



Iberoamerican fitness trends for 2025: a regional comparative study

Tendencias iberoamericanas del fitness para 2025: un estudio comparativo regional

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Abstract

Introduction: The fitness industry continues adapting to customers' unique characteristics and needs across different regions. Studying fitness trends enables industry professionals to make informed decisions, seize new opportunities, and foster a culture of health and well-being. **Objective:** This observational and cross-sectional study aimed to determine the most relevant fitness trends in Ibero-America for the first time and examine any differences between global fitness trends for 2025.

Methodology: A national online survey was conducted in two countries of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) and three countries in the Americas (Mexico, Brazil, and Chile), following the methodology used by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) since 2006. An online questionnaire was sent to fitness professionals to assess the relevance of over 50 fitness trends.

Discussion: A total of 5,262 responses were collected across the 5 national surveys, with an overall mean response rate of 13.44%. Some of the most relevant fitness trends in Ibero-America for 2025 include: exercise for weight loss, personal training, employing certified exercise professionals, fitness programs for older adults, and traditional strength training.

Conclusions: The present findings highlight the similarities in the results of the Ibero-American surveys and their significant differences in global fitness trends. The results can help fitness professionals plan services and make strategic decisions based on the priorities of each Ibero-American region.

Keywords

Ibero-America; regional fitness trends; health and fitness industry; ACSM survey.

Resumen

Introducción: La industria del fitness continúa adaptándose a las características y necesidades únicas de los clientes en diferentes regiones. Estudiar las tendencias en fitness permite a los profesionales del sector tomar decisiones informadas, aprovechar nuevas oportunidades y fomentar una cultura de salud y bienestar.

Objetivo: Este estudio observacional y transversal tuvo como objetivo determinar por primera vez las tendencias de fitness más relevantes en Iberoamérica y examinar posibles diferencias con respecto a las tendencias globales de fitness para 2025.

Metodología: Se realizó una encuesta nacional en línea en dos países de la Península Ibérica (España y Portugal) y tres países del continente americano (México, Brasil y Chile), siguiendo la metodología utilizada por el Colegio Americano de Medicina del Deporte (ACSM, por sus siglas en inglés) desde 2006. Se envió un cuestionario en línea a profesionales del fitness para evaluar la relevancia de más de 50 tendencias del sector.

Discusión: Se recopilaron un total de 5,262 respuestas en las cinco encuestas nacionales, con una tasa de respuesta media del 13.44 %. Algunas de las tendencias de fitness más relevantes en Iberoamérica para 2025 incluyen: ejercicio para la pérdida de peso, entrenamiento personal, contratación de profesionales del ejercicio certificados, programas de ejercicio para adultos mayores y entrenamiento de fuerza tradicional.

Conclusiones: Los resultados obtenidos ponen de manifiesto las similitudes entre las encuestas iberoamericanas y sus diferencias significativas con respecto a las tendencias globales en fitness. Los hallazgos pueden ayudar a los profesionales del sector a planificar servicios y tomar decisiones estratégicas según las prioridades de cada región iberoamericana.

Palabras clave

Iberoamérica; tendencias regionales en fitness; industria de la salud y el fitness; encuesta de ACSM.

Introduction

The global fitness sector is constantly evolving, driven by economic, social, and technological advances and the efforts of millions of professionals worldwide who strive to meet the diverse needs and exceed the expectations of a growing number of people interested in improving their health and well-being. These new clients present a wide range of characteristics, goals, needs, preferences, and challenges, inspiring ongoing innovation within the industry. The remarkable growth of the health and fitness industry since the 1970s is evidenced by the proliferation of commercial gyms, private fitness clubs, franchise chains, international fitness magazines, fitness professionals, and other industry players (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014). Furthermore, there is an increased number of active memberships, participation in personal and small group training, use of health clubs, and demand for qualified exercise professionals such as certified personal trainers, clinical exercise physiologists, and athletic trainers (A'Naja et al., 2024). Nonetheless, while this industry continues to showcase astounding growth and innovation worldwide, the prevalence of sedentary behavior and obesity has reached unprecedented levels in human history, with almost 50% of the adult population currently leading a sedentary lifestyle and more than 60% of them being overweight or obese (Batrakoulis, 2019). This global epidemic is producing public health challenges in both economically developed and developing regions of the world (Gonzalez Ramirez & Bolanos Munoz, 2023). The World Health Assembly (WHA) ratified a new Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA), targeted to reduce the global levels of sedentary behavior in adults and adolescents by 15% by 2030 (World Health Organization, 2019). According to the WHO guidelines for physical activity, all adults should undertake 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity (PA), or some equivalent combination, per week. Additionally, the guidelines recommend engaging in regular muscle-strengthening activities for all age groups and reducing sedentary behavior throughout the day (Bull et al., 2020). Regular PA is known to reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases, poor physical and cognitive function, and mental health, and has benefits for mental well-being and weight maintenance (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). In addition, recent efforts have led to the publication of a global consensus on exercise recommendations for healthy longevity in older adults, highlighting the central role of physical activity in aging societies and its contribution to public health worldwide (Izquierdo et al., 2025). These developments reinforce the need to adapt fitness programs and industry practices to the evolving demographic landscape. For this same reason, the global health and fitness industry has both the responsibility and the opportunity to help minimize the negative effects of physical inactivity and obesity and promote healthy and active lifestyles among the population by offering innovative and engaging ways to participate in safe and regular PA.

Since 2006, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the world's leading organization on sports medicine and exercise science with more than 50,000 members and certified professionals, has been conducting the annual worldwide survey of fitness trends in the health and fitness industry aiming to detect the most popular, valuable, and safe exercise modes (Thompson, 2006-2023; A'Naja et al., 2024). This annual survey gathers data from thousands of certified fitness professionals around the world to determine the most influential fitness trends for the coming year in the United States and other regions of the world (A'Naja et al., 2024). This annual survey is not intended to evaluate products or services that might appear during that year but rather guide owners, operators, program directors, health club managers, and fitness professionals in making informed business decisions to support customer engagement, as well as recognize trends and needs specific to the regions where it is developed to support the steady growth of the industry (Thompson, 2023). For this reason, the survey highlights the distinction between a trend and a fad. According to Thompson (2023), a fad is a fashion adopted enthusiastically for a short time and then quickly abandoned. In contrast, a trend represents a broader change or development in a situation or in the way people behave (A'Naja, 2024). Due to the need to study the development of the fitness industry, the fitness trend survey is conducted annually to reflect its dynamic nature and continuous development and expansion. As a result, some trends may be highly relevant for several years (e.g., wearable technology) or disappear from the survey over time (e.g., reimbursement for qualified fitness professionals) (A'Naja 2025). Additionally, the ACSM annual survey collects data from different regions, enabling international comparative analyses to assess the current state of the global fitness industry (Kercher et al., 2023).

