

Health on Demand 2023

Benefits for all.
Benefits for a fast-changing world.
Benefits for healthier societies.

benefits that truly benefit



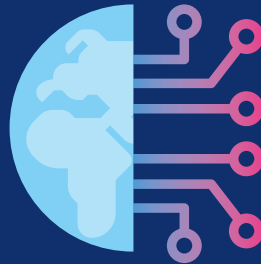


Benefits for all

**Introduce Gen Z into
your benefits mindset**

**Keep caring
for caregivers**

**Make inclusive changes
for meaningful impact**



Benefits for a fast-changing world

**Bring resilience for a
“continuous crisis” era**

**Intensify your impact
on social issues**

**Balance human and
digital health delivery**



Benefits for healthier societies

**Mitigate risk for
the unwell**

**Address health and risk
protection gaps**

**Design for emotional
well-being**

Survey overview

Are your benefits still relevant for today's challenges?

The physical, social, emotional and financial challenges brought upon us largely by COVID-19 were just the start of a period of “polycrisis” — where disparate crises interact such that the overall impact far exceeds the sum of each part. This has encompassed war, environmental disasters, political upheaval and inflation levels that have affected access to basic necessities, including energy, food and housing.

Amid this turmoil, employers have had to reconsider their business and work models to find new ways to grow. They have had to get creative in the “war for skills” and assess whether their benefits are affordable and relevant to the challenges now facing their workforces.

These external and internal factors affect employees' health and well-being needs, especially in vulnerable groups such as low-paid employees and those who are unwell. In parallel, the rise of Gen Z (born between 1997 – 2012) is challenging employers to rethink traditional benefits offerings. Gen Zers have different priorities, values and health needs from previous generations and want employers to actively engage with societal issues, such as women's health, barriers to health equity and mental health.¹

¹ Oliver Wyman Forum | The News Movement. A-Gen-Z Report, 2023, available at <https://www.oliverwymanforum.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/ow-forum/template-scripts/a-gen-z/pdf/A-Gen-Z-Report.pdf>.





For employees to thrive, employers must care

Health systems, public and private, are under increasing pressure from factors like labor shortages and financial constraints, driving employers to think about a more caring, hands-on approach to employee healthcare.

Our 2021 Health on Demand research focused on the importance of “showing you care”: providing benefits that have meaning and meet the individual needs of all members of the workforce. Health on Demand 2023 (fielded in late 2022) expands on that theme. It explores what it means to offer benefits that resonate with individuals, drive healthier societies and address key risks of our time, such as climate change.

Caring employers have an enormous impact on people's lives. Over three-quarters (78%) of employees who

believe their employers care about their health and well-being also say they are thriving. This aligns with our Global Talent Trends research, which indicates that thriving employees are seven times more likely to work in a healthy workplace.² This research also shows that one in three employees would forgo a pay raise for additional well-being benefits for themselves or their families.

Although 88% of companies consider themselves caring (they have a supportive culture and embrace the health and safety of their people), our Health on Demand data reveals that only 66% of employees say their employers care about their health and well-being.³ Workers in financial services companies and in construction are the most likely to believe their employers care, whereas

those working in healthcare, education and retail — industries acutely strained by the pandemic — are more likely to believe their employers fall short in this area.

Consistent with prior years, our latest findings suggest that supporting the widest possible range of employee needs makes a difference. Of the employees who have access to 10 or more benefits (such as medical coverage, life insurance and mental health counselling), 82% say they are thriving, compared to just 58% of those with access to between one and four traditional benefits.

^{2,3} Mercer. Global Talent Trends Study 2022–2023, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/career/global-talent-hr-trends.html>.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of employees who are offered 10 or more benefits say the level of benefits they receive makes them more likely to stay with their employers.

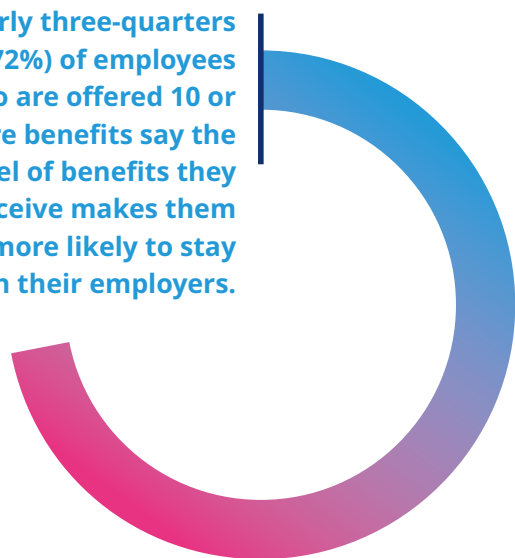
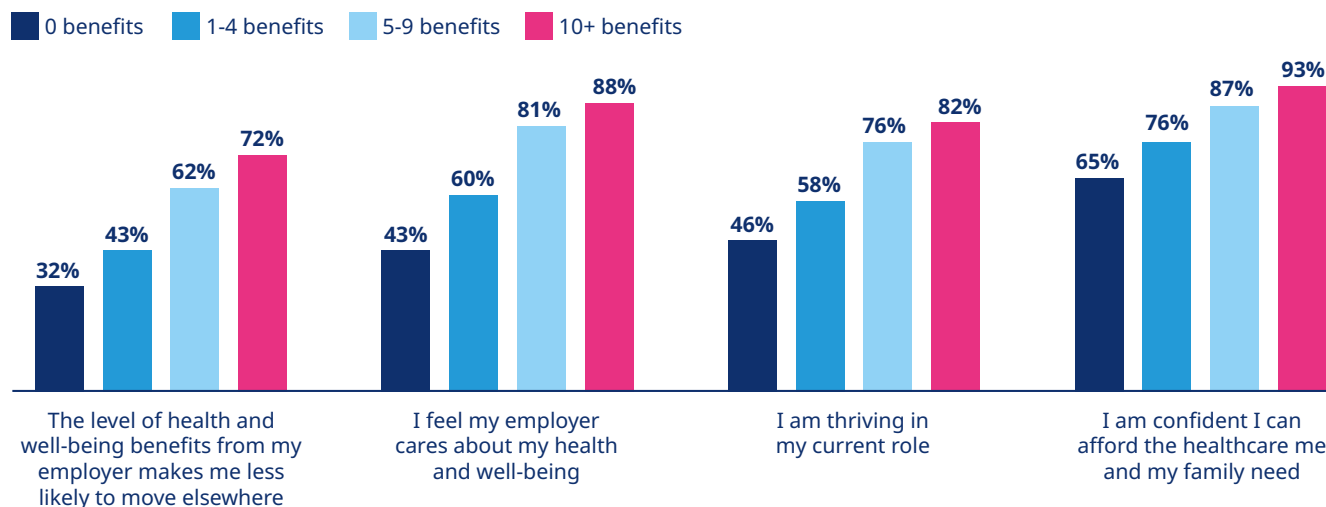


Figure 1: The more benefits an employee receives, the more likely the employee is to report thriving in their role



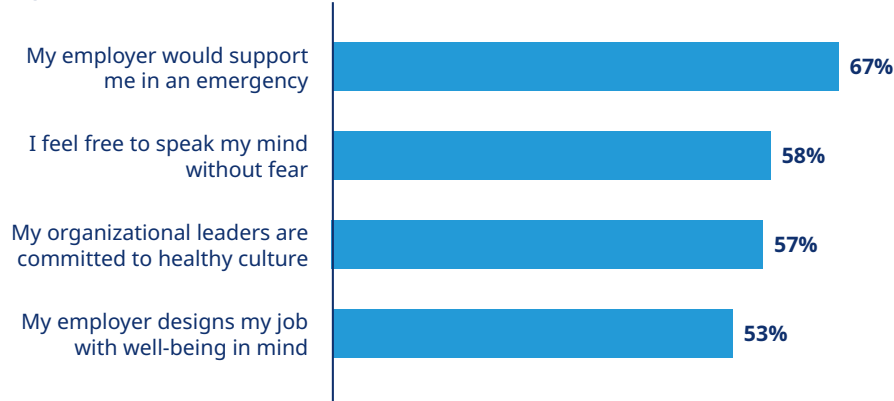
Close healthcare gaps so all employees thrive

Certain groups within the workforce are still struggling. Sadly, employees who are physically or mentally unwell are much less likely to believe their employers care about their well-being (41%) than respondents overall (66%).

In addition to providing meaningful benefits, building a caring, trusting relationship with employees involves being there in times of need.

An authentic culture of caring also requires that leaders promote openness and insist on psychological safety. This demands commitment to developing future leaders who are willing to listen; able to start conversations about well-being; focused on creating manageable, meaningful work; and genuinely committed to organizational health and well-being. Those who feel their employers care are more than twice as likely to

say they would feel comfortable opening up to their managers or colleagues about a mental health condition (64% compared to 30%). In a culture of openness, managers will be better able to address problems like burnout before they escalate.

Figure 2: Culture of health

Health and well-being is a top concern for many CEOs and CFOs and is influencing their 2023 business decision making. According to our Beat the Crisis research, people's safety ranked in importance above many other factors, including financial market volatility and high energy costs.⁴ Providing meaningful benefits has moved well beyond an opportunity to differentiate the employee value proposition to an operational necessity, not to mention a mitigation against wage inflation. Today's business case for benefits covers a myriad of people risks, including meeting growing environmental, social and governance (ESG) expectations.

This report will help revise, refine and prioritize the business case for further investment in benefits that support the needs of a modern workforce and sustain productivity through this new era.

⁴ Mercer. Beat the Crisis: How Executives Are Responding to Economic Shocks and Talent Shortages, 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.ca/en/our-thinking/career/how-executives-are-responding-to-economic-shocks-and-talent-shortages.html>.



Methodology

What

Health on Demand is a global employee survey designed to explore how workforce needs and attitudes relating to health and well-being are changing in response to current issues. This is the third iteration of the research.

When

Fielded in October and November 2022.

Who

17,531 full-time and part-time employee respondents

Where

Asia: China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Singapore.

Europe: Italy, Netherlands, Spain, UK.

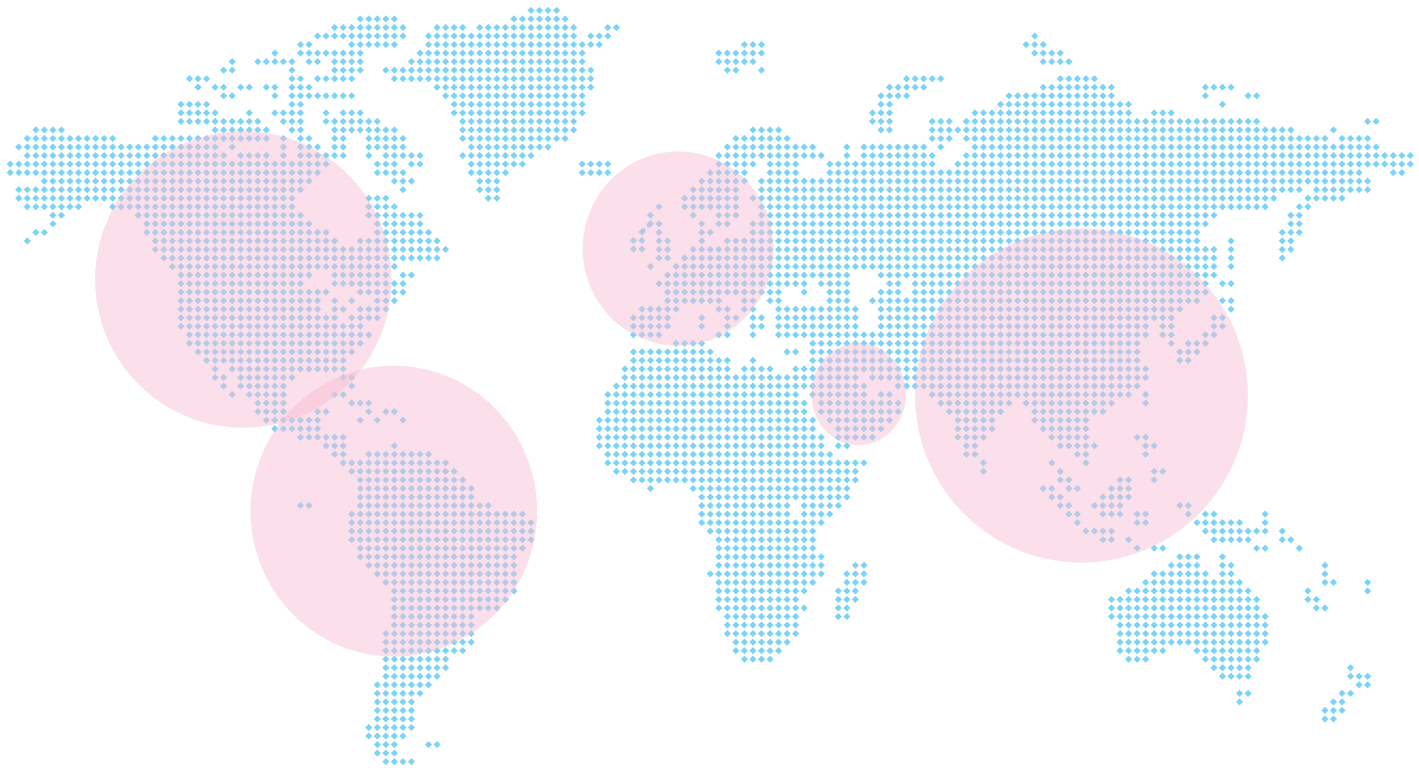
Latin America: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama.

Middle East: UAE.

North America: Canada and US.

Why

- Help employee benefits sponsors design and deliver support programs to meet employee needs as the nature of work changes, technology evolves and crises intensify.
- Understand employee attitudes and behaviors around the world toward benefits, including digital health, in the quest for improved quality of care and employee experience.
- Explore employees' concerns about the accessibility and affordability of healthcare (including mental healthcare) and risk protection.



Additional notes

Survey instrument: This survey questionnaire was translated into the local language in each market. The questions were the same across markets, with the exception of questions about gender identity, abortion, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity, which were included only where appropriate based on the local legislative environment.

Global weighting: All markets were sampled using demographic data on age, gender and location so that results would be as representative of the local workforce as possible. Approximately 1,000 working people were surveyed in all countries except the US, which had more than 2,000 respondents, and Panama, which had 750. In the global results, the US and Panama are weighted to 1,000 so that each market has equal representation. The percentages and sample sizes are produced using the weighted data.

Part 1

Benefits for all

Building benefits strategies that work for everyone requires insight into the broad range of needs and preferences of different employee groups in employers' workforces.





Introduce Generation Z into your benefits mindset

Generation Z (born between 1997 – 2021) forms 25% of the global population.⁵ They have just entered the workforce, with many in-demand skills; by 2025, they will comprise 27% of the workforce.⁶ They have unique needs, experiences and expectations that set them apart from all previous generations. Our survey captured the responses of adult Gen Z employees, 18- to 25-year-olds.

Helping this group of individuals sustainably thrive at work should now be a priority for benefits design. The goal should be to enable these employees to evolve into leaders of the future and to alleviate the risk of burnout that characterizes a generation where over half (52%) feel stressed in their everyday lives.



Keep caring for caregivers

Caregivers are an established part of the workforce in both mature and growth markets, with 71% of employees globally saying they have caregiving responsibilities. Societies are in dire need of caregiver solutions to support this group at work and beyond.

During COVID-19, caregiver needs rose to the forefront, and employers responded with greater focus on flexible working, digital health and family benefits. Employers now have an opportunity to build on that momentum and consider creative and innovative models of support for this dominant and critical group of employees.



Make inclusive changes for meaningful impact

The more employers understand the needs of their employees, the better able they will be to make inclusive changes for meaningful impact. Women and LGBTQ+ employees feel less cared for by their employers than the workforce in general does.

Understanding how current programs support different employee groups will help businesses improve upon the 59% of employees globally who say their benefits meet their needs. Employers can address this by assessing all employee life stages, understanding attitudes toward crises and health concerns, and targeting specific economic groupings and the many responsibilities employees may have outside work.

^{5,6} Oliver Wyman Forum's 2023 A-Gen-Z Report <https://www.oliverwymanforum.com/global-consumer-sentiment/a-gen-z.html>.

Introduce Generation Z into your benefits mindset



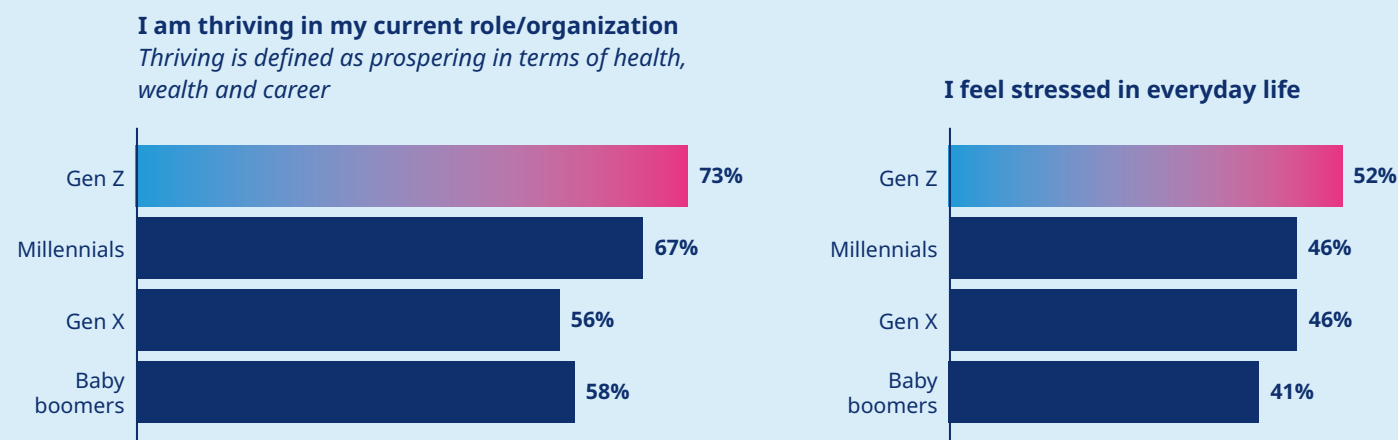
Gen Z's worldview stems from a place of disenchanting realism. They experienced too much, too young, from the ravages of the Great Recession to COVID-19 and spasms of social unrest. You can call them cynics, or even nihilists, but they'll tell you they're just realistic about the future, having seen the failures of government, business, and religious institutions.

Oliver Wyman and The News Movement's
A-Gen-Z Report

While the Gen Z worldview may be one of "disenchanted realism," they are generally more positive about their work lives than other generations. They are more likely to be thriving (73% versus 64% overall), feel as if their employer designed their jobs with well-being in mind (60% versus 53% overall) and are more open about discussing mental health at work (58% versus 54% overall). That said, nearly two-thirds of Gen Z (62%) report actively or passively seeking new jobs.⁷ Furthermore, they are more stressed in everyday life than employees of other generations.

Supporting and nurturing this group is an investment in the future of the business. Employers might consider how to design the work environment and structure benefits to optimize their enthusiasm and openness by supporting Gen Z's willingness to reach out for assistance. Gen Z brings an opportunity to model positive workplace cultures and the potential to become empathetic future leaders.

Figure 3: Thriving and stress by generation



Gen Z:

Employees born in 1997 and after (those in the workforce: ages 18 to 25)

Millennials:

Employees born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 26 to 41)

Gen X:

Employees born between 1965 and 1980 (ages 42 to 57)

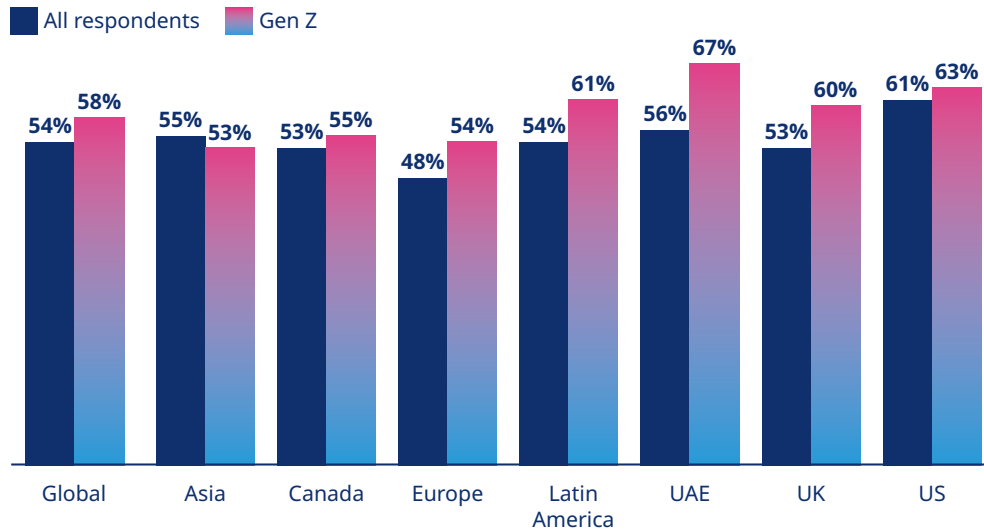
Baby boomers:

Employees born before 1964 (ages 58+)

Ranges obtained from Pew Research Center

⁷ Oliver Wyman Forum's 2023 A-Gen-Z Report.

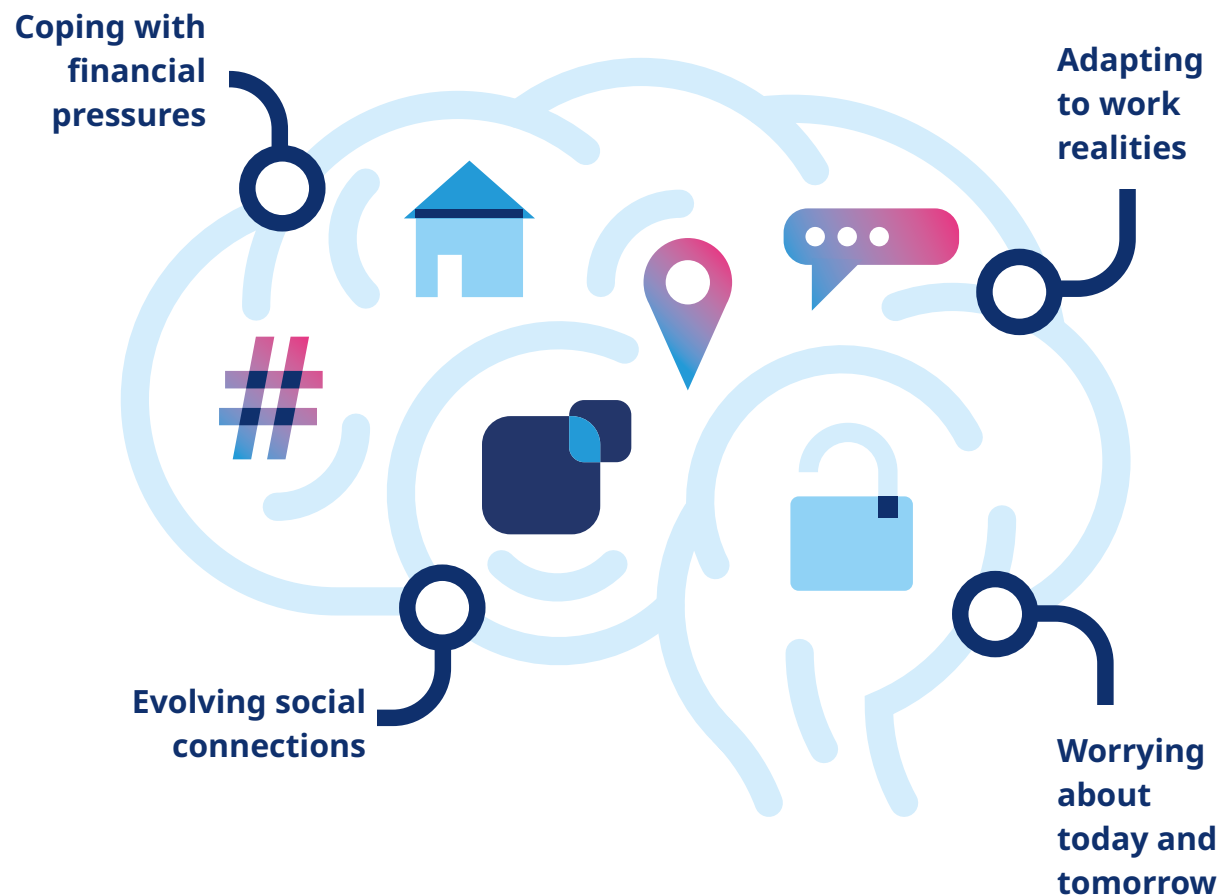
Figure 4: Regional by the numbers: “I would feel comfortable telling my manager or colleagues that I see a therapist or take medicine for a mental health issue”



Despite their general positivity, Gen Z faces special challenges. Gen Zers are new to the workplace and dealing with the culture shift from school into their first jobs or careers. Many entered the workplace during the pandemic, making their early experiences of work far from optimal. They report higher levels of stress and have greater expectations of their managers, including understanding of their emotional well-being inside and outside the workplace. Oliver Wyman and The News Movement found that Gen Z is 1.9 times more likely than other generations to report they struggle with mental health issues.⁸ Their stressors and coping mechanisms are likely to be different from those of other generations.

