

# THE TOP FITNESS AND WELLNESS TRENDS FOR 2012



**T**he fitness industry will look different in 2021, thanks to a tumultuous 2020. Back in June 2020, Verywell Fit reported that less than 50% of gym members would return to their gym in the coming months. Despite high hopes across the industry, a December follow-up survey reports that only 15% of respondents anticipate using the gym as their primary form of exercise.

Lax social distancing guidelines, cold weather, and the threat of the flu alongside COVID-19 squashed any semblance of a return to “normal” for gyms and studios. Now, fitness professionals are looking ahead to 2021 to refine their business strategies and look for new opportunities.

With data from various research reports, Verywell Fit forecasts fitness trends you’re likely to see in 2021.

## 2020 in Retrospect

Brick-and-mortar fitness businesses were forced to close their doors in early 2020, and many have yet to reopen. Some reopened only to experience forced closures again.

To avoid bankruptcy, many companies quickly pivoted their business strategies to focus on at-home workouts and digital fitness options, including apps with on-demand content as well as livestreams.



## Key Takeaways

- 2020 was a turbulent year for the fitness industry, but trainers, gym owners, and other fitness professionals exhibited resilience and adaptability
- Digital fitness options will expand
- With renewed stay-at-home orders in some regions and the threat of another COVID-19 surge, 2021 doesn't look bright for brick-and-mortar gyms

### The Year Ahead

As the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to persist for many more months, it's likely that 2021 will bring many of the same challenges to the fitness industry, and consumer opportunities will reflect that.

**Related:** *The Future of Fitness: Nearly 50% of Gym Members Won't Go Back After Coronavirus Pandemic*

### Top Fitness Trends You're Likely To See In 2021

#### Digital Fitness

This should come as no surprise, but trend forecasts say digital fitness will continue to rise and likely dominate throughout 2021. After analyzing insights from more than 30,000 studios, gyms, and other partners, **ClassPass** reports that the majority of people will continue to work out digitally.

Even if gyms remain open, many people have already become accustomed to app-based fitness and have grown to love the convenience of **working out at home**. Apps like **Nike Training Club**, **Peloton Digital**, **Obe Fitness** and others make it too easy—just browse, click, and get your sweat on.

#### At-Home Workouts

Of course, **at-home workouts** aren't going anywhere. This trend is tied closely to the digital fitness trend, but you don't even need apps or livestreams to get in some great workouts at home. You can make up your own **bodyweight workouts** or follow plans you find online.

ClassPass reports that only 40% of people who receive fitness benefits from their job plan to transition exclusively to in-person workouts when it is safe to do so. The rest plan to use at-home options at least part of the time. In the RunRepeat study, only 15% of gym members planned to use the gym as their principle mode of fitness in 2021.

Over 70% listed outdoor activities or home fitness options as the best ways to achieve their future fitness goals.

The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) reports that 15% of all fitness and wellness studios have been closed since September 30, 2020 and that as many as 25% of fitness businesses could permanently close by the end of 2020. These statistics lead us to believe that at-home fitness will remain a dominant mode of exercise.

#### Outdoor Fitness

The RunRepeat study reports that more people will engage in outdoor activities as a means to increase their fitness. In fact, nearly half of survey respondents said outdoor activities, such as **walking**, hiking and biking, will be their primary mode of exercise in 2021.

#### Open-Air Gyms

Some gyms and studios decided enough was enough. If they couldn't open their doors to members, well, they'd just remove the doors entirely. Open-air gyms, whether makeshift or permanent, became popular in the latter





half of 2020. For example, Row House, Cyclebar, and other popular studios have been **offering outdoor classes in Orange County, California** since the summer. With COVID-19 restrictions up in the air, fresh air might be the key to maintaining memberships.

### Community Focus

2020 was isolating. Most people remained in their homes for days, if not weeks, at a time. People didn't leave to go to work, to go to the gym, or to go out to eat. Even a grocery run was rare. The fitness industry, which has long been fueled by community, picked up on this and moved communities online. Despite all of the physical distancing in 2020, **many fitness communities have thrived** and will likely continue to thrive in 2021.

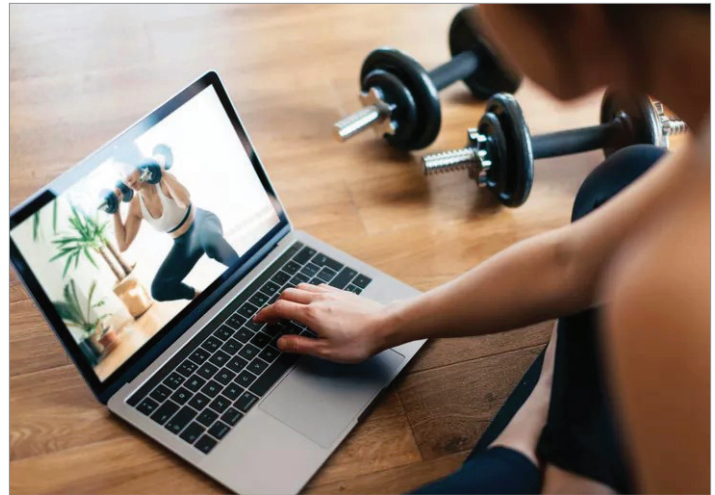
**Related:** [\*Group Fitness Classes Can Combat Loneliness, Isolation in Seniors\*](#)

## 2020 Fitness Perspectives We Hope To See In 2021

### De-emphasize Aesthetics, Emphasize Health

This shift was long overdue—and there's still a ways to go before aesthetics stop dominating the fitness industry—but 2020 expedited this much-needed change. For so long, the fitness industry has used aesthetics as a marketing tactic: Companies prey on insecurities to sell products and programs.

In 2020, likely due to the threat of COVID-19, we saw an influx of health-based messaging over physique-based messaging. We hope this trend is here to stay, because exercising to feel good is much more productive (and usually healthier) than exercising to achieve a certain look.



### Fitness Isn't That Complicated

In all honesty, fitness is simple. People tend to overcomplicate fitness, and some fitness professionals may inadvertently overcomplicate things by getting way too scientific for audiences without scientific backgrounds. In 2020, it was refreshing to see fitness professionals all over prioritize simplicity. We love the current consensus that all exercise is good exercise—you don't need to do the best, newest, hardest, most interesting workout to get fit.

### Fitness For All

Fitness is for everyone. Health is a human right and a necessity. The collective effort of fitness and wellness professionals to become more inclusive has proved promising, but there's still a lot of work to do, so we hope to see this shift continue into 2021 and beyond.

**Related:** [\*How the COVID-19 Pandemic Is Equalizing Fitness Opportunities\*](#)

## What This Means For You

- More and more fitness professionals will continue to go digital. More fitness apps will become available, expanding options for consumers
- As fitness increasingly moves online, brands will continue to emphasize community via digital platforms, offering enhanced integrations and social feeds within apps
- Outdoor workouts and recreational activities will rise in popularity, which means exercisers reap the **benefits of physical activity** and **sunshine** at once
- People of all ages, races, genders, sexual orientations, and economic classes will be able to enjoy fitness thanks to the inclusivity movement sparked by COVID-19 and an intense year of social unrest