

# The Current State and Future of Employee Well-being 2023



Ensure holistic well-being of employees today and tomorrow



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## About the Survey

The *Future of Employee Well-being* survey ran from February 2023 to March 2023. We gathered 304 complete and partial responses from 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 participants 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-fifth of responses were from organizations with over 1000 employees.

# Executive Summary

Organizations increasingly expect employees to do more with less. In fact, Meta has declared the year 2023 to be the “Year of efficiency.”<sup>1</sup> But what does this mean for employees’ well-being?

Our results show that three-fourths of organizations grapple with the effects of employee stress and that an overwhelming workload is viewed as a common source of stress in 62% of organizations.

Studies show that a comprehensive well-being strategy and culture positively impacts firm performance.<sup>2</sup> Employees today face a myriad of well-being challenges. With increasing longevity, older employees have to stay in the workforce longer while other employees belong to the “sandwich generation” and have to juggle taking care of their children and elders. In the context of recent economic, political and business changes, these issues may multiply, resulting in a number of physical, mental, financial and social well-being issues. These cause organizational issues such as lost productivity and poor retention.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it is a business imperative for organizations to focus on employees’ well-being. This report investigates the current state and future of employee well-being in organizations. Further, results of this year’s survey have been compared to results from the previous two years to make observations regarding changes in well-being trends over the recent past.<sup>4,5</sup> Below is a summary of key findings from the study:

<sup>1</sup> Vanian, J. (2023, February 2). Meta’s ‘year of efficiency’ was everything wall street needed to hear from Zuckerberg. *CNBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/01/metas-year-of-efficiency-everything-wall-street-needed-to-hear.html>

<sup>2</sup> Goetzl, R. Z., Fabius, R., Fabius, D., Roemer, E. C., Thornton, N., Kelly, R. K., & Pelletier, K. R. (2016). The stock performance of C. Everett Koop Award winners compared with the Standard & Poor’s 500 index. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26716843/>

<sup>3</sup> De Neve, Krekel, C & Ward, G (2019). “Employee wellbeing, productivity and firm performance,” CEP Discussion Papers dp1605, *Centre for Economic Performance*, LSE.

<sup>4</sup> HR.com’s HR Research Institute. (2021, February). *The state of employee health and well-being 2021*. Retrieved from [https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free\\_research\\_white\\_papers/the-state-of-employee-health-and-well-being-2021-r\\_kkz1ij2w.html](https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free_research_white_papers/the-state-of-employee-health-and-well-being-2021-r_kkz1ij2w.html)

<sup>5</sup> HR.com’s HR Research Institute. (2022, June). *The state of employee well-being 2022*. Retrieved from [https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free\\_research\\_white\\_papers/the-state-of-employee-well-being-2022-report\\_l3wm44c2.html](https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free_research_white_papers/the-state-of-employee-well-being-2022-report_l3wm44c2.html)

Below are the major findings of this study:

Major Finding **1**

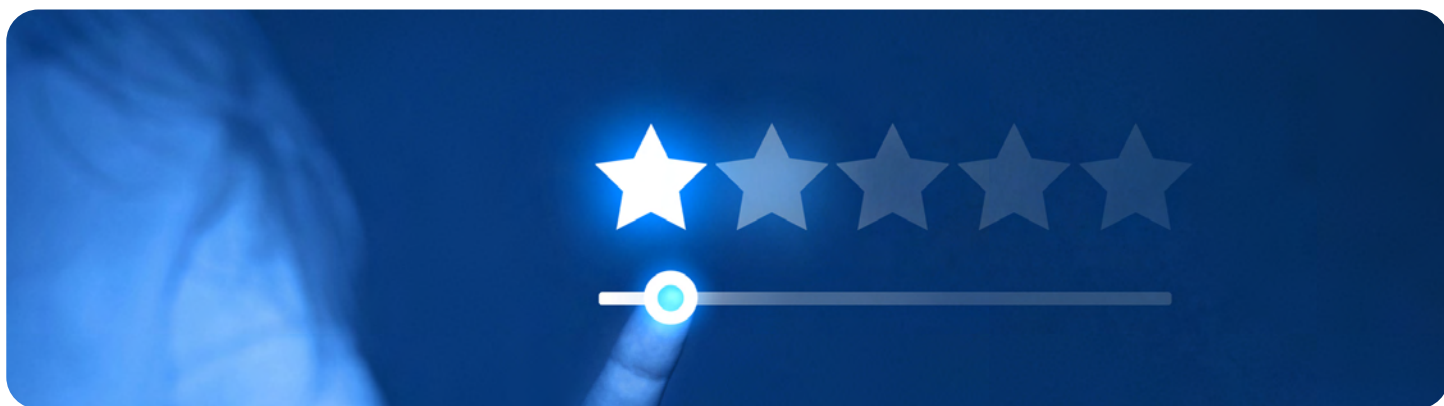
**Organizations strive to improve employees' well-being through various special initiatives.**

- As was the case in 2022, in 2023 mental well-being continues to be the top well-being priority that organizations seek to improve via specific initiatives.
- Over half of organizations strive to increase the following types of well-being through specific initiatives:
  - ▶ mental/emotional well-being (72%)
  - ▶ work environment well-being (e.g., physical, virtual) (64%)
  - ▶ physical well-being (63%)
  - ▶ financial well-being (54%)

Major Finding **2**

**Few organizations deem their well-being programs as highly effective, but most organizations rate them as being at least moderately effective.**

- Under a quarter (23%) say their well-being programs are effective to a high (18%) or very high (5%) degree.
- However, 84% say their well-being programs are effective to at least a moderate degree while only 17% say they are effective to a low or very low degree.
- Just over a quarter say their organization has successfully maintained employees' well-being over the past two years to a high (20%) or very high degree (7%).



## Major Finding 3

**Although there are many potential benefits to well-being programs, none was chosen by a majority of organizations, perhaps because many initiatives are still just not effective enough.**

- More than a third of organizations benefit from the following outcomes due to well-being initiatives:
  - ▶ greater employee engagement (43%)
  - ▶ improved employee experience (40%)
  - ▶ improved employee retention (37%)
- A quarter or more benefit from outcomes such as:
  - ▶ improved employee performance (29%)
  - ▶ less absenteeism (29%)
  - ▶ increased attraction for new or potential employees (26%)
  - ▶ less work-related stress (25%)

## Major Finding 4

**There are various challenges affecting work well-being.**

- Major work-related well-being challenges are:
  - ▶ dealing with employee stress in the workplace (73%)
  - ▶ inflation and economic uncertainties (58%)
  - ▶ managing the dynamics of a hybrid workforce (40%)
  - ▶ dealing with uncertainty of what will happen in future (37%)
- Major challenges facing organizations with ineffective well-being initiatives are:
  - ▶ not enough well-being programs (49%)
  - ▶ programs are lackluster (41%)
  - ▶ many employees continue to have concerns about well-being (39%)
  - ▶ lacking the capability to track well-being related metrics (36%)
  - ▶ continuing to have well-being related challenges (31%)

## Major Finding 5

**Remote/hybrid work is among the most commonly provided well-being initiatives at present and this is expected to continue into the future, but its effects on employee well-being are not seen as robust.**

- Over the *last two years*, organizations have offered the following initiatives to secure employee well-being:
  - ▶ allowed more employees to work remotely at times (60%)
  - ▶ provided more informational sources to help employees cope with stressors (59%)
  - ▶ ensured employees had the resources and support to do their jobs (56%)
- Over the *next two years*, organizations are most likely to offer:
  - ▶ remote/hybrid work arrangements (47%)
  - ▶ health-related information resources (46%)
  - ▶ financial wellness programs (43%)
- However, just 18% of respondents say remote/hybrid work has improved the physical well-being of employees a little or a lot, while a third of respondents say the same about mental well-being.

## Major Finding 6

**Negative stress is prevalent in many organizations, but just 31% say they are excellent at helping employees address stress issues.**

- Forty-five percent of respondents agree (40%) or strongly agree (5%) that negative stress is prevalent in their organization, and just 27% actively disagree that it is prevalent.
- The top stressors for employees are:
  - ▶ overwhelming workload (62%)
  - ▶ difficulty balancing work and personal life (58%)
  - ▶ financial stress (45%)
  - ▶ lack of communication (44%)
- However, fewer than a third agree (28%) or strongly agree (3%) that their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues.

## Major Finding 7

### **Mental health is an HR priority in the majority of organizations and is most commonly dealt with by using Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).**

- In almost 9 in 10 organizations, employees' mental health is among the top 10 priorities for HR, with half saying it is among the top 3 (36%) or the top priority (13%).
- Two-fifths of respondents believe employees are interested in mental health/wellness benefits.
- Respondents say the top mental-health-related issues their employees deal with are:
  - ▶ stress (86%)
  - ▶ anxiety (74%)
  - ▶ uncertainty (57%)
  - ▶ depression (54%)
- The top initiatives to support mental health include:
  - ▶ Employee Assistance Program services (79%)
  - ▶ flexible work arrangements (57%)
  - ▶ mental health benefits (56%)
  - ▶ information about managing mental health issues (50%)

## Major Finding 8

### **Organizations primarily offer healthcare benefits to support employees' physical well-being.**

- Organizations offer the following to promote physical well-being:
  - ▶ healthcare benefits (85%)
  - ▶ telemedicine/virtual healthcare (58%)
  - ▶ preventive care (54%)
  - ▶ resource materials such as brochures, posters (53%)
- More than half of respondents (53%) believe employees are most interested in health benefits.

Major  
Finding **9**

**Employees are plagued by a number of competing financial stressors, and half of organizations offer financial education to improve employees' financial well-being.**

- Employees' top sources of financial stress are:
  - ▶ unexpected emergency expenses (33%)
  - ▶ child care expenses (33%)
  - ▶ difficulty in saving to enjoy life's simple pleasures (33%)
- More than two-fifths (41%) of respondents believe employees are interested in retirement benefits.
- The top initiatives offered for employees' financial well-being are:
  - ▶ financial education
  - ▶ retail discounts
  - ▶ help with counseling/other psychiatric bills

Major  
Finding **10**

**Well-being leader organizations provide more initiatives to support all types of well-being and are better able to maintain employees' well-being levels. Well-being leaders are significantly more likely to:**

- have maintained employees' well-being over the past two years to a high or very high degree (63% of leaders vs. none of laggards)
- provide more informational sources to help employees cope with stressors—1.5 times more likely (73% vs. 47%)
- allow employees to work remotely at times—1.5 times more likely (69% vs. 44%)
- agree or strongly agree that their organization is excellent in helping employees address stress issues—almost 20 times more likely (59% vs. 3%)
- say employees' mental health is the top priority for their HR—more than 9 times more likely (28% vs. 3%)
- offer a variety of mental, physical and financial well-being initiatives
- benefit from a number of well-being related outcomes such as:
  - ▶ employee retention—more than 5 times more likely (70% vs. 13%)
  - ▶ engagement—almost 3 times more likely (67% vs. 23%)
- aim to monitor the connection between workplace wellness and employee satisfaction over the next two years—more than 2 times more likely (50% vs. 23%)

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.



# Which Types of Well-being Do Organizations Enhance via Specific Initiatives?



## Finding: Organizations are most likely to have specific initiatives for mental/emotional well-being

Well-being is multifaceted, and organizations that seek to improve employee well-being must focus on various aspects of it. Respondents were asked to rate which types of initiatives their organizations look to improve via specific initiatives. Results indicate that more than 7 in 10 organizations use initiatives to increase mental/emotional well-being, and about two-thirds aim to improve work environment well-being (64%) and physical well-being (63%). Over half of organizations improve financial well-being (54%) through initiatives.

The proportion of organizations looking to specifically improve career and social well-being is relatively low, with fewer than half saying their organization aims to specifically improve these types of well-being. Career development is essential for employee retention and engagement.<sup>6</sup> Organizations may benefit from prioritizing these types of well-being.

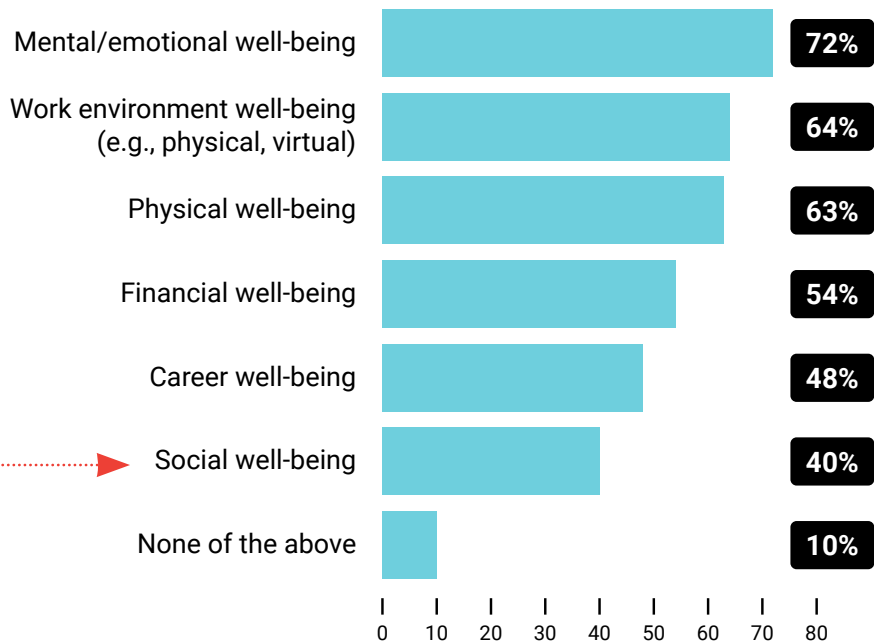
It is important for organizations to consider the interconnectedness of all types of well-being. For example, social well-being is increasingly at stake with more employees experiencing isolation due to remote/hybrid work which can have an impact on mental well-being. However, just two-fifths of organizations are prioritizing it.

<sup>6</sup> Keswin, E. (2022, April 5). 3 ways to boost retention through professional development. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2022/04/3-ways-to-boost-retention-through-professional-development>



Just two-fifths say their organization strives to enhance social well-being via specific initiatives

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



**Mental and physical health are very closely tied together. When an employee faces physical health challenges, their mental health is also likely to be impacted and vice versa. Organizations need to focus on all types of well-being when building benefits strategies.”**

- Yvonne Chen, VP of Marketing, Calm Business

## Well-being Priorities Over the Last Two Years

When we examine the well-being priorities of organizations from 2022 to 2023, there has been a continued relative importance placed on mental/emotional well-being. There has been greater awareness of the workplace factors that can contribute to poor mental health and a recognition of the need to address stigma surrounding these issues.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Cording, J. (2023, January 18). Mental health in the workplace: Predicted trends for 2023. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jesscording/2023/01/16/mental-health-in-the-workplace-predicted-trends-for-2023/?sh=79f93ec55bb9>

# How Well Are Organizations Doing with Regard to Employee Well-being?



**Finding: Just over a quarter have successfully maintained employees' well-being over the past two years to a high or very high degree**

The last three years have been challenging for employees' well-being. In that short span of time, employees have dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic, social justice movements, economic upheavals, a sudden shift to remote work, and political instabilities. A good measure of success of well-being initiatives would be their ability to maintain employees' well-being levels through these tumultuous times. About three-quarters (73%) of respondents say they have maintained employees' well-being to only a moderate degree or lower while just over a quarter claim to have done so to a high (20%) or very high degree (7%).

