

# Awareness of and Behaviour in Sustainable Consumption

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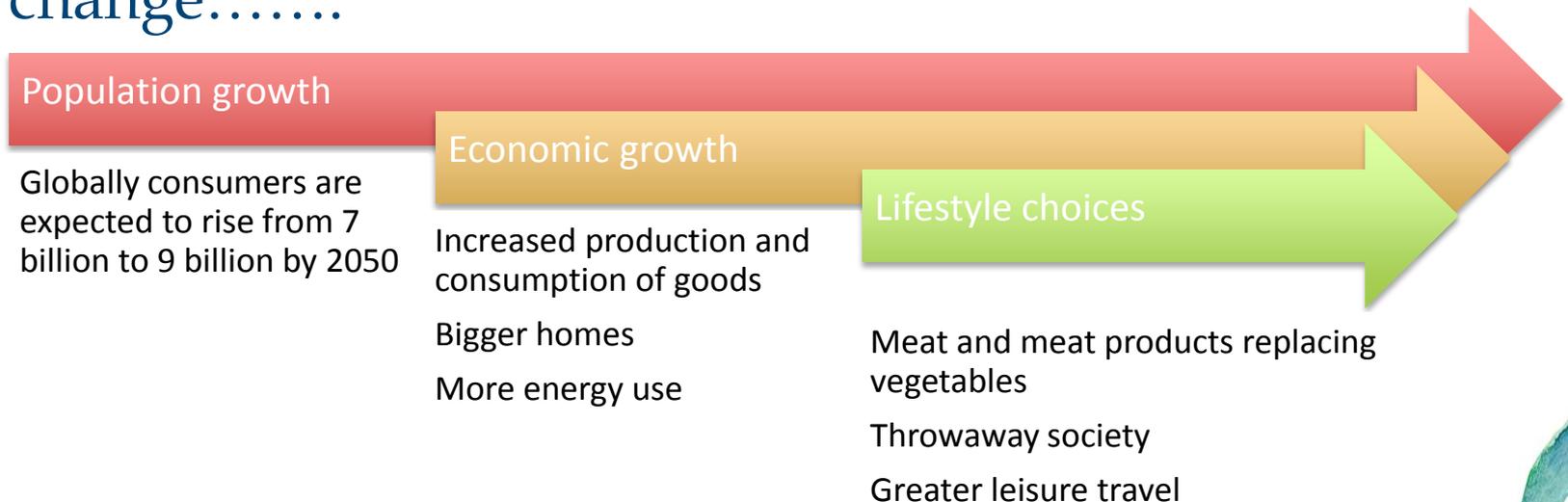
# What is Sustainable consumption (SC)?

- 1994 Oslo Symposium defined SC as
  - Use of services and related products respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life (wisely consume)
  - Minimize negative environmental impacts (use less natural resources, generate less toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants) over the life cycle of the service or product
  - Not to jeopardize the needs of future generations
- SC ≠ No consumption; SC ≠ Consuming less; SC ≠ Poor economy; SC ≠ Lower quality of life
- SC = Wise/Smart consumption; SC = Use more efficiency and less polluting goods
- Targets everyone, from individual to governments and multi-national conglomerates



# Why do we need SC?

- Human consumption continuously and significantly impacts upon the environment
- In last 50 years, global population has consumed more goods and services than combined total of all previous generations that foster economic growth, improve quality of life **BUT** cause environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, global warming, climate change.....



# How to achieve SC?

- Increase in efficiency of consumption, achieve by
  - Technological improvements
  - Eco-efficient support
- Changes in consumption patterns and reductions in consumption levels, especially in industrialized countries, requires
  - Attitude and behavioral changes: many consumers are well aware of the importance of SC and care about environment, but most do not translate their concerns into actions, due to high prices; lack of awareness, information, support; traditional habits.....
  - Changes in infrastructures
- Essential to understand how consumers behave and to nurture their SC behaviour
  - Are SD, SCP and SC in Hong Kong? Any voice? Any agenda?



# Consumer Council: 1<sup>st</sup> Questionnaire Survey and Focus Group Discussion

Undertaken August – September 2015 to understand Hong Kong Consumers' Attitude and Behaviour towards SC



# Framework for the Survey

**Consumers' awareness and attitudes towards environmental protection and SC**

**Consumers' behaviour in relation to SC**

**Consumers' readiness towards SC**

Telephone interview: 1000 Cantonese-speaking HK people  
(age: 15-64), each lasted 20-30 minutes  
Discussion forum

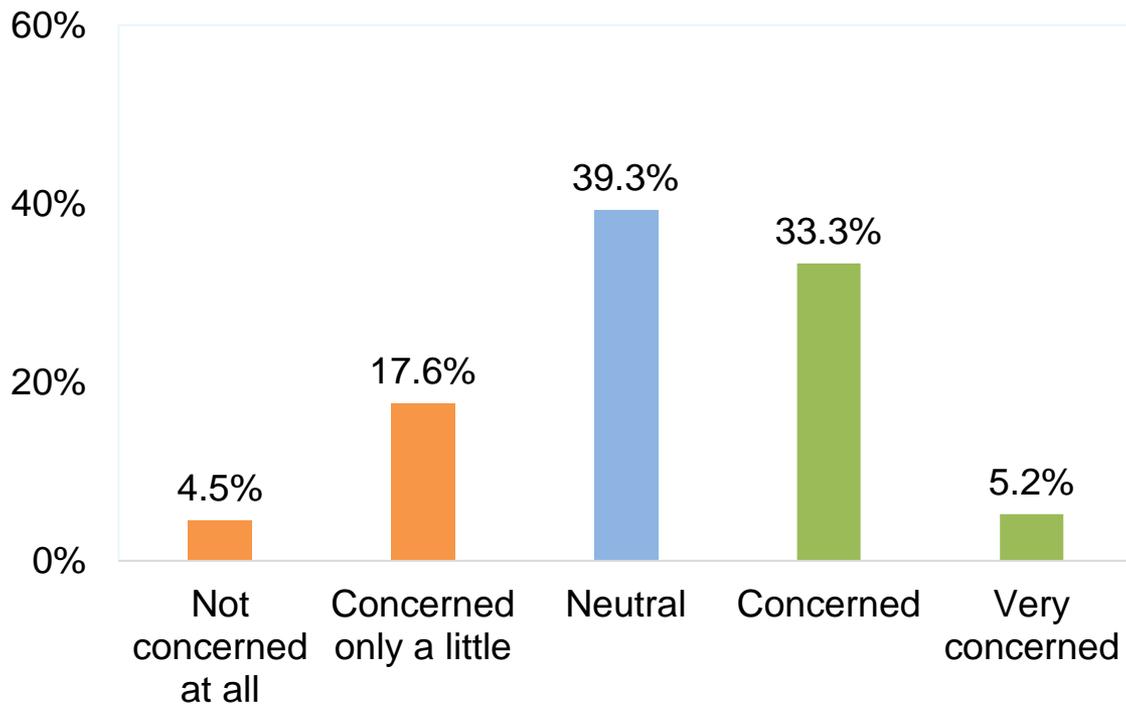


# Consumers' Awareness

- Concern for the environment & adverse impact of people's consumption
- Understanding of the concept of SC
- Relationships between SC and other issues
- Impact on consumption behavior to environment
- Preference for sustainable products
- Attitudes towards energy conservation and waste separation



