

# Lingnan University “Hong Kong Happiness Index 2009” Survey Happiness Indices Rose Under Economic Recovery

**7 Dec 2009**

Lingnan University (the University) Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) today announced the survey findings of the “Hong Kong Happiness Index 2009”. According to the survey, Hong Kong people in 2009 apparently are happier than they were in the previous year, with the overall happiness index rose to 70.6 in 2009, up from 69.3 in 2008. This is the second year in a row marked by a rise in the Lingnan Happiness Index.

The survey was conducted by CPPS from 9-13 November 2009 via randomized phone calls, and sponsored by the University’s Economics Department Master of Science in International Banking and Finance Programme. The research team successfully interviewed 828 Hong Kong residents aged 21 or above. On a scale of 0 to 100, an index above 50 suggests that people are happy and an index below 50 indicating unhappiness.

Director of CPPS Professor Ho Lok-sang said, “the rise of the 2009 happiness index is due mainly to the increase of happiness among households with relatively lower family incomes, people with household income below \$9,999 and those with household income between \$10,000 and \$19,999 recorded a 5.69% and 8.19% increase in the happiness index respectively, while the happiness indices for people with higher household income remained roughly the same.”

He continued, “26% of those interviewed experienced an improvement in their finances, while 20% experienced a decline, the ongoing economic recovery appears to be taking hold, and has changed the mood of many of the lower income people.”

The 2009 sample shows a smaller proportion of respondents over 30,000 dollars monthly household income (39.9% cf 43.7%). The happiness indices for people with monthly household income above \$30,000 show a slight decline. The happiness index of the lowest income group (below \$10,000), rose noticeably from the previous year, but remained the most unhappy group among the various income groups (at 66.6 cf 70.6 for the entire sample).

The report shows that the older, the female, the retired, and housewives tend to be happier. This is consistent with earlier results and those reported by other researchers.

The survey shows that financial stress is one key factor for unhappiness, and that improvement in finance is one key factor for happiness.

The study also found that longer working hours, unsatisfactory working environment and stress at work affect happiness indices adversely and significantly. Those who do voluntary community work as well as those who have stronger religious beliefs are also significantly happier than others.

### **“Three Happinesses” and the “Happiness Formula”**

The study confirmed a theory proposed by Professor Ho on “Three Happinesses” comprising “retrospective happiness,” “process happiness,” and “prospective happiness,” and his “Happiness Formula” based on Love, Insight, Fortitude, and Engagement (LIFE). An important finding is that educated people tend to score lower in the Love and Wisdom Indices, though university graduates tend to be more focused and engaged in their pursuits. University graduates’ low score on wisdom is driven by a competitive notion of success and this explains their relatively lower happiness scores.

Regression results showed that happiness is positively related to the extent of involvement in various activities. In particular, for the “three happinesses” model, “happiness in process” and “retrospective happiness” appear to count more than “prospective happiness”. For the LIFE model, those who have more wisdom of life (Insight) and who have a stronger sense of

purpose (Engagement) tend to be happier.

The study offers an explanation for the commonly observed U-shaped happiness profile through the life cycle. As a young person goes into the prime working age, the prospective happiness score drops, while the coefficient on the prospective happiness score also falls. At the same time the effect of process happiness on total happiness also falls, suggesting excessive preoccupation with the future. When people go past the age of 60, the wisdom score and the love score rise significantly and the effect of the wisdom score on happiness also rises significantly.

Interestingly, females outperform males for all the LIFE scores. This is true of 2009 as of 2008, offering yet another insight to why females tend to be happier and live longer.

Since 2005, Lingnan University's annual Happiness Index Survey aims to study the impacts of economic, political and social factors on Hong Kong people' happiness and to 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.

