

WIFA
THE WOMEN IN FITNESS ASSOCIATION



GENDER EQUALITY

IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Women in Fitness Association and Sport Alliance have made it their joint mission to draw attention to a topic that has received little attention in the fitness industry so far. We therefore have created a survey with the aim to get some insights on the status of diversity and equal opportunities in the fitness industry. To this end, a total of **679 employees** in the fitness industry worldwide were surveyed online over a period **from September 2021 to March 2022**. This data is not representative of the industry. Nevertheless, the results provide interesting insights into the structure of the industry. This survey is only the beginning; more a being planned.

The distribution of this survey was supported by various international fitness media, large companies and associations like EuropeActive. The goal is to take proactive steps regarding gender equity and strengthen the image of the global fitness industry. In this paper we have gathered some of the most interesting findings.

Hamburg, July 2022

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD BY THE WOMEN IN FITNESS ASSOCIATION

Dear Reader,

Talking about topics like diversity, equity and inclusion is both uncomfortable and difficult. It's because these topics force us to inspect our implicit bias or the unconscious attitudes and beliefs that we have about other people. Addressing implicit bias requires acknowledging that there may be misinformation driving those beliefs as well as raising our awareness and knowledge to learn new perspectives. All of us have implicit biases, and we all need to do our own work to uncover them.

When we started scoping this project, many people pushed back with - 'Haven't we solved the gender equity thing?' or 'I don't see this as a problem in our industry, I work with a lot of women.' Remember, our perceptions are distorted by our implicit biases.

How do you change bias when the problem itself hasn't been investigated? That's the question that prompted our work on this survey. Gender equity in the workforce has been studied across many sectors but, until recently, not specifically in the fitness industry and not across global markets. We know from the 2021 McKinsey reports:

- Only 21 % of C-suite positions are held by women.

- 4 out of 10 women have experienced discrimination in the workplace.
- The gender pay gap is stuck at 16 %.

The benefits of creating gender equity are both social and economical, because we know if women participated equally to men in the economy, it would increase the global GDP by 28 trillion \$ by 2025.

„Equality is giving everyone the same pair of shoes. Equity is giving everyone a pair of shoes that fits.“

— Author unknown

In order for a shift to happen in the fitness sector, we must commit to continually examine the state of gender equity, create equitable opportunities and policies for women and measure their impact. Most importantly, we need to provide resources and insights to people like you, who are making the change happen.

We see you!



JENNIFER HALSALL
COO
WIFA

FOREWORD BY SPORT ALLIANCE

Dear Reader,

The fitness industry is undergoing constant change that could not be more complex. As one of the leading software companies in Europe, we at Sport Alliance are playing a key role in shaping this change on a technological level. Beyond that, in recent years, we have also experienced a strong cultural shift. Fitness is no longer represented by sweaty bodybuilders or action heroes of the 1980s. Instead, there is now an emphasis on fitness standards for health and wellbeing, on fitness as a lifestyle, and a modern society in which movement is becoming increasingly important. As a result of this change, our industry has become very diverse.

In this context, gender equality also plays a major role. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s the fitness industry was still primarily defined by males, today a different picture of the industry is emerging. Fitness role models such as Emma Lehner or successful female CEOs like Valerie Bures-Bönström are paving the way for future generations. But outward appearances don't always reflect the truth of the matter. So what is the real state of gender equality within our industry? What do employees experience and feel, and how do they deal with the issue? We would like to get to the bottom of these and many other questions with this paper.

However, such a task requires a reliable partner and a strong network. We are therefore very pleased that we were able to get The Women in Fitness Association (WIFA) on board for this project. Together with WIFA, we were able to motivate almost 700 participants for the first edition of the survey – for which I would like to express my sincere thanks to the entire team. We would now like to build on this data and continue the project on an ongoing basis.

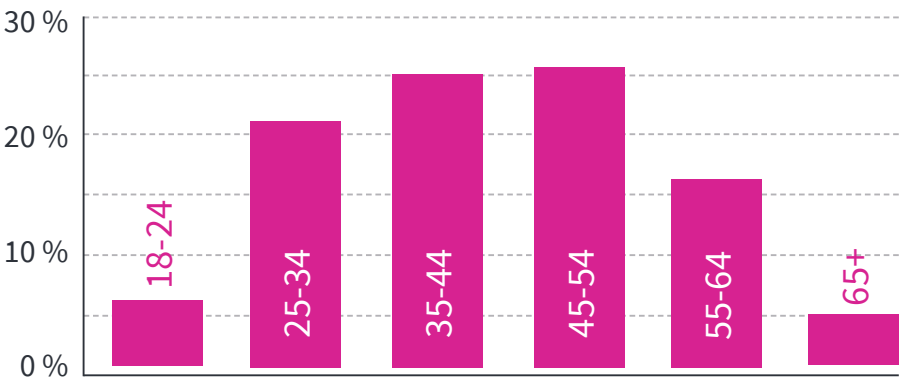
We see this study as a first step, and we are well aware that further research will be needed. But right now, I would like to thank all participants for getting involved. I hope you enjoy reading this report.