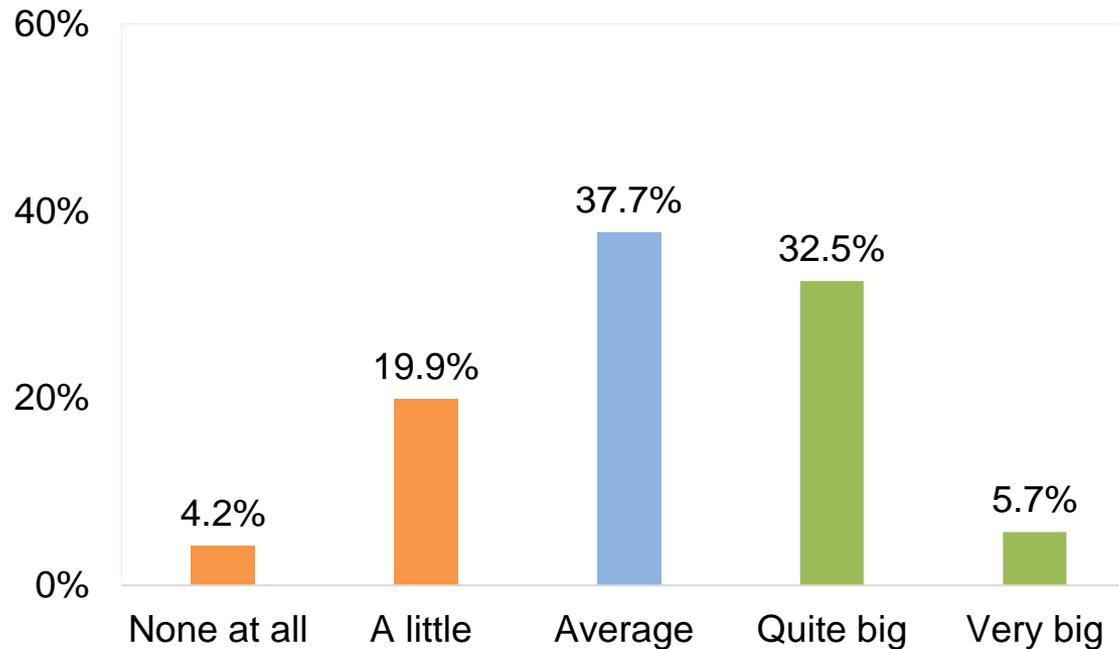
# Concern over the environment



- 38% concerned over the environment  
BUT
- 22% said NOT concerned
- Younger (aged 15 to 29), better educated (tertiary) and higher income people (monthly salary >HK\$20000) tended to be more concerned



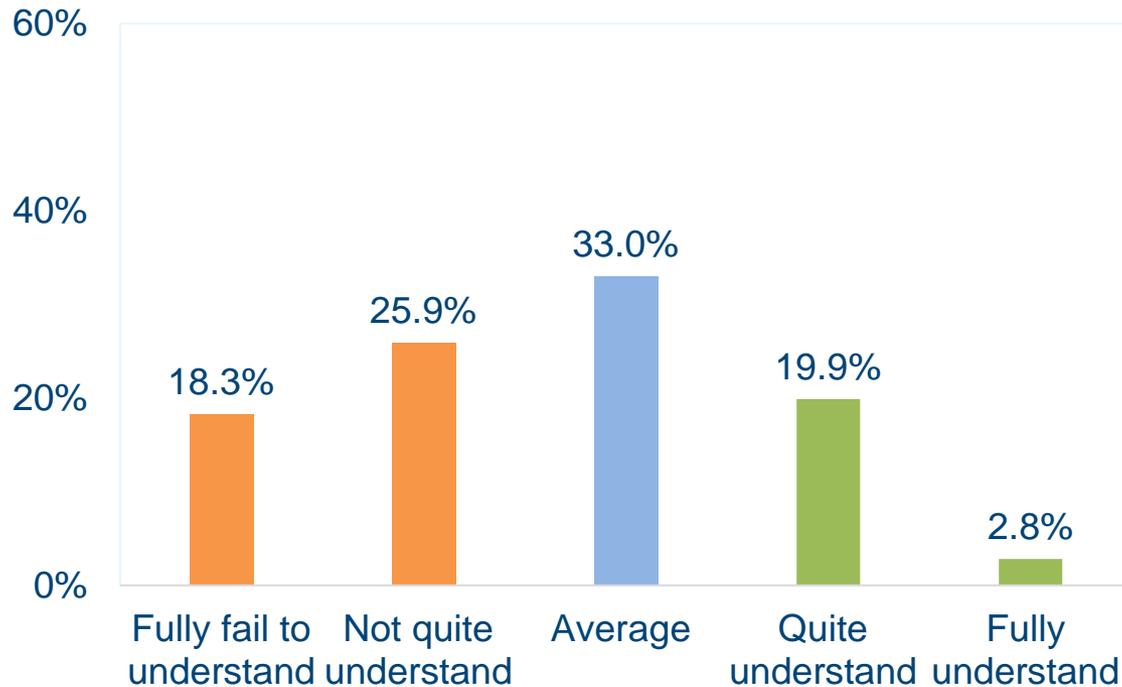
# Impact of consumption pattern upon environment



- Similar to Q(i), 38% considered their consumption had big impact upon the environment
- Also younger, higher income people tended to think their consumption had more impact
- However, around 22% thought little or no impact



