

REPORT

WINNING THE WAR ON ATTRITION

Ready to supercharge member retention & unlock lasting growth? This report is packed full of insights & tactical takeaways to help you conquer member engagement and motivation – keeping members coming back for longer.



WINNING THE BATTLE TO KEEP MEMBERS COMING BACK

Ever feel tempted to ignore retention and just focus on signing up new members? You wouldn't be alone!

For many owners and operators, it feels easier to focus on acquisition. Yet, if you're serious about growing your business you **need to focus on retention**.

We're here to help.

Together with industry partners, we're bringing you new insights that dig deep into **attrition trends from across the fitness & wellbeing industry** in the UK & Ireland. And we're arming you with practical ways to tackle the challenges that are costing you members.

XPLOR EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS

The insights featured in this report are based on Xplor data from **714,674** gym, health club and leisure members paying by Direct Debit in the UK & Ireland.

As well as current members, it includes data on members who held a membership that's been **cancelled between January 2017 and April 2023**.

The data was collected in May 2023.

ATTRITION MATTERS

Acquiring a new member can be anywhere from **5 to 25 times more expensive** than retaining an existing one. And research shows that **increasing retention rates by 5% can increase profits by as much as 25% to 95%**.

Reducing attrition will increase current member life time value (LTV). And it cuts the need to constantly sign-up new members. So, you'll save money and grow your profitability.

- **What is attrition?** Attrition is a measure of how many people leave in a given week, month, quarter, or year
- **What is retention?** Retention is a measure of months that helps you track growth, letting you see how long members stick with you for

Attrition and retention are intrinsically linked. Reduce the number of members leaving (attrition) and you will increase the amount of time that members stay (retention).

LET'S GET STUCK IN!

Throughout this report, we'll share exclusive insights into the latest attrition and retention trends. And, in partnership with industry experts, we'll give you strategies and tools to overcome common retention hurdles.

WE'LL COVER

1. WHY MEMBERS QUIT

→ [How to reduce silent cancellations](#)

2. REDUCING CANCELLATIONS AND WINNING BACK FORMER MEMBERS

→ [How to build a feedback habit to reduce attrition](#)

→ [Strategic follow ups for leavers](#)

3. THE ROLE OF INDUCTIONS AND ONBOARDING IN ATTRITION

→ [How to master the art of onboarding](#)

4. CONTINUOUSLY CHEERING ON & SUPPORTING MEMBERS

→ [How to engage to increase length of stay & membership](#)

You'll find attrition stats throughout this report. And we've included 4 bonus spotlight sections to give you even more insights, covering:

→ [How is cost of living impacting cancellations?](#)

→ [How do cancellation reasons vary across the UK & Ireland?](#)

→ [Do inductions have an impact on why members go on to cancel?](#)

→ [How does length of stay and membership vary?](#)

MEET THE EXPERTS



Guy Griffiths

Owner,
[GGFit](#)

A leading authority on member retention, Guy is on a mission to help more people to be healthier and happier by spreading the word on member retention initiatives that work.

Since founding GGFit in 2008, Guy has worked with independent clubs, national chains, and low-cost operators. Projects range from data analysis to building retention policies and processes, running coaching workshops and sending member communications. Mystery joining, recruitment, customer feedback and e-learning all complement Guy's core offering.

Guy's systems background means he can help people understand complex processes and programmes. He also knows what makes people tick, having trained, and practiced as a successful life coach.



Julie Allen

Business Development Director,
[Active Insight](#)

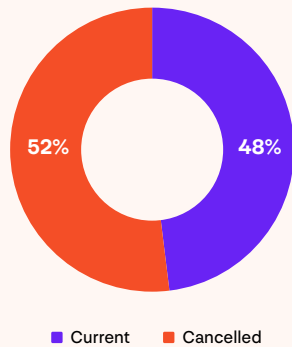
Having worked in the active leisure industry for 18 years, Julie is passionate about creating engaging, memorable customer experiences which lead to happier, healthier lives.

From an operational background, Julie started her career as a receptionist before progressing through several roles including Sales and Marketing Executive and Front of House and Customer Services Manager at Hertfordshire Sports Village before then joining TRP (Fitronics) as a Customer Engagement Coach for 8 years.

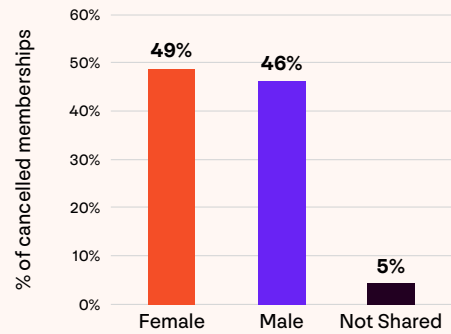
Julie has recently joined the team at Active Insight (formerly Leisure-net Solutions) as Business Development Director and when not at work, you'll find her in a studio as she is also a qualified Spin and Zumba instructor.

ABOUT THE DATA

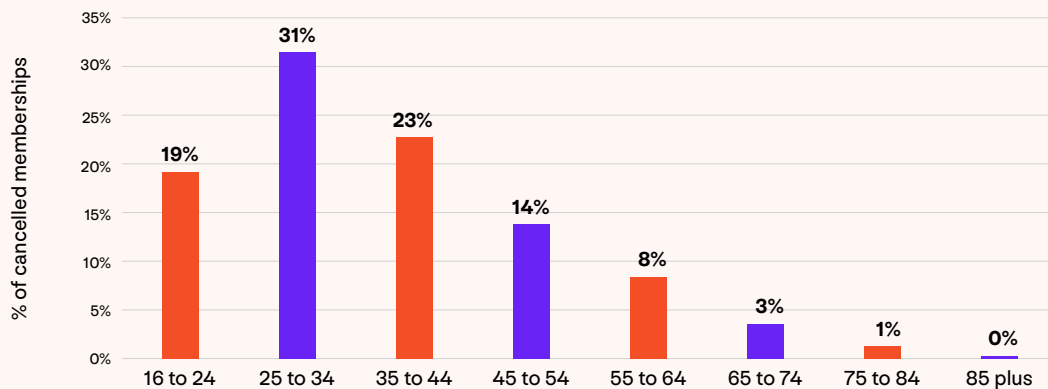
SPLIT: CURRENT VS. CANCELLED MEMBERS



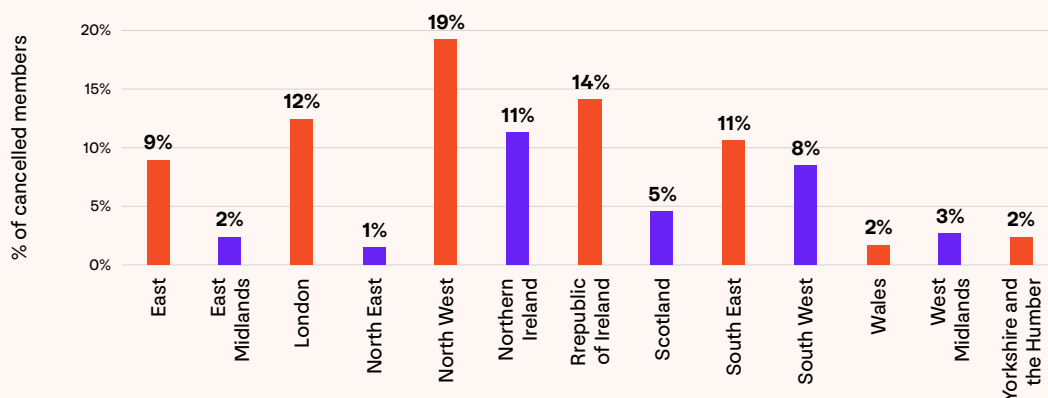
CANCELS BY GENDER



CANCELS BY AGE GROUP



CANCELS BY CLUB REGION



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

CHAPTER 1:

REASONS, EXCUSES, MISSING ANSWERS... WHY DO MEMBERS QUIT?

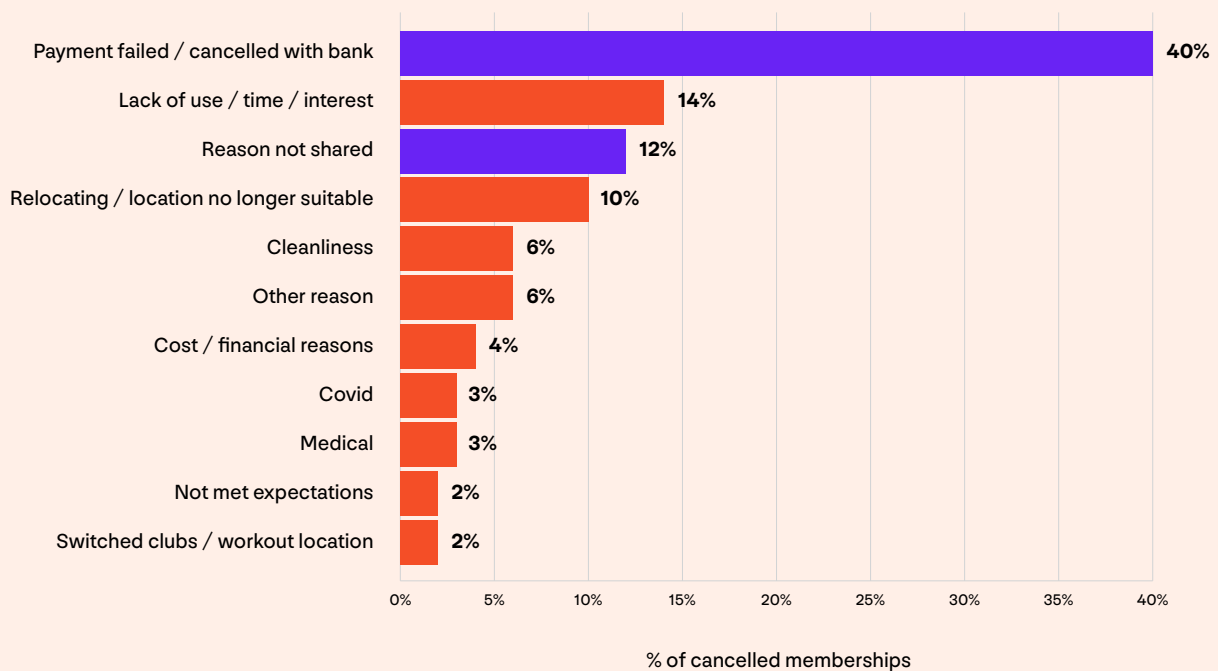
Good question! The reality is that **half of members** leave without ever telling clubs why.