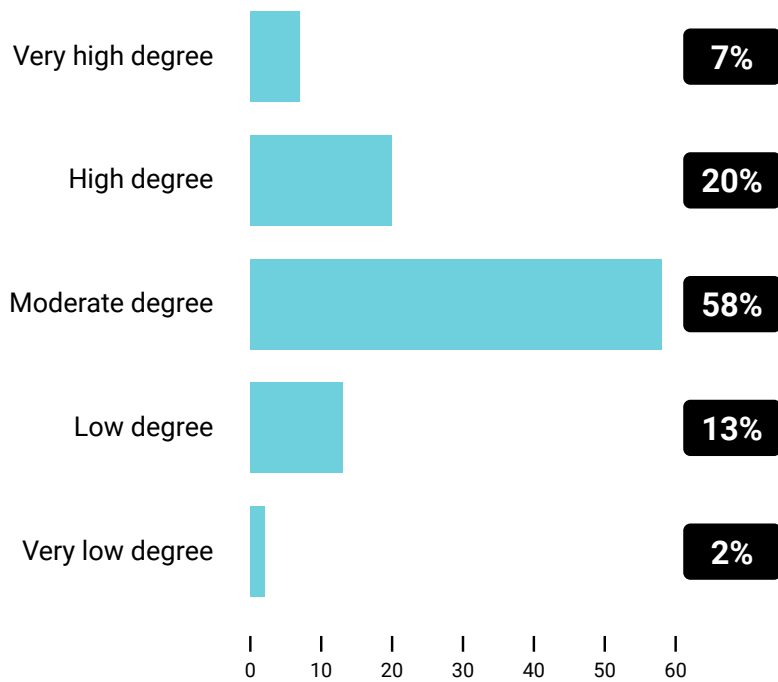
This is a drop from last year's result, which indicated that almost half of the respondents believe their organizations had successfully maintained employees' well-being. The cause of this is not clear. Perhaps the recent layoffs have taken a toll on employees and thereby reduced organization's ability to maintain well-being.





A majority of organizations (58%) have successfully maintained employees' well-being to a moderate degree over the past two years

### To what degree has your organization successfully maintained employees' well-being over the past two years?



Editor's Note: In the original data, 7% of respondents stated that they "don't know." We removed those responses and recalculated, so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question.

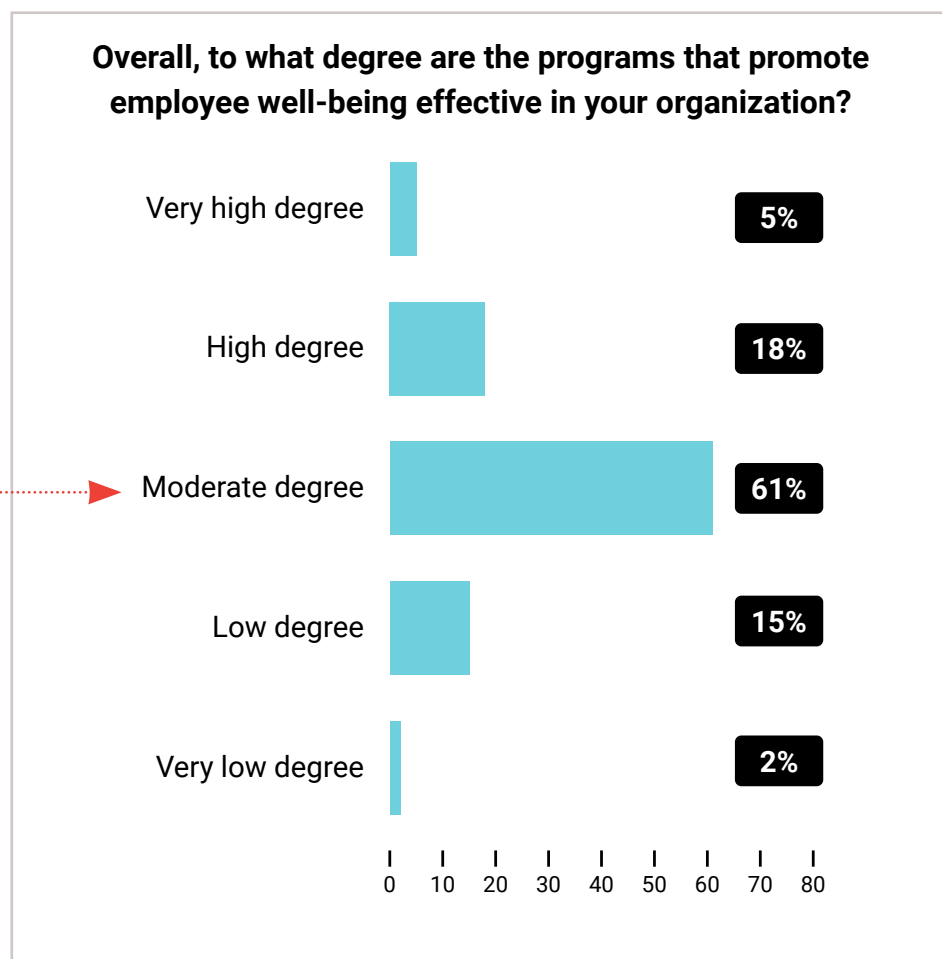


## Finding: Just 23% say their organization's well-being programs are effective to a high or very high degree

When we directly measure the effectiveness of well-being programs, we found that it supports the previous finding that organizations have struggled to maintain employee well-being over the past two years. The majority of respondents say their well-being programs are only moderately effective or lower (84%). Under a quarter (23%) say their well-being programs are effective to a high (18%) or very high (5%) degree.



Three-fifths of respondents believe well-being programs in their organizations are only moderately effective



Editor's Note: Effective refers to improvements in employee well-being levels. In the original data, 8% of respondents stated that they "don't know." We removed those responses and recalculated, so this only shows percentages for those that answered the question. Numbers do not add up to 100% due to rounding.



## Finding: Organizations are most likely to gain greater employee engagement and improved employee experience through well-being initiatives

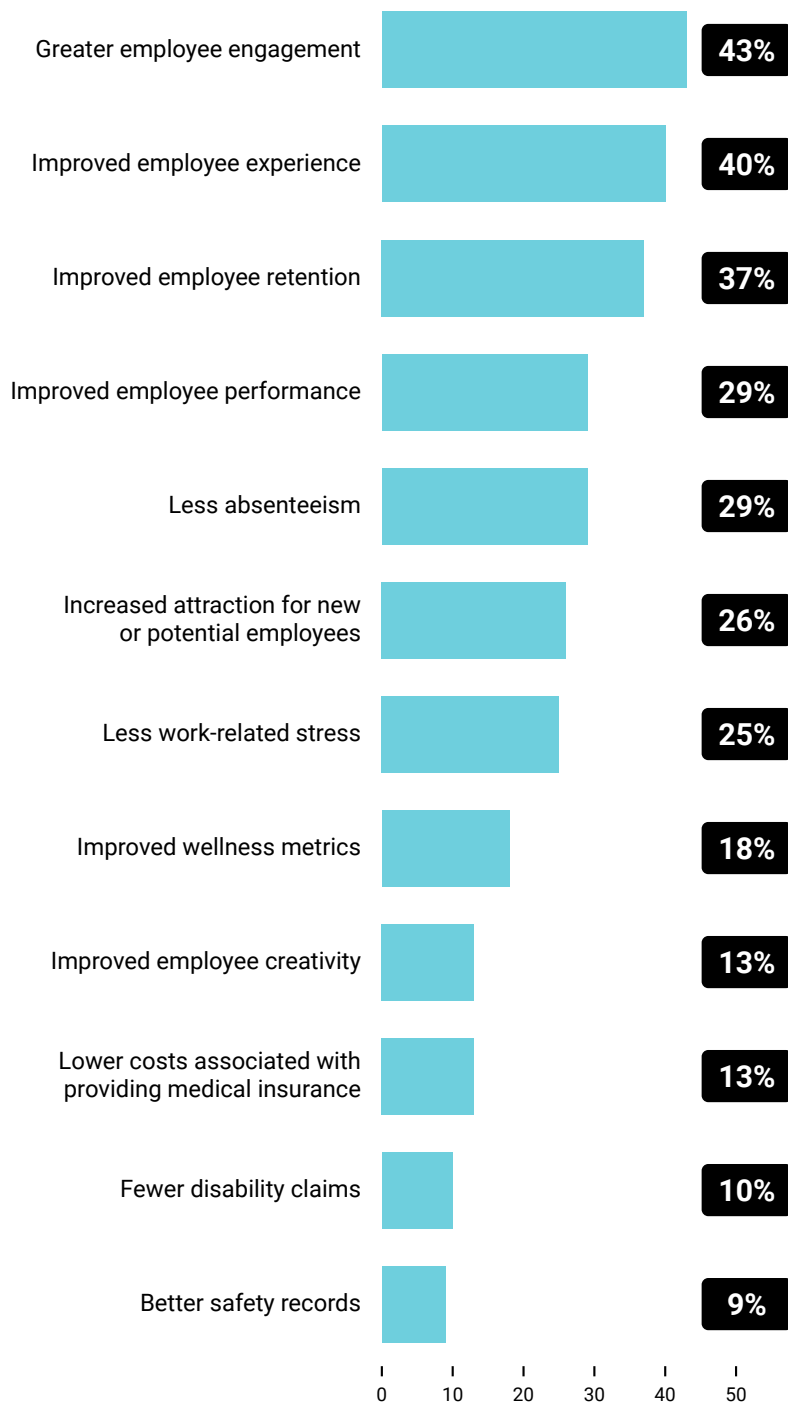
How do employee well-being initiatives benefit organizations? About two-fifths of organizations that employ well-being initiatives report greater employee engagement (43%), increased employee experience (40%) and improved employee retention (37%). However, none of the outcomes are chosen by a majority. This is likely due to the relatively poor effectiveness of well-being initiatives cited in the finding above.

Further, well-being initiatives should improve aspects of employees' lives, not just organizational benefits. Healthy employees benefit from a better quality of life, have lower risk of disease, illness and injury and thereby are more likely to contribute productively at work.<sup>8</sup> Organizations looking to employ productive and efficient employees must take care to maintain worker well-being so they are in fact *able* to contribute productively.



<sup>8</sup> CDC Workplace Health Resource Center. (2020, February 29). Engaging Employees in Their Health and Wellness. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/initiatives/resource-center/index.html>

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



**None of the well-being outcomes are chosen by over half of respondents**



# What Well-being-related Challenges Are Organizations Facing?



## Finding: Half of organizations with ineffective well-being initiatives say they do not have enough well-being programs

We asked respondents who rated the effectiveness of their organization's well-being initiatives as low or very low to elaborate on reasons for this ineffectiveness. Half (49%) say their organization does not have enough well-being programs. About two-fifths say the programs they do have are lackluster (41%), and many employees continue to have concerns about well-being (39%).

Over a third of respondents say they lack the capability to track well-being related metrics. This is a major area of concern, both in this HR area and others. In fact, the HRRI's recent study on people analytics found that HR professionals effectively use people analytics in only a little over a third of organizations.<sup>9</sup>

More than a quarter selected "Other" with an option to write in a response. The most common written responses include lack of time for employees to participate in well-being initiatives, poor leadership commitment, and low employee engagement in programs. One respondent says, "While well-being budget is provided, employees can't participate since there is a lack of leadership commitment to support employees to participate in well-being activities."

<sup>9</sup> HR.com's HR Research Institute. (2022, September). *The state of people analytics 2022-23*. Retrieved from [https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free\\_research\\_white\\_papers/the-state-of-people-analytics-2022-23\\_l88qmrax.html](https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free_research_white_papers/the-state-of-people-analytics-2022-23_l88qmrax.html)

## Differences based on size of organization

Organizations of different sizes face different challenges. Respondents in large organizations are more likely to say they continue to have well-being-related challenges (71%) and that the programs they have are lackluster (71%). By comparison, the primary challenge facing both mid-size and small organizations is they do not have enough well-being programs.

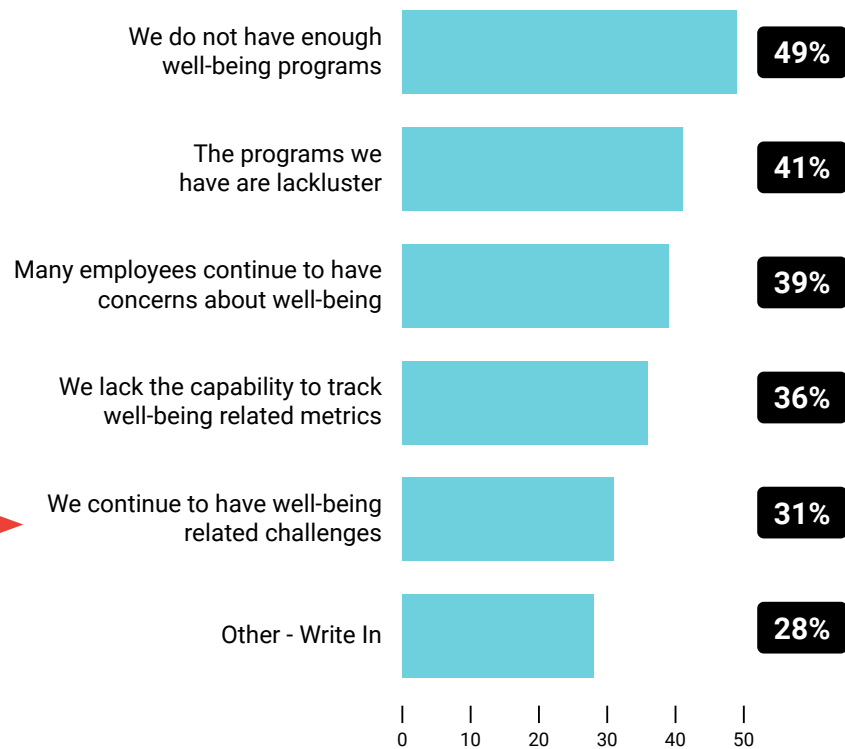


For the purpose of this report, large organizations have 1,000 or more employees, mid-sized organizations have 100 to 999 employees, and small organizations have 99 or fewer employees.



About a third of organizations with ineffective well-being initiatives continue to have well-being related challenges

### Why do you feel your organization's well-being programs are not very effective?





## Finding: Dealing with employee stress in the workplace is the top well-being related challenge for most organizations

About three-quarters (73%) say dealing with employee stress in the workplace is their biggest well-being related challenge. This is in line with a recent study by the American Psychological Association which says that 27% of respondents are so stressed on most days that they cannot function.<sup>10</sup>

Almost three-fifths (58%) also say dealing with inflation and economic uncertainties is a challenge. The move to remote and hybrid work has also sometimes been difficult, with two-fifths saying managing the dynamics of a hybrid workforce is a well-being challenge. Later in the report we will examine the effect of remote/hybrid work on physical and mental well-being of employees.



