

UK FITNESS REPORT

Gym Statistics 2023/24

What is the state of fitness in the UK and what are our nation's attitudes to our health. Find this and more out, in our latest in-depth report



THE UK FITNESS REPORT

Welcome to the second edition of the annual PureGym UK Fitness Report, where we take an extensive deep dive into the nation's exercise regimes, attitudes towards fitness, and even how healthy we're all currently feeling. This year we've built on our very first 2022/23 fitness report to give an even more thorough and up-to-date view of health and fitness in the UK and in turn, track how these attitudes and behaviours change over time.

To create this report, we've used data from YouGov, Google, independent surveys and our own internal member data. As a low-cost gym, we're aware that our audience may not be representative of the full nation, especially in areas where we do not currently have gyms. By using multiple data sources, we can see the bigger picture across the UK and provide an accurate benchmark of health and fitness.

In addition to the insights from the sources mentioned above, the report also comes complete with expert opinion on what this all means, as well as advice for anyone aiming to make 2024 a year of better health.



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SUMMARY

The UK Fitness Report was first created to build an understanding of the nation's relationship with health and fitness, and with each new edition we hope to further develop this understanding and track how this relationship changes over time.

What hasn't changed since last year is how we feel about our own health, with 66% of the population still feeling that they don't look after their health as much as they should (a change of just +1% from last year). Meanwhile, almost a quarter (23%) of the population still do not consider themselves to be healthy from any point of view - exactly the same as last year. A cause for concern however, is for 35-44 year olds the numbers are up, with 5% more (now 29%) of this age group stating that they don't feel healthy at all, compared to how they felt just one year ago.

Coinciding further with last year's report, our 2023/24 findings again cement the fact that there are multiple internal and external barriers when it comes to all feeling healthy or being able to look after our own health more. With a cost-of-living crisis still gripping the nation, the financial side of going to the gym was revealed as the primary reason behind 54% of people not purchasing gym memberships. Modern working life also has a clear impact; two in five people (41%) say they are simply too tired after work to exercise, while a third (34%) say their job doesn't leave them enough time to exercise.

Couple that with uncertainty around what constitutes a 'healthy lifestyle' - our new report showing that one in five people don't know whether their diet is healthy or not - there's no wonder the nation feels there is some room for improvement.

There are plenty of positives to come out of our research, however. For example, anyone that does take part in physical exercise is doing so regularly, with 87% exercising at least once per week. The benefits are clear to see too, with a highlight being that more than 1 in 3 (36%)



people that exercise, state that they have seen an improvement in their mental health, mood, anxiety and stress levels, as well as less feelings of depression. Throughout this new report, Danny Gray, the Founder of our mental health partner JAAQ, gives his thoughts on these findings, as well as advice for anyone looking to make a positive change when it comes to their health-related habits.

Perhaps most encouraging of all, is that despite the cost-of-living crisis, our research reveals that 24% of the population has actually increased their spending on exercise within the last year, with many citing that this increased spend is down to health and fitness becoming a greater passion of theirs. This is something that is echoed by UK gym members having grown by 2% since last year, with 16% of the population now currently gym members. Beyond this, a further 16% of people have stated that they plan on joining the gym in 2024. While we know from last year's report that intentions differ from reality, it's great to see people prioritising their health and fitness.

If one thing throughout our new report is apparent, it's that good health is becoming ever more important and that many have health-based goals in mind. It's just on us and others within the fitness space to empower people to overcome the barriers that have largely stayed unchanged over a 12 month period, and join the millions already exercising their way to a healthier life – as the benefits for overall wellbeing take centre stage.

Read on for the full insight, year-on-year comparisons and to hear commentary from some of our own personal trainers and partners such as JAAQ and the British Heart Foundation.



HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OUR HEALTH IN 2023/24

Key findings:

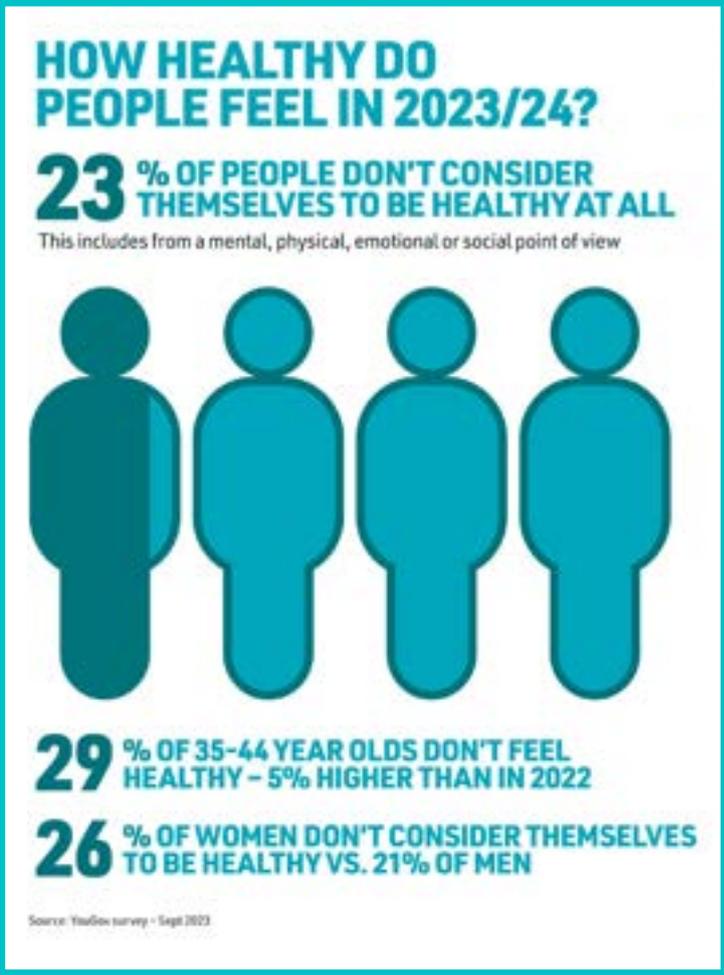
- 66% of people in the UK say they don't look after their health as much as they should (+1% since last year)
- 23% of the UK population currently do not consider themselves to be healthy from any point of view (physically, mentally, emotionally or socially)
- 29% of 35-44-year-olds don't feel healthy from any point of view (up 5% since 2022)
- Women are more likely to consider themselves as being unhealthy (26%) vs men (21%)
- Around one in ten people aged 16-24 think that having a six pack or a thigh gap is a good benchmark for health
- A quarter of the population (26%) increase the frequency that they exercise in the run up to a holiday
- Almost a third of people (30%) are most likely to reduce, or stop their exercise in the run up to Christmas

Last year, our research showed that living through a pandemic impacted attitudes towards our own health, with 79% of the population considering their health more of a priority than it had been pre-pandemic.



However, a year later it seems little has changed with our latest research revealing that two thirds of the population (66%) still don't feel that they look after their health as much they should (an increase of 1% on last year's numbers).

Further to this, almost a quarter (23%) admitted that they still don't consider themselves to be healthy from any point of view (the same amount as our findings showed at the end of 2022). What's more, for people aged between 35-44 in the UK at present this picture is even more of a concern, with nearly 1 in 3 (29%) saying they don't feel healthy at all, which is a notable increase of 5% when compared to last year's results.



So, what's going on - why do so many people feel unhealthy if health was such a priority? While we know it can take more than 12 months to see any major changes in how the nation feels about their health, this felt like a great opportunity to learn what being 'healthy' actually means to us and from there, how our jobs, age, gender and even the internet, could be impacting this...



What Is A Healthy Lifestyle?

To start, we wanted to identify what people think a healthy lifestyle entails, as this would help us to understand what people mean when they say they are or aren't unhealthy, and why people may feel they aren't doing enough to prioritise their health. To do this, we asked people what they considered as a benchmark for a 'healthy lifestyle':

Statement	% that consider this to be a good benchmark of 'being healthy'
Eating fruit and veg every day	52%
Feeling happy	48%
Drinking a lot of water each day	47%
Being able to walk up the stairs without getting out of breath	45%
Sleeping for 8 hours each night	44%
Not being stressed	42%
Not eating 'junk food' e.g., chocolates, sweets or fries	32%
Being able to get up from a seated position with ease	32%
Having a 'slim' build	17%
Getting out of bed early	17%
Tracking your food	16%
Having muscles	12%
Being able to run five kilometres without stopping	12%
Being skilled at sports	8%
Having a 'six pack'	6%
Having a 'thigh gap'	6%



What Do Most People Consider To Be A Healthy Lifestyle?

Eating fruit and vegetables every day was the metric most considered to be the ultimate benchmark of a healthy lifestyle with over half of the population agreeing with this. While this is great to see, research from the Health and Food Supplements Information Service (HSIS) earlier this year revealed that 86% of people don't know how much fruit and veg they should be consuming. Not knowing what to aim for could be one of the reasons people do not feel they are healthy enough. We've got more on diet and nutrition later in the report, but for now, how much fruit and veg should we be aiming for?

Sunny Deo, PT at PureGym Leicester Walnut Street weighs in:

"Studies have continually provided evidence that happiness and mental health is improved, and wellbeing peaks, at 7 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that choosing to consume fruit and vegetables rather than processed foods will benefit an individual in the long run by reducing risk of disease and leading to overall better health."

It's promising to see that almost half of the population view 'feeling happy' (48%) and 'not being stressed' (42%) as markers of good health, as mental health is so entwined with our overall wellbeing.

With exercising having repeatedly been shown to reduce stress levels and improve our mental health, we asked Danny Gray, the Founder and CEO of our mental health partner JAAQ, to discuss the close link between physical and mental health, and why this is so important:





Are Our Perceptions Of A Healthy Lifestyle Correct?

There are several different things that can be considered 'healthy', and these will change from person to person. Different lifestyles and abilities mean that different individuals will not all have the same capability in each area of health; for example, new parents who are often unable to get the recommended amount of sleep, or people who work long hours and cannot dedicate as much time to exercising. As not everyone can hit the same levels of 'health', it is difficult to accurately benchmark.

Sunny echoes this:

"Of course, the actual benchmark of good health can vary depending on an individual's fitness goals and levels, with certain metrics more beneficial than others. When looking at fitness for example, according to recent journal articles and well-known health organisations such as the British Heart Foundation, the best metrics are your VO2 max, daily step count, quality of sleep, heart rate and calorie intake.

"Each component is essential for overall health, and lacking in one could be detrimental and/or lead to other components being affected. But it is important to remember that being healthy, or fit, can be relative for each person. Always consider your own ability levels, and any underlying conditions that can prevent you from pushing yourself to the 'guidelines' recommended for most adults."



What Does This All Mean?