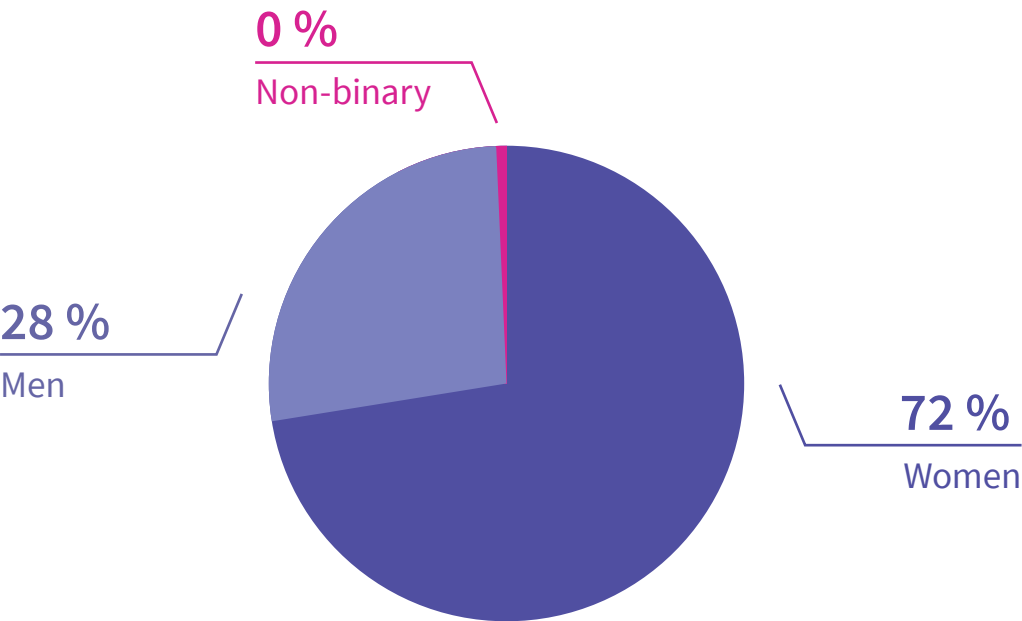
DANIEL HANELT
CEO
Sport Alliance

SET OF DATA & STUDY SETUP

1. AGE Record Count



2. GENDER DISTRIBUTION



3. COUNTRY

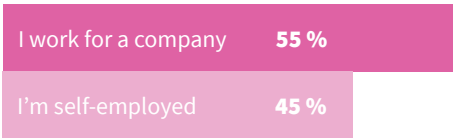
WHAT COUNTRY DO YOU LIVE IN?	RECORD
Canada	38 %
Germany	35 %
United States	12 %
United Kingdom	5 %
Netherlands	2 %
Others	8 %

4. INDUSTRY

IN WHICH PART OF THE FITNESS INDUSTRY DO YOU WORK?	RECORD
Indoor fitness provider	78 %
Digital sector	8 %
Outdoor fitness provider	4 %
Supplier	3 %
Personal training	2 %
Others	5 %

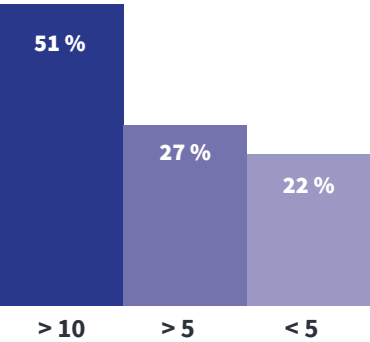
5. JOBS

WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE FITNESS SECTOR?



6. WORK EXPERIENCE

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY?



CURRENT
ROLES,
FUTURE
GOALS AND
OBSTACLES
TO REACH
CAREER
GOALS



CHAPTER
01

CURRENT
ROLES

47 % of men have a leadership or senior role when working for a company, among women it's 11 % less. Of the self-employed men, 70 % are club owners; only 29 % of the self-employed women are studio owners.

“This data shows that the non-self-employed men hold leadership roles more often than the non-self-employed women, who tend to be trainers instead of running a business.”



