


IWBI's 2023 State of



WORKFORCE WELL-BEING POLL

A look at employee priorities
and perspectives on health
and well-being at work

A Key Findings Report
by The Harris Poll



Overview

In January of 2023, the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) commissioned The Harris Poll to conduct a national poll to understand how U.S. workers prioritize and experience investment by their employers to promote health, well-being and equity in their work environments. The Harris Poll surveyed approximately 1,000 full-time employed U.S. adults 25 years and older during a period of two weeks. *IWBI's 2023 State of Workforce Well-Being Poll* provides an important glimpse into the current state of the workforce, including many trends initiated and magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years.

From the emergence of trends like the Great Resignation to “quiet quitting,” the American workforce has been grappling with unprecedented change, ranging from the way they work to where they work. **The poll results demonstrated that employees place a high priority on their own health and well-being — more than 8 in 10 full-time employees agree that supporting the health and well-being of employees is a “must-have” for companies.** This worker emphasis on health and well-being seeps into every aspect of how they view employers, spanning whether companies foster a flexible, supportive and caring attitude towards employees, as well as the degree to which workers are provided safe, comfortable and productive workspaces.

The survey results show that employees have a good idea of what health and well-being support should look like: it should involve diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, a welcoming culture and health-first factors integrated into the physical work environment. Well-being benefits and health strategies implemented within the organization make up an important part of an employee's perceived well-being. While most employees agree that their company cares about the health and well-being of its employees, the proportion who *disagree* with this statement increases as the number of well-being benefits provided to employees decreases. Separately, there are some who believe that their company is overly focused on the bottom line, i.e., profits over people. This view is even more pronounced among younger generations and employees who work for large companies.

Supporting employees from an overall health and well-being perspective is in employers' best interest. According to employees, it can enhance company reputation, attract and retain the top talent, lead to stronger engagement and productivity from employees, and boost morale companywide. Workers who already receive more well-being benefits drive this point home, as they are more likely to affirm these positive outcomes compared with employees whose company provides fewer benefits. Increasingly, organizations large and small will need to be better attuned to employee health and what it tells us about the future of the workplace and the needs of the workforce.

The summary of the poll's findings are organized below across seven overarching thematic areas:

- 1) Employees Want to Work for Companies that Value their Health
- 2) A Healthy Work Environment is Non-Negotiable
- 3) Employees Look Forward to Going to the Workplace, But Health is Among Top Return-to-Workplace Concerns
- 4) A DEI Focus is Critical to a Company's Health and Well-Being Efforts
- 5) Workforce Health Benefits Business
- 6) Are Companies Doing Enough to Make Health and Well-being a Top Priority?
- 7) Flexibility is Here to Stay

Employees Want to Work for Companies that Value their Health

Employees overwhelmingly value health and want their employers to care about and prioritize their well-being.

Employees view health as a *must-have* and say companies are *ethically obligated* to help enhance health.

- More than 8 in 10 (84%) employees agree that supporting the health of employees is a “must-have” for companies.
- Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) agree that employers should be “ethically obligated” to create a work environment that enhances the health, safety and well-being of their employees.



A Healthy Work Environment is Non-Negotiable


According to employees, a healthy work environment is linked to their productivity. While its importance may be intuitive, the findings also suggest that employees see gaps between the health strategies they prioritize and the implementation of those strategies at their company.

Employees link their productivity to a healthy work environment.

- 96% of employees agree that a healthy work environment is necessary for employee productivity.

The physical workplace is a big part of employee health and well-being.

- 81% agree that their company’s physical work environment has a major impact on their health and well-being.

