

INTERNATIONAL FITNESS ROUNDUP

GROUP FITNESS AND PERSONAL TRAINING TRENDS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

BY LAWRENCE BISCONTINI, MA

Last year's global update featured trends in group fitness, and now the 2015 update considers personal training as well! This report reflects the current state of fitness affairs for a country's particular club culture, demographic and economics. Once per year, this author checks in with various clubs across countries and continents to help AFAA readers put a finger on the pulse of which trends and programs are most successful in the group exercise and personal training arenas.

Caveat: Regrettably, not all country sources returned the survey to represent fitness in their countries.

(Countries listed in alphabetical order; monetary exchange rates are expressed in U.S. dollars current as of this writing.)

Argentina: Buenos Aires

Ulises Puiggrós, creator of Ritmix, FullBox and PowerFit programs, consults for Fitness Services. Puiggrós reports that both cardiovascular classes and CrossFit-inspired classes are popular now in Argentina. "We continue to offer Latin-based dance classes," he explains, "and Zumba" is a small part of that here, too. [Experienced] students are discovering how, in CrossFit-like boot camp classes, they can get strength and cardiovascular gains." Like most countries reported, "Step has almost died here," Puiggrós says. The mind-body methodology has infiltrated the traditional group exercise grid. "We now offer Pilates, yoga, mixes, and traditional stretching for those who want to work slower and barefoot."

Puiggrós did not comment on group exercise or personal training average salary rates, as they vary widely in his country.

Australia: Brisbane

Ken Baldwin has been working as a group fitness instructor for 13 years at Fitness First in Brisbane and has seen trends come and go. "Currently the aging population continues to come to group ex, but they favor Hot Yoga and fun classes without the stress on intensity, offering less equipment and less stress on the body than traditional programs," he shares. "The Tabata interest continues, as well as small group training on the

gym floor, which has the added benefit of driving people toward booking one-on-one personal training sessions." Baldwin also sees some programs declining. "Step and Zumba are either reduced or off of most club timetables here, and Les Mills' GX programs and Group Active programs are declining in numbers," he reports.

