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HR.com's Future of Employee Well-being 2025

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AUGUST 2025

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Executive Summary

Despite growing investment in employee well-being, this year's HR.com survey shows only 41% of organizations say their well-being programs are truly effective. This points to a clear gap between good intentions and meaningful impact.

This year's research also contains a critical insight: burnout and structural stressors, such as heavy workloads, chronic understaffing, job insecurity, and limited autonomy remain the most persistent threats to well-being. In fact, 57% of organizations say burnout is difficult to reduce.

Moreover, well-being programs still tend to focus narrowly on physical (83%) and mental (70%) health, leaving areas such as digital, financial, and social well-being under-addressed.

Crucially, well-being leader organizations (those successfully embedding well-being into strategy and culture) are achieving better outcomes in retention, engagement, and financial performance. Their approaches offer a clear roadmap for others ready to move from fragmented efforts to sustained impact.

The following key findings reveal where progress is happening, where major gaps persist, and what sets high-performing organizations apart.

About the Survey

HR.com's "Future of Employee Well-being 2025" survey ran from April 2025 to July 2025. We gathered responses from 215 HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical. Respondents are located all over the world, but most of them reside in North America, especially the United States.

The respondents represent a broad cross-section of employers by number of employees, ranging from small businesses with fewer than 100 employees to enterprises with 20,000+ employees. One-fourth of responses represent large organizations with over 1000 employees.

Major Research Findings

Major Finding 1

Most organizations continue to focus on physical and mental well-being, but other areas remain under-addressed.

- Physical (83%) and mental/emotional well-being (70%) remain top priorities in employee well-being programs.
- Digital well-being is largely overlooked, with only 26% of organizations addressing it despite concerns like screen fatigue.
- Financial, career, and social well-being receive attention from just over half of organizations.
- Most organizations still lack a truly integrated and holistic approach to well-being. Just 32% say their well-being initiatives are highly or very highly integrated.
- These patterns suggest that many well-being strategies still reflect traditional health models rather than a holistic, modern approach.

Major Finding 2

Effectiveness of well-being programs is improving over time, but strong impact remains elusive.

- 41% of organizations rate their well-being programs as effective or highly effective—an increase from 30% last year.
- Most organizations (44%) still report only moderate effectiveness of employee well-being initiatives.
- This points to a gap between employee needs and the support being offered, even as overall effectiveness shows marginal gains.

Major Finding 3

Stress and burnout remain top threats to employee well-being.

- Stress and burnout (57%) and understaffing (41%) are the most common challenges affecting well-being.
- Poor communication (40%) and lack of measurement (34%) also limit the success of well-being efforts.
- Financial stress, overwhelming workloads, and poor work-life balance continue to be leading sources of employee strain.
- Despite these challenges, only 30% of organizations believe they are effective at helping employees manage stress.

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Major Finding **4**

Organizations plan to expand mental and financial well-being support, but structural changes remain limited.

- Over the next two years, many organizations intend to:
  - improve tracking between well-being and satisfaction
  - expand mental health and financial well-being programs
- Fewer organizations plan to implement flexible schedules (22%) or hybrid work models (18%).
- AI is expected to help reduce workload stress and personalize well-being support, though concerns about job security, bias, and privacy remain.

Major Finding **5**

Organizations with highly effective well-being programs (well-being leaders) are achieving stronger results across key outcomes.

- Compared to organizations with less effective programs (well-being laggards), well-being leaders are:
  - 4X more likely to say they are excellent at helping employees manage stress
  - more than 2X as likely to use deeper data methods like claims analysis to guide well-being strategy
  - more likely to achieve better outcomes in employee experience, engagement, retention, and performance
  - more optimistic about the role of AI in improving personalized well-being support
- Leader organizations are more likely to treat well-being as a strategic priority and embed it into culture, leadership, and day-to-day practices.

Please note that the findings and recommendations contained in this report are informational only. Nothing in this report should be construed as constituting legal opinions or advice. Please consult an attorney if you have questions about the legal requirements, rules or regulations associated with any content discussed in this report.

Employee Well-being Practices Today

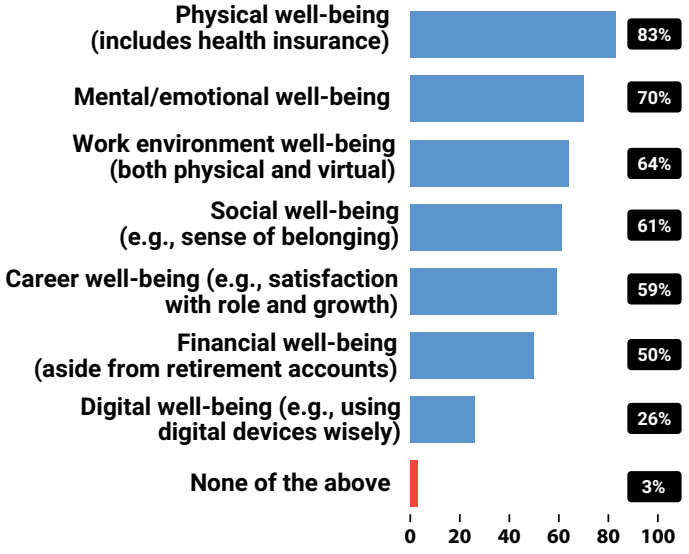
Overall Scope and Effectiveness

Finding: Physical and mental well-being remain the focus, while digital well-being is largely ignored

Most organizations continue to concentrate on physical (83%) and mental/emotional well-being (70%), but efforts drop sharply in other areas. Digital well-being is prioritized by only 26%, despite the growing impact of screen fatigue and digital overload.

Financial, career, and social well-being each receive attention from under two-thirds of organizations, even though these factors are closely tied to retention, productivity, and inclusion. This narrow focus suggests that many well-being strategies still reflect traditional health models rather than a more integrated, modern approach.

Which types of employee well-being does your organization try to enhance via specific initiatives? (select all that apply)



Only about a quarter (26%) of organizations strive to enhance digital well-being

For the purpose of this report, large organizations have 1,000 or more employees, midsize organizations have 100 to 999 employees, and small organizations have 99 or fewer employees.

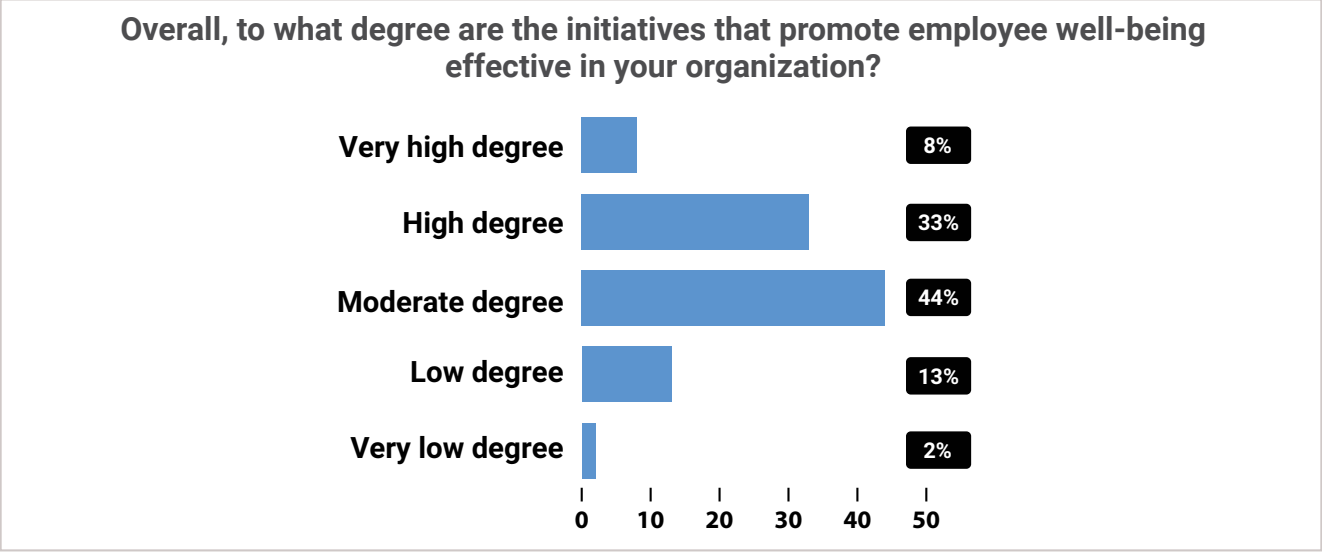
Finding: Most organizations see only a moderate impact from their well-being initiatives despite year-on-year improvements in effectiveness of initiatives

Nearly 85% of organizations report at least a moderate level of effectiveness from their well-being efforts, but just 41% rate their effectiveness as high or very high. Although that percentage may not look impressive, it does represent an improvement from our 2024 (30%), 2023 (23%) and 2022 (26%) surveys on this topic, suggesting that organizations might be making improvements in employee well-being.

Nonetheless, the data continues to indicate that although initiatives are in place, many organizations are still not moving the needle meaningfully on employee well-being. The relatively low percentage of organizations reporting strong results points to a possible mismatch between well-being programs and actual employee needs.

Differences based on size of organization

Large organizations are more likely to rate their employee well-being effective to a high or very high degree compared to midsize and small organizations.



Editor's Note: As stated in the survey, "effective" refers to improvements in employee well-being levels. In the original data, 5% of respondents stated that they "Don't know." For the purpose of this graph, we removed those responses and recalculated; so only those who confidently answered the question are included.

Well-being cohort definition

For this report, we conducted various analyses to gain insights into which practices are most widely used by organizations that report greater effectiveness of their well-being programs. Specifically, we analyzed responses and segmented the data into two groups:

- **Well-being leaders:** these represent respondents who answered the question "Overall, to what degree are the programs that promote employee well-being effective in your organization?" as "high" or "very high" degree.
- **Well-being laggards:** these represent respondents who answered the same question as "low" or "very low" degree.

Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to higher well-being, we do see intriguing relationships that may, if used judiciously, result in greater success.

