

# 2022 Fitness Trends from Around the Globe

by Vanessa M. Kercher, Ph.D., ACSM-EP, M.Ed.; Kyle Kercher, M.S., ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT; Trevor Bennion, D.H.Sc.; Paul Levy, MPH; Chris Alexander, ESSAM, AEP, AES; Paulo Costa Amaral, Ph.D., MBA, M.Sc.; Yong-Ming Li, Ph.D.; Jia Han, Ph.D.; Yang Liu, Ph.D.; Ran Wang, Ph.D.; Hai-Yan Huang, Ph.D.; Bing-Hong Gao, Ph.D.; Alexios Batrakoulis, M.S., ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT; Lino Francisco Jacobo Gómez Chávez, Ph.D.; Jorge López Haro, B.Sc., M.Sc.; Adrián Ricardo Pelayo Zavalza, M.Sc.; Luis Eduardo Aguirre Rodríguez, B.Sc.; Oscar L. Veiga, Ph.D., M.Sc.; Manel Valcarce-Torrente, Ph.D.; and Alejandro Romero-Caballero, M.Sc.

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## Apply It!

From this article, the reader should be able to

- Identify top 20 fitness trends for Australia, Brazil, China, Europe, Mexico, Spain, and the United States.
- Recognize individual and unique fitness trends represented within Australia, Brazil, China, Europe, Mexico, Spain, and the United States.

**Key words:** Regional, Commercial, Corporate, Community, Trends

## INTRODUCTION

During a time of global uncertainty, the value of the American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM's) Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends has never been more essential to better understand consumer behavior as a strategic approach into future fitness offerings that drive business growth. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant influence on the worldwide health and fitness industry, with certain aspects accelerating (use of wearable technology, outdoor activities) and others being challenged (boutique fitness studios, low-cost and budget gyms). Public health professionals across the world recognize the value in assessing health and fitness trends annually as one approach to guide future programming efforts. For this reason, several countries and regions have independently sought to use ACSM's worldwide survey to investigate fitness trends within their respective regions (1–7). In this edition, the same seven regions from last year's Fitness Trends article (8) (Australia, Brazil, China, Europe, Mexico, Spain, and United States) contributed to the survey results, providing a global representation of the health and fitness trends. Consistent with past practice (8–10), the authors herein aim to support the individuality of each region by providing evidence of popular health and fitness programming that is identifiable



## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

**TABLE 1: Global Fitness 2022 Trend Survey Methodology**

Country	Trend	Additional Trends	Survey Time	Response Rate
Australia	Total of 43 trends; 40 from worldwide survey, 4 unique to Australia; survey deleted 4 potential trends from worldwide survey.	1) Inclusive fitness services; 2) quality accredited businesses; 3) boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts training; 4) electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) training	Electronic survey from June 21 to August 2, 2021 (6 weeks), sent to Fitness Australia registered exercise professionals and business members; a link also was shared on Fitness Australia's various social media sites	N = 478 (2.1%)
Brazil	Total of 45 trends; 42 from worldwide survey; 3 unique to Brazil; deleted 1 potential trend from worldwide survey	1) Low-cost gym; 2) boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts (MMA); 3) electromagnetic muscle stimulation (EMS)	Electronic survey from May 17 to July 25, 2021 (10 weeks); electronic survey was disseminated to universities, physical education professionals and students, professors/teachers, health professionals, area managers, and on social networks	N = 942 (not reported)
China	Total of 30 trends; 25 from worldwide survey, 5 unique to China; survey deleted 18 potential trends from worldwide survey	1) Healthy diet; 2) certified education for fitness and health professionals; 3) exercise and sport for children and adolescents; 4) aerobic fitness; 5) prevention and rehabilitation of sport injuries	Electronic survey from July 1 to 31, 2021 (4 weeks), sent to 10,858 respondents; a total of 80.5% of respondents were health and fitness professionals	N = 4,259 (39.2%)
Europe	Total of 42 trends; removed one (low-cost and budget gyms)	None	Electronic survey from June 14 to August 9 (8 weeks) to 19,778 people, including 7,122 ACSM members residing in Europe and 12,656 European health and fitness professionals, including gym owners/managers, faculty members, graduate students, and registered members onto the European Register of Exercise Professionals specializing in physical activity and fitness; a link also was shared on various social media sites	N = 1,571 (7.9%)
Mexico	Total of 45 trends; 11 trends of ACSM were not considered and 5 trends not considered by ACSM were added	1) Cardiometabolic rehabilitation; 2) professional fitness regulation; 3) fitness influencers; 4) fitness in streaming; 5) sustainable gyms or ecogyms	Electronic survey from May 3 to August 5, 2021 (13 weeks); distributed to 52,735 people (increased by 388% compared with the previous year — 13,589), subscribers included in specialized Facebook groups such as dream associations and gym managers, fitness professionals and gym chain communities, in all cases based in Mexico; also, the community of managers, teachers, and graduates of the AMISCF (Mexican Association of University of Physical Culture) was considered through official Facebook accounts from different partner universities. For this edition, responses were obtained from 30 of the 33 states that make up the Mexican Republic	N = 918 (1.7%)

(continues)

**TABLE 1: Global Fitness 2022 Trend Survey Methodology, Continued**

Country	Trend	Additional Trends	Survey Time	Response Rate
Spain	Total of 48 trends; 3 ACSM trends removed; 9 unique trends added	1) Multidisciplinary work teams (doctors, physiotherapists, nutritionists, and physical trainers); 2) fitness and nutrition (healthy diet); 3) injury prevention/functional rehabilitation; 4) seeking new market niches; 5) exercise programs for children and adolescents against obesity; 6) postural correction (postural fitness); 7) medical derivation; 8) inclusive fitness services; 9) fitness influencers/youtubers/bloggers	Electronic survey from June 6 to July 5 (approximately 4 weeks); initially sent to 6,764 people (8.5% increase from last year's record of 6,230) primarily fitness professionals in Spanish (rest were former professionals, graduated or ungraduated students of sport sciences and others). Responses from all Spanish regions were collected, including Spanish autonomous cities in Africa (Ceuta and Melilla). A link also was shared via social networking sites — Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn	N = 520 (7.9%)
United States	Total of 43 trends identical to the worldwide survey	None	Electronic survey from June 7 to August 3, 2021 (8 weeks), sent to 123,615 ACSM health and fitness professionals through email, associated Web sites, and social media (see details in worldwide survey)	N = 3,589 (3.9%)

Each country and region used similar and/or different survey methodology and procedures compared with the worldwide survey.

to each region, and then providing comparisons with the other regions. Through the process of distilling the survey results down and gathering substantial insight from the regional representatives, this article provides industry stakeholders with a strategic advantage of looking into future fitness offerings which may drive economic growth and programming opportunities within the industry.

For each region, the results of the fitness trend survey may help fitness business operators, directors, owners, universities, professors, digital influencers, health professionals (*e.g.*, physical education professionals, physiotherapists, dieticians, and physicians), manufacturers of fitness and wellness equipment and products, and industry stakeholders enhance customer engagement by offering experiences that are popular and safe and that bring positive experiences to the end user.

## THE SURVEYS

All surveys were conducted electronically using either SurveyMonkey or Google forms. The survey was distributed to health and fitness professionals through email and social media networks (see Table 1), with the surveys being open for responses for a duration ranging from 4 to 13 weeks.

Each participating region used a critical mass of the 43 trends within ACSM's worldwide survey (11) to create a base of trends; however, each region also had the opportunity to modify the list with respect to what seemed most logical regionally (see Table 1 for details). The Europe and Brazil surveys were the most comparable with ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends (11), whereas the China survey had the most differences listed among the trends (see Table 1).

All regions collected responses using a 10-point Likert scale ranging from highest (10 = most popular trend) to lowest (1 = least popular trend) for each potential trend option and sorted them to identify the top 20 fitness trends (11). Participants did not have the option to select "not applicable". At the end of the survey, an opportunity was provided for respondents to include possible nonlisted fitness trends to be considered for future survey inclusion.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Each region's representatives contributed to this article and provided insightful observations regarding their regional results. Topics discussed included major takeaways and points to ponder from the top 20 trend results, unique country features, especially in comparison with the US results, and the primary challenges COVID-19 presented with regard to their respective region's health and fitness industry. The top 20 most popular fitness trends for all regions can be found in Table 2. Data also were interpreted and compared in global, absolute rankings where each region was weighted equally and then sorted into the most frequently represented trends (see Figure).

### Australia

Demographics information from Australia ( $N = 478$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A194>.

Chris Alexander, ESSAM, AEP, AES, reported three major takeaways for the 2022 fitness trends in Australia that include the following:

- Functional fitness training (no. 1) has often been a massive hit with Australians. With less access to fitness facilities,



## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE



activities to improve balance, coordination, strength, and endurance via functional fitness training to benefit daily living are anticipated to maintain their popularity.

- Strength training with free weights (no. 2) has remained a very hot trend. As the restrictions associated with the pandemic continue to disrupt access to fitness facilities, consumers are opting for the use of at-home strength equipment (e.g., barbells, dumbbells, and kettlebells) to improve or maintain muscular fitness. In addition, exercise professionals are commonly opting to use this type of equipment as part of their mobile business.
- Group exercise training, both in large (no. 4) and small training groups (no. 10), has improved in the Australian trends ranking compared with the previous year. This may be due to the appeal of training in groups compared with personal training in terms of both financial and social well-being, which have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

All fitness businesses across Australia have experienced lockdowns, some states more than others. This has caused a number of businesses to permanently shut their doors, despite federal and state financial assistance. Until vaccination rates are significantly

higher, each state is likely to continue to experience short snap lockdowns, which will continue to cause significant burdens to fitness business operators and employees.

When comparing trends between Australia and the United States, there appears to be a stronger trend toward strength training in Australia. Functional fitness, strength training with free weights, and fitness programs for older adults rank no. 1, no. 2, and no. 3, respectively, signaling that fitness professionals may be well served to include components of strength training in their 2022 offerings. Exercise for weight loss was ranked much lower in Australia (no. 15) than the United States and other regions. However, employing registered exercise professionals ranked higher in Australia than in any other region; this is a promising sign for Australian fitness professionals looking to enhance their marketability by earning recognized fitness credentials. Of the top 20 trends in Australia, 15 also were trends in the United States.

### Brazil

Demographics information from Brazil ( $N = 942$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A195>.

Paulo Costa Amaral, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.Sc., reported three major takeaways for the 2022 fitness trends survey in Brazil that include the following:

- Personal training (no. 1) moved up three spots from last year's survey when it was no. 4. This may have been due to the pandemic where personal trainers continue to guide customers in physical training, even if it is online personal training (no. 3).
- In Brazil, the practice of exercising to lose weight remains one of the top trends (no. 2).
- Post-COVID recovery programs are highlighted at no. 4, which is a higher ranking than any other region. This specialization of professionals is essential to serve the population that was infected by COVID and the corresponding need for rehabilitation.