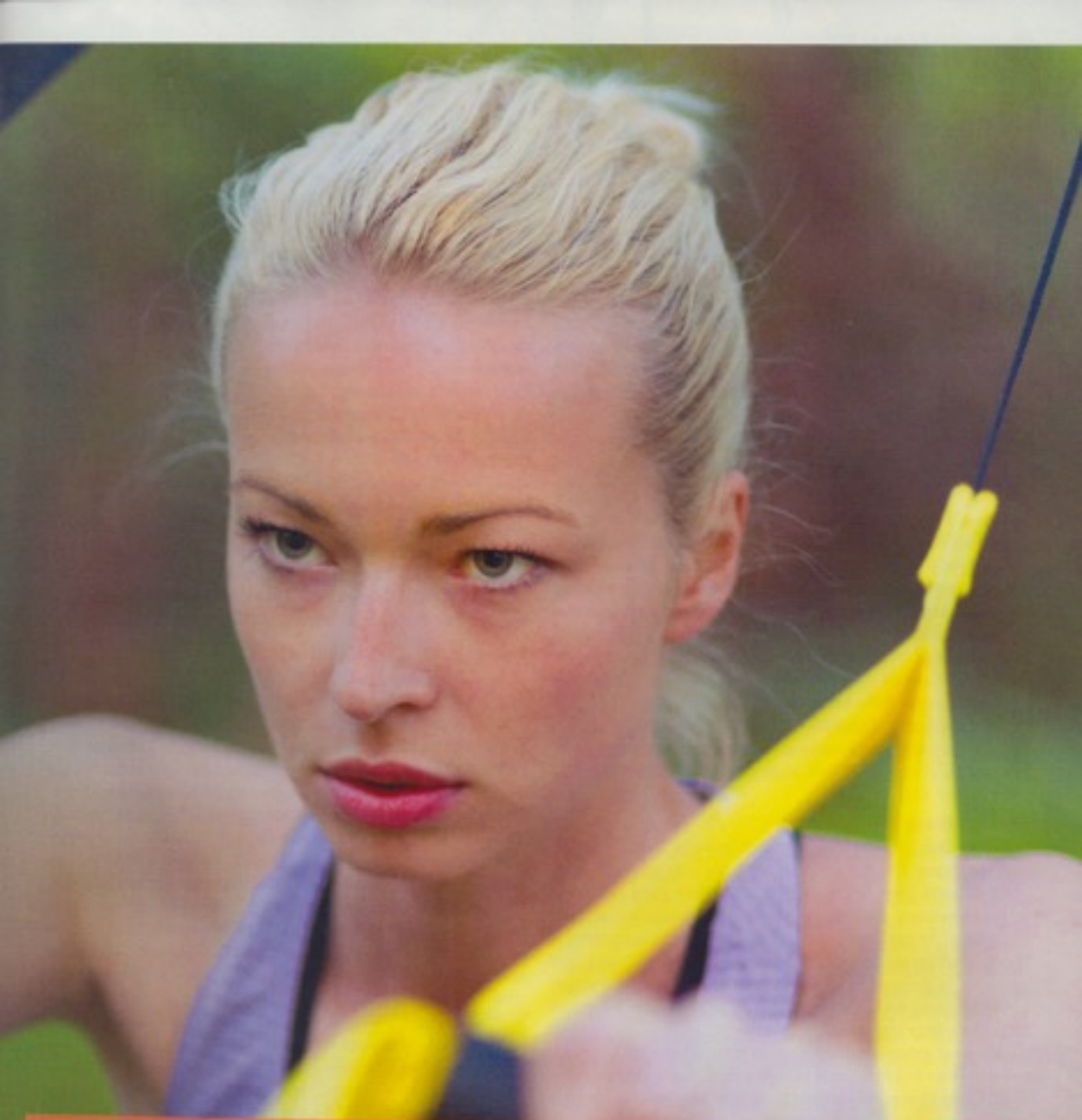
Growing on the schedules is programming for kids, and Baldwin predicts it will continue to rise. However, "unfortunately, little exists for the aging market in terms of specific, fall-prevention classes, but, like the USA, Australia has a huge need for programming in this area."

Fitness pay scales in Australia have levels. "The average at my club is for Level 1 instructors to start at \$35 per hour, and this rises in increments of \$2.50 or \$5 depending on the experience of the instructors and the amount of time they have been teaching for that club. Higher level instructors with 3 to 4 years of experience average \$45 to \$50, and this rate also includes mind-body instructors of any seniority given that they generally earn more than instructors of traditional disciplines. We don't give incentives for drawing numbers, but we give awards for positive feedback from participants."

In the personal training arena, Baldwin states that his market currently provides 30-, 45- and 60-minute one-on-one personal training sessions, giving a time frame for almost everyone's needs. "Generally, the 30-minute sessions are more intense," he says, "and some trainers are starting to realize that small group sessions allow them to work less and generate more revenue. The average personal trainer rate for an hour is \$75."

Canada: Toronto

Georgia Mattheos, event experience manager of canfitpro based in Toronto, shares with us that organization's "Top 10 Most Effective Fitness" trends report for 2015, recently compiled with input from thousands of their members. The top trends listed from the first to tenth ranking are "High-Intensity Interval Training, Functional Fitness, Older Adult Training,



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Certifications for Fitness Professionals, Personal Training, Body Weight Training, Express Workouts, Nutrition Education Programs, Boot Camps and Circuit Training."

Ecuador: Quito

Janine Mongardini owns Janine's Gym and The X Gym in Quito. Mongardini reports that the most popular classes now in Central and South America are "Bailoterapia (dance-based conditioning), TRX, functional training group circuits and Zumba. As we have an aging population, more people are slowly embracing mindful movement on mats, but we don't have special programs for seniors yet." She continues, "Instructors average a flat rate of \$10 to \$15 for most classes, but at our gym we give an additional incentive in cycling if an instructor can fill every bike."

