

Making China Longevity-ready

The current and
future economic
benefits of investing
in prevention

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International
Longevity Centre UK



China's population is ageing rapidly

With China's ageing population, investing a greater share of health budgets in prevention will be critical to unlocking the longevity dividend. Healthy China 2030, which frames health as integral to national development and places strong emphasis on prevention, provides a strong foundation to drive sustained improvements in population health and economic resilience.

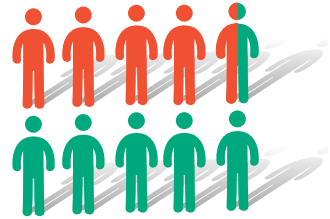
Today, **adults aged 50 or over** account for

37%
of the
population.



By 2035, they will account for

45%
of China's population.



By mid-century, more than

1 in 2

Chinese residents will be aged 50 or older, creating the world's largest cohort of older adults in absolute terms.

Older people's economic contributions are already worth trillions and show no signs of slowing

In 2024 alone, adults aged 50+ generate

\$8.3 trillion

annually in **consumption** and **labour** income (\$3.6T and \$4.8T, respectively) - larger than the entire GDP of Japan.



They also hold

\$38.4 trillion
in pension wealth.

In China, adults aged 50+

already generate nearly

47%

of all labour income.



or **\$4.8 trillion**

out of the country's

\$10.2 trillion total.

By 2050, they will generate **more than half** of all labour income,

rising to **\$6.1 trillion**.

With more than half of adults aged

50–79

remaining economically active

(52% labour force participation rate).



Older workers represent one of the largest and most under-recognised sources of economic output and stability.

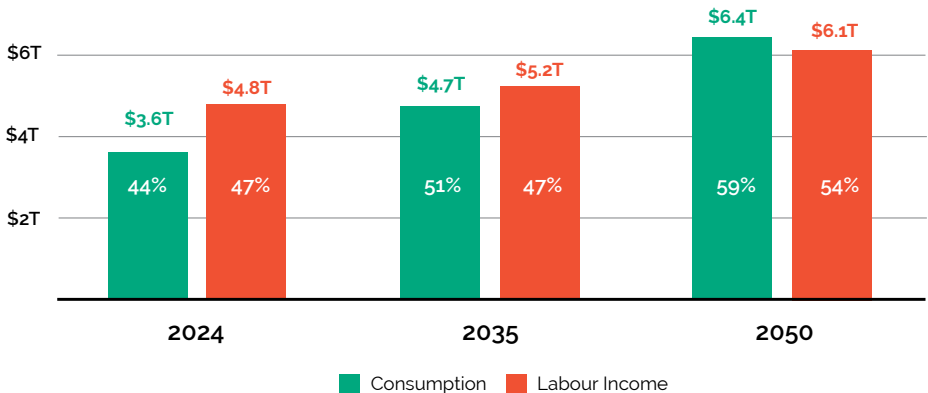
Healthy longevity is, thus, an increasingly important driver of workforce productivity.

The future consumer in China is older and already dominates spending

Adults aged 50+ are not economic dependents but a primary engine of consumption. Today they generate **more than \$2 in every \$5 (\$3.6 trillion or \$6,761 per capita)** of household spending. By 2050, they will generate **close to \$3 in every \$5 (\$ 6.4 trillion or \$9,468 per capita)**, making them the dominant consumer demographic commanding spending power larger than the current economy of Germany. Industries that thrive in the next 30 years will be those that design for longevity consumers, not just younger ones.

Adults over 50 already drive nearly half of all spending and earning and that share is rising fast

By 2050, 59% of every dollar spent and 54% of every dollar earned comes from adults aged 50+



The longevity economy extends beyond markets into the foundations of family and care

In China, unpaid caregiving, family support, and community contribution from older adults enable large parts of the formal economy to function.



Around **60%** of middle-aged and older women provide regular family caregiving.

While over **one quarter of middle-aged adults** support older parents directly.

These contributions enable working-age adults to remain in full-time employment and sustain productivity across the economy.



People aged **65 and over** spend **more than 70%** more time **volunteering than people at other ages.**

If this volunteering were valued at prevailing wages, it would represent significant economic value. Across non-European G20 countries, the value of volunteering by adults 50+ equates to nearly 0.5% of combined GDP.



Applied to China's economy, that would imply a **volunteering contribution by older adults** worth approximately **\$95 billion** per year.

The longevity dividend starts with prevention

Healthy older adults don't just live longer – they work longer, spend more, support families, and strengthen communities. Poor health collapses all of this. Investing in prevention is how the longevity dividend will be further unlocked.

One of the highest-return tools available is immunisation. China has 310 million people aged 60+. Today, roughly one in seven are vaccinated against influenza, and one in twenty against pneumococcal disease.



Each **flu vaccination** delivers approximately

\$2,200

in **lifetime societal value per person**, and each **pneumococcal vaccination** approximately

\$1,980.

Using the WHO target coverage rate of 75% as a benchmark, closing the vaccination gap from current levels would mean reaching approximately 186 million additional older adults for influenza and 217 million for pneumococcal disease.



That alone would generate roughly

\$840 billion in additional societal value over the remaining lifetimes of those vaccinated – equivalent to about

\$41 billion per year, or around **0.2% of China's annual GDP.**

These figures capture the full social and economic return: avoided hospitalisations, emergency visits, and treatment costs; reduced premature death; fewer workdays lost to illness for both the vaccinated individual and their caregivers; and improved quality of life in later years.

Vaccination is only one entry point. The broader case for prevention spanning screening, chronic disease management, fall prevention, and mental health support would amplify these returns many times over. The evidence is clear: investing in the health of older adults is not a cost it is one of the highest-return investments a society can make.

The opportunity

To truly benefit from the longevity dividend, action must extend beyond the health system. Engaging employers to deliver prevention (beyond the clear economic rationale) will help reduce the growing over-reliance on hospitals, which is increasingly unsustainable. Incentivising innovation to drive consumption and reducing barriers to volunteering are also important.

As China raises its retirement age, prioritising and investing in preventative interventions such as immunisation, which offer significant returns, will be essential to keeping an ageing population economically active and contributing to the formal and informal economy.

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About ILC

ILC is the UK's leading authority on the impact of longevity on society. We combine evidence, solutions and networks to make change happen.

We help governments, policy makers, businesses and employers develop and implement solutions to ensure we all live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives. We want a society where tomorrow is better than today and where future generations are better off.

ILC wants to help forge a new vision for the 100-year life, where everyone has the opportunity to learn throughout life, and where new technology helps us contribute more to society.

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