



# State of the Fitness Industry Report 2021

How fitness has (and hasn't) changed—the latest data for enterprise brands and the clients they serve.



Resilience and perseverance aren't exactly new concepts for the fitness industry, but the past year and a half put those words to the test like never before. There was no specific path or master plan to emerge from a global pandemic. Yet, many forged forward—showing incomparable grit and resourcefulness along the way.

But if resilience is about digging deep to endure the unexpected, perseverance is about using the experience to rethink and rebuild. That's especially true of industry leaders and their clients, and the data tell us a story about how that's taking shape in 2021.



# Here's to moving forward

Recently, Mindbody surveyed both consumers and wellness brands to understand how the industry's shifted over the past year and a half and more importantly, where it's headed in the months to come.

For fitness organizations, knowledge is innovation waiting to happen. We hope these data points can help inform your business strategy, at a time that calls for you to adapt more rapidly than ever.

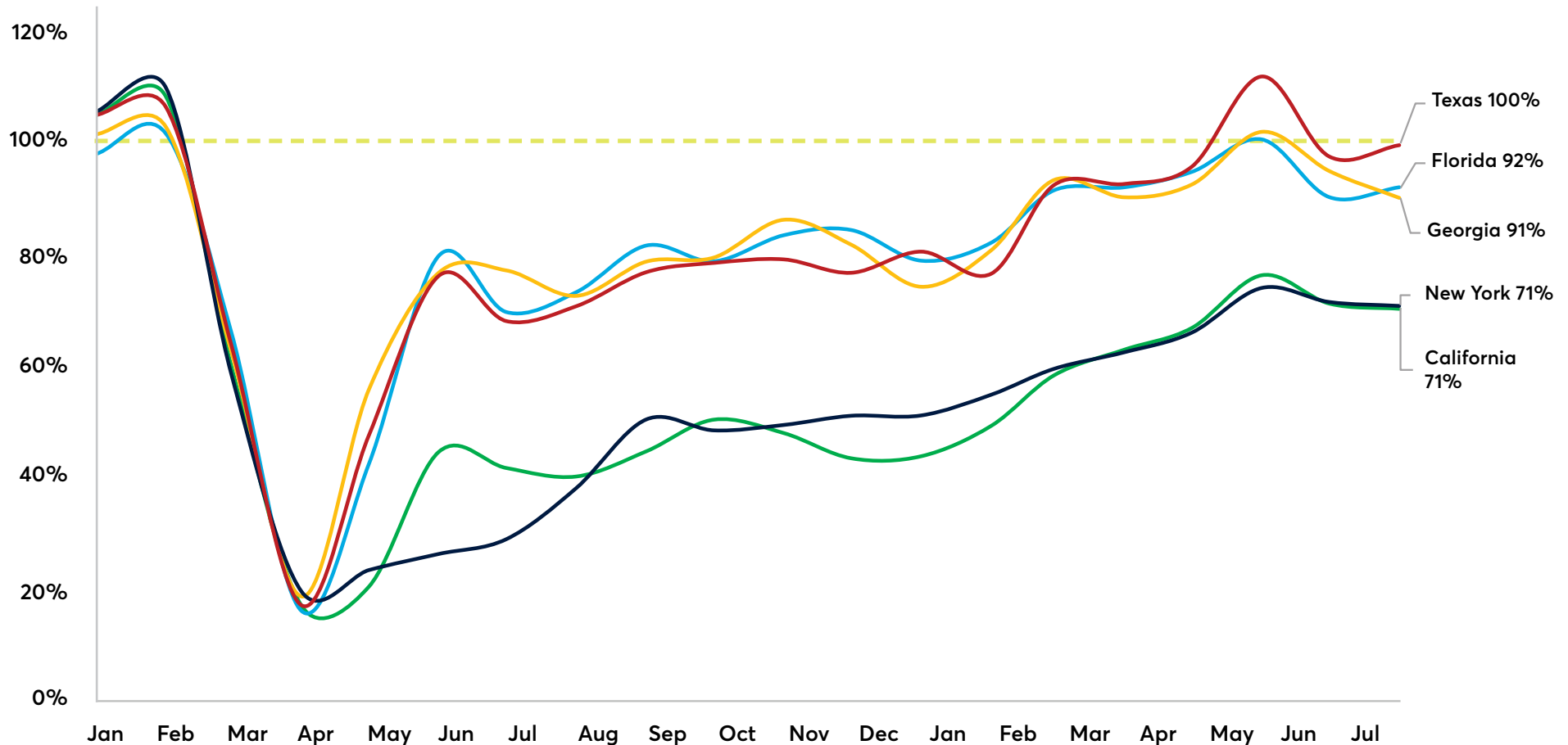


## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	02
Bookings are recovering	05
Cost and location matter, but they're not everything	06
Top 5 reasons for reluctance to return to a studio	07
Offering workout variety is a big advantage	08
Who we follow predicts what we try	08
Men present the biggest opportunities	09
What the industry is overcoming	11
Challenges facing the business	12
What's next	14
About Mindbody	19