Well-being Problems

Finding: Burnout and understaffing remain the biggest threats to well-being

Stress and burnout (57%) and lack of staff (41%) are the most common well-being challenges, pointing to deeper organizational strain. Burnout has remained the top issue from last year. Despite this, only 24% cite a lack of programs, suggesting current efforts fail to address the real problems.

Poor communication (40%) and lack of metrics (34%) further weaken impact. Many initiatives appear disconnected from the everyday pressures employees face.

Differences based on size of organization

The most widely cited challenge in large and midsize organizations is high employee stress/burnout levels while small organizations are most likely to grapple with not tracking well-being-related metrics.

From the list below, which five work-related well-being challenges are most problematic in your organization? (select up to five)

About a quarter struggle with coping with a toxic workplace

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Measuring Well-being

Finding: Well-being measurement relies heavily on indirect or surface-level data

Employee engagement scores (47%) and surveys (46%) are the most common ways organizations track well-being. These can be useful approaches but there's a danger that they too often capture symptoms rather than root causes.

More direct methods such as qualitative feedback (33%) or health risk assessments (14%) are far less often used. Without deeper insights, it can be difficult to link well-being efforts to real outcomes.

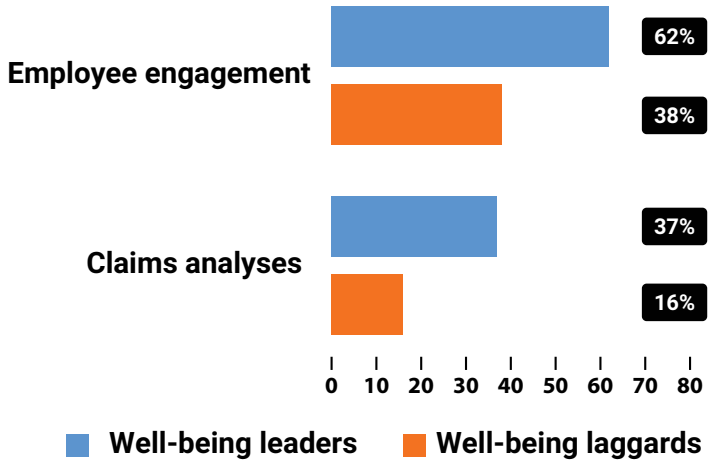
What are the top five ways your organization measures employee well-being? (select up to five)

Nearly 1 in 10 organizations do not measure employee well-being at all

Finding: Well-being leaders make better use of data

Well-being leader organizations are nearly twice as likely (62%) as laggards (38%) to measure employee engagement when assessing well-being. They are also more than twice as likely to use claims analyses (37% vs. 16%), indicating a stronger reliance on hard data to inform strategy. These gaps point to a key differentiator: leaders are more likely to treat well-being as a measurable, strategic priority rather than a set of disconnected programs.

What are the top five ways your organization measures employee well-being?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Consider broadening well-being strategies to address digital, financial, and career health. Move beyond physical and mental health to create a more balanced and modern approach that reflects today's workplace challenges.
- Align well-being programs with actual employee pain points. Focus on solving issues such as burnout, burdensome workloads, and understaffing instead of relying solely on general wellness offerings.
- Measure employee well-being along multiple dimensions. For example, strengthen feedback loops with direct input from employees. Use interviews, focus groups, and real-time check-ins to uncover root causes of well-being challenges. Treat well-being data as essential to strategic planning by integrating it with engagement, retention, and productivity analytics.

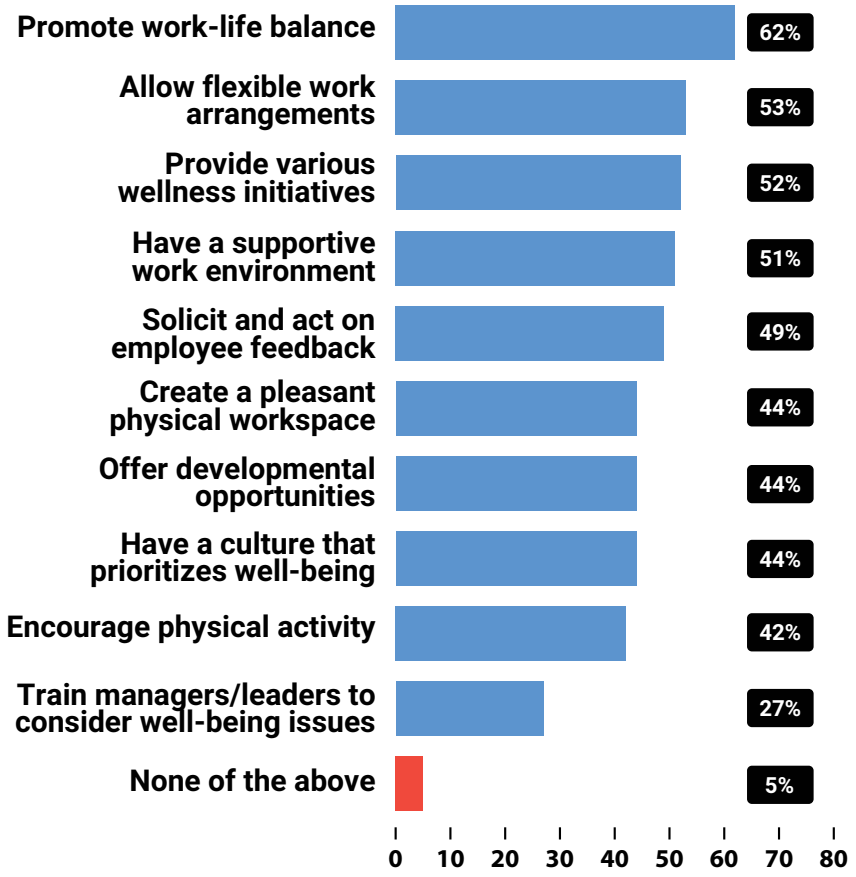
Well-being Strategies and Practices

Overall Strategic Approaches

Finding: Most strategies target work-life balance and flexibility, but leadership training is rare

Promoting work-life balance (62%) and flexible work (53%) are the most common well-being strategies, reflecting a shift toward autonomy and personal control. Yet, only 27% train managers to address well-being, limiting leadership's ability to support these efforts. While wellness initiatives and feedback loops are fairly common, lasting impact requires leaders who model and reinforce well-being—not just policies that permit it.

What strategies does your organization use to improve overall employee well-being? (select all that apply)



Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to use the listed strategies to improve employee well-being.

Finding: Well-being leader organizations create a culture of support, growth, and responsiveness

Well-being leader organizations stand out not just for offering more wellness initiatives but for embedding well-being into the culture itself. They are more likely to encourage physical activity, support employee development, and act on feedback.

These organizations typically do not treat well-being as a checklist. They create environments where support, growth, and employee voice are foundational. Laggards may offer programs but often lack the culture and follow-through needed for lasting impact.

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

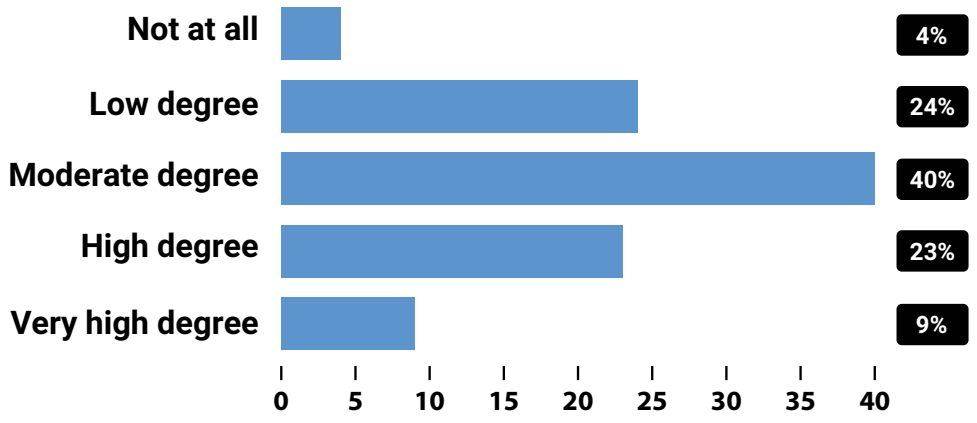
- Train managers to recognize and support employee well-being in day-to-day interactions, making sure they know how to guide employees to useful organizational resources as needed.
- Launch multiple well-being initiatives rather than relying on just one that is supposed to address everything.
- Assess the corporate culture and work environment to ensure they support employee well-being. Incorporate well-being expectations and behaviors into leadership competency models and performance reviews. Communicate clear expectations that well-being is a leadership responsibility, not just an HR initiative
- Offer developmental opportunities to employees to enhance their sense of well-being and growth.

Integration of Well-being Programs

Finding: Few organizations take a truly holistic approach to well-being

Only 32% say their wellness initiatives are highly or very highly integrated, while most report a low or moderate level of coordination. This suggests that many programs operate in silos, limiting their overall impact. A fragmented approach can confuse employees, reduce engagement, and waste resources.

To what degree do you feel the various wellness initiatives in your organization are well integrated with one another to create a comprehensive and "holistic" approach to employee well-being?



Editor's Note: In the original data, 5% of respondents replied "Don't know." For this chart, we removed those responses and recalculated.

