Outlook

Your Friday three - 23 January 2026

From ILC UK <events@ilcuk.org.uk>
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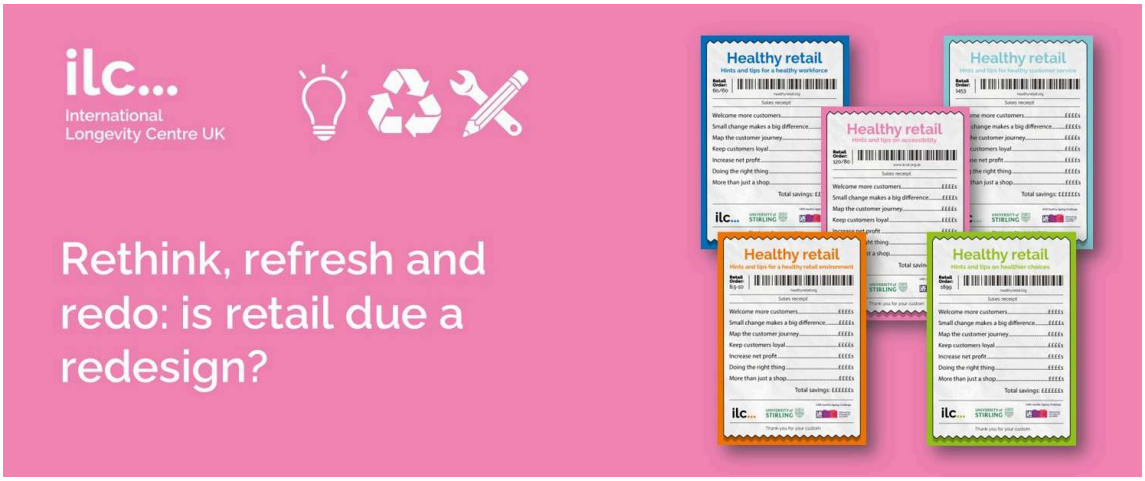
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Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Rethink, refresh and redo - is retail due a redesign?
- Sweet dreams - the facts and myths of good sleep
- Greenland is ageing - but what might happen next?

Rethink, recycle and redo - is retail due a redesign?



Last year, Pizza Hut announced 68 restaurant closures. While we take no joy in job losses or more closures on the high street, might this also reflect changing food habits?

We often hear that people are making healthier choices - yet the evidence suggests otherwise.

At the ILC, we spent 2022–2024 exploring the role of retail in supporting healthy ageing through our Retail Impact Project – part of the UK Government's Healthy Ageing Challenge, supported by UKRI and the University of Stirling.

Through our project, we wanted to help retailers better understand what healthy ageing really means – and inspire action to make our shops, high streets and retail workforces fit for a 100-year life.

From small independents to major brands, we found inspiring examples showing that healthy retail isn't just good for people and communities – it's good for business.

Our work culminated in a Healthy Retail Summit, bringing together the retail leaders, policymakers and innovators to explore the opportunities of an ageing society. With older consumers already responsible for over half of UK spending – rising to an estimated 63p in every pound by 2040 – it's an opportunity the sector can't afford to ignore.

According to the UK Government's National Diet and Nutrition Survey published in June 2025 it turns out that most of us aren't making the healthiest choices:

- Less than one in five adults meet the '5 A Day' target
- Most consume too much saturated fat and sugar
- Almost everyone fails to meet fibre recommendations
- Many aren't getting enough vitamin D

Income makes some difference – but poor diet quality persists across all groups.

Interestingly, the survey found that average energy intakes were below estimated needs – probably because we don't always tell researchers what we *really* eat.

And as the founder of behavioural science practice within the Ogilvy Group, Rory Sutherland, notes, technology can also shape our consumption. He argues that McDonald's self-order screens may have led people to buy more – because when no one's watching, we might just order two burgers instead of one.

