



Winning the Fitness Game

# How Gyms Can Boost Retention and Attract Members



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# Executive Summary

The global fitness industry, valued at over \$96 billion in 2019, continues to grow but faces persistent challenges in retaining members. **With gyms losing up to 50% of new members within six months** and high competition from home workouts and digital fitness platforms, **understanding what drives gym membership decisions and long-term engagement has become critical**. Given that acquiring a new customer is more costly than retaining an existing one, fitness providers must focus on strategies that improve member retention and attract new customers.

To address these challenges, a nationwide survey was conducted in December 2024, collecting responses from 1,004 participants across the United States. This study explored the primary factors influencing gym selection, member retention, and the motivations behind leaving or joining a gym, with additional analysis across age and gender demographics.

## Key Findings

- **Cost, location, and cleanliness** are the top factors influencing gym choice.
- **Affordability, convenience, and well-maintained facilities** drive member retention.
- Members leave primarily due to **high costs, inconvenient locations**, and the rise of **home workouts**.
- Younger members prioritize **24/7 access** and digital options, while older members value **cleanliness and variety of classes**.



## Strategic Recommendations:

- Introduce **flexible and tiered pricing** models to improve affordability.
- Expand **hybrid fitness solutions** by integrating digital and in-person offerings.
- Prioritize **cleanliness** and proactive **facility maintenance**.
- Customize programs to align with **age- and gender-specific preferences**.
- Leverage technology for continuous **member engagement** and **feedback collection** through tools like **Sogolytics**.

By aligning services with member needs and addressing key pain points, gyms can improve retention, attract new members, and remain competitive in an evolving fitness landscape. This report provides data-driven insights and actionable strategies to help fitness providers achieve sustainable growth.



# Introduction & Background

In today's health-conscious world, fitness has become a top priority for many individuals seeking to improve their well-being and maintain a balanced lifestyle. The global fitness and health club industry has experienced steady growth, surpassing **\$96 billion in market size in 2019**. However, despite this expansion, gyms face significant challenges in retaining members. Research shows that most gyms **lose 50% of new members within six months**, and up to **40% of members cancel their memberships annually**. Given that acquiring a **new customer is five times more costly** than retaining an existing one, improving retention is critical for gym profitability. In fact, increasing retention rates by just 5% can boost profits by **25% to 95%**.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of home workouts and digital fitness platforms, reshaping consumer expectations. **Gyms must now compete with more convenient and flexible fitness solutions**, making it essential to understand what drives membership decisions and long-term engagement.

**This study was conducted to explore the key factors influencing gym membership behavior and provide actionable insights for fitness providers.** It examines what drives individuals to select and stay with a gym, the reasons behind member attrition, the motivations that encourage non-members to join, and how these preferences differ across various age and gender groups. By addressing these areas, the report delivers strategic recommendations to help gyms improve retention, attract new members, and adapt to evolving industry trends.



A **nationwide survey** was conducted to gather insights into gym membership behaviors, preferences, and decision-making factors. The survey collected 1,004 valid responses through an online platform, targeting participants across the United States with a demonstrated interest or participation in fitness activities. This approach ensured the data was both relevant and reflective of current fitness consumers.

Designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights, the survey included a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions. **It explored respondents' fitness goals and success in achieving them, current gym membership status and preferred gym types, factors influencing gym choice, retention, and switching behavior, as well as motivations to join a gym and what differentiates gyms in a competitive market.**

The collected data was carefully cleaned for accuracy and analyzed using cross-tabulation to identify trends across demographics like age and gender. Open-ended responses were coded to uncover recurring themes and deeper insights. Due to the survey format, some percentages may exceed 100% as participants could select multiple responses.

This **comprehensive methodology provides a strong foundation for delivering actionable, data-driven strategies** to help fitness providers better understand and meet the evolving needs of their members.





