

# MEMBERSHIPS ARE STILL GROWING

**↑** The 2010 Australian Fitness Industry Survey (AFIS) brought to you by Ezypay will again provide Australian fitness club owners and managers of Australian fitness clubs with insights into club operations, staffing, sales, marketing and finance along with the thoughts and perceptions of their members.

To provide additional guidance and direction, Ezypay invited a panel of leading industry professionals to discuss some of the major outcomes from this year's survey results.

The survey outcomes showed that over 64 per cent of clubs have had an increase in membership numbers in the last year; this is 10 per cent up on the year before (see graph opposite).

## WHAT FACTORS DO YOU BELIEVE HAVE LEAD TO THE LARGE INCREASE OF MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS?

**GG** I don't believe the economy has affected this. It is probably other forces; the growth in 24-hour clubs and PT studios for example, which although it may be affecting more traditional clubs, may also be making the consumer more aware. I think the average consumer is a lot savvier today.

They shop around a little more, they may be prompted by a new club opening across the road and that's made them go in there. I also think it is far more of an issue from an education standpoint and the media has done us some favours in that regard. It's just a general swell in the understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing.

**JW** I think you make a very valid point. I don't think fitness is seen as an add-on to your life anymore. Fitness and wellbeing is seen as part of your life, and I think the media has done us a lot of favours there and made people more inclined to join a gym. Five or so years ago the gym was seen as a trendy social place to go in the city. Gyms are now seen more as part of a person's life and wellbeing.

**GB** Outdoor PT has grown enormously. When people drive past and see all the groups exercising outdoors, it may trigger in their minds that they need to do something. Females who may not have gone to a traditional gym are more likely to try one of the new style express clubs or attend different classes, giving them confidence to go to the gym. The definition of what fitness and exercise is has changed.

**EK** I think (due to the poor economy) it's a two-fold thing for both consumer and business. People can take control of exercise, health and fitness when they can't control external factors, like the economy. Similarly, while that fear factor was going on in the business world, getting back into business with your own business (like a franchise) could also be seen as a way of taking control.

**JT** I work with about 50 clubs around Australia and New Zealand and we track numbers very closely. I wonder if all the survey respondents understood the question? Some of the clubs I work with are some of the best operators and they are only seeing membership growth of between 5 and 7 per cent, although they have seen income grow by more than 10 per cent. So, while their profit has increased by more than 10 per cent, their membership growth may not be more than 10 per cent.

**MC** I have to agree. When I saw this question, I thought 'wow, it must be good in Australia – it's not like that in New Zealand'. The growth of our facilities has been below 5 per cent and we've had a dramatic drop-off in members, but more people have been attending casually and taking part in programs, which has been a change in the method of using the facility. More people are going for group activity like the boot camps and the council's have been providing funding to attend those group-based activities on a casual basis.

## SUMMARY

Membership growth has been due to;

- an increase in general awareness of fitness and wellbeing
- more clubs in the marketplace

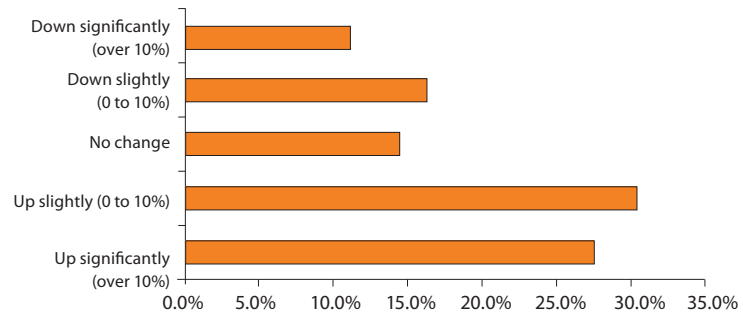
### The 2010 AFIS expert panel included;

Grant Gamble ( <b>GG</b> )	Owner – Bodywise
Justin Wilshaw ( <b>JW</b> )	CEO – Contours
Gayle Brimble ( <b>GB</b> )	Training Team Captain – Australian Institute Fitness
Megan Crow ( <b>MC</b> )	Business Manager – Christchurch City Council, NZ
Jamie Hayes ( <b>JH</b> )	Managing Director – Healthy Inspirations
Edel Kilmartin ( <b>EK</b> )	Director of Operations – Curves
Justin Tamsett ( <b>JT</b> )	Managing Director – Active Management
Simon Hall ( <b>SH</b> )	CEO - Marketing Manager – Ezypay
Celeste Kirby-Brown ( <b>CKB</b> )	Sales & Marketing Director – Ezypay

- trying to control an area of life during unstable economic times
- greater visibility of fitness through boot camps and outdoor training
- a move to casual usage rather than membership
- an increase in media exposure of health and wellness issues.

The 2010 AFIS discussion series covers critical fitness topics including staff quality, social media, membership fees, retention and growth and the concerns around membership contracts. The full series can be viewed on [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) keyword Ezypay or subscribe to the Ezypay YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/user/Ezypay](http://www.youtube.com/user/Ezypay). Visit the Ezypay stand P22 at the Australian Health and Fitness Expo. 

#### How have your membership numbers changed compared with last year?



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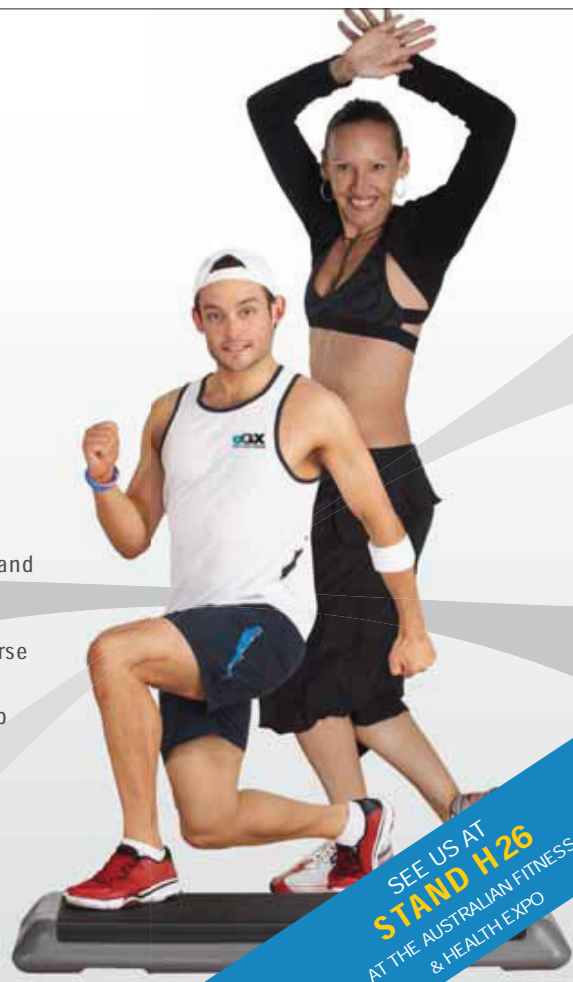
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