To date, several regional and national surveys have been published that faithfully replicate the ACSM methodology to study the specific context of the fitness sector in these regions and create awareness of the most relevant health and fitness trends for that year (Batrakoulis et al., 2023). Specifically, the status of fitness trends in Spain (Veiga et al., 2017-2025), Portugal (Franco et al., 2021-2025), Brazil (Amaral & Palma, 2019), Mexico (Gómez et al., 2021-2025), and Chile (Giakoni-Ramírez et al., 2024, 2025) have been studied a total of nine, five, six, five, and two times, respectively. The fitness industry in these five Ibero-American countries has experienced rapid growth since the last decade. Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile comprise a population of approximately 423.43 million people. Spain stands out as the fourth largest fitness market in Europe, with 5.5 million gym members and generating around 2.4 billion euros in revenue. In Portugal, the industry is becoming increasingly professionalized, with a growing number of fitness professionals and a projected revenue of \$5.31 million in 2022, expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.01% through 2029. According to data from 2023, Portugal had a penetration rate of 6,9%, with approximately 708,568 clients in 1056 gyms/health clubs (Pedragosa & Ferreira, 2024). Brazil, with a population of 216.4 million people, has seen a rapid expansion of its fitness market, with a projected CAGR of 9.5% between 2023 and 2030. Mexico, with a population of 128.5 million, projects a revenue of \$23.43 million in 2022 and a CAGR of 5.97% through 2029. Finally, Chile anticipates a revenue of \$9.5 million in 2022, with a CAGR of 6.42% through 2029.

The increasing focus on regional fitness trend studies reflects fitness professionals' need for reliable data to make informed decisions, ensuring the sustainable growth of this industry at a local level (A'Naja 2025).. These regional studies also enable future comparisons at both regional and international levels, allowing for more comprehensive fitness trend analyses. An example is the fitness trend studies of Europe (Batrakoulis, 2019) and Southern Europe (Batrakoulis et al., 2023), which showed alignment among the top fitness trends of the participating countries but notable differences compared to the outcomes of the global surveys. Additionally, regional fitness trend surveys integrate the expertise and perspectives of hundreds of professionals on fitness trends in their regions (Thompson, 2023). The fitness industry should leverage these survey results to guide business decisions, investments, product innovation, professional development, and the promotion of a culture of health and well-being (A'Naja, 2025). It is, therefore, essential that fitness professionals have access to reliable data to understand the most relevant trends and the current state of the fitness and health industry in Ibero-America. Despite the vast geographical distances between the countries in this region, they all share a very similar history and culture, which gives rise to similarities in many aspects. Moreover, it's posited that conducting this study may foster greater collaboration and unity across countries, encouraging fitness professionals from various parts of the world to support and assist each other in achieving a shared goal: moving the fitness industry forward and promoting a more active and healthier global population. Thus, the purpose of this observational, cross-sectional study was to: a) identify for the first time the most relevant health and fitness trends for fitness professionals in Ibero-America, b) examine potential differences in fitness trends across Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile, and c) assess any potential discrepancies between regional results and those reported in the ACSM Global Fitness Trends Survey for 2025.

Method

Study design

This study employed an observational, cross-sectional design with five national online surveys and a descriptive approach to analyze the most relevant health and fitness trends in Ibero-America and compare them with the main findings from the worldwide survey of fitness trends for 2025. The methodology of these surveys mirrored that of previous fitness trend surveys conducted by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), following similar criteria used in national (Veiga et al., 2024; Franco et al., 2024; Gómez et al., 2024; Reyes, 2023; Batrakoulis et al., 2024), regional (Kercher et al., 2021-2023; Vorobiova, 2019) and global fitness trend surveys (Thompson, 2006-2023; A'Naja et al., 2024, 2025) over the past 19 years. The participating countries in this study represent two Iberian Peninsula countries (Spain and Portugal) and three Central and South American countries (Brazil, Mexico, and Chile).

Sample recruitment and inclusion criteria

Eligible participants included adults of any gender aged 18 or older from any occupational role, experience level, education, work status, or annual salary within the health and fitness industry. The survey was distributed via social and professional networks (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter), fitness-related newsletters, national registries of exercise professionals, and local university departments specializing in physical education, exercise, or sports sciences across all participating countries. In total, the online survey was sent electronically to more than 50,000 individuals in the five participating Ibero-American countries, with Mexico being the country that sent the most surveys, with a total of 32,151 (Table 1). All respondents were fitness professionals from Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile with various occupational roles (e.g., exercise instructors, personal trainers, professors, students, medical professionals, business owners, and freelancers).

Table 1. Demographics of the Survey Respondents in Ibero-America and Survey Characteristics

	Spain	Portugal	Brazil	Mexico	Chile	Total / Mean
Sent to:	6,799	N/A	4,500	32,151	2,489	45,939
N=	411	554	1,728	1,988	581	5,262
Response Rate	6.20%	N/A	18.32%	5.90%	23.34%	13.44%
Men	74%	52%	64.18%	68.20%	52.67%	62.01%
Women	26%	47%	34.84%	31.70%	47.33%	37.374%
+10 years of experience	68.80%	46.7%	68.99%	22.6%	18.76%	45.17%
Full time	64.20%	39.2%	57.40%	32.6%	32.53%	45.19%
Private practice/ own business	40.7%	N/A	48%	49%	51.64%	47.335%
Number of trends included	56	51	45	55	45	50.4
Weeks the survey was open	6 weeks	8 weeks	6 weeks	6 weeks	10 weeks	7.2
Financial incentive	No	No	No	No	No	N/A

Note: N/A information not available in that country's fitness trends survey

Data collection tool

Following the methodology outlined by the ACSM in its 2025 Worldwide Fitness Trends Survey (A'Naja et al., 2025), five web-based questionnaires were developed to identify the most relevant fitness trends for 2025 in the five participating Ibero-American countries. The surveys were designed using online platforms such as Google Forms, Survio, or SurveyMonkey to facilitate accessibility and participation. They included a comprehensive list of 40 to 60 fitness trends, identified through input from experienced health and fitness professionals, educators, and academics, as well as through analysis of trends included in previous editions of regional surveys. Some countries opted to exclude certain trends from the ACSM survey (e.g., Reimbursement for Fitness Professionals) and incorporate emerging trends considered relevant to their local fitness sector (e.g., Crosstraining) (Franco et al., 2024). The surveys incorporated seven different trend categories (Figure 2) to help participants better interpret individual trends and facilitate further analysis. Additionally, the introduction clarified the distinction between a “fad” and a “trend” using dictionary definitions, and a brief description accompanied each fitness trend listed to facilitate participant understanding. The questionnaire was structured to collect data from health and fitness professionals using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10 for each included fitness trend, where “1” indicated the lowest probability of that trend gaining relevance in the upcoming year and “10” indicated the highest probability. Additionally, the survey gathered sociodemographic information, including gender, age, education, occupation, professional experience, work status, career choice, and annual salary of the respondents. The survey was intended to be completed in less than 15 minutes. To ensure accessibility, the included trends were translated from their original English version into local languages (Spanish and Portuguese). The translations were managed by authors from each participating country and were then reviewed by bilingual exercise science experts to ensure accuracy and consistency with the original content.