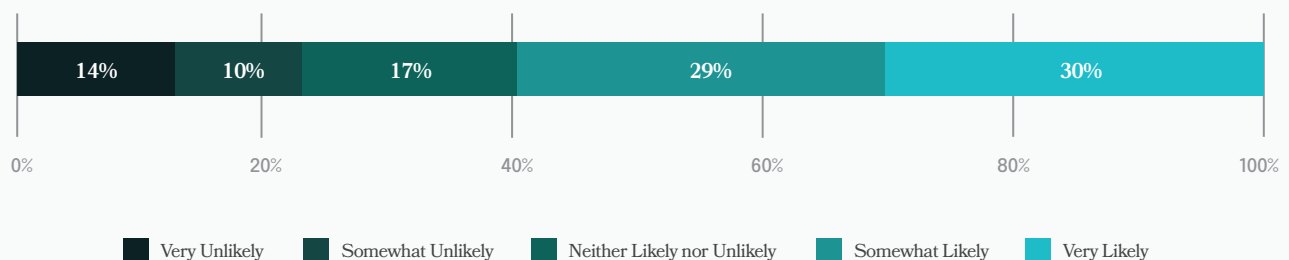
# Fitness Goals & Behavior

**Understanding how individuals approach fitness-related goal-setting and success provides a foundation for analyzing gym membership behavior.** Survey responses reveal a significant inclination toward setting fitness goals, but success in achieving these goals shows room for improvement, with notable differences across gender groups.

## Fitness Goal-Setting Likelihood

Most respondents are motivated to set fitness-related goals, with **nearly 60% indicating they are likely or very likely to do so**. However, a smaller yet significant portion (24%) shows reluctance, suggesting potential barriers such as **lack of interest, time, or confidence**. This indicates opportunities for gyms to engage this segment by creating approachable programs and promoting the benefits of goal setting.

### Likelihood of Setting Fitness Goals



**Figure 1:** This stacked bar chart illustrates respondents' likelihood of setting fitness-related resolutions or goals. Responses are categorized into five levels, and the percentages represent the distribution across all participants.

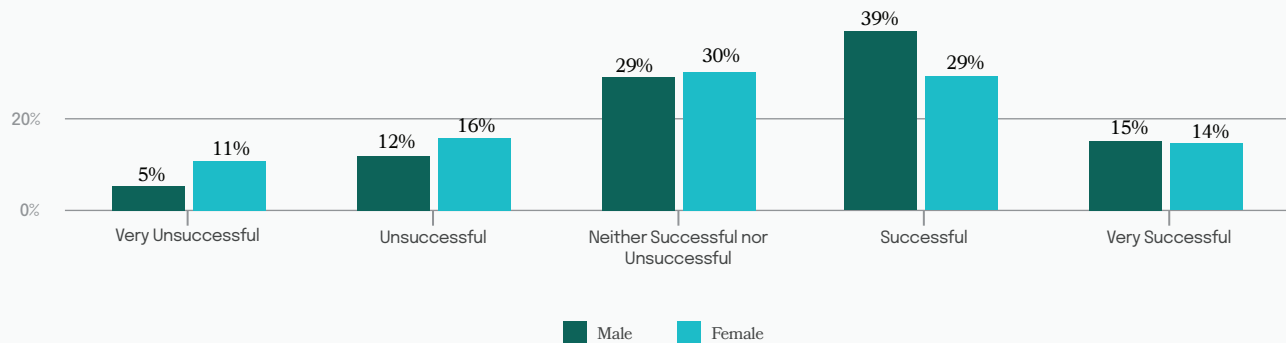


# Perceived Success in Achieving Goals

**Nearly half of respondents consider themselves successful in meeting fitness goals.** However, **success rates vary notably by gender:** 54% of men rate themselves as successful, compared to 43% of women. Women are more likely to report challenges in achieving their goals, with 27% identifying as unsuccessful compared to 17% of men.

**This underscores the importance of tailored support systems,** such as coaching and progress-tracking tools, to address these differences and help individuals translate motivation into consistent results.

## Perceived Success in Meeting Fitness Goals by Gender



**Figure 2:** The graph illustrates respondents' self-reported success in achieving fitness-related goals, segmented by gender (Male and Female). Responses are categorized across five levels of success

The findings on fitness goal-setting and perceived success highlight the need for targeted support and engagement strategies to help individuals bridge the gap between intentions and outcomes. **Differences in success rates across genders further emphasize the importance of inclusive and tailored approaches.** These insights lay the groundwork for gyms and fitness programs to align their offerings with the diverse needs and motivations of their audiences.





