

FITNESS TRENDS IN PORTUGAL FOR 2025

Susana Franco, Ph.D.^{1,2}; Rita Santos-Rocha, Ph.D.^{1,2}; Fátima Ramalho, Ph.D.^{1,2}; Vera Simões, Ph.D.^{1,2}; Isabel Vieira, MSc^{1,2}; and Liliana Ramos, Ph.D.^{1,2}

¹Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior – Santarém Polytechnic University

²Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation cenTer – SPRINT

For the fifth consecutive year, fitness trends were analysed in Portugal. The Portuguese survey of fitness trends was based on the American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM) Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends and included 51 trends. Beyond the 45 trends of the ACSM Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2025, 6 trends have been included in the Portuguese survey concerning experts' recommendations: Group Fitness Classes, Crosstraining, EcoGyms, Outcome Measurements, Core Training and Dance-based Workouts.

The online survey was sent to universities that offer bachelor's degrees in sports sciences, vocational schools that promote fitness courses, and associations of the fitness sector. The link also was shared on social networks and at fitness events and sent directly to many fitness professionals and sports sciences and fitness students.

Data were collected through the SurveyMonkey platform, from 1st May to 18th June (approximately 8 weeks). There was no financial incentive offered to complete the survey. The research was constructed using a Likert-type scale, ranging from a low score of 1 (least likely to be a trend) to a high score of 10 (most likely to be a trend). At the end of the survey, an opportunity was given for respondents to include possible non-listed fitness trends. The survey participants included 554 respondents from Portugal: fitness professionals (including Fitness Instructors, Technical Directors/Owner/Operator/Coordinators in the fitness area), health professionals related to exercise, and students of the Fitness/Physical Education and Sports sector. Their mean age was 34.93 years and the mean professional experience in the fitness sector was 10.2 years. Demographics data is available in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Table 1 – Demographics Data – Gender

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Frequency (%)</u>
Female	47.1
Male	51.8
Other (Prefer not to answer)	0.2
Missing Value	0.7

Table 2 - Demographics Data – Qualifications

<u>Qualifications</u>	<u>Frequency (%)</u>
High School or less	23.8
Bachelor degree	47.1
Master degree	23.6
PhD degree	4.7
Missing Value	0.7

Table 3 – Work Status

Work Status	Frequency (%)
Part-time (<34 hours/week)	24
Full-time (≥35 hours/week)	39.2
Missing Values	36.8

Table 4 - Profession/Functions

Profession or functions in the fitness sector¹	Frequency (%)
Group Exercise Instructor	38.6
Gym Exercise Instructor ²	35.7
Personal Trainer	57.4
Crossfit/Crosstraining	9
Technical Director/Owner/Operator/Coordinator	23.6
Teacher/Professor	18.4
Graduate Student	14.3
Undergraduate Student	5.1
Medical Professional	4.5
Others	9.4

¹Possibility to tick several options²Cardiofitness/Strength training room

Table 5 - Workplace

Workplace¹	Frequency (%)
Gyms/Health clubs	44.2
Box	4.3
Community Recreation Center	7.4
Pools	5.1
Fitness Studios/Boutiques	18.1
Clients Home	16.1
Outdoor	12.6
Hotels and similar	0.5
Medical Fitness Center and similar	3.8
On-line	14.6
Others	2.2

¹Possibility to tick several options

Results

Table 6 – Top 20 of Portugal Fitness Trends 2025

Portugal Fitness Trends 2025		Mean
1	Personal Training	8.23
2	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	8.15
3	Exercise for Weight Loss	8.11
4	Pilates	7.93
5	Traditional Strength Training	7.78
6	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	7.58
7	Small Group Training	7.50
8	Exercise for Mental Health	7.37
9	Group Fitness Classes	7.37
10	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	7.36
11	Outdoor Fitness Activities	7.33
12	Pre- and Post-natal Fitness	7.31
13	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	7.25
14	Exercise is Medicine	7.19
15	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	7.09
16	Boutique Fitness Studios	7.03
17	Crosstraining	7.02
18	Wearable Technology	7.00
19	Body Weight Training	6.95
20	Youth Athletic Development	6.94

Table 7 – Top 10 of Portuguese Fitness Trends 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

	Portuguese Fitness Trends 2021 (Franco et al., 2021)	Portuguese Fitness Trends 2022 (Franco et al., 2022)	Portuguese Fitness Trends 2023 (Franco et al., 2023)	Portuguese Fitness Trends 2024 (Franco et al., 2024)	Portuguese Fitness Trends 2025
1	Licensure for Fitness Professionals	Licensure for Fitness Professionals	Licensure for Fitness Professionals	Personal Training	Personal Training
2	Employing Certified Fitness Professionals	Employing Certified Fitness Professionals	Employing Certified Fitness Professionals	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals
3	Personal Training	Personal Training	Personal Training	Exercise for Weight Loss	Exercise for Weight Loss
4	Exercise for Weight Loss	Exercise for Weight Loss	Exercise for Weight Loss	Small Group Personal Training	Pilates
5	Lifestyle Medicine	Lifestyle Medicine	Lifestyle Medicine	Traditional Strength Training	Traditional Strength Training

