

Hakuholdo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai unveils  
“The Dynamics of Chinese People 2021”

## **The Real Lives of the Post-00s, China’s Future** ***Xi yuǎn*: Post-00s Tapping the Power of their “Far Circle”**

Tokyo—December 21, 2021—Hakuholdo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai (HILL Shanghai) and the School of Advertising at the Communication University of China today unveiled the ninth set of findings from their joint research project, “The Dynamics of Chinese People.” **The theme this year was “The Real Lives of the Post-00s, China’s Future.”**

Recently, the word *tǎng píng* (躺平; literally “lie flat”), meaning to seek a simpler life with lower professional and economic ambitions, has been popular among the younger generations in China. A massive drop in the number of young people who say they want a “High” standard of living in the future, which was 79% in the 2012 study but only 56% in 2021, seems to back up this trend.

Meanwhile, in an interview survey of the Post-00s generation (Chinese people born in the 2000s), comments such as the following abounded: “I say I want to *tǎng píng* to my friends, but I actually have a detailed life plan that I am working hard toward,” and “I am studying on the sly because I don’t want to fan competition among my friends.”

While agreeing that their standard of living is “High,” having been brought up in privileged circumstances economically and in terms of their educational environment, (11% among young Chinese in 2012, but 27% in 2021 (Data 1)), the Post-00s generation sees the competitive environment they inhabit as growing fiercer due to factors such as China’s slowing GDP growth, fiercely competitive university entrance exams, and decreasing job vacancies. They are feeling the pressure.

With the future of the global economy also murky due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only around 20% of respondents agreed they would accept maintaining or lowering their current standard of living. Therefore, most Chinese youngsters have not lost the desire to improve their lives, per se (Data 3).

*Tǎng píng* acts like an invisibility cloak that helps young people avoid competing with or becoming a target of jealousy and comparison for others in their close communities of friends, class mates and colleagues. In other words, in their “close circle.” This study found that many young Chinese today strongly desire to steadily improve themselves in an effort to survive in a society that is growing increasingly unclear.

## ***Xì yuǎn* (系遠): Post-00s Tapping the Power of their “Far Circle”**

Analysis of findings from the 2012 and 2021 studies has revealed the existence of **young Chinese who cleverly leverage the power of distant third parties (their “far circle”). They want to steadily increase their skills and get ahead by using social media and the like to tap into knowledge and skills of people in their far circle that they can interact with without restraint**, unlike those in their close circle, who they share ties of obligation with.



HILL Shanghai and the School of Advertising at the Communication University of China have dubbed this desire ***Xì yuǎn*: Post-00s Tapping the Power of their “Far Circle.”**

Key characteristics of *Xì yuǎn*

- (1) Asking questions of people that seem to have specialist knowledge that they have only ever conversed with on social media to get accurate information
- (2) Connecting online with unknown third parties with similar goals and engaging in friendly rivalries with them to acquire skills and abilities
- (3) Sounding off to people they connect with through shared interests or are in occasional contact with about the true feelings they cannot share with those in their close circle

At the unveiling of the findings of “The Dynamics of Chinese People 2021” held today, details of the behavioral characteristics of young people who have this ***Xì yuǎn*** desire were introduced, as well as key marketing perspectives and hints for companies that market to them.

