

Children Facilitates Social Integration: Lessons Learned from a Survey of Hong Kongers Recently Arrived Canada

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Background and Purpose

There is extensive research on how immigrant children and families adapt to their new environments. Much of this work focuses on the effects of immigration on children's social and psychological health. Some studies also explore the shifts in family dynamics and relationships throughout the migration process. However, the active roles and contributions of children in shaping their families' adaptation and integration experiences are often overlooked, especially within the context of Hong Kongers.

This study investigates the following research question:

How do Hong Kong immigrant families with children experience the process of settlement and integration compared to those without children, and what factors influence the differences in their adaptation outcomes?

Methods

This study was conducted between December 2022 and January 2023 using an online survey. A convenience sampling approach was employed, yielding a total sample size of 660 respondents, primarily from Vancouver and Toronto, with some participants from other locations. The sample was stratified into two groups: those with children (n=273) and those without children (n=385). T-test was conducted to compare the settlement and integration experiences between these two groups, and binary logistic regression was used to examine the factors that influence their adaptation.

Sample

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 660)

| | n | % |
|--|-----|------|
| Age | | |
| 19 - 29 years old | 188 | 28.5 |
| 30 - 39 years old | 175 | 26.5 |
| 40 - 49 years old | 179 | 27.1 |
| 50-59 years old | 85 | 12.9 |
| Over 60 years old | 33 | 5.0 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 255 | 38.6 |
| Female | 396 | 60.0 |
| Non-binary / third gender | 1 | .2 |
| Prefer not to say | 8 | 1.2 |
| Immigration categories^a | | |
| Study permit | 182 | 27.6 |
| Open work permit | 251 | 38.1 |
| Citizens | 107 | 16.2 |
| Permanent Resident | 63 | 9.6 |
| Others | 56 | 8.5 |
| Number of children residing with them in Canada^b | | |
| 0 | 385 | 58.5 |
| 1 | 117 | 17.8 |
| 2 | 138 | 21.0 |
| 3 | 16 | 2.4 |
| 4 and more | 2 | 0.3 |

^a Missing 1 response for this variable.
^b Missing 2 responses for this variable.

Conclusion

Hong Kong migrants with children engaged in more pre-migration planning, ensuring they had access to housing, education, and healthcare before arriving in Canada compared to those without children. Children appear to positively contribute to the social networks of their families, helping parents make new friends and build family support systems. Consistent patterns were found among respondents who came to Canada with different entry statuses. These results suggest that families with children may have unique needs and strengths that could inform social policy and social service provision.

Results

Figure 1. Pre-Migration Preparation

Hong Kongers with child(ren) engaged in more pre-migration preparation to ensure appropriate housing, education and health care prior to arrival in Canada, compared to Hong Kong migrants without children.

