

# The State of the Nation's Health and Wellbeing in 2023



Key findings from the Healthier Nation Index



**Steve Gray**  
Chief Executive, Nuffield Health


**It has never been more important to talk about the nation's health and wellbeing.** We have been through a lot these past few years. A global pandemic, international conflict, and the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation.

The aftershocks of these seismic events are still being felt. Last year's Healthier Nation Index revealed the long-term impact of the pandemic on our physical and mental health. This year's Index shows further damage to the nation's wellbeing due to the decline in our financial health.

**As the UK's largest healthcare charity, Nuffield Health exists to make people's lives better.** Our purpose is simple: to build a healthier nation. We do that through our outstanding services and through our free-to-access community programmes that address unmet health needs. We also do it by tracking the state of the nation's health. The Healthier Nation Index is one of the most detailed reviews and barometers of all aspects of physical and mental health in the UK.

Now in its third year, the Index points to the serious impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on the country's wellbeing. It highlights the link between people's financial means and their physical and mental health – and the importance of taking a holistic approach to the nation's wellbeing.

We hope this report and its recommendations will be a catalyst to further collaboration. If each of us plays our role – including government, business, charities, communities, families and individuals – we will succeed in building a healthier nation.

A portrait of Dame Kelly Holmes, a double Olympic gold medalist, smiling on a running track. She is wearing a blue tank top and a black necklace. A large white speech bubble is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Like millions of us,  
I have struggled  
with my health.



**Dame Kelly Holmes**

Double Olympic Gold Champion and Nuffield Health Ambassador

I've experienced burnout, I've woken up feeling rubbish, I've struggled to get motivated and – on my darkest days – I've suffered from poor mental health. The past few years have been particularly difficult, with the pandemic and fallout from the war in Ukraine. We need to be open about this because it's only when we talk about it, we can do something about it.

And it's only from talking about it and working with Nuffield Health that I've truly understood the fundamental link between good physical health and good mental health. When we do exercise, our body feels healthier. Exercise helps to reduce our chances of long-term health conditions, it can help alleviate aches and pains, and it can improve our wellbeing.

But I know from personal experience how invaluable exercise can be for our mental health. When I'm feeling rubbish, a short walk, run round the park or visit to the gym can make a real difference to how I feel about myself. So, if we're going to build a healthier nation then we need to get Britain moving again.

This year's Healthier Nation Index exposes the scale of the challenge we face. Nearly two thirds of people say the cost-of-living crisis has worsened their physical health and mental wellbeing. It has impacted on people's sleep and eating habits. It is a national crisis that requires a national response.

To build a healthier nation, we need to see leadership from government. As individuals, families and communities, we need to play our own part too. Small changes can make a really big difference which is why Nuffield Health's Find five campaign is so important. If everyone can find just five extra minutes a day, then we'll help put the nation on a healthier path.

**This is my challenge to the nation. I'm up for it.  
Are you?**



# Snapshot: A healthier nation?

The Healthier Nation Index is a unique annual barometer, providing one of the most detailed reviews of all aspects of the nation's physical and mental health.

Now in its third year, the Index has charted the state of the UK's wellbeing as the nation handles the aftermath of an unprecedented couple of years which have left deep and long-lasting marks on our health and wellbeing.

In 2022 the impact of international conflict exacerbated our fragile post-pandemic recovery, with the resulting economic shock waves leading to a cost-of-living crisis that has undermined both our financial resources and our wellbeing.

This report provides an overview of the Index's latest findings, revealing the toll this crisis is taking on the nation's wellbeing, analysed through the lens of physical and mental health, sleep, nutrition, community and workplace wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, our findings do not paint a very positive picture.

**The majority of adults in the UK report worsening health, and the hardest hit are younger people, those with long-term health issues and lower earners.**

Despite this, **there are glimmers of hope.** Exercise levels have improved for the first time in three years, along with an increasing awareness of the benefits that moving more can have on both body and mind.

**We must cultivate these green shoots where we can,** and we must focus on collaborating across sectors and society to take a more proactive, preventative approach to health to build a healthier nation for everyone.

**Dr Davina Deniszczyc**

Charity and Medical Director, Nuffield Health










The Index is based on a survey of 8,000 UK adults



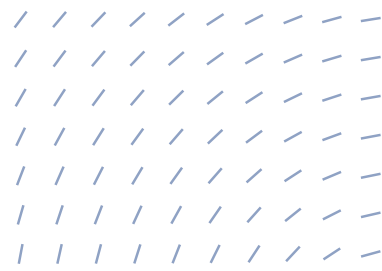


Over the last 12 months, how much better or worse would you say the following areas of your life are?



