Stories of the Alliance for Healthy Cities: Innovations and Indicators

Keiko Nakamura, MD, PhD

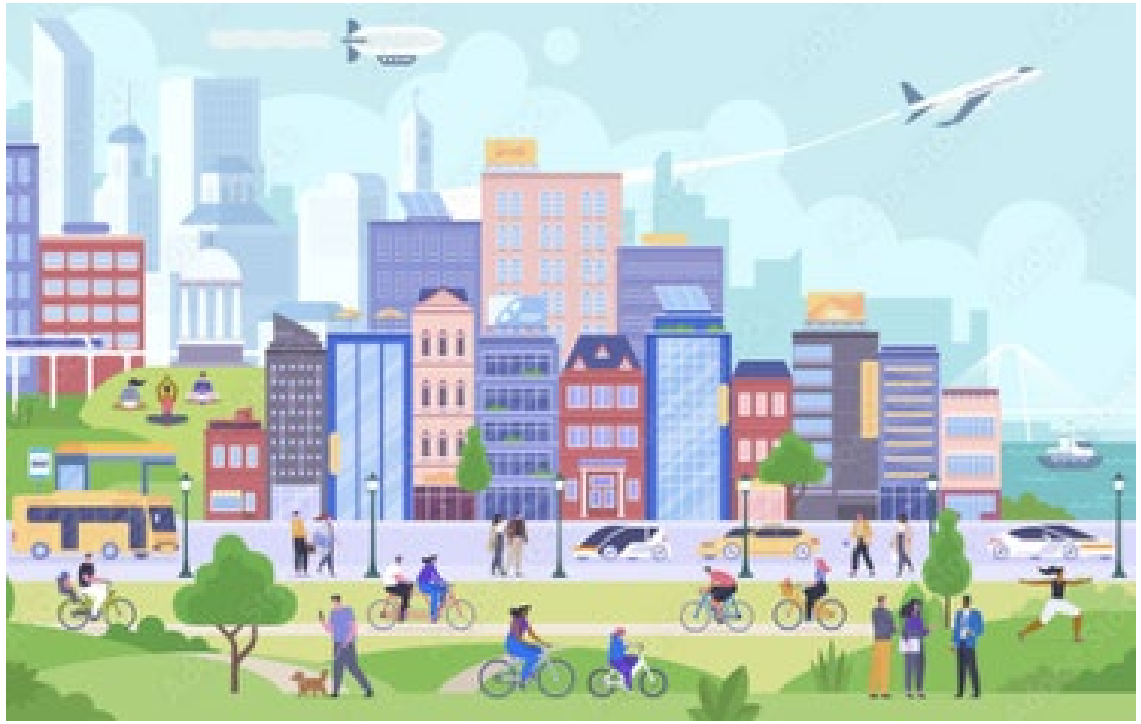
Professor Emeritus, Institute of Science Tokyo (Science Tokyo)

Former Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities & Urban Policy Research

Chair of Environmental Risk Sub-Committee, Science Council of Japan

Urban Health and Well-being Scientific Committee, International Science Council

Head of Secretariat, the Alliance for Healthy Cities



September 29, 2026, 15th World Congress of Design and Health, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

Stories of the Alliance for Healthy Cities

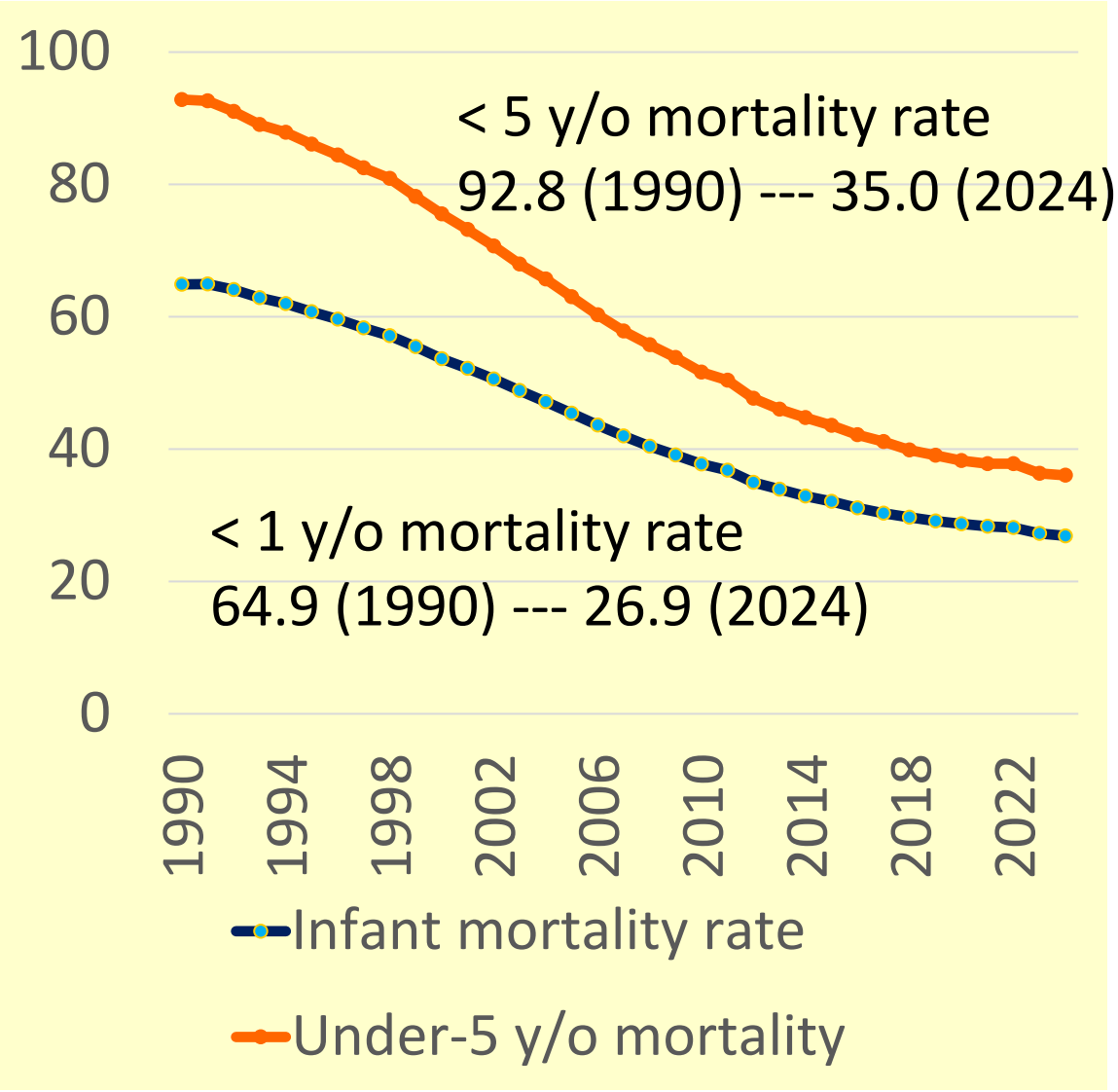
- Progress in Health/Environment
- The Network
- Actions in Cities
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Future