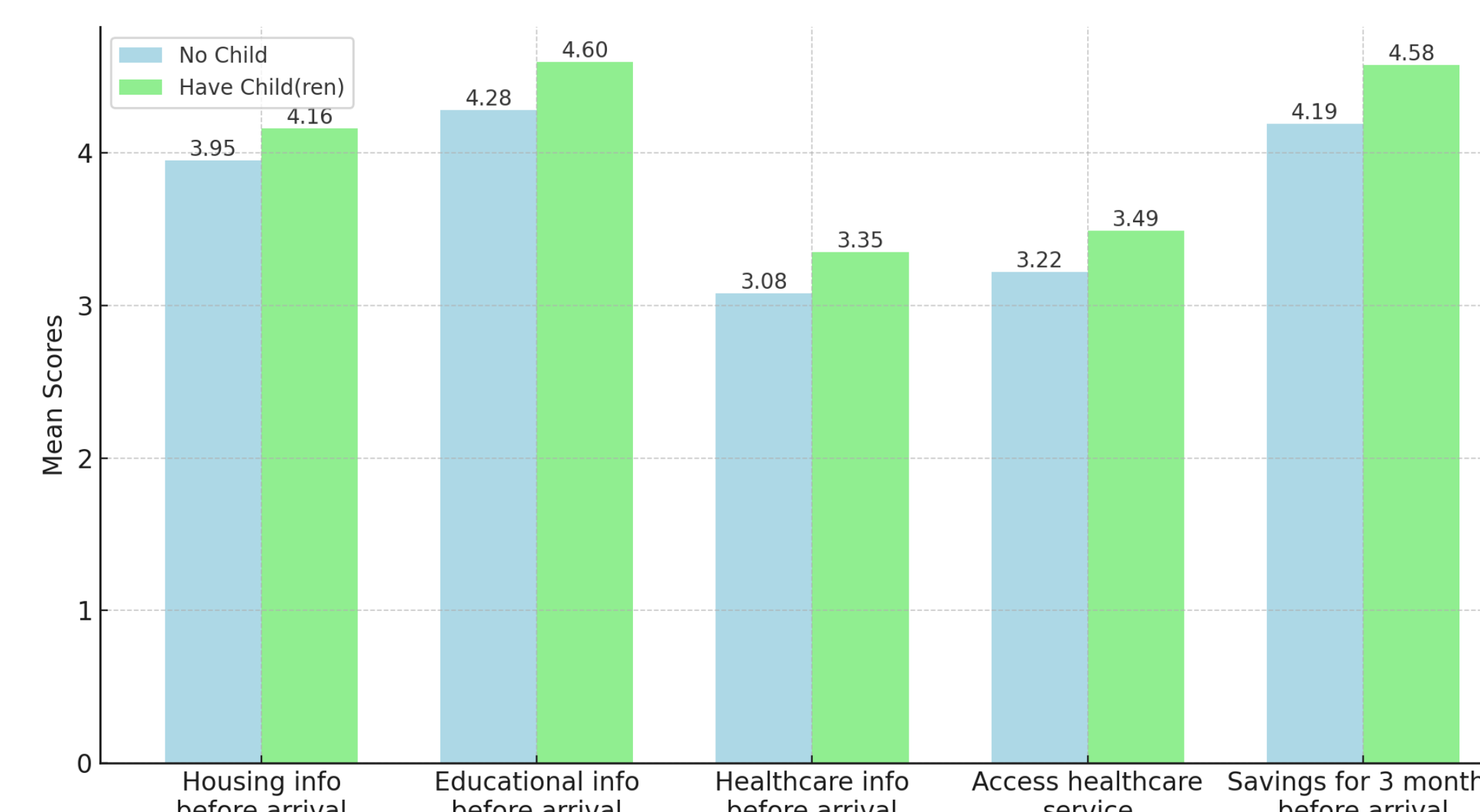


Figure 2. Social Supports in Canada

Hong Kongers with child(ren) have higher proportion of social support (family and friends), compared to Hong Kongers without child(ren).