Greece: Athens

Christos Niaros is an AFAA Examiner, Pilates specialist and personal trainer based in Athens. "The most popular classes we have now," he starts, "are classes like CrossFit, HIIT, indoor cycling, and group Pilates and equipment classes, which shows that these were not fads." Some programming has reached a popular plateau, such as Zumba, Latin dance and Step. Sometimes sponsorship helps programming. Niaros explains "when large companies step in to sponsor outdoor running events, classes start [to] help prepare people for those types of training." Indoors, he says that "functional training continues to grow, allowing students to use relatively small pieces of equipment like hand weights and BOSU."

"In our country of financial crisis now," Niaros notes that "the average entry-level rate for new group ex instructors is €15 hour," or about \$17. Niaros adds that "more experienced instructors earn up to €30 (or \$34) per hour."

India: New Delhi

Vipin Chandran, a personal trainer based in New Delhi says that equipment use among personal trainers is growing, especially different types of free weights and, when gyms can afford it, large resistance training machines. "Even though we like new equipment," he explains, "another huge personal training trend is sports conditioning training, both for fitness enthusiasts and 'best physique,'" a group of fitness models countrywide who attend specialized training for them which, Chandran reports, is "a separate track that's more aggressive."

The small group trend continues to grow in India, with "a minimum of three to a maximum of eight people, but we always call it 'Boot Camp Fitness,' which attracts a greater number of individuals than other names." Chandran says that, although rates vary, personal trainers in India average to 1,500INR per hour, or about \$25.

Among fitness trends in India now, he mentions, "Zumba and CrossFit popularity remain strong but have leveled off on their numbers. Whereas elite gyms can boast specialized equipment for those who can afford it. The popularity of body weight training is intensively resurfacing among exercise programs considering the functional and affordable angle of training programs."

Regarding specialized groups in fitness, Chandran says like so many other countries in Asia with a large population of aging

adults, "we just don't get seniors asking for training because, first, of our shortage of qualified professionals trained to deal with this market, and, second, a lack of good health education telling the older adult market why they need to keep moving."

Italy: Rome

Serafino Ambrosio is the owner and instructor of both the ASD Fitness 2000 club and Polestar Pilates School in Rome. "Here people flock to 'Pump and Pilates' mat-work classes because they don't have to pay extra and they can spread out on the floor. We get more into the classes this way than in our Reformer studios, for equipment reasons." While Zumba was growing very quickly at the start, he says "[It] is just status quo now. Our people love new things, so they welcome traditional work with some added bonus, [such as] Pilates mat-work with cardio, rollers, springs or barre-like moves fused in." When asked about the worldwide growing trend of active aging, Ambrosio laughs, "Here in Italy we don't offer classes especially for the over-60 crowd because they wouldn't come. We have a few mind-body addicts who are over 50, but they make up a huge minority in clubs across Italy."

Like Chandran, Ambrosio agrees that group fitness instructor class rates far under weigh those in North America. The Italian average rate for group ex per hour is €20, or about \$23.

Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur

Noel Chelliah works as a Physical Transformation Specialist and CEO of Daily Muscle outdoor boot camps. "Currently the most popular programs in our country are Zumba and outdoor programming including boot camps," he says. "Yoga is just status quo. Although it has been around for awhile and popular at select clubs, it doesn't seem to be experiencing growth and recognition like other fitness programs, sometimes due to cultural reasons. Mind-body classes are offered during off-peak hours as part of group exercise programming at no extra cost."

Unlike some other countries that report a decline, Chelliah states Zumba continues to grow in Malaysia, claiming, "Zumba is now reaching its record highs here. In February 2015, we had the SCORE FitMob: Largest Zumba Fitness Party, which saw close to 6,000 people gathering together for a 90-minute workout session, creating a new countrywide record." (See www.thestar.com.my/Metro/Scoreboard/2015/01/29/Scoring-in-a-big-way-Insurance-giant-sets-new-Malaysian-record-for-fitness-party.)