Maïke Kumstel
International Business
Development Manager
Sport Alliance

■ WOMEN ■ MEN

1. WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE FITNESS SECTOR?

I work for a company	I'm self-employed
58 % 53 %	42 % 47 %

2. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT TYPE OF ROLE BEING SELF-EMPLOYED?

I'm an independent club owner	I'm a trainer/instructor/coach
26 % 60 %	15 % 10 %
I'm a trainer/instructor/coach	I'm the club owner of a franchise
48 % 13 %	3 % 10 %

3. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT TYPE OF ROLE WORKING FOR A COMPANY?

I'm a trainer/instructor/coach	38 % 30 %
I have a head office leadership role	16 % 17 %
I'm a club manager	9 % 16 %
I have a head office senior role	11 % 14 %
I have a head office administration role	14 % 14 %

FUTURE GOALS

Both genders have the same goals when it comes to employment status and/or desired roles within a company. Both genders rather want to be self-employed and in a leadership role when being employed.

When it comes to being self-employed, women tend not to want to be an owner, but rather a coach in a leadership role.

WOMEN MEN

1. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Be self-employed 57 % 65 %

2. WHAT SORT OF POSITION WOULD BE YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IN THE FITNESS SECTOR? (WHEN WORKING FOR A COMPANY)

Head office leadership role 17 % 27 %

Head office senior leadership role 32 % 27 %

Trainer/instructor/coach 21 % 16 %

3. WHAT SORT OF POSITION WOULD BE YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IN THE FITNESS SECTOR? (WHILE SELF-EMPLOYED)

30 % Independent club owner

Trainer/instructor/coach (leadership) 27 %

7 % Wellness/nutrition coach (leadership)

Trainer/ instructor/coach 24 %

62 % Independent club owner

Trainer/ instructor/coach (leadership) 11 %

11 % Club owner of a franchise

Trainer/ instructor/coach 7 %

OBSTACLES

27 % of women in a non-leading position say that they have faced obstacles when it comes to reaching their career goals. They name feeling underestimated and not respected as the number one reason (11 %). Similar figures are given by male participants with 26 % saying they have faced obstacles in their careers.

A completely different picture emerges regarding leader positions. 27 % of the women in a leading post say their journey to leadership was harder because of their gender. For men, on the other hand, it is only 7 %.

Among the chief obstacles to reach their career goals, women name lower chances of promotion, the feeling of being underestimated and not respected as well as gender bias.

1. HAVE YOU FACED OBSTACLES REACHING YOUR CAREER GOAL?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women non-leaders	27 %	64 %	9 %
Men non-leaders	26 %	64 %	10 %

2. DID YOU HAVE A HARDER TIME BECOMING A LEADER IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY THAN OTHER GENDERS?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women leaders	27 %	54 %	19 %
Men leaders	7 %	83 %	10 %

3. TOP 3 OBSTACLES PEOPLE ARE FACING IN ORDER TO REACH THEIR GOALS

Women	Men
Felt underestimated and not respected	Felt underestimated and not respected
Hard to combine family and work	No support from supervisors
Lower chances of promotion	Lower chances of promotion

“As non-leaders, men and women experience similar obstacles in their career paths. However, the higher one climbs the career ladder, the more pronounced the difference between genders, where women are left behind. Being a boss in the year 2022 is unfortunately still male-dominated.”



Artur Jagiello
Head of Marketing & Communications Sport Alliance

CHAPTER
02

GENDER BIAS

When asked about gender bias in companies, over 80 % of men say there is none. On the contrary, 64 % of women state there is a gender bias; almost 20 % are unsure about the subject. Among leaders the take is different: 70 % of the women and 69 % of the men think that their company is gender-biased.

“These figures show us that women and men have a different perception of gender inequality in the work place. Women are more aware of discrimination and inequality, because unfortunately they are a lot more likely to become victims of it themselves.”



Maike Kumstel
International Business
Development Manager
Sport Alliance

1. DO YOU FEEL THERE IS A GENDER BIAS IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

	Yes, my company is gender-biased towards women	Yes, my company is gender-biased towards men	Yes, my company is gender-biased towards other genders	No	I don't know
Women	7 %	9 %	1 %	64 %	19 %
Men	7 %	4 %	1 %	82 %	7 %

2. AS A LEADER, DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS A GENDER BIAS IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

	Yes, my company is gender biased toward women	Yes, my company is gender biased toward men	No	I don't know
Women	38 %	32 %	25 %	5 %
Men	47 %	22 %	29 %	2 %

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Both men and women agree that there is an equal distribution of males and females in their workplace in general, but that there are more men in senior leadership positions.

