

Workplace well-being and the employee experience



Until recently, a key focus of workplace benefit strategies has been on physical wellness and discouraging behaviors and lifestyles that prematurely lead to poor health and death.

Now, all that is changing.

Based on research, the focus is shifting to well-being's more holistic approach. Broader and more relevant well-being encompasses an individual's five primary health dimensions — physical, social, financial, community and mental. Nurturing these dimensions can help people live longer, happier lives as well as be more productive at work.

In well-being, science and relevance go hand-in-hand, making it easier to engage employees. A new survey by Optum® and the National Business Group on Health (the Business Group) demonstrates that many employees wish their employer would get behind a more holistic view of well-being.

Understanding the dimensions of well-being and their relevance to employees and the workplace experience is essential to creating a happier, healthier and more productive workforce.

Definitions of the dimensions of well-being used in the survey



Physical health

The ability to maintain a healthy quality of life (e.g., manage risk factors/health conditions) and to have enough energy to accomplish daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress



Social health

The ability to relate to and connect with other people in our world; having supportive, positive relationships and feelings of social belonging



Financial health

The ability to effectively manage your current and future economic life



Community health

Having a feeling of connection and engagement with the area in which you live (e.g., liking where you live and feeling safe)



Mental health

The presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness); the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety); the ability to cope effectively with life

Introduction

This white paper details the key findings of the Optum and the Business Group survey of more than 2,000 employees on the impact of individual dimensions of well-being — physical, social, financial, community and mental health — on their overall well-being and employee experience.

The employee insights revealed are both fascinating and sobering. They show the profound interplay among the dimensions of financial, physical and mental health as well as community and social health. Equally as important, they also provide a roadmap for employers, suggesting practical, new opportunities to improve the employee experience.

Key insights

-  Investment in multiple dimensions of well-being is correlated with high levels of employee productivity, loyalty (eNPS®) and employee well-being.

-  There is a relationship between high levels of employee well-being and access to quality mental health services and health care in a convenient location.

-  Employees would like their employer to better support financial health (followed closely by mental health).

-  There is an opportunity for employers to consider investing in the health of the community surrounding their key workplace locations given the influence it has on employee well-being.

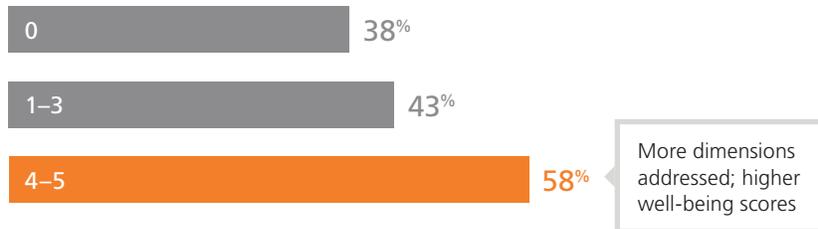
Employer investment in well-being

In the world of well-being, more is better: the greater the number of dimensions addressed, the higher the levels of reported overall well-being. Indeed, the survey shows the sweet spot is employer investment in four to five dimensions. Employees report lower levels of well-being as the number of dimensions addressed declines.

Investment in *multiple* dimensions of well-being is correlated with high levels of well-being

Percentage of employees who claim excellent/very good overall well-being:

Number of dimensions employer supports:*



*Five dimensions: physical, mental, financial, social and community health.

Investment in multiple dimensions of well-being impacts the employee experience, too

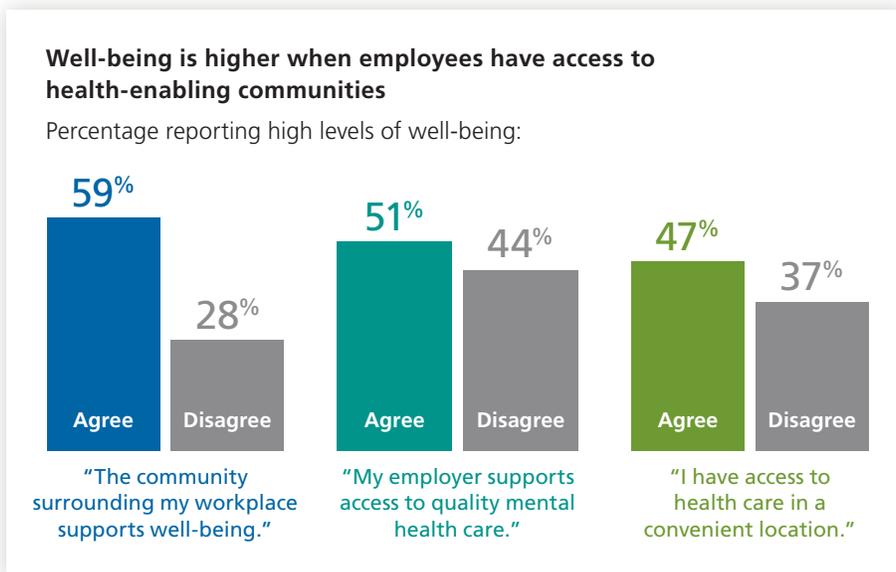
Nearly nine out of 10 employees who report their employer supports 4–5 dimensions say their job performance is excellent. And they take pride in where they work. More than three-quarters say they have an excellent or very good impression of their employer. And many would recommend their employer to others.