# Bookings are recovering



While the volume continues to vary considerably by state, the overall trend line for bookings is going up toward where we were prior to the pandemic. Once restrictions were lifted or relaxed state by state, pent-up consumer demand was and continues to be the driver for recovery.

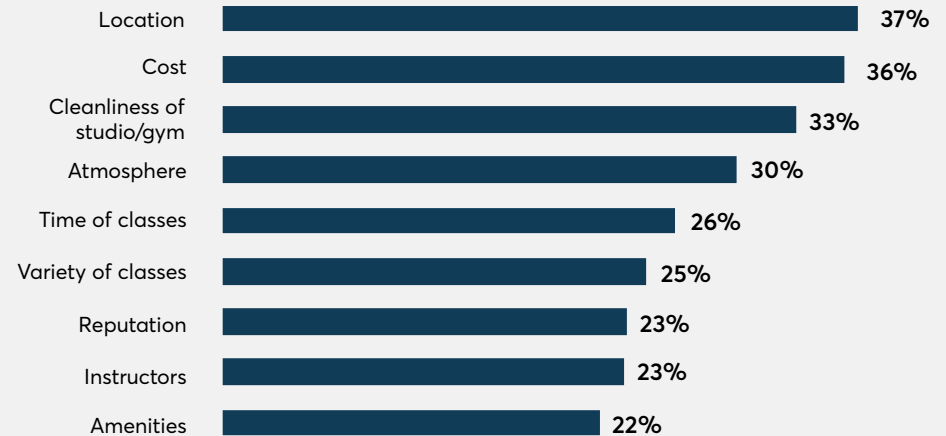


# Cost and location matter, but they're not everything

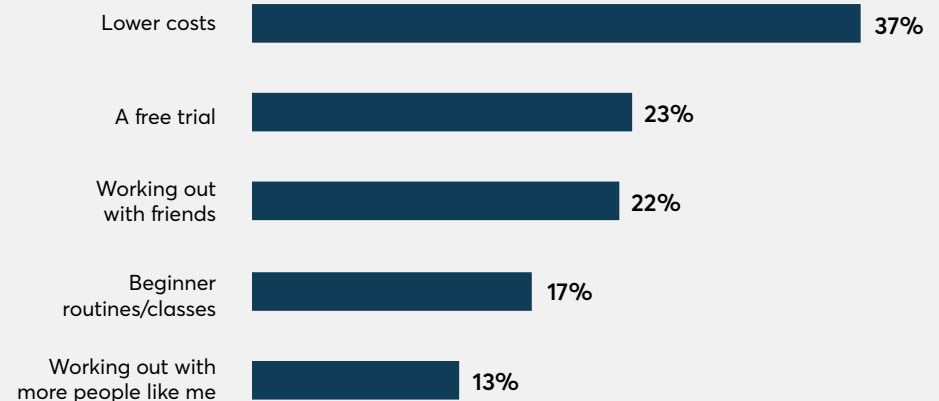
When it comes to choosing a fitness business, consumers do still cite location and cost as top considerations—and when motivating people to return, lower costs are still the winning strategy.

Unsurprisingly, cleanliness has also emerged as a key factor. This goes hand-in-hand with health concerns, which are here to stay. When asked their reasons for being reluctant to return to an in-person experience at a studio, vaccination is very much on everyone's minds.

## Top considerations for choosing a fitness studio/gym



## Ways to get people back to a gym or fitness studio



## Top 5 reasons for reluctance to return to a studio:

**29%**

I am not comfortable knowing that not all attendees are vaccinated

**24%**

I am not comfortable being near others

**23%**

I am not vaccinated yet

**19%**

I feel too intimidated because I am out of shape/gained weight

**17%**

I have a new routine doing virtual fitness at home



## Offering workout variety is a big advantage

A strong majority of survey respondents said they prefer a fitness studio or gym with a variety of workout types available—with men citing it as slightly more influential than women (69% versus 64%).