However, equal gender distribution is more important to women than to men. The equal distribution of genders in senior leadership roles is important for 59 % of the women, only 35 % of the men feel the same.

■ WOMEN ■ MEN

1. DO YOU FEEL LIKE THERE’S AN EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF GENDERS IN YOUR WORKPLACE (WORKING FOR A COMPANY)?

	Yes	No, more women	No, more men	I don’t know
Women	38 %	32 %	25 %	5 %
Men	47 %	22 %	29 %	2 %

2. DO YOU FEEL LIKE THERE’S AN EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF GENDERS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE? (WORKING FOR A COMPANY)

No, there are more men in senior level positions	43 %	42 %
Yes, there is an equal number of women and men in senior level positions	41 %	33 %
No, there are more women in senior level positions	12 %	15 %
I don’t know	5 %	11 %

3. AS A LEADER WORKING FOR A COMPANY, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THERE’S AN EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF GENDERS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE? (WORKING FOR A COMPANY)

No, there are more men in senior level positions	50 %	49 %
Yes, there is an equal number of women and men in senior level positions	30 %	44 %
No, there are more women in senior leadership positions	16 %	5 %
I don’t know	4 %	2 %

4. YOU WORKING FOR A COMPANY, IS AN EQUAL GENDER DISTRIBUTION IN YOUR WORKPLACE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

	Yes	To some extent	Not really	Not at all	I don’t know
Women	55 %	27 %	12 %	4 %	2 %
Men	36 %	28 %	21 %	12 %	5 %

5. YOU WORKING FOR A COMPANY, IS AN EQUAL GENDER DISTRIBUTION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

	Yes	To some extent	Not really	Not at all	I don’t know
Women	59 %	26 %	8 %	5 %	2 %
Men	35 %	29 %	21 %	12 %	5 %

6. AS A LEADER WORKING FOR A COMPANY, IS AN EQUAL GENDER DISTRIBUTION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

	Yes	To some extent	Not really	Not at all	I don’t know
Women	65 %	25 %	4 %	4 %	2 %
Men	36 %	22 %	27 %	9 %	7 %

GENDER INEQUALITY

Women state that they feel the effect of gender inequality in the workplace. 44 % of female leaders say that gender inequality in their workplace affects them negatively directly or to some extent. The biggest negative effects mentioned are lower salaries, lower chances of promotion and discrimination in everyday working life.

Another interesting result: 31 % of female leaders working for a company think that they had a harder time becoming a leader due to their gender. Only 5 % of men feel that they had had a harder time because of being male.

1. DOES GENDER INEQUALITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE AFFECT YOU NEGATIVELY?

(WORKING FOR A COMPANY)

	Yes	To some extent	Not really	Not at all	I don't know
Women	13 %	22 %	33 %	27 %	6 %
Men	6 %	17 %	30 %	43 %	5 %

2. AS A LEADER, DOES GENDER INEQUALITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE AFFECT YOU NEGATIVELY?

(WORKING FOR A COMPANY)

	Yes	To some extent	Not really	Not at all	I don't know
Women	16 %	28 %	26 %	26 %	4 %
Men	0 %	22 %	29 %	44 %	5 %

3. TOP 3 ANSWERS ON HOW GENDER IMBALANCE IN THE WORKPLACE AFFECTS PEOPLE

Women leaders working for a company

Lower salary

Lower chances of promotion

Gender discrimination

4. WORKING FOR A COMPANY, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAD A HARDER TIME BECOMING A LEADER DUE TO YOUR GENDER?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women	31 %	51 %	19 %
Men	5 %	86 %	10 %

5. BEING SELF-EMPLOYED, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAD A HARDER TIME BECOMING A LEADER DUE TO YOUR GENDER?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women	24 %	58 %	19 %
Men	8 %	83 %	10 %

WORKPLACE POLICIES

31% of the participants working for a company say that there is something being done in their company to address inequality. Main workplace policies that hold people back from getting in senior leadership positions are:

- Old habits and history – men have always dominated the industry, hard to make a shift
- Hard to combine family and career
- Part-time is a huge issue
- Not enough active diverse hiring processes
- Old stereotypes and role models

1. WHAT WORKPLACE POLICIES, PRACTICES AND BELIEFS DO YOU THINK MAY BE HOLDING PEOPLE BACK FROM SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

