

# Starting Strength

## Starting Strength Coaches: A Demographic Analysis

by

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The typical Starting Strength Coach (SSC) is an experienced, well-educated coach who is physically strong and active within the fitness industry. Here's how we know this.

The Starting Strength Coaches Association recently conducted a survey of its members. Of the 103 active members as of 3/16/16, 100 responded to this basic survey which polled their experience, education, role within the fitness industry and individual strength levels. The purpose of the survey was to demonstrate the depth and quality of Starting Strength Coaches.

### Age and Experience

The mean age of an SSC is 38 with a median of 36 years. Coaches range from 21 to 63 years of age. Of the 100 responding members, there were 76 males and 24 females. On average, an SSC has 9.1 years of experience coaching; this translates into over 900 years of collective experience from a very small coaching organization. Please see Table 1 for further details.

**Table 1: Age and Experience Coaching**

Count	Average Age	Average Years Coaching
All (n=100)	37	9.1
Male (n=76)	37	9.9
Female (n=24)	38	6.6

### Education

Starting Strength Coaches are highly educated. Ninety one percent of SSCs hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, while 38% hold a Master's degree or higher. Many of these graduate degrees are in the engineering and health care fields, but are diverse as multiple MBAs and two Vocal Performance degrees. See Table 2.

## Starting Strength Coach Demographics

Sixteen percent of the coaches have doctoral qualifications – terminal degrees in their fields of education. There are 3 medical doctors, 5 doctors of physical therapy and 2 lawyers. Seven SSCs hold PhDs in the following fields: Pharmacology, Mathematics, Physiology, Electrochemical Engineering, Finance and Nutrition.

Two thirds of Starting Strength Coaches have at least one other fitness certification, see Table 3. The most common additional certification is Crossfit Level 1; 39% hold this certification. Roughly one quarter of SSCs possesses the USAW certification and 19% are Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist certificate holders. Seven percent are NSCA Certified Personal Trainers. Five percent or less of SSCs each hold ACE, NASM and ACSM certifications. Other certifications include SCCC, Krav Maga, BOLC, AOLC, ISSA, various Nutrition Certifications, and one Registered Dietician.

**Table 2: Education Levels**

BS/BA or Higher	<b>91%</b>
Masters Level or Higher	<b>39%</b>
Doctoral Qualification	<b>16%</b>

Note: Doctoral Qualification includes the terminal degrees PhD, MD, JD, DPT

**Table 3: Additional Fitness Industry Certifications**

CSCS	Crossfit Level 1	ACE	NASM	ACSM	NSCA-CPT	USAW	Other	At Least One Other Certification
19%	39%	3%	5%	4%	7%	24%	19%	67%

Note: Other certifications include: SCCC, Krav Maga, BOLC, AOLC, ISSA and Various Nutrition Certifications.

About 30% of SSCs hold diverse professional certifications and fellowships in non-fitness industry fields. These include an SSC who is a Fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians, a Fellow of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine and who sits on the American Board of Emergency Medicine. One SSC is a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality and one is an Instructor at the Professional Crisis Management Association. SSCs are also CPAs (2), Registered Nurses (2) and Lean Six Sigma certificate holders (2). One SSC is a Personal Protection Specialist and one is a Certified Protection Professional. Multiple SSCs hold multiple certifications within our Armed Services.

## Role within the Fitness Industry

The majority of Starting Strength Coaches work primarily in the fitness industry. Table 4 summarizes the various roles SSCs play within the fitness industry (each SSC may identify as multiple roles).

**Table 4: Position(s) within the Fitness Industry**

Gym Owner	Gym Manager	Personal Trainer	Team Coach	Coach on the Side
29%	8%	45%	11%	39%

An impressive minority, 44%, of SSCs work primarily outside of the fitness industry. There are several Physicians (Emergency Room and Internal), Attorneys, Professors (Finance), Physical Therapists, Engineers (Electrochemical, Mechanical, Civil, Aerospace, Computer and Software). There is also one high school teacher (Physics/Math), one Nurse Practitioner, one Photographer, a Director of Finance, a Director of Music, and a Firefighter.