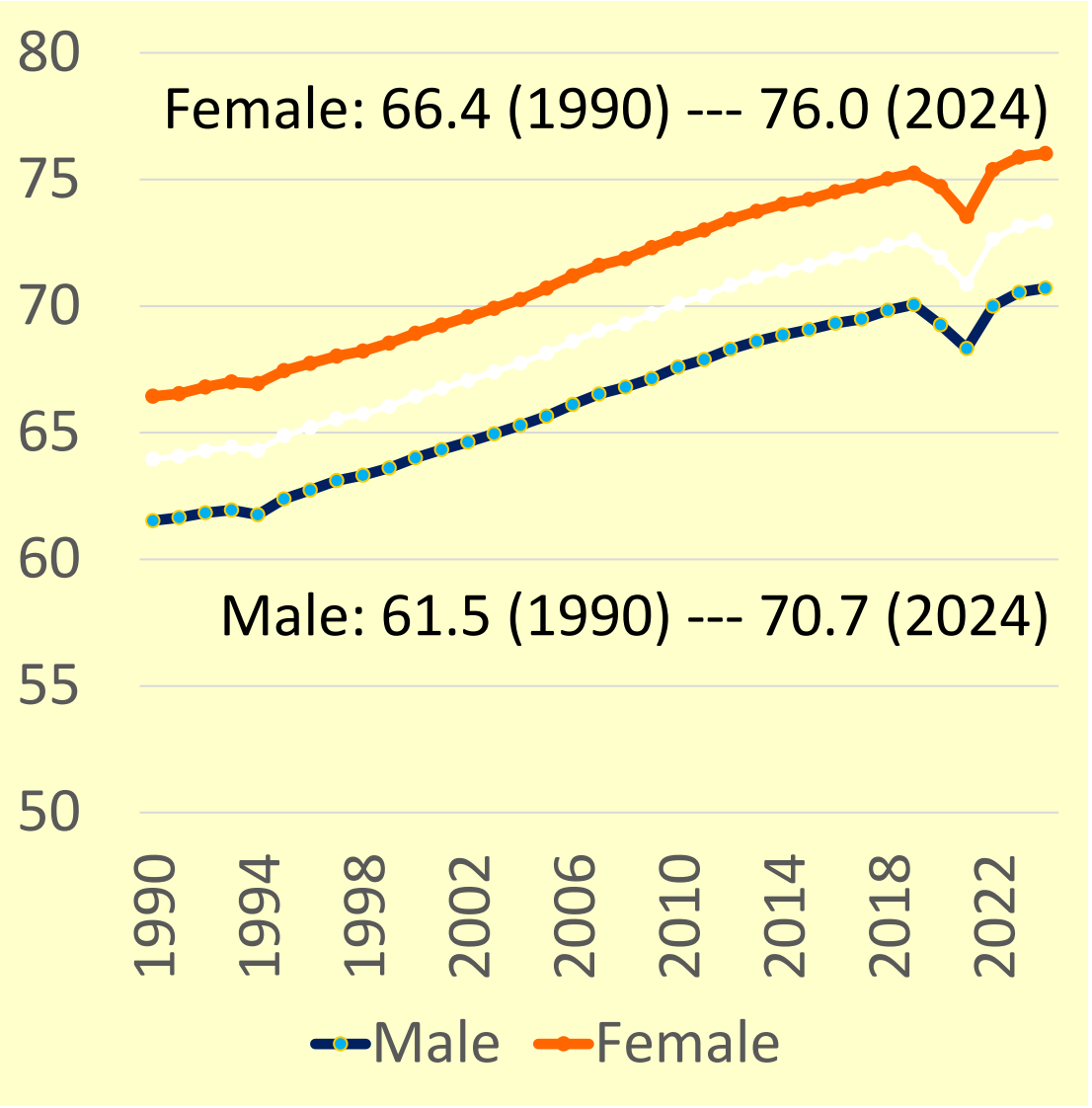
1. Progress in Health and Environment



Child mortalities, World



Life expectancy at birth, World



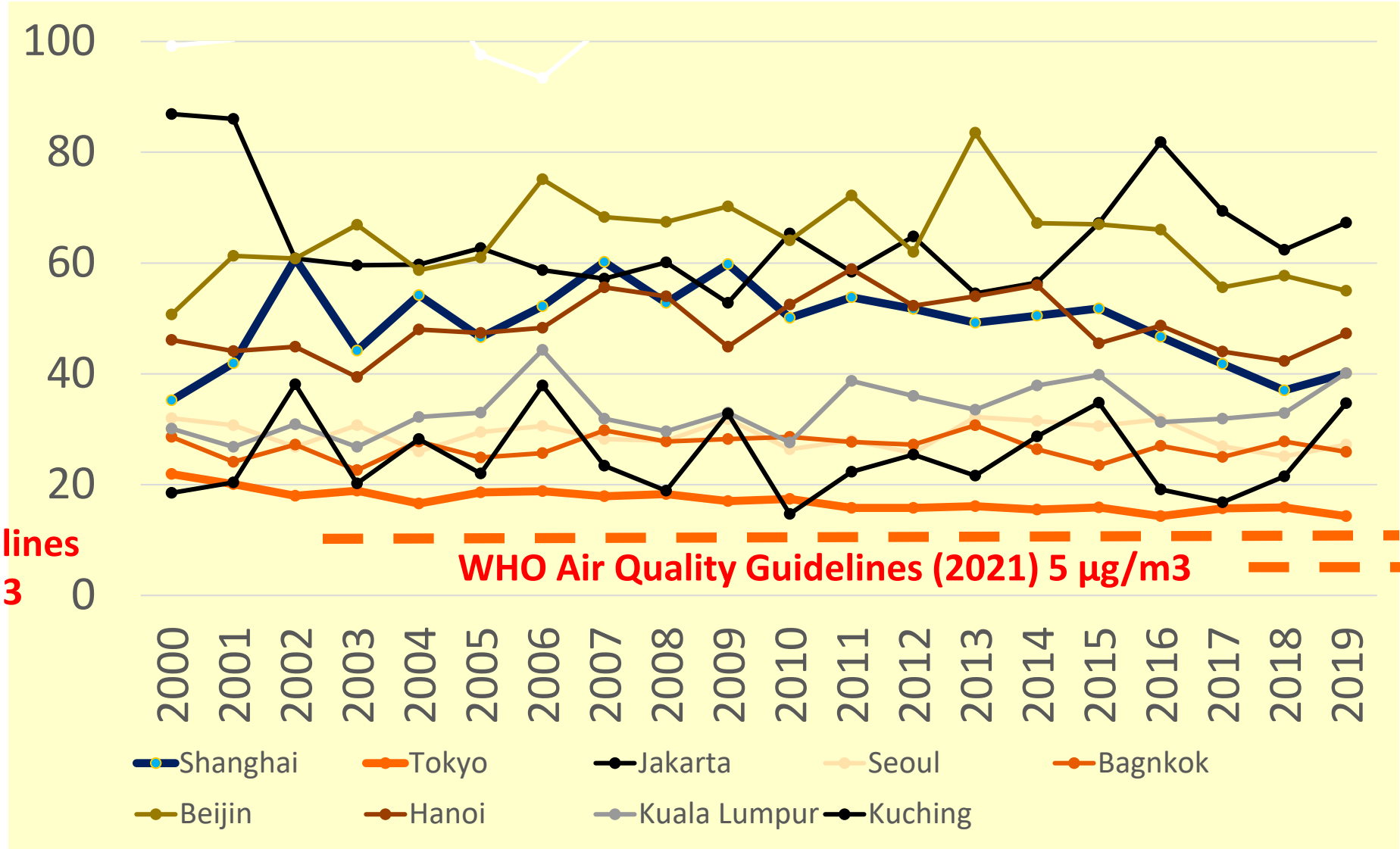
[United Nations Population Division: https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data-landing-page]

Average green area per capita per region in cities 1990-2020 (m2/person)



[Cities and Climate Action: World Cities report 2024. UN-HABITAT, 2024]

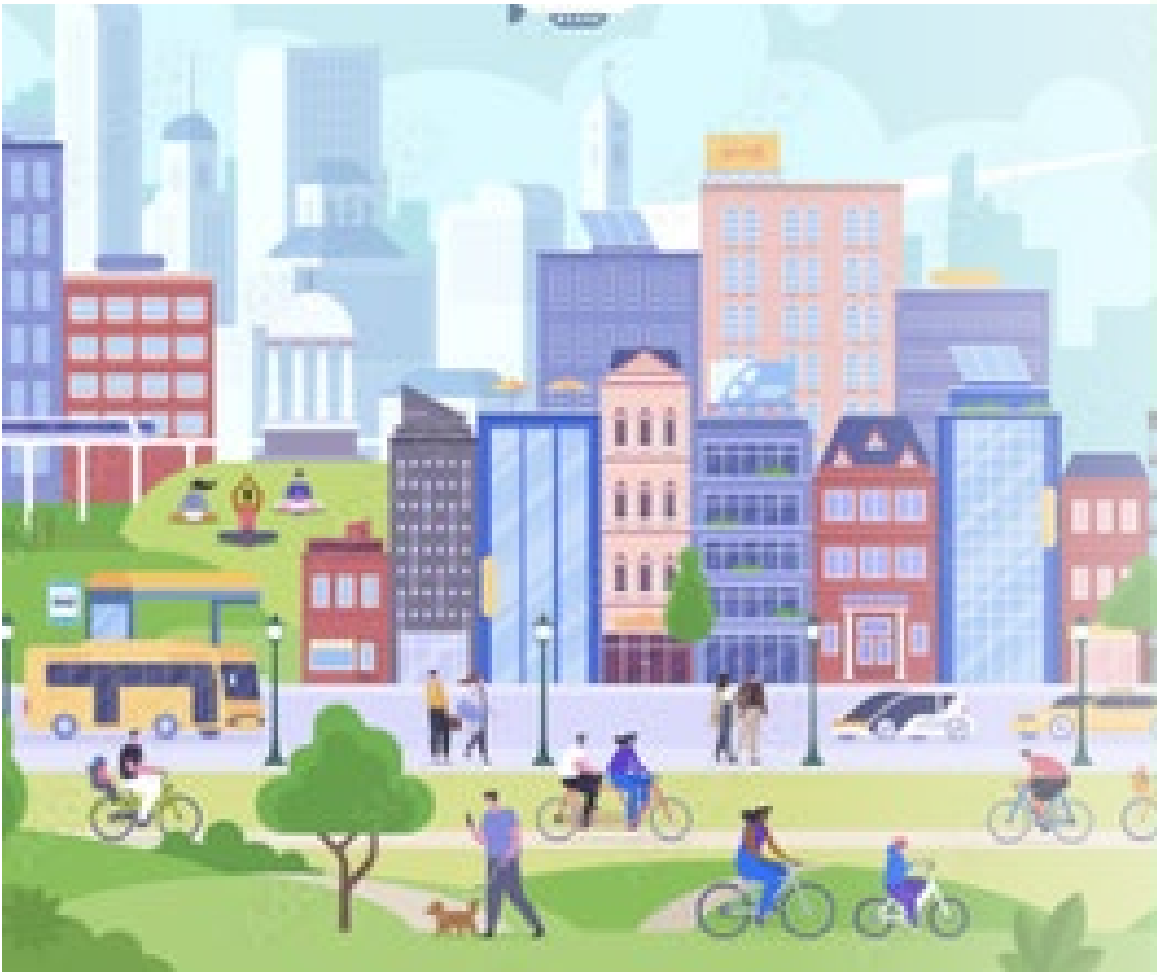
Trends of PM 2.5 (µg/m3), selected cities in Asia-Pacific



WHO AQ Guidelines (2005) 10 µg/m3

[State of Global Air: https://www.stateofglobalair.org/resources/health-in-cities]

Impact/ Outcome among cities of the Alliance for Healthy Cities



- Increased **healthy life expectancy**
- Decreased **child mortality**
- Improvement in **healthy lifestyles**
- Yet, **loss of green** space
- Still high levels of GHG emissions/ PM 2.5
- Vulnerable in low-elevation zones
- **National legislation** for Healthy City planning and evaluation (Korea)
- **Local ordinance** for multisectoral governance structures
- **Increased awareness and membership** for Healthy Cities
- **Comprehensive Monitoring** of Social Determinants of Health
- **Human resources** developed as Healthy Cities' new generation leaders

2. The Network: The Alliance for Healthy Cities



Inaugural Global Conference of AFHC
October 12-14, 2004
Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia









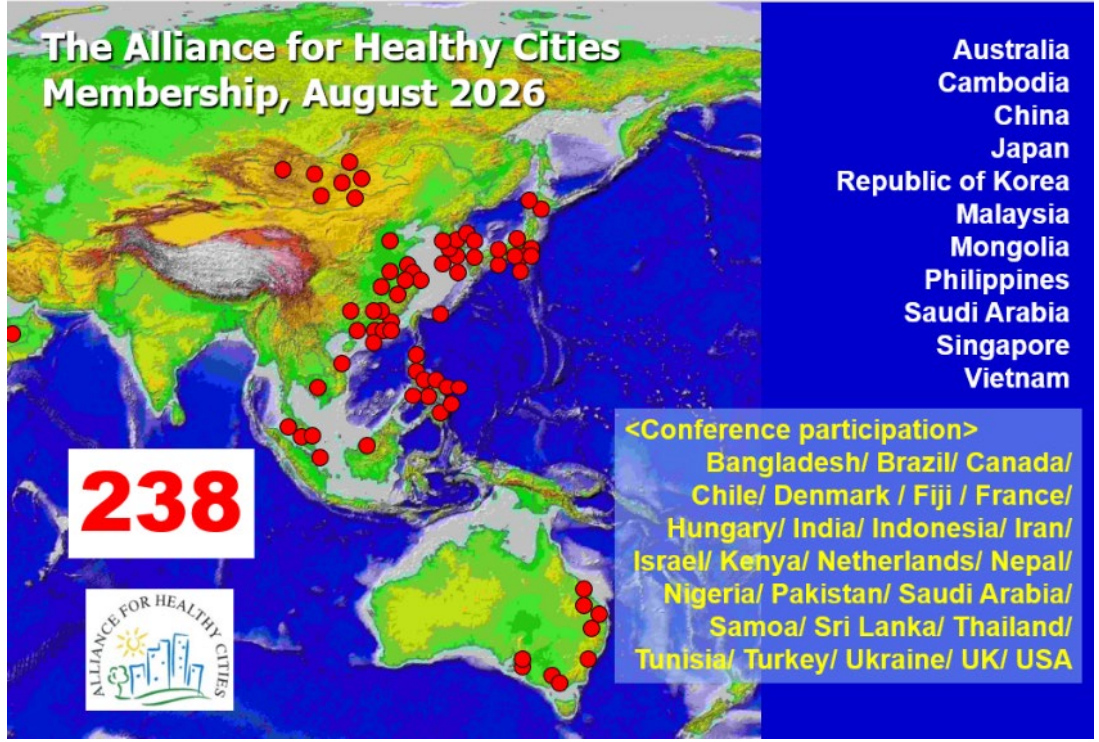


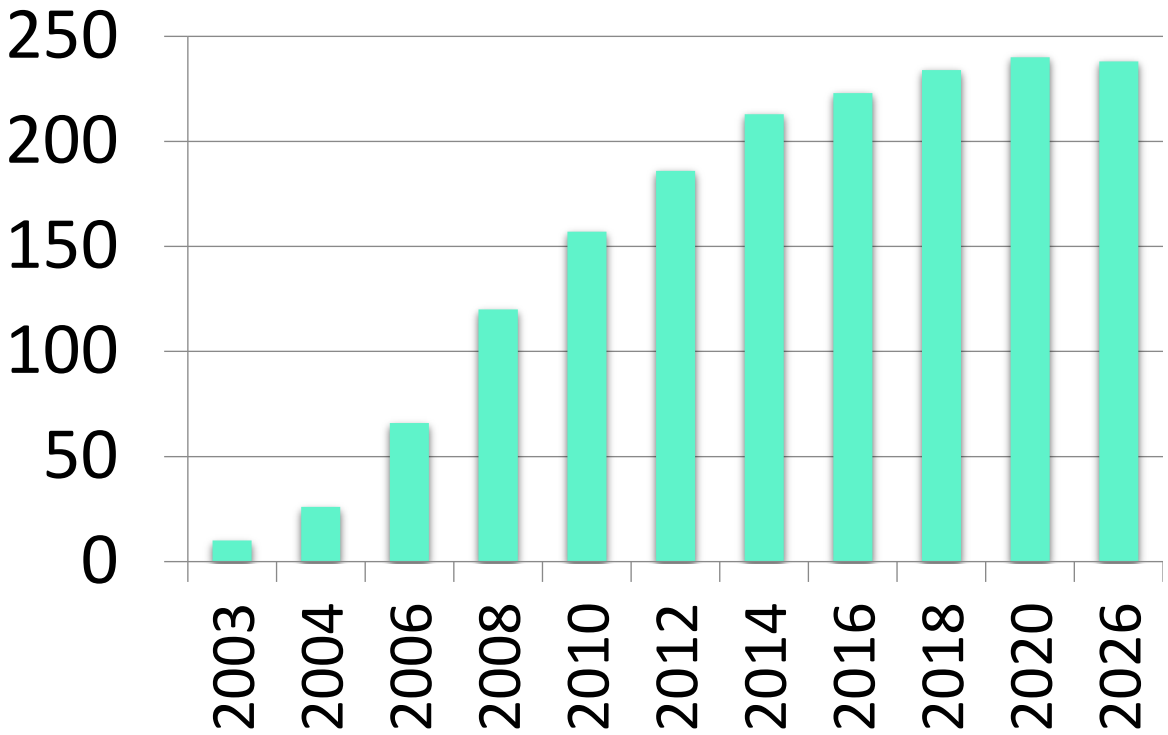


AFHC Membership

as of August 2026

- **City members (181)**
- **NGOs (36)**
- **Academics (10)**
- **National agencies (7)**
- **Private organizations (2)**
- **Individuals (2)**





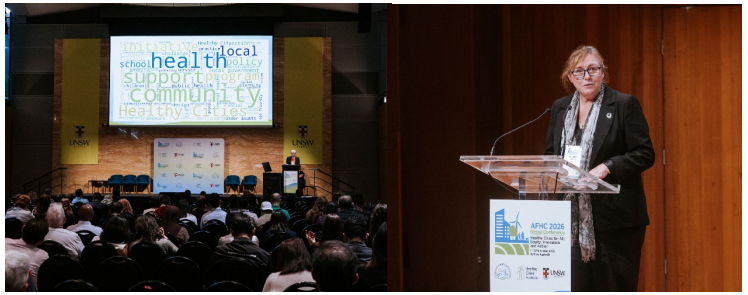
Members from Australia, Cambodia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Vietnam
Conferences are attended from other countries as well. (Bangladesh/ Brazil/ Canada/ Chile/ Denmark / Fiji / France/ Hungary/ India/ Indonesia/ Iran/ Israel/ Kenya/ Netherlands/ Nepal/ Nigeria/ Pakistan/ Saudi Arabia/ Samoa/ Sri Lanka/ Thailand/ Tunisia/ Turkey/ Ukraine/ UK/ USA / others)

The 11th Global Conference of AFHC, Sydney, Australia, Spt 1-3, 2026
(Univ. New South Wales, Cities Institute; Healthy Cities Australia)





