



2019

**REPS UAE**

WORKING IN FITNESS SURVEY



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# FOREWORD

# FOREWORD

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REPs UAE has a vital role in the fitness industry as an independent, public register which recognises the qualifications and expertise of fitness professionals in the United Arab Emirates. We provide a system of regulation for instructors and trainers to ensure that they meet agreed international standards.

REPs UAE provides assurance and confidence to the public and employers that all professionals on the Register are appropriately qualified and have the knowledge, competence and skills to perform their role effectively.

At REPs we constantly want to improve our services to members and develop the fitness industry as a whole. In order to do that we need to know more about the characteristics, views and opinions of the people who work in the fitness industry.

We are proud to present the results of the first REPs UAE Working in Fitness survey where we can report on the realities of hours and pay for fitness professionals in the UAE and look at trends in training and development, careers in fitness, and the types of clients that use the services of the fitness industry.

We are sure many stakeholders will find these results interesting and use them to develop new policies and initiatives.

REPs will run the survey again in future years to map trends over time. We would love to hear your feedback on the survey results or if you think the survey can be improved.

Yours in health and fitness

Naser Al Tamimi, CEO and Catherine Hanson Farid, Director of Operations, REPs UAE



Naser Al Tamimi



Catherine Hanson Farid





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The REPs UAE Working in Fitness Survey has been designed to be a key source of information on the fitness industry in the United Arab Emirates. This is the first Working in Fitness survey carried out by REPs UAE and it will be repeated in future years to explore trends in employment patterns, pay, training issues and career paths.

The objectives of the research were to explore characteristics and tendencies of the UAE fitness workforce related to employment and professional development, and set a baseline for research in future years.

## THE COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

The survey was promoted to all people working in the UAE fitness industry in any role. The sample of fitness professionals who completed the survey had a majority of male respondents with 57% male and 43% female. The majority (65.4%) are located in Dubai, with a further 28.1% working mostly in Abu Dhabi. A total of 60 different nationalities are represented in the sample of fitness professionals showing the truly international nature of the UAE fitness industry.

Personal trainer is the most represented job title among the sample (57.1%). A majority of respondents (56.1%) are employed full time in the fitness industry, with just over a third (36.7%) employed on a freelance/ self-employed basis. Survey respondents are most likely to work at a private gym or studio (37.5%) or else at chains of private fitness clubs (20.6%) or private homes (13.1%).

96% of respondents think the regulation of fitness trainers is important to the development of the fitness industry in the UAE, providing an overwhelming endorsement of the work of REPs in industry regulation.

## HOURS AND PAY

The average number of hours worked in the fitness industry per week for all respondents is 31.33 hours. Over 10% of respondents work more than 60 hours per week while 20% work 9 hours a week or less. This evidence suggests the fitness industry is flexible enough to accommodate different working patterns where some can work a large number of hours perhaps in an attempt to generate as much revenue as possible, while others can work part time or on a freelance basis and chose lower hours to fit individual circumstances and the specific stage in their life or career.

For personal trainers the average number of hours per week training clients is 25.30.

The two most common modes of payment for fitness professionals are monthly salary and payment per hour and this was confirmed in the survey sample.

For those paid by the hour average pay is 218.62 AED per hour. It is more common for females to be paid by the hour than males, perhaps due to the prevalence of females as fitness class instructors (group fitness, Pilates, Yoga). There is a small gender pay gap in the average hourly pay of males and females with males earning on average slightly more per hour.

The overall average monthly salary for respondents paid monthly is 5380 AED and for those paid monthly there is no gender pay difference seen in the results.



## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Nearly two thirds of respondents took their main fitness qualification in the UAE, showing demand for entry level qualifications.

Respondents reported a significant amount of professional development - 58.2% reported having done more than 3 days and 23.9% reporting having done more than 10 days in the past year. The average spend on training and development across all respondents was 3290 AED, however only 6.6% of respondents reported that their organisation pays for their training and development.

## CAREER PATHS

The survey showed an experienced workforce in the UAE fitness industry and also that fitness professionals are choosing to stay in the UAE fitness industry for a large part of their career.

The most common factor for joining the fitness industry was a passion for fitness followed by wanting to help other people.

The most likely reason for fitness professionals potentially leaving the industry is low pay compared to other industries. This was followed by other personal reasons, lack of work/ new clients, and rising costs.

## FITNESS TRENDS

A large majority of fitness professionals work with older adults and children, nearly half work with clients with physical disabilities and pre-and post natal clients. This has implications for core fitness qualifications and CPD training.

A vast majority of respondents also work with people with lower back pain and with obesity/ diabetes, also highlighting a training need in these areas.

### THE TOP FIVE RANKED FITNESS TRENDS AMONG RESPONDENTS

1. HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)
2. PERSONAL TRAINING
3. GROUP TRAINING
4. FUNCTIONAL FITNESS TRAINING
5. BODYWEIGHT TRAINING

(CHOSEN FROM ACSM WORLDWIDE FITNESS TRENDS SURVEY OPTIONS)

## CONCLUSION

The results of the REPs UAE Working in Fitness Survey 2019 show a diverse, hard-working and flexible workforce serving the fitness and wellness needs of the UAE. REPs UAE looks forward to working with partners to take any actions they feel relevant after considering these results and continuing to monitor trends in the UAE fitness industry through future research activities.







# INTRODUCTION

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

---

This report presents the findings of the REPs UAE Working in Fitness Survey 2019, a confidential online survey conducted in the spring of 2019. The survey provides a unique opportunity to gauge the characteristics and views of the fitness workforce currently working in the United Arab Emirates. REPs UAE plans to repeat the survey annually in order to map tendencies and trends in the industry.

It is hoped the results of the survey will be interesting and useful to a variety of stakeholders including Government entities, employers, training providers, and fitness professionals themselves.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The Working in Fitness Survey was open to all those working in the fitness industry in the UAE, including those working on a full-time, part-time or self-employed basis. The survey was publicised extensively through REPs UAE channels including direct e mail to REPs members. This report is based on 370 responses. We thank all those who took the time to participate in the survey.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The key objectives of the research were:

- To gather information on workforce characteristics
- To explore employment patterns
- To comment on issues of working hours and pay
- To explore training and development issues
- To discover more about motivations to join the fitness industry, how long fitness professionals plan to stay, and why they may leave the industry
- To look at future trends in terms of clientele and other key issues

## 1.3 SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was based on examples of workforce surveys carried out in other countries, then tailored to meet the specific characteristics of the fitness industry in the UAE.

The results of the Working in Fitness survey are unweighted. The survey is a self-selecting sample and therefore it is not necessarily representative of the actual population. To interpret the results appropriately the profile of respondents is examined in the next section.





# WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS

# 2

## WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS

### KEY POINTS

- In terms of home nation/nationality of respondents; 60 countries were represented in the survey sample showing the global nature of the UAE fitness workforce.
- More males than females completed the survey, but females were more likely to teach fitness classes, and, probably as a result, more likely to be self-employed/freelance.
- 89% of respondents are REPs members and 96% think regulation of fitness trainers is important to the development of the fitness industry in the UAE.
- Personal trainers made up the majority of the sample size, with a majority of personal trainers being male.
- While private studios and gyms form the main place of work; hotels, private homes, sports clubs and open spaces are all common places where fitness activities take place.
- 76% of respondents would recommend their employer to a friend; however 24% would not, suggesting some level of dissatisfaction for some respondents with their current employer.

### 2.1 ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

This section of the report looks at the characteristics of those who responded to the Working in Fitness Survey. Understanding the composition of the sample is important, as it can help us to interpret the answers given to subsequent questions in the survey.

#### 2.1.1 HOME COUNTRY/ NATIONALITY

The fitness industry in the UAE is truly international with fitness professionals coming to the UAE to work from all over the world. The 370 respondents to the survey come from 60 different countries, from Australia to Zimbabwe.

The Philippines was the most represented nation with 60 respondents, followed by the UK with 50 and India with 47. There were seven responses from United Arab Emirates nationals. The top 10 countries represented in the survey sample can be seen in Table 2.1.1.

All of the countries represented in the sample can be seen in Figure 2.1.1 which shows the home nations of respondents in a word cloud and world map.



TABLE 2.1.1

TOP TEN NATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY

1	Philippines	60
2	UK	50
3	India	47
4	Egypt	18
5	Serbia	13
6	Kenya	9
7	Portugal	9
8	Lebanon	8
9	South Africa	8
10	UAE	7

FIGURE 2.1.1

WORD CLOUD AND WORLD MAP SHOWING HOME NATIONS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY



## 2.1.2 GENDER AND AGE

Table 2.1.2 shows the gender and age of the sample who responded to the Working in Fitness Survey. The following points are worthy of note:

- While females make up 43% of the survey sample, they make up 60.8% of the self-employed/ freelance respondents to the survey. Only 32% of the respondents employed on a full time basis are female compared to 68% male. This could be linked to the main occupations of female fitness professionals where 82.8% of group exercise instructor respondents are female, 77.8% of yoga teachers and 93.8% of Pilates instructors – which are all occupations where there is a greater proportion of self-employed and freelance instructors. A majority (65.5%) of personal trainer respondents were male with 34.5% female.
- There was a fairly even split in the gender balance for respondents in general and club management positions 52.4% male/ 47.6% female.
- There is a broad spectrum of ages represented, with numbers peaking in the middle age groups and tailing off at the younger and older ends. However the vast majority (84.6%) fall in the age bands from 25 – 44 perhaps reflecting the ages at which professionals from abroad are most likely to be working in the UAE. The percentages for the younger (age 16 – 24) and older (age 45 – 54, 55 – 64 and 65+) bands are significantly lower in the UAE when comparing to the age of the fitness workforce in other countries<sup>1</sup>.
- 50.3% of personal trainer respondents are in the age band 25 – 34 with only 8.1% aged 45 or over.