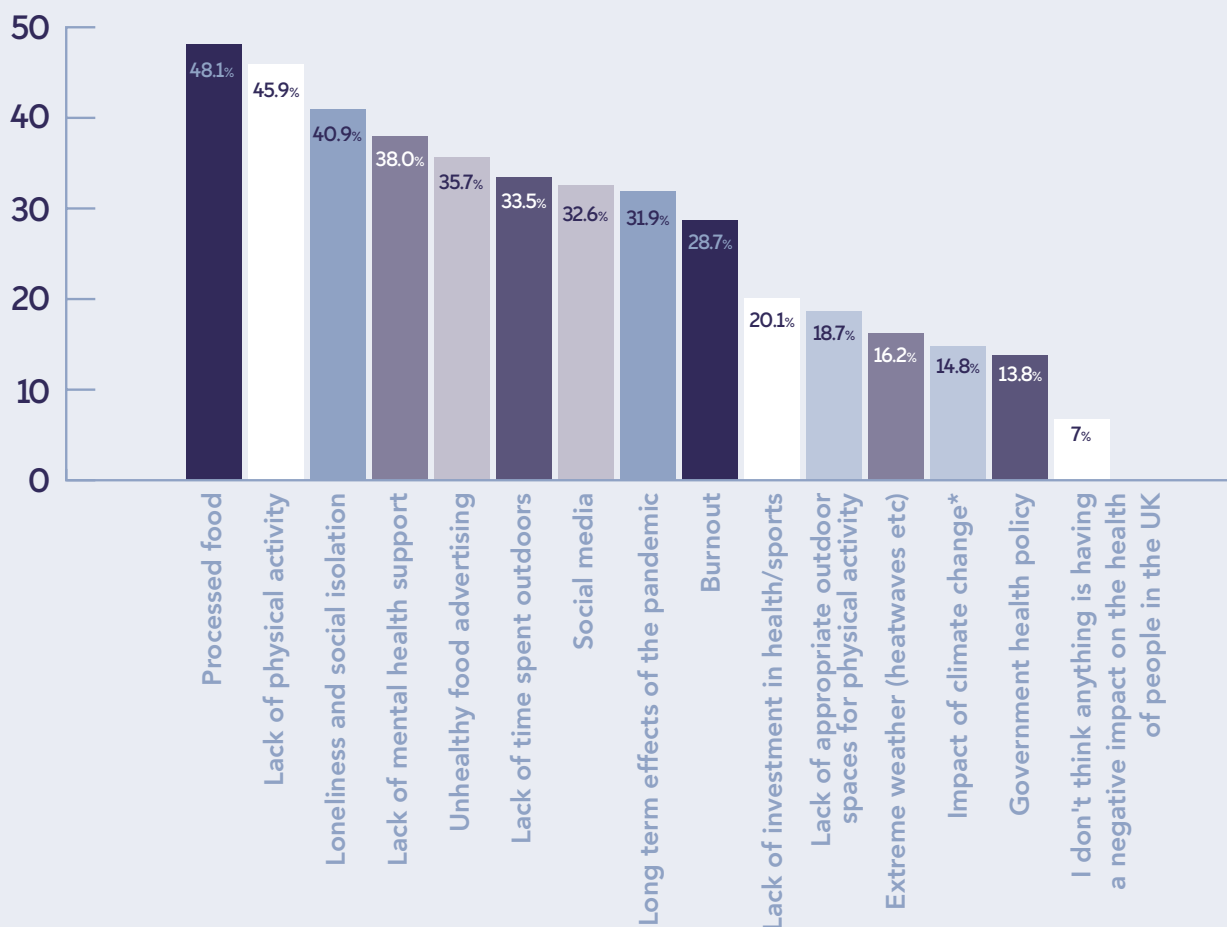
	Significantly or slightly better	Significantly or slightly worse
 Financial Health	21.4% ↑	48.5% ↓
 Physical Health	26.8% ↑	35.1% ↓
 Mental or emotional Health	25.8% ↑	33.7% ↓
 Eating habits	32.2% ↑	26.9% ↓
 Family relationships	35.5% ↑	14.9% ↓
 Social contact or social life	28.7% ↑	30.7% ↓
 Sleep	24.8% ↑	40.1% ↓

What, if anything, do you think is having a negative impact on the health of people in the UK?



# COST OF LIVING

63.2%



\*(Extreme weather conditions e.g. heatwaves, and events e.g. flooding)

# Physical health



**Paul Johnson**  
Clinical Fitness National Lead, Nuffield Health



This year's Healthier Nation Index highlights the profound impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on people's physical health in the UK.

Over a third of people stated that the ongoing crisis has negatively impacted their own physical health over the past year, while **nearly two thirds (63%) said that the cost of living is the biggest concern impacting the health of the population.**

As with the pandemic, we know that the impact of the cost-of-living crisis will not be evenly felt. The Index shows that younger people are being hit the hardest, with **nearly two thirds (63%) of those aged 25–34 stating that cost was a barrier to exercise**, compared to just under two in five of those aged over 55.

It is vital that everyone has the opportunity to move more to support their physical health. This Index has shown exercising outdoors tops the list of most popular type of activity for boosting physical health, with **38% of people saying that is the main way they have exercised in the last year.** Encouragingly, the new data has also revealed a slight improvement in the levels of exercise nationwide for the first time since the survey began in 2020, with people spending almost an hour extra exercising each month compared to last year.







**Dr James King**

Senior Lecturer in Exercise Physiology, Loughborough University



The data relating to physical health and activity behaviours within the Healthier Nation Index is very interesting and, in many ways, reflects broader influences within contemporary society.

It is quite striking that so many respondents perceived the cost-of-living crisis to have negatively impacted health. This is perhaps unsurprising given that tighter household budgets will be forcing families to spend less on food which is likely to mean a reduction in diet quality for many. The stress associated with managing limited household budgets may also be relevant.

Limited financial resources may also influence people's engagement with physical activity. However, on this specific topic responses were quite polarised. This may reflect differing financial circumstances across participants, but also relate to the varied ways that individuals engage in physical activity. For instance,

almost two in five respondents reported undertaking physical activity outside, either alone or with friends and family members. Such activities likely require less resource than more structured forms of physical activity, such as attending a gym or classes.

It is interesting to see that around one fifth of respondents reported engaging in physical activity through online and virtual formats. Undoubtedly, this method of physical activity engagement will become increasingly popular, with home-based physical activity being a particularly useful tool to facilitate active lifestyles more widely.



The news that people are not meeting activity levels doesn't feel surprising. But the impact the cost-of-living crisis has had, further slamming the brakes on our activity levels is especially worrying – because movement can be a free everyday pursuit. And it's essential for good health.

In order to engage more people more regularly, rather than randomly, I believe a shift in the narrative that surrounds fitness is needed. A large part of this is linked to an end goal – 'get abs', 'sofa to shredded in six weeks' – rather than making it a tool for life. To do so we need to stop viewing fitness in short term goals, and instead, be active in our everyday: children need to see us walking more and enjoying it; we need to embrace movement breaks and we should get behind shorter bursts of activity.

We need to return to as much focus on simple, daily

movement as there is on big, lofty fitness goals.

I truly believe that daily movement has the power to help us manage life's load.



