

# Working in Fitness 2004

## The Main Findings

The fitness industry is one in which:

- 3 in 4 employees would recommend their employer to a friend.
- 9 in 10 plan to remain in the industry for the next three years.
- people are generally keen to learn new techniques and participate in training and development.

On the other hand:

- instructors and trainers do not compare favourably with management positions;
- managers are more likely to have experienced an increase in pay in the last year; to have received a bonus; and to have their training paid for by their employer.
- there is disparity in female and male pay for the same job roles, and in the proportion of males in females in the senior management and director positions.
- only 41% of private sector employees received an increase in pay in the last year compared to 70% of the public sector.

The survey suggests that anticipated retention rates in the private and public sectors are very similar and that movement from private to public sector is to be expected.

The importance of customer service and technical & practical skills is high, there is a need for management and general IT skills and the main cause of hard-to-fill vacancies in the sector is due to poor terms and conditions offered.

Both employers and employees agree that poor terms and conditions, especially low levels of pay in certain occupations, are the major challenges to be met by the sector in the future.

## The Survey

The annual Working in Fitness survey is a confidential web based survey conducted by the Register of Exercise Professionals and SkillsActive, carried out by business intelligence specialists Leisure-net Solutions. The survey is a unique opportunity to gauge the health of the fitness industry itself by representing the views and opinions of employees - more than 1,100 of them this time - across the range of occupations in the sector, which enabled underlying issues to be highlighted in terms of regional, gender or occupational differences.

## The Sample

Respondents were divided evenly between working for small, medium and large enterprises; just under five hundred work in public sector in either local authorities or trusts and just over five hundred work in the private sector with an additional ninety responses coming from corporate fitness.

Across the sector 72% of respondents were full time employees, 12% part time, 15% self employed and 1% working on a seasonal or casual basis.

There is an almost exact equal gender breakdown across the sector and the age breakdown between men and women across all age groups is also equal. By occupation, whilst there are more females employed as instructors and trainers, men outnumber women in all management roles. Only 1 in 5 respondents at the director level were female.

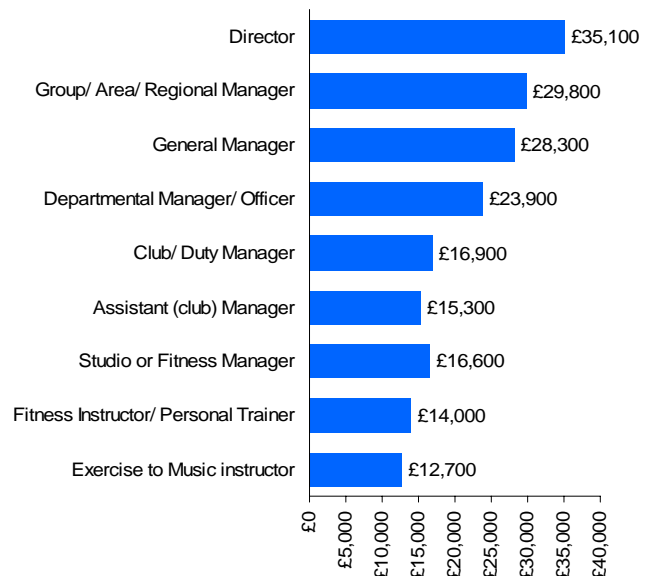
## Salaries, Bonuses and Benefits

The average basic salary in the sector is £19,300 per annum; the comparable figure in 2003 was £16,200. However, there are still occupations in the industry with very low rates of pay; 63% of the sector earned less than £20,000 in 2004; 15% earned less than £10,000.

Across the five main occupations featured, males earn more than females for the same job role. Male general managers have on average a noticeably longer length of service compared to their female counterparts; males on average are marginally more qualified than females in the survey.

The average value amongst those who are getting a bonus is £1,800. Spread across all those in the survey, the average value is £500; this is equivalent to 3% of the basic salary in the industry. As a general rule, the more you earn, the higher the bonus paid. Senior occupations are in a better position to achieve the targets and so gain the highest bonuses.

### Average salary by occupation



Only just over half of the respondents received a pay increase in the last year; the key concern reported by the fitness sector employees is basic pay. Only a third of fitness instructors and personal trainers received a pay increase compared to over 60% of managers. The wage gap between instructors / trainers and the management roles can have only widened in the period.

"In the last year have you received an increase in pay?"

Sector	Yes %
Public - Local Authority	70%
Public - Trust	71%
Private	42%
Corporate	62%
Total	57%

Only 42% of employees in the private sector received an increase in pay compared to over 70% of employees in the public sector.

## Employment Turnover and Retention

56% of employees had 4 years experience or more. The occupations with the most experience tended to be the senior management and director posts, which is a good sign that there is scope for career progression in the industry. Full time employees had longer career histories on average than part time and self-employed employees.

Employees in the sector were very positive in terms of remaining in the sector in the next three years. 9 in 10 respondents said they were very likely or quite likely to be in the industry in 2007.

55% of respondents cite low pay when asked what factors would make them consider leaving the fitness industry. Poor training and development (15%) combined with better prospects/career paths (36%) shows scope for improvements in continuing professional development in the sector.