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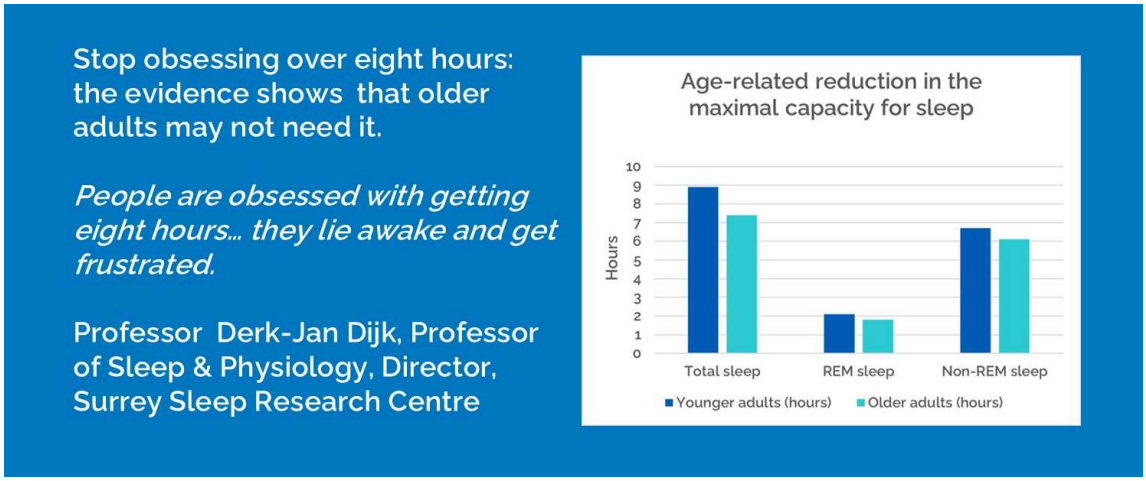
With recent closures of several Leon restaurants and the vegan burger chain, Neat Burger, perhaps Pizza Hut's shutdowns have less to do with health and more to do with changing expectations and affordability. Talking amongst the ILC team, we agreed, if we wanted pizza, we'd never go to Pizza Hut – it just hasn't kept pace on quality or choice.

Still, retailers have a vital role to play in driving healthier choices – and some are already leading the way. We will be discussing how innovation and skills can improve our communities at our Future of Ageing conference on Thursday 5 March 2026. If you've not done so already, you can get your tickets here.

You can explore ILC's five guides and short films showcasing real-world examples of retailers making a difference via the button below.

READ MORE

Sweet dreams - the facts and myth of sleeping well



If sleep were sold in a supermarket, profits would soar and we might finally treat it like the public health priority it is. That was one of the more striking takeaways from ILC's recent webinar, *Sweet Dreams: the importance of good sleep for healthy ageing*, delivered with ILC's Partner, the University of Surrey's Centre of Excellence on Ageing. Chaired by Mark Chataway (Finn Partners), the session brought together Professor Derk-Jan Dijk (Surrey Sleep Research Centre), Ben Lumley (Night Club), ILC trustee Yvonne Sonsino and Jessie Kullar (Drinkaware) to cut through myths and focus on what sleep means for longer, better lives.

Professor Dijk began with a simple but powerful suggestion: if you want a genuine sense of how someone is doing, ask them how they sleep. Research comparing people who report "living well" with those who do not consistently places sleep quality near the top of the list of what matters most. That matters for policy because sleep is often framed as a personal choice rather than a driver of poor health and an issue for the healthcare system.

Several common misconceptions came under the spotlight. The first: that older people are inevitably sleepier. In fact, self-report and objective measures suggest younger adults are typically more sleepy during the day, while healthy older people tend to be better at staying awake. The implication is important – daytime sleepiness in later life can be a cue to investigate underlying sleep disorders or other health problems, rather than something to shrug off as "just ageing".

A second myth is that long sleep is always a sign of good health. Professor Dijk discussed evidence linking longer sleep duration with poorer memory performance in groups with cognitive impairment. The message was not to panic about an occasional lie-in, but to pay attention to change – a marked shift towards longer sleep or more time in bed can be an early sign that something is wrong.

The conversation also challenged our obsession with "deep sleep". When Surrey researchers compared sleep physiology with how well people *felt* they had slept, REM sleep and sleep continuity were stronger predictors of perceived sleep quality than deep sleep. Put plainly: fewer awakenings and sufficient REM may matter more to how restored we feel than chasing a perfect "deep sleep score".

From the workplace perspective, Ben Lumley highlighted the hidden scale of night work – millions of people regularly work evenings, early mornings or overnight. Shift patterns, unpredictable rotas, harsh lighting, lack of rest spaces and workplace culture all make it harder to sleep well. The key point was pragmatic: night work does not doom people to poor health, but it increases risk when sleep, diet and exercise are squeezed. Better scheduling, healthier environments, visible leadership and

are squeezed. Better scheduling, healthier environments, visible leadership and routine health checks can make a measurable difference.

Yvonne Sonsino reframed sleep disturbance as a lived experience shaped by work design, digital overload and stress, not an individual "discipline problem". Sleep, she argued, is a keystone behaviour with multiplier effects – on mood, metabolic health, resilience, productivity and psychological safety. Employers that glorify exhaustion will struggle to make any wellbeing offer stick.

Jessie Kullar brought compelling evidence on how alcohol impacts our sleep. While it may help people fall asleep faster, but it reliably worsens sleep quality later in the night, disrupting REM and leaving people less refreshed. Encouragingly, better sleep can also be a strong motivator to cut down on the amount we drink.