TABLE 2.1.A

GENDER AND AGE OF RESPONDENTS

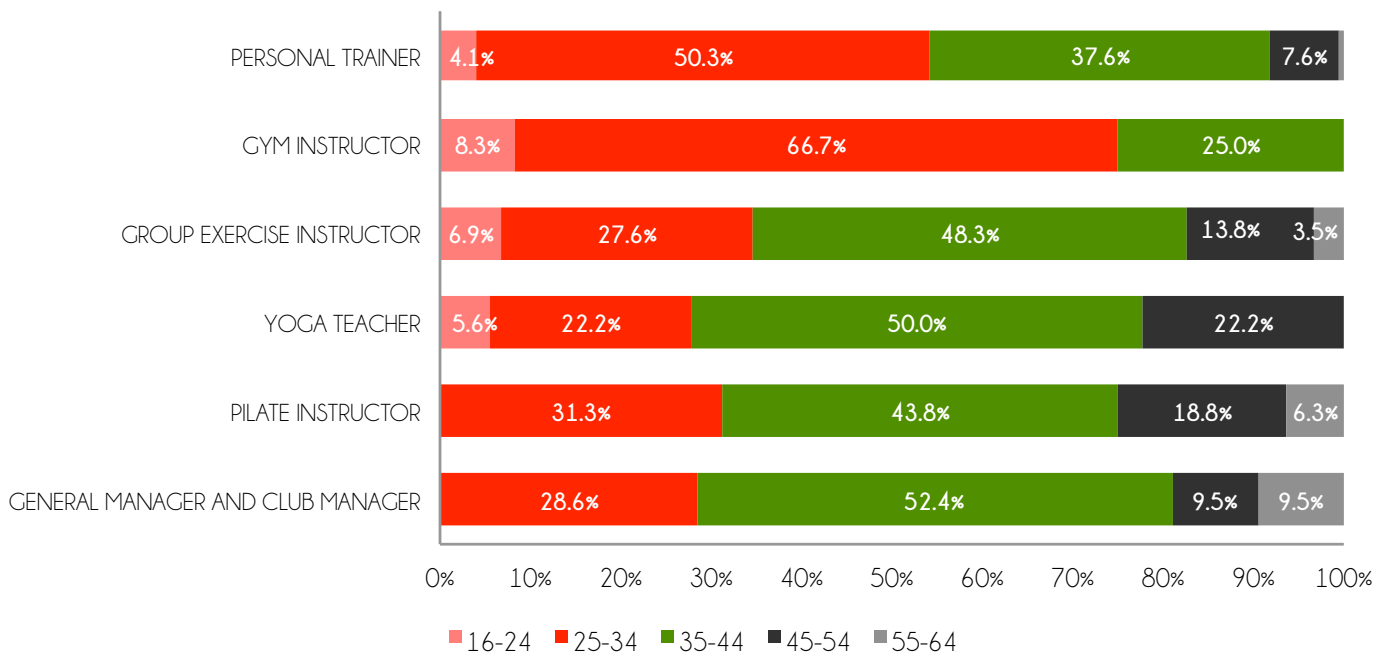
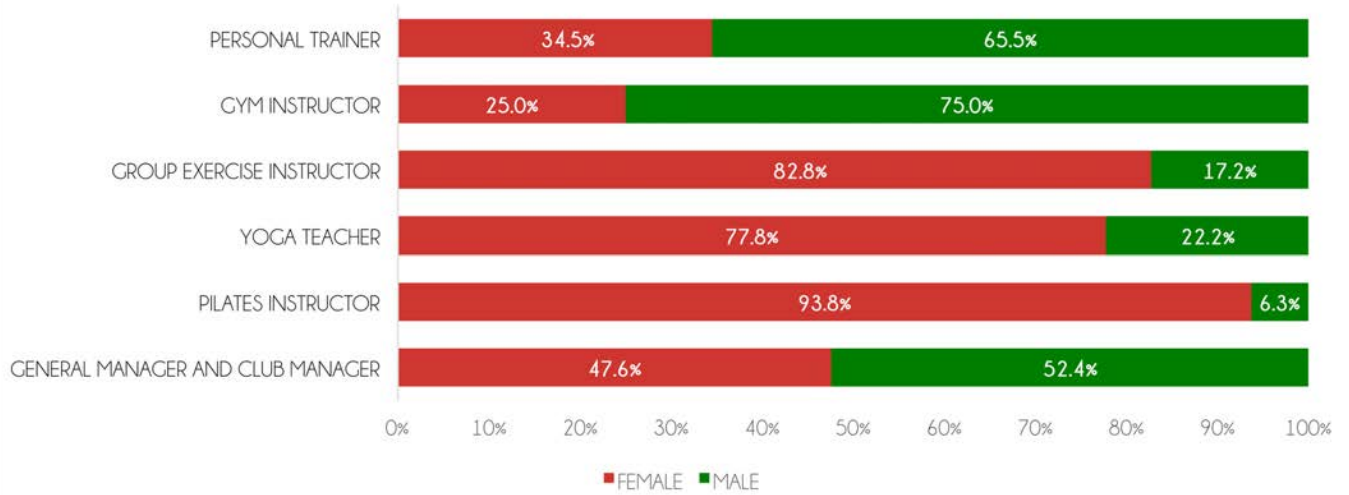
GENDER	Male	57%
	Female	43%
AGE	16-24	3.8%
	25-34	44.6%
	35-44	40.0%
	45-54	10.0%
	55-64	1.6%
	65+	0.0%

<sup>1</sup> Reference UK Working in Fitness Survey, 2015



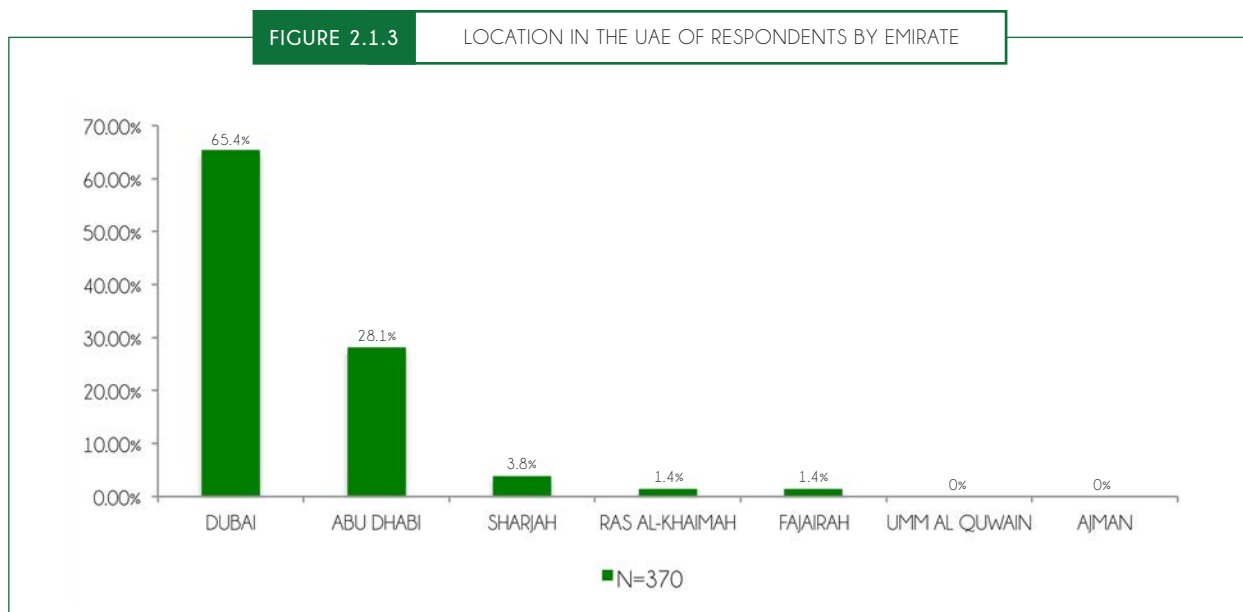
FIGURES 2.1.2A & 2.1.2B

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF MAIN OCCUPATIONS BY AGE AND GENDER



### 2.1.3 LOCATION IN UAE

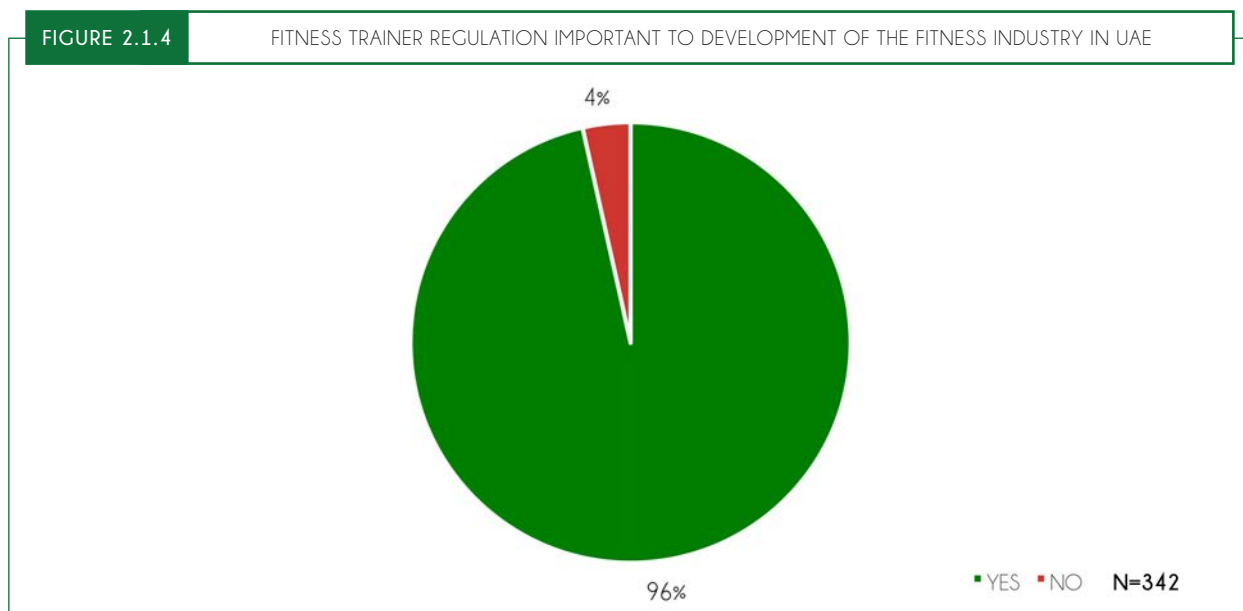
Dubai was the most represented Emirate within the survey sample (65.4%) followed by Abu Dhabi with 28.1% of the sample. All other Emirates were represented by less than 5% of the sample. Later in this report issues related to hours and pay are compared between Dubai and Abu Dhabi.



### 2.1.4 REPS MEMBERSHIP AND REGULATION

89% of respondents are a member of REPs showing their commitment to professional registration and personal development. Some respondents may not be members of REPs as the survey was open to managers and others in non-instructor roles such as sales and marketing staff.

Encouragingly 96% of respondents think the regulation of fitness trainers is important to the development of the fitness industry, supporting the important mission and role of REPs UAE.



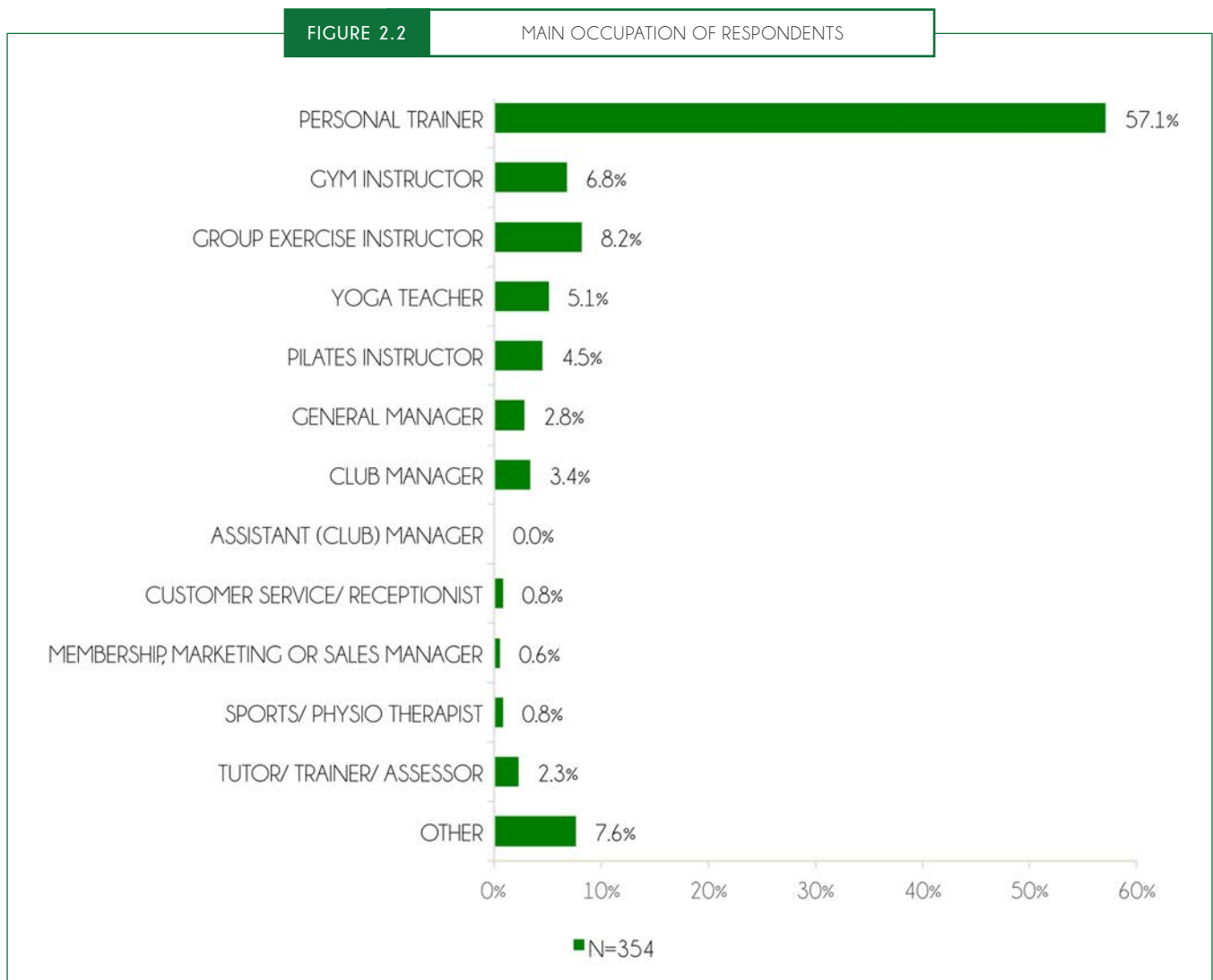


## 2.2 MAIN OCCUPATION

Figure 2.2 shows the main occupations represented in the survey. Some fitness professionals work in more than one role but we are concentrating here on their main role.