The main challenge for professionals and the fitness industry in Brazil was the adaptation to online services. Culturally, Brazilians prefer face-to-face service, and most professionals





**TABLE 2: Top 20 Global Trends for 2022**

	Australia	Brazil	China	Europe	Mexico	Spain	United States
1	Functional fitness training	Personal training	Exercise for weight loss	Home exercise gyms	Exercise for weight loss	Employing certified professionals	Wearable technology
2	Strength training with free weights	Exercise for weight loss	Healthy diet	Exercise is medicine	Functional fitness training	Functional fitness training	Home exercise gyms
3	Fitness programs for older adults	Online personal training	Exercise and sport for children and adolescents	Personal training	Personal training	Small group personal training	Outdoor activities
4	Group exercise training	Post-COVID recovery programs	Aerobic fitness	Wearable technology	Strength training	Personal training	Strength training with free weights
5	Employing registered exercise professionals	Body weight training	Boutique fitness studios	Body weight training	Body weight training	Exercise and weight loss	Exercise for weight loss
6	Body weight training	Fitness programs for older adults	Core training	High intensity interval training	Multidisciplinary teams	Outdoor activities	High intensity interval training
7	Personal training	Lifestyle medicine	Group exercise training	Online live and on-demand exercise classes	Outdoor activities	Licensure for fitness professionals	Online live and on-demand exercise classes
8	High intensity interval training	Outdoor activities	Functional fitness training	Exercise for weight loss	Specific training for a sport	Multidisciplinary work teams	Personal training
9	Wearable technology	Functional fitness training	Strength training with free weights	Outdoor activities	Circuit training	Fitness and nutrition (healthy diet)	Body weight training
10	Small group personal training	Home exercise gyms	Outcome measurements	Functional fitness training	Prevention/functional rehabilitation of injuries	Fitness programs for older adults	Health/wellness coaching
11	Inclusive fitness services	Post rehabilitation classes	Exercise is medicine	Online personal training	Licensure for fitness professionals	Outcome measurement	Fitness programs for older adults
12	Outdoor activities	Health/wellness coaching	Mobility/myofascial devices	Resistance band training	New activities/adaptation of postpandemic services by COVID-19	High intensity interval training	Mobile exercise apps
13	Exercise is medicine	Small group personal training	Mobile exercise apps	Fitness programs for older adults	High intensity interval training	Postrehabilitation Classes	Yoga

(continues)

## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

**TABLE 2: Top 20 Global Trends for 2022, Continued**

	Australia	Brazil	China	Europe	Mexico	Spain	United States
14	Core training	High intensity interval training	Prevention and rehabilitation of sport injuries	Licensure for fitness professionals	Strength training with free weights	Mobile exercise apps	Employing certified fitness professionals
15	Exercise for weight loss	Strength training with free weights	Licensure for fitness professionals	Health/wellness coaching	Wearable technology	Injury prevention/functional rehabilitation	Functional fitness training
16	Home exercise gyms	Mobility/myofascial devices/rollers	Employing certified fitness professionals	Employing certified fitness professionals	Worksite health promotion and workplace well-being programs	Core training	Exercise is medicine
17	Pilates	Wearable technology	Personal training	Post-COVID recovery programs	Monitoring of training/results	Body weight training	Online personal training
18	Post rehabilitation classes	Clinical integration/medical fitness	Outdoor activities	Clinical integration/medical fitness	Group training	Strength training with free weights	Group exercise training
19	Online live and on-demand exercise classes	Walking/running/jogging/cycling clubs	Body weight training	Walking/running/jogging/cycling clubs	CORE training	Seeking new market niches	Licensure for fitness professionals
20	Health/wellness coaching	Online live and on-demand exercise classes	Certified education for fitness and health professionals	Boutique fitness studios	Home training with personalized accompaniment of professionals	Wearable technology	Lifestyle medicine

were not prepared to provide online services. Consequently, the development of training methodologies was a decisive factor for people to feel motivated in the practice of activity at home. The majority of companies that were able to remain open were those that used social networks to advertise their services. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was considerable resistance from most professionals and practitioners to the use of technology in the supervision and practice of physical activity. As the pandemic progressed, Brazilians were adapting. For 2022, it is necessary that all professionals have their own modern methodologies and that they invest in digital marketing to attract clients to their services and motivate people to remain more active, regardless of the training environment.

Online care is growing in Brazil and has now become a more common part of many Brazilians' lives as a way to promote the practice of physical activity, especially those who do not want to go to a gym or training center. Unlike the United States, the hiring of certified fitness professionals and the licensure for fitness

professionals are not trends in Brazil potentially because both are part of a complementary training process that requires a bachelor's degree in Physical Education to work as a professional in the Brazilian fitness industry. Overall, of the top 20 trends in Brazil, 14 also were trends in the United States.

## China

Demographics information from China ( $N = 4259$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A196>.

Yong-Ming Li, Ph.D., highlighted three important takeaways for the 2022 fitness trends for China that include the following:

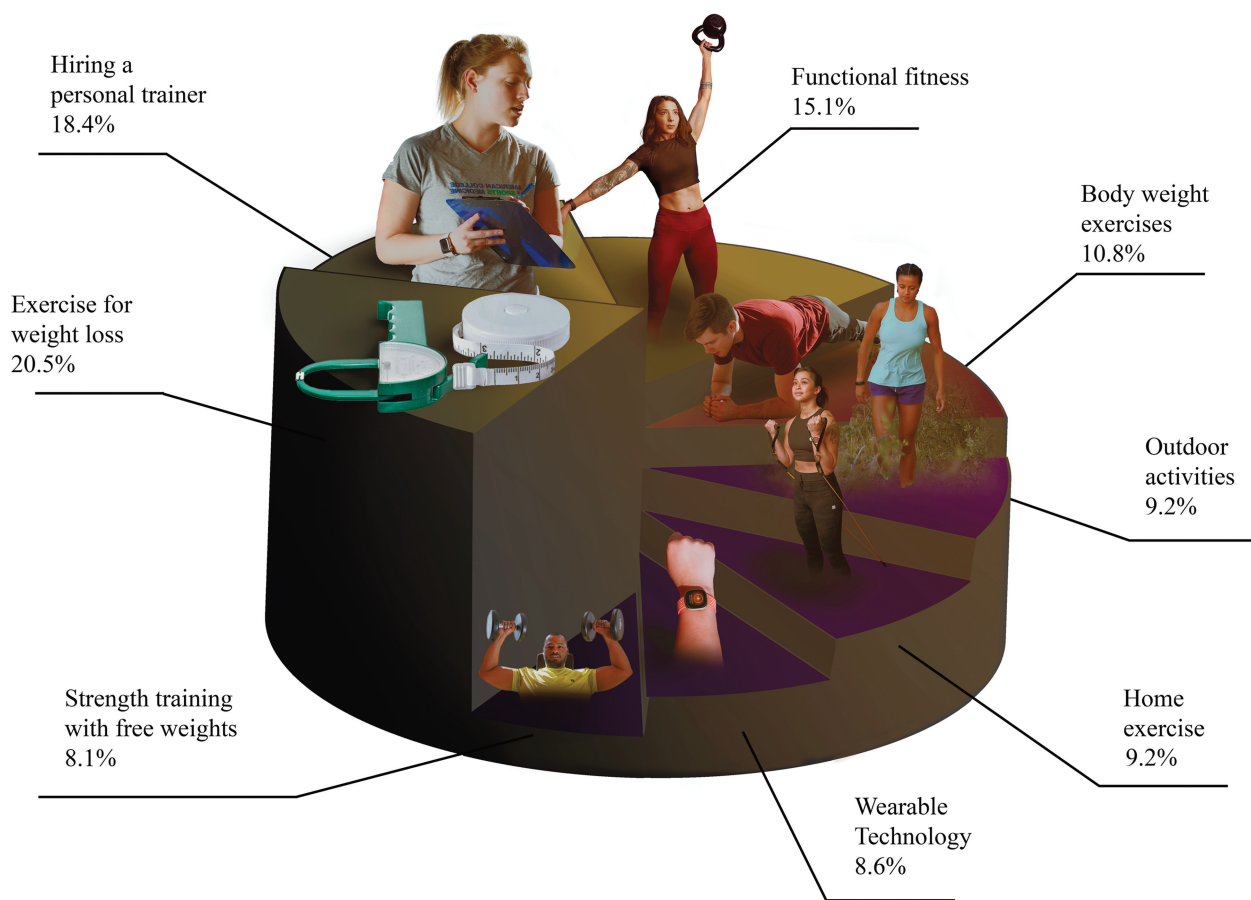
- Weight loss (no. 1) leads the ranking for the third consecutive year in China.
- Highly ranked China-specific trends such as healthy diet (no. 2), exercise and sport for children and adolescents (no. 3), and aerobic fitness (no. 4) support the necessity to incorporate some items that are specific to each region.





## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

**Figure.** Absolute data from all regions were ranked and sorted into the top 8 global health and fitness trends for 2022. The eight most frequently represented trends from all regions include the following: 1) Exercise for weight loss (no. 2 in Brazil, no. 1 in China, no. 8 in Europe, no. 1 in Mexico, no. 5 in Spain, and no. 5 in the United States), accounting for 20.5% of the top 8 popularity. 2) Personal training (no. 7 in Australia, no. 1 in Brazil, no. 3 in Europe, no. 3 in Mexico, no. 4 in Spain, and no. 8 in the United States), accounting for 18.4% of the top 8 popularity. 3) Functional fitness (no. 1 in Australia, no. 9 in Brazil, no. 8 in China, no. 10 in Europe, no. 2 in Mexico, and no. 2 in Spain), accounting for 15.1% of the top 8 popularity. 4) Body weight exercises (no. 6 in Australia, no. 5 in Brazil, no. 5 in Europe, no. 5 in Mexico, and no. 9 in the United States), accounting for 10.8% of the top 8 popularity. 5) Outdoor activities (no. 8 in Brazil, no. 9 in Europe, no. 7 in Mexico, no. 6 in Spain, and no. 3 in the United States), accounting for 9.2% of the top 8 popularity. 6) Home exercise training (no. 10 in Brazil, no. 1 in Europe, and no. 2 in the United States), accounting for 9.2% of the top 8 popularity. 7) Wearable technology (no. 9 in Australia, no. 4 in Europe, and no. 1 in the United States), accounting for 8.6% of the top 8 popularity. 8) Strength training with free weights (no. 2 in Australia, no. 9 in China, and no. 4 in the United States), accounting for 8.1% of the top 8 popularity.



- The full influence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the fitness industry in China could not be reflected in the rankings.

In an interesting contrast, the shutdown of some clubs decreased job availability for fitness professionals across China, yet at the same time, there was a call for more fitness professionals nationwide as the awareness of exercise for health and fitness arose due to COVID-19.

Home-based trends are not ranked in the top 20 in the China Fitness Trends, which is unlike the United States survey results (nos. 2, 7, and 17). With regard to special populations, the fitness trends in China emphasize children and adolescents (no. 3), whereas in the United States, trends focus more on older adults

(no. 11). Of the top 20 trends in China, only 11 also were trends in the United States.

### Europe

Demographics information from Europe ( $N = 1571$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A197>.

