



# Navigating Together: Supporting Employee Well-Being in Uncertain Times

MetLife's 18th Annual  
U.S. Employee Benefit  
Trends Study 2020

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► WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

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# 01

## **The New Work-Life Reality**

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Learn how the work-life blend impacts employees in the wake of COVID-19 and what support employees are looking for to help manage their challenges.

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# 02

## **Driving Employee Engagement and Reducing Stress**

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Explore how employers can drive productivity, engagement and loyalty, mitigate employee challenges and recover from the impact of crisis.

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# 03

## **Supporting Employees by Embracing a Model of Holistic Well-Being**

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See how a holistic well-being approach that addresses four key components — mental, financial, social and physical health — will be critical for companies both to help their employees manage the crisis and support their organization's recovery.

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# 04

## **Promoting Employee Well-Being With Benefits and Communications**

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Learn how a comprehensive approach to benefits and communications can be critical to both the company and its employees throughout the pandemic and beyond.

► INTRODUCTION

Over the past 18 years,  
our annual U.S. Employee  
Benefit Trends Study  
has examined changing  
workplace dynamics  
and how employers  
can best respond to them.



Visit [metlife.com/ebts2020](https://www.metlife.com/ebts2020) to see select  
data by industry, company size and more.

As is our typical process, we conducted research for our 2020 report in the second half of 2019. We were finalizing a study that focused on the opportunities and challenges of the blended work-life world and the importance of holistic well-being when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.

This pandemic has reshaped the world as we know it — transforming the fabric of both work and life and dramatically impacting employee well-being.

To ensure we can provide HR decision-makers with actionable, timely insights reflective of this new reality, we've resurveyed employees and refined this year's study prior to publication.

**The study we are sharing today blends two waves of research:** Wave 1 focuses on enduring insights gleaned from the late summer of 2019 before the pandemic and Wave 2 highlights emerging perspectives from our current moment in time as we collectively respond 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.

In many ways, the global working world has fundamentally changed and is still changing. For some organizations, a focus on attraction and retention has been replaced by a fight for sustainability and survival. At the same time, employees who are still able to work in this context may have new priorities, concerns and motivations.

**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.

In the pages that follow, we'll explore a holistic model of well-being, which consists of physical, financial, mental, and social components. Adopting this model and offering a mix of benefits that support it can help employees manage the issues and concerns they face and ultimately feel more protected, secure and cared for, especially when it comes to financial wellness, which is a top concern for employees right now.

An example from Chapter 1:

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



**4 in 10** employees stated they struggle to navigate the demands that come with today's more flexible, "always-on" work-life world

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19



**7 in 10** of employees state the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their daily routine

As an advocate for the workforce, now more than ever our goal is to help people and organizations navigate uncertainty together, and emerge on the other side of this crisis stronger and more united.

**We hope this study can be a helpful resource for employers in this challenging time.**

## 01

# The New Work-Life Reality

## ► KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Even before the COVID-19 pandemic**, the blended work-life world was becoming more complex, leading to challenges for both employers and employees.

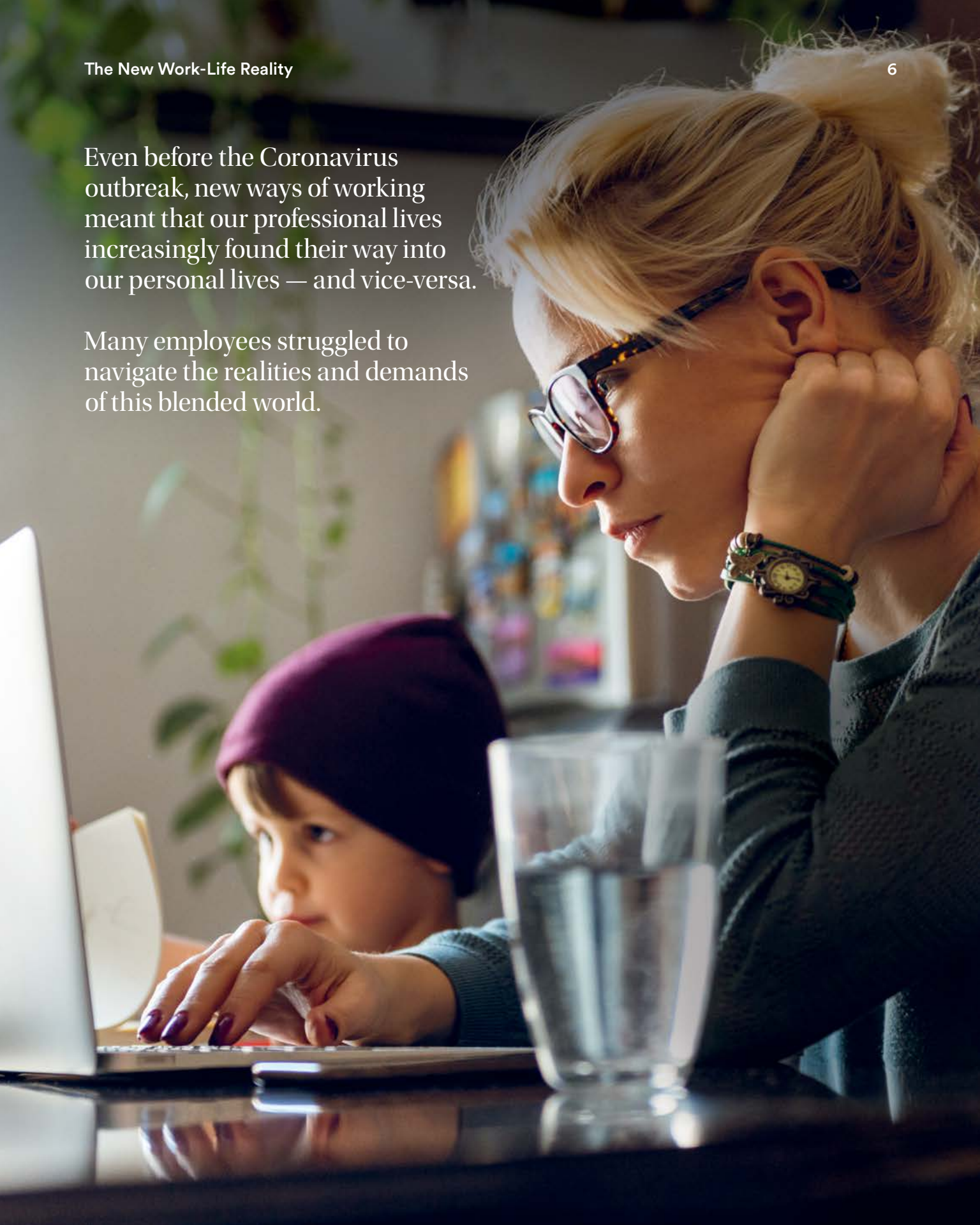
**Data from both before and during the crisis clearly shows** that when employers provide greater support to their employees, their employees are more successful.

**A flexible approach to work**, along with managers and supervisors who lead by example, is essential in helping employees manage the challenges of the work-life blend.

**Financial wellness support is continually valued:** employees who successfully navigate the work-life blend are more likely to say their employers offer financial wellness programs that meet their needs.

Even before the Coronavirus outbreak, new ways of working meant that our professional lives increasingly found their way into our personal lives — and vice-versa.

Many employees struggled to navigate the realities and demands of this blended world.



# The work-life world is increasingly complex

Before the pandemic, both employees and employers reported increased complexity in managing the blending of work and life.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



**4 in 10** employees stated they struggle to navigate the demands that come with today's more flexible, "always-on" work-life world

**Employers are struggling too. In fact, employers were even more likely than employees to say they were struggling to keep up.**

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**60%** of employers stated their organization is struggling to keep up with the blended work-life world

▲ Up 3% pts. from 2019 report data

Therefore, to help their employees — and ultimately their organizations — succeed, there is a need for employers to understand the challenges of work and life blending and address these stressors through their programs, policies and experiences.

**“**On the one hand, I can work from anywhere, but on the other hand, I can work from anywhere. So, you can see the problem with that.”

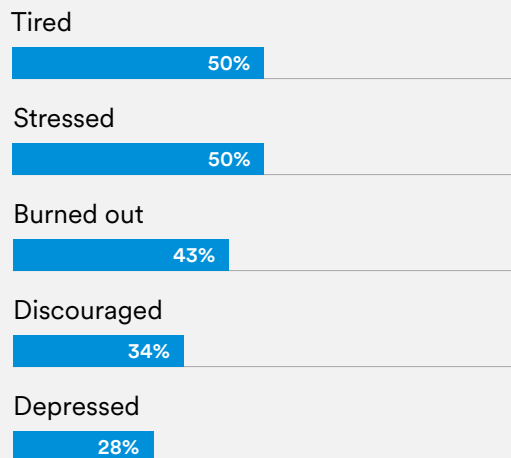
WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



# Employees often feel stressed and burned out

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

Employees who struggle with the work-life blend stated that they felt the following more than half of the time at work:



Employees highlight top sources of stress to be personal finances (34%), work (32%) and personal/family health (19%).

These difficulties can lead to absenteeism, with about one in three struggling employees taking time off due to stress.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**1 in 3** struggling employees took time off, in a 12-month period, from work due to stress

These stresses and challenges may negatively affect employees' success at work and also impact business outcomes.

Now, in the midst of the pandemic, work and life are blending more than ever, forcing people to manage their work, personal schedules and competing priorities in dramatically different ways.

An unprecedented number of employees are currently working from home, which means they have to manage their physical space, do their work and care for their loved ones, while also taking care of themselves.

Meanwhile, essential workers on the frontlines — healthcare workers, grocery and pharmacy employees, truck drivers and more — are tasked with supporting our communities and putting their own health at risk, while still managing personal obligations and finding time to unplug and rest.

Employers have always played an important role in their employees' well-being. Now, their support is even more critical. With the right resources and support from employers, employees can better manage work and life and navigate an ever-changing reality.

# In light of COVID-19, employees are now facing new work-life challenges

In the current crisis, employees are even more stressed.

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

 **2 in 3** employees state they are feeling more stressed than before the COVID-19 pandemic

Those who are more stressed report lower levels of well-being and point to several COVID-19-specific concerns.

## Employees' top sources of current stress

- ▶ Contracting the virus
- ▶ A friend/family member contracting the virus
- ▶ Social distancing

Other, overarching sources of stress still persist. In general, work and finances continue to be top concerns during the COVID-19 crisis.

Financial concerns are most significant for workers who have felt job-related and financial disruption. Twenty-nine percent of employees say they are earning less due to the pandemic.

**38%** of current full-time employees say their job or employment status has been directly impacted as a result of COVID-19

**36%** of full-time employees expect there to be an impact eventually

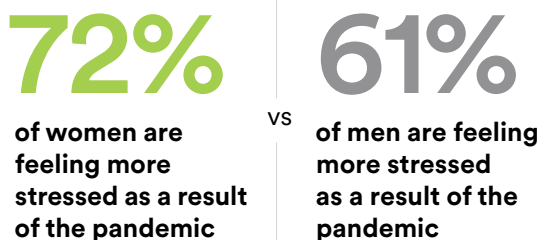


## KEY QUESTION

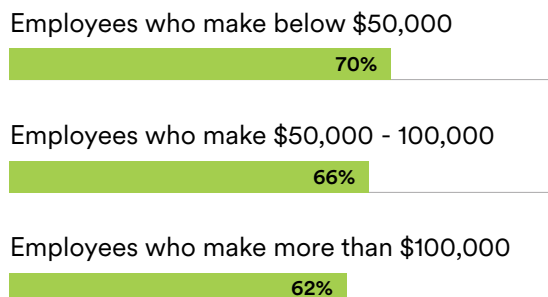
## Which employees are most stressed as a result of COVID-19?

The majority of employees (67%) are feeling more stressed due to COVID-19, but the virus is disproportionately impacting certain groups of employees.

- **Women are more stressed than men:**  
This is true across generations.



- **Employees with lower personal annual incomes:**  
(Percentage of employees who are feeling more stressed as a result of the pandemic)



- **Employees working in the healthcare sector:**

Nearly **3 in 4** healthcare workers are feeling more stressed as a result of the pandemic

vs

About 2 in 3 non-healthcare employees who are feeling more stressed

- **Other concerned sectors:**

Professional, scientific and technical services



Retail



As the world faces these challenges, employers can focus on what's in their control — lessening the impact of the crisis on their workforce.

Prior to the pandemic, employees saw many positives in work and life blending — from working remotely through digital collaboration software to easily swapping shifts on an app. In fact, 62% of employees believed work and life blending had a positive impact on their lives.

However, work-life blending also introduced new challenges that brought about increased stress and uncertainty — like employees' inability to switch off and set boundaries.

### WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



**of employees agreed that modern technology makes it very difficult to switch off and stop thinking about work**

The employees who struggled before are more likely to feel this challenge now. Seventy-seven percent of struggling employees now say modern technology makes it difficult to switch off, up 8 percentage points from before the pandemic.



# Finding new ways to switch off is now the reality for those working from home, or working differently, for the foreseeable future

People are now wearing different hats over a workday — as parents, teachers, dog walkers and more. New day-to-day distractions and responsibilities mean employees have to juggle work-life responsibilities like never before.