## Starting Strength Coach Demographics

A plurality of coaches work primarily in private gyms, with 32% identifying as working in a Starting Strength Gym (see Table 5). Crossfit affiliates are the next most common facility, 31 SSCs work at one of these. While 17% work primarily from a home gym, only 3% work at a “globo gym” (e.g., LA Fitness, Gold’s Gym, etc).

**Table 5: Primary Coaching Facility**

Starting Strength Gym	Crossfit Affiliate	Private Gym	Globo Gym	Home Gym	None
32%	31%	44%	3%	17%	1%

Note: Some gyms identify in multiple categories (e.g., Coliseum Strength and Conditioning, a Starting Strength Gym, is also Crossfit Excursion)

Many coaches choose to focus on coaching special populations. While the vast majority of SSCs, 93%, coach general population (see Table 6), over half also have a focus on Masters Athletes (defined here as lifters over the age of 40). Slightly over half of SSCs specialize in sports performance clients, and 36% focus on younger clients. Twenty three percent of SSCs specialize in injury rehabilitation. A handful of coaches focus on military and law enforcement.

**Table 6: Coaching Specialization(s)**

General Population	Rehabilitation	Sports Performance	Younger Clients	Masters Athletes	Other
93%	23%	51%	36%	51%	3%

Note: Other Coaching Specializations include: Military, Law Enforcement.

## Strength

Starting Strength Coaches are strong; they walk the walk. They are strong in absolute terms and relative to their bodyweight. The average male SSC squats 450 lbs. (median = 449 lbs.), which is roughly 2.1 times his bodyweight. The average female SSC squats 274 lbs. (median = 255 lbs.) which is roughly 1.8 times her bodyweight. See Table 7.

**Table 7: Strength Stats (Average Best Lifts)**

	Squat	Press	Deadlift	Bench Press	Power Clean
<b>Males (n=76)</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>236</b>
Times Bodyweight (n=74)	2.1x	1.0x	2.4x	1.4x	1.1x
<b>Females (n=24)</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>148</b>
Times Bodyweight (n=18)	1.8x	0.7x	2.1x	1.0x	1.0x

Notes: Three male master athletes do not perform the PC; two males and six females did not enter bodyweight.

Male and female average deadlifts were 511 lbs. (2.4xBW) and 319 lbs. (2.1xBW). The average male SSC presses his bodyweight (mean = 205 lbs., median = 200 lbs.) while the average female SSC bench presses her body weight (mean = 165 lbs., median = 162 lbs.). Please see the Appendix for full frequency distributions of strength levels by individual exercise.

The survey did not ask specifically if every coach completed a typical linear progression, the data is suggestive. Though strength level does not equate to training stage, the strength levels reported suggest considerable time and effort spent developing each coach’s personal strength. This is an important necessary condition to coaching – personally experiencing the process of becoming strong.

## *Starting Strength Coach Demographics*

A strong coach – an SSC – understands the changes and challenges that come with progression.

There are at least two useful takeaways from this survey. First, a typical Starting Strength Coach has significant experience and depth within the fitness industry. Second, Starting Strength Coaches are physically and intellectually strong, devoting considerable time and effort into improving both aspects. They have ground through the last few repetitions and trained on days when they didn't feel like it. This rare combination sets the typical Starting Strength Coach apart from other trainers within our industry.

