



FIT TO GROW

More Chinese turn to exercise as tech startups feed the trend with smart gyms, workout apps and AI-enhanced equipment

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
kelly@chinadailyapac.com

Health is wealth, goes the adage. And perhaps it was never more relevant than for China's burgeoning middle class, who are turning increasingly health-conscious with their growing affluence.

Chinese residents' per capita disposable income rose to 21,035 yuan (\$3,065) in the January-August period from 19,342 yuan a year earlier, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

"It is natural that when people get rich, they will want to keep in good health to enjoy their life and pursue a better living quality," said Terence Chau, CEO and program director of the Asian Academy for Sports

& Fitness Professionals (AASFP).

And China is living proof. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of Chinese people who exercise regularly increased steadily and reached 550 million, accounting for over 40 percent of the total population, according to a report by market research firm AskCI Consulting, headquartered in Shenzhen, in South China's Guangdong province.

But the growth potential for the fitness industry remains huge. While China now has 37,627 gyms, surpassing the US, the penetration rate of the fitness population is only 0.79 percent, far below the US' 17.8 percent, according to a white paper by fitness industry SaaS (software as a service) provider Qingcheng Fit, based in Beijing.

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Joint Printing Company Limited, 2-3/F, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong