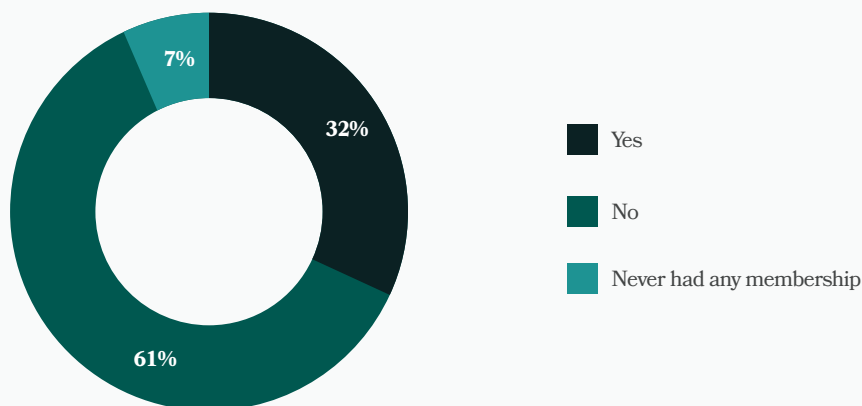
# Gym Membership Status & Preferences

This section explores respondents' current gym membership rates and their preferences for gym types, segmented by membership status and gender. The data provides insights into general preferences, highlighting opportunities for gyms to tailor their offerings based on user demographics.

## Gym Membership Status

Among respondents, **32% currently hold a gym membership, while 61% do not**. The significant proportion of non-members presents an **opportunity for gyms to develop targeted re-engagement strategies**, such as flexible membership plans, to attract former members and expand their customer base.

### Gym Membership Breakdown



**Figure 3:** This donut chart illustrates respondents' gym membership status, highlighting the proportions of those who currently hold a membership, those who do not, and those who have never held one.



## Gym Preferences by Membership Status

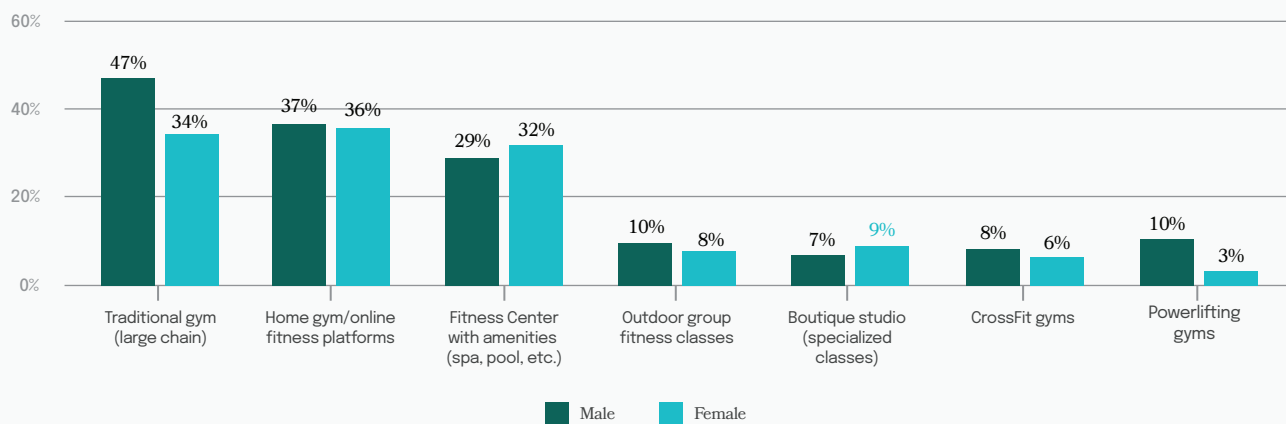
Preferences differ between members and non-members. Among current members, 63% prefer traditional gyms, followed by fitness centers with amenities (40%). Boutique studios (12%) and home/online fitness platforms (26%) hold niche appeal.

Non-members lean heavily toward home/online fitness platforms (42%) compared to traditional gyms (31%), reflecting a preference for convenience and flexibility.

## Gym Preferences by Gender

**Gym preferences reveal distinct patterns by gender.** Men show a strong preference for traditional gyms and fitness centers with amenities, with notable interest in powerlifting gyms and CrossFit gyms. Women, on the other hand, favor boutique studios and group fitness classes more than men, while also showing a higher preference for home/online fitness platforms compared to men.