Wave 1 data showed that employees who successfully managed the work-life blend focused on both short- and long-term goals.

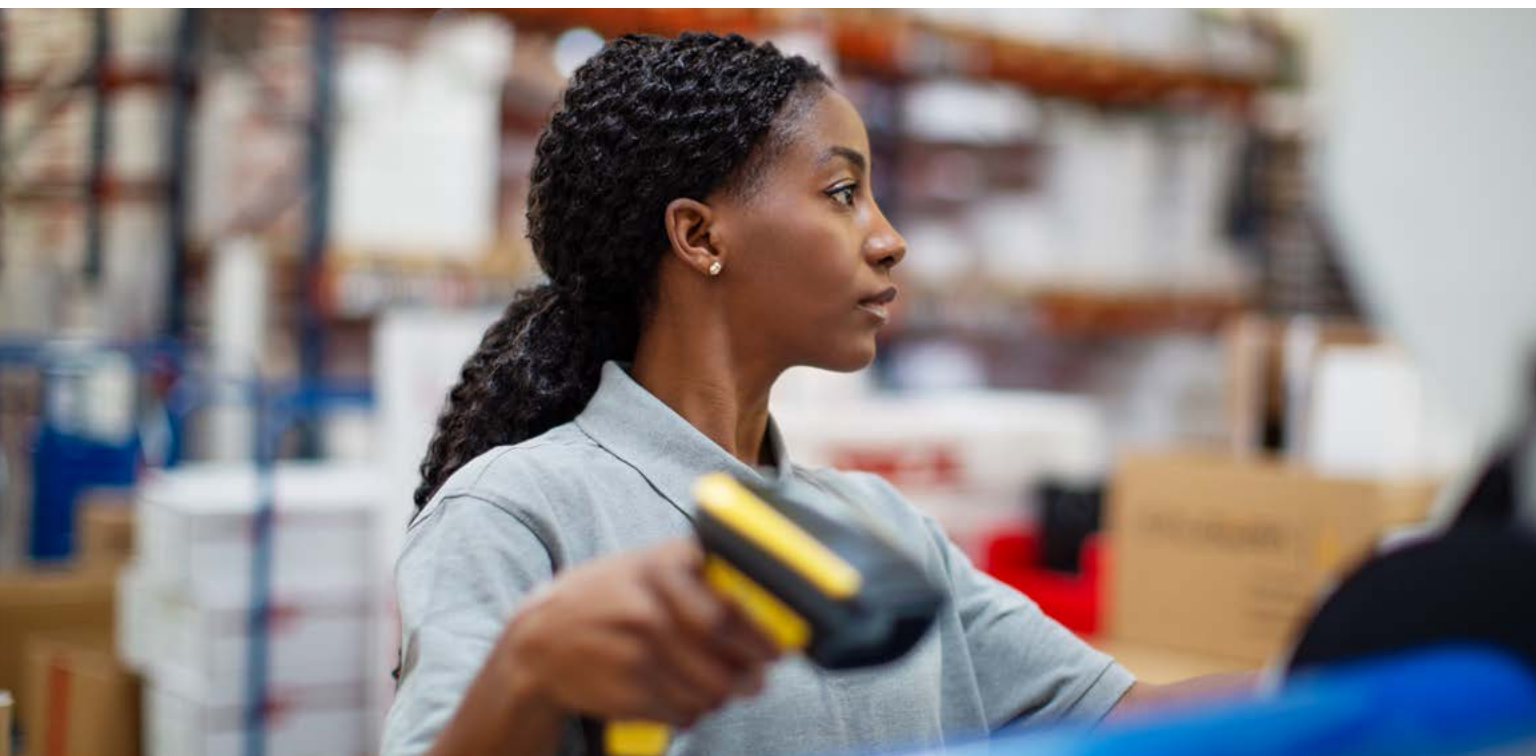


**Roughly 7 in 10 employees considered how their daily actions helped them achieve overall objectives**

These employees actively planned ahead for personal and work commitments — recognizing the ebb and flow of the work-life blend.

Before COVID-19, this may have looked like prioritizing workloads, making time for a doctor's appointment or taking an exercise class.

Now, this might mean finding time to manage personal responsibilities during the hours of a traditional workday and working later into the evening, or postponing non-critical work projects to focus on emerging, urgent tasks.



# Employers can provide more flexibility to help employees navigate the higher stress of the work-life blend

Our lives are filled with obligations and interests that require boundaries and balance. Employees need downtime from professional and personal commitments to rest and recharge — and this has become even more important now.

To help employees achieve this balance, employers can consider providing their employees with more flexibility as to when and how work gets done.

**Employers can create a more flexible work environment and encourage managers and supervisors to lead by example**

Wave 1 research revealed that employees who were successfully managing work and life were more likely to have employers who offered flexible programs and policies.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

# 67%

**of successful employees stated their employer provided the flexibility required to manage both work and life**



“ [Work-life flexibility] is emphasized by our leadership ... who have families, and who do a lot of volunteering events and things outside of work. When you see that at the higher-up level, then you say, ‘Hey, we see them doing this well.’ ”

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

In times of uncertainty, it's even more essential that leaders show their support for flexible working and share how the current climate is impacting their own working norms.

For example, leaders whose organizations are working remotely can communicate how they themselves are taking breaks, adapting their habits and managing their daily routines.

Meanwhile, leaders in essential occupations might put policies and communications in place to ensure employees feel protected from the virus and are able to take time off between shifts to ensure their own families are cared for.

### **Employers can support employees in setting boundaries for work**

Historically, setting boundaries was often the employees' responsibility. Employees who were more successful at managing the work-life blend recognized that their personal and professional lives may overlap, so they set realistic boundaries to maintain control.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**76%**

**of successful employees set boundaries to keep their work lives from overtaking their personal lives**

Employees were already looking for help in setting boundaries. They may need more help now.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**87%**

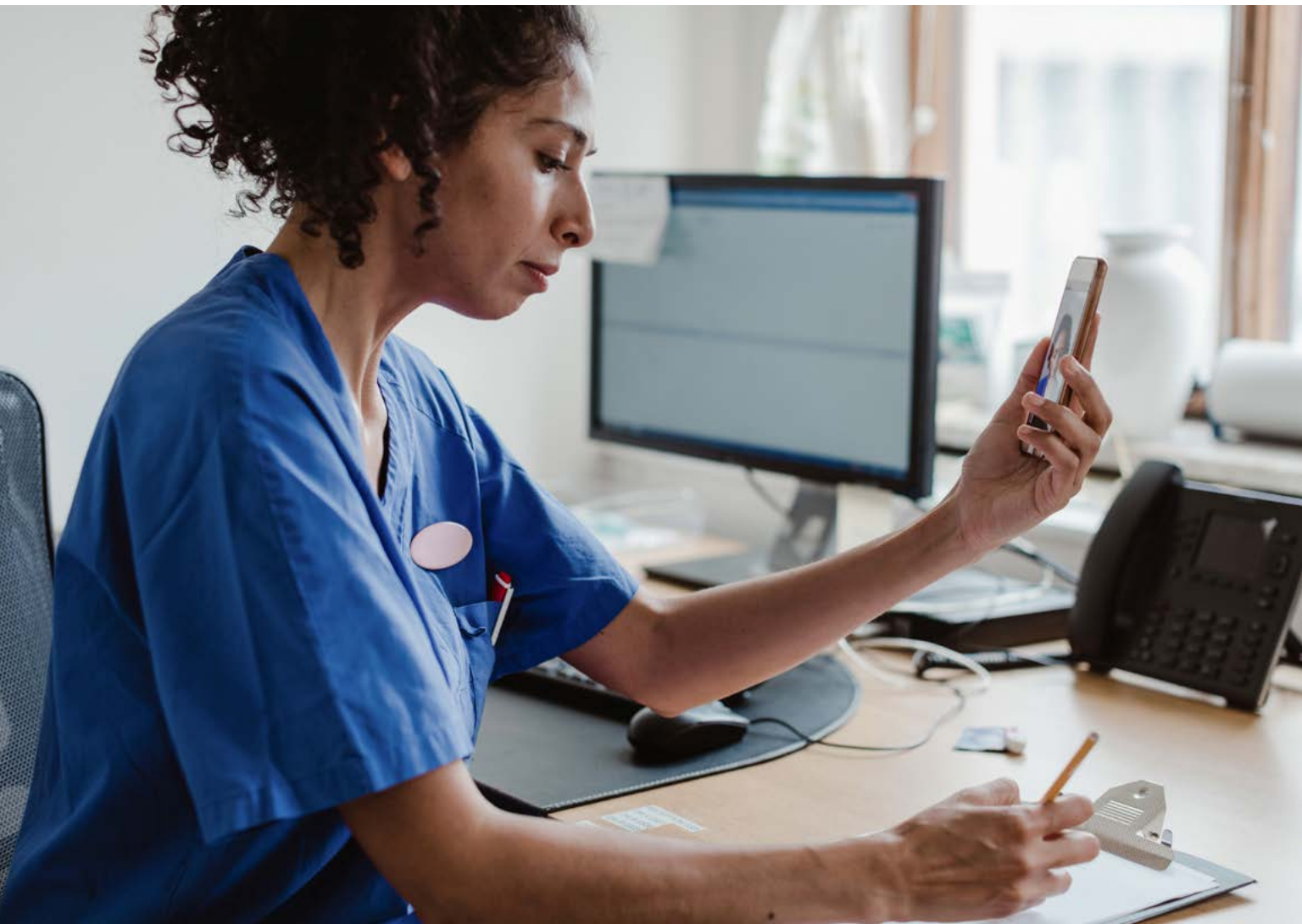
**of employees were interested in working for an organization that has policies to help place boundaries on their working hours**

Employers can make it more acceptable for employees to discuss their needs and invest in tools to make setting these boundaries easier.

For example, employers can provide training for managers to navigate boundary-setting conversations or design shift schedules for employees with their personal needs in mind. They can also encourage employees to take PTO or personal days to rest and recharge, even if travel or typical vacation activities are still restricted.

# The “new normal” calls for enhanced employee emotional and financial wellness for better management of work-life stress

After flexible policies, employees are looking for support to manage other aspects of the blended work-life world. There is a significant opportunity for employers to provide greater support, particularly around mental health and financial wellness.



WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**58%** of employees who struggle said their employer doesn't offer mental health programs that meet their specific needs, or they are difficult to access/understand

A comprehensive benefits program that supports various aspects of the work-life blend is critical. It's not only traditional benefits that matter today but also benefits that help manage work-life stressors, like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which can provide free counseling for stress management, family dynamics, work, personal relationships and more.

These programs can be of greater value during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing critical support for employees' mental well-being. For employees on the frontlines of the pandemic, having this support system can be valuable as they cope with the potential impact on their and families' lives.

### **Employers can also help employees gain financial stability and prepare for retirement, even in the current climate**

Many employees were already struggling to successfully save for retirement, often prioritizing day-to-day expenses rather than saving for the future.

Now with unemployment on the rise and a volatile global economy, employers have an opportunity to help their employees feel more financially secure and protected.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**55%** of employees who struggle expected to postpone their retirement due to their financial situation

Similar to mental well-being benefits, employees could use more financial wellness support.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

When comparing employees who successfully navigate the work-life blend versus those who struggle, succeeding employees were:

**~1.5x** more likely to state their employers were offering financial health initiatives/ programs that effectively address their specific needs

### **Employers have a significant opportunity to help employees better understand and use the programs available to them**

If employees don't understand the programs and benefits offered to them — such as voluntary benefits that provide valuable financial support on top of medical benefits — they can't take advantage of them.

Particularly in times of crisis, good communication is critical to helping employees easily see how benefits and resources fit into their lives to mitigate their stress. In Chapter 4, we highlight ways employers can effectively communicate about their programs to help employees understand them and take action.

# Employer actions and solutions

- 
- ▶ **Communicate** frequently and stay connected to your employees at this critical time.
- 
- ▶ **Empower** your employees with a more flexible work schedule so they have the time they need to take care of themselves and their loved ones.
- 
- ▶ **Provide** mental health and EAP programs to help employees manage new stresses from the pandemic.
- 
- ▶ **Support** employees with financial wellness programs to help them feel more financially secure.
-

# 02

## Driving Employee Engagement and Reducing Stress

### ► KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Support from employers is even more important during the COVID-19 crisis:** there is a correlation between strong employer support and employee feelings of success, appreciation, engagement, productivity and respect.

**Roughly a third of employees are experiencing stress** and/or burnout during the pandemic, which could lead to lower productivity, engagement and loyalty, as well as increased absenteeism.

**The top mitigators of employee stress, burnout and depression include** a reasonable workload, employee recognition, flexible work arrangements and time to address personal needs.

**The top drivers of productivity, engagement and loyalty are** employee recognition, competitive compensation and a comprehensive benefits program.

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating new challenges and placing additional stress on employees and their organizations every day. Improving productivity, engagement and loyalty, as well as reducing stress and burnout, are key objectives for organizations looking to manage both through and beyond the crisis.