⁸ Oliver Wyman Forum's 2023 A-Gen-Z Report.



Figure 5: Introduce Gen Z into your benefits mindset

The advantages and challenges that characterize Gen Z point to the importance of an open culture (e.g., two-way communication), with preventive mental health supports to build resilience, self-care and balance to mitigate the risk of burnout. As they begin to face increased responsibilities both in and outside the workplace, this group will look to leaders for authentic understanding of the factors inside or outside work affecting their well-being and support to help them thrive in terms of health, wealth and career.

As Gen Zers impose their will on the workplace, they will change the traditional employer–employee relationship. HR leaders will have to act not only as recruiters, but as guidance counselors, psychologists, mediators, and change agents. To attract Gen Z workers, employers will also need to rethink the workplace itself — everything from office layouts to company benefits, policies, and culture. Boomers and Gen Xers shouldn't view Gen Zers as the enemy but rather as the enablers, since their demands for better benefits and workplace standards will be acted on broadly.

Oliver Wyman and The News Movement's A-Gen-Z Report

Gen Z versus Gen X

Gen Z is redefining the employer–employee relationship. Their mindset is very different from the Gen X decision makers who are likely to be organizational leaders shaping current corporate programs. When compared to Gen X employees, those now in their mid- to late careers, this youngest age workplace cohort is more likely to:

- Report that benefits are a reason to remain with their employers
- Trust their employers to provide quality personal health solutions
- Feel their employers care about them

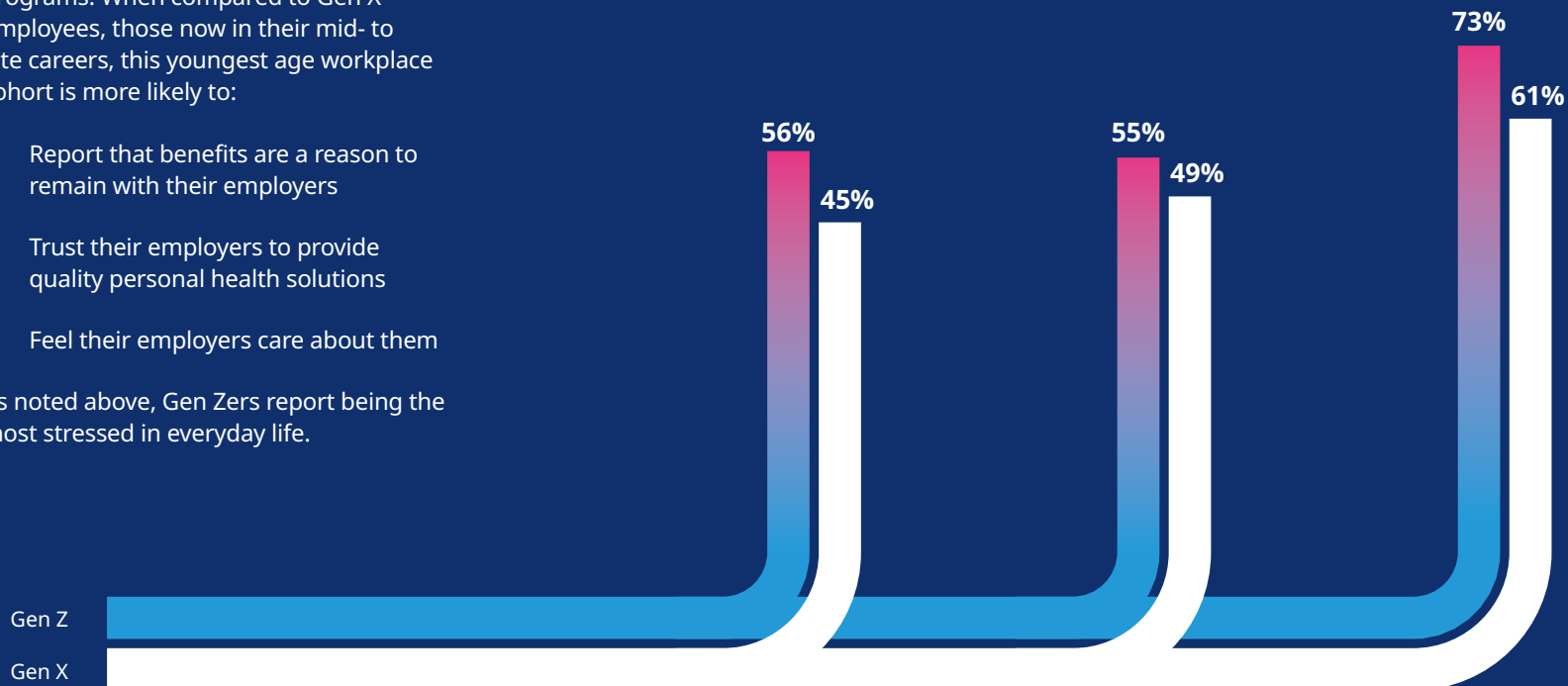
As noted above, Gen Zers report being the most stressed in everyday life.

Figure 6: Gen Z versus Gen X

Stay at their employers due to the benefits they receive

Trust their employers to deliver personal health solutions

Feel their employers care about their health and well-being




Taking care of Gen Z's well-being is a key priority

Generation Z is focused on well-being. This has important implications for organizational commitment to benefits and for healthcare program design. As a trusted influencer in the lives of their Gen Z workers, employers are well positioned to demonstrate authentic leadership to this growing segment of the workforce; for example, to embrace more innovative approaches to healthcare that solve real problems in a convenient way.

These employees are more concerned about their mental health and more willing to explore alternative approaches to mental health therapy than other generations. Employers will need to evaluate inclusion of these approaches carefully for quality and to mitigate risk. In addition, they can help by putting resilience at the heart of their workplace cultures. This includes providing a wide range of mental-health-related benefits, encouraging senior and line managers to share relatable personal experiences of managing their own mental health, and listening empathetically to colleagues of all ages.

Financial well-being is another important area. Research in the US and the UK showed that watching their parents and older siblings struggle financially has made Gen Zers debt averse, stressed about money and determined to manage their finances differently.⁹ Gen Z investors are starting younger. However, they're not sure if they're making the right moves. Gen Zers are 1.4 times more likely to report that "money stresses me out" than older generations — and five times less likely to be disciplined with their spending.¹⁰

There are also important considerations for supporting the health of Gen Z women, who are well aware of issues around health inequities and reproductive health more broadly. This group values fertility-related support and contraception access and coverage, reflecting their current priorities. A focus on these areas has implications for more inclusive benefits programs that support all life stages. (See the "Make Inclusive Changes for Meaningful Impact" section.)



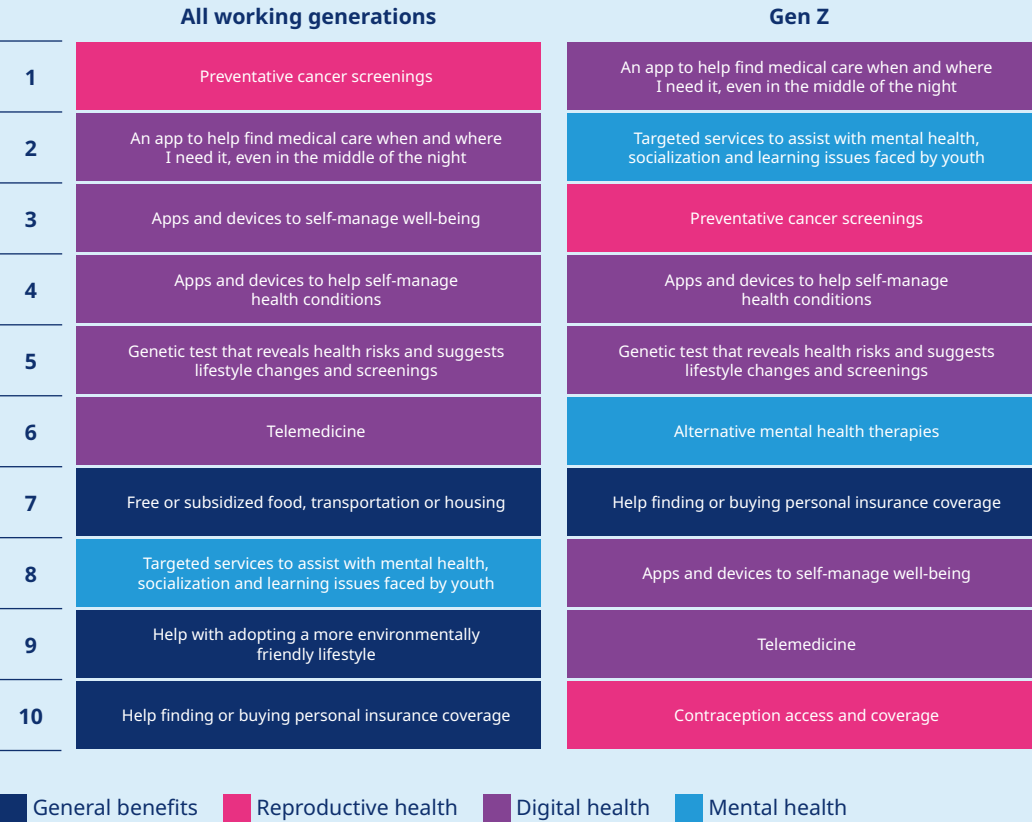
Gen Zers are open-minded and experimental, willing to supplement (or replace) the medical establishment with alternative treatments like herbal or botanical medicine, energy healing, or hypnosis. Forty percent of Gen Z has tried at least one form of alternative medicine, and more than two-thirds say they are willing to try herbal medicine, homeopathy, or energy healing.

Oliver Wyman and The News Movement's A-Gen-Z Report



^{9,10} Oliver Wyman Forum's 2023 A-Gen-Z Report.

Figure 7: What does Gen Z value?



Authenticity in Gen Z communication and education

Relatable, inclusive, trustworthy, democratized, digestible, personalized and transparent communications are especially important with Gen Zers.¹¹

Gen Zers are the first true digital natives, and it shows in how they choose to stay informed. Research in the UK and the US shows that 60% get their news from social media (twice the level of print or digital newspapers and magazines) and its many influencers and creators, in part, because they appreciate multiple viewpoints. Nearly 60% say they've developed techniques to spot unreliable or fake news, but 77% of Gen Zers who say they fact-check their news believe at least one COVID-19-related conspiracy theory.¹²

A benefits PDF booklet downloaded from an employer's intranet is unlikely to engage this segment. Although employers fear the administration and headaches associated with social media content moderation, experimenting with engaging social forms of authentic content may be necessary to be noticed, with important implications for engagement on benefits topics and health education.

^{11,12} Oliver Wyman Forum's 2023 A-Gen-Z Report.

Actions for employers

How to introduce Gen Z into your benefits mindset:



- Communicate the use, value and importance of benefits in the employee value proposition for all age groups, using a mix of communication techniques that blend physical and digital options. Understand that dialogues are the path to transactions.
- Involve Gen Zers in communication strategy and health/benefits campaign decisions. Appoint Gen Z employees as ambassadors in areas such as digital health.
- Prioritize benefits that are meaningful to Gen Z, such as mental health, women's health and preventive care. Also address areas like charitable-contribution-matching, and encourage use of paid time off to show you care.
- Enable safe, secure access to self-care, self-learning, and digital health and well-being solutions, such as wearable technology to help manage health risks.
- Provide access to benefits and tools that support this group's financial well-being, including access to education (for example, understanding paychecks and taxes), guidance (for example, getting started with investment) and support (for example, student debt, where relevant).
- Look for ways to encourage cross-generational collaboration across the business. For example, Gen Zers may be able to learn from baby boomers, who are less at risk of burnout, and boomers can learn the latest skills from digital natives.
- Provide professional opportunities to affect critical societal issues to help engage Gen Z in all aspects of work life.
- Train and prepare managers to have empathetic, supportive conversations with Gen Z employees, particularly around mental health.

Keep caring for caregivers



Caregiving is part of the fabric of life. The majority of respondents globally (71%) report having caregiving responsibilities for children, parents, family members or friends.

Most working caregivers are millennials (78% say they are caregivers) or Gen X (74%), which means that many of an organization's current leaders and experienced workers are caregivers. By providing support to caregivers, employers have an opportunity not only to improve lives and strengthen communities but also to retain business-critical experience and talent.

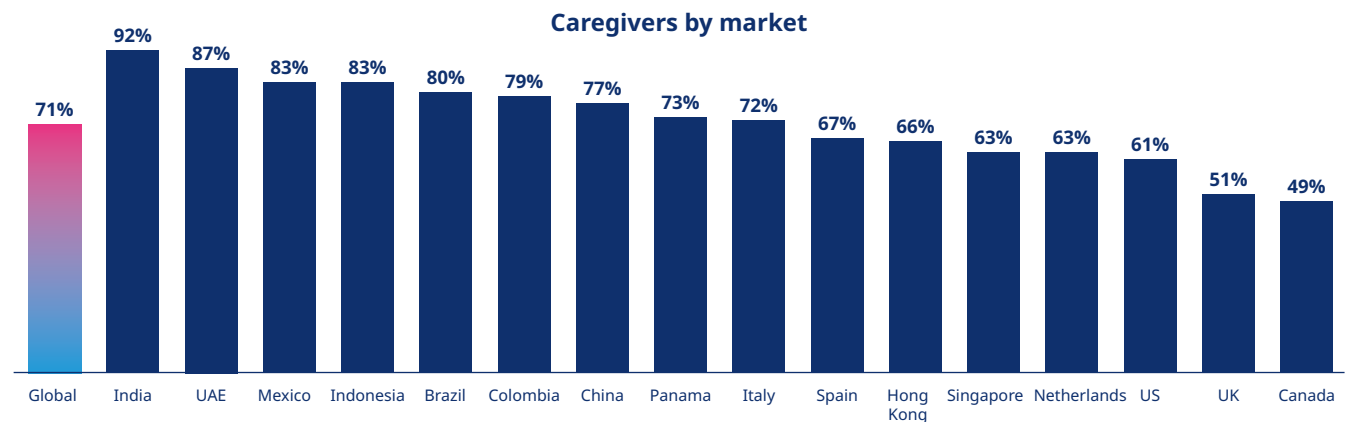
Significant regional nuances will affect benefits design for this group. A higher proportion of employees in growth markets are caregivers, and perceived definitions of caring may differ from region to region. For example, in some parts of the world, employees may view supporting their families financially to be caregiving; in others, those identifying as a caregiver will be providing more direct, hands-on care to children or adults.

Wider aging, cultural and societal factors continue to shape caregiving at a regional level. For example, by 2050, nearly 60%¹³ of the world's population aged 65 or older is expected to live in Asia. For many cultures, care for both children and elders is typically provided by females in the home. In parts of Europe, the UK and North America, social care (such as long-term-care homes) is more common; in Latin America, family-based

care is the norm for both cultural and financial reasons. However, what may have been traditional in a specific geography may not reflect the reality of what is needed by those in flourishing diverse communities. Meanwhile, many are questioning the sustainability of available traditional government supports that should make life smoother for caregivers (for example, the availability of family doctors in many markets with mature public healthcare systems).



Figure 8: In most markets, the majority of employees are caregivers
Caregivers are those who have caregiving duties to children, parents, family members or friends.



¹³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. World Population Ageing 2019, available at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf>.

Priorities for caregivers

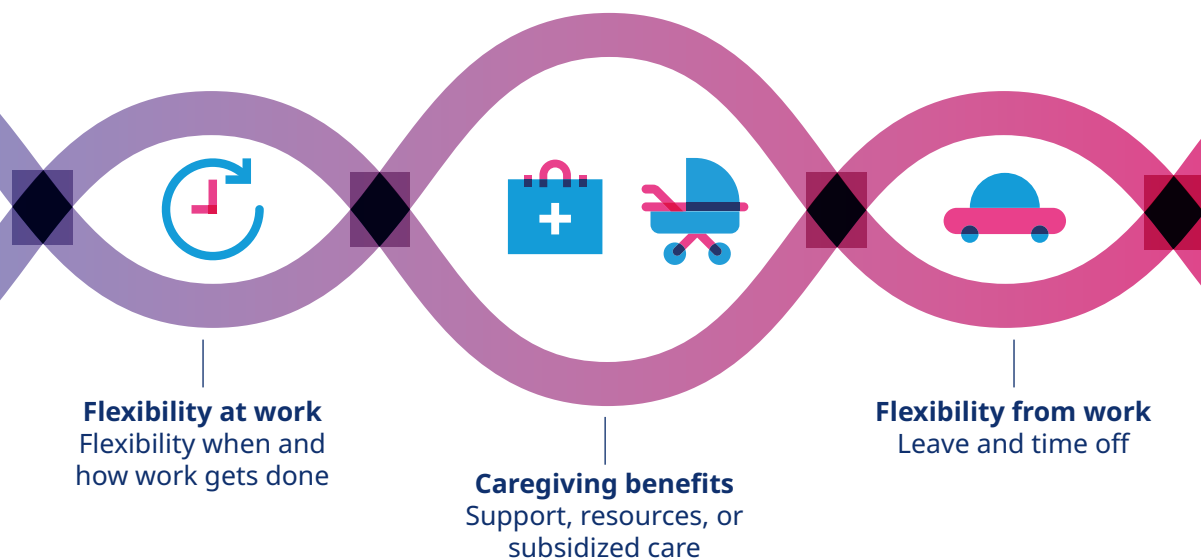
Caregivers value the support of their employers. They are more likely to say their employers care about their health and well-being than noncaregivers (69% versus 59%) and are also more likely to trust their employers to deliver personal health solutions (55% versus 45% of noncaregivers). At the same time, they are more likely both to report being stressed and to have worked while feeling unwell in the past year.

This group prioritizes timesaving benefits that help them self-manage their own health and that of their families. COVID-19 highlighted the need for employers to support caregivers, in part, through accelerated digital means but also through flexible working. Employers have an important opportunity to build on this momentum by creating a work culture that supports caregivers in very practical ways to ease stress and prevent burnout.

All aspects of physical, emotional, social and financial well-being play important parts — for example, the cost of childcare is unaffordable for many. Unless addressed, employers will face challenges in meeting diversity, equity and inclusion objectives.

Figure 9: Keep caring for caregivers

Keep caring for caregivers



Top five interventions* that caregivers find helpful

- 1 Preventive cancer screenings
- 2 An app to help find medical care when and where I need it, even in the middle of the night
- 3 Targeted services to assist with mental health, socialization and learning issues faced by youth
- 4 Apps and devices to help self-manage health conditions
- 5 Apps and devices to self-manage well-being

Caregivers, along with many of the groups in our research, emphasize the importance of relationships at work as a source of social interaction — which has broad implications for mental health. As COVID-19 restrictions fade, employers can encourage employees to reconnect with peers and colleagues at work, spend focused time with family and friends, and get involved in the community.

Note: “Interventions” refers to specific reproductive health, digital health, mental health and general benefits queried in the survey (see Appendix A). This does not refer to traditional benefits, such as life insurance or medical coverage.



Figure 10: Regional by the numbers: “Over the past year, medical expenses have caused financial hardship for me and/or my family”

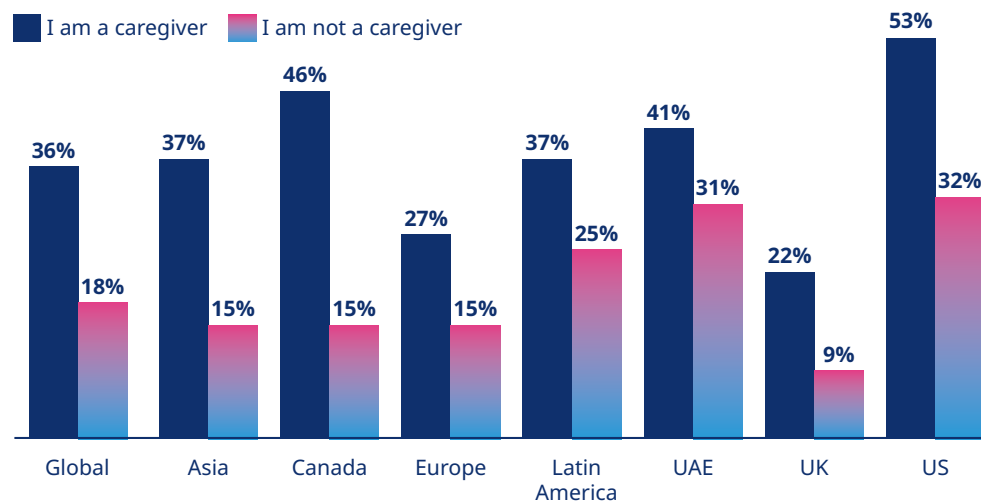
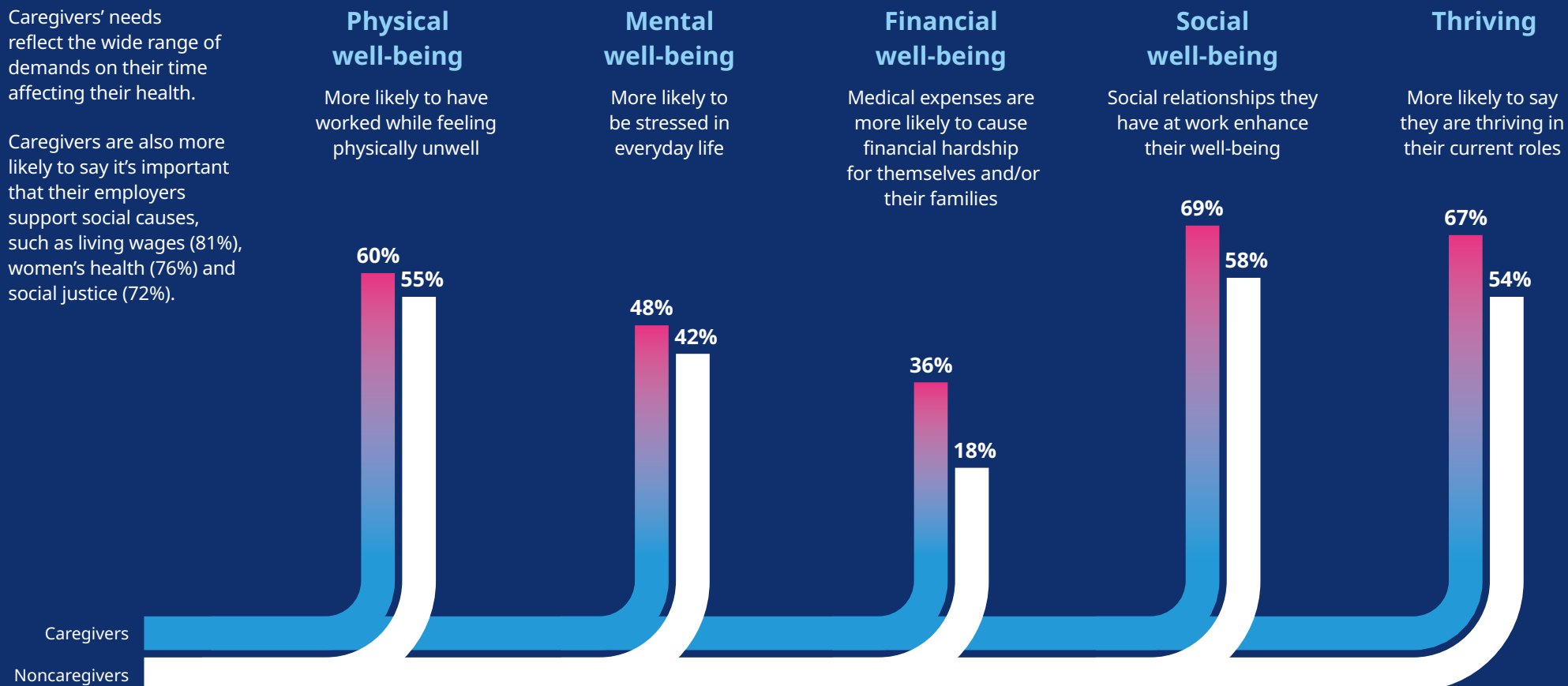


Figure 11: Physical, mental, financial and social well-being for caregivers

Caregivers' needs reflect the wide range of demands on their time affecting their health.

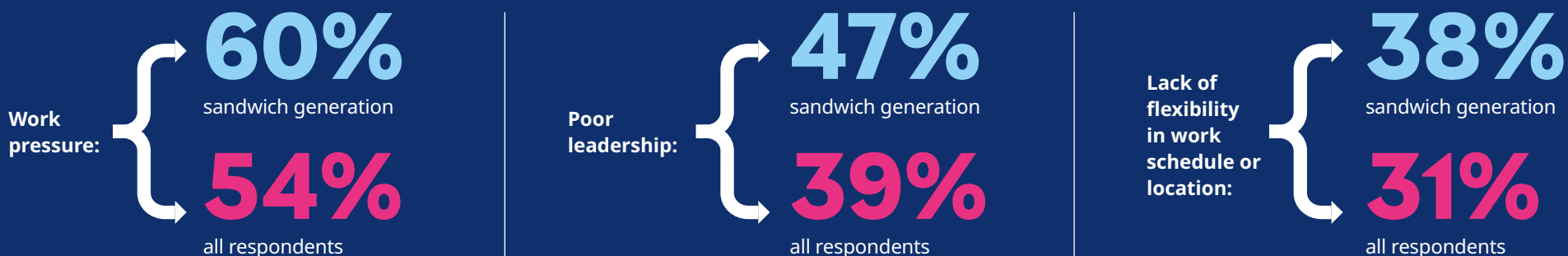
Caregivers are also more likely to say it's important that their employers support social causes, such as living wages (81%), women's health (76%) and social justice (72%).