### Gym Preferences: Male vs. Female Respondents



**Figure 4:** This chart illustrates respondents' preferences for different types of gyms, segmented by gender. Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

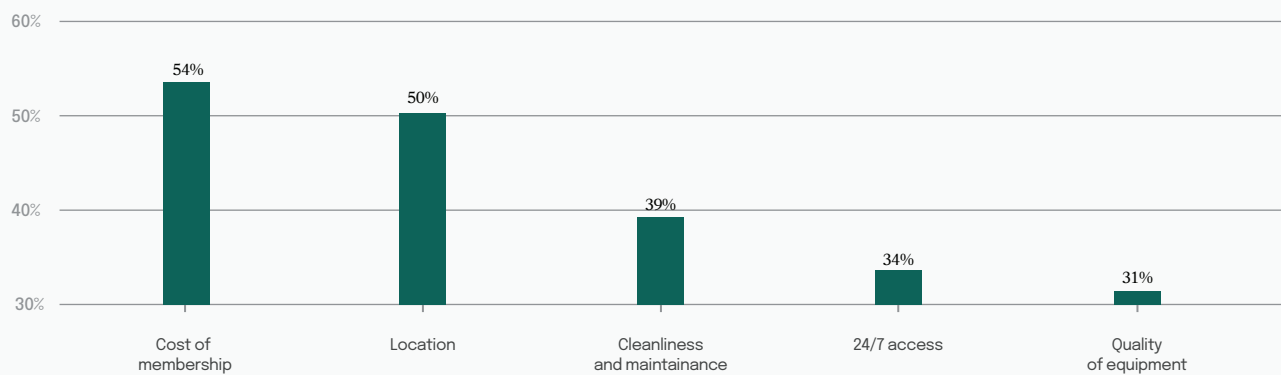


# Top Factors Influencing Gym Choice

By understanding the diverse preferences and behaviors of gym members and non-members, fitness providers can better align their services to meet evolving needs. **Focusing on flexibility, facility quality, and personalized experiences will be key to attracting and retaining a broader range of members.** These insights provide a foundation for developing targeted strategies to drive long-term engagement and growth, which will be explored in the following recommendations.

**When selecting a gym, respondents prioritize practical and essential factors, with cost (54%), location (50%), and cleanliness (39%) emerging as the top three considerations.** These preferences reflect a focus on affordability, convenience, and hygiene, which align with the modern fitness consumer's expectations.

## Top Factors Considered When Choosing a Gym



**Figure 5:** This graph highlights the top factors respondents consider when selecting a gym. Participants were given 10 options to choose their top three factors. Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.



## Additional Factors by Age and Gender

Beyond the general top three factors (cost of membership, location, and cleanliness), other preferences vary across age and gender groups.

Younger respondents aged 18–34 emphasize 24/7 access, with 37% of those aged 18–24 and 45% of those aged 25–34 selecting it as important, reflecting their need for flexibility. Middle-aged respondents (35–54) show a preference for quality of equipment, with 37% in the 35–44 age group highlighting it. Among those aged 55 and above, preferences largely align with cleanliness and maintenance but also show interest in variety of classes, particularly in the 75+ group (25%).

Gender differences reveal that females prioritize 24/7 access more than males, while males place greater emphasis on quality of equipment, reflecting their interest in performance-driven facilities.

These findings highlight the importance of offering a well-rounded gym experience. **By understanding how preferences shift across age and gender, gyms can tailor their services to meet diverse member needs, ensuring broader appeal and stronger member engagement.**



# Gym Retention & Switching Behavior

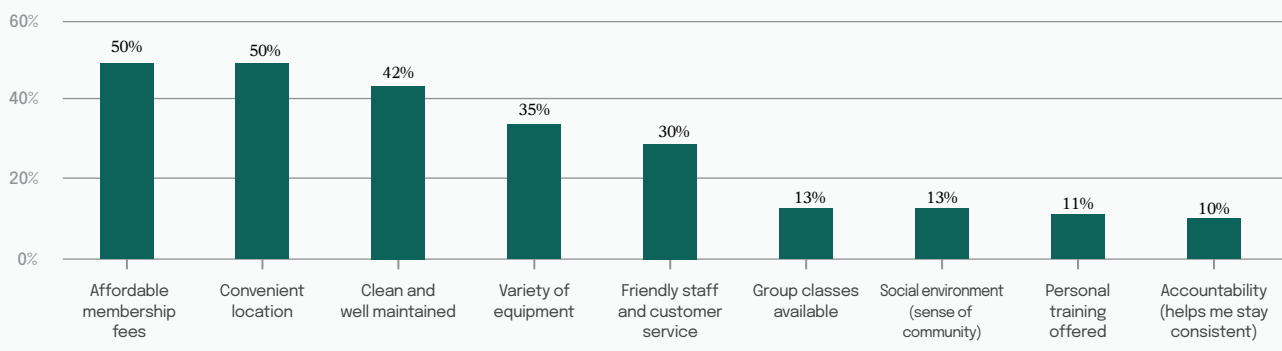
Understanding why members stay with or leave their gyms offers valuable insights into the factors driving customer loyalty and attrition. The survey reveals that while most respondents remain loyal to their gyms, a notable portion has switched or left within the past year due to specific pain points.