Figure 1. Fitness Trends Categories



Recruitment and study period

The research was conducted electronically in mid-2024 over a period of 6-10 weeks in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. No financial or material incentives were offered to participants in any of the participating countries. Several reminders were sent via email throughout the study period to encourage participation. The online survey was completed anonymously, and all participants provided informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire. The first page of the online survey outlined the research objectives, confidentiality measures, and participants' right to withdraw at any time. At the end of the survey, respondents had the opportunity to suggest emerging fitness trends not included in the current survey for consideration in future editions.

Data analysis

The results of the five surveys were analyzed by calculating the average scores assigned to each fitness trend, ranking them from highest to lowest. The first 20 trends identified through this process constitute the "top 20" of the most relevant fitness trends for the following year in that region. The information collected from the fitness trend surveys in the Ibero-American countries was then analyzed with the results of the ACSM worldwide fitness trends survey for 2025. All descriptive analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 software (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Overall, the five national online fitness trend surveys collected a total of 5,262 responses from health and fitness professionals over the 6-10 weeks of data collection. The average response rate (responses divided by the number of emails sent) was 13.44%. This figure does not include data from Portugal, where the response rate was not calculated in its annual survey. Based on demographic characteristics (Table 1), the majority of respondents were male (average of 62.01%) and had less than 10 years of fitness industry experience (average of 45.17%). Among respondents, an average of 45.19% work in the private sector or have their own business, and 47.34% are employed full-time (data not provided in the Portugal survey). The number of fitness trends reported in national surveys varied across countries. Spain recorded the highest number, listing a total of 56 trends, while Brazil and Chile reported the fewest, including only the 45 trends featured in the ACSM survey. All candidate trends were ranked from the highest average score (most relevant trend) to the lowest (least relevant trend). A total of 45 different fitness trends were reported in the top 20 of the six surveys included. Table 1 reflects the comparison of the top 20 fitness trends for 2025 between Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and the

world. On the other hand, Table 2 employs the ACSM categorization of trends in eight different groups (Figure 2), these being: i) programming, ii) training modalities, iii) special populations, iv) exercise setting, v) fitness business model, vi) digital technology, vii) recovery-based therapies and viii) exclusive regional trends. Finally, Figure 2 shows the top 5 most relevant fitness trends in Ibero-America and the world for 2025.

Figure 2. Most relevant fitness trends for Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and the world for 2025

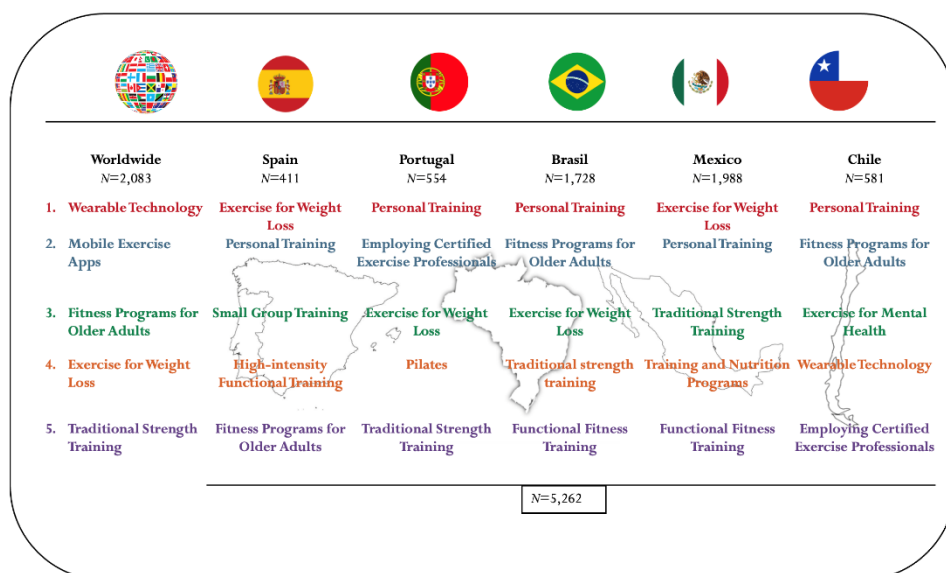


Table 4 summarizes the positions of the main fitness trends included in the top 20 of the Ibero-American and global surveys for 2025. In summary, 7 trends were included in the top 20 of the 5 Ibero-American countries and of the results reported by the ACSM (exercise for weight loss, personal training, outdoor activities, fitness programs for older adults, traditional strength training, functional fitness training, high-intensity interval training). In turn, 4 trends appeared in 5 of the surveys (exercise for mental health, bodyweight training, employing certified exercise professionals, wearable technology), and 2 trends appeared in only 4 of the 6 surveys (multidisciplinary teams, mobile exercise apps). In sum, exercise for weight loss, personal training, and traditional strength training were widely selected by health and fitness professionals as some of the most popular trends in the Ibero-American region for 2025. Similarly, trends related to exercise modalities such as functional fitness training, high-intensity interval training, and bodyweight training were highly relevant, as were fitness programs for older adults. Furthermore, the trends of employing certified exercise professionals and creating multidisciplinary teams of professionals were also quite popular among respondents. Regarding fitness trend categories, the most relevant were programming and training modalities (4 trends each), fitness business models and digital technology (2 trends each), and exercise training for special populations (1 trend). However, when comparing the results of the surveys of the Ibero-American countries with those reported by the ACSM in the global survey of fitness trends, we can appreciate that although a large number of trends and categories are relatively similar in relevance, trends related to digital technology (wearable technology and mobile exercise apps) occupy greater relevance at a global level, occupying the first two positions in the top-20 of the survey (positions #1 and #2, respectively). Finally, a total of 12 trends exclusive to the national surveys managed to enter the top-20 of some of the Ibero-American countries (high-intensity functional training, nutrition and healthy diet programs, group classes, monitoring training results, searching for new market niches in the fitness sector, group fitness classes, crosstraining, training and nutrition programs, nutrition and healthy diet programs, employing professionals with degrees in physical activity or related careers, cardiometabolic rehabilitation, recreational and sports clubs for adults). Specifically, Spain was the country that had the most exclusive trends within the national top-20, followed by Mexico, Portugal, and Chile (5, 4, 2, and 1 exclusive fitness trends, respectively).