By better understanding the drivers of positive employee outcomes (like productivity), as well as the detractors of negatives ones (like stress), employers can shape programs and experiences to help their workforce better navigate the new challenges they are facing.

The next step is to translate employee understanding into the right programs and support. Data fielded at the start of the pandemic demonstrates that employees whose employers have provided programs and benefits to support them during COVID-19 feel more successful, appreciated, engaged, productive and respected.

In this chapter, we explore tangible ways for employers to address these employee challenges, help mitigate the impact of the crisis and manage successfully through recovery.

#### WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

### Top 10 challenges and concerns for employers

**#1 Driving employee productivity (61%)**

**#2 Ensuring compliance with ever-changing laws and regulations (61%)**

**#3 The security of employees' personal data (61%)**

**#4 Attracting and retaining top talent (60%)**

**#5 Fostering a culture of teamwork and collaboration (60%)**

**#6 Offering competitive benefits packages (60%)**

**#7 Maintaining a good corporate reputation (59%)**

**#8 Ensuring employee engagement (57%)**

**#9 Increased demand for work-life flexibility by employees (55%)**

**#10 Creating a more purpose-driven work culture (55%)**

# Employee workplace stress impacts organizations' bottom lines

Even before the pandemic, employers prioritized managing employee stress and the impact of burnout on their organizations.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

# 73%

of employers said reducing employee stress was a key objective for 2020

▲ Up 5% pts. from 2019 report data

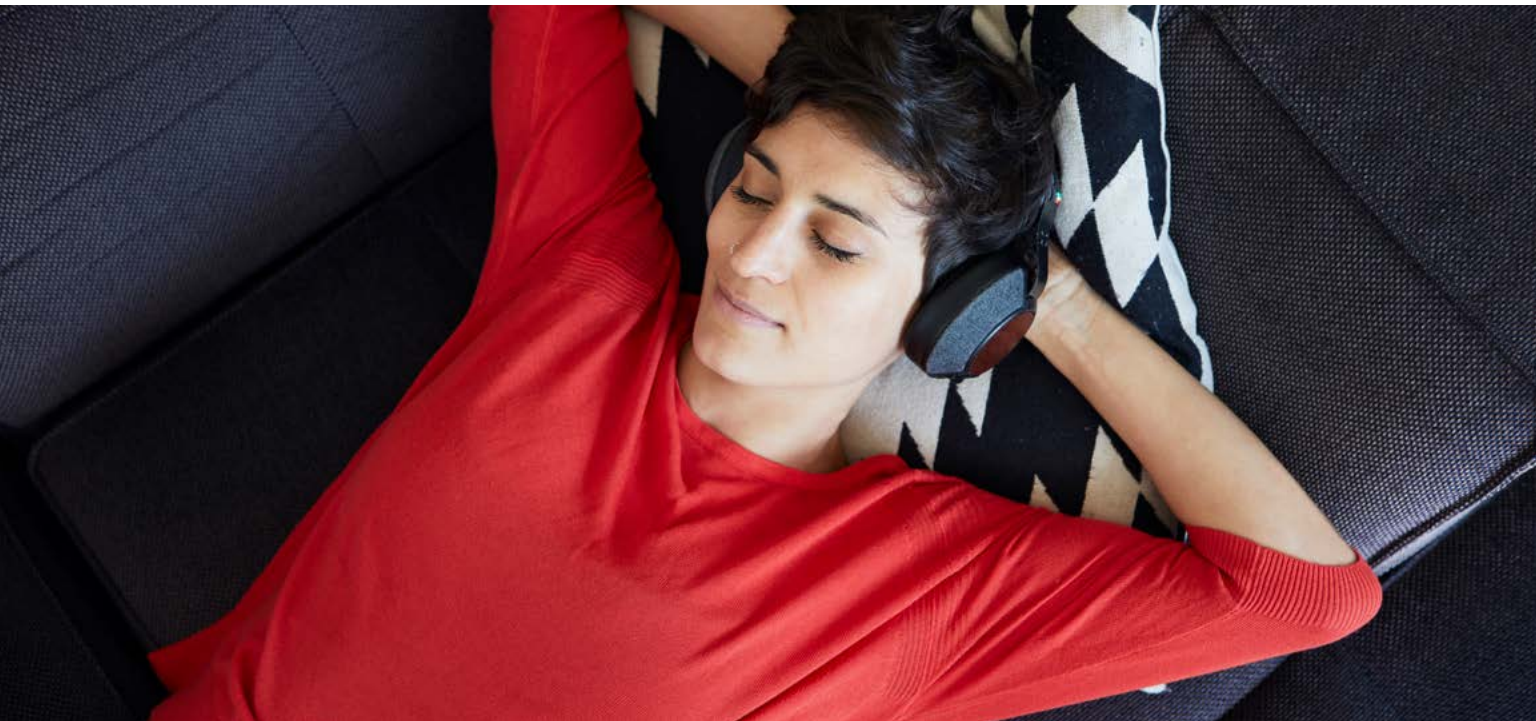
# 55%

of employers said employee burnout is a major concern/challenge for 2020

compared with

37% of employers who said it was a challenge in 2019 report data

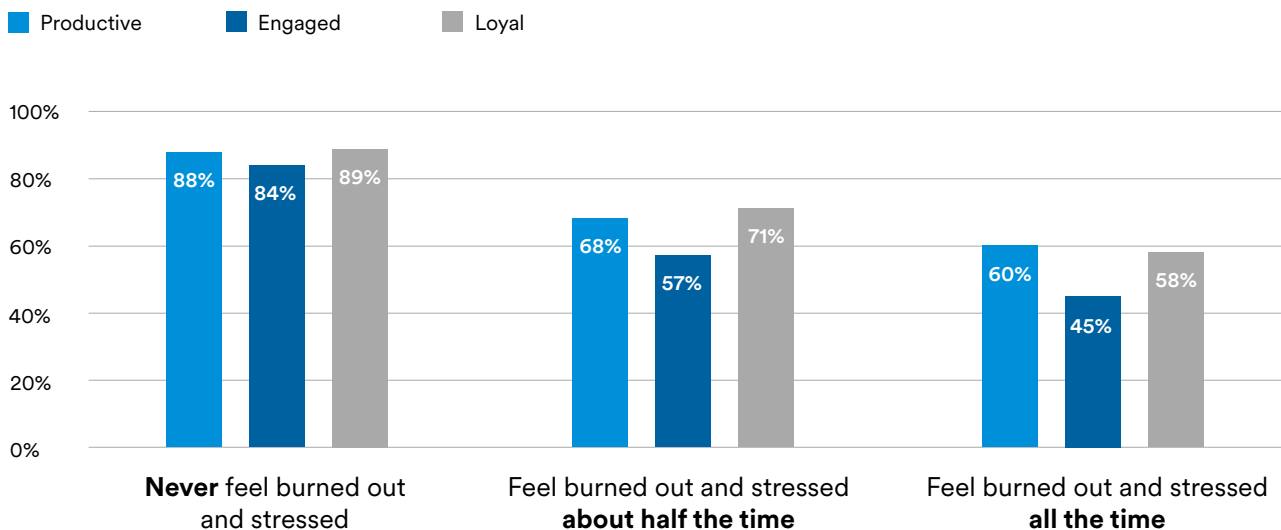
Workplace stress and burnout are major concerns because they have a real and tangible impact on businesses. Frequent feelings of stress and burnout **directly cause declines in productivity, engagement and loyalty.**



WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**Employees who frequently feel burnout and stress (about half the time or all the time) are less productive, engaged and loyal.**

### Percentage of employees who are...



## Providing employees support will be key to managing workplace stress through the pandemic

Addressing workplace stress is now more important than ever, as roughly **1 in 3 employees (50 million U.S. workers) feel tired, stressed and/or burned out at work.**

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

### How are employees feeling\* at work?

Tired

34%

Stressed

34%

Burned out

27%

Discouraged

22%

Distracted

19%

Depressed

17%

\*More than half of the time at work

## Programs employees state will ease their stress and improve their well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic

- #1 Increased paid time off
- #2 Work from home policy
- #3 Flexible work hours and arrangements
- #4 Roth/401(k) retirement plans
- #5 Emergency hardship assistance
- #6 Mental wellness programs (i.e., Employee Assistance Programs, access to a therapist)
- #7 Subsidized internet and/or cellular service
- #8 Health Savings Account (HSA) and/or Flexible Spending Account
- #9 Paid family/caregiver leave
- #10 Access to telehealth services

In addition to the flexibility and financial support mentioned in Chapter 1, employees are looking for additional support across a few key areas to help manage their stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Employers who are taking action to support employees during the COVID-19 crisis are creating a positive impact

**In fact, more employees are feeling valued and appreciated by their employer during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic than before it began — a 10 percentage point increase overall.**

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

**66%** of employees are feeling valued and appreciated when working during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

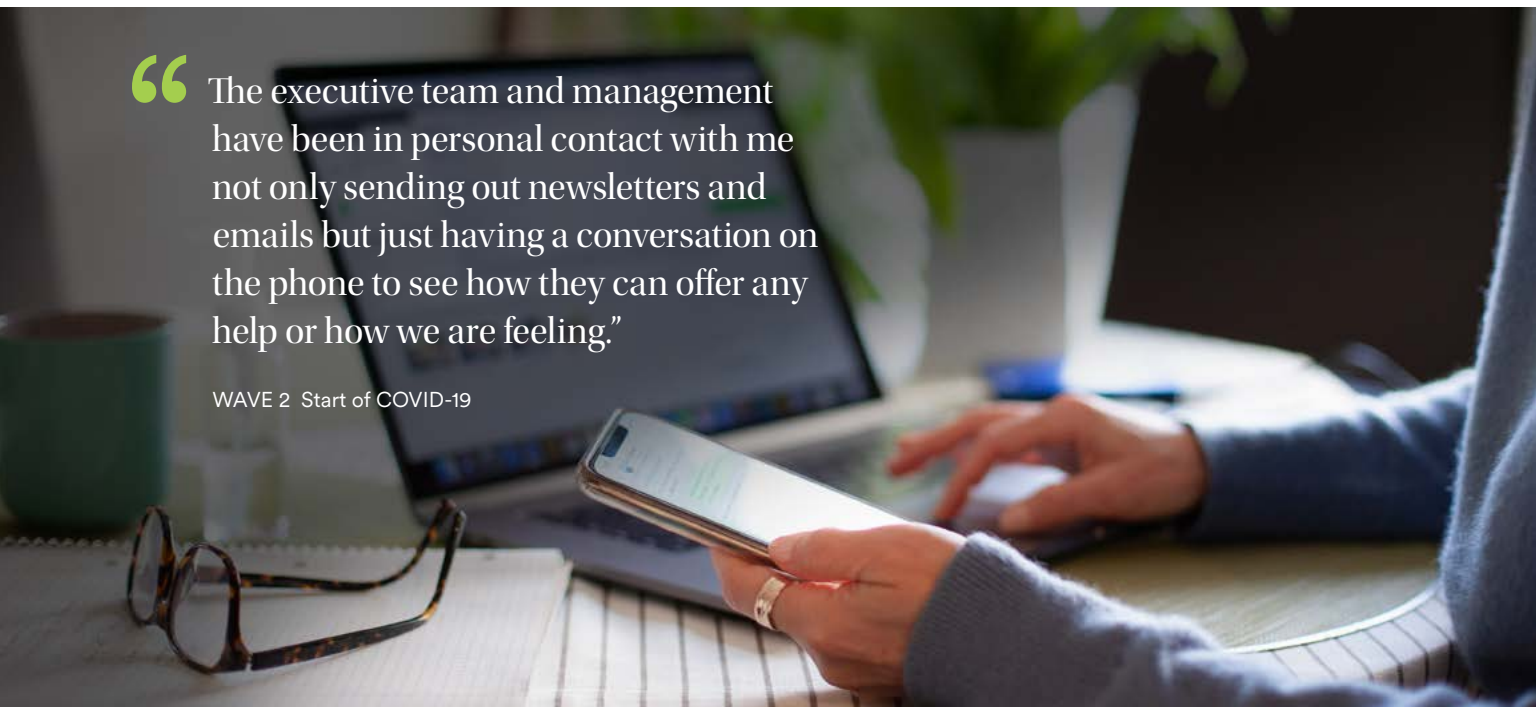
compared with

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**56%** of employees who were feeling valued and appreciated when working before the COVID-19 pandemic

**“** The executive team and management have been in personal contact with me not only sending out newsletters and emails but just having a conversation on the phone to see how they can offer any help or how we are feeling.”

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19



**What’s more, Wave 2 data shows a strong correlation between an employer offering benefits and support for employees and positive employee feelings.**

When employers support their employees, especially in the face of unprecedented challenges and uncertainty, employees report feeling more successful, valued/appreciated, engaged, productive and respected. If employees are unsupported, reports of those feelings drop significantly.

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 employees who report feeling...