52% of cancellations happen silently – with members not providing a reason or cancelling indirectly.

FIGURE 1:

TOP CANCELLATION REASONS

52% of cancellations are silent



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Cancellation reasons **help you make improvements**. If most members aren't even cancelling with you, there's no chance to get valuable feedback. Feedback you can use to prevent future members leaving for the same reasons.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS: REDUCE SILENT CANCELLATIONS

With the right approach you can get a real understanding of why members leave.

Here are our top tips:

1. Build a feedback culture & use exit survey best practices

Members need to feel safe to feedback and share dissatisfaction. They need to feel that you'll **listen and act** on what you hear (without necessarily trying to win them back).

The most effective way to **encourage member honesty**, even in tough situations, is to build a feedback culture. One where members feel strongly connected to your club and that they are always heard. (Check out chapter 2 for [strategies to help you build this type of culture](#).)

A starting point is to build an effective **exit survey**. Use this as well as recording a leaving reason within your [gym management software](#). Add a link to the survey in your cancellation confirmation email. And let cancelling members know to expect it, encouraging them to complete it.

EXIT SURVEY DOS & DON'TS

Dos

- ✓ **Use open questions** – you're looking for detail with this survey
- ✓ **Ask if there's anything else you should know** – people can use this as an opportunity to share the real reason they are leaving
- ✓ **Explain how you use the feedback** you get (include proof if you can)
- ✓ Ask members if you can **get in touch for further feedback**

Don'ts

- ✗ **Ask closed questions** that aren't specific or contain two questions in one (e.g., 'Tick if you are unhappy with the service or facilities')
- ✗ **Make the survey too long**
- ✗ **Use language that's negative** (e.g., 'we hate to see you leave')

2. Give members more control

As well as creating a feedback culture, giving members more flexibility and control over their membership can help prevent silent cancellations. And even reduce cancellations.

Letting members **freeze for a while** is a great alternative to cancelling if a member can't visit for a specific period. So, ideal if a member is travelling, busy with family or work commitments, or experiencing injury or illness.

Make sure you **get the member back** in when the freeze is up. Consider offering an incentive or reason to make that return visit.

Also think about how you can **make cancelling** simple. While that might sound counterproductive, ending on a good note means members are more likely to re-join. And it can encourage an honest leaving reason.

Giving members the option to cancel their membership online, making any terms clear, is especially important for certain groups of members.

65% of Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Gen Z (born 1997-2012) prefer to communicate digitally, rather than in-person.

And 52% of Millennials and 44% of Gen Z have confidence in following non-company guidance when it comes to seeking customer service.

Understandably they **don't want to pick up the phone or visit in-person to cancel**. So, many cancel indirectly – 43.5% of former members aged 16-24 (see figure 2).

Make the path to cancellation clear and give a digital option to encourage members to cancel directly with you. In your online self-service area, let members cancel. And as a part of that process capture a leaving reason.

By doing this you'll give members a **non-confrontational way** to share this information. Set up an automated confirmation email to go out afterwards – include a link to your exit survey and explain why completing this is important.



"Make sure you limit the amount of time a freeze lasts for. And communicate consistently during a freeze to encourage an early return and maintain engagement. This is critical to get members back after a freeze and avoid cancellations."

Guy Griffiths

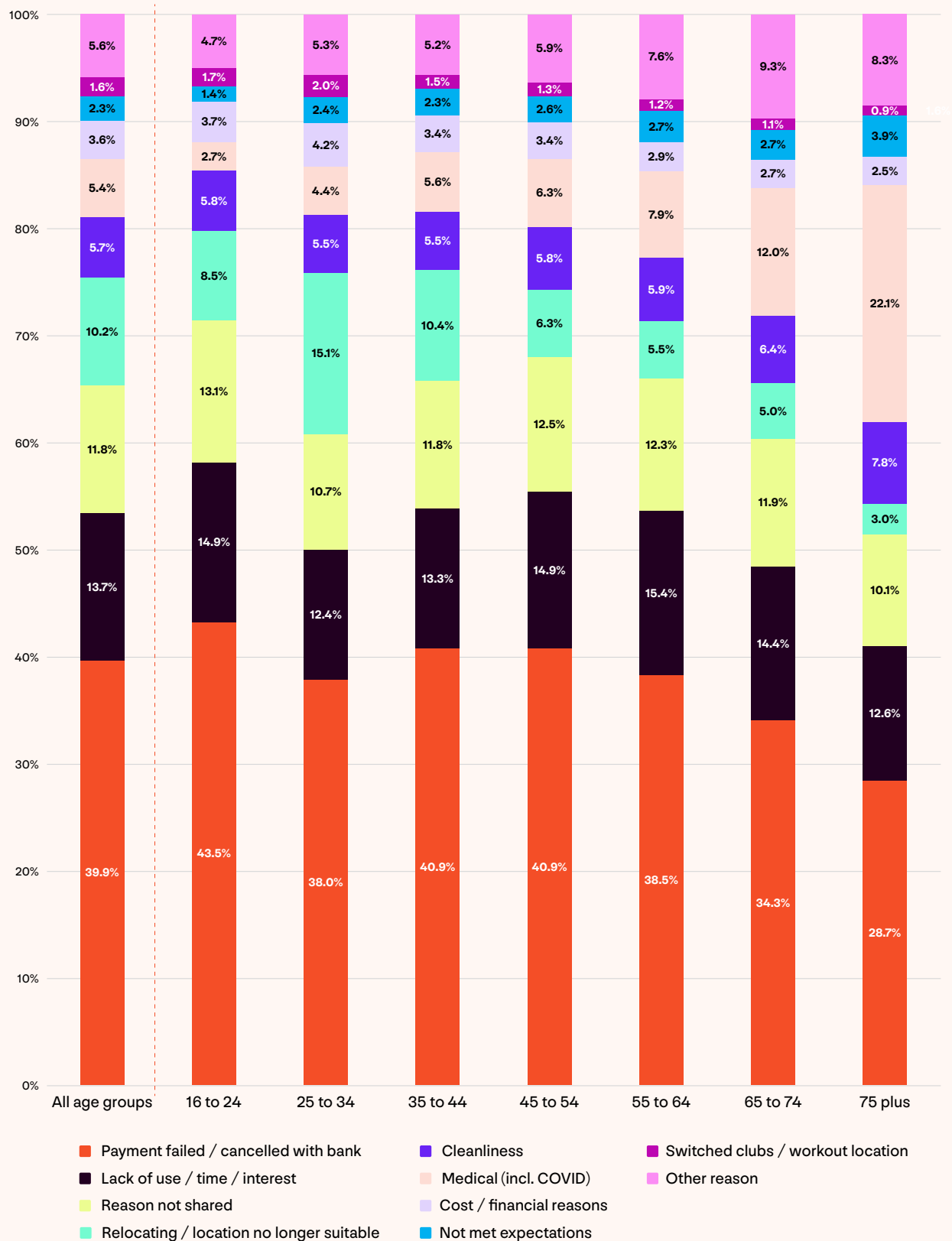


"We often say that first impressions count. Yet, each touch point of a member journey should be meaningful. And it's essential that if this moment is the last interaction with the club that it's approached positively and leaves a lasting impression."

Julie Allen

FIGURE 2:

CANCELLATIONS REASONS BY AGE GROUP



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

3. Choose the right payment processes

The most common cause of membership cancellations is a payment failing. Typically, it's been cancelled directly with the bank or there was a lack of sufficient funds. That means **40% of members cancel indirectly and never tell you why**.

As well as making it simpler for members to cancel or freeze directly with you digitally, the **right approach to managing membership payments** will reduce silent cancellations.

FOLLOW THESE BEST PRACTICES TO AVOID PAYMENT FAILURES:

✓ Verify all new Direct Debit mandates

Do this automatically before the first collection to check the bank details are correct. For incorrect details, an automated follow up should make it easy for new members to correct their bank details without creating extra work for your team.

✓ Accept new bank details

Let members change their bank details via your online self-service area, making it clear when the new details will be used from.

✓ Automated, proven approach to failures

Where a payment is rejected, use an automated follow up approach. Automatically attempt the collection again and let the member know what's happening (and how to resolve the issue and/or get in touch).



DATA SPOTLIGHT:

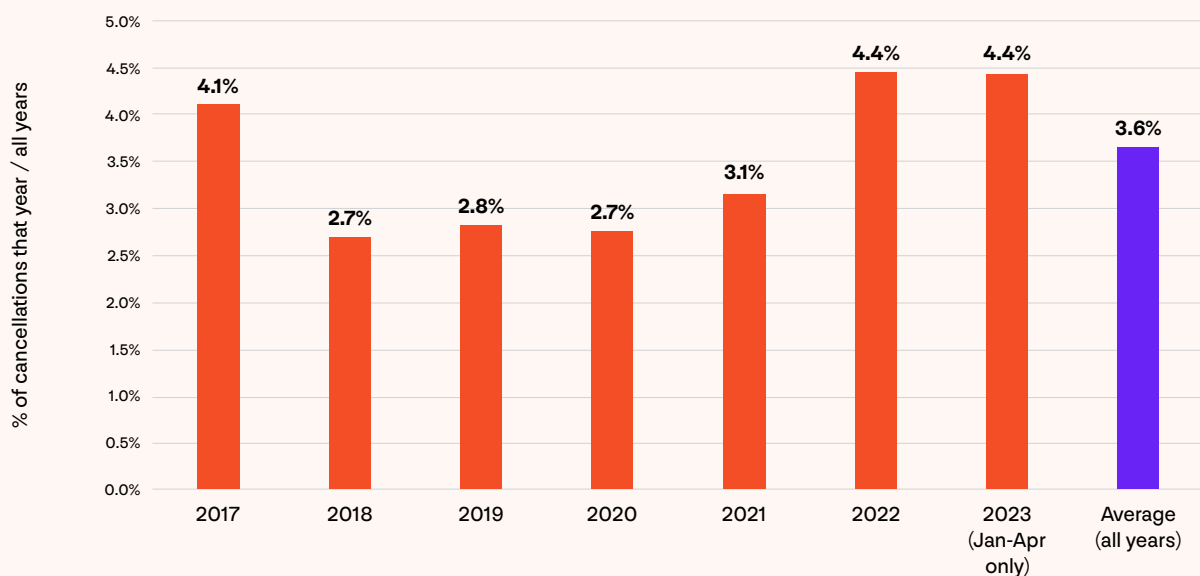
HOW IS COST OF LIVING IMPACTING CANCELLATIONS?

