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HONG KONG TOPS GLOBAL HEALTH INDEX

Residents of Hong Kong and other high-income Asian cities live longer than urban dwellers in other world regions, but health and well-being are still dependent on your postcode

HONG KONG—15th November 2011.

Hong Kong, Osaka, Tokyo and Singapore – all high-income Asian cities – come out on top of a new study of 129 world metropolitan regions. The study by LSE Cities is part of new research being launched today at the Urban Age Hong Kong ‘Cities, Health and Well-being’ conference, organised by the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Deutsche Bank’s Alfred Herrhausen Society, in partnership with the University of Hong Kong.

Combining data from the UN and other sources usually only available at national level, the study gives a snapshot of how health, education and wealth vary in 129 city regions across five continents totalling 1.2 billion people. Taking into account life expectancy and child mortality, and other health indicators, the study reveals that western European cities like Stockholm, Paris and Berlin fare better than North American counterparts, but lag behind cities in developed Asian regions.

The findings confirm that urban dwellers in Hong Kong are likely to live to an average age of 82.5 years, a few months more than Parisians (82.3 years) but nearly two years more than Londoners (80.6 years) or New Yorkers (80.9 years). Residents of Tokyo or Singapore can expect to live to 82.4 years and 80.7 years respectively. But differences can also be pronounced within world regions: Ho Chi Min City’s residents reach the much lower average age of 74. In South America, one of the most unequal regions of the world, the urban dwellers of La Paz in Bolivia live to 63.3 years while in the nearby Lima, the capital of Peru, life expectancy reaches 76.4 years.

Another key finding of the study is that the health of residents in cities globally is better than their national averages. Even though the residents of Johannesburg only live to an average age of 51 – reflecting the tragic consequences of AIDS – efforts to provide access to universal education and healthcare means that they have longer life expectancy than most people living in South Africa as a whole. Those living in Mumbai and New York, for example, do better than national averages in India and the USA, as do residents of Beijing and Shanghai compared to the rest of mainland China.

Commenting on the findings, Ricky Burdett, Director of LSE Cities and Urban Age said, “To date, urbanisation has been associated with improvements in income levels and health

outcomes. However, the pressures of urban growth have contributed to the emergence of stark social and health inequalities in cities of the developed and developing world. With 70 per cent of the world's population forecast to be living in urban areas by 2050, global well-being will increasingly be determined by the health of urban dwellers.”

Living in Hong Kong

The study has also investigated health and social patterns in Hong Kong. It reveals that, despite its high global position, strong unequal health outcomes persist across the city-state. Child mortality in the poorest 20 per cent of the city is more than 1.6 times higher than for the city as a whole. Premature mortality rates drop significantly when moving from more to less deprived areas within Hong Kong.

An in-depth study by LSE Cities and the University of Hong Kong with residents living in some of the city's densest areas confirms they recognise that ‘convenience and accessibility’ are amongst Hong Kong's greatest assets, but many are finding it more difficult to reconcile their daily routines with the pressures of modern living. While a middle-aged resident in Sai Ying Pun recognised that ‘**Time matters in Hong Kong**’ an 18-year old student in Whampoa notes that “**the pace of living is too fast and it's hard to breathe.**”

Paul Yip, Director of the HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong said ‘The success of a city cannot be measured only by its financial prowess; the mental health and the well-being of its residents must also be considered.’

For more on Cities, Health and Well-being, see <http://urban-age.net/conferences/hongkong/>

For more on Measuring Metropolitan Wellbeing, see <http://urban-age.net/media/objects/articles/measuring-metropolitan-well-being>

For more on Hong Kong specific research, see <http://urban-age.net/media/objects/articles/hong-kongs-spatial-dna>

For more on the focus groups, see <http://urban-age.net/media/objects/articles/living-at-density>

For more on research methodology/discussion paper, see <http://urban-age.net/files/2011/11/LSE-Cities-Metropolitan-HDI-and-Density-18-10-11.pdf>

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About Urban Age

The Urban Age Programme, jointly organised with Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society, is an international investigation of the spatial and social dynamics of cities centred on an annual conference, research initiative and publication. Since 2005, more than ten conferences have been held in rapidly urbanising regions including New York, Shanghai, London, Mexico City, Mumbai, Johannesburg, Sao Paulo and Istanbul. The conferences operate as mobile laboratories, testing and sampling the social and physical characteristics of global cities through expert presentations and testimonials, research, site visits, mapping and informal information exchange.

ORGANISED BY

LSE Cities

LSE Cities is an international centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science, supported by Deutsche Bank, that carries out research, education and outreach activities in London and abroad. Its mission is to study how people and cities interact in a rapidly urbanising world, focusing on how the design of cities impacts on society, culture and the environment. Through research, conferences, teaching and projects, the centre aims to shape new thinking and practice on how to make cities fairer and more sustainable for the next generation of urban dwellers, who will make up some 70 per cent of the global population by 2050.

Alfred Herrhausen Society, The International Forum of Deutsche Bank

The non-profit Alfred Herrhausen Society is the international forum of Deutsche Bank. Its work focuses on new forms of governance as a response to the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Alfred Herrhausen Society seeks traces of the future in the present, and conceptualises relevant themes for analysis and debate. It works with international partners across a range of fields, including policy, academia and business, to organise forums for discussion worldwide. It forges international networks and builds temporary institutions to help to find better solutions to global challenges. It targets future decision-makers, but also attempts to make its work accessible to a wide public audience. The society is dedicated to the work of Alfred Herrhausen, former spokesman of the Deutsche Bank board of Directors, who advocated the idea of corporate social responsibility in an exemplary manner until his assassination by terrorists in 1989. The Alfred Herrhausen Society is an expression of Deutsche Bank's worldwide commitment to civil society.

London School of Economics and Political Science

LSE is a specialist university with an international intake and a global reach. Its research and teaching span the full breadth of the social sciences. Founded in 1895 by Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and set up to improve society and to "understand the causes of things", LSE has always put engagement with the wider world at the heart of its mission.

URBAN AGE HONG KONG PARTNERS

The University of Hong Kong

The University of Hong Kong, founded in 1911, is a pre-eminent international university in Asia, with more than 100 teaching departments and sub-division of studies. It has over 23,400 undergraduate and postgraduate students from over 50 countries. The University seeks to sustain and enhance its excellence as an institution of higher learning through outstanding teaching and world-class research so as to produce well-rounded graduates with lifelong abilities to provide leadership within the societies they serve. Our vision is to be amongst the top-tier universities in the world. The University is also a member of the Universitas 21 Consortium which is an international network of leading, environmental and economic characteristics of cities.