6	Outdoor Activities	Health/Well-being Coaching	Health/Well-being Coaching	Pilates	Fitness Programs for Older Adults
7	Body Weight Training	Outdoor Activities	Exercise is Medicine (EIM)	Pre- and Post-natal Fitness	Small Group Training
8	Health/Well-being Coaching	Functional Fitness Training	Strength Training with Free Weights	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Exercise for Mental Health
9	Functional Fitness Training	Body Weight Training	Outcome Measurements	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	Group Fitness Classes
10	Wearable Technology	Small Group Personal Training	Outdoor Activities	Group Fitness Classes	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)

Brief Discussion

The results of the 2025 fitness trends in Portugal have the same top 3 as in 2024, with Personal Training in 1st place, Employing Certified Exercise Professionals in the 2nd place, continuing to reveal a great concern about the quality of the professionals acting the fitness area, and Exercise for Weight Loss occupying the 3rd place. This 3rd trend can be explained by the high rate of obesity in Portugal, concerning that more than half of Portuguese adults tend to be overweight or obese (National Institute of Statistics, 2019; World Health Organization, 2020).

Personal Training and Small Group Personal Training were the 1st and 7th trends. In a characterization study of fitness professionals in Portugal (Ramos et al., 2021), personal training was the second most performed function as a fitness professional, and concerning the Portuguese Fitness Barometer of 2022, behind monthly fees, the personal trainer service was the second largest source of revenue in Portuguese gyms and 8% of Portuguese gyms are personal training studios (Pedragosa et al., 2023).

The 5th place is occupied, like the previous year, by Traditional Strength Training, rising from 8th place in 2023, 14th place in 2022 and 13th place in 2021 (Franco et al., 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). There is increasing scientific evidence that strength training is important for health (ACSM, 2021), which is reflected in several recommendations for physical activity (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020) and exercise (ACSM, 2021), which may be one of the justifications for its growth. The trend Fitness Programs for Older, 8th in 2024, occupying now the 6th position. Awareness towards the practice of physical exercise in this population is also increasing, with the WHO (2020) and other organizations (ACSM, 2021) indicating specific guidelines, and the encouragement of the National Health Service (SNS) to carry out programs with this population (SNS, 2017).

Mental health is a rising concern of the world, regarding the growing crisis of world mental health (World Health Organization, 2022b) and maybe this fact justifies that the trend of Exercise for Mental Health occupied this year the 8th position.

The trend of Group Fitness Classes was not in the top 20 in Portugal until 2022, it began to appear in 2023 with the slowdown of the pandemic and grew for 2024 (10th place) and 2025 (9th place). Group Fitness Classes is a very successful service in Portugal, with 81% of Portuguese gyms offering it (Pedragosa & Ferreira, 2024).

Functional Fitness Training was the last trend from the top 10, but this trend has always had good results in Portuguese studies, being the 9th, 8th, 11th, 16th and 10th place respectively in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 (Franco et al., 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024).

In the Top 20, the only trends that had never been part of it were Fitness Boutiques and Crosstraining. The growth of Fitness Boutiques may be related to the fact that they often offer one-to-one or small-group personal training services. Concerning Crosstraining, 38.7% of gyms offer this service (Pedragosa & Ferreira, 2024), which may justify its position.

Comparing the results obtained by the study of ACSM trends with the Portuguese trends, we can see a huge difference in the trends that belong to digital technology, which occupy the 1st, 2nd, and 7th position in the ACSM survey and, respectively, 18th, 27th, and 43rd trend in the Portuguese study. Considering this aspect, it can be concluded that there is not such a great appreciation of technology in the Portuguese fitness market compared to the American market. Regarding similarities, in the Top 10, there are 5 coinciding trends between the two studies, namely Exercise for Older Adults (3rd in the USA and 6th in Portugal), Exercise for Weight Loss (4th in the USA and 3rd in Portugal), Traditional Strength Training (5th in both countries), Exercise for Mental Health (8th in both countries) and Functional Training (9th in the USA and 10th in Portugal). It should be noted that the Personal Training trend (trend no. 1 in Portugal), occupies only 16th place in the USA and the trend Employing Certified Fitness Professionals, no. 2 in Portugal, occupies 15th position in the study from ACSM.

The main limitations of this study are related to the fact that the sample is not random and not representative of the population of professionals/students in the sector. This study aims to increase knowledge about fitness trends for 2025 in Portugal and help organizations and professionals adjust their services, products and programs offered.