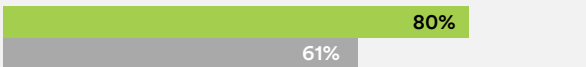
Productive



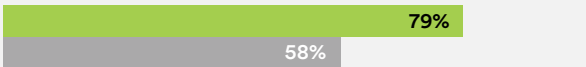
Engaged



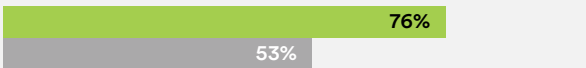
Successful



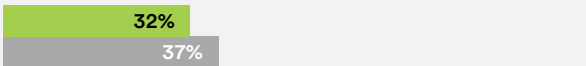
Respected



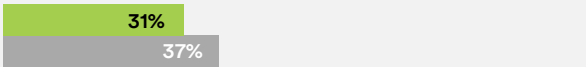
Valued / Appreciated



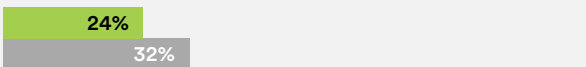
Stressed



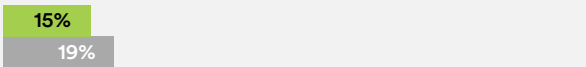
Tired



Burned out



Depressed



# Tangible ways to improve employee productivity and engagement

Visit [metlife.com/ebts2020](https://metlife.com/ebts2020) to filter the interactive drivers by company sector, employee type, gender and age.

Minimizing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employee engagement and productivity will be critical for businesses as they navigate the challenges ahead.

Our 2020 Wave 1 analysis provides specific actions employers can take to impact these employee metrics and better position their employees and their companies to manage the crisis.

The top drivers of employee productivity, engagement and loyalty are all tools employers have at their disposal — and, as you'll learn, can also be used to mitigate negative outcomes like employee stress, burnout and depression.

**Employee recognition is the top driver of productivity and engagement across all age groups — it also mitigates stress, burnout and depression**

## WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**Recognizes my achievements and hard work**

**#1** Driver of productivity and engagement; Mitigator of depression

**#2** Driver of loyalty; Mitigator of stress and burnout





**According to our 2020 Wave 1 data, a comprehensive benefits program also plays a critical role in employee satisfaction, helping them manage stress and feel more stable, secure, and engaged at work**

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**Offers a comprehensive benefits program**

**#3** Driver of productivity and loyalty

**#6** Driver of engagement

**#6** Mitigator of stress, burnout and depression

A comprehensive benefits program is a top-three driver of productivity and loyalty — and is critical in a time like this. A robust program takes into account not only traditional benefits like medical or dental but also voluntary benefits like legal plans or critical illness insurance, as well as emerging benefits

to support other sources of stress, like personal finances and work.

**Financial wellness programs can help employees learn how to manage short-term finances, unexpected expenses and long-term financial goals.** A well-designed financial wellness program — especially in the face of market volatility and unexpected day-to-day expenses — can equip employees to do more with confidence, from managing financial emergencies to paying down debt to saving for retirement.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**76%** of employees offered financial wellness programs are satisfied with their benefits

vs

**59%** of employees not offered financial wellness programs

# Employer actions that can help reduce burnout and depression

As all employers attempt to improve employee experience and success in the current climate, it's not enough to only think about positive outcomes like engagement and productivity. Employers should also consider that negative feelings from stress, burnout and depression can jeopardize the positive outcomes they seek.

While drivers of positive outcomes like employee recognition and competitive compensation are also top mitigators of stress, burnout and depression, there are a few other levers employers can use to alleviate employee stress.

Especially in times of crisis, a reasonable workload, sufficient time to address personal needs and flexible work arrangements lessen negative employee outcomes.

We know that support from their employers is essential to help employees successfully manage both work and life. Furthermore, employees with employer support feel more successful, appreciated, engaged, productive and respected.

In Chapter 3, we will share a model of holistic well-being that can further help employers understand what tools they have at their disposal to work toward positive outcomes and mitigate negative ones.

## WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

### Provides a reasonable workload

**#1** Mitigator of stress and burnout

**#3** Mitigator of depression

\*Within the top five drivers of productivity, engagement and loyalty.

### Offers flexible work hours or arrangements

**#2** Mitigator of depression

**#4** Mitigator of stress

**#5** Mitigator of burnout

\*Within the top ten drivers of productivity, engagement and loyalty.

### Provides sufficient time to address personal needs

**#3** Mitigator of stress

**#4** Mitigator of burnout

**#5** Mitigator of depression

\*Within the top five drivers of engagement and loyalty.

# Employer actions and solutions

- 
- ▶ **Recognizing and appreciating employees** is the most impactful way for employers to increase productivity and reduce stress.
- 
- ▶ **A comprehensive benefits program** also plays a pivotal role in employee satisfaction and is crucial to employee stability and security in a time of need.
- 
- ▶ Visit [metlife.com/ebts2020](https://www.metlife.com/ebts2020) to uncover industry benchmarks and drivers that can influence your desired employee outcomes.
-

## 03

# Supporting Employees by Embracing a Model of Holistic Well-Being

## ► KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Employers' support** of employees' holistic well-being — through benefits packages and programs that address physical, financial, mental and social health — can make a measurable difference in this time of crisis.

**Improving well-being** across physical, financial, mental and social health leads to higher workforce engagement, productivity and loyalty.

**Financial wellness** is particularly important for holistic well-being. Employees with poor financial health also rate their mental, social and physical health significantly lower than the average.

**Lack of awareness and understanding** of employee wellness programs may limit usage.

“ I think mental well-being is just as important as your physical health.”

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

The traditional approach to employee well-being primarily focuses on supporting employees' physical health with medical coverage, and to some extent, financial health through retirement benefits. Additionally, benefits packages and HR programs are often designed reactively, fixing one problem at a time but failing to make a broader impact on employees or their organizations.

The reason this approach has a limited impact is because it fails to account for broader aspects of well-being, including mental, social, financial and physical health.

These elements are interconnected and work together to support employee well-being. With this in mind, a model of holistic well-being can help employers shape programs and benefit plans that address all aspects of employees' well-being.



#### A closer look at each of the components of holistic well-being:

- ▶ **Mental health**  
Condition of psychological and emotional well-being
- ▶ **Financial health**  
State of personal and family financial security
- ▶ **Social health**  
Ability to form satisfying interpersonal relationships with others
- ▶ **Physical health**  
Level of illness, injury and general lifestyle

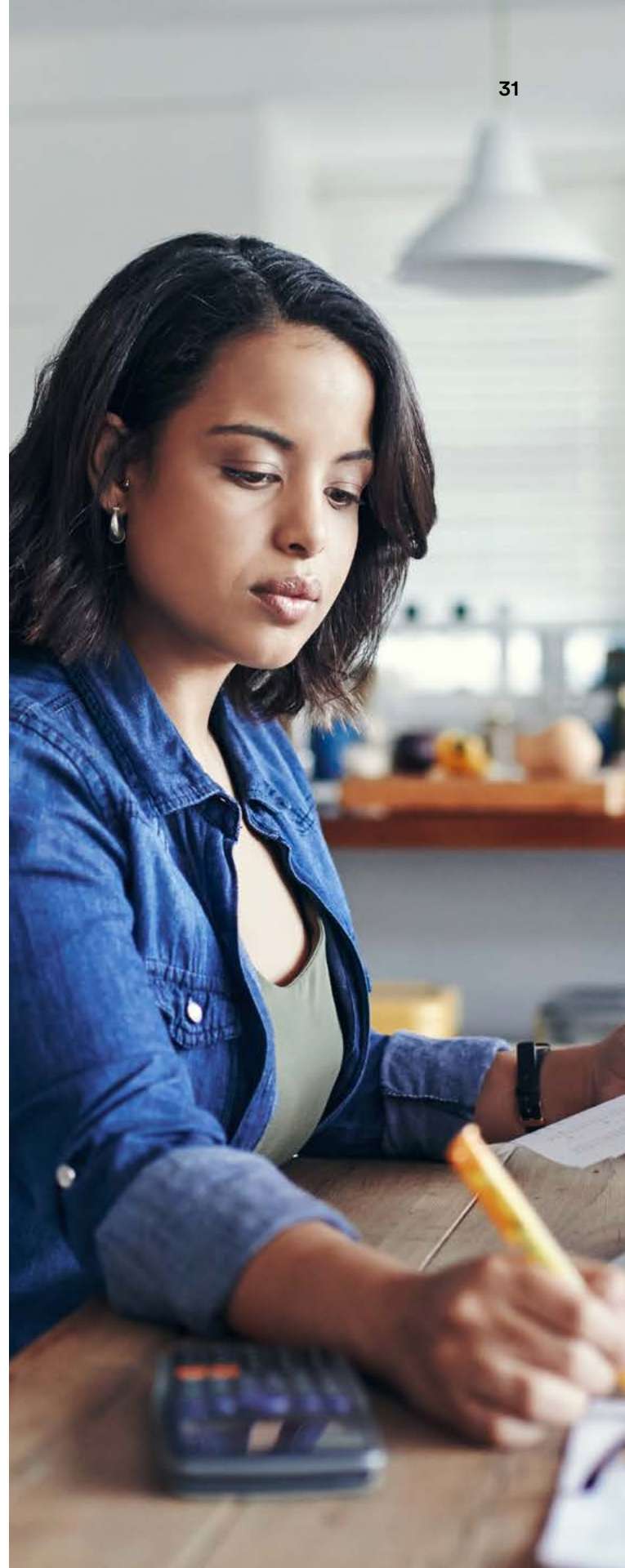
## Supporting Employees by Embracing a Model of Holistic Well-Being

In a normal environment, employees may struggle in one or two areas of well-being. But the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the workforce as a whole across all elements. Shelter-in-place orders and social distancing from friends and family impact social health. Concerns over job security and longer-term retirement preparedness affect financial health. Physical health may be impacted by the virus, but also through the closing of gyms and decreased access to self-care. And mental health can be strained by stress from all these factors.

Taking a holistic approach to well-being will be critical for companies both to help their employees manage the crisis, but also to support their business' recovery, by improving productivity and engagement and reducing stress and burnout.

Companies that can address the holistic needs of their employees, both inside and outside the workplace, will be better positioned to meet the evolving challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this chapter, we'll show how the components of holistic well-being are interconnected and share how employers might shape their benefits, programs, policies and experiences to help influence positive employee well-being outcomes — especially in the wake of this crisis.



# Most employers haven't adopted a well-being model that addresses all aspects of employee health

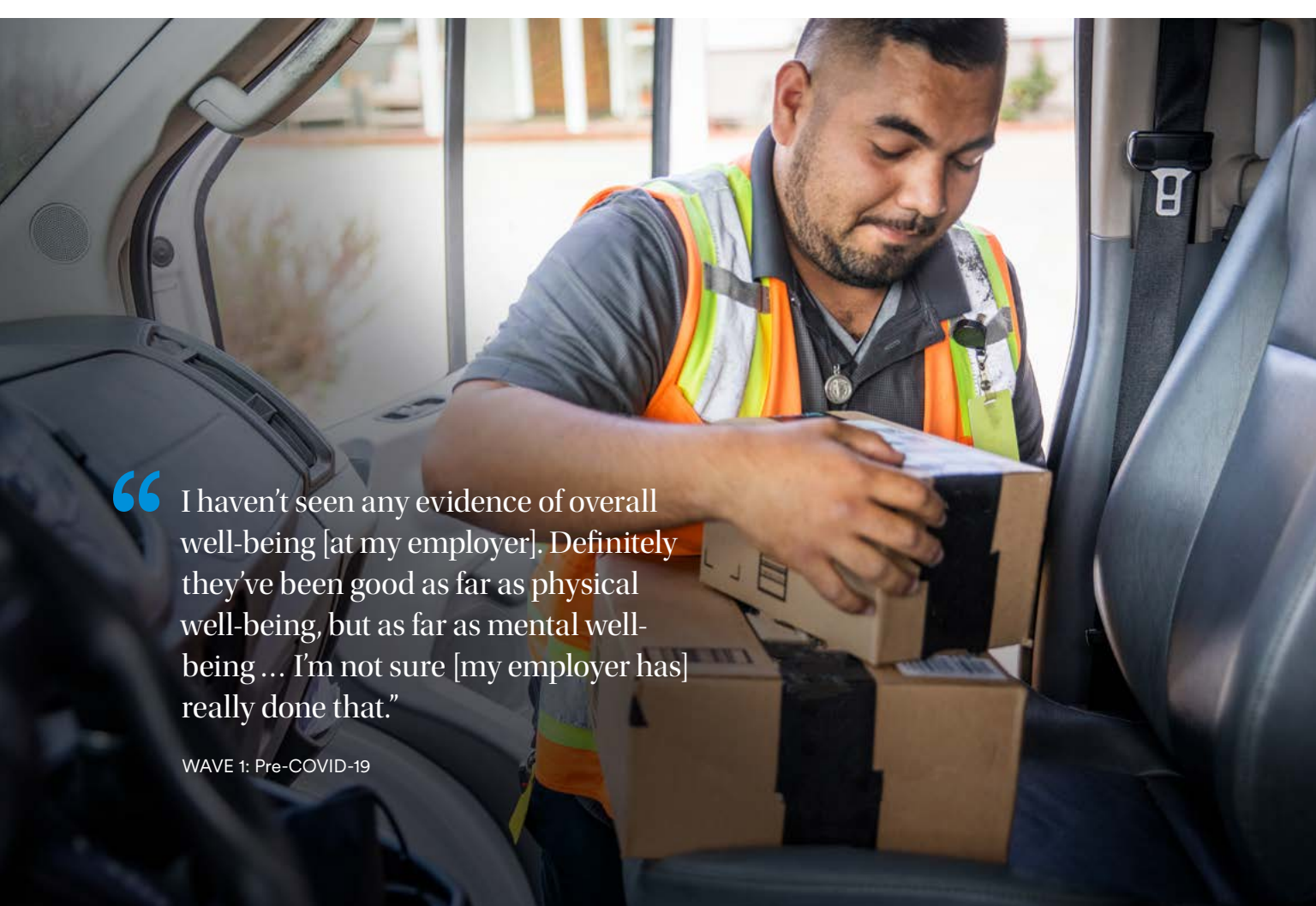
Today, only a small percentage of employers are using a well-being model that addresses all four aspects of employee health.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

Only

**15%**

**of employers have a definition of a healthy workplace that includes all four aspects of health**

A man with a beard, wearing a grey polo shirt and a high-visibility orange and yellow safety vest, is loading cardboard boxes into the back of a white truck. He is looking down at the boxes. The truck's interior, including the seat and seatbelt, is visible on the right side of the frame. The background shows a building and some greenery.