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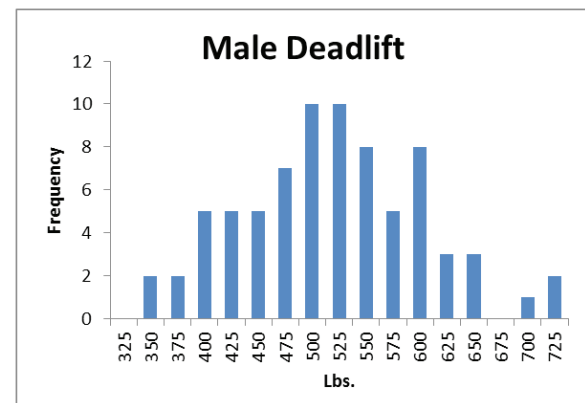
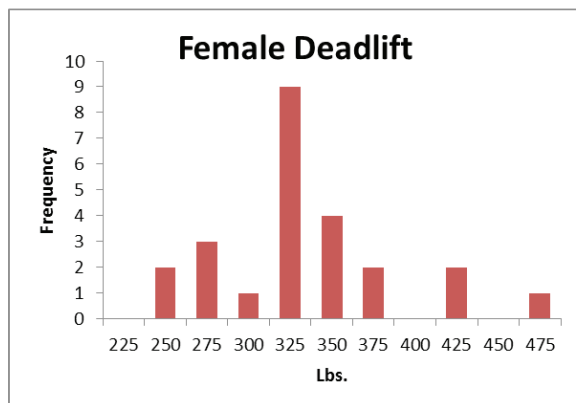
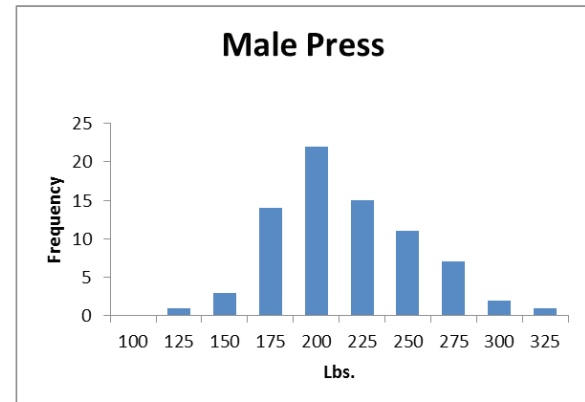
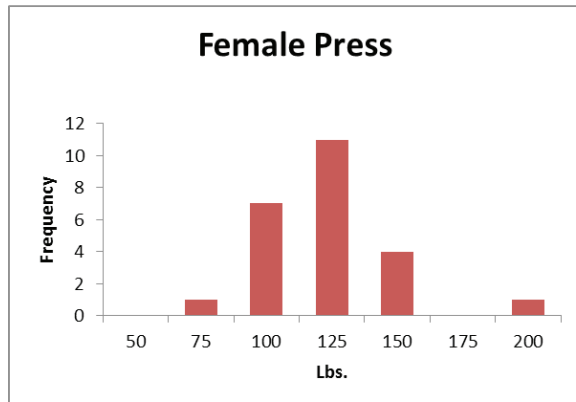
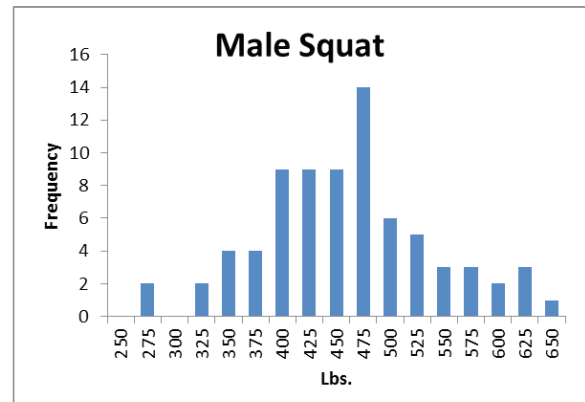
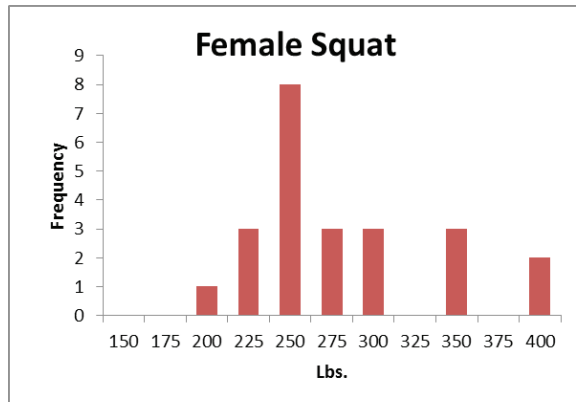
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## Appendix: SSC Strength Frequency Distribution



## Starting Strength Coach Demographics