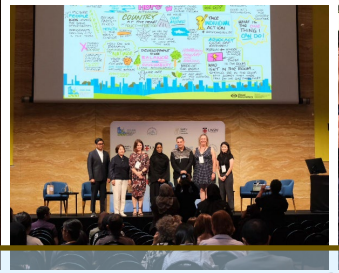
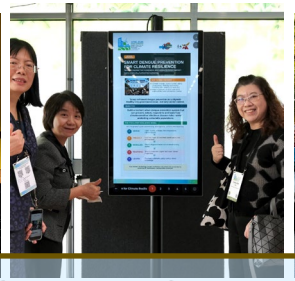











Healthy Cities for All: Equity, Innovation, and Action

3. Actions in Cities



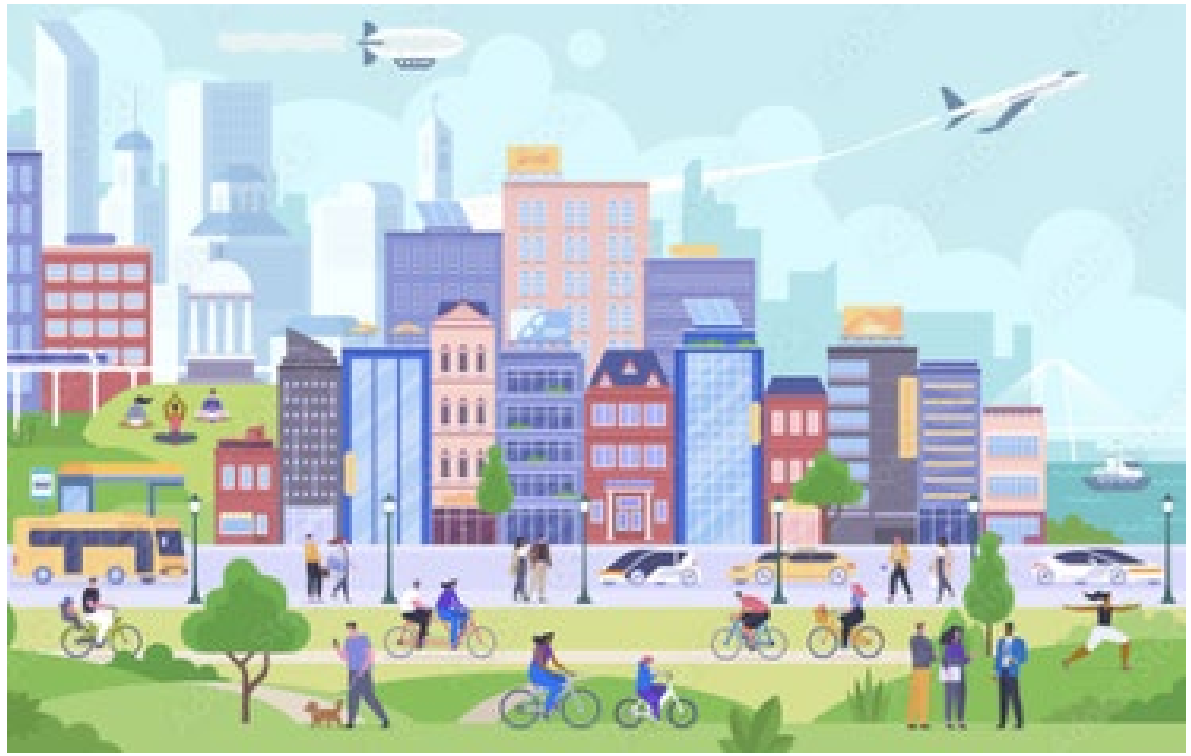
Examples of Initiatives

1. Smarter, Healthier, Ecologically-friendly initiatives
2. Blue and Green zones as priority settings
3. Age-friendly health and well-being in all policies
4. Resilience to emergencies
5. Public Spaces for Health and Well-Being
6. Universal Health Coverage in Cities
7. Data-driven applications



Long-term commitment to sustainability

Institutional mechanism to sustain and improve Healthy Cities



Healthy City with Expert (AFHC Progress Award 2026)

- **Gangdong-Gu, Seoul, South Korea** (population 499,000)
- Healthy City movement in Gangdong-Gu, Seoul, is based on continued policy commitment, legal support, and multi-sectoral health promotion. The mayor's pledges and Healthy City-related ordinances provide a strong foundation for initiatives that improve urban environments and community health.
- Key initiatives include school-based obesity prevention, ICT-based mobile healthcare, multicultural family support, neighborhood health check-ups, and Healthy 100s counseling centers across all 19 sub-districts. These initiatives are monitored through community health surveys and local indicators, with resident feedback gathered through regular consultations.
- The city contributes to the broader Healthy City movement by sharing case studies, supporting overseas cities, and others.
- The Healthy City with Expert award was given for its exemplary and sustained contribution to Healthy City action.

LOCAL ACTION

Health reaches residents where they live

Mobile neighborhood health services, education, healthy schools, children's nutrition and intergenerational spaces.



Healthy City with Expert (AFHC Progress Award, 2024 and 2026)

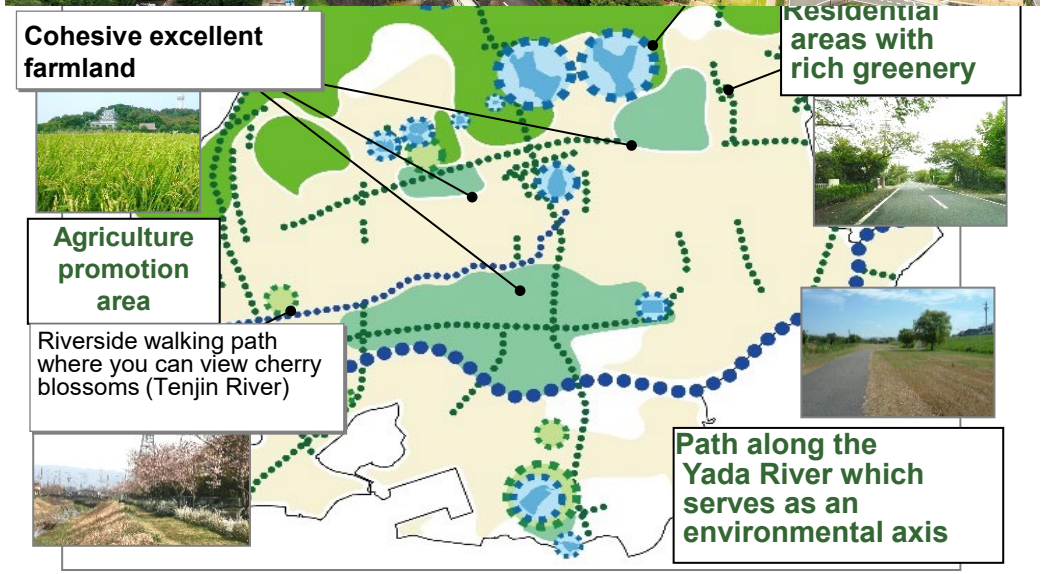
- **Owariasahi City, Japan** (population 83,000)
- The Sixth Owariasahi City General Plan, March 2024, identifies Healthy City development as a central means of realizing the city's broader vision, "Owariasahi—bringing happiness filled with smiles."
- The Owariasahi Healthy City Program, March 2025, is structured around three policy pillars: lifelong health, a city that encourages people to go out, and a city where people wish to continue living. Approximately 400 administrative programs are linked to this framework, with progress managed through the city's administrative evaluation system.
- Nearly two decades of Healthy City development, evidence-based monitoring of citizen satisfaction and health indicators, and active dissemination of its experience through the Alliance for Healthy Cities.
- The Healthy City with Expert award was given for sustained policy action and for integrating the Healthy City ethos into everyday life.



