

Press Release



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Cigna Study Shows Uncertainty about the Future as Leading Cause of Stress

Hongkongers are the fourth most stressed population globally

Hong Kong – March 31, 2021 – Cigna Hong Kong today released the Hong Kong findings of the latest edition of its **Cigna COVID-19 Global Impact Study**. As part of Cigna’s annual 360 Well-Being Survey, this research is the fourth in a series of studies to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s well-being in 11 markets, including Hong Kong. The research tracks people’s well-being as they move across and between different stages of the pandemic.

This fourth wave of research, [Cigna COVID-19 Global Impact Study: Future Uncertainty Hangs Heavy](#), suggests that overall well-being in Hong Kong improved slightly by 0.4 points between August and October 2020 (from 56.4 to 56.8) and was lower than the global average of 61.5. It also has one of the lower levels of well-being of the 11 markets surveyed, aside from Taiwan and Korea. Hong Kong compares unfavorably with its global counterparts in areas of work, finance, and family well-being.

Financial insecurity still the key stressor

Finances continue to be the key stressor for the people of Hong Kong, with the financial well-being index remaining stable (49.8 in August to 49.9 in October 2020), with only 13% of respondents saying their current financial situation is positive (increased slightly from 11% in August 2020). People continue to feel insecure financially and are more pessimistic about their finances, with only 15% of respondents saying they can maintain their current standard of living (same number in August 2020). Only 11% of people said they have the financial ability to meet their own or their family’s medical needs (increased slightly from 10% in August 2020).

The concern on the ability to pay for housing has increased (from 11% in August to 14% in October 2020), and the majority of respondents have a bad outlook on the economic environment and its impact on their financial situation and planning, with only 10% of respondents said they feel optimistic (slightly increased from 9% in August 2020). Only 10% of respondents said they have sufficient money for retirement (slightly increased from 8% in August 2020).

Hong Kong still has one of the higher stress levels across the markets surveyed, with unmanageable stress level staying at 14% in October (slightly dropped from 18% in August 2020). 90% claim to be stressed, which is slightly lower than Korea (96%), Taiwan (92%), and UAE (92%), and continues to be higher than the global average of 84%. Uncertainty about the future has become the key stress driver, with more than half (52%) of respondents attributing this as the cause of their stress in October 2020.

Prolonged stress affects body and mind

COVID-19 has led to diverse mental health problems. People suffering from long-term stress have developed emotional and mental symptoms. This can be seen in married couples, where the most common stress induced symptoms are short-tempered and unusually aggressive behavior, e.g. easily angered, yelled and snapped at people (up from 16% in August to 22% in October 2020). Other symptoms include the inability to concentrate (up from 19% in August to 22% in October 2020), and negative thinking, with 20% of respondents claimed to have this symptom in October (up from 16% in August 2020).

Jonathan Spiers, CEO and Country Manager, Cigna Hong Kong, said: “The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching human and economic consequences. Hong Kong people continue to feel stressed about their personal finances as they see it more challenging to maintain their current financial situation and are also uncertain about the future. Cigna understands that mental and physical health are tightly intertwined, and we have been offering a range of products and services to address the mental health needs of our customers. These include various inpatient and outpatient treatment benefits to provide coverage for medical expenses incurred in the treatment of mental illness, and support from an in-house Health, Wellness and Clinical Services team. Our registered nurses provide necessary assistance and emotional support to patients and their family members who face critical medical conditions. We also work with our group clients to develop and evaluate wellness programs to help improve their physical and mental health. To provide extra peace of mind to our customers during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also extending the coverage period of our COVID-19 related special measures that was first introduced in 2020, until 31 December 2021. Some of these measures include extending the grace period for premium payment to 90 days for policyholders of our medical insurance plans¹ who are suspected or confirmed to be infected with COVID-19, and no penalty for ward upgrade in case of COVID-19 hospitalization. Our individual and group medical insurance plans² also include coverage for COVID-19 vaccination and its side-effects, as well as COVID-19 treatment costs.”

