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HSBC Life Survey shows knowledge gap exists among older adults despite increased digital adoption expedited by Covid-19

- *Survey highlights Covid-19 as a major accelerator of adoption of digital devices across all age groups*
- *Yet, the older adult lags in the consumption of digital service to manage health and wealth due to low digital literacy with 82% not aware of available digital services such as virtual financial consultation services and 84% not yet using telemedicine/online mental counselling services*
- *HSBC Life is collaborating with HKLSS to bolster digitalised lifestyle and literacy for older adults to live a more productive and better life*

Having the longest life expectancy in the world, Hong Kong faces important questions around how the older adult can be supported to continue to live productively and with dignity. In a recent survey conducted by Economist Impact and sponsored by HSBC Life, it is found that COVID-19 has served as a major accelerator of adoption of digital devices across all age groups including those aged 60 or above of which over 96% now own a smartphone and have access to the Internet daily. Nevertheless, the survey reveals key barriers impeding older adults to make better use of digital devices to adopt more technological innovations in their daily lives.

The survey, entitled “Tech refining ageing”, is the fourth study in a row under HSBC Life’s Eldercare programme launched in 2019 to raise awareness of the burgeoning issue of ageing in Hong Kong. Between June and August this year, 600 respondents aged between 30 to 69 shared their views towards the role of technology in enabling them to age productively .

‘Trust’ named the top barrier to digital lifestyle across the board

According to the survey, despite over 90% of respondents think that COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of digital tools, the overall respondents including those aged 60-69 consider the lack of trust (45%), low level of digital literacy (32%) and absence of person-to-person interaction (27%) as top barriers of further digital popularisation.

Edward Moncreiffe, Hong Kong Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life, said, “It comes as no surprise that trust is a key barrier hindering further digitalisation across all walks of life including the older adult. As the number one insurer in Hong Kong and backed by a mother brand that has deep roots and a strong heritage in the city, we greatly treasure the trust our customers place on us and continue to invest to make our digital solutions more inclusive for everyone. Leveraging HSBC’s advanced digital security and controls, we aim to dismiss the public’s skepticism in using digital channels, especially for the older adult who are mostly first-time users, by further optimising our digital journeys and enriching our online financial education platform – Life Talk, which has already half a million active users. We are very pleased that such efforts have paid off and in the first half of 2022, we have brought in HKD240 million annualised new premium via our direct channels and 40% of our insurance applications came through digital channels during the fifth wave of the pandemic.”

Older adults’ knowledge gap: low literacy on digital finance and health prevents them from reaping the full benefits of digital service that facilitates a productive ageing

Digitalisation of financial services is welcomed by people in all age groups – 83% of respondents have used digital devices to manage their investments or insurance policies in the past six months and 86% of the caregivers say that digital tools are helpful in managing older adults’ finances. At the same time, 61% of respondents believe technologies are making financial products easier to understand.

However, the adoption of digital service among older users lags behind the younger generation, as shown on the consumption of digital finance and health service. For those aged 50 or above, as many as 82% are unaware of digital services such as virtual financial consultation and 84% have no knowledge of available telemedicine/online mental counselling service. In stark contrast, one-third of those aged 30-49 say they have used these digital finance and health services.

K C Cheung, Head of Products, HSBC Life, said, “At HSBC Life, we always believe that digital is not just meant for millennials and is not necessarily unmanned. We have been investing in various means in order to make digital easier and friendlier for users across all age groups, which include a full digital product suite and a one-stop platform which offers services from policy application to servicing. With Hong Kong being one of the cities with longest life span, in order to make productive ageing sustainable, HSBC Life has been offering various retirement solutions at customers’ choice, the latest being HSBC Wealth Select Protection Linked Plan, an investment-linked assurance scheme that offers high insurance protection, flexibility in switching choice of funds, as well as transparent and simple fee structure.”

New mobile app to close the digital literacy gap and encourage social interaction

In light of the survey results and in an effort to support the older adult to age productively, HSBC Life has sponsored the Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service (HKLSS) to develop a mobile app – “Health Dollar Fun App” to enhance digital literacy of the older adult and encourage physical wellbeing and social interaction.

Knowing that in-person support is indispensable in helping the older adult to incorporate technology in their daily lives, the app has adopted an online-to-offline model. Older adults who visit any of the HKLSS centres can access the app with the help of caregivers and play the in-app interactive games to earn points and redeem rewards. The app is scheduled to be launched next month and is expected to benefit at least 3,000 older adults and caregivers in the first six months.

Edward concluded, “It is our strong belief that productive ageing is one of the solutions to a fast-ageing society such as Hong Kong and it takes a collaborative effort from stakeholders in the public and private sector who share the same vision to make this a reality. We would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to thank our partners – Economist Impact and the Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service – for their continued support in raising overall awareness and building an ecology that better serves the ageing population. Coupled with our wide range of retirement solutions, we hope to provide the right protection with a view to easing the financial burden of the Hong Kong population as they expect to live a longer and better life.”

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Note to editors:

1. Productive ageing emphasises how the older adult can make important contributions to their own lives, organisations and communities



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Edward Moncreiffe, Chief Executive Officer, HSBC Life, Hong Kong and K C Cheung, Head of Products, Hong Kong, HSBC Life

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