

Case study

Ageing Societies: Challenges and Opportunities

Who do you think should look after you when you are old? What illnesses do you fear the most – and how likely are they to occur? And how old do you have to be to feel ‘old’, anyway?

Our report for BUPA Health Dialog explores reactions to these questions across twelve countries. Its findings are analysed and contextualised by Dr Jose-Luis Fernandez and Dr Julien Forder, Principal Research Fellows of the Personal Social Services Research Unit at LSE.

Increases in life expectancy mean that the world’s population is ageing. The number of people in the world aged over 60 has almost tripled since 1950. Average life expectancy worldwide has increased during that time from 47 to 68 (79 in the UK). 72 percent of respondents worldwide aged 65 and over do not think of themselves as old.

The link between changes in life expectancy and the prevalence of health problems and of dependency is key to gauging the impact of ageing on the demand for health and social care services. Most adults do not start becoming dependent on others until after they are 80. But the BUPA Health Pulse Report 2010 finds that the ‘informal care network’, where families look after their elderly relatives, is disintegrating.

‘Across the world,’ says Dr Fernandez, ‘a combination of societal and economic factors – including demographic changes, the breakdown of the extended family, and the rise in divorce rates, migration and women in the workplace – are eroding the family-supported structures that have historically provided the bulk of the care for dependent older people. With state social care systems also under huge financial strain, a global challenge is emerging about how to support dependent older people in the future.’



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