- **VO2 Max** – the higher your VO2 max is, the better your physical fitness is. You can work out your VO2 max using online calculators, you just need to know your maximum heart rate and your resting heart rate. The higher yours is, the lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.
- **Daily Step Count** – The CDC recommends 10,000 steps daily, while the NHS suggests that even a brisk 10-minute walk can have multiple health benefits.
- **Sleep** – Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night, according to the NHS. Affecting many areas of our health, a lack of sleep has been proven to increase the risk of obesity, heart disease and infection.
- **Resting Heart Rate** – According to the British Heart Foundation, a normal adult heart rate is between 60 and 100 bpm while resting. This does vary for everyone, and is impacted by your lifestyle, such as whether you smoke, exercise or how much alcohol you drink. A lower resting heart rate is generally an indicator of good health.
- **Calorie Intake** – In general the recommended daily calorie intake according to the NHS is 2,000 calories per day for women and 2,500 for men. Read on for more in-depth insight into diet and nutrition!

What Dangerous Misconceptions Are There Around Our Health?

While the results are largely positive overall, with the nation having a holistic view of health that encompasses factors like sleep and nutrition, there are some more worrying metrics being benchmarked as health. Our research revealed that 12% of those aged 16-24 view having a six pack as a benchmark of good health, with 9% thinking the same about having a 'thigh gap'.

It's likely that social media and the online fitness industry has played its part in these views, and we look more closely at the impact of these in more detail later in the report. However, these kinds of



aesthetic metrics are not achievable for all bodies, and using them as the definition of a 'healthy lifestyle' is certainly worrying, as **Sunny** explores:

“While it is possible for some people to achieve a six pack or thigh gap as part of a healthy lifestyle, it’s not feasible for everyone to attain these. But with the emergence of social media and fitness influencers with large online platforms, many who have obtained or maintained these features unnaturally, younger audiences are being exposed to these athletic bodies and may believe that they must achieve them at any cost. Without the correct knowledge, this can lead to undereating, over training, and even misusing enhancements, all at a time when their bodies are still developing.”

“Often, achieving six packs and thigh gaps depend heavily on bone structure and genetics, and alone they are not a measure of good health, especially when the pursuit of these can override actual healthy habits such as getting adequate food and allowing enough rest.”

In summary, a lot of us have the right idea when it comes to defining whether they are healthy or not, but this isn't the case for everyone. This is useful to understand and highlights the need for industry leaders like ourselves to continue to create resources on how to improve health and wellbeing.

If one thing is for sure, it's that eating fruit and vegetables and ensuring you exercise regularly is always a good place to start, which takes us on nicely to the next focus of our report...



THE CURRENT STATE OF FITNESS IN THE UK

Key findings:

- 87% of people who do exercise, do so at least once per week
 - Londoners exercise the most of any region (55%)
- A third (33%) of those who work out do so 2 to 3 times per week, with 27% working out 4 to 6 times per week
- Summer is the most popular time of the year for exercise, with 43% of people exercising in the summer
 - Winter sees the lowest levels of physical activity, with three quarters (74%) of people not exercising during the winter months
- More than half of the UK population (55%) say they don't exercise
- People are most likely to reduce, or stop, their exercise in the run up to Christmas, compared with any other life event

Regular physical activity has been widely documented for years as being a pivotal part of what a healthy lifestyle looks like, with the British Heart Foundation stating that it's:

"beneficial for your health and regular exercise can reduce the risk of heart and circulatory diseases by up to 35%. It can also help to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol, both of which are risk factors for heart attack, stroke and vascular dementia. As well as supporting heart health, exercise can boost energy, improve sleep, enhance mental health and wellbeing and reduce feelings of stress."

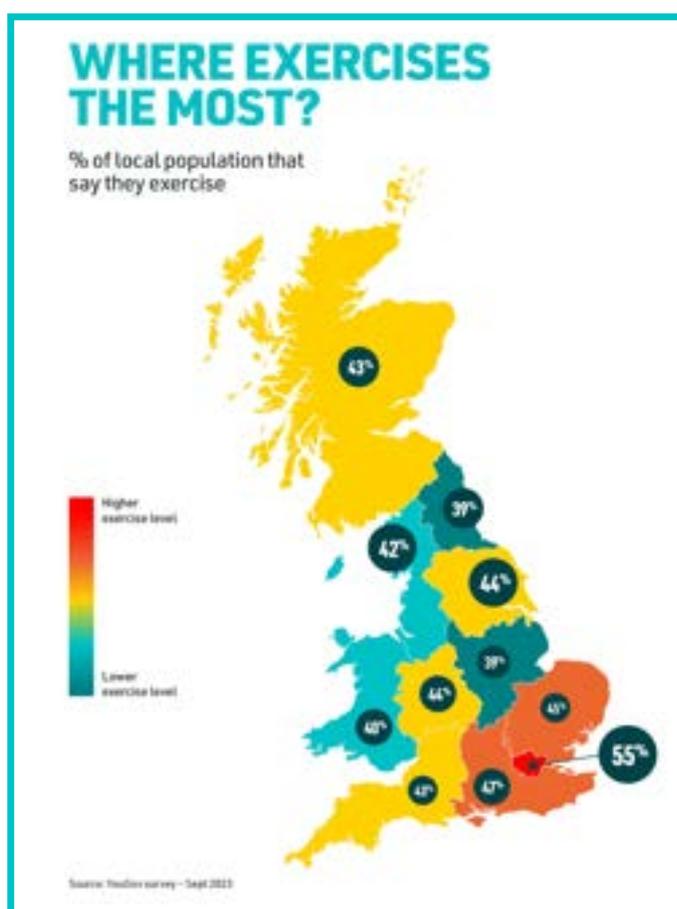


We know that most of the nation is keen to feel healthier than they currently do – is physical activity an area that needs to be worked on?

While the results are promising in places, there's certainly room for improvement as our research showed over half of people in the UK (55%) admitted they don't exercise at all. Of those that do, however, the picture is brighter, with almost nine in ten of these individuals exercising at least once a week, enough to help reduce your risk of heart disease or stroke.

Where In Britain Exercises The Most?

With the national average for exercise sitting at 45%, there's three regions that hit this mark or surpass it. The East of England (45%) and the South East (47%) are exactly at or just above the national average,



while London stands tall as the exercise capital of Great Britain. An impressive 55% of Londoners say they exercise, something that shines through in the number of London gyms, sports clubs and specialist activity centres available in each borough of the ever-growing city.

All other regions in the UK, including Scotland (43%) and Wales (40%) come in under the national average. The East Midlands sees the lowest levels of exercise, with just two in five (39%) in the region exercising. Coincidentally, the East Midlands is

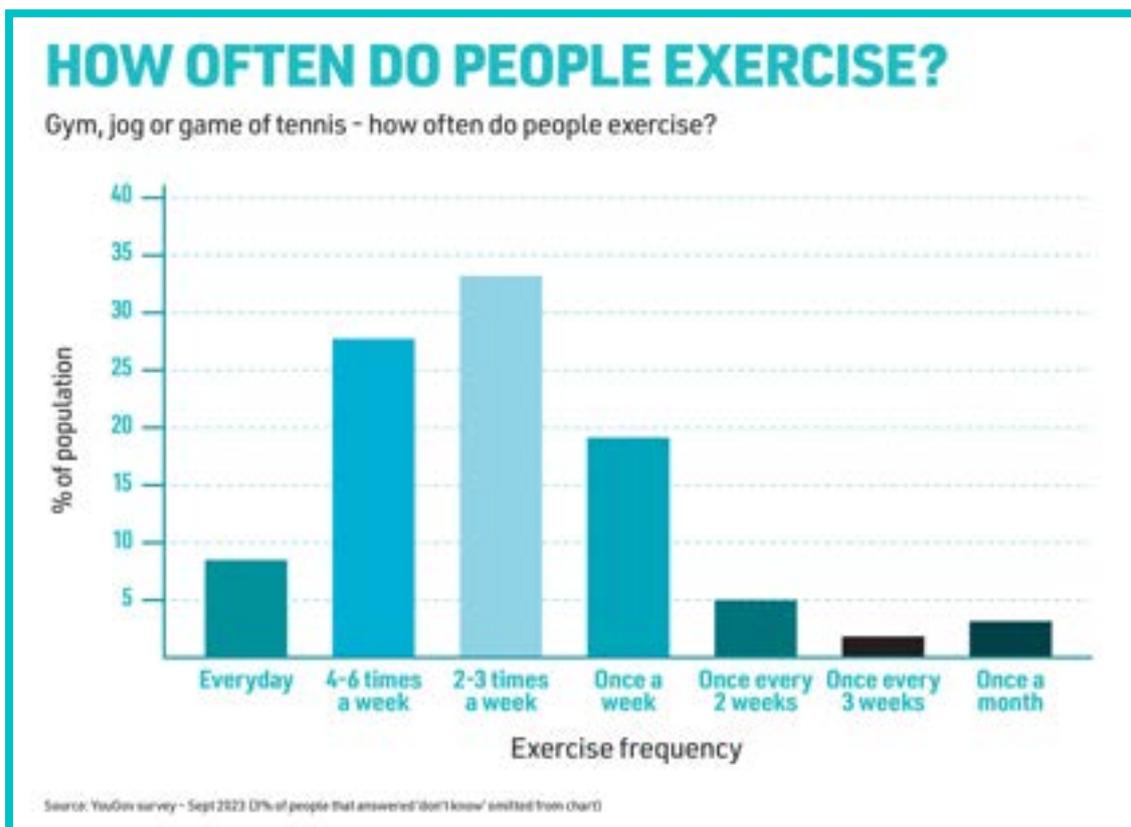
also the region with the highest number of people discontinuing their gym memberships, stating that the main reason behind this is the cost. There's more on the cost-of-living and fitness later in the report.



How Often Do People Exercise?

It's promising to see that the majority of people (33%) that exercise are doing so 2 to 3 times per week, with more regular exercise being the route to better results, and ultimately, better health. A further 27% are exercising 4 to 6 times every week, but when we look at this year's findings versus the benchmarks set in our first fitness report in 2022, slightly less people are exercising every day. That number has dropped from 14% exercising every day in 2022, to 8% in 2023. This is by no means a bad thing though, with rest days essential in any fitness regime.

When looking at exercise frequency across different age groups, it's great to see people later in their lives exercising so regularly, with an average of 74% of people aged over 55 who exercise, doing so two or more times every week! A number that actually drops to 60% for 18 to 24-year-olds, with busy studies, social lives and the first steps into the working world no doubt having an impact.



Age Groups and How Often They Exercise

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Every day	6%	7%	11%	6%	10%	7%
4-5 times per week	24%	32%	28%	28%	25%	19%
2-3 times per week	30%	28%	25%	40%	39%	47%
Once a week	21%	18%	25%	15%	19%	16%
Once every two weeks	5%	9%	5%	4%	3%	2%
Once every three weeks	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Once a month	4%	3%	3%	4%	1%	1%

While it's great to see so many people exercising multiple times a week, how often should we be exercising? For many people, exercising every day isn't always feasible due to work, commuting, family, and other commitments.

