Question
Is modern living harmful to human health?

Prompt
It has often been stated that ‘we have never had it so good’. The global response to the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the power of modern medicine through the swift provision of effective vaccination. Death from starvation or injury is rare in countries that maintain civil order. The internet connects us and offers the entirety of human knowledge at our fingertips. However, life expectancy has been falling in the US and parts of the UK in recent years, and the last decades of life are increasingly being spent in a state of chronic ill health. The mental health of young people is also considerably poorer than that of previous generations. Is modern living actually harmful to human health?

Things to consider
The question is deliberately open-ended to allow innovative and creative thinking – there is no ‘right or wrong’ answer here. There will be arguments for and against the question posed and it is advisable to consider both. This is not necessarily a question about medicine and you may wish to consider what is meant by ‘modern living’ at the outset.

Structuring your writing
Consider structuring your work like a short scientific paper, with an abstract – a short paragraph that summarises the whole answer – followed by a main body of text comprising separate paragraphs that expands your argument. It is quite all right to use subheadings if you think that they will be useful. This may be different to how you have been used to writing at school– you are essentially starting with your conclusion – however, scientists are busy people and like to see a concise summary of the main argument before deciding whether to read the rest of the paper. It is worth looking at a short review article (on anything) to see how a scientific paper is written.

Do include diagrams, graphs, tables and lists (collectively known as figures) if you think that these will be useful. They are often a more efficient way of presenting information than prose. All figures should have a legend summarising the information that they are conveying.

It is important to reference your sources of information throughout the text, citing the sources in a reference section at the end.