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Press Release

Lingnan University survey: Hong Kong people slightly happier than last year despite significant drop in satisfaction with public policy and living environment

Results of Lingnan University's Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey 2013 indicate a slight increase of Hong Kong people's happiness index to 70.5, up from 70.3 last year on a scale of 0-100. Even though the uptick in the happiness index is insignificant, it is still unexpected in view of the social and political tensions in Hong Kong.

Satisfaction with the quality of public policy has fallen markedly from last year's 4.77 to 4.14 on a scale of 0 to 10. Also declining noticeably is satisfaction with the living environment from 6.03 to 5.75. Overall, only healthcare generated a satisfaction score of 6 or above. The media is also deemed to be unsatisfactory, with a rating of 5.10, about the same as last year.

Work pressures, excessively long hours, and financial pressures continue to be 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 66.7, goes to those who report no income. Those reporting family incomes at \$40,000 or above report the highest happiness at 73.3.

As in previous years, females continue to command a premium over males in happiness, and older people tend to be happier. Those who take success to mean realising one's potential through one's best effort and those who score high in a sense of balance and those with a strong sense of purpose in life score high on Insight and tend to be happy.

Four key determinants of happiness, namely Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement (LIFE) have been surveyed since 2008. Happily for Hong Kong, the Love score has continued to climb, rising to a historic high of 8.50 from last year's already impressive 8.10. Also rising noticeably are Insight (up 0.19 point to 7.15) and Fortitude (up 0.24 point to 7.68, also a historical high), while Engagement stays at more or less the same level.

Designed by the Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University, the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey 2013 is the ninth in the series. A total of 942 respondents aged 21 or above were interviewed by telephone through randomised digit dialing from 8 to 13 November. The response rate is 26%. The Centre for Public Policy Studies is pleased to acknowledge the help from the Public Governance Programme of the University in conducting the telephone survey and the financial support from the Shih Wing Ching Foundation who funded the study.

Highest income families are the happiest

This year the happiness index for all those with household incomes below HK\$10,000 per month declined over 4.5% year-on-year. The greatest jump in the happiness index is seen in the HK\$30,000 to HK\$39,999 group. (Please see Table 2 in Appendix) This reversed the rather big decline registered last year. It should be noted that these income groups do not retain the same composition from year to year. This year's

\$30,000 to \$39,999 earners probably include some employees who have been promoted in the past 12 months.

Financial stress is another key factor for unhappiness. Families with lower incomes but no financial pressure are likely to be happier than those with higher incomes but also heavy financial burdens.

Long working hours and pressures from work drain happiness

Housewives and retirees are generally happier than full-time workers or students. The unemployed are the least happy, with their happiness index at 5.95, representing a significant drop from last year. With the unemployment rate falling to new lows in recent years, those who still fail to find work are the most frustrated. Respondents who reported their working hours of 60 or more hours per week are the least happy, with a happiness index at 6.66. As in last year, over 40% of the sampled workers work in excess of 50 hours per week.

Marriage and Happiness

Married people appear to be happier than unmarried people, but the marriage premium tends to diminish for older people.

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.

For enquiries, please contact:

Miss Sylvia Song
Project Officer
Centre for Public Policy Studies
Lingnan University
Tel: 2616 7182 / 9865 7655
Email: kl4chu@LN.edu.hk

Ms Candy Lau
Communications & Public Affairs Officer
Office of Communications & Public Affairs
Lingnan University
Tel: 2616 8856 / 6159 1264
Email: candylau@LN.edu.hk

	N	67	111	187	365	68	111	186	365	66	107	175	348
Female	2012	7.2	7.05	7.12	7.03	6.7	6.33	6.66	6.45	7.54	7.4	7.58	7.41
	2013	7.03	7.28	7.23	7.14	6.66	6.64	6.7	6.60	7.82	7.54	7.48	7.50
	N	62	183	311	556	62	180	309	551	62	182	298	542
All	2012	7.01	6.95	7.14	7.03	6.68	6.35	6.6	6.50	7.28	7.29	7.55	7.38
	2013	6.93	7.03	7.15	7.05	6.45	6.51	6.59	6.52	7.48	7.31	7.38	7.37
	N	157	323	422	914	157	325	416	913	155	323	403	891

* Based on 2011 Census Age Structure Weights

y Gender, 2013

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		Happiness				Total Life Satisfaction				Worthy Life			
Age		21-29	30-49	50 or up	Total*	21-29	30-49	50 or up	Total *	21-29	30-49	50 or up	Total*
Male	2012	6.82	6.76	7.18	6.91	6.66	6.38	6.49	6.48	7.03	7.09	7.5	7.21
	2013	6.84	6.63	7.03	6.81	6.25	6.3	6.42	6.33	7.17	6.93	7.21	7.07
	N	67	111	187	365	68	111	186	365	66	107	175	348
Female	2012	7.2	7.05	7.12	7.03	6.7	6.33	6.66	6.45	7.54	7.4	7.58	7.41
	2013	7.03	7.28	7.23	7.14	6.66	6.64	6.7	6.60	7.82	7.54	7.48	7.50
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	N	157	323	422	914	157	325	416	913	155	323	403	891

Table 2: LIFE Score by Age Groups, 2009-2013

Age Group	Year	關愛 Love					智慧 Insight					堅毅 Fortitude					行動 Engagement				
		09	10	11	12	13	09	10	11	12	13	09	10	11	12	13	09	10	11	12	13
21-29	平均值	7.02	7.61	7.64	7.82	7.82	6.88	6.54	6.9	6.48	6.54	6.63	6.55	7.13	6.97	7.15	6.84	6.58	7.35	6.87	6.81
	人數	181	143	144	157	130	175	143	144	156	128	152	143	144	156	130	180	143	143	155	130
30-59	平均值	7.79	8.51	7.64	8.18	8.61	7.14	7.62	7.38	6.98	7.17	6.86	7.42	7.32	7.47	7.75	6.84	6.9	7.3	7.41	7.38
	人數	512	517	472	534	521	460	516	471	526	495	449	515	479	519	515	516	510	469	535	518
60 or above	平均值	8.24	8.52	7.71	8.11	8.61	7.31	7.93	7.5	7.31	7.45	7.54	7.51	7.3	7.73	7.81	6.23	6.27	6.66	7.21	7.39
	人數	102	149	156	207	269	93	155	153	191	237	82	149	168	189	262	99	144	130	193	261
Entire sample	平均值	7.67	8.35	7.65	8.10	8.50	7.1	7.49	7.31	6.96	7.15	6.89	7.28	7.28	7.44	7.68	6.76	6.73	7.2	7.27	7.30
	人數	795	809	772	898	920	728	814	768	873	860	683	807	791	864	907	795	797	742	883	909

Table 3: Happiness Index by Income, 2009-2013

Year/Household income per month	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2013 Change in Percentage
No Income	71.3	67.2	71.2	70.2	66.72	-4.96%
\$1 - \$9,999	63.85	66.21	73.1	68.4	65.31	-4.52%
\$10,000-\$19,999	70.42	69.57	71	68	68.24	0.35%
\$20,000-\$29,999	71.89	70.58	73.2	70.8	71.56	1.07%
\$30,000-\$39,999	70.13	70.6	74.1	66.9	70.14	4.84%
\$40,000 或以上 or above	72.82	73.29	72.4	73.8	73.3	-0.68%