

Supporting Employee *Health and Wellbeing* in the Wake of COVID-19

Peakon, a Workday company, and Gympass have partnered to share the latest insights on how organizations are currently supporting employee health & wellbeing.



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Introduction

In the face of a global pandemic, employees have had to implement significant changes to their working lives that would normally take years, in only a matter of months. Coupled with social isolation, economic uncertainty, and few options for escape, many people are overwhelmed by deep fatigue, extreme stress, work-life imbalance, and financial anxiety.

Gartner surveyed over 5,000 employees at the end of 2020, and found that more than one-quarter of the workforce (29%) described themselves as depressed. Longer working hours and increased caring responsibilities have also put an additional strain on women in the workplace – with 34% on the verge of burnout compared to 25% of men.

While 96% of companies around the world have provided some form of additional mental health resources during the pandemic, only one in six employees feel supported.

For organizations, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvent their approach to employee health and wellbeing. Many of the current initiatives are well intended, but without a reliable source of employee feedback to inform these efforts – and their outcomes – they are unlikely to have the desired effect.

With the right kind of organizational support and investments in employee wellbeing, companies can have an immediate and long-term impact on operational and healthcare costs, while also increasing employee engagement and retention.

1.0

State of employee *health* *and wellbeing*

Based on an extensive database of over 150 million employee survey responses and over 30 million employee comments sourced from Peakon, a Workday company, we're able to showcase how employee health and wellbeing has evolved over the past few years.

The proportion of comments on the topic of health and wellbeing increased by 46% in 2020 compared to the previous year. Even though the pandemic has amplified the number of employees mentioning health and wellbeing, this builds on a 19% increase in health and wellbeing related comments during 2019 — pointing to an underlying trend.

Physical health is a concern in some industries such as healthcare and manufacturing, but overall, mental and financial health dominated the conversation, comprising over 75% of employee wellbeing comments throughout 2020.

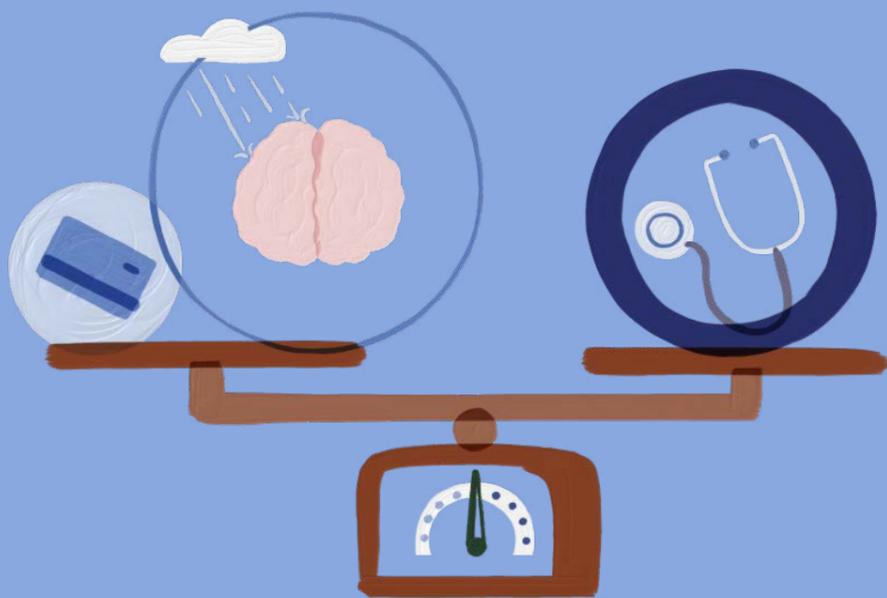
In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau stated that 42% of Americans reported symptoms of anxiety or depression in December 2020, an increase from 11% the previous year. Evidently, the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder throughout COVID-19 has put mental health at the forefront, resulting in a greater need for broader access to wellness resources.

How health and wellbeing differs by industry

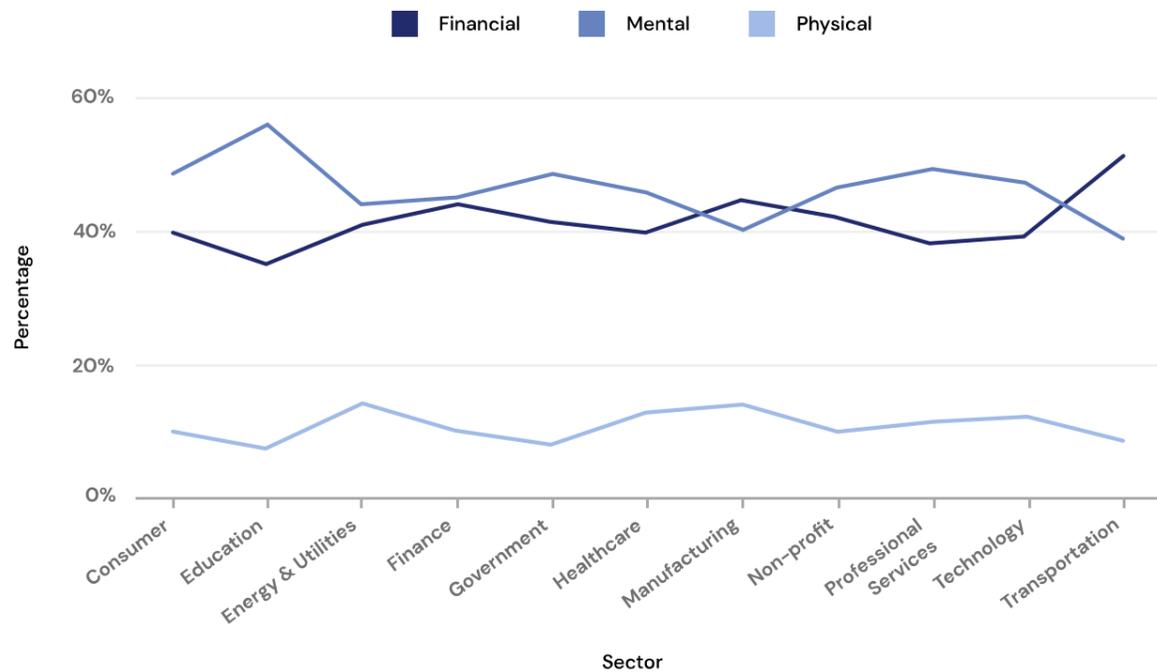
When we dig deeper into the Peakon comments submitted by employees, it's possible to see how the distribution of comments by type — financial, mental, and physical — differs across certain industries.

