

"Hong Kong Today" Module

Quality of Life

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Quality of life is a complex and dynamic concept with multiple aspects, and its meaning and measuring criteria evolve with social, economic and cultural development. This phrase can be broken down into its two constituents where the "life" of any human comprises the material (e.g. food, clothing, accommodation and transport, income, consumption and purchases) and non-material or spiritual (relationships with friends and family or leisure and entertainment activities). The term "quality" refers to levels and standards, which can be high or low as they are measurable. Based on the above, the quality of life largely means the degree to which the people are satisfied with different aspect of their lives (material and non-material lives) (including objective data and subjective, personal experience), which in turn reflects the wealth of a nation or region as well as the overall well-being of residents.

Material Life



Spiritual Life

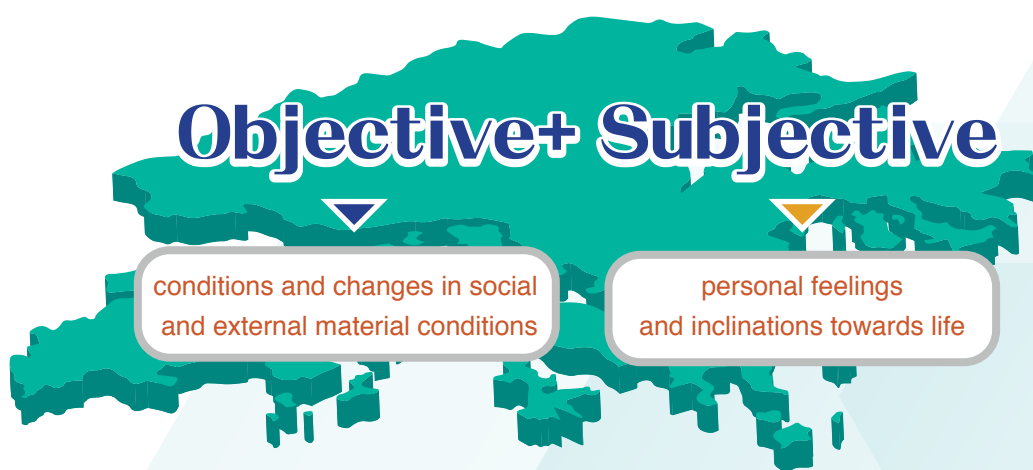


In an economically advanced society like Hong Kong, the quality of life is often associated with material life, and is often measured based on income as well as social and economic status. However, the quality of life is not equal to the standard of living, as the latter emphasises material life, while the quality of life involves both material and non-material lives. The quality of life is affected by many factors, such as objective factors related to external issues like economic, political and environmental conditions, as well as subjective factors like physical health and psychological well-being. The degree of impact associated with these factors also varies among individuals and places. Just as we are all under the influence of different social settings, cultural backgrounds and personal philosophies, so are the interpretation and evaluation of the quality of life



of residents. For example, Denmark is proud of its high-quality life and work-life balance that play a vital part in attracting foreign investment. This is credited to a greater value placed on soft factors including culture, leisure and family time, than to hard values such as monetary and material fortune. In 2014, Panama topped the Global Well-Being Index for the second consecutive year, reportedly for daily happiness without significant stress or worry. These examples indicate that **the quality of life does not depend on the standard of one's material life and that subjective experience is an essential component and neither should be overlooked.**

Since quality of life involves the satisfaction with different aspects of one's life, **objective data from a multitude of perspectives (e.g. political, economic and environmental) as well as the subjective experience of people should be collected for any country or territory to generate representative findings.** Objective data includes the GDP, GDP per capita, unemployment rate, income level, Gini coefficient, environmental pollution indexes (e.g. solid waste, water and air pollution), and the number of medical facilities and schools. Subjective experience refers to one's satisfaction with aspects of life that may include work prospects, family relations, physical health, cultural diversity, rights to participate in political affairs, freedom of the press as well as freedom of speech. **Various aspects of life should be taken into account because quality of life is a complex concept that covers objective and subjective indicators.** Objective indicators are used to measure conditions and changes in social and external material conditions while subjective indicators are used to study personal feelings and inclinations towards life experience.



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To understand the overall quality of life for residents in a country or territory, international and local organisations conduct surveys with varying focuses, themes and titles to reflect national or territory-wide welfare, at times ranking lists for comparison. Surveys by these organisations are not necessarily conducted in the name of quality of life, and items in the measurement of quality of life as well as their definitions, also tend to be different. The UN Human Development Index uses four indices, life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling and gross national income per capita, to evaluate the human development of countries and territories worldwide. According to its 2018 report, Hong Kong attained “Very High Human Development”, coming 7th out of 189 countries and territories worldwide in 2017. This is the highest ranking in Asia. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Global Liveability Index is based on five categories of stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. The 2018 liveability score for Hong Kong was 91.3 out of 100, placing it 35rd in the index and up 10 places from 2017. Hong Kong ranked the first in Asia.

In Hong Kong, the Centre for Quality of Life of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has compiled the CUHK Hong Kong Quality of Life Index since 2003. The index includes 23 indicators that are grouped into five sub-indices: Health, Social, Culture and Leisure, Economic, and Environmental.



2002 was the base year of the study, and the CUHK Hong Kong Quality of Life Index for that year was set at 100. According to the report in 2018, Hong Kong scored 105.09 in its quality of life, a drop of 0.21 from 2016. Among the sub-indices, the Culture and Leisure, and Social indicators reported growth while the Health and Economic sub-indices declined. The Environmental sub-indices remained unchanged.

In conclusion, quality of life is measured by a wide spectrum of perspectives, and surveys tend to have their own focuses. Findings from these surveys reflect local residents' experience and what they care about, and the findings the Government to help grasp an overall picture of the people's livelihood, thereby serving as a source of reference when implementing policies.