### Top reasons why:

- 40% prefer a variety of workouts
- 31% convenience
- 30% prefer going to one location
- 28% seems better priced

And forget the idea that people are afraid to try something new. With over half of all respondents (52%) saying they're more open to new workouts than they were before the pandemic, there's good evidence to suggest that being forced to adapt to new fitness routines has had a lasting effect on the marketplace.

## Who we follow predicts what we try

When asked what influenced them to try new workouts, respondents gave variations on the same theme: their news feeds. 26% pointed to social media, 24% said YouTube, and another 19% said it came from an influencer or celebrity recommendation.

That trend holds true for virtual workouts too. 30% say they've opted for workouts led by someone they were already following on social media platforms.

# 30%

say they've opted for workouts led by someone they follow on social media.





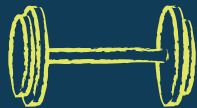


# Men present the biggest opportunities

While we can't speculate about why, we can report some marked differences between men's and women's exercise habits since the pandemic. The why is much less important than what it means for your organization, though: If you're not already, it's time to make a conscious effort to target men in your marketing efforts.

## Men are exercising more

**52%** exercise 3x a week or more (42% for women)



## Men don't see the pandemic as a blocker

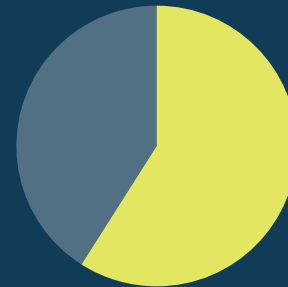
**36%**

exercise more frequently since the pandemic started  
(24% for women)

**30%**

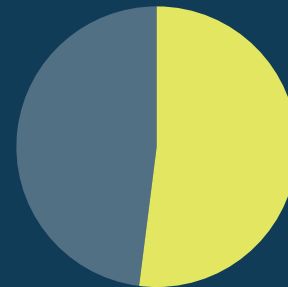
exercise longer since the pandemic  
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## Men are going back to classes



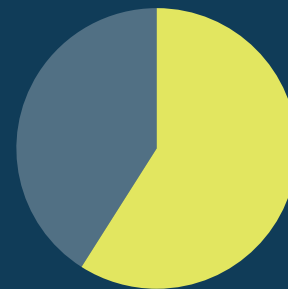
**59%**

of men are attending in-person classes at a gym (40% for women)



**52%**

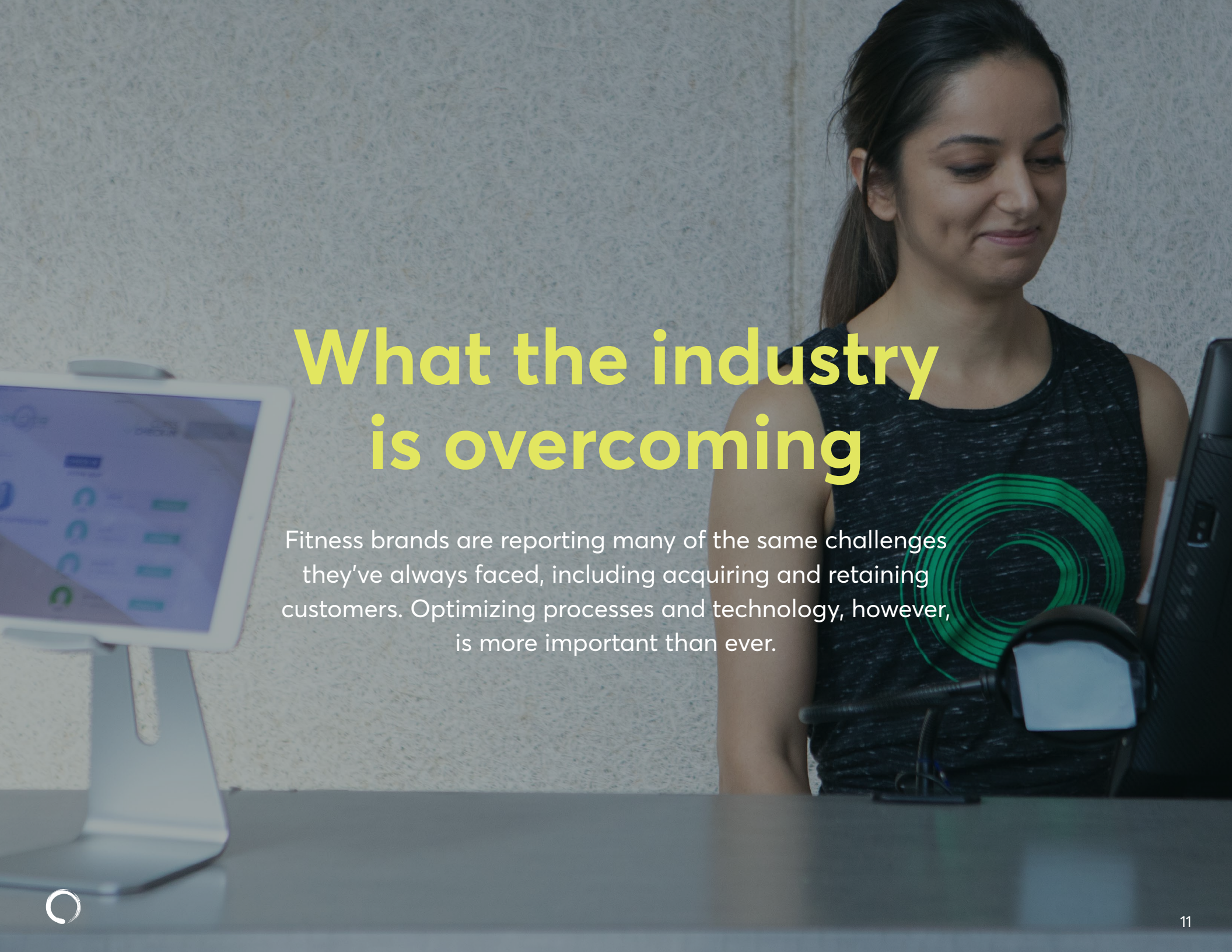
of men are attending in-person classes at a boutique studio (37% for women)



