

Lingnan University Study Reveals A Happier Working Population and a Less Happy Non-Working Population

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The working population in Hong Kong in 2006 are generally happier, with the average happiness index rising fastest for the young and working--by nearly 5% over past year's, a survey conducted by the University's Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) and the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences indicates(IHSS).

The Survey shows an overall average happiness index for Hong Kong people standing at 70.58, a fairly high score by international standards despite a slight decrease from 2005's. However, the scores for both retired persons and housewives show a noticeable decline.

Commenting on the happiness index by age groups for the working population, Prof Lok Sang HO, Chair of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lingnan University and Director of CPPS, said that the score of the young workers aged 21-29 has increased significantly to 70.66 from last year's 67.32. This could be a result of the improving economic opportunities for the young working population during 2006. The survey data also indicates that the proportion of workers aged 21-29 with personal income below \$7000 has decreased from 20.17% in 2005 to 13.56% in 2006. However, among the working population, the happiness scores for those aged 30-49 and 50 or above are almost the same as that of last year.

As for the happiness index by occupation, the scores for both the clerical and elementary workers have improved compared to year 2005, while there is an obvious decline in the scores for the retired persons and housewives. Although the income level and job stability have in general improved during this year, increasing workload, longer working hours, and working overseas or on the Chinese Mainland for the "employed family members" may reduce their interaction with other non-working family members. This could be the reason why the retired persons and housewives have become less happy. The implementation of the five-day work week system may well help increase the "time together with the family" and therefore enhance happiness.

According to Prof Ho, the overall average index for Hong Kong in 2006 is 70.58 in comparison to 71.4 in 2005. Moreover, most people feel that they are happier than 10 years ago, with an improvement index at 58.91. Whereas an improvement index above 50 suggests an improvement, this year's index has decreased slightly from 61.3 in 2005. Although the scores for both the happiness and happiness improvement indices have dropped slightly from last year's, the overall scores are still satisfactory according to international standards.



The report also shows that the happiness scores for the age groups of 50 or above, 30-49 and 21-29 are 70.58 (from last year's 75.38), 71.12 (from 71.08) and 69.86 (from 67.39) respectively. The group aged 30-49 has obtained the highest score, replacing those aged 50 or above who topped the scores last year.

The analysis also indicates that those who put a high value on "harmonious relation with family" and "spiritual satisfaction" as their life goals are generally happier than average while those who attach a higher value on "financial success" tend to be less happy than average. Those who attach a higher value on "career success" are about average in terms of the happiness index.

The study also shows that females are generally happier than males, at 71.35 (with 72.62 in 2005) as compared to the male average of 69.61 (with 69.58 in 2005). This result resembles those obtained elsewhere. Additionally, the report indicates that respondents value civic liberties (67.6) much more than electoral democracy (56.1).

The survey was conducted by CPPS with a research grant from the IHSS between 3 and 8 April 06 via randomized phone calls. The research team successfully interviewed 827 Hong Kong residents.

Launched in 2005 with much press coverage, Lingnan University's annual Happiness Index

Survey aims to study the impacts of economic, political and social factors on Hong Kong people's happiness and provide a measurable index of happiness. It is hoped that the study will inform policy makers and the public, leading to better policies and ultimately a happier society. The report shows that the main sources of unhappiness in Hong Kong include unemployment, worries over medical spending, retirement concerns, and relationship with family members, in descending order of importance. Policies relieving these worries will promote happiness and harmony in society. Report details please refer :
www.LN.edu.hk/pao/info/releases/happinessindex.ppt

Source: <http://www.ln.edu.hk/news/20060518/01>