The cost of living has been rising in the UK and Ireland (and around the world). Consumer goods and services prices increased at the [fastest rate in 4 decades](#) in the year to October 2022. As of May 2023, the [annual inflation rate was 7.9%](#).

While on average under 5% of members claim to cancel due to cost & financial reasons, this has **increased compared to previous years**. And its likely many members are simply cancelling their payment. Plus, some will become cancelled due to payment failures caused by insufficient funds.

In 2022 and the start of 2023, 4.4% of cancellations happened because of cost & financial reasons. That's the highest since 2017. And that was the year that saw [lower than usual consumer spending due to stagnant wages and increased inflation following the 2016 Brexit vote](#).

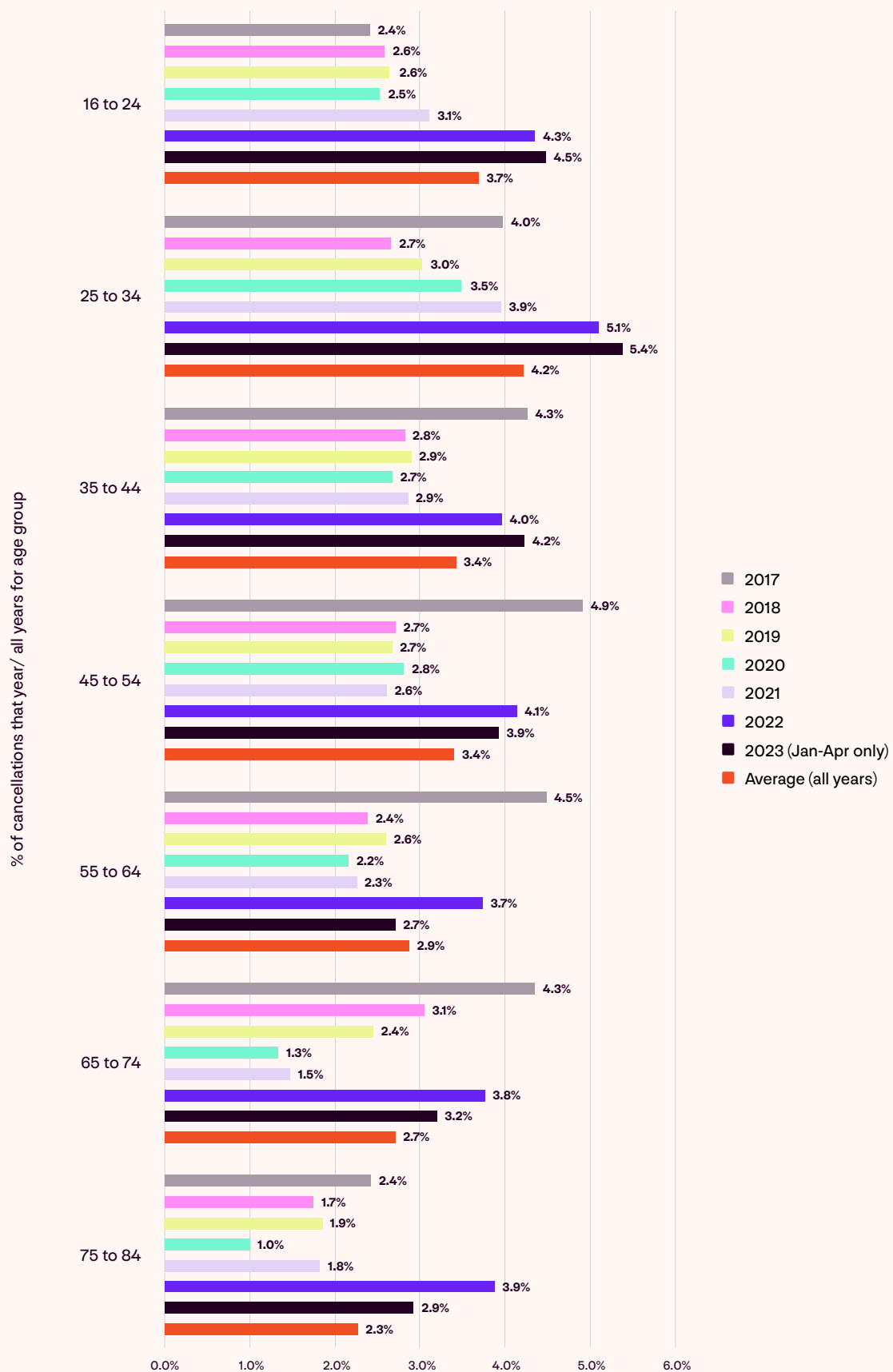
CANCELLATION FOR COST & FINANCIAL REASONS — BY YEAR



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

This time round, it appears that rising costs are particularly impacting those of **working age**. And based on cancellation data from January to April 2023, we may continue to see a higher proportion of cancellations due to cost and financial concerns amongst those aged under 45.

CANCELLATION FOR COST & FINANCIAL REASONS — BY AGE GROUP & YEAR



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023



CHAPTER 2:

GET AHEAD AND ACT WHERE YOU CAN

Want to address attrition and increase retention? You need to create the right culture.

A culture where feedback is **welcomed and strategically sought out** through a mix of reactive and proactive channels. Feedback should happen regularly; you should be looking for it daily.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS: BUILD A FEEDBACK HABIT TO REDUCE ATTRITION

Get ahead of issues before it's too late by creating a **feedback habit** in members. And continuously show how you value and act on feedback.

Here's how to build that habit:

1. Create a feedback-focused culture

Want to get more feedback? The culture of your business is essential. Feedback needs to be encouraged, welcomed, and communicated at every level.

Member experience must be a consistent topic during team meetings and 1-to-1s. The more focus you give to creating a **consistent member experience**, the more energy your team will put into it.

Every member of your team should be regularly seeking verbal member feedback. A simple 'are you enjoying your visit today?' or 'when will we see you again?' as a member is leaving will **encourage open conversation**. Building the habit of feedback, while also helping members build the habit of keeping active.

2. Rely on technology to automate feedback requests

Resource is always a challenge when you're running a gym or fitness club business. So, support your team by using your [gym management software](#) to automate the feedback gathering process where you can.

Create **triggers at key points in a member's journey** with you and automatically use your software to send email or SMS messages asking for feedback.

Start these early in a member's journey and send at regular intervals. For example, ask for feedback after a member has had their induction/welcome session with you and again at other key points in **the onboarding process**.



"Verbal comments help you to adopt a proactive management style - listening and picking up an issue. And celebrating successes.

Verbal comments should be logged to track key trends within the business. Report on all feedback and communicate it internally for continued learning and development of processes.

This will also make all team members are aware of key trends. And will empower the team to deal with comments proactively and close the feedback loop more effectively, rather than pass issues to other team members.

Consider where feedback is discussed internally – it should be on all meeting agendas across all departments. Language is crucial here – avoid calling it 'Feedback' on the agenda, consider calling it 'CX intel'. You'll position feedback as vital as any operational tests that take place daily."

Julie Allen

3. Seek feedback via your website

Make it easy for members to give feedback when they want to. No need to visit, pick up the phone, or send an email. On your website, include clear call-to-actions and an effective feedback form (or link to a survey).

A clearly signposted way to feedback via your website will encourage members to come directly to you. Avoiding negative feedback on social media and other public forums.

4. Use Net Promotor Score (NPS) surveys

Running NPS surveys on a regular basis will help you measure satisfaction and loyalty. NPS surveys ask members to rate on a scale of 0-10 how likely they are to recommend your club to someone they know.

Members typically fit into 3 categories:

- **Promoters** – score of 9 or 10 – Your most committed, satisfied, and loyal members
- **Passives** – score of 7 or 8 – At most risk of leaving to try something new
- **Detractors** – score of 0 to 6 – Very frustrated and see operational issues

If you have a high number of detractors, you'll have high attrition levels. Give passives your attention to turn their experience around. Speak to detractors to find common frustrations that you can resolve.

Use your promoters' feedback to show how your members feel about you. This will add credibility to any claims you make about the type of club you are.



“For detractors, there’s a gap between expectation and delivery. But they’re still vocal. So, there’s an opportunity to engage and understand their experience with a view to impacting it positively and shifting their loyalty up the ladder towards promoter.

After an NPS survey takes place, detractors visit frequency typically starts to decline over the following 12 weeks compared with promoters. That puts you at risk of silent cancellations - your detractors are your neon flashing light of a warning of leaving. It’s time to act!”

Julie Allen



FREE NPS SURVEY

Active Insight is offering you a free NPS survey for your club.

Email julie.allen@leisure-net.org to claim yours.



“Developing member feedback into regular member stories, both positive and negative (“You said, We did”) will help build a feedback culture. The more you ask for feedback, the more positive stories you will get.”

Guy Griffiths



“Call out where individual team members receive praise from members. When a team member is mentioned positively, team morale is boosted.

And it helps create positive change amongst the team. Others will seek and enjoy individualised feedback.”

Julie Allen

5. Nail your follow up process

Want members to take the time to provide you with good and not-so-good feedback? You need to show you are listening. And that calls for a **robust follow up process**.

Have empathy. Show the action you’re taking. And where you can’t make a request happen reach out and acknowledge that you’ve heard.

6. Consider the option of confidentiality

Especially if its negative, giving feedback can be daunting. Providing a range of different feedback channels can help encourage those who want to **avoid a confronting conversation** to comfortably feedback (great for Gen Z and Millennials!).

Using feedback surveys? Make providing a name and contact details optional, so it’s easy to stay anonymous. Ask the right questions in your survey to get **constructive feedback** that can be actioned.

7. Celebrate success

Feedback is more than just complaints. The more you create a culture that welcomes feedback in all shapes and forms, the more actionable feedback you’ll attract.

Remember to **celebrate wins and understand what’s going well**, just as much as identifying what can be improved on. Share successes with your team and members to motivate them on.

Publicly sharing feedback – positive and negative – and the action you’ve taken as a result, will help **create a commitment to making time for feedback**. And encourage members to feedback by showing you take it seriously.