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Top 20 Fitness Trends Among Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and the World for 2025

#	Spain	Portugal	Brazil	Mexico	Chile	World
1	Exercise for Weight Loss	Personal Training	Personal Training	Exercise for Weight Loss	Personal Training	Wearable Technology
2	Personal Training	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Personal Training	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Mobile Exercise Apps
3	Small Group Training	Exercise for Weight Loss	Exercise for Weight Loss	Traditional Strength Training	Exercise for Mental Health	Fitness Programs for Older Adults
4	High Intensity Functional Training (HIFT)*	Pilates	Traditional Strength Training	Training and Nutrition Programs*	Wearable Technology	Exercise for Weight Loss
5	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Traditional Strength Training	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Traditional Strength Training
6	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Exercise for Mental Health	Exercise for Mental Health	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
7	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Small Group Training	Home Exercise Gyms	Nutrition and Healthy Diet Programs*	Outdoor Fitness Activities	Data-Driven Training Technology
8	Mobile Exercise Apps	Exercise for Mental Health	Bodyweight Training	Youth Athletic Development	Exercise for Children's Health	Exercise for Mental Health
9	Traditional Strength Training	Group Fitness Classes*	On-Demand Exercise Classes	Walking/Running/Jogging/Cycling Clubs	Exercise is Medicine	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)
10	Nutrition and Healthy Diet Programs*	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Wearable Technology	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	Exercise for Weight Loss	Health/Wellness Coaching
11	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Outdoor Fitness Activities	Exercise for Children's Health	Bodyweight Training	Pilates	Youth Athletic Development
12	Wearable Technology	Pre- and Post-natal Fitness	Lifestyle Medicine	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Recreational and Sports Clubs for Adults*	Influencer/Ambassador-Led Fitness Programs
13	Bodyweight training	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Worksite Health Promotion	Outdoor Fitness Activities
14	Boutique Fitness Studios	Exercise is Medicine	Health/Wellness Coaching	Mobile Exercise Apps	Hot and Cold Therapies	On-demand Exercise Classes
15	Group Training*	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	Pre- and Postnatal Fitness	Employing Professionals with Degrees in Physical Activity or Related Careers*	Data-driven Training Technology	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals
16	Outdoor Fitness Activities	Boutique Fitness Studios	Worksite Health Promotion	Cardiometabolic Rehabilitation*	Traditional Strength Training	Personal Training
17	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	Crosstraining*	Online Personal Training	Low-Cost and Budget Gyms	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	Exercise is Medicine
18	Low-Cost and Budget Gyms	Wearable Technology	Mobile Exercise Apps	Outdoor Fitness Activities	Small Group Training	Bodyweight training
19	Monitoring training results*	Bodyweight training	Outdoor Fitness Activities	Exercise for Children's Health	Pre- and Postnatal Fitness	Lifestyle Medicine
20	Searching for new market niches in the fitness sector*	Youth Athletic Development	Data-driven Training Technology	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Hot and Cold Therapies

Note: * trend exclusive from that country's fitness trends survey

Table 3. A grouped comparative analysis of top 20 fitness trends in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and the world for 2025

#	Spain	#	Portugal	#	Brazil	#	Mexico	#	Chile	#	World
Trends related to programming:											
1	Exercise for Weight Loss	1	Personal Training	1	Personal Training	1	Exercise for Weight Loss	1	Personal Training	4	Exercise for Weight Loss
2	Personal Training	3	Exercise for Weight Loss	3	Exercise for Weight Loss	2	Personal Training	3	Exercise for Mental Health	8	Exercise for Mental Health
3	Small Group training	7	Small Group Training	6	Exercise for Mental Health	6	Exercise for Mental Health	7	Outdoor Fitness Activities	10	Health/Wellness Coaching
16	Outdoor Fitness Activities	8	Exercise for Mental Health	12	Lifestyle Medicine	9	Adult Recreation and Sport Clubs	9	Exercise is Medicine	13	Outdoor Fitness Activities
		11	Outdoor Fitness Activities	14	Health/Wellness Coaching	18	Outdoor Fitness Activities	10	Exercise for Weight Loss	16	Personal Training

		14	Exercise is Medicine	19	Outdoor Fitness Activities		18	Small Group Training	17	Exercise is Medicine	
									19	Lifestyle Medicine	
Trends related to training modalities:											
6	High-Intensity Interval Training	4	Pilates	4	Traditional Strength Training	3	Traditional Strength Training	6	High-Intensity Interval Training	5	Traditional Strength Training
7	Functional Fitness Training	5	Traditional Strength Training	5	Functional Fitness Training	5	Functional Fitness Training	11	Pilates	6	High-Intensity Interval Training
9	Traditional Strength Training	10	Functional Fitness Training	8	Bodyweight Training	11	Bodyweight Training	16	Traditional Strength Training	9	Functional Fitness Training
13	Bodyweight training	15	High-Intensity Interval Training	13	High-Intensity Interval Training	20	High-Intensity Interval Training	20	Functional Fitness Training	18	Bodyweight Training
		19	Bodyweight Training								
Trends related to exercise training for special populations:											
5	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	6	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	2	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	8	Youth Athletic Development	2	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	3	Fitness Programs for Older Adults
		12	Pre- and Post-natal Fitness	11	Exercise for Children's Health	13	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	8	Exercise for Children's Health	11	Youth Athletic Development
		20	Youth Athletic Development	15	Pre- and Postnatal Fitness	19	Exercise for Children's Health	19	Pre- and Post-natal Fitness		
Trends related to exercise settings:											
14	Boutique Fitness Studios	16	Boutique Fitness Studios	7	Home Exercise Gyms	17	Low-Cost and Budget Gyms	13	Worksite Health Promotion		
18	Low-Cost and Budget Gyms			16	Worksite Health Promotion						
				17	Online Personal Training						
Trends related to fitness business models:											
#	Spain	#	Portugal	#	Brazil	#	Mexico	#	Chile	#	World
11	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	2	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals			10	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	5	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	12	Influencer/Ambassador-Led Fitness Programs
17	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	13	Multidisciplinary Work Teams			12	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	17	Multidisciplinary Work Teams	15	Employing Certified Exercise Professionals
Trends related to digital technology:											
8	Mobile Exercise Apps	18	Wearable Technology	9	On-Demand Exercise Classes	14	Mobile Exercise Apps	4	Wearable Technology	1	Wearable Technology
12	Wearable Technology			10	Wearable Technology			15	Data-driven Training Technology	2	Mobile Exercise Apps
				18	Mobile Exercise Apps					7	Data-Driven Training Technology
				20	Data-driven Training Technology					14	On-demand exercise classes
Trends related to Recovery-Based Therapies:											
								14	Hot and Cold Therapies	20	Hot and Cold Therapies
Exclusive Regional Trends:											
4	High Intensity Functional Training (HIFT)	9	Group Fitness Classes			4	Training and nutrition programs	12	Recreational and sports clubs for adults		
10	Nutrition and healthy diet programs	17	Crosstraining			7	Nutrition and healthy diet programs				
15	Group Training					15	Employing Professionals				

		with Degrees in Physical Activity or Related Careers	
19	Monitoring training results	16	Cardiometabolic rehabilitation
20	Searching for new market niches in the fitness sector		

