



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Generation O – overworked, overstressed and overwhelmed – and in Malaysia, overeating

- **Malaysians rank personal health as their top concern, yet one in four is likely to be overweight or obese**
- **Are most concerned about nutrition and weight management of any population in Asia**
- **Are less satisfied than their regional peers when it comes to their energy levels and sleep habits**

KUALA LUMPUR, 6 November 2014 — New research from Sun Life Financial Asia reveals a generation of Malaysians who say personal health is their top priority and who know that making better lifestyle choices – especially in nutrition and weight management – would improve their level of health, but, who are just not taking steps in that direction. The findings are part of a larger survey showing that Asians are most affected by and concerned about health and lifestyle conditions that often can be preventable.

Despite their apparent prioritization of health, one in four Malaysians report being overweight or obese. Also, Malaysians resemble people in the most developed markets in the region and came in third after Hong Kong and Singapore in lacking motivation to attain and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Amongst the eight countries where the research was conducted, Phillipines came in first for motivation at 85 percent, the region averaged at 71 percent while Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia came in bottom three at 51, 55 and 67 percent respectively.

“What we are seeing is the emergence of what we are calling Asia’s ‘Generation O’ – a demographic that is overworked, overstressed, and generally overwhelmed – and unfortunately, if you’re in Malaysia, overeating as well,” said Ooi Say Teng, CEO of Sun Life Malaysia Assurance Berhad. “While most Malaysians want to make changes in areas of their lives that are largely within their control, such as exercise, nutrition and stress management, that desire hasn’t yet been successfully converted to action that leads to sustained, behavior change.”

Malaysians unsurprisingly demonstrated a high level of concern around diet and weight:

- One third (33 percent) admit to unhealthy eating habits, behind Filipinos (45 percent) and Thais (39 percent).
- More than one quarter (28 percent) admit to being overweight or obese, just slightly behind Thais (frontrunners with 30 percent).
- They are also one of the top two populations with high cholesterol – at 16 percent, following Thailand at 22 percent.
- Top other surveyed populations in ranking nutrition (65 percent compared to 49 percent regionally) and weight management (48 percent versus 40 percent) as the two areas of behavior they would most like to change.

This concern also flows through to diet-related health issues, such as exercise and diabetes:

- Malaysians are among those least likely to exercise regularly, tying with the Philippines (both at 62 percent who do not regularly exercise), just behind Hong Kong and Thailand (both at 63 percent).
- They are also least satisfied with their level of exercise (36 percent satisfied) and a majority (71 percent) identifies exercise as an area they would most like to change.
- Out of all other health issues, Malaysians most frequently cite overweight/obesity as a health issue that they have personally experienced (28 percent), second highest among the eight populations.
- The top four health conditions experienced by family are diabetes (37 percent), overweight/obesity (29 percent), severe joint/muscular problems/arthritis (27 percent), and heart attack/heart disease/stroke (24 percent).
- They cite heart attack/heart disease/stroke and diabetes – largely preventable conditions – as first and third of the top three health issues that they are most concerned about personally dealing with in the future.

When asked about the barriers to living a healthy and active lifestyle, Malaysians cite a range of factors habits now typical in a wired, modern world including: lack of time due to work, lack of personal motivation, and lack of time due to family responsibilities. In reality however, Malaysians could significantly improve their health in the short and long runs, by making small improvements to their eating and health habits.

“Sun Life has always had a strong focus on providing programs that build stronger, healthier, more financially secure communities. Nowhere is this more necessary now than in Malaysia,” Mr Ooi concluded. “As part of our call to Generation O of Malaysia to convert awareness to action through better, healthier choices, we at Sun Life, together with our partners and customers, continue to explore ways to raise awareness about wellness and health-enhancing behaviors, toward improved physical and financial well-being in time to come. It shouldn’t be about being overwhelmed but embracing opportunity – to work together toward better outcomes all around.”

The research also showed that while awareness is high around the correlation between lifestyle choices and level of health, there is conversely low understanding of the real cost of healthcare, leading to inadequate provisions made for healthcare funding in retirement.

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About the Sun Life Financial Asia Health Index

The first ever Sun Life Asia Health Index is based on the findings of an Ipsos survey conducted between August 21 and September 11, 2014. A sample of over 5,000 Asians from 25 to 55 years of age was interviewed online from the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Singapore and Thailand. The survey questioned respondents on their attitudes towards healthy and active living, their health concerns for the future and expectations on access to healthcare.

About Sun Life Malaysia

Sun Life Malaysia (Sun Life Malaysia Assurance Berhad and Sun Life Malaysia Takaful Berhad) is a joint venture by Sun Life Financial Inc. and Khazanah Nasional Berhad.

Sun Life Malaysia offers a comprehensive range of life insurance and Takaful products and services to Malaysians across the country and is focused on helping customers achieve financial security. Sun Life Malaysia distributes its products through a range of distribution channels including bancassurance, direct marketing, telemarketing and government and corporate business. The centerpiece of Sun Life Malaysia's distribution strategy is its exclusive bancassurance agreement with CIMB Bank in Malaysia where it is able to distribute its products and services through the Bank's extensive network of branches.

Sun Life Financial is a leading international financial services organisation providing a diverse range of protection and wealth accumulation products and services. Chartered in 1865, Sun Life Financial and its partners today have operations in key markets worldwide, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, India, China, Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Bermuda.

Khazanah Nasional Berhad is the strategic investment fund of the Government of Malaysia entrusted to hold and manage the commercial assets of the Government and to undertake strategic investments. Khazanah is involved in various sectors such as power, telecommunications, banking, healthcare, airport management, infrastructure, leisure & tourism, property development, broadcasting, investment holding, and technology.

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