**Employees today are stretched more than ever before. Organizations are asking employees and managers to do more with less. Employees find it difficult to set boundaries and turn off work. This puts them in a difficult situation.”**

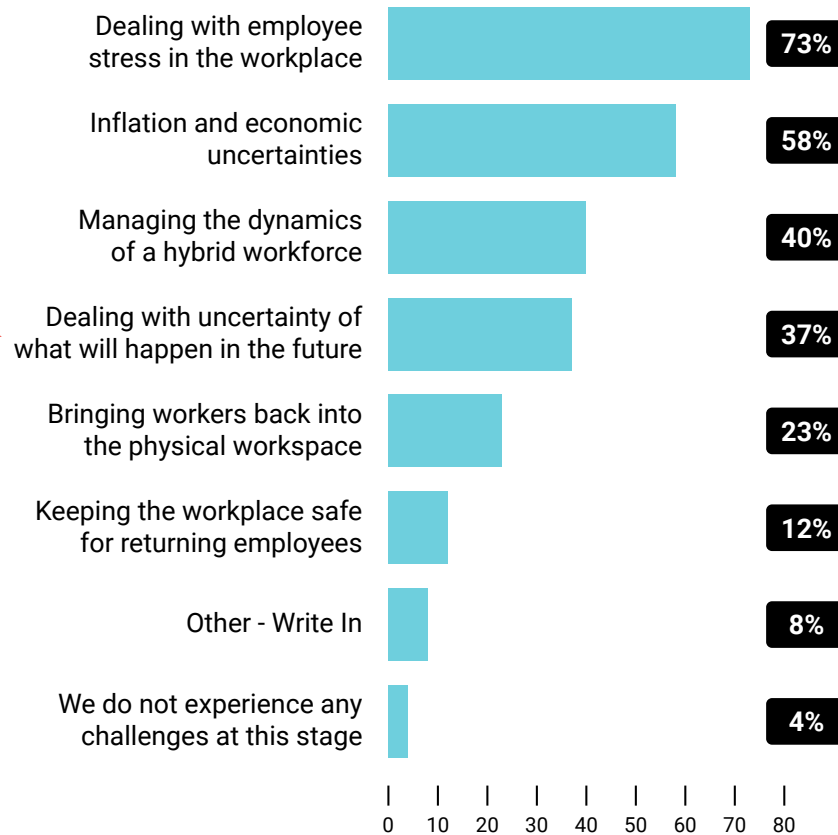
**- Mike Whitmire, EVP Marketing, Avidon Health**

<sup>10</sup> American Psychological Association. (2022, October). Stress in America 2022: Concerned for the future, beset by inflation. *American Psychological Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/concerned-future-inflation>



More than a third of respondents say their organizations face well-being challenges due to uncertainty of what will happen in the future

**What work-related well-being challenges does your organization currently face? (select all that apply)**



# What Well-being Initiatives Have Employers Used in Past and What Will They Use in the Future?

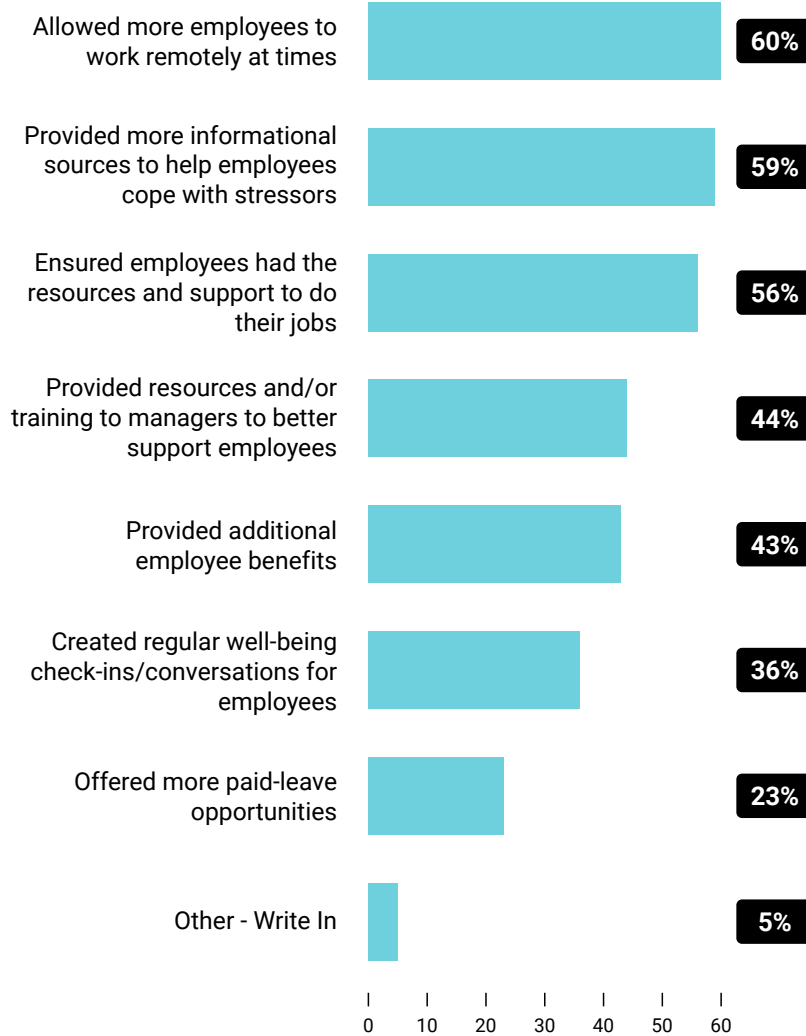
What initiatives are organizations currently offering to improve employee well-being and what are their plans for the near future? Ideally, decisions regarding well-being initiatives should be made using data and metrics. However, to what degree do organizations know about the effects of their preferred well-being initiatives (such as remote/hybrid work) on the well-being of their employees?



## Finding: Three-fifths of organizations have offered remote work to improve employee well-being over the past two years

We asked respondents to choose initiatives their organizations have deployed to ensure employee well-being over the last two years. More than half have allowed more employees to work remotely at times (60%), provided more informational sources to help employees cope with stressors (59%), and ensured employees had the resources and support to do their jobs (56%). While these are good initiatives, just over a third have created regular well-being check-ins/conversations for employees (36%). These conversations could be invaluable in gauging employee well-being levels and may provide insights to work hassles that can be easily remedied at earlier stages.

**Over the last two years what types of initiatives has your organization used to better secure employee well-being?  
(select all that apply)**



**Just over two-fifths have provided resources and/or training to managers to better support employees**



## Finding: Remote/hybrid work will continue to be a popular well-being initiative over the next two years

Many organizations will continue to offer remote/hybrid work arrangements over the next two years (47%) in addition to providing health-related information resources (46%) and financial wellness programs (43%). About two-fifths will also monitor the connection between workplace wellness and employee satisfaction, offer flexible work schedules and support telemedicine/virtual care arrangements.

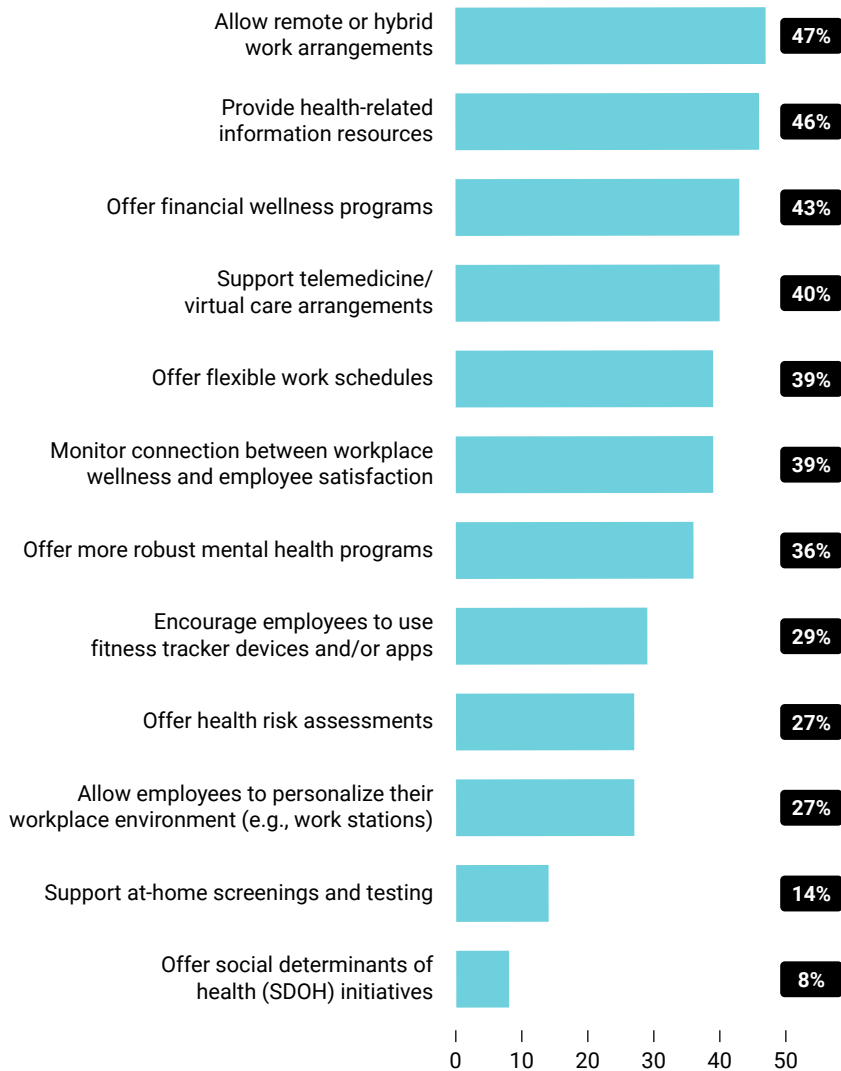
Monitoring the connection between wellness and other outcomes is important since a lack of metrics is a critical gap identified in this report. While many organizations roll out a variety of well-being initiatives, there is a lack of focus on measuring the actual well-being challenges of employees, the changes that well-being initiatives bring about, and the effect of changes on organizational outcomes such as satisfaction and retention. These metrics will improve the validity of well-being initiatives and result in better top management support.



**Employee listening has become even more important with the challenge of attracting and retaining talent and promoting a culture of well-being. If an employee feels valued in the workplace, they are more likely to stay, feel like they have a purpose, and have better emotional well-being. Whether this listening happens through facilitating focus groups, conducting leadership rounding, adding well-being questions to an existing employee survey, using a wellness champion committee, or a mixture of these, listening intentionally to employees and using the data collected can help to pave the path of a healthier and happier workforce."**

- **Samantha Reid**, Wellbeing Strategy Consultant, Wellright

**Which of the following well-being related initiatives do you think your organization will utilize within the next two years?  
(select all that apply)**



**More than a quarter of organizations will offer health risk assessments over the next two years**



## Results of Chi-squared Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that respondents are significantly more likely to say remote/hybrid work has improved mental well-being a little/lot than physical well-being.

## Finding: Remote/hybrid work has been significantly better for employees' mental well-being than physical well-being

While the move to remote work has often been lauded to be beneficial for employees<sup>11</sup>, what has the effect been on their physical and mental well-being? Results indicate that the effects of remote/hybrid work are complicated at best.

On one hand it allows for greater flexibility and affords more time with family and on pursuits outside of work. However, remote/hybrid work can also be socially isolating and lead to over-work.<sup>12</sup> Further, the move to remote work may be disproportionately burdening certain segments of the workforce such as women who take on primary care-giving duties.<sup>13</sup> It can also cause deterioration of physical well-being due to reduced mobility.<sup>14</sup>

Under one-fifth of respondents say remote/hybrid work has improved the physical well-being of employees a little or a lot (18%) while a third of respondents say the same about mental well-being. One-fifth of respondents say remote/hybrid work has been detrimental for employees' mental and physical well-being.

About a third of respondents said they do not know about the effects of remote/hybrid work on physical well-being and a quarter said the same about mental well-being. This, once again, indicates the need for better metrics to measure the effects of workplace changes such as remote work on employees' well-being.

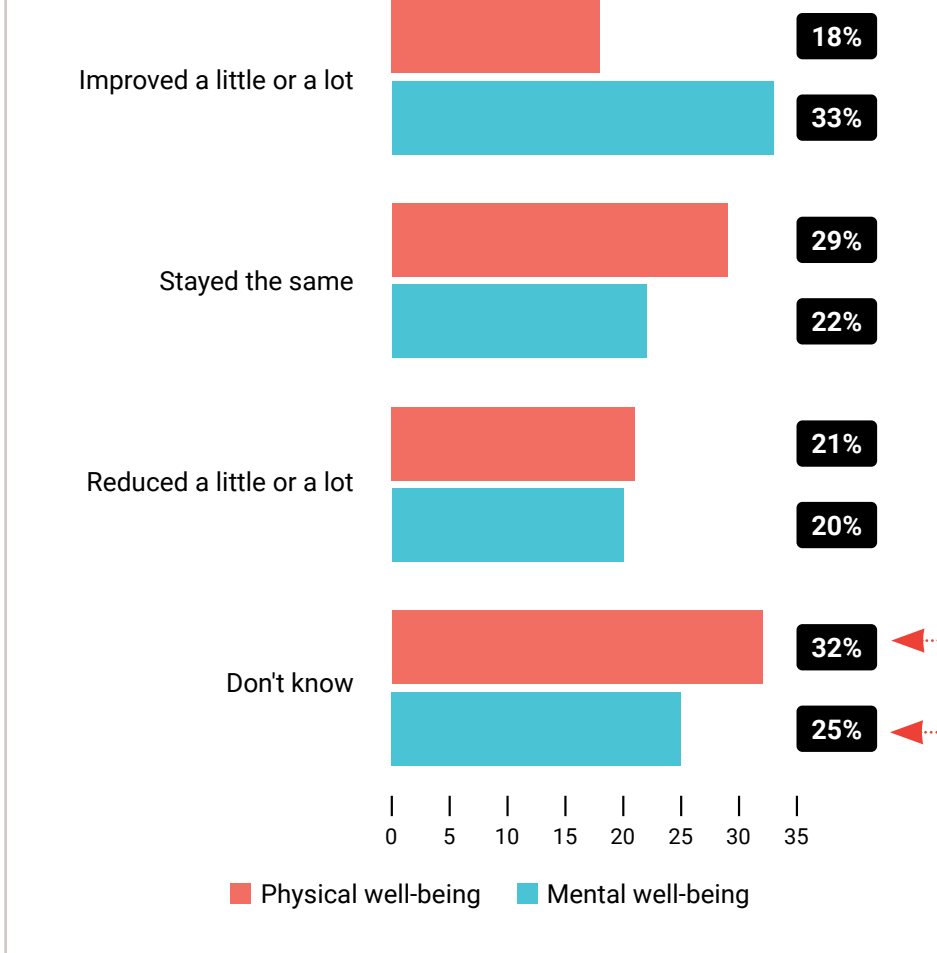
<sup>11</sup> Reynolds, B. W. (2022). The mental health benefits of remote and flexible work. *Mental Health America*. Retrieved from <https://mhanational.org/blog/mental-health-benefits-remote-and-flexible-work>

<sup>12</sup> Osborne, H. (2021, February 4). Home workers putting in more hours since Covid, research shows. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/04/home-workers-putting-in-more-hours-since-covid-research>

<sup>13</sup> Hogenboom, M. (2022, February 28). The hidden load: How 'thinking of everything' holds mums back. *BBC Worklife*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210518-the-hidden-load-how-thinking-of-everything-holds-mums-back>

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, B. (2022, April 21). New research shows remote and hybrid workers suffering physical and mental health dilemmas. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2021/11/01/new-research-shows-remote-and-hybrid-workers-suffering-physical-and-mental-health-dilemmas/?sh=2e3fa15b5aa9>

**How has the physical and mental well-being of employees in your organization been impacted by remote/hybrid work? (select the one that best applies)**



Editor's Note: This chart is comprised of data from two questions, "How has the physical well-being of employees in your organization been impacted by remote/hybrid work?" and "How has the mental well-being of employees in your organization been impacted by remote/hybrid work?"