## Retention: Why Members Stay

A significant 81% of respondents reported that they have not switched or left their gym in the past year. **The primary reasons for continued membership are affordable membership fees and a convenient location**, each cited by 50% of participants. Additionally, 42% of members value clean and well-maintained facilities, highlighting the importance of hygiene and upkeep in member retention.

Other influential factors include the variety of equipment (35%) and friendly staff and customer service (30%), both contributing to a positive gym experience. While elements like group classes and a strong social environment were less frequently mentioned, they still play a role in fostering overall member satisfaction.

## Top Factors for Staying with Current Gym



**Figure 6:** This bar chart illustrates the primary factors that contribute to member retention at gyms. Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

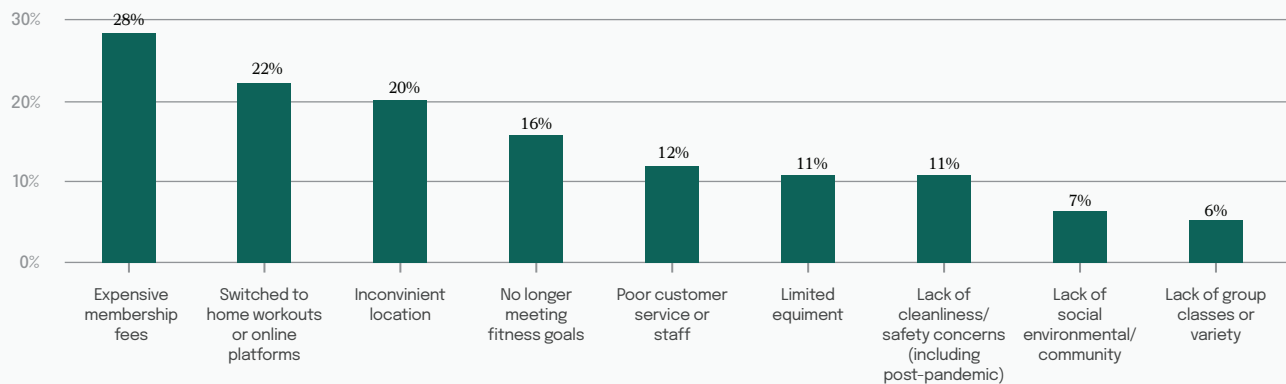


## Attrition: Why Members Leave

Despite strong retention rates, **19% of respondents reported leaving or switching gyms in the past year. The leading reason for attrition was expensive membership fees (28%),** followed by a shift to home workouts or online fitness platforms (22%) and inconvenient location (20%).

Other contributing factors include the gym no longer meeting fitness goals (16%), poor customer service (12%), and limited equipment (11%). Additionally, cleanliness and safety concerns—particularly in the post-pandemic environment—were cited by 11% of respondents as reasons for leaving.

### Top Factors Members Leave Their Gym



**Figure 7:** This bar chart displays the primary reasons members leave or stop attending their gyms. Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.





# Differentiators: What Makes a Gym Stand Out

When comparing gyms, **respondents highlighted a variety of factors that influence their decision** to choose one gym over another. The most frequently mentioned aspects include the **quality of equipment, pricing, location, and cleanliness**. These priorities align closely with the broader themes identified in earlier sections, reinforcing the importance of offering a balanced and customer-centric gym experience.

- **Quality and Variety of Equipment**

The most frequently mentioned factor was the quality and availability of equipment. Respondents value gyms that offer modern, well-maintained, and diverse workout machines.