According to Chelliah, new programs gaining ground are women-only boot camps, and just starting are programs for kids. "Unfortunately," he concludes, "we offer no classes for the active aging."

Chelliah reports that the average rates for instructors are between RM70 to RM100 Malaysian Ringgit, or \$20 to \$30.

Philippines: Manila

Earl Jimenez works as the VP for training and education for the Gold's Gym chains in the Philippines, including its surrounding islands. Regarding group exercise classes, he says, "most popular now is Zumba, which is still growing, but also we have been putting more and more on the group exercise sched-



ule [such as] street dance, boot camp and yoga. As a chain, we have also added some pre-choreographed programming like the 'Piloxing' program and 'Body Combat' from the Les Mills programming selections. We find that the consistency helps instructors with preparing for class, and helps the members know what to expect."

Not all classes are booming, however, with a recent decline in strength and endurance classes. "People want to move, and not sculpt so much right now," Jimenez notes. In the mind-body arena, yoga continues to out-populate the Pilates draw, and those attracted to the new specialty barre programs "are coming from mind-body and not the traditional class market."

When speaking of salary, Jimenez says that group exercise pays 600 PHP per 55-minute class, or about \$13.50.

Turkey: Istanbul

Cem Öner is the GM of FitnessTurk and The Pilates Coach Turkey. Speaking to the personal training market he says, "TRX continues to grow fast here, along with metabolic training and outdoor fitness programming. And, although small group sessions are still less popular than group sessions, they and 30-minute sessions are growing." Öner reports that personal trainers average \$40 per hour-long session, and almost all have left behind using large pin-style machinery for "smaller, more functional equipment that takes up less space and generally allows the body to move more." Unfortunately, Öner says, "there is still very little draw to personal trainers from the aging market, and group schedules don't seem to favor that population's needs either."

Vietnam: Hanoi

Yury Rockit Miankovich is an AFAA certified continuing education provider working as both group movement specialist and mind-body personal trainer. Owner of Ki Mind-Body Studios, Miankovich reports that Zumba and Piloxing are at an all-time high of countrywide popularity. The average rate per class for group instructors is 350,000 to 550,000 VND or about \$15 to \$25. Miankovich says that clubs tend to group mind-body with traditional classes instead of charging extra. "Unfortunately," he admits, "classes here are geared toward the young and fit, and we offer almost no classes for the aging population, kids or the deconditioned."

As a personal trainer, Miankovich mentions that, like in India, "TRX is booming now, as well as other forms of small equipment training. Also growing is small group personal training."

Vietnamese salary rates for personal trainers may surprise. "Certified trainers who go to residences are able to earn \$30 to

\$35 per session, yet members in traditional clubs pay \$40 to \$45 per session for mostly uncertified personal trainers who receive different percentages of that amount."

Miankovich reports that popular trending questions now arising from the majority of Vietnamese clients include paleo and noncarbohydrate diets, claiming how "it's only the certified trainers who steer clear of prescribing nutritional diets for their clients and stay within their scope of practice."

Singapore

Tommy Yau works as head of fitness education for Fitness First in Singapore. Yau says that Singaporean club membership is currently divided this way: "personal training penetration is at 10%, group exercise at 50%, small group training at 10%, and client owned club usage at 30%." He adds that the personal training rate in clubs is "\$90 per session, and different tiered trainers give different percentages of this amount to the club.

"Personal trainers now love VIPR", Plyo Box and small equipment. The hottest PT trend now is our 30-minute, small group HIIT sessions featuring one trainer per 10 clients, and we call it 'freestyle group' sessions."

Summary

Checking in with personal trainers and group exercise instructors around the globe helps everyone keep a finger on the pulse of fitness. Knowing what grows, steadies and declines in other countries also makes everyone feel more connected in this wellness field. Many countries have yet to consider the possible values of offering 30-minute personal training sessions, creating and offering both children's and active aging programming, and incentivizing group exercise instructors for capitalizing on their potential draw of students. These seem to be areas worth considering for the ever-changing nature of the fitness industry and future job security for all.

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