# Understanding of the concept of SC

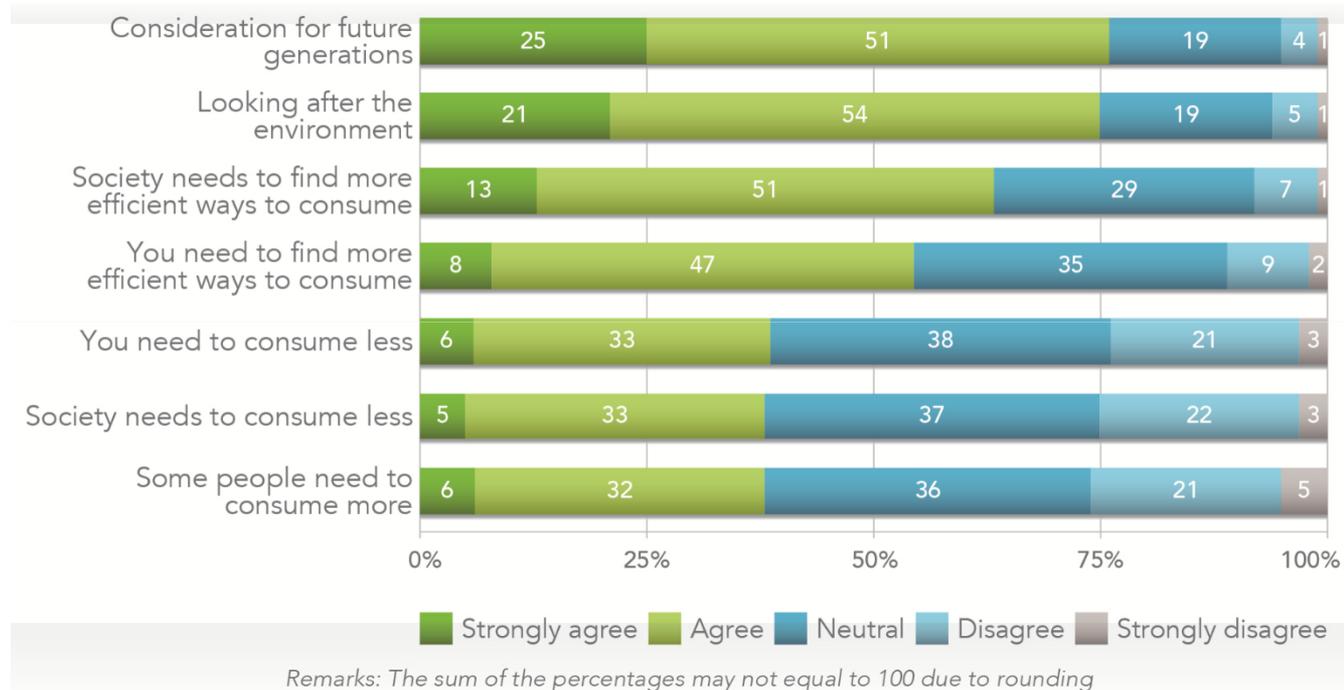


- 44.2% did not quite understand or fully failed to understand the concept of SC
- Out of those fully fail to understand/not quite understand:
  - 51% aged 45 to 64
  - 63% were Retired Person

Majority (94.3%) indicated that the survey enhanced their understanding upon SC



# What does “SC” mean to you?



Close to UNEP's definition

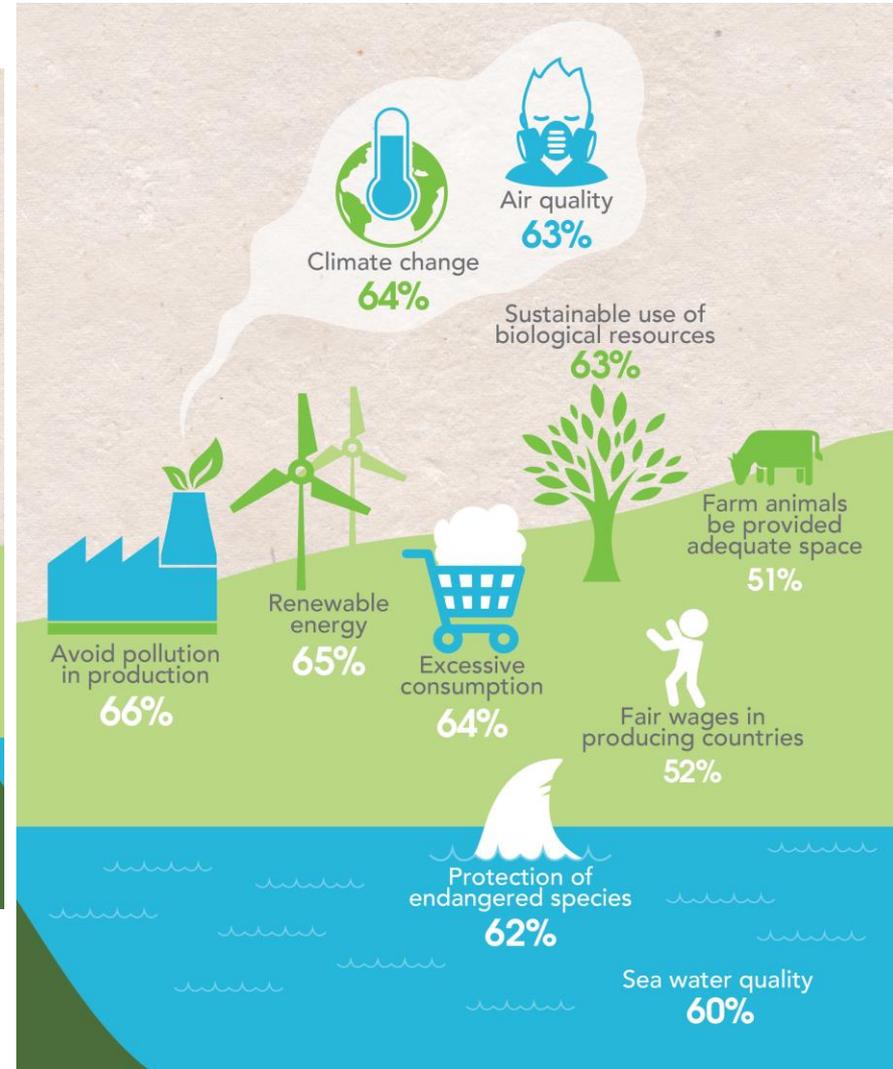
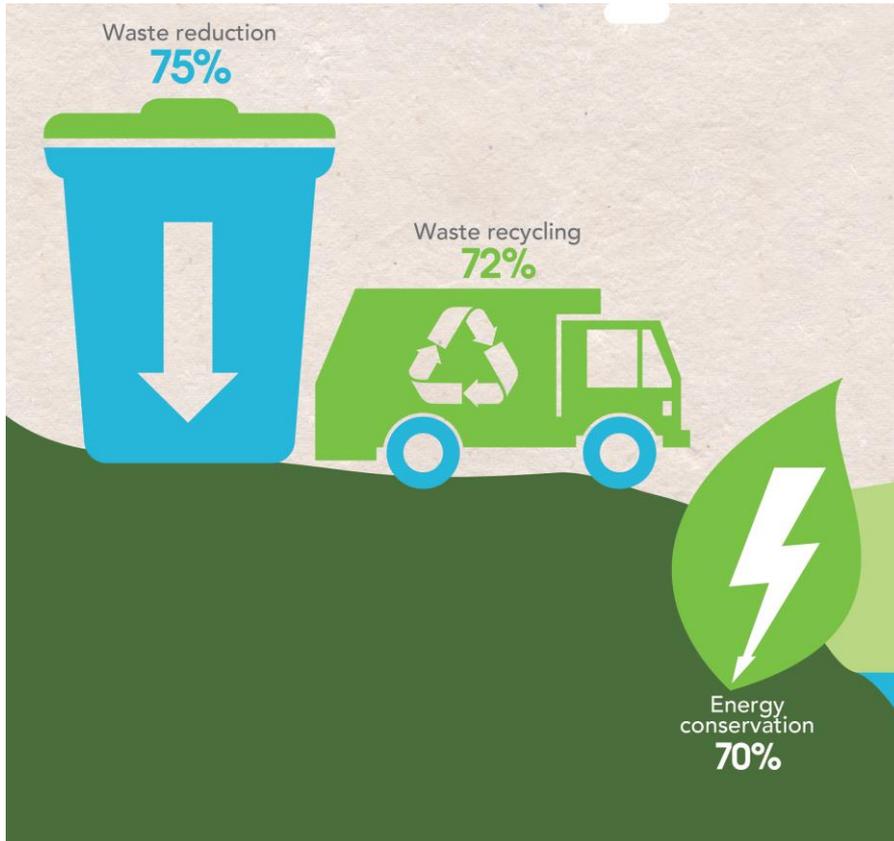
Top 3 issues are:

- Thinking about the future generations (76%)
- Looking after the environment (75%)
- Society having to consume more efficiently (65%)

Only 39% felt “You need to consume less”!!



# Which issues are related to SC?



## Top 3 related issues are:

- Reducing waste (75% support)
- Using energy efficiently (70%)
- Avoiding using harmful substances and production method (66%)

# Summary on consumers' awareness

- HK people's intuitive understanding of SC is close to UN's official definition
- Agree that SC is pivotal and powerful to SD
- BUT few people felt they should consume less
- Most strongly embrace SC ideas related to their own daily experiences, i.e., issues they face everyday
  - Waste reduction/recycling
  - Energy conservation
  - Avoid harmful substance
- Less concerned with remote issues, e.g. fair trade, animal welfares



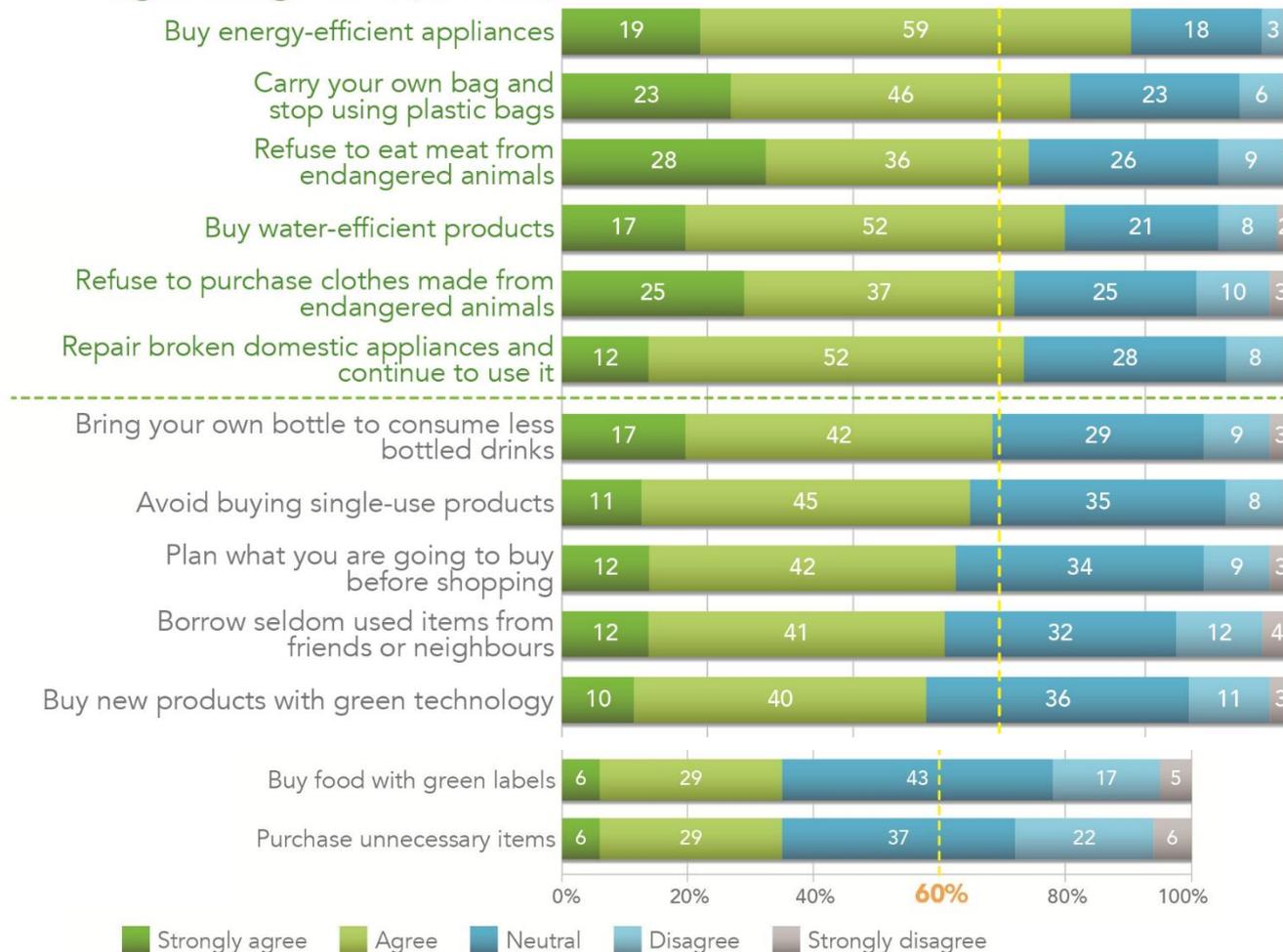
# Consumers' Behaviour

- Purchasing behavior: habits being practiced
- Conservation behaviour
- Recycling behaviour