The connection between well-being and the employee experience

Employees who report their employer addresses 4–5 dimensions of well-being* are significantly more likely to:

- Have an excellent or very good **impression** of their employer
(77% vs. 50%)
- Be **eNPS “promoters”** — have high recommendation intent
(57% vs. 33%)
- Report that their usual **job performance** is “excellent” over the past year or two
(88% vs. 81%)
- Report excellent or very good overall **well-being**
(58% vs. 42%)

Well-being grows when employees feel engaged in the community surrounding their workplace. It also grows when employees have good access to both quality mental health care and conveniently located health care.



*Compared to 0–3 dimensions.

The demographics of well-being

Overall, most employees describe their well-being as good, with a few calling it excellent. A closer look reveals how gender, income and the flexibility to work from home all play a part in an employee’s level of well-being.

- Men, for example, are most likely to report higher levels of well-being.
- Financial security is also a critical factor, with people earning more than \$50,000, and especially more than \$100,000, most likely to rate their well-being at a higher level.
- Being able to work from home also counts. Having more job autonomy and easing stressful commutes help increase feelings of well-being.



Men are most likely to report higher levels of well-being.

Age and preferences for dimensions in health

Employees agree that the dimensions of physical, financial and mental health have the most impact on their well-being. But based on age, they differ on which dimension matters more to them.

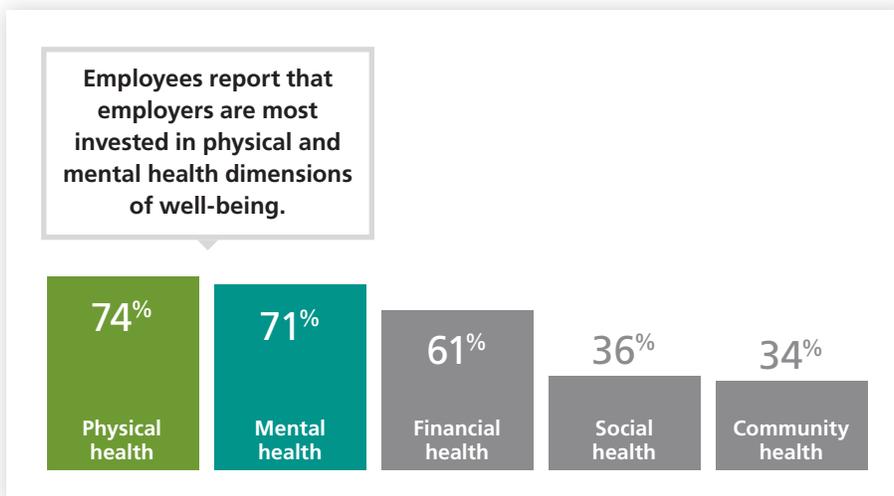
With aging’s inevitable physical toll, employees between the ages of 55 and 64 care most about physical health. In contrast, younger employees are more focused on mental health. This finding reflects a national trend that shows increasing numbers of young people grappling with anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders. Still finding their place in the world and busy cultivating relationships, younger employees are also more interested in social health.

Regardless of age, employees consider financial security as one of the most important factors affecting their well-being.

What employers are offering

For years, employers have recognized that physical and mental health are intertwined. Recognition that a person’s financial health can also affect their total well-being continues to grow among employers and employees alike. In addition, awareness of the impact of social and community health on well-being is also gaining traction.

Most employers address the dimensions of physical and mental health. Slightly fewer cover financial health. A minority focus on employee social and community health needs.

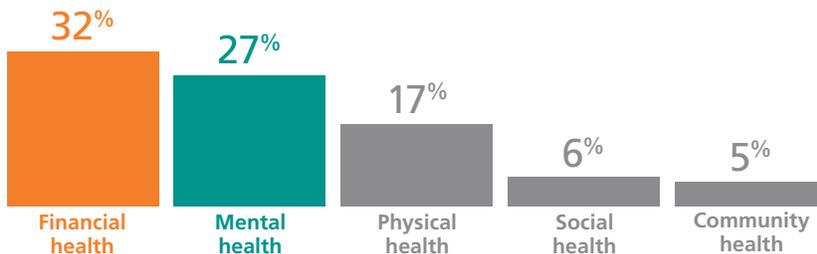


What employees would like to see offered

Employees want more help with their financial health. In fact, nearly one out of three employees puts financial health at the top of their wish list for more employer help; also near the top of their list: more help with mental health.

Q. What one dimension of well-being would you like your company to address more than it does today?

Employers have an opportunity to better address financial and mental health.