**“** I haven't seen any evidence of overall well-being [at my employer]. Definitely they've been good as far as physical well-being, but as far as mental well-being ... I'm not sure [my employer has] really done that.”

WAVE 1: Pre-COVID-19

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

## Employers who include the following four aspects of health in their healthy workplace definition:

(Employer response)



Taking a proactive approach to well-being, with a holistic view that accommodates diverse and evolving needs and challenges, is an opportunity for employers to have a significant, positive impact on their organizations.

This starts by developing a clear organizational definition of well-being that recognizes the challenges employees face during this crisis as well as the interconnected elements of well-being.

# Employers and employees agree that employers have a responsibility for the health and well-being of their workforce

A significant majority of employers, 77%, agree they have a responsibility for the health and well-being of their employees (2020 Wave 1).

Seventy-three percent of employees agree, and this expectation has risen with the crisis — jumping 7 percentage points — to 80% agreeing employers have this responsibility (2020 Wave 2).

**However, in the past, employers have over-estimated the holistic well-being of their employees, especially their financial health**

There is a gap between employers' perceptions of their employees' holistic well-being and employees' own perspectives.

This perception gap is largest for financial health (a 14-percentage point difference between employers and employees), which means employers may be underestimating the financial support employees need. Prior to the crisis, 40% of employees agreed employers have a responsibility for the financial well-being of their employees, which has jumped to 47%.

What's more, employees who rate any aspect of their health poorly are far more likely to see it getting worse over time.

Acknowledging and addressing this perception gap will be important for organizations as they look to develop programs to help their employees through the crisis and into the post-pandemic world.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

54%

of employers think employees are healthy in all four aspects of well-being

vs

39%

of employees who think they themselves are healthy in all four aspects



And 1 in 8 employees, roughly 20 million workers, aren't healthy in any aspect

# Increased employee well-being directly correlates to positive business outcomes

As we explored in Chapter 2, increasing the productivity, engagement and loyalty of their workforce is a priority for employers. These positive outcomes have a clear connection to the components of well-being.

For example, productivity is sometimes improved with recognition — a social factor. While loyalty may increase with competitive compensation — a financial reward.

**Improving employee health across all four dimensions can lead to a happier workforce with increased productivity, engagement and loyalty**

In fact, a **one-point increase in holistic well-being**, on a seven-point scale, translates to an increase of:

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

- ▶ 12% in engagement
- ▶ 9% in productivity
- ▶ 10% in loyalty



# Employers who are providing benefits during the crisis are positively impacting employee well-being

**59%** of employees say their employers are providing benefits and programs to support and improve their well-being during this time

The more benefits an employee is offered, the more likely they are to say they feel well-supported by their employer during COVID-19. Employees who state they are receiving support during this time are more likely to have benefits such as life, dental and disability from their employer.

In addition, employees whose employer is going “above and beyond expectations” have a higher propensity to be offered voluntary benefits such as critical illness, hospital indemnity and financial wellness programs.

Data from the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that employers who have offered benefits and programs to help employees manage the impact of the crisis also have a workforce that reports greater holistic well-being.

## 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 employees who state they are healthy in each component of well-being)

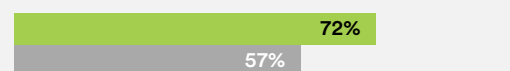
### Mental health



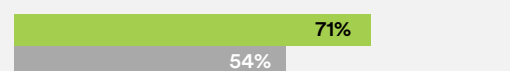
### Physical health



### Social health



### Financial health



# The four components of well-being work together to influence employee satisfaction and success

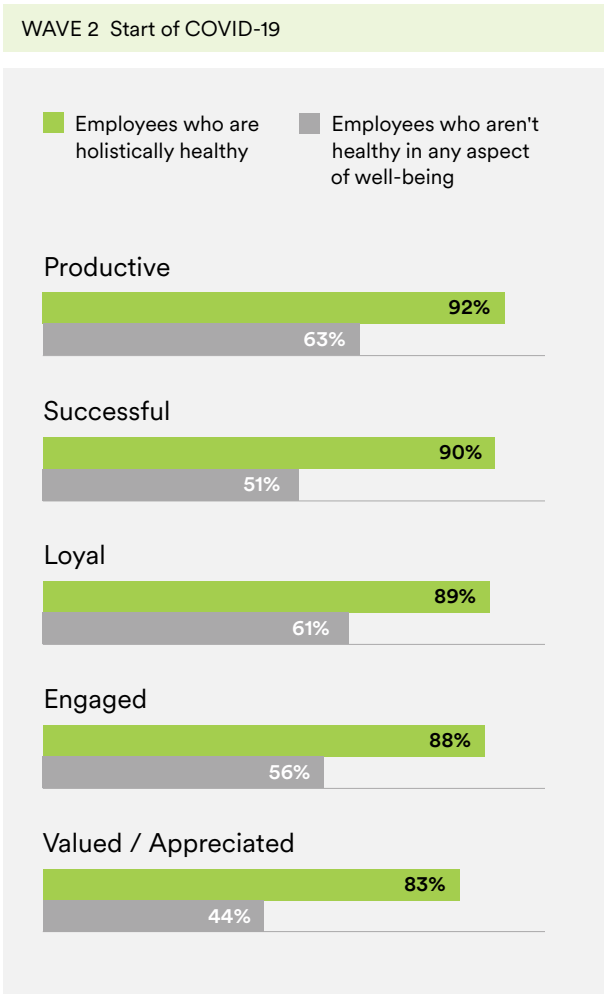
2020 Wave 1 data shows that mental health is the biggest driver of holistic well-being, followed by financial health, then social health, and lastly, physical health. But all four dimensions are important.

For example, financial concerns may lead to poor mental health. Not to mention, work concerns can relate to social health, particularly in our current context (e.g., a poor relationship with a manager or effects of isolation and working remotely).

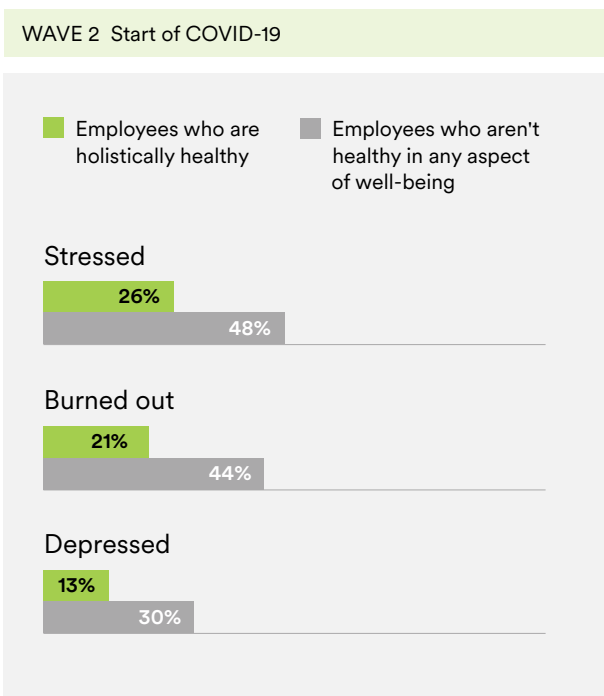


**Productivity, engagement and loyalty improve when employees are healthy overall**

Employees who are healthy across all four aspects of well-being are more likely to be loyal, engaged and productive, compared to those who rank poorly for all aspects of health.



**Similarly, holistic well-being reduces stress and burn out**



What's more, employees who rate their health poorly in one dimension are likely to rate their health poorly in others as well.

# Right now, financial health is a top concern that plays an especially important role in overall well-being and mental health in particular

Financial health has always been a key element of well-being, with a clear impact on other components of overall health.

In this new climate, where financial security has been disrupted for millions of workers, the impact of financial health on other aspects of health has only intensified.

Financial health may be linked to poor physical, mental and social health. 2020 Wave 1 data showed that the 43% of employees who don't consider themselves financially healthy also said that their mental, social and physical health is significantly lower than the average.

In the context of COVID-19, the majority of employees state financial health is a top concern.

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

**52%** of employees are concerned about their financial health in the wake of the pandemic

vs

**44%** of employees who are concerned with their social, mental, and physical health respectively

**74%** of employees are concerned about at least one aspect of their well-being as a result of the virus (financial, social, mental, physical)

Even prior to the pandemic, there was a particularly strong relationship between financial health and mental health. Forty-three percent of employees who aren't mentally healthy said financial concerns are why they haven't rated their mental health higher.

“Finances are probably the forerunner for everything. That's just life ... Most of us are worried day-to-day. Are we doing alright and providing for our children and providing for our spouse?”

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19



WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

## Top reasons employees don't rate their financial health highly:

Everyday cost of living (groceries, utilities, etc.)

41%

New threats to my job security or income due to COVID-19

30%

Stock market declines due to COVID-19

34%

Lack of emergency fund

28%

Having debt and getting into debt (e.g., credit card, mortgage, etc.)

32%



WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

# Retirement and its role in financial health

Retirement planning is an important factor in overall financial well-being.

However, many employees are significantly behind with their savings or haven't yet started saving for retirement. Some feel pressure from short-term financial needs, which can stall their ability to save by forcing them to take an early loan or withdraw savings for unplanned expenses or medical bills.

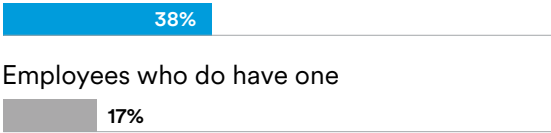
And more are likely to struggle in the near future, as they navigate potential market volatility.

Poor financial health is connected to other behaviors.

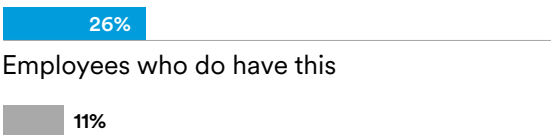
## Employees are significantly more likely to have poor financial health if they:

(Percentage of employees with poor financial health)

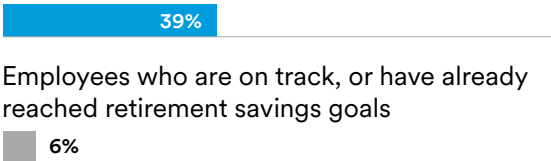
- ▶ **Don't have a defined contribution plan** (such as a 401(k), 403(b) or 457 plan)



- ▶ **Don't have, or don't know if they have, a defined contribution plan** (such as a 401(k), 403(b) or 457 plan) with an option that allows them to convert their money at retirement into guaranteed income



- ▶ **Are significantly behind, or haven't started retirement savings**



► **Plan to have their retirement savings last under five years**

35%

Employees who plan to have their retirement savings last 21 years, or more

17%

► **Expect to work in retirement because of financial necessity**

38%

Employees who are doing so to stay socially engaged

14%

Financial wellness resources, tools and retirement guidance are ways employers can help employees in the wake of the crisis — connecting them to advisors or other resources to help them stay the course on their retirement plans.



# Wellness programs can have an impact, but increased awareness of them is needed

Employers have begun to introduce wellness programs to support overall employee well-being. These programs may include financial wellness to help employees manage day-to-day finances, protect against unplanned expenses or save for future milestones.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**40%** of employers offer financial wellness programs  
▲ Up 10% pts. from 2019 report data

Mental health programs, like Employee Assistance Programs, are another example of wellness programs employers offer today. Forty-four percent of employers currently offer Employee Assistance Programs (up from 41% in 2019 report data).

