

Season 3 | Episode 7

# HR Survey Results: Workers' Well-Being Now Takes Priority



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Welcome to Pulse, a Paychex podcast where HR professionals find insights on today's top issues and inspiration to build in lead effective teams in a healthier workplace. I'm your host, Rob Parsons.

**Rob Parsons**

Hello, everybody. Rob Parsons here. Joining me today is Jeanne Meister. Jeanne is founding partner of Future Workplace and now executive vice president of Executive Networks, an HR peer network company. Jeanne has teamed up with us to conduct research investigating employees' top concerns and priorities as the modern workplace continues to evolve.

**Rob Parsons**

Today, we'll be discussing her latest findings around employee well-being. Jeanne, welcome back to the podcast.

**Jeanne Meister**

Thank you so much for having me, Rob.

**Rob Parsons**

It's great. Jeanne, you and I have been talking a lot about well-being this past year, haven't we?

**Jeanne Meister**

And it's even more important, as we are battling the surge of Omicron.

**Rob Parsons**

No question. And I really like that we're covering off this topic with employees to get their perspective on what's working and what isn't. Overall, what did you see? What did the research reveal about what employees are reporting about their own well-being?

**Jeanne Meister**

Yeah, so first, just for your listeners, Paychex surveyed 603 workers — employees, as Rob has said — in the United States, in businesses ranging from 20 employees all the way up to 500 employees. And not surprisingly, you know, well-being was rated as about 70% before the pandemic, and it really dipped under 50% during the pandemic.

**Jeanne Meister**

It's come back to around 58% as people rate their overall well-being. But I think Rob, and this survey was conducted in mid-November, and I would anticipate if we'd ask this very same question now, people are very concerned, you know, about Omicron and what that means for them and their families.

**Rob Parsons**

I think you're exactly right, Jeanne. But what is nice about when the survey was conducted is we do get a feeling about maybe what we'll see in months to come and what we'll see when we get through this. Were there, were there areas where employees were struggling or were there specific areas that you noted that you found interesting?

**Jeanne Meister**

Yes, the top two areas we reported, among these 603 employees where workers were struggling, were financial well-being was rated the top area they were struggling with. And the second was overall mental health and emotional well-being. So, we defined for them financial well-being as just thinking about their overall compensation, their 401(k) plan, and what they really zeroed in on was the increasing need for financial wellness and financial education, especially important in times of uncertainty.

**Rob Parsons**

No question. And, and I suspect that you saw some variation between generations in regards to that. I know I have a very different perspective than my daughters do when it comes to financial fitness.

**Jeanne Meister**

Yes, yes. So not surprisingly, Gen X — often called the sandwich generation — were struggling with both children, financial well-being related to their children, and their aging parents. And this wasn't necessarily the case for younger employees. Younger employees, though were struggling more with mental health, right? And they were missing their in-person interactions in the office, their networking, their overall social life. In fact, just today, I'm in New York City. Just today in the New York Times, there's, you know, really concern will colleges go back to remote learning in January, given the surge of Omicron, and what is that going to do to the overall mental health of our college students?

**Rob Parsons**

You know, we forget sometimes that softer side of, of the of the workplace, of seeing your friends, of being able to talk to people, be able to have a cup of coffee and find out how someone's kids are.

**Rob Parsons**

I know, especially my youngest daughter, 24 years old, working at a wonderful company here in Rochester. And yeah, and she's had trouble getting back to the office on a regular, regular basis, and she really misses it.

**Jeanne Meister**

Yeah, and I had someone, I have somebody working for, for me that, you know what he really misses? He bought an electric scooter. And when we had our office in New York City, he would, you know, that's how we got to work.

**Jeanne Meister**

And it was it was really a great way to get to work for him about 30 blocks. And it's unusual to say someone misses the commute because that's everyone's biggest pain, right? Right. But he made it fun, and it was part of the overall experience of going to work.

**Rob Parsons**

So did employees - did you, did you poll employees on what employers can do to help?

**Jeanne Meister**

Yes. And the overall big finding, as Paychex has reported in their article, was that 62% of workers now say that employee well-being benefits will be part of what they consider as they apply for new jobs. So this is really major news, Rob.

**Jeanne Meister**

I mean, you know, typically employers have focused on the comp package, right? Right now, workers are saying actually financial well-being, financial education, workplace flexibility— if that's possible in one's job — overall mental health support ... these benefits are now important to workers, and they're going to be thinking of their next job as it relates to does their employer offer a full range of employee well-being benefits?

**Rob Parsons**

And it's, it's interesting. Back in the day, they were called fringe benefits. They were on the outside, and now they're becoming critical. I wonder if — and you and I have talked about this a little bit — I wonder if not just the benefits are useful, but are they indicative of the culture of the companies that they're seeking to join? Do they say something about these employers that they want to choose?

**Jeanne Meister**

Yes. I think the big takeaway for employers is create a culture of care. That's what workers are looking for when they —and right now with the Great Resignation, it's only becoming greater with 11 million jobs going unfilled— so, as an employer, really think about what can you do beyond the obvious, which is additional paid time off and the comp packages. So, ask yourself, do employee surveys, and segment your data by generations to understand what's important to each segment of worker. And think about what's possible in terms of financial well-being, mental health well-being and just having an adequate staff and, and, and health insurance for your workers.

**Rob Parsons**

I'd love that advice Jeanne that I think too often we, as leaders, as employers don't necessarily listen. We think we know what's best. We think we know what people want. Why not just ask, you know, and turn it into a dialogue instead of a one-way street?

**Jeanne Meister**

Yeah, I think that's ... and do it frequently. I think what employers are seeing is that gone are the days when you do the annual employee survey, right? We're now, we're now making that monthly, you know, shorter. And, and really taking the pulse of your workers on what's important to them.

**Jeanne Meister**

Because overall, to create this culture of care, an employer really has to understand how are they going to define the overall employee experience, and then to communicate that to prospective workers, because that's what they're looking for as they vet one employer against another?

**Rob Parsons**

Mm hmm. And read reviews. Employers are just like products on Amazon now. I can read reviews and find out exactly what's going on at that company.

**Jeanne Meister**

I know and I can remember when, when people were thinking about, you know, reading the reviews and Glassdoor and the overall transparency, as does. Will this really matter? Well, I think we've answered that question.

**Rob Parsons**

Yes, I think so. I think so. Well, Jeanne, once again, another revealing study. Thank you so much for joining the podcast today and sharing those results.

**Jeanne Meister**

You are so welcome, Rob, and happy holidays to you and your family.

**Rob Parsons**

Oh, thank you so much, Jeanne. Same to you. And thank you to our listeners for joining. I encourage you all to visit [Paychex-dot-com-slash-worx](https://www.paychex.com/W-O-R-X). That's [paychex.com/W-O-R-X](https://www.paychex.com/W-O-R-X) to see a full breakdown of the research, along with Jeanne's suggestions and recommendations. She has great insights as usual. And finally, we'd love you all to tell us what you want from this podcast. So visit [Pay-X-dot-me slash pulsetopics](https://www.paychex.com/Pay-X-dot-me-slash-pulsetopics) to submit guest and topic ideas. That's [Payx.me/pulsetopics](https://www.paychex.com/Pay-X-dot-me-slash-pulsetopics).

**Rob Parsons**

Thank you all. And please stay happy and healthy.

**Announcer**

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