about the topics.

Regarding the proposed way forward to resolve the current deadlock, participants' opinions showed the following changes: stronger support in the revival of constitutional reform, slightly less support to dismissal of principal officials, less support in having public consultation. These results in general echoed that of the focus groups. Through the movement, young people saw the problems in the system per se, thus concern grew on constitutional change, but not so about the stepping down of individual officials. Meanwhile, some young people believed the demands of the movement are very clear, so consultation or dialogue would do not much help.

Overall speaking, the participants are of the views that the Government should first withdraw the bill, and set up independent commission of inquiry. In the long run, it should reopen constitutional reform, that would move to universal suffrage.

Youth Opinion Follow-up Study: Overall Conclusion

- Combining young people's views expressed in the focus groups and the engagement meeting, they were getting more and more concerned and agitated regarding the extradition bill, obviously because prolonged protests have invited more confrontations between the people and the police, more reports on police officers losing control of themselves and colluding with triads, and more accusations that the government is neglecting people's opinion.
- Prolonged protests and disappointments among young people have also driven them to challenge and rebel against frontline police officers. This sentiment of fighting institutional violence with people violence has a spiral effect in escalating total violence in society. The heightened conflict between the police and the people, and the blurring of divide between police and triads, have lured more young people into accepting severe violence as a means of protest. Slinging stones, setting fire and other actions become reasonable provided that they do not inflict injury to the innocent.
- Meanwhile, many young people have lost faith in the system, not just the establishment system but also their own. They thus do not want to be led by any central stage. This kind of pessimism and mistrust has driven some young people to vent their anger using aggressive means, some are considering emigration, while some would like to change the system by reactivating political reform and to bring changes to the Chinese political system as well.

Youth Opinion Follow-up Study: Overall Conclusion

- Our engagement meeting with young people has facilitated some opinion changes, but their dissatisfaction with the police and their demand for an independent commission of inquiry have already deepened to such an extent that increased understanding is not going to change their views too much. Regarding the way forward, young people after deliberation felt more pressing to revive constitutional reform and less insistent on the removal of government officials, but they also did not think that government-held consultations or dialogues would be useful.
- Because young people found our engagement meeting valuable but they did not approve of government consultations or dialogues, the conclusion is that they have lost faith in the official system. To find the way out, civic society should establish its own dialogue platforms for government officials to participants, in order to actively discuss the establishment of independent commission of inquiry, the other demands of the people, and the long term development of one country two systems.

End of Presentation