**A third are unsure about effects of remote work on physical well-being and a quarter say the same about mental well-being**

# Why Are Employees Stressed and What Can Organizations Do to Help?

According to our research, employee stress is the most pressing well-being-related challenge facing organizations. In the context of the survey on which this report is based, stress was defined as follows:

*The word “stress” refers to negative emotional stress. Emotional stress can be positive or negative. Positive stress tends to be short-term and is perceived as being within our coping abilities. Negative stress, however, tends to cause anxiety and is perceived to be outside of our coping abilities. Negative stress is often longer term in nature.*



## Finding: Over two-fifths of respondents say negative stress is prevalent in their organization

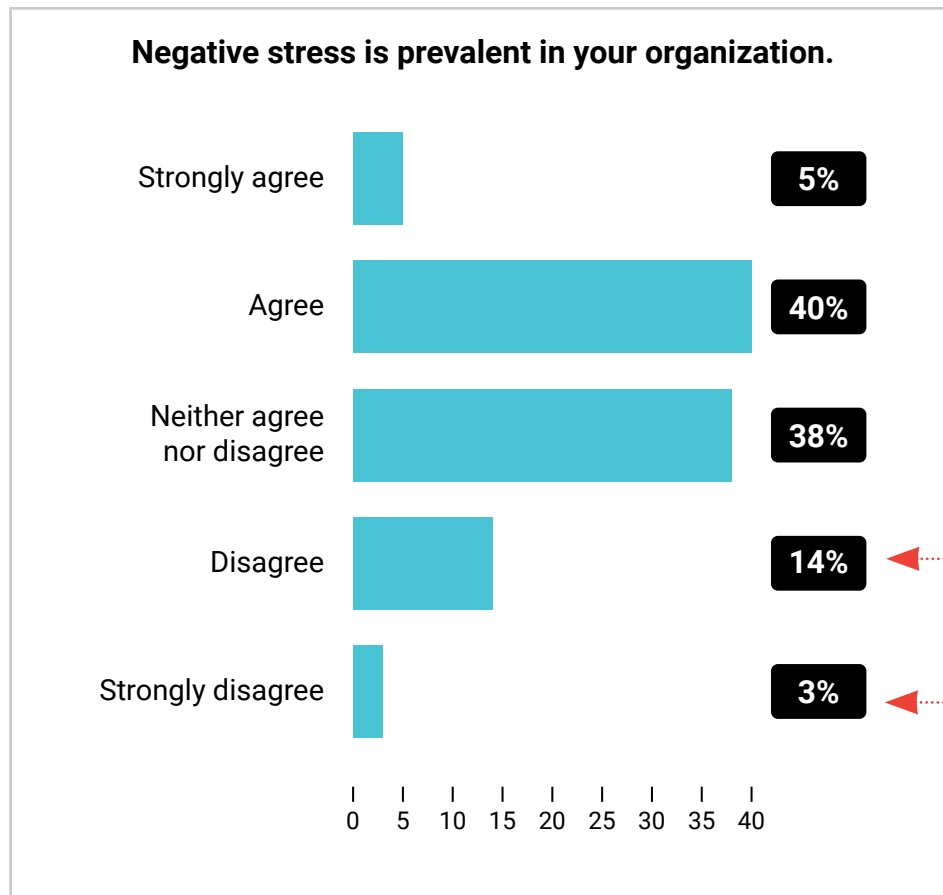
Almost half of respondents agree (40%) or strongly agree (5%) that negative stress is prevalent in their organization. This is a drop in the proportion of respondents saying the same last year (61%). About two-fifths are neutral (38%) and just 17% actively disagree.

Negative stress can impact physical and mental well-being. It can compromise our immune system, cardiovascular health, and worsen the experience of chronic pain and other medical conditions. It can also impact our relationships with those we are close to and affect our ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.<sup>15</sup>

### Differences based on size of organization

Compared to those in mid-size (48%) and small (30%) organizations, respondents in larger organizations are more likely to agree or strongly agree that negative stress is prevalent in their organization (58%).

<sup>15</sup> Mastroianni, B. (2021, February 5). Feeling more stressed than ever? you're not alone. *Healthline*. Retrieved from <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/people-feeling-more-stress-now-than-any-point-since-the-pandemic-began#How-this-stress-is-impacting-our-health->



Less than a fifth actively disagree that negative stress is prevalent in their organization



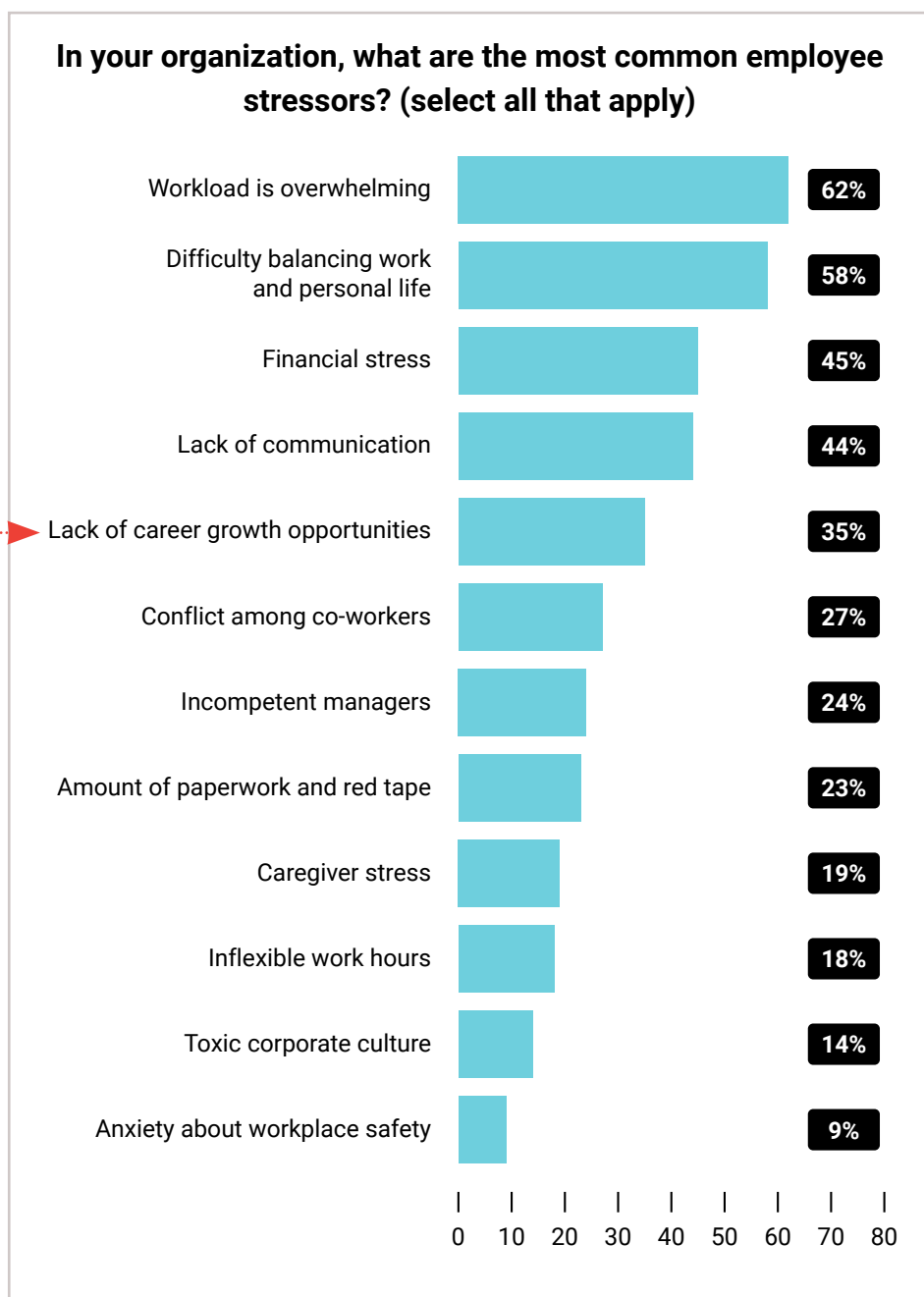


## Finding: An overwhelming workload is the primary stressor for employees

What causes employee stress in organizations today? Most employees are stressed by overwhelming workloads (62%) and/or a difficulty balancing work and personal life (58%). In addition, over two-fifths of employees are plagued by financial stress (45%) and lack of communication (44%).



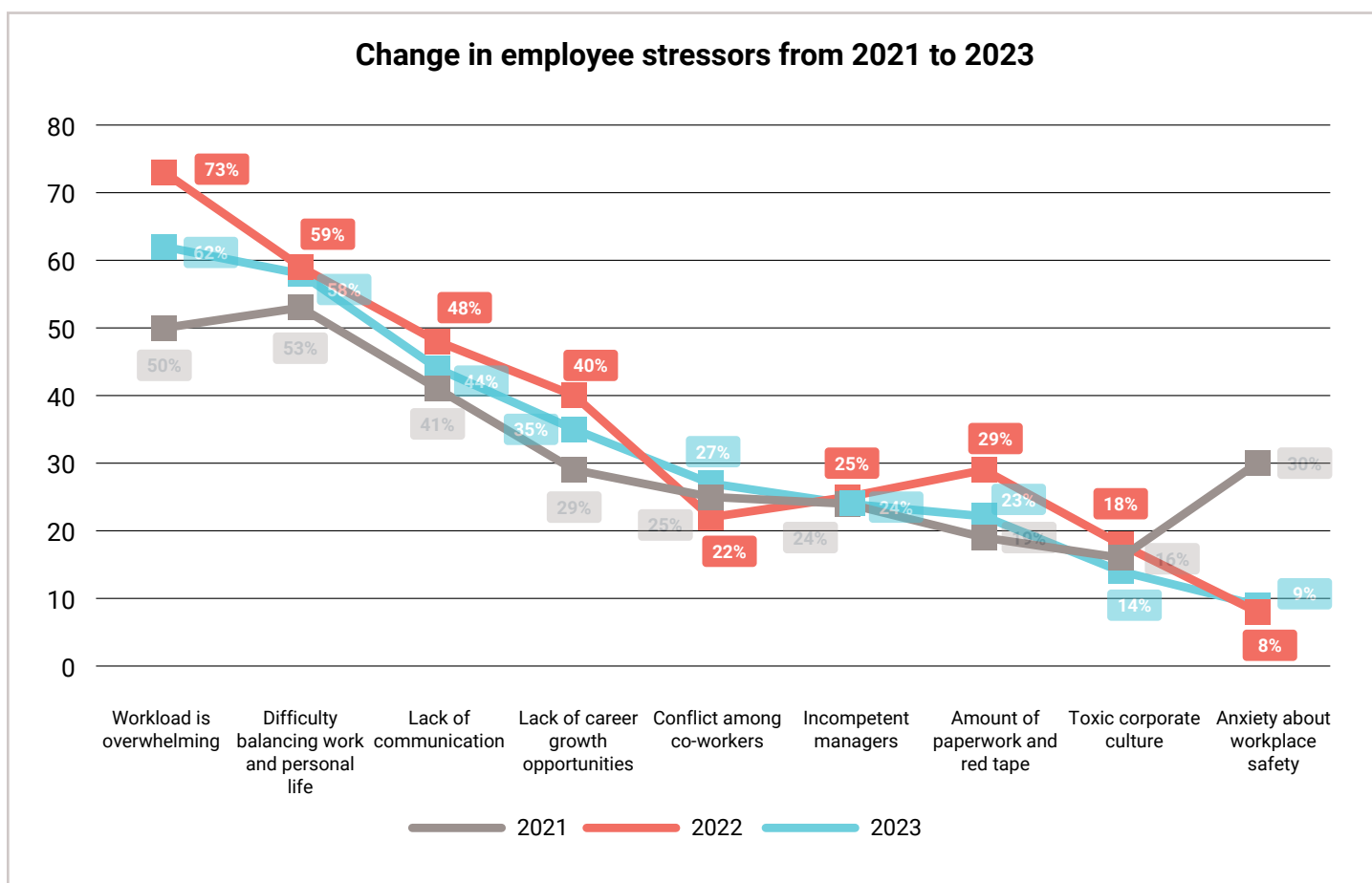
Over one-third of employees are stressed by a lack of career growth opportunities





## Finding: Difficulty managing workload and work-life balance remain the top two stressors over the past two years

When we compare the top stressors facing employees since 2021, difficulty balancing work and personal life and overwhelming workload have remained the top two stressors. While owing to the pandemic, anxiety about workplace safety was much higher in 2021, this stressor has reduced over the past two years. The effects of incompetent managers on stress levels of employees have remained fairly steady over the years.





## Finding: Fewer than a third of respondents say their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues

Fewer than a third agree (28%) or strongly agree (3%) that their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues. In fact, they are twice as likely to strongly disagree than strongly agree (6% vs. 3%).

With issues such as overwhelming workloads and poor work-life balance being predominant employee stressors, there is no doubt that organizations have a role to play in reducing employee stress. Organizations that fail to do so may be faced with higher employee turnover or poorer employee engagement.



More than a quarter actively disagree that their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues



# How Are Organizations Securing Employees' Mental and Physical Well-being?

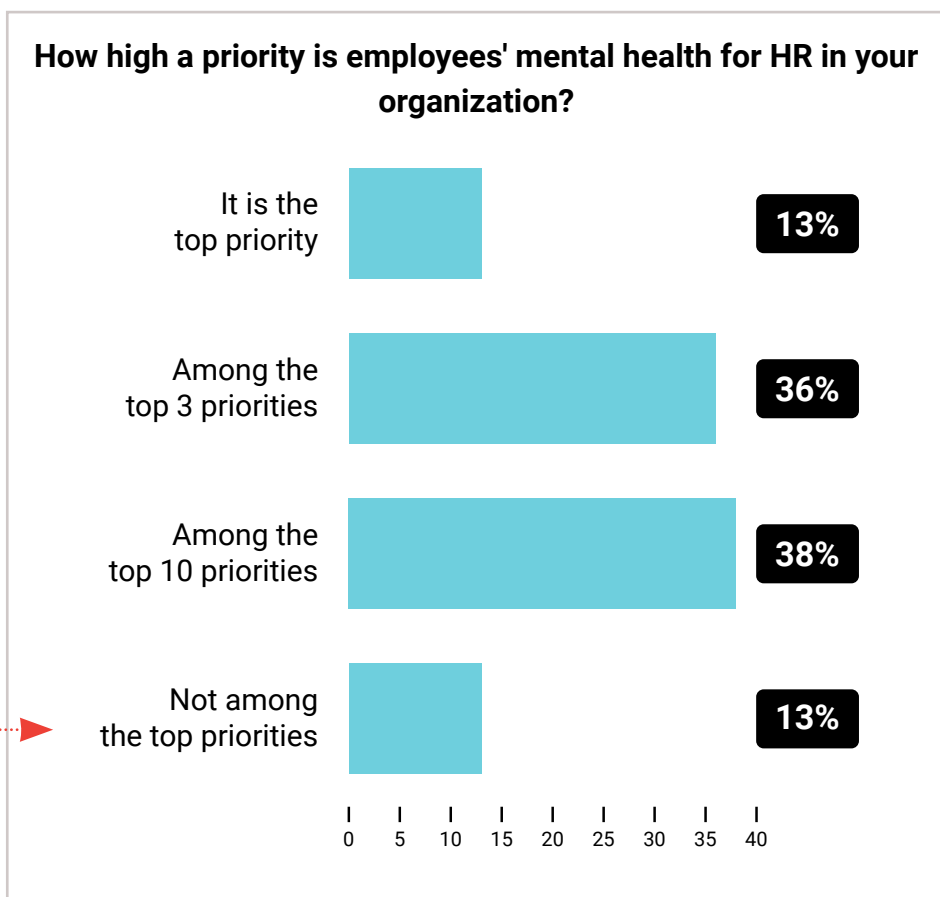


**Finding: Half say employees' mental health is the top priority or among the top three HR priorities**

Employee mental well-being is a priority for HR in most organizations. In almost 9 in 10 organizations, employees' mental health is among the top ten priorities for HR, with half saying it is among the top three (36%) or the top priority (13%).



**Mental health is not among the top 10 priorities in just 13% of organizations**



Editor's Note: In the original data, 6% of respondents stated that they "don't know." We removed those responses and recalculated the data.

