

# Employee Wellness Benchmarking Overview





## Introduction

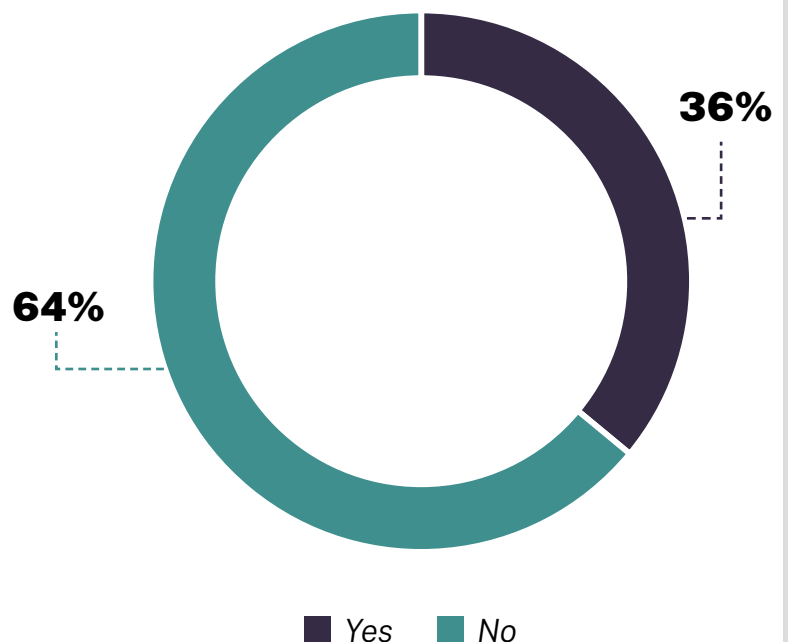
In early 2021, employers across the country were surveyed about various employee benefits and human resources topics, and roughly 150 employers responded to the survey. Their responses help provide insight into trends surrounding employee health and wellness and how employers are responding to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing how other U.S. employers are responding to these events via workplace wellness initiatives can help organizations appropriately adjust their offerings, which, in turn, can lead to improved attraction and retention, increased engagement and morale, and reduced health care costs.

## Wellness Overview and Key Findings

Employee wellness programs have historically been a part of many employers' workplace strategies. Despite this, only 36% of respondents currently offer a wellness program or employee perks to help improve employee health and well-being. This is particularly surprising given the COVID-19 pandemic's negative effects on employees' mental, physical and financial wellness over the past year.

Traditionally, these programs focus on mitigating rising health care costs and encouraging employees to improve their lifestyles and avoid unhealthy habits. Unfortunately, in many cases, typical employer-sponsored wellness programs — ones that offer exercise and nutrition education, workplace exercise initiatives and fitness facility discounts — likely aren't addressing the overall well-being of employees.