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Results of Chi-square Test

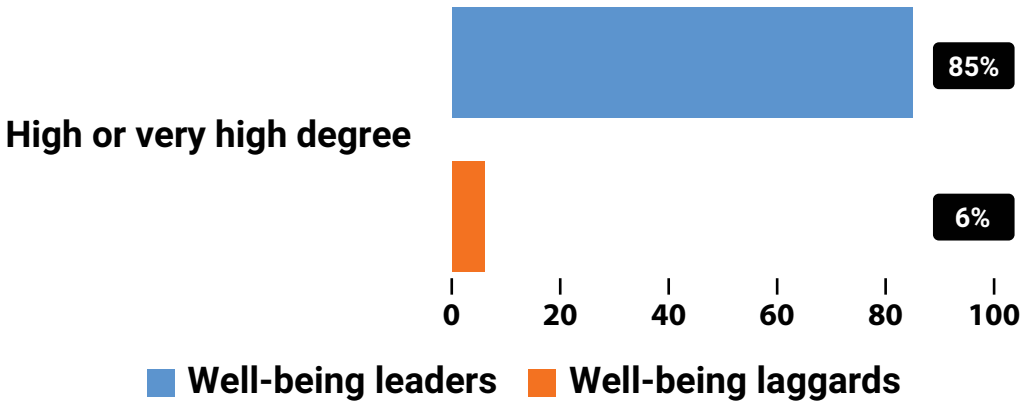
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to say their well-being initiatives are well-integrated with one another.

Finding: Integration sets leaders apart from laggards

Eighty-five percent of well-being leader organizations report a high or very high degree of integration across wellness initiatives, compared to just 6% of laggards organizations.

This sharp divide suggests that well-being leader organizations are more likely to approach well-being as a cohesive strategy, while laggards tend to rely on fragmented or isolated efforts. Without integration, even well-intended programs are unlikely to drive meaningful outcomes.

To what degree do you feel the various wellness initiatives in your organization are well integrated with one another to create a comprehensive and "holistic" approach to employee well-being?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Audit all existing well-being initiatives to identify overlaps, gaps, and misalignments.
- Develop a central framework that connects all well-being efforts under a unified strategy. Chart the relationships between various initiatives.
- Assign clear ownership for coordinating well-being across departments and functions.
- Embed well-being goals into broader HR and business strategies to reinforce alignment.
- Regularly communicate how different programs connect and contribute to overall employee well-being.

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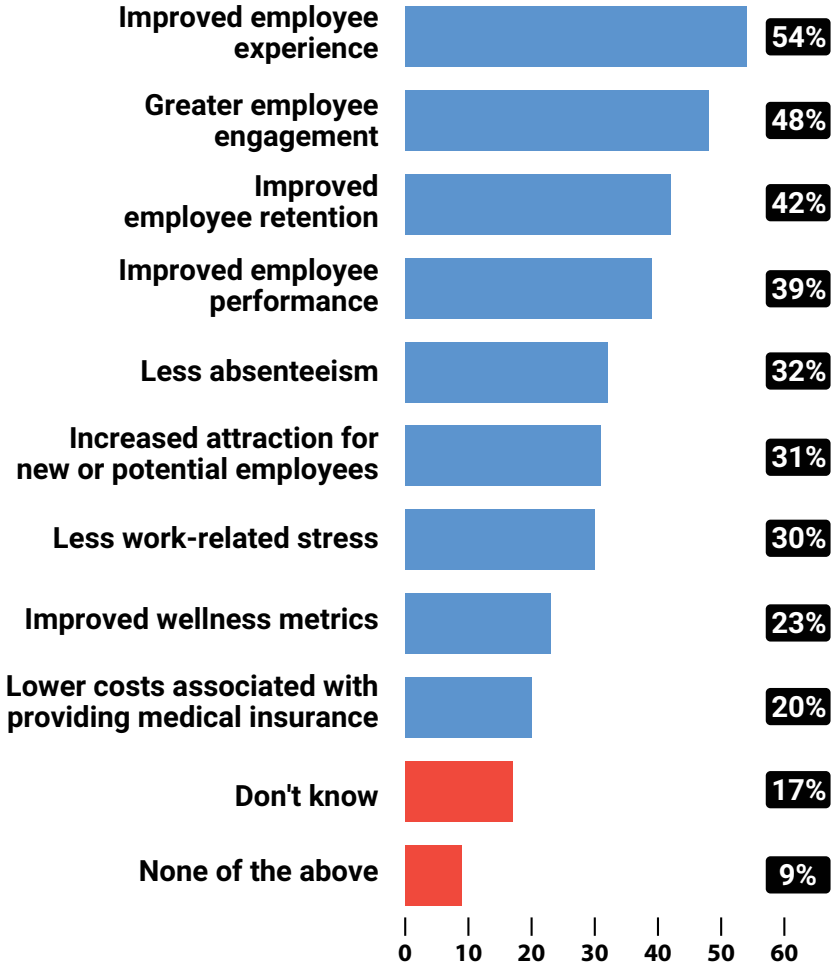
Outcomes of Well-being Programs

Finding: Most organizations see experience gains, but few track hard outcomes

Improved employee experience (54%) and engagement (48%) are the most reported outcomes of employee well-being, showing that well-being efforts are making a visible impact. However, fewer cite improvements in performance (39%), retention (42%), or cost reduction (20%), suggesting limited alignment with business goals. With 17% unsure of any outcomes, many organizations may lack the data or strategy needed to evaluate success.

Which of the following are outcomes of employee well-being initiatives in your organization? (select all that apply)

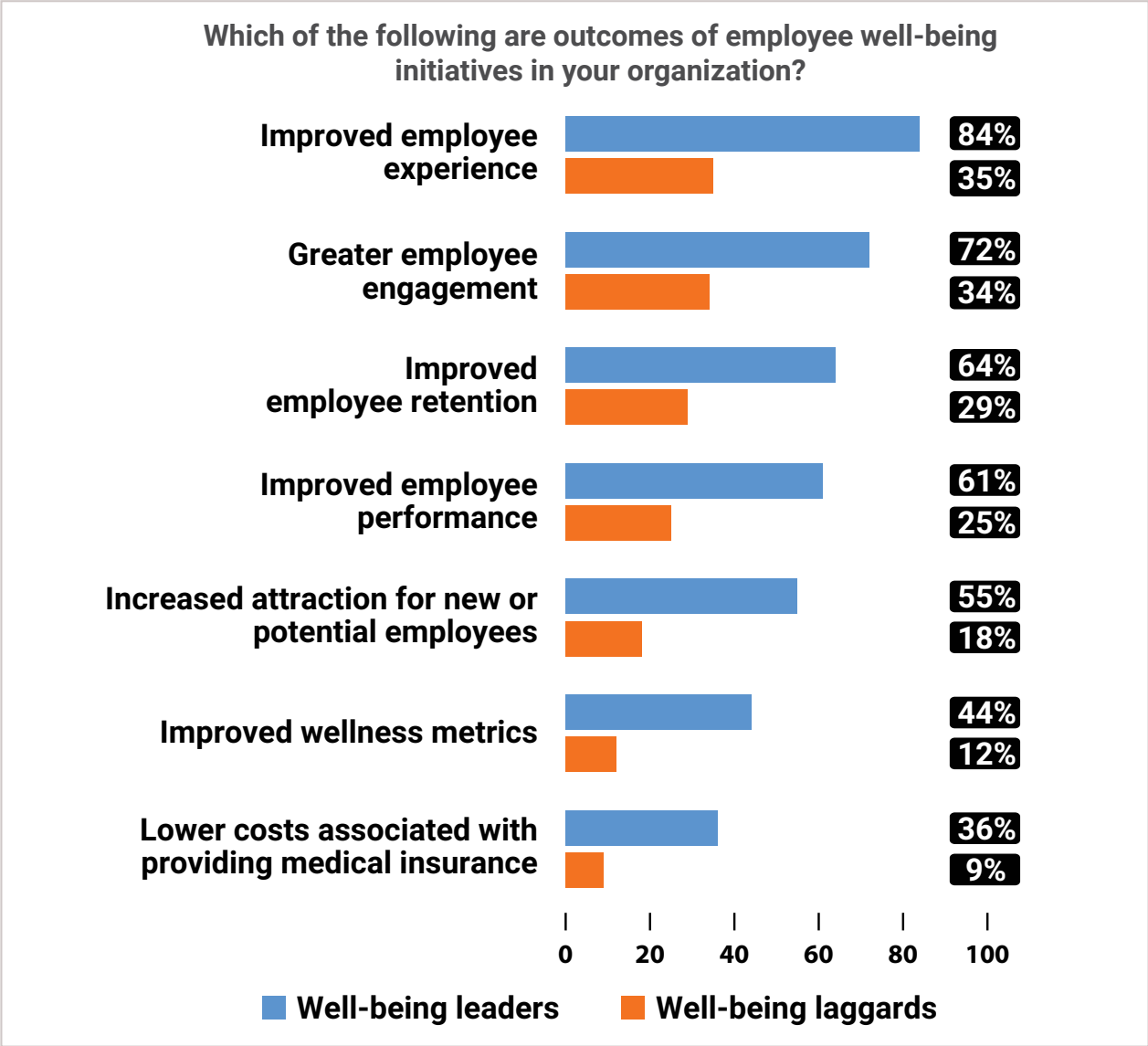


Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to say employee well-being results in the listed outcomes.

Finding: Well-being leader organizations achieve stronger outcomes across all areas of well-being

Well-being leader organizations report better results than do their laggard counterparts across every measured outcome, including employee experience, engagement, retention, and performance. These differences show that organizations with integrated and consistent well-being strategies are more likely to see real business benefits. Laggard organizations see limited returns, which reflects the cost of treating well-being as a peripheral initiative rather than a core priority.



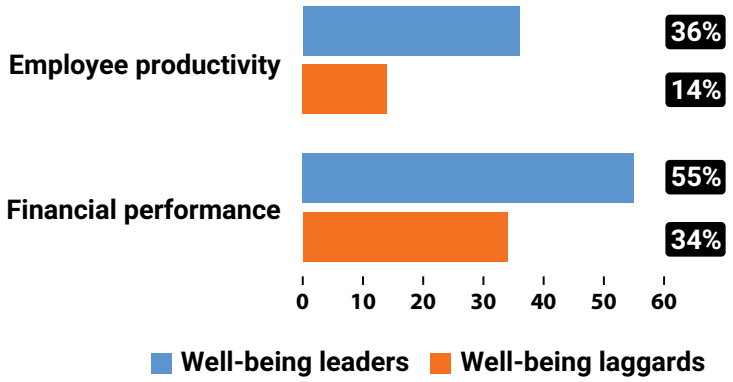
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to be in the top 10% of employee productivity and financial performance.