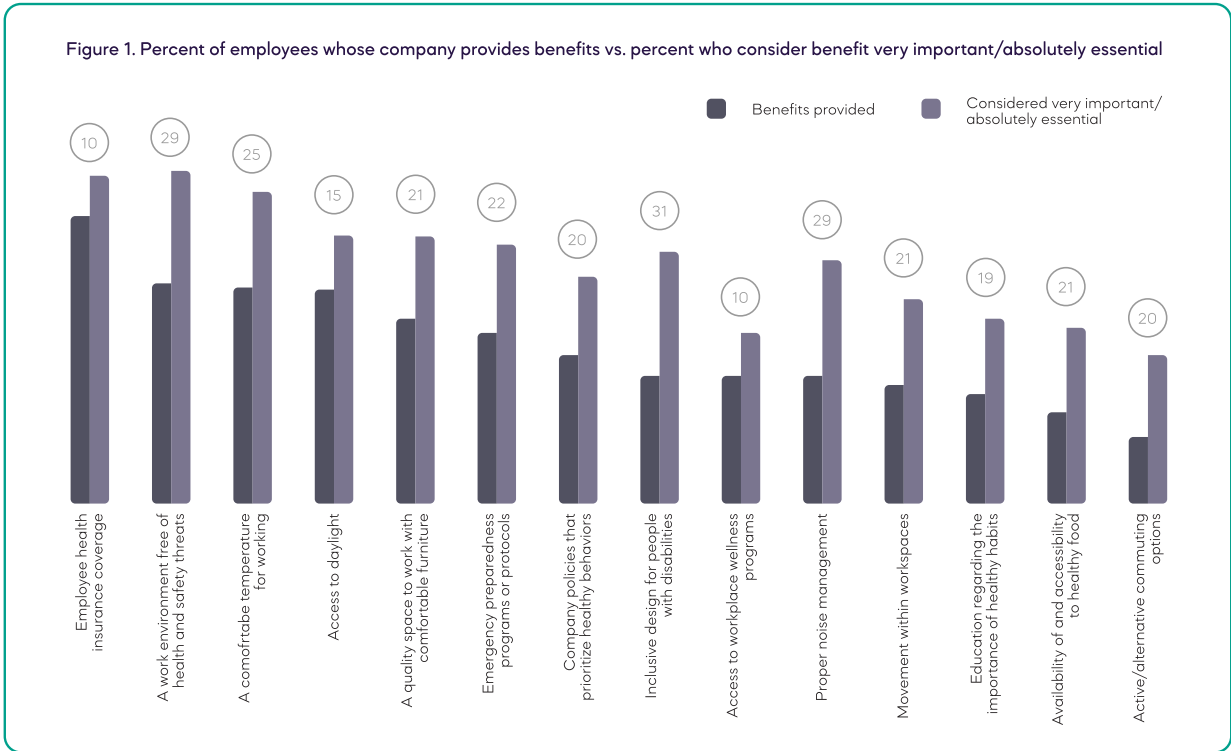
 More than half of full-time employees (54%) acknowledge that their mental or physical health could be negatively impacted by their physical work environment.

Employees place strong value on several health-specific strategies.

More than half of employees consider the following specific health strategies *very important* or *absolutely essential*:

- 84% a work environment free from health and safety threats
- 82% health insurance coverage
- 78% a comfortable temperature for working
- 67% a quality space to work with comfortable furniture
- 67% access to daylight
- 65% emergency preparedness programs or protocols
- 63% inclusive design for people with disabilities
- 61% proper noise management
- 57% company policies that prioritize healthy behaviors
- 51% movement within workplace

Across the board, there is a gap between health-promoting workplace strategies that employees deem important and the perception that these features, policies and commitments are actually available from their organizations. See Figure 1.



Employees Look Forward to Going to the Workplace, But Health is Among Top Return-to-Workplace Concerns

Employees mostly say they look forward to going to the workplace, but health is one of the top concerns when considering returning full or part-time among those currently working remotely at least one day per week. Return-to-workplace mandates are also a significant concern to employees who are currently working remotely part of the time.

A high percentage of employees say they look forward to going to the company workplace.

- Nearly three-quarters of employees (74%) agree that their company workplace is a place that they look forward to going or would look forward to going.

But health is a top concern when considering a return to the workplace, on par with commuting.

- General health concerns, which include health and safety concerns and mental health concerns, top the list of employee concerns about returning to a company's physical work location full-time or part-time (49% tied with commuting), among employees who work remotely at least one day per week.



Other high concerns included commuting at 49%, loss of work-life balance at 38%, productivity loss at 29%, obligations at home at 28%, and uncomfortable work environment at 18%. See Figure 2.

In addition, there are important generational differences about mental health concerns: younger generations are more than three times as likely than their older counterparts to acknowledge mental health concerns (30% of Gen Z/Millennials vs. 8% of Boomers/Seniors).



Figure 2. Concerns about returning to company's physical work location full-time or part-time (among employees who work remotely at least one day per week)



* Overall health concerns include:
 Health and safety concerns – 37% (e.g., physical disability, COVID-19, exposure to other illness)
 Mental health concerns – 23%
 Question allowed for multiple responses

A DEI Focus is Critical to a Company's Health and Well-Being Efforts

Employees view company diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts as a vital part of a company's commitment to health. In addition, a company's DEI efforts also strongly align with employee job satisfaction and comfort in the workplace.

Employees view DEI considerations as an important part of a company's commitment to health and well-being.

- 83% of employees agree that DEI initiatives are an important part of a company's overall commitment to employees' health and well-being.

A DEI commitment supports job satisfaction and comfort in the workplace.