The sandwich generation

Figure 12: Work practices are squeezing the sandwich generation

Factors contributing to burnout risk: sandwich generation versus all respondents.



The sandwich generation must fit caring responsibilities for both children and aging/sick parents within their work lives. They are the most likely to experience financial hardship over medical expenses (38% compared to 18% for noncaregivers) and to suffer because of work pressures (60% compared to 54% for all respondents). Nearly six in 10 (58%) say they are less likely to change employers due to the health and well-being benefits provided (versus 50% of all respondents).



Actions for employers

How to keep caring for caregivers:



- Consider flexible working arrangements, such as flextime, alternative shifts, compressed work weeks, reduced schedules and job sharing.
- Ensure adequate flexibility away from work through formal leave policies, but don't overlook returning to work post-leave as a source of potential stress.
- Review caregiving-specific benefits, including subsidies for child/adult care, navigation support, digital health solutions for children and benefits eligibility for extended family members, such as parents.
- Look for opportunities to provide advantages to dependents. Although it may not be financially feasible to offer benefits to extended family members like parents, you may be able to provide support, such as negotiated discounts, voluntary benefits or health evaluations under broader well-being programs.
- Check benefits adequacy for specialized benefits, such as home renovations, assistive technology and developmental assessments, in light of current-day costs.
- Establish social networks and focus groups that support caregivers.
- Explore how you can better reach the individuals being cared for. There could be opportunities to communicate directly with dependents covered under plans about the importance of prevention or involve them in health-engagement activities.
- Evaluate how you can support parents of children with developmental needs and/or neurodiversity (including ADHD, autism).
- Provide access to services that can help caregivers save time and money, such as grocery or medication delivery.

Make inclusive changes for meaningful impact

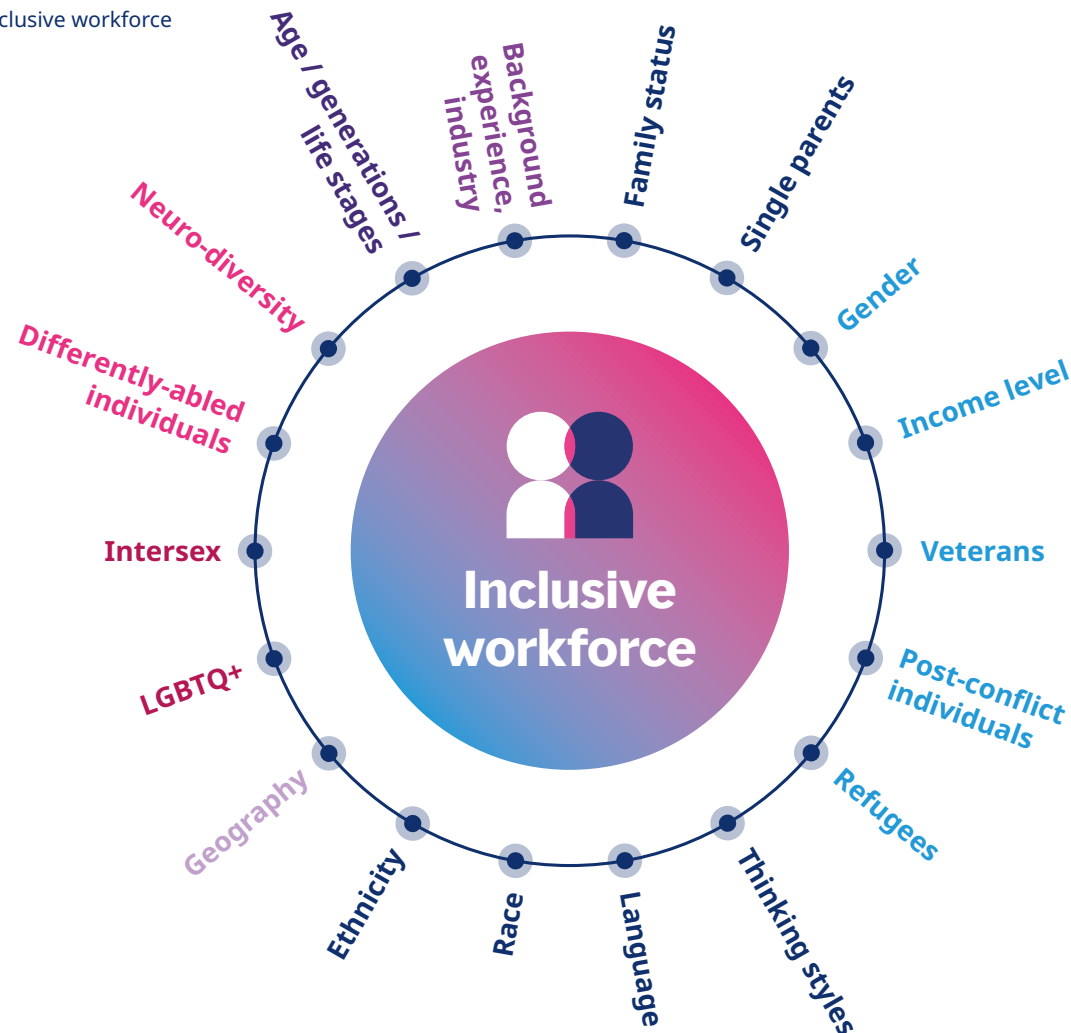


We have discussed how tailoring benefits to meet the needs of Gen Z and caregivers could positively influence their lives at and outside work. However, these two groups represent just some of the many different needs, characteristics and priorities present in the workplace. Given the vast spectrum of priorities in the workforce, benefits programs should be built on a framework that promotes inclusivity and allows for continuous positive change.

A growing body of research highlights that women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ employees, and many others continue to experience health inequities and benefits gaps.^{14,15} This is reflected in how well employees feel they're cared for at work and whether they feel they're thriving.



Figure 13: Inclusive workforce



¹⁴ Ndugga N and Artiga S. "Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers," May 11, 2021, available at <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers/>

¹⁵ Mercer. Health on Demand 2021.



Figure 14: How well do you feel cared for at work, and are you thriving?

	Cared for	Thriving
Men	69%	66%
All respondents	67%	64%
Women	63%	60%
LGBTQ+*	62%	61%
Single mothers	57%	54%

Cultural and societal influences provide additional insight. Our regional and market findings will be released throughout the first half of 2023. These provide additional insights into findings, including for ethnic minorities in certain markets. For example, in Canada, our Health on Demand research found that employees who identify as indigenous are 3.5 times more likely to have suffered from financial hardship due to medical expenses over the past year compared to respondents in Canada who do not identify as indigenous.

Note: Respondents in the US, the UK, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Spain, Mexico and the Netherlands were asked (on a voluntary basis) whether they identified as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual and/or transgender.

Focus on women's health

Although some high-profile organizations have begun to recognize the challenges that issues such as domestic violence, infertility, unwanted pregnancy and menopause can pose to working women, they are the exception rather than the rule.

Women, particularly single mothers, are less confident that they can afford the healthcare they and their families need — which may reflect gaps in employer-provided coverage. Just 18% of men are not confident they can meet their families' healthcare needs as compared to 32% of single mothers (and 26% of women overall).

Women of all ages experience significant gaps in coverage when it comes to their reproductive health. Men are also affected when the women in their lives face these gaps. Men may also have their own unmet needs in some of the items shown in the reproductive health chart shown on page 30. Although survey results reveal a mismatch between the benefits employees consider helpful and those provided through work, some of this variance may be due to the fact that benefits could be provided by other sources, such as public healthcare plans. The chart provides insight into what individuals find helpful (see Appendix A for other benefits). Employers have an opportunity to fill gaps where the need is unmet by other sources.

Figure 15: Universal women's health issues

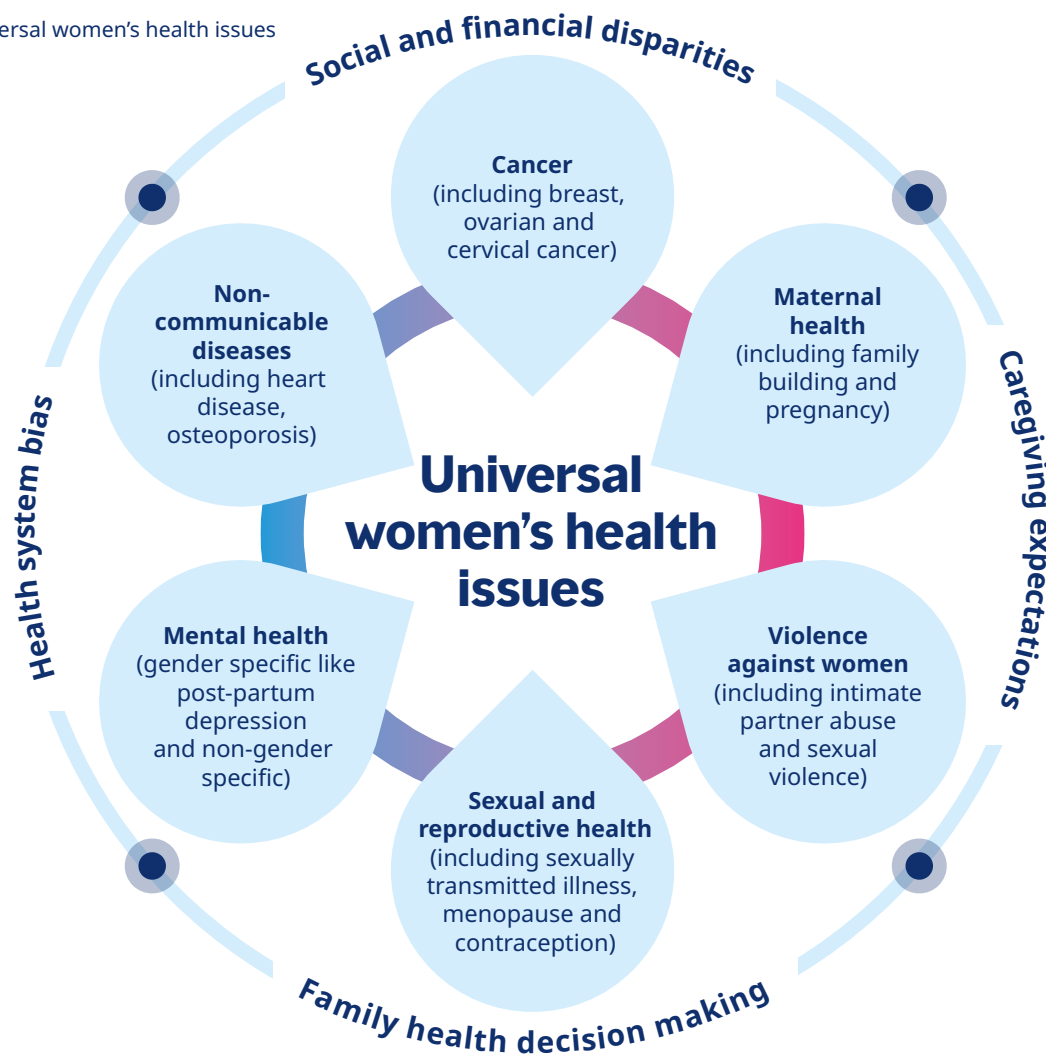
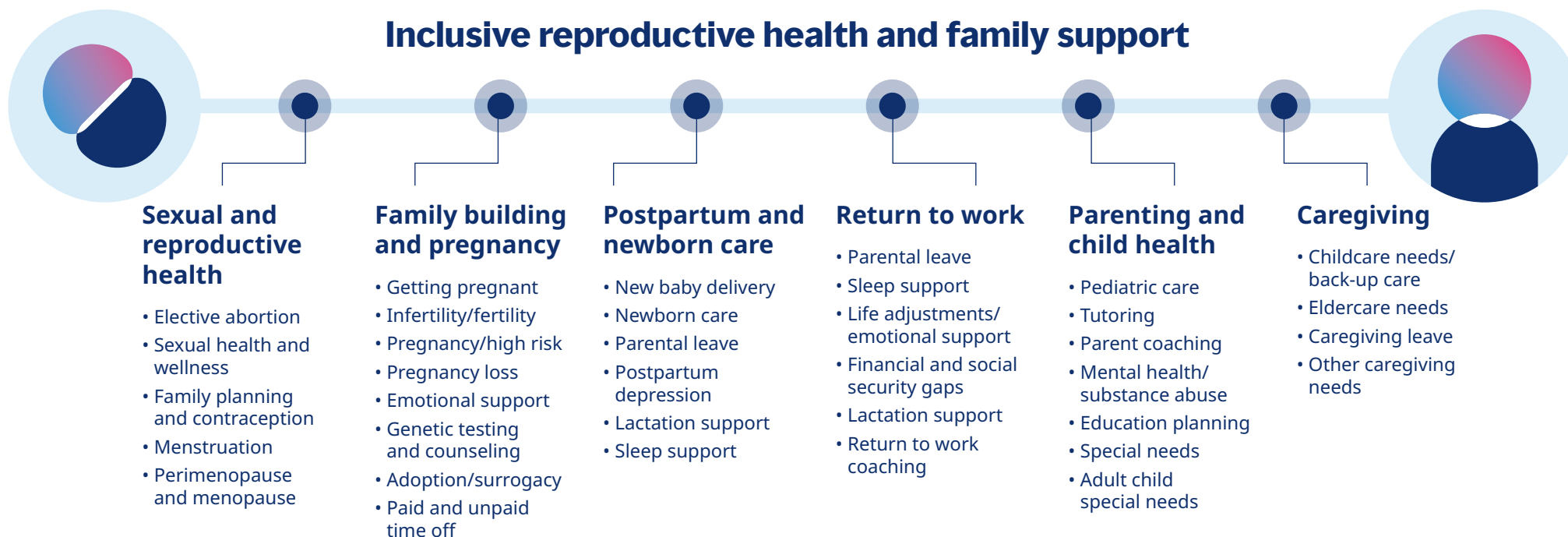


Figure 16: Reproductive health benefits are not just for women

Role of employer and legislative framework varies from market to market.

Reproductive health and family support needs

Reproductive and family support needs differ across life stages, from early-life priorities, such as contraception access, to support during menopause. Egg freezing and surrogacy have become more common with individuals in childbearing years.¹⁶ Many of these needs affect all genders, directly or otherwise. However, many

employees feel they are unable to access valuable benefits through their employers.

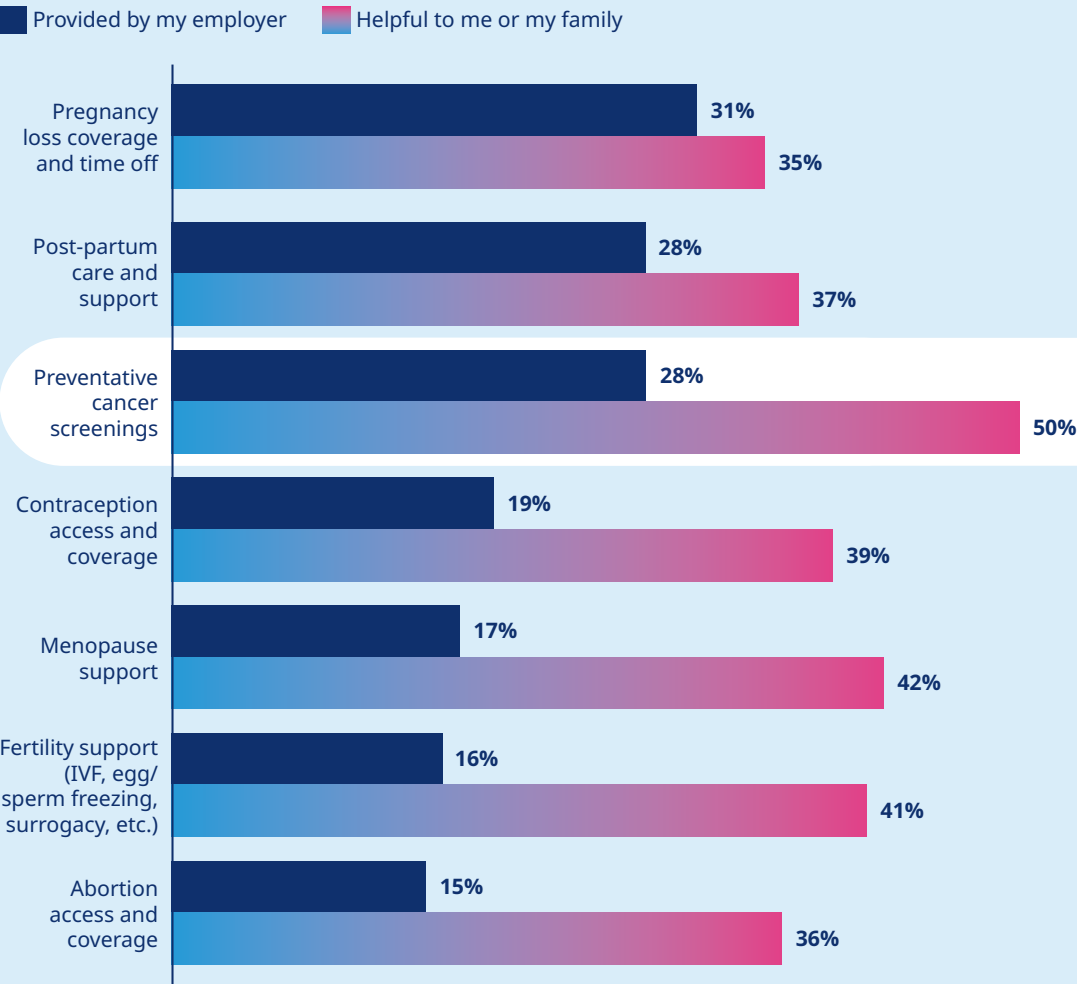
We're seeing increasing innovation in this area. For example, in the US, in our health and benefits strategy survey among employer respondents with more than

500 employees, 11% offered coverage for doulas, midwives, birth centers or other alternative maternal care to improve outcomes for Black women, and 20% were considering adding coverage.¹⁷

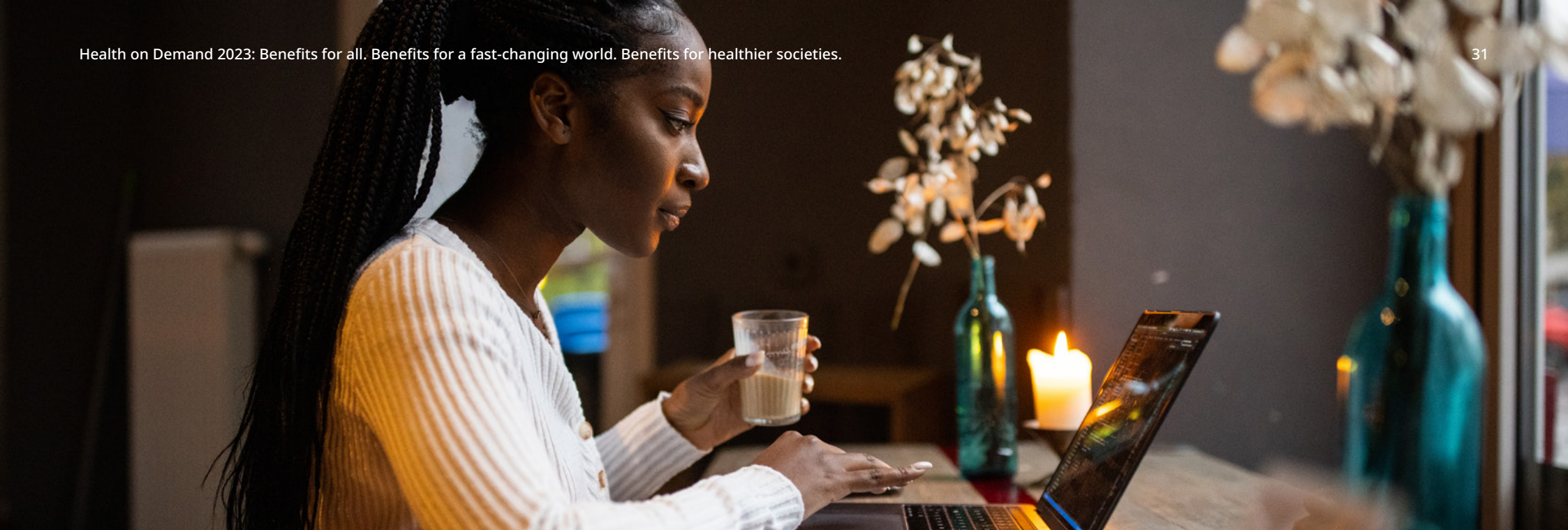
¹⁶ Smith K. "Canadian Fertility Clinic Reports 180% Increase in Elective Egg Freezing," Global News, January 30, 2019, available at <https://globalnews.ca/news/4903303/family-matters-fertility-clinic-180-increase-social-egg-freezing/>.

¹⁷ Mercer. Health and Benefit Strategies for 2023, available at <https://www.mercer.us/our-thinking/healthcare/2023-benefit-strategies-report.html>.

Figure 17: Reproductive benefits

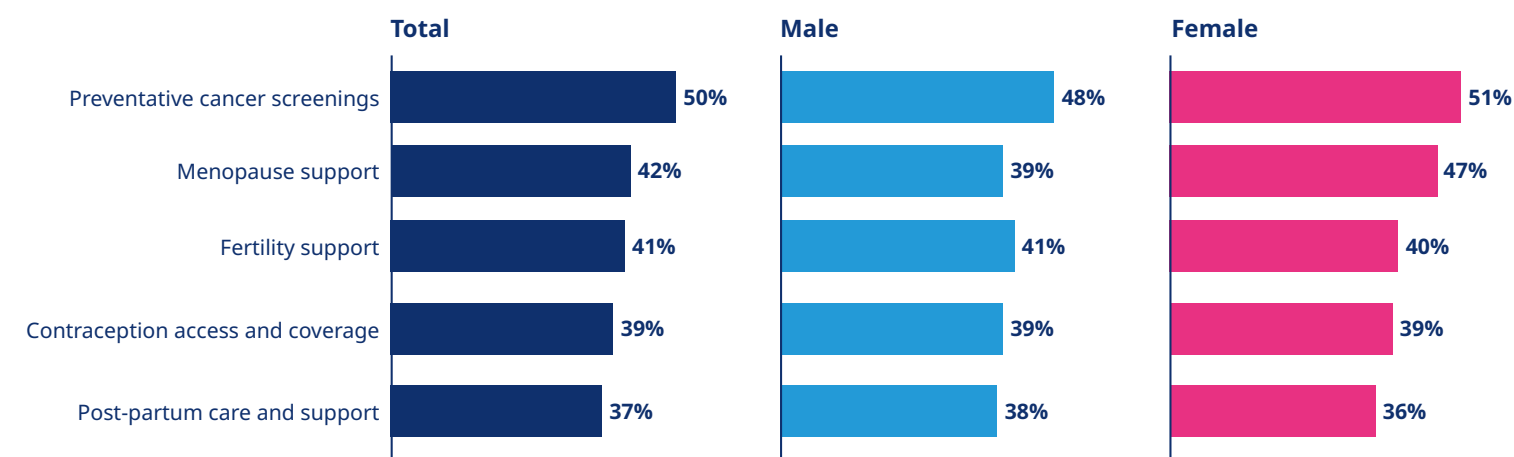


Preventive cancer screenings show the biggest gap between the reproductive benefits employers provide and those employees find helpful. Cancer screening also tops the list of benefits that many other groups would find helpful, including remote workers, caregivers and people with below-median earnings. By providing preventive cancer screenings where they are not otherwise easily available, employers can improve benefits for less-well-supported groups and encourage employees to become more engaged in caring for their health. This is especially important given the disruption in care experienced during the pandemic and resulting implications for late stage diagnosis.



There was surprisingly little difference between men and women in the value placed on reproductive health benefits, especially for fertility support and access to contraception.

Figure 18: Top five reproductive health benefits — Percentage of men and women who find these helpful



LGBTQ+ — Lessons from the US

Organizations are making progress in promoting inclusive workplaces and encouraging employees to be their authentic selves at work.

In our 2023 Health on Demand findings, we see limited progress from our 2021 research which showed that employees who identify as LGBTQ+ are significantly more likely to experience anxiety and depression and value mental health benefits above all other benefits.