**Amy Lane**

Podcaster and author

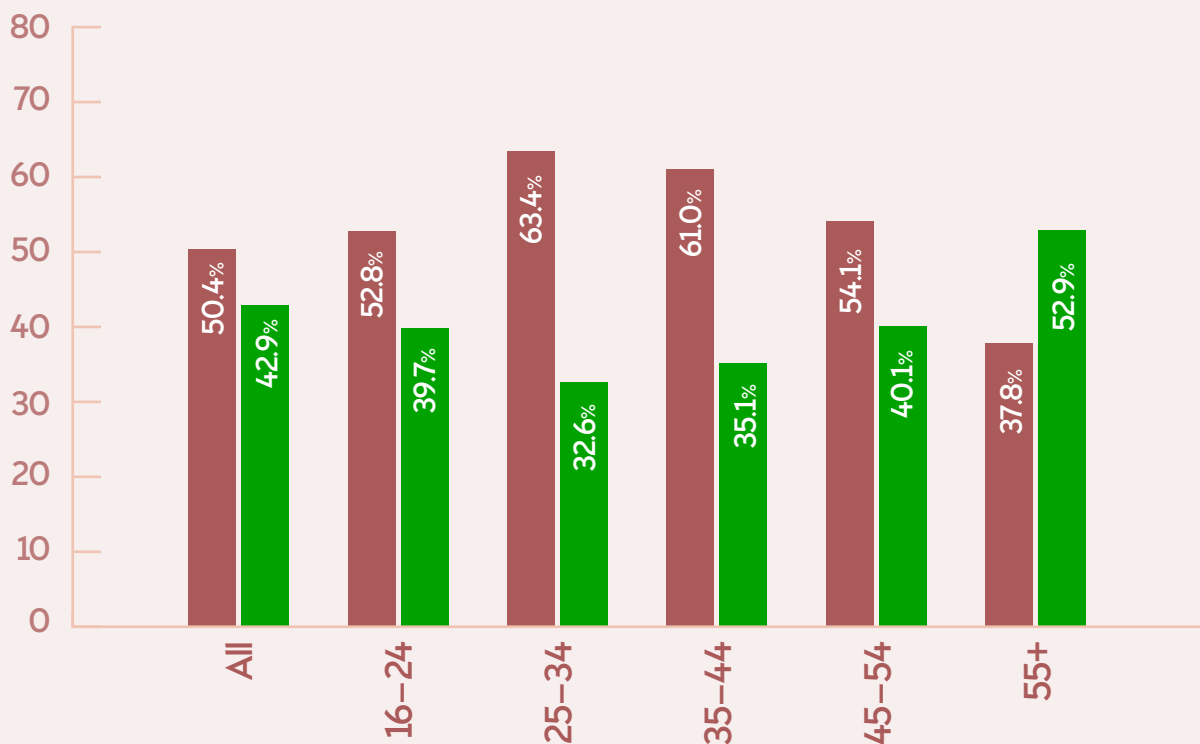
# How much of a barrier do you think that cost is to undertaking more physical activity?



Significant or slight barrier

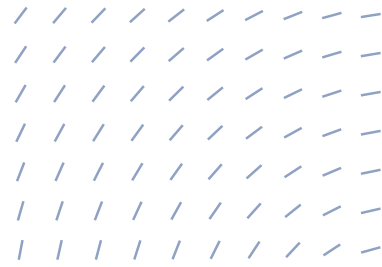


Not much or no barrier



Almost two thirds of those aged between 25-34 stated that cost was a barrier to exercise, compared to under two in five of those aged over 55.

Thinking about the exercise that you have done over the last 12 months, what types of activity have you been most likely to choose/do?



Outside activity  
alone or with friends

38.0%

Strengthening  
exercise

*e.g. free weights, resistance  
machines or bodyweight*

17.1%

Exercise alone  
in the gym

16.5%

Exercise with  
family members

16.0%

N/A – I have  
not exercised  
over the last  
12 months

14.0%



38% of people have  
exercised outside  
in the last 12 months





In the last 12 months, on average how much time, if at all, have you spent on moderate physical activity per week?



76% of people do not reach the NHS recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, a slight improvement from 81% in 2022.





# Mental health



**Gosia Bowling**  
Emotional Wellbeing Lead,  
Nuffield Health

As a nation we are gradually getting better at talking about and looking after our mental health. However, the Healthier Nation Index findings show the extent of the challenge that we still face as a country...

...Nearly one in four people (23%) rated their mental health as poor in our survey...



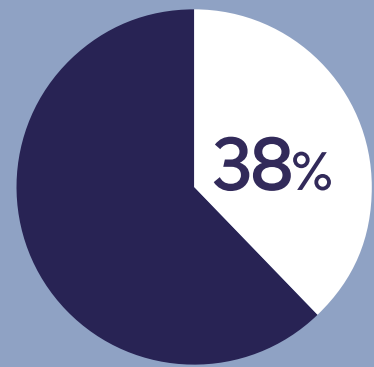
...while one in three reported that their mental health has got worse over the last year.



Unsurprisingly, the cost of living and changes in personal finances were seen as the biggest contributors, closely followed by work and health issues. Worryingly, **three in five people (59%) said that the cost-of-living crisis has negatively impacted their mental health** in the last year, and this is being most keenly felt amongst lower earners.



As a nation we are becoming more aware of the serious impact that poor mental health has on overall wellbeing. **Over a third of people (38%) said that they thought a lack of mental health support was having a negative impact on the population.**



Despite this, **one in 10 adults reported that they have not done anything to look after their mental health in the last year** – showing that there is still work to be done to encourage and empower people to look after their mental fitness.



More encouragingly, though, this means **nine in 10 are dedicating at least some time to looking after their mental health.**



**39**  
minutes

On average, those surveyed spent **39 minutes per week looking after their mental health**, with activities including going for a walk, speaking with family and friends and making plans with friends.

We know the scale of the challenge we are facing. But our survey clearly underlines that as a nation we need to work collectively, and do more to stop the decline in our nation's mental health.







**Professor Andy Smith**  
Professor of Sport and Physical Activity, Edge Hill University, and Mental Health Lead at the Sport for Development Coalition



The findings of the Healthier Nation Index 2023 make clear the positive actions people can take to support their mental health, including being active, connecting with family and friends, taking a break from work, and engaging in other forms of self-care.

However, the findings also reveal the persistent challenges many people are facing in relation to their mental health. The cost-of-living crisis, sleep problems, work and health challenges, the quality of our social relationships, and access to timely and effective mental health support are all identified as having negative impacts.