References

- American College of Sports Medicine (2021). *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription* (11th Ed.). Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.
- Franco, S., Santos Rocha, R., Simões, V., Ramalho, F., Vieira, I., & Ramos, L. (2023). Tendencias de Fitness en Portugal para 2023 (Fitness Trends in Portugal for 2023). *Retos*, 48, 401–412. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v48.97094>
- Franco, S., Santos Rocha, R., Simões, V., Ramalho, F., Vieira, I., & Ramos, L. (2024). Tendencias de Fitness en Portugal para 2023 (Fitness Trends in Portugal for 2023). *Retos*, 57, 88-100. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v57.105198>
- Franco, S., Santos-Rocha, R., Ramalho, F., Simões, V., Vieira, I., Ramos, L. (2021). Fitness Trends in Portugal for 2021. *Cuadernos de Psicología del Deporte*, 21(2), 242-258. <https://doi.org/10.6018/cpd.467381>
- Franco, S., Santos-Rocha, R., Ramalho, F., Simões, V., Vieira, I., Ramos, L. (2022). Fitness Trends in Portugal for 2022. *Motricidade*, 18(2022). <https://doi.org/10.6063/motricidade.25847>
- National Health System (2017). National strategy for active and healthy ageing 2017-2025. Portuguese Republic. <https://www.sns.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ENEAS.pdf>
- National Institute of Statistic (2019). National Survey for Health. https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contexto=pi&indOcorrCod=0010212&selTab=tab0
- Pedragosa, V., Cardadeiro, E., & Santos, A. (2023). Fitness Barometer in Portugal for 2022. AGAPPortugalActivo.

Pedragosa, V., Ferreira, A. (2024). Fitness Barometer in Portugal for 2022. AGAP-PortugalActivo. Pordata (2023). 2021 CENSUS. Pordata.

<https://www.pordata.pt/censos/resultados/emdestaqueportugal-361>

Ramos, L., Esteves, D., Vieira, I., Franco, S., Simões, V. (2021). VidaProFit: Characterization of Fitness Professionals in Portugal (2021). *Motricidade*, 17(2021).





<https://doi.org/10.6063/motricidade.20727>


World Health Organization (2020). *WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour*. World Health Organization.

World Health Organization (2022a). WHO European Regional Obesity Report 2022. World Health Organization.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/353747/9789289057738-eng.pdf>

World Health Organization (2022b). World mental health report: transforming mental health for all. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>

Author Bios	Photo
<p>Susana Franco, Ph.D. sfranco@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt</p> <p>Tenured Associate Professor at Sport Science School of Rio Maior (ESDRM) - Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal</p> <p>Specialist in Fitness, Body-Mind and Exercise Pedagogy areas</p> <p>Publication of several scientific articles, books and chapters in Fitness, Body-Mind and Exercise Pedagogy areas</p> <p>Researcher at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT</p> <p>Participation in several European research and development projects</p> <p>Editor in Apunts (physical education and sport journal)</p>	
<p>Rita Santos-Rocha, Ph.D. ritasantosrocha@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt</p> <p>Tenured Associate Professor at Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior (ESDRM) - Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal.</p> <p>Researcher at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT</p> <p>Vice-President of the Portuguese Association of Exercise Physiologists (APFE)</p> <p>Member of the ACSM Exercise is Medicine® Education Committee</p> <p>Member of the ACSM Pregnancy and Postpartum Special interest Group.</p>	
<p>Fátima Ramalho, Ph.D. fatimaramalho@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt</p> <p>Adjunct Professor at Sport Science School of Rio Maior (ESDRM) - Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal</p> <p>Fitness specialist in the following areas: Strength Group Training, Body-Mind/Pilates and Personal Training (assessment and exercise prescription)</p> <p>Publication of several scientific articles, books and chapters focused on exercise programs for elderly, pregnant and postpartum women and postural conditioning</p> <p>Researcher at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT</p>	
<p>Vera Simões, Ph.D. verasimoes@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt</p> <p>Adjunct Professor in Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior - Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal</p> <p>Researcher at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT</p> <p>Publications (scientific/technical articles, books and chapters) in Fitness and Exercise Pedagogy areas</p> <p>Participation in several European research and development projects, in the Fitness area.</p>	

<p>Isabel Vieira, MSc isabelvieira@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt Guest Adjunct Professor at Sport Science School of Rio Maior, Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal Teacher at Fitness Academy Fitness specialist in the following areas: Strength Group Training, Choreographed Group Training Researcher (student of PhD) at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT Publications (scientific/technical articles and chapters) in Fitness and Exercise areas</p>	
<p>Liliana Ramos, Ph.D. lilianaramos@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt Adjunct Professor at Sport Science School of Rio Maior (ESDRM) - Santarém Polytechnic University, Portugal Researcher (student of PhD) at the Sport Physical activity and health Research & INovation CenTer – SPRINT Publications (scientific/technical articles, books and chapters) in Fitness and Exercise Pedagogy areas Fitness specialist in Choreographed Group Training</p>	