There is still much work to be done in addressing contributing factors like discrimination and, sometimes, the lack of a family safety net — vitally important in many cultures. Employers have an opportunity to provide support through innovative employee benefits. For example, in India, we’ve seen employer interventions for the LGBTQ+ community to mitigate discrimination, ranging from

support with finding housing to targeted financial counselling. In the US, LGBTQ+ employees are struggling more than the general population with stress in their day-to-day lives, the impact of medical costs and burnout. These pressures are carrying through into their working lives; LGBTQ+ employees are more likely to report working while physically or mentally unwell.

To address these support gaps, employers need to deepen allyship and go beyond surface-level support for Pride events or rainbow logos to truly understand the needs of their LGBTQ+ populations. Investments in employee resource groups and coverage for same-gender spouses are a place to start, but employers can also consider, for example, expanding their efforts to inclusive family-building benefits. Access to diverse medical providers is also important.

Figure 19: LGBTQ+ Lessons from the US

Strongly Agree + Agree	US all	US LGBTQ+
My employer cares about my health and well-being	74%	67%
In the past year, medical expenses have caused hardship for me and/or my family	45%	55%
I can be my authentic self at work	77%	72%
In the past year, I have worked while feeling mentally unwell	57%	65%
I have worked while feeling physically unwell this year	64%	68%
I feel stressed in every day life	49%	58%
A toxic workplace culture causes me to burnout	33%	40%

Actions for employers

How to make inclusive changes for meaningful impact:

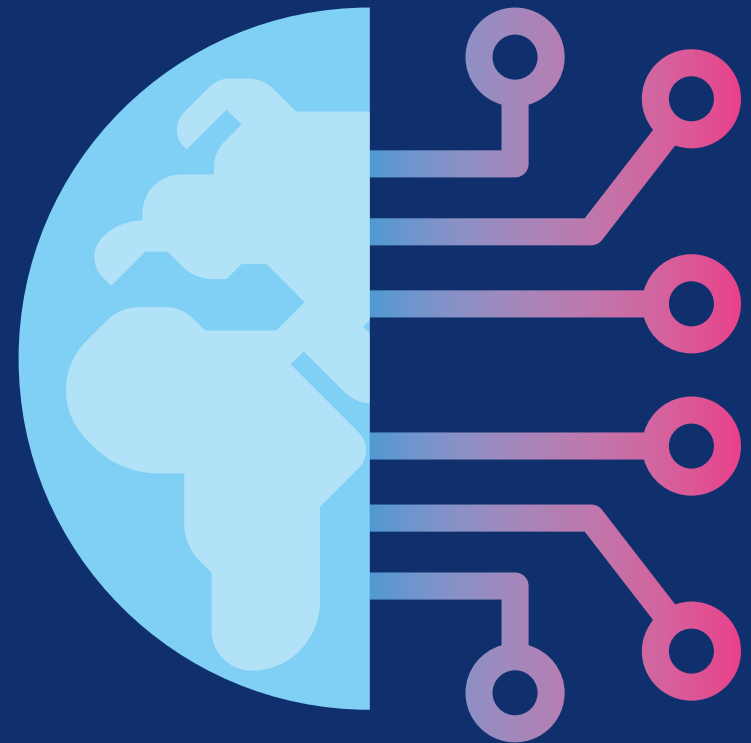


- Review benefits coverage provided to low-wage workers (see part 3: Benefits for Healthier Societies).
- Ensure that adequate preventive care coverage is in place for disadvantaged groups.
- Get to know your employees: Ask them what is important to their health and how they would like to access benefits. For example, understand how health and benefits needs differ across minority groups.
- Address gaps in women's health coverage. Consider the six universal health issues shown on page 28.
- Define your philosophy related to reproductive health and family support. Consider areas such as family planning for same-gender couples, adequacy of prenatal care and cost of childcare.
- Continue to advance efforts to reduce the mental health burden on LGBTQ+ individuals by assessing the psychological safety of workplace culture and providing access to mental health support from individuals who can identify with daily microaggressions and bias.
- Understand the types of discrimination LGBTQ+ individuals experience in their day-to-day lives and explore ways to help them overcome these.
- Consider focus groups and safe spaces for employee listening to see what specific groups need from their benefits experience.

Part 2

Benefits for a fast-changing world

Using benefits as an expression of company values and to mitigate people risk is going to be more important as life in a polycrisis becomes more complex, chaotic and digital.





Bring resilience for a ‘continuous crisis’ era

In late 2022, Collins English Dictionary chose “permacrisis” as its word of the year.¹⁸ This is an appropriate choice given that ongoing macroeconomic, environmental and political disasters have characterized the 2020s. Another term, “polycrisis,” has emerged to describe the interrelated and compounding effects of risks.¹⁹

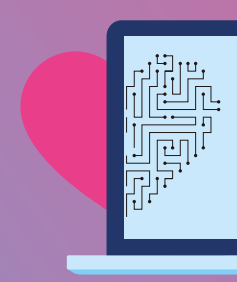
Whether employees are worried about their personal safety or about their ability to afford the basics, such as healthcare for their families, it is inevitable that these concerns will affect their well-being and their work performance.



Intensify impact on societal issues

Although global crises may not be under the control of employers, employees expect the organizations they work for to actively address some of the underlying societal issues. Eighty percent think it is extremely or very important that their employers support a living wage with internal/external statements, reporting and/or tangible actions.

Employee benefits offer a unique opportunity to advance societal issues. For example, 43% of respondents say they would find benefits that help support a more environmentally friendly lifestyle helpful. Increasingly, employees are alert to accusations of ‘greenwashing’ among brands they trust. To build credibility internally and externally, businesses can align their social action messages to investors and the market with the real-life support they are offering to employees.



Balance human and digital health delivery

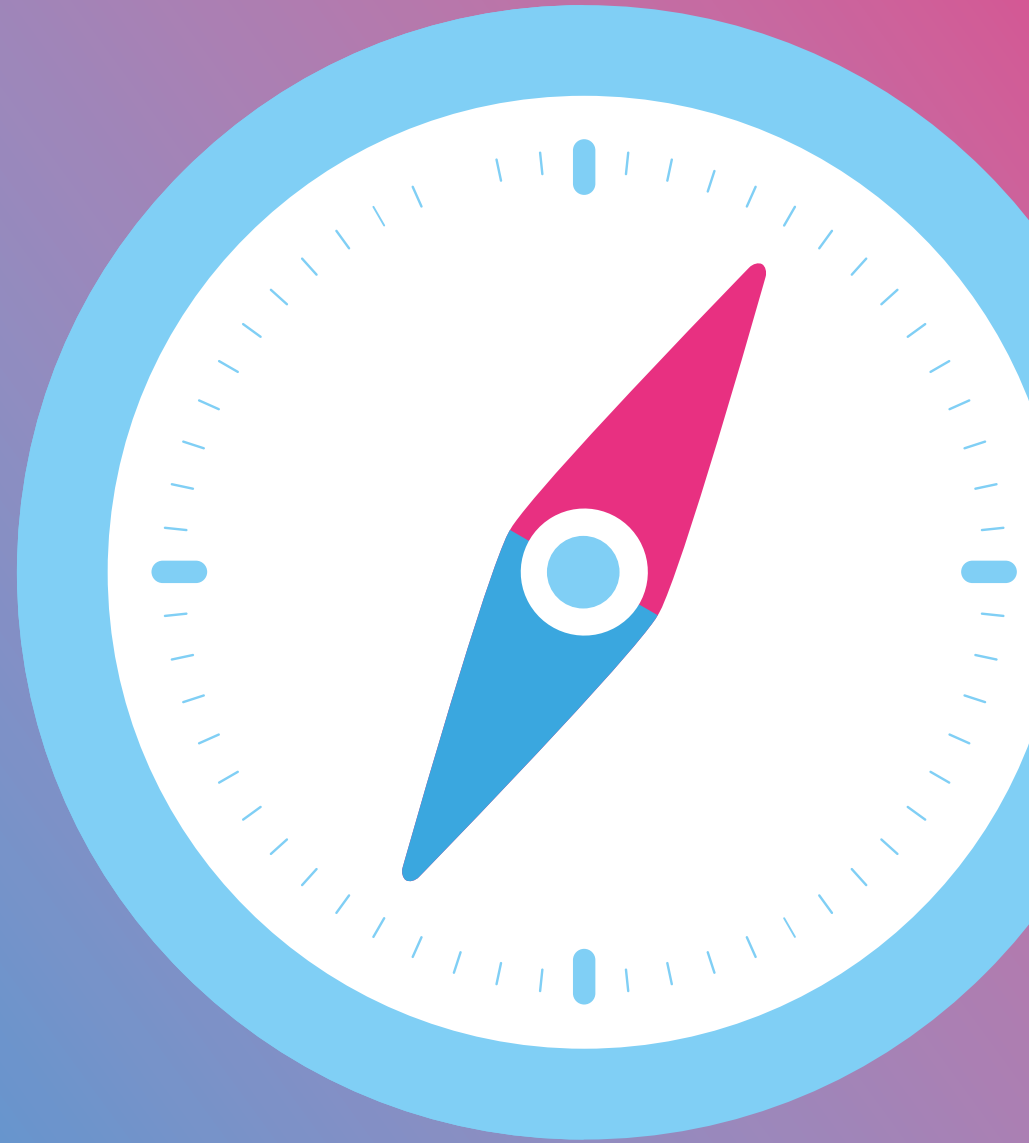
A silver lining from the COVID-19 crisis was the acceleration of digital and virtual health innovation and adoption. Virtual health services, including telemedicine services, went mainstream as in-person consultations with health professionals had to be put on hold.

Although digital innovation continues at pace and certainly has its place, people still value human connection when it comes to their care. Either/or approaches miss the point. Trusted health workers and even business leaders are needed to foster adoption, whereas digital health solutions should focus on the right conditions and risk factors to be effective.

¹⁸ Collins Dictionary. “The Collins Word of the Year 2022,” available at <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/woty>.

¹⁹ The World Economic Forum. The Global Risks Report 2023, available at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf.

Bring resilience for a 'continuous crisis' era



The last three years have seen businesses and employees alike existing in a state of continual disruption. The COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, major climate events, financial pressures and political turmoil have all taken their toll. Employees experienced the fallout in their everyday lives and are rightly concerned about the potential impact on their futures. Concurrent shocks, deeply interconnected risks and eroding resilience are giving rise to the phenomenon of polycrisis.²⁰

There are regional differences in the scale and variety of employee concerns, reflecting a mix of global and local events. For example, employees in Latin American countries, such as Brazil, see violent crime as a top concern, whereas recent instability in the government made political turmoil a much higher concern for employees in the UK than in any other country we surveyed.

Figure 20: Concurrent crises impacting businesses and their workforces

Mental health deterioration
Public infrastructure collapse
Lack of natural resources
Chronic health conditions
Geoeconomic confrontation
Social cohesion erosion
Climate change
Digital inequity
Biodiversity loss
Infectious disease
Misinformation
Cost of living

Polycrisis concerns for employee health and benefit managers

²⁰ Tooze A. "Welcome to the World of the Polycrisis," Financial Times, October 28, 2022, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/498398e7-11b1-494b-9cd3-6d669dc3de33>.

Figure 21: Top societal concerns vary by region

Ranked by percentage of respondents who say they are extremely or very much concerned by each societal concern: *Top nine responses:*

Societal concerns (extremely or very much concerned)		
	Mature markets	Growth markets
1	Adverse economic factors	Violent crime
2	War/conflict	Adverse economic factors
3	Pandemic	Pandemic
4	Violent crime	Fraud
5	Fraud	War/conflict
6	Adverse climate events	Adverse climate events
7	Political turmoil	Political turmoil
8	Social unrest	Social unrest
9	Domestic violence	Domestic violence

Top concerns across regions:

Latin America:
Violent crime

Asia:
Pandemics

Continental Europe:
Economic downturns

Canada:
Economic downturns

US:
Economic downturns

UAE:
Pandemics

UK:
Economic downturns

Appendix B provides a country view of top employee concerns.

World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2023 (18th Edition)



Every year, the World Economic Forum (WEF), in partnership with Marsh McLennan, publishes The Global Risks Report, highlighting shifts in the macro-level landscape. This year's report builds on insights from more than 1,200 experts in academia, business, government, multilateral community and civil society.

The 2023 report echoes many of our own research findings. For example, the report ranks the "cost-of-living crisis" as the most severe global risk over the next two years, brought about by a combination of rampant inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, and the ongoing disruption of food and energy supplies. The potential ramifications are stark, with the WEF warning of "rising poverty, hunger, violent protests, political instability and even state collapse" and concluding that "the resulting new

economic era may be one of growing divergence between rich and poor countries and the first rollback in human development in decades."

In the longer term, environmental crises dominate the risk landscape. The report identifies the growing dangers of "failure to mitigate climate change," "natural disasters and extreme weather events," and "biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse" and forecasts a potential polycrisis as these factors combine to trigger a global shortage of natural resources — including basic essentials, such as food and water.

In short, the report underlines how quickly the world is changing — and confirms the importance of bringing resilience for an era of "continuous crisis."

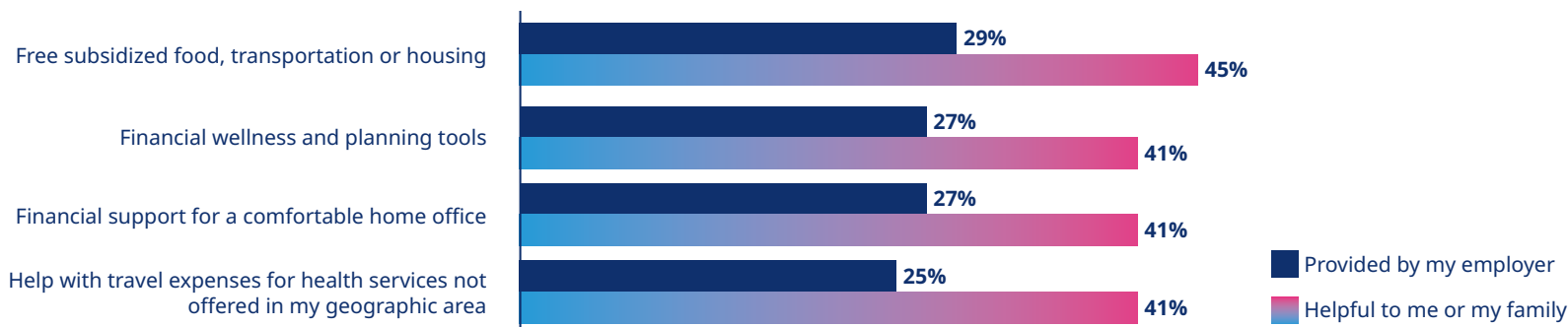
Economic factors

Adverse economic factors are one of the top two concerns in the majority of the markets surveyed, with 56% of all respondents citing this as their biggest concern. Our Global Talent Trends research shows that more than half of employees are concerned about their financial futures.²¹ Although employers are rallying to support employees in the face of personal finance struggles, there is often a gap between finance-related benefits offered and those that employees say they would find helpful. Some of the benefits employees desire relate to basic human needs, such as food and health services, showing the heavy impact of current economic conditions on the workforce.

Higher costs of food, energy and housing, causing lower real incomes, will result in trade-offs in essential spending, worsening health and well-being outcomes for communities.

World Economic Forum's The Global Risks Report 2023

Figure 22: Financial needs are a priority for employees



²¹ Mercer's Global Talent Trends Study 2022–2023.



Getting creative with financial support

Employers can look for creative ways to support their workers' financial health. For example:

- Consider covering employee-paid contributions for health, risk protection and retirement plans to reduce opt-outs during earnings troughs.
- Provide guidance or a means for employees to build an emergency savings plan.
- Fund spending accounts to bring certain kinds of purchases (e.g., fitness, solar panels, ergonomic equipment) within reach.
- Help people protect themselves financially by offering voluntary home, auto, flood, fire, travel or personal life/disability insurance.
- Seek opportunities to offer easily accessible discount programs and education assistance.
- Better communicate existing benefits that could help employees with their finances.
- Provide more flexible retirement options.



Pandemic

Pandemics and other public health concerns continue to worry employees, especially in Asia, where the impact of COVID-19 still reverberates. Our People Risk research suggests further mitigations be implemented, such as having robust systems, environments and communication in place for the prevention of workplace injury and illness events and to support a culture of employee safety.²² Ongoing pandemic preparedness (that is, remote-working support and policies, health benefits, and training and development) is also vital.

Offering paid sick leave can both alleviate financial anxiety and help ensure that employees do not come to the workplace while sick and spread infectious illnesses. Mental health response services are especially important during times of crisis to help people manage disruption and cope with their fears.

²² Mercer Marsh Benefits. People Risk 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/health/mmb-managing-risks-for-workforce-and-business-resilience.html>.

Violent crime

Violent crime, including workplace violence, is a major concern for employees in several markets, notably in Latin America. Employers are in a unique position to help by taking actions where appropriate, such as:

- Education and awareness relating to gender violence
- Reducing exposure to risky situations (for example, installing onsite ATMs)
- Supporting remote working
- Facilitating carpooling or providing other safe transport
- Reimbursing employees for transport costs to ensure safety
- Support for self-defense training and home security
- Benefits to address mental health and compensation for permanent disability
- Creating a plan for addressing workplace violence (see the framework on page 43)

Our 2021 Inside Employees' Minds survey highlighted a number safety challenges for racial and ethnic minorities in the US, with personal safety the top concern of Black colleagues and in the top five for Asian and Hispanic employees. While the 2022 findings show that this concern has moved down the ranked list (factors like covering monthly expenses have moved up), employers have a duty to address workplace violence.²³

Applying a crisis-mitigation framework to address crises, including violence, is important for all employers in order to build psychological safety and demonstrate that the organization cares about employee well-being. Similar frameworks can be applied to various types of crises, such as climate events.

²³ Mercer. Inside Employees' Minds Report 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.us/our-thinking/career/inside-employees-minds-report.html>.

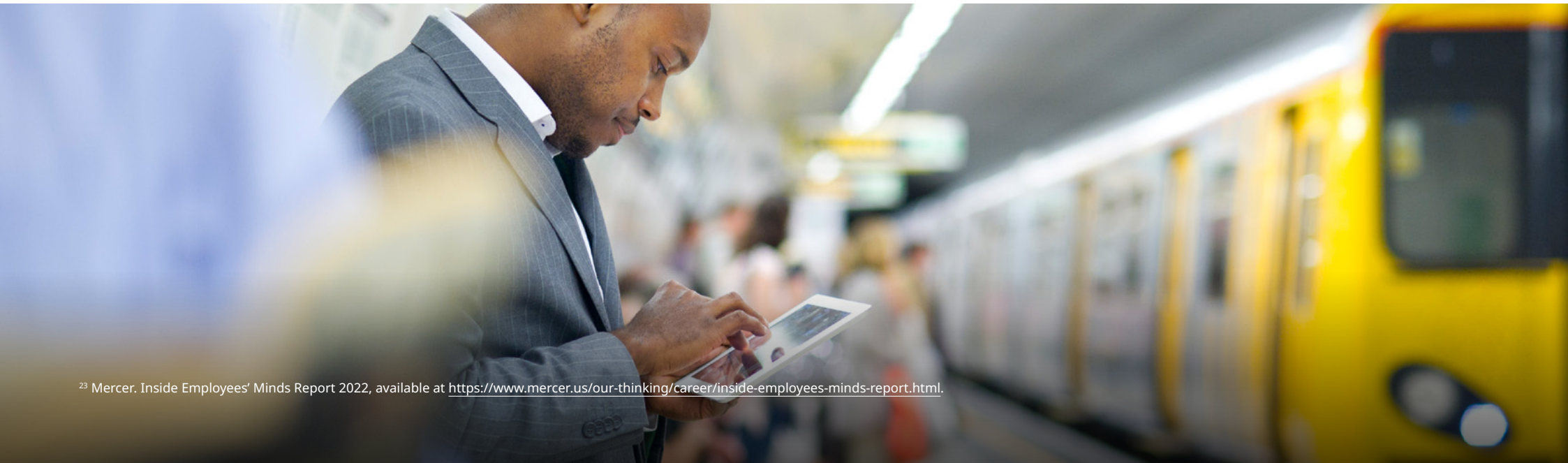


Figure 23: Crisis mitigation plan



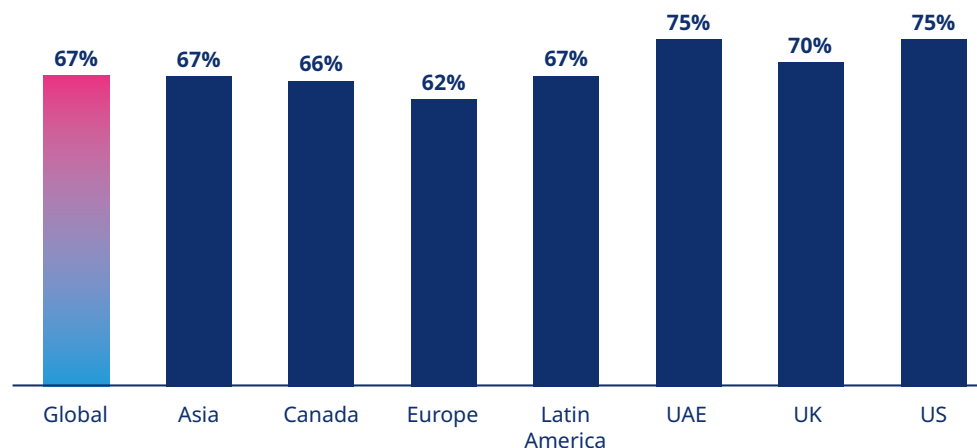
Are employers there for their employees in a crisis?

Globally, the majority of employees feel their employers would support them during an emergency (67%). Employees in India (80%), the US (75%) and UAE (75%) are the most confident in their employers, whereas those in Italy (56%) are the least confident.

Employee responses to this question show little variation across industry sectors, with two exceptions: Those working in financial services are somewhat more likely to feel confident in their employers' support (72%), whereas those working in healthcare are somewhat less likely to feel confident (65%). It's not surprising that workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic have a less sanguine view of their employers' ability to support them, especially since, at the beginning of the crisis, there were limited ways to provide adequate protection.

Using the experience gained during the pandemic, HR and risk departments can work together on crisis-scenario planning. This includes physical crises (such as floods, fires and health emergencies) and economic crises like high inflation and recessions. Doing so will not only improve business continuity and mitigate risks related to employee well-being but also enable companies to provide better, faster support to their employees.

Figure 24: Regional by the numbers: "My employer would support me in an emergency"



The pandemic pushed the health and safety of employees and society as a whole to the foreground. As a result, nearly nine out of 10 (87%) HR and risk professionals indicate health and safety is a serious threat to business.

Mercer Marsh Benefits' People Risk 2022

Actions for employers

How to bring resilience for a 'continuous crisis' era:



- Use MMB's People Risk framework to foster collaboration between HR and risk functions to help identify risks.²⁴ Apply the crisis mitigation framework to future emergencies for scenario planning purposes.
- Identify how each of the top 10 people risks — for example, cybersecurity and pandemics — can be mitigated by employee benefits or how they are designed, delivered and financed.
- Be creative in the support you provide to employees in the face of “moments that matter,” such as picking up premiums for health coverage to reduce opt-outs, special allowances, a mental health crisis-response service or greater digital health options.
- Look for opportunities to help people protect themselves beyond standard offerings in the general marketplace of home, auto, flood and fire insurance coverages.
- Understand resilience concerns and perceived risks within your own workforce, and identify whether current employee benefits provide support.
- Explore ways to provide financial support to employees for either short-term needs or ongoing financial challenges.
- Develop an action plan to eliminate causes of workplace violence, and protect employees from violent crime outside work.

²⁴ Mercer Marsh Benefits. People Risk 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/health/mmb-managing-risks-for-workforce-and-business-resilience.html>.

**Intensify your
impact on
societal issues**



Employees want their employers to support positive change, but statements alone won't convince them. Most want their employers to take an active stance on issues, assuming alignment with company purpose and values. They want to make good work a reality.²⁵ This is particularly true in employee groups such as caregivers, who value their employers' support for societal causes more highly than noncaregivers do.

Living wages and women's health and/or equity are priorities globally for both men and women and across most generations. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), along with gender-specific equity, is rated more highly by women, whereas men are more likely to focus on environmental issues, including design of healthy cities and communities.

Figure 25: How important is it to you that your employer strongly support the following issues? (Strongly Agree + Agree)

	Men	Women
1	Living wages	Living wages
2	Women's health	Women's health
3	Social justice	The interests and equity of women
4	Environmental sustainability	Social justice
5	Healthy cities and communities	Diversity, equity and inclusion

Organizations today are expected to have a heart, to come off mute on what they stand for, and to make measurable progress against goals relevant to all stakeholders — from ESG to diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) to co-creating the new shape of work. They are striving to become more relatable, taking on the values and personalities of their people and their communities.

Mercer's Global Talent Trends Study 2022-2023

²⁵ Mercer | World Economic Forum. The Good Work Framework: A New Business Agenda for the Future of Work, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/setting-standards-for-good-work.html?bsrc=mercer>.

Aligning benefits and values

Employers have a clear opportunity to reinforce their corporate values and take a stance on societal issues through the benefits they offer as well as how they communicate existing and new offerings. Benefits can back up a company's external statements and tangible actions by improving support for specific groups within the workforce, including differently abled individuals and neurodivergent employees. This has advantages both for employers, through access to a wider range of talent, and for individual employees, through better employment options and potential improvement in their physical and financial health.