Finding: Strong well-being strategies are linked to better business performance

Well-being leaders are more likely to outperform their competitors in both financial performance and employee productivity. These results suggest that prioritizing employee well-being is not just a people initiative but a competitive advantage. Laggard organizations fall behind in both areas, highlighting the business risk of neglecting well-being as a strategic focus.

Please rate your organization's relative performance in the most recent fiscal year compared to competitors in your industry in the following areas (% responding 10% or higher)



Editor's note: In the original data, 37% to 43% of respondents replied "Don't know." For this chart, we removed those responses and recalculated.

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Know what outcomes your organization is trying to achieve with its well-being initiatives so you can better evaluate success.
- Link well-being goals directly to business outcomes like performance, retention, and productivity.
- Establish clear KPIs and use consistent metrics to track the impact of well-being initiatives.
- Integrate well-being data with HR and business analytics to evaluate ROI more effectively.
- Use outcome data to regularly refine and prioritize well-being efforts that drive tangible results.
- Position well-being as a core business strategy—not a peripheral program—to gain executive buy-in and long-term support.

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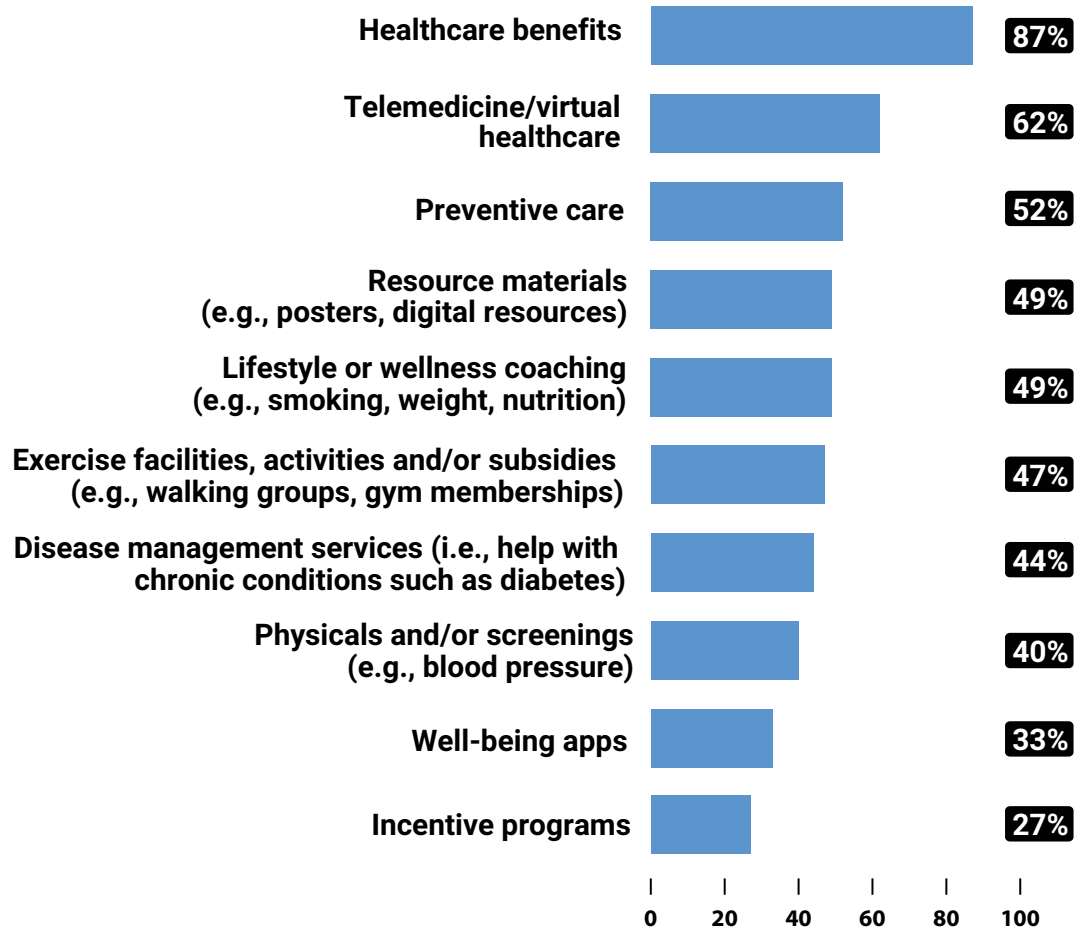
Physical Well-being Practices

Finding: Physical well-being practices center on healthcare

While most organizations offer healthcare benefits (87%) and telemedicine (62%), fewer invest in preventive or behavior-focused tools such as incentive programs (27%) or wellness apps (33%). Exercise subsidies and health screenings are available in well under half of organizations. This shows a tendency to treat physical well-being as a medical issue rather than a proactive, everyday priority.

Which of the following does your organization have in place, either directly or via a partner organization, to promote physical well-being? (select all that apply)



Just a third offer well-being apps

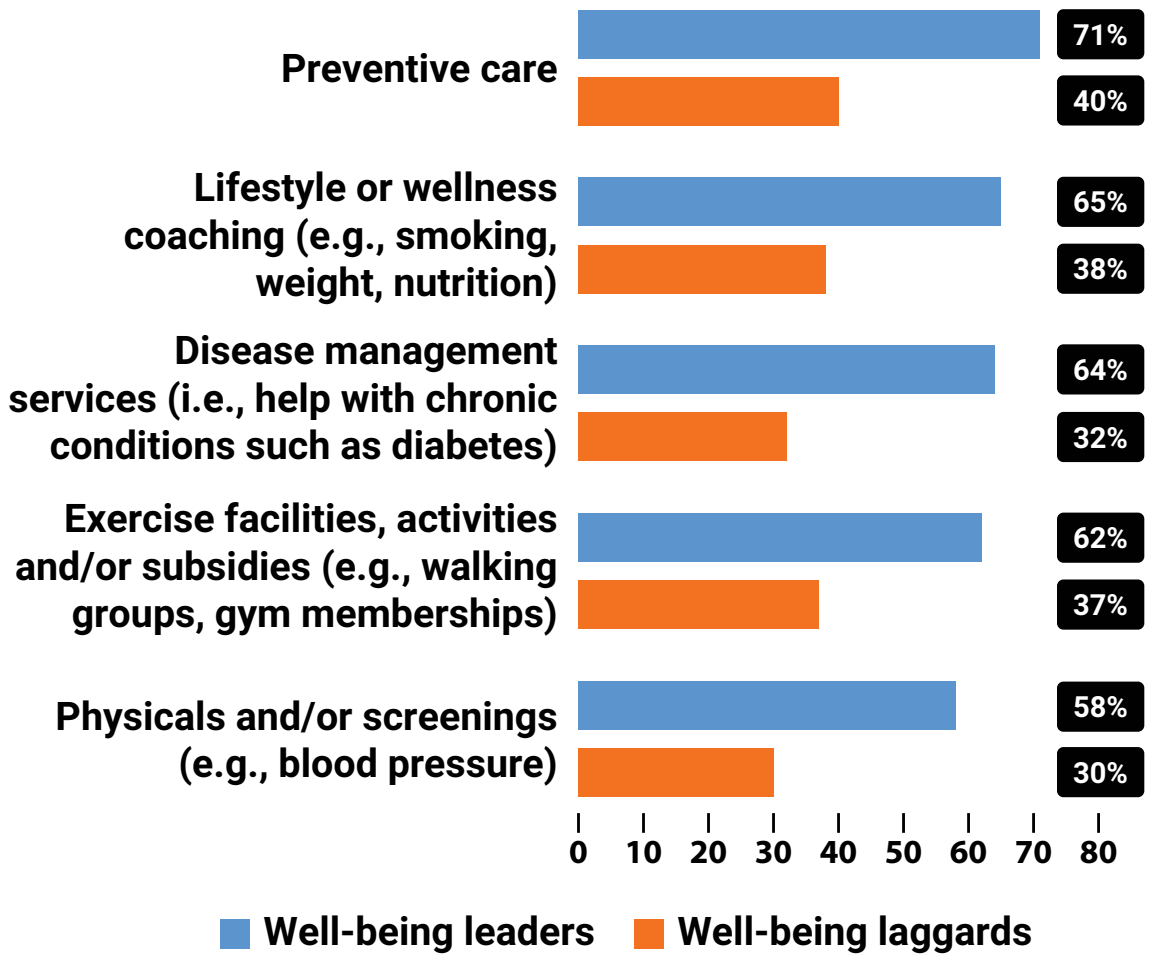
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to offer the listed initiatives to promote physical well-being.

Finding: Well-being leaders are nearly twice as likely to offer preventive care and chronic disease support

Well-being leader organizations are consistently more likely to offer physical health programs, including preventive care, disease management, and lifestyle coaching. Laggard organizations trail the leaders across the board, reflecting a reactive rather than proactive approach to employee health. This disparity reinforces earlier findings that leaders often take more a strategic, integrated view of well-being, while laggards usually rely on limited or disconnected efforts.