We strongly believe in doing what you can, and that something is better than nothing, but for overall health the NHS recommends doing strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups at least twice a week, doing at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity and reducing the time you spend lying or sitting down.

How you choose to spread this over the course of a week is up to you, and finding ways that work for you to incorporate as much physical activity into your lifestyle as possible is the most important thing. If you can commit to regular training, remember all training plans should ideally have at least one rest day per week, as exercising every day has the potential to have adverse effects such as injury and burnout.





How Do The Seasons Affect How We Exercise?

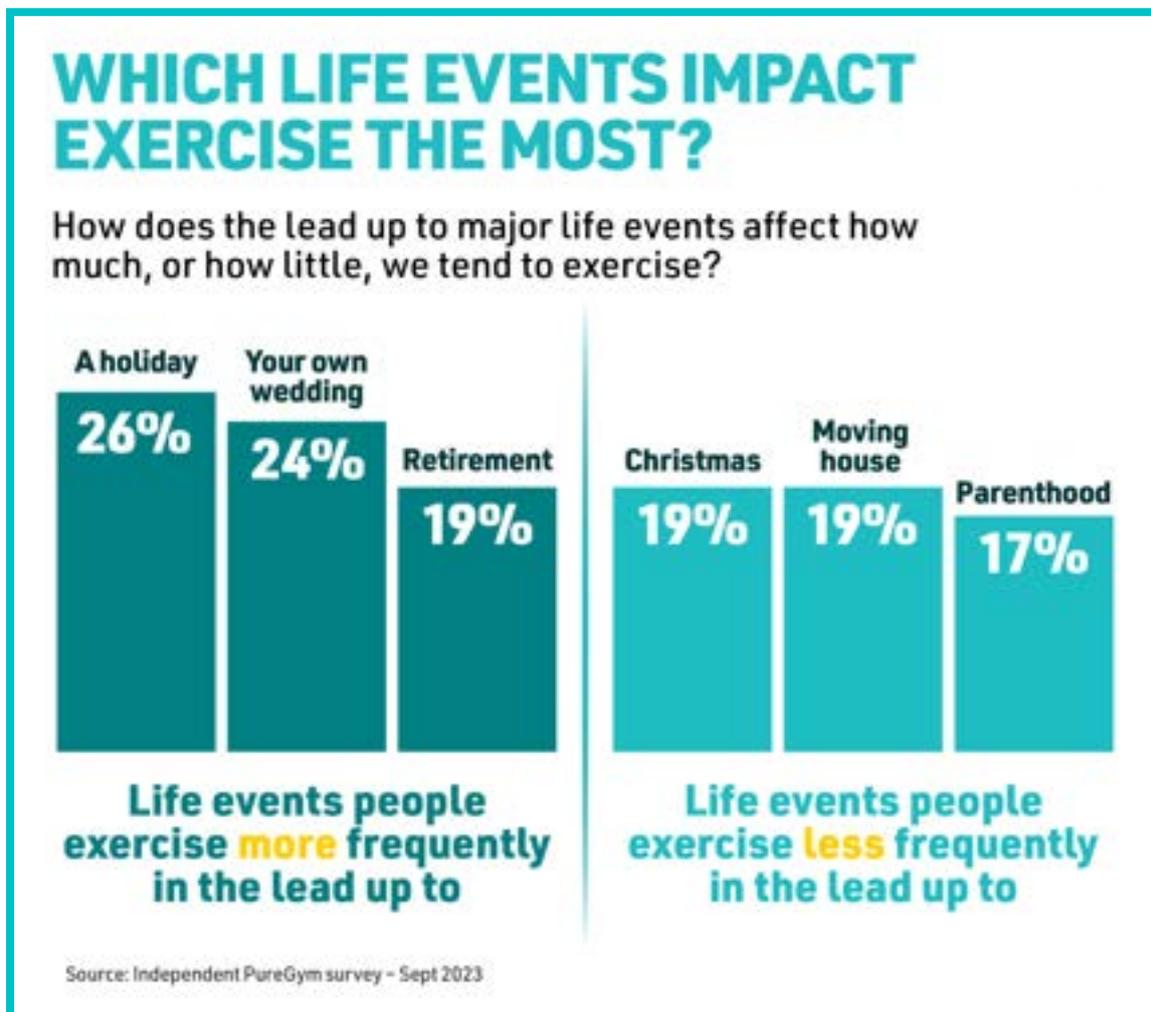
As with most things, there's a clear seasonality when it comes to exercise. As a gym, we already know that gym usage spikes at certain points throughout the year (more on that shortly) but our research shows that the weather impacts all forms of exercise.

Looking across various forms of exercise, such as working out, playing sports, or simply going for a walk, most people will exercise more during the summer months. While an average of 43% of people exercise during the summer, this drops to 31% in the autumn before hitting the lowest levels of exercise in the winter (26%). As you would expect, things start to pick up again in the spring, with 39% of people exercising when the weather starts to warm up.



What Life Events Affect How Often We Exercise?

Outside of the seasons, what other life events trigger an increase or decrease in exercise levels? Interestingly, people are slightly more likely to increase the frequency of their workouts for a holiday (26%), than their own wedding (24%). And although it's not compulsory to 'get in shape' for either of these events, this does tally with the idea that many of us tend to consider exercising more ahead of summer holidays and weddings where we want to look our best.



Conversely, the research reveals that Christmas has the opposite effect, tallying up with exercise levels through the winter seeing a general decrease. Almost a third (30%) of people reduce or stop physical activity during the festive season, along with many who also do when moving house or when having a child.



WHY ARE PEOPLE EXERCISING IN 2023/24?

Key findings:

- For those who work out, their main goal is to improve their overall health, with almost half (48%) aiming for this
- An increase in energy is the main benefit that people have seen from exercising (36%)
- 31% of people feel exercise has improved their mood, while 29% feel it has helped them to feel less stressed
- Women are significantly more likely to exercise to lose weight (47%) than men (32%)

There are many ways to keep yourself motivated to exercise consistently, but one thing that many people agree on is setting goals and tracking your progress. As part of our research, we asked what goals are motivating those who regularly exercise.

For almost half of all individuals who regularly workout, the main goal they all share is to improve their overall health (48%). The other primary goals that all these people also share are to lose weight (39%), improve mental health (36%) and to generally feel happier with their appearance (35%).

Maureen Talbot, Head of Clinical Support at the British Heart Foundation commented on how pleased she was to see these new findings:



“It’s great to see PureGym’s survey reveal that the top reason people said they go to the gym is to get or stay healthy. It’s vital that we help the public to understand just how fantastic exercise is for overall health. At the BHF, we believe that exercise should be a combination of aerobic, resistance, flexibility and balance activities for well-rounded health. Recovery days are also key to help improve fitness and to keep up the level of enjoyment.”

How Does This Differ Between Men And Women?

Women are far more likely to exercise to lose weight than men, with almost half of all women (46%) saying this compared to just a third of men (32%). They’re also more likely to use exercise to support their mental health (41% vs 32%).

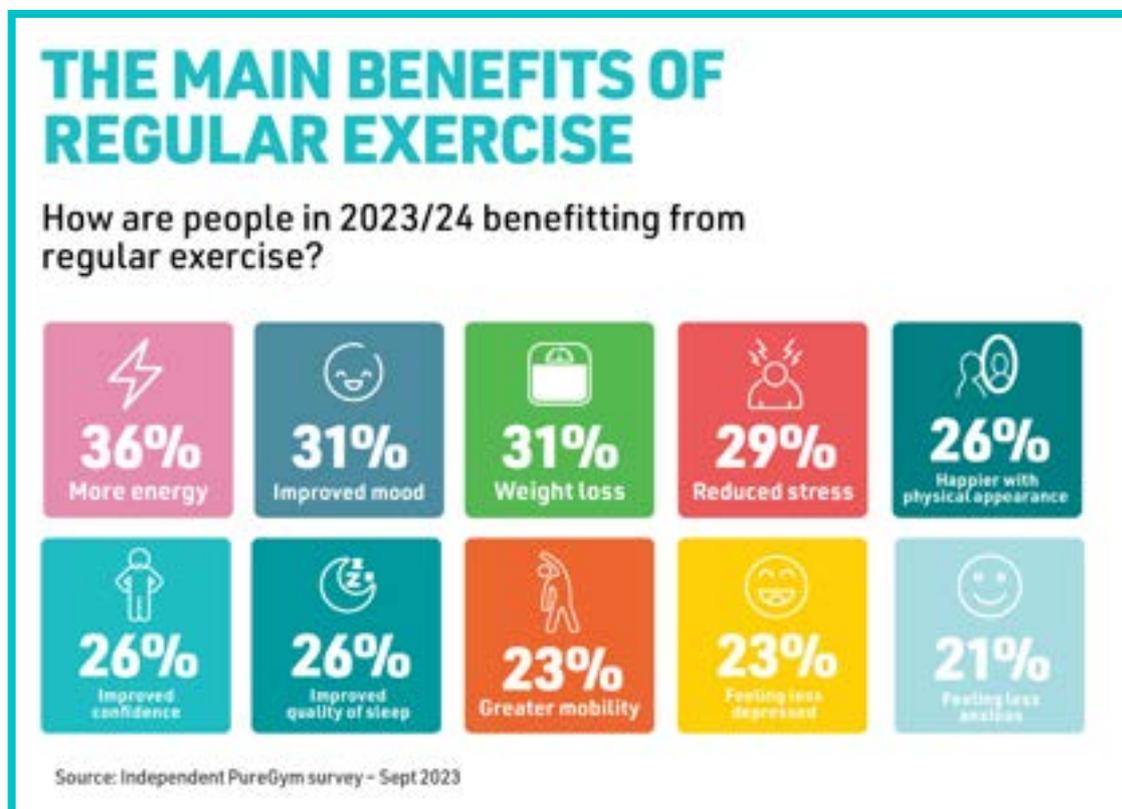
Overall, women seem to prioritise goals relating to improving their overall health (54% of women vs. 42% of men), their appearance (43% of women vs. 29% of men) and confidence (36% of women vs. 28% of men) far more than men, who in turn prioritise building muscle (22% of men vs. 19% of women), improving their self-defence (12% of men vs. 10% of women) and getting better at a sport (11% of men vs. 8% of women).



What Benefits Do People See From Exercising?

Having specific goals can do wonders for your motivation when starting or restarting a fitness journey, but for many, the benefits of exercising is what keeps them going. For regular exercisers, the main benefit people have seen from exercising is an increase in energy, which a huge 36% of people have experienced.

Improvements in mental health are also among the top benefits stated, with improved mood (31%), less stress (29%), less feelings of depression (23%) and less anxiety (21%) are all included in the top 10 benefits that people most commonly experience when exercising regularly.