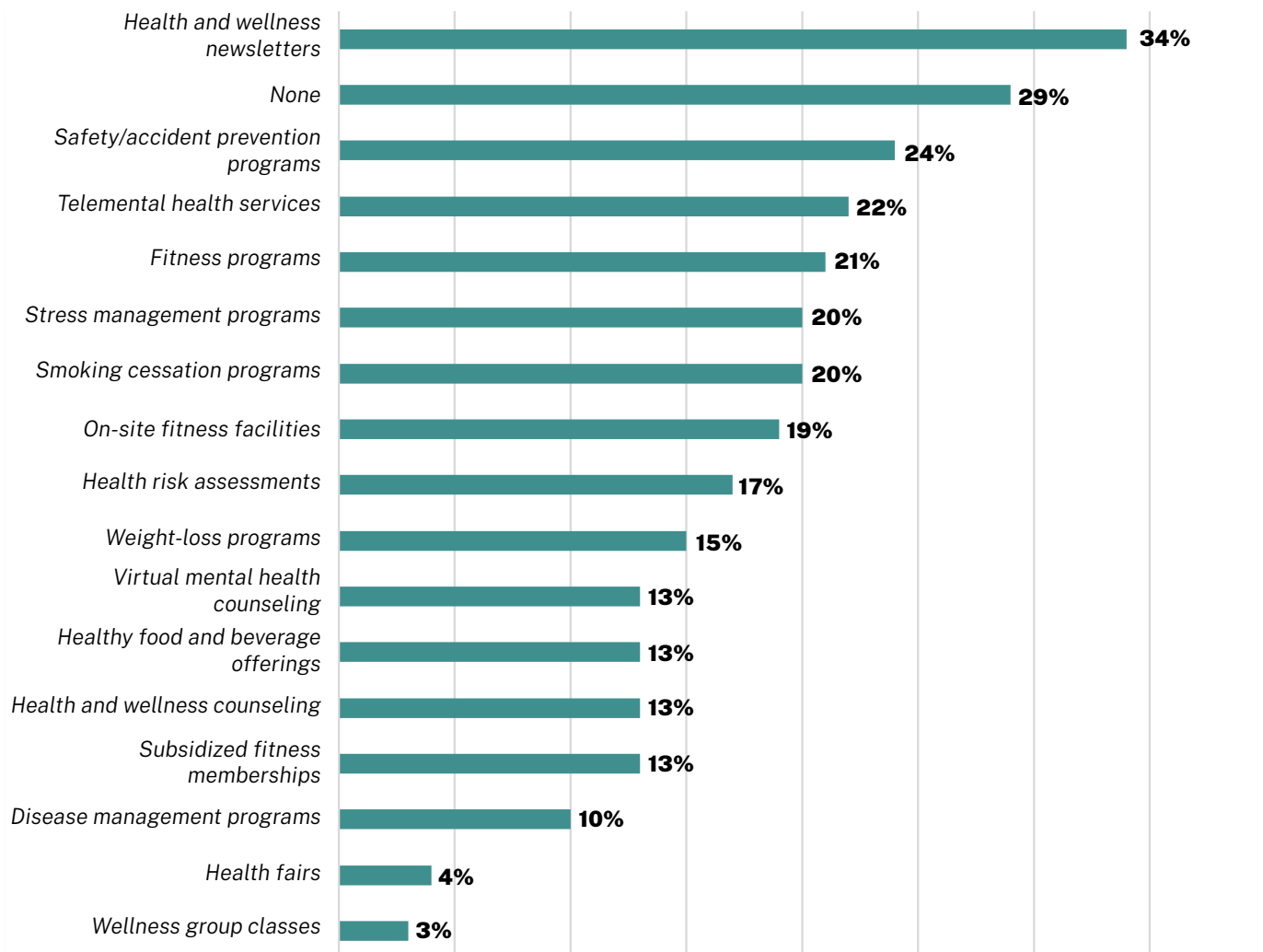
*Do you offer a wellness program or employee perks to help improve employee health and well-being?*



When asked what types of wellness initiatives employers offered, the most common offerings were:

- Health and wellness newsletters — **34%**
- Safety and accident prevention programs — **24%**
- Telemental health services — **22%**
- Fitness programs — **21%**
- Smoking cessation programs — **20%**
- Stress management programs — **20%**