**59%**

of men are attending live virtual fitness classes (43% for women)





# What the industry is overcoming

Fitness brands are reporting many of the same challenges they've always faced, including acquiring and retaining customers. Optimizing processes and technology, however, is more important than ever.

# Challenges facing the business





When it comes to business challenges, bringing in new customers is at the top of the list. Retention, for both customers and staff, remains as big a challenge as ever too, if not bigger.

Beyond that, nearly half of fitness brands (45% franchise and 42% non-franchise organizations) reported a need to learn how to more effectively optimize the business. COVID forced us all apart, which has put a bigger spotlight on the power of software for business operations. The ability to collaborate and conduct business online isn't just a matter of efficiency and convenience anymore—it's now essential to survive and grow.

More than a third of all fitness brands also reported struggling to get the capital they need to grow: 38% currently take advantage of commercial business loans, and an additional 34% say they plan to get one within the next 6 months.





A row of black, textured balls, possibly juggling balls, resting on a light-colored wooden surface. The balls are arranged in a diagonal line from the bottom left towards the top right. The first ball in the foreground is in sharp focus, showing its dimpled texture. The others are progressively more out of focus as they recede into the background.

# What's next?

Where do we go from here? In 2021, it's a question that's equally philosophical and practical. For the latter at least, business owners have reported a few common threads in thinking.





## There's plenty of optimism

Across both franchise and non-franchise organizations, a third of business owners (31%) say their goal is to maintain the business for the foreseeable future, a plurality (44%) say they're ready to start growing again. They're planning to actively invest in strategies that will expand their businesses in the next 1 to 3 years.

## Diversifying is on everyone's mind

More revenue streams offer more possible paths to stability and growth, and 88% of fitness businesses have already added something besides fitness classes or training sessions to their slate of services.

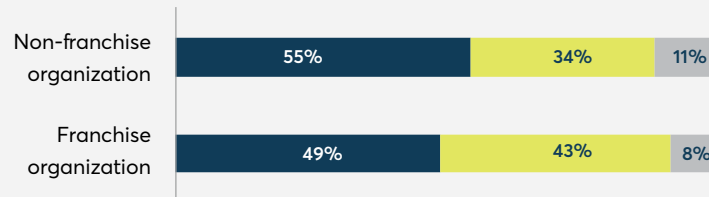
### Top 5 supplemental services:

- Wellness (45%)
- Nutrition (40%)
- Massage therapy (36%)
- Physical therapy (35%)
- Meditation (31%)

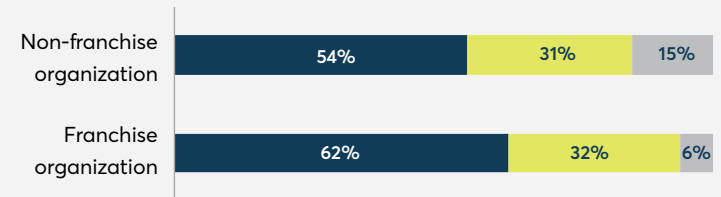
# Technology will only become more important