# Purchasing behaviour: to what extent do you agree with followings about your purchasing behaviour?

## Significant agreement (over 60%)

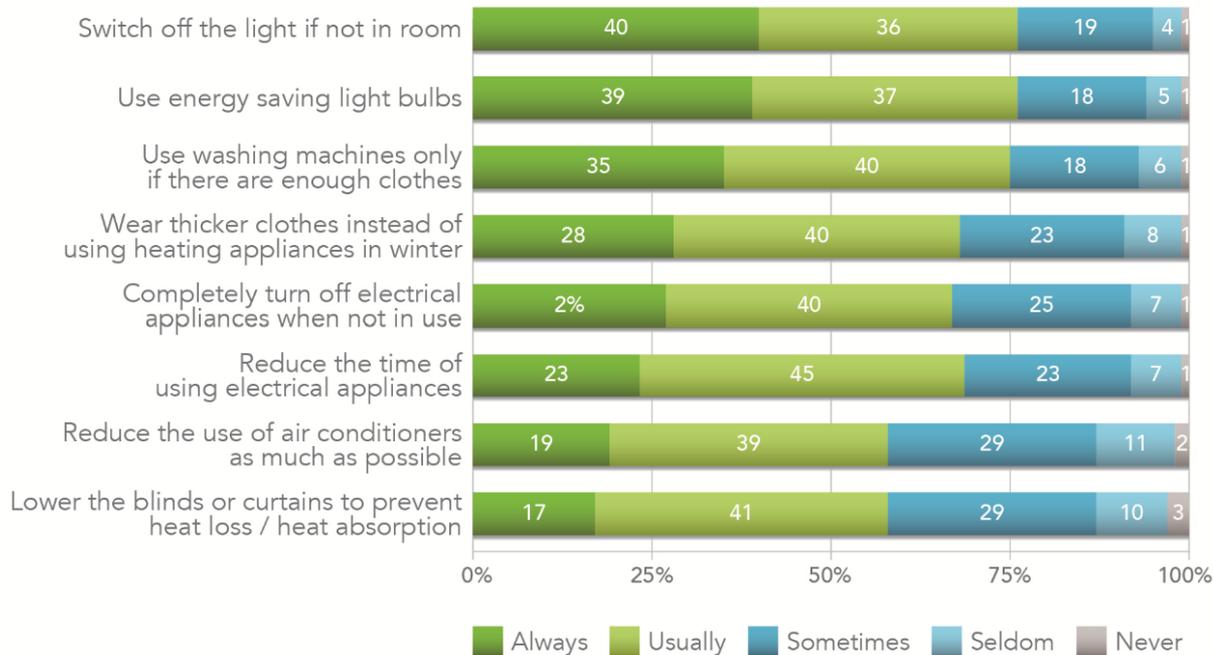


**Higher support:**  
Bring about economic efficiency

**Lower support:**  
Expensive such as green labelled products



# Conservation behaviour: Do you usually practice the following



**Support activities simple to execute:**

- Turn off light
- Use energy saving light bulbs
- Conserve water

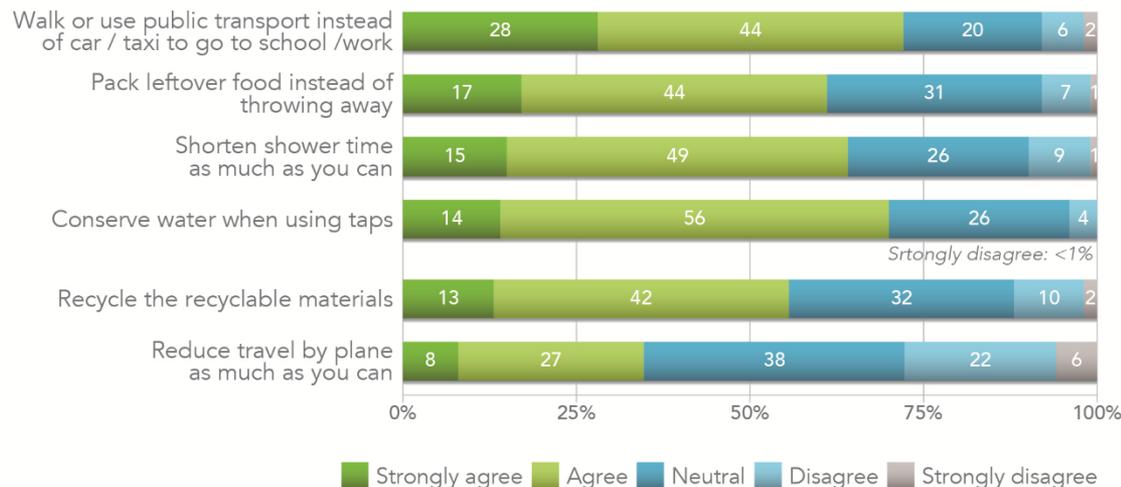
**Older people although less concerned with environment, more likely to do the above**

**Lower Support:**

- Need more effort /planning
- Give some discomfort, e.g., reduce the use of air-conditioner, lower the curtains to prevent heat loss



# Conservation behaviour: Do you usually practice the following habits?



Remarks: The sum of the percentages may not equal to 100 due to rounding

For those save money and convenient:

- Usually walk or use public transport
- Pack uneaten food
- Recycle

Not those:

- Require behavior / lifestyle change
- Need more effort / planning
- Give some discomfort, e.g., reduce travel by plane

Particularly younger generation, they should learn more and adopt environmental behaviours more vigorously



# Summary on consumers' behaviour

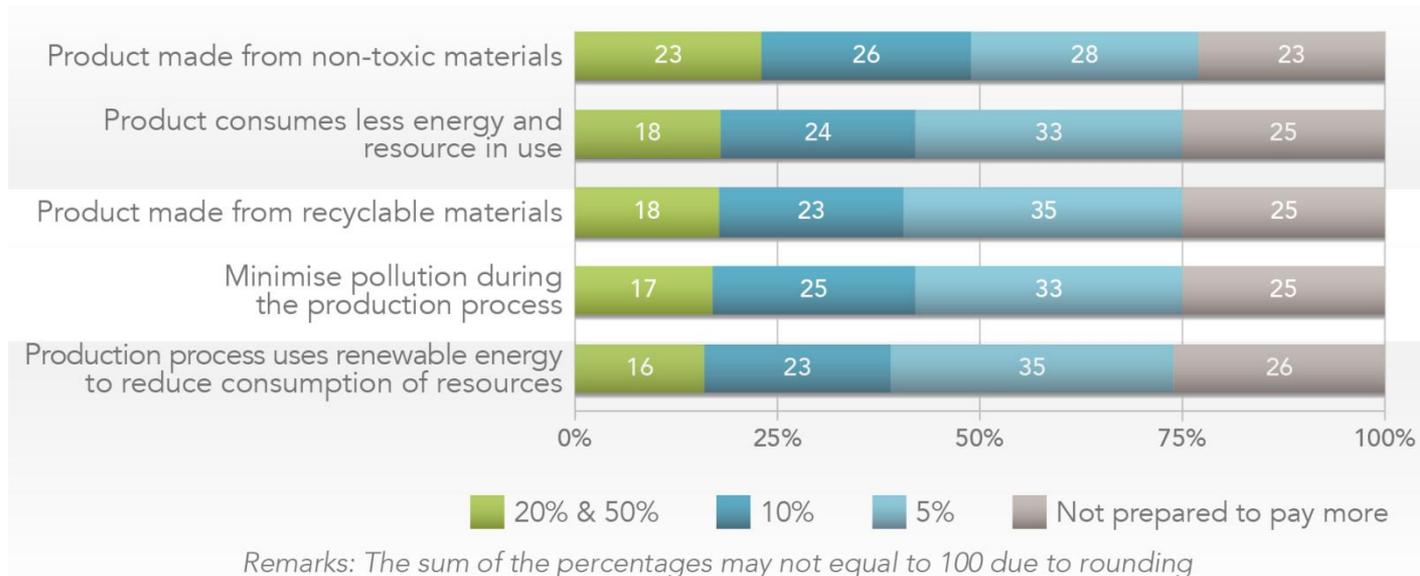
- Still much room for HK people to enhance their SC behaviours to become an “always” habit rather than “usually” or “sometimes”
- Older people, although they were less concerned about the environment, were more likely to support SC (recycle and pack uneaten food)
- Younger people could learn from their elders
- People need to be helped to convert good intentions into actions through
  - Better education
  - Better infrastructure
  - Better information
  - Wider range of suitable sustainable produce choices