# 嶺南大學「香港快樂指數 2009」調查報告

## 經濟回穩下快樂指數上升

2009 年 12 月 7 日

嶺南大學(嶺大) 公共政策研究中心 (研究中心)今日公布「香港快樂指數 2009」調查報告。結果顯示快樂指數連續兩年錄得上升，對比上一年度，香港人在 2009 年表現得更快樂。整體快樂指數由 2008 年的 69.3 分上升至 2009 的 70.6 分。

是次調查由研究中心於 2009 年 11 月 9 至 13 日以電話隨機抽樣方式進行，並由嶺南大學經濟學系國際銀行與金融碩士課程贊助。研究中心成功訪問了 828 名年齡 21 歲或以上的香港居民。調查以零至 100 分作指標，50 分以上表示「快樂」；50 分以下表示「不快樂」。

研究中心主任何灤生教授指出：「2009 年的快樂指數上升，主要是因為較低家庭收入的人士比去年更快樂。每月家庭收入少於 \$10,000，以及 \$10,000-\$19,999 人士的快樂指數分別錄得 5.69% 及 8.19% 的升幅，而其他較高家庭收入組別的快樂指數則沒有明顯的變化。」

何教授續指出：「26% 的受訪者表示其財政狀況對比上一年有所改善，表示轉差的則有 20%。正在復蘇當中的經濟環境似乎改變了大部分低收入人士的情緒。」

調查顯示家庭收入 \$30,000 或以上的比例減少了（由上年的 43.7% 跌至本年的 39.9%），而此等人士的快樂指數錄得輕微下跌。雖然最低家庭收入的組別（\$10,000 以下）的快樂指數比上年回升，但相對其他收入組別，他們仍然是最不快樂的一群（66.6 分對比整體 70.6 分）。

調查亦發現，年長、女性、退休以及家庭主婦比較快樂。這跟過去幾年的調查，以及同類型研究的結果亦大致吻合。

報告顯示，財政壓力是導致不快樂其中一個很重要的因素，相反，財政狀況改善則是導致快樂的重要原因之一。

除此之外，工作時數較長、對工作環境不滿以及較大工作壓力均會對快樂指數造成負面影響。我們亦發現：愈多參與義工工作，以及有虔誠宗教信仰的人都會比較快樂。

### 「三式快樂」理論以及「快樂方程式」

今次調查確認了何灤生教授提出的「三式快樂」理論以及「快樂方程式」。「三式快樂」理論將快樂分

為「回溯式快樂」(後顧快樂)、「進行式快樂」(過程快樂)以及「展望式快樂」(前瞻快樂)三種；而「快樂方程式」則把快樂的元素綜合成四類：「關愛」(Love)、「智慧」(Insight)、「堅毅」(Fortitude)及「活動」(Engagement)(LIFE)。其中一個重要發現是，雖然曾受大專或以上教育的人較專注及投入追求人生目標，但他們在「關愛」及「智慧」的得分卻較低，這是由於他們普遍受「透過競爭才能達至成功」的觀念影響所致。這亦解釋了為什麼受高等教育的人的快樂指數會相對較低。

透過回歸分析，快樂指數跟以上各種變量皆呈現有效的正向關係。「三式快樂」中，「過程快樂」及「後顧快樂」比「前瞻快樂」對整體快樂指數影響較大。而「快樂方程式」模型顯示，較能看透世情(「智慧」Insight)及能夠帶著清晰目標做事(「活動」Engagement)的人會比較快樂。

這次研究為人生週期中快樂指數呈「U形」發展模式提供了解釋：當年青人進入工作年齡，「前瞻快樂」得分會下跌，而該變量的關係系數亦會下降。同時，「過程快樂」對整體快樂指數的重要性亦會下跌，顯示這個階段的人由於過於瞻前顧後，反而忽略了當下生活的樂趣。而當人的年齡超過六十歲之後，其「智慧」及「關愛」的得分普遍上升，「智慧元素」對快樂指數的影響亦變得更重要。

有趣的是，在 2008 年及 2009 年的調查都顯示女性在四個 LIFE 元素的得分均比男性高，這或許可以提供新的角度去理解為什麼女性會比男性快樂兼且長壽。

研究中心自 2005 年開始每年進行「香港快樂指數」調查，旨在讓社會了解目前本港經濟、政治、社會及文化氣候下香港人的快樂感受，並提供一個可量化的指數，分析導致「快樂」的因素，為公共政策的設計提供基礎。

香港快樂指數 2009 調查報告