LEAVERS: TO FOLLOW UP, OR NOT TO FOLLOW UP? THAT IS THE QUESTION...

Beyond building a culture that encourages feedback to resolve issues before members decide to leave, there are some actions you can take to follow up with members who've cancelled.

The trick is to do this strategically. Focus on segments where you can achieve positive outcomes. These types of cancellation reason tend to be **most actionable**:

- Cleanliness
- Lack of use
- No interest or motivation to workout
- Not met expectations
- Cost / financial reasons

In some cases, you may be able to recover cancelled members by asking a few well positioned questions and providing an incentive to return. However, in most cases, you'll simply want to **learn more from those leaving**, so you can take your learnings and stop more members leaving for the same reasons.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS: STRATEGIC FOLLOW UPS FOR LEAVERS

The best approach to following up with those members who cancel, and leave, will differ depending on:

- Number of members who cancel
- Reasons why members leave
- How feedback is managed
- The technology you use
- Your team – capacity and skillsets

Here are some ideas for follow ups that could work for your business.



“Look at the different leave reasons your members give you and decide to focus on a few specific areas.

Make your primary goal to find out more about leavers, to learn from them, so you can reduce leavers next month. The secondary aim is to see if you can recover them.

Outline two or three recovery options that your staff can offer to save a member depending on their reason.

Track success of each option. Then adapt and fine-tune to save more leave requests in the future.”

Guy Griffiths

Cancellation reason: Not met expectations

Objective:

Understand why expectations are not met so you fix any issues for future members

Actions:

- Create a simple survey to send to members who cancelled as their expectations were not met. Send this out via email & SMS. If your cancellation reasons give you more insight into why expectations haven't been met (see figure 3 for example), you could target specific reasons first with tailored surveys
- Consider an incentive to complete (e.g., entry into a prize draw to win a gift card)
- Ask for permission to call with more questions

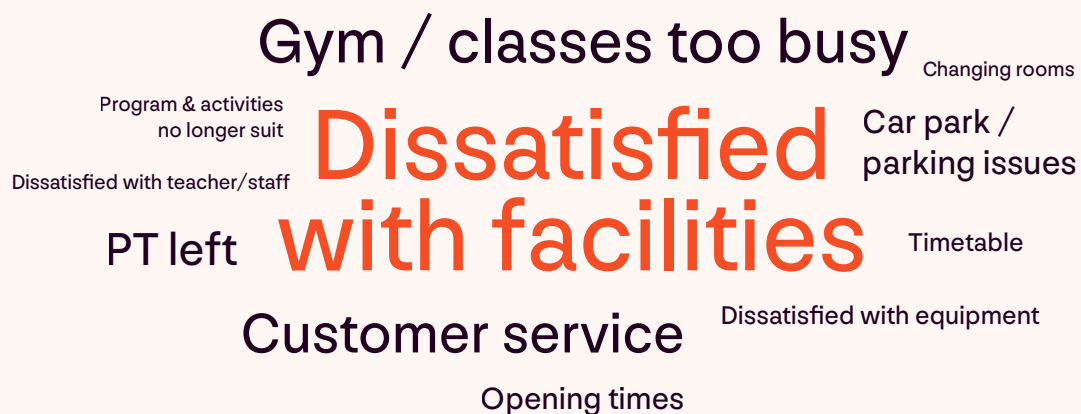
Next Steps:

Review answers, follow up with any questions where you have permission to call. Address issues raised, demonstrate what you've done publicly using your social channels, email updates etc.



FIGURE 3:

CANCELLATION REASONS GIVEN WHEN EXPECTATIONS NOT MET



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Cancellation reason: Lack of use, interest, or motivation

Objective:

Find out if there's anything else you could've done to support them

Actions:

- Identify if there are any segments you can prioritise targeting. For example, perhaps a specific demographic group are most likely to stop using their membership soon after joining. Or maybe you can identify a more specific reason (like 'No enjoyment' in figure 4)
- Once you've identified a specific segment of this group to follow up with, ask them if there's anything else you could have done to support them. How you get in touch will depend on the demographics and size of the group

Next Steps:

In some cases, you may be able to tempt the member back in with a PT session or class on you. Take learnings from the feedback you get and apply them to new and existing members going forwards

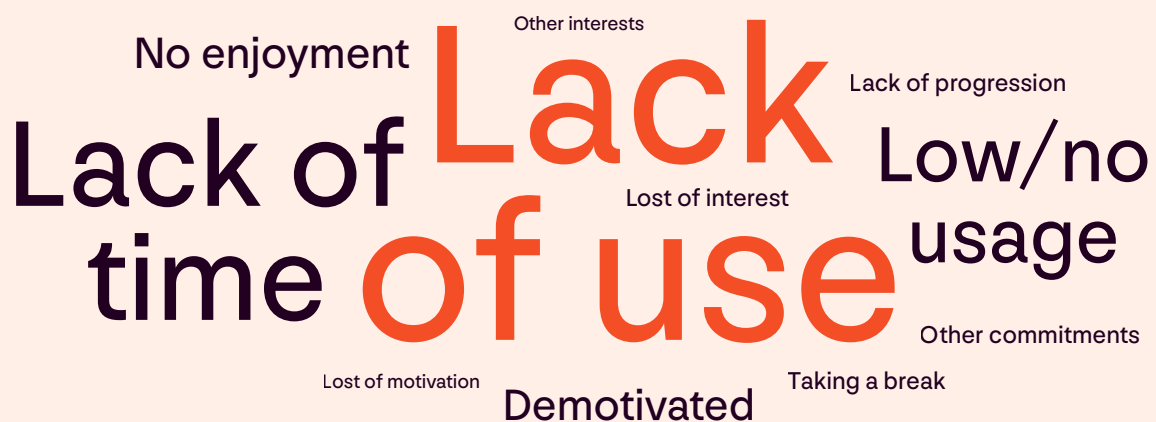


"Clubs who use Active Insight's Recovery Focus platform find that upon cancellation an effective conversation that signposts the member back in can lead to an increased length of stay. For example, if a member is leaving as they're not achieving their goals, offering a 1:1 programme review can win the member back."

Julie Allen

FIGURE 4:

CANCELLATION REASONS SHOWING LACK OF USE, INTEREST, OR MOTIVATION



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Cancellation reason: Cost / financial reasons

Objective:

This is a sensitive topic so needs a careful approach. Look to see if there's any support you can provide to those concerned with cost to encourage them back now or in the future

Actions:

- In most cases, you'll want to choose a smaller subset of cancelled members in this group to target. Look at past usage patterns, if a member has visited on a frequent basis (even if that's 2-4 times a month) they're more likely to come back in the future. Also review more specific cancellation reasons. For example, in figure 5 you can see cancellations due to loss of earnings, in this case with regular visitors you could offer support
- Contact the group you are targeting. A phone call may be easiest in this circumstance. Ask questions around value for money rather than affordability

Next Steps:

Based on the circumstances of cancelling, you could offer a freeze period. Or suggest a lower rate or casual option. You're looking to show support and encourage these cancelled members back gently

FIGURE 5:

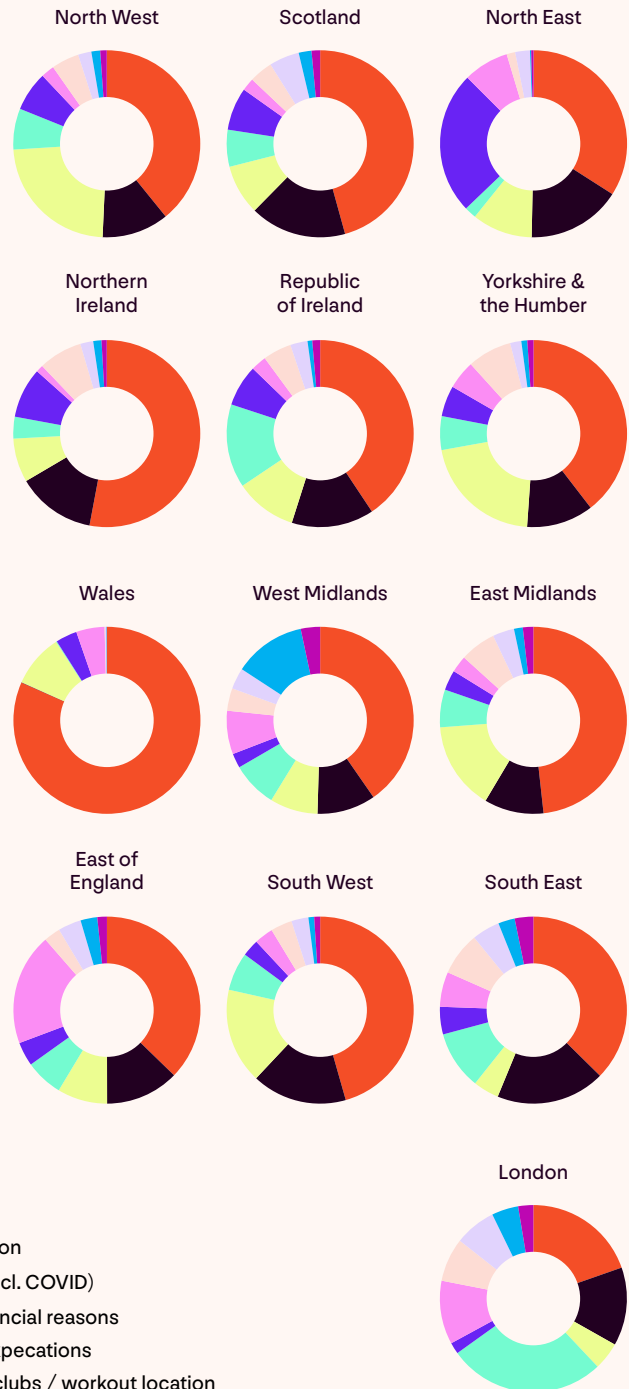
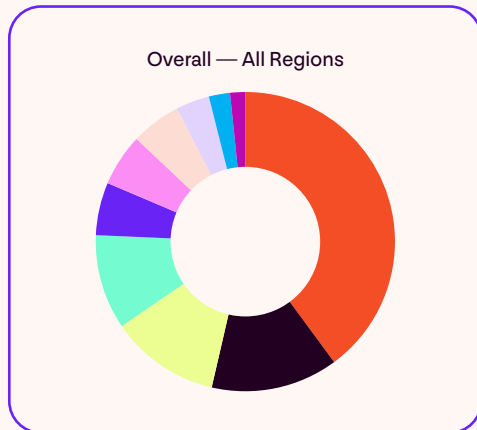
CANCELLATIONS FOR COST OR FINANCIAL REASONS



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

DATA SPOTLIGHT:

HOW DO CANCELLATION REASONS VARY ACROSS THE UK & IRELAND?