We spoke to the **experts at Mental Health UK**, to reveal exactly what it is about exercise that is so beneficial for our brains:

“Exercise can be a brilliantly effective tool in looking after both our physical and mental health. There is much research to suggest that it can be used to treat common mental health problems, such as low mood and anxiety, and it is recommended by the National Institute



of Clinical Excellence as a treatment for depression. Exercise can increase the levels of serotonin and dopamine in our brain, which positively impacts our mood and mental wellbeing. There can also be other positive mental health benefits attached to exercise, such as increasing social connections, spending more time in nature, and improving concentration levels.

For many of us experiencing struggles with our mental health, starting exercise can feel daunting. Many of us will want to wait until we feel motivated and 'ready' to start, but we could wait forever for that day! A good way to think about it is to see physical activity as an 'outside-in' approach, rather than waiting for our mood to feel up for exercise. In actual fact, by doing it, exercise often lifts our mood. Setting a realistic and very achievable goal is a good place to start, even if it feels like a silly-easy first goal; once we've achieved it, the next step will always feel much easier."

Danny Gray from JAAQ, a new mental health platform, echoes this:

"Even if you're starting to think about exercise, you're on the right journey. Mental health is a journey, and it might be a short or a long one, or even a quick or a slow one. As long as you're on the journey that's all that matters."



WHY AREN'T PEOPLE EXERCISING IN 2023/24?

Key findings:

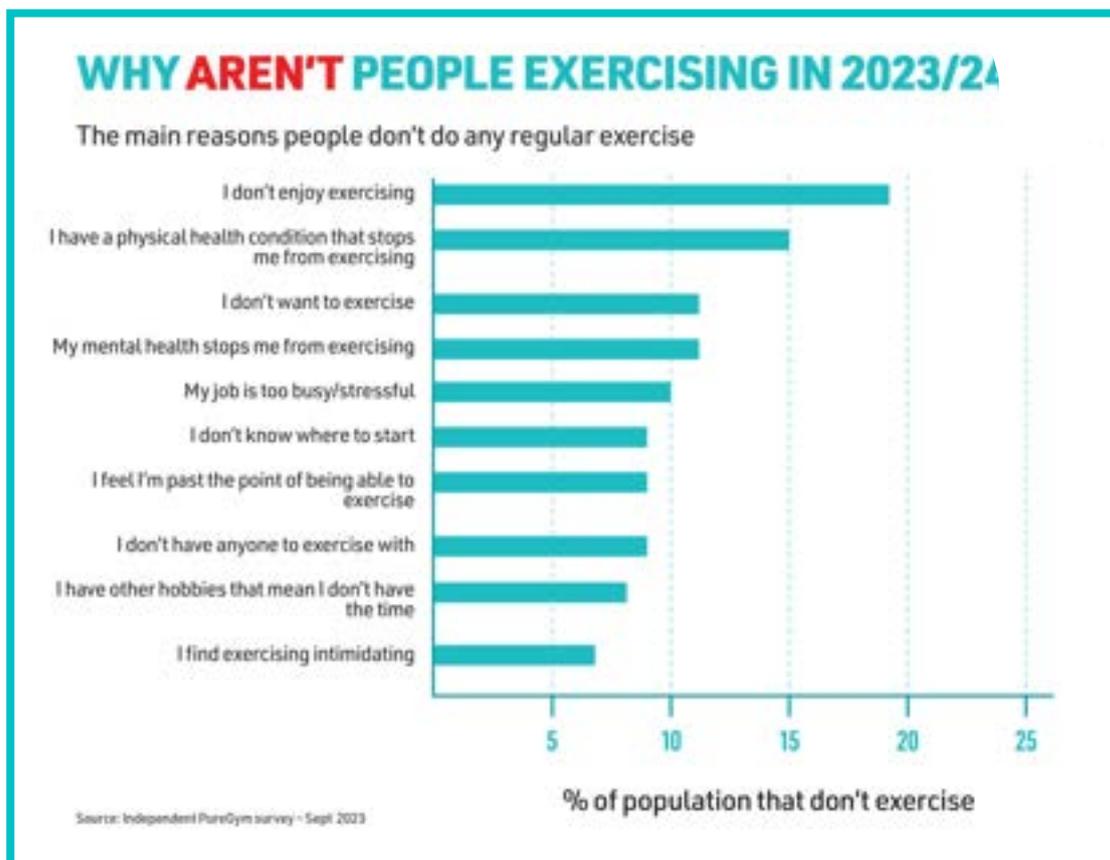
- One in five people (21%) find the gym intimidating
- 19% of people who don't exercise say it's because they dislike exercise
- 1 in 10 people (11%) feel that their mental health stops them from exercising
- Women are more likely to experience 'gymtimidation' (25%) than men (16%)

While we know there's a whole host of reasons to, and benefits from, exercising, we must appreciate that there's many reasons stopping people from doing so as understanding the barriers to exercising is key to removing them.

First and foremost, is an outright dislike of exercise itself, with 19% of the population currently feeling this way about working out, playing sports or potentially, a regular walk. This is followed by having a health condition that prevents exercise (15%), and simply not wanting to (11%), which can again hint towards a dislike of exercising.

While it's not easy to change attitudes like these towards exercise, it reinforces the idea that the way forward to a healthier nation is for everyone to find ways of keeping active that work for them. For those who dislike exercise or don't want to, it's possible they have preconceived ideas of what exercise must be.





Laura Melia, PT and General Manager at PureGym Manchester says there are three key ways anyone can help themselves to start enjoying exercise: going at your own pace, avoiding the comparison game and finding a form of movement you enjoy:

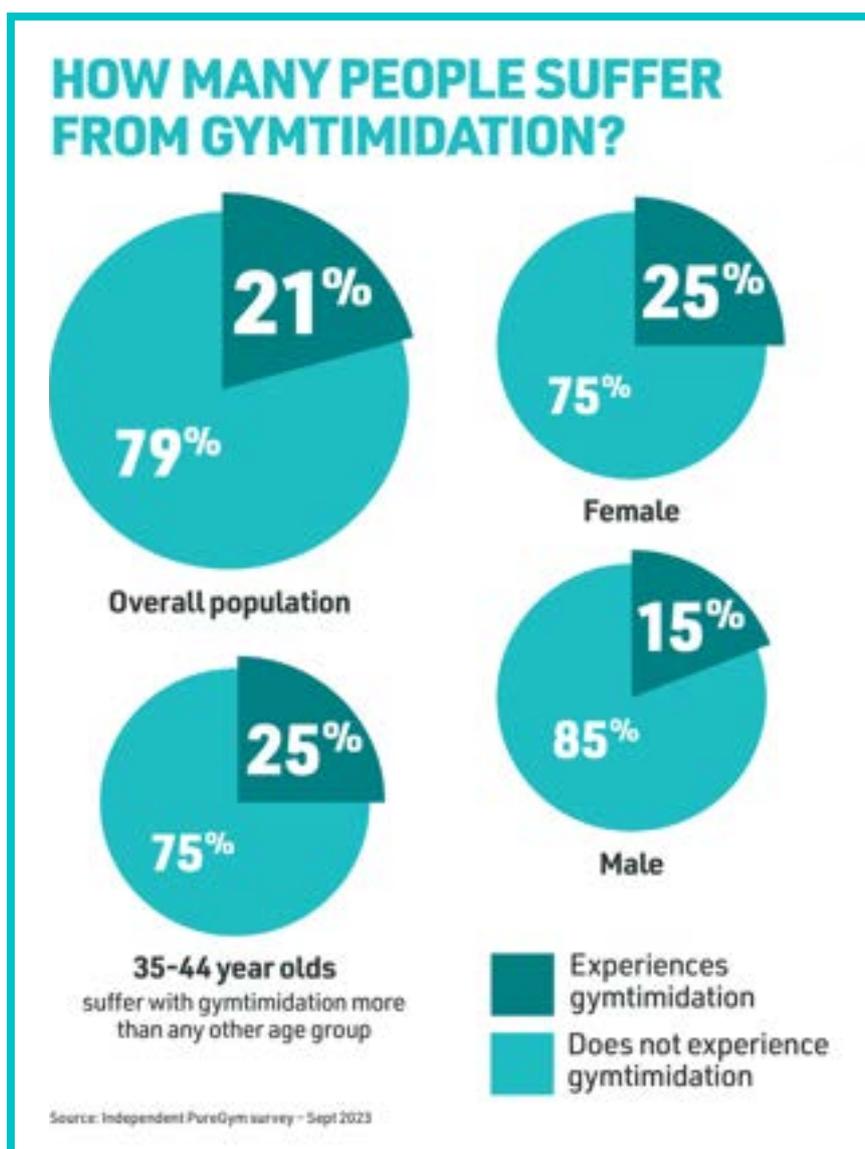
“Everyone is at a different stage of their fitness journey, with different levels of strength and mobility, and what works for one person might be too much or too little for another. Don’t feel pressured to match anyone’s workouts and avoid comparing progress with other people. Instead, focus on how you feel. Spending an hour in the gym isn’t the only form of movement we can do. Going for a nice long walk, playing a sport with the kids or dancing is also a great way to keep your body moving”.



Are People Scared Of The Gym?

As the gym is where a lot of people tend to get their exercise in, we also wanted to delve deeper into the topic of 'gymtimidation'. One in five people admit to experiencing this phenomenon, which leaves people too nervous to step foot onto the gym floor, or too intimidated to use the entirety of the gym. It also unfortunately prevents more women than men from accessing gyms too, with a quarter (25%) of women that rarely or never go to the gym saying that it's due to gymtimidation, compared to a smaller 16% of men.

This fear does vary between age groups too, with a quarter of those aged 35-44 (25%) finding the gym intimidating – the most of any age range.



With our gyms all about fun, inclusion and reaching your goals in a safe space and at your own pace, we want to help support people suffering from a lack of in-gym confidence. We've previously worked with **Dr Margee Kerr**, an expert in fear, to help provide actionable tips for overcoming gym-fear, and we've also spoken to **PureGym Leeds PT Kat Crisp**, to get top tips from both on beating gymtimidation once and for all.

1. Take a tour of the gym before you start

Helping yourself to visualise your environment is the first step to beating gymtimidation, as Kat explains:

"Whether you're new, or are confident in your training but have moved gyms, it can feel intimidating not knowing where any of the kit is, as every gym is set out differently and uses different equipment. Taking a tour of the gym before you start, either through an induction or simply walking around, can help alleviate nerves."

2. Acknowledge your fears but remind yourself that you are in control

Dr. Kerr explains that to tackle fear, you should acknowledge that it's there in the first place:

"Take the time to think about what exactly makes you nervous about going to the gym. Is it not knowing how to use the equipment? Judgement from others? A fear that maybe you won't be as strong as you want to be, or perhaps as strong as you used to be? After each fear you think of, ask yourself why it scares you, and if it is worth giving up all you stand to gain".