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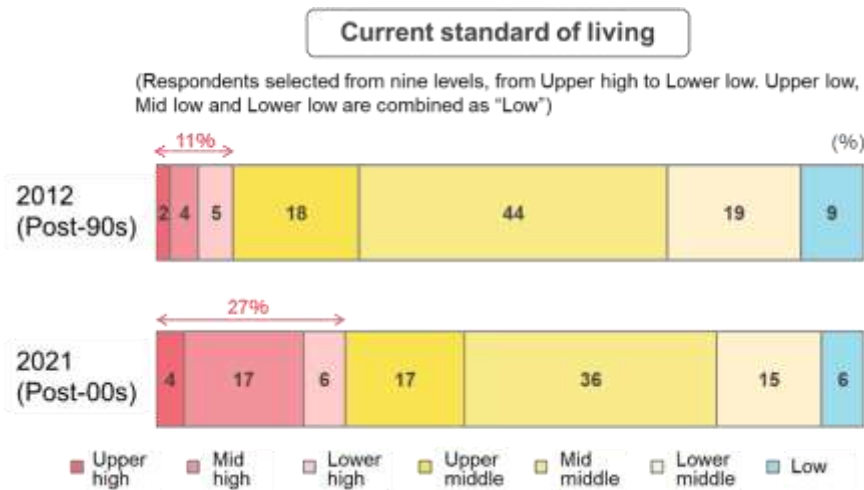
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**Data**

**Data 1: The number of young Chinese who see their standard of living as “High” jumped nearly 250% in approximately 10 years**

Comparison of findings from Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai (HILL Shanghai) surveys targeting young people aged 18–21 conducted in 2012 and 2021. The surveys asked respondents to rank their standard of living on a nine-point scale from Upper high to Lower low. While 11% said they were in the “High” category (Upper high, Mid high, Lower high) in 2012, this soared by nearly 250% to 27% in 2021.

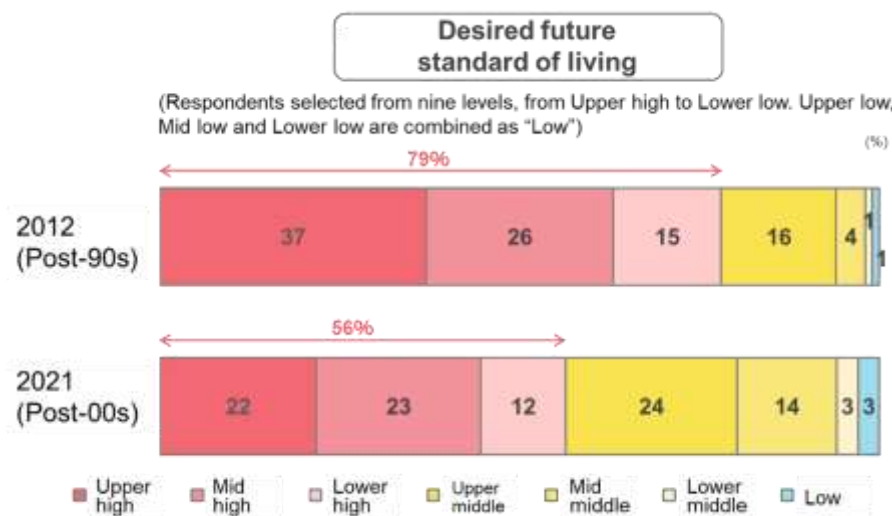


\* Decimals rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Survey of Youth Values 2012, 2021, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

**Data 2: Young people are no longer aiming for Upper high**

When asked about their desired future standard of living, in 2012, 79% responded “High,” with as many as 37% responding Upper high. However, in the same survey in 2021, both scores had dropped, with 56% saying they desired a “High” standard of living, and just 22% responding Upper high. Comparing this with the scores from nearly 10 years ago, it is possible to interpret it as meaning that a Middle standard of living is sufficiently comfortable that young Chinese no longer feel the need to be in the “High” category. Either way, it is clear that the desire to live a high standard of living compared to others has weakened.

