

## Commentary

## National Fitness Day: Evolving from “Getting Active” to “Promoting Health”

Qiang Feng<sup>1,†</sup>

Physical activity represents a fundamental pillar of healthy living and serves as a critical determinant of population health outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality, accounting for approximately 3.2 million deaths annually (1). Recognizing this significant public health challenge, nations worldwide have implemented comprehensive strategies to promote physical fitness among their populations. China formally established “National Fitness Day” in 2009, designating August 8 as an annual nationwide initiative dedicated to encouraging physical activity participation. This landmark decision not only commemorates the legacy of the 2008 Beijing Olympics but also signifies a strategic shift from prioritizing elite athletic performance toward fostering widespread community engagement in sports and fitness activities.

National Fitness Day serves as a pivotal mechanism for promoting public health on a national scale, utilizing diverse promotional slogans each year to stimulate community engagement in physical activity. The inaugural campaign in 2009 featured inspiring themes such as “Daily Exercise, Daily Joy,” “Strong Body, Better Life,” and “Fitness for All, Together We Move.” In subsequent years, these slogans evolved to reflect changing national priorities, including “One Hour of Daily Exercise for a Lifetime of Health” (2012) and “Advancing National Fitness for a Moderately Prosperous Society” (2020), demonstrating the progressive integration of physical fitness into broader national health objectives.

In recent years, the thematic focus of National Fitness Day has become increasingly sophisticated and multifaceted, strategically aligning with national priorities and major sporting events. For instance, the 2023 theme, “National Fitness Paints a Happier Life,” capitalized on the widespread enthusiasm generated by the Beijing Winter Olympics, thereby amplifying the cultural and societal significance of fitness initiatives across the nation. The 2024 campaign, themed “Fitness for All, Celebrating the Olympics,”

strategically coincided with the Paris Olympics and successfully mobilized over 20,000 events nationwide, engaging more than 10 million participants — a testament to the initiative’s remarkable societal impact and organizational effectiveness. In 2025, the 17th National Fitness Day adopted the dynamic slogan “Get Moving for Fitness,” with the National Olympic Sports Center leading coordination efforts alongside seven provincial hubs to establish a comprehensive online-offline event framework (2). This evolution represents a fundamental transformation: National Fitness Day activities have progressed from initial single-themed promotional events to a sophisticated, coordinated national movement that encourages sustained engagement in fitness and health initiatives throughout the year. This strategic development has positioned National Fitness Day as a pivotal mechanism for advancing the “Healthy China” strategy at the grassroots level, creating lasting behavioral change rather than merely temporary awareness.

Over the past decade, China has achieved remarkable progress in its national fitness initiative across policy development, infrastructure expansion, and public participation. The national fitness program gained formal recognition as a national strategy in 2014 (3). Subsequently, the “Healthy China 2030” Plan Outline, launched in 2016 (4), established this initiative as a fundamental pillar of the national health policy framework. The revised Sports Law, enacted in 2022, legally codified “National Fitness Day” as an official observance and strengthened governmental obligations to advance this initiative (5). Infrastructure developments have been equally impressive: by 2024, China’s sports facilities reached 4.84 million, with per capita sports area expanding from 1.46 m<sup>2</sup> in 2013 to 3.0 m<sup>2</sup> (6). The “15-Minute Fitness Circle” initiative has enhanced accessibility, while the availability of free or low-cost public sports venues has consistently expanded (7). Regular physical activity participation among Chinese citizens rose from 28.2% in 2007 (8) to 37.2% in 2020 (9). Furthermore, the national physical fitness qualification rate has shown consistent

improvement, reaching 90.4% (10). Simultaneously, scientific research into exercise health benefits has intensified. The development of innovative service platforms, including exercise-for-health centers and sports-health integration facilities, has provided crucial scientific support and established new pathways for advancing the national fitness strategy.

Despite these substantial achievements, significant challenges persist that require targeted intervention. Regional disparities in infrastructure development and program accessibility continue to create unequal opportunities for physical activity participation across different geographic areas. Furthermore, certain demographic groups — particularly sedentary populations, individuals with chronic conditions, and those in underserved communities — remain inadequately engaged in national fitness initiatives. The absence of comprehensive scientific guidance and personalized exercise prescription represents another critical gap that limits the effectiveness of current programs.

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\* Corresponding author: Qiang Feng, [fengqiang@ciss.cn](mailto:fengqiang@ciss.cn).

<sup>1</sup> National Fitness and Scientific Exercise Center, China Institute of Sport Science, Beijing, China.

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Qiang Feng

Associate Professor, China Institute of Sport Science

Deputy Director, National Physical Fitness and Scientific Exercise Center, China Institute of Sport Science

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