The Sport for Development Coalition's 'Moving for Mental

Health' report drew similar conclusions, and it is clear that we need to continue promoting the benefit of being active for mental health while also tackling the deep-seated inequalities associated with poor mental health.

Addressing the systems-level changes needed to better support mental health through place-based community programmes is also essential.

## How would you rate your mental or emotional health today?



Very good

**13.0%**



Good

**30.4%**



Fair

**33.4%**



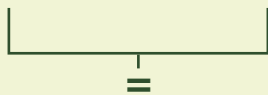
Poor

**17.5%**

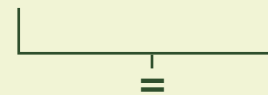


Very poor

**5.7%**



**43.4%**

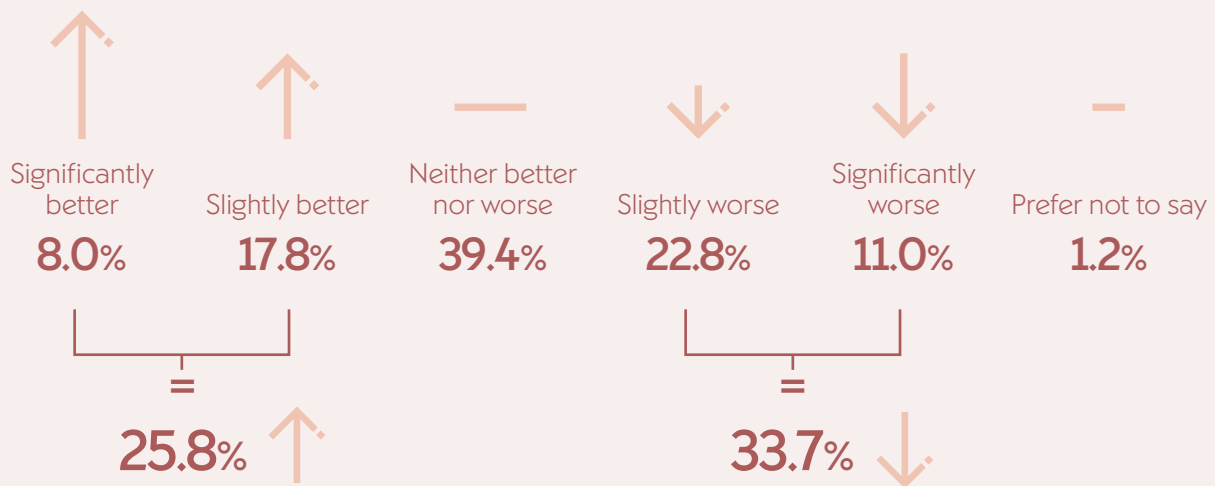
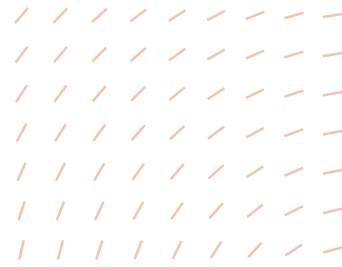


**23.1%**

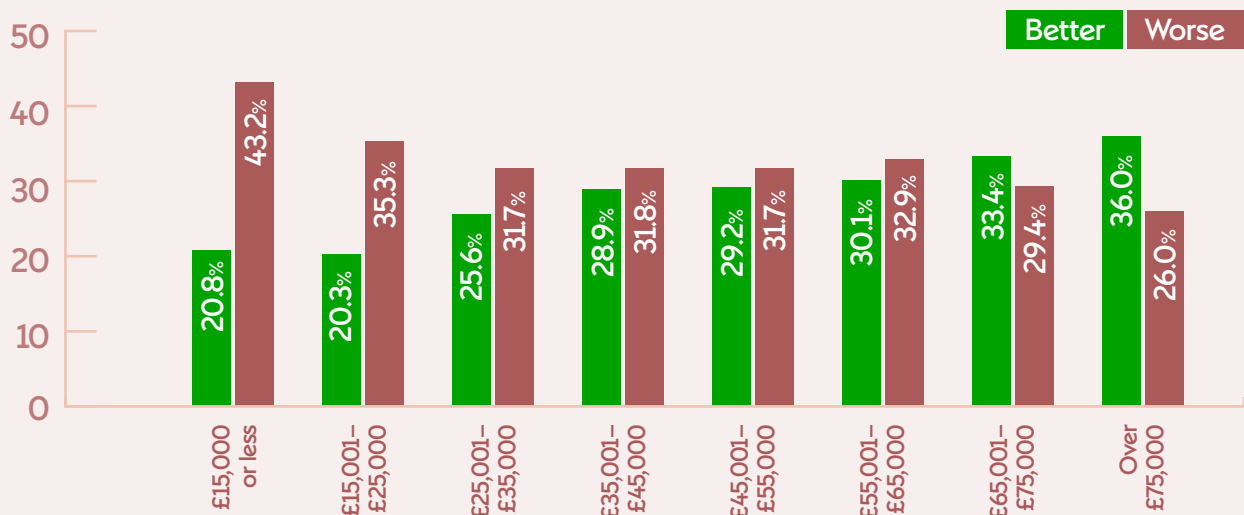


**More than two in five people would rate their mental health as good, compared to over one in five people who rate it as poor.**

Over the last 12 months, how much better or worse would you say your mental or emotional health is?

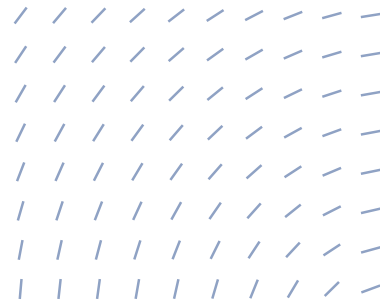


One in three people (34%) said their mental health has got worse in the last year, with just over one in 10 (11%) saying it had gotten significantly worse.



People earning less than £15,000 a year were most likely to say their mental or emotional health had got worse.

In the last 12 months, to what extent have the following had a negative impact on your mental health, if at all?