# Consumers' Readiness

- Willingness to pay extra for eco-friendly products and consideration of SC
- Consumers' motives towards SC
- Consumers' support / commitment for SC

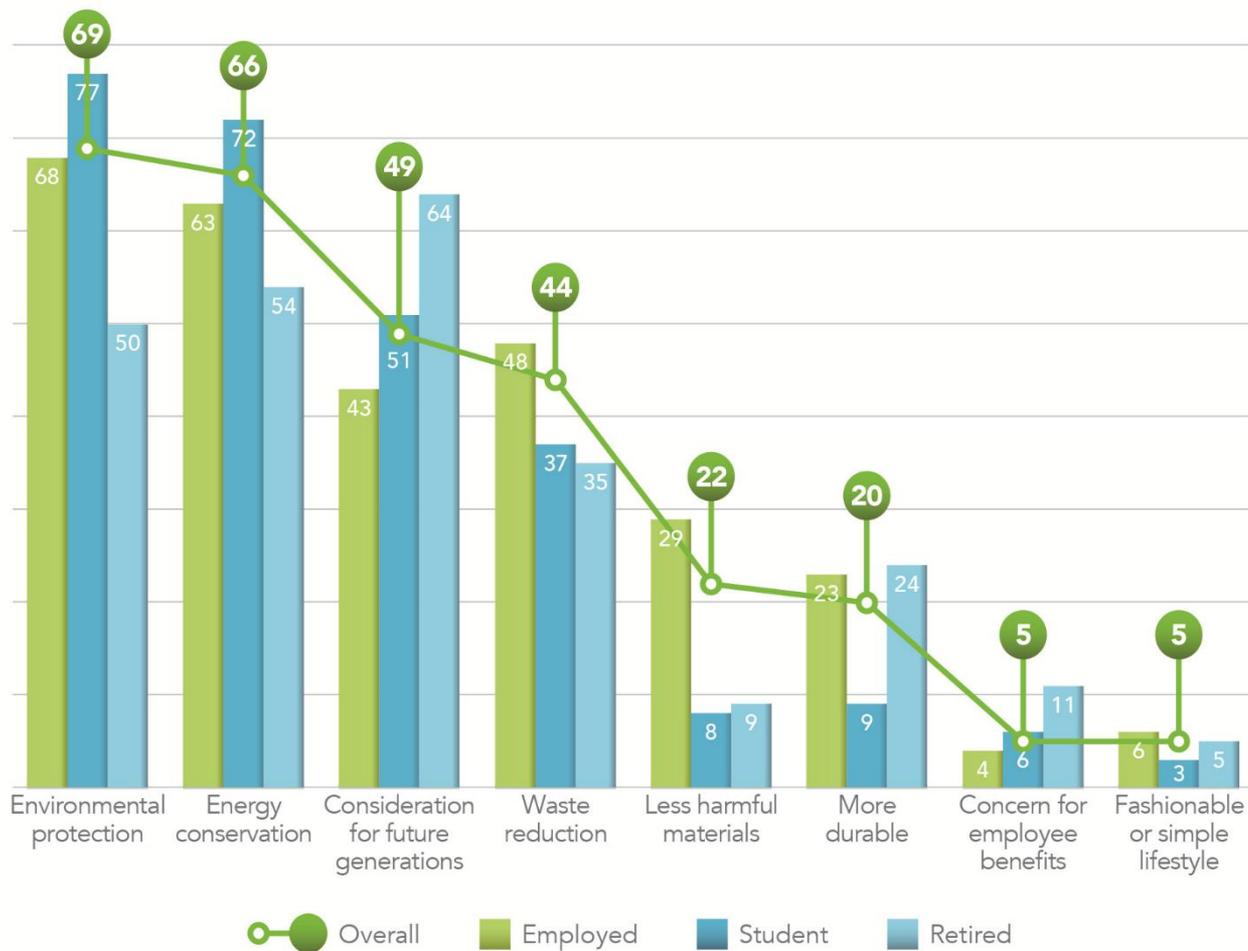
# How much more would you be prepared to pay more for the following products?



- Large majority (75%) prepared to pay more price premium for more sustainable product, esp. if they provide greater safety or economy in-use
- More true for consumers earning >HK\$20,000
- BUT
- Less true for older and retired consumers
- 25% NOT prepared to pay a price premium for more sustainable products



# Motives for making environmental or sustainable purchases?



Top 3 reasons:

- Environ Protection
- Energy Conservation
- Future Generation

Students:

Protecting environment and energy saving

Employed people:

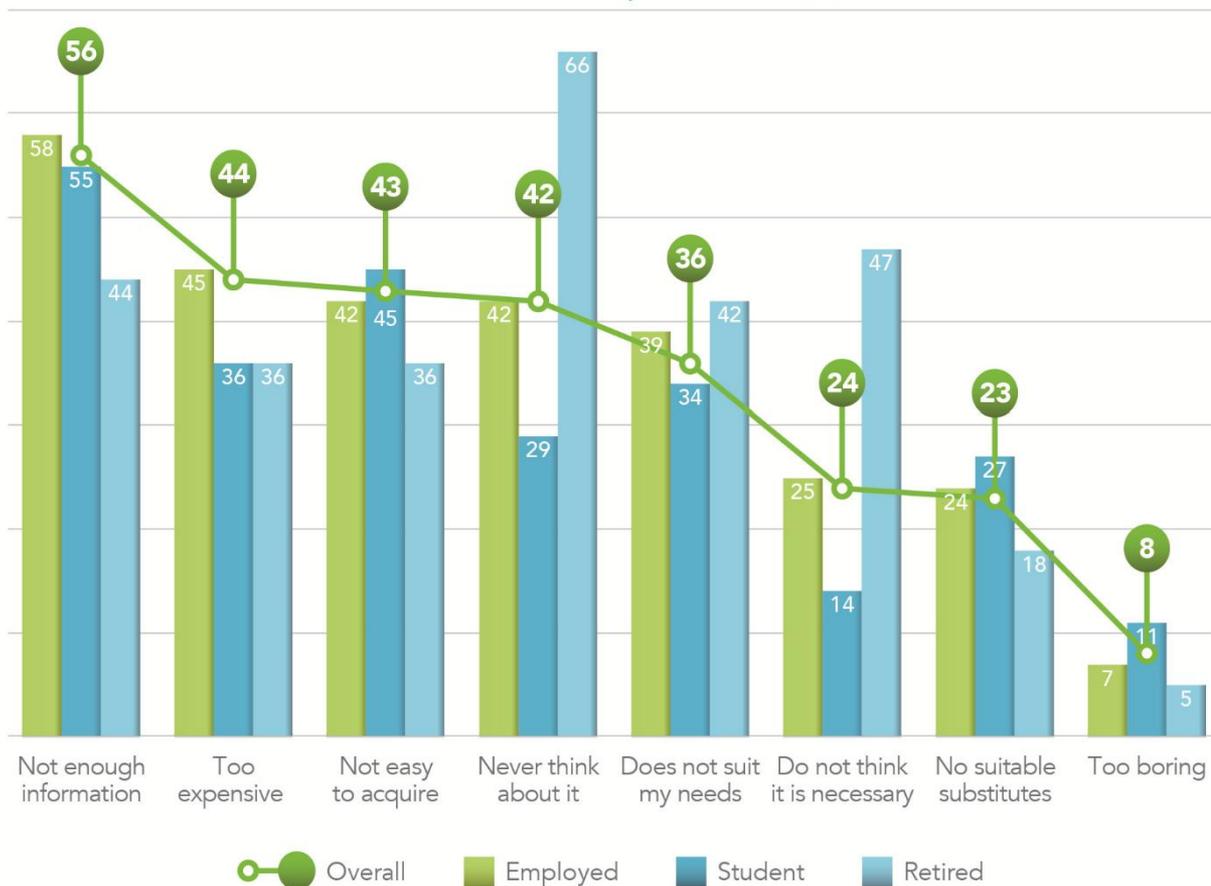
Waste reduction and less harmful materials