Which of the following does your organization have in place, either directly or via a partner organization, to promote physical well-being?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

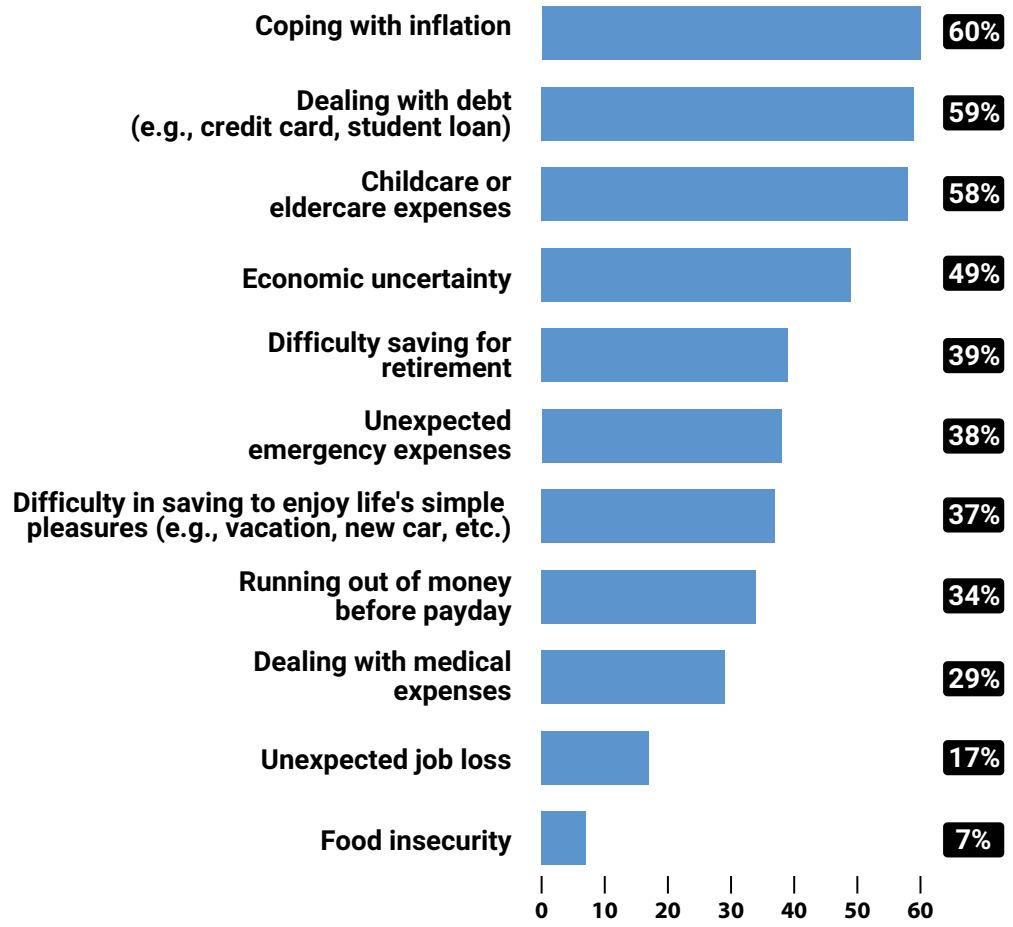
- Consider launching a preventive care campaign that includes regular health screenings, vaccinations, and wellness check-ins.
- Partner with vendors to provide disease management programs for chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension.
- Introduce lifestyle coaching services focused on nutrition, physical activity, and stress reduction.
- Implement a wellness incentive program that rewards employees for participating in health-related activities.
- Consider rolling out a mobile wellness app that offers personalized health tips, activity tracking, and access to virtual fitness or health content.

Financial Well-being Challenges and Practices

Finding: Inflation, debt, and caregiving are the top financial stressors for employees

Coping with inflation (60%), debt (59%), and caregiving costs (58%) top the list of financial pressures, far outweighing concerns like job loss (17%) or food insecurity (7%). These findings show that ongoing, day-to-day financial strain is the main driver of stress. HR professionals tend to believe that employees are more concerned about ever-increasing expenses and debt than about the sudden loss of income in catastrophic events such as layoffs.

What do you believe are your employees' five greatest sources of financial stress? (select up to five)

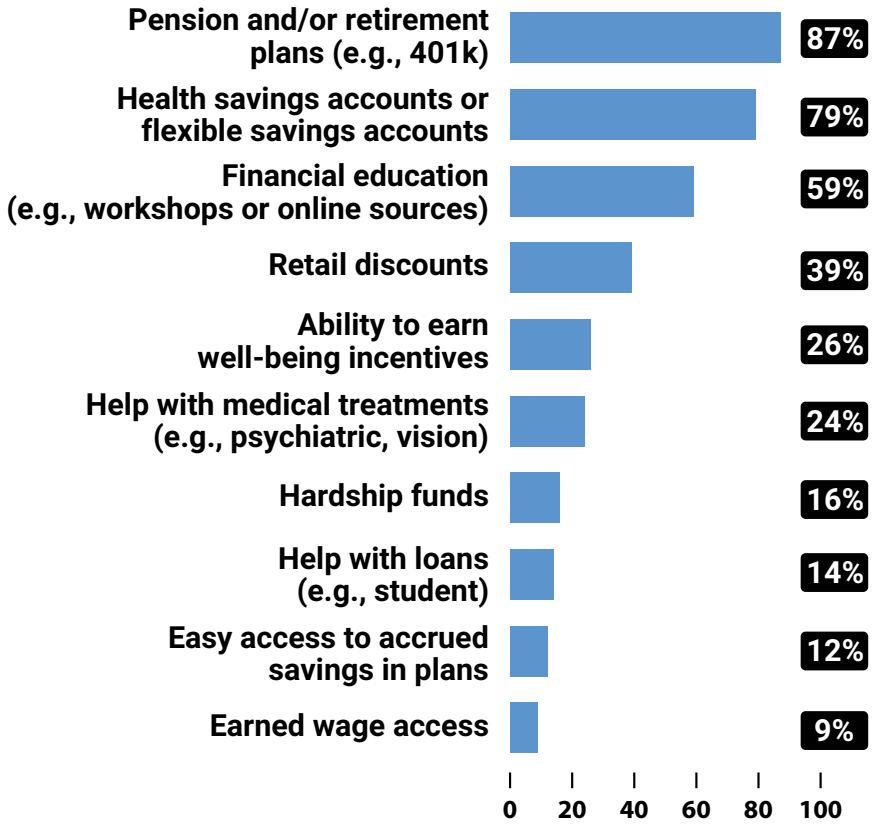


Finding: Financial support focuses on long-term savings, not immediate relief

Most organizations offer retirement plans (87%) and health savings accounts (79%), but far fewer provide short-term financial relief such as earned wage access (9%) or hardship funds (16%). While financial education is fairly common (59%), practical tools to manage immediate stressors remain limited.

This gap suggests many employers are still prioritizing long-term financial security programs over short-term programs that address current financial difficulties, despite signs that short-term financial issues such as dealing with debt, inflation and childcare expenses are the top financial stressors among employees.

Which of these initiatives does your organization offer to employees?



Just 9% offer earned wage access

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Consider expanding support for immediate financial needs by offering tools like earned wage access or emergency hardship funds.
- Tailor financial education to address inflation, debt management, and caregiving expenses, not just retirement planning.
- Survey employees regularly to understand their top financial stressors and adjust programs accordingly.
- Provide access to personalized financial coaching that focuses on budgeting, debt reduction, and short-term goal setting.
- Support small organization employees by promoting flexible work perks, internal advancement opportunities, or low-cost wellness benefits that help offset limited pay.

Work Environment Well-being Practices

Finding: Most work environment efforts focus on function, not inclusivity or restoration

Ergonomic equipment (58%) and social spaces (49%) are the most common workplace well-being features, supporting comfort and connection. However, fewer organizations offer quiet zones (21%) or wellness areas (26%), which can be important for rest and mental recovery. Inclusive features such as gender-neutral bathrooms (23%) also remain limited. This suggests most organizations could do much more to cultivate work environments that enhance employee mental and emotional well-being.

Which of the following does your organization have in place to promote well-being via an improved work environment? (select all that apply)

Results of Chi-square Test

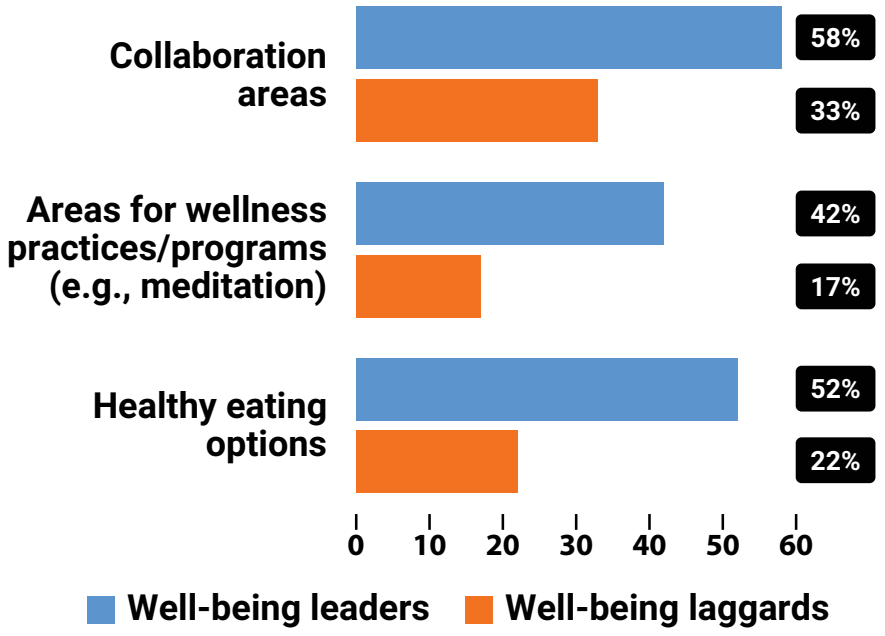
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to offer the listed initiatives to promote well-being via improved work environment.

Finding: Well-being leader organizations more than twice as likely as their laggard counterparts to offer healthy spaces

Organizations that lead in well-being are far more likely to create environments that promote health and collaboration. Leaders are more than twice as likely as laggards to offer healthy eating options and dedicated wellness spaces, such as areas for meditation or quiet reflection.

Leader organizations also prioritize collaborative spaces, signaling a broader investment in holistic, everyday well-being. In contrast, laggards fall behind on all environment-focused initiatives, missing chances to improve well-being through design.

Which of the following does your organization have in place to promote well-being via an improved work environment?