Table 4. Trends Included in the Top-20 of Four to Six Surveys

Fitness trend	Trend category	# Spain	# Portugal	# Brazil	# Mexico	# Chile	# World	Mean
Exercise for Weight Loss	Programming	1	3	3	1	10	4	3.67
Personal training	Programming	2	1	1	2	1	16	3.83
Exercise for mental health	Programming	N/A	8	6	6	3	7	6
Outdoor activities	Programming	6	11	19	18	7	13	12.33
Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Exercise training for special populations	5	6	2	13	2	3	5.17
Traditional Strength Training	Training modalities	9	5	4	3	16	5	7.67
Functional Fitness Training (FFT)	Training modalities	7	10	5	5	20	9	9.33
High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)	Training modalities	6	15	13	20	6	6	11
Bodyweight training	Training modalities	13	19	8	11	N/A	18	13.8
Employing Certified Exercise Professionals	Fitness business model	11	2	N/A	12	5	15	9
Multidisciplinary teams	Fitness business model	17	13	N/A	10	17	N/A	14.25
Wearable Technology	Digital technology	12	18	10	N/A	4	1	9
Mobile Exercise apps	Digital technology	8	N/A	18	14	N/A	2	10.5

Note: N/A trend that is not among the top 20 in that country's fitness trends survey

Discussion

Key findings summarized

This observational and cross-sectional study aimed to identify the most relevant health and fitness trends in Ibero-America for the first time and examine differences between regional and global fitness trends for 2025. A national online survey was conducted in five Ibero-American countries—Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile—replicating the methodology used in similar surveys by the ACSM. A total of 5,262 responses from health and fitness professionals were collected, assessing the relevance of over 50 fitness trends across seven key categories. The findings reveal that exercise for weight loss, exercise for mental health, and fitness programs for older adults are highly relevant for health and fitness professionals, consistent with current global concerns about longevity, rising overweight and obesity rates, and mental health issues. In addition, personal training and outdoor exercise were consistently valued across the surveyed countries, emphasizing both the critical role of exercise professionals in designing, guiding, and evaluating effective training programs and the flexibility of PA in various settings. Outdoor exercise, in particular, offers the added benefit of engaging with nature, which can enhance both physical and mental well-being, making fitness more accessible and enjoyable for diverse populations. Regarding training modalities, the most relevant trends included traditional strength training, functional fitness training (FFT), high-intensity interval training (HIIT), and bodyweight training, all of which emphasize strength development, mobility, and endurance. HIIT and bodyweight training, in particular, offer accessible and time-efficient exercise options that require little to no equipment. From a fitness business model perspective, employing certified exercise professionals and incorporating multidisciplinary teams were identified as key trends, reinforcing the need for well-qualified professionals integrated into allied health services to support the growth and credibility of the Ibero-American fitness sector. Compared to the ACSM Global Survey of Fitness Trends, notable differences emerged, particularly in the adoption of digital technology, with wearable fitness devices and mobile exercise apps ranking higher globally than in Ibero-America. This suggests that while the regional fitness sector continues to develop, the prominence of technology-driven fitness solutions may increase in the coming years. Additionally, country-specific trends such as cross-training, nutrition and

healthy diet programs, and cardiometabolic rehabilitation highlight unique regional preferences. The presence of distinct trends in different regions underscores the value of conducting regional fitness trend surveys, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of fitness sector dynamics and exclusive trends. Like other parts of the world, Ibero-America faces an epidemic of insufficient PA, obesity, and mental health concerns, all of which increase the risk of non-communicable diseases, reduced physical and cognitive function, and poor mental well-being (Strain et al., 2024). Regular PA fosters physiological adaptations that enhance exercise capacity and overall health, regardless of age, gender, or existing chronic conditions (Atakan et al., 2021). To ensure that the fitness industry remains effective, engaging, and evidence-based, continuous research on emerging trends is essential. By tracking and adapting to both global and regional trends, the sector can better promote regular PA, health, and well-being, offering safe, innovative, and high-quality programs, services, and products. In the following sections, we will explore the most significant fitness trends in Ibero-America for 2025 and their impact on health and fitness professionals.

Programming

Exercise for weight loss

This trend refers to exercise programs designed for individuals living with overweight or obesity, primarily aimed at promoting calorie expenditure and fat loss. These programs typically combine moderate-to-vigorous aerobic exercise with strength training and are often paired with dietary interventions to improve eating behaviors and create a negative energy balance, ultimately leading to weight loss. The WHO defines overweight as a body mass index (BMI) exceeding 25 kg/m² and obesity as a BMI over 30 kg/m². These conditions are characterized by excessive fat accumulation, which increases the risk of various health complications such as type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), hypertension, dyslipidemia, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), depression, and several forms of cancer, among other conditions (Scully et al., 2021). Over the past 30 years, global obesity and overweight rates have doubled among adults and quadrupled among children and adolescents. In 2022 alone, 43% of adults aged 18 and older were classified as overweight, and 16% were living with obesity (NCD-RisC, 2024). While the benefits of exercise extend beyond weight loss, regular physical activity should be a key component of long-term weight management strategies (A'Naja et al., 2025). Effective weight loss programs aim for gradual and sustained fat reduction while preserving or increasing muscle mass to promote body recomposition, being the simultaneous reduction of fat mass (FM) and maintenance or increase of skeletal muscle mass (SMM) (Bonilla et al., 2024). This trend ranks among the top 3 fitness trends in four of the included Ibero-American countries (Spain #1, Mexico #1, Portugal #3, Brazil #3) and is also in the top 10 in Chile and the international ACSM survey (Chile #10, World #4). The widespread popularity of this trend is expected since the prevalence of overweight and obesity will continue to increase globally over the next decade, with the steepest increases expected to occur among children and adolescents (Ferreira et al., 2024). Many Ibero-American countries have experienced a rapid increase in overweight and obesity rates, driven by regional characteristics arising from complex interactions between multiple factors, including the physical environment, food availability, economic and political interests, social inequities, limited access to scientific knowledge, cultural influences, behavioral patterns, and genetics (Ferreira et al., 2024). Increasingly sedentary lifestyles, declining PA levels, coupled with the widespread consumption of unhealthy diets high in refined carbohydrates, trans fats, and added sugars, aggravated by genetic, endocrine, metabolic, and environmental influences, have significantly contributed to the rise in obesity rates in recent decades (Upadhyay et al., 2018). This situation represents a great opportunity for health and fitness professionals in Ibero-American countries, who can focus on creating weight loss programs for different sectors of the population (adolescents, students, workers, seniors) to help them achieve their health goals safely and effectively. Lastly, the emergence of contemporary anti-obesity medications (AOMs), which are highly effective for obesity management and related comorbidities, necessitates awareness among fitness professionals regarding their impact on PA participation (Rogers, 2024). These medications often cause side effects such as gastrointestinal discomfort and fatigue, which may discourage individuals from engaging in high-intensity exercise. Thus, promoting enjoyable and sustainable forms of PA can enhance adherence, improve self-efficacy, and help mitigate weight-related stigma.

