



The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is a not-for-profit trade association open to investor-owned and member-owned fitness, racquet, and athletic facilities. Associate memberships are available to manufacturers or suppliers of products and services of use to IHRSA members.

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Women, Revisited

When it comes to sports and fitness, women are truly a powerful force. At the recent Summer Olympics, women took 29 (63%) of the 46 gold medals won by the U.S., and, for the first time, each of the 205 participating countries sent a female athlete.



Bill McBride
IHRSA Chairperson

The nickname for the U.S.'s female squad, "Team Title IX," acknowledged the 40-year-old law that guaranteed girls and women equal access to America's sports programs. At London 2012, women ruled the event in many ways, and, in years to come, we can expect even more of them to become involved in athletic activities.

IHRSA-member clubs have long recognized and addressed the health-and-fitness needs and expectations of women. Now, for a number of reasons, the industry would be well advised to revisit and review what it's doing—and consider how well it's doing it—in terms of this constituency.

Women have changed and times have changed, and clubs need to reflect, and respond to, the current situation.

Recently, I happened upon a number of important facts that make a compelling case for a heightened industry awareness about women:

- By 2015, 44% of the U.S. population will be women over the age of 40, and that percentage will continue to increase for the next 30 years.
- Today, 85% of all brand purchases are made by women, and their buying represents more than 50% of the country's GDP.
- Currently, in the U.S., club members are 51% female and 49% male, according to the 2011 edition of IHRSA's *Profiles of Success*. Also telling is the fact that, in 2011, 57% of new members were female, while 43% were male.
- The IHRSA *Health Club Consumer Report* indicates that 68% of group fitness participants are women, and notes that there's a growing emphasis on stretching, yoga, tai chi, Pilates, etc. Also popular with women are step, high-and low-impact aerobics, calisthenics, cardio kickboxing, indoor group cycling, and "other exercise to music."

These figures should prompt us to reconsider how we conceive of, design, market, program, and operate our businesses with respect to women. While I'm certainly not suggesting that we sideline or ignore men, we need to make sure that we know, right now, in 2012, what women want ... and we need to be equally sure that we're helping them fulfill their goals with our facilities and programs. —

— Bill McBride, Bill.McBride@ClubOne.com