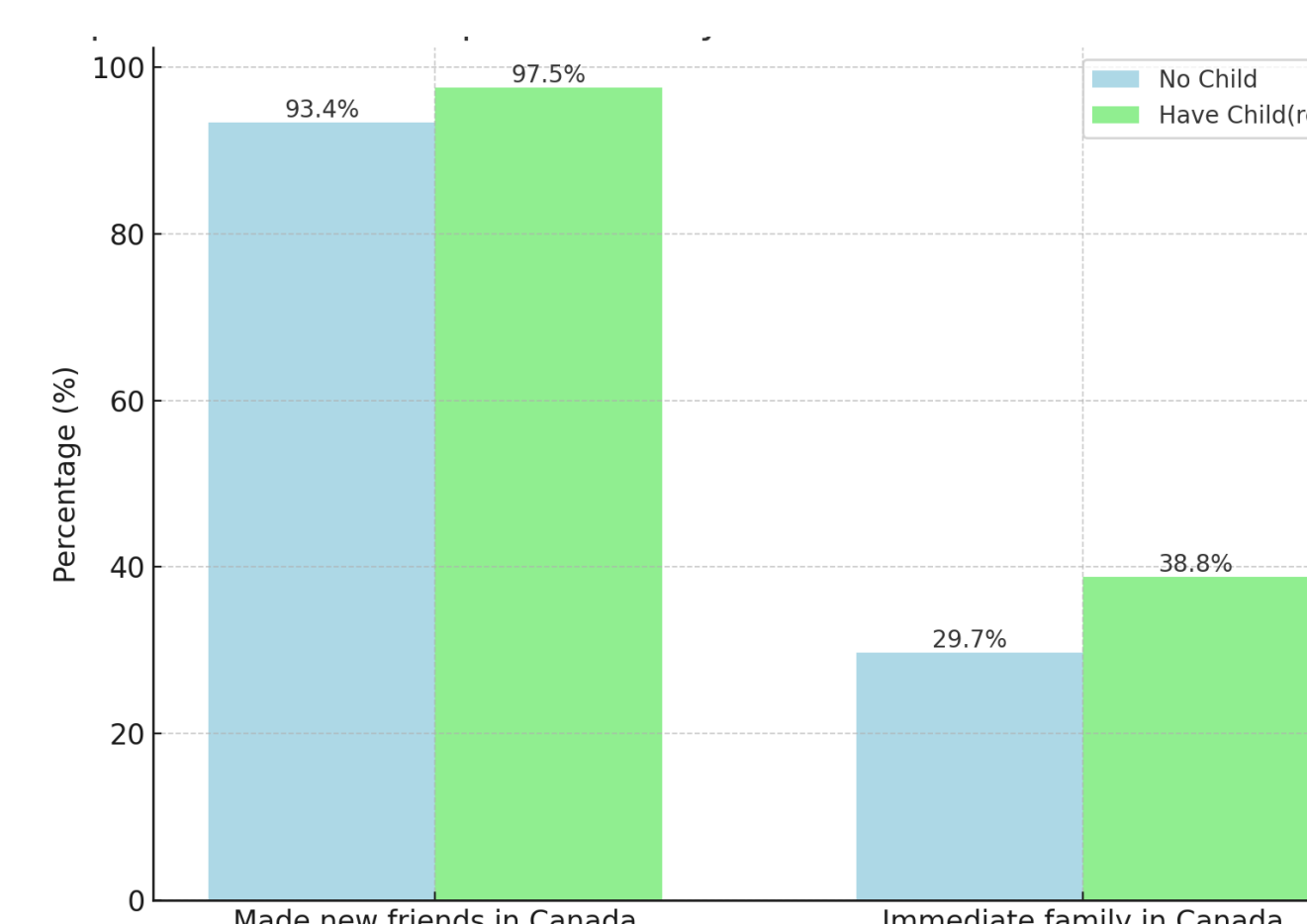


Figure 3. Employment Seeking in Canada

A lower proportion of Hong Kongers with child(ren) were seeking employment, compared to Hong Kong migrants without children.

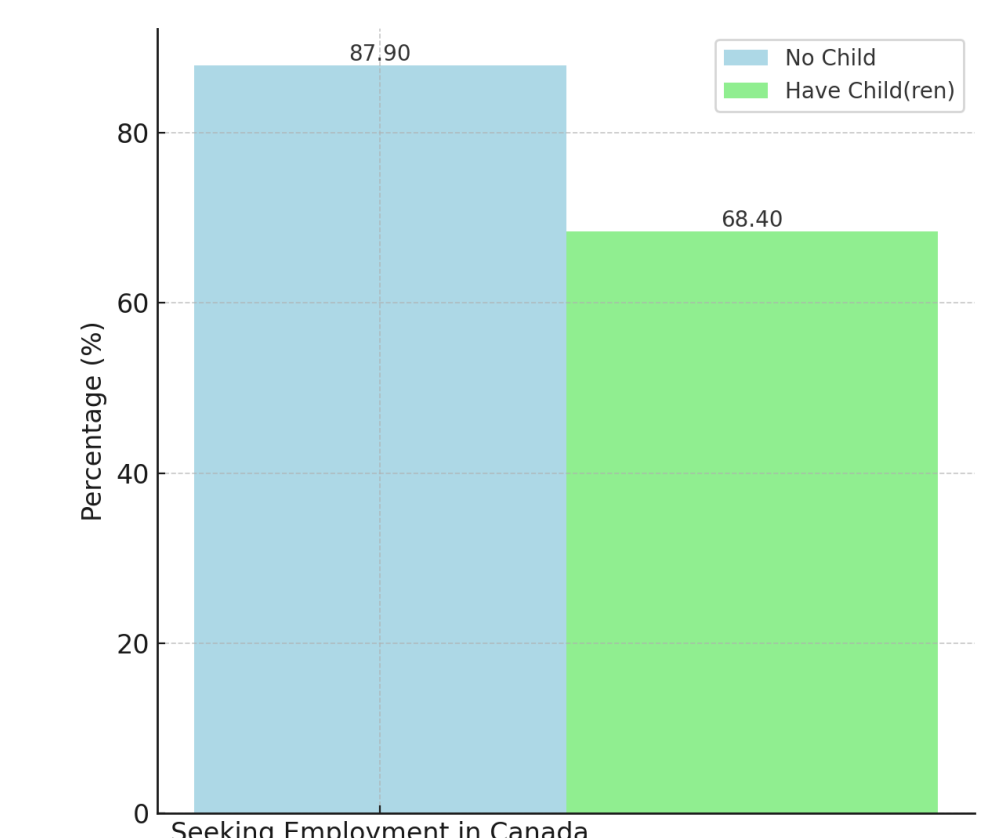


Figure 4. Social and Recreational Engagement, Past 6 Months

Hong Kongers with child(ren) engaged in more social/recreational activities, compared to Hong Kong migrants without children.