Retired people:

Consideration for future generations



# Motives for not making environmental or sustainable purchases?



Top 3 reasons:

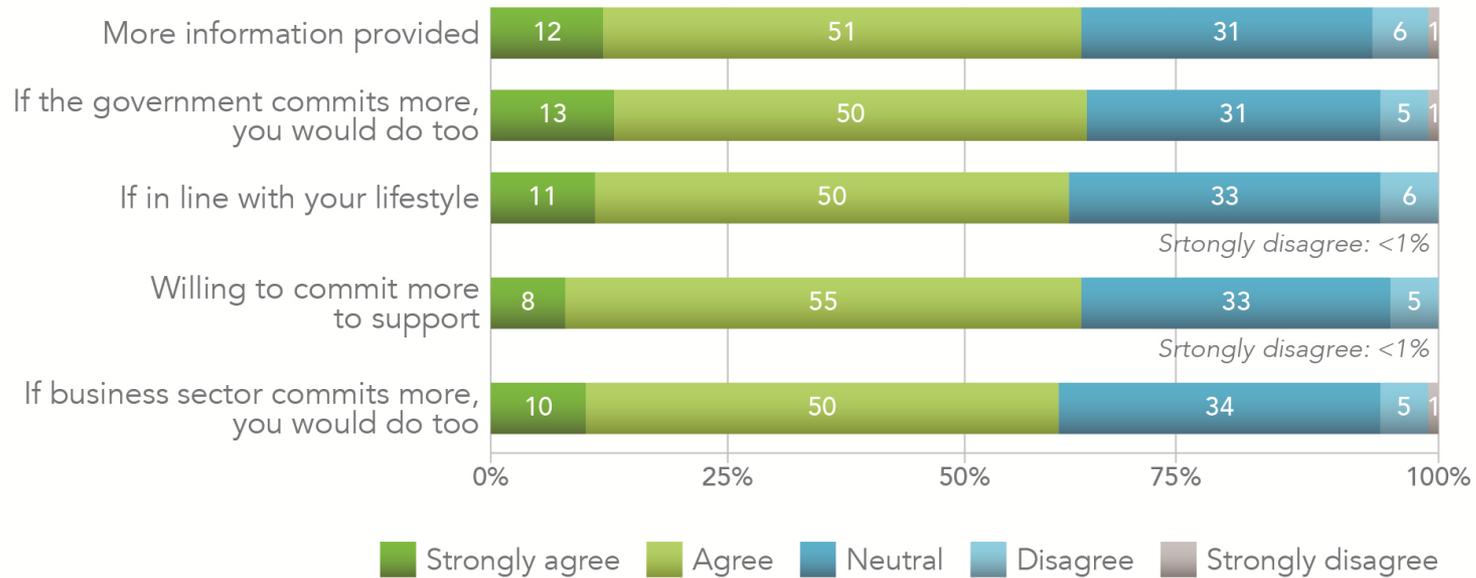
- Lack of suitable information
- High prices
- Lack of suitable product

People are not opposed or uninterested in SC BUT

There are obstacles (may be overcome by Government and businesses)



# You are willing to do more to support for SC if...



Remarks: The sum of the percentages may not equal to 100 due to rounding

High proportion of respondents are prepared to support SC  
BUT

- Require more information
- Government to drive, formulate right regulations and infrastructure
- In-line with lifestyle