■ Plan to have/use within the next 6 months\*   ■ Plan to have/use after 6 months\*   ■ Don't plan to use\*

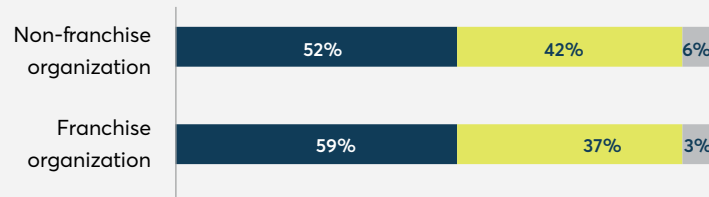
## Livestreaming



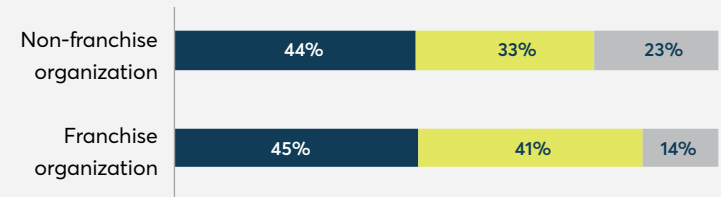
## Video on Demand



## Custom Mobile App



## AI Chatbot



\*Those who don't already have technology

Whether reluctantly or eagerly, strong majorities of owners either have adopted or are planning to adopt technology in new ways. The latest innovations, which have already proven themselves valuable since the pandemic, are on-demand video for fitness classes, custom mobile apps, live video streaming for fitness classes, and **AI chatbots** for online booking.



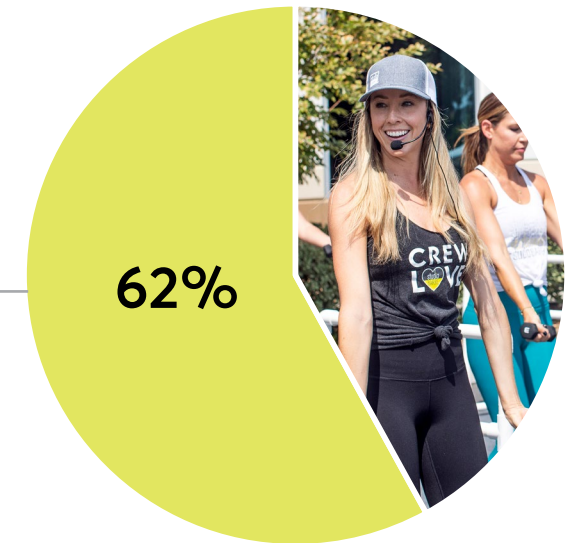


## Doubling down on fitness instructors

For all the talk of innovation, adapting, and diversifying, one of the most reliable predictors of client retention has always come down to one very simple question: "How do you like your instructor?"

62% of fitness enthusiasts say that they are more loyal to their fitness instructor than to the gym or studio where they work out.

Human connection is everything, and fitness businesses who help foster and encourage that relationship between instructor and customer will likely see it reflected in their retention numbers.



Consumers are seeking fitness and wellness like never before—it's up to brands like yours to maximize the opportunity. Now's the time to adopt technology, hire and and retain top talent, and create standout experiences for customers. We can't wait to see what you do next.

# Trusted by the biggest brands

Leading wellness business enterprises in over 150 countries count on Mindbody to help them manage and expand their operations.





## About Mindbody

Mindbody is the leading wellness experience software platform for the fitness, wellness, and beauty industries. Tens of thousands of fitness studios, salons, spas, and integrated health centers worldwide—from the newest entrepreneurs to the largest franchises—use Mindbody’s integrated software and payments platform to run, market, and grow their businesses. Consumers use Mindbody to more easily find, engage, and transact with wellness providers in their local communities and around the world.

## About the Mindbody research team

Mindbody Research & Insights is a diverse and experienced team of market and user researchers, with deep expertise in advanced quantitative methods, qualitative, and mixed research methodologies. The team brings together MBAs, economists, behavioral and social scientists, and international specialists. With broad skills in both consumer and business research and decades of collective industry experience, the team delivers high-impact research in both domestic and international markets to help position Mindbody as an industry leader.





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