- Payment failed / cancelled with bank
- Lack of use / time / interest
- Reason not shared
- Relocating / location no longer suitable
- Cleanliness
- Other reason
- Medical (incl. COVID)
- Cost / financial reasons
- Not met expectations
- Switched clubs / workout location

Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

STARTING OUT STRONG

The start of a member's journey matters just as much as the end. Especially with plenty of members joining online (and some never even using their membership).

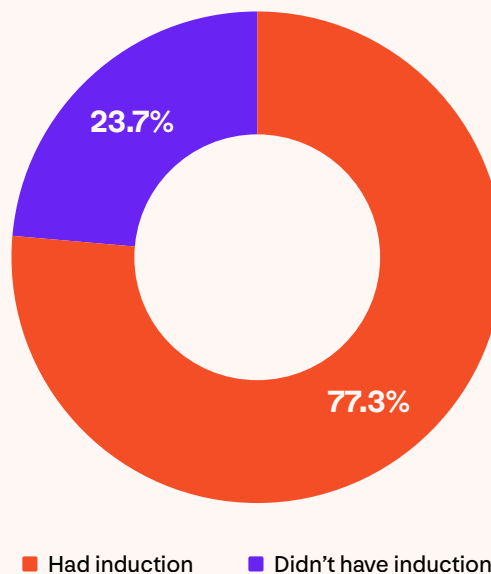
Get onboarding right, and you'll create motivated members who attend regularly and tell you how they're feeling.

THE VALUE OF INDUCTIONS

77.3% of those with a cancelled membership had been marked as having had an induction of some type (see figure 6). That compares to 72.6% of current members.

FIGURE 6:

PERCENTAGE OF CANCELLED MEMBERS WHO DID/DIDN'T HAVE AN INDUCTION

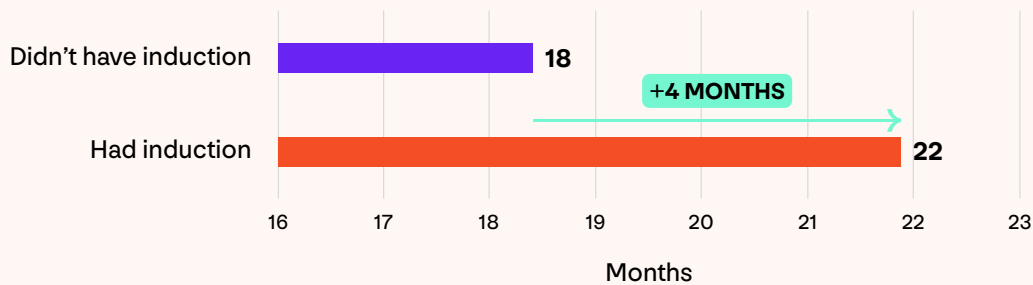


Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Are inductions worth it? It's surprising to see that a slightly higher percentage of cancelled members have had an induction than current members. Yet, we do see signs that **inductions pay off**.

FIGURE 7:

IMPACT OF INDUCTIONS ON LENGTH OF STAY

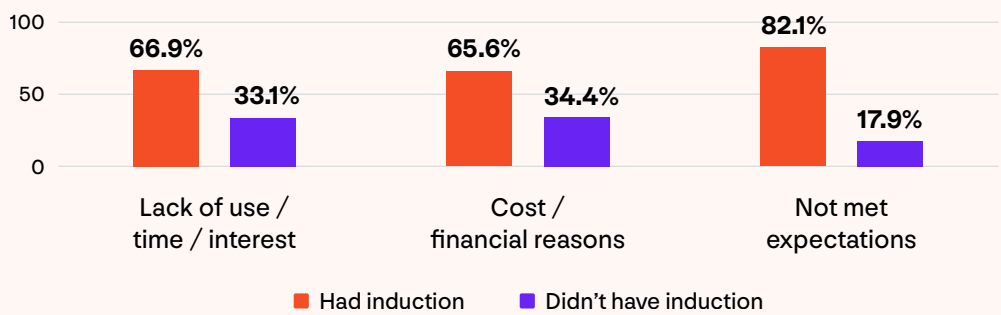


Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Members who've cancelled **keep using their membership for an average of 4 months more** if they've had an induction (see figure 7). And they're less likely to cancel due to lack of use, time, or interest and for cost or financial reasons (see figure 8).

FIGURE 8:

IMPACT OF INDUCTIONS ON REASON FOR CANCELLING



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

An induction helps a member get into the **habit of visiting regularly**, keeping this habit up for longer. These members also better understand the value of their membership.

82.1% of those who cancelled as their expectations hadn't been met had an induction. Couple this with the overall high percentage of members with a cancelled membership despite having had an induction, and it's clear to see that the time has come to rethink and rebrand inductions.

RETHINKING & REBRANDING INDUCTIONS

All too often an induction is a box ticking exercise. And that means many past and present gym members have had a **disappointing experience**.

To encourage members to take part in an induction session, it needs to be **positioned differently**. That starts with a new name. For example, make it a **welcome session** instead.

Your welcome session should be personalised to the needs of each member as much as practical. Make them feel empowered and motivated to **get the most out of their membership investment**.

Everyone in your team should understand the value of all new and returning members attending a welcome session. Explaining the benefits for the member with clarity.

A welcome session should be **part of a longer onboarding process**. One that's dynamically tailored to each member, always cheering them on to make that next visit.



"A good induction appointment ensures your new member makes at least one visit. And encourages them to make one more."

Equally valuable for new exercisers, as returning members, it needs selling to all new, and lapsed members to help them get into the habit. And feel comfortable, confident, and motivated.

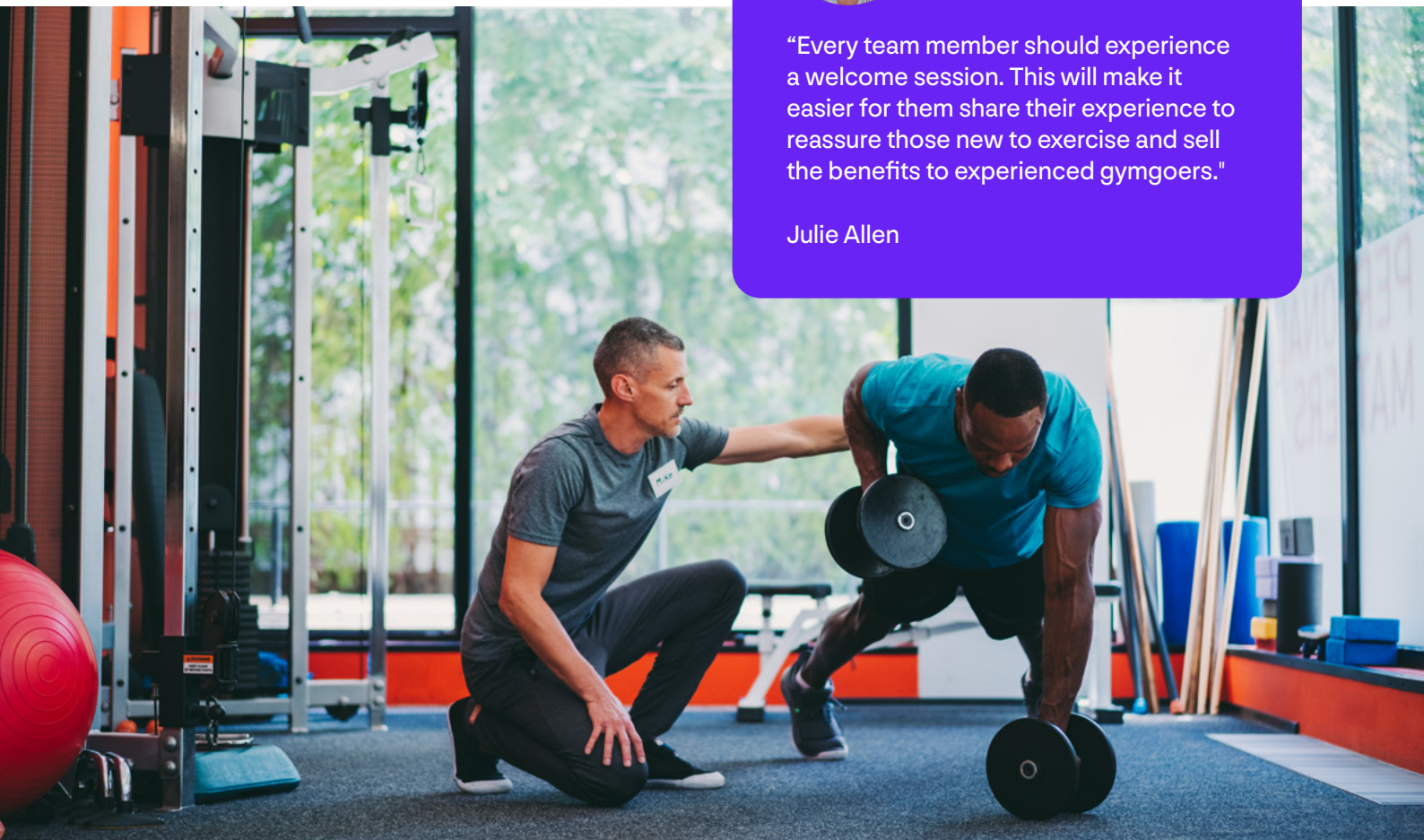
An induction is not for health and safety (otherwise it would be mandatory). It helps your members to stay longer, if delivered properly, as a first point of interaction between member and staff."

Guy Griffiths



"Every team member should experience a welcome session. This will make it easier for them share their experience to reassure those new to exercise and sell the benefits to experienced gymgoers."

Julie Allen



TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS: MASTERING THE ART OF ONBOARDING

Success is individual. Your onboarding journey will have a positive impact on attrition when you design it with your business and members in mind.

Give members a warm welcome

Think about what a valuable welcome session (otherwise known as an induction!) should look like for your business.