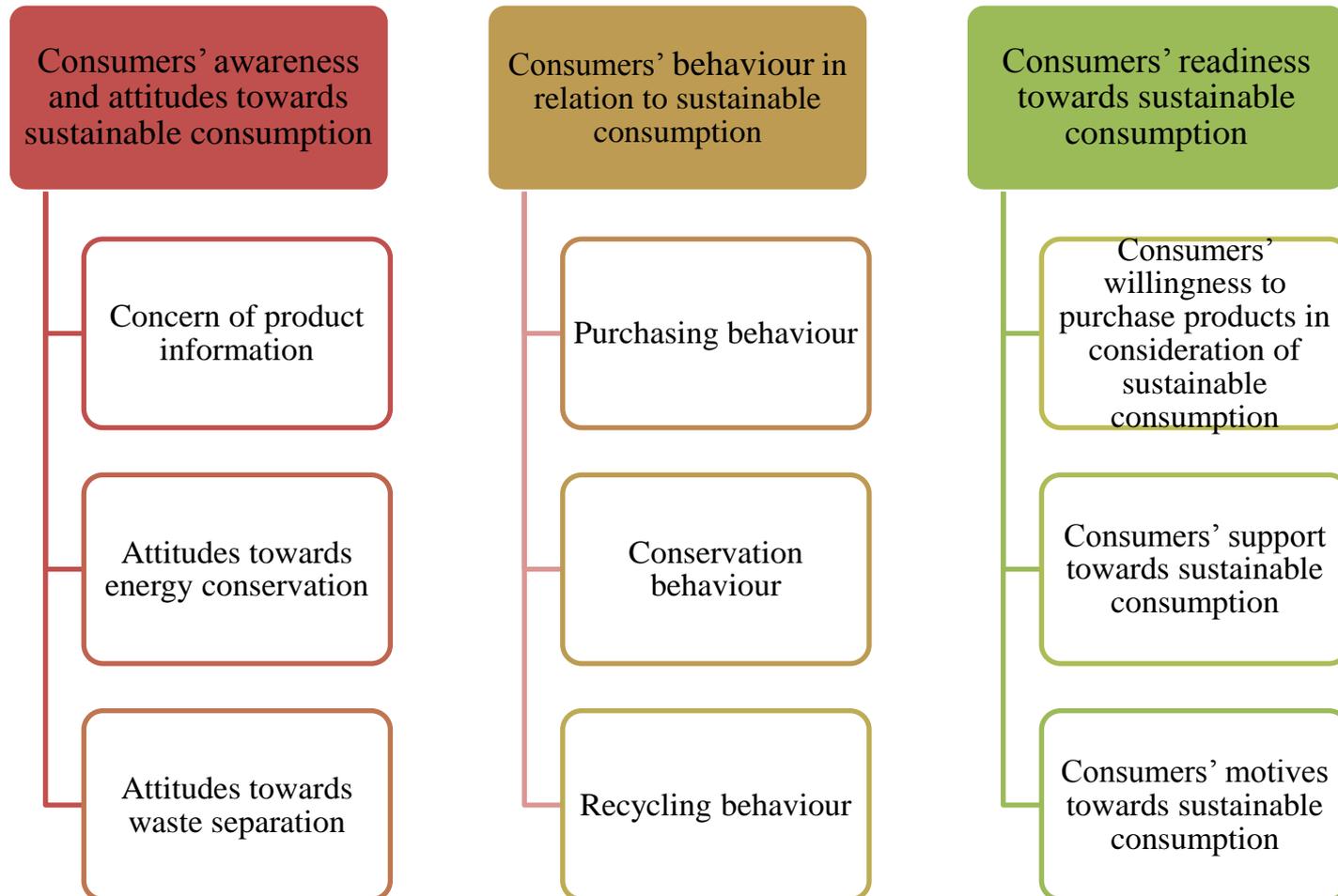
# Summary on consumers' readiness

- Only about half of respondents said they usually purchased sustainable products
- Younger consumers and students claimed they would be prepared to pay more **BUT did not translate into actions**
- Lack of information and high prices are main factors holding consumers back
- Reasons towards SC:
  - Concern for environment
  - Energy conservation
  - For next generation, particularly retired people



# Sustainable Consumption Index (SCI)

Based on framework, three indexes were constructed from 9 constituent parts, awareness-behavior-readiness



# First SCI and Sub-index of Hong Kong

(0-100)	Sub-Index	Index
<b>Consumers' awareness and attitudes towards sustainable consumption</b> Concern of product information Attitudes towards energy conservation Attitudes towards waste separation	 71.70 <u>75.43</u> 73.33	   <u><b>73.54</b></u>
<b>Consumers' behaviour in relation to sustainable consumption</b> Purchasing behaviour Conservation behaviour Recycling behaviour	 69.03 75.17 63.36	   <b>69.23</b>
<b>Consumers' readiness towards sustainable consumption</b> Consumers' willingness to purchase products in consideration of sustainable consumption Consumers' support towards sustainable consumption Consumers' motives towards sustainable consumption	 <b>48.04</b> 72.89 73.93	   <b>65.23</b>

- **Consumers are fairly concerned and aware about SC and their consumption can impact environment BUT**
- **Have to be motivated to take further action (a gap between action and expectation)**



# Summary of First survey

- A high level of awareness of and concerned of SC amongst HK people
- Support most strongly for issues they can directly experience such as waste reduction and energy conservation
- Action is greatest only for simple behaviour such as switching off lights BUT not for things less convenient or require more effort, like turn off air-conditioner or less air-travel
- Beliefs and agreements do not translate into actions

SO

- Need to strengthen people's support and action
- Need to enhance their understanding of SC through education
- Need to instil the belief that consumers can influence business and government



# Challenges Ahead

## 4 Stakeholders

- Consumers
- Consumer Council & NGOs
- Government
- Business Sectors



# Challenges for Consumers

## Citizen Responsibility:

- Make themselves informed of consumption impact to environment

## Take Action:

- Make purchases & take actions consistent to beliefs and awareness

## Lifestyle Change:

- Not merely small and simple changes, but take on more significant and challenge changes



# Challenges for Consumer Council & Other NGOs

## **Behaviour Change:**

- Use various communication vehicles to educate and influence SC behaviour of consumers

## **International Cooperation:**

- Engage with international and regional consumer bodies to monitor global measures and to explore collaboration

## **Communicate Consumer View points:**

- Understand consumer priorities and concerns on SC issues and feed into stakeholders

## **Co-ordination among stake-holders:**

- Act as an active co-ordinator among the 4 stake-holders; organizing activities; supporting initiatives



# Challenges for Government

## **Synchronised Action:**

- Well co-ordination among bureaux and statutory bodies

## **Effective Planning:**

- Collect, analyze and disclose data; perform strategic planning

## **Targeted Product Charges or Subsidies:**

- Influence consumer purchases through carefully targeted product charges or subsidies to drive SC choices

## **Incentivising More Energy-Efficient Purchases:**

- Consider incentive or support schemes to encourage take-up of energy-efficient products

## **School curriculum:**

- Encourage experimental learning and provision of information



# Challenge for Business

## **Sustainability Performance of Products:**

- Provide high-quality, pertinent and trustworthy information; use of sustainability certification schemes

## **Anticipation of Consumer Demand:**

- Take proactive action to bring sustainable products to local market

## **Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) Reporting:**

- Improve quality and level of disclosure to provide meaningful data on business performance



# The way forward The Council's next three year strategy



# Work in Partnership with Stakeholders to...



- Advocating and promoting the key messages and behaviours on sustainable consumption to the general public
- Enhancing consumers' capability to understand ecolabels
- Including sustainability aspects in the Council's testing and survey projects to enhance consumer information
- Monitoring consumer needs and demands on sustainable consumption



# Sustainable Consumption Behaviour Survey

- Baseline survey conducted in Sep 2015
- Whether consumer attitudes have changed over the recent few years
- Any changes in consumer behaviour  
e.g. purchasing habits, conservation and recycling actions, willingness to pay following the lead by Government and businesses



# Ecolabel Products

- Wide range of rival voluntary labelling schemes to market the sustainability characteristics of their goods e.g. fair trade, organic, low energy, low emission, sustainable harvesting etc.
- To develop useful tool to help consumers understand the meaning behind different labels before making choices



# Promote Sustainable Lifestyle

- Work with overseas counterparts to understand benefits and implications of peer-to-peer consumption to consumers, and advocate for the right safeguards
- Repairing / Reconditioning of goods i.e. reduce waste from production by repairing or restoring old or defective items



# Long March of SC, Starts from Me

民、會、政、商

衷 誠 合 作

千里之行  
可持續消費

始於足下  
從我做起



