

Insights from the Optum 2019 International Wellness in the Workplace Benchmark Study



Employers evolve workplace wellness in the wake of economic uncertainty and shifting workforce demographics

Findings in context: Global companies face significant workforce challenges

Despite robust global economic growth, international companies and employees are feeling increasing pressure from escalating trade disputes, financial volatility, geopolitical tensions, declining multilateralism and the transition to more environmentally sustainable production methods.¹

- In APAC, overwork continues to be a pervasive problem, and in some countries, the slowing pace of population growth means there are fewer adults to replace employees aging out of the workforce in the generations that follow.²
- In EMEA, deadline extensions, media coverage, and the looming economic uncertainty of Brexit are creating stress for companies and employees.³
- LATAM has ranked as the region with the widest skills gap in the world for more than a decade, and companies struggle to fill vacant positions.⁴

Employee engagement, an essential for corporate success, is dismal according to Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace* report, which states the percentage of adults who work full time for an employer and are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work is just 15%.⁵

Study background

The survey was conducted with 303 international companies located in:

EMEA (Europe/Middle East)

LATAM (Latin America)

APAC (Asia-Pacific)

Respondents included health benefit and wellness programme decision-makers.

For the purpose of this report, companies are classified as:

Large: **3K to 9.9K** employees

X-large: **10K to 49.9K** employees

Jumbo: **50K+** employees

Amidst all these challenges, companies are experiencing a tremendous ideological shift ushered in by millennials who have now overtaken gen Xers and baby boomers as the largest demographic cohort in the workforce. Over 40% of employees at the companies surveyed are millennials (aged 23 to 38), a generation with vastly different expectations of employers than gen Xers and boomers.

Workplace wellness is more important than ever

The results from the Optum 2019 International Wellness in the Workplace Benchmark Study ("IWIW") show employers are confronting challenges head-on and are more committed than ever to employee health and wellbeing. Among companies with no health management and wellness (H&W) programmes currently in place, two out of three are very interested or extremely interested in providing programmes in the future, and 38% would like to initiate them within a year. Among those with programmes, 86% report they've been successful at increasing employee engagement. Other findings suggest companies are doubling down on their commitment to workplace wellness:

- About 70% more employers are developing long-term strategic plans for employee wellness than in previous years.
- Four in five companies (up about 10%) now employ full-time staff to oversee programmes.
- Four in five employers also expect programme spending to increase in the next three years.
- Three in four companies contract with multiple vendors for best-in-class programmes.

Companies are adjusting H&W strategy to meet changing needs

Whilst health risk assessments, health/fitness challenges, H&W websites/portals and employee assistance programmes remain the most commonly offered programmes in 2019, companies are fine-tuning their overall programme offerings to help tackle global and regional challenges. More companies are offering health advocacy programmes (up 27%) and stress reduction activities (up 30%), whilst fewer (down 25%) are offering wellness coaching. EMEA, with its Brexit uncertainties, is driving the increase in stress reduction programmes. However, APAC, with a culture of overwork, has the highest participation.⁶

Employers are also seeking to improve employee engagement in programmes by extending H&W offerings to family members, increasing incentives and utilising technology to drive participation. Survey findings also show companies are meeting millennials where they are by embracing new and emerging technologies.

- Three in four companies (up 14%) now make programmes available to family members.
- The average total possible value of incentives is \$560 (up from \$493).
- Over half of employers reported using social networks (57%), health-related mobile messaging such as text alerts and notifications (52%), and online competitions and challenges (52%).
- Digital engagement/social media platforms are now thought to be the most effective means of driving employee engagement in four out of six corporate environments (manufacturing/production, telecommuting, business travel and transportation). In 2018, emails were viewed as most effective in all environments except warehouses and manufacturing/production.

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of employees at the companies surveyed are millennials (aged 23 to 38), a generation with vastly different expectations of employers than gen Xers and boomers.

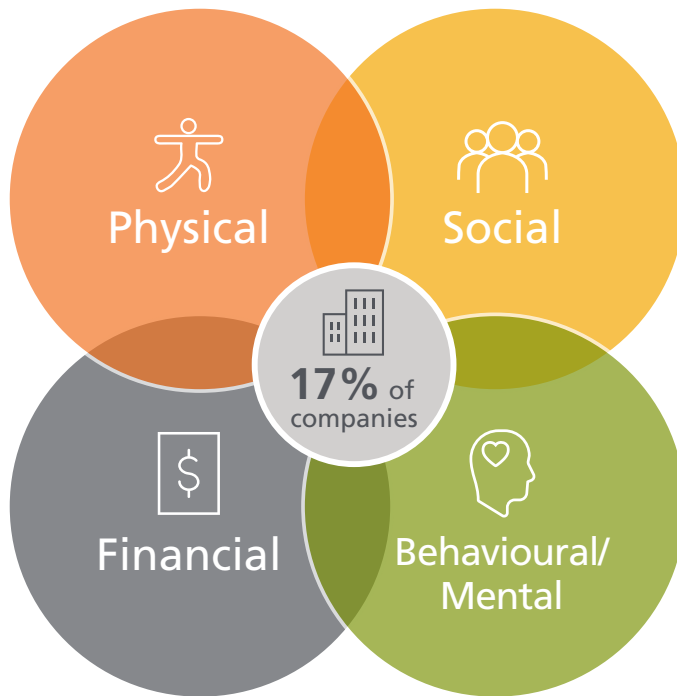
Most common programmes

- Health risk assessments
- Health/fitness challenges
- H&W website/portal
- Employee Assistance (EAP)

The right H&W partner can make all the difference in navigating the shift from wellness to wellbeing

Traditionally, wellness programmes have focused on physical health, but the current trend is for employees, and especially millennials, to view everything that happens at work as an integrated experience impacting all areas of their life. Wellbeing expands the concept of wellness to include behavioural/mental, social and financial health. And making the shift to wellbeing is critical for employers trying to engage the modern workforce. Whilst all four are important to overall employee wellbeing, only 17% of companies with 2+ programmes believe their wellness strategy addresses all. That number hasn't grown over time.

As employers strive to establish a culture of health and transition from wellness to wellbeing, having an H&W partner to help is more crucial than ever before.



Only **17%** of companies have wellness strategies that address **all four aspects** of employee wellbeing.

23% address 3 aspects | **40%** address 2 aspects | **20%** address 1 aspect

About Optum

We are a health services and innovation company helping make the health system work better for everyone around the globe. Our uniquely broad and deep capabilities set us apart as an innovative leader and position us to help solve the most critical health care issues facing international employers today.

Sources:

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