Personal trainers are the largest occupational group, making up 57.1% of the sample; all other occupations represent less than 10% of the sample and could be further targeted when the survey is repeated in future years.

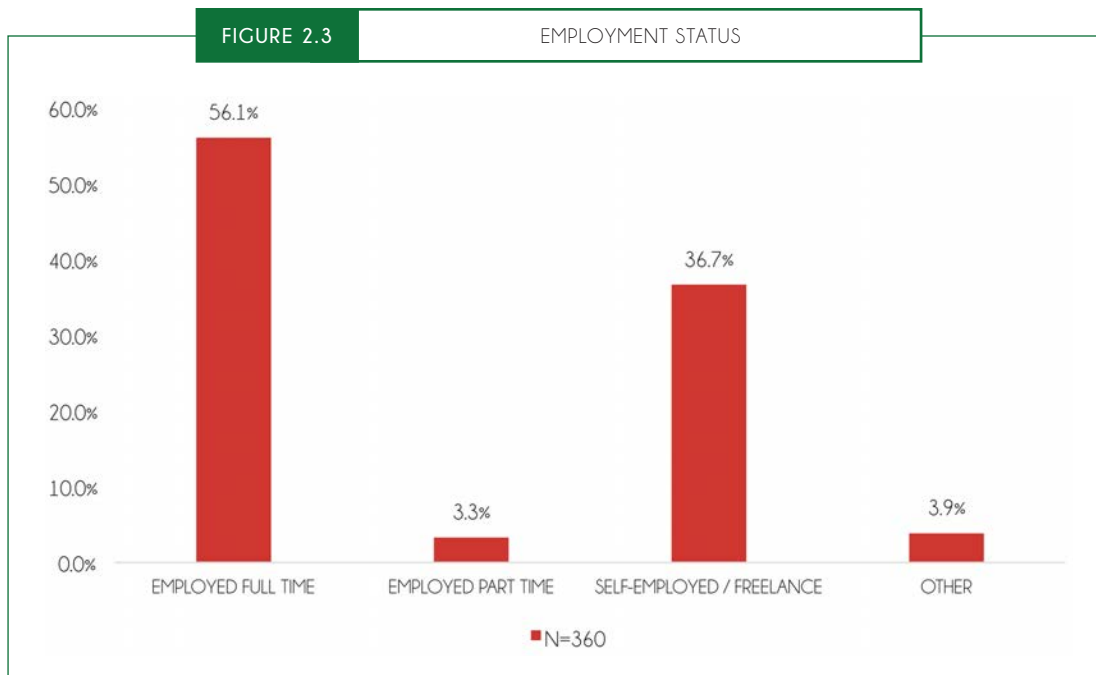
As mentioned above, a majority of personal trainer respondents are male, while a large majority of group fitness, yoga and Pilates instructor respondents are female.



## 2.3 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Figure 2.3 shows that overall a majority of 56.1% of respondents are employed on a full time basis, with 36.7% working on a self-employed/ freelance basis. The data can be further analysed to draw out several points of note:

- 39.6% of female respondents are employed on a full time basis, and 68.7% of male respondents. This is compared to 49.7% of female respondents working on a self-employed/ freelance basis and 26.15% of male respondents. This can also be expressed in terms of 32% of full time employed respondents are female and 68% male; and 60.8% of self-employed/ freelance respondents are female and 39.2% male. There is therefore a higher percentage of self-employment/ freelance work among female fitness professionals, which can probably be explained by the high instance of freelance work in activities where there are more females such as group fitness, Pilates and yoga.
- The most common age band for full time employed staff is 25 – 34 with 53.3% of respondents with a full time job being in this age band. The most common age band for self-employment/ freelance work is 35 – 44 with 47.8% of respondents operating on that basis being within that band
- The research found that 60.4% of personal trainer respondents are working full time, and 33.5% working on a self-employed or freelance basis
- A majority of tutors/ trainers in education who responded work on a self-employed/ freelance basis



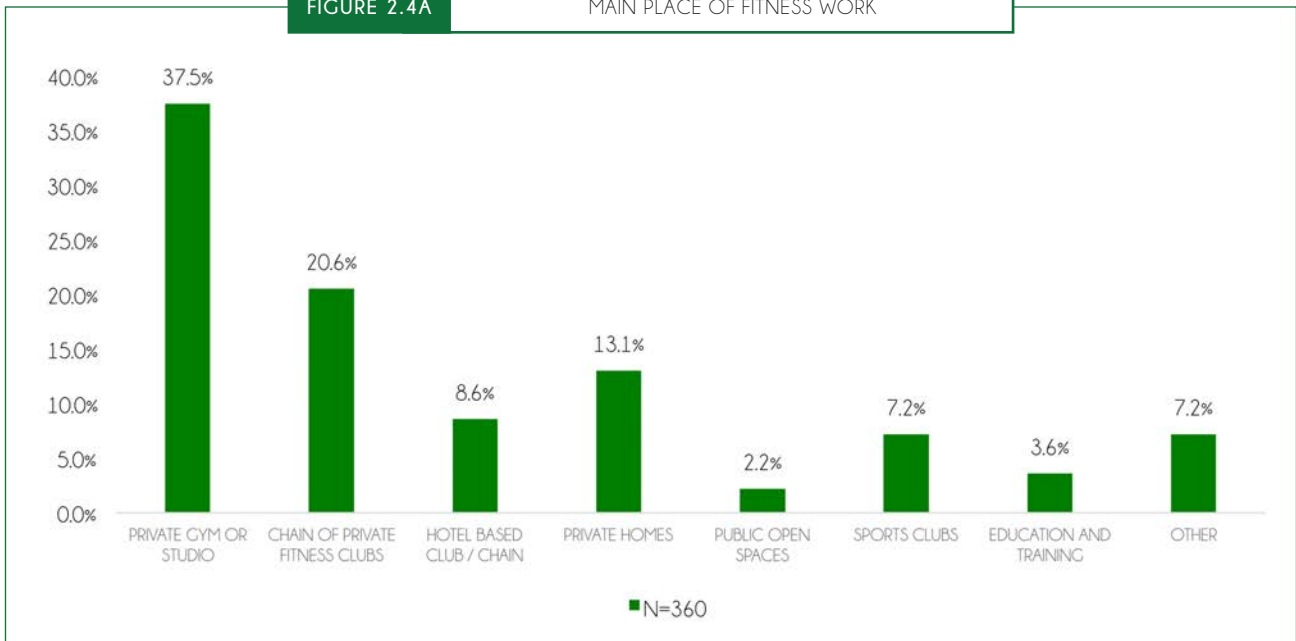
## 2.4 PLACE OF WORK

A variety of locations for fitness work are represented in the sample, with the most prevalent being a private gym or studio (37.5%) and chain of private fitness clubs (20.6%). Hotels, sports clubs, private homes and public spaces are all represented as can be seen in Figure 2.4A.



FIGURE 2.4A

MAIN PLACE OF FITNESS WORK

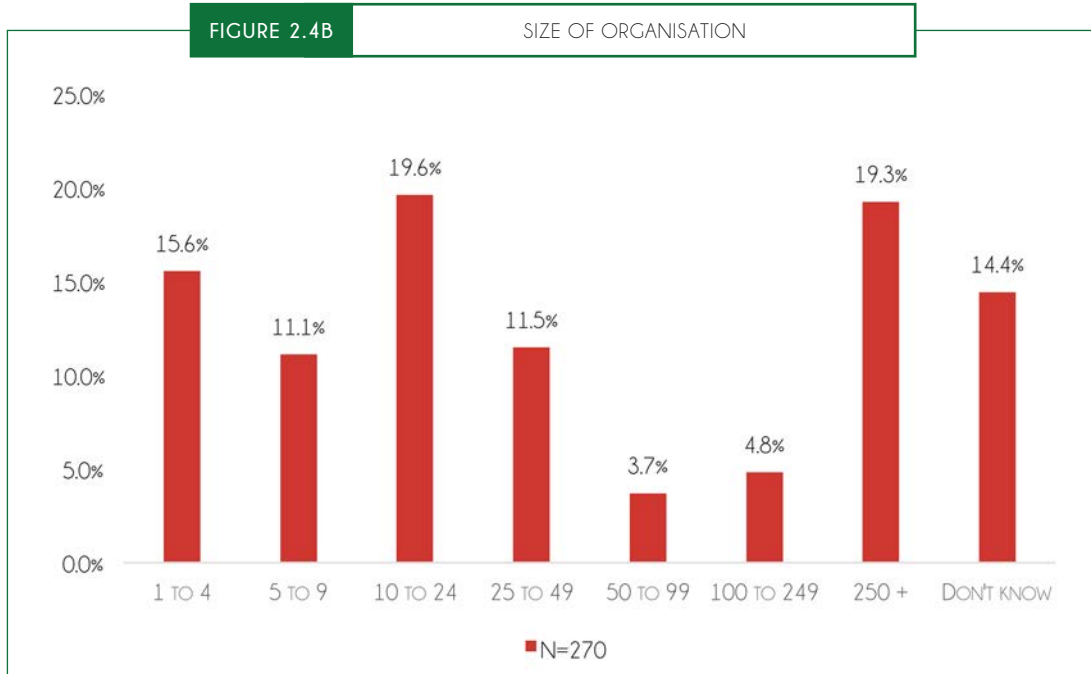


Further information can be provided about the place of work of fitness professionals:

- Only 48.1% of respondents work at just one fitness organisation, while 31.1% work at two or more fitness organisations, of this 2.6% work at five or more organisations. 20.7% do not work at any fitness organisation and work in homes, parks etc.
- The size of organisation respondents work for (where they work for a fitness organisation) in terms of number of employees differs greatly among respondents from 1 – 4 staff (15.6%) to over 250 staff (19.3%). The full range can be seen in Figure 2.4B.
- It is also interesting to note that 16% of fitness professionals in the sample have a job outside the fitness industry.