We asked what factors were important for the sector employees. Overall, basic pay is the most important issue when choosing the next job. 45% say that basic pay is very important compared to just 23% answering that it is not important. Good holiday pay is the factor with the highest proportion of employees attaching at least some importance to it.

## Skills

When employees rate the skills needed in their jobs, only 4% do not consider general IT skills to be important; 29% consider IT skills to be very important.

Communication skills and customer handling skills are universally accepted as very important in the sector. There is little perceived importance given to foreign language skills in the sector. Problem solving and numeracy skills are concentrated in certain occupations only.

Management skills are not exclusively deemed important in management roles. Individual attributes such as initiative, personal appearance & attitude and self-motivation all rate very highly. Four in five respondents across all occupations believe these three skills are very important to their job.

## Continuing Professional Development

1 in 4 employees feel they have not been given adequate training to do their job properly; rates are slightly higher in the private sector (26% report a lack of adequate training) than in other sectors (average 21%). The smallest sized organisations in the survey have the lowest proportion of staff that have not received adequate training.

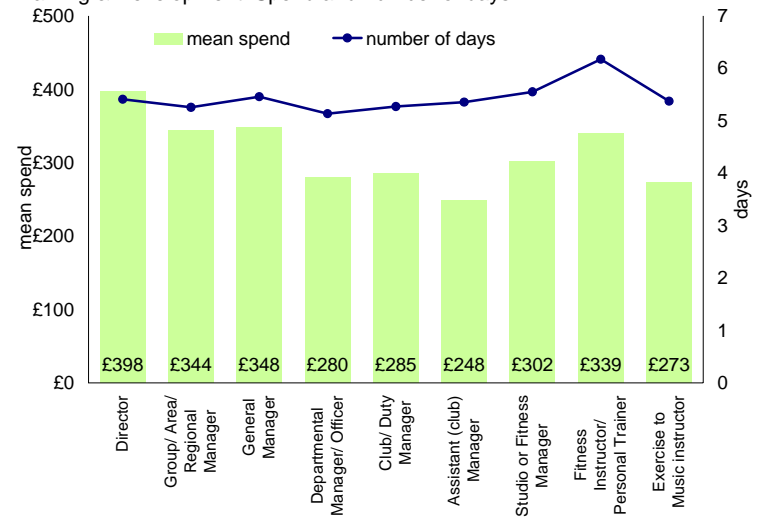
Unprompted answers revealed a big demand for GP referral courses. Other areas of additional demand were management skills, nutrition, IT and business skills.

Training and development is very common in the sector, 20% of employees having attended 11 or more days of training in the last twelve months, 17% 7 - 10, 29% 4 - 6 and 34% 1 - 3 days.

The average number of training days for employees in the sector is six days. There is little variation within occupations or levels of education, which is surprising.

The average spend on training and development in the sector is £330 per annum. There are only small differences in the duration of training attended by occupation or level of education, but noticeable differences in the cost of training.

Training & Development: Spend and number of days



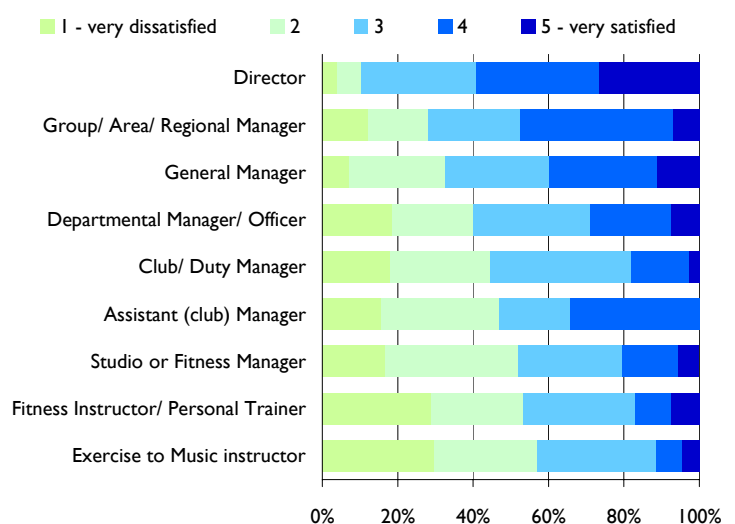
The cost of training differs with the employees level of education eg. spend on employees with masters degree = £374 whilst those with GCSE = £267. Senior posts are likely to attend the same amount of training but the cost of training will be higher than non-management positions.

3 in 5 respondents attended one or more trade shows last year. The most popular attended were LIW (22%), FitPro (9%) Fitness Expo (7%), YMCA (6%) and ISRM (5%). There is a noticeable difference in the occupations when it comes to funding these training and development courses. A high proportion of instructors, personal trainers and facility managers and their deputies pay for their own development; most development for senior managers and directors is met by the employer.

## Job Satisfaction

Generally employees in the sector appear to be happy with their degree of responsibility, their employers, job security and hours of work. Remuneration packages and career development prospects were given the lowest satisfaction scores by the sector. 3 in 10 fitness instructors/ personal trainers are very dissatisfied with their remuneration package compared to only 1 in 25 directors.

How satisfied are you with your remuneration package?



The full version of this report is available by contacting [research@skillsactive.com](mailto:research@skillsactive.com)  
 Further information about this survey and other surveys about your organisation can be obtained by contacting [info@leisure-net.org](mailto:info@leisure-net.org)