

Unlock the potential of sport, recreation and physical activity

Make the United Kingdom the most active nation in Europe

The sport, recreation, and physical activity sector's leading bodies are making an urgent call to our main political parties and leaders: **commit to making the UK the most active nation in Europe.**

Currently placing as the 11th most inactive nation, 3rd highest spenders on healthcare costs associated with inactivity and last in spend on sport and recreation per capita, we are being outperformed and our lack of action is holding us back as a nation.

Our ask is clear: work with our sector to make it easier for people to play, move and be active in any way they choose by ensuring sport, recreation and physical activity is accessible and affordable for everyone.

Together we can build a future where:

- All children are given the best possible start in life, gaining habits and skills to manage their

physical and mental wellbeing, enabling them to live happier and longer lives.

- A focus on prevention and improved community health leads to significantly less pressure on the NHS and other key public services.
- Our communities and streets are safer, greener and happier places to be, with cities and communities built for activity.
- Our economy is boosted by a healthier workforce that increases productivity levels and enables people to stay in employment for longer.

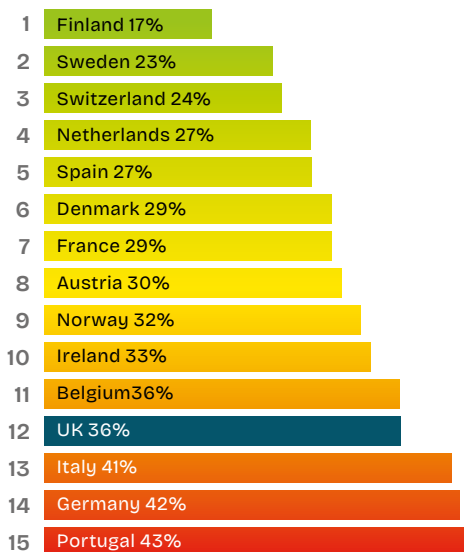
The Challenge

When it comes to physical activity, the UK currently performs poorly against close European counterparts – in sporting terms we are not even close to the medal podium:

“If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat.”

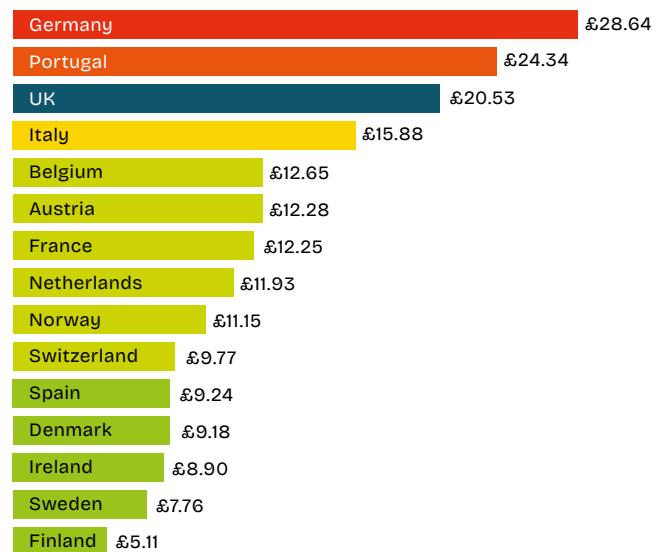
CMO Official Guidance 2019

UK inactivity levels compared to European neighbours (from most to least active):



Proportion of adult population physically inactive.

Direct healthcare costs related to inactivity per capita:



These costs are for new preventable cases of coronary heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes, hypertension, seven cancers (breast, colon, endometrial, gastric, oesophageal, renal and bladder), dementia and depression resulting from physical inactivity per year.



In terms of wellbeing the UK ranks only 9th in Europe.

This underperformance when combined with healthcare spending on preventable disease due to inactivity, as well as population wellbeing levels, paints a clear picture: we are not yet maximising the power of an active nation and, if we did, we would reap huge benefits.

We therefore face a huge challenge to become a healthier, happier, and more prosperous nation. As the evidence shows, getting more people more active through sport, recreation and physical activity is essential to achieving this.

As we approach the next UK General Election, we – a coalition of leading national organisations representing the sport, recreation, and physical activity sector –

therefore urge leaders and politicians to commit to turning this potential into reality by pledging to:

MAKE THE UNITED KINGDOM THE MOST ACTIVE NATION IN EUROPE.

The prize

Community sport, recreation and physical activity **saves the NHS £9.5 billion every year** by preventing illness and overall generates **£85 billion*** annually in economic value, improved health and wellbeing, increased educational attainment, reduced crime and greater community cohesion. (*Figures for England only).

But these benefits could be so much greater, if we work toward the ambition of making the UK the most active nation in Europe.

Healthcare savings if the UK was as active as...

Ireland	£0.46bn
Norway	£0.51bn
Austria	£0.60bn
Denmark	£0.65bn
France	£0.65bn
Netherlands	£0.73bn
Spain	£0.73bn
Switzerland	£0.84bn
Sweden	£0.88bn
Finland	£1.07bn

Wellbeing gains if the UK was as active as...

Ireland	£12.2bn	1.6m
Norway	£16.3bn	2.1m
Austria	£24.4bn	3.2m
Denmark	£28.5bn	3.7m
France	£28.5bn	3.7m
Netherlands	£36.6bn	4.8m
Spain	£36.6bn	4.8m
Switzerland	£48.8bn	6.4m
Sweden	£52.9bn	6.9m
Finland	£77.2bn	10.1m

○ Number of inactivate adults required to become active.

(*Wellbeing gains measured using WELLBY, which is 'wellbeing-adjusted life year' and is defined as a change in life satisfaction of 1 point on a scale of 0 to 10 affecting one person for one year).

Other potential benefits:

- Up to £3.6 bn GDP uplift per year linked to reduced sickness absence and productivity.
- Significant increase in educational attainment and projected earnings per active individual.
- Up to 10% increase in social capital per active individual.

Finally, some of our communities facing the greatest disadvantage and deprivation are the least active – achieving our ambition means tackling these inequalities and unlocking the benefits of sport, recreation and physical activity for all.

Achieving the ambition

Turning this vision into reality will not be easy. And it will take time. But we believe it can – and must – be done.

While welcome, action to date from successive governments hasn't yet shifted the dial enough to maximise the truly transformative power of our sector, and the impact it can have in meeting national priorities.

Now, more than ever, political leaders must demonstrate boldness and bravery and work with our sector to leverage our collective assets and unlock the full potential of sport, recreation, and physical activity. If future leaders commit to our ambition, and are able to harness the power of our sector, we believe we can make our nation the most active in Europe.

To achieve our ambition, government – both now and in the future - must put sport, recreation and physical activity at the heart of national policy making and work collaboratively with the sector

and devolved governments of all the Home Nations on a programme of reforms including:

- Building a robust, common evidence base for the benefits of sport, recreation and physical activity which drives better funding and policy decisions;
- More and better-targeted investment to create modern, accessible and sustainable places and spaces to be active;
- Bold and ambitious policy reform - including tax and regulatory changes - to unlock growth, drive up participation levels and leverage the power of sport for social good.

For more detail on our specific policy proposals, these are set out in our report [Unlocking the Potential](#).

We are therefore asking leaders, parties and organisations to work with us and commit to the ambition:

MAKE THE UNITED KINGDOM THE MOST ACTIVE NATION IN EUROPE.

...Will you?

Signed _____

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To see the full research behind this ambition, please visit [this link](#).