Owariasahi Citizens' Charter, enacted in 1980 (excerpt)

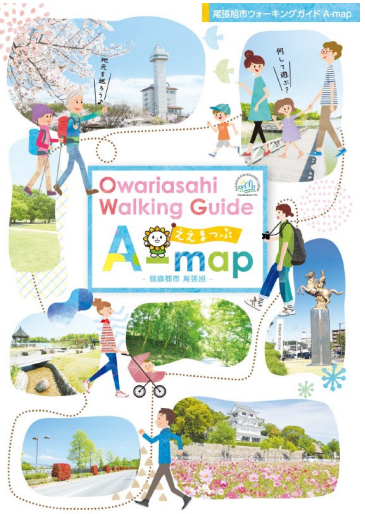
"Let us love nature and create a hometown surrounded by greenery"





Green spaces in the city: approx. 40%





The Healthy City Program



Eco-garden City

(Promoting activities to nurture greenery)

×



Basic Plan for Greenery



A city where people support greenery together (Cooperation)

Tainan Health Mobility: Hopi–Baihe Friendly Bike Lane





Core proposition: **everyday cycling + tourism + infrastructure reuse + local partnership + low-carbon mobility**

14.66 km A cycling route connecting rural landscapes and local attractions while supporting exercise and low-carbon transport.

1 HEALTH + PLACE

- Cycling supports physical activity and environmentally friendly transport
- "Sport tourism" makes rice, orchid and lotus landscapes part of the experience

2 REUSE + PARTNERSHIP

- Abandoned sugarcane railway sections were converted into dedicated bike lanes
- City bureaus, districts, citizens, experts, restaurants and B&Bs contributed

3 SAFE + SUSTAINABLE

- Clear direction, map and road-control signage improves legibility
- District offices and community organizations support continued maintenance

WHAT WAS DELIVERED

- renovated across seven sections **14.66 km;**
- bike direction signboards **51;**
- instruction signs with / without tour maps **8 + 9;**
- renewed map signboards **12**

Changwon Healthy City: Nature-Based Solutions as Health Infrastructure

Changwon's innovation = ecology + health + participation + data + governance

One Health governance connects ecological restoration, citizen participation and evidence to deliver healthier urban living.

1 RESTORE + CONNECT
One Health governance

- Restore streams, forests and wetlands
- Link public health, environment and climate
- Sustain action through ordinances and municipal budgets

2 ACTIVATE + INCLUDE
Residents as co-creators

- Plogging and biodiversity monitoring
- Walking leaders, mobile challenges and ecological education
- Restored nature becomes an everyday setting for health

3 MEASURE + SCALE
Science and institutions

- Biotope mapping informs planning and assessment
- Air-quality monitoring adds quantitative evidence
- Proven restoration techniques are transferred to new projects

MEASURABLE WELL-BEING

Moderate-or-higher intensity physical activity **24.2% → 29.6%**

increase in stream use **Up to 77.1%**

average resident satisfaction with restored streams **93.3%**

Jinhae walking practice rate **40.6% → 60.9%**



EUNPYEONG-GU · SEOUL: Healthy City Action Plan for Planetary Health

Carbon neutrality + circular economy + inclusive green space

1 CARBON-NEUTRALITY VILLAGES

- 2050 carbon-neutrality target
- Neighborhood-centered pilot street
- Resident action groups + participatory projects

2 RESOURCE-CIRCULATION VILLAGES

- Green Moa Moa community collection
- AI recycling bins + food-waste services
- Resource Circulation Center + education

3 GREEN HEALING FOR ALL GENERATIONS

- Generational gardens + carbon-neutrality forest
- Barrier-free forest trails
- Healing forests and neighborhood parks

Resident-led action connects carbon neutrality, circular resources and green healing environments.

