



Why Holistic Wellness Matters For Healthcare Workers Now More Than Ever

A report based on
MetLife's 18th Annual
U.S. Employee Benefit
Trends Study 2020

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► INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic has transformed work and life, creating new challenges for employees and employers. Throughout, healthcare workers—and especially those on the frontlines—face even greater challenges as they balance patient care with the health and well-being of themselves and their families.



Visit [metlife.com/ebtshealthcare2020](https://www.metlife.com/ebtshealthcare2020) to download this report and see select data by industry, company size and more.

An untold number of healthcare workers are rising to the occasion working tirelessly on the front lines battling COVID-19. They're confronting new risks of illness and infection, increased stress and financial instability. That's all in conjunction with the ongoing workforce shortages and employee burnout concerns that have taxed the industry for years. Now, as employers and employees continue to cope with the consequences of the pandemic, finding ways to reduce stress and improve healthcare workers' well-being, while delivering quality patient care and managing financial pressures, is paramount.

Research from MetLife's 18th annual U.S. Employee Benefit Trends Study reveals that healthcare employers who prioritize holistic employee well-being—that is, financial, physical, mental, and social health—can create a more resilient, successful, and satisfied workforce. That's because employees who are holistically well are also more productive and engaged.

Providing employees with support and the array of solutions to meet their needs is the most effective way to support them today and promote holistic wellness over the long-term.

What you will learn from this report:

1. How stress, burnout, and financial worries create unique challenges for healthcare employees.
2. Why decreasing stress provides tangible benefits to employees and employers alike.
3. The impact of holistic wellness on employee productivity, loyalty, engagement and more.
4. The role benefits and communications play in promoting holistic wellness and how to create a plan that meets employees' evolving needs.

A study for the times

To provide HR decision-makers with actionable, timely insights reflective of COVID-19, this Study blends two waves of research that we conducted. Wave 1 focuses on enduring insights gleaned from the late summer of 2019 before the pandemic. And, Wave 2 highlights emerging perspectives from the beginning of the pandemic as we were collectively responding to this crisis (a narrower study fielded in early April 2020). Throughout this report, you will see Wave 1 data visualized in blue and Wave 2 in green.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

Despite these shifts, one thing remains constant: employers who understand their employees' experience and needs—and take action to help their employees manage the challenges they face inside and outside of work—will have a more engaged, productive and successful workforce.

01

Compounding Risks of Stress, Burnout, and Financial Concerns

The healthcare industry has long wrestled with the challenges of helping employees stay holistically well amidst worker shortages and demanding jobs. Now with the COVID-19 crisis, healthcare workers have been tasked with supporting our communities and putting their own health at risk, while still managing personal obligations and finding time to unplug and rest.

Perhaps as expected, nearly three out of four healthcare workers report that they're feeling more stressed out as a result of the pandemic. And the threat of burnout is becoming more of a reality. In fact, **64% of healthcare employers ranked employee burnout as a top challenge/concern** this year – a significant increase from 51% that claimed was a challenge in 2019.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

Top healthcare challenges

Healthcare employers recognized—and ranked—their most pressing challenges.

- #1** Employee burnout
- #2** Employee engagement
- #3** Fostering a collaborative culture

Financial concerns add to the stress

Financial wellness is a critical component of overall health and wellness. Unfortunately, the pandemic has not only increased work demands and health concerns for healthcare workers but also impacted family finances. For example, spouses may have lost jobs, or employees may have been furloughed if they worked in a part of the industry that was temporarily shuttered due to the COVID-19 crisis.

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

53% of healthcare workers are more concerned about their finances in the wake of the pandemic

And the confidence that healthcare workers have in their finances decreased as the crisis continued. Consider that 57% of healthcare workers say they were confident about their finances in 2019 compared to 45% in 2020.



WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

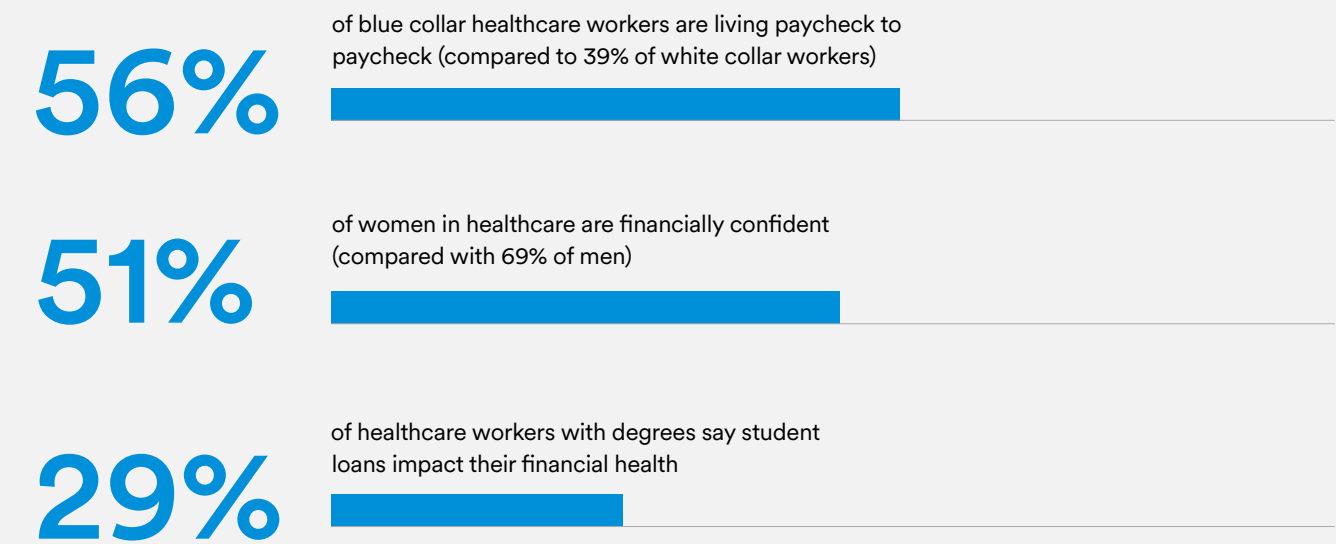
A gap in perception

Even as healthcare workers navigate the challenges presented by their work and their lives, employers may not be fully aware of their employees' financial concerns.

- ▶ Employers perceive that 74% of their employees are financially well
- ▶ Compared to only 57% of employees who report the same

Different workers, different worries

Financial wellness and concerns vary, depending on the workers' role, gender or education.



02

Decreasing Stress For Purpose-Driven Employees

Healthcare employees continued to feel a significantly greater sense of purpose in their work than the average employee even before the pandemic. For example, 78% say they're doing work that contributes meaning to their life compared to 64% of overall employees. Also, 77% feel like they're contributing to the greater good for society versus 64% of employees from other industries.

Despite the passion for their work, stress and burnout remain significant threats for today's healthcare heroes. MetLife research shows that healthcare workers are more likely to report work as a top source of stress. They're also more likely to have taken time off of work in the last year because of stress.

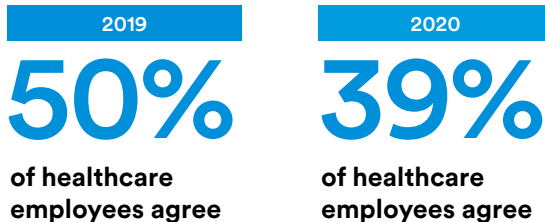
This stress not only impacts an organization's people, but it also has a real and tangible impact on businesses.

Prioritizing employees' best interest

While healthcare workers remain committed to their organizations, they're less likely to believe their employer is committed to them.

My employer has my best interest in mind

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



What's more, the percentage of healthcare employees who believe their employers have their best interest in mind declined by 11% from 2019 to 2020. For employers, this should be concerning since healthcare employees who regularly feel burnt out and stressed are also less productive and engaged with their jobs.



The top employer priorities

Healthcare employers understand the impacts of stress and burnout on their employees and the ramifications it has on productivity, employee recruitment, and retention.

What are your top priorities?

#1 Increasing employee productivity

#2 Retaining employees

During tough times, benefits can make the difference

The support of a comprehensive benefits package can improve multiple aspects of employee well-being during the COVID crisis.

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

Do you feel your employer is offering benefits or programs that help support or improve your well-being during this time?

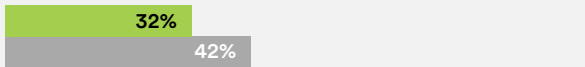
■ Yes, they are ■ No, they are not

Percentage of healthcare employees who report feeling...

