Sustainability is one of the most objective measures of the health of a population. Hong Kong's rapid rise in life expectancy to the top in the world – a position held for the past five years – has led to international calls to emulate Hong Kong's success. However, the drivers for Hong Kong's life expectancy gains are unclear. Cornerstones for longevity include economic development and low infant and maternal mortality. From 1960 to 2017, Hong Kong has enjoyed rapid economic growth with GDP per capita increasing more than 100-fold, established universal health coverage, and reduced infant and maternal mortality rates to among the lowest globally. Yet these achievements may not fully explain Hong Kong's survival advantage. We therefore examined the underlying drivers in Hong Kong's journey to become the world's longest living population.