One of the most significant differences appears in the education sector, where comments about mental health support make up 59% of the total. Teachers have a difficult job during the best of times, but it's clear that the increased hours, additional in-class precautions, and exposure to COVID-19 have taken their toll.

17% of these comments (1 in 6) also mentioned some kind of communication tool, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, and Skype. This highlights the difficulty of transitioning to an online classroom environment, both from a technical and behavioral perspective.



Distribution of employee *wellbeing comments by type*



Source: Peakon, a Workday company. Database of over 150 million employee survey responses

While financial wellbeing is a concern across all industries, this is most pronounced in the transportation sector, where 56% of employee comments were about financial wellbeing – most likely due to the industry taking one of the largest economic hits.

The main concerns of employees might differ across industries, but the overall trend highlights the fact that employees are in need of greater health and wellbeing support.

Evolution of organizational support throughout 2020

Despite the increased need for health and wellbeing support, scores in response to the Peakon survey question “[Company] provides me with information and support to manage my health and wellbeing” decreased across most industries during the course of last year.

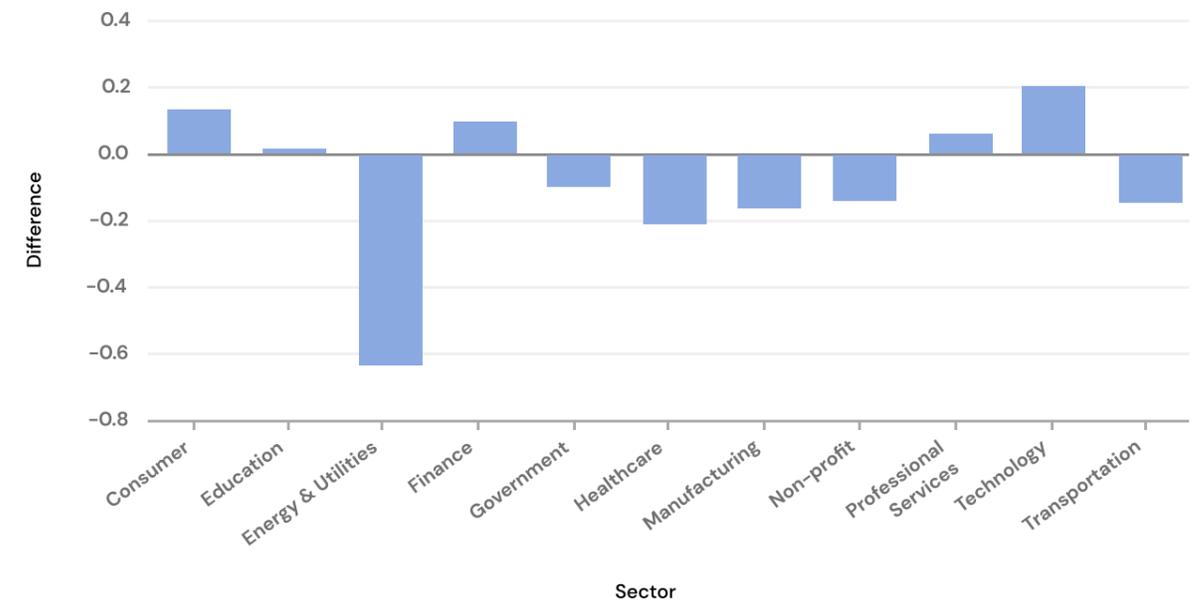
Organizations have reacted to the decline in employee health and wellbeing, but the decline in organizational support scores highlights the need for a more proactive and ongoing approach. Instead of quick fixes, companies need to invest time and resources into understanding what their employees really need to feel supported.

Front line industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, energy & utilities, and transportation saw the biggest declines. Employees in these sectors have little flexibility in terms of where they work, meaning they are more exposed to the virus. They have also seen greater economic impacts than other industries during the pandemic.

The tech sector saw the biggest improvements, in large part as many employees are able to work remotely and the relative agility with which tech companies can introduce new policies and protections.

One sector that showed a surprising improvement was the consumer industry. While the exact reasons are unclear from the data, it may be due to the international furlough schemes which provided employees with some degree of financial support.