Alexios Batrakoulis, M.S., ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT, conducted the fitness trends survey in Europe, which took a pan-European approach that included more than just the 27 European Union member states. Some of the major takeaways from this year's survey include the following:



- In Europe, technology-oriented trends as well as fitness activities that take place outside the traditional gym setting (*e.g.*, home and outdoors) appear to be the most attractive among industry stakeholders.
- Health-oriented trends, particularly exercise for health and special populations, are popular, comprising six of the top 20 trends.
- Mind-body modalities such as Pilates (no. 31, down from no. 24 last year), yoga (no. 32, down from no. 26 last year),

and mind-body movement (no. 36, down from no. 35 last year) showed reduced popularity, although boutique fitness studios (no. 20, down from no. 16 last year) remain relatively popular as a work setting in Europe.

The present findings point to the significant effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the European health and fitness industry. The rapid need of hybrid fitness services is now a reality and may be the most challenging issue for those practitioners who



## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

typically offered training sessions and programs in the traditional in-person modality. The digital transformation in the fitness industry could, however, be an excellent new path for evolution, innovation, and progress not only for industry stakeholders but also for consumers.

When comparing trends between Europe and the United States, there are a number of overlapping themes that rise to the surface. In both regions, trends influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic such as digital services and technology-oriented trends, as well as home and outdoor fitness activities, seem to be substantially popular. Exercise for health emerges as a hot area for the majority of industry stakeholders in both regions and underpins the need for high-quality services in several untapped markets. Lastly, mind-body modalities such as Pilates, yoga, and tai chi are not considered very popular among the masses in either region, suggesting that fitness professionals may need to consider offering more adapted programs for inexperienced and special populations. A total of 13 of the top 20 trends were shared among the two regions.

For both Europeans and Americans, the regulation of the fitness profession, as well as the rationale for certified practitioners aiming to protect public health and offering high-quality fitness services, appear to be attractive trends.

### Mexico

Demographics information from Mexico ( $N = 918$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A198>.

Lino Francisco Jacobo Gomez Chavez, Ph.D., and his colleagues reported some of the major takeaways from this year's survey in Mexico that include the following:

- Exercise for weight loss (no. 1) remains the primary fitness trend in Mexico for the second consecutive year.
- The top four trends in Mexico are in the same order as last year's survey, exercise for weight loss (no. 1), functional fitness training (no. 2), personal training (no. 3), and strength training (no. 4).
- Unlike other regions, technology-focused trends such as mobile exercise apps and online/on-demand classes were not in the top 20 trends in Mexico.

COVID-19 has rocked the world, and the fitness sector has not been an exception. In Mexico, the fitness industry faces new challenges such as the recovery of users, spaces, jobs, salaries, services, and protocols for the safe development of activities in gyms and training centers. On the other hand, challenges continue that historically have not been solved, such as professional





fitness regulation, the improvement of working conditions for professionals in the sector, and the recognition of fitness activities as part of the national public health strategy.

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## COVID-19 has rocked the world and the fitness sector has not been an exception.

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In general, there are a few differences among the five main fitness trends between the United States and Mexico. The United States repeats two of its main trends, whereas Mexico repeats four, with only new activities/adaptation of postpandemic services by COVID-19 as the newcomer. A total of 10 of the top 20 trends overall were shared among the two.

### Spain

Demographics information from Spain ( $N = 520$ ) can be found at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A199>.

Oscar L. Veiga, Ph.D., and his colleagues conducted the 2022 fitness trends in Spain. Some of the major takeaways include the following:

- Results from the 2022 Spanish survey are very similar to the 2021 survey, with only two new trends emerging in the top 20, plus all the trends were ranked in similar positions, indicating less change overall from the previous year.
- The phenomena of outdoor activities continues to surface as a potential consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Trends related to technology (wearables and mobile apps) were ranked in a very low position in Spain in comparison with the other surveys, demonstrating that technological trends are not as prevalent in Spain.

The challenges posed by the pandemic as a result of COVID-19 focus on meeting the new needs of customers, adapting to their way of consuming, and guaranteeing safe training that allows individuals to improve their health. In Spain, the health crisis has caused a high rate of sedentary behavior because of restrictions and confinement. The fitness sector has the challenge of being able to offer an active return to normalcy, educating clients in healthy habits, and putting the focus on society through professional and safe services. The use of technology or online training can be used to complement services but may not be as effective as a substitute for fitness centers.



## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

One of the most surprising results within the Spanish survey is that online fitness classes do not appear within the top 20 ranking, which seems to suggest that its emergence inside the top 20 list in 2021 may have just been a transitory phenomenon from the COVID pandemic and government mobility restrictions. This is notable because most experts believed the delivery of online services would continue post-COVID in all sectors, including fitness, although this appears to have not been the case. Thus, it is surprising that fitness professionals in Spain do not feel that online services will continue as a trend. Additionally, it is quite interesting that technology trends (wearables and apps) have not gained relevance in Spanish either, remaining different from what is seen in the United States. Lastly, although it cannot be observed within the top 20, the trend of “exercise is medicine” rose 11 positions and for the first time is on the verge of entering the ranking at the 21st position. Overall, 11 of the top 20 fitness trends were shared with the United States.

### United States

Inclusion criteria were that respondents must reside in the United States, resulting in  $N = 3589$  qualified candidates from the original  $N = 4549$ . Demographic information from the

United States can be found here at <http://links.lww.com/FIT/A200>.

A few trends to highlight in the 2022 top 20 fitness trends for the United States include the following:

- Wearable technology (no. 1), home exercise gyms (no. 2), outdoor activities (no. 3), and strength training with free weights (no. 4) may reveal the effects of the pandemic, as people are doing more activities outside of a traditional gym setting supported by new forms of technology. Exercise for weight loss (no. 5, up from no. 16 last year) and strength training with free weights (no. 4 this year, up from no. 7 last year) increased this year, whereas body weight training (no. 9, down from no. 3 last year) decreased. These results may be related to 2020 and early 2021 shutdown-related inactivity, weight gain, or people finding ways to workout with new free weight fitness equipment.
- Online live and on-demand exercise is the no. 7 trend. Although the trend is a modification and slightly different from last year's no. 1 trend, “online training,” its lower ranking compared with last year's may be related to facilities reopening.