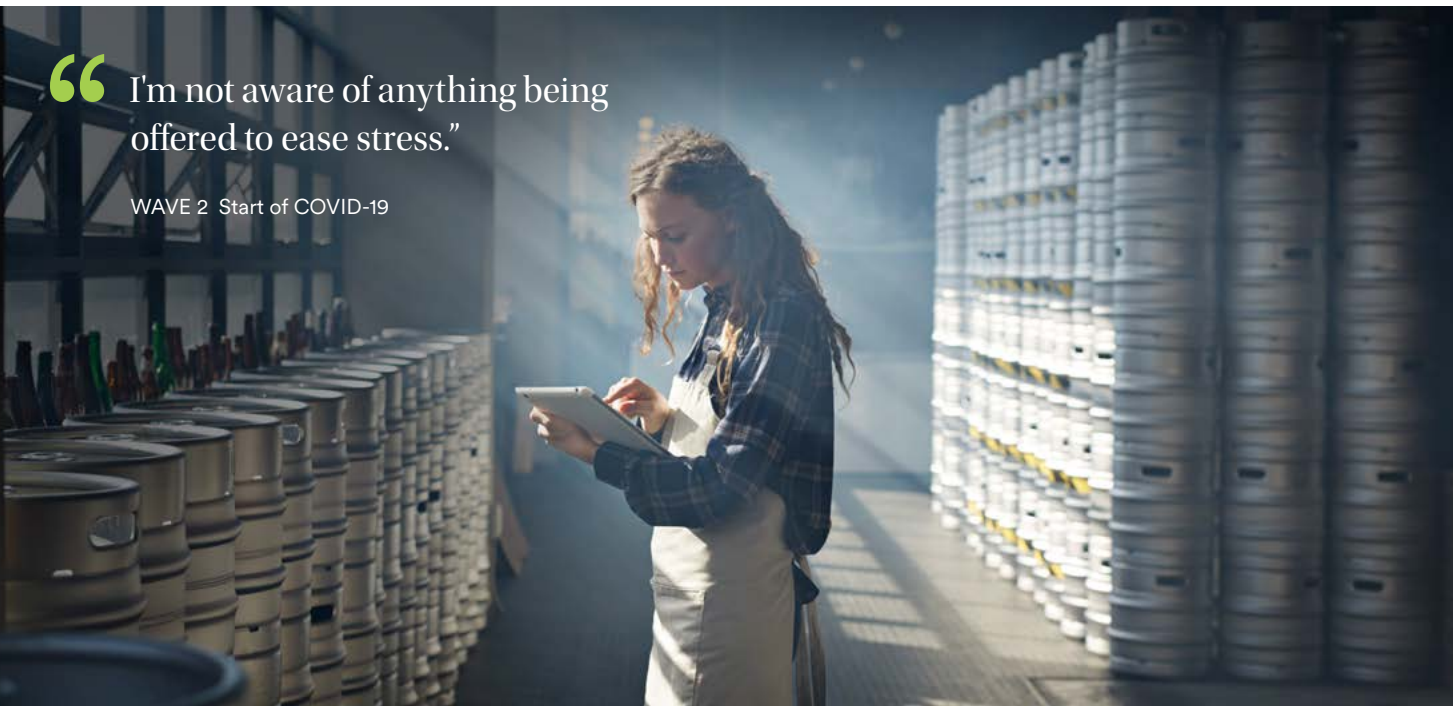
## Employers have an opportunity to drive greater adoption of wellness programs — especially in times of uncertainty

One key opportunity is to drive better understanding and awareness, particularly about mental health benefits. Wave 1 data showed nearly half (46%) of employees said that their employer doesn't offer mental health initiatives and programs that address their specific needs. Meanwhile, 29% said that their employer offers mental health programs that are difficult to access and understand.

We cover tactics to make benefits and program communication more compelling in Chapter 4.

**“** I'm not aware of anything being offered to ease stress.”

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19



**Employers can make open discussion a part of their company culture, provide actionable tools and guidance, and enlist leaders to help employees access and use resources**

Education and leadership commitment can make a big difference in employee well-being.

At every step, leadership commitment and buy-in are essential. When leaders visibly support well-being initiatives, they often become a stronger part of the company culture.

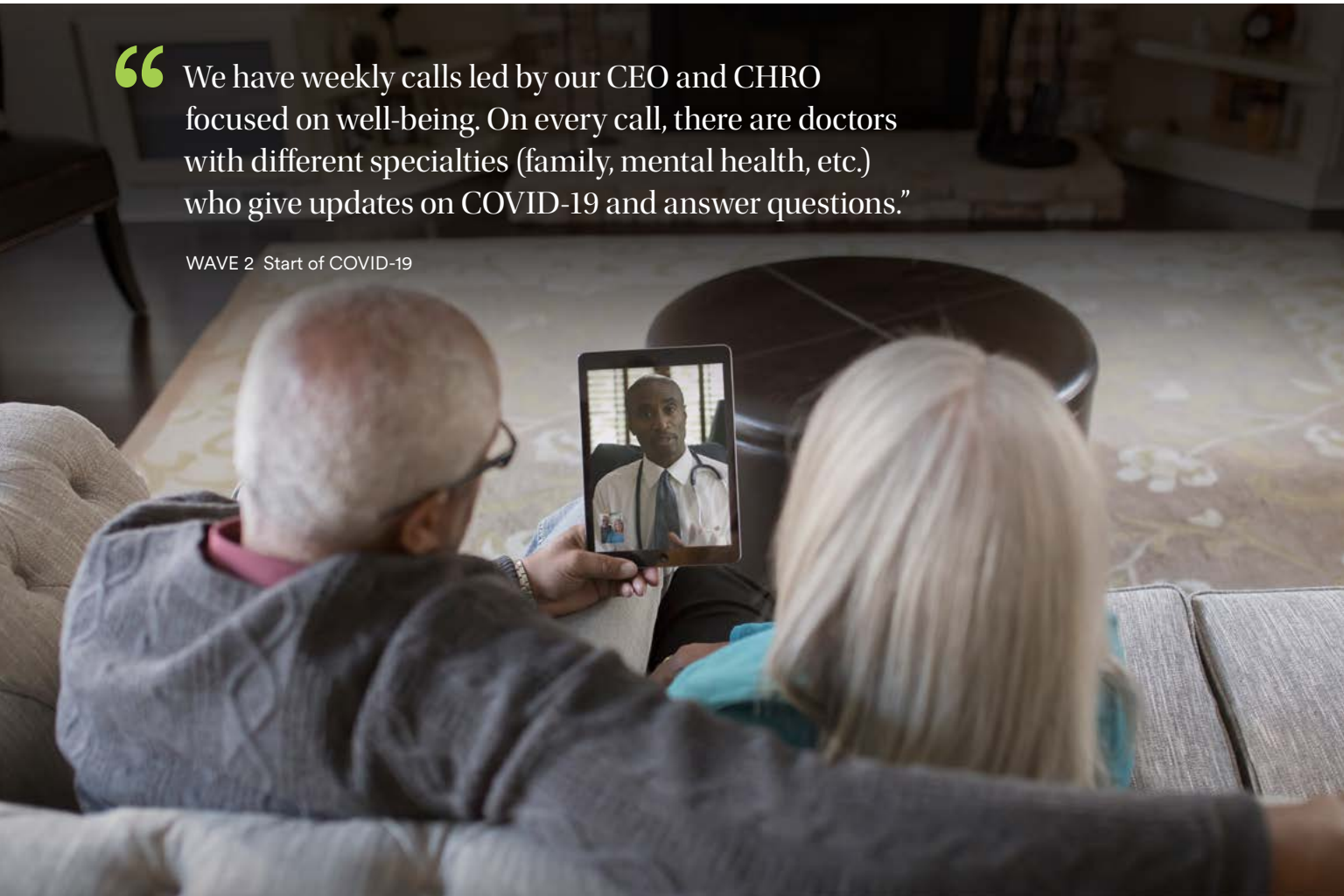
To support employee financial health, employers can offer webinars and online tools to help make it easy for employees to access resources on their own time. Team leaders can attend these sessions themselves and encourage employees to do the same.

Employers can also promote the use of Employee Assistance Programs through a campaign that uses stories about how co-workers take care of their mental health. It's particularly compelling if senior leaders also participate and lead by example.

In the next chapter, we'll explore how employers can structure benefits programs to meet these changing employee needs and provide communications and support that empower employees to act.

**“**We have weekly calls led by our CEO and CHRO focused on well-being. On every call, there are doctors with different specialties (family, mental health, etc.) who give updates on COVID-19 and answer questions.”

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19



# Employer actions and solutions

- 
- ▶ **Define** what holistic well-being means for your organization. Evaluate if there are any components (physical, mental, social, financial) missing from your model.
- 
- ▶ **Evaluate** how your current benefits and programs support the different aspects of employee well-being — especially financial and mental health.
- 
- ▶ **Embed** open discussion — reinforced by resources, campaigns, and leadership support on available company EAPs and benefits — into your organizational culture.
-

## 04

# Promoting Employee Well-Being With Benefits and Communications

## ► KEY TAKEAWAYS

**A comprehensive approach to benefits** can support employee well-being by meeting their diverse and changing needs and ultimately help employees feel more valued by their employers.

**Benefits can alleviate financial burdens** and help employees feel more financially secure beyond income alone.

**Employees who understand their benefits are more holistically well;** clear, timely communications about the value of benefits and how to use them in relevant moments of need can increase the impact benefits can have, especially during extreme circumstances like COVID-19.

**Communication for the upcoming open enrollment period is critical** to increasing awareness and understanding of benefits to ensure employees choose benefits that can protect them in times of uncertainty.

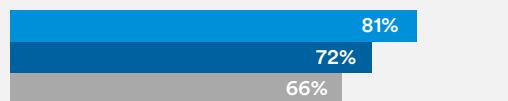
At the core, benefits have always protected employees against vulnerability and promoted well-being.

As employers think not only about addressing the pandemic, but recovering from it in the months to come, a comprehensive approach to benefits and communications can be very important to both the company and to its employees. It also builds employees' trust in their employers' leadership and makes them feel more committed to their organizations' goals.

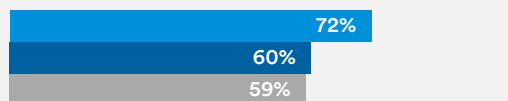
#### WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

- Employees offered 15+ benefits
- Employees offered 5-14 benefits
- Employees offered 0-4 benefits

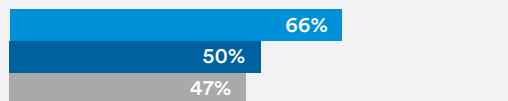
I feel committed to my organization's goals



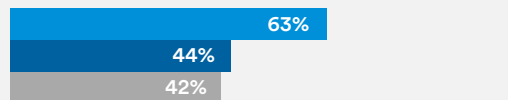
I trust my employer's leadership



My employer is committed to my success



My employer has my best interest in mind



The current pandemic is significantly impacting employees across their physical, financial, mental and social health. Benefits, perhaps now more than ever, play a pivotal role in supporting employees through times of crisis, helping them feel confident and secure in times of uncertainty and beyond. In particular, financial wellness benefits add a layer of protection to medical insurance and can ease the financial impact of the pandemic.

Employer communications help employees see the role benefits can play in their lives and the current crisis. As organizations prepare for the next open enrollment period, awareness and understanding will be critical in helping employees make informed choices about their benefits, and feel reassured about any vulnerabilities they face.

#### WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19

**4 in 10** employees say their employer is currently not offering benefits or programs that help

### A comprehensive approach allows employers to address immediate employee stressors and meet changing needs

The key to this approach is considering benefit offerings as a connected set of resources that work together to meet the holistic and diverse needs of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic and in their broader lives.

Because the elements of well-being are interconnected, it's critical for employers to offer a mix of benefits to help employees stay holistically healthy.

# A comprehensive benefits program helps employers support employees' holistic well-being

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

Following competitive compensation and recognition, a comprehensive benefits program is the

**#3** driver of holistic well-being

A comprehensive program extends beyond traditional benefits, like medical and retirement. It should include voluntary benefits (like disability insurance and legal plans) and emerging benefits (like family and caregiver leave, financial wellness programs and telehealth) to support all four components of well-being.

As organizations respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers may feel pressure to make critical decisions around how to deploy funding against the programs and benefits they offer. Employers may be forced to take measures that influence drivers of holistic well-being, such as freezing promotions and merit increases, reducing hours, furloughs and even layoffs. During this time, benefits provide a way to take care of employees, improving their well-being while also directly impacting their job performance.



# Benefits provide financial security and impact other connected well-being elements

Benefits can help employees feel more secure in their finances beyond their salary — something that is especially valuable now given market volatility and unemployment concerns.

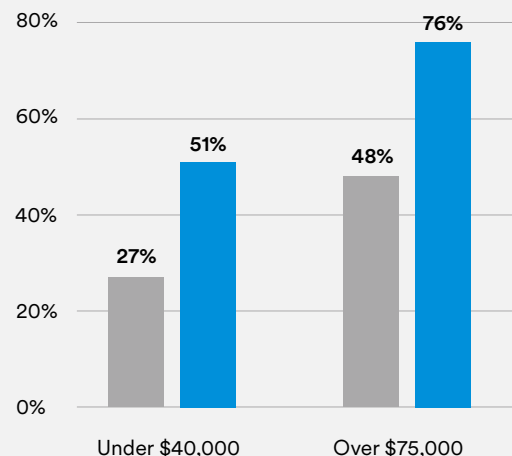
This, in turn, can help with their mental well-being, as well as physical manifestations of stress, like chronic fatigue.