Productive



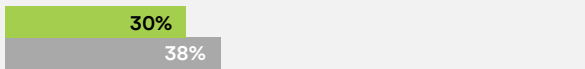
Stressed



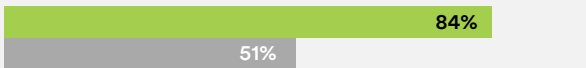
Engaged



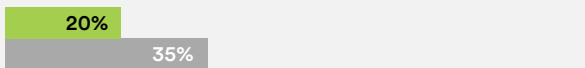
Tired



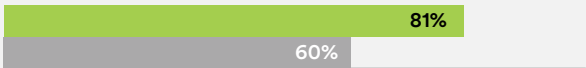
Successful



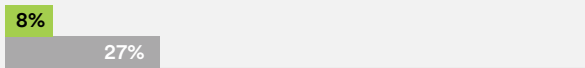
Burned out



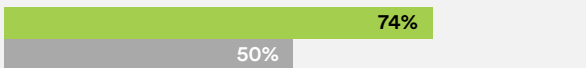
Respected



Depressed



Valued / Appreciated



03

Supporting Holistic Wellness in Healthcare

The traditional approach to employee well-being has primarily focused on supporting physical health with medical coverage, and to some extent financial health through retirement benefits. Human Resources teams often then add benefits reactively.

However, given the stress and burnout healthcare employees currently face, employers should consider a new approach that accounts for all aspects of employees' holistic well-being, which are mental, social, financial and physical health. All of these are interconnected and work together to support employees' holistic wellness, which is especially important right now.

To be sure, healthcare employers have had a broader definition of healthy workplaces than employers in general. For example prior to the pandemic, 62% of healthcare employers include mental health in their definition of a healthy workplace compared to 51% of employers overall. And the increase in employee assistance plans within the healthcare industry underscores that employers are prioritizing employee mental health.

But when it comes to helping healthcare employees become holistically well, there's still work to be done.

Only

36% of healthcare employees say they are holistically well

Women in healthcare and their struggles with well-being

In the U.S., women comprise 75% of full-time, year-round healthcare workers, according to the U.S. Census. Yet, as employees, they're falling behind in financial wellness and other aspects of employee well-being. Female healthcare workers are less likely to feel mentally, financially and physically healthy when compared to their male counterparts.

Only

33% of women in the healthcare field report they're holistically well compared to 47% of men working in healthcare

In fact, 13% of women in healthcare say they're not healthy in any of the four aspects of holistic health, compared to just 5% of men. This number jumps to 21% of single women who work in healthcare. The latter group also faces extreme financial concerns, with 70% of single women in healthcare citing financial concerns as a cause of poor mental health.

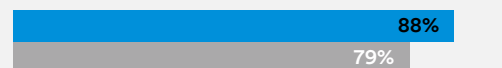
The impact of holistic wellness

Empowering employees with benefits that improve their holistic wellness isn't just good for employees; it's good for employers as well. Improving health across all four dimensions creates a stronger, more engaged, and resilient workforce that's ready to perform.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

■ Holistically Well Healthcare Employees ■ Not Holistically Well Healthcare Employees

Productive



Engaged



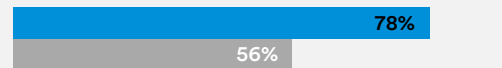
Successful



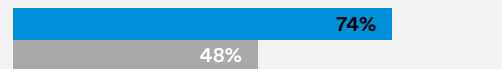
Loyal



Respected



Valued/Appreciated



On the flipside, holistically well employees are also significantly less likely to be burnt out or stressed.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

Only

23% of holistically well healthcare employees say they're stressed (compared to 35% of overall employees)

Only

23% of holistically well healthcare employees say they're burnt out (compared to 30% of overall employees)

04

How Comprehensive Benefits and Excellent Communication Improve Well-Being

At the core, benefits have always protected employees against vulnerability and promoted well-being. Now, the current pandemic is significantly impacting healthcare employees across their physical, financial, mental and social health. A comprehensive benefits package, perhaps now more than ever, plays a pivotal role in supporting employees through times of crisis, helping them feel confident, secure and engaged in times of uncertainty and beyond.

In particular, financial education and planning benefits can add a layer of protection to medical insurance and can ease the financial impact of the pandemic.

A comprehensive benefits package is the #3 driver of employee holistic well-being

However, currently **four out of 10 healthcare employees believe that their employer doesn't provide financial health initiatives that address their needs.** A similar percentage report that their employer doesn't offer mental health benefits that do the same.