Personal training

This trend refers to traditional personal training, where a certified trainer works exclusively with a client to achieve a fitness-related goal through face-to-face sessions. Together, the trainer and client establish realistic objectives, assess fitness levels, create an action plan, and engage in personalized training tailored to the client's needs, whether in a commercial gym, home gym, or other settings (Thompson, 2023). Personal training offers consumers valuable benefits, including expert guidance, safe and effective exercise practices, and ongoing support and accountability. This trend has gained significant prominence in surveys across Ibero-American countries, ranking first in Portugal, Brazil, and Chile and second in Spain and Mexico. The trend's strong standing in Ibero-American countries underscores its importance among health and fitness professionals, reinforcing the profession's role in promoting PA, health, and well-being. This popularity may be linked to rising global rates of sedentary behavior, overweight, and obesity (Gonzalez Ramirez & Bolaños Muñoz, 2023). However, it is noteworthy that personal training ranks significantly lower (#16) in the ACSM global survey, suggesting a disparity between Ibero-American preferences and global trends. The widespread acceptance of personal training in these countries indicates that the profession is likely to continue expanding and evolving in the coming years.

Exercise for mental health

Exercise for mental health is a trend included for the first time in the 2024 worldwide survey (A'Naja et al., 2025). This trend emphasizes exercise programs designed to improve various aspects of mental well-being, such as reducing symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression while promoting overall psychological and physical health. Depressive disorders are the second leading cause of global disease burden, accounting for over 44 million years lived with disability. These conditions are associated with increased medical comorbidities, higher healthcare costs, and premature mortality, affecting people of all ethnicities, ages, and genders (Cooper, 2020). The cost of mental health conditions to the global economy is estimated to reach US\$16 trillion by 2030 (Patel et al., 2018). Notably, individuals who engage in higher levels of PA significantly reduce their risk of developing depression and major depressive disorder compared to those with lower activity levels. Specifically, meeting the recommended 150 minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity is associated with a 22% reduction in the risk of incident depression in adults and a 21% reduction in older adults (Schuch et al., 2018). Exercise offers a self-administered, cost-effective, and accessible intervention with fewer negative side effects than medication. Evidence supports the role of PA in alleviating anxiety and depression, particularly for individuals experiencing long-term psychological distress (Cooper, 2020). This trend ranks #3 in Chile and is within the top 10 in the other surveyed countries, except Spain (Brazil #6, Mexico #6, Portugal #8, World #7). Despite the growing recognition of exercise as a mental health intervention, specific exercise guidelines for optimizing mental health benefits across diverse populations have not yet been established. However, it remains the responsibility of exercise professionals to encourage lifelong active habits, address individual barriers to participation, and create safe, engaging exercise programs that enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Outdoor fitness activities

Outdoor fitness activities encompass a wide range of exercises performed in natural environments such as parks, mountains, trails, and lakes. These activities include hiking, kayaking, skiing, cross-country running, cycling, horseback riding, and climbing. They can vary from short sessions to full-day events, such as marathons or multi-day excursions. Unlike gym memberships, outdoor spaces are freely accessible and available to everyone locally. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis found that PA in natural environments provides greater psychological benefits than exercising in urban settings (Wicks et al., 2022). Outdoor exercise offers a dual advantage, combining the well-documented benefits of PA with the restorative effects of being in nature, promoting overall health and well-being. This trend gained significant relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic, as outdoor exercises were considered a safe and viable alternative to indoor exercises, reducing the risk of contagion and helping reduce stress and anxiety levels (Wicks et al., 2022). Outdoor exercise equipment (OEE) has also become increasingly popular as a cost-effective strategy to promote PA (Sami et al., 2020). This trend consistently ranks within the top 20 across Ibero-American countries and in the ACSM worldwide survey (Spain #6, Chile #7, Portugal #11, Mexico #18, Brazil #19, World #13). Its widespread appeal among fitness professionals and clients is largely due to its affordability, accessibility, variety, and additional benefits linked to nature. As a result, outdoor fitness is emerging as a promising alternative to commercial gyms.

Exercise training for special populations

Fitness programs for older adults

This trend focuses on exercise programs designed for older adults of retirement age, which are supervised by certified professionals and tailored to their specific needs to ensure safety and effectiveness. According to the WHO 2020 guidelines PA and sedentary behavior, older adults should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity, or a combination of both, per week. Additionally, they should perform muscle-strengthening and balance-improving exercises at least twice a week (Bull et al., 2020). Regular PA is a fundamental strategy for maintaining health and well-being in this population, preventing chronic diseases, improving quality of life, and promoting independent living. However, individuals aged 60 and older are less likely to meet recommended PA levels than other age groups, highlighting the need for evidence-based supervised fitness programs that can engage this population into more active lifestyle habits (Strain et al., 2024). This trend ranks highly in all of the included fitness trends surveys, including Brazil (#2), Chile (#2), the world (#3), Spain (#5), Portugal (#6), and Mexico (#13). As global life expectancy rises every decade, it becomes increasingly important for older adults to develop active and healthy lifestyles throughout their lives (Aldas-Vargas et al., 2021). Furthermore, the steady decline in fertility rates across high-income countries has contributed to population aging (Bloom et al., 2024), which may explain the increasing relevance of this trend in Ibero-American countries. Regular, supervised PA is a safe and cost-effective strategy to combat conditions affecting this population, such as sarcopenia—an age-related loss of muscle mass, strength, and function that increases the risk of frailty and falls (Cruz-Jentof et al., 2019). Fitness professionals have a unique opportunity to support older adults in achieving their health goals, enhancing longevity, and improving their quality of life. Fitness programs for older adults should incorporate aerobic exercise, muscle strengthening, and balance activities. Additionally, they should prioritize safety and engagement, provide education on healthy habits, and be evidence-based. Collaboration with other health professionals, such as nutritionists and psychologists, can further enhance program effectiveness and safety.

