

Health and Wellbeing

Technologies and services to improve health and well-being are advancing, but threats from disease, poor sanitation and mental health are growing, and new risks are emerging.

Healthcare is developing rapidly and has led to major improvements in global health and wellbeing. Despite this, many risks persist worldwide and several emerging threats are challenging the trend of improving health. A lack of adequate sanitation and healthcare services in developing regions poses a threat to life, perpetuating local health risks¹.

Chronic diseases have risen in prevalence to become the leading global cause of death, particularly in western countries, as physical inactivity and poor diet escalates with population and economic growth¹. In developed countries, obesity and resistance to antibiotics are increasing, as are psychological problems. Mental health issues now account for the largest share of economic burden globally, impacting on wellbeing and social cohesion. Misconceptions of mental illness are perpetuating a lack of treatment and proper care, and those suffering are often excluded from society. Air quality is a concern in many major cities worldwide, with transport-related pollutants and fossil fuel combustion creating respiratory and cardiovascular issues. Climate change may worsen the situation.

Positive trends are however apparent. Cases of infectious diseases and child mortality are falling, while people are generally living longer^{1,2}. There have been advancements in disease prevention, personalised medicine, prosthetics and the critical drug effectiveness¹. Good mental health and wellbeing is now increasingly recognised as essential in maintaining healthy populations and social cohesion, allowing citizens to contribute fully to a community³.

Challenges

- ★ Will we be able to balance population growth with universal access to good quality healthcare, in light of economic challenges and rising social inequality?
- ★ Can healthier, more active lifestyles and better diet be encouraged through design and education?
- ★ To what extent can planning help boost health and wellbeing?
- ★ Will measures to mitigate the health impacts of climate change be sufficient and can investment be prioritised fairly?



Key Facts:

- 1. Global deaths from infectious diseases are likely to decline 30% by 2030 but deaths from chronic diseases are rising, causing 63% of total deaths in 2008¹.**
- 2. The number of under-fives dying each year halved between 1990 to 2012, to 6.3 million, with further decreases likely¹.**
- 3. Roughly 2.5 billion people worldwide lack access to adequate sanitation¹.**
- 4. In Europe, 25,000 people a year die due to antimicrobial resistance, with this trend projected to increase in future¹.**
- 5. Around 215 million women in developing countries continue to use ineffective methods of birth control, or none at all³.**
- 6. The global cost of mental health conditions in 2010 was estimated at \$2.5 trillion, and is likely to more than double by 2030¹.**

Urban green space accounts for **one-third of all urban public green space** in England (including parks, playing fields, nature reserves, allotments and cemeteries)¹⁰

90% of people surveyed by Mind said that physical exercise outdoors in a natural environment was important to how they felt¹²



LDA Design Insights:

The UK faces several major health risks. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, lung and liver disease cause 150,000 deaths annually⁴, due mainly to poor diet and unhealthy lifestyles, while one in four will have some form of mental health problem - the biggest disease burden nationally⁵.

★ The UK is advanced in preventing major infectious diseases but chronic diseases are rising. Alcohol, smoking and obesity are primary causes, as are inactive lifestyles. The economic burden is clear: obesity-related issues cost the UK \$73 billion in 2012, while smoking cost \$90 billion⁶. Promoting more active lifestyles through high quality and accessible public realm and sports facilities, and making provision for walking and cycling, are an essential part of plan-making and development. Promotion of local foods and community self-sufficiency could help combat excessive and poor diets.

★ Mental health problems are significant in the UK, but are often under-reported and under-treated⁷, and loneliness is common particularly for the elderly. Impacts on the economy and wellbeing are considerable. Budget constraints mean healthcare services are failing to meet demand⁸ and problems persist despite being treatable. Design of public spaces and new development should consider the positive contribution they can make to health and wellbeing through provision of cultural facilities and inclusive active spaces.

★ Climate change is likely to add to health risks due to water and food stress, extreme weather, changing disease patterns and pollution. In the UK, more frequent heat waves and flooding will put greater pressure on health services and increase mortality, especially in vulnerable groups. Ultra-violet radiation levels will rise and vector-borne diseases may become more prevalent⁹. Green infrastructure and well-planned cities designed, using high quality data, to reduce risk and provide refuge for the vulnerable are critical responses. Encouraging communities to establish local food sources and to participate in the design and management of public spaces will improve resilience.

★ Air quality is a growing urban concern, particularly in larger towns and cities. Exposure to pollutants and particulate matter due to transport emissions and fossil fuel combustion contributes to respiratory and cardiovascular health issues¹⁰. Roadside and urban air quality has improved over time but plateaued in recent years¹⁰. Reducing vehicles with internal combustion engines, promoting cleaner public transport options and utilising green spaces and appropriate planting can have significant beneficial impacts⁹.

What is LDA Futures?

The world is changing in response to a set of environmental, economic, social and technological drivers, and these are shaping the types of infrastructure and development we need and the way we use land.

LDA Futures explores these drivers and their implications to enable us to make appropriate responses through our projects and the advice we give to clients.



References

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