Providing must-haves for holistic health

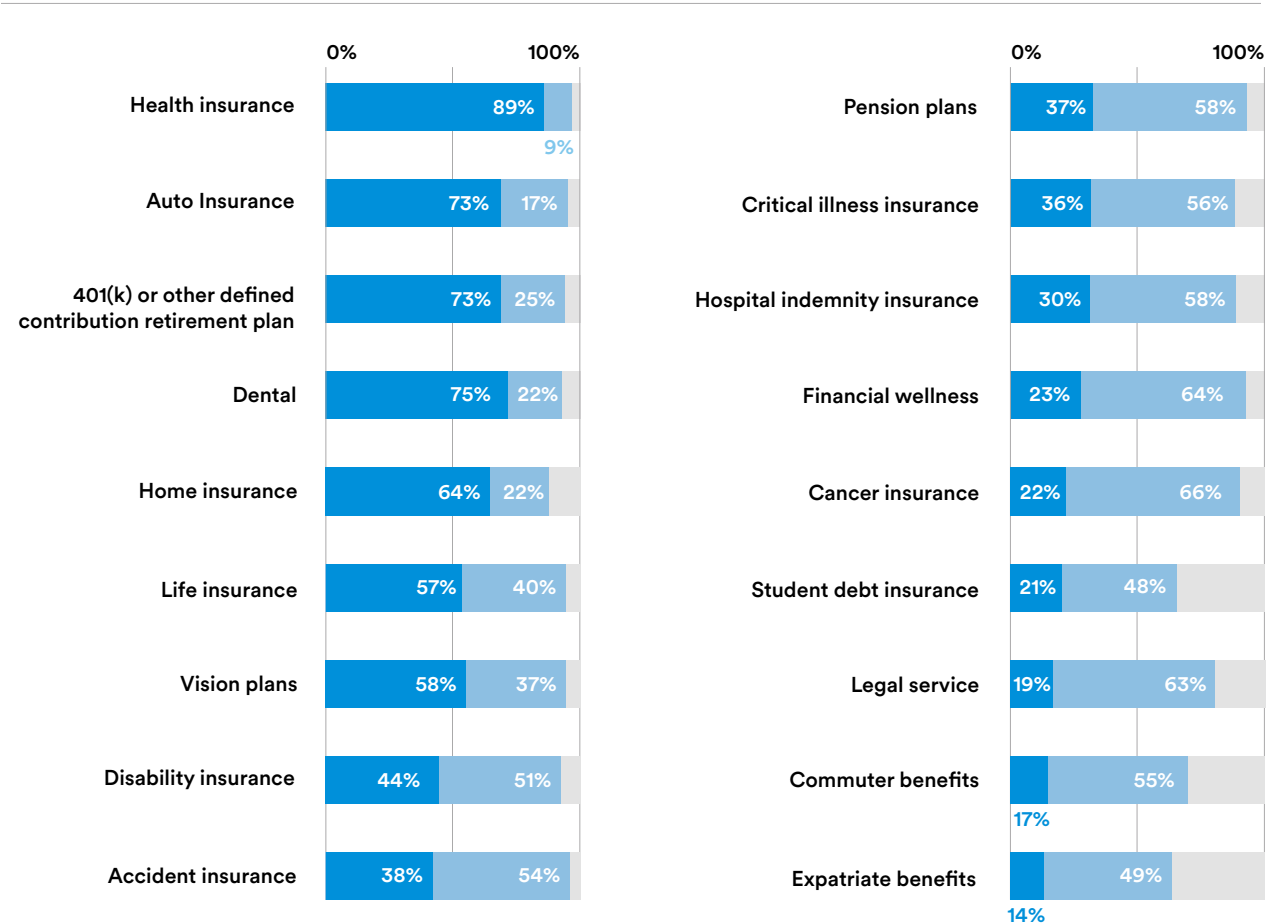
So how can employers close some of these gaps and improve the well-being of their healthcare workers? Ensuring that you offer what employees deem as must-have—as well weaving in some nice-to-have—benefits is a great place to start.



WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

What do healthcare employees consider must-have benefits?

Must have Nice to Have Not needed



79% of healthcare employees agreed employers have a responsibility for their health and well-being

71% of healthcare employees say having a wider array of benefits to meet my needs would increase my loyalty to my employer

Disability Insurance

Short- and long-term disability insurance plays a critical role in a comprehensive benefits package. Among healthcare workers who took a health-related leave over the past three years, those who had disability coverage reported **better work performance and financial outcomes than those who did not**.

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

Healthcare employees with disability coverage through the employer Healthcare employees without disability coverage through the employer

Feel successful in work and life



Confident in their finances



Financially healthy



When it comes to short-term and long-term disability, healthcare employers are more likely to offer both and employees are more likely to enroll in both. For example prior to the pandemic, 57% of employers provided short-term disability and 47% of employees enrolled. For long-term disability, 57% provided it and 44% enrolled.

However, closing gaps in employee awareness and understanding of the value of disability coverage is still critical. Among healthcare employees who say they understand their benefits, 47% say long-term disability is a must-have versus 46% of those who don't understand their benefits. For short-term disability, the figures are 49% and 44% respectively.

