ILC Friday three - 15 December 2023

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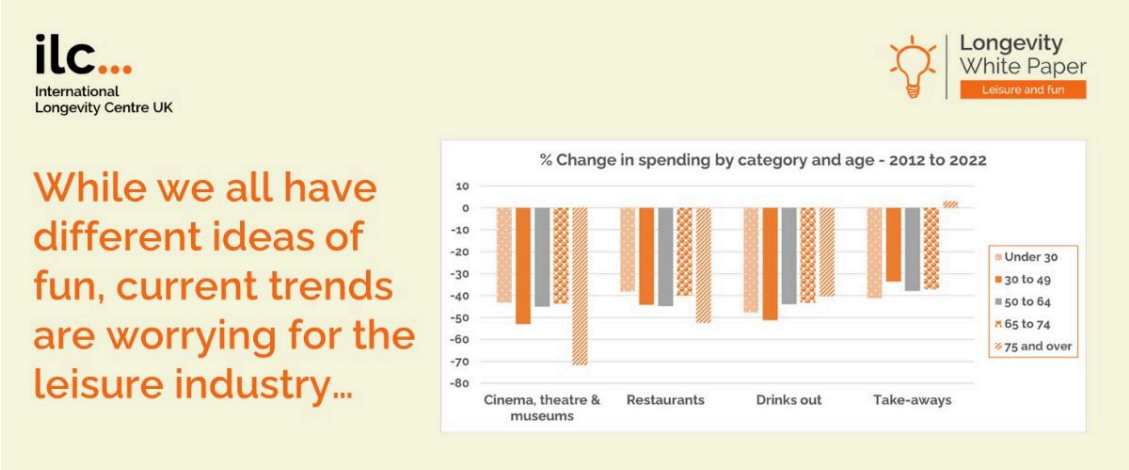
International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

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Solutions of the week - is festive fun good for everyone?



As we hurtle towards the end of the year, often full of cold or flu and in a state of near collapse, we're also supposed to have fun. It's the festive season and alongside a frantic pre-holiday work schedule we're expected to squeeze in gift shopping, office parties, family gatherings – and massively overindulge.

Although this time of year is exhausting, and often difficult for many, having fun is important to us. In one study of 24 countries, people in the UK were the least willing to sacrifice their leisure time for work, and Catherine Price's book *The Power of Fun* was named "Best self-help book of 2022" by The Independent newspaper. But fun is necessarily subjective; the concept is rarely well-defined. As a result, it's hard to measure, and not always valued in its own right.

The ILC devotes a whole chapter to leisure and fun in our One hundred not out report

less ‘fun’ outcomes, such as health or the economy" arguing that fun should be a reasonable objective for funding in itself.

But arguably we do need to address the health and well-being of those keeping our leisure and entertainment industries going – especially those with night-time roles. According to research by The Liminal Space, people who work at night are 37% more likely to have a heart attack, 44% more likely to have diabetes and six times more likely to get divorced than those who work during the day.

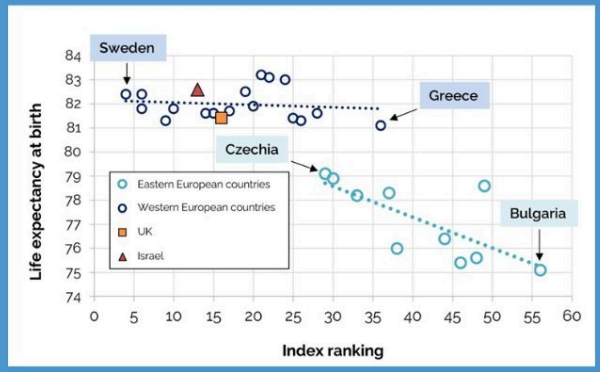
Over a quarter of the UK's workforce (27%) regularly work at night and face numerous barriers to good health including long hours, low wages, lack of sleep, disrupted routines and limited healthy food options. The Mayor of London has called on the Government to recognise their distinct needs and to commission further research into reducing the impact of working at night. While a global study by Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, found there are no interventions to encourage night workers to make healthier dietary choices.