<i>“Boys Club mentality both on junior and senior levels employees (among all genders) that further placate men as more capable or at least more representative.”</i>	<i>“In my opinion, those individuals who identify as anything other than heterosexual are not promoted very far up the organization/ municipalities where I work. The belief seems to be that they are difficult to work with cooperatively,</i>	<i>“Lack of support/framework for progression after starting a family or looking to. Lack of progression after a certain level of role.”</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>are more vocal and demanding regarding their rights and opinions, and are “not a good fit” within the management teams.”</i>	<i>.....</i>
<i>“Fear, lack of confidence, lack of ambition, family.”</i>	<i>.....</i>	<i>“Just a lack of knowledge towards who the industry favors and what can be done to assist women in furthering their careers.”</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
<i>“Maybe the old world view of men in high ranking positions is the only one able to lead. Old role models.”</i>	<i>“I don’t know why, but women are not seen as management-worthy.”</i>	<i>“Lack of emphasis on diversity in hiring.”</i>
<i>.....</i>		
<i>“Management tasks only full-time.”</i>		

2. IS THERE SOMETHING BEING DONE IN YOUR COMPANY TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

	Yes	No	I don’t know
Women and men	31 %	43 %	26 %

3. EXAMPLES OF WHAT’S BEING DONE IN COMPANIES

Some companies have already initiated strategies to address the problem, knowing that something needs to be done to improve the situation for women in the fitness industry.

<i>“A couple of women are given the opportunity to level up to a leadership position, but this is still very limited in the good old boys club of leadership.”</i>	<i>“On an ongoing basis we measure gender representation at all levels in the organizations I represent. We ask the questions that help us determine if more attention is needed to ensure gender equity and we are presently evaluating pay scales for all positions and I trust that the same evaluation is being taken for pay equity based on gender.”</i>	<i>“Senior management actively recruiting equal numbers of both men and women. Creating campaigns and content around gender equality & diversity in the workplace in general.”</i>
<i>.....</i>		
<i>“Empowering talks, promotions available (although to not as senior positions).”</i>		

4. WHAT STEPS COULD YOUR COMPANY TAKE TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

<i>“More women and more managers in part-time.”</i>	<i>“Equal pay. Better representation of females at board level. Better support for employee wellness and mental health (for both male and female).”</i>	<i>“They could address the issue by having town halls regarding gender equality and do trainings for everyone and open discussions”</i>
<i>.....</i>		
<i>“Actively recruit under-represented genders and provide scheduling flexibility to accommodate home life.”</i>	<i>.....</i>	
	<i>“Take survey like this in the workplace.”</i>	



CHAPTER
03

ROLE MODELS AND SUPERVISORS

More women (51 %) have a role model than men do (38 %). People tend to choose role models of their own gender. Both genders agree that the higher the position you are in, the lower the number of female leaders. While administrative staff state that 37 % of their leaders are female, people in higher positions say only 22 % of the leaders are women.

1. DO YOU HAVE A ROLE MODEL IN THE FITNESS SECTOR WHO INSPIRES YOU TO CONTINUE TO GROW AS A LEADER IN YOUR CAREER?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women	51 %	43 %	6 %
Men	38 %	55 %	8 %

2. WHAT IS THE GENDER OF YOUR ROLE MODEL?

Women	Men
74 % Women 24 % Men	9 % Women 87 % Men

3. YOU WORKING IN AN ADMIN ROLE, WERE THE MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS YOU HAD SO FAR MAINLY ... ?

	Women	Men	Equal distribution
Women in admin roles	39 %	34 %	27 %
Men in admin roles	31 %	45 %	24 %

4. AS A LEADER, WERE THE MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS YOU HAD SO FAR MAINLY ... ?

	Women	Men	Equal distribution
Women	26 %	52 %	21 %
Men	10 %	59 %	32 %

MENTORS

When it comes to whether the respondents have had role models who have supported them in their careers, the answers of both genders are similar. People tend to choose mentors of their own gender, nevertheless, the percentage of female mentors decreases when people climb up the career ladder.

1. YOU ARE WORKING IN AN ADMIN ROLE; HAVE YOU HAD A MENTOR/MENTORS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED YOU ON YOUR CAREER PATH?

	Yes	No
Women in admin roles	62 %	38 %
Men in admin roles	57 %	43 %

2. HAVE THEY BEEN MAINLY ... ? (ADMIN ROLES)

Women	Men
65 % Women 31 % Men	29 % Women 63 % Men

3. ,YOU ARE WORKING IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE; HAVE YOU HAD A MENTOR/MENTORS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED YOU ON YOUR CAREER PATH?