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HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

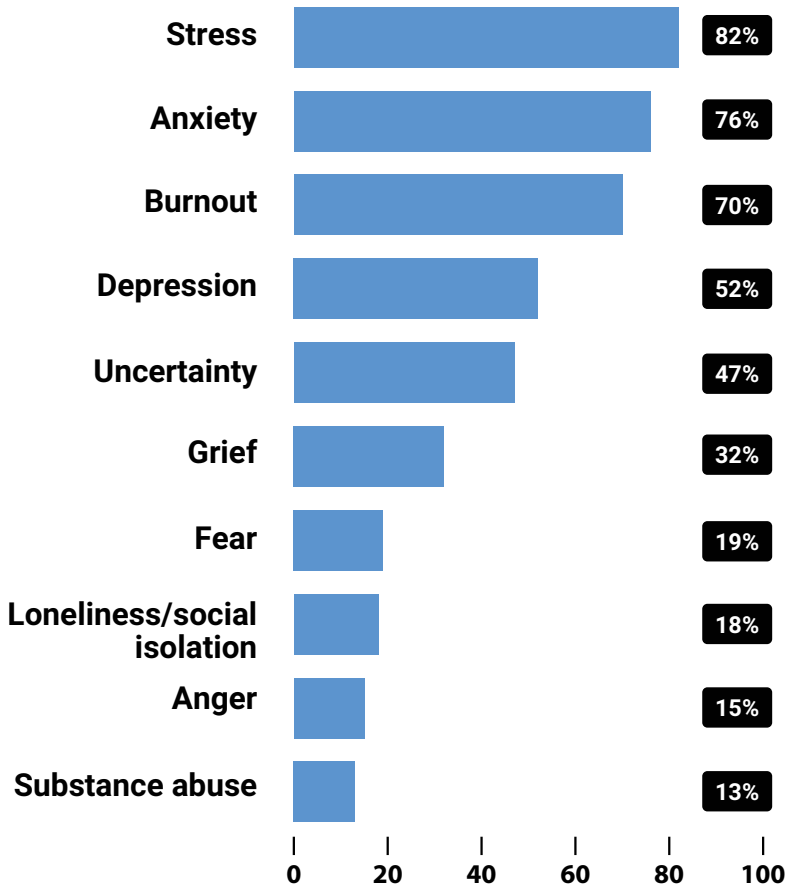
- Design workspaces that support mental recovery. Include quiet zones, wellness rooms, and spaces for mindfulness to help employees recharge during the workday.
- Incorporate inclusive design elements. Ensure facilities support all employees by adding features like gender-neutral restrooms and accessible layouts.
- Encourage healthy habits through the environment. Provide nutritious food options and visible cues for physical activity, such as walking paths or ergonomic setups.
- Create spaces that foster collaboration and social connection. Balance individual focus areas with comfortable communal spaces to strengthen teamwork and morale.
- Regularly audit and evolve the physical workspace. Assess how your environment aligns with employee needs and well-being goals and make updates as those needs change.

Mental Well-being Challenges and Practices

Finding: Stress, anxiety, and burnout dominate the mental health landscape

Stress (82%), anxiety (76%), and burnout (70%) are the most reported mental health issues, underscoring a workforce under sustained pressure. Depression (52%) and uncertainty (47%) also rank high. This data underscores the need for more organizations to implement comprehensive mental health strategies and support systems.

To your knowledge, which five of the following mental-health-related issues are employees in your organization most likely to have dealt with over the past year? (select up to five)

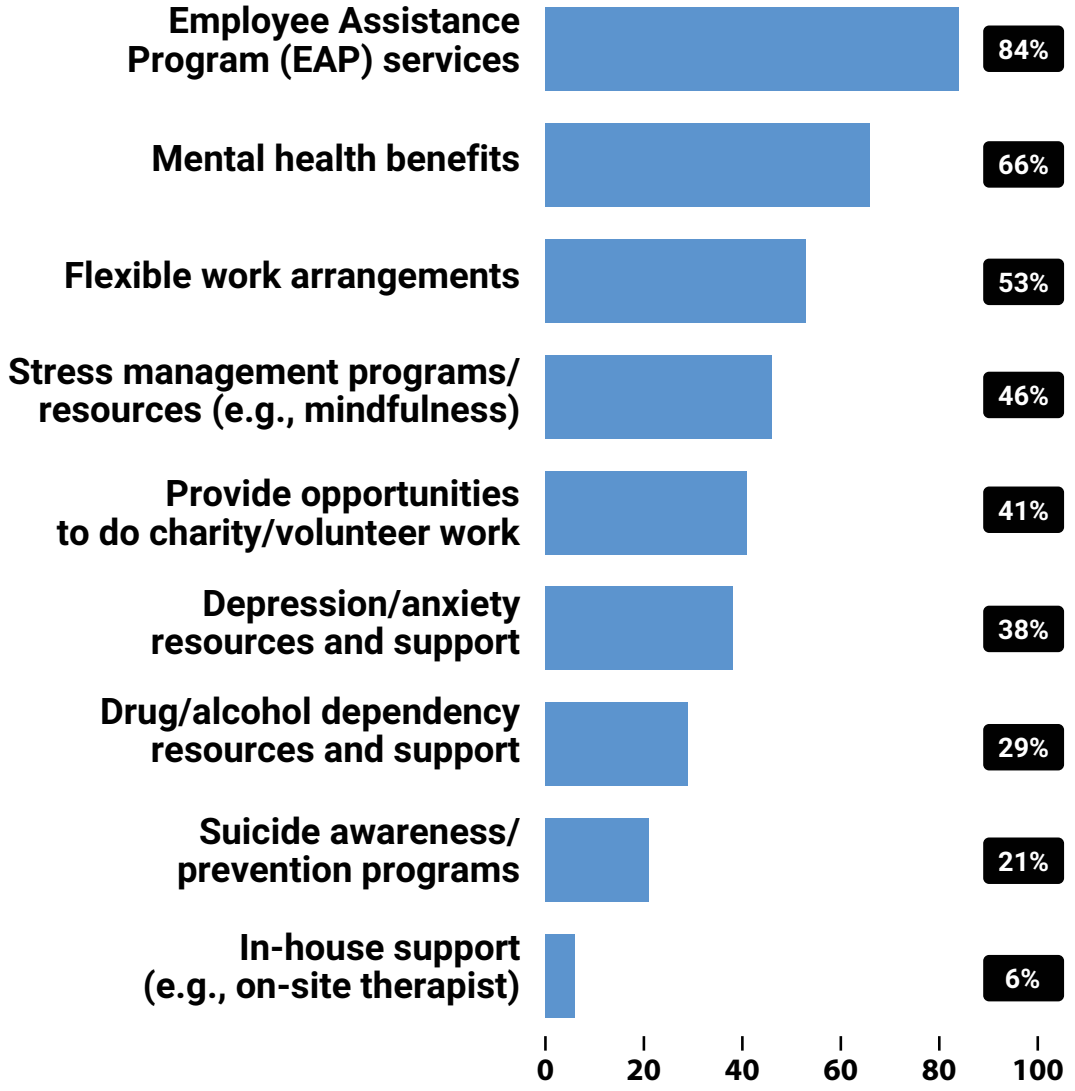


Over half of respondents say depression is among the top five issues employees have dealt with over the past year

Finding: Mental health support relies heavily on EAPs, with limited in-house resources

While 84% of organizations offer EAP services and 66% provide mental health benefits, only 6% offer in-house support such as on-site therapists. Resources for specific issues such as suicide prevention (21%) or substance abuse (29%) remain limited.

Which initiatives does your organization offer to support employee mental health? (select all that apply)



Results of Chi-square Test

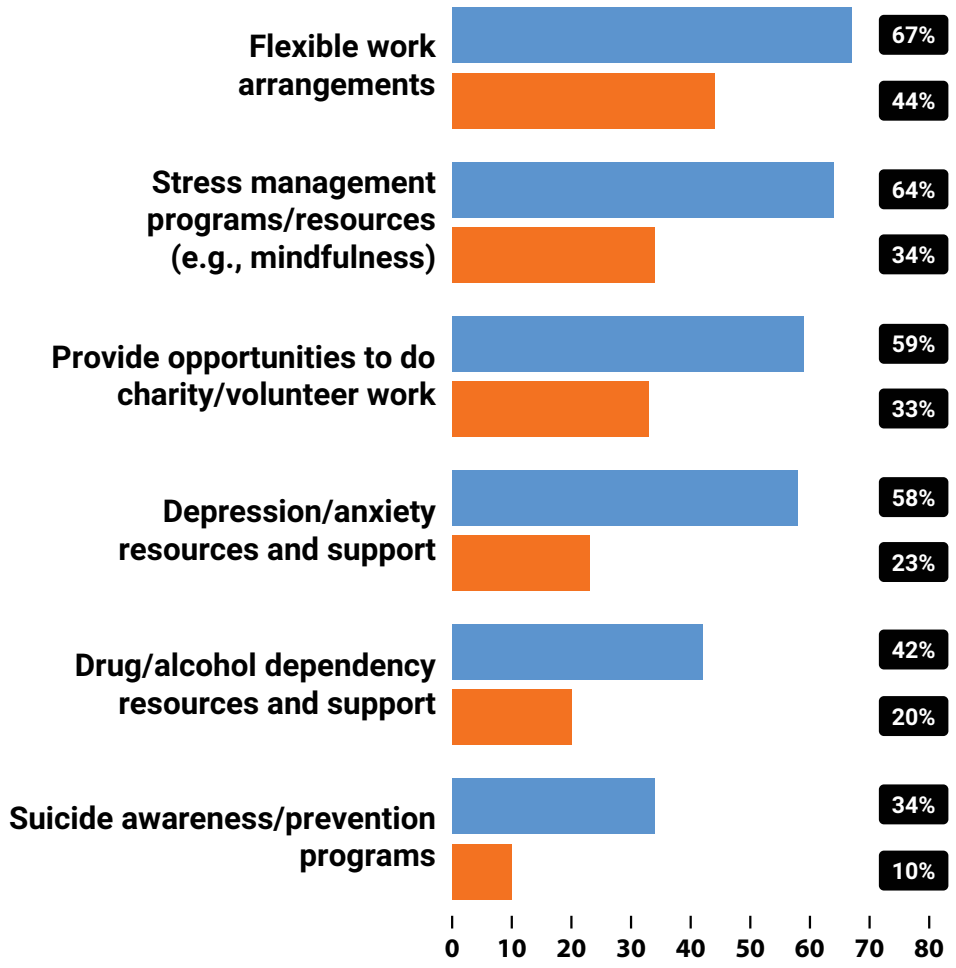
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to offer the listed initiatives to promote mental health.