Figure 26: Percentage of respondents who say it's extremely or very important that their employers support this issue

Women's health	72%
The interests and equity of differently abled individuals	66%
Diversity, equity and inclusion	66%
Environmental sustainability	66%
Neurodiversity	60%
The interests and equity of ethnic minorities	60%

Figure 27: What issues matter most to your organization and employees?



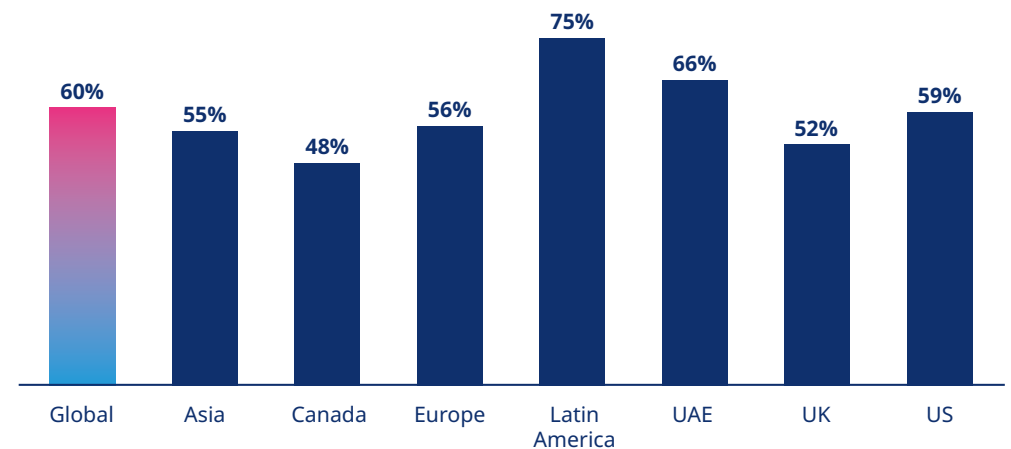


What is neurodiversity?



Neurodiversity acknowledges that people experience and interact with the world around them in different ways, which shapes their behaviors, ways of learning, sociability and many other factors. A lack of understanding can lead to differences being perceived as deficits. Employers have an opportunity to provide better support for neurodivergent colleagues and to benefit from their unique abilities and perspectives.²⁶

Figure 28: Regional by the numbers: “It is extremely important or very much important that my employer strongly supports neurodiversity”



²⁶ Baumer N and Frueh J. “What is Neurodiversity?,” Harvard Health, November 23, 2021, available at <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>.

Environmentally friendly benefits need different thinking

Several institutions are innovating to help individuals adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles. These can serve as inspiration for benefit managers, even if the focus is on awareness of what is available from others.

Electric vehicle support: Offer rebates on the purchase or lease of a new plug-in vehicle, free or subsidized home-charging stations, or charging stations at workplaces.

Improve spaces: In Utrecht, Netherlands, more than 300 bus stop roofs have been converted to wildlife-friendly gardens. The design helps to conserve rainwater and support cooling during summer and also helps to increase biodiversity.²⁷

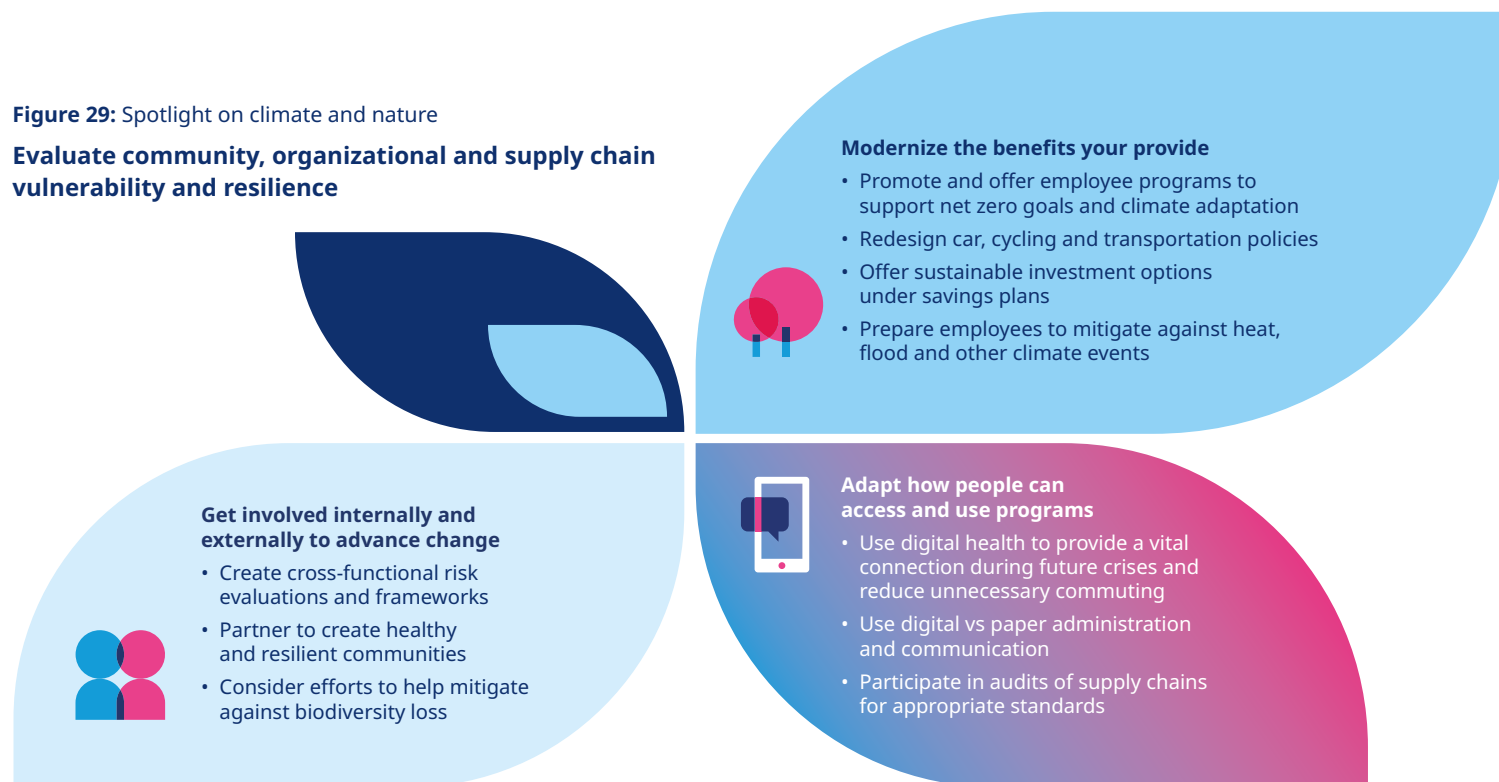
Support alternative energy sources: Work with providers to offer or promote subsidies or cashbacks. For example, Hawaiian Electric pays a cash incentive via bill credits to customers in some locations to add a battery to an existing or new rooftop solar system.²⁸

Offer digital health and benefits: Digital delivery of healthcare and benefits programs can reduce paper and vehicle use.

Regardless of whether employers want to get involved in helping employees adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles, they will want to start tackling the threat environmental issues could have on business. This is another opportunity for HR and risk functions to work together.

Figure 29: Spotlight on climate and nature

Evaluate community, organizational and supply chain vulnerability and resilience

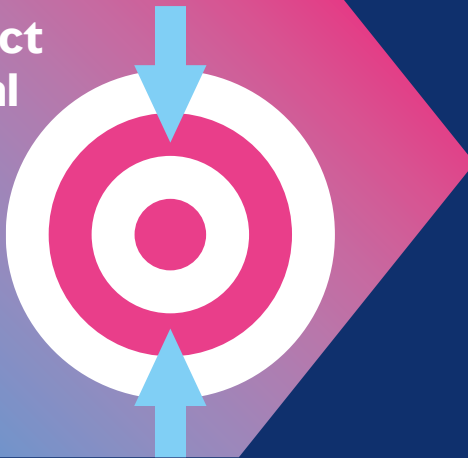


²⁷ Desai K. "7 Innovative Dutch Projects for a Sustainable Future," DutchReview, October 26, 2022, available at <https://dutchreview.com/culture/innovation/dutch-innovative-projects-sustainable-development/>.

²⁸ Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. "Customer Renewable Programs," available at <https://www.hawaiianelectric.com/products-and-services/customer-renewable-programs/rooftop-solar/battery-bonus>.

Actions for employers

How to intensify your impact on societal issues:



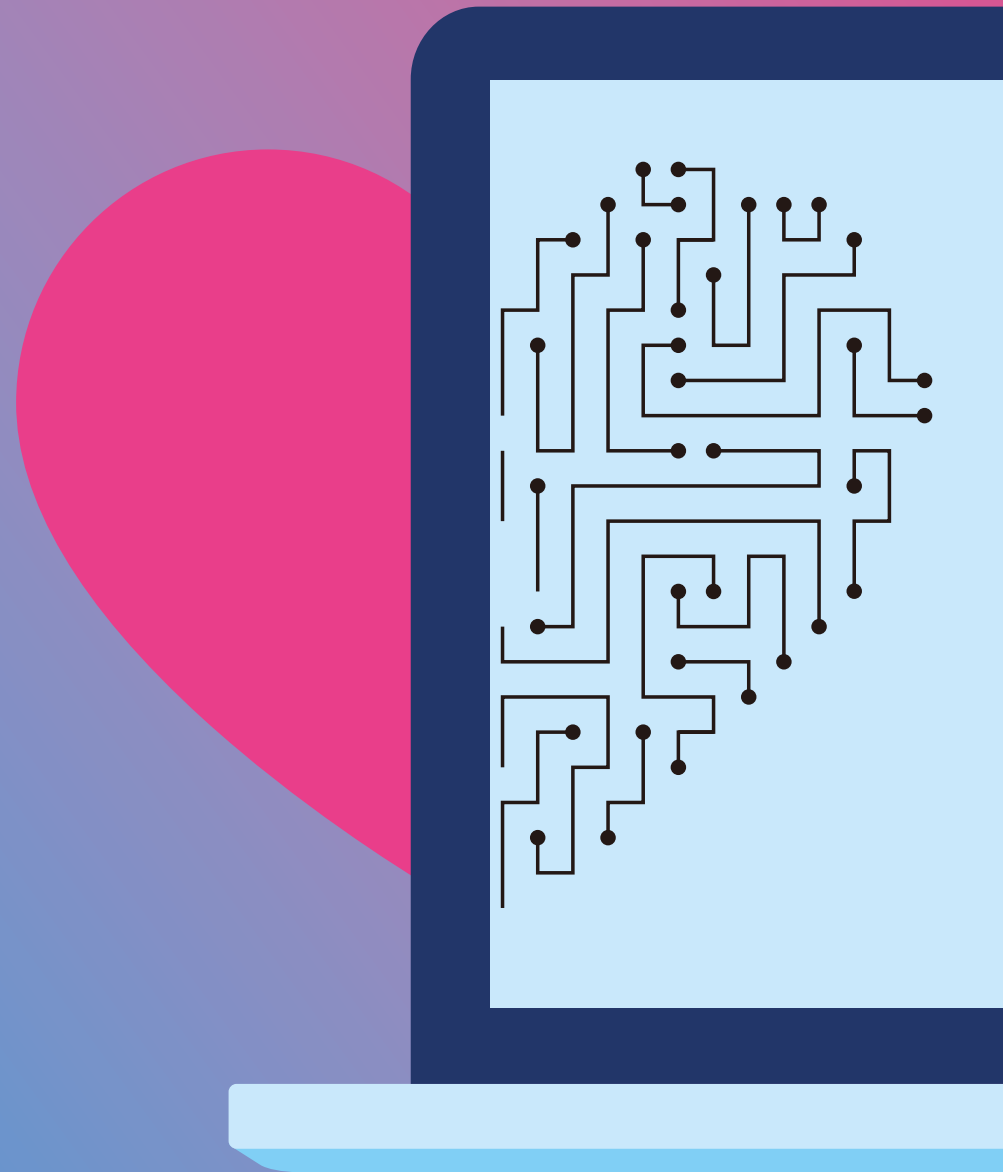
- Take a stance on the issues aligned with your company purpose and values and where you can have an impact.
- Ensure that what you say matches what you do and that employees see your stance as authentic.
- Find ways to introduce neurodiversity support into your workplace and benefits coverage.^{29,30}
- Overhaul your entire approach to working with differently abled workers through all aspects of the employment cycle, including talent acquisition, workplace barriers, disability return-to-work programs and retirement.
- Be open-minded and curious to explore benefits to support an environmentally friendly lifestyle. These may be a good fit with flexible benefits program design.
- Explore ways to make benefits design and delivery more environmentally friendly, such as increased use of digital over paper-based communications.
- Conduct a gap analysis to ensure women's health needs through all life stages are addressed, starting with cancer and reproductive health.
- Explore use of the Good Work Framework to promote good-quality job design and people strategies.³¹

²⁹ SAP. "Careers — Autism at Work Program," available at https://jobs.sap.com/content/Autism-at-Work/?locale=en_US.

³⁰ Austin RD and Pisano GP. "Neurodiversity Is a Competitive Advantage," Harvard Business Review, available at <https://hbr.org/2017/05/neurodiversity-as-a-competitive-advantage>.

³¹ Mercer and WEF's The Good Work Framework: A New Business Agenda for the Future of Work.

Balance human and digital health delivery



Employees globally value digital health benefits, including those that help them find and obtain healthcare or self-manage their own health and well-being digitally.

Not surprisingly, employees are still more likely to seek in-person care for even a relatively simple medical issue (e.g., a rash) than they are to use a telemedicine service. Only 12% of respondents say they would be most likely to use telemedicine. Another 15% say they would be most likely to self-treat using information on the internet.

Figure 30: The most helpful digital health interventions

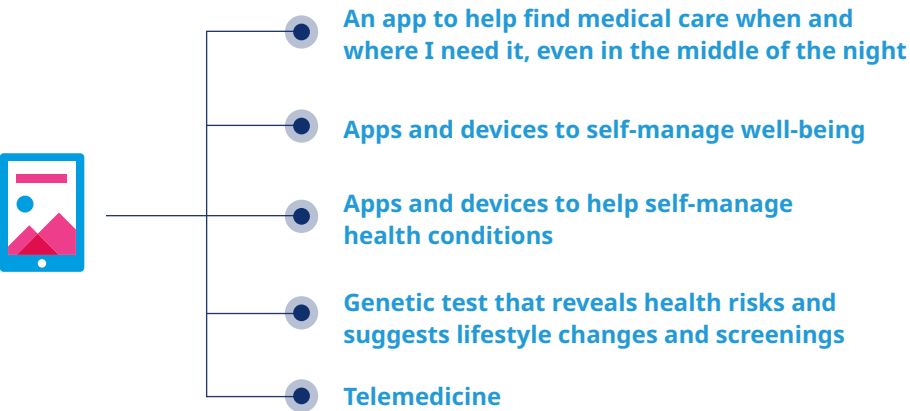
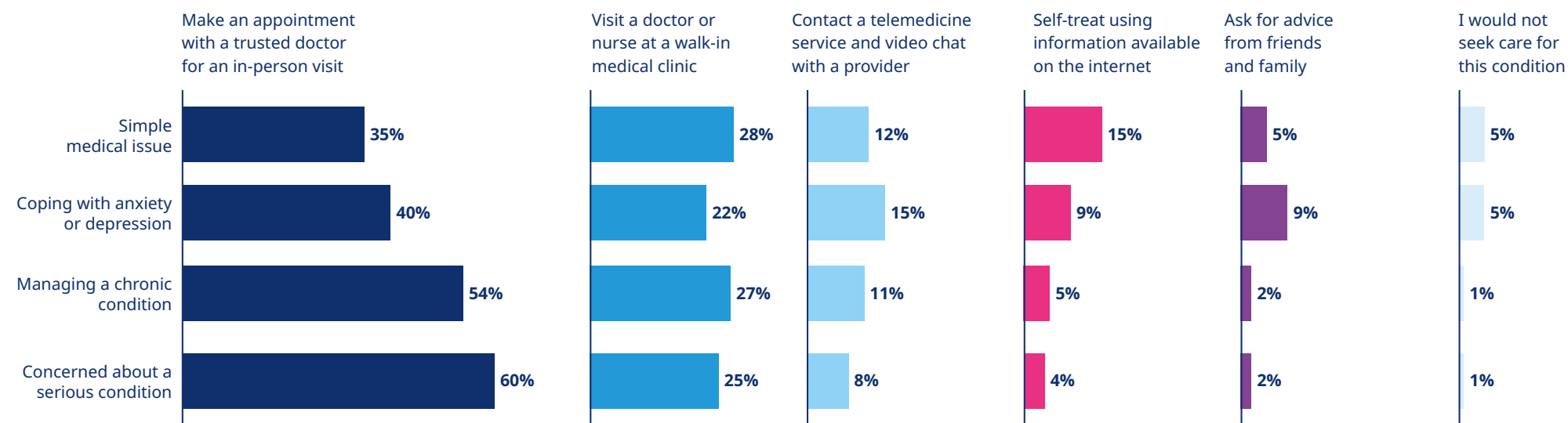


Figure 31: How are you most likely to seek care in the following scenarios?

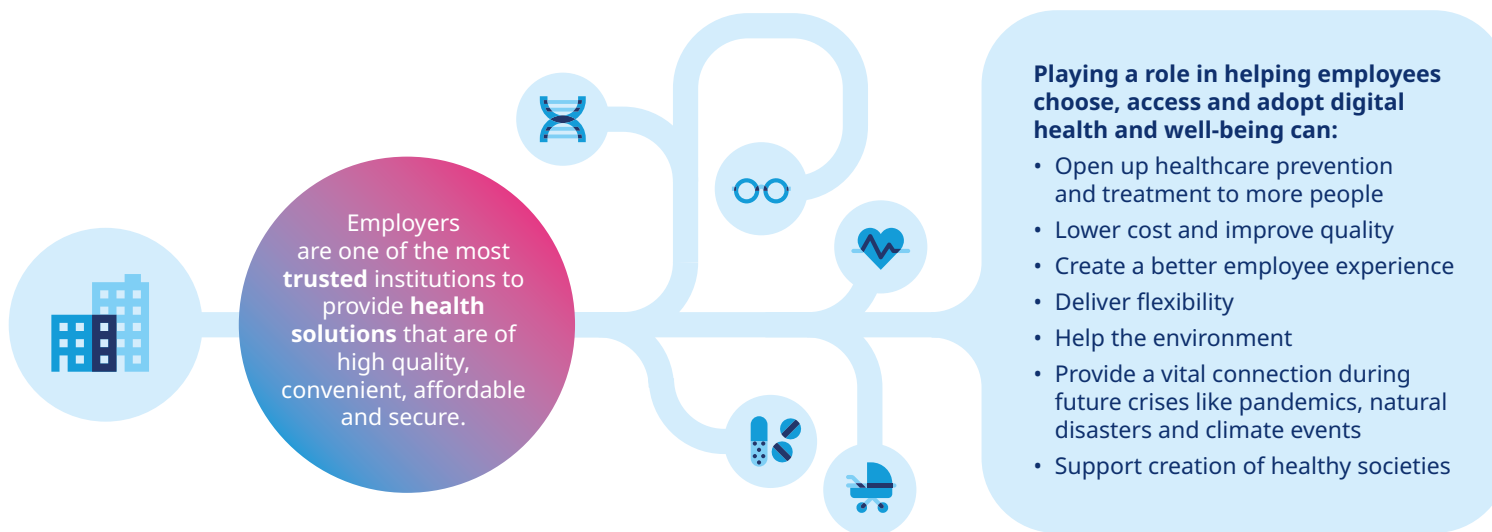
Telemedicine solutions are now an everyday component of employer-sponsored healthcare, and 45% of respondents globally say these are helpful for themselves or their families. Despite current preferences for face-to-face over telemedicine services, 68% of employees globally find the future of digital healthcare appealing; this increases to 82% in growth markets. The challenge for providers and employers will

be to identify appropriate stepping stones that build trust and confidence in digital solutions over time. As outlined further on page 58, Mercer's work in collaboration with the World Economic Forum on the Digital Health Action Alliance identifies the community health worker and other trusted frontline health staff as key contributors and catalysts in driving positive health outcomes.³²

³² World Economic Forum. Digital Health Action Alliance, 2023, available at <https://weforum.ent.box.com/s/9drkmo3gz000wqzgpmasmb8z1ig89gg>.



Figure 32: Digital health supports environmental, social and governance objectives



As we saw in our 2020 and 2021 Health on Demand reports, employers continue to be a trusted source to deliver personal health solutions that are high quality, convenient, affordable and secure. In this year's findings, trust in employers has increased by six percentage points since 2021. (See detailed country data in Appendix B.)

The future of healthcare is hybrid. Employers can promote good-quality, easy-to-use virtual care benefits while also encouraging an ongoing relationship with a primary care provider. Health advocacy and concierge services, along with digital navigation tools, can also promote the appropriate use of digital health services, especially in geographies where healthcare accessibility is a challenge.

Figure 33: Regional by the numbers: “An app to help find medical care when and where I need it, even in the middle of the night, is a helpful benefit”

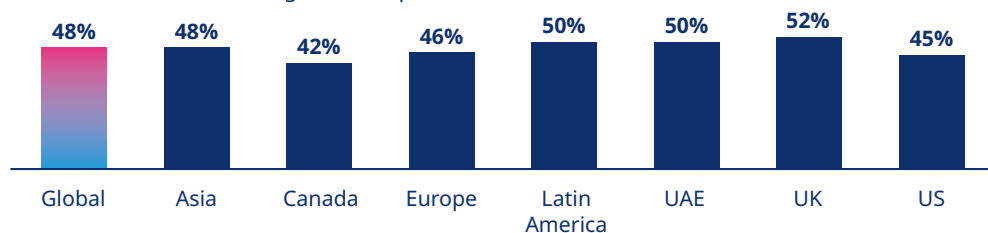


Figure 34:
Human + digital health delivery

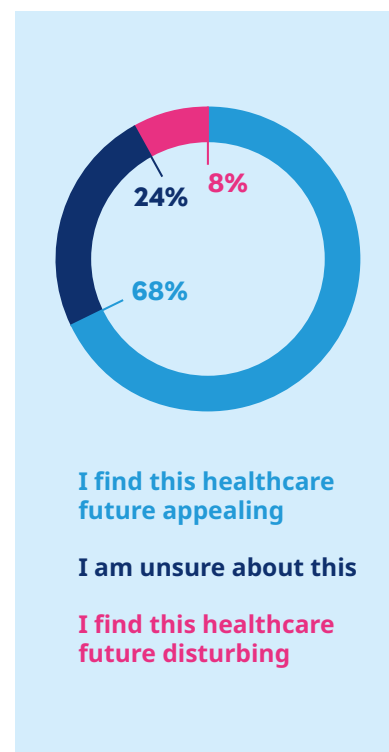
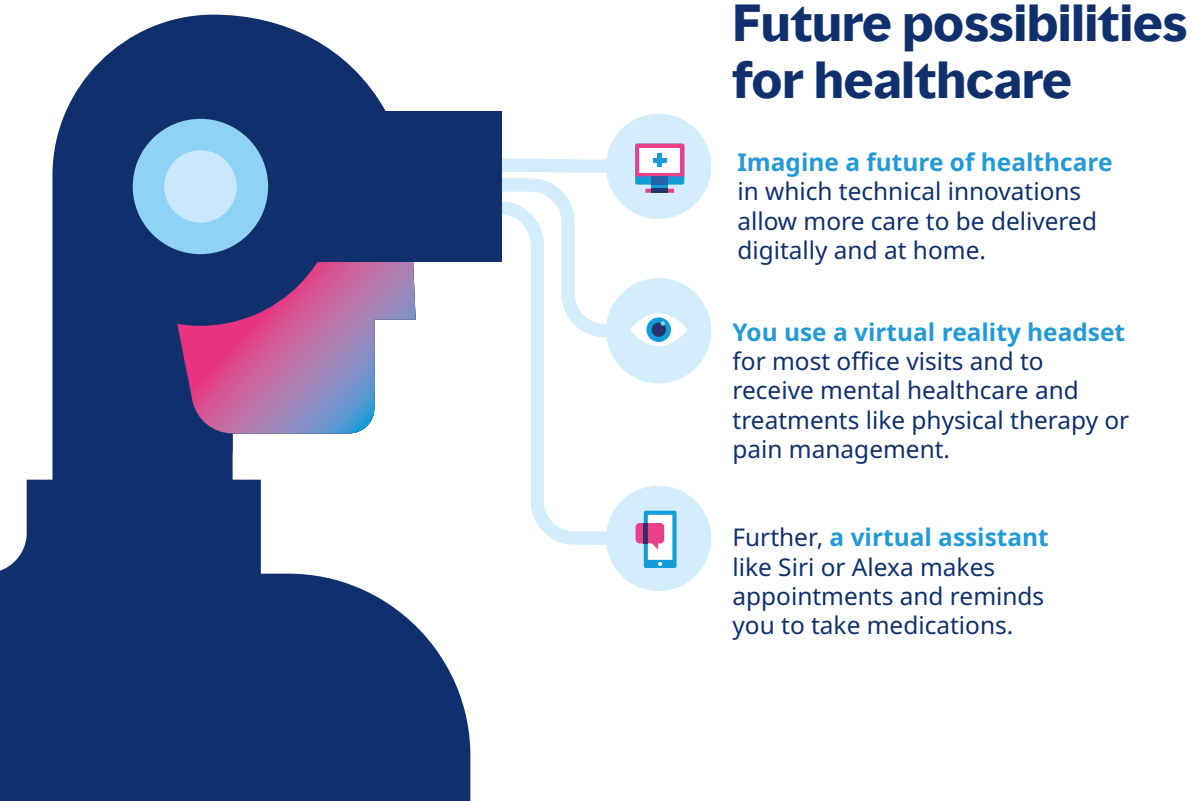


There is also potential for healthcare to reap the advantages of technological advances and digital transformation that other sectors have embraced, such as augmenting capacity with technology and combining virtual and in-person care to reduce costs.