The clear message running through the webinar – which you can watch via the button below – sleep is not a nice-to-have, it is a barometer of health, a lever for prevention and a design challenge for workplaces, services and communities. If we are serious about healthier ageing, we need to stop treating sleep as an afterthought – and start acting as if it sits alongside diet and exercise at the heart of better, longer lives.

Keep an eye out for news of other ILC Partner events and find out more about the ILC Partners programme here.

WATCH HERE

Greenland is ageing - but what might happen next?

Only by melting the ice in the heart of man does man have a chance to change and begin using his knowledge wisely.
~ Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq, Kalaallit Elder & storyteller

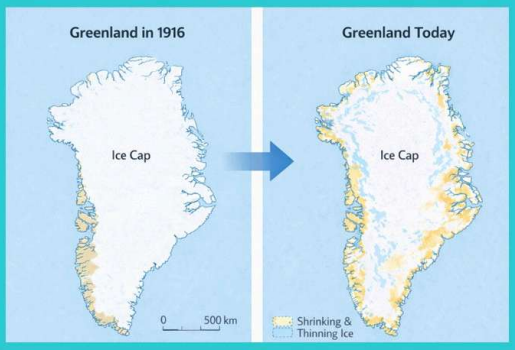


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At the risk of trivialising the very real and potentially serious global disruption created by the current US administration, a few of us at ILC found ourselves asking: what might happen if Greenland's geopolitical status were to change – for example through closer US control or even ownership? Despite its vast geography, Greenland's population is exceptionally small – small enough that it would struggle to fill most national football stadiums. With a current population of just over 56,000 and an economy closely bound to Denmark, Greenland does not feature as a separate country in our Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index. Yet its size, structure and strategic position make it a fascinating case study in how demography, dependency and power intersect.

From the first modern census in 1901 until 1991, Greenland's population grew steadily, reaching 55,520. Since the early 1990s, total numbers have remained remarkably stable, fluctuating only slightly year to year – standing at 56,421 in 2021, close to a historical peak of 56,969 in 2005. On the surface, this suggests little change. Yet this stability masks a much more dynamic history. During the 20th century, population growth was rapid and transformative: numbers doubled between 1951 and 1971 from 23,647 to 47,935, driven by major improvements in public health, including the eradication of tuberculosis, falling infant mortality, rising fertility and significant inward migration, largely of Danish labour.

In everyday modern life in Greenland, people usually use chronological age just as in most contemporary societies, especially in schooling, health and legal contexts. But culturally, especially in traditional Inuit society, age is defined more by the things a person does and is recognised for – rather than just how many years they have lived.

Today Greenland faces a familiar set of pressures seen across many advanced economies. Birth rates are falling, younger people continue to emigrate, and the share of older people is rising. The fertility rate, which stood at an estimated 2.4 children per woman in 2000, has fallen to around 1.9 and an increasing proportion of people live alone. Combined with outward migration, falling birth rates shrink the working-age population, placing increasing pressure on public finances.

Economic structure intensifies these trends. Fisheries dominate economic activity, while a substantial annual subsidy from Denmark – around $670m in 2024 – accounts for roughly half of government revenues. Denmark also directly funds courts, defence and policing at an estimated cost of $240m a year and has pledged additional spending on healthcare, infrastructure and Arctic defence. Without this support, Greenland could not sustain its European-style public services.

Growth has stalled, rising just 0.2 per cent last year, as shrimp and halibut stocks

Growth has stalled, rising just 0.2 per cent last year, as shrimp and halibut stocks decline and infrastructure investment slows. Statistics Greenland forecasts that the population could fall to as few as 46,000 within the next 25 years, exacerbating labour shortages and creating budgetary pressures that Nuuk is already struggling to manage.

While the majority of migration is to and from Denmark, over the past five years, Greenland has attracted growing numbers of migrant workers from further afield, particularly from south-east Asia. Many are keeping seafood factories running, staffing restaurants and supporting the fishing fleet – roles that are increasingly hard to fill locally.

But if Greenland's geopolitical status were to change in line with President Trump's wishes, demographic trends could shift rapidly. Increased military, infrastructure and commercial investment would almost certainly drive inward migration of working-age adults, temporarily slowing population ageing and boosting labour supply. But if migration were largely short-term and male-dominated, it could deepen social fragmentation rather than deliver long-term renewal.

Such a shift would also challenge existing arrangements for public services. Moving away from a Danish-style universal model could alter incentives to settle, particularly for families and older people, increasing inequality across age and income groups.

Climate change is transforming Greenland's physical landscape at breakneck speed. Less visible, but no less significant, is its demographic shift. These issues are reshaping the country's future – offering an extreme but telling case study of the challenges many societies and communities face as they grapple with ageing, smaller workforces and profound economic change.

READ MORE

The Friday three newsletter, edited by Emily Evans, is usually sent out fortnightly.

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