	Yes	No
Women in senior roles	67 %	33 %
Men in senior roles	61 %	39 %

4. HAVE THEY BEEN MAINLY ... ? (LEADERSHIP ROLES)

Women	Men
56 % Women 42 % Men	20 % Women 80 % Men

5. DO YOU NEED A MENTOR? (ADMIN ROLES)

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women in admin roles	35 %	47 %	18 %
Men in admin roles	38 %	45 %	17 %

6. DO YOU NEED A MENTOR? (LEADERSHIP ROLES)

	Yes	No	I don't know
Women in leadership roles	36 %	47 %	17 %
Men in leadership roles	39 %	46 %	15 %



SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS

6 IMPORTANT KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Gender Discrepancy Regarding Job Positions

Both genders have the same ambitions and goals when it comes to employment status and/or desired roles within a company. In reality, 47 % of men hold a leadership post when employed by a company, whereas the figure for women is 11 % lower. 70 % of self-employed men are club owners; whereas in comparison only 29 % of the women own a studio.

2. Poorer Career Opportunities for Women

As in many other industries, it is evident in the fitness industry that there are fewer career opportunities for women than for men. 27 % of women in a leading position say their journey to leadership was harder because of their gender; only 7 % of men in leading roles feel the same about discrimination against their gender.

3. Perception of Gender Bias Varies

The perception of gender discrimination is different or partly even non-existent for men. When asked about gender inequality in their companies, over 80 % of men say there is none; this answer was only given by 64 % of the women.

4. Importance of Gender Equality

Another difference becomes evident when participants were asked about the importance of gender equality. For 59% of the women it's important that there is an equal gender

distribution in senior leadership roles, whereas only 35 % of the male participants think that this is of relevance.

5. Gender Inequality and Its Effects

Both women and men agree that there is an equal distribution of males and females in their workplace, but that men outweigh women when it comes to senior leadership positions.

They also agree that the higher the position you are in, the lower the number of female leaders. While administrative staff state that 37 % of their leaders are female, people in higher positions say that only 22 % of their colleagues are women.

Women state that they feel the effect of gender inequality in the workplace. 44 % of female leaders think that gender inequality in their workplace affects them negatively directly or to some extent.

6. Few Companies Take Action against Gender Discrimination

Although the issue has been in the public eye for a long time, very few companies do anything to address gender discrimination. Only 31 % of participants working for a company say that there is something being done in their company to address inequality.



CONCLUSION & ACTIONS

INSPIRATION ON INITIATING CHANGE

What do we learn from our analysis and what conclusion do we reach? How can we proceed with this knowledge?

The survey clearly shows us two things:

1. The awareness of gender discrimination is still too low.

2. Equal participation and remedial action are far too rare.

► We need to raise awareness and educate people about inequality! We are not as progressive as we think! We need to make people aware of the fact that some people have a harder time reaching their goals. We need to understand their views and difficulties in order to help them thrive — and learn to see the world through other people's eyes.

► The glass ceiling still exists. We need to take action to create more equality and equity in our industry — especially in leadership positions!

► We need to take action and change the system, especially when it comes to bias and workplace policies! Companies should evaluate their current policies. They need to conduct internal surveys asking their employees what they need in order

to learn where they actually stand and which challenges there are in the work environment. From there, other individual actions need to take place more often. These could be unconscious bias training, flexible working policies and much more. Just getting started is key!

► Companies and the decision-makers behind them need to develop a better understanding of what gender equality and equity mean for their employees. Gender equality and diversity will become more and more important in the future; both issues call for change. An attractive company will also be judged on its handling of diversity issues. Gender equality and its perception thus have a direct economic impact on companies.

With our survey we have made a first important contribution to the current situation of gender equality in the fitness industry. In order to look a little deeper into the topic, we asked different industry experts about their experience and thoughts regarding gender bias.

We would like to thank all guest authors. We very much appreciate your support!



GUEST ARTICLES



SUSANNE DE SCHEPPER BASIC-FIT

Susanne de Schepper is the Operations Director France for Basic-Fit, Europe's largest fitness chain. With over 18 years of experience within the sector, Susanne is an inspiring example of a self-made executive.

THE POWER OF DIFFERENT

As the American author Stephan R Covey said: "Strength lies in differences not in similarities."

Inclusion in the workspace is about uniqueness, belonging, giving people the opportunity to contribute and fairness.

Let each person be a person with a diversity of thought, a person with different experiences that brings something else to the table, and not a person who is judged differently because he is a man or she is a woman. We should be recognizing women for their abilities and skills, rather than treating them as show-cases for diversity and inclusion.

In fact, the power of a team is that individuals bring their respective skills to the collective. It is about

setting a company up for success by bringing different people with different perspectives to work on a common goal. This goes as well for our personal support teams.