Aim to cover:

- ✓ **Need to know info** – like how to access your app and make bookings
- ✓ **Tour and introductions** – show new members where key facilities are and introduce them to team members if you can
- ✓ **Goals and experience level** – dig deep to understand why the member has joined and how comfortable they are working out
- ✓ **Next steps** – encourage the new member to book a class, an appointment for a programme if that's part of your onboarding process, or simply ask them when they next plan to attend
- ✓ Avoid heavy selling during this session, you can talk about extras without overtly selling



“This first appointment is ideally called anything but an induction. After all many people have had a poor induction in the past. Welcome Session, Activation, Getting Started, or Step 1 are all good alternatives.

Consider having an alternative name (e.g., fast-track) for experienced members who are reluctant to take up this session. These members have already left (failed) at least once, so need this appointment.

Regardless of the name of the appointment, it's a booked, timely meeting with the new member that typically takes 15-30 minutes. And includes a basic checklist of points, such as a gym comfortability check, signpost to the club app, booking a first class, chat about goals, and booking a follow-up appointment, such as a programme or body composition appointment if needed.”

Guy Griffiths

Once you've decided what a welcome session will look like, make sure all new and returning members book one (and attend):

- ✓ **Welcome email & SMS** – when members join, they should receive details on how to book a welcome session in the first email and SMS
- ✓ **Clearly explain the benefits to the individual member** – whenever you and your team talk about welcome sessions, they should explain the benefits. What will the member get by attending? How will it help them get more out of their investment?
- ✓ **Share details of what to expect** – particularly for those new to or nervous about the gym environment, attending a welcome session can be intimidating. Providing a basic outline of what to expect (covering basics like what to wear, what to bring, who they'll be meeting and more) can help prevent no-shows
- ✓ **Remind members ahead of their appointment** – send an email or SMS message the day before the welcome session takes place to remind the member about the session. Give the option to reschedule if needed



"It's unlikely that everyone will book a welcome appointment, and also that those who do book will all attend. So, you need a fallback plan, where all no-shows get a call and/or email/SMS to try to rebook.

And those members who turn down the appointment as they join should be re-offered the chance to book through the digital journey. And with the member benefits of a welcome session reiterated to them in the message."

Guy Griffiths

Anticipate no-bookings and no-shows for welcome sessions

There'll always be some members who **don't take up the offer**, or **who fail (or forget) to show up** for their booked welcome session.

Get ahead and **anticipate both scenarios**. Set up triggered, automated emails in your [gym management software](#) to:

- **No-bookings** – explain the importance of and give advice on setting goals
- **No-shows** – send a reminder encouraging them to rebook. Also make sure they get the email about goal setting



Beyond the welcome session

A welcome session is a vital component of successfully onboarding new members. And you'll be even **more successful** if it's part of a bigger onboarding process. Exactly what that process looks like will depend on the shape and size of your business.

It should be a **multi-touch, multi-channel journey** lasting around 60-90 days. Successful onboarding journeys:

- ✓ Help members set realistic, personal **goals**
- ✓ Offer **follow up** assessments and programmes
- ✓ Use segmentation and milestones to create a **personalised journey**
- ✓ Welcome members to an **inclusive, friendly environment**
- ✓ Provide basic fitness & wellbeing **education**
- ✓ Encourage **gym buddies**
- ✓ Ask for regular, honest **feedback**

As you scale and grow, automation becomes more important. Use the marketing automation and messaging features within your software **to create triggers** that send the right message at the right time. For example:

- After a member **completes their first gym workout**, send a celebratory email, and invite them to tell you about it via a quick survey
- **10 days after a new member joins**, send them a quick email with training and recovery tips
- When a member has **visited 15 times**, tell them about your refer-a-friend programme and offer them a guest pass to bring a friend
- **60 days after a member has joined**, offer them a PT session on your club to review their goals

You can find a full schedule of essential onboarding communications with ready-to-use templates in the [Successful New Gym Member Onboarding Playbook](#). It's free to download – [get your copy here](#).

The trick is to start **small, then adjust** and add more to your onboarding process as you go.



"Feedback during the onboard experience is vital. It also sets the scene that feedback is encouraged, welcomed, and will be asked for from time to time."

Julie Allen

DATA SPOTLIGHT:

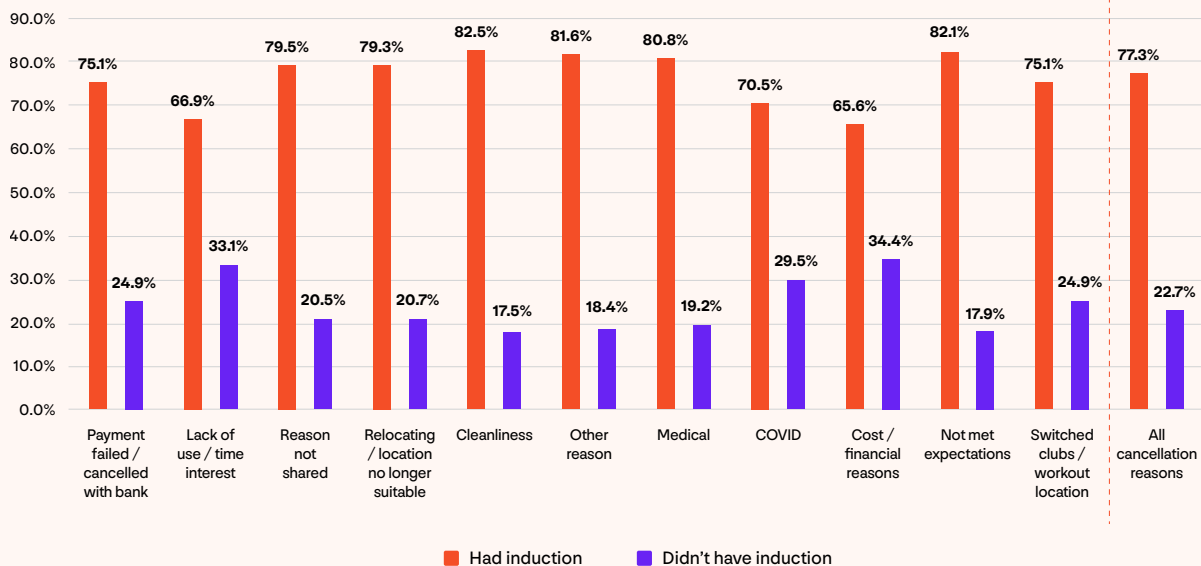
DO INDUCTIONS HAVE AN IMPACT ON WHY MEMBERS GO ON TO CANCEL?

A good induction/welcome session and solid onboarding journey will:

- Encourage members to get into the **habit of making time to visit** (more members cancel due to lack of use or time having not had an induction)
- Give members an understanding of the **value of their membership** (more members cancel for cost and financial reasons having not had an induction)
- And more...

The reality of the member experience needs to be established during the onboarding period and feedback regularly gathered to rectify issues. So, expectations are met and managed.

WHY DO MEMBERS WHO DID/DIDN'T HAVE AN INDUCTION GO ON TO CANCEL?



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

CHEER ON & SUPPORT MEMBERS

If you can master the art of onboarding, you'll motivate and inspire new members to build the habit of visiting regularly.

Start small for those new to working out, 1 visit a week is enough to start building a habit. For others, 2-3 visits a week will be achievable. Include celebratory email and SMS messages in your onboarding journey for when members reach key visit milestones to cheer them on to make that next visit.

TRACKING LENGTH OF STAY & MEMBERSHIP

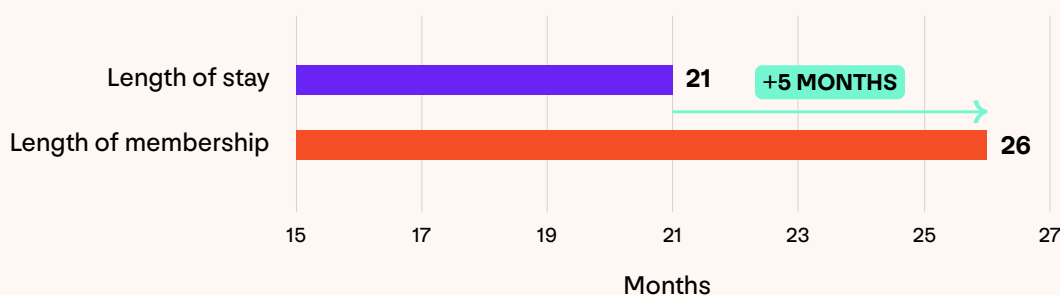
Members who visit regularly will stay with you for longer. If you can keep members motivated and engaged, you'll increase length of stay and length of membership for your fitness business:

- **Length of stay** = the time between a member joining and their last visit
- **Length of membership** = the time between a member joining and cancelling

The average length of stay for members who cancel is 21 months and length of membership is 26 months. That means **members typically cancel 5 months after their last visit**.

FIGURE 9:

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY VS. LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023



“Members were forced to record or book every visit as we came out of lockdown. This provided very rich visit data, which had previously not always been that accurate. As restrictions have been relaxed, so has visit tracking at many clubs.

Although visit tracking has improved in general, there is still room to tighten up visit data further.

This comes down to education of staff and members to the benefits of checking in every visit (retention, rewards, tailoring the journey, service, products, etc.).

Most people are quite happy to let their supermarket know what they're buying each week, or how often they're ordering a coffee and what with. The gym experience should be just the same, with appropriate rewards (e.g., everyone loves a t-shirt!).”

Guy Griffiths



TRACKING VISITS

When a member stops visiting, it's likely they'll cancel over the coming weeks and months. If you can successfully intervene and win back these at-risk members, you'll see **attrition drop and retention soar**.

Accurate visit data is **essential** to successfully re-engaging members who've stopped visiting.

Yet, **18% of current and cancelled members have no last visit date recorded**. And more cancelled members have no last visit date compared to current ones:

- **20% of cancelled members** have no last visit date recorded
- **15% of current members** have no last visit date recorded

Without visit data it's easier to lose members. It's impossible to see when a member has stopped visiting.