FIGURE 2.4B

SIZE OF ORGANISATION



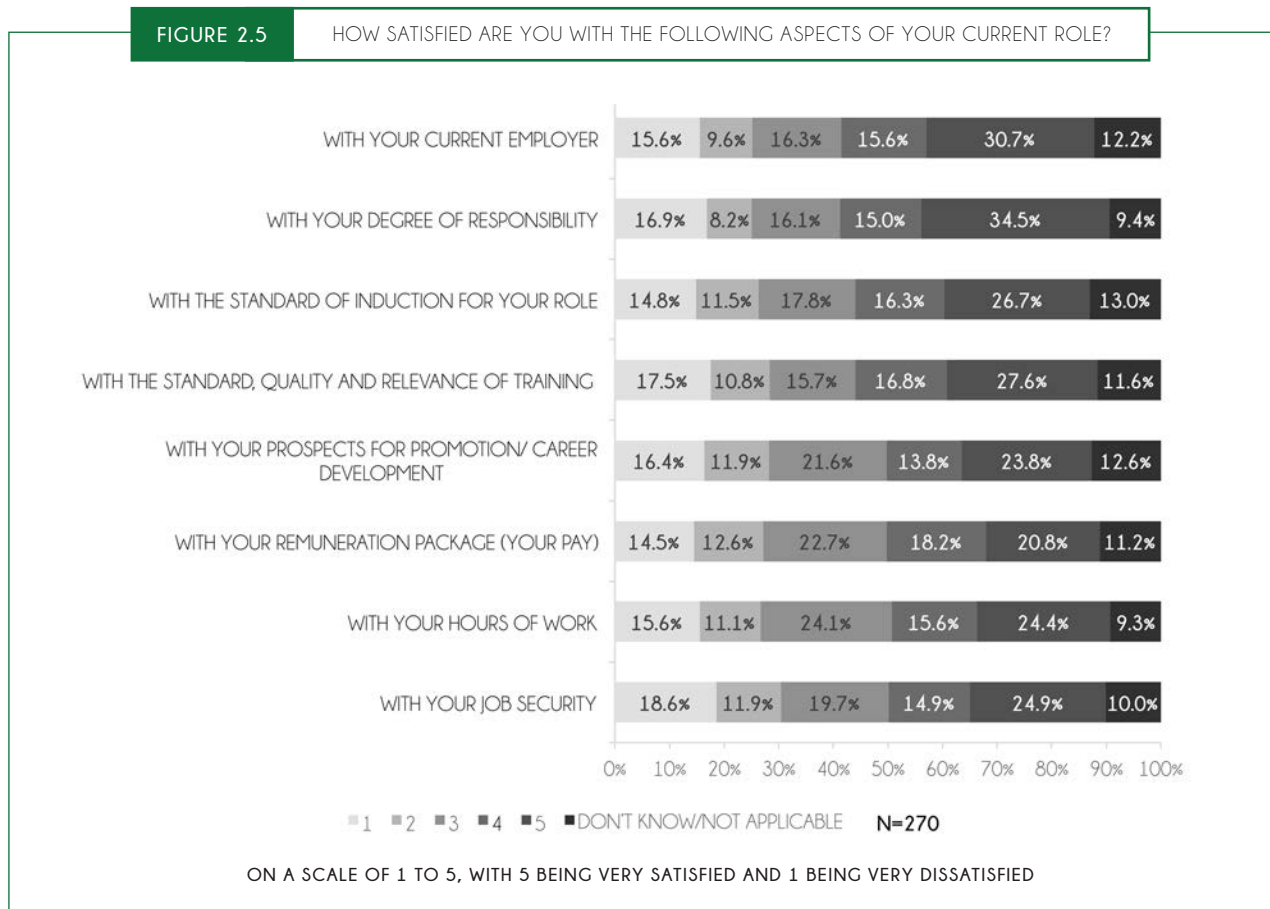
## 2.5 JOB SATISFACTION

76% of respondents would recommend their employer to a friend; however 24% would not, suggesting some level of dissatisfaction for some respondents with their current employer.

Figure 2.5 shows trainer satisfaction with a range of aspects of their current role. The following noteworthy points can be drawn out from this data:

- 18.6% of respondents are very dissatisfied with their job security, this is the highest rating for any aspect for very dissatisfied.
- The lowest rating for an aspect where respondents are very satisfied is with their remuneration package.
- 28.3% showed dissatisfaction (1 or 2 on the scale) with the standard, quality and relevance of training offered by their employer.
- 28.3% also showed dissatisfaction with their prospects for promotion and career development.
- Overall there was a higher level of satisfaction than dissatisfaction with respondents' current employer.

Employers can consider this data and develop policies to increase employee satisfaction to aid staff wellbeing and retention.





# HOURS & PAY

# 3

## HOURS & PAY

### KEY POINTS

- The average number of hours worked in the fitness industry per week for all respondents is 31.33 hours.
- Lower working hours for many show the fitness sector is flexible and suitable for a range of employment patterns/stages in a trainers life.
- On average males work longer hours than females.
- Among all personal trainers the average number of hours training clients per week is 25.30 hours.
- The two most common modes of payment for fitness professionals are monthly salary and payment per hour.
- The average pay per hour for all respondents paid by the hour is 218.62 AED.
- The overall average monthly salary for respondents paid monthly is 5380 AED.
- There appears to be a slight gender pay gap for those paid by the hour but not for those paid monthly.

### 3.1 HOURS

#### 3.1.1 AVERAGE HOURS

The fitness industry is well known as a hard working sector and this is confirmed through the Working in Fitness survey. 45% of respondents to the survey work more than 40 hours per week on average serving the wellness needs of population of the UAE and generating revenue for themselves or their employer. 11.3% work 60 hours or more. At the same time lower number of working hours for many professionals shows the fitness sector offers flexible working and the opportunity for part time work and working the number of hours to suit a variety of lifestyles. The average number of hours worked for all respondents was 31.33 hours. Figure 3.1.1 shows the average number of hours per week across the survey sample.



We can interrogate the data further to learn more about the working habits of UAE fitness professionals.

On average male fitness professionals work longer hours than female fitness professionals; this can be seen in the following data:

- 57.2% of males report working over 40 hours per week compared with 33.8% of females
- Of those working 60 or more hours per week 69.5% are male compared with 30.5% female
- 47.6% of females report working less than 20 hours per week compared with 25.7% of males

The average number of hours worked per week for female respondents is 25.10 hours (N=145) and for male respondents the average number of hours worked per week is 37.01 hours (N=175).

It could be argued that part time and freelance working opportunities can particularly suit female fitness professionals at different times in their career and stages in life.

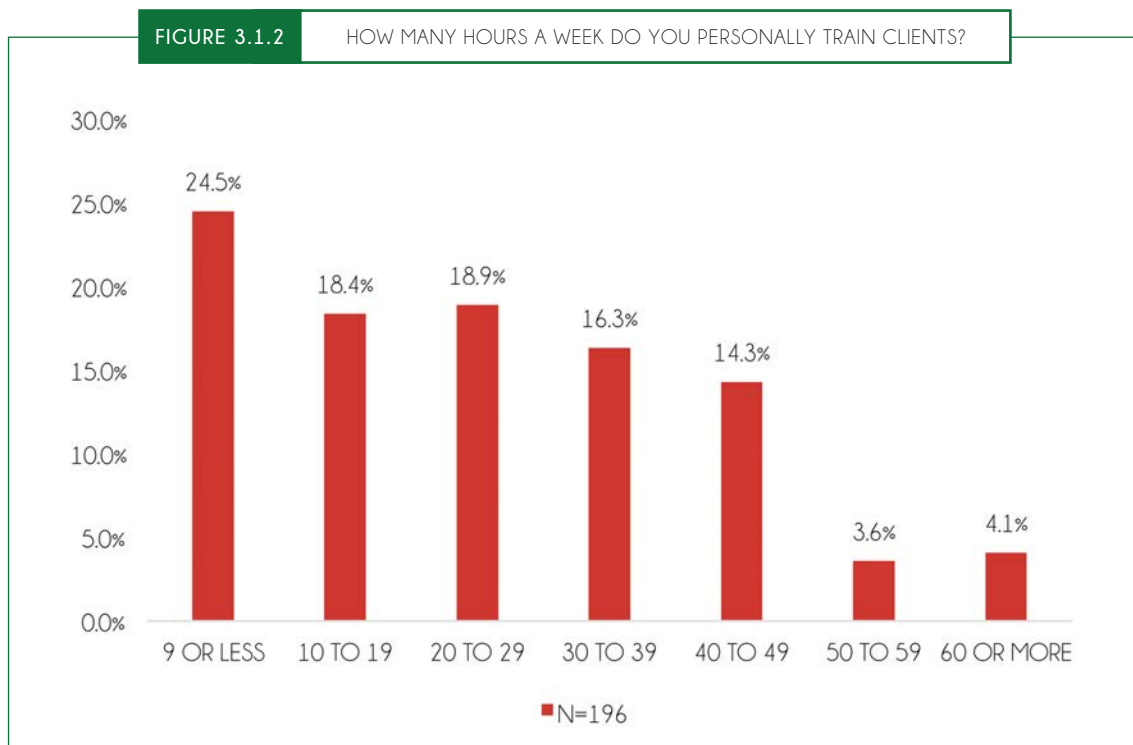
There is no evidence in the data to say fitness professionals in any particular Emirate work more hours than their counterparts in other parts of the UAE, for example the average number of hours worked per week by respondents in Dubai and Abu Dhabi are 32.06 and 31.98 respectively, so the difference is statistically insignificant.

### 3.1.2 PERSONAL TRAINER HOURS

There is also a range of hours worked personally training clients for those who identified as personal trainers. Among all personal trainers the average number of hours training clients per week is 25.30 hours.

For male personal trainers the figure is 27.49 (N=122) and for female personal trainers it is 21.12 (N=65).

Figure 3.1.2 shows the spread of hours spent personally training clients from all respondents.

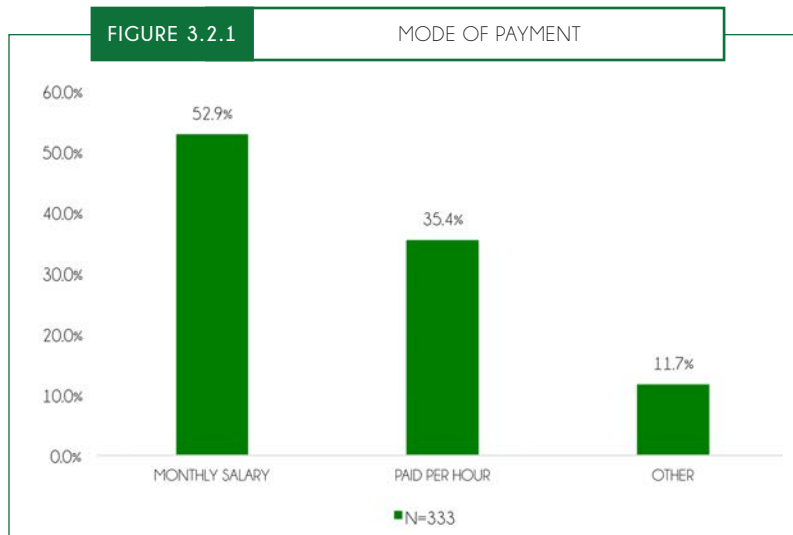


## 3.2 PAY

### 3.2.1 MODE OF PAYMENT

The two most common modes of payment for fitness professionals are monthly salary and payment per hour and this was confirmed in the survey sample.

Figure 3.2.1 shows 52.9% of respondents are paid via monthly salary and 35.4% are paid by the hour.