Finding: Well-being leader organizations invest in mental health across multiple dimensions

Well-being leaders tend to offer a broader range of mental health support, including programs for stress, depression, substance use, and suicide prevention—areas where laggards fall far behind.

Leaders are also more likely to go beyond treatment by fostering purpose through volunteer opportunities and enabling flexibility that supports psychological safety. In contrast, laggards tend to offer less support. This disparity suggest that mental health support, when treated as a multifaceted and integrated strategy rather than a checkbox, can create a deeper and more responsive culture of care.

Which initiatives does your organization offer to support employee mental health?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Expand support beyond EAPs by building internal mental health capabilities. Invest in in-house mental health resources such as trained managers, peer support programs, or access to onsite or virtual therapists.
- Embed stress and burnout prevention into day-to-day practices. Move from reactive support to proactive strategies—incorporate workload management, rest norms, and psychological safety into team operations.
- Address the full spectrum of mental health needs. Include programs that support grief, substance use, suicidal ideation, and anxiety—not just general wellness or stress management.
- Foster purpose and connection through values-based initiatives. Enable volunteering, community-building, and inclusive collaboration to support deeper emotional well-being.
- Ensure accessibility and visibility of mental health resources. Regularly communicate and normalize the use of mental health services to reduce stigma and increase engagement across all employee groups.

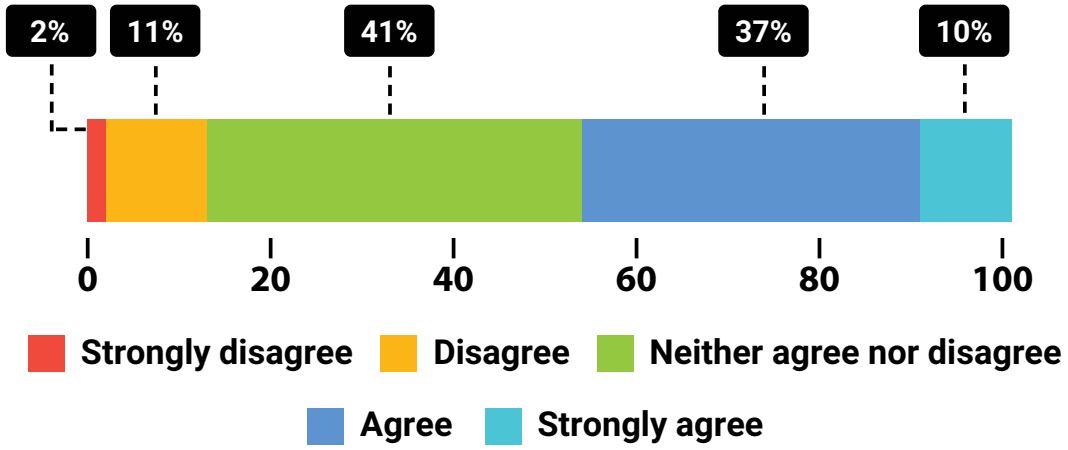
Employee Stress Sources and Solutions

Employees' Greatest Sources of Stress

Finding: Negative stress is prevalent in about half of the organizations

Nearly half (47%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that negative stress is an issue, a decline from 56% who said the same last year. Yet, 41% neither agree nor disagree, suggesting a lack of visibility or measurement. This uncertainty is concerning, as it can prevent timely intervention. Without clear data or open dialogue, stress risks becoming normalized and unaddressed in workplace culture.

Negative stress is prevalent in your organization:



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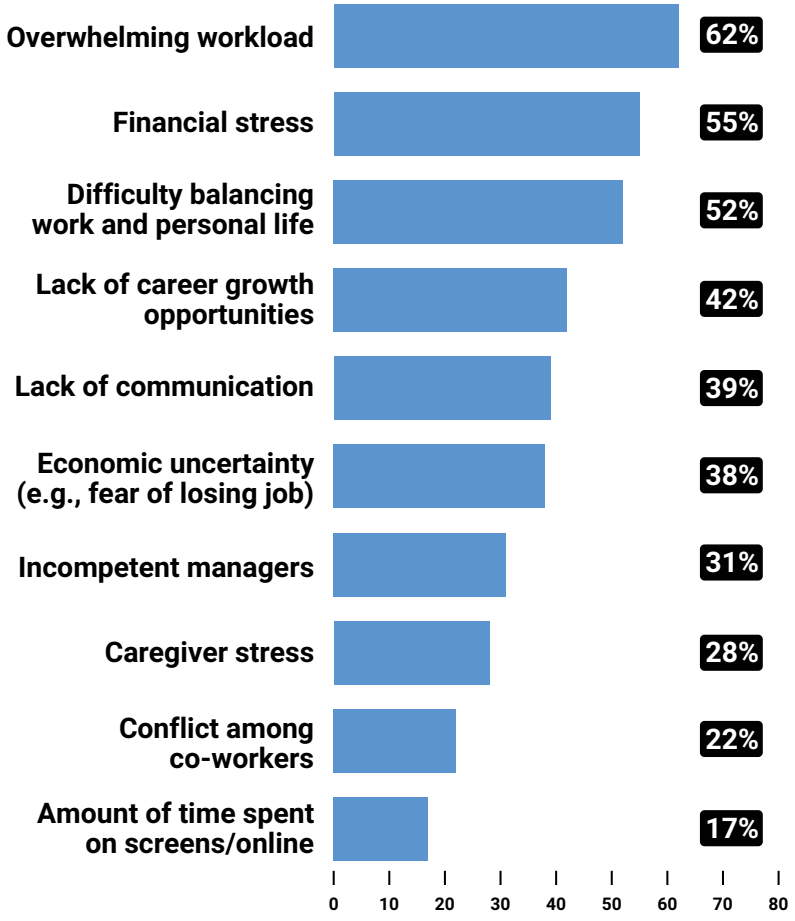
Finding: Workload and financial stress are the top drivers of employee strain

An overwhelming workload (62%) and financial stress (55%) are the most common employee stressors, pointing to systemic issues rather than isolated events. Lack of work-life balance (52%) and poor communication (39%) further compound the problem. Despite frequent focus on individual resilience, these results show that many stressors are structural and likely require organizational rather than personal solutions.

Differences based on size of organization

Employees in small and midsize organizations are most likely to be stressed due to financial stress while employees in large organizations are most likey to suffer due to overwhelming workload.

In your organization, what are the five most common employee stressors? (select up to five)

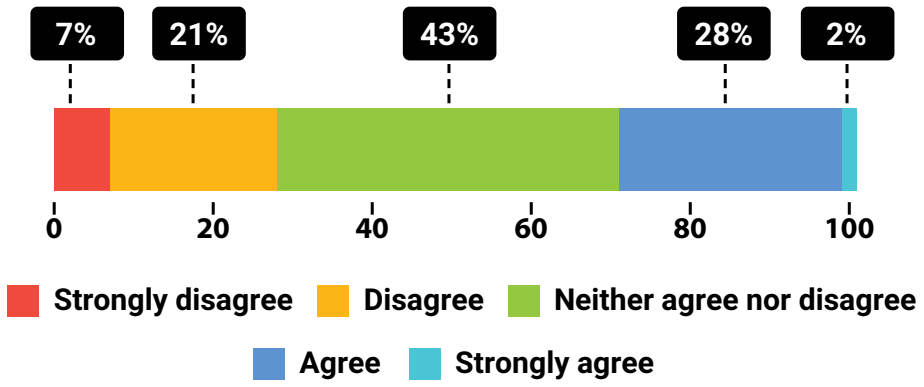


Helping Employees with Stress Issues

Finding: Few organizations excel at helping employees manage stress

Only 30% agree their organization is excellent at addressing employee stress, while nearly half (43%) remain neutral. Just 2% strongly agree. This suggests a lack of confidence in current support systems and highlights a widespread gap between recognizing stress and taking action to reduce it.

Your organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues.



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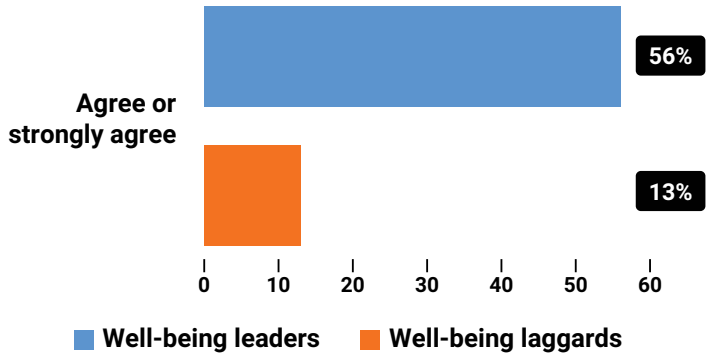
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to agree or strongly agree their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues.

Finding: Employee well-being leaders are four times more likely than laggards to rate themselves as excellent at helping employees address stress issues

Despite the prevalence of stress, well-being leaders differentiate themselves in their response to it. When asked if their organization if excellent at helping employees address stress issues, over half of respondents from well-being leader organizations agree or strongly agree (56%), compared to just a tenth of respondents from laggard organizations who say the same.

Your organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues.



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Track and measure stress more deliberately across teams. Implement pulse surveys, manager check-ins, or mental health metrics to identify where stress is accumulating and respond with targeted action.
- Redesign workloads to be more sustainable. Audit workloads, redistribute tasks, and encourage reasonable expectations to prevent burnout from overwhelming demands.
- Improve communication practices to reduce uncertainty. Train managers and teams in clear, consistent, and empathetic communication to reduce the stress caused by ambiguity or mixed messages.
- Offer proactive support for financial well-being. Introduce benefits or programs that help employees navigate everyday financial pressures—not just long-term planning.
- Develop both individual resilience and organizational responsibility. Recognize that many if not most stressors are systemic. Redesign policies, workflows, and cultures to address root causes rather than just pushing coping strategies onto employees.