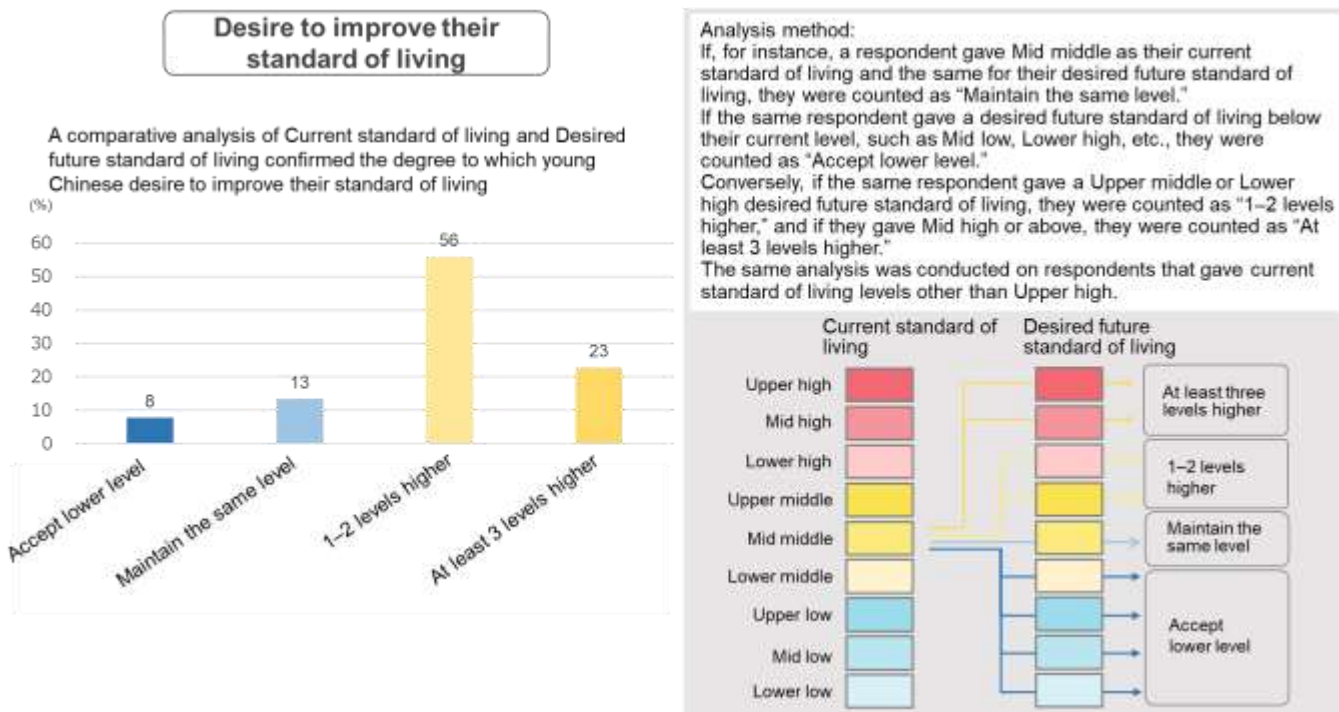


\* Decimals rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Survey of Youth Values 2012, 2021, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

### Data 3: Young Chinese have not lost the desire to improve themselves

But young Chinese have not necessarily lost the desire to better themselves. A comparative analysis of their current and desired future standards of living showed that only around 20% of young Chinese would accept a future standard of living the same or lower than their current standard of living.



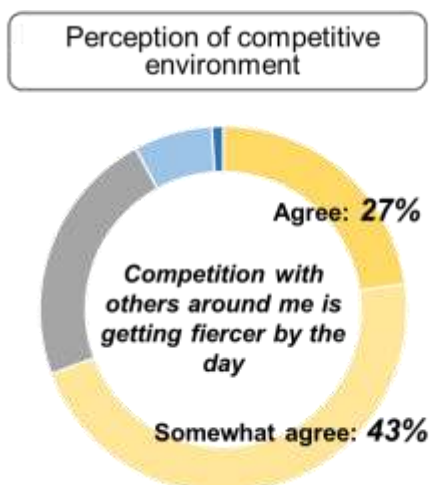
\* Decimals rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Survey of Youth Values 2021, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

### Other data

◆ **70% of Post-00s feel that competition with their classmates, colleagues and others around them is getting fiercer by the day**

For young Chinese today, slowing economic growth and the pandemic mean that getting the job of their choice is becoming more difficult even for university graduates. Some 70% of **Post-00s** feel that competition with others around them is getting fiercer.

