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Sent: 31 May 2024 12:44
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Subject: Your Friday three - 31 May 2024

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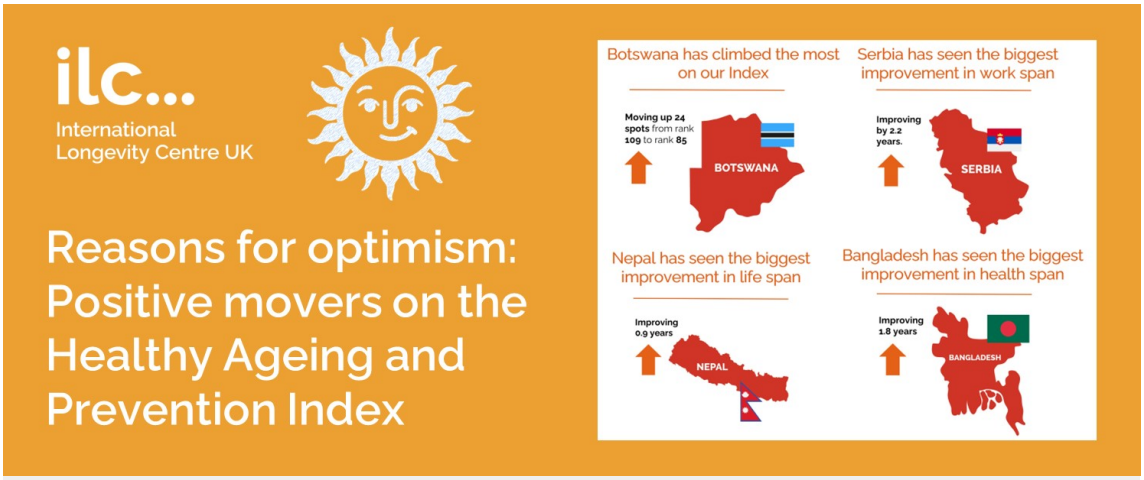
International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

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Reasons for optimism - positive movers on the Index



This week the ILC were proud to launch the second wave of its Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index alongside the WHO's World Health Assembly in Geneva. In its latest iteration the Index measures how well 153 countries across the world are ageing,

looking at life span, health span, work span, income, environmental performance and happiness.

Our Index allows us to compare how sustainable different countries are, both in terms of longer lives and the extent to which their governments are investing in efforts to prevent ill health and support healthy ageing. With two published sets of data, from 2019 and 2022, we can now also track progress over time allowing meaningful insights into what must happen to keep people well for longer.

So, comparing the pre-pandemic 2019 data with that in 2022, which countries have been the biggest movers? The countries that have seen the biggest movement overall and on the specific individual metrics are diverse:

- Botswana has moved up the most on our Index climbing 24 spots from 109th place to 85th
- Nepal has seen the biggest improvement in lifespan from 69.56 years to 70.5 years
- Bangladesh the biggest improvement in health span from 64.3 years to 66.2 years.
- Serbia has seen the biggest improvement in work span from 27.41 years to 29.57 years

Also dramatically:

- Ireland has shown the biggest in increase in income from $75.28K to $97.32K per GDP/capita.
- India has seen the biggest improvement in happiness from 2.38 to 4.68 on a scale of 0 to 10
- Afghanistan the biggest improvement in environmental performance from 25.5 to 43.6 on a scale of 0 to100.

It is perhaps no surprise that those at the top of the table remain those who are wealthier and have relatively small populations. Iceland now replaces Switzerland as the top-ranked country but the Scandinavian countries, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia have consistently performed well. On average and relative to other countries, people in the UK are living longer, healthier and richer lives than before the pandemic. However, over this three-year period, we've seen a drop in work span, environmental performance, and happiness and as a result the UK global ranking on ILC's Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index remains largely unchanged since 2019 (ranked 14th).

There is much to learn from the countries at the top of the table. At the launch Dr Karin Tegmark Wissell, Director General of the Public Health Agency of Sweden spoke about what Sweden is getting right to rank so highly in our Index, and what is needed next to continue making progress - particularly on mental health and loneliness.

There are many lessons we can learn from those countries who have made such progress on healthy ageing. From them we know what action governments must make and, in this election year, call for investment in prevention, work and the environment, so that everyone and not just the privileged few can benefit from longer and healthier lives.

If you have any optimistic suggestions or solutions for longer lives, please do let us know via the button below.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Index launch - what does global health look like post-pandemic?

"The updated ILC survey findings come at the right time: Physical and mental health – across all members of a given nation's society continue to be the most critical driver to advance healthy life expectancy and prosperity on our planet. The past 5 years – with the unprecedented effects of the pandemic – demonstrate what happens if we lose focus on giving prevention or healthier ways to live an ongoing priority. The starting point to achieve this is building health literacy across societies and our ongoing commitment to invest in health. Failure is not an option!" Hans Groth, Chairman of the World Demographic & Ageing Forum (WDA Forum)



Despite the progress made by some countries, those attending the launch of the second wave of its Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index alongside the WHO's World Health Assembly in Geneva, learnt that since 2019, the world has become unhealthier, less environmentally sustainable, and more unequal. In the light of this analysis, the ILC set out a three-point plan for governments to invest in preventative health interventions, support people to stay in work for longer and foster more sustainable societies.