The Future of Employee Well-being

Finding: Future plans focus on monitoring and expanding mental and financial support

Looking ahead, organizations are most likely to improve tracking between wellness and satisfaction (42%) and expand financial (37%) and mental health programs (32%).

However, plans to move toward more structural shifts such as flexible schedules (22%) or hybrid work (18%) are uncommon. In some cases, this might be because organizations already provide such offerings. But, it may also suggest that organizations are more likely to plan to enhance existing offerings rather than rethink core work practices that contribute to well-being.

Which of the following well-being-related initiatives do you think your organization will utilize within the next two years?

Under a fifth plan to offer health risk assessments

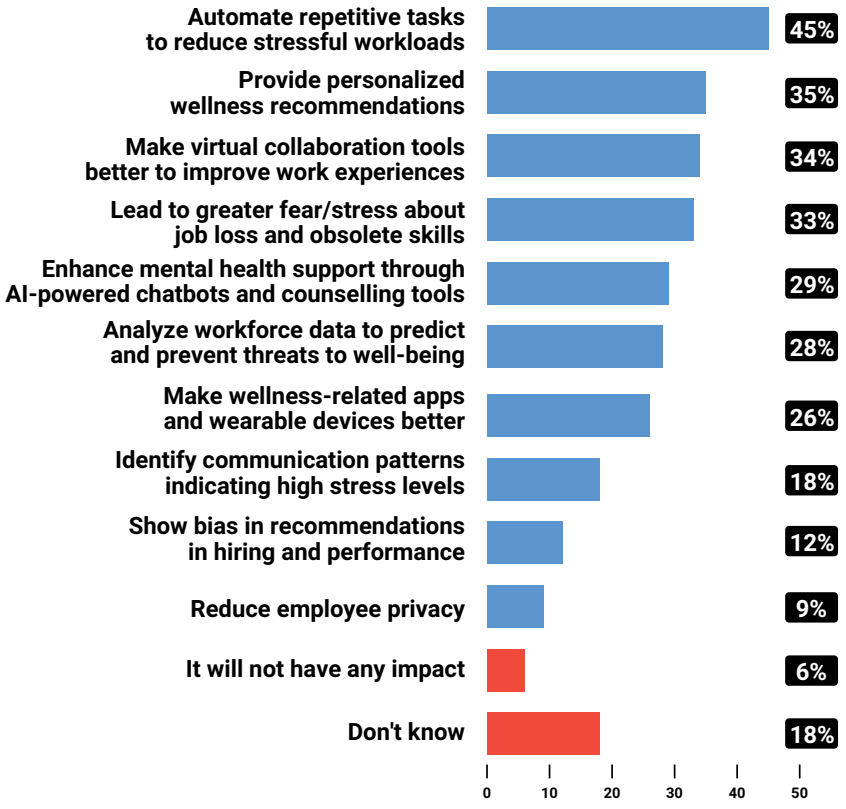
Finding: AI is expected to ease workload stress but may also heighten anxiety about job security

As a way of enhancing well-being, HR professionals see the greatest potential for AI in reducing workload through automation (45%) and improving wellness personalization (35%).

However, one in three also anticipate increased fear and stress related to job loss and skill obsolescence (33%). While AI is viewed as a tool for support, concerns about unintended consequences like bias (12%) and reduced privacy (9%) remain. These mixed expectations highlight the need for thoughtful implementation that balances efficiency with empathy.

There is still some uncertainty about AI's impact on employee well-being, with 18% of organizations saying they don't know how AI will affect it. However, there has been a drop in this proportion from 34% last year, indicating HR professionals are slowly gaining a better understanding of these issues.

How do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will impact employee well-being in your organization over the next two years? (select all that apply)



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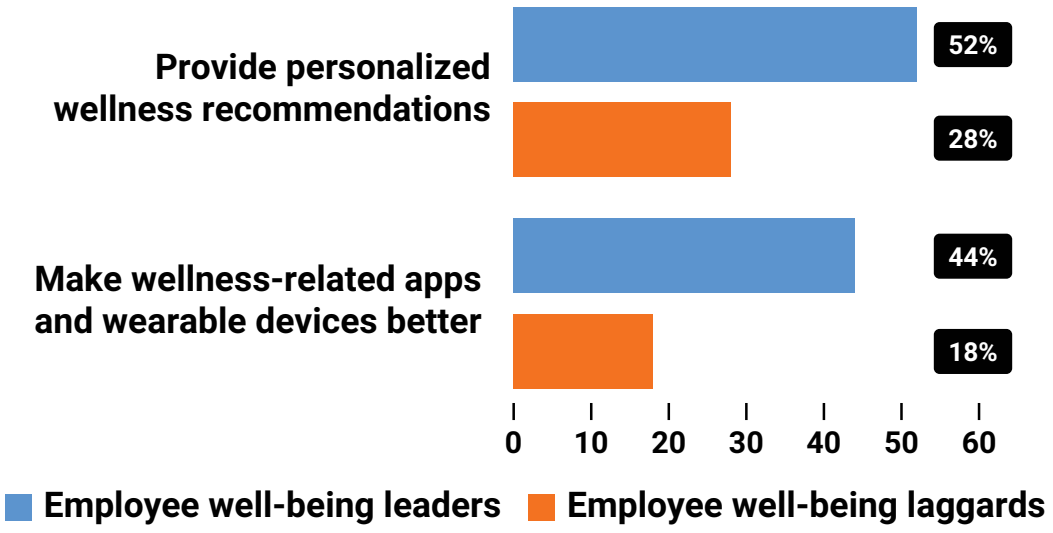
Results of Chi-square Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to anticipate the use of AI for well-being in the listed ways.

Finding: Well-being leaders twice as likely to expect AI to improve employee support

Well-being leaders are far more optimistic than laggards about AI's role in enhancing employee well-being, particularly in improving wellness apps and delivering personalized support. This signals a clear divide in digital readiness. While leader organizations look to AI as a tool for proactive, individualized care, laggards may be underestimating its potential, risking further stagnation in already limited well-being strategies.

How do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will impact employee well-being in your organization over the next two years?



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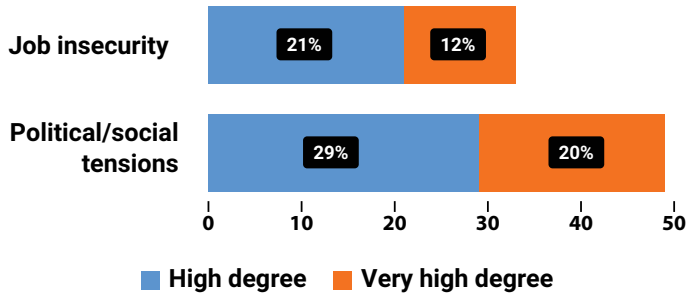
Finding: Political and social tensions are expected to weigh more heavily than job insecurity

HR professionals anticipate that political and social tensions (49%) will have a stronger negative impact on employee well-being than job insecurity (33%) over the next two years. This suggests that external societal pressures may increasingly affect workplace morale and mental health. Yet, many organizations remain focused on internal stressors alone, overlooking the growing need to help employees navigate broader cultural and political volatility.

To what extent will these issues lead to decreased employee well-being over the next two years?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, please consider the following suggestions:

- Consider broadening your well-being strategy beyond benefits by addressing systemic work design issues such as flexibility, autonomy, and workload.
- Prioritize real-time data collection and feedback mechanisms to track well-being trends and link them to performance and satisfaction.
- Invest in AI tools that personalize support but develop ethical guardrails to address concerns about job insecurity, privacy, and bias.
- Prepare managers to recognize and respond to external stressors, including political or societal unrest, that may affect employee engagement.
- Benchmark your organization's digital readiness and close gaps in tech-enabled well-being to avoid falling behind in AI-powered care delivery.

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaway 1

Shift from reactive to proactive well-being. Organizations still lean heavily on healthcare and EAPs. Build preventive systems that support daily well-being, not just crisis response.

Key Takeaway 2

Make mental health a strategic priority. Stress, burnout, and anxiety dominate—but most responses are piecemeal. Embed mental health into leadership, culture, and work design.

Key Takeaway 3

Redesign financial wellness to include immediacy as well as long-term planning. Retirement plans alone won't ease daily stress. Provide tools that address short-term needs such as budgeting, wage access, and emergency funds.

Key Takeaway 4

Invest in the physical environment as a wellness asset. Spaces for rest, focus, and inclusivity are rare. Make the physical workplace a visible extension of your well-being strategy.

Key Takeaway 5

Recognize and address employee stress as structural. Issues such as excessive workload, poor communication, and financial strain help drive employee stress. Organizational change, not education and coaching alone, is often key to reducing stress.

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Key Takeaway **6**

Use AI with empathy and ethics. AI can personalize care and reduce workloads but it also fuels fears. Communicate transparently and co-design solutions with employee input.

Key Takeaway **7**

Develop internal capacity, not just vendor reliance. Heavy dependence on external programs limits impact. Build in-house expertise and leadership commitment to create a sustainable culture of care.

Key Takeaway **8**

Tailor strategies by size of the organization. Employees in larger versus small organizations can face different challenges, and their organizations often provide different levels of well-being initiatives. Small employers may, for example, need to engage in more creative, low-cost interventions that can still drive impact.

Key Takeaway **9**

Track well-being with rigor and purpose. Measurement remains limited. Use empirical wellness data, real-time feedback, and KPIs to connect well-being to engagement, retention, and productivity.

Key Takeaway **10**

Support employees in navigating external uncertainty. Political, economic, and social volatility are growing sources of stress. Offer psychological safety, dialogue spaces, and flexible policies that reflect today's broader realities.

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