Crucially, pairing this acknowledgment with reminders that you're in control of the experience can be a game changer. Dr Kerr adds:

"Studies show a sense of agency, or control, makes scary events easier to tolerate and overcome. So, acknowledge and frequently remind yourself that you are the one choosing to take on this fear inducing challenge. Your doctor, spouse, family member, coach, etc. didn't choose this, YOU did".



3. Wear comfortable clothing

This sounds simple, but feeling comfortable in what you wear can go an extremely long way, as Kat explains:

“Social media can make us believe that everyone is training in just a sports bra and the tightest, shortest shorts. If the idea of donning this kind of gear makes you feel uncomfortable, you are not alone. You do not need to be wearing a certain brand of clothing to fit in at the gym; if wearing something baggy makes you feel confident then wear that!”

4. Accept you can't do everything and go at your own pace

In addition to normalising sweating, accepting what you can and can't do early on can really help to minimise the intimidation, as Dr. Kerr explains:

“We have to accept what we are capable of right now, and for many that's a hard truth to confront. It's okay that you don't know how to work every machine, you can learn.”

Kat also adds:

“Remember that training is a skill that needs to be learnt, and everyone in the gym was once a beginner too. Don't compare the beginning of your journey with the middle of someone else's: it's okay to be a beginner!”

5. Avoid peak hours

Visiting the gym for the first time when it's at its busiest can worsen any feelings of intimidation you have. Avoiding these peaks and visiting when the gym is quiet allows you to start in a more relaxed environment and have more space to explore, says PureGym PT Kat. We reveal the quietest and busiest times at the gym later in the report.

It's common for people to feel a lack of confidence around the gym because they don't know where to start or what to do first. If this is you, try downloading the PureGym app to help with planning and goal setting, as it offers hundreds of free workout ideas.



2023/24 GYM USAGE

Key findings:

- 16% of people in the UK are currently a member of a gym (up 2% year-on-year)
- A further 16% are planning to join a gym in the next calendar year, which is down 3% compared to last year
 - A quarter of the UK population choose to only workout at home
- More than three quarters (82%) of those aged 55+ do not have a gym membership or use a gym
- 16-24s and 25-34s are most likely to cite time as their main reason for not purchasing a gym membership
- Out of those that exercise regularly or go to the gym, one in ten use a personal trainer (PT)
- 93% of those who currently use a PT say that using one has helped them to achieve their fitness goals

As we approach the end of 2023, 16% of people in the UK are currently members of a gym. Based on current population figures, this amounts to close to 11 million people!

Although this is a really encouraging figure, it is worth noting that our research last year revealed that at the end of 2022, 19% of people were looking to join a gym within the next calendar year. As gym memberships have only grown by 2% since then, this evidently hasn't happened.



Even with the best intentions, sometimes our plans get derailed. And notably, we're still living through a cost-of-living crisis which our research also revealed is the reason behind 50% of people not purchasing gym memberships.

While a quarter (25%) of the population choose to workout solely at home, 16% of people have stated that they intend on purchasing their own gym membership in the next calendar year - so the figure above could still double as we move through 2024.

Why Aren't People Joining The Gym?

While it's great to see that so many people are planning on joining a gym in the next calendar year, this figure has dropped by 3% since last year. When quizzed on why this is, more than half of people (54%) said they don't plan on joining a gym as it's too expensive - the highest-ranking reason across all age groups.

At PureGym, we're committed to providing great gyms at affordable pricing for this exact reason. Offering low cost, no contract memberships with gym membership options for different budgets helps to make gyms more accessible.

Those aged 35-44 admit to feeling most affected by the cost, with 65% of this age group citing the expense as their reason for not joining a gym. For younger age groups (both 16-24 and 25-34-year-olds) time is the primary blocker to joining the gym, suggesting that for those studying, entering the world of work and still relatively early on in their careers - time is a scarcity.



Reason for not joining a gym	Total	Female	Male	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
It's too expensive	54%	59%	49%	57%	56%	65%	59%	51%
I don't have enough time	15%	15%	15%	35%	35%	29%	22%	8%
I don't have a strong enough will to benefit from a membership	21%	22%	21%	15%	17%	17%	23%	22%
I exercise at home / outdoors / through other sporting activities	33%	31%	34%	33%	38%	32%	39%	30%
I have access to a gym at work	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%	3%	3%	0%
For health-related reasons	21%	23%	20%	7%	15%	9%	15%	26%
I'd feel intimidated	18%	23%	12%	37%	26%	23%	22%	15%
I am not interested in becoming more physically active	25%	22%	28%	20%	19%	17%	20%	29%

How Many People Use A Personal Trainer?

From online coaching to in person options, personal trainers (PTs) are an integral part of the fitness industry, particularly the gym industry, and investing in a personal trainer can be a great way to stay motivated, remove gymtimidation, and reach your goals.

In terms of the UK population that either go to the gym or exercise regularly, one in ten (10%) currently use a personal trainer, with men more likely to use them (12%) than women (7%), and for 93% of those who have worked with a PT, they've felt that using one has helped them to achieve their fitness goals.

There are barriers to working with PTs, including money and time, and almost half (47%) of those that currently attend a gym or exercise regularly have never used a PT, nor do they intend to – but almost a quarter (23%) do hope to use one in the future.



Which Classes Are Most Popular?

Almost a third of gym users (31%) attend group exercise classes, sessions which are specifically designed to help you achieve your goals, learn new skills, build your confidence in the gym, and even meet new friends at the same time.

Looking at our own internal class-booking data, Cycle is the most popular class across the board, making up 21% of all classes attended in 2023. This is followed Legs, Bums & Tums (16%) and Pump (14%). Interestingly, Aerobics classes are the least popular overall, followed by Box Fit and Combat. However (spoiler alert!) as our 2024 fitness trends predict at the end of this report, wrestling classes are set to spiral upwards in popularity, so both Box Fit and Combat may be further up the rankings this time next year.



HOW LONG DO PEOPLE SPEND IN THE GYM?

Key findings:

- The average gym session duration is 70 minutes (consistent over 2022 and 2023), both for men and for women
- Hereford and Mansfield are tied as the cities with the highest average visit length, at 79 minutes
- Northampton's gym users spend the least time in the gym, at an average of 59 minutes per session

Last year our research revealed that for most people (36%), 30-59 minutes was the sweet spot for a workout, with our internal data showing the average visit was around 66 minutes. The data this year very much reflects that too, with the average visit now around 70 minutes – plenty of time for a workout and getting changed after.

While it can be easy to judge our own workout times, thinking the longer means the better, this isn't always true. **Emma Vincent, a PT from PureGym Romford** explains why it's not a problem if you work out for a different amount of time:

"30-59 minutes is more than enough to get an effective training session for most goals. That's one of the reasons why group exercise classes last this long. There isn't a perfect or set amount of time for a workout. It will always depend on the individual and the type of workout they are performing".



As we've mentioned multiple times throughout this report, it's difficult to benchmark exactly what a 'good' or 'healthy' lifestyle is, as it changes from person to person. The same can be said for our workouts, as the time spent exercising is just one metric for how good that physical activity is for us. As long as you're exercising regularly, doing something you enjoy and aiming for those benchmarks we discussed earlier, you're on the right track.



WHAT ARE THE BUSIEST AND QUIETEST DAYS/TIMES AT THE GYM?

Key findings:

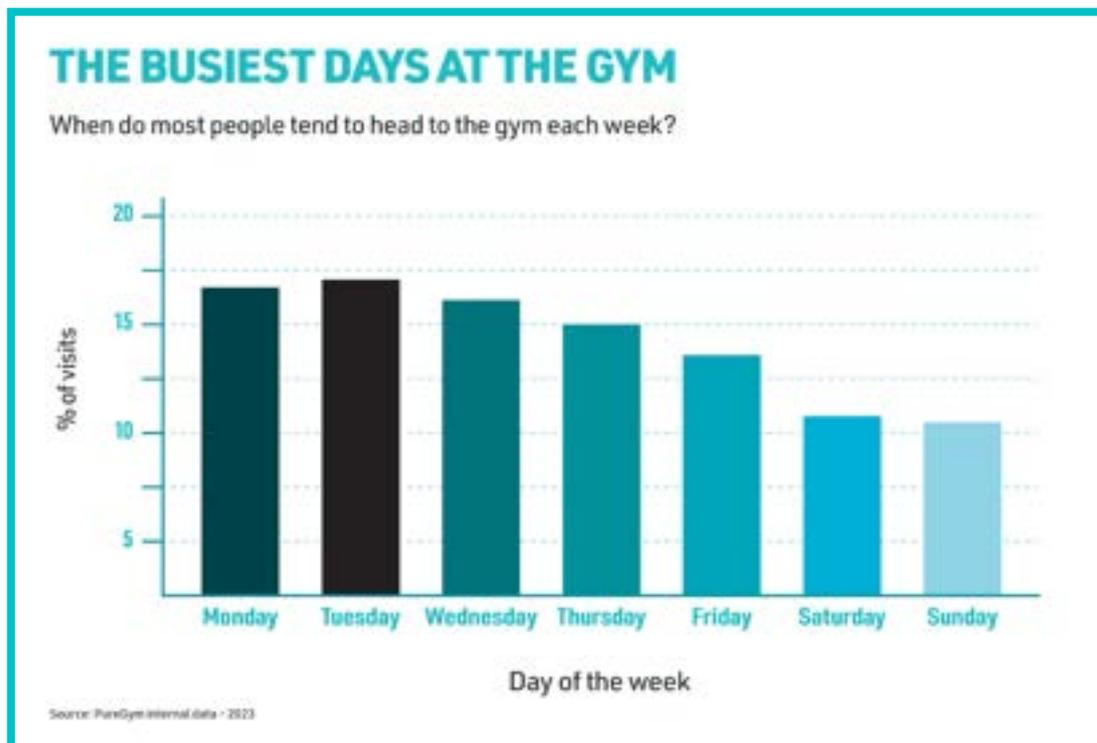
- Tuesdays are the busiest day of the week in the gym
- Sundays are generally the quietest day of the week at the gym
- Across the past 2 years, 18 out of the 20 busiest days across the year were in January and February
- 85% of the busiest days fell in the 3.5-week period between the 16th Jan and 8th Feb
- 30% of the least busy days of the year of the last 2 years fell in December
- August followed as the month with the next highest number of 'quiet' days

With one in five people finding the gym an intimidating place to be, we wanted to understand which times are best for people hoping to work out when it's a little quieter.

Thanks to our internal data, we know that Mondays and Tuesdays are consistently the busiest days of the week in the gym, unchanged year on year - with people getting into the swing of a new week and ready to kick start their training after the weekend.

You can see live usage data in the PureGym app if you want to check how busy your nearest PureGym is.





January is well known as the month new gym members sign up, but interestingly it is not the most popular month to visit the gym. Looking at data from the previous two years, the busiest months have varied from March in 2022 to May in 2023. Visits in September tend to be low, even with people getting back into regular routines after summer, and conversely, visits in May pick back up again with people looking to improve their fitness ahead of the summer months – echoed by people stating they increase their levels of exercise in the lead up to holidays.