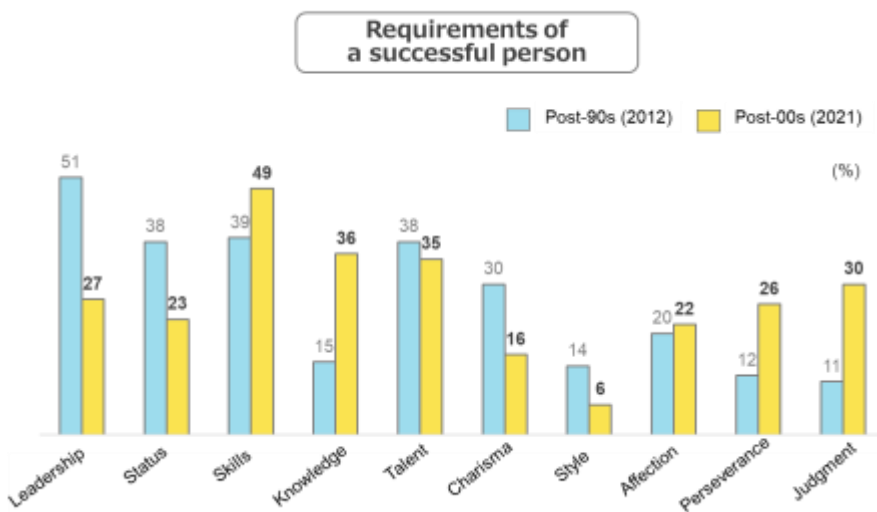


Source: Survey of Youth Values 2021, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

◆ **The requirements of a successful person are not charisma and style but skills and knowledge**

In 2012, when the then young **Post-90s** generation were asked what the requirements of a successful person were, the top responses were Leadership, Skills, Status, Talent and Charisma. The result gives the impression that people with talents, charisma and skills and social standing were “successful.”

However, in 2021, even more young Chinese of the **Post-00s** generation mentioned Skills, and the score for Knowledge also jumped significantly. Moreover, more nominated items related to mental strength, such as Perseverance and Judgment, as requirements of a successful person. From the decline in scores for Charisma and Style, it appears, skills and knowledge to get through this age of uncertainty are being prioritized over conspicuous personality.

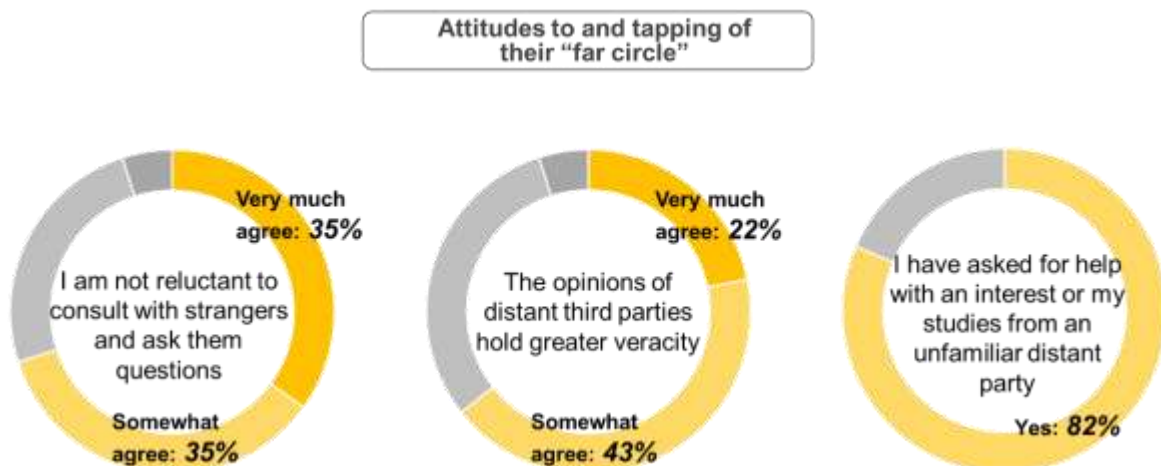


\* Decimals rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Survey of Youth Values 2012, 2021, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

