

Why do people choose certain environments and methods for strength training, and why might Cross-Fit be so popular?

Resistance exercise or strength training is recognised to improve multiple physiological and psychological health parameters, to the extent where being stronger reduces risks of ALL-CAUSE mortality. That means; being stronger reduces your risk of dying by any means; stronger people are harder to kill! However, whilst the development of sector strategies aimed to initiate resistance exercise are currently a vital part of health promotion, it is important that individuals continue to be regularly active throughout their life. As such developing long term involvement is important. Since research suggests that 50% of adults will discontinue an exercise programme within the first 6 months, an area of importance exists in understanding the motives behind resistance exercise participation.

There are multiple approaches to resistance exercise and this study aimed to consider why people choose a certain type. It is worth clarifying that this study didn't consider which method was the most effective, but rather assumed that the most effective was probably the one people choose to attend and will stick at. CrossFit is a fitness movement that has seen an explosive growth in popularity worldwide; however, little research has investigated the motivational factors within this "niche" resistance exercise environment. Other people choose to attend group exercise classes, exercise alone or exercise one-to-one with a personal trainer. So what motivations determine this choice?

We used a questionnaire called the exercise motivations inventory-2 (EMI-2) and asked a total of 314 male and female participants (CrossFit: n = 68, Group Resistance Exercise: n = 55, Alone: n = 125, Personal Trainer: n = 66) who had been regularly involved in resistance exercise for >6 months. The EMI-2 asks people to rate their exercise type for 14 subscales: stress management, revitalization, enjoyment, challenge, social recognition, affiliation, competition, health pressures, ill-health avoidance, positive health, weight management, appearance, strength and endurance, and nimbleness.

Our results suggest that CrossFit participants were more likely to report higher levels of intrinsic motives, such as enjoyment, challenge and affiliation, whereas one-to-one personal training clients reported higher values for health related motives such as positive health, ill-health avoidance and weight management. Ultimately this seems to support our perceptions of CrossFit as the "*sport of fitness*" where competitive elements and team camaraderie are important. This seems to fit with ideas that people commit a *lifestyle* to CrossFit because of the other elements inherent in team relationships. This is all part of affiliation and belonging, especially to something as big and fashionable as CrossFit. The participants who choose one-to-one resistance exercise with a personal trainer reported higher importance around the long-term outcomes of their health and well-being rather than competition. Ultimately we might say that they were no longer interested in lifestyle commitment or the '*bells and whistles*' of exercise but rather wanted what they perceived

the most effective and efficient approach.

Irrespective of the methods of resistance exercise chosen, the people involved in this study are no doubt improving the quality of their lives and increasing their longevity as a result of their engagement in long-term strength training.

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Publication

[A comparison of the motivational factors between CrossFit participants and other resistance exercise modalities: a pilot study.](#)

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