

SE Working

HD Lengthy retirement has its price in Singapore; Costs continue to go up for the people who have longest life expectancies, global survey shows

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LP Singaporean Richard Mui joined the ranks of the world's longest-living retirees when his career ended in 2010. Three years on, the 54-year-old can no longer afford to pay his father's

medical bills, and worries about putting his two children through university.

Almost half a century after independence, Singaporeans now live the most number of years after leaving the workforce, according to the Global Sunset Index of 68 countries compiled by

Bloomberg. In the world's sixth-most expensive city, 41 per cent of more than 1,000 residents

surveyed by HSBC Holdings Plc said they haven't saved for retirement, with nearly half of them blaming living costs for hampering efforts.

TD "The standard of living has improved, but the cost of living, we're feeling the pinch," said Mui, who's made about \$3,300 US in the past six months as a part-time taxi driver, compared

with \$9,900 a month at digital-storage device company SM Summit Holdings Ltd. before a corporate takeover put him out of a job. "The Singapore government is one of the richest in the world but yet the people don't feel they are rich."

Mui's experience encapsulates the economic success that forged Southeast Asia's only developed nation, as well as the challenges emerging after decades of policies emphasizing

self-reliance over state-funded welfare. An aging population and voter demands for more government aid for the poor and elderly have put pressure on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

to boost social spending even as growth slows.

The ruling People's Action Party will probably keep urging Singaporeans to take care of themselves, as any other method could impose excessive demands on the government's coffers, said Eugene Tan, an assistant law professor at Singapore Management University and



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a non-elected member of Parliament.

"Given that Singaporeans are living longer after retirement, and given that we now have smaller families, the question is whether that traditional model would be as robust," he said.

"This could point toward an evolving social compact where the state will now have to take on

a bigger burden than it has been accustomed to."

Lee warned in his August National Day Rally address that Singapore will need to raise taxes

in the next two decades as the government boosts social spending to support an aging population. He pledged to ensure sufficient affordable housing for citizens and add nursing homes for the elderly, while proposing measures to boost the country's birthrate.

"We're going to have to spend more on health care, substantially more," Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said in February.

Still, while the government will take on a larger share of medical costs after a review of the health-care financing system, it will continue to make individuals pay a portion, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Grace Fu was cited as saying by the Straits Times this week.

Singaporean men live an average 20.8 years after retirement while their female counterparts

have 25.6 years, according to the Bloomberg Sunset Index.

ART Wong Maye-E, The Associated Press Files / People in Singapore live longer after retirement

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RE singp : Singapore | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | seasiaz : Southeast Asia

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