In fact, Wave 1 report data revealed that lower-income employees who were offered benefits to meet their personal needs reported higher levels of financial wellness than higher-income earners without the same benefits.

This demonstrates that while income is important, benefits that aim to alleviate financial burdens can make a tangible impact on employees' broader financial health.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

## Employees who reported being financially healthy

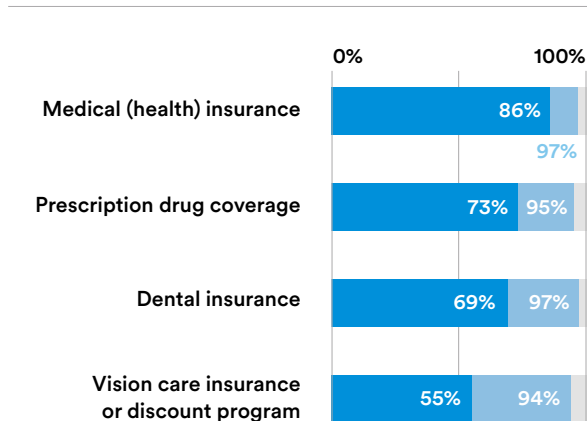


- Employees who said their employer offers a range of benefits that meet their personal and household needs
- Employees who said their employer **does not** offer a range of benefits that meet their personal and household needs

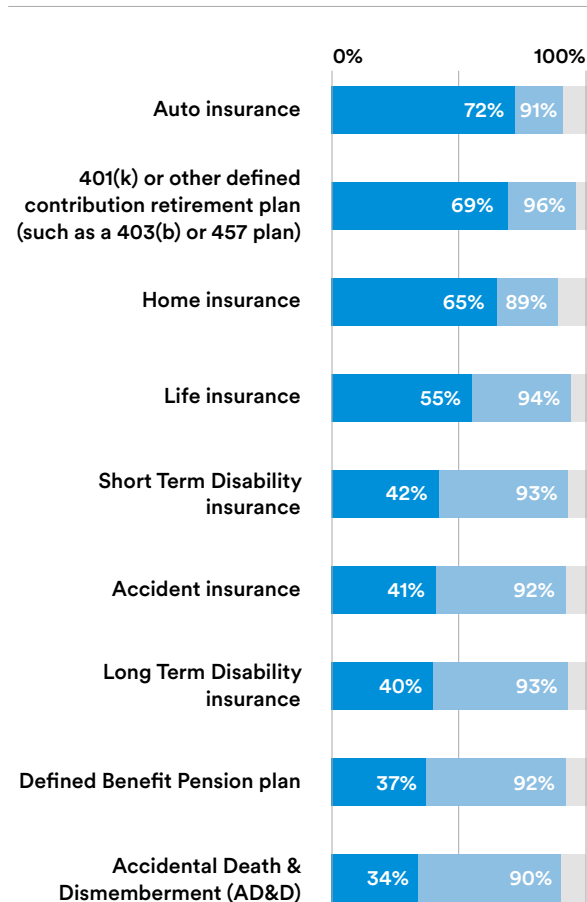
## What do employees consider must-have benefits?

■ Must have    ■ Must have + Nice to have

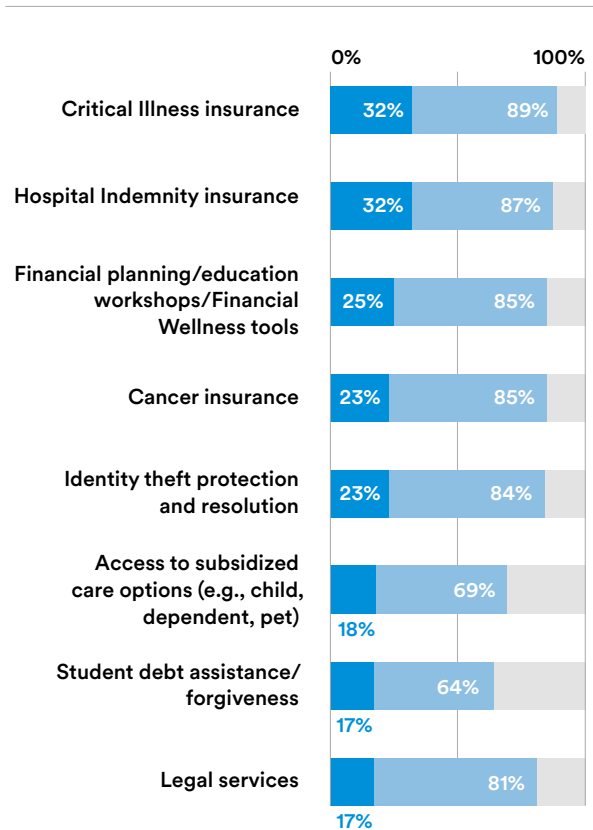
### PHYSICAL



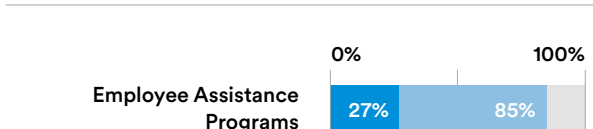
### FINANCIAL



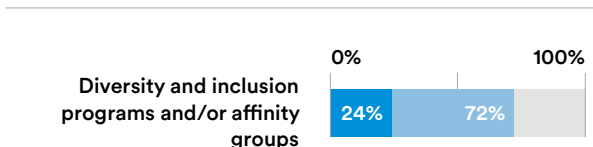
### FINANCIAL (CONT.)



### MENTAL



### SOCIAL



➔ Visit [metlife.com/ebts2020](https://www.metlife.com/ebts2020) to see what benefits employees want based on industry, company size and region.



## KEY QUESTION

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

## How does disability insurance support holistic well-being?

Disability insurance plays a critical role in a comprehensive benefits package. It can provide employees with valuable income protection during extended illnesses or injuries that keep them out of work, or help them supplement parental leave with extra time and financial support following the birth of a child.

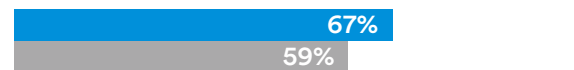
Now more than ever, disability insurance can help employees feel secure in case they are diagnosed with COVID-19 and are unable to work for an extended period of time due to the illness.

Employees who have needed to take health-related leave, and were covered through their employer, state they are more financially and holistically well than their counterparts who are not offered these same benefits.

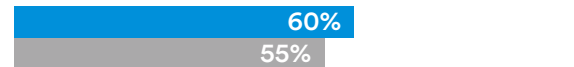
With income to cover essentials during a disability, these employees are able to better manage their day-to-day obligations, stay on track for longer-term goals and return to work feeling productive and engaged — a win for both employees and employers.

### Those who took health-related leave (in the past three years) and had disability coverage through their employer are:

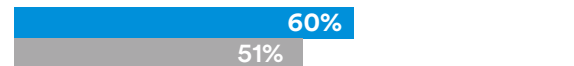
More likely to feel successful in both work and life



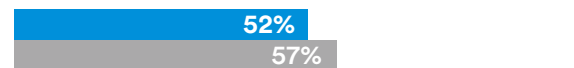
More likely to feel confident in their finances today



More likely to be financially healthy



Less likely to live paycheck to paycheck



Less likely to be unproductive because of financial worries



Less likely to have not started saving for retirement



■ Employees who had employer disability coverage

■ Employees who did not have employer disability coverage

# A comprehensive benefits program meets and adapts to individuals' diverse needs

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**69%** of employees say having a wider array of benefits would increase loyalty to their employer

In 2020 Wave 1 report data, before the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, 62% percent of employers also viewed providing a wide range of benefits as an important strategy for meeting employees' diverse needs (up 11 percentage points since 2015 report data).

**This is critical, as providing a range of options ensures employees can choose the right benefits for them and consider different options as their needs and priorities evolve.**



But while each employee's needs are unique, employee demographic groups often gravitate toward similar benefits and what they deem as "must-haves." Younger generations, more recently out of school, are more interested in student debt forgiveness programs. And as employees get older, their desire for prescription drug coverage increases.

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

## Employees who said the benefit is a "must-have"

### Student debt assistance/forgiveness

Gen Z

36%

Millennials

29%

Gen X

14%

Boomers

5%

### Prescription drug coverage

Gen Z

51%

Millennials

63%

Gen X

77%

Boomers

82%

### 401(k) or other defined contribution retirement plan

Gen Z

56%

Millennials

68%

Gen X

72%

Boomers

70%

Additionally, paid leave to take care of family is a must-have benefit. Whether it's to care for an ill family member or a new baby, 52% of women and 41% of men agreed it was essential before the pandemic. This benefit can be particularly helpful in the current climate, demonstrating how a range of benefits can adapt to changing needs and events.

**With a range of benefit options, employees can adjust and choose the benefits of most value to them, ensuring their needs are continuously met throughout their careers, ultimately driving greater engagement and loyalty.**

Visit [metlife.com/ebts2020](https://www.metlife.com/ebts2020) to see what benefits employees want based on industry, company size and other employee demographics.



INSIGHT

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

## Emerging benefits can fill gaps in overall well-being and help reduce work-life stress

Emerging benefits, like onsite medical care, commuter benefits, or paid sabbatical programs, are of higher demand among today's workforce, and particularly among younger generations.

A majority of Gen Z (61%) and millennials (64%) say they are interested in a benefit their employer currently doesn't offer.

### Employees say having access to emerging benefits would:

Reduce their stress

61%

Improve their financial wellness

53%

Make them more loyal to their employer

52%

Make them more interested in working for a company

49%

Help them be more successful in both work and life

49%

However, very few employers are currently offering emerging benefits today, missing a compelling opportunity to attract and retain top talent.

Particularly now in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging benefits can make a significant difference.

## What emerging benefits are employees interested in?

■ Employees interested    ■ Employers offering

Wellness/well-being programs that reward my  
healthy behavior



Phased retirement program (to support a  
gradual shift from full-time employment to  
full-time retirement)\*



Unlimited paid time off



Family/caregiver leave



Professional development credits/  
reimbursements (e.g., employees can spend  
money on external training/learning)



\*From MetLife's Evolving Retirement Model study



# It's now more important than ever to communicate how benefits can protect employees in times of need

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a clear example of how timely, specific and clear communications can inspire employees to take the right actions to protect themselves and their families.

Communications 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.

Importantly, there is a sizeable gap in holistic well-being between employees who understand their benefits and those who do not:

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

**49%**

**of employees who understand their benefits are holistically well**

vs

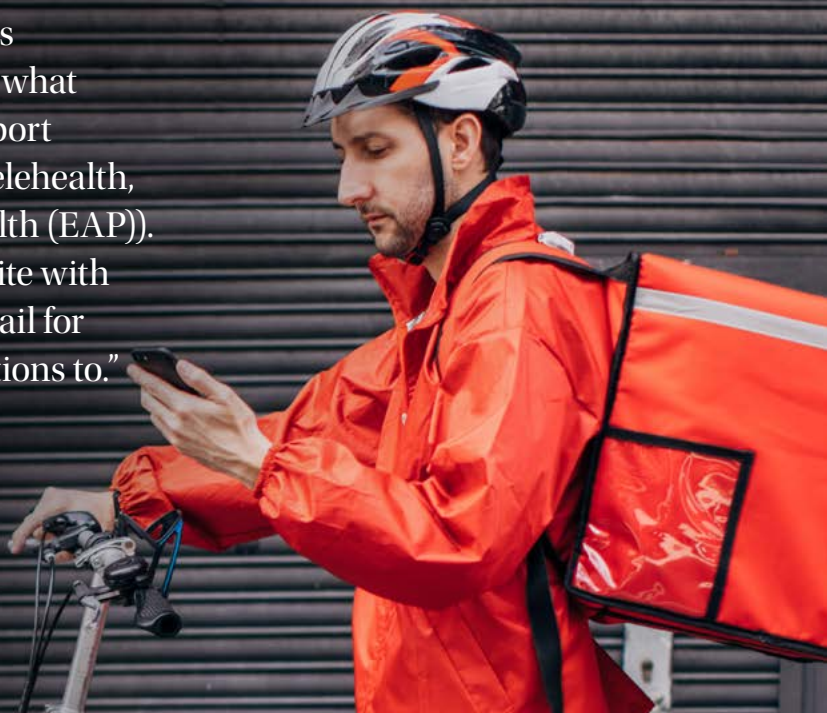
**15%**

**of employees who don't understand their benefits**

This suggests employees' understanding of benefits is key to helping them become holistically well. Employers have an opportunity to use communications to aid understanding and realize the full impact of their benefit offerings.

**“** [My employer] has sent numerous messages helping us understand what to do if we are sick and what support mechanisms are available (e.g., telehealth, prescription delivery, mental health (EAP)). They also set up an internal website with all of this information and an email for people to send confidential questions to.”

WAVE 2 Start of COVID-19



Closing these gaps in awareness and understanding is critical, as employees who understand their benefits are far more likely to see their value, and use them to support their health.

