

About the Nuffield Health Healthier Nation Index

The Healthier Nation Index is based on a comprehensive annual survey of 8,000 Britons and offers one of the most detailed looks at all aspects of the nation's physical and mental health. Our aim is to understand how people are feeling, identify where the biggest challenges are, and provide this crucial information to the public, the NHS and policymakers, so that they can use it to improve outcomes for everyone and build a healthier nation.

2021 is the first year of the Index and it gives us a unique and vital picture of how the UK is faring since the start of the pandemic. We will carry out this poll annually, which will enable us to identify trends and changes year on year. The large sample size allows us to dive deep into variations among age group, gender, ethnicity, region and socio-economic background. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25 March and 1 April 2021. The figures have been weighted and are nationally representative, unless indicated otherwise.

What we learned from the Healthier Nation Index

COVID-19 has had a massive impact on people's physical and mental health. It's given some a reason to make **lifestyle changes to support their health**, but successive lockdowns have had a hugely detrimental effect and many people are still struggling to make changes.



24%
of Britons don't plan to do any exercise once lockdown is over.



The group most likely to say this were older people over 55 (36%).

Some groups were much less receptive to prevention messages overall.

Only 17% of Asian Bangladeshi respondents knew that obesity was a bigger killer than smoking in England, compared to 51% overall.

Every age group reported worse **emotional wellbeing**.



41%

said their mental health was worse than last year. **This rose to nearly half of women.**

Nearly half were nervous about socialising again.

38% said they will do so less than they did pre-pandemic.



18%
of young people said their life was significantly worse since the pandemic.



Younger people were particularly badly affected.

With those in the 16-24 age group most likely to say that their mental health was significantly worse.

Despite well-publicised evidence about the link between **obesity** and severity of illness from COVID-19, and in the wake of the Prime Minister announcing a new obesity strategy last year, the majority of people are not doing enough exercise.

25%
of over 55s
have done no
exercise at all.

in the last 12 months.
16% of the whole
population have done no
exercise at all in the last
year.

**Almost ½ of
people used
food as a treat.**

more frequently during
COVID-19 lockdowns,
rising to 54% of women
and 55% of 35 to
44-year-olds.

46%
thought
they were
overweight.

despite this, 25% of
people said they were
not actively trying to
change this.

**The NHS
recommendation of 150
minutes of exercise a
week is not being met.**

73%
did not meet this
recommendation.
42%
knew it was
recommended.



37%
admitted they found it
harder to eat healthier
during lockdown.



People felt the effects of the pandemic unequally.

**Lower income groups face
higher barriers to exercise.**

And not just cost: they were more likely
to say they were embarrassed, didn't
know where to start or struggled with
motivation or didn't have time.

**Women were more likely
to say their mental health
was worse (49%).**



Parents with one child were the most
likely (31%) to say childcare or home-
schooling had an impact on their
mental health. **Women were more
likely than men to be impacted.**



People in the lowest income group
were **most likely to strongly disagree
that they feel physically healthier**
(20%), which is more than double
people in the highest income groups
(11.5%).

**Long Covid is affecting people's wellbeing to an even
greater extent than realised, with nearly 7% of the
population or roughly 3.7 million people, saying they've
had problems exercising because of it.**

About Us



Nuffield Health is the UK's largest healthcare charity. For the last 60 years, Nuffield Health's experts have been working together to make the nation fitter, healthier, happier and stronger, all for the public benefit. We do this through outstanding day-to-day services in our family of 31 award-winning hospitals, 113 fitness and wellbeing centres, healthcare clinics, and over 150 workplace wellbeing services, and through our flagship programmes to support communities by widening access to our services.