



Institute for Statistical
Studies and Economics of Knowledge



priority2030^
leaders are made, not born



Human Capital
Multidisciplinary
Research Center

Health

Proliferation of unhealthy lifestyles



Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge (ISSEK) HSE presents the results of a study of human potential trends. The research methodology includes methods of big data mining based on the iFORA system created at HSE ISSEK, as well as expert sessions and the Delphi survey with the participation of more than 400 leading foreign and Russian scientists in the field of human potential.

The project is implemented within the framework of the activities of the [World-Class Human Capital Multidisciplinary Research Centre](#) and the UNESCO Chair on Future Studies (UNESCO Futures Literature Chairs network). The full list of trends is available in a unique open-access database https://ncmu.hse.ru/chelpoten_trends.

This trendletter is based on data obtained from care.diabetesjournals.org, isosugar.org, nejm.org, statista.com, who.int, etc.

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Key subtrends

▶ Proliferation of hypodynamia

Along with the growth in the number of people who care about their health, the share of those leading an unhealthy lifestyle is also increasing. More than a quarter of the world's population suffer from hypodynamia, while in developed countries these numbers are even higher. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation by closing parks, gyms, swimming pools, and other facilities which help people adhere to healthy lifestyle principles. Insufficient physical activity leads to proliferation of various chronic diseases and to increase of the burden on the healthcare system. Adopting a more active lifestyle could save up to 5 million people annually; just 2.5 hours of moderate exercise per week will reduce mortality by 10%.

One of the key factors negatively affecting people's health is unbalanced diet, with the calorie content significantly exceeding the energy consumption of the body. People's diet increasingly includes deeply processed, industrially made foods, animal and saturated fats, free sugars, and salt, to the detriment of lactic acid bacteria and fibre. Every year, excess salt intake (more than 5 grams per day) causes

▶ Changing structure of nutrition, emergence of eating disorders

▶ Rise of addictions (to gadgets, games, alcohol, smoking, etc.)

the death of 1.7 million people, while excessive consumption of industrially produced trans-fatty acids kills 500 thousand. Exceeding the daily sugar intake by 25% doubles the probability of dying from cardiovascular diseases, and increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Excessive use of personal computers, smartphones, and the internet also leads to adverse consequences for the body, such as problems with vision, hearing, and the musculoskeletal system, lack of sleep, eating disorders, gambling addiction, etc. A significant proportion of people have bad habits (often caused by external stress factors): e.g. there are 1.3 billion smokers in the world. The total economic cost of smoking, including healthcare costs and loss of productivity, amounts to about 1.4 trillion USD a year, or 1.8% of global GDP. Excessive alcohol consumption causes the death of up to 3 million people each year (5.3% of total mortality). Many countries ban advertising of harmful products, and restrict their consumption (e.g. public places such as restaurants, train stations, airports, etc. are declared tobacco-free zones), and promote healthy lifestyles.

Key estimates

42%

of the global population will be overweight in 2025.

59 grams

is the global average daily per capita sugar consumption (while the WHO-approved norm is no more than 25 grams per day)

Trend's characteristics



Impact on human potential

1

2

3



Weak signal²

Proliferation of destructive stress coping practices



Strongest manifestation period

2021–2025



Wild card³

Control over of people's mind and emotions



Effect of COVID-19 pandemic

Strengthened the trend



Consequences of wild card

Deterioration of people's mental health



Level of occurrence in Russia

Comparable with the global level

¹ 1 – weak influence, 2 – medium, 3 – strong.

² Weak signal is an event that has a low degree of significance (mention, popularity), but indicates a radical trend transformation in the future.

³ Wild card is an unpredictable event, which, if realized, can have a significant impact on the trend development.

Drivers and barriers



Drivers

- Active state policy aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles
- Growing public attention to their own health
- Emergence of urban environment conducive to active pastime
- Proliferation of applications and devices which induce people to lead a healthy lifestyle (calorie counters, fitness trackers, etc.)
- Growing range of healthy food products (including functional ones)



Barriers

- Further automation of work, growing number of office workers
- Use of gadgets at home and for leisure
- Exurbanisation, the need to use “passive” transport modes for travel
- Relatively high cost of healthy foods, vegetables, and fruits
- Changing lifestyle and food culture, growing demand for “quick bites”
- Proliferation of eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia, etc.)
- Deliberately increased sugar, salt, and trans-fat content in industrially made foods, to improve their palatability

Effects



Opportunities

- The implementation of the trend will have an extremely negative impact on human capital development



Threats

- Declining public health
- Rising morbidity and mortality rates