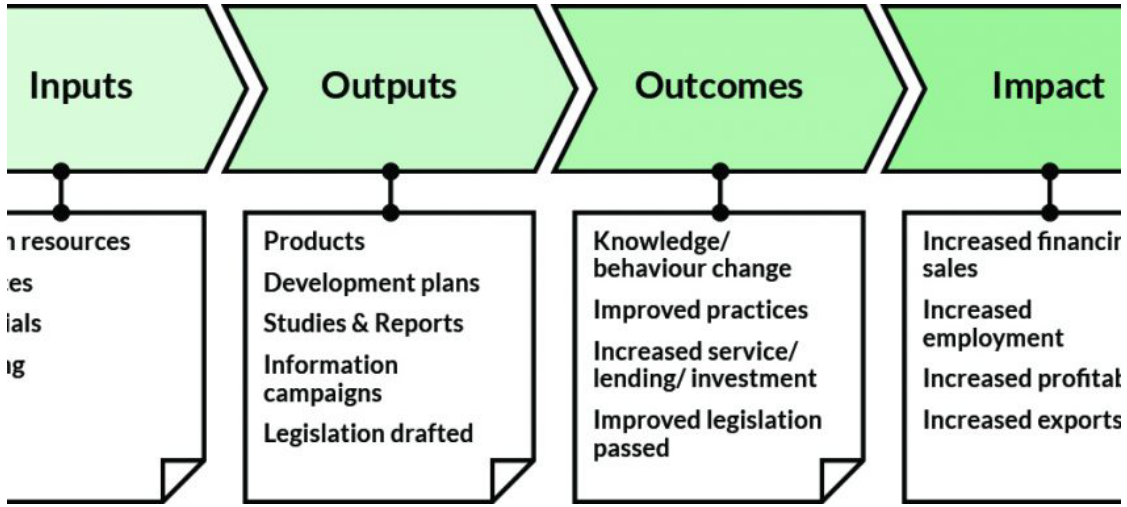




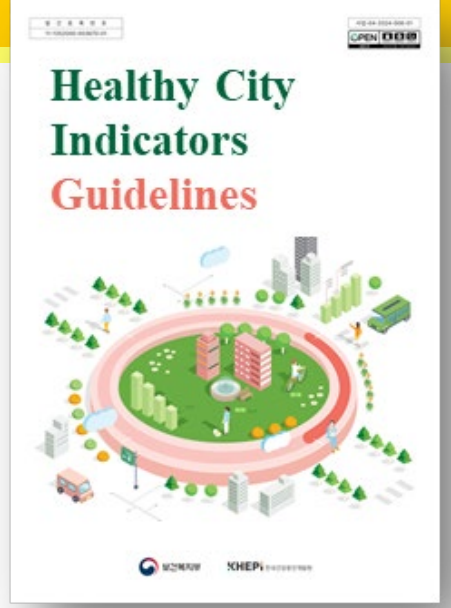
EVIDENCE OF ACTION

- buildings · transport · energy · circulation · forest · practices **35 projects · 6 areas;**
- recyclables collected in 2023 **398 tons;**
- resident participations reported **328,912;**
- 9 % reduction reported **Waste ↓ 7,125 tons;**
- Bongsan barrier-free healing trail **9.8 km;**

4. Monitoring & Evaluation



Evaluation of the process of institutionalizing a Healthy City: **Korea***



- National Assembly Public Hearing for Healthy City legislation (2018)
- National Health Promotion Act revised ('Healthy City Creation" newly established) (2021)
- Announcement of Healthy City Indicators for Local Government (by the Ministry of Health and Welfare) (2024)

Areas	Categories	Indicators	Checklists
Infrastructure Development	Foundation for Healthy City promotion, budget, organization and personnel, and establishment of mid-to-long-term plans (4)	8	22
Interdepartmental Cooperation	Realization of HiAP (Health in All Policies), collaboration with public and private sectors, and network building (3)	8	17
Community Engagement	Citizen′s participation and experts′ participation (2)	5	14
Planning and Implementation	Planning, environmental improvement, monitoring & evaluation (3)	8	24
Information System	Development, publication, updating, and use of city health profiles (3)	5	19
5	15	34	96

*Courtesy of Prof. Changwoo Shon

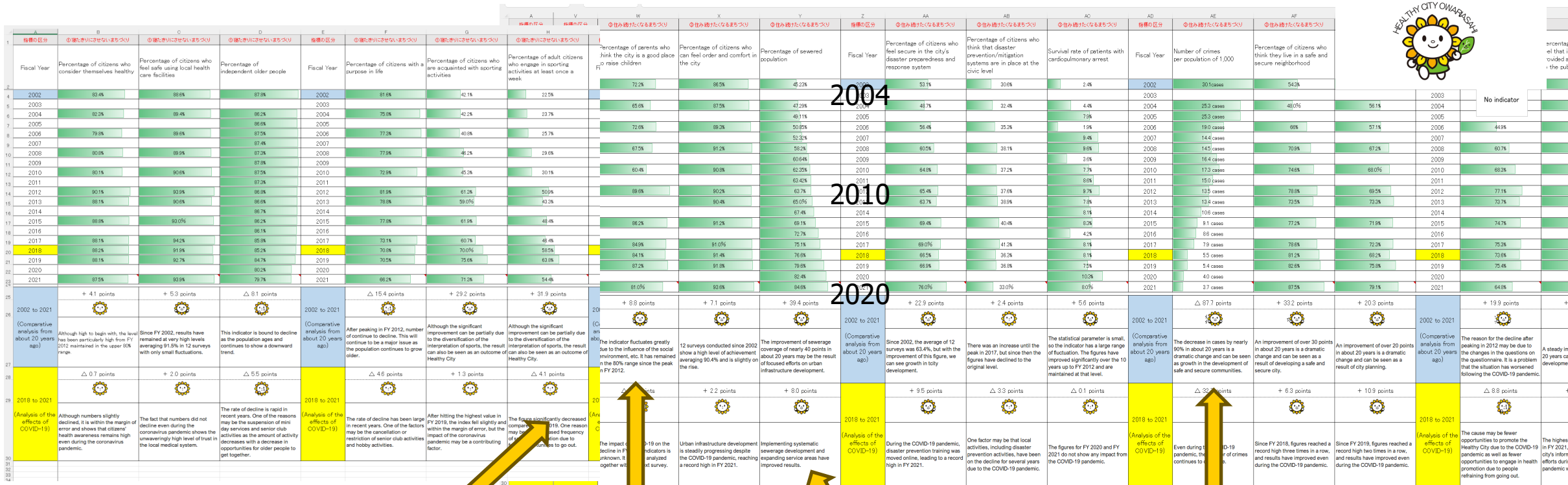
Monitoring and evaluation of HC Plan: **Owariasahi City**

健康都市 尾張旭の実現に向けて

～これまでの取組のまとめ～

（平成16年度～令和4年度）

Monitoring the outcome/intermediate indicators to achieve the goals of the Healthy City Plan (2002 – 2021)



% of adult citizens engaging in sports at least once a week

% of parents who think the city is a good place to raise children

% of sewered population

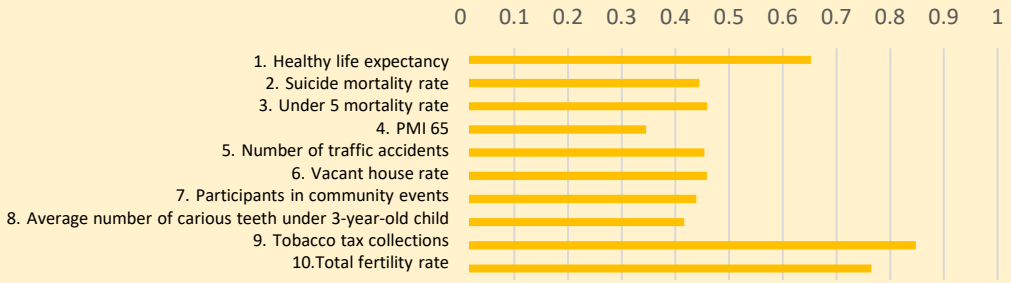
Number of crimes per 1,000

*Courtesy of Owariasahi City

Comprehensive index of health, environment, and actions: Japan

e-Stat

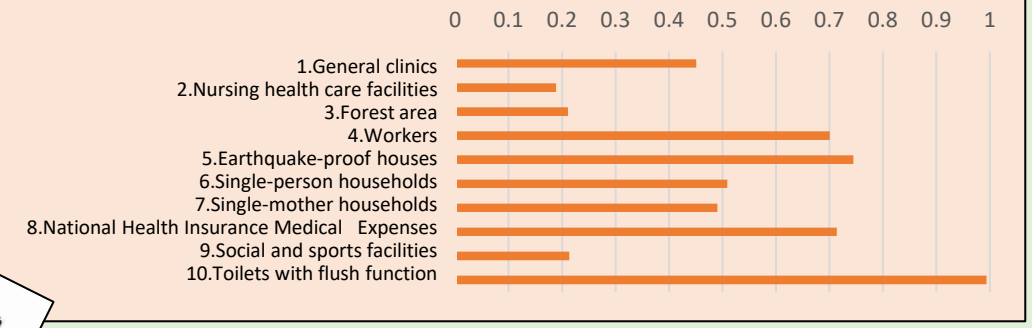
Human Health and Safety



Human Health and Safety (Score)