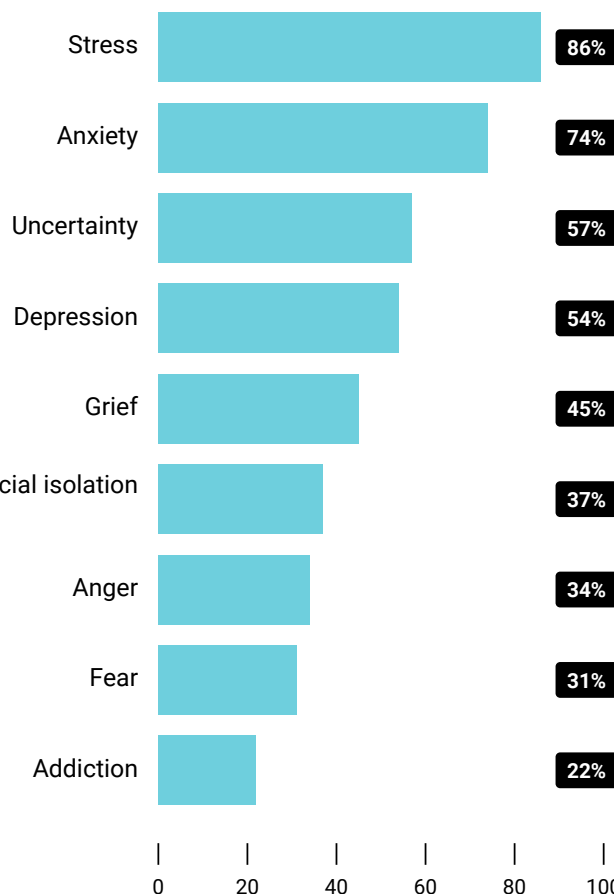




## Finding: More than 8 in 10 respondents say stress is a mental-health-related issue that employees in their organization have dealt with over the past year

Employee stress is the most prevalent mental-health-related issue, according to this research. Fully 86% of respondents say their employees have dealt with stress over the past year, and 74% say they'd dealt with anxiety. We discussed common sources of employee stress above. Anxiety can be caused by the need to reconcile multiple stressors associated with political, economic and health uncertainties. Relatedly, uncertainty (57%) and depression (54%) are also issues employees have dealt with.

**Which of the following mental-health-related issues have your organization's employees dealt with over the past year? (select all that apply)**



Over one third say employees in their organization have suffered loneliness/social isolation



## Finding: 8 in 10 organizations offer employee assistance program (EAP) services

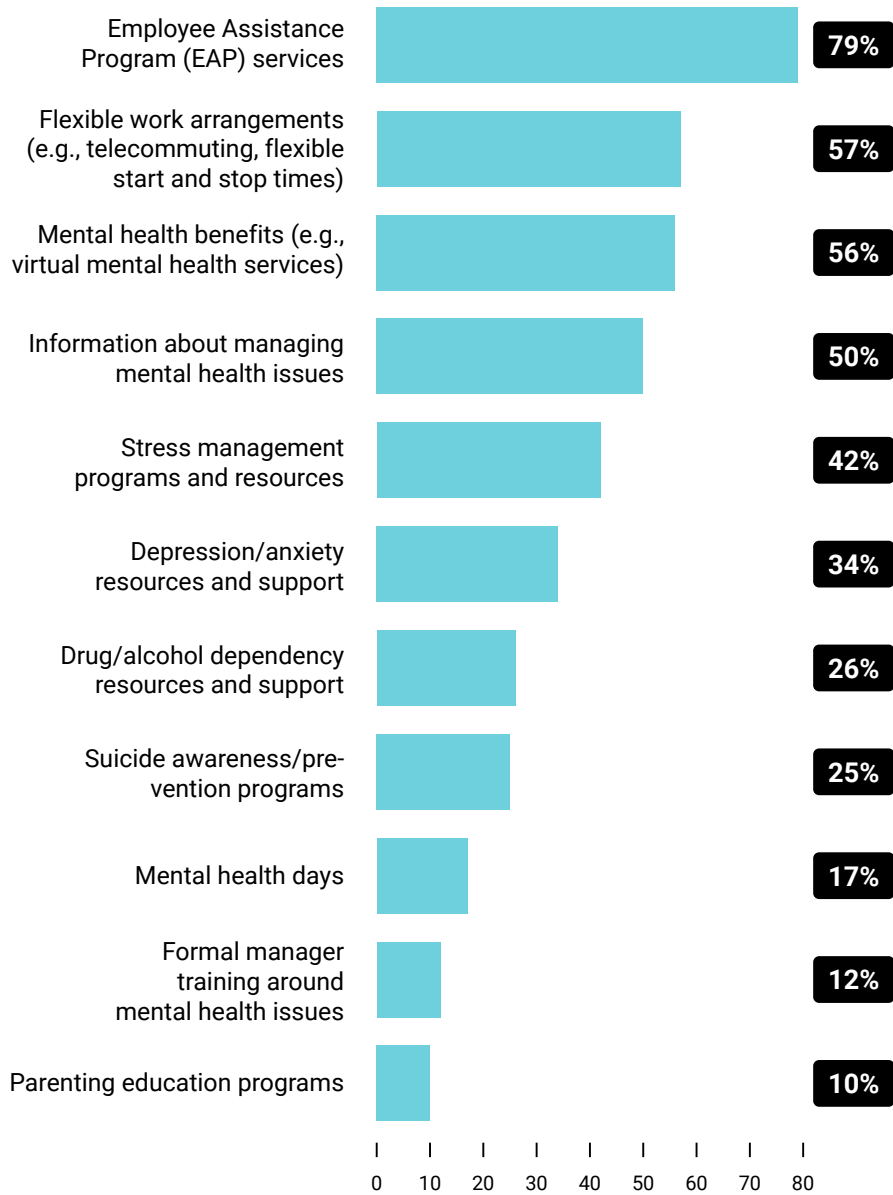
How do organizations help employees address mental health concerns? Predominantly through employee assistance program (EAP) services. The Center of Workplace Mental Health asserts the utility of EAPs and says EAPs can help individuals deal with a variety of issues such as emotional and substance abuse issues, interpersonal relationships, legal and financial difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

Over half also offer flexible work arrangements (57%), mental health benefits (65%) and information about managing mental health issues (50%).

It is important to note that while stress, anxiety and depression are among the top mental health issues facing employees, just two-fifths offer stress management programs and resources and only a third offer depression/anxiety resources and support.



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



**A third of organizations offer depression/anxiety resources and support**

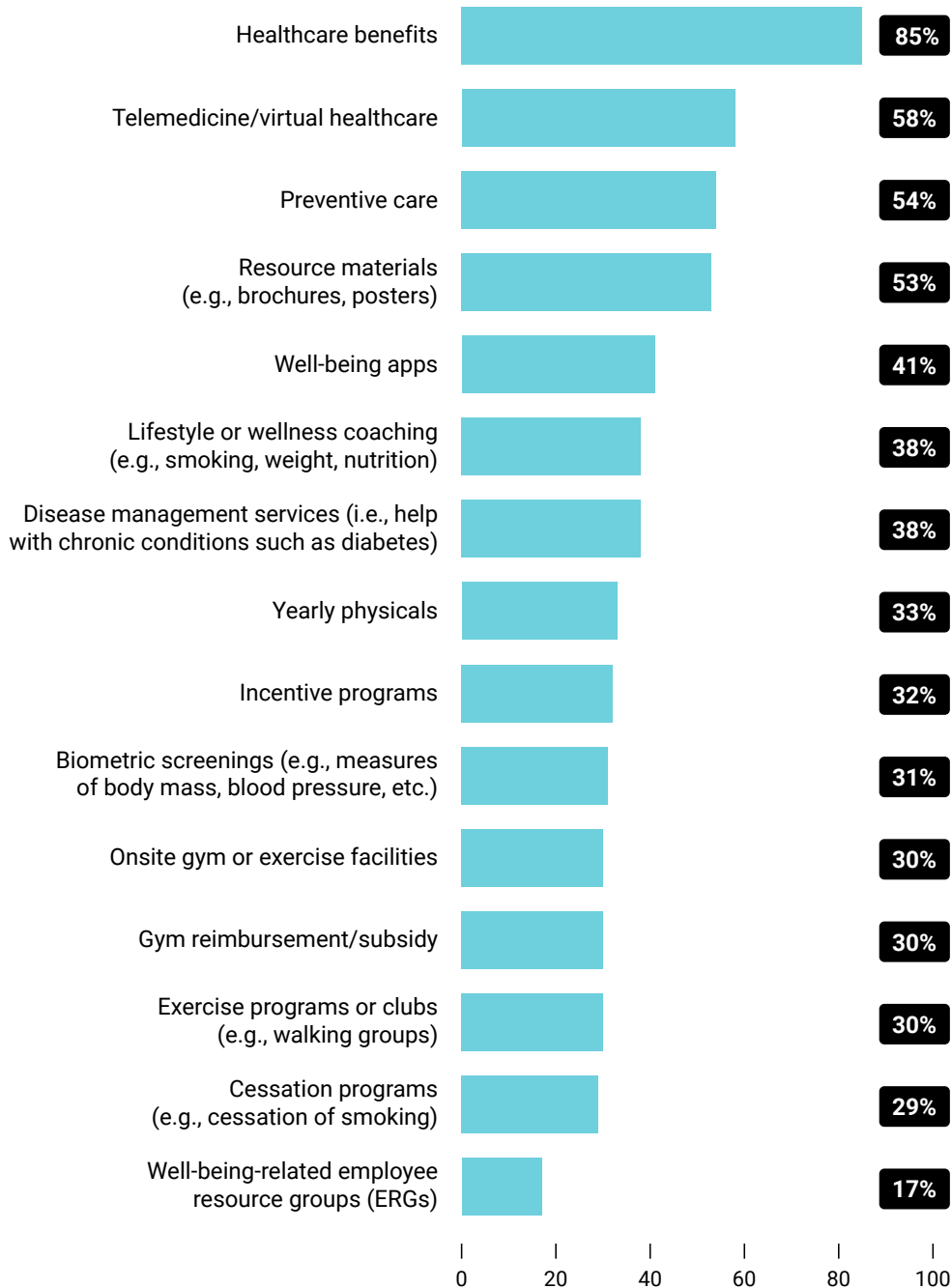


## Finding: The majority of organizations offer healthcare benefits to promote physical well-being

What initiatives have organizations offered to support physical well-being of their employees? More than 8 in 10 organizations offer healthcare benefits (85%) to promote employees' physical well-being. However, the focus on preventive care is considerably less commonly offered, with just over half (54%) offering these initiatives. Since the pandemic, we believe there's been a rise in the popularity of telemedicine/virtual healthcare (58%) and well-being apps (41%).



**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)**



**Almost two-fifths offer lifestyle or wellness coaching to promote physical well-being**

# What Can Organizations Do to Ensure Financial Wellness?



## Finding: Employees face numerous types of equally pressing financial stressors

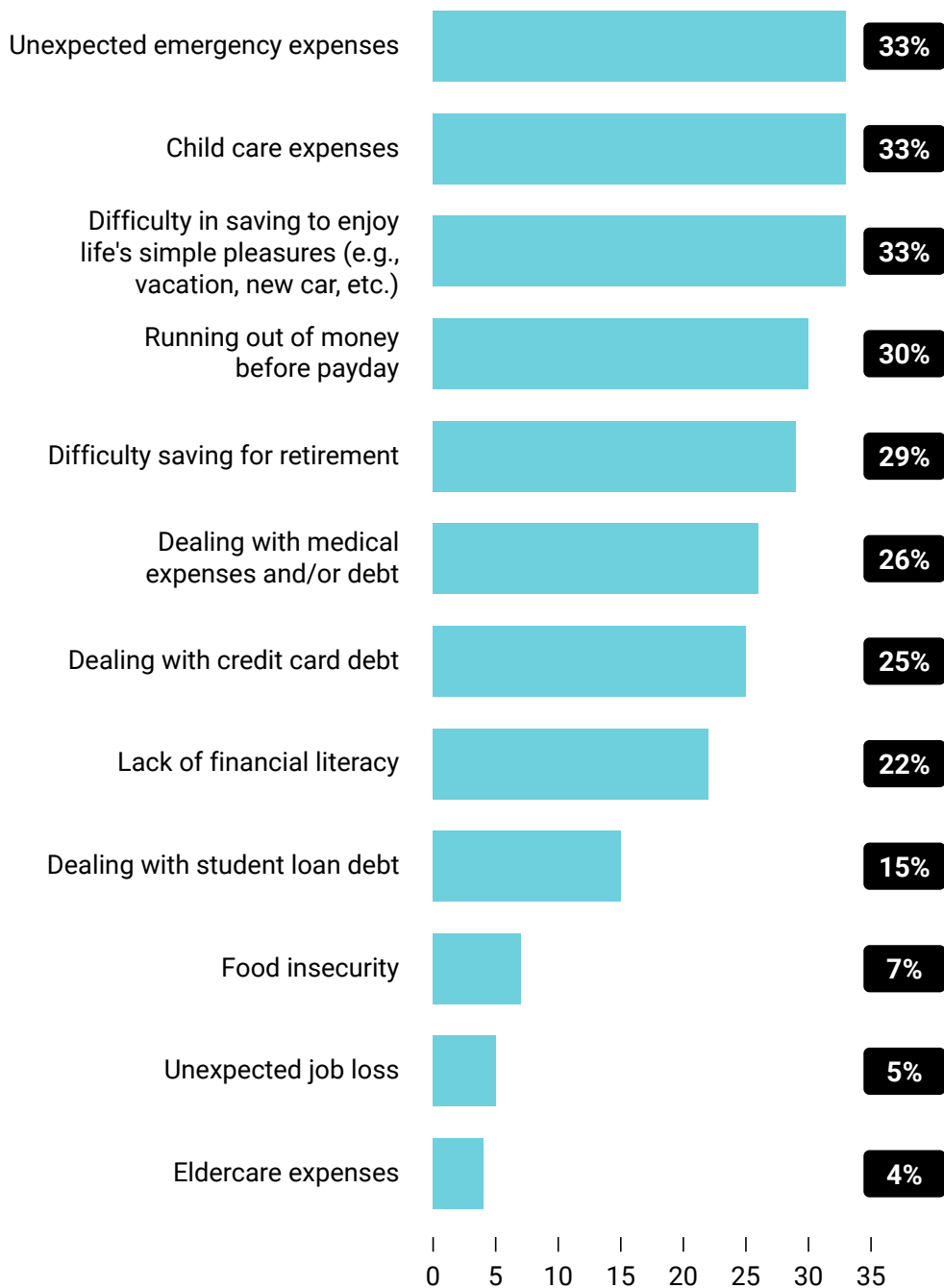
We asked respondents to choose the top three sources of employees' financial stress. Difficulty in saving to enjoy life's simple pleasures (e.g., vacation, new car, etc.), child care expenses and unexpected emergency expenses are tied for first place (33%). Closely following are running out of money before payday (30%) and difficulty saving for retirement (29%). About a quarter also deal with credit card debt (25%) and medical expenses and/or debt (26%). The financial issues employees face depend on unique situations and may require a personalized effort to handle some of these issues.



**With an increase in adolescent mental health challenges, childcare expenses can include more than just daycare; it can include expenses to support mental health such as therapy. Organizations need to think about the whole family and consider dependents when they build their benefits strategies."**

- **Yvonne Chen**, VP of Marketing, Calm Business

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



**More than a fifth of employees face challenges due to lack of financial literacy**



## Finding: More than half of respondents believe employees are most interested in health benefits

Apart from raising wages to keep up with rising costs of living, offering well-being benefits can be useful in securing employees' financial wellness.<sup>17</sup> Respondents believe employees are most interested in health benefits (53%) and retirement benefits (41%). This is understandable considering the cost of healthcare and retirement. According to the CDC, more Americans are reaching the age of 65 and often have an additional 19-years of life ahead of them at that stage. Moreover, the population age 85 and over could grow from 6 million in 2014 to 20 million by 2060.<sup>18,19</sup> About two-fifths also believe employees want mental health/wellness benefits and over a third say financial well-being benefits are in demand (35%).