Disability and student loans

Many healthcare professionals carry educational debt, which can pose a financial burden for those on disability. That's why offering an option for additional disability payments to cover student loans can be a lifesaver.

56%

of healthcare employees who have taken a medical or disability leave—without disability coverage—said they delayed their student loan payments

36%

of those with disability coverage delayed their student loan payments

Financial Wellness

This is an area where there's an opportunity for employers to enhance their employee support at time when it's needed. The interest and usage of financial planning benefits by healthcare employees increased from 2019 to 2020.

Still, 34% of healthcare employees say their employer doesn't offer financial health programs that address their needs. There's a correlation between the use of financial planning benefits and employee financial confidence. Address these needs and you can help boost a critical aspect of employee wellness.



Employee Assistance Programs

The past year hasn't been easy for healthcare employees or their families. The fact that 51% of healthcare organizations provide access to employee assistance programs (EAP) undoubtedly helped support employees through this crisis and others.

For healthcare employers, continued focus on EAP access and communication remains important. Only one-third of healthcare employees take advantage of EAP programs, despite the demand.

Six stress-reducing benefits

Healthcare employees said the following benefits would do the most to reduce their stress during the pandemic:

- #1** Increased paid time off
- #2** Work from home policies
- #3** Flexible hours and schedules
- #4** Emergency hardship assistance
- #5** 401(k) or retirement plans
- #6** Mental wellness programs

Explore emerging benefits

The benefits landscape is evolving to meet employee needs and help employers improve retention, productivity, loyalty, and more. Emerging benefits can help fill the gaps overall while improving well-being and reducing work-life stress. And given that healthcare employees have a high level of interest in emerging benefits, adding them to your benefits mix could be a real differentiator.

Top 3 emerging benefits

Among healthcare workers, interest has increased in:

- ▶ **Unlimited paid time off—79%**
- ▶ **Well-being programs—77%**
- ▶ **Phased retirement programs—76%**

Benefits communication is more important than ever

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear example of how timely, specific and clear communications can inspire healthcare employees to take the right actions to protect themselves and their families. The right communications, especially now, can help employees gain awareness of the benefits they have access to and understand how their benefits can help support and protect them as they navigate new challenges.

Employees that understand their benefits and the support they provide are more likely to use them—and more likely to be holistically well.

41% of healthcare employees who understand their benefits say they are holistically well compared to 15% of employees who don't understand their benefits

- ▶ Male healthcare workers are more likely to say they understand their benefits than their female counterparts (**75% vs 60%**) and they are more likely to feel their employer's benefits communications are easy to understand (**79% vs 63%**)
- ▶ Female healthcare workers are more likely to want online decision support tools (**28% vs 12%**) and informational emails with enrollment tips (**22% vs 13%**) as resources to learn about benefits

Supporting healthcare employees is crucial for recovering from the crisis—and preparing for the future

The challenges facing the healthcare industry will continue to evolve, but one thing is constant: you need a healthy workforce that is primed to thrive in every circumstance. Employers can take a more

comprehensive approach to managing employee well-being by providing a range of support across physical, mental, financial and social factors.

In doing so, you'll not only empower your employees to be more holistically well, you'll also improve your business by reducing stress and burnout and increasing productivity, engagement, and loyalty.

Healthcare employees have shown their strength by caring for patients and communities during this crisis. Implementing meaningful solutions now show them how much you care and can help them improve their work and lives in the future.

Healthcare employer actions and solutions

- ▶ Review your approach to employee wellness to ensure it addresses all four aspects of their health and well-being: physical, financial, mental and social.
- ▶ Provide access to a comprehensive package of benefits that enables employees to meet their specific situations.
- ▶ Ensure your organization communicates the value of benefits in the context of employees' lives so that they understand the relevance in these uncertain times.

MetLife's 18th annual U.S. Employee Benefit Trends Study (EBTS) consists of three distinct studies. The first two were conducted in August and September 2019 (Wave 1) and the third in early April 2020 – during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Wave 2). The 2019 employer survey consists of 2,501 interviews with benefits decision makers and influencers at companies with at least two employees.

The 2019 employee survey includes 2,650 interviews with full-time employees, aged 21 and over, at companies with at least two employees. The updated 2020 employee survey (Wave 2) consists of 2,367 interviews using the same criteria (full-time employed at time of survey completion). All studies were fielded by Rainmakers CSI – an international strategy, insight and planning consultancy.

Additionally, 302 healthcare employers and 327 healthcare employees participated in our Wave 1 research. And, 263 healthcare employees participated in our Wave 2 research.



Metropolitan Life Insurance Company
200 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10166
L0720005609[exp0721][All States][DC,GU,MP,PR,VI]
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