### 3.2.2 PAYMENT PER HOUR

We can then explore how much fitness professionals are paid through each of the two methods of payment by the hour and monthly salary.

Figure 3.2.2 shows the pay per hour of respondents, with the majority (52.2%) being paid 101 to 200 AED per hour. This is followed by 31.9% earning 201 to 300 AED per hour and a smaller amount (8%) earning 301 to 400 AED per hour and 3.5% over 400 AED per hour.

The average pay per hour for all respondents paid by the hour is 218.62 AED.

Among the respondents it is more common for females to be paid by the hour than males – 62.5% of females paid via this method versus 37.5% of males. This reflects the way in which instructors of group classes such as group exercise, yoga and Pilates are paid where there is a higher proportion of females than males.

The average hourly rate by gender and Emirate is as follows:

GENDER	Male	233,39 AED
	Female	209,75 AED
EMIRATE	Dubai	223,10 AED
	Abu Dhabi	212,08 AED

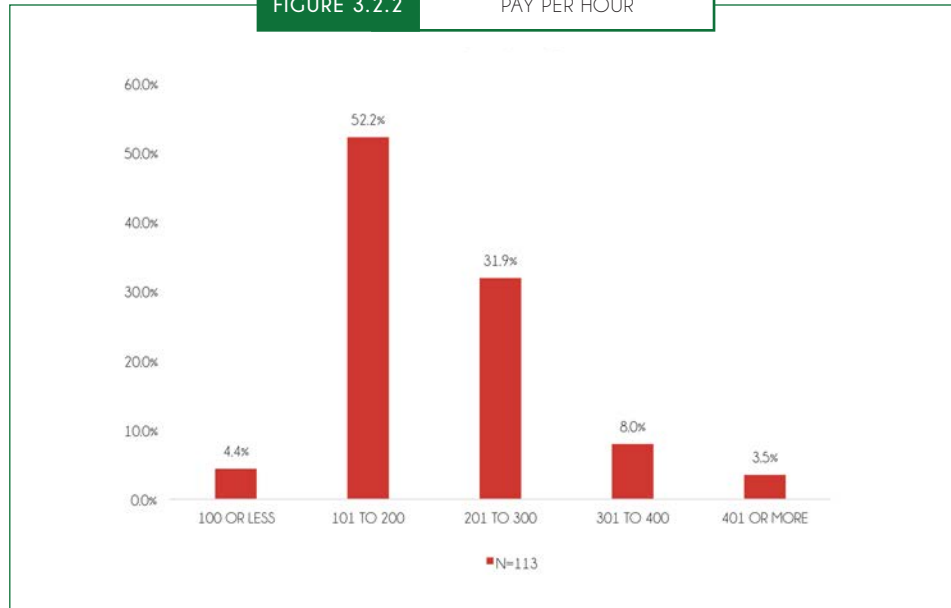
This suggests a small gender pay gap in favour of male fitness professionals and a slightly higher rate of pay in Dubai than Abu Dhabi.





FIGURE 3.2.2

PAY PER HOUR

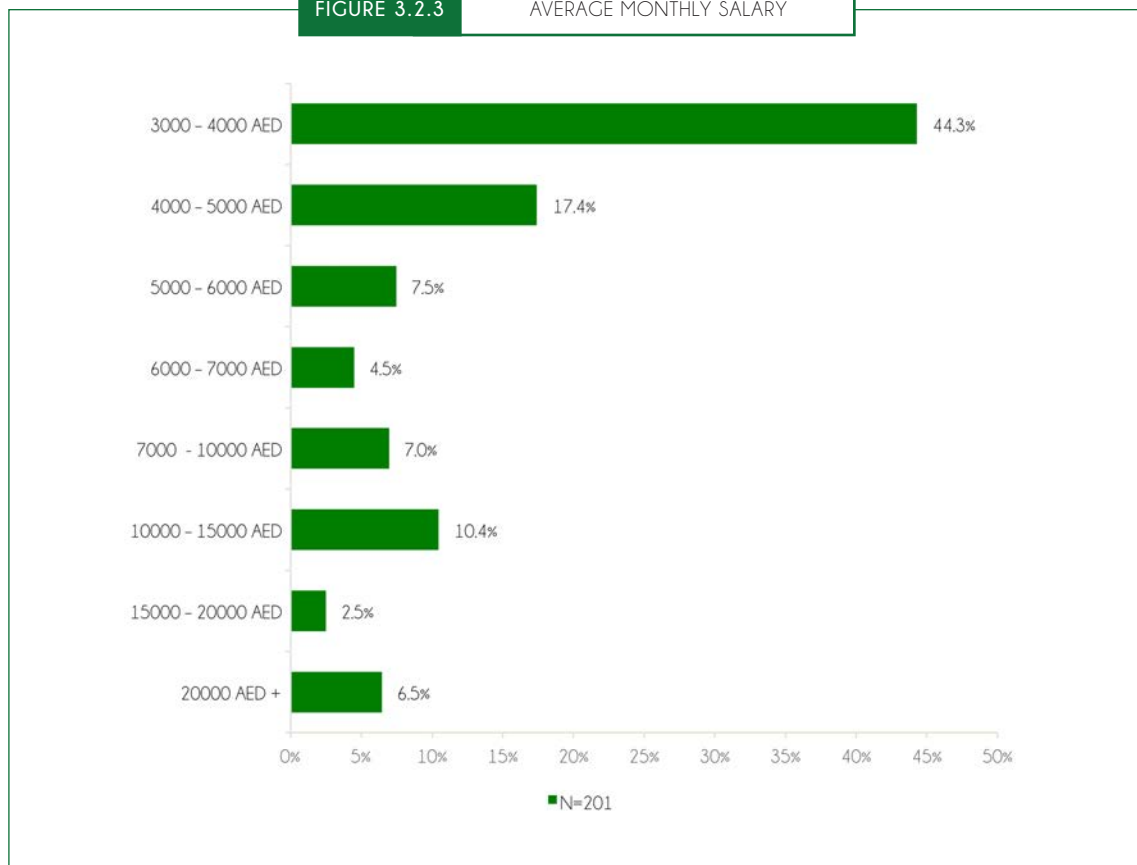


### 3.2.3 BASIC SALARY

A wide spread of basic salaries was reported by respondents from between 3000 and 4000 AED per month to over 20000 AED. The most common salary reported was 3000 to 4000 AED per month at 44.3% followed by 4000 to 5000 at 17.4%.

FIGURE 3.2.3

AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY



The overall average monthly salary for respondents paid monthly is 5380 AED

A higher proportion of male fitness professionals who responded are paid monthly (65.5%) than females (34.52%).

The average monthly salary by gender and Emirate is as follows:

GENDER	Male	5360 AED
	Female	5420 AED
EMIRATE	Dubai	5590 AED
	Abu Dhabi	5310 AED

This data does not show any gender pay gap among professionals being paid via monthly salary. It also shows a slightly higher average pay for Dubai than for Abu Dhabi.

### 3.2.4 COMMISSION, BONUS, PERKS

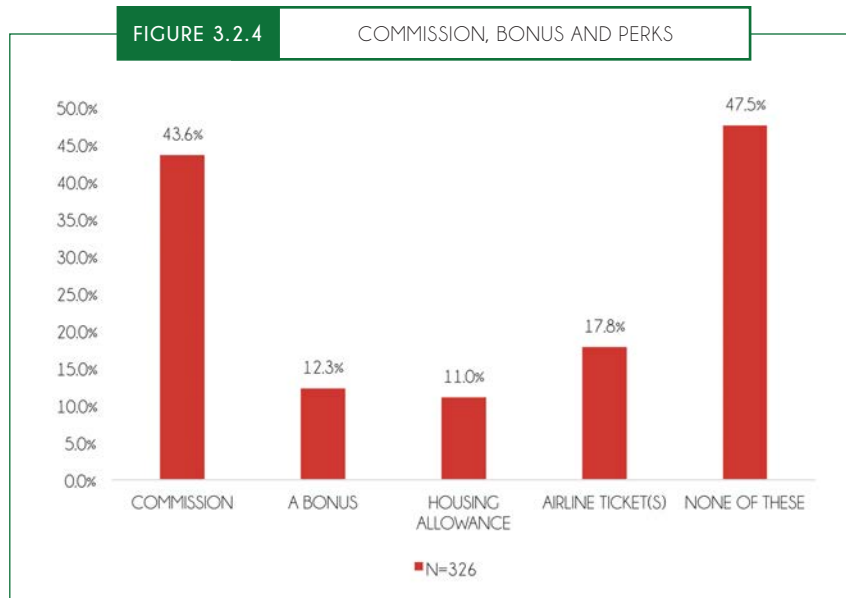
Opportunities to supplement pay is common in the fitness industry and this was confirmed by the survey sample.

While 47.5% of respondents receive no additional benefits or chance to add to their basic pay, 43.6% can earn commission, while 12.3% receive a bonus. Housing allowance and airline ticket are also reported to be offered to some fitness professionals with 11.0% and 17.8% of respondents receiving these benefits respectively. These benefits are shown in Figure 3.2.4.

For those who receive commission the most common amount reported is between 30 and 40 per cent in additional income that can be earned through commission. The commission rates received by all respondents are as follows:

Up to 5%	10.6%
Between 5% and 10%	10.6%
Between 10% and 15%	4.3%
Between 15% and 20%	8.5%
Between 20% and 30%	14.2%
Between 30% and 40%	24.1%
Between 40% and 50%	8.5%
Above 50%	19.1%





### 3.2.5 PAY RISES

A majority of respondents reported that their pay had stayed the same over the past year (62.3%) with 17.3% receiving a pay rise and 11.4% seeing a decrease in their pay over the past year.

20.7% of respondents in Dubai reported a pay rise compared with 13.4% of respondents from Abu Dhabi. Only 9.85% of respondents from Dubai reported a decrease in pay, and this percentage was 13.4% for Abu Dhabi. This may suggest pay for fitness professionals in Dubai is holding up more strongly than in Abu Dhabi.

For those across the whole of the UAE who received a pay rise 41.1% of them received over 10% pay rise and 48.2% of them received less than 10% (10.7% didn't know their percentage increase).





# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

# 4

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### KEY POINTS

- Nearly two thirds of respondents took their main fitness qualification in the UAE, showing demand for entry level qualifications.
- 3 - 6 months was the most supported length of time to complete a personal trainer qualification.
- Respondents reported a significant amount of professional development - 58.2% reported having done more than 3 days and 23.9% reporting having done more than 10 days in the past year.
- The average spend on training and development across all respondents was 3290 AED.
- Only 6.6% of respondents reported that their organisation will pay for their training and development.

### 4.1 QUALIFICATIONS

#### 4.1.1 QUALIFICATIONS IN THE UAE

It is interesting to note in Figure 4.1.1.that nearly two thirds of respondents took their main fitness qualification in the UAE (63%). This shows there is a continuing strong market for entry qualifications in the country.