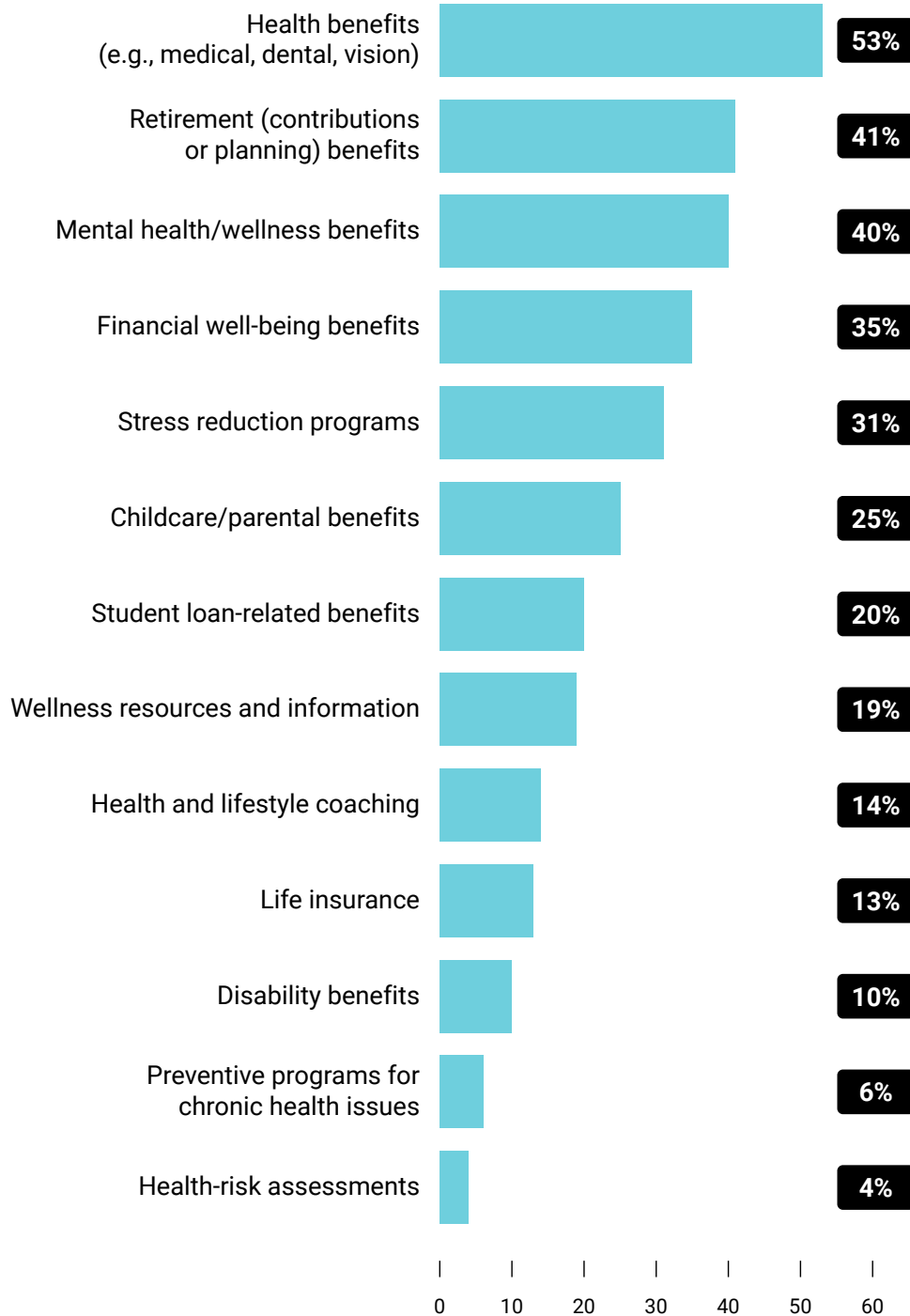


<sup>18</sup> Bunch, W. (2023, February 2). Financial wellness: How hr can step up and 'be deliberate'. *HR Executive*. Retrieved from <https://hr executive.com/financial-wellness-how-hr-can-step-up-and-be-deliberate/>

<sup>19</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *Healthy aging in action*. National Prevention, Health Promotion, And Public Health Council. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/healthy-aging-in-action508.pdf>



**Out of the benefit areas listed below, which ones are employees most interested in your organization? (select up to four)**



**A quarter of respondents believe employees in their organization are interested in childcare/parental benefits**



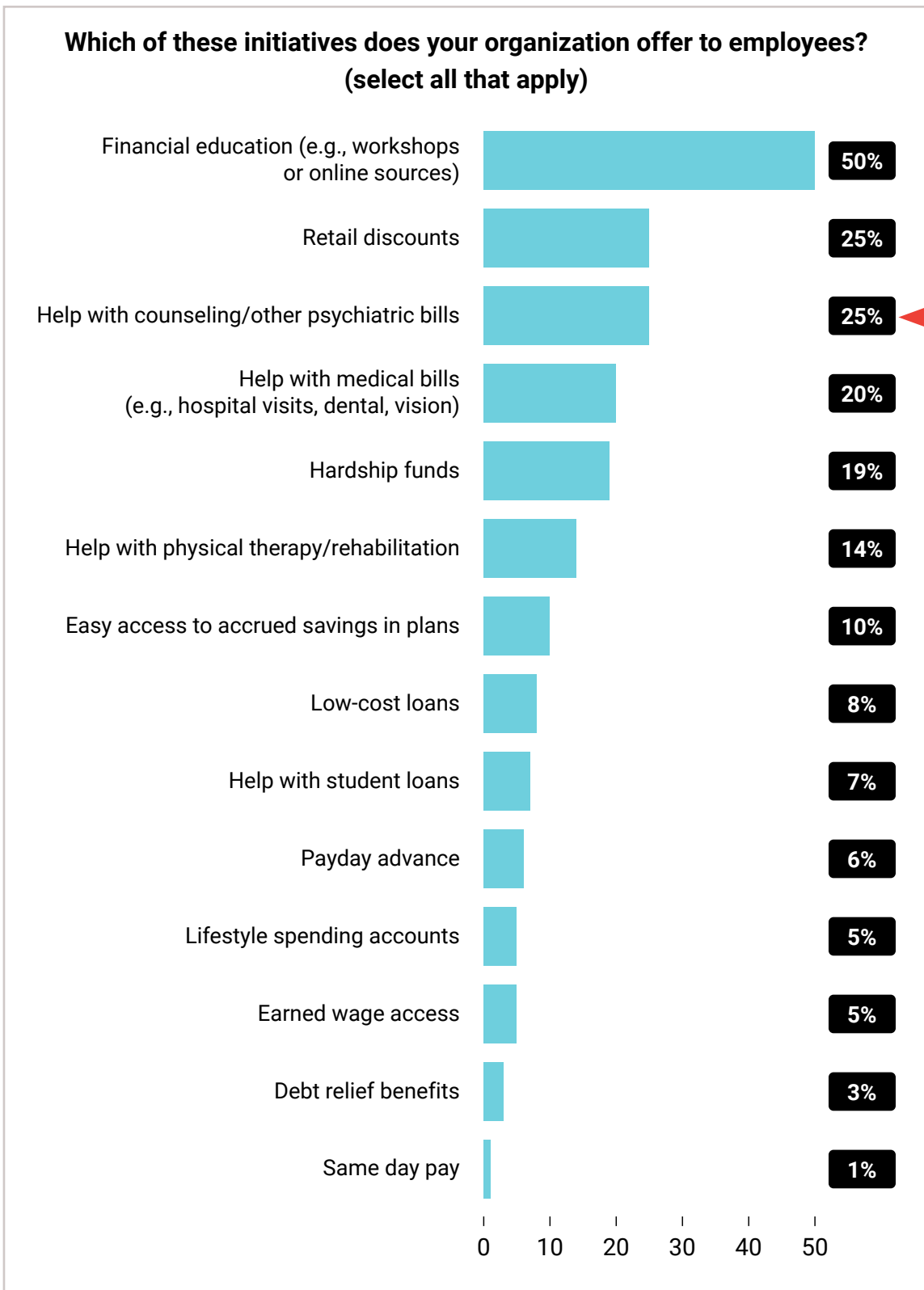
## Finding: Half of organizations offer financial education to help employees with financial well-being

Half of organizations offer financial education initiatives to employees. In light of growing inflation and rising healthcare costs, it is important for employees who engage in financial planning to be prepared for the future. Financial education gives employees access to practical solutions so they can work toward financial goals.

A recent study by HR.com's HR Research Institute on financial wellness shows ties between employees' financial wellness and employee mental health and retention. The study also shows that almost all (98%) HR professionals believe financial education is an important or very important part of financial wellness strategy.<sup>19</sup> However, just half of organizations seem to be offering financial education to employees.



<sup>19</sup> HR.com's HR Research Institute. (2023). *The state of employee financial wellness 2023*. Retrieved from [https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free\\_research\\_white\\_papers/the-state-of-financial-wellness-2023\\_leq0wq99.html](https://www.hr.com/en/resources/free_research_white_papers/the-state-of-financial-wellness-2023_leq0wq99.html)



**A quarter offer help with medical and counselling/psychiatric bills**

# What Do Well-being Leaders Do Differently?

## How Do We Classify Well-being Leader Organizations?

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:** Those 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.



### Results of Chi-squared Test

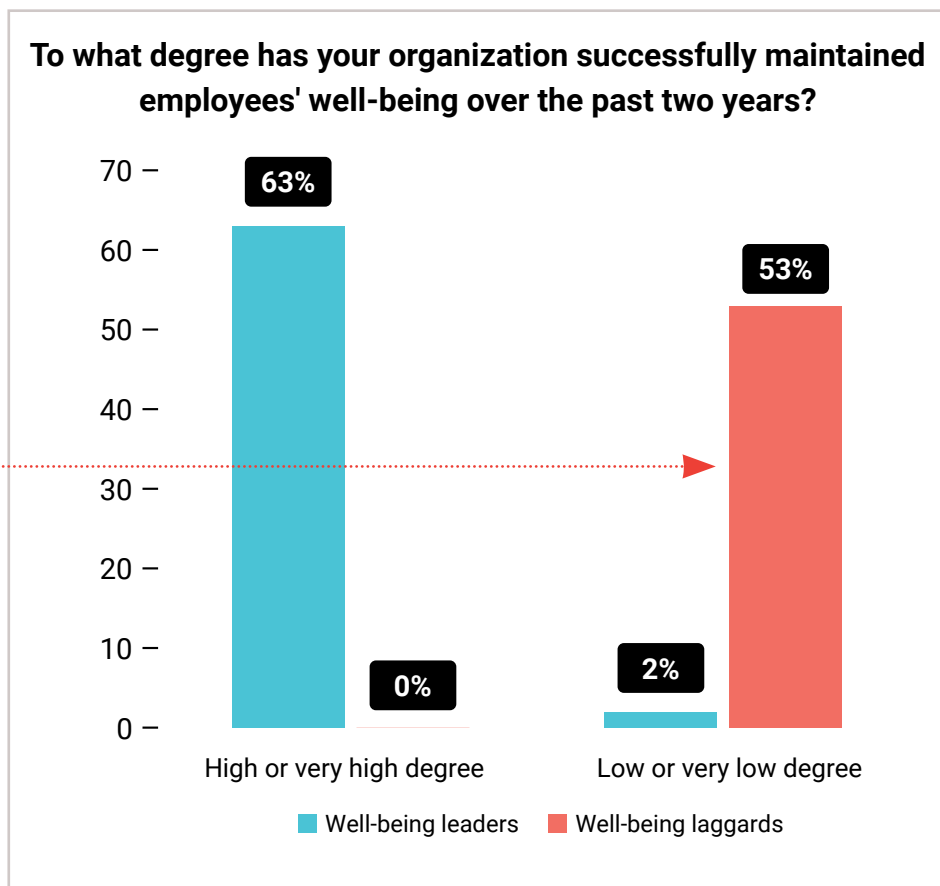
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to say they have successfully maintained employees' well-being over the past two years to a high or very high degree.

## Finding: Almost two-thirds of well-being leaders have successfully maintained employees' well-being over the past two years

Well-being leaders outperform laggards in their ability to maintain their employees' well-being levels despite ups and downs of the past two years. While two-thirds of leaders say they were able to maintain employees' well-being levels to a high or very high extent, none of the laggards have been able to do so. In fact, more than half (53%) of laggards admit that they have been able to maintain well-being levels to only a low or very low degree.



Over half of laggards have successfully maintained employees' well-being to a low or very low degree



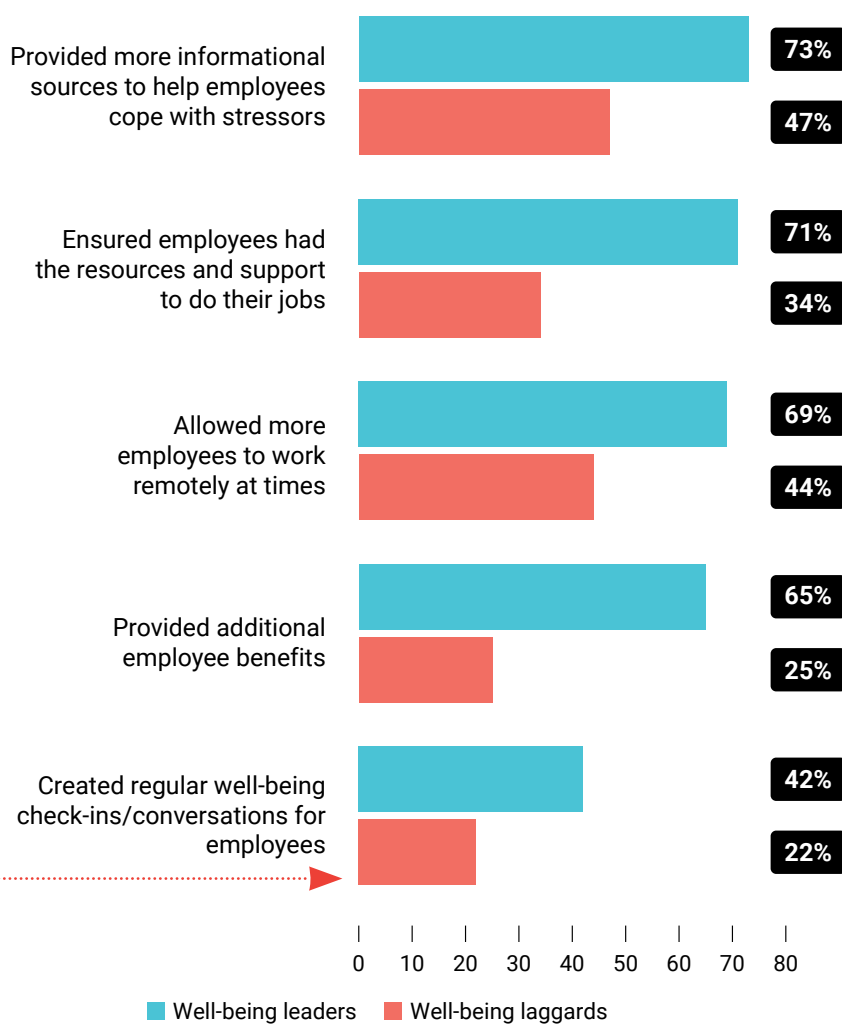
### Results of Chi-squared Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely to utilize all listed well-being initiatives to a greater extent than laggards.