So if you are suffering from overindulgence and a lack of sleep over this festive period, spare a thought for the UK's 8.7 million night workers – and, if possible, a generous tip for those you meet. But also take care and do have fun.

Thank you for all the excellent solutions for better longer lives. We have gathered your many ideas so far. There have been so many that we've only been able to include some of them in our 'route map' document. Those we've not fitted in we aim to share in the months ahead. We would also like to hear from you about the report itself - the bits you liked and those you didn't - get in touch via the button below.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Europe is ageing - what can we do about it?



Looking at our [Index] ranking, it's not something that surprises me...Eastern European countries haven't invested well in the health system, in prevention or vaccination programmes...we see Romania and Bulgaria lower down on the list...there is a big difference between Western and Eastern European countries.
Radu Ganescu, President, COPAC

Republic, France, Israel and Romania shared insights into how their countries perform on the ILC's Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index when it comes to life expectancy, work span, and other issues linked to population ageing.

Despite Europe performing well in terms of life span and health span, countries continue to face challenges with an ageing workforce. While Europeans may be living longer, they're not necessarily working for longer, posing issues for state pensions and the labour market.

Drastic levels of inequality can also be found between different European countries. For example, Swedish people can expect to live 5.6 more years in good health and work 3.9 more years than a Bulgarian. Immunisation is also much lower in Eastern European countries than Western European ones, suggesting that those in the East are at a much higher risk from preventable diseases such as flu.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Panellists also pointed to examples of good practice that can be followed by countries across Europe to support healthy ageing. One initiative in the Czech Republic highlights the importance of keeping older adults socially connected by getting them to engage with younger populations in different educational activities.

Dr Kateřina Macháčová, Director, ILC-Czech Republic explained, *"There is a programme in the Czech Republic called the 'Grandmas and Grandpa fairy tale reading club'. Older people go to the kindergartens, and they read a fairy tale after lunch before nap time. It's very popular, and I think it's very nice to connect older and younger generations…it's a very important way for older people to remain active in wider society."*

The ILC Europe Network wants to explore these barriers and solutions further by hosting an event in Brussels ahead of the European Parliament elections next year. For more details visit our website or email PatrickSwain@ilcuk.org.uk

READ MORE

Our health, the planet - no one can opt out

need to be filled out with specific undertakings, or protocols in diplomatic language, on the different aspects of climate change. These protocols must be binding and there must be effective regimes to supervise and monitor their application. Margaret Thatcher in a speech to the UN in 1989



While all the coverage is understandably around the "historic" agreement to "transition away" from fossil fuels, the other notable development over the two-week-long COP28 was the focus on health. Signed by over 140 countries, the UAE Declaration on Climate and Health marked a world first in acknowledging the need for governments to protect communities and prepare healthcare systems to cope with climate-related health impacts such as extreme heat, air pollution and infectious diseases.

“The climate crisis is a health crisis, but for too long, health has been a footnote in climate discussions,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organisation's Director General. The Declaration was developed with the support of several ‘country champions’ including Brazil, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, India, Kenya, Malawi, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the UK and the US. This joint action comes as annual deaths from polluted air reached almost 9 million and 189 million people were exposed to extreme weather-related events.

The UK Health Security Agency’s report published this week warned that parts of the country could become home to mosquitoes capable of spreading dengue fever, chikungunya and zika virus in decades. The report emphasised these "plausible worst-case scenario" projections could be avoided if international commitments to tackle climate change were properly kept. In her percipient 1989 speech to the UN, Margaret Thatcher said *"It is life itself—human life, the innumerable species of our planet—that we wantonly destroy. It is life itself that we must battle to preserve."* She concluded with a rallying call for global action stating, *"...the environmental challenge which confronts the whole world demands an equivalent response from the whole world. Every country will be affected and no one can opt out."*

Climate change and ageing are arguably the two most important and pressing issues facing the world yesterday, today and tomorrow. Both require visions for the long term and an urgent interconnected and collaborative approach. If we don’t start addressing both together, real threats and inequalities in healthy ageing and environmental impact will be exacerbated. But the opportunities are still there and if we get it right – and act now – then the lifespans of both us and our planet will be greener, healthier and longer.

To keep up-to-date with ILC events throughout the year, please continue to check our website on a regular basis.

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