Cost of living or change  
in personal finances

**58.7%**

*(incl. impact of increased energy  
and household bills)*



Sleep  
**48.0%**



Work  
**44.1%**



Health issues  
**40.6%**



News and  
media coverage  
**38.2%**



Loneliness and  
social isolation  
**35.9%**



Eating habits  
**35.1%**



Personal or family  
relationships  
**33.5%**



Reduced access  
to healthcare  
**30.8%**



Impacts of  
climate change  
**25.2%**



Social media  
**24.9%**



Care giving  
responsibilities  
**24.8%**



Long-term symptoms  
of COVID-19  
**17.4%**



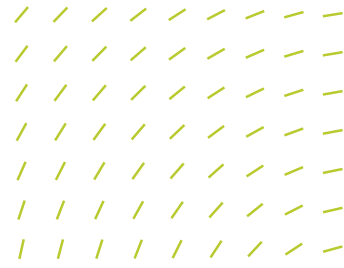
Waiting for an  
operation or surgery  
**17.2%**



Childcare  
**14.9%**



Thinking about looking after your mental health over the last 12 months, what type of actions have you been most likely to choose/do?



**Go for a walk**  
**48.4%**

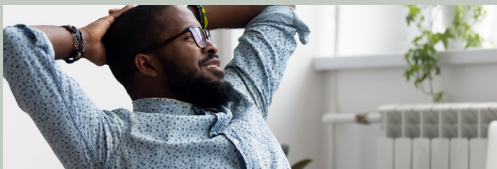


**Speak to family and friends**

**26.5%**



**Exercise 29.4%**



**Take a break 21.7%**

**Make plans with my friends**  
**19.0%**



**One in 10 adults say they have not done anything to look after their mental health in the last year.**



Almost one in three people (32%) said that exercise improves their mental health, with over a quarter (27%) saying that exercise lifts their mood and helps them feel less anxious or depressed.





## How often, if at all, do you feel lonely?

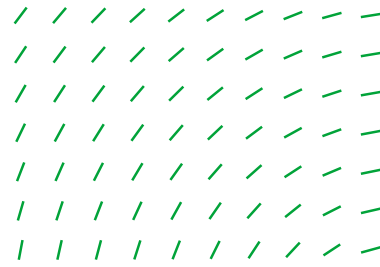


More than two in three people (68%) aged 16–24 feel lonely at least once a week, compared to under a third (30%) of people aged over 55.



People with 'very bad' health are nearly twice as likely as people with 'very good' health to feel lonely at least once a week (73% vs 38%)

# The view from Westminster



The findings from the Healthier Nation Index shine a light on the important but often neglected issue of loneliness, which, having been appointed the world's first loneliness minister, is a topic close to my heart.

## Tracey Crouch

MP for Chatham and Aylesford

It is an enormous public health challenge especially as it can affect people of any age, gender, ethnicity, wealth and at any life stage. The pandemic has exacerbated the problem, as many are still finding it difficult to rebuild their social connections.

While loneliness can affect anyone, it is striking that over two thirds of people aged 16–24 feel lonely at least once a week, with 20% saying they feel lonely every day. The data also reveals that people between the ages of 35 and 54 were more likely to say their social life had gotten worse over the last year.

As such, we urgently need to put in place interventions which recognise the different challenges facing people of all ages, genders and life stages, and the instrumental role that physical activity can play in enabling community cohesion.

Having previously served as Minister for Sport, and as someone who has a keen interest in watching and participating in sport and physical activity, I have seen first-hand the life changing impact it can have for people's health and wellbeing, and how the social connections that are made through activity can

enable more people to feel they are part of a community.

As a co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tackling Loneliness and Connected Communities, I work with colleagues across the political spectrum with the common goal of increasing social connection across all communities in the UK. I fully believe sport and physical activity should be at the heart of the solutions to tackle loneliness and social isolation, whether it is watching it or doing it.







**Kim Leadbeater**  
MP for Batley and Spen



It's incredibly encouraging to see an improvement in exercise levels compared to the last two years, particularly when we consider the potential impact this can have on people's physical health and wellbeing – an area I've been passionate about for as long as I can remember.

While this is a positive step in the right direction, the data suggests most of us are still struggling to meet NHS recommendations, with 76% of people not reaching 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

Another worrying finding from this survey is the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, with just under two thirds of people aged 25–34 saying that this is a barrier to doing exercise. These findings should remind us of the urgent need to prioritise the nation's health and wellbeing – which would not only be beneficial for individuals and communities but would also boost productivity and economic growth.

Improving the population's health through physical activity should be central to any strategy to support the NHS,

because we know it is effective in reducing the need for costly treatments later down the line. Sport and exercise are also the best ways to bring people together, and in this way help build stronger and more resilient communities. To maximise the benefits of getting the nation moving, we need a holistic approach. Government departments must make a concerted effort to ensure physical health and wellbeing is put on a par with commitments to rebuild the economy and recover from the pandemic.

This will also require close collaboration with local authorities, the NHS, businesses, unions, trade bodies, voluntary organisations, and the sport and fitness sector to drive forward meaningful action on the ground.



Supporting the nation's mental health and wellbeing has never been more important given the background of our post-pandemic recovery and cost-of-living crisis.

Improving access to mental health services and supporting the NHS workforce to deliver care is vitally important, but it is only one part of the solution. It is also crucial to ensure that people know what steps they can take to maintain their own mental fitness, and that those who need support receive it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Exercise has a crucial role to play. It has the potential to enhance mental wellbeing and prevent the onset of mental ill health in a variety of ways, including improving sleep, boosting mood, increasing self-esteem, reducing the risk of depression, and managing stress and anxiety.

In this context, it is very positive that this year's Healthier Nation Index shows growing awareness of the benefits of exercising for wellbeing. Around one in three people said that they were motivated to exercise and look after their physical health because it improves their mental health – a welcome increase on previous years.

But there is still much more to do. A long-term and holistic approach which recognises the link between physical and mental health is fundamental if we are to improve the nation's mental health and wellbeing.



**Dr Lisa Cameron**  
MP for East Kilbride,  
Strathaven and Lesmahagow

# Sleep



The benefits of a good night's sleep are undisputed. The science is very clear; sleep can boost our concentration and enhance our mood, improve our resilience and reduce our long-term risk of serious illness.