World Economic Forum's
Global Risks Report 2023

Employees increasingly value digital apps that help them access healthcare and self-manage their own well-being. In time, and with the right offerings, employees will gain confidence in using digital health tools for a broader range of functions — and, in so doing, have access to wider and more equitable access to care.

Figure 35: Future possibilities for healthcare



Futuristic healthcare is seen as less disturbing than it was before the pandemic

The survey described a future in which healthcare would be grounded in digital health tools such as virtual reality and asked respondents how they felt about it. Although 8% of respondents in this year's survey find the vision disturbing, when we asked a similar question in a survey fielded in 2019, prior to the pandemic, 34% found the vision of healthcare we presented to be disturbing — and it was less futuristic than the vision presented in the current survey.

Digital Health Action Alliance: Bringing digital health and human support together

The majority of our survey respondents are open to and even excited about a future with more digital healthcare solutions. However, in-person support continues to be a highly valued aspect of healthcare delivery.

There is great future potential in developing solutions that combat chronic illness using a combination of human support and digital tools. The Digital Health Action Alliance (DHAA), a collaboration between the World Economic Forum and Mercer, aims to advance change in this area. The DHAA is currently focused on noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes and their complications, which account for 40% of all deaths worldwide (over one-third of those deaths occur before the age of 70).³³

That proportion of deaths is still increasing despite awareness of well-understood risk factors, behavior changes and treatment regimes. Much of the world lacks access to the solutions required to reverse this reality, due to cost or access to suitable healthcare professionals.

Figure 36:
Digital Health Action Alliance

Digital Health Action Alliance (World Economic Forum and Mercer)

Prevention

Digital solutions can provide affordable, scalable, culturally-appropriate opportunities to reduce risk factors (such as obesity, poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles) that can cause non-communicable disease early in life through education and awareness.

Diagnostics

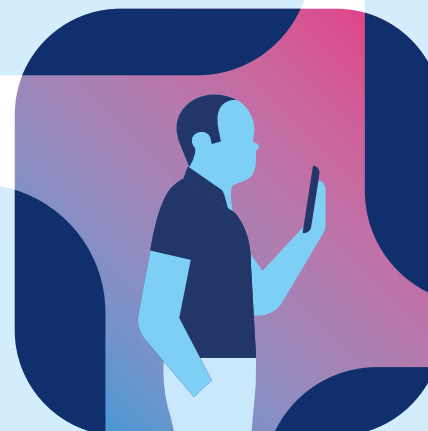
Advances in digitization, AI, data transfer, and mobile technology in combination with point-of-care testing have unlocked a new era of access to diagnostics for illnesses like diabetes and heart disease and are improving affordability.

Community Healthcare

Community care providers are the frontline in the fight against non-communicable diseases, but they are severely under-resourced. Digital-first education, AI-backed advice, and care integration solutions can empower community health workers with the tools they need to keep their communities healthy, even in areas where connectivity is limited.

Therapeutic care

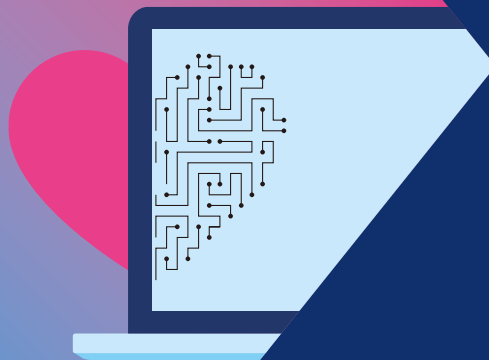
There is opportunity to use new predictive algorithms, better technology and improved formulations to improve supply of pharmaceuticals. Uncontrolled hypertension is the world's single most important preventable risk factor for mortality and morbidity.



³³ World Economic Forum's Digital Health Action Alliance.

Actions for employers

How to balance human and digital health delivery:



- Identify the digital health support your employees find helpful, and be selective. Focus employer-paid offerings on foundational needs, such as those highlighted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (indicator 3.8.1) on the coverage of essential health services.³⁴
- Explore the functionality and quality of digital services offered by insurers, and understand how these fit within the benefits portfolio.
- Research options to further tailor services based on employee interests, such as specialized fitness programs or interest in genetic testing. Unlike basic needs, these can often be offered on a voluntary basis rather than as a core benefit.
- Investigate how to remove financial and nonfinancial barriers to good-quality preventive and primary care (for example, access to and use of a family doctor).
- Work with providers to develop long-term plans that combine human interaction with digital services in your health and well-being program.
- As you refurbish environments for hybrid working, consider the role an onsite health center could play, or consider reopening clinics shuttered during the pandemic. These could focus on preventive care, health risk management and effective use of digital health.
- Partner with your insurer on building trust in employer-provided healthcare, and hold it accountable for delivering high-quality solutions.
- Monitor developments in digital health — for example, advancements in remote patient monitoring — to make sure your plan isn't left behind with outdated treatment protocols.
- Audit the employee experience when dealing with the healthcare system outside your benefits system to see where you may be able to alleviate pain points, such as visibility into wait times at urgent care facilities.

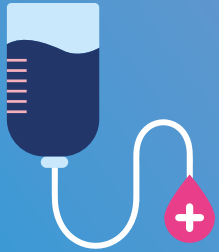
³⁴ World Health Organization. "Universal Health Coverage (UHC)," December 12, 2022, available at [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc)).

Part 3

Benefits for healthier societies

Deteriorating social, economic and political contexts could contribute to poorer health outcomes for communities and individuals, especially with healthcare systems under strain. Advancing employee health is a critical component of “the S in ESG.” Responsible employers are part of the solution.

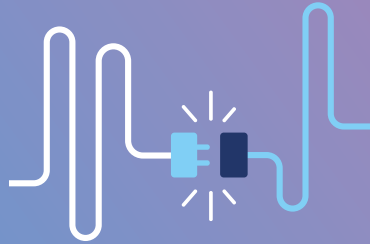




Mitigate risk for the unwell

We are all at our most vulnerable when we are unwell. Although physical or mental health problems are temporary conditions for many people, for others, they are long lasting or permanent and can affect their experiences of work and wider life.

Among those surveyed who define themselves as physically or mentally unwell, 79% (versus 47% overall) say they are stressed in everyday life, and just 35% (versus 64% overall) are thriving in their current roles or workplaces. Only a minority of unwell employees (31% versus 59% overall) believe the benefits they receive meet their needs.



Address health and risk protection gaps

Our research also identified other benefits gaps affecting the workforce. Twenty-one percent of employees aren't confident they can afford needed healthcare, and 56% don't have access to medical coverage through their employers.

Just 33% of respondents globally have access to short-term disability protection, such as sick leave or income-protection insurance, through their employers. This is more acute for low-paid workers. Being forced to work while they are physically or mentally unwell inevitably affects employees' productivity and erodes confidence in their employers' concern for their well-being.

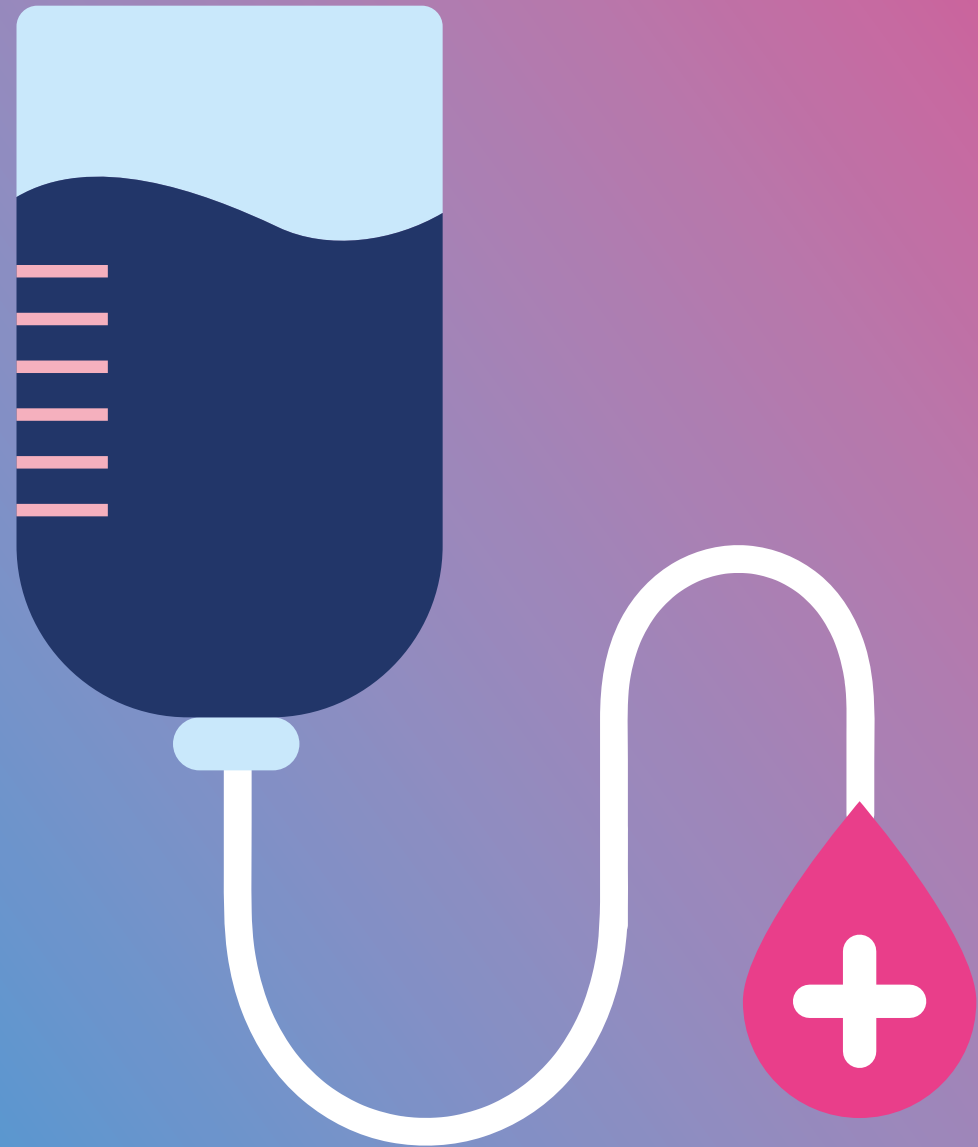


Design for emotional well-being

Employers can take steps to design benefits and work for emotional well-being. From training in recognizing and addressing mental health challenges to virtual advice chats, there are plenty of opportunities to broaden the scope of mental health benefits based on what employees find helpful.

To ensure all employee groups feel cared for and emotionally safe, employers need to take root-and-branch action on the underlying causes of workplace stress, such as job design and supervisor competencies. At present, just over half of employees (53%) believe their employers consider well-being in job design.

Mitigate risk for the unwell



All employees go through times when they are physically or emotionally unwell. In our survey analysis, we categorize respondents as “unwell” if they disagree with the statement “Overall, I am physically and mentally well.” By finding out more about unwell colleagues in their workforces, employers can make sure their benefits programs offer targeted support where it’s needed most.

When employees are unwell, they report worse outcomes when it comes to health, wealth and career. Employers can help by providing opportunities for unwell employees to take an active role in managing their health and well-being in ways that make a difference in their day-to-day lives. This might include self-care programs, solutions to empower those dealing with chronic conditions or assistive technology at work.

Healthcare systems face worker burnout and continued shortages at a time when fiscal consolidation risks deflecting attention and resources elsewhere. More frequent and widespread infectious disease outbreaks amidst a background of chronic diseases over the next decade risks pushing exhausted healthcare systems to the brink of failure around the world.

World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report 2023

Figure 37:

Unwell employees are 2x less likely to:

**say the benefits they have at work meet their needs
(31% vs 64%)**

**feel stressed in everyday life
(79% vs 42%)**

**be thriving in their current roles
(35% vs 70%)**

**feel their employers care about their health and well-being
(41% vs 71%)**

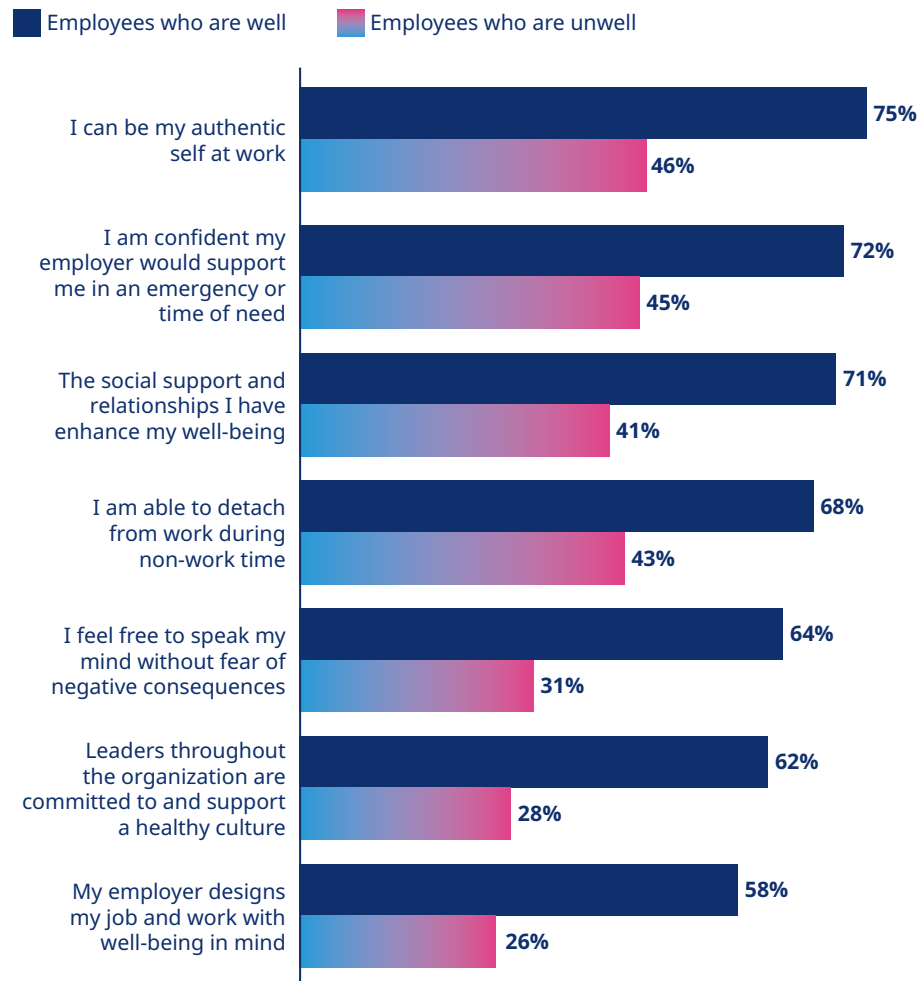
and 1.5x less likely to:

**be confident they can afford healthcare
(53% vs 83%)**

Unwell employees feel much less positive about their everyday lives and are half as likely to thrive at work as respondents who identify as “well.” More than four-fifths (81%) say they have worked while physically unwell compared with 55% of employees who say they are well. Similar numbers of employees have worked while mentally unwell (80% versus 48%).


This group of employees is also likely to feel less positive about their workplace experiences in general. Only 46% feel they can be their authentic selves at work compared to 75% of well individuals. And just 45% believe their employers will support them in an emergency or time of need compared to 72% of well employees.

Figure 38: Unwell versus well employees



Health issues relating to the pandemic will be with us for years to come. Mercer's Health Trends 2023 report found that COVID-19 is still a top-five source of insurer claims in all regions globally.³⁵ Although the number of individuals suffering from long COVID worldwide is unknown, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated in May 2022 that around 7.5% of adults were still experiencing persistent symptoms three or more months after diagnosis.³⁶ The wider impact of the pandemic is also being felt in delayed diagnoses of conditions like cancer.

There is a wide body of research that highlights that COVID-19 was isolating and further impeded persons with disabilities from accessing meaningful work.^{37,38,39,40} Employers can add immediate and significant value through better understanding the needs of those who are differently abled, offering meaningful benefits and improving working conditions.



Lockdowns and infection fears during the pandemic meant that medical diagnosis and treatment for many conditions were disrupted. The after-effects of those delays are being felt in both the volume and costs of claims in 2022. More than three in five insurers (61%) globally say claims patterns have changed in 2022, and 55% of insurers globally report seeing more later-stage illness diagnoses in claims due to deferred care.

Mercer Marsh Benefits' Health Trends 2023



³⁵ Mercer Marsh Benefits Health Trends 2023.

³⁶ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Nearly One in Five American Adults Who Have Had COVID-19 Still Have 'Long COVID,'" available at https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/20220622.htm.

³⁷ Mercer Marsh Benefits. People Risk 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/health/mmb-managing-risks-for-workforce-and-business-resilience.html>.

³⁸ Jesus TS, Bhattacharjya S, Papadimitriou C, Bogdanova Y, Bentley J, Arango-Lasprilla JC, Kamalakannan S and The Refugee Empowerment Task Force International Networking Group of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. "Lockdown-Related Disparities Experienced by People with Disabilities During the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scoping Review With Thematic Analysis," International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Volume 18, Issue 12 (2021), p. 6178, available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126178>.

³⁹ Banks LM, Davey C, Shakespeare T and Kuper H. "Disability-Inclusive Responses to COVID-19: Lessons Learnt From Research on Social Protection in Low- and Middle-Income Countries," World Development, Volume 137 (2021), p. 105178, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105178>.

⁴⁰ Hillgrove T, Blyth J, Kiefel-Johnson F and Pryor W. "A Synthesis of Findings from 'Rapid Assessments' of Disability and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Response and Disability-Inclusive Data Collection," International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Volume 18, Issue 18 (2021), p. 9701, available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189701>.

Unwell employees value social supports, mental health and prevention. Financial support, such as free food, transportation and housing, along with tools to help locate appropriate healthcare, are also high priorities for this group.

Figure 39: Top five most helpful interventions for unwell employees*

- 1** — Preventive cancer screenings
- 2** — Free or subsidized food, transportation or housing
- 3** — An app to help find medical care when and where I need it, even in the middle of the night
- 4** — Training to recognize and address my own and others' mental health challenges
- 5** — Apps and devices to self-manage well-being

Note: Interventions refers to specific reproductive health, digital health, mental health and general benefits queried in the survey (see Appendix A). This does not refer to traditional benefits, such as life insurance or medical coverage.



Just over half (53%) of unwell employees feel confident they can afford healthcare for themselves and their families, compared to over three-quarters (79%) of all respondents. Only 23% of unwell employees report being able to find mental healthcare when they need it, compared to half (49%) of all respondents. Scouring the internet for solutions when facing a crisis isn't an optimal employee experience, so offering employees a digital "front door" to all their available benefits can be a way to ease stress in locating an appropriate, trusted resource when they need it most.

Coverage to provide short-term disability income protection or paid sick leave is often an overlooked area. Employees coming into the workplace while unwell increases risk to the business and coworkers. Given labor shortages, cost and headaches over administration, it's understandable that employers wouldn't want to "turn on the switch" immediately. We expect to see more legislation in this area, and there are opportunities to "get in the game" gradually. For example, as we've seen in the UAE, temporary total disability schemes require some form of adjudication, early intervention and financial incentive to return to work versus full paid sick leave.

Figure 40: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are on the rise, but employers can help

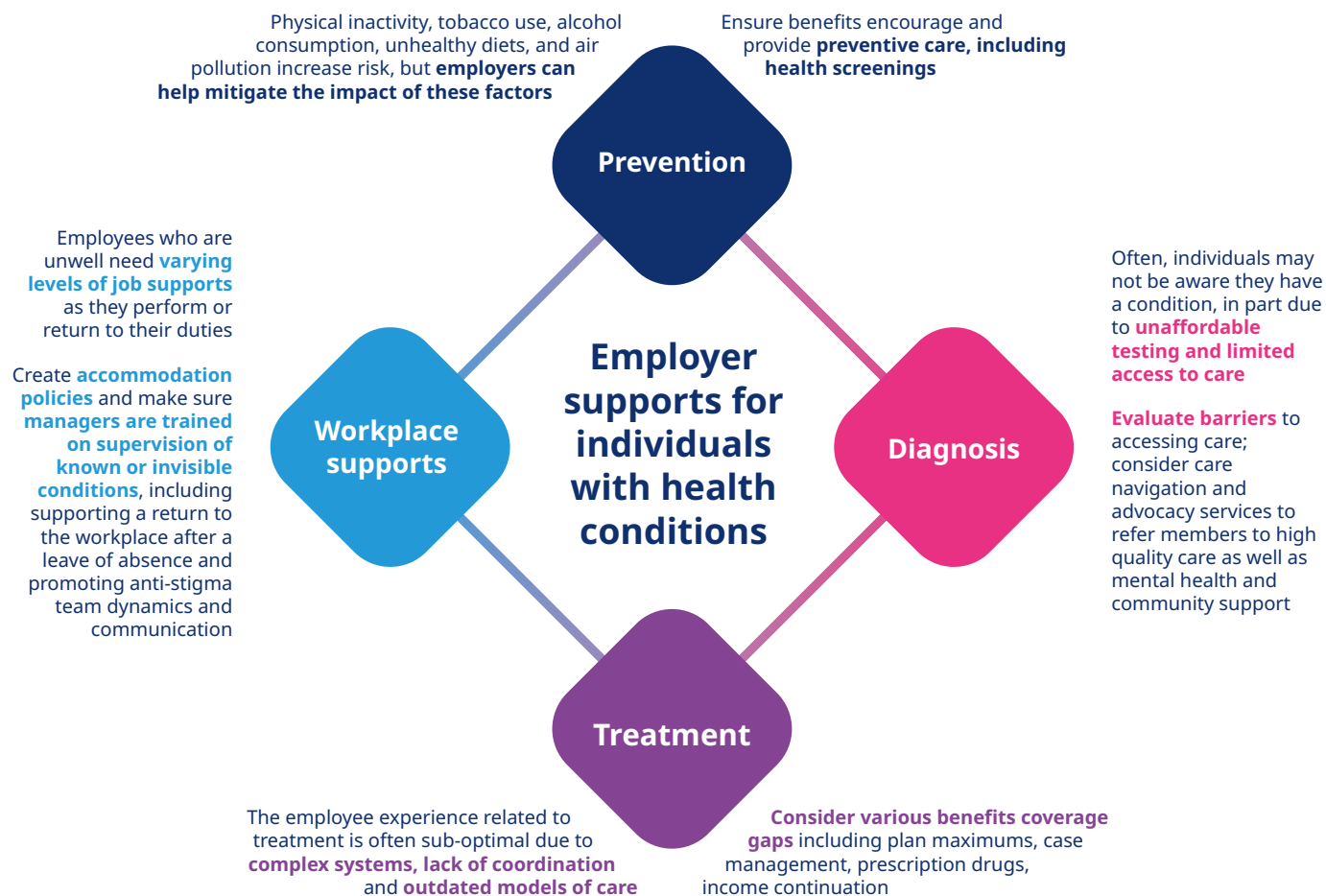
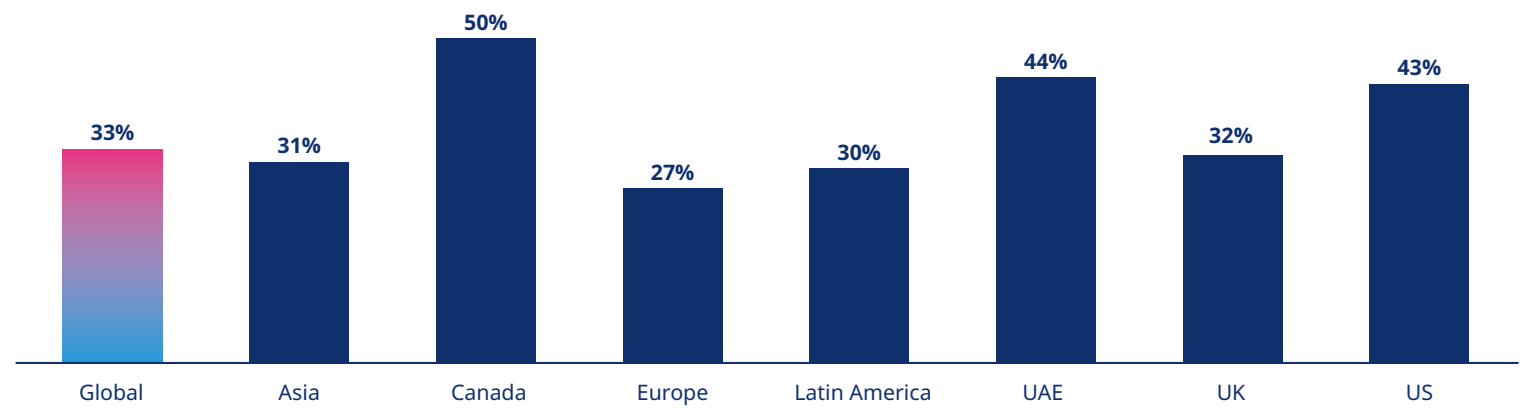


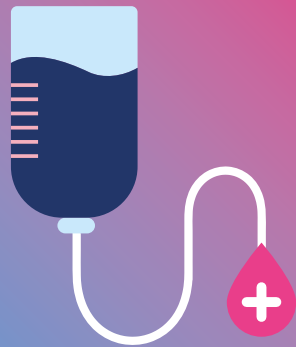


Figure 41: Regional by the numbers:
“My employer provides access to employer-
sponsored short term disability protection/
sick leave”



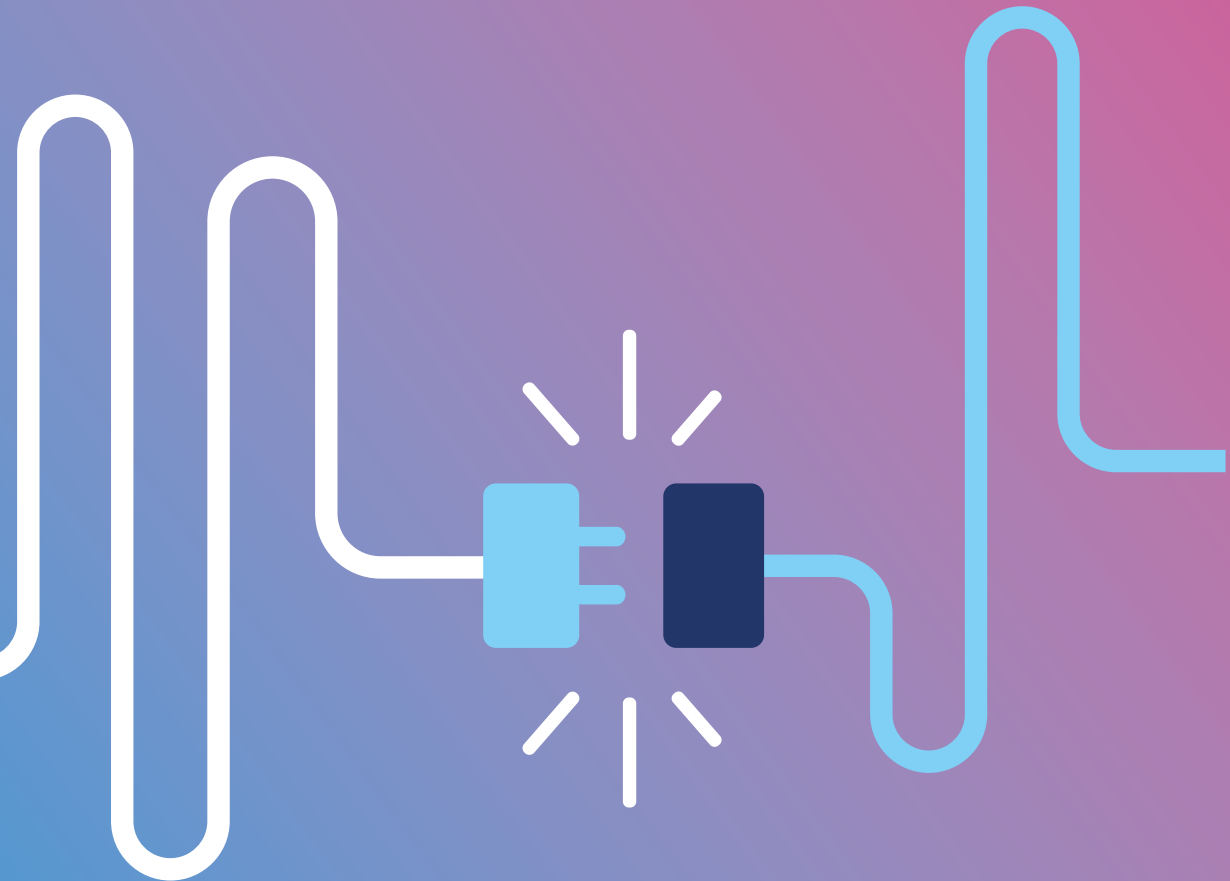
Actions for employers

How to mitigate risk for the unwell:



- Expand your workplace policies to fully accommodate groups of employees who may need additional support, including neurodivergent colleagues and people with mental health conditions like anxiety and cognitive or emotional conditions.
- Educate line managers and leaders about both visible and invisible disability to enable them to understand and support individuals' circumstances.
- Create work environments and design jobs that can support those who are differently abled. Build in the flexibility to further tailor environments and roles to the needs of specific employees. Extend this concept to benefits communication practices.
- Listen to unwell and differently abled colleagues as well as expert advisers, and use their insight to make changes in policies, practices, physical environments and benefits design.
- Develop a cancer strategy addressing factors such as prevention, use of centers of excellence, care navigation, case management/navigation and second opinions.
- Facilitate and promote the importance of early diagnosis and regular risk-based screening, especially for cancer but also for other noncommunicable diseases like diabetes.
- Implement solutions to empower those with chronic conditions to care for their health (for example, subsidize/cover maintenance medications) and to help employees detect an underlying condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure (for example, health screenings and assessments).
- Evaluate opportunities to provide condition management, even if not common from a market practice or employer-sponsored perspective.
- Where current programs don't exist, explore options to provide income continuation to individuals who are unwell and not able to work.

Address health and risk protection gaps

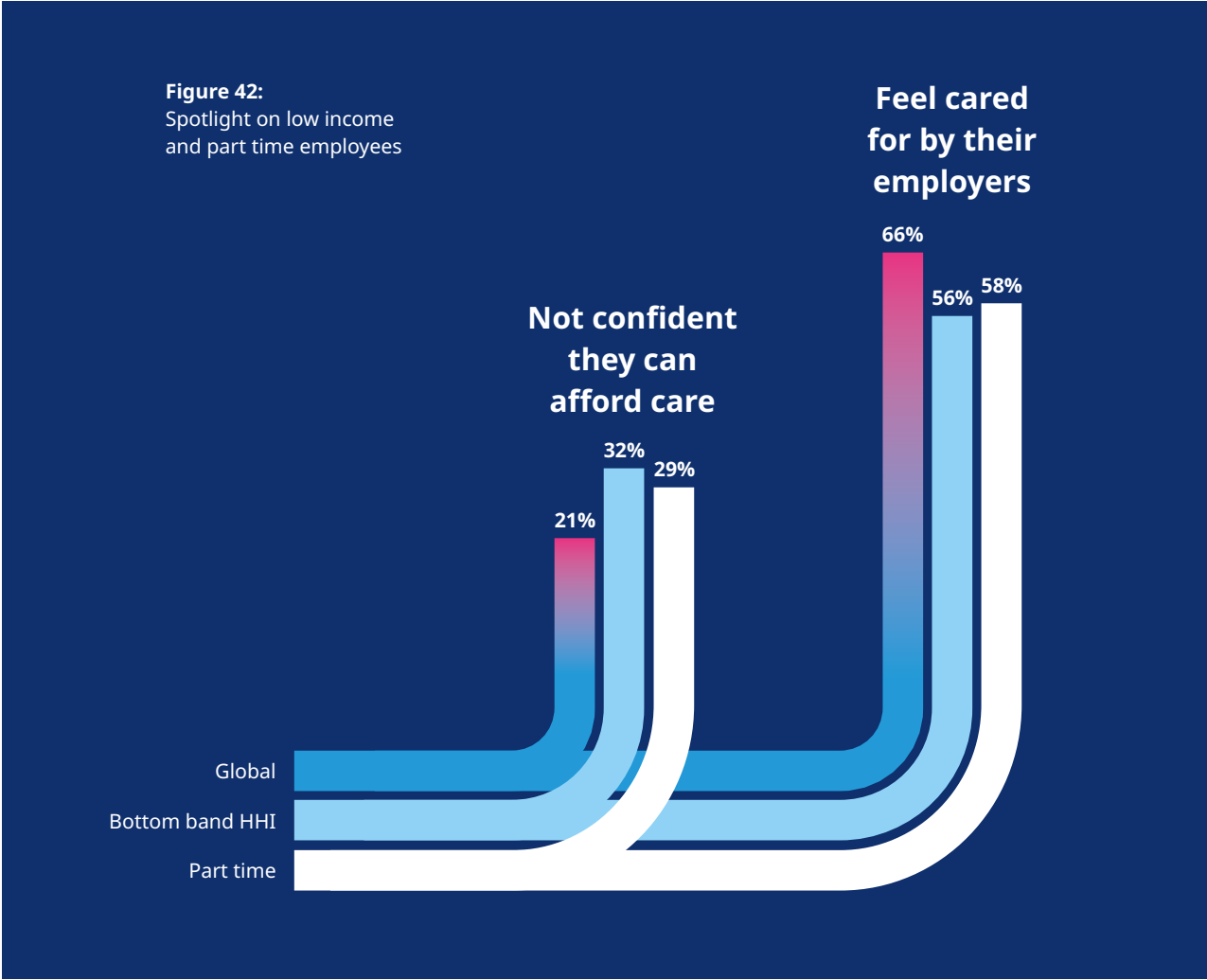


Employees are more likely to thrive when their basic needs are met. However, gaps in protection for low-income or part-time workers can leave them behind. Under-protected groups are less likely to believe their employers care about their well-being and are less likely to thrive in their careers.

Note: In this section, we refer to different categories of income level. For example, those in the bottom-band HHI (household income) earn less than 20% of median income. Categories are as follows:

Bottom-band HHI	Less than 20% of median
Below-median HHI	Between 20% and 100% of median
Median HHI	Between 1 and 1.5 times the median
Above-median HHI	Between 1.5 and 8 times the median
Top-band HHI	8 times the median

Figure 42:
Spotlight on low income
and part time employees



Twenty-one percent of employees are not confident they can afford the care they need (as compared to 24% in our 2021 report). Of concern is that one in five employees (19%) who are not confident they can afford healthcare say they will self-treat simple medical issues using information available online. Of note is that in China, those with below-median income were three times more likely than those with a median income or above to seek advice about a simple medical issue from a family member or a friend as opposed to visiting a trusted doctor.

Figure 43: Regional by the numbers: “I am not very or not at all confident I can afford the healthcare I or my family may need”

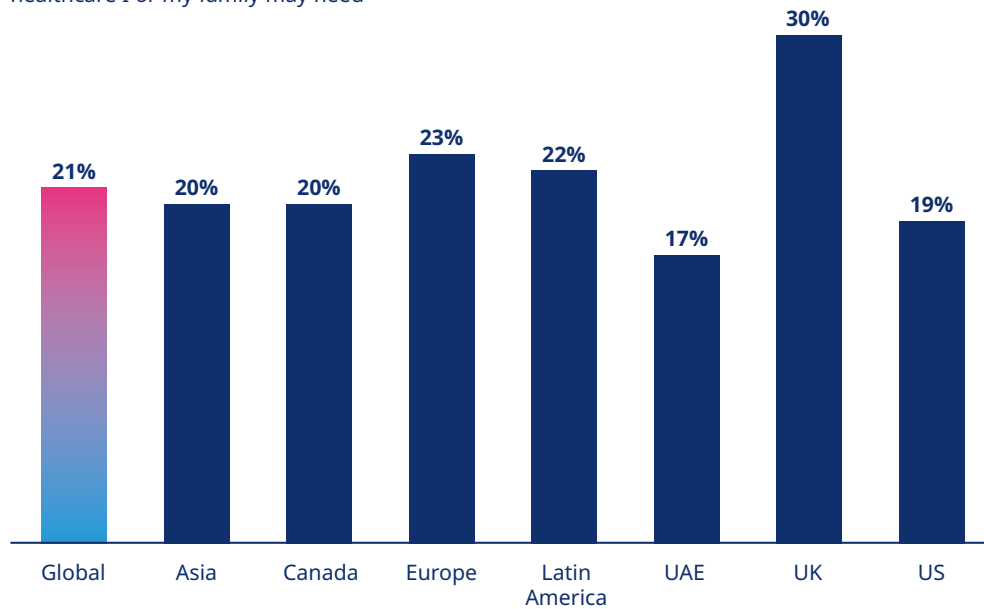


Figure 44: Which of the following benefits do you currently have access to? (access through employer)

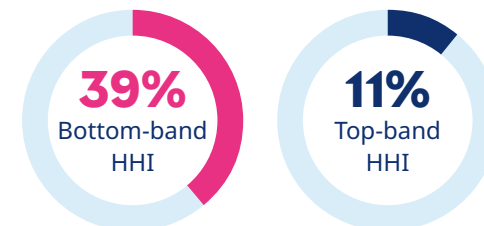
Which of the following benefits do you currently have access to? (access through employer)	Bottom-band HHI	Top-band HHI	Difference (percentage points)
Mental health counseling services	22%	39%	18%
Lifestyle modification support	18%	32%	14%
Medical coverage	38%	52%	14%
Onsite workplace health services or clinics	29%	44%	15%
Short-term disability income protection	27%	40%	14%
Health evaluation	31%	44%	13%
Life insurance	25%	38%	13%
Long-term disability income protection	20%	33%	13%

Programs to address protection gaps often exclude the employees who would benefit most from services. For example, 44% of those in the top band of earners (eight times their country's median pay) have access to health evaluation services, compared to just 31% of those in the bottom band of earners.

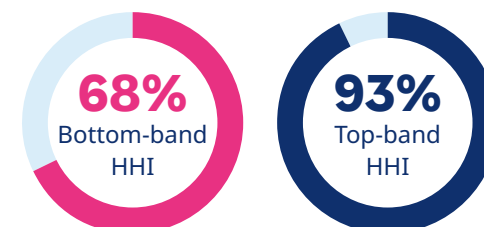
There are striking differences between low and high earners' access to benefits. Predictably, income level also strongly influences whether or not employees believe their employers care about their health and well-being.

Figure 45: Gaps between low and high earners

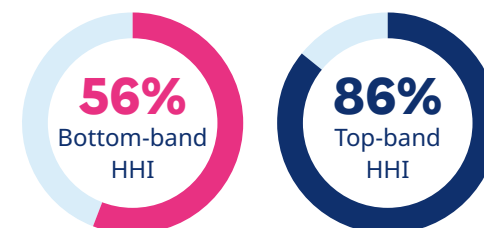
Have access to zero benefits from employer:



Confident you can afford the healthcare you and your family need:



My employer cares about my health and well-being:





Part-time employees

Part-time workers (38%) are more than twice as likely to have no employer benefits as full-time employees (16%). Self-employed gig workers are even more poorly supported, with 67% receiving no benefits at all.

Figure 46: Which of the following benefits do you currently have access to? (access through employer)

Which of the following benefits do you currently have access to? (access through employer)	Full-time employment	Part-time employment	Difference
Medical coverage	50%	24%	26%
Life insurance	33%	15%	19%
Health evaluation	38%	20%	18%
Dental care	33%	15%	18%
Personal accident insurance	36%	19%	17%
Onsite workplace health services or clinics	37%	20%	16%
Critical illness insurance	31%	15%	16%
Supplemental medical insurance	29%	14%	14%

Organization size

Figure 47: Access to employer-provided benefits by employer size

	Fewer than 50 employees	50–499 employees	500–19,999 employees	20,000 or more employees
Mental health counseling services	14%	27%	35%	40%
Medical coverage	28%	46%	54%	52%
Short-term disability income protection	20%	33%	41%	44%
Health evaluation	21%	35%	42%	43%
Dental care	18%	30%	36%	38%
Life insurance	17%	31%	38%	36%
Critical illness insurance	16%	29%	35%	34%

Larger businesses are more likely to offer access to benefits, including mental health and medical, than smaller ones.

Small business owners, facing a multitude of daily business threats, may not prioritize or have the financial or knowledge resources to deliver more than the most basic benefits, if any. This puts these workers at a disadvantage and could pose a longer-term retention challenge.

Figure 48: Feeling cared for by employer size:

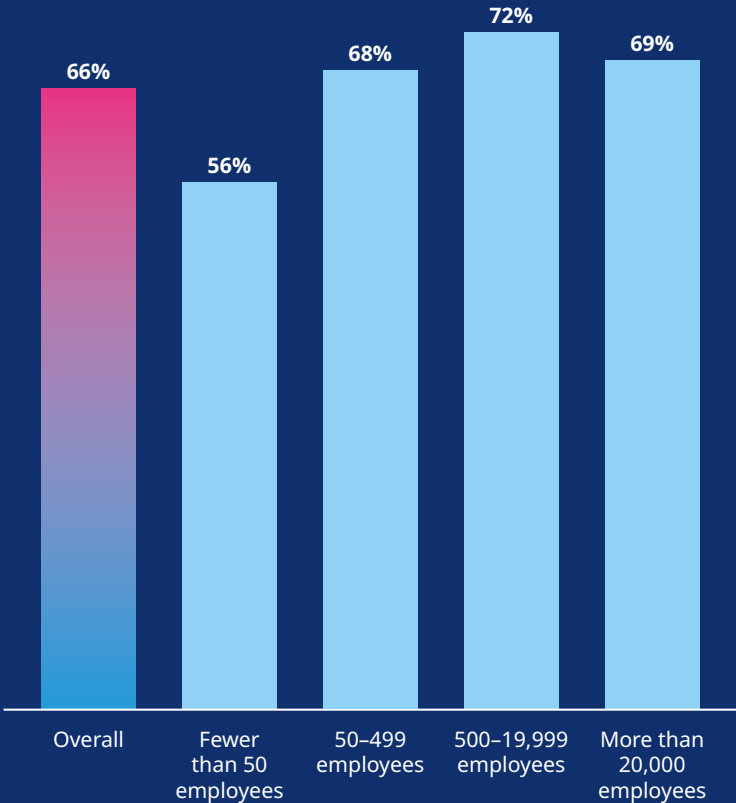


Figure 49: Bring health in reach for your entire workforce:

Note: Interventions refers to specific reproductive health, digital health, mental health and general benefits queried in the survey (see Appendix A). This does not refer to traditional benefits, such as life insurance or medical coverage.

Top five most helpful interventions* to bottom-band household income earners

- 1 — Preventive cancer screenings
- 2 — An app to help find medical care when and where I need it, even in the middle of the night
- 3 — Tools to help build skills like mindfulness and resilience
- 4 — Training for dealing with work-related pressure
- 5 — Free or subsidized food, transportation or housing

In the face of economic unknowns, employers may be hesitant to open benefits eligibility to those without access today, especially in markets where providing benefits to part-time, temporary, contract/gig or even blue-collar workers is not market practice. However, there continue to be plenty of opportunities to introduce benefits over time in a cost-effective and even defined contribution manner. With “Deliver on Well-being” and “Provide Flexibility and Protection” as two of five elements of the Good Work Framework, we expect the importance of this to grow for responsible employers.⁴¹ After all, the health and resilience of their workforces lead to the health and resilience of their businesses.⁴²

⁴¹ Mercer and WEF's The Good Work Framework: A New Business Agenda for the Future of Work.

⁴² Mercer Marsh Benefits. People Risk 2022, available at <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/health/mmb-managing-risks-for-workforce-and-business-resilience.html>.

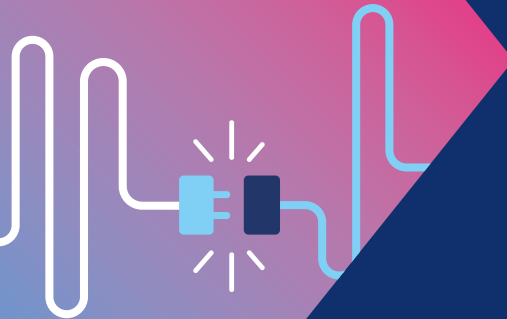
Figure 50: Introducing benefits to those ineligible today

Health and wealth benefits	Career, time-off and other benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer-funded telemedicine, employee assistance plans, health screening or other digital health solutions• Navigation and promotion of community supports• Defined contribution healthcare (for example, insurance contribution-matching, spending accounts)• Expansion of existing onsite health services• Financial education, guidance and support• Savings plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predictable scheduling and guaranteed hours• Career path or opportunities to higher-wage jobs• Rotation programs• Paid sick leave above statutory requirements• Paid time off for preventive care• Healthy meal access, subsidized dinners-to-go• Onsite daycare• Rideshare service as alternative to unsafe transportation• Early access to earned pay



Actions for employers

How to address health and risk protection gaps:



- Help benefits plan decision makers and the C-suite understand that a proportion of the workforce may be living below the poverty line, worried about funding healthcare and coming in to work when they are unwell.
- Explore ways to go beyond standard market practice and open up more and relevant benefits to the most vulnerable groups within the workplace.
- Ensure vulnerable groups have access to at least a basic set of healthcare benefits through the workplace, including short-term disability protection.
- Question and review benefits structures that tier basic health needs coverage levels by “employee class.”
- Establish minimum standards of benefits for your entire organization, including traditional offerings (such as medical insurance, sick and long-term disability, life insurance) and innovative but meaningful supports (such as food/housing subsidies and financial planning tools).
- Consider, as a part of your benefits philosophy, whether premium contributions and supports should focus on equity rather than equality.
- Recognize that there are network gaps with insurance or health providers, such as national medical insurers operating in large geographic territories or global employee assistance plan providers. Consider making arrangements with more than one provider to ensure comprehensiveness and access.
- Explore areas to support employees with the unique issues they’re facing within their communities (for example, housing insecurity), and consider partnering with local governments or nongovernmental organizations to deliver.

Design for emotional well-being

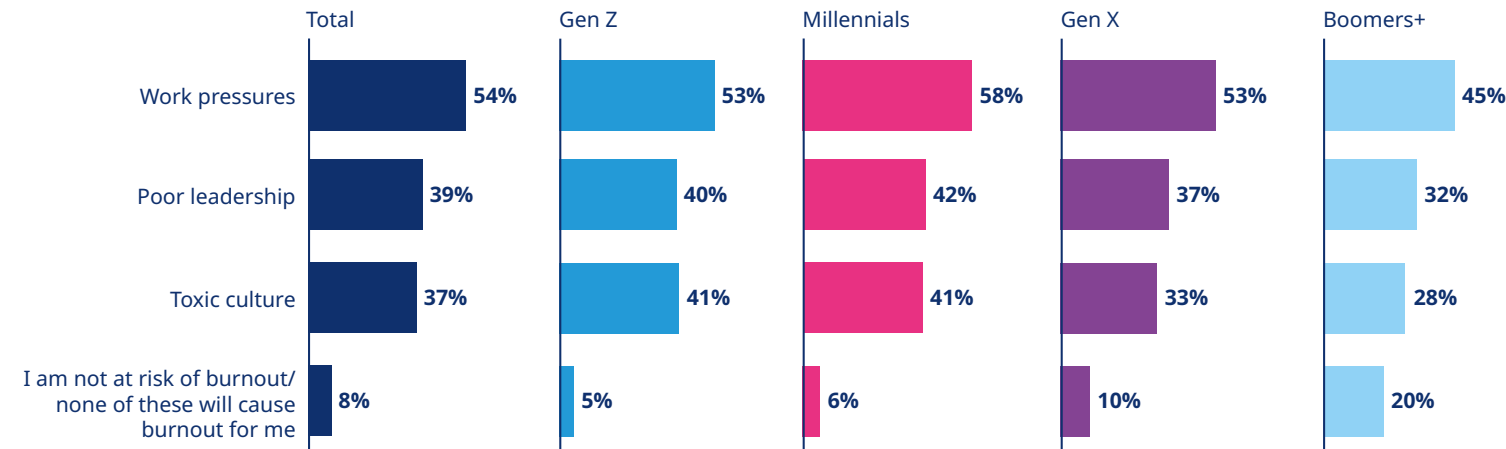


COVID-19 was a cause of decline in employees’ mental health but also a catalyst that helped open up workplace awareness of emotional well-being.^{43,44,45} The challenge for employers is to retain and evolve that awareness, in terms of how mentally well employees feel in both the workplace and in their overall lives.

In part 2, “Benefits for a Fast-Changing World,” we explored some of the societal factors that are worrying employees, but workplace-specific pressures are also contributing to the 47% of employees who say they feel stressed in everyday life. Most respondents (92%) say at least one factor had the potential to cause burnout, with work pressures, poor leadership and a toxic work culture leading the list of factors most likely to cause burnout.