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**The effects of the pandemic have influenced the fitness industry dramatically prompting people to find creative ways to stay fit in their home gym or outdoors while tracking their progress with their wearable tech.**

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## TOP 4 TAKEAWAYS

After reviewing the results across all the different regions of the world that were surveyed, four of the most interesting findings are highlighted below:

### Pandemic audible for all

Interpreting the 2022 global fitness trends through the lens of COVID-19 is a critical way to sift through the complexity of emerging fitness patterns. Although each region does not tell the same story, the overall rise of technology-based trends and outdoor activities is likely a direct factor of the pandemic. Regions such as Europe and Mexico even highlighted COVID-19-specific recovery programs as a prevailing theme throughout the year. Although not consistently found in each region, these novel COVID-specific programs, in tandem with online, digital, and remote technology trends, reflect a major shift in fitness norms over the past year. Although the specific effects of the pandemic cannot be isolated in this study, readers are encouraged to maintain this contextual understanding throughout their review.

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**The overall rise of technological based trends and outdoor activities cannot be explained without factoring in the pandemic's effect.**

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### Living in a tech-driven world

Although wearable tech has been dominating the fitness industry for some time now, it is no surprise that it is also increasingly finding a place within people's fitness routines. Wearable technology ranked within the top 20 trends for the United States (no. 1), Europe (no. 4), Australia (no. 9), Mexico (no. 15), Brazil (no. 17), and Spain (no. 20). Although China is the only region that does not have "wearable technology" within their top 20 trends, it did move up to no. 22, from no. 36 last year. Consumers have many options on how to accomplish their fitness and wellness goals; therefore, health and fitness professionals and gyms will likely have many options to consider as they look toward future implementation of tech in their respective fitness spaces.

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**Consumers have many options on how to accomplish their fitness and wellness goals; therefore, health and fitness professionals and gyms may need to think through how to make relevant changes to allow for these advances.**

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### Move it and lose it?

Over the years, exercise for weight loss has consistently been ranked among the top health and fitness trends in many regions. Compared with last year's rankings, exercise for weight loss remained similar across most regions, except for a notable increase in importance in the United States (no. 16 in 2021, no. 5 in 2022). Although it surprised many to see it ranked so low last year in the United States, especially compared with other regions, the outlook among United States-based health and fitness professionals seems to have returned to a more globally important trend in 2022. The one outlier region for this trend in 2022 is Australia, where exercise for weight loss comes in at no. 15.

### Clever combos

A recurring regional dynamic that could not be ignored was complimentary trends — items that may be working together to highlight broader themes. For example, the broader theme of strength training may be seen in the presence of functional fitness, strength training with free weights, and body weight training. These popular trends were found in many regions, such as Australia, where all three were in the top 10. At least one of these three complementary trends and up to all three were in the top 10 for each region (1 in Europe and Spain; 2 in Brazil, China, Europe and the United States; 3 in Australia and Mexico). This trend is similar to the synergistic combinations seen with other popular trends, such as wearable technology paired with home gyms or outdoor activities combined with body weight training. Readers are encouraged to look at trends within their region as to what can be coupled together to efficiently meet the various needs of their clients.

### POINTS TO PONDER

This year's trends bring to light an opportunity for discussion around some compelling supportive and potentially divergent trends. For example, in review of the top 20 trends, are there complimentary or opposing themes both within and across regions that would benefit from a more granular analysis? Because none of these trends exist in a vacuum, a challenge for practitioners becomes how to package or deliver various combinations of trends. Rather than having all the answers, a few thought-provoking questions will be raised in the following



## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

section for health and fitness professionals to ponder while they read these lists.

### At-home fitness essentials

New to the trends this year, home gyms emerged as very popular in Europe (no. 1), the United States (no. 2), Brazil (no. 10), and Australia (no. 16). For many of the regions, home gyms appeared alongside established trends like wearable technology and outdoor activity. The effects of the pandemic have influenced the fitness industry dramatically, prompting people to find creative ways to stay fit in their home gym or outdoors while tracking their progress with wearable tech. Given the heightened risk of spending time indoors, especially around others, it is no surprise that people are gravitating toward outdoor workouts and/or taking the time to invest in a personal home gym space. Maybe a bigger question is whether fitness enthusiasts will want to go back to the gym, and if so, when? With the shutdown of gyms, people around the world are looking for alternative means of getting daily exercise. Some segments of the industry are reaping the benefits of this; as demand for at-home fitness equipment explodes, the industry is experiencing massive growth. Will the skyrocketing demand for fitness equipment, manufacturing, shipping delays, and price increases further prompt gym goers to focus on more body weight training outdoors because of necessity or access?

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**It is no surprise that people are gravitating toward the great outdoors and/or taking the time to invest in a personal home gym space as many people navigate fitness facilities closing for long periods of time or remain unsure of when it is safe to go back.**

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**Will the skyrocketing demand for fitness equipment continue to prompt gym goers to focus on more body weight training outdoors because of necessity or access?**

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### Certified fitness professionals versus independent fitness enthusiasts

Could certified fitness coaches be more important than initially thought, or is online remote-based technology phasing out these professionals? Despite the increase in tech-driven fitness trends

and autonomous self-directed exercises, most regions also witnessed an equally strong acknowledgement of the importance of registered or certified fitness professionals. Although these seem in contrast to one another, findings may suggest that despite limited access to hands-on professionals during the COVID pandemic, a premium is still placed on tapping the insight of these certified professionals. The available data support the idea that in most regions, people value some sort of “professional” or “coach” to help guide individuals’ fitness journeys. Future analyses of this international survey data may be well served to examine whether this particular group diverges from tech-based fitness trends, or if professionals are actually complementing and augmenting these efforts. For example, are those who engage in wearable technology and online classes more likely to seek professionally certified instructors to help monitor and track their progress or are individuals who “hire” these coaches more likely to seek alternative trends?