Lack of accessibility on virtual health still the cause of lower usage

The likelihood to use virtual health remains stable (48% in October VS 49% in August 2020) if they are offered the option. For those who are likely to use virtual health, a majority (64%) said they will consider using it due to social distancing or to minimize contact with others. Generic health support (54%), mental health support (42%) and prescriptions delivery (40%) continue to be the top services of interest. Lack of accessibility on virtual health still appear to be the key reason for its lower usage in Hong Kong, with 61% of respondents said they do not have access to the service in October (slightly dropped from 67% in August 2020).

Less ‘Always on’ working despite longer working hours and poorer work-life balance

Satisfaction regarding workload or working hours of Hongkongers has decreased, with fewer people saying they have a reasonable workload/ working hours (down from 34% in August to 30% in October 2020), and a decline in work-life balance (down from 42% in August to 39% in October 2020), even though less people are experiencing ‘Always on’ working (down from 80% in August to 74% in October 2020). Workplace stress remains stable, with 47% of respondents saying they have work-related stress in October (VS 46% in August 2020).

Less Hong Kong working professionals are provided an option to work from home (down from 62% in August to 56% in October 2020). Across all these working professionals, 64% are concerned with the outbreak of COVID-19 if most people return to the office (slightly increased from 62% in August 2020). The research also reveals the majority of people prefer financial support from their employer on COVID-19 testing (increased from 69% in August to 72% in October 2020). Next is enhanced health insurance cover (increased from 65% in August to 69% in October 2020).

There is also a shift in people's behavior after the COVID-19 outbreak, with more people changing the way they manage their physical health and well-being (increased from 30% in August to 37% in October 2020) and the way they manage their mental health and well-being (increased from 21% in August to 26% in October 2020). There are also more people who care about the types of healthcare services that they have access to (up from 55% in August to 59% in October 2020).

About Cigna 360 Well-Being Survey

Cigna's 360 Well-Being Survey has tracked perceptions about health and well-being, including an index covering physical, family, social, financial and work well-being since 2014. The Cigna COVID-19 Global Impact Study is an ongoing study that has been conducted by Cigna between January and October 2020, and will continue for the remainder of the year. To date, over 23,000 online interviews have been conducted across China, Hong Kong, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States. 2,062 respondents came from Hong Kong. Hong Kong has one of the lower health and well-being score of all markets surveyed: Physical (54.0), Social (57.1), Family (59.6), Finance (49.9) and work well-being (62.3).

¹ Medical insurance plans include Cigna HealthFirst Elite Medical Plan, Cigna HealthFirst Choice Medical Plan, Cigna Plus Medical Plan, Cigna HealthFirst TopUp Medical Plan, and Cigna HealthFirst DiaMedic Medical Plan under Cigna HealthFirst Medical Plan Series and Standard Plan, Flexi Plan (SMM), Flexi Plan (Superior) under Cigna VHIS Series, Guarantee 100 Protection Plan and WorryFree Protection Plan under Cigna HealthSecure Critical Illness Series, and Cigna 108% Health Spectra.

² Standard policy terms and conditions apply. For the applicable benefit limits, please refer to the relevant benefit schedule and policy provision for more details. The COVID-19 vaccination must be approved by the relevant local health authorities and prescribed by a registered medical practitioner.

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About Cigna Worldwide Life Insurance Company Limited and Cigna Worldwide General Insurance Company Limited (Cigna Hong Kong)

Since 1933, Cigna Hong Kong has been offering insurance solutions at the right place and the right time, providing advice to customers throughout the different stages of their life journeys. Cigna delivers comprehensive health and wellness solutions to employers, employees and individual customers. Leveraging an extensive global healthcare network, Cigna provides group medical benefits that are suitable for international companies with a worldwide workforce, but also offers tailored and packaged group medical insurance plans to local small and medium-sized enterprises that fit specific needs of the company and its employees. For individual customers, Cigna offers a full suite of health insurance products that caters to consumers' diverse needs. For more details, please visit www.cigna.com.hk.