Our launch was honoured by a stellar line up of expert speakers including the Italian Health Minister, Professor Orazio Schillaci, who spoke about the importance of collaboration within and outside of the health system to identify opportunities for preventative interventions.

The Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index measures how well countries across the world are ageing, looking at life span, health span, work span, income, environmental performance and happiness. Comparing the latest 2022 data with 2019 data, ILC's analysis across 153 countries finds that, on average:

- We are living 8 months less: life expectancy fell by 0.64 years from 73.1 years in 2019, to 72.5 years in 2022.
- We spend 7 fewer months in good health: health span fell by 0.61 years from 63.6 years in 2019, to 63 years in 2022.
- Environmental performance has dropped by 10% mainly due to deteriorating air quality and rapidly rising greenhouse gas emissions.

The ILC's Index also further highlights how global inequalities are on the rise. There is a 27-year gap in life span between the top 10 and bottom 10 countries (one year more than reported in 2019) and a 24-year gap in health span (one year more than in 2019).

At the launch Professor Ilona Kickbusch, warned that in addition to inequalities between countries *"47 million women were pushed into poverty during COVID"* and the

resultant losses to the formal and informal economy are enormous. *"Sexism and ageism really impact how we feel about our health, and how we feel about our happiness."*

ILC's work on it's Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index has been made possible by support and charitable grants from GSK, Hallmark Foundation, MSD, Pfizer and Sanofi. You can watch the full recording of the event by clicking the button below and see the presentation slides here.

WATCH HERE

Mental health matters - expert roundtable in Geneva



A billion people around the world have a mental health condition. That's one in eight of us; yet the majority receive no treatment at all, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. In the UK alone, there are approximately 1.2 million people on the NHS waiting list for mental health support and treatment.

While in Geneva this week, ILC convened a high-level roundtable discussion on acute mental health and the policy opportunities and challenges in this area. The discussion brought together decision-makers, health leaders, healthcare professionals, industry representatives, and the non-profit sector to highlight solutions for managing the acute mental health burden across our longer lives.

We are collectively talking more about mental health, and awareness is increasing around the world. However, those with acute diagnoses and symptoms are too often left behind. Stigma and lack of appropriate services affect these groups most adversely. Efforts to destigmatise mental illness and democratise access often benefit those with mild to moderate symptoms at the expense of those who perhaps need the most support.

Our keynote speaker, Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, Director of the Division of Country Health Policies and Systems for WHO Europe, made this same point:*"All countries are struggling with this issue – but it's important to take a step back and look clearly at two different types of people. The acute patients, who make up 1-2% of the population, and the broader population, who experience different and less acute*

challenges. We are seeing that many without diagnosed conditions still struggle to cope with the demands of work or education."

Another of our speakers, Professor Tsuyoshi Akiyama, President of the World Federation of Mental Health, emphasised the potential of those with mental health conditions to contribute more to society with the right support. He objected to the stereotype that those with acute conditions are a drain on the system and invites us all to reframe our understanding of who mental health patients are and the value that individuals can bring to society.

Although higher economic output is a by-product of improving population mental health, particularly at the acute end, this aspect only forms part of the case for change. Improving access to high-quality acute mental healthcare is the right thing to do for people and their families. This is not a resource people can provide for themselves, and only a select few in society can afford private access to consultations, therapies, and medications. The socioeconomic returns for governments and societies are not irrelevant to this discussion – but this cannot be the only reason that we intervene to improve health outcomes for some of the most vulnerable in our societies.

Another key issue that was evident from the roundtable was the disparity between high-income and low- and middle-income countries with regards to access to diagnosis, treatment, and innovation. The wealth of evidence to this effect has not led to a significant change of course in these places. Luna El Bizri, member of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Delegation, spoke about the demand for medical professionals specialising in mental health, which is far greater than the supply in places like Lebanon, her home country. This, coupled with longstanding problems with medicine supply of all kinds, leaves individuals and families to manage without any kind of evidence-based care.

Delegates brought a range of perspectives and solutions to the discussion, including the role of allied healthcare professionals, new technologies, and what culturally competent care should look like to begin to alleviate disparities in outcomes for marginalised groups.

The wealth of issues raised reflected one of the most interesting aspects of ILC's Mental Health Matters project – population mental health is a vast, complex, and multifaceted issue. Attention and resources are too often directed to the less acute end, and those with lifelong acute conditions consistently do not receive appropriate support. There are interesting and creative solutions out there, but taking them up and scaling them to meet people's needs remains a challenge.

This conversation in Geneva enabled ILC to gather a wealth of insights that will be reflected in our report and outputs towards the end of this year. Please see our Mental Health Matters programme page to keep abreast of the events and updates. Boehringer Ingelheim has provided financial support to ILC to conduct the Mental Health Matters project.

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