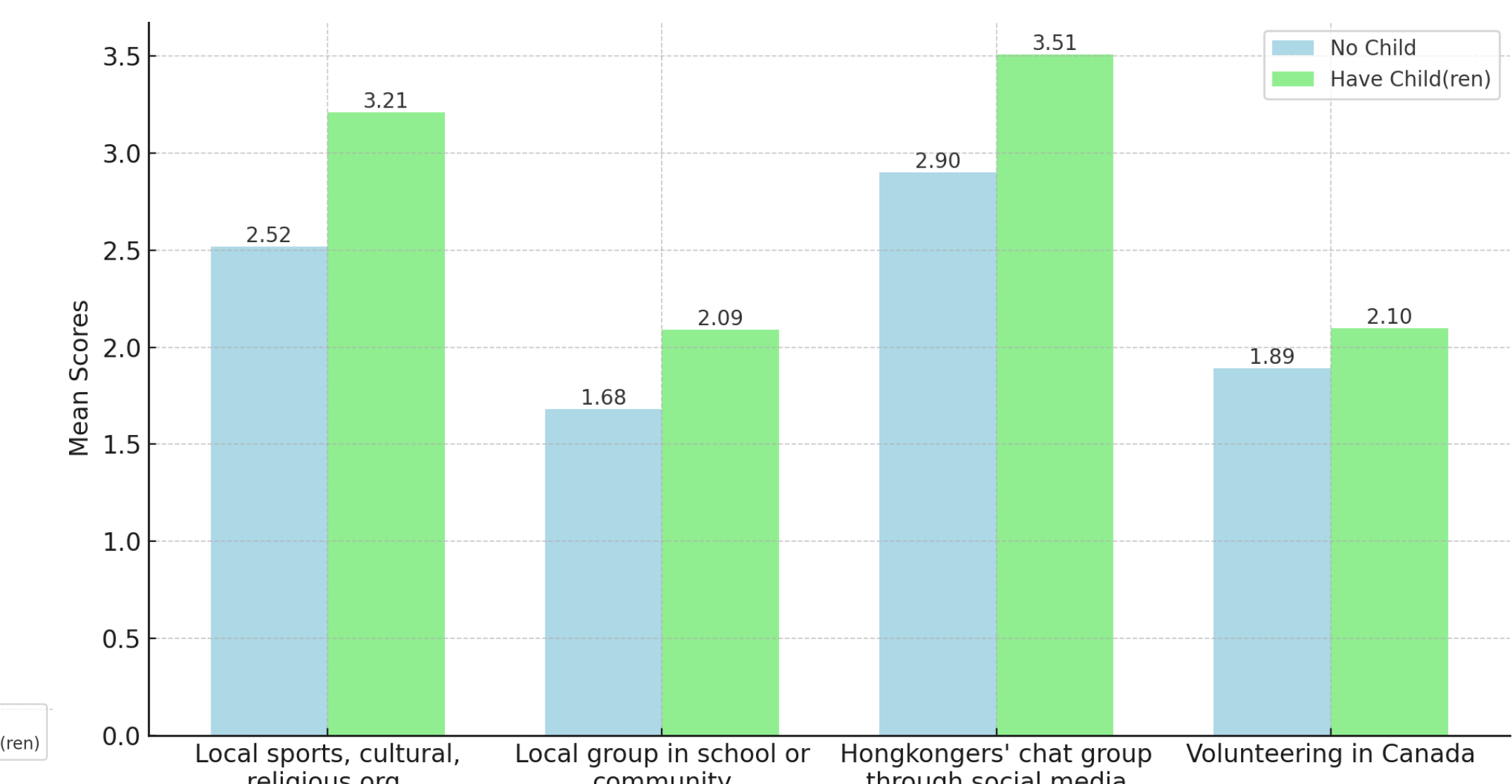


Figure 5. Identity and Belonging in Canada

Hong Kongers with child(ren) have a greater sense of "belonging" and "self identify as Canadian", compared to Hong migrants without children.