While the month of January may not be the busiest overall, it's home to some of the busiest days with half of the top 20 most busy days of the year occurring in January, and a further 40% taking place in February – trends which are consistent with last year's data. All the days in January take place from the middle of the month onwards, suggesting that the peak resolution period really kicks off in mid-January, after the excitement of Christmas and New Year has died down.

As for the quietest days of the year, it's December that takes the crown. We already know that people tend to work out less in the lead up to Christmas, so this tallies with the fact that the gym seems to be a lot quieter during this month, with August following behind.



EXERCISE AND OUR JOBS

Key findings:

- People working in accountancy, IT or marketing generally exercise the most when not at work
 - 56% of people in the UK say their job stops or holds them back from exercising/keeping fit
 - Two in five (41%) say they're too tired to exercise after work
 - 34% of people say their job means that they don't get time to exercise
 - More than half (54%) of those who are unemployed don't exercise
 - Over half of the population (51%) say that their job causes them back pain
- The number of those who struggle with back pain is almost twice as high among those who don't go to the gym vs those who do (66% vs 38%)
- 23% of workers eat their lunch at their desk, with no real 'break' from work

With so many of us now working from home, our lifestyles are becoming ever more sedentary, with the mean time spent sitting at work across all professions now at 3 hours and 12 minutes per working day. It has been widely documented that inactivity in our lives increases the chances of long-term, chronic illness, and our jobs have a huge part to play in this.

Our new findings show that those who are unemployed tend to exercise the least, with 54% stating that they never work out. Our research also



revealed that for individuals who rarely or never exercise, it's mental health that plays a key role - with one in ten admitting that low mood means they don't feel like exercising. It's certainly possible that this could be a contributing factor to currently unemployed individuals working out less than those in employment, with being unemployed having been shown to have negative consequences on a person's mental health, including depression, anxiety and lower self-esteem. We also previously noted that the expense of a gym is the number one reason people choose not to join one, which could of course further influence the exercise levels of those currently not in employment.

This can become a vicious cycle, with inactivity further contributing to low mood and motivation. **JAAQ's Danny Gray** discusses his advice for getting more physical activity into your day, by starting small:



[Click to watch on YouTube](#)



How Do Exercise Levels Differ Between Professions?

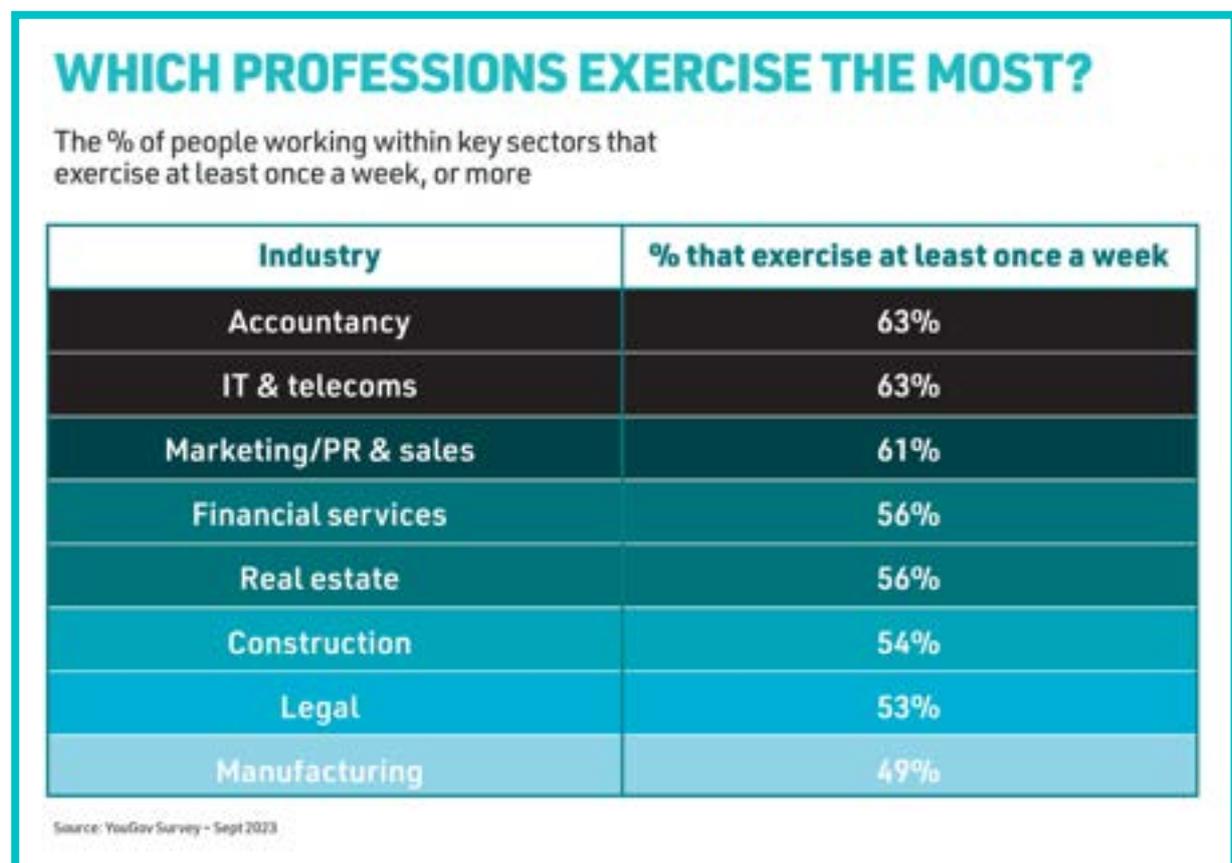
When it comes to people who work in various industries, those in retail, transportation and hospitality & leisure tend to exercise the least. It's highly likely that given these are all very active industries, where workers can be on their feet and engaging in physical activity for long shifts, these individuals participate in enough physical activity during the working day, and don't feel the need, or don't have the energy, to work out independently.

This is the case for 24% of the UK population who say they don't work out because they feel they get enough exercise through their work, with those in retail, catering and leisure spending the most time standing, walking and lifting per day. Those working in this industry also state that they are too tired after work to exercise.

Profession	Percentage That Don't Work Out At All
Unemployed	54%
Retail	47%
Transportation & distribution	44%
Hospitality and leisure	42%
Manufacturing	42%
Medical & health services	41%
Education	38%
Construction	36%
Legal	36%



For the industries where people work out the most, it's interesting to note they are mostly sedentary jobs, where workers tend to sit at a desk throughout the day, such as marketing, IT and accountancy-based roles. A sedentary lifestyle negatively impacts our health and increases mortality rate, so it's great to see that people in these roles are actively participating in exercise outside of their working hours. Those who state that they work out 'regularly' spend more time sitting on average than those who say they only exercise 'sometimes', 'rarely', or 'never'.



Why Are Our Jobs Stopping Us From Exercising?

Our research last year revealed that over a third of the population feel there’s not enough time in the day to exercise, and this sentiment is echoed this year with over half (56%) of the population stating that their job stops or at least holds them back from exercising and keeping fit. Two in five people (41%) say they’re too tired to exercise after work, while a third (34%) say their job means they don’t find enough time in the day to exercise.

In general, it’s worth noting that across all industries at least 50% of workers across all professions feel that their job has an impact on them being able to exercise and keep fit, suggesting that a large part of our working population is having difficulty juggling the modern-day demands of work, social life, chores and the likes of child or pet care.

Industry	% that feel their job holds them back from exercising
Hair and Beauty	90%
HR	80%
Arts & Culture	69%
Finance	68%
IT & Telecoms	64%
Architecture, Engineering & Building	62%
Sales, Media & Marketing	60%
Education	59%
Legal	59%
Trades (plumbing, electricity etc.)	57%
Retail, Catering & Leisure	54%
Travel & Transport	53%
Manufacturing & Utilities	51%
Healthcare	50%



Are Our Jobs Causing Us Pain?

Our increasingly sedentary lifestyles are also contributing to people experiencing pain in their daily lives, such as joint pain and stiffness that we know can become a problem after spending multiple hours a day sitting down. Almost two thirds (61%) of the population believe that their job specifically causes them aches, pains, and injury, and perhaps unsurprisingly, more gym-goers (72%) than non-gym-goers (53%) agree with this. It's possible that those who are already actively utilising a gym membership and prioritising regular exercise fully understand the impact that their job, or being inactive, can have on their body.

On the other end of the scale, it's not just jobs involving sitting down that are impacting us. 80% of those working in the hair and beauty industry think their job causes them aches, pains, and injury. While these professions tend to spend the least time sitting down, they are often required to stand in one position for long periods which have just as much impact on the body. Combined with the fact they are more likely to have said their job prevents them from pursuing further physical activity outside of working hours it's unsurprising they struggle with pain as a result.

Phil Carpenter, PT and Assistant Gym Manager at PureGym Portsmouth explains why this can be:

"There are so many different types of jobs available these days, and we can categorise them as either sedentary or physical. One thing we do know, is that functional movements through multiple planes of motion are far more appropriate for the body than single joint movements.

"To help improve and strengthen the core in a sedentary job, where possible lose your desk chair. Have a higher desk so you are standing and then use your breaks for sitting instead, or alternate between working seated and standing. Alternatively, sitting on an exercise ball instead of a desk chair is just as good. Outside of work, consider classes like legs, bums and tums, Pilates and yoga to stay mobile and supple.



“Being active outside of a working environment will not only increase energy levels naturally and offer a social aspect which is important for mental fitness, but it also helps maintain and stimulate other muscles groups and parts of the body that may be under activated during the working day which is important for physical fitness. Exercising can help alleviate aches and pains that come from both sedentary and more physical jobs, but a bigger culture change is also needed to properly address this. Having a manageable workload that means people have the energy to finish work and get to the gym is key, and something which starts in the workplace.”

The Key Injuries Caused By Working Life

Ache/Pain/Injury	Percentage of women who experience this due to their job	Percentage of men who experience this due to their job	Percentage of population who experience this due to their job
Back pain	60%	43%	51%
Muscle soreness	28%	25%	27%
Leg pain	28%	25%	27%
Muscle strain	27%	25%	26%
Neck pain	30%	20%	25%
Headaches/migraines	29%	18%	23%
Wrist pain	22%	18%	23%
Eye strain	21%	19%	20%
Eye strain	11%	12%	11%
Tendon injury	7%	10%	9%

Over half the population (51%) feel that their job causes them back pain – with this number increasing even more for women (60%). Neck pain is also more prevalent in women (30%) than men (20%), while headaches and migraines follow the same trend; almost one third (29%) of women experience them as opposed to one in five (18%) men.



How Can We Combat This?

