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Press Release

Lingnan University survey: Hong Kong people slightly less happy than last year

The “Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey 2012” indicates a slight slip of Hong Kong people’s happiness index to 70.5, from 71.3 last year on a scale of 0-100. As before, females continue to command a premium over males in happiness, and older people tend to be happier.

Both work pressures, particularly excessively long hours, and financial pressures are important causes of unhappiness among Hong Kong people. According to the survey results, low-income families are generally less happy than those better off. The lowest happiness score, at 66.9, however, goes to the sandwich class with monthly income from HK\$30,000-39,999 per month.

Satisfaction with public policy, and particularly the satisfaction with the public healthcare system, has improved. The former rose from 4.69 last year to 4.77 on a scale of 0-10, while the latter rose noticeably from 5.67 to 6.18—a satisfactory level. However, respondents still consider the quality of public policy, though improved, as slightly unsatisfactory (as their satisfaction score stays below 6).

Four key determinants of happiness, namely Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement (LIFE) were also surveyed. This year the scores for Insight and Engagement have slipped, Fortitude edged and Love soared (Please see Table 1 in Appendix), suggesting that Hong Kong people are mostly loving and resilient, but may need more wisdom and a greater sense of purpose in their lives.

Designed and conducted by the Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University, the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey 2012 is the eighth in the series. A total of 926 respondents aged 21 or above were interviewed by telephone through random sampling on 8-13 November.

Highest income families are the happiest

This year the happiness indices for all household income brackets below HK\$40,000 per month declined drastically, while that for the HK\$40,000 and above went up.

The greatest decline in the happiness index is seen in the HK\$30,000 to HK\$39,999 group at nearly 10%. Those who earn a household income of less than HK\$10,000 also saw their happiness index slashed by 6.4%. (Please see Table 2 in Appendix)

However, the happiness index for those without incomes is significantly higher than those with the lowest incomes. This group probably consists of recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. Unlike low income earners who tend to work long hours and face the risk of dismissal, CSSA recipients actually face less anxiety and financial stress.

Young couples face greater pressures

Married people appear to be happier than unmarried people, but married people in the

twenties are generally less happy than the unmarried of the same age group, suggesting that young couples probably face a lot of pressures.

Meanwhile, respondents with post-secondary and tertiary education are generally less happy than those with only secondary education.

Long working hours drain happiness

Housewives, retirees, and students are generally happier than full-time workers or the unemployed. Respondents who reported their working hours of 50-59 hours per week, and those working 60 or more hours per week are the least happy, with a happiness index recorded at 6.81 and 6.71 respectively. Over 40% of the sampled workers work in excess of 50 hours per week.

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About the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey

Designed and conducted annually by the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) of Lingnan University since 2005, the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey is a systematic study of the happiness of Hong Kong residents and reports the overall average happiness index on a scale of 0-100. Since 2008, the Survey also includes questions on Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement, which are key elements of “mental capital” that help produce the “mental goods” that are essential to happiness.

Prof Ho Lok-sang, Director of the Centre for Public Policy Studies, would like to thank the Shih Wing Ching Foundation for its continued support to the survey this year.

About the Centre for Public Policy Studies, Lingnan University

The Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) of Lingnan University was established in 1994. Apart from in-house research, the CPPS offers support for public policy research among Lingnan’s researchers and conducts commissioned projects on various aspects of public policy.

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Appendix

Table 1: LIFE scores in Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey, 2011-2012

Year	2011		2012	
	LIFE scores (mean)	No. of respondents	LIFE scores (mean)	No. of respondents
Love	7.65	772	8.11	912
Insight	7.31	768	6.96	886
Fortitude	7.28	791	7.43	876
Engagement	7.35	742	7.28	896

Table 2: Happiness Index by Income, 2008-2012

Year/Household income per month	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2012 Change in percentage (%)
No income	58.9	71.3	67.2	71.2	70.2	-1.4
HK\$1-9,999	66.21	63.85	66.21	73.1	68.4	-6.43
HK\$10,000-19,999	65.1	70.42	69.57	71	68	-4.3
HK\$20,000-29,999	70.2	71.89	70.58	73.2	70.8	-3.24
HK\$30,000-39,999	71.64	70.13	70.6	74.1	66.9	-9.69
HK\$40,000 or above	72.91	72.82	73.29	72.4	73.8	1.93