

## Abstract

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### The Quality of Life in Megacity and Seoul-Specific Happiness Indicator

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#### Policies in Public Sectors Should Aim to Increase the Quality of Life

There is a common consensus that more efforts on the part of government should be made to increase the happiness of people. The World Happiness Report published by the United Nations in 2012 was the first of its kind which promoted such consensus. Not only did the report raise a fundamental question on the adequacy of current measures of social progress in particular based on GDP, but also it provided a template for every interested country or group of countries of what it means for the world, a country, and a city to progress and what the public sector should do for the growth and development of human being.

#### **Shifting Paradigm: From Quantitative to Qualitative Development of Megacity**

Today, megacities around the world are grappling to survive a global competition, looking for the growth engine of the city. Economic growth, however, is no longer deemed as an effective solution for the competitiveness of the city as it used to be because with absolute poverty posing little, if any, threat to most of the advanced megacities, public policies focusing on the improvement of the quality of life and the enhancement of a qualitative, not just quantitative, growth of the city and society now play a more essential role in creating 'a better society' to live in.

### **Seoul-Specific Happiness Index Emphasizing Public Policies on Better Life and Society**

In an effort to promote the quality of life of the city, the city government of Seoul has embarked on developing innovative policy tools, one of which was creating Seoul-Specific Happiness Index(SSHI) through which the city government can monitor regularly the quality of life in Seoul and identify crucial factors affecting people's happiness. SSHI aims not only to compare Seoul with other megacities by using comparable happiness indicators, but also to monitor Seoul-specific happiness level which draws upon the weights that the citizens of Seoul attribute to happiness indicators. To create SSHI, various happiness indexes currently used by other megacities and countries were reviewed, from which a set of common denominators were drawn. The component of SSHI, for the most part, resembles that of OECD's Better Life Initiative.

### **SSHI Comprises 11 Topics and 24 Indicators**

SSHI comprises 11 topics and 24 indicators. 11 topics are economy, housing, jobs, human capital, environment, community, civic engagement, health, safety, cultural leisure, and life satisfaction and each topic comprises one to three indicators. Using SSHI, factors affecting the quality of life in Seoul will be analyzed continuously and used as evidence for policy-making. Our analysis reveals that in Seoul, of the 11 topics, health matters the most to people's happiness, followed by income, safety, work and life balance, and life satisfaction.

### **In Other Megacities, the Importance Decreases in Order of Human Capital, Health, Life Satisfaction, Safety, and Work and Life Balance**

In the cities or countries where the quality of life is higher than that of Seoul, areas such as human capital(education or skills), health, life satisfaction, and work and life balance are found to matter the most to happiness while income matters relatively less. In terms of the similarity of the weight pattern, countries like Russia, Poland, and Luxemburg resembles Seoul the most whereas countries like Italy and France the least.

To Seoulites' Happiness, Materialistic Factors Do Matter; But Subject and Perceptive Factors Matter as Well.

Our analysis of the happiness index of Seoulites reveals that the extent of influence on happiness decreases in order of satisfaction with life achievement, stability in the future, living standard, and job satisfaction. While life satisfaction, concept wise, may tap on the quality of life, people in practice tend to measure it in terms of social status or materialistic success in life. Both stability in the future and living standard represent a materialistic aspect of life as well. Therefore, how Seoulites assess their happiness is for the most part decided by materialistic and economic factors. It is also found that subjective and perceptive factors such as trust, subjective social status, social mobility prospect, and subjective satisfaction with life influence happiness more than objective factors like income.

#### **Calling for a Multidimensional Approach to the improvement of Happiness in Seoul**

We confirm that the happiness of Seoulites is affected by both materialistic and subjective factors. SSHI is the first of its kind ever designed to monitor and analyze how the happiness of Seoulites is affected by the greater changes in socioeconomic conditions of Seoul and the perceptions and attitudes of community. SSHI will serve as a communicative bridge between the city government and the citizens, allowing the city government to better understand what people want and how to earn more trust. It is also noted here that when the unit of analysis is reduced to 25 metropolitan boroughs from Seoul as a whole, we find different happiness mechanisms at work between boroughs. Accordingly, for the city government to enhance democratic communication with people and exercise a scientific governance, it is imperative to choose the priority of public policies and services based on happiness mechanisms at work.

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