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To: Editors of Local/Education News Desk

**Latest survey reveals that  
Happiness Index for Young people drops significantly amid stable public policy  
satisfaction indicators**

According to the results of the **Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey** conducted by **Chu Hai College of Higher Education** in collaboration with **Lingnan University's Centre for Public Policy Studies**, the **Happiness Index for Hong Kong people in 2016 stands at 67.6 (on a scale of 0 to 100), significantly lower than last year's 70.0**. However, the main decline occurs with those aged below 30, whose happiness index plunged from 69.3 to 63.8, the lowest score on record.

This decline in the self-reported happiness index, paradoxically, occurs at a time when people's satisfaction with the living environment, the media, the publicly funded healthcare system, and with the overall quality of public policy improving or stable. Moreover, young people's satisfaction with all these aspects of living quality appears to be grossly out of line with that of other age groups. This suggests that their dissatisfaction with progress in political reform may have affected their perception about different dimensions of living quality.

The decline in an indicator for purposive living (6.32, dropping from 6.65) and a very low score for "not thinking too much about things beyond one's control," which stood at 5.28, down from 5.35 last year, offer some clue to the frustration and unhappiness of the younger group.

Respondents' degree of satisfaction with the media rose slightly to 4.94 from last year's 4.89, albeit still at a low level. Satisfaction with the living environment increased to 5.82 from last year's 5.69, while that with public healthcare, at 6.29, is little different from last year's 6.30. Youngsters' (aged 21-29) satisfaction with the media and public policy also fell while other age groups' satisfaction with both improved.

There are signs that over the period 2011 to 2016, the middle class has shrunk while the upper income and the lower income class have expanded. This is consistent with the observation of Kenichi Ohmae that an "M society" is emerging.

The Happiness Index of those with a monthly household income between \$10,000 and \$20,000 showed a rise of 2.21% from last year's level to 6.97, while those with income below \$10,000 showed a decline, by 5.54%. The Happiness Index of those with family income from \$20,000 to \$30,000 hardly changed.

***Long working hours undermine happiness but less serious***

Statistics from past years revealed that people with longer working hours are generally less happy. Those who work for over 60 hours a week reported a happiness rating at 6.26, which



is noticeably lower than the average Happiness Index of 6.76 for all Hong Kong people. Work pressure, long working hours and financial burdens are the main contributing factors of Hong Kong people's unhappiness. This year 34.1% of the respondents have to work over 50 hours a week, showing a slight decrease from 35.7% of last year, which is also significantly lower than 2013's proportion of over 40%.

As in past surveys, females are found to be generally happier than males, and older people also reported higher Happiness Index levels. Housewives and retired persons are happier than full time working respondents and students, but the difference is narrowing. The Happiness Index of the unemployed showed a significant slump by almost one full point (0.96) to 5.68 this year, and they remained the least happy group.

### ***LIFE scores generally rose***

Since 2008, the annual scheme has surveyed on the factors of Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement (LIFE) which are related to the mental qualities of respondents. The Love score increased slightly to 8.16 from last year's 8.02; the Insight score rose by 0.24 to 7.41; the Fortitude score also rose by 0.12 to 7.49; while the Engagement score edged up from 7.47 to 7.57. Unfortunately, the Engagement score of youngsters (aged 21 - 29) showed a decrease of 0.28 to 6.65. The Love score of youngsters dropped to 7.60 from last year's 7.77. The good news is that elderly people have reported a continuous rise in the Engagement Index, from 6.66 in 2011 all the way to this year's 7.72. The Engagement score reflects purposive living.

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### **About the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey**

Conducted annually with the help of the Public Governance Programme and designed by the Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University since 2005, the Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey tracked and measured the level of happiness of Hong Kong residents on a scale of 0 to 100. For specific groups the scale is from 0 to 10. Since 2008, the Survey also includes questions on Love, Insight, Fortitude and Engagement, which are the key elements of "mental capital" essential to happiness.

The Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey in 2016 marks the twelfth consecutive year the survey has been conducted. Telephone interviews with a total of 925 respondents aged above 21 selected by random sampling were conducted from 19 September to 25 September 2016, with a response rate of 25.4%. This annual survey is sponsored by the Shih Wing Ching Foundation. The Centre for Public Policy Studies would like to express its gratitude for the Foundation's continuous support.

### **About the Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University**

**Press release**



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Lingnan 嶺南大學  
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The Centre for Public Policy Studies of Lingnan University was established in 1994. Apart from self-initiated studies, the Centre offers support for public policy research among Lingnan's researchers and conducts commissioned studies on various aspects of public policy.

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