### HIIT me with your best shot

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) has historically been one of the most popular fitness trends, remaining the no. 1 trend in the worldwide survey from 2014 to 2018. However, there has been a slow but steady drop in its ranking since, as HIIT now sits at no. 6 in the United States (no. 5 in 2021) and Europe (no. 2 in 2021). HIIT does still remain high across the board in every region, though, between no. 6 and no. 14 everywhere except China (no. 26), but it is not quite as popular as it was while dominating the rankings in the mid to late 2010s. At the same time, exercise for weight loss rose from no. 16 last year in the United States to no. 5 this year, and the trend maintained its strong popularity in other regions. Thus, although HIIT has the potential toward impactful weight loss, does the downward shift of HIIT coupled with the continued popularity of exercise for weight loss signal that people are moving away from HIIT as a strategy for weight loss?

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**With the shutdown of gyms, so many people around the world are slowly working on building their home gym, whereas others are taking advantage of outdoor activity spaces to get their blood pumping.**

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### For the Children? Fitness Programs for Older Adults versus Children and Adolescents

Some regions place a greater emphasis on older adults’ fitness compared with children’s fitness than others. This finding is

demonstrated by fitness programs for older adults being found within the top 20 trends for Australia (no. 3), Brazil (no. 6), Spain (no. 10), the United States (no. 11), Europe (no. 13), and Mexico (no. 24), although it was not an available trend created within the survey for China. The authors for China, on the other hand, created a trend called “exercise and sport for children and adolescents,” which scored very high (no. 3 in China). Conversely, long-term youth development (no. 35 in Australia and the United States; no. 27 in Brazil; no. 34 in Europe), children and exercise (no. 24 in Australia; no. 25 in Europe and Brazil; no. 32 in the United States; no. 37 in Spain), and exercise programs for children and adolescents with obesity (no. 25 in Spain) scored very low relative to the youth emphasis in China. The question to ponder here is, why are children and youth fitness-related trends ranked so low outside of China?

## LIMITATIONS

As rich as the data are from each region, there are several survey limitations to note. First, readers should use caution in assuming that trends in one region are representative of other regions. Please refer to Table 1, which highlights several differences and similarities represented within each region. Additionally, because most regions identified at least some trends unique to them, these trends were unable to be explored in a true region by region comparison for this year and previous years. Because the number of potential trends we explored ranged from 30 to 48 this year, the time it took to complete the survey may have affected the overall quality of the responses. Lastly and most importantly, this survey is sent to health and fitness professionals within the industry across different regions, rather than the general population. Therefore, it is essential that the readers of this article understand that respondents represent fitness trends that are supported by practitioners within the field, not consumers.

## SUMMARY

The authors of this paper are extremely thankful to work with each region to provide a global representation of ACSM’s fitness trends. We encourage other regions to participate in this annual survey as a means to gain a more accurate representation of the top 20 fitness trends around the world. We hope to continue to expand this global partnership to make yearly improvements and progress on the survey design, methodology, and implementation. ACSM and our international contributors have a tremendous opportunity to continue leading the way in this evolving international collaboration, which is well positioned to have a continuously positive effect on the worldwide health fitness industry.

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**Vanessa M. Kercher, Ph.D., ACSM-EP, M.Ed.,** is a clinical assistant professor in the Kinesiology Department, School of Public Health, Indiana University. Dr. Kercher’s research passion focuses on helping individuals optimize their physical activity experiences through the utilization of behavioral strategies to promote sustainable, positive health behaviors.



**Kyle Kercher, M.S., ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT,** is a Ph.D. candidate, an NIH R01 research coordinator, and an associate instructor at Indiana University (IU). He is studying health behavior in the IU School of Public Health, and his research focuses on the intersection of public health and youth sport participation.

## 2022 FITNESS TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE



**Trevor Bennion, D.H.Sc.**, is the founder of *fitnphys.com* and an instructor in ATSU's graduate kinesiology program. Dr. Bennion's research involvement includes substrate oxidation and metabolic flexibility, with specific focus on the influence from sprint interval training.



**Paul Levy, MPH**, is an environmental health researcher specializing in participatory action research that integrates community voice and cocreation. He has explored this topic through the lens of urban transformation, public health infrastructure, and environmental justice. His work integrates stakeholders across systems, including international collaborations to enhance Bogota's public transport system to EPA grassroots water safety efforts across the United States.



**Chris Alexander, ESSAM, AEP, AES**, has been working in the fitness industry for more than 20 years. He is currently a general manager for Standards and Development at the not-for-profit association Fitness Australia; a director for International Confederation of Registered Exercise Professionals; a secretary to Australian Fitness Industry Standards Council; and a practicing accredited exercise physiologist. For the second consecutive year, he has led the investigation of the fitness trends in Australia.



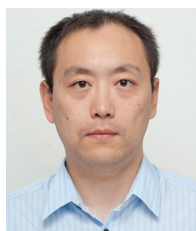
**Paulo Costa Amaral, Ph.D., MBA, M.Sc.**, is a coordinator and professor in graduate and postgraduate courses of Physical Education and Administration. He also serves as a health/wellness coach and a speaker in fitness, wellness, and gym management. For the third consecutive year, he has led the fitness trends survey in Brazil.