Despite this, our survey shows that the nation is getting less, and worse quality, sleep. The data showed that, on average, **people in the UK are getting less than six hours of sleep a night**. This has fallen from just over six hours a night in 2022, and is well below the NHS recommendation of seven to nine hours of sleep a night.

Perhaps most worrying is the finding that **nearly half of UK adults (45%) report that they have got less sleep in the last 12 months** compared to previous years, and **nearly half (49%) say their sleep quality has worsened in the last year**.

We know poor sleep can have a knock-on effect to other areas and elements of our health and well-being. Respondents to our survey reported low mood, lower productivity levels, increased likelihood of becoming unwell, struggling to eat healthily and lack of motivation to exercise or socialise as impacts of a lack of sleep. If we want to improve the nation's mental and physical wellbeing, sleep is critical – and we must give people the tools to help.



**Louise Wright**  
Physiology National Lead,  
Nuffield Health

PEOPLE IN THE UK ARE GETTING LESS THAN

**6 HOURS SLEEP PER NIGHT**

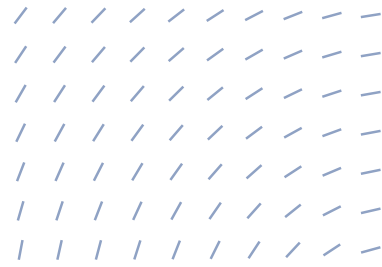
NEARLY HALF OF UK ADULTS GOT

**LESS SLEEP**  
IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

**49% SAY THEIR SLEEP QUALITY WORSENE**  
D IN THE LAST YEAR



In the last month, on average,  
how much sleep have you had  
per night?



Have you noticed a change in your sleep quantity and quality over the last 12 months?



## Quantity

### More sleep 21.2%

I get much more sleep	6.2%
I get slightly more sleep	15.0%

No change  
32.3%

### Less sleep 44.7%

I get slightly less sleep	27.3%
I get much less sleep	17.5%

## Quality

### Better sleep quality 19.4%

I get much better sleep quality	5.4%
I get slightly better sleep quality	14.1%

No change  
30.1%

### Lower sleep quality 48.6%

I get slightly lower sleep quality	25.4%
I get much lower sleep quality	23.2%



Nearly half (49%) of adults say the quality of their sleep has got worse in the last 12 months.



# Nutrition



**Dr Unnati Desai**  
National Lead – General  
Practice, Nuffield Health



As food prices have skyrocketed over the last 12 months, we are all feeling the effect in our shopping basket. As such, it is unsurprising that nearly **half of people (47%) say healthy food is too expensive, up from 44% in 2022.**

Nutrition is such an important part of our overall wellbeing, so it is a serious concern when the cost of food is a barrier to people eating well. It is vital that everyone can afford healthy, nutritious food and has the confidence to know how to cook it. It's concerning that **a third (34%) of people aged 16 to 24 reported in our survey that not being able to cook is a barrier to eating healthily, compared to just under one in five (19%) of UK adults.**

Many people recognise that their eating habits are not setting them up for a healthy lifestyle.

**Nearly two in five people (38%) say that their eating habits have had a negative impact on their physical health in the last year, while a similar proportion (35%) say their eating habits have negatively impacted their mental health.** But, due to cost, confidence or other factors, it seems that they are not always empowered to do anything about it.

These findings highlight the need for more action to support people to eat better, for body and mind, and ultimately to improve the health of the nation.







**Nancy Odogwu**  
Nutritional therapist –  
Fit Soul Kitchen



From these findings we can see that people face multiple challenges when it comes to eating healthily.

The cost of fresh produce has soared, and adults who feel unable to cook are left with less healthy foods as alternatives.

Processed foods are everywhere, and too easy for us to gravitate towards when we're confused about what to eat or when we have limited time to cook. Adverts for these less healthy options are all around us, and

it's clearly having a negative impact on the nation.

We need to ensure that people have more easy and affordable ways to eat healthily. It's important to help people make healthy swaps in their shopping basket and educate people on the wide range of affordable plant-based options that are available too.

## How much of a barrier do you think the following is to you eating more healthily?

	Significant or slight barrier
Healthy food is too expensive to buy	47.3%
It is easier to buy unhealthy food	40.2%
Healthy food is too expensive to cook at home due to cost of energy	40.2%
I don't like healthy food	21.6%
I don't know how to cook	18.6%
I don't understand what is considered healthy or unhealthy	17.1%
I don't think there are benefits to eating healthily	12.0%



Nearly half of people (47%) say healthy food is too expensive.



More than one in three people (34%) aged 16–24 say not being able to cook is a barrier, compared to just under one in 10 (9%) of people aged over 55.

# Workplace Health



Marc Holl  
Head of Quality (Primary Care),  
Nuffield Health



For many of us, work is a huge part of our lives. We spend dozens of hours a week either at our place of work or working from home. Any strategy to build a healthier nation must ensure that the working population is properly supported to look after their mental and physical health, to improve their long-term health outcomes as well as their short-term productivity.

Of those in employment, our survey found that **68% of people have gone into work despite their physical health being poor**. Similarly, **63% said they had gone into work despite their mental health being poor, up from 60% in 2022 and 56% in 2021**. Employers need to empower their employees and provide a supportive environment where health concerns can be properly addressed.

Trust is therefore the critical first step to improving workplace wellbeing. The onus must now be on employers to create environments where their employees can thrive.

Not only is this a health imperative but there is also a clear business incentive to making sure employees are able to look after their mental and physical health properly. **Nearly six in 10 workers (59%) say they have been less productive at work due to poor mental health** – an issue on an upward trajectory from 56% in 2022 so set to become an ever-greater issue unless proactive action is taken.

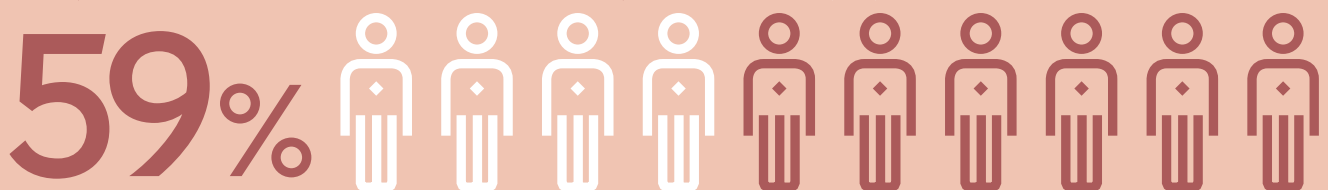
On a national level, there is increasing focus on the challenges caused by a reducing working population, and bringing people back into the workforce is a major focus for the government.