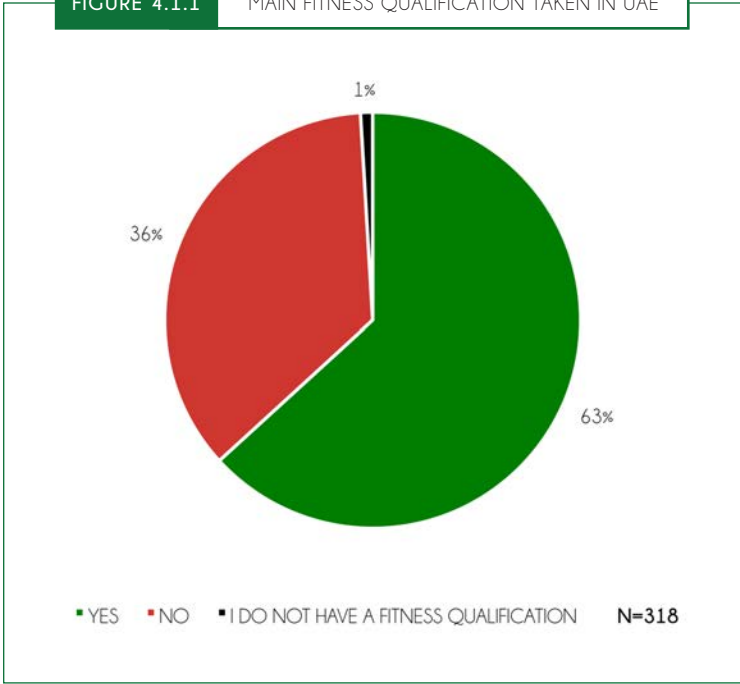
There is no discernable difference in response to this question between respondents from Dubai or Abu Dhabi (61.2% and 63.4%).

69.5% of personal trainer respondents took their personal trainer qualification in the UAE. Yoga teacher was the only occupation where a majority of respondents took their qualification outside the UAE.

To some extent this question is dictated by nationality and whether internationally recognised certifications are on offer in the fitness professionals' home country. It is also linked to requirements of employers and REPs to hold an internationally accredited certification.



**FIGURE 4.1.1** MAIN FITNESS QUALIFICATION TAKEN IN UAE



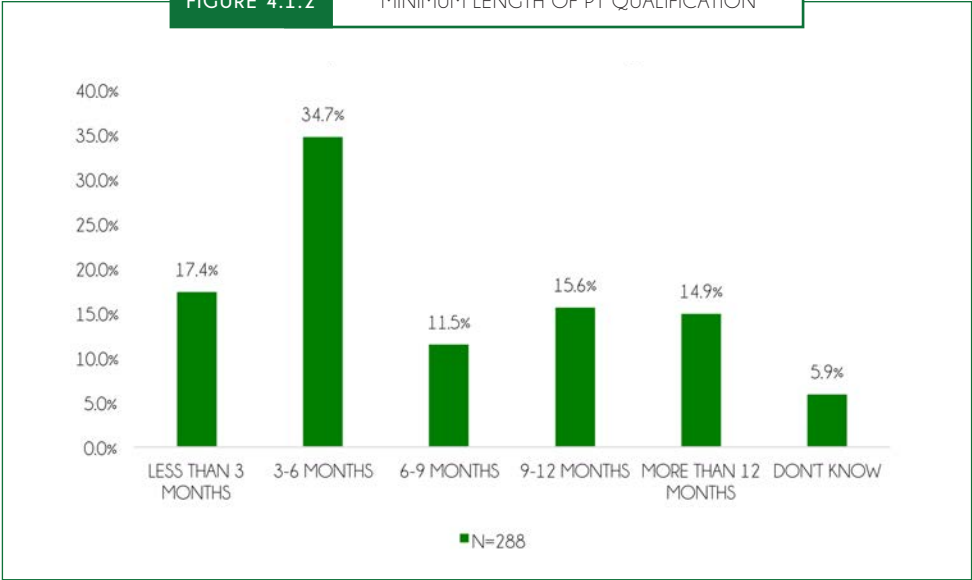
4.1.2 VIEWS ON LENGTH OF PERSONAL TRAINER QUALIFICATION

Respondents were asked their view on the minimum length of time they feel it should take to complete a personal trainer qualification. Figure 4.1.2 shows there was a range of responses from less than 3 months to more than 12 months, with the largest band being 3 – 6 months.

Often the answer to this question will be linked to the certification taken by the respondent themselves.

Analysing the data further shows that respondents who have been in the industry 10 years or more are most likely to see longer qualifications as necessary, with 24.8% of this group suggesting more than 12 months minimum time for a personal trainer qualification.

**FIGURE 4.1.2** MINIMUM LENGTH OF PT QUALIFICATION

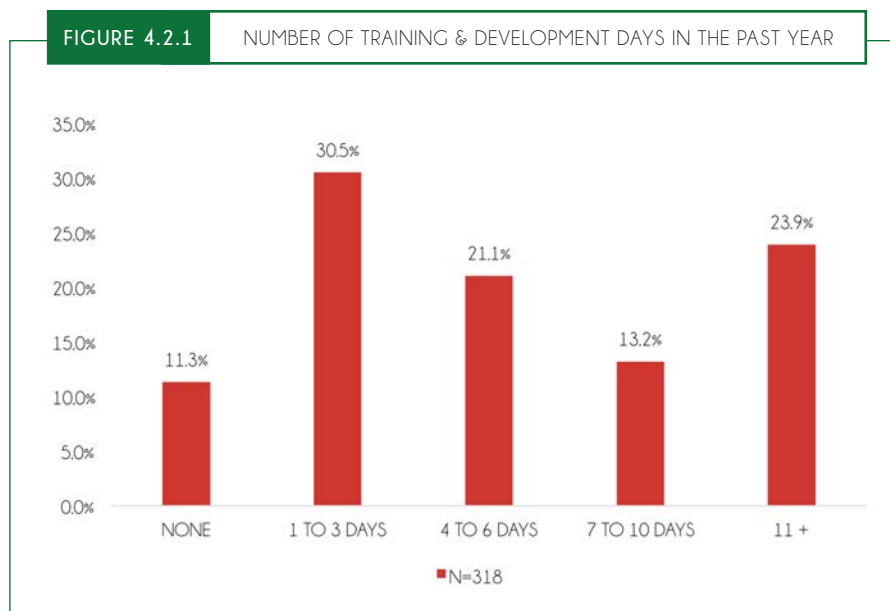


## 4.2 TRAINING

### 4.2.1 NUMBER OF TRAINING DAYS

Figure 4.2.1 shows there is a large appetite for training and professional development in the UAE fitness industry.

88.7% of respondents have taken part in training and development in the last 12 months, including 58.2% reporting having done more than 3 days and 23.9% reporting having done more than 10 days.



This shows many trainers go beyond the REPs CPD requirement of 10 CPD points (hours) per year. These figures also show a demand and market for training and development in the industry.

Surprisingly, given the greater number of training opportunities in Dubai, the figures are not significantly different between respondents from Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

When looking at specific occupations, yoga and Pilates teachers were more likely to undertake a larger number of training and development days, with over 50% of professionals in these areas who responded reporting taking over 10 days of training activities in the last year.

Self-employed respondents were more likely to undertake a greater number of training days than their employed counterparts. 47.9% of self-employed respondents reporting taking part in 7 or more days of training and development compared with 30.4% of full time employed respondents.

### 4.2.2 COST AND FUNDING OF TRAINING

The cost of training and development activities was explored further and results can be seen in Figure 4.2.2A. Responses ranged from under 1000 AED (15.1%) to the most common answer which was 5000 AED or more (33.3%).

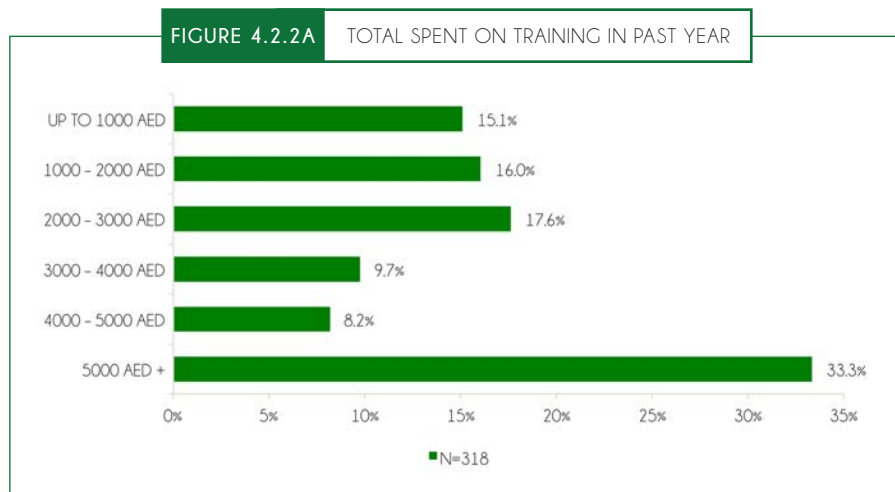


Again surprisingly given the greater options for education and training in Dubai, it was respondents in Abu Dhabi who were more likely to spend 5000 AED or more on training and development (43.0%) compared with 31.8% in Dubai.

The average spend on training and development across all respondents was 3290 AED

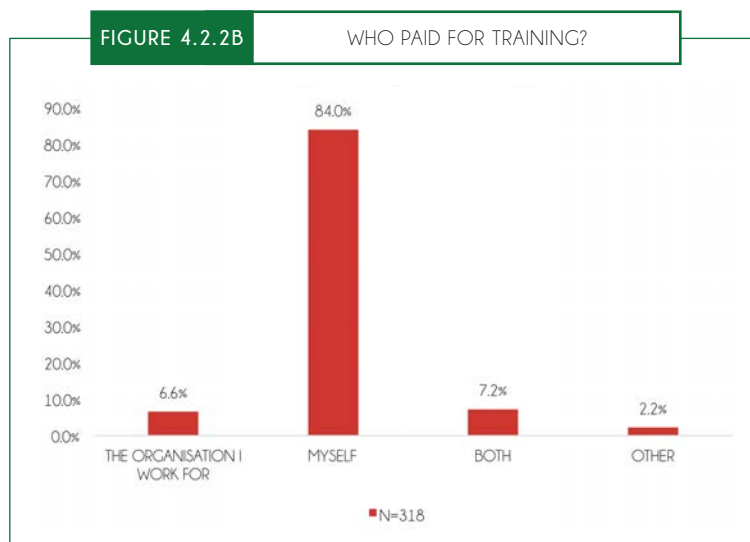
The average spend on training and development by personal trainers across the UAE was 3260

There is no major difference in spend on training between self-employed and full time employed respondents.



An overwhelming 84% of respondents reported that they alone pay for their training and development, with a further 7.2% paying jointly with their employer. Only 6.6% of respondents reported that their organisation will pay for their training and development. This is shown in figure 4.2.2B.

It could be argued that, if these figures represent the real situation, then employers could consider increasing their training budget and supporting development needs of staff who contribute to their business.





### 4.2.3 SUFFICIENCY OF TRAINING

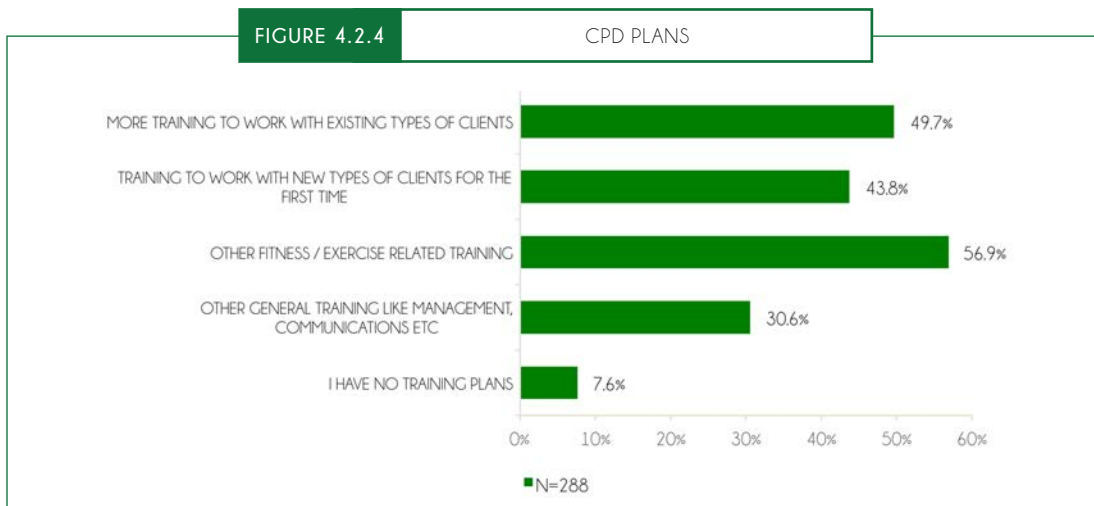
When asked whether they considered that they have been given sufficient training to do their job, 20.1% said they had more training than needed, and 61.0% said they had sufficient training, only 14.2% said they did not feel they had enough training.

This contrasted with responses from fitness managers where 65% of managers said they have to provide additional training to fitness staff to ensure they are work-ready.

Furthermore managers were asked if they feel fitness staff have the right level of knowledge in a range of key areas. Results from this question show that 50.0% of managers who responded to the survey feel that fitness staff lack commercial and business skills, and a further 45.0% of managers felt fitness staff lacked skills knowledge in technology and tracking activity. Finally 40.0% of managers felt nutritional knowledge was lacking in fitness staff.

### 4.2.4 CPD PLANS

In terms of future plans for CPD respondents were asked what type of CPD they plan to take in the following year. Figure 4.2.4 shows that 49.7% of respondents plan to take more training to work with existing types of clients, while 43.8% plan to take training to be able to work with new types of clients. It is interesting to note that 30.6% of respondents plan to take training in more generic topics such as management and communication.



Respondents were then able to insert the topics of the CPD they plan to study in the next 12 months. The following were the responses (not in order of prevalence):

TRAINING THE CLIENT AFTER STROKE

REHABILITATION AFTER BREAST CANCER AND HYSTERECTOMY

SPORTS THERAPY

OBESITY & DIABETES

PRE/POST NATAL EXERCISING

ONLINE COACHING, BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION

FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT SYSTEM

NUTRITION

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

TRX

BUSINESS SKILLS

MANAGEMENT

NEURO-PILATES

PHYSIOTHERAPY AND MASSAGE

INJURY PREVENTION

MOVEMENT SCREENING

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

DANCE

LOWER BACK PAIN

KETTLE BELLS

AGILITY TRAINING

CORRECTIVE EXERCISE

PILATES

BOOT CAMP

YOGA FOR CANCER

MENTAL HEALTH

ANATOMY DISSECTION

OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING

SCOLIOSIS COURSE



Furthermore respondents were asked what CPD courses they would like to see in the UAE which they do not think are currently available, responses were as follows (again not in order of prevalence):

RUNNING CLINICS  
AQUA BIKE  
SPORTS THERAPY  
SHOULDER MASTER COURSE  
NECK PAIN  
FUNCTIONAL ANATOMY  
FUN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
DIGITAL MARKETING  
DISORDERED EATING EDUCATION  
ENDURANCE TRAINING  
KINETICS  
ERGON TECHNIQUE  
ASSISTED STRETCHING  
CLUBS  
SALES AND MARKETING  
OLYMPIC LIFTING  
ATHLETIC CONDITIONING  
FLEXIBILITY TRAINING  
LADIES ONLY TRAINING  
MUAY THAI TRAINING  
FITNESS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT





# CAREER PATHS

# 5

## CAREER PATHS

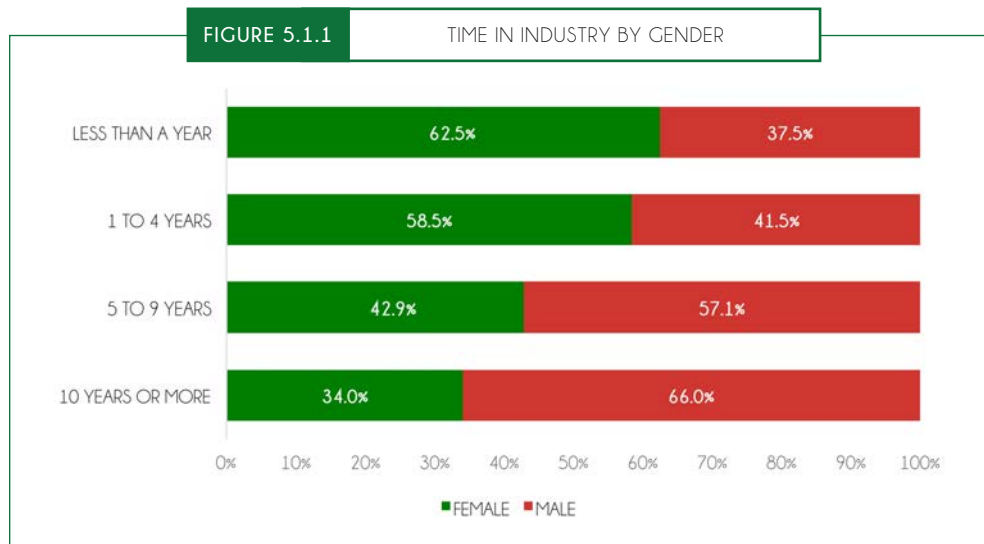
### KEY POINTS

- The survey showed an experienced workforce in the UAE fitness industry.
- Fitness professionals are choosing to stay in the UAE fitness industry for a large part of their career.
- The most common factor for joining the fitness industry was a passion for fitness followed by wanting to help other people and the third most common factor stated was wanting to work with other people.
- The most likely reason for fitness professionals potentially leaving the industry is low pay compared to other industries. This was followed by other personal reasons, lack of work/ new clients, and rising costs.

### 5.1 CAREER IN FITNESS TO DATE

#### 5.1.1 LENGTH OF TIME IN THE INDUSTRY

Overall respondents are quite experienced in the fitness industry with 68.7% having worked more than four years in the industry and 35.9% having worked 10 years or more. Only 6.1% of respondents are in their first year in the fitness industry.

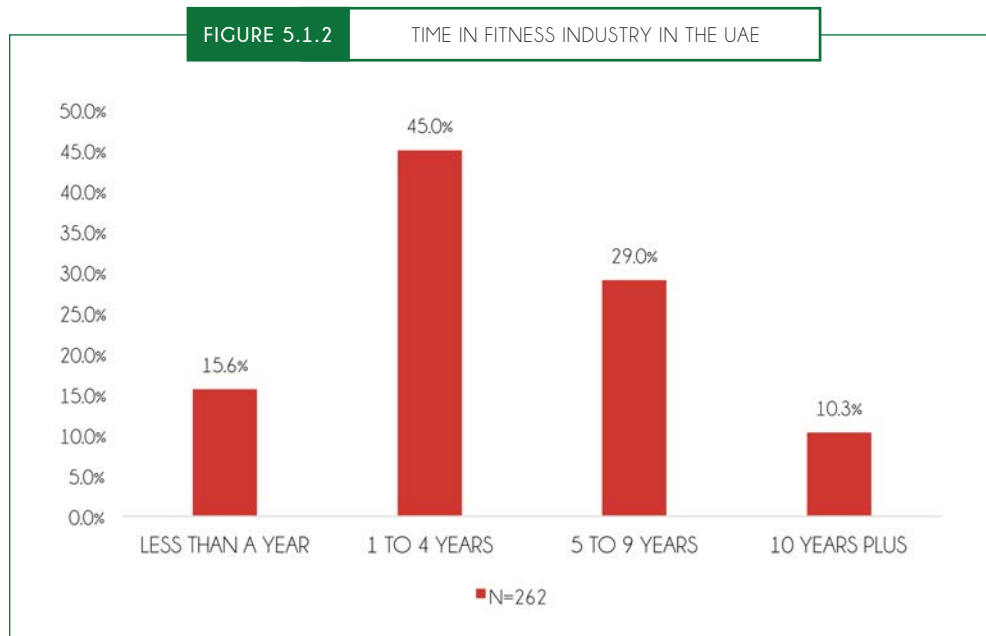


#### 5.1.2 LENGTH OF TIME IN FITNESS IN UAE

As the fitness industry in the UAE has become more established, fitness professionals have committed to work in the UAE for a significant part of their career.

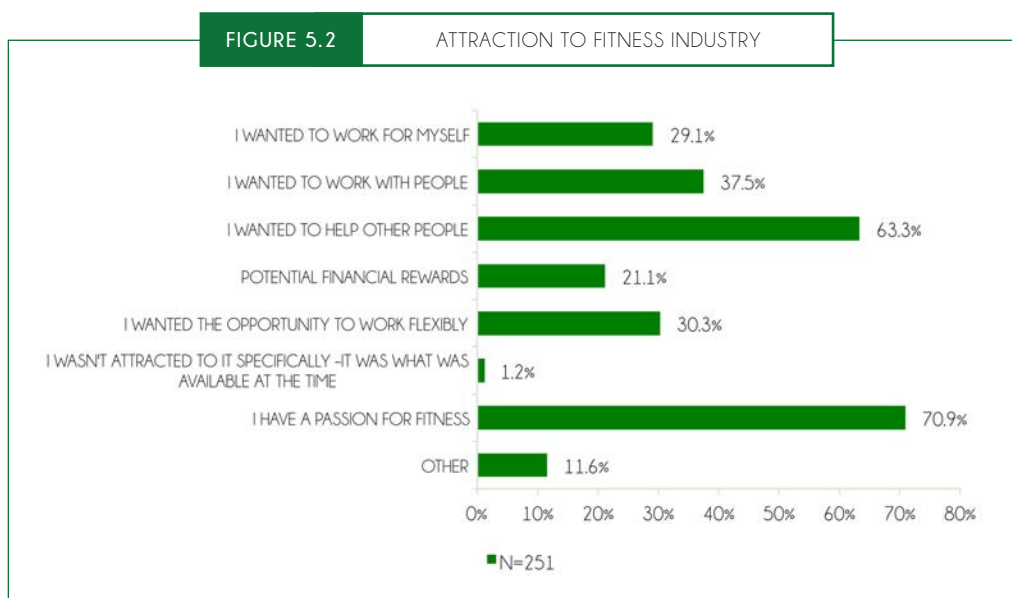


Figure 5.1.2 shows that even in a relatively new industry, 10.3% of respondents have worked in the UAE fitness industry for 10 years or more with a further 29.0% working for 5 - 9 years in the UAE fitness industry.



## 5.2 REASONS FOR JOINING THE INDUSTRY

When discussing the career paths of fitness professionals it is useful to explore what motivated them to work in the fitness industry, it can be seen in figure 5.2 that the most common factor for joining the fitness industry was a passion for fitness (70.9%) followed by wanting to help other people (63.3%) and the third most common factor stated was wanting to work with other people (37.5%). Flexible work and working for myself (self-employment) were also common reasons for joining the fitness industry where these opportunities are on offer (30.3% and 29.1%).



