

# The Role of Movement in Building a Healthier and Wealthier Nation

## Context

The health challenges facing our nation demand urgent attention.

Over 15 million people in England live with long-term health conditions and the number of people economically inactive due to long-term sickness now stands at 2.5 million.

With record waiting lists, recent data from Nuffield Health's Healthier Nation Index (HNI) reveals that 3 in 4 adults fall short of the NHS' minimum recommended levels of moderate exercise.

As physical inactivity is a key risk factor in developing long term health conditions, these findings pose a significant threat to the nation's health, both now and in the future, with profound economic implications.

Increasing physical activity is one cost-effective intervention that has been proven to support the prevention, management and treatment of long-term conditions – and could help improve the overall health and wealth of the population. But for too long movement has been a tool underutilised by policymakers.

## About the Healthier Nation Index

The Healthier Nation Index (HNI) is one of the UK's most comprehensive reviews and barometers of all aspects of our health and wellbeing. Previous years have found the nation's health to be in a state of decline since the pandemic.

In its fourth year, the HNI now reveals that alarming levels of physical inactivity are acting as a driver of mental and physical ill health, with potentially dire consequences for the economy.

Analysis of this year's HNI has found four core themes that demonstrate how current strategies are failing to meet the challenge of the nation's health needs.

## Key findings from the Healthier Nation Index 2024

1. **People still have a restricted view of what physical activity means**
2. **The cost-of-living crisis is continuing to have a visible impact on people's health**
3. **The burden of poor mental health is stopping people from living healthy lives**
4. **People are making the difficult decision to prioritise work over their health and wellbeing**

**That is why Nuffield Health is now calling on all political parties to commit to introducing a National Movement Strategy in the next Parliament to stem the tide of the nation's poor health.**