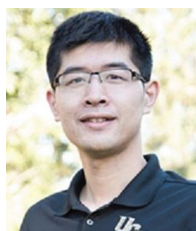
**Yong-Ming Li, Ph.D.**, is a professor in the School of Physical Education and Sport Training at the Shanghai University of Sport. He is also a distinguished research fellow at the China Institute of Sport Science. He is a researcher on energetics in exercise and sports and a consultant to the fitness industry in China. He is currently serving the International Relations Committee of the American College of Sports Medicine. Yong-Ming Li and his colleagues have led the investigation of the fitness trends in China for the fourth consecutive year.



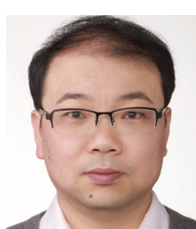
**Jia Han, Ph.D.**, is a professor in the Physiotherapy and Sport Rehabilitation Department at the Shanghai University of Sport. He also holds adjunct research positions at the University of Canberra and the Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. He serves as the vice president of the China Sport Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy Committee and the associate editor of the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*.



**Yang Liu, Ph.D.**, is a professor in the School of Physical Education and Sport Training at the Shanghai University of Sport. He is also a researcher at the Shanghai Research Center for Physical Fitness and Health of Children and Adolescents. He is currently serving as the coleader of Active Healthy Kids China.



**Ran Wang, Ph.D.**, is a professor at the School of Physical Education and Sport Training at the Shanghai University of Sport. He received a bachelor's and a master's degree in kinesiology from Beijing Sport University and completed his doctoral training at the University of Central Florida. His research interests include the development of performance testing methodologies, the analysis of physical and physiological profiles, and the assessment of adaptations to different training stimulus in varying populations.



**Hai-Yan Huang, Ph.D.**, is a professor at the School of Economics and Management at the Shanghai University of Sport. He serves as the vice president of Sciences Academy in Shanghai University of Sport, the deputy director of Shanghai Collaborative Innovation Center of Sports and Health Industry, the deputy secretary-general of Sports Industry Association in YRD area, and the executive member of Sport Industry Committee of Shanghai Sport Science Society.



**Bing-Hong Gao, Ph.D.**, is a professor and the dean of the School of Physical Education and Sport Training at the Shanghai University of Sport. He serves as a member of the Expert Board of Science and Technology, and Training Supervision for Tokyo Olympic Games at the General Administration of Sport of China. He is also a consultant of Shanghai Citizen Community Fitness and an editor in *China Sport Science and Technology* and *Journal of Shanghai University of Sport*.





**Alexios Batrakoulis, M.S., ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT**, is a teaching assistant in the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science at the University of Thessaly in Trikala, Greece. He was named the 2018 IDEA Personal Trainer of the Year, 2019 IDEA China Fitness Innovator, 2020 NSCA Personal Trainer

of the Year, and 2021 PFP Trainer of the Year, and he was also a finalist for the 2021 ACSM Certified Professional of the Year. He is also the founder of the International Obesity Exercise Training Institute. For the third consecutive year, he has led the fitness trends survey in Europe.



**Lino Francisco Jacobo Gómez Chávez, Ph.D.**, is a research professor from the University Center of the Coast of the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. He is a member of the academic research group UDG-CA-1076-Determinants of Health. In recent years, he has developed an application of healthy lifestyles knowledge. Dr. Chávez

and his colleagues have led the fitness trends survey in Mexico for the third consecutive year.



**Jorge López Haro, B.Sc., M.Sc.**, is a professor in Physical Culture and Sports at the University Center of the Coast from University of Guadalajara, México. He has earned a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in physical activity and sports from the University of Seville, Spain, and a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in innovation and research in physical activity science and sport from the University of León, Spain.



**Adrián Ricardo Pelayo Zavalza, M.Sc.**, is a professor at the University Center of the Coast of the University of Guadalajara. He has earned a bachelor's degree in physical culture and sports and a master's degree in science for development, sustainability, and tourism. In recent years, he has developed an application of healthy lifestyles knowledge.



**Luis Eduardo Aguirre Rodríguez, B.Sc.**, has a degree in Physical Culture and Sports from the University of Guadalajara. He has a Master of Sciences from the University of Guadalajara. He is a member of the academic research group UDG-CA-

1076-Determinants of Health. He has earned a diploma in scientific research and evaluation in high-performance sports by the Autonomous University of Nuevo León and a Certificate in critical library science, search processes, selection, and communication of scientific information from the University of Sheffield.



**Oscar L. Veiga, Ph.D., M.Sc.**, is senior lecturer and researcher in physical activity and sport sciences at Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain) where his research focuses on physical activity and fitness for health in several populations. He also teaches about new trends in physical activity in bachelor studies and is the current director of the Spanish Survey on Fitness Trends. Dr. Veiga and his colleagues led the investigation of the fitness trends in Spain for the second consecutive year.



**Manel Valcarce-Torrente, Ph.D.**, is a professor in Sport Sciences at the University of Lleida (Spain) and CEO of Valgo Sport Consulting, an enterprise focused on company consulting and human resources training for fitness business in Spain. He is also a professor hired by the Valencian International University and participates in numerous master's degrees and postgraduate courses related to sports management and marketing.



**Alejandro Romero-Caballero, M.Sc.**, is a sports science predoctoral researcher at Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain) where his research focuses on sports performance and physical activity for health. He is also a coach and physical trainer in soccer.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

The results from ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends guide the health and fitness industry in making critical programming, resource, and investment decisions. These results are not only applicable to commercial, clinical, corporate, and community fitness programs worldwide but also provide unique regional preferences. Although the prediction of future trends for each region is difficult, the data captured in these surveys provide health and fitness professionals information to track and compare the trajectory of trends in the field all over the world.