Leadership and overarching workplace culture set the tone for supporting emotional well-being. There is work to be done in this area as only half (57%) of employees believe company leaders are committed to and support a healthy culture, and 53% say their employers design work with well-being in mind.

Figure 51: Burnout factors across generations



⁴³ Mata J, Wenz A, Rettig T, Reifenscheid M, Möhring K, Krieger U and Naumann E. “Health Behaviors and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Population-Based Survey in Germany,” Social Science & Medicine, Volume 287 (2021), p. 114333.

⁴⁴ Sasaki N, Kuroda R, Tsuno K and Kawakami N. “Workplace Responses to COVID-19 Associated With Mental Health and Work Performance of Employees in Japan,” Journal of Occupational Health, Volume 62, Issue 1 (2020), p. e12134.

⁴⁵ Thomson L. Furlough and the Wellbeing of the Workforce, n.d., University of Nottingham, available at <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/vision/vision-furlough-and-wellbeing>.

Women struggle more with psychological safety at work

Workplace mental health supports don't serve women's needs as effectively as men's. From affordability to confidence in speaking up about mental health problems at work, women are less comfortable with the support and services they receive.

Women (55%) are also somewhat more likely than men (49%) to have worked while mentally unwell.



Figure 52: Women struggle more with psychological safety at work

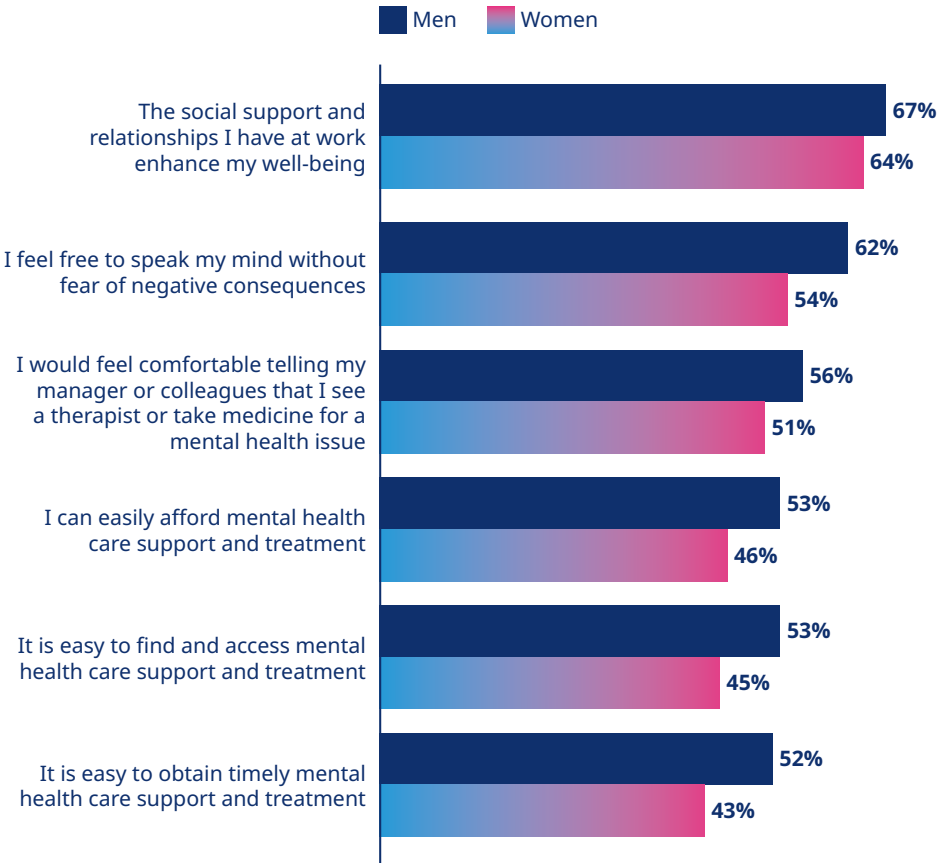
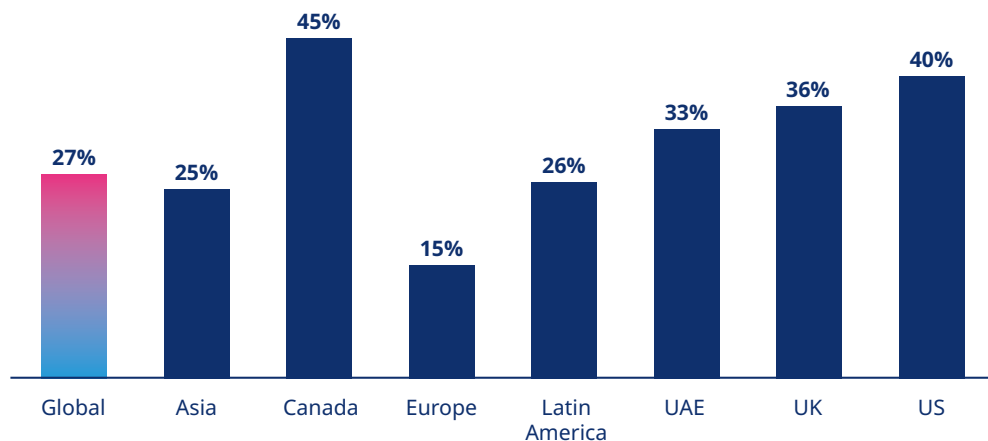


Figure 53: How to create a psychologically safe workplace



Figure 54: Employee mental health benefits opportunities abound. Regional by the numbers:
“My employer provides access to employer-sponsored mental health counselling services”



Half of employees globally say they've worked while feeling mentally unwell, and most don't report having access to mental health counselling through their employers. Only 43% of those who are unwell report having mental health counselling through any means, not just through their employers. This is a significant safety issue and cause for concern.

MMB's Health Trends 2023 report highlights how mental health gaps in medical coverage persist. For the first time, we've seen mental conditions as one of the top five

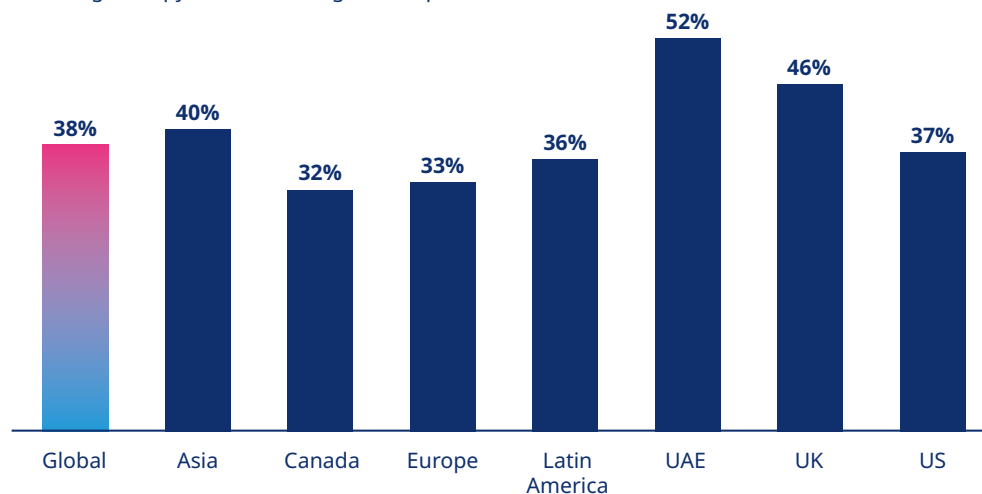
causes of claims cost in Europe. Insurers have responded with increased support for mental health prevention, management and treatment. In 2022, outside the US, just 16% of insurers globally offered no support for mental health, compared to 26% in the previous year. Although the headline trend of more support for mental health is encouraging, in practice, the scope of insurers' offerings is often still limited (for example, a capped number of therapy sessions, no coverage for medications and rare coverage for substance abuse). Furthermore, there is significant regional variation.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Mercer Marsh Benefits Health Trends 2023.





Figure 55: Regional by the numbers: “The option of treatment or programs for substance use, including therapy and counseling, is a helpful benefit”



Employees report that insurance coverage or a program that reduces the cost of mental health treatment (counseling, medication) is one of their most helpful benefits (see Appendix A for further details). Forty-one percent of individuals indicate this is or would be helpful, but only 28% say their employers provide this benefit. The largest gap is in the area of targeted services for children, teenagers and parents to assist with mental health, socialization and learning issues faced by youth.

More than two in five (41%) view virtual counseling with a therapist via video chat or text for anxiety, sadness

or relationship issues as helpful. Given the scarcity of mental health professionals in many markets as well as stigma, high-quality mental health applications provide an exciting opportunity to address issues with access and affordability.

Our findings suggest considerable interest in alternative mental health therapies (42% helpful; 22% provided by employer). This could include animal therapy or culturally relevant counseling; for example, in Canada, from indigenous elders.

Actions for employers

How to design for emotional well-being:



- Provide all levels of leadership with mental health training to offer better support for employees and encourage them to be more open about their mental well-being.
- Interview all levels of leadership, and listen in to employee networks to understand organizational stressors, and devise a plan to address these.
- Provide a digital alternative to face-to-face mental healthcare for people who want to embrace this approach or have access challenges.
- Ensure your medical plan provides adequate coverage for both prevention and treatment of mental health.
- Familiarize yourself with ISO 45003 (managing psychological health in the workplace)⁴⁶, focused on the management of work-related stressors.
- Extend mental health support to families, including rapid access to diagnosis for children, teenagers and their parents.
- Explore alternative therapies for mental health support and emotional well-being. Make sure these are assessed for quality and effectiveness as well as from a tax and compliance perspective. Talk to employees to gain a better understanding of alternative approaches that resonate with them.
- Make sure Gen Z's needs are a key part of emotional well-being strategies given their high risk of burnout (see part 1).

⁴⁶ ISO 45003: 2021 Occupational health and safety management - Psychological health and safety at work - Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks <https://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html>.

Conclusion



The pandemic provided strong evidence that savvy businesses can survive and grow, even in the darkest of times, by investing, innovating and looking after their people.

Mercer's Global Talent Trends Study 2022–2023



As we continue in a period of economic uncertainty, it's natural for the C-suite to question well-being spend. Have superficial broad-based well-being programs that create a culture of health but deliver little outcome started to take over? How do we focus efforts on those facing the widest gaps in care and caring so that the workforce and society as a whole truly benefit?

It's important to review workplace health and well-being benefits through an equity lens to ensure health programs are helping all employees thrive and perform at their best. Furthermore, benefits decision makers should ask whether basic needs are being met for all employees. Given budget realities, employers should also be discerning in choosing solutions that will be valued by employees and be effective. Perhaps most important is that benefits are delivered within a culture of safety and support, in which leaders have earned the trust of employees by demonstrating that they care.

Leadership

Understanding underrepresented groups in the workplace and addressing their needs to open up new possibilities requires commitment from top leadership. Board-level support is essential for reviewing benefits design for all, endorsing flexibility in working practices, designing jobs with well-being in mind, and being willing to recognize that there are employees so important to the business who are struggling and unwell.

Trust

Employers are trusted providers of access to healthcare services. This gives them a powerful opportunity to shape the future direction of many elements of healthcare, such as access to good-quality health services and reliable information.

Giving employees reasons to believe their employers genuinely care about their well-being will help build trust for the long term. Employers can help by identifying gaps in health and protection and engaging with less-well-supported groups within the workforce, from women to part-time workers.

Putting those priorities into practice will involve line managers and leadership at all levels in an organization. Top-level support for flexible working, for example, will have limited success if line managers don't trust their employees or create a good workplace experience for remote workers and part-time employees.

Trust is also vitally important in addressing specific regional challenges, including threats of violence both in society and in the workplace. Providing a physically and psychologically safe working environment and protecting employees in their wider lives will help employees thrive and feel confident in their workplaces.



Culture

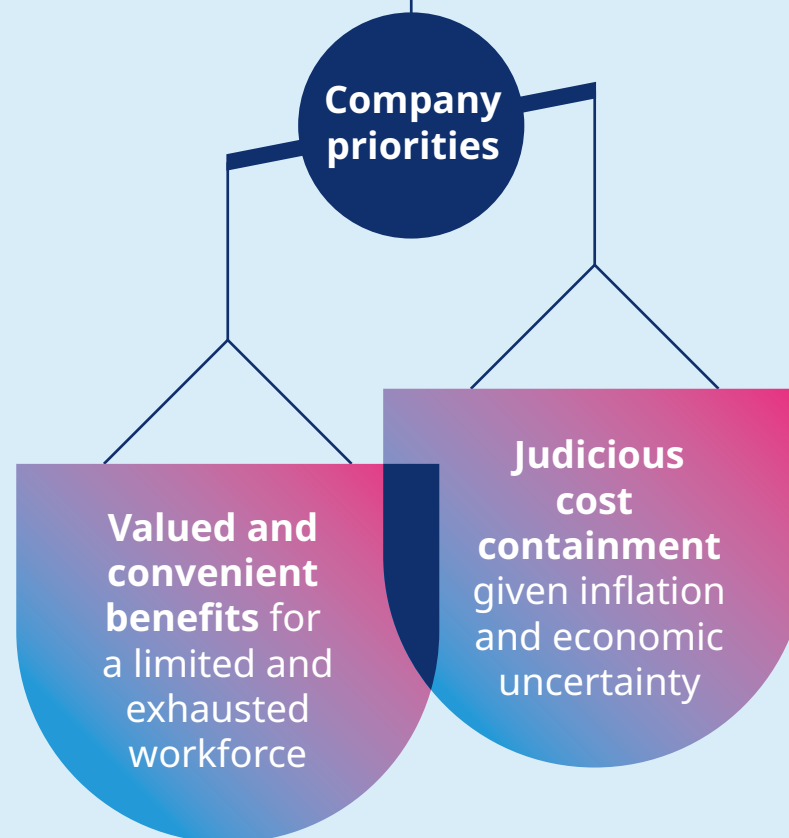
Embedding well-being into company culture isn't limited to the benefits offering. From providing paid time off across all employee groups to recognizing and supporting the unique needs of Gen Z, leaders should keep listening and responding to the changing needs and preferences of the full workforce as they evolve health and well-being strategies for the future.

In addition, employers will need to demonstrate that they are authentic in their commitment. Employees expect their employers to back up public claims around issues such as social justice and environmental support with action.

Over the course of 2023 and beyond, the economic, business-specific and personal challenges employees face will continue to shape their well-being. Through their benefits strategies, organizations now have a unique opportunity to mitigate the effects of the first, minimize the impact of the second and lift employees up to overcome the third. Those that don't will risk compounding enduring labor shortages by neither attracting new employees from a broader pool of talent nor offering a compelling work experience to existing employees. Organizations must balance empathy for employees' total well-being with the economics of the business to provide better support for their employees to thrive across every part of their lives. When people thrive, societies thrive.

Balancing economics with empathy

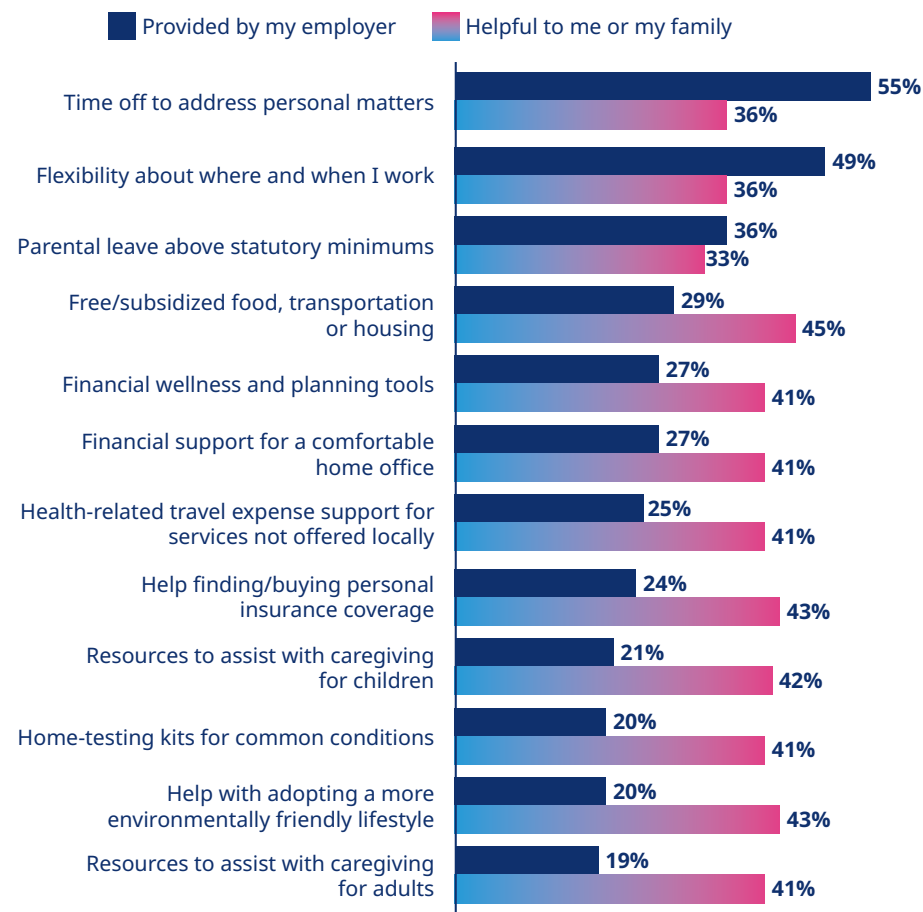
- Use of digital
- Health issues
- Benefits spend
- C-Suite and investor scrutiny
- Workplace diversity



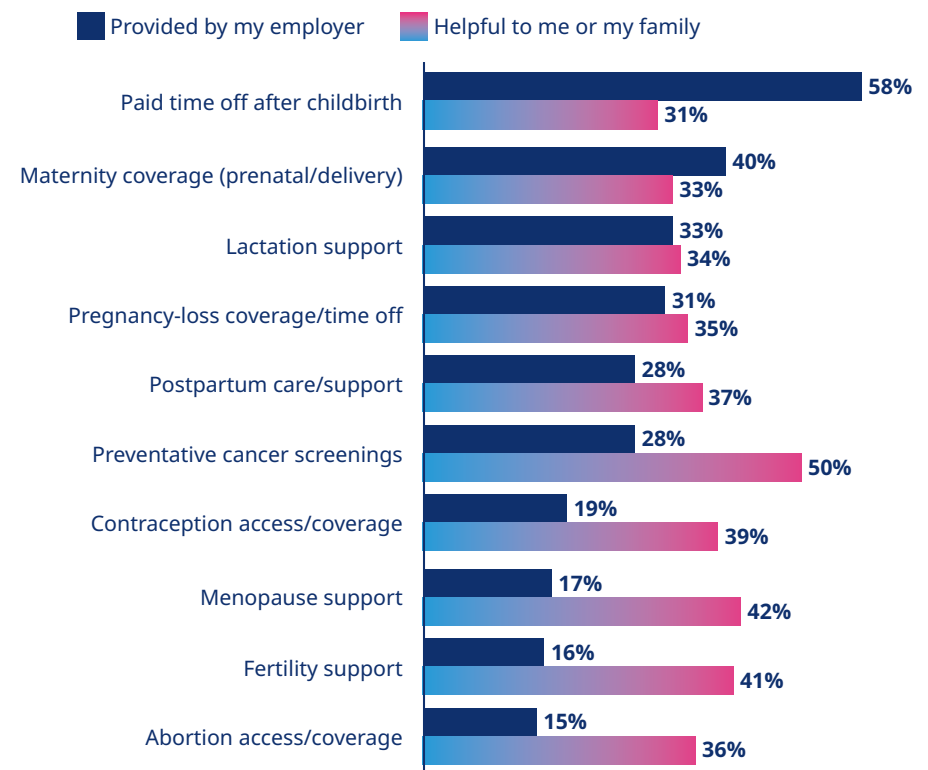
Appendix A

Helpfulness of health and well-being interventions to the workforce

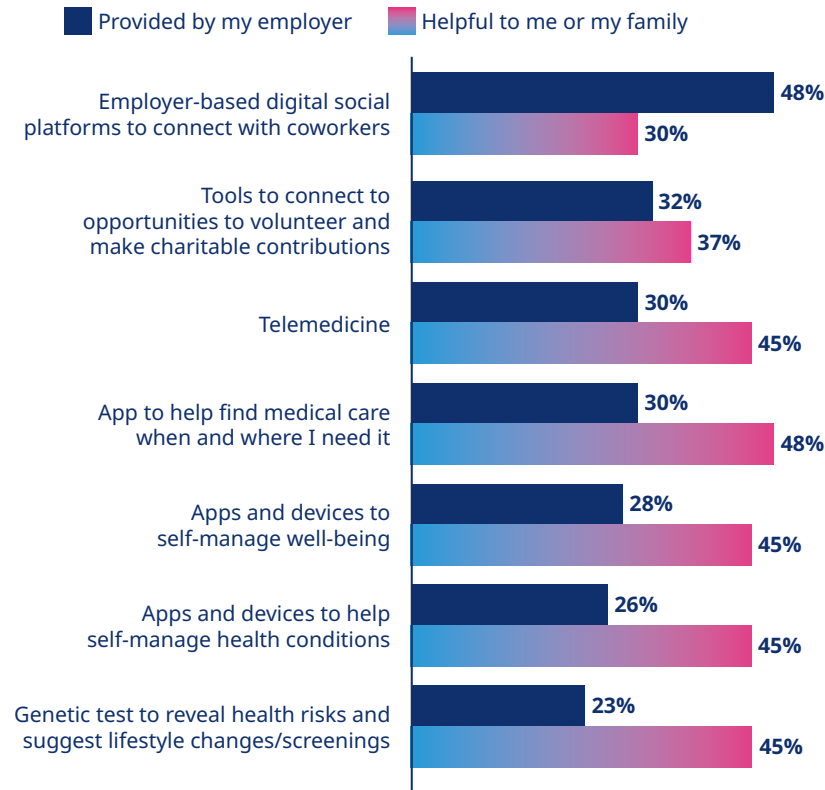
General benefits



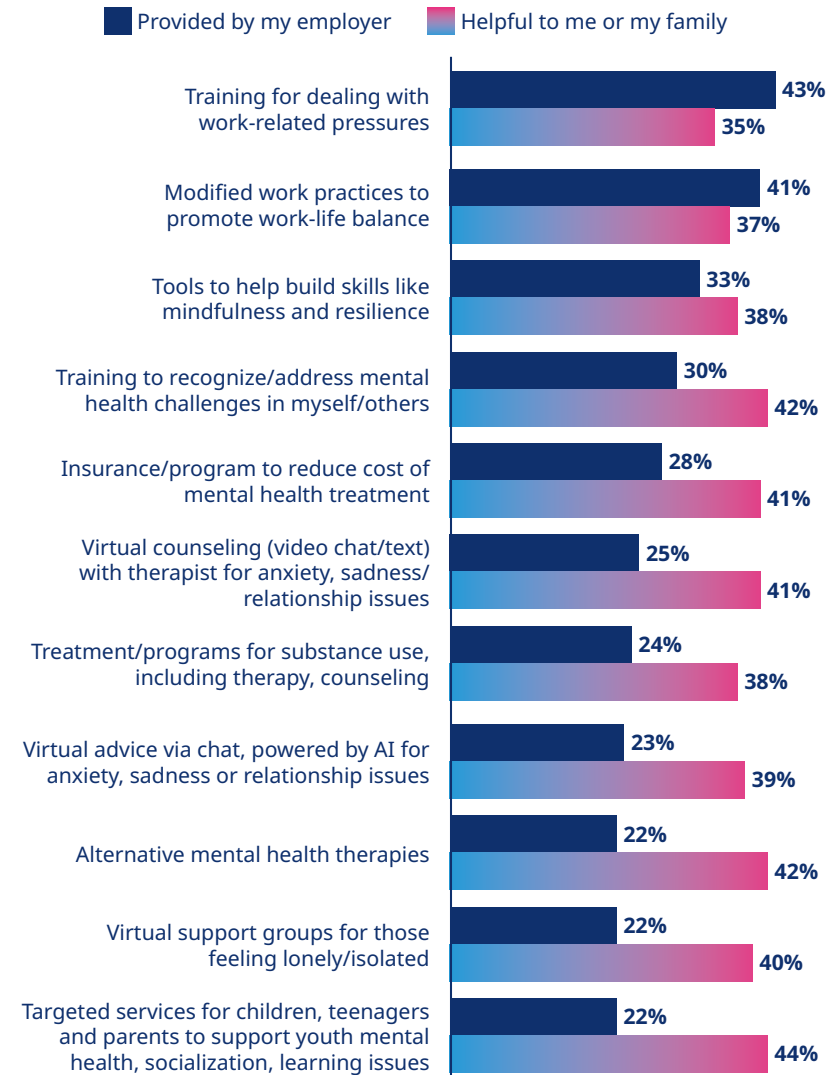
Reproductive health benefits



Digital health benefits



Mental health benefits



Sample market comparisons

[illegible]

Trust in sources to deliver personal health solutions

How much trust or distrust do you have in the following sources to deliver personal health solutions that are of high quality, convenient, affordable and secure (a great deal or a fair amount of trust)