Training modalities

Traditional Strength Training

Traditional strength training aims to enhance muscular strength and hypertrophy by adjusting variables such as repetitions, sets, tempo, load, and exercise selection. Muscle-strengthening activities, including resistance training and weight lifting, require muscles to work or hold against an applied force or weight. These activities often involve lifting heavy objects, such as barbells, dumbbells, plates, kettlebells, and medicine balls, multiple times to strengthen various muscle groups (Thompson, 2023). Additionally, muscle-strengthening exercises can incorporate elastic bands or the user's body weight for resistance. Current PA guidelines recommend that adults engage in strength training at least twice per week, targeting all major muscle groups (Piercy et al., 2018). However, many adults fail to meet this recommendation, not engaging in enough PA per week. Exercise professionals play a critical role in addressing this gap and designing evidence-based, engaging, safe, and cost-effective programs targeting different populations (A'Naja et al., 2025). This trend ranks highly in all the included surveys, including Mexico (#3), Brazil (#4), Portugal (#5), the world (#5), Spain (#9), and Chile (#16). Strength training not only enhances muscular strength and hypertrophy but also provides numerous health benefits, including improved functionality, cardiometabolic risk profile, and overall health and well-being (Iversen et al., 2021). Health and fitness professionals in Ibero-America can integrate strength training into their programs to support public health efforts and contribute to a healthier population. Strength training programs should prioritize safety to prevent injuries, with intensity and progressions tailored to the individual's needs.

Functional Fitness Training (FFT)

Functional training is defined as a 'physical interventional approach that contributes to the enhancement of human performance, according to individual goals, in sports, daily life, rehabilitation, or fitness, and takes into consideration the specificity of the task and the unique responsiveness of each individual' (Pereira et al., 2025). This training modality typically integrates strength training activities aimed at improving balance, coordination, functional strength, mobility, and endurance to enhance an

individual's ability to perform activities of daily living. Functional Fitness Training (FFT) is particularly crucial for fitness professionals working with older adults and clinical populations, as it fosters exercise behaviors that promote long-term quality of life and independence. By enhancing physical functionality, FFT enables individuals to perform daily tasks more efficiently (e.g., climbing stairs, picking up objects from the floor, opening doors, and carrying bags) and maintain greater autonomy throughout their lifespan (A'Naja et al., 2025). This trend is included in the top-20 trends of all surveyed regions (Mexico #5, Brazil #5, Spain #7, World #9, Portugal #10, Chile #20). Regular PA plays a crucial role in improving mobility, delaying functional decline, and minimizing the risk of fall-related injuries, reinforcing its significance for older adults and clinical populations (Dipietro et al., 2019). Ibero-American health and fitness professionals can develop multicomponent programs incorporating functional exercises and activities to support vulnerable populations in enhancing physical function and overall quality of life.

High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is a type of training characterized by short, repeated bouts of high-intensity anaerobic effort performed at "near maximal" intensity ($\geq 90\%$ of maximal oxygen uptake (HRmax) or $>75\%$ of maximal power), followed by brief recovery periods of rest or low-intensity exercise ($<65\%$ of HRmax) to allow sufficient recovery for repeated efforts. Given that lack of time is a major barrier to exercise and a contributor to physical inactivity worldwide, HIIT has gained popularity among individuals with limited time, as it typically requires minimal equipment and less than 30 minutes per session (Veiga et al., 2024). Research demonstrates that HIIT elicits numerous physiological adaptations that enhance exercise capacity (e.g., maximal oxygen uptake, aerobic endurance, anaerobic capacity) and metabolic health in both clinical and healthy populations (Atakan et al., 2021). This trend is consistently present across surveyed regions (Spain #6, Chile #6, World #6, Brazil #13, Portugal #15, Mexico #20). Health and fitness professionals can incorporate HIIT into programs for individuals with limited time for PA, as it can provide higher enjoyment while inducing adaptations similar to or greater than those of moderate-intensity continuous training, despite requiring a lower total exercise volume. However, professionals should conduct thorough pre-screening and closely monitor intensity and form to minimize the risk of injury.

Bodyweight training

Bodyweight training, also known as calisthenics, is a form of exercise that utilizes minimal space and equipment, relying on one's body weight to generate mechanical tension for developing strength, flexibility, and balance. Its accessibility and versatility make it a cost-effective and functional way to train both indoors and outdoors, incorporating multi-planar movements such as squats, lunges, and push-ups. This trend includes Street Workout, a novel urban sport where athletes perform isometric and isotonic calisthenic exercises on rings, bars, or the floor, often incorporating dynamic swings and freestyle combinations similar to artistic gymnastics routines (Sanchez-Martinez & Hernandez-Jaña, 2022). While research has consistently highlighted the health and cardiovascular benefits of bodyweight training, evidence supporting its effectiveness for muscle strength and hypertrophy remains limited compared to traditional strength training using external weights (Iversen et al., 2021). Nonetheless, bodyweight training offers a time-efficient and highly adaptable alternative to conventional resistance training, as it can be performed almost anywhere without the need for equipment. This trend ranks within the top 20 in most surveys, except in Chile, typically appearing on the lower end (Brazil #8, Mexico #11, Spain #13, World #18, Portugal #19). Ibero-American fitness professionals can leverage this trend's versatility to expand remote fitness programs, offering clients home-based, virtual, and equipment-free workout options (A'Naja et al., 2025). However, since bodyweight training relies on biomechanical adjustments rather than external resistance for progression, it requires greater knowledge of exercise mechanics. To ensure continued improvement, fitness programs should be supervised by professionals who can guide participants through appropriate progressions.

Fitness business model

Employing Certified Exercise Professionals

This trend emphasizes the importance of recognizing qualified and certified health and fitness professionals to mitigate job intrusion in the sector. Qualified Exercise Professionals (QEPs) possess the training, knowledge, experience, and scope of practice to effectively counsel on PA and other lifestyle

habits, prescribe exercise, and develop fitness programs for individuals with or without chronic conditions (O'Brien et al., 2021). Their adaptability ensures they can provide personalized and effective training across various formats—whether in-person, online, or hybrid (Anaja et al., 2025). This trend ranks prominently across most of the top-20 fitness trend surveys, except in Brazil (Portugal #2, Chile #5, Spain #11, Mexico #12, World #15). Nationally accredited certifications, such as those from ACSM, equip fitness professionals with the expertise to tailor exercise prescriptions to clients' physical, behavioral, and cognitive needs. Physicians frequently promote PA to their patients but often cite barriers such as low self-confidence, lack of knowledge, time constraints, insufficient resources, financial limitations, and perceived low patient interest (O'Brien et al., 2021). In Ibero-America, certified professionals play a crucial role in bridging this gap by prescribing and guiding PA programs based on physician recommendations. Moreover, many fitness businesses actively support the education and credentialing of their professionals. Employing only certified professionals not only enhances client outcomes but also benefits this sector by fostering credibility, safety, and quality in service delivery.