To encourage greater employee awareness and understanding of benefits during the pandemic:

- ▶ 1 **Frame benefits in the context of employees' lives, in particular when preparing for the next open enrollment season**

and

- ▶ 2 **Provide targeted, ongoing communications and guidance to reinforce the value of benefits in moments of need**

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

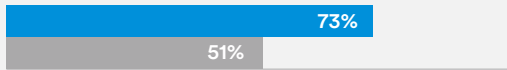
**Employees who understand their benefits are far more likely to rate their benefits as "must-haves"**

■ Employees who understand the benefit      ■ Employees who do not understand the benefit

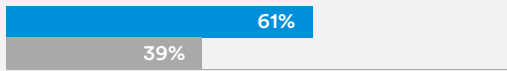
**Medical Insurance**



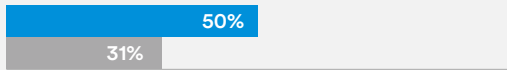
**Dental Insurance**



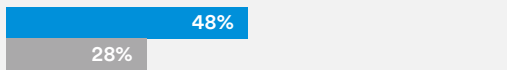
**Life Insurance**



**Short Term Disability Insurance**



**Long Term Disability Insurance**



# Leading up to open enrollment, it's important to describe benefits in the context of employees' lives — and the current global perspective

Traditionally, employer open enrollment communications frequently focus on cost, availability or coverage details, leaving employees confused about how benefits can work together.

The next open enrollment will be a critical time for employees to select benefits that can protect them in times of vulnerability, like the current COVID-19 pandemic. As employers prepare for their next open enrollment, they have an opportunity to show the evolving role, or function, that benefits play in people's lives.

To do so, employers can consider introducing additional benefits in the context of employees' lives to show how they “anchor” onto or complement their medical insurance.

For example, employers can clearly and simply communicate how hospital indemnity insurance can be a financial safety net in the case of hospitalization.

An effective way for employers to help employees better understand the role benefits play is by engaging benefits counselors equipped to help people recover from the pandemic. Leaders and HR representatives can also host virtual office hours to answer questions, which can be a cost-effective way to provide authentic support during the pandemic.

Additionally, decision support tools, like MetLife's **Make Your Match tool** ([metlife.com/makeyourmatch](https://metlife.com/makeyourmatch)), can help employees better understand what benefits might be right for them given their specific life stage and personal situations. Younger generations, particularly Gen Z, are most interested in online decision support tools and personalized communications.





INSIGHT

# Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) can be another valuable way to support physical, mental and financial health

High-deductible health plans have risen in popularity as employers try to better control healthcare costs.

These plans have the potential to increase financial risk for employees as they are responsible for greater deductible costs. One way employees can offset that cost is through an HSA.

Employers offering a qualified high-deductible medical plan can communicate the true value of HSAs in supporting employee well-being. HSAs have benefits some employees may not fully understand, like:

- ▶ **Employees can use the HSA** to cover medical and mental health-related out-of-pocket costs.
- ▶ **Unlike other employer-sponsored savings accounts, the employee is not required to spend their annual contribution.** HSAs offer different investment options to grow tax-free that employees keep when they retire or leave the company.
- ▶ **When employees reach the age of retirement, they can withdraw the money** (in accordance with IRS tax regulations). This money can be used for retirement or to cover eligible expenses.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, employers who offer HSAs can remind employees of their value as a tax-free source of funding for medical-related expenses; including the need to refill first-aid kits and buy essential medical supplies as a preventive measure.

# In addition to communicating the role benefits play in employees' lives, employers should try to show benefits' ongoing relevance

Often, communications taper off after the enrollment period, leaving employees confused about how they can best use their benefits — and sometimes leading them to question their choices or unenroll in the future.

Communicating regularly beyond open enrollment helps employees realize their ongoing needs for benefit support — and helps employers demonstrate how their offerings meet these needs. And in times of uncertainty, it helps employers reassure employees about their choices so they can feel protected and covered.

This is especially important for coverage that is designed for long-term protection, like life insurance, critical illness insurance or hospital indemnity insurance. Since these benefits tend not to be used regularly, there is a risk that employees do not see the long-term value. But, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that unexpected events can occur, and employers can underscore the need for ongoing benefits protection.

**To reinforce the role benefits play in employees' lives, employers can ground communications in relevant, of-the-moment events:**

- ▶ **Hospital indemnity insurance:** Hospital indemnity insurance can provide valuable coverage to help ease the financial impact of a hospital stay. Employers might send a reminder to those enrolled, showing how, in the case of hospitalization due to COVID-19, employees can receive a lump sum to use however they deem necessary.
- ▶ **Legal plans:** Legal plans can provide valuable telephone consultation across a variety of needs, such as setting up wills or preparing a power of attorney. Given the current pandemic, employers might explain how a power of attorney document allows employees to appoint another person to conduct transactions or make medical decisions on their behalf.
- ▶ **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** EAPs can provide 24/7 confidential access to professional support for stress, anxiety, grief, financial concerns and more, but employees often don't know what EAPs cover. To show how EAPs are relevant during the pandemic, employers might send an email reminding employees that EAPs can be accessed via phone, video and chat to help them cope with trauma, self-care and managing change.

“ [The Employee Assistance Program] provides support or opens the door to that support. That's something that I've utilized in the past and was really helpful for me.”

WAVE 1 Pre-COVID-19

- ▶ **Financial wellness programs:** Financial wellness programs help employees manage their short-term needs (budgeting, saving, paying down debts), protect against unplanned expenses (emergency funds), and work toward long-term goals (buying a house, retirement). In the current situation, employers might host webinars on the impact of market volatility on retirement plans. Or, employers might send reminders on how Health Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Accounts can pay for qualifying medical needs.





## KEY QUESTION

## What are some communication best practices?

- 
- ▶ **Address** the role of benefits in people's lives.
- 
- ▶ **Reference** of-the-moment topics and point employees to where they can access more information.
- 
- ▶ **Clearly show** how benefits work together and complement each other. For example, explain how accident and health benefits can provide additional protection on top of medical insurance.
- 
- ▶ **Engage** post-enrollment and send reminders in relevant moments (e.g., highlight various uses of EAPs in supporting mental and financial health, counseling, etc.).
-

# Supporting employee well-being will be crucial for recovery and preparing for the “new normal”

The COVID-19 pandemic will fundamentally change our workplaces and work-life experiences.

Employers will need to take a more comprehensive approach to managing the well-being of their employees by providing a range of support across physical, mental, financial and social factors.

Benefits play a vital role in supporting employees, as they support the interconnected elements of well-being. The right mix of traditional, voluntary and emerging benefits and programs can help mitigate employees' stress and support them when they need it most.

This support will not only increase the well-being of our employees but also will help our businesses to recover by improving productivity and engagement and reducing stress and burnout.

It's up to employers to be a source of strength and support and to protect their most important asset: their people.



# Employer actions and solutions

- 
- ▶ **Communicate** current benefits that can be relevant for employees, especially during times of uncertainty.
- 
- ▶ **Start planning** for open enrollment and consider how to improve communications to drive benefit awareness and understanding.
- 
- ▶ **Ground benefits communications** in how they are relevant to employees' lives, short term and long term, using specific examples, such as ones that illustrate benefits' usefulness in the current pandemic.
-

# Methodology

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.

## Employees

■ Wave 1 ■ Wave 2

| Gender                             |      |      |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Male                               | 55%  | 52%  |
| Female                             | 45%  | 48%  |
| Other (including non-binary)       | 0.1% | 0.2% |
| Marital status                     |      |      |
| Married                            | 54%  | 54%  |
| Single, not living with partner    | 26%  | 28%  |
| Single, living with partner        | 10%  | 9%   |
| Divorced/Separated                 | 9%   | 8%   |
| Widowed                            | 2%   | 2%   |
| Ethnicity                          |      |      |
| Caucasian                          | 75%  | 77%  |
| African-American                   | 13%  | 9%   |
| Asian                              | 6%   | 9%   |
| Other                              | 6%   | 5%   |
| Hispanic                           | 14%  | 13%  |
| Non-Hispanic                       | 86%  | 87%  |
| Family status                      |      |      |
| Do not live with children under 18 | 62%  | 68%  |
| Live with children under 18        | 38%  | 32%  |
| Employer size (staff size)         |      |      |
| 2-9                                | 7%   | 7%   |
| 10-49                              | 14%  | 16%  |
| 50-199                             | 17%  | 16%  |
| 200-499                            | 11%  | 9%   |
| 500-999                            | 10%  | 8%   |
| 1,000-4,999                        | 14%  | 10%  |
| 5,000-9,999                        | 7%   | 8%   |
| 10,000+                            | 22%  | 26%  |
| Geography                          |      |      |
| South                              | 35%  | 38%  |
| West                               | 22%  | 17%  |
| Northeast                          | 22%  | 23%  |
| Midwest                            | 21%  | 22%  |

| Age                                                             |     |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 21-24                                                           | 6%  | 6%  |
| 25-34                                                           | 25% | 24% |
| 35-44                                                           | 23% | 22% |
| 45-54                                                           | 22% | 21% |
| 55-64                                                           | 20% | 22% |
| 65+                                                             | 4%  | 5%  |
| Personal income                                                 |     |     |
| Under \$30,000                                                  | 11% | 11% |
| \$30,000-\$49,999                                               | 24% | 24% |
| \$50,000-\$74,999                                               | 20% | 20% |
| \$75,000-\$99,999                                               | 17% | 17% |
| \$100,000-\$149,999                                             | 16% | 16% |
| \$150,000 and over                                              | 10% | 10% |
| Prefer not to answer                                            | 3%  | 3%  |
| Industry                                                        |     |     |
| Other Services                                                  | 15% | 16% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance                               | 13% | 12% |
| Educational Services                                            | 11% | 13% |
| Retail                                                          | 10% | 7%  |
| Manufacturing                                                   | 8%  | 8%  |
| Finance and Insurance                                           | 8%  | 8%  |
| Information Technology                                          | 5%  | 7%  |
| Professional, Scientific & Technical Services                   | 5%  | 8%  |
| Transportation and Warehousing                                  | 5%  | 3%  |
| Construction                                                    | 4%  | 3%  |
| Accommodation and Food Services                                 | 4%  | 2%  |
| Public Administration                                           | 3%  | 3%  |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation                              | 2%  | 2%  |
| Wholesale Trade                                                 | 2%  | 1%  |
| Real Estate                                                     | 1%  | 1%  |
| Utilities                                                       | 1%  | 1%  |
| Administration and Support and Waste Management and Remediation | 1%  | 1%  |
| Information                                                     | 1%  | 1%  |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas Extraction                     | 1%  | 1%  |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises                         | 1%  | 0%  |
| Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing                              | 0%  | 1%  |

| Education                                             |     |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Some schooling completed/<br>No high school diploma   | 1%  | 1%  |
| High school graduate or the<br>equivalent (i.e., GED) | 12% | 8%  |
| Some college credit, no degree                        | 18% | 12% |
| Associate degree                                      | 11% | 12% |
| Bachelor's degree                                     | 35% | 40% |
| Master's degree                                       | 18% | 21% |
| Professional/Doctorate degree                         | 6%  | 7%  |

## Employers

■ Wave 1

| Employer size (staff size) |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 2-9                        | 12% |
| 10-49                      | 16% |
| 50-199                     | 18% |
| 200-499                    | 12% |
| 500-999                    | 10% |
| 1,000-4,999                | 15% |
| 5,000-9,999                | 6%  |
| 10,000+                    | 11% |

| Industry                                                           |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Health Care and Social Assistance                                  | 12% |
| Information Technology                                             | 11% |
| Manufacturing                                                      | 9%  |
| Finance and Insurance                                              | 9%  |
| Other Services                                                     | 9%  |
| Professional, Scientific & Technical Services                      | 7%  |
| Educational Services                                               | 7%  |
| Retail                                                             | 6%  |
| Construction                                                       | 6%  |
| Transportation and Warehousing                                     | 3%  |
| Public Administration                                              | 3%  |
| Administration and Support and Waste<br>Management and Remediation | 3%  |
| Real Estate                                                        | 3%  |
| Accommodation and Food Services                                    | 3%  |
| Wholesale Trade                                                    | 2%  |
| Management of Companies & Enterprises                              | 2%  |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation                                 | 2%  |
| Utilities                                                          | 1%  |
| Information                                                        | 1%  |
| Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing                                 | 1%  |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas Extraction                        | 0%  |

| Geography |     |
|-----------|-----|
| South     | 36% |
| West      | 21% |
| Northeast | 22% |
| Midwest   | 21% |

## ABOUT METLIFE

MetLife, Inc. (NYSE: MET), through its subsidiaries and affiliates ("MetLife"), is one of the world's leading financial services companies, providing insurance, annuities, employee benefits and asset management to help its individual and institutional customers navigate their changing world. Founded in 1868, MetLife has operations in more than 40 countries and holds leading market positions in the United States, Japan, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

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**[www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)**

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Rainmakers CSI is a UK-based global strategy, insight and planning consultancy with a focus on delivering game-changing commercial impact. Since our inception in 2007, we've worked collaboratively with leading companies to help define opportunities for brands, categories and businesses. Our expertise spans not only Financial Services, but also Food and Drink, Beauty, Healthcare, Telecoms, Technology, Entertainment, and Travel. Our programs and client relationships span all continents, with 50% of our work originating in the US.

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