Increase the accuracy and completeness of your visit data by:

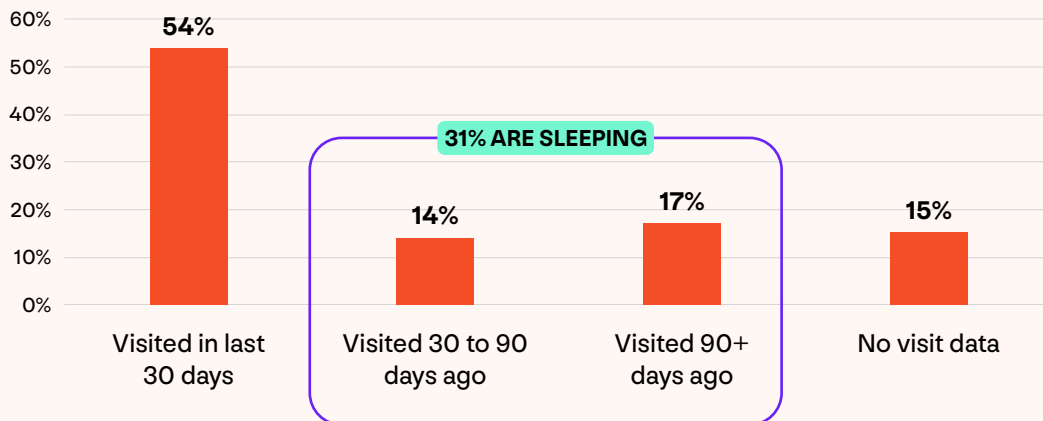
- Make it easy for members to **check-in and use access control equipment** where practical
- Educate all your team on the **importance of visit tracking** and how it helps you increase retention (and therefore revenue)
- Reward members in return for their loyalty using **visit data for tracking**. That could mean creating goals that are rewarded when members hit them. For example, bring a friend when you reach 25 visits, or get an exclusive t-shirt when you hit 150 visits.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TIME TO RE-ENGAGE

31% of current members are sleeping. That means they've not visited in the last 30 days. And 17% of sleeping members haven't visited for more than 90 days (see figure 10).

FIGURE 10:

PERCENTAGE OF CURRENT MEMBERS WHO ARE SLEEPING



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Look to keep the number of sleepers as low as possible. Particularly those who've been sleeping for 3+months. That means **intervening before it's too late**. There are many ways to cheer members on and support them back into the habit of working out.



"Active Insight has found that 39% of sleeping/lapsed members would be willing to return again if their club provided encouragement and advice. This shows the importance of engagement when members stop attending."

Julie Allen

A SEASONAL PERSPECTIVE

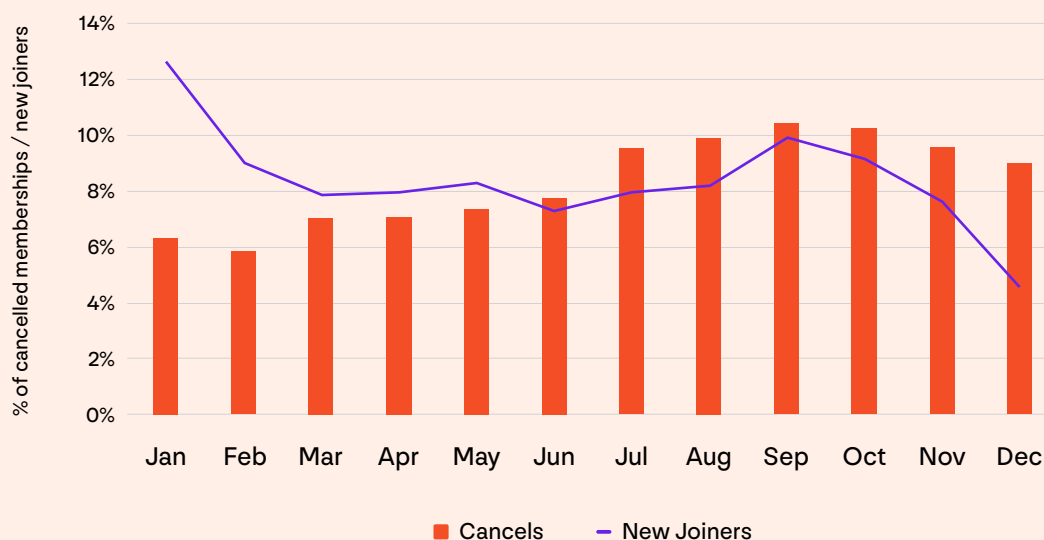
Your [gym management software](#) should make it easy to track visits and automatically enrol those members at-risk of cancelling into a **re-engagement programme**. To complement this, you can look to engage and re-engage members on a seasonal basis.

More cancellations happen in the **second half of the year** than the first (see figure 11).

Habits typically slip over the summer months, when life can get busier with travel, school holidays and better weather. For some making it back to the gym doesn't happen.

FIGURE 11:

CANCELLATIONS & JOINERS — BY MONTH



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Support members during months where visiting is not always possible or practical. And make your club the place to be come autumn and winter.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS: ENGAGE TO INCREASE LENGTH OF STAY & MEMBERSHIP

Want to keep members active, visiting and paying for longer? And limit the impact of seasonal visit and cancellation trends? You need the **right approach to engage and re-engage** members.

1. Automatically intervene at the right time

By tracking visits and monitoring visit habits, you can identify changes and see when members are at risk of cancelling.

Newer members (those who've been with you for less than a year), are **most likely to leave**.

47.6% of new gym members stay for less than 12 months. So, aim to intervene with this group before they hit 30 days of no visits. After 7 absent days, send a gentle 'we miss you' email that encourages them back and offers support.

Members who've been with you for more than a year are more likely to have formed solid workout habits. If they get to 30 days of no visits, then it's time to re-engage them. For those who typically visit very frequently, you could intervene earlier. The **exact timing and approach** will depend on your business, members, and resources.



"Use your visit data to recognise members at risk with reduced visits or no visits for 30 days.

Ignore them at your risk! Unchecked absentees are more likely to leave, so take action to try to get them back into your club, for a reactivation (induction), or other incentive.

Newer members are generally at higher risk of leaving. So, focus on absentees who are less than a year into their membership first. Then do your best to contact all at risk members."

Guy Griffiths



"Active Insight research from the Consumer Insight Panel shows that lapsed members (those who've not visited in 3 months or more) develop a mindset of 'I can go if I want'. That doesn't help people become more active - effective communications are vital to maintain engagement."

Julie Allen

2. Stay in touch, keep it personal

Keeping in touch is essential whether a member is currently at risk or not. Regular emails are a convenient, effective way to reach members even when they are not visiting.

As well as respecting member's communication preferences, to positively impact engagement, your marketing emails **must be relevant** to each individual member. Encouraging opens and inspiring action time and time again.

Use your [gym management software](#) to **segment** your members into target groups. Using segmentation can [increase click-through rates by as much as 50%](#) and [increase open rates by as much as 30%](#).



Supercharge the relevance of your segmented, targeted emails using **personalisation**. For example, include the member's name in the subject line or make a recommendation based on a past class or activity. Even simply addressing your member by their name, can increase [open and click through rates by as much as 35%](#).

Get email marketing right and if members become at-risk of cancelling it'll be easier to get their attention.

Use your [gym marketing software](#) to create triggers and **automatically send a targeted email** to a member as they become at-risk. As you scale this type of automation, you'll reduce the workload that contacting at-risk members can create.

3. Help members set goals and review results

Most members will join your gym with a specific goal in mind. Your onboarding process should help new members set achievable goals, track progress, and review and reset goals.

Extending this support beyond the onboarding period is a powerful way to engage members. Regularly help them **track progress and set new goals**. And they'll feel supported and motivated to stick with you.

You can also use reviews and new programmes as **part of your re-engagement approach** for at-risk members.

Offering a **personal training session paid for by your club** will help disengaged members overhaul their workout programme and get back on track. Attach a value to this session, rather than making it free, to show how valuable it is and encourage take up.

For example, you could say 'Let us buy you a £50 personal training session to jumpstart your fitness routine.' Highlight the benefits of working with a personal trainer.

4. Listen and let members know you hear them

Want to build strong engagement and make it easier to win back at-risk members? Show you're listening.

Focus on what the member wants. The ultimate way to understand what a member really values is to **ask for feedback and opinions** – both via surveys and in-person.

Armed with this knowledge, **show the value** you deliver based on their wants and needs. These are some ideas to help you show the value of your club:

- Share customer **testimonials and success stories**
- Promote the **investments you are making** in your club – new equipment, refurbishments, extra classes – explain why your member should care
- Use your website and social media to provide **extra value** – share recipes, exercise technique tips, recovery guidance, self-care ideas, and more
- Demonstrate with **evidence** how you are actioning feedback
- Show how you **measure up to competitors** in your area



“22% of consumers surveyed by Active Insight value staff availability and 10% value the reception team at their club.”

Julie Allen



5. Harness the power of your team

Your team can have the biggest impact on how engaged members are. Research shows [fitness staff can generate as much as 600% more income per member](#) than salespeople alone. The more often members interact with your fitness team, the more they will visit.

To stop members becoming at-risk of cancelling, you need to **keep your team engaged and motivated**. Low staff turnover will aid member engagement – creating a sticky gym member experience.

Invest in your team with **regular training**. Help them communicate effectively with members, chatting with them each time they visit – both about fitness and small talk too. You'll help your team have **meaningful interactions** with members to build strong bonds.

Creating trust with your fitness team will give members confidence to raise any problems straightaway. So, you can address them before the member becomes high-risk.

Get your **team involved** in re-engaging at-risk members. For example, if a member visits after a period of inactivity gently approach them to understand more and offer help.

You could also **promote your personal trainers and class instructors** in re-engagement emails. Focus on being helpful and informative rather than salesy.

6. Encourage workout buddies

An accountability partner in the form of a workout buddy can help motivate, encourage, and keep a member working towards their fitness goals. So, members are **less likely to quit**.

Make it easy for members to bring along a friend or family member with guest passes and refer-a-friend offers.

Especially for members who work out alone, offering a complimentary **guest pass** will encourage them to use their membership, while bringing someone else along for a social experience. Reward members who make use of a guest pass with another pass for another friend.

Showcase your **referral programme** (especially to those who've recently taken up your offer of a guest pass). Having a longer-term workout buddy can take the member out of at-risk status (and avoid them getting to that status in the first place).

7. Promote your community

Members who feel part of something bigger, more than just another name on a list, are more likely to keep showing up and less likely to become at-risk. From onboarding and beyond, find ways to **create and promote your community** to members.

Research shows members who go to [at least 1 class a week are 20% more likely to be loyal members](#) than those who work out in the gym 3 times a week. Having a **group exercise programme** is a powerful tool to keep members motivated and engaged. Even if you don't have a dedicated studio space, running gym floor-based sessions can engage members.