While one impactful solution to work related injuries and pain is using the gym, or exercising elsewhere too, but when so many people admit that their job stops them from exercising as much as they'd like to, this may not be realistic for all. In these cases, making small changes where possible may be the best route initially.

Our research has revealed that lunch breaks in particular could be a big opportunity for many to get more movement in their days. Currently, one in four people say they spend the majority of their lunch break on their phone - a leading cause of 'text neck' which is another widespread mobility issue impacting people's overall wellbeing in 2023/24 - while 14% opt to watch the TV. Perhaps most concerning of all from both a mental and physical wellness point of view, is that a quarter of the population (23%) are currently eating their lunch at their desks, with no real 'break' from work.

Just a quarter of the population (25%) go for a walk, while as few as 9% of people use their lunch break to go to the gym, and just 7% going for a run.

Phil explains why getting up and using your breaks to for a walk are so beneficial:

"In most office-based jobs you can try to incorporate stretching at your desk, such as an overhead stretch, triceps stretch or even a leg extension stretch. But you should always get up and walk about when you can. Walking is essential to keep your hamstrings active and stretched, as they are shortened when sitting for long periods. A great way to incorporate small walks multiple times a day is making a round of tea, which gets you up and about while also giving your eyes a screen break) You'll also become the office hero for making the



DIET AND NUTRITION

Key findings:

- **Almost half the population (48%) feels they have a healthy diet, while almost a third (31%) don't**
 - **One in five people don't know if their diet is healthy or not**
 - **1 in 4 people count the number of calories they're consuming**
 - **Those aged 24-34 count calories most often (35%)**
 - **7% of people say they don't drink water daily**
 - **Only a quarter of people (24%) drink over a litre of water per day**
- **Almost two thirds of the population consume 4 portions or less of fruit and veg per day**
 - **Only 1 in 5 people consume three balanced meals per day**

Diet and nutrition is a much-discussed topic, and one that is becoming ever more important around the world. Within the UK alone, the UK government estimated that two thirds of adults were classed as overweight or living with obesity during 2021 and 2022. With health becoming more of a priority for many people as we discussed earlier, it's encouraging to see that from our new data, half of the population (48%) currently feel they have a healthy diet.

This does however leave the other half of the population, amounting to tens of millions of people, that feel they don't have a healthy diet,



or are unsure what a healthy diet constitutes. As this breaks down into food, fluids and calories, we decided to investigate each area, and see where we really do land when it comes to the recommended daily intake.



How Can We Combat This?

The NHS guidelines suggest that women consume 2,000 calories a day, and men 2,500 and it's promising to learn that the majority - 59% of men and 58% of women estimate that they're consuming the correct amount per day, with a smaller 29% for each gender not knowing whether they do or not. This uncertainty can be normal, especially if you're not counting the calories of everything you consume each day. But that said, is it advisable to count your calories?

Currently, one in four people (25%) regularly count the number of calories that they're consuming. However, as **Jamie Thorpe, PT at PureGym Leeds Bramley** explains, although counting calories can certainly be helpful in making sure you hit the recommended amount to consume per day, calorie counting can be negative when taken too far:



“Calorie counting can be a useful tool for managing your diet especially if you’re trying to control your weight. However, it’s not the only factor to consider. It’s essential to focus on the quality of the calories you consume by paying attention to portion sizes, incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables and choosing nutrient-dense foods.

“Undereating can lead to various negative impacts, including nutrient deficiencies, weight and muscle loss, fatigue, weakened immune system, hormonal imbalances, cognitive and mood changes, digestive problems, slowed metabolism, and hair and skin problems. Prolonged undereating can increase the risk of long-term health problems like osteoporosis and heart disease, so it’s essential to maintain a balanced and adequate diet to support overall health and well-being.”

Jamie suggests that tracking your macronutrients instead of calorie counting can be useful when trying to maintain a balanced diet, allowing individuals to achieve specific dietary goals, such as weight management, athletics performance, or specialised dietary plans – however, the effectiveness of macro counting can vary from person to person and he also suggests that simpler approaches like intuitive eating are also viable options.

Ryan Legge, PT at PureGym Manchester First Street echoes this, saying not all of us need to track calories or macros to maintain a healthy diet. However for who want to, a step-by-step approach is advised:

“If you are looking to track what you eat, start by focusing on your calories consumed per day, then only once you have become familiar and comfortable with that look at slowly introducing macros. Focusing on tracking whether you’re consuming enough protein is a great place to start. Too much information will be an overload and prevent you from monitoring your nutrition in a healthy way. Once you understand the Eat Well Guide and portion sizes, then start to introduce the idea of counting calories, and finally, look at your macros.”



How Much Water Should We Drink?

What we do know, is that drinking water every day is a must as part of a healthy diet. So, it is a surprise to learn that 7% of people say they don't drink water daily at all, while only a quarter of people (24%) say they drink a litre or more of water a day, which is still highly unlikely to be enough, particularly if you're exercising. There are no hard and fast rules for how much water you should be drinking, and it varies between men and women, but the NHS recommend that most of us drink between 1.5l and 2.5l per day.

Phil Carpenter explains what is so dangerous about us not drinking enough water in our daily lives:

"The body is made up of water and it is fundamental to being able to optimise at our best. You wouldn't be able to run your car for long without water in the coolant system before it overheats and burns out, the body is the same - and is a more complex bit of machinery."

"Due to busy schedules and poor planning, we tend to lose sight of keeping hydrated and only take on essential fluids once we're already dehydrated. This can affect the body in many ways, but the most common are being thirsty, having a dry mouth, less frequent urination, dry skin, headaches, dizziness and a rapid heartbeat."

"If you really struggle with staying hydrated, try tracking your water consumption with a hydration app, scheduled reminders on your phone, or even a get fancy bottle with water levels on it - whatever works for you! My top tip is to add some lemon, lime or even electrolytes into your water - your body will thank you for it."



How Much Fruit and Veg Should We Eat?

We touched on the need to consume fruit and vegetables earlier in the report, with Sunny discussing how wellbeing peaks at seven portions per day. Our findings show that we collectively have a way to go before hitting this mark, with the average number of fruit and veg portions consumed per day sitting at approximately four portions per day, and 62% of people consuming four portions or less of both per day. Thankfully, **Phil** also has some tips for those who are still struggling to get enough into their diet:

“Some simple quick fixes can improve your relationship with fruit and veg if you need to increase your uptake. Firstly, remove the concept of five pieces a day, and instead focus on where you can add more fruit and veg throughout the day. For example, introducing fruit platters for lunch or reducing the number of carbohydrates in your meals so you can load up on colourful vegetables instead try and aim for three or four different colours on your plate as part of a balanced meal.”

What Is A Balanced Meal?

Phil mentions a balanced meal, but with our research revealing that one in ten people are unsure how many balanced meals they eat a day – the place to start is looking at what a balanced meal really is.

You don't need to calculate the exact amounts of each food type you have on your plate every time you eat, but you do need to make sure that your diet overall is balanced. According to the NHS, this means:

Eating at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Basing meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice or pasta

Having some dairy or dairy alternatives

Eating some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat or other protein



Choosing unsaturated oils and spreads and eating them in small amounts

Drinking plenty of fluids (at least six to eight glasses a day)

Our data found that only one in five people (20%) say they consume the traditional benchmark of three balanced meals a day, with the larger majority (66%) instead stating that when it comes to a 'balanced' meal, they're consuming two or less per day. But do we really need to ensure we're getting our three balanced meals a day?

Phil thinks we do:

"This was introduced during the periods of war-torn Britain to help ration food, and make sure people were consuming food. We still follow the same protocol today because it works well. Although some people like to fast or follow keto diets, it's important to remember we all fast in between our last meal and breakfast. All fasting beyond this time will do is limit your eating window."

"When you do consume food, it needs to be the right food, or when you eat it doesn't really matter. With that in mind, maintaining



EXERCISE AND THE COST OF LIVING

Key findings:

- 24% of the population has increased its spending on exercise in the last year
- The main reason people increased their spending on exercise and fitness is due to fitness becoming a greater passion of theirs (23%)
- 21% of people increased their spending by purchasing more fitness-focused clothing
 - 1 in 5 (19%) say their spending on exercise/keeping fit has decreased
 - More women have reduced their spending on fitness than men – 23% vs 15%
 - Almost half (47%) of those who have decreased their spending did so because they could no longer afford it
- 41% are likely to reduce their spending on their gym memberships in the next 6 months
 - 1 In 5 (20%) of people in the East Midlands have discontinued their gym memberships due to cost which is more than any other region in the UK

The cost of living has hit many individuals around the UK hard in the last two years, with many of us having to cut back on what we deem luxuries to pay for essentials. With our health and wellbeing such an important part of our lives and long-term happiness, our findings help to shine a light on how these high costs have altered what we spend on exercise.



While it might be easy to think that a gym membership or fitness subscription could be one of the first to go in a personal cost-cutting exercise, a quarter (24%) of the population have in fact increased their spending on fitness over the last year, which is a testament to the nation's clear intent to prioritise health despite the financial strain of high bills and more expensive produce.

24 % OF PEOPLE HAVE INCREASED THEIR SPENDING ON EXERCISE IN THE LAST YEAR



16-24 YEAR OLDS
HAVE INCREASED THEIR SPENDING THE MOST (42%)

The key reasons fitness-focused spending has increased

	% citing reason	% that have increased spending
1	Fitness has become a greater passion in the last year	23%
2	Invested more in fitness clothing	21%
3	Invested more in home workout equipment	20%
4	Started a new exercise-based hobby	20%
5	Started a new fitness-focused subscription (e.g. app/online workout plan)	20%

Source: Independent PureGym survey - Sept 2023



A further one in five people however have reduced their spending on exercise and keeping fit, and this applies more to women than men, likely highlighting the disparity in pay that unfortunately continues into 2024.

When it comes to the key reasons some people are spending less on keeping fit, almost half (47%) said they did so because they could no longer afford it, meanwhile 28% said they'd rather spend the money elsewhere, and 12% said they weren't making enough use of the gym to justify the expense.

How Many People Plan To Decrease Their Spending On Fitness in 2024?

The nation is split when it comes to whether they plan to reduce spending on their gym memberships this year, with 43% saying it's unlikely and 41% saying it's likely. While this may not be an accurate prediction of what will happen, as people's circumstances can change, it is a good indicator of the uncertainty we're all feeling regarding our finances.

Overall, gym memberships continue to be a priority for people of all ages. 41% told us that it was unlikely they'd cancel their gym membership compared with a lower 35% saying the same for TV subscriptions. All in all, the only things people are less likely to reduce spending on compared with gym memberships are other necessities, like grocery shopping, childcare and transport.

Macallum Livock, PT from PureGym Leeds North offers advice to anyone looking to take out a new gym membership, but who might be worried about the expense and making sure it's a long-term commitment:

"To stay longer as a member and use the gym as much as possible, you should do the following things."