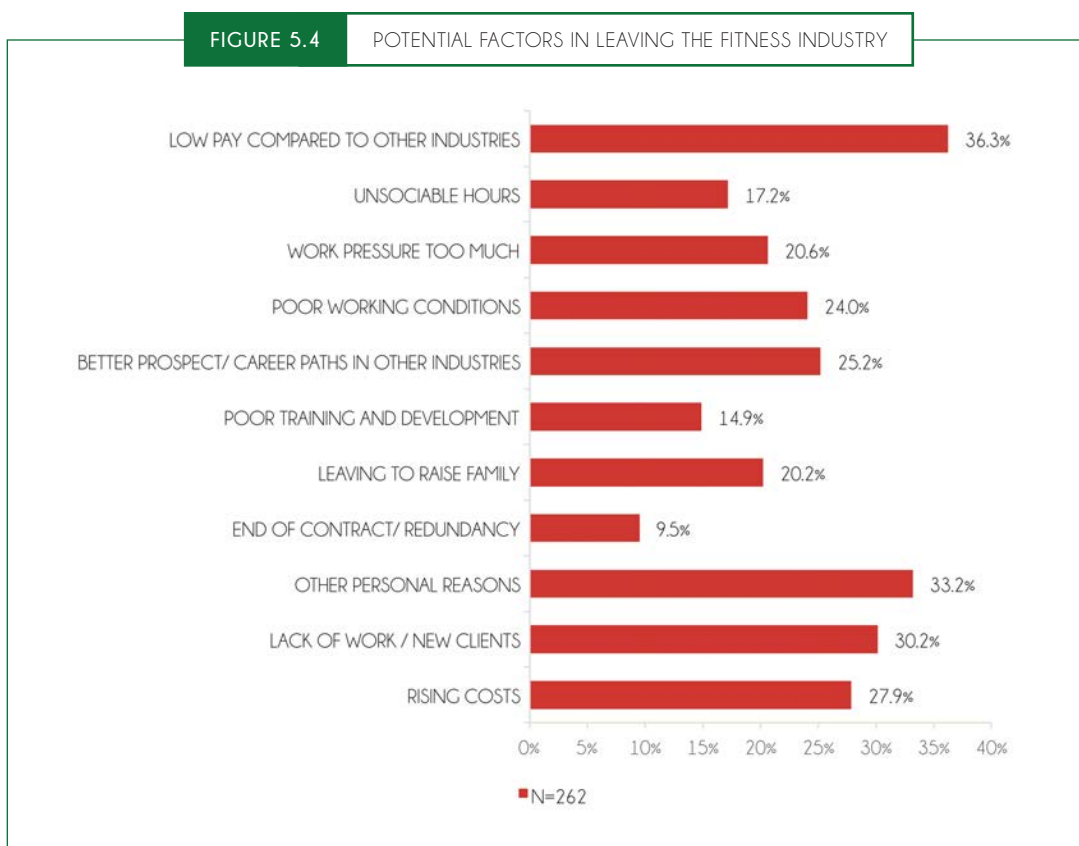
### 5.3 FUTURE PLANS

A high proportion of respondents (61.5%) showed a strong commitment to the fitness industry and stated they expect to continue working in the industry for more than five years.

### 5.4 REASONS FOR LEAVING

For those who may leave the industry we explored their possible reasons for leaving, it can be seen in Figure 5.4 the most likely reason for fitness professionals potentially leaving the industry is low pay compared to other industries (36.3%). This was followed by other personal reasons (33.2%), lack of work/ new clients (30.2%) and rising costs (27.9%).

Employers could consider the reasons in Figure 5.4 when developing a staff retention strategy.





# FITNESS TRENDS



# 6

## FITNESS TRENDS

### KEY POINTS

- A large majority of fitness professionals work with older adults and children, nearly half work with clients with physical disabilities and pre-and post natal clients. This has implications for core fitness qualifications and CPD training.
- A vast majority of respondents also work with people with lower back pain and with obesity/diabetes, also highlighting a training need in these areas.
- The top five ranked fitness trends among respondents were:
  1. High-intensity interval training (HIIT)
  2. Personal training
  3. Group training
  4. Functional fitness training
  5. Bodyweight training

(CHOSEN FROM ACSM WORLDWIDE FITNESS TRENDS SURVEY OPTIONS)

### 6.1 CLIENTS

#### 6.1.1 SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The fitness industry aims to attract all types of client to be physically active, so it is interesting to explore the extent to which fitness professionals work with different types of client.

First we asked respondents if they work with four different special population groups and the results can be seen in Figure 6.1.1a. An overwhelming 81.8% reported working with older adults and around two thirds reported working with children and young people. These results raise questions whether these populations are “special” or just a normal and common part of the fitness clientele.

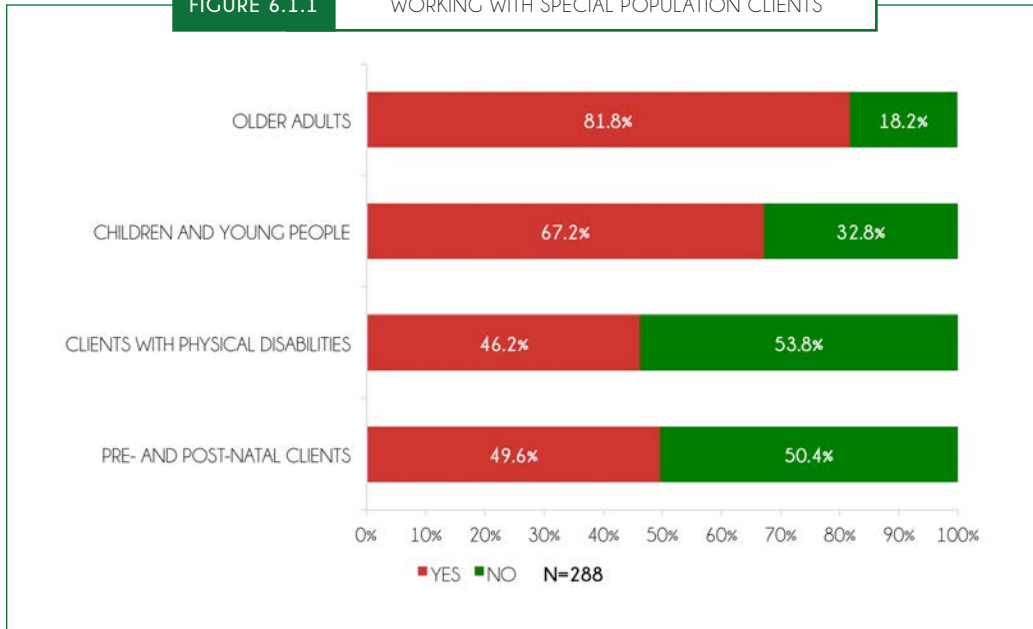
There are also implications for education and training, raising the question whether programming for special populations should be included in core fitness certifications if so many fitness professionals work with these groups.

Just under half of respondents reported working with disabled clients 46.6% and pre and post-natal clients (49.6%).



FIGURE 6.1.1

WORKING WITH SPECIAL POPULATION CLIENTS



### 6.1.2 CLIENTS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS

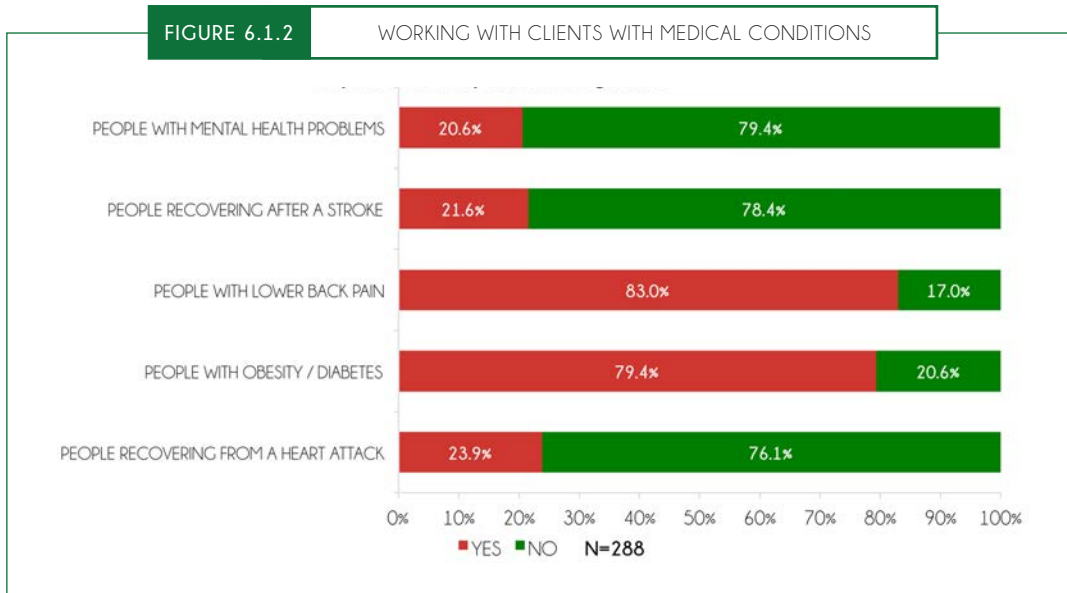
Respondents were also asked to state if they work with clients with certain medical conditions.

It can be seen in Figure 6.1.2 that a large majority work with people with lower back pain (83.0%) and people with obesity/ diabetes (79.4%). This shows the prevalence of these conditions in UAE society and among fitness club members. It is also positive to note that specialist training courses for these conditions are available in the UAE.

Around 20% of respondents work with people with other medical conditions: mental health problems, people recovering from a stroke and people recovering from a heart attack. Although far fewer in number this does also raise a training issue where trainers need to feel suitably knowledgeable to work with clients with complex medical conditions.

FIGURE 6.1.2

WORKING WITH CLIENTS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS



## 6.2 FITNESS TRENDS

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conduct an annual worldwide survey of fitness trends<sup>2</sup>.

We listed the 20 common trends as collated by ACSM and asked respondents to tick the five most important to them. Table 6.2 shows the top ten trends in the UAE fitness industry from the choice of the ACSM worldwide fitness trends. The table also shows the worldwide ranking for the same item from the ACSM worldwide survey.

This study of trends shows wearable technology is perhaps not showing quite the same level of importance in UAE fitness industry yet compared to other countries, while HIIT training tops the ranks among UAE fitness industry respondents.

TABLE 6.2

UAE FITNESS INDUSTRY TRENDS

UAE RANKING	ITEM	WORLDWIDE RANKING
1	High-intensity interval training (HIIT)	3
2	Personal training	8
3	Group training	2
4	Functional fitness training	9
5	Bodyweight training	5
6	Wearable technology	1
7	Yoga	7
8	Outdoor activities	17
9	Small group personal training	19
10	Exercise is Medicine	10

<sup>2</sup> See: [https://journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness/Fulltext/2018/11000/WORLDWIDE\\_SURVEY\\_OF\\_FITNESS\\_TRENDS\\_FOR\\_2019.6.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness/Fulltext/2018/11000/WORLDWIDE_SURVEY_OF_FITNESS_TRENDS_FOR_2019.6.aspx)





# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

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The results of the REPs UAE Working in Fitness Survey 2019 show a diverse, hard-working and flexible workforce serving the fitness and wellness needs of the UAE. The objectives to explore characteristics and tendencies of the UAE fitness workforce and set a baseline for research in future years were met.

Encouragingly, respondents supported regulation of fitness trainers reinforcing the crucial role of REPs UAE.

The hours worked by fitness professionals shows a high level of commitment but also the flexibility in the sector for fitness work to fit in with a range of lifestyles. Respondents reported a significant amount of training and development mostly paid for by themselves.

Most fitness professionals appear to work with a broad range of clients including some who have traditionally been called “special populations” or people with medical conditions, but who now make up a mainstream part of the population who use the services of the fitness industry. The implications for education and training will need to be considered.

Exploring fitness industry trends will allow for the monitoring of new trends as they emerge in future years.

Overall it is felt that the Working in Fitness Survey 2019 was a success and something that can be built on in future years to understand and develop the UAE fitness workforce.

REPs UAE

April 2019





EUROPEAN OBSERVATOIRE  
OF SPORT AND EMPLOYMENT

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