**“Modern and high-end equipment.  
Ability to go 24/7, low monthly rate.”**

**“A good variety of equipment and no  
burdensome membership requirement.”**

- **Affordable Pricing and Flexible Memberships**

Cost of membership and affordable pricing remain top considerations, with participants favoring gyms that provide value without hidden fees or long-term commitments.

**“My main focus would be the cost. As  
long as it has basic weight machines,  
exercise bikes, and treadmills, I'm happy.”**

**“Cost of the membership and the  
equipment on the floor.”**

- **Convenient Location**

A gym's proximity to home or work is critical for convenience and consistent attendance.

**“Close to home and affordable.”**

**“Location and price.”**



- **Cleanliness and Maintenance**

Clean, well-maintained facilities were frequently cited as a key differentiator, reflecting ongoing concerns about hygiene and safety.

**“Clean and safe environments are what stands out.”**

**“The cleanliness of the facility as well as the operating hours.”**

- **Friendly and Knowledgeable Staff**

Positive interactions with staff and knowledgeable trainers contribute to a supportive gym atmosphere.

**“It's all about the staff and if they are knowledgeable. I don't want to get hurt and I want to see results.”**

**“Being able to speak with knowledgeable staff.”**

- **Sense of Community and Environment**

A welcoming and inclusive environment, along with a sense of community belonging, makes a gym more appealing to members.

**“The environment and the type of people who work and frequent the gym.”**

**“One thing that stands out is how it is as a community and safety.”**

- **Amenities and Special Features**

Additional amenities like pools, spa services, and diverse group classes enhance a gym's appeal.

**“If it has a pool.”**

**“Cleanliness, lovely customer service, privacy room, spaciousness, and amenities like massages and other spa-related treats.”**



# Strategic Recommendations

The survey findings highlight clear opportunities for gyms to strengthen member retention, attract new members, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving fitness industry. Addressing key pain points and aligning services with member preferences will be crucial for long-term success.

- **Offer Flexible and Value-Driven Pricing Models**

High membership costs remain a major barrier for many gym-goers. Introducing tiered pricing options—such as off-peak rates, short-term passes, and family plans—can make memberships more accessible and appealing to a broader audience.

- **Prioritize Cleanliness and Facility Maintenance**

Clean, well-maintained facilities are essential for member satisfaction. Regular cleaning protocols, proactive equipment maintenance, and clear communication about safety measures can help build trust and encourage continued gym use.

- **Leverage Technology for Member Engagement**

Consistent communication is key to member retention. Implementing CRM systems, push notifications, and targeted email marketing can help gyms stay connected with members. Using tools like Sogolytics for regular feedback collection enables gyms to quickly address member concerns and adapt to evolving needs.

- **Expand Hybrid Fitness Solutions**

The growing popularity of home workouts and digital fitness platforms underscores the need for gyms to adapt. Offering on-demand classes, virtual training sessions, and mobile fitness tracking can provide members with greater flexibility and convenience.

- **Personalize Offerings to Demographic Needs**

Preferences vary across age and gender groups, with younger members valuing flexible access and older members prioritizing cleanliness and diverse class offerings. Tailoring gym programs to these different needs can enhance engagement and improve overall satisfaction.

- **Enhance Customer Service and Community Engagement**

Positive interactions with staff and a welcoming gym environment are critical for member loyalty. Investing in staff training and fostering a sense of community through group classes and events can strengthen member relationships and improve retention.

**By focusing on affordability, convenience, personalization, and engagement, gyms can create a more dynamic and satisfying fitness experience.** Implementing these strategies will not only improve member retention but also position gyms for sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive market.



# Conclusion

This study highlights key factors driving gym membership decisions, retention, and attrition. **Cost, location, and cleanliness are the top priorities for gym-goers**, while preferences vary by age and gender. Younger members value 24/7 access and digital fitness options, whereas older members prioritize clean and well-maintained facilities.

Retention is fueled by affordability, convenience, and a positive gym environment, while high costs, poor service, and inconvenient locations lead to attrition. Differentiators like quality equipment, friendly staff, and a strong sense of community further impact member satisfaction.

To stay competitive, **gyms must offer flexible membership plans, invest in modern equipment, integrate hybrid fitness solutions, and foster a welcoming community**. Addressing these needs will help fitness providers improve retention, attract new members, and thrive in a rapidly evolving industry.



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