Expanded financial health

The approach to financial health is becoming more holistic. Helping employees save for retirement remains the most common form of employer support, followed by assistance in maximizing health spending accounts and reducing health care costs.

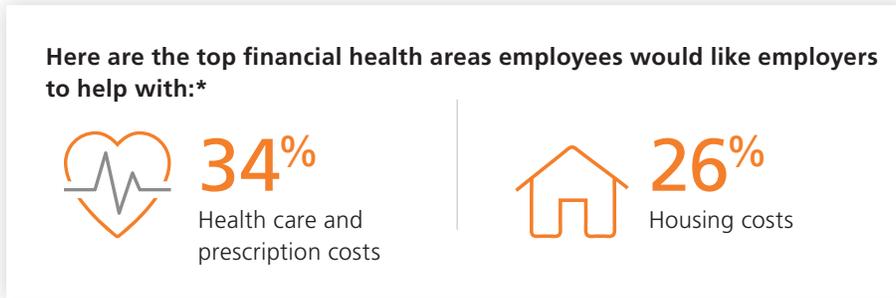
Albeit in smaller numbers, employers are also stepping up to help employees with child care, basic budget-making, transportation needs and managing student loans.

Retirement saving and maximizing HSA support is most common

Percentage of employers supporting financial health topics (employee reported):



Juggling multiple financial challenges, many employees embrace this holistic approach.



Overall, this data show a sizable slice of the workforce welcomes programs and services that support their financial health needs.

More mental health services

The demand for mental health services continues to grow. Though most (71 percent) employees say their employer provides mental health programs, more than a quarter of employees say they want their employer to expand such services.

Two out of five employers offer programs to treat substance abuse and manage stress. But, many employees without access to stress reduction programs wish their employer would provide them.



*Among those not currently supported in this manner.

Employees also say they would like more help in other mental health areas. Two out of five employees want help for “burn-out at work.” And more than a quarter say they want support to get better sleep. An equal number of employees also want assistance to become more resilient.*

Here are the top mental health areas employees would like employers to help with:*

2 out of 5
employees want help for “burn-out at work.”

More than 1/4
of employees want support to get better sleep.

Employees also want assistance to become more resilient.



Additional findings:

- Employees with **high** levels of well-being are more likely to request resources for sleep health. 
- Employees with **low** levels of well-being are more likely to request resources for resiliency. 

Community around the workplace and well-being

Employer efforts to involve employees in their broader community also have a positive effect on well-being.

Mainstays of these efforts are charitable giving campaigns, offering volunteer opportunities and supporting initiatives to improve the local community. Less prevalent but more popular with employees are programs that provide paid time off for volunteering.

In fact, more than two out of five employees wish their employer would offer this option.*

Percentage of employers who support community health topics (employee reported):

56% Charitable giving campaigns

24% Monetary support for community improvement initiatives

43% Volunteer opportunities

24% Paid time off for volunteering

25% Initiatives that improve health/safety of community

*Among those not currently supported in this manner.

Plentiful sidewalks, stores with fresh produce, gyms, and accessible urgent care and mental health clinics have the potential to make communities surrounding the workplace more engaging and secure.

They also seem to heighten well-being. Many employees with the highest well-being scores report that the communities surrounding their workplace have these healthy features.

The relationship between high levels of well-being and a supportive community surrounding the workplace

Those reporting the highest well-being scores most often agree:

Percentage agree strongly: The community surrounding my workplace has...	Excellent/very good overall well-being	Fair/poor overall well-being
Sidewalks	47%	38%
Grocery stores with fruits/vegetables/other fresh food	45%	38%
Easily accessible urgent care clinics	36%	25%
Fitness/recreation centers	36%	26%
Easily accessible ambulatory care centers	35%	22%
Restaurants that offer healthy options	34%	20%
Open spaces/parks	33%	24%
Designated bike paths/lanes	27%	14%
Day care centers/preschools	23%	15%
Easily accessible mental health clinics	20%	8%

Social health

About a third of employers are engaged in efforts to foster better employee relationships in the workplace.

Though only about one in five employers works to help employees enhance relationships outside the workplace, a quarter of employees* wish their employers would do the same.

Support for social health is relatively low

Percentage of employers who support social health topics (employee reported):

35% Job design that supports collaboration	34% Workplace design that supports socialization
35% Improving relationships at work	20% Improving relationships with others at home/outside work

*Among those not currently supported in this manner.

Conclusion

The insights from this survey suggest clear and practical opportunities for employers to increase employee well-being and the employee experience at work.

- Address multiple dimensions of employee well-being, especially mental and financial health
- Invest in the community surrounding key corporate locations
- Consider demographics and employee preferences in addressing dimensions of health

Methodology

Web-based survey conducted in 2018 of 2,210 employees, aged 18–64 years old, working for a company of 3,000+ employees for at least one year. All have group health insurance coverage via their employer and are involved in making health care decisions for themselves or family members under their plan.

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Source: Optum/National Business Group on Health well-being and the employee experience study, 2018

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