Regularly promote your group exercise timetable, any new classes you've added, and the benefits of working out in a group. **Recommend relevant classes** and sessions to at-risk members based on their past preferences and those of similar groups of members.

Use **social media groups** to keep members connected and interacting while they're away. Fitness challenges that are easy for all to access can spark healthy competition and encourage members to interact more. Promote these on social media and in your email newsletter.

Recognise member achievements too (where a member is comfortable with a public call out). This is inspiring for others and encourages the celebrated member onwards.



"24% of consumers surveyed by Active Insight value making friends at their club."

Julie Allen



↑ 4.4%

of cancellations were due to cost & financial reasons in 2022. Up from 3.1% in 2021.



“A freeze or suspension may be an option for members who aren’t visiting right now, especially if injured or finding it difficult to visit.

Limiting the freeze term and communicating constantly during a freeze (encouraging an early return and maintaining engagement) is critical to get members back after a freeze, otherwise, you’re just delaying the cancellation.”

Guy Griffiths

8. Offer flexible options and freezes

Now more than ever members are seeking more flexibility in their membership. Regularly review your membership options to stay competitive and provide members with what they want.

Ask members who are at-risk of cancelling if their current package still works for them. This is particularly important where a Direct Debit has been rejected.

If cost is an issue:

- **Suggest a value package** that might suit their needs based on usage patterns (e.g., if their membership includes classes that they don’t use, suggest gym-only membership)
- Let your members **choose which perks they want** with a basic gym-only option. Add bolt-on extras for classes, personal training sessions, coffees or shakes from your café, etc.
- Supply a **promotional offer** for a fixed period
- Offer a **temporary freeze**, free of cost in certain circumstances (staying in regular contact to keep top of mind and prepare them for returning)

If members are worried about committing to a long-term deal:

- Give the choice of a **rolling monthly membership**
- Have a casual **pay-as-you-go** access option

Being flexible can help you win-back high-risk members over the long-term by supporting their short-term needs.

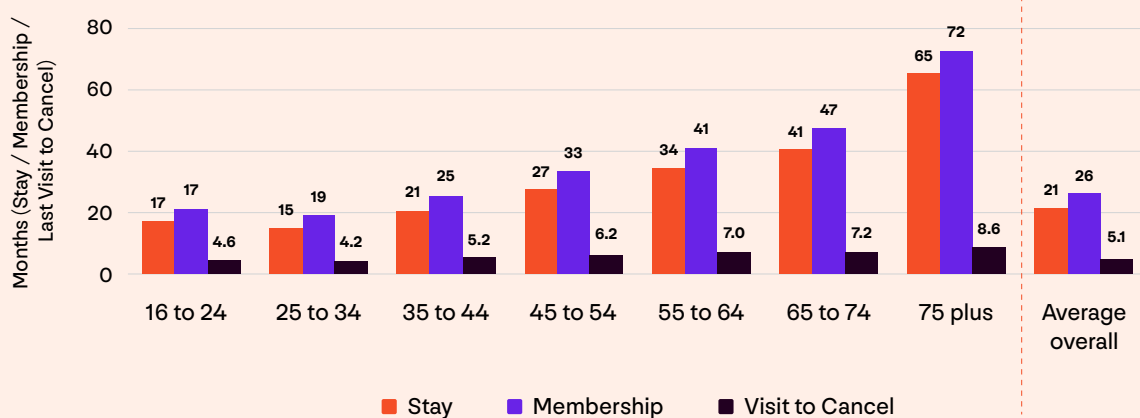


DATA SPOTLIGHT:

HOW DOES LENGTH OF STAY AND MEMBERSHIP VARY?

IMPACT OF AGE

HOW LENGTH OF STAY & MEMBERSHIP DIFFER BY AGE



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

On average, length of stay and membership **increase with age**.

The exception is those aged **25 to 34** who have the **lowest length of stay and membership**. And **cancel faster** than other age groups. This group are also most likely to cancel due to a change of location and cost/financial reasons.

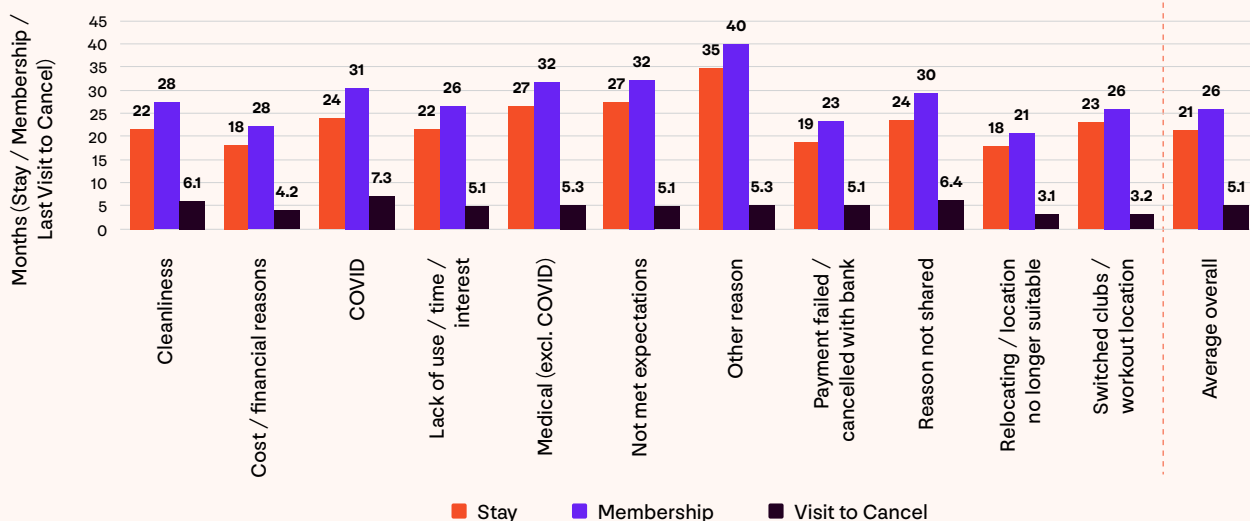
→ For younger members, a **good leaving experience is essential**, so the door is wide open for a future return

Amongst older age groups, the length of time between last visit and cancellation extends **beyond half a year**. Supporting and encouraging these members back is essential.

→ For older members, the right approach to offering **support to get back to activity** is vital

IMPACT OF CANCELLATION REASON

HOW LENGTH OF STAY & MEMBERSHIP DIFFER BY CANCELLATION REASON



Source: Xplor Technologies Attrition Research 2023

Members who cancel due to a **relocation or unsuitable location** have a **shorter length of stay and membership** on average, cancelling quickly after their last visit. It's a similar picture for those who cancel for **cost & financial reasons**.

- Make leaving a **positive experience**
- Offer support where you can **through flexible memberships, casual access options and freezes** to help when cost is an issue

Those who end up with a cancelled membership due to a **failed or cancelled payment**, also tend to have a **shorter than average length of stay and membership**. The time between last visit and membership cancellation is around average.

- Help members **manage their membership online**, including freezing and cancelling when needed, to recover the members you can and gain better insight into why members cancel

Members who cancel **directly and don't share why**, stick around for longer than average. However, the **time between last visit and cancelling is over 6 months**.

- Get more insights by building a culture where members are used to giving honest feedback and providing **digital, less confrontational ways of feeding back**. So, you can re-engage more of this group before the point of cancellation

Where **cleanliness** is given as a reason for cancelling, the time between last visit and cancellation is also longer at just over 6 months. That means members are **cancelling based on cleanliness concerns when they've not visited for half a year**.

- Survey members regularly, asking questions to understand if you're meeting cleanliness expectations. **Act on any issues raised and publicly share the action** you've taken to encourage sleeping members with cleanliness concerns back in

THE WRAP UP...

Without solving the attrition challenge, fitness & wellbeing businesses will continue to overly rely on acquiring new members. That makes business and overall industry **growth tough** to achieve.

If you can reduce attrition, you'll increase retention. So, members stick with you and actively use their membership investment for longer.

To win the war on attrition you need **complete, accurate data** to hand – and more of it too. Right now, we see:

- **Over half of cancellations happen silently** – this gives you little feedback, feedback that's so valuable for overcoming common leave reasons in the future. More needs to be done to build an open culture in clubs where members feel safe to share feedback
- **Members who have an induction actively visit for longer** than those who don't, there's still room to improve the onboarding and welcome experience to positively impact attrition
- Length of stay and membership metrics are a vital measure of how well retention and re-engagement strategies are working. Yet, many clubs **fail to track visits**, without this data it's almost impossible to systematically re-engage members when visit patterns change. And effective re-engagement programme is a key way to reduce attrition



Serious about tackling attrition?

Start by **reviewing the data available** for your business looking at:

- Cancellation reasons
- Induction & onboarding uptake
- Length of stay & membership
- Cancellation timing
- Visit frequency

Overlay this with **demographic data** to understand your trends. **Then apply the most relevant strategies and tips** from this report to your business.

Make gradual changes, focusing first on engaging, motivating and listening to current members. **Track these metrics** to measure success

- **Attrition rate** – % of members that have left each month, quarter, or year. Look for a decrease
- **Collection rate** – % of membership payments successfully collected each month. Look for an increase
- **Length of stay** – Average number of months between when members join and last visit. Look for an increase
- **Length of membership** – Average number of months between when members join and cancel. Look for an increase

Xplor Gym will help you successfully win the war on attrition. With all-in-one gym management software, you'll get **easy access to the data you need** to understand attrition trends across your business. And best-in-class features and integrations to **automate and scale** your engagement and retention efforts throughout a member's journey with you.



THINK BIGGER, GO FURTHER WITH XPLOR GYM

Faster. More responsive. Easier to use. Xplor Gym is the best-in-class gym management software solution of choice for ambitious clubs.

When you choose Xplor Gym, you'll get exactly what you need to save time, engage members, and grow. No compromising, ever.

Flexible technology and integrations help you customise your solution to fit your business. So, you can build your ideal value proposition, stand out from the crowd, and add new revenue streams. Be ready for the future.

Get the tools you need to power growth – including:

- CRM & member management
- Billing & membership payments
- Bookings & classes
- Access control
- Marketing & retention
- Online joining
- Member experience
- Analytics & reporting
- And more...

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