Multidisciplinary teams

Multidisciplinary work teams bring together professionals from various health fields—medicine, sports science, physiotherapy, nutrition, psychology, and more—into a holistic, coordinated approach to health and fitness. Their shared goal is to improve health outcomes by maximizing benefits and minimizing risks through personalized, evidence-based strategies (Veiga et al., 2025). For instance, strength and conditioning coaches play a crucial role in multidisciplinary sports performance teams, ensuring athletes meet weight and body composition targets, optimize performance, and prevent injuries (Anaja et al., 2025). Likewise, in weight management clinics, dietitians, nurses, exercise physiologists, and behavioral therapists collaborate to support sustainable weight loss and maintenance. However, allied health professionals often report low confidence in providing PA counseling, facing barriers to offering guidance and referrals (O'Brien et al., 2017). This trend ranks in the lower half of the top-20 fitness trends in most surveys, except in Brazil and the ACSM worldwide survey (Mexico #10, Portugal #13, Spain #17, Chile #17). While implementing multidisciplinary approaches in fitness requires restructuring clinical practices, such strategies have been shown to improve efficiency and enhance client outcomes (Hendriks & Jaarsma, 2021). Expanding the use of multidisciplinary teams in Ibero-America's fitness sector could foster a more comprehensive and personalized approach to health and wellness.

Digital technology

Wearable Technology

Wearable technology includes fitness trackers, smart bracelets, heart rate monitors, and GPS-tracking devices. These devices are now widely accepted and used across all fitness performance levels (Kang & Exworthy, 2022). Typically connected to a mobile phone via Bluetooth, wearables monitor various biosignals and performance metrics such as step count, sedentary behavior, distance traveled, speed, glucose levels, sleep quality, blood oxygenation, heart rate variability, and calories burned. The most common wearables include wrist-worn smartwatches, chest straps, footwear-mounted devices, and, more recently, sensors embedded in sports clothing (Kang & Exworthy, 2022). The increasing adoption of wearable technology by health and exercise professionals is driven by its proven effectiveness in promoting PA across different age groups and both clinical and non-clinical populations (Ferguson et al., 2022). This trend holds the top position in the Worldwide Survey, a ranking it has achieved multiple times in previous editions of the survey (A'Naja et al., 2025). However, interest in Ibero-American countries is comparatively lower, as reflected in its rankings: Chile (#4), Brazil (#10), Spain (#12), Portugal (#18), and Mexico (N/A). This suggests that wearable technology is more influential globally than within the Ibero-American health and fitness sector. As wearable technology continues to advance, it enhances self-monitoring and real-time feedback, supporting behavior change through goal setting, personalized coaching, and integration with apps for actionable insights. Despite these benefits, concerns remain regarding data validity, reliability, and privacy. Ibero-American fitness professionals can leverage wearable technology to better support their clients, track progress, and improve adherence to fitness programs.

Mobile Applications for Exercise

There are an estimated 100,000 health and fitness apps in the Apple Store alone and over 165,000 when including Android's Google Play Store. In 2023, there were 850 million fitness app downloads by nearly 370 million users (A'Naja et al., 2025). These apps commonly feature fitness and exercise trackers, heart rate monitors, step counters, structured exercise programs, and virtual coaching. Over the past decade, mobile devices have become ubiquitous, driving the rapid growth of fitness apps that offer flexible, accessible, and customizable workout solutions—especially for inactive individuals. Like wearable technology, this trend ranks higher in the Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends (#2) than in Ibero-American regional surveys (Spain #8, Mexico #14, Brazil #18, Portugal N/A, Chile N/A). Its global popularity may be influenced by its strong synergy with wearable technology, the top 1 worldwide fitness trend. Preliminary evidence suggests that fitness apps can help improve health-related behaviors and manage chronic conditions (Guo et al., 2017). However, research indicates that many popular free fitness apps are not evidence-based and fail to align with ACSM guidelines on PA and health (Modave et al., 2015). Users should be cautious when selecting fitness apps, particularly novice exercisers who may benefit from guidance by a qualified exercise professional. Exercise professionals can integrate mobile fitness apps into their practice to provide evidence-based exercise prescriptions aligned with ACSM recommendations, enhancing client engagement and adherence.

Strengths and limitations

The present observational and cross-sectional study has analyzed for the first time the most relevant fitness trends for 2025 in five Ibero-American countries, offering valuable information for health and fitness professionals so that they can make informed decisions with which to seek new business opportunities and ensure the sustainable development of the industry in their regions. Each participating country comprehensively replicated the methodology widely used by the ACSM and other national, regional, and global fitness trend surveys, facilitating trend analysis across countries and over time while reducing potential bias. Furthermore, one of the key strengths of this study is its large sample size. Across the five included Ibero-American countries, a significant number of health and fitness professionals (N=5,262) provided insights into the most relevant fitness trends for 2025 in their respective regions. Moreover, the annual nature of the fitness trends survey enables the collection and comparison of data over time, offering a powerful outlook on the future of the global health and fitness industry. Finally, the creation of trend categories provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of the factors that could shape the fitness market in 2025, which is crucial for business development, resource allocation, and professional growth.

However, some methodological limitations to this study should be considered. First, the five fitness trend surveys included in this observational study were sent in a non-random fashion to varying numbers of industry professionals (e.g., Brazil sent the survey to 4,500 professionals and Mexico to over 32,000 professionals). Second, not all surveys have the same number of possible trends (for example, Brazil included 45 trends and Spain 56), and 12 exclusive fitness trends are specific to national surveys and not included in ACSM's regional and global surveys. While this may enrich the analysis of fitness trends in a specific region, the lack of consistency across studies complicates further analysis. Third, the failure to offer financial or material incentives to participants in all studies may have contributed to the low response rates of the surveys, which are close to 10%. Readers should be cautious about assuming that trends in one region are representative of other regions. Similarly, as the survey is directed at health and fitness professionals, readers should consider that perspectives on trends may differ when viewed from the consumer's standpoint.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the most relevant fitness trends in Ibero-America for 2025 fall into five key categories, including programming (exercise for weight loss, exercise for mental health, personal training, and outdoor fitness activities), exercise training for special populations (fitness programs for older adults), training modalities (traditional strength training, functional fitness training, high-intensity interval training, and bodyweight training), and fitness business models (employing certified exercise professionals and multidisciplinary teams). The findings reveal strong similarities among Ibero-American surveys, with many overlapping top-20 rankings, yet notable differences compared to global

fitness trends, particularly in the adoption of new technologies such as wearable devices and mobile fitness apps. These insights can help health and fitness professionals in Ibero-America make informed business and professional development decisions, fostering growth in the regional fitness sector. Additionally, analyzing Ibero-American fitness trends allows for comparisons with other regions in terms of program popularity, service offerings, and credentialing standards. Future research should explore whether client perspectives align with those of fitness professionals in Ibero-America and other regions, further strengthening the fitness sector's role in promoting regular physical activity worldwide through safe, innovative, engaging, cost-effective, and evidence-based products, programs, and services.

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