For me, no leader functions well without having a support team. Being a successful leader is never an individual success. I was able to accept my challenging position because my family was open to taking things on differently as well. I get to do what I do because my husband runs our beautiful family and is my biggest cheerleader.

We still have a lot to gain on the level of diversity in general. Don't be afraid to approach things differently! Let's all step away from judgment, let's listen to hear what the other person is saying instead of listening in preparation for our response. ... and let's embrace our differences, so that together we can use THE POWER OF DIFFERENT!



PROF. DR. NIELS NAGEL

DIFG e.V. ASSOCIATION

Niels Nagel is Managing Director of the German Industry Association for Fitness and Health (Deutscher Industrieverband für Fitness und Gesundheit e.V.) and Professor of International Sport Management at the International School of Management. Sustainability and management in the fitness sector is one of his areas of expertise, to which he contributes at trade fairs and events such as FIBO.

Equality in the fitness industry – a worthwhile challenge!

If one understands equality as the equal right granted to women and men in a professional context, then this must first be seen as an ethical-moral duty in our society. And thus also in the fitness industry. Referring to Jennifer Halsall, we should not just talk about equality, but strive for equity. In order to take advantage of the opportunities that arise from women's equity, the fitness industry should create a development environment in which women can develop their potential just like men and receive the same pay and career opportunities in return. There is a strong case to be made that equity is a worthwhile investment:

1. Social and political acceptance and relevance

One of the most important issues in

politics is the development of sustainability. The UN has identified 17 specific goals in this regard. One of them is gender equality between men and women. If the fitness industry wants to be accepted as a relevant partner by policy makers and society, then they should contribute to achieving these 17 goals, including gender equality.

2. Meeting the challenge of the shortage of skilled talents

If the fitness industry wants to attract talents for the workforce, it should position itself as an attractive labor market. Rather patriarchal structures with entrenched power relations appear rather unattractive for acquiring young, motivated talent. Equity is an important signal that should show that personal commitment pays off and that it is possible to combine career, family and leisure time.

3. Corporate success

It stands to reason that teams can find better solutions if they have an inclusive, diverse corporate culture. For example, it is important for a high level of innovation to look at issues from different perspectives. So there's a lot to be said for how strong equity pays off for the fitness industry, your companies and your employees. For sure this is a process that cannot be started today and completed tomorrow. But as we all know, the longest journey begins with the first step. And it's best to start together right from the beginning.



SABRINA BARTSCH

ANYTIME FITNESS
DEUTSCHLAND

Sabrina is the Chief Operating & Marketing Officer for Anytime Fitness Germany and a member of The Women in Fitness Association (WIFA). Her work experience as a personal trainer, head coach for a group fitness sub-brand and as a gym manager at Fitness First built the bridge to the global group fitness player Les Mills, where she worked as a key account manager.

My path into and through the fitness industry

No one tells you which way to go to reach your destination. When I started I didn't know where my path would lead me. But what I quickly realized was that I was being asked different questions than my male companions in the fitness industry.

And I did it, too. I often asked myself: "Can I do this?" At some point – between Fitness First and Les Mills... on my way from group fitness coordinator to Key Account Manager, I realized that this was a seemingly typical female question. It made me wonder and think. Still, it took a lot of experience and also positions until I changed the question to: "How can I do this?"

Today, I am asked quite often how I managed to get into a leadership position as a woman. I believe it takes a clear goal and an unconditional desire to shape the content of a job. And no, I don't think that it's easier for men per se. Perhaps they simply have more self-confidence, more courage to take new paths and dare to take big steps. Competence is not something you are born with. Competence is learned... and women are just as capable as men, if they dare and trust in their abilities. No pain, no gain. I want to challenge you to find out what you are good at! What makes you different to others? Find out what brings you pleasure! After all, you want to occupy yourself with it every day. And then: decide. Create added value ... for yourself and for your business!



KIRSTEN DEHMER

FITFORFACTS

Kirsten Dehmer is founder of fitforfacts and KÖRPER. WIRKUNG. IMAGE, as well as current CEO of Outdoor Gym. She has been successfully working in the fitness industry for 20 years and additionally advises VIPs and managers.

Testing service qualities hurts and is not for the faint of heart: just right for me!