- 78% of employees say that their company's commitment to DEI is an important part of their job satisfaction.
- 83% agree that companies that actively promote DEI initiatives facilitate a more comfortable workplace.

Historically marginalized groups place higher value on DEI efforts.

- Black (81%) and Hispanic (59%) employees are more likely than white employees (45%) to say that their company's commitment to DEI is at least *very important* to their job satisfaction.

🔍 Nearly 2 in 5 Black employees (39%) say that commitment to DEI is absolutely essential (vs. nearly 1 in 5, or 18%, of white employees).

Nearly three-quarters of LGBTQ employees (72%) consider commitment to DEI very important or absolutely essential, compared with about half of non-LGBTQ (51%).¹

- Nearly 2 in 3 Black employees (64%) strongly agree that companies that actively promote DEI initiatives facilitate a more comfortable workplace (vs. 40% of Hispanic employees and 36% of white employees). Similarly, LGBTQ employees are more likely than non-LGBTQ to strongly agree (61% vs. 38%).²

Employees generally say they feel accepted and included, but it's not felt the same across demographics.

- 58% strongly agree that they feel accepted and included at work.

🔍 Employees with a disability are less likely to strongly agree that they feel accepted and included at work (48% vs. 60% of those without a disability).

Employees from historically marginalized communities (which includes people of color, LGBTQ and employees with a disability) are less likely to strongly agree that they feel accepted and included at work (54% vs. 64% of non-marginalized).

Employees in non-management positions are less likely to strongly agree that they feel accepted and included at work (52% vs. 65% in management).



¹ Small base size (n<100); results should be interpreted as directional only.

² Small base size (n<100); results should be interpreted as directional only.

Workforce Health Benefits Business

Investing in employee health and well-being is good for business. Employees generally agree it can influence employee productivity, job satisfaction, morale and more. In addition, employees see connections between companies that prioritize health and how those companies enhance their reputation, help recruit and retain top talent and how they stand out in a crowd.

Employees see a strong connection between a healthy workforce and a company's bottom line.

- 95% agree (62% strongly agree) that a healthy workforce is essential to a company's financial success.

Employees view a company commitment to health and well-being as key to other critical company performance factors, including employee engagement, company reputation, employee recruitment and retention, and morale.

- **Employee engagement:** 95% agree (52% strongly agree) they are more likely to engage with a company that visibly cares about the health and well-being of its employees.
- **Enhanced reputation:** More than 9 in 10 employees (92%) agree (43% strongly agree) that a company that is committed to employee health and well-being stands out from the crowd.
- **Recruitment and retention:** Nearly 4 in 5 employees (79%) say they would not feel any loyalty to a company that does not prioritize their health. And nearly 3 in 4 employees (73%) say they would not apply to a company that does not show they proactively invest in employee health and well-being.
- **Morale:** 79% of employees said higher morale is a potential outcome for companies that care about health and well-being of their employees.

Job satisfaction is strongly influenced by company commitment to health and well-being.

- Nearly one-third of employees (31%) view company commitment to the overall health and well-being of employees as *absolutely essential* to their job satisfaction, higher than flexibility (29% absolutely essential) and potential for career growth or advancement (28% absolutely essential).

Black employees (48% vs. 26% white) and female employees (36% vs. 27% male) are more likely than their respective counterparts to consider commitment to health and well-being to be *absolutely essential* to their job satisfaction.

Employees who work in management (36% vs. 25% in non-management positions) are more likely to consider commitment to health and well-being to be *absolutely essential* to their job satisfaction.



Are Companies Doing Enough to Make Health and Well-being a Top Priority?

Employees generally have favorable views about their company's commitment to employee health and well-being, but many still note companies could be doing more, and this perspective is more common among certain demographic groups. More than two-fifths of employees (44%) say their company puts profits over people, but agreement with this statement decreases as the number of well-being benefits offered by their employer increases. **Notably, roughly 1 in 3 employees (34%) don't know what their employer is doing to support their health and well-being.**

Most employees say their company is committed to their health.

- Three-quarters of employees (75%) grade their company's commitment to employee health and well-being as an 'A' or 'B.'
- More than two-thirds of employees (69%) agree that employee health and well-being is a top priority for their company.

Still, a lot of employees question their company's commitment to their well-being.

- Nearly one-third of employees (31%) say they do not believe that employee health and well-being is a top priority for their company.

🔍 LGBTQ employees are more likely to agree that employee health and well-being is not a top priority for their company (43% vs. 30% of non-LGBTQ).³

More than 1 in 5 employees in non-management roles agree that their company does not care about the health and well-being of its employees (21% vs. 12% in management).

Pink-collar (25%) and blue-collar employees (23%) are more likely than white collar employees (12%) to agree that their company does not care about the health and well-being of its employees.

Many employees also say their company puts profit over people.

- More than 2 in 5 employees (44%) agree that their company puts profits over its people.

🔍 Those who work for a large company are more likely to agree with this statement (48% vs. 37% of employees at a small/micro company).

This "profits over people" sentiment decreases when companies invest in health.

- An inverse relationship exists based on well-being benefits: the proportion who agree with the statement that their company puts profit over its people decreases as the number of well-being benefits provided increases (63% of those who are provided fewer than 4 well-being benefits agree vs. 48% provided 4 to 6 and 24% who are provided 7 or more).

Some employees don't know what their company is doing to support health and well-being.

- Notably, roughly 1 in 3 employees (34%) don't know what their employer is doing to support their health and well-being.

🔍 Gen Z/Millennial employees are more likely not to know compared to employees who are Boomers/Seniors (39% vs. 27%); employees from historically marginalized communities (40% vs. 28% of non-marginalized); and those workers who received fewer well-being benefits (51% who are provided fewer than 4 benefits and 39% who are provided 4 to 6 benefits vs. 13% who are provided 7 or more).

³ Small base size (n<100); results should be interpreted as directional only.

Flexibility is Here to Stay

For employees, hybrid working conditions – working both in-office and remotely – is a somewhat common occurrence and highly valued. With more flexibility, employees who sometimes work remotely are wary of a return-to-office mandate. And of those employees who already spend some working hours away from the office, the vast majority say they feel more productive outside of the office.



Hybrid work is happening.


- On average, employees say they work remotely two days per week.
- More than two-fifths of employees (45%) work remotely at least one day per week.

Return-to-office mandates concern employees.

- Nearly 4 in 5 employees who work remotely at least one day per week (78%) say they are concerned about return-to-office mandates (whether their company has actually enacted a mandate or not).
- Slightly more than half of employees who work remotely at least one day per week (51%) say that their company has mandated that its employees return to its physical location full-time or part-time already, or at some point in the future.

Employees who work remotely say it supports their productivity.

- More than three-quarters of employees who work remotely at least one day per week (79%) admit that they feel most productive somewhere outside of their company-provided office. Of those, 7 in 10 (70%) feel most productive at their home office.

 Nearly three-quarters of employees who feel most productive at a location that is not a company-provided office (74%) say that less distraction is a reason, followed by greater access to a more comfortable workstation (e.g., sit/stand seating, height-adjustable desk, or split keyboard – 49%), more comfortable temperature (47%), and/or more exposure to daylight (36%).

Appendix

Methodology

The survey was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll among 1,001 adults 25 years and older who are employed full-time. The survey was conducted from January 3 to January 17, 2023. Data is weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, number of employees at place of employment and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 4.1 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval is wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error that are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments

Report Notes

Unless otherwise specified, all relationships discussed within sub-groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. As with any poll, there are findings in this poll that may be unique to this population and may differ from national averages in other research publications.

Key sub-groups mentioned are defined below:

Subgroups	Definition	Sample Size
Historically marginalized communities	Employees of color, LGBTQ and/or employees with a disability	N=490
Employees with a disability	Those with a physical, mental, or emotional condition, disability, functional limitation or health problem	N=176
White collar employees	Those whose job involve work traditionally performed in an office, cubicle or other administrative setting	N=582
Blue collar employees	Those whose work that requires manual labor	N=178
Pink collar employees	Those whose work that is related to customer interaction, entertainment, sales or other service-oriented work	N=195
Hybrid employees	Those who work remotely at least one day a week and works at their company's physical workplace at least one day a week	N=268
Full-time remote employees	Those who work remotely at least five days a week and zero days at their company's physical workplace	N=148
Micro/small company	2-49 employees	N=231
Medium company	50-249 employees	N=210
Large company	250+ employees	N=560
Gen Z/Millennials	Employees aged 25-43	N=423
Gen X	Employees aged 44-57	N=360
Boomers/Seniors	Employees aged 58+	N=218
Management	Employees who are business owners, managers or senior executives	N=427
Non-management	Employees who are individual contributors	N=489

Reference and Citation

IWBI makes research and educational resources available to the general public to further its mission of promoting people-first places everywhere. IWBI encourages the use of *IWBI's 2023 State of Workforce Well-Being Poll* results and this summary report for informational, news reporting and educational purposes and accordingly grants permission to the general public to use the poll results and the summary report consistent with such purposes so long as attribution is made in accordance with the below guidance.

Media should refer to the poll as, "IWBI's 2023 State of Workforce Well-Being Poll." Academic citation or other references should cite the poll as such:

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