## Finding: Three-fourths of well-being leaders have provided more informational sources to help employees cope with stressors

How have leaders been able to maintain employee well-being levels? They have provided well-being initiatives to a much greater extent over the last two years than have laggards. Specifically, more than 7 in 10 well-being leaders have provided more informational sources to help employees cope with stressors (73%) and have made sure employees had the resources and support to do their jobs (71%), compared to just 47% and 34% of laggards, respectively.

### Over the last two years what types of initiatives has your organization used to better secure employee well-being? (select all that apply)



Only one-fifth of well-being laggards created regular well-being check-ins/conversations for employees over the last two years

### Results of Chi-squared Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being laggards are significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that negative stress is prevalent in their organization than leaders.

## Finding: Well-being laggards are nearly twice as likely to say negative stress is prevalent in their organization

Well-being laggards are nearly twice as likely as leaders to agree or strongly agree that negative stress is prevalent in their organization (63% vs. 36%).



### Results of Chi-squared Test

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

## Finding: Well-being leaders are 20 times more likely to say their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues

Not only is negative stress more prevalent in well-being laggard organizations, these organizations are also less likely to help employees address these stress issues. Just 3% of respondents in well-being laggard organizations say their organization is excellent at helping employees address stress issues, compared to 59% of respondents from well-being leader organizations.





### Results of Chi-squared Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being laggards are significantly more likely than well-being leaders to say incompetent managers cause employee stress.

## Finding: Well-being laggards are nearly four times more likely than leaders to say that incompetent managers cause employee stress

Well-being laggards are almost four times more likely than well-being leaders to say incompetent managers cause employee stress in their organization (42% vs. 11%). They are also twice as likely as leaders to deal with stress due to inflexible work hours (32% vs. 16%). Both of these can sometimes be internal organizational factors that can be rectified through training and cultural change.



Well-being laggards are twice as likely to cite inflexible work hours as an employee stressor

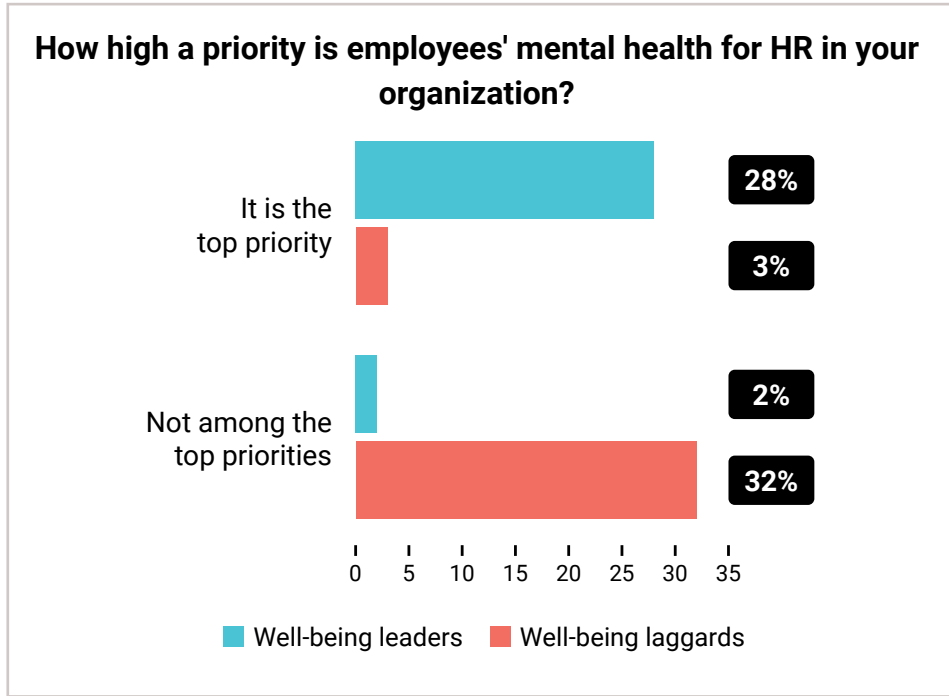


### Results of Chi-squared Test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely to say employees' mental health is the top priority for HR in their organization than laggards.

## Finding: Employees' mental health is the top priority in over a quarter of well-being leader organizations but just 3% of well-being laggards say the same

Organizations that prioritize employees' mental health are likely to invest more in mental health well-being initiatives and create a work environment that promotes positive mental health. Well-being leaders are more than nine times more likely than laggards to prioritize employees' mental health as HR's top priority (28% vs. 3%). In fact, in about one-third of laggard organizations, employees' mental health is not among HR's top priorities.



### Results of Chi-squared Test

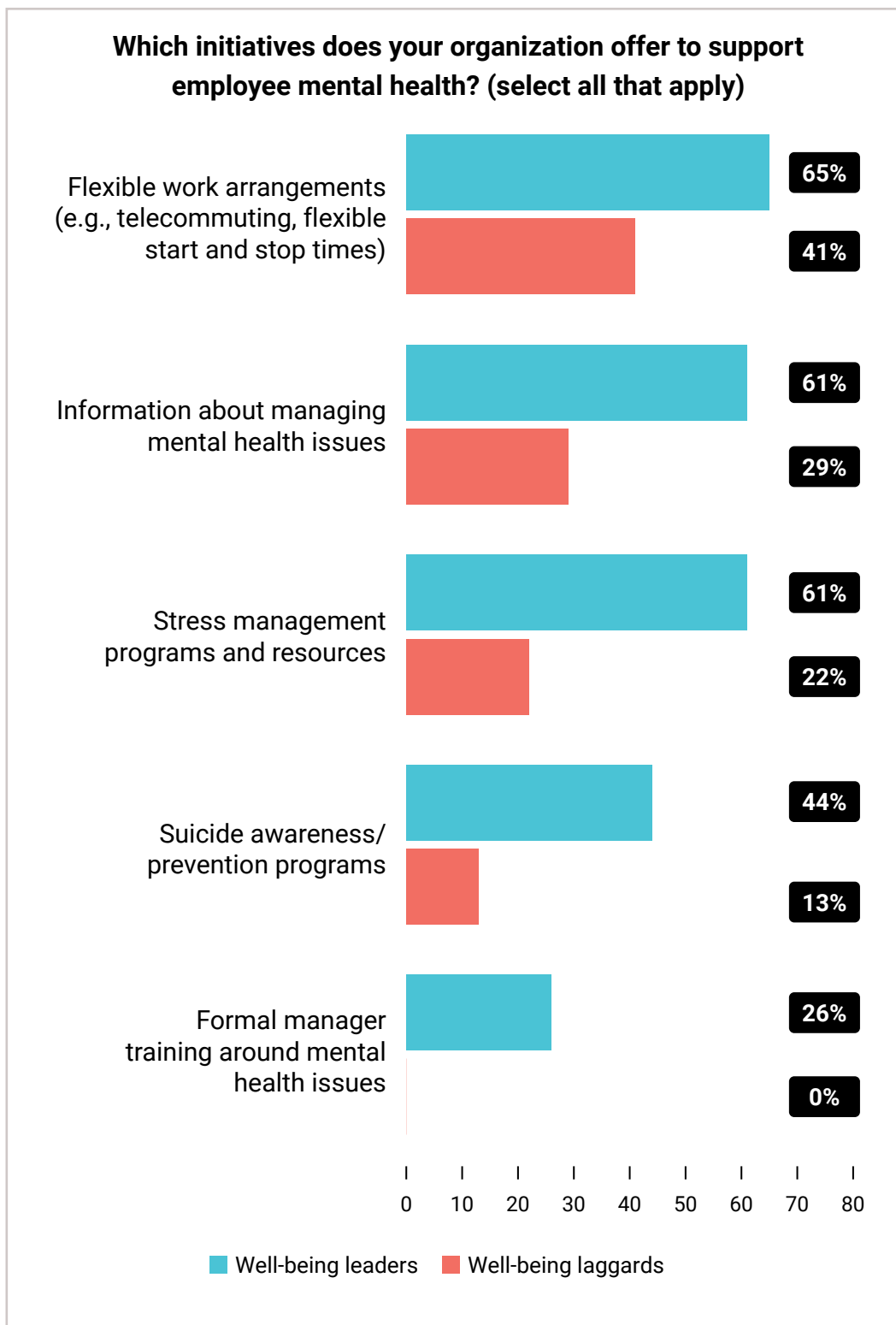
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely to utilize all listed initiatives to promote mental well-being to a greater extent than laggards.

## Finding: Well-being leaders are more likely than laggards to offer a variety of initiatives to support employee mental health

The lack of prioritization of mental health in laggard organizations is reflected in the stark difference in the likelihood of leaders to offer various well-being initiatives. For example, well-being leaders are more likely than laggards to offer flexible work arrangements (65% vs. 41%), information about managing mental health issues (61% vs. 29%), and stress management programs and resources (61% vs. 22%).

It is also important to note that none of the laggard organizations offer formal manager training around mental health issues, compared to more than a quarter of leaders (26%) who do so. Managers are often the first to detect unusual behaviors among employees, and they may be better positioned than others to make employees aware of corporate resources that support well-being.





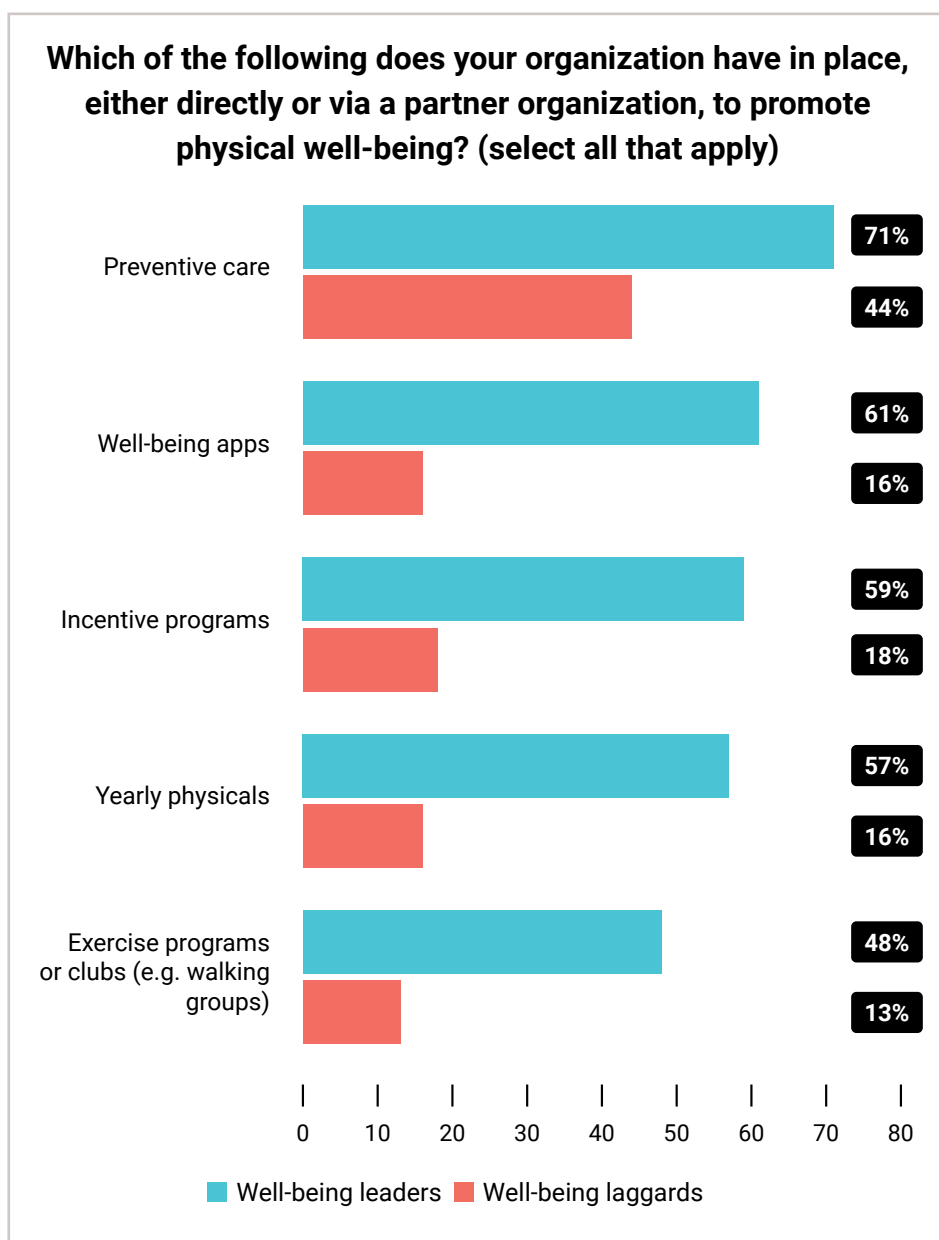
**Two-thirds of well-being leaders offer flexible work arrangements to support employee mental health**

### Results of Chi-squared Test

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

## Finding: Well-being leaders are almost four times more likely than laggards to have well-being apps to promote physical well-being

Well-being leaders are also more likely to offer specific well-being initiatives to promote physical well-being of employees. Specifically, well-being leaders are more likely than laggards to focus on preventive care (71% vs. 44%), yearly physicals (57% vs. 16%) and exercise programs or clubs (48% vs. 13%).



### Results of Chi-squared Test

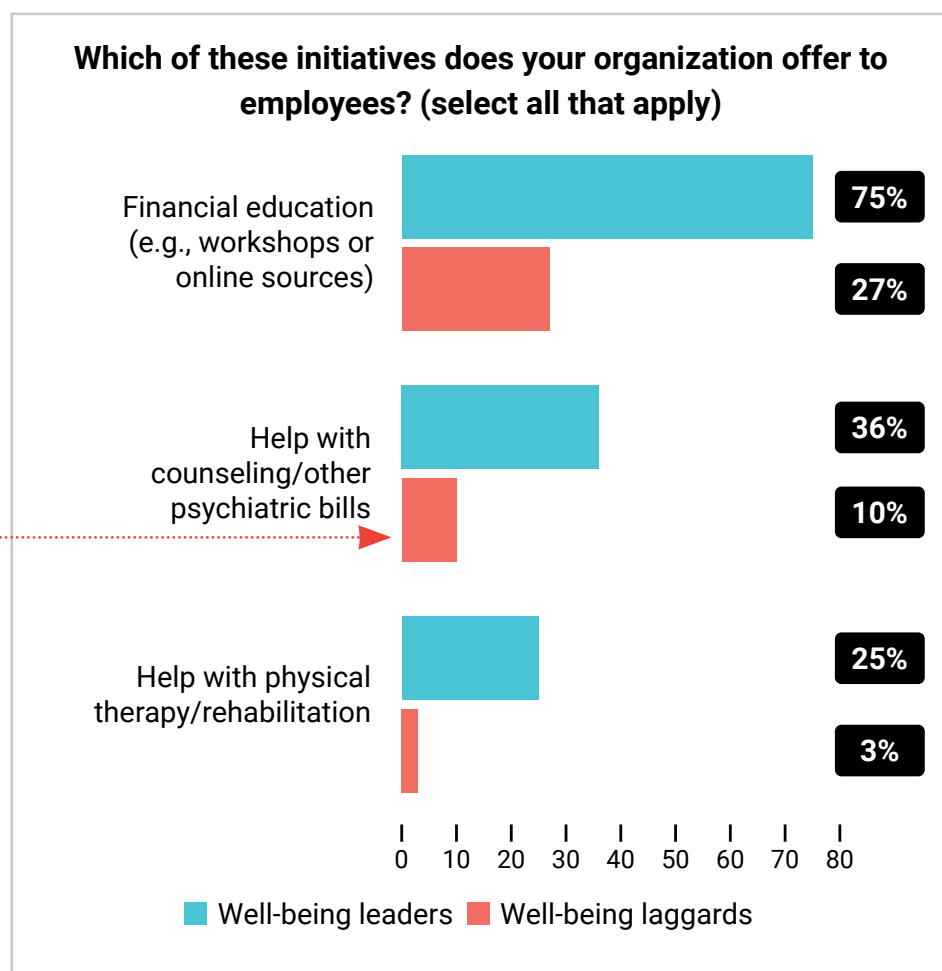
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to utilize all listed initiatives to promote financial well-being.