◆ **Post-00s university students prioritize and tap their far circle**

In a survey of university students across China conducted with the cooperation of the School of Advertising at the Communication University of China, most students responded that they are not reluctant to consult with strangers and ask them questions, and that the opinions of distant third parties hold greater veracity. In addition, over 80% reported they had asked for help with an interest or their studies from an unfamiliar distant party.



Source: Survey of University Students, Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai, School of Advertising at the Communication University of China

## Reference material

### ■ Survey of Youth Values 2021 survey outline

Target country:	China: 3,600 samples (total) from Tier 1–3 cities
Respondent qualifications:	Males and females aged 18–41 (Post-00s, Post-90s, Post-80s). Of which, 2,000 samples were taken from Post-00s aged 18–21
Survey method:	Internet survey
Survey period:	August 2021
Conducted by:	Shanghai Zhongyan Network Technology Co., Ltd.

### ■ Survey of University Students survey outline

Survey method:	Questionnaire and internet surveys*
Respondents:	400 samples (total) from students of the Communication University of China and other universities in Beijing, Shanghai Guangzhou and other cities
Survey cooperation:	The School of Advertising at the Communication University of China

\* Questionnaire and internet surveys were conducted three times in the period April–October 2021 on university students at universities across China, utilizing networks of the School of Advertising at the Communication University of China

### ■ About HakuHodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai

HakuHodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai, a wholly-owned subsidiary of HakuHodo Inc. of Japan, is a think-tank established in Shanghai in 2012 to serve the HakuHodo Group in China. Leveraging *sei-katsu-sha*<sup>1</sup> research know-how amassed in Japan, the Institute supports companies' marketing activities in China, while developing local insights and making proposals on future ways of living in China.

Key activities:

- The Dynamics of Chinese People: Research that intuits the true desires of *sei-katsu-sha* and puts forward ideas for new ways of living
- New method development: Development of new methods for contributing to companies' marketing activities
- New viewpoint proposal: Offering new ways of looking at *sei-katsu-sha* and markets

The fruits of these activities are provided to customers through the HakuHodo Group's offices. Some of the results are also made public via presentations of research findings, the HakuHodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai's website, publications and by other means.

"The Dynamics of the Chinese People" is a joint presentation of research findings by HakuHodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai and the School of Advertising at the Communication University of China. Held annually, "The Dynamics of the Chinese People" research presentations analyze changes in the behavior and desires of Chinese *sei-katsu-sha*, and put forward unique key words. *Xi yuǎn*: Post-00s Tapping the Power of their "Far Circle" is the project's ninth set of findings, following Whirlpool Creation: Insights into New Behaviors of Young Urbanites in 2013, Information Bees: China's New Information Transmitters in 2014, Un-framing Consumption: China's New Consumption Landscape in 2015, Title Energy: Consumers as Providers of New Goods and Services and Their Impact in 2016, *Yúlè*: Chinese *Sei-katsu-sha* and the Desires Giving Rise to New Cultural Consumption in 2017, *Shù-zì-lì*: China's New High-tech Lifestyle Trend in 2018, Life Enyouthiasts: Youthified *Sei-katsu-sha* at the Dawn of a New Age in 2019, and *Duówù*: Scaleable Shopping in 2020.

To learn more about the above material, contact HakuHodo Institute of Life and Living Shanghai at: [news@hakuHodo-shzy.cn](mailto:news@hakuHodo-shzy.cn)

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<sup>1</sup> "*Sei-katsu-sha*" is a term HakuHodo uses to describe people not simply as consumers, but as fully rounded individuals with their own lifestyles, aspirations and dreams.