5.3 points

Urban Characteristics for Health

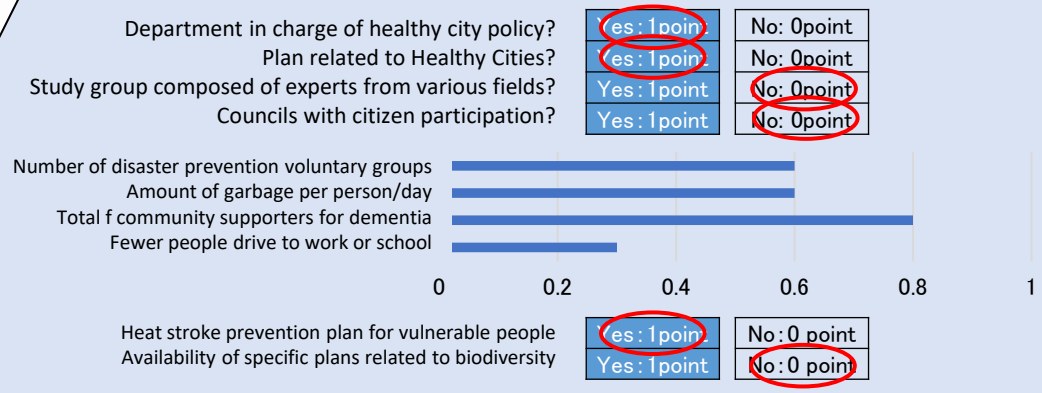


Urban Characteristics for Helth (Score)

5.1 points



Healthy City Development Activities



Healthy City Development Activities (Score)

5.3 points

Your municipality's overall score in the two categories

10.4 points

Overall rating of your municipality

AA

Your municipality's overall score in the three categories

15.7 points

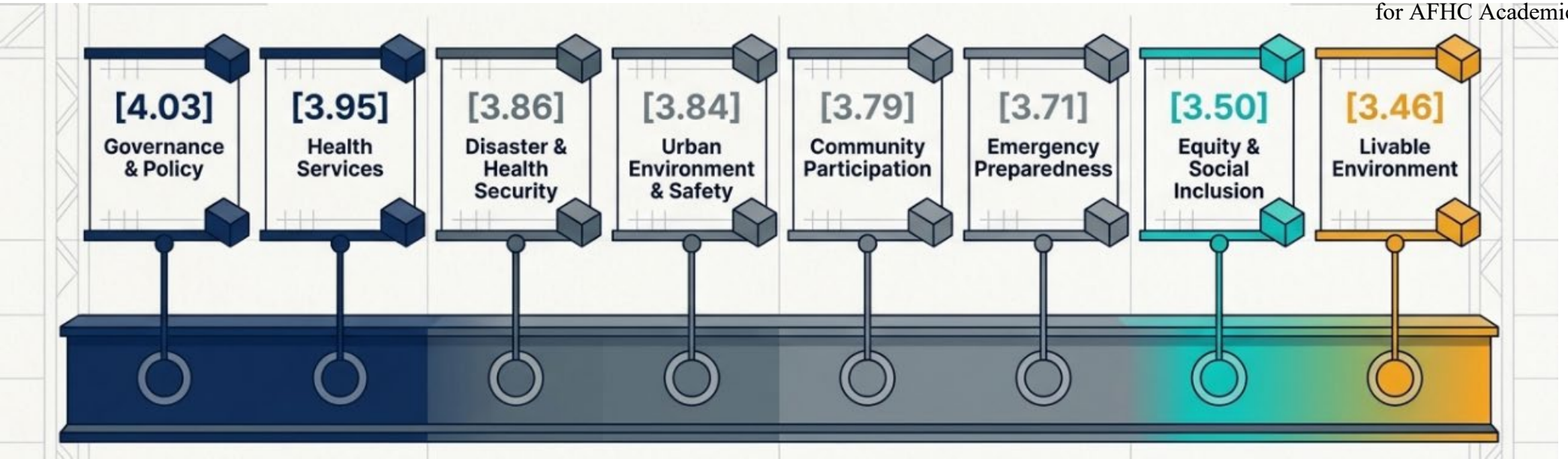
Feasible indicators to assess essential Healthy City action domains

[Action Domains: Healthy Cities: Effective Approach to a Changing World. **WHO, 2020**.]

- Improve city governance for health and well-being
- Reduce/minimize health inequalities
- Promote health-in-all-policies approach
- Promote community development and empowerment and create social environments that support health
- Create physical and built environments that are supportive to health and healthy choices
- Improve the quality of/access to local health/social services
- Consider/ plan for all people in the city and prioritize those most in need
- Strengthen local public health services and capacity to deal with health-related emergencies
- Plan for urban preparedness, readiness, and response in public health emergencies



*Courtesy of Dr. Razitasham Safii for AFHC Academic Committee



5. Future: A Platform to Design Healthy and Sustainable Cities



Emergence of Healthy Cities

Started as an application of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in cities; integrated multiple urban programs
Healthy Cities project/ programme

Alliance for Healthy Cities

(2016) **Shanghai Consensus on Healthy Cities**

1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030

(1978) **Alma-Ata Declaration** Primary Health Care



(1986) **Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion**

WHD 1996



Sustainable Cities

SARS

(2000) **Millennium Development Goals**

WHD 2010



COVID -19

(2015) **Sustainable Development Goals**

Post-SDGs

(2021) **Geneva Charter: Well-being**

Well-being Cities

Age-friendly Cities

Smart Cities

Resilient Cities

Low-carbon Cities

15-minutes Cities

Regenerative Cities

Beyond GDP

(1987) **Our Common Future**

(1992) **Earth Summit/ Local Agenda 21**

Garden Cities

Ecological Cities

Eco Cities

Livable/compact Cities

Habitat I 1976

Habitat II 1996

Habitat III 2016 New Urban Agenda


ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY CITIES



June 7-11, 2027, Tokyo
[https://smartconf.jp/content/pham2027]