## Well-being leaders are about three times more likely than laggards to offer financial education to employees

Well-being leaders are more likely to take a more proactive role to enhancing employees' financial well-being. For example, when compared with laggards, they are more likely to offer financial education (75% vs. 27%), help with counselling and other psychiatric bills (36% vs. 10%) and physical therapy (25% vs. 3%).



Just one in ten laggards offer employees help with counseling/other psychiatric bills



### Results of Chi-squared Test

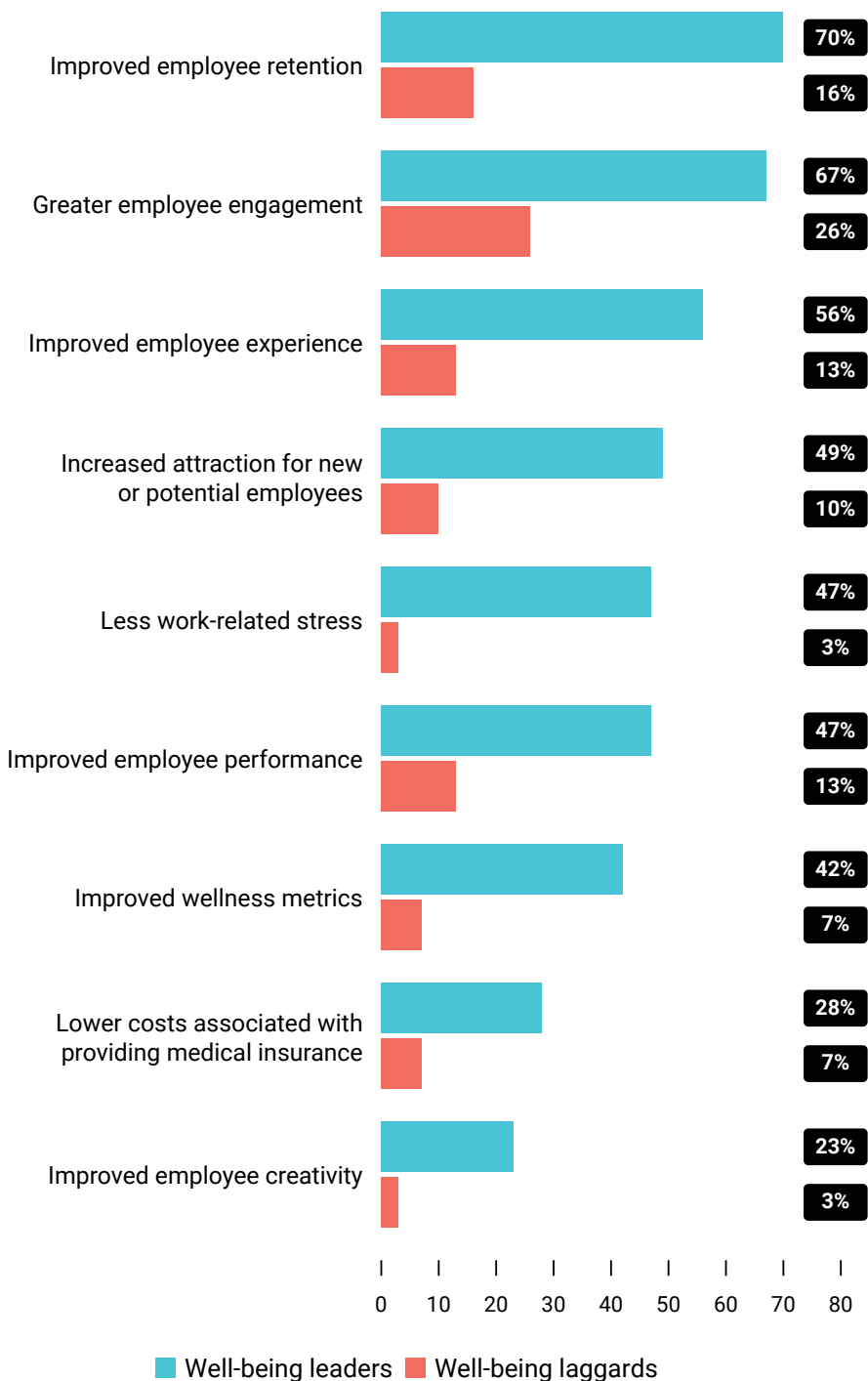
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-being leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to report better well-being related outcomes.

## Finding: Well-being leaders are five times more likely than laggards to say that their well-being programs play a role in attracting new or potential employees

Mental, financial and physical well-being initiatives allow well-being leaders to reap better outcomes. For instance, leaders are more likely to benefit from improved employee retention (70% vs. 16%), employee performance (47% vs. 13%) and employee experience (56% vs. 13%). They are also five times more likely to be able to attract new or potential employees to a much greater extent (49% vs. 10%), and they are four times more likely to benefit from lower costs associated with providing medical insurance (28% vs. 7%).



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



**7 in 10 well-being leaders benefit from improved employee retention**



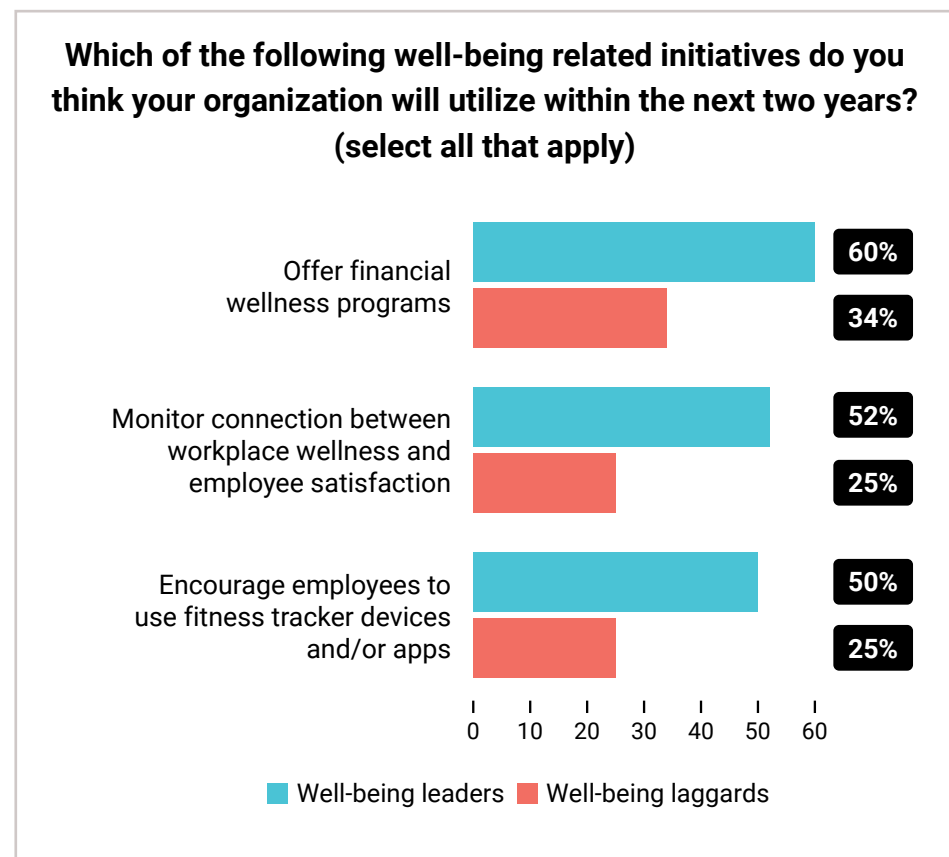
**Results of Chi-squared Test**

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

## Finding: Well-being leaders are twice as likely as laggards to say they aim to monitor connections between workplace wellness and employee satisfaction within the next two years

Well-being leaders are twice as likely as laggards to offer financial wellness programs (60% vs. 34%), monitor the connection between workplace wellness and employee satisfaction (52% vs. 25%) and encourage employees to use fitness tracker devices and/or apps (50% vs. 25%).

These initiatives potentially help organizations gather better well-being metrics which, in turn, could help them demonstrate measurable success to top management.





# Key Takeaways

## Key Takeaway 1

**Redesign work to reduce employee stress.** One of the primary ways to do this is to give employees more control over how and when they do their work. This increase in autonomy should typically come with additional training that gives employees the necessary skills to do their work independently. Further, allowing employees more control over their schedules potentially helps improve their mental health. Even jobs done on-site can sometimes allow for varied start and stop times and easier shift-trading to maximize flexibility.

## Key Takeaway 2

**Encourage employees to identify and help solve problems at work.** Employees who are allowed greater participation in improving their workplace report less burnout and more job satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> Allowing employees to problem solve creates greater feelings of ownership and control and can result in better well-being. Further, simple exercises such as identifying their personal strengths and utilizing it at work has been shown to improve happiness levels in employees.<sup>21</sup>

## Key Takeaway 3

**Train managers to support employee well-being.** Research shows that supportive and understanding managers have an impact on employees' cardiovascular health and stress levels.<sup>22</sup> Managers need to take a proactive stance while dealing with subordinates' well-being issues. Organizations must support managers through training on how to check-in with subordinates on their well-being; provide them with tools to support mental health and well-being, and also provide them with information on actions they could take if they detect early warning signs of decline in well-being. Managers can also be trained to deal with sensitive topics such as workplace bias, which can impact well-being. Managers should know what steps to take and what resources and services to offer employees faced with such challenges.

<sup>20</sup> Linzer, M., Poplau, S., Grossman, E., Varkey, A., Yale, S., Williams, E., Hicks, L., Brown, R. L., Wallock, J., Kohnhorst, D., & Barbouche, M. (2015, February 28). A cluster randomized trial of interventions to improve work conditions and clinician burnout in primary care: Results from the Healthy Work Place (HWP) Study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. SpringerLink. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-015-3235-4>

<sup>21</sup> Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *The American psychologist*. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16045394/>

<sup>22</sup> Berkman, L. F., Buxton, O., Ertel, K., & Okechukwu, C. (2010). Managers' Practices Related to Work-Family Balance Predict Employee Cardiovascular Risk and Sleep Duration in Extended Care Settings. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>

Key  
Takeaway **4**

**Foster supportive relationships at work** Employees who have a supportive network of colleagues at work gain advantages for their overall well-being, especially their mental health. Supportive networks and social belonging at work can be fostered through sharing affirming and inspiring personal stories, building ERGs, and nurturing an overall collaborative and supportive culture at work.

Key  
Takeaway **5****Encourage employee participation in well-being programs.**

Improvements can only be achieved if employees participate in these initiatives. Participation can be improved by increasing employee awareness and understanding of well-being needs and offerings. Some employees may be unaware of their well-being needs. This can be remedied through increased communication surrounding well-being issues and targeted training to help employees understand this need. Senior managers could share their own experiences regarding well-being, and managers should check in regularly about employees' well-being needs. Further, employees must be made aware of resources available to them and, when possible, well-being initiatives can be personalized to meet individual needs.

Key  
Takeaway **6**

**Reduce stigma around seeking well-being support.** Employees may hesitate to seek support especially with regard to mental well-being if they fear stigmatization. Organizations can normalize seeking support for well-being through continuous communication of the benefits of well-being initiatives and how it can improve quality of life. When top managers act as visible supporters and users of well-being initiatives, stigma surrounding these issues may decline. Organizations may also adopt default enrollment in some initiatives and allowing employees the option to opt-out rather than opt-in to these initiatives.



Key  
Takeaway **7**

**Focus on well-being of underrepresented groups.** While well-being for all employees is important, equity-deserving groups often face greater well-being challenges than others. For instance, research shows greater incidence of major health issues among Native populations,<sup>23</sup> declines in mental health due to systemic oppression of Black Americans,<sup>24</sup> and lack of access to care for members of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>25</sup> Further, women of color often report they don't feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work and lack allies at work, thereby reducing their well-being.<sup>26</sup> This may necessitate an increased focus on the well-being of these marginalized communities. Special training can be provided for employees dealing with racial battle fatigue, microaggressions and associated emotional labor which has a huge impact on their day-to-day well-being. Well-being-centered ERGs can help provide needed support and help improve mental well-being and provide social support. Childcare and educational services for children can also be invaluable to reduce stress of working parents.

Key  
Takeaway **8**

**Personalize some well-being initiatives.** With the use of data and analytics, organizations can leverage demographic data, health histories and other information to better understand the needs of employees. In some cases, employees will be able to personalize certain well-being initiatives (e.g., gym plans) to suit their specific needs. Employers can also craft messaging that reaches the target audience and maximizes participation. Another way technology can be leveraged is through better communication and collaboration with hybrid/remote workers. This improves feelings of inclusiveness and belonging, thereby improving their well-being at work.

<sup>23</sup> American Cancer Society. (2022). Cancer facts & figures 2022. *American Cancer Society*. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2022.html>

<sup>24</sup> Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, A. C. (2018). Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of Black Americans: A population-based, quasi-experimental study. *U.S. National Library of Medicine*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6376989/>

<sup>25</sup> Gruberg, S., Mahowald, L., & Halpin, J. (2020). The state of the LGBTQ community in 2020. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/state-lgbtq-community-2020/>

<sup>26</sup> Krivkovich, A., Liu, W. W., Nguyen, H., Rambachan, I., Robinson, N., Williams, M., & Yee, L. (2022, October 18). Women in the workplace 2022. *McKinsey & Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

Key  
Takeaway **9**

**Set healthy standards for remote/hybrid work.** Many organizations offer remote/hybrid work as a means to improve employee well-being through offering increased flexibility. However, many remote workers report working longer hours than when they worked on-site.<sup>27</sup> Further, employees may lose the social connection and associated benefits of brainstorming and creative collaborations of working on-site. To improve well-being of hybrid workers, organizations must encourage employees to prioritize their family, fitness and hobbies. Taking regular breaks can improve productivity and reduce chances of burnout.<sup>28</sup> Employees could also create boundaries at home, such as hard start and stop times, so they do not work at all times of the day just because they can. Lastly, employees can consider their individual preferences, needs and perspectives while designing their work structure. We think organizations should avoid normalizing overworking and working after hours by promoting a sustainable pace of work to prevent burnout.

Key  
Takeaway **10**

**Measure employee well-being.** While well-being can be complex to measure due to its multidimensional nature, it is important to measure base levels, track changes in well-being levels at regular intervals and check the influence of initiatives on improving overall well-being of employees. It is also essential to understand the effect of organizational culture, leadership and work pressure on the well-being of employees. Further, metrics must be devised around the outcomes and utilization of well-being initiatives. Some measurement tools to consider are employee surveys, focus groups, lived experience panels and health assessment tools.

<sup>27</sup> Work Trend Index Annual Report. (2021). The next great disruption is hybrid work-are we ready? *Microsoft*. Retrieved from <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>

<sup>28</sup> Work Trend Index Special Report. (2021). Research proves your brain needs breaks. *Microsoft*. Retrieved from <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/brain-research>



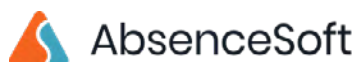
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