*What types of wellness initiatives do you offer? Select all that apply.*

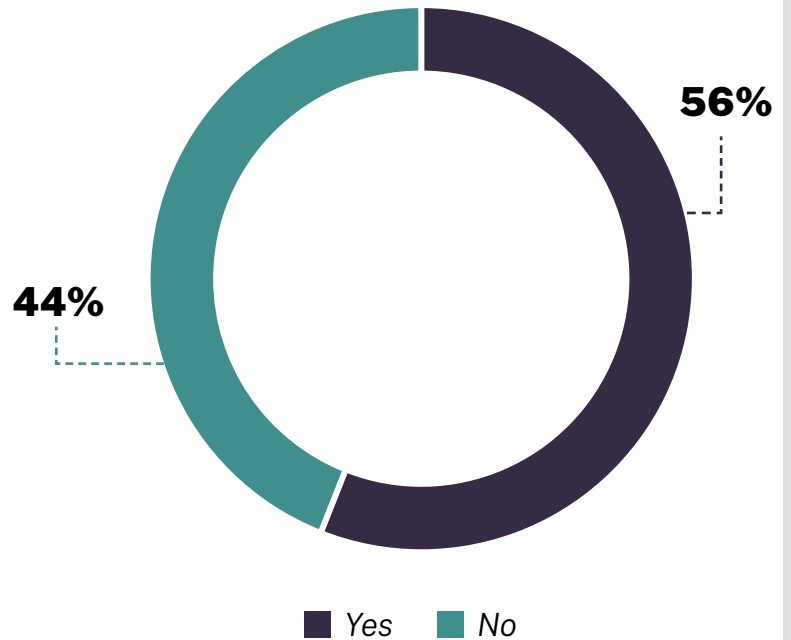


## Mental Health

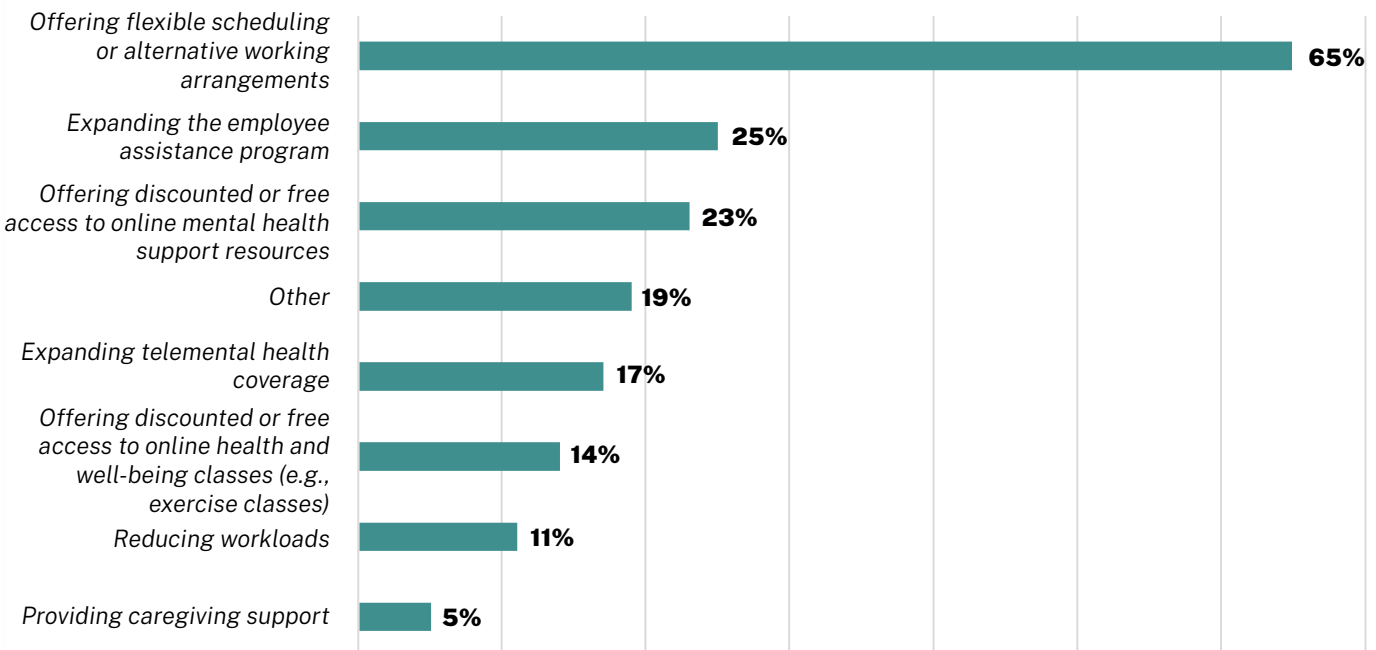
After a year that was turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic, many aspects of the workplace have changed, including employer-sponsored wellness programs. Employees are experiencing burnout and high levels of stress, are under financial stress and are putting off preventive care. Moreover, employees are looking to their employers for assistance and support during these difficult times.

Just over half of employers are concerned with how the pandemic has affected their employees' mental well-being. The most common way they are supporting employees is by offering flexible scheduling or alternative working arrangements.

Are you concerned with how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected employee mental health?