I got my business idea in 2002 when I left the hotel and celebrity world and became a mother. The core question of my company foundation was: “Why do people like to go to the gym and what do they find annoying?” As a fairly small, blonde woman who was a mother of 2 babies (my son was born in 2002 and my daughter in 2003), I came into a world that was all managers. Testing or mystery shopping, which is what I offered, is exclusively for quality assurance and further development of fitness and wellness facilities. Therefore, it is used in “silence” and I did not have to get loud because the quieter it was, the more successful it was. From 2002 to 2013, I dealt exclusively with men. My first female customer was celebrated as a heroine in the industry at the time (2013), because

she was one of the few women who talked “loudly” about her system and showcased it everywhere. Wonderful. Isn’t that absurd? Do women have to get “loud” first? Almost all the conversations I have to this day are conversations with men. For a long time, one statement from the industry was that women didn’t want manager positions, or didn’t feel they were good enough. The other theory was that women weren’t seen and didn’t make their presence felt.

Whatever it is or was, I think the issue of a lack of women in management positions needs to be emphasised because the main target group in traditional fitness facilities are women. More women take classes than men to this day. Most initial members in a club are women, who then bring their husbands. Also women are the main buying group for other revenue generators such as clothing, nutrition, etc. In my eyes, this is a strong argument to ask yourself: “Do I have enough women on my team?!!”

My view is manifold: it requires a clear objective, clear collaboration and fair treatment; then diversity is no longer an issue.



ALEXANDRA PLAZA

KADER 1

Alexandra Plaza is Managing Director of the fitness studio Kader 1 in Cologne. At the age of 27, she is already extremely successful and has gained a lot of experience.

I have been in the sport industry for many years and started my athletics career in 2005. In addition to my focus on high jump, I competed in sprints, hurdles, long jump and heptathlon until the mid-2010s and participated in the German championship.

With my knowledge about sport, fitness, the right nutrition and mental health, I decided that I want to help other people to live a healthy lifestyle and together with three friends of mine, we created the idea of Kader1 and opened the fitness studio in 2018.

In total, we have a team of 18 employees; 8 are female. It’s becoming more and more important to me to have an equal balance between male and female staff in our studio. Next to administrative tasks, I was mainly responsible for our clients and worked as a personal trainer. What I noticed here was a slightly hesitant reaction from male

clients when my services as trainer were offered to them. I certainly had the feeling that a female trainer needs to prove her skills more than a male trainer. Once a client felt more comfortable with me as a female trainer, they even admitted that their training was more effective – because they didn’t want to embarrass themselves in front of me. Apart from that, I don’t feel that other studio owners have prejudices towards me, on the contrary, we all have the same goal, and they respect my ambitions, knowledge and skills.

Since February 2021, I have been Managing Director of our studio, but my colleagues still have a consultative function. I come from a very secure environment, from competitive sports, and I was also in my comfort zone when I was working as a trainer. As Managing Director, I am encountering many new variables and I am surpassing myself in the process. I also like to get support and advice from the other three shareholders if I notice that something is not working out the way I want it to. I am not afraid to ask them for help, as I don’t see it as a female weakness to do so. On the contrary, I want to improve as a professional businesswoman, and I always have the feeling that my male colleagues treat me equally.

CLOSING WORDS

OUR 4 GOALS

Dear readers,

We hope you find the results of our study as interesting and exciting as we do. Even though we are still at the beginning with the analysis, we can already make a statement: there is still a lot to do, and it concerns us all.

With this first joint study by WIFA and Sport Alliance, the authors are pursuing four goals, which we would like to briefly outline here:

1. We want to analyse and contribute to the study of gender equity and equality in our industry, as there is only little industry-specific research on this. For this reason, we are combining the strengths of our two networks to generate as much data as possible.

2. We want to encourage participation and bundle the reaches. Sport Alliance and WIFA have shown how it's done. Now it's your turn, join in!

3. We want to inspire and motivate other partners from the industry and the sector to make their contribution. For this reason, this study is not the conclusion of a survey project, but the beginning of a discussion that is now set to grow even bigger. Have courage and become a part of this journey!

4. We want to raise awareness of the issue and motivate people to speak up. In order to shape the future of the industry, we need your cooperation and we need your voice. Get loud and try to address gender discrimination despite the stress of everyday life.

We know that we are still in the early stages with this study and that we have so much more to do to shed light on this large and complex topic from as many angles as possible. Consider this project an invitation for your feedback, new input, new collaboration opportunities, and a better and more active network that truly cares about the cultural evolution of the fitness industry.

As the authors of this study, we would like to thank everyone involved so far for participating and helping us publish it. We hope to keep moving and in touch.

Best regards from the project team

Maike Kumstel, Daniel Hanelt, Jennifer Halsall, Ariam Debas, Artur Jagiello, Kerstin Bürgel, Sera Omer, Isabel Rückert, Lucas Lefèvre

List of Partners

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