- *Book a gym induction, finding your way around the gym and getting comfortable as quickly as possible will help you enjoy it more and faster.*
- *Follow a training plan, or get a personal trainer, so you have some goals to strive for straight away that will help with motivation.*
- *Participate in group exercise classes, these are always fun, you can meet other gym members and get a helping hand if you're struggling to come up with your own training plan.*
- *Finally, book a fitness event! A 5k race or a Hyrox style event, whatever you choose to do can give you a fantastic goal to aim towards and will help give you the motivation to keep getting in the*

As a gym, our primary aim is to help as many people as possible reach their fitness goals and lead healthy lives. We offer a variety of low-cost memberships that make fitness accessible, and have more than 370 gyms across the country, with more set to be in place by the end of 2024.



THE ONLINE FITNESS INDUSTRY

Key findings:

- YouTube is the most popular type of app/digital content used to support both home workouts (51%) and gym workouts (39%), with more than half the population (51%) using it
- Almost a quarter (23%) of people say they have used AI for fitness advice/exercise inspiration
- 13% say they compare themselves to fitness influencers on social media, rising to 25% among those who work out
- One in three (32%) 18-24-year-olds compare themselves to fitness influencers

A great way to cut costs, is to turn to free sources on the internet for advice, and during the pandemic, the online fitness industry boomed. While last year's report highlighted a serious decline in interest for all things online fitness, that doesn't mean it isn't still being used in its various forms.

With over a billion active users per month on TikTok, and two billion on Instagram, there's more people than ever uploading fitness content across social media every single day. But how much of an impact does this have on us in our day-to-day lives?



The Enduring Rise of the Fitness Influencer

With social media comes influencers - and the fitness industry is no different. There are thousands of influencers posting workout plans, advice and a window into their daily lives on an ever more consumable basis. This easy access to fitness content can come with a lot of benefits, but also the inevitable comparisons to our own personal strength, fitness levels and appearance...

13% of the population admitted to comparing themselves to fitness influencers on social media, with this number almost doubling among those who work out (25%). The age group this impacts the most is those aged 18 to 24, with 32% admitting they make such comparisons.

PT Ryan Legge, explains why these comparisons can be so damaging for the majority:

"We tend to follow the top 1% within an industry when following people on social media. So, for the fitness industry this means they tend to be ripped, super fit, very lean, and regular fitness competitors - essentially any word you'd use to describe an athlete. At this point it's important to realise they are essentially athletes, whose job it is to train, eat, rest, sleep, supplement and monitor their fitness 24/7. The majority of people using the gym have a 9-5 and are simply looking to feel fitter and healthier in themselves, so try not to get side tracked by what you see on your feed."

This sentiment is echoed by **Sunny Deo, PT at PureGym Leicester Walnut Street** who says that comparing yourself to social media influencers can lead to unrealistic standards of perfection, negatively impacting the way individuals may perceive their own body image:

"It's so important to remember that everyone is at different levels when it comes to fitness. The only person that you should be comparing yourself to is yourself. To get to a high level, it takes a lot of time and dedication and it's not something that can be achieved overnight. Consistency, training hard, consuming a well-balanced diet, good sleep and great knowledge are the key fundamentals to progressing to that next level."



Which Online Platforms Are People Using For Their Workouts?

54% of the population say they use YouTube for fitness advice and exercise inspiration, followed by 40% who use Facebook, and Instagram use at 37%. Since TikTok is the platform of choice for Gen Z, it comes as no surprise that 71% of those aged 16-24 say they use TikTok to find fitness advice and exercise inspiration.

Ryan also explains why it's so important to use the fitness inspiration you see online as just one part of your journey:

"Knowledge and application are two different things. As long as you cross check knowledge you come across online to ensure it's not false or misleading, it's a great place to learn. But everyone is built differently and has different genetics – so our form will always be different to people you see online, particularly if it's someone who's competing in fitness competitions each month, for example."

"Not everyone can lunge the first time, deadlifts are much harder than they first seem, and even the humble push up has more technical elements than you might think. Remember this when applying the knowledge that you learn online and try not to be disheartened if you don't achieve the movement straight away. Focus on performing the movement correctly and safely, and improvements will come in time."

Notably, almost a quarter of the population (23%) have used AI for fitness advice or exercise inspiration, a trend we expect to see increase over the years as AI becomes more prevalent.

With this high level of AI related fitness use in mind, we set out to analyse some AI-created training plans to discover how effective and importantly, safe, they are as a method of devising workout plans. While the plans themselves weren't anything out of the ordinary compared to what you might find on a generic blog post on the internet, there is certainly still cause for concern in using a robot to help you train.



PT Jhaun Penrose from PureGym London says:

“AI cannot correct form in real time or physically spot a human, so the plans lack the ability to allow safe progressive overloading (increasing the weight lifted over time). Beginners would need demonstrations of each exercise, and benefit from live verbal cues and feedback. Even advanced lifters benefit from having a PT to feedback on form and act as a spotter when attempting PBs”.



LOOKING AHEAD: FITNESS TRENDS FOR 2024

Key findings:

- Wall Pilates is set to be the biggest fitness trend in 2024, with an enormous 4,461% increase in interest
- The likes of all forms of Pilates, including wall, mat and reformer, are all set to continue their resurgence - occupying three of the top 20 trends for 2024
 - Unusual fitness trends such as Tarzan movement (529%) and primal movement (81%) also seem set to take 2024 by storm
- Branded workouts like the Jennifer Anniston backed Pvolve (512%) and cult phenomenon Hyrox (233%) are also continuing to rise in popularity
- Meanwhile, trends from previous years have turned into fads, with weighted hula hoops (-55%), eye yoga (-19%) and backwards running (-19%) all experiencing steep drops in interest

Last year we investigated the trends that were set to take 2023 by storm and if we do say so ourselves, got a lot of them right! So, without further ado, we'll finish off this year's report with a look into the future of exercise and the very latest fitness trends primed to boom in 2024.



The Top Fitness Trends for 2024

After comparing the number of people searching for almost 200 different fitness trends versus the same period last year, the most interesting thing to note is that for some of the previous year's trends that had their moment in the limelight, many have proceeded to drop in popularity in subsequent years - with weighted hula hoops, stroller fitness and backwards running all having seen the biggest drops in interest of the year, despite having been at the top of the rankings in the past.

Taking top place this time around having seen an impressive 4,461% increase in popularity, is wall Pilates. A form of fitness that took the internet by storm this summer, and a low-cost workout that's very easy to do from home, wall Pilates is a creative way to change up your regular routine - particularly for those that have been practising for a while.

Beyond wall Pilates, all forms of Pilates seem to have increased in popularity this year. Mat Pilates and reformer Pilates both also feature in the top 20 and have seen 50% increases in searches compared to the same period last year.

Some more intriguing trends pepper the rankings too, like Tarzan movement and primal movement, both of which are two newer forms of exercise that incorporate movements that feel natural and fundamental to humans (for example, pushing and pulling or squatting and lunging). These have been coined as forms of movement that combat our 21st century sedentary lifestyles, taking us back to moving how our ancestors did - tying in with Phil's comments earlier on the need to include functional movements through multiple planes of motion than just single joint movements.

Interestingly, wrestling classes have also seen a spike in interest, perhaps due to influencers and celebrities such as Logan Paul and Bad Bunny bringing more mainstream attention to the world of wrestling.



2024 Trends, ranked by % increase in Google searches from July - Sept 22 vs July - Sept 23

1. Wall Pilates: **4,461%**
2. Tarzan Movement: **529%**
3. Pvolve: **512%**
4. Hyrox: **233%**
5. Exercise Snacking: **190%**
6. Cycle Syncing: **124%**
7. Wrestling Class: **124%**
8. 75 Soft: **83%**
9. HIIT: **83%**
10. 75 Hard: **82%**
11. Primal Movement: **81%**
12. Solo Fitness: **81%**
13. 25-7-2 (Stairmaster): **52%**
14. Mat Pilates: **50%**
15. Micro Meditation: **50%**
16. Party Cycling: **50%**
17. Reformer Pilates: **50%**
18. Rock Climbing: **50%**
19. Breathwork: **49%**
20. Rainbow walk: **49%**

Which Fitness Trends Are On Their Way

With an increase in interest always comes the alternative; the fitness trends that have lost the interest of fitness enthusiasts worldwide. It's interesting to note that classic forms of exercise like HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training), Pilates and yoga continue to remain at the top of the charts, but the more niche the trend is, the more likely it is to lose its spotlight after it's had its day.

Previous years have shown drops in interest in all things virtual, a trend that continues as we move away from the lockdown years. But interestingly we've also seen drops in popular brands of exercise that have previously taken the fitness world by storm, Zuu Fitness and F45, for example, are two franchises that in previous years saw immense popularity and found themselves at the top of the rankings, whereas this year both have seen significant drops in interest.

Alongside these are the niche trends, or fads. Weighted hula hoops seem to have had their day, along with eye yoga, backwards running



and stroller fitness - all trends that once upon a time appeared as the most popular upcoming trends of the year but are now continuing to see drops in interest. rankings, whereas this year both have seen significant drops in interest.

1. Forehead Workout: **-64%**
2. Weighted Hula Hoop: **-55%**
3. Evening Workouts: **-47%**
4. Punk Rope: **-35%**
5. VR Fitness Games: **-33%**
6. Eye Yoga: **-19%**
7. Backwards Running: **-19%**
8. Stroller Fitness: **-19%**
9. Virtual Fitness Classes: **-19%**
10. Functional Fitness Training: **-19%**
11. Mini Workout: **-19%**
12. Twerking Class: **-19%**
13. Wearable Technology: **-18%**
14. Leg Workout: **-18%**
15. F45: **-18%**
16. Calf Workout: **-18%**
17. Jump Rope Workout: **-18%**
18. Skipping Workout: **-18%**
19. Goat Yoga: **-18%**
20. Zuu: **-18%**



Ready to hit the gym?

Just like that, we've reached the end of another report. Spanning nutrition, costs, when the gym is busy and even how AI is being used in fitness, we hope you found it interesting!

Much like previous years, we'll continue to see fitness trends peak and trough throughout the year, but ultimately how we all really feel about our health and fitness is the most important thing. Finding workouts that work for you, and adopting healthier habits that make you feel good is key to better health across the nation, and beyond.

If you're ready for a new fitness journey in 2024 and want to join us, find out more about [our membership options here](#).

Methodology

Data was compiled for the report using the following sources:

- YouGov survey - data compiled w/c 17th September 2023
- PureGym internal, anonymised customer data
- Google Keyword Planner (fitness trends) analysing worldwide search volume. Correct as of October 2023

Certain trends were omitted from the rankings if their search volumes were not representative of an increase in interest. (For example, 'puppy yoga' gained widespread attention for the mistreatment of animals, rather than interest from a consumer point of view, so was removed from the rankings).

- Censuswide survey - 2,004 nationally representative respondents, conducted in September 2023