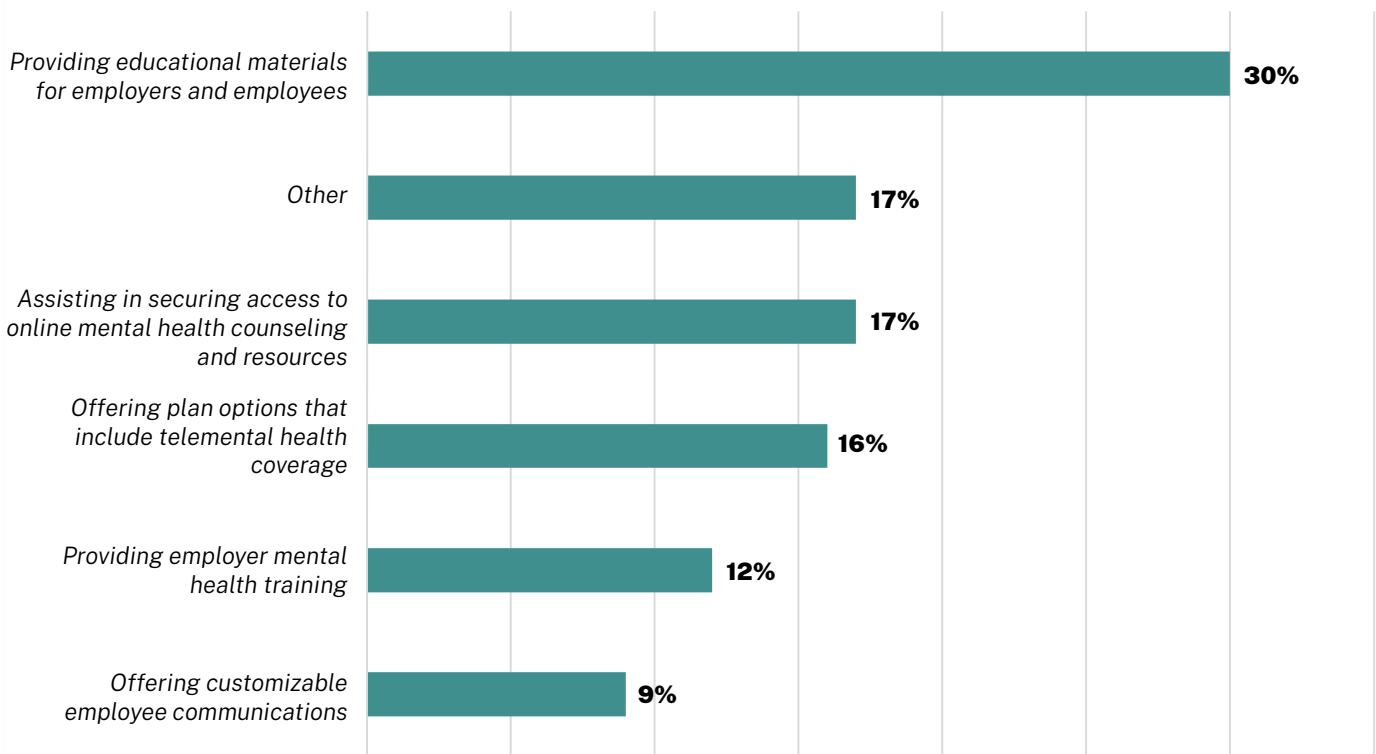
How is your organization currently supporting employee mental health and well-being? Select all that apply.



“Other” responses included promoting a current employee assistance program (EAP), handling employee mental health concerns on a case-by-case basis and doing nothing. An alarming statistic revealed from the survey is that only 5% of employers are providing caregiving support. Working caregivers include working parents, who have been particularly taxed during the pandemic. Catering wellness initiatives to this sector of employees will prove important moving forward, and it could be a way for employers to retain their top talent while attracting other top performers.

When asked how brokers can help support employee mental health and well-being during the pandemic and beyond, nearly one-third of respondents said providing educational materials for both employers and employees. “Other” responses most often included employers saying they want help with all of the areas highlighted in the chart.

*How can your broker help you support employee mental health and well-being during the pandemic and beyond?*



Employee mental health had been a prominent point of discussion prior to 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many mental health issues and created a mental health crisis. Employee stress, burnout and anxiety are at an all-time high, which means that employers must do something to provide employees with the support and resources they need.

## Employer Challenges

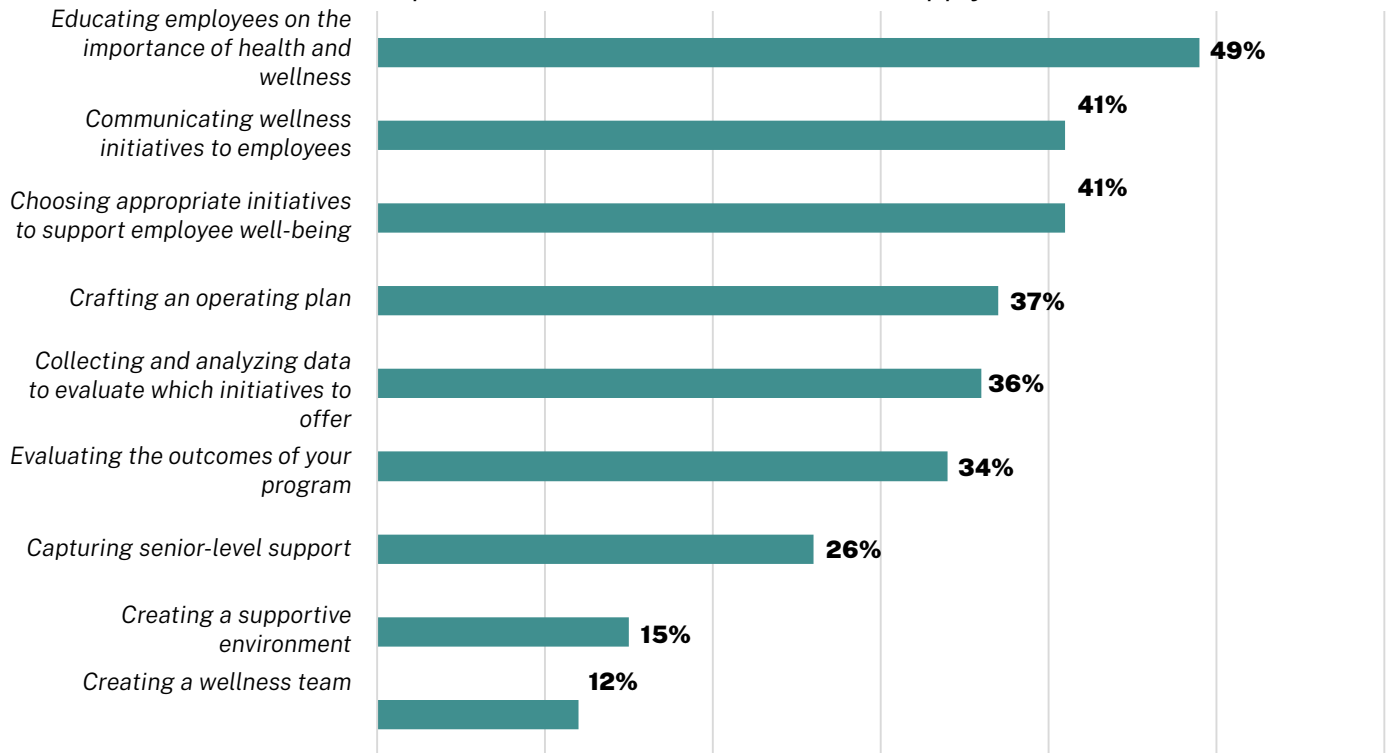
Creating, promoting and facilitating a successful employee wellness campaign isn't as simple as starting a program and sending out a few emails. Employers often face a variety of challenges when it comes to their wellness programs, some of which can discourage them from offering or continuing to offer initiatives at all.

Employers reported that their biggest challenges in regards to wellness programs were:

- Lack of employee buy-in – **38%**
- Time requirements to implement and run a program – **27%**
- Difficulty measuring its success – **17%**

Specifically, nearly half of employers said they need their broker's help educating employees on the importance of health and wellness, and 41% said they want help communicating wellness initiatives to employees and choosing appropriate initiatives to support well-being. Other top answers can be viewed in the chart below.

*In what areas of establishing a workplace wellness program can your insurance broker provide assistance? Select all that apply.*



Figuring out how to overcome these challenges is essential to the success of any wellness initiative, which, in turn, relates to the overall wellness of employees. Happy and healthy employees are more engaged and loyal than their disengaged counterparts, and they tend to use fewer health care services, which can equate to cost-savings for their employer.



## Conclusion

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Prioritizing health and wellness will prove essential for employers in 2021 and beyond. Employees expect more from their employers than ever before, particularly when it comes to receiving mental health support and feeling valued. One way that employers can do that is by providing holistic wellness programs that go beyond focusing on physical well-being. Successful employers will be those that expand mental health resources in addition to promoting healthy lifestyles. Employers that don't rise to the occasion and provide employees with the support they need will likely face what experts are calling the "turnover tsunami," expected later in the year. Employees are voluntarily leaving their jobs at a staggering rate. This means that employers that want to attract and retain their top talent, improve employee engagement and support employees need to act fast.

Leveraging employee health and well-being solutions at the workplace can help provide employees with the resources they need to manage their stress and improve their overall health. And, when employees are happy, healthy and feel supported by their employer, they're more likely to remain at the company, be more productive and encourage others to work for their employer, too.