In our efforts to encourage people considering early retirement to continue working or indeed those who have already retired to come back to work, we should not overlook the significant impact that work has on our health.

**More than four in 10 people (44%) say work has had a negative impact on their physical health in the last 12 months.** The same proportion say the same of their mental health.

If we are serious about increasing the number of people in work, we must look to make our work healthier, for body and mind.

## NEARLY 6 IN 10 WORKERS



SAY THEY HAVE BEEN LESS PRODUCTIVE AT WORK DUE TO POOR MENTAL HEALTH



**Gemma Dale**

Lecturer, Liverpool  
Business School



The finding that many people go to work despite their mental health being poor is concerning, but not necessarily surprising.

We know that employees are often reluctant to disclose mental health conditions to their employer, and we absolutely need more research to understand the reasons behind this.

It falls to all organisations to create the conditions in which employees have sufficient psychological safety to raise both physical and mental health conditions and seek the support that they need to help them thrive at work.

The data on physical activity is also interesting. We know that following the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a shift to remote working, with around 28% of UK employees now working in a hybrid way.

Remote forms of work are often very sedentary, which is associated with a range of negative health outcomes. More time for wellbeing and exercise is often quoted as a benefit to remote work, but this data suggests that perhaps this, for some people at least, may not be turning into a reality.

Governments, HR professionals and employers need to do more to not just promote physical activity but also make it easier to undertake. We could, for example, look to cities like Paris, which since the pandemic has invested significantly in cycling infrastructure to encourage people onto their bikes.



Work, and working practices, have fluctuated significantly for many since the COVID-19 pandemic. These data perhaps reflect the 'new normal' and give an indication of how work relates to physical and mental health during a more stable period. There are two things which are thought provoking from the data.

**First, people feel their physical health is affected by work and that many have attended work while their physical and mental health is poor.** We know that many people report the pace of work seems to be getting faster, with tight deadlines, but they have less autonomy – all aspects which have the potential to have detrimental health effects.

**Second, there are associations between remote working and physical and mental health.** We know that in many sectors greater numbers of people now work more frequently from home than pre-pandemic. The relationship between

the opportunities for home working and physical and mental health is something that should be explored in future surveys, given that the nature of work has changed for many.



**Professor Marc Jones**

Professor of Psychology,  
Manchester Metropolitan  
University



**Tina Woods**

CEO, Business for Health

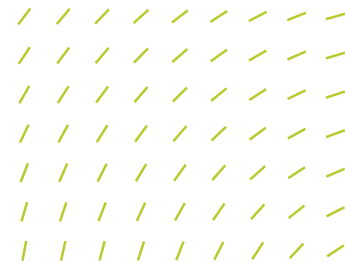


The findings from the Healthier Nation Index show the clear link between work and health – and wealth.

It is concerning that many people feel that their working life has a negative impact on both physical and mental health. In addition, stress caused by financial worries is clearly having a major impact. Given the importance of sleep for maintaining good health, it is also interesting to see the link between income and sleep patterns, with the data suggesting that higher earners get half an hour more sleep than lower earners.

These findings add to the growing evidence base that underlines the importance of taking a 'whole system' approach to achieving better population health while tackling health inequalities. Business undoubtedly has a big role to play here. Not only is a healthier and happier workforce more productive, but better population health also creates opportunities for economic prosperity. Put simply, it's a win-win.

# How much of a barrier do you think the following are to you undertaking more physical activity?



## Lack of time due to work

**Barrier 62.8%**

**No barrier 33.4%**



Significant barrier

**26.4%**



Slight barrier

**36.4%**



Not much of a barrier

**21.0%**



Not a barrier at all

**12.4%**



**Nearly two in three working people (62.8%) say that a lack of time due to work is a barrier to undertaking more physical activity**

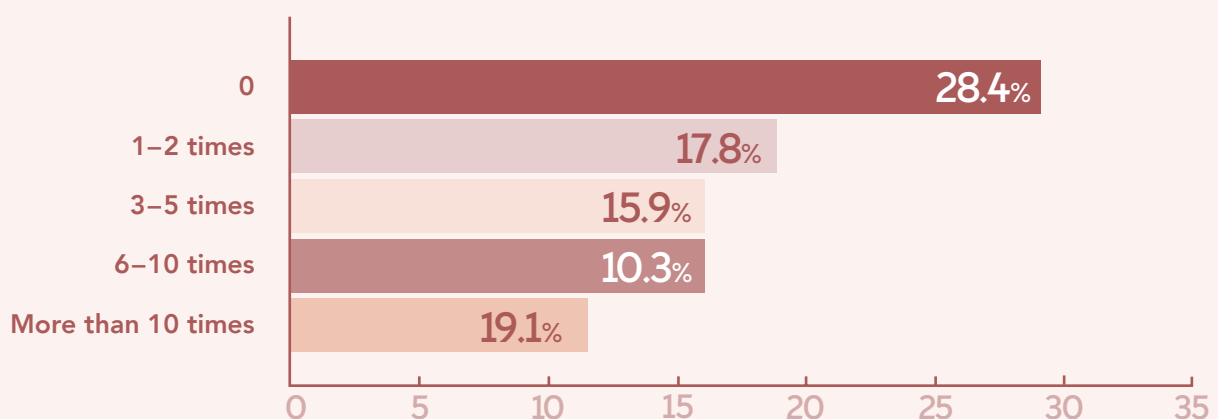




In the last 12 months, how often, if at all, have you done the following?



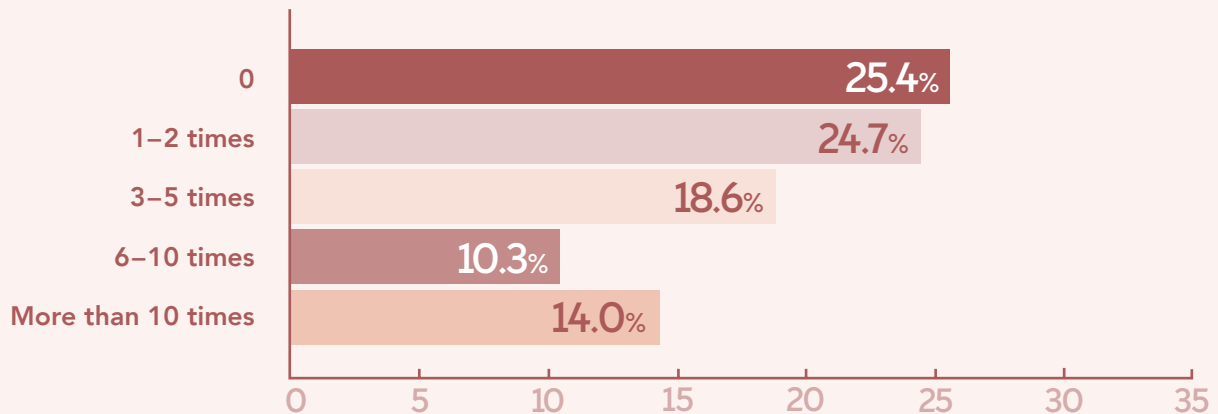
Gone to work despite my mental health being poor that day



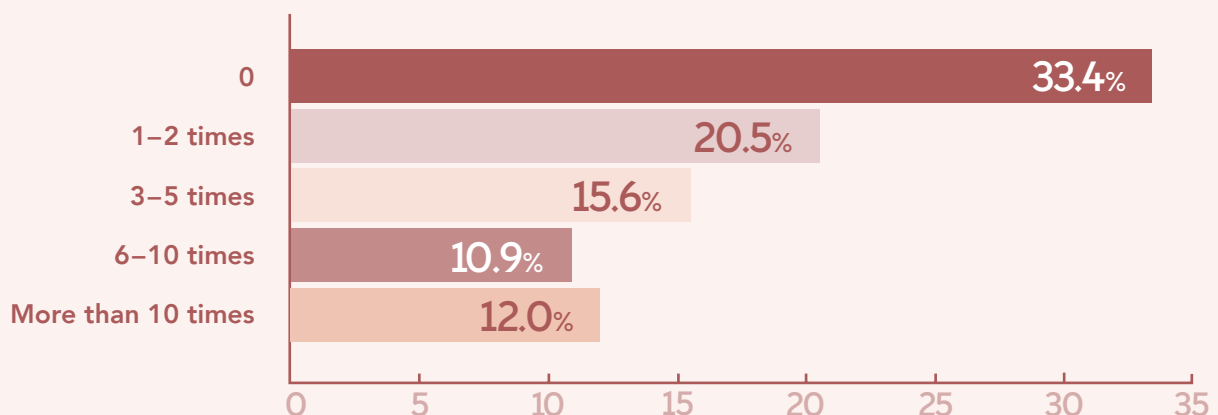




### Gone to work despite my physical health being poor that day



### Been less productive during work due to poor mental health



In the last 12 months, over two in three working people have gone into work despite their physical health being poor (68%), and a similar number (63%) have gone into work despite their mental health being poor.



In the last 12 months, nearly three in five (59%) working people have been less productive at work due to poor mental health.

# What next?

There is no doubt that the UK is in the middle of a very challenging period, with significant implications for our health and wellbeing. Whilst there are some positives to be taken from this year's data, the overall picture is one of worsening physical and mental health across the nation.



**Steve Gray**

Chief Executive, Nuffield Health

## So what next?

Nuffield Health is proposing three key principles that should drive a collective and meaningful push to reverse the decline and set us back on the path of progress towards a healthier nation.



### **We must make health and wellbeing the national priority.**

The health of the population is our most important national asset. Through bold leadership and long-term thinking, the government should seek to create the conditions for future economic prosperity by focusing on the drivers of poor physical and mental health and widening inequalities.



### **We must address the root causes of ill health.**

For too long there has been an over-emphasis on the treatment of ill health and an under-investment in strategies for prevention. It is crucial that we learn to overcome the barriers to joined up thinking, both nationally and locally, to support people to live healthier lives.



### **We must mobilise all parts of the healthcare system, not just the NHS.**

To deliver health and wellbeing as a national priority, we must work collectively as a national health 'system' – with a wide range of organisations engaged as partners in the broader mission.

# Methodology and acknowledgements

## Methodology

The research was conducted by UK-based market research consultancy, Censuswide, among a nationally representative sample of 8,000 UK adults across the UK. The data was collected between 17.02.2023 – 06.03.2022. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society, follows the MRS code of conduct which is based on the ESOMAR principles, and is also a member of the British Polling Council. The questionnaire was compliance tested in line with the guidelines and principles set by the MRS. Previous waves of research were also conducted among a nationally representative sample of 8,001 UK adults between 25.03.2021 – 12.04.2021 and a nationally representative sample of 8,001 UK adults between 14.02.2022 – 28.02.2022.

## Acknowledgements

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◆ Nancy Odogwu

◆ Tina Woods

◆ Professor Marc Jones

◆ Gemma Dale

We have worked with Lexington who have supported us to produce this report. All written material copyright Nuffield Health unless stated otherwise.







Driven by our purpose to build a healthier nation, our experts have been working together for more than 65 years to make the nation fitter, healthier, happier and stronger.



Nuffield Health provides health and wellbeing for every part of you. We believe that the best healthcare should help prevent illness by looking after mind and body. That's why our connected health and wellbeing offering spans physical and mental health – from providing mental health support or hospital care and treatment to personal training, health assessments, GP services and physiotherapy.

We work together as a team to help you achieve your health and wellbeing ambitions, championing free health and wellbeing programmes in local communities by giving more people the tools they need to live a healthy life. These programmes help people understand and improve their own health, from those living with joint pain, to helping rehabilitate people experiencing the long-term effects from COVID-19.



Find out more about us and our pioneering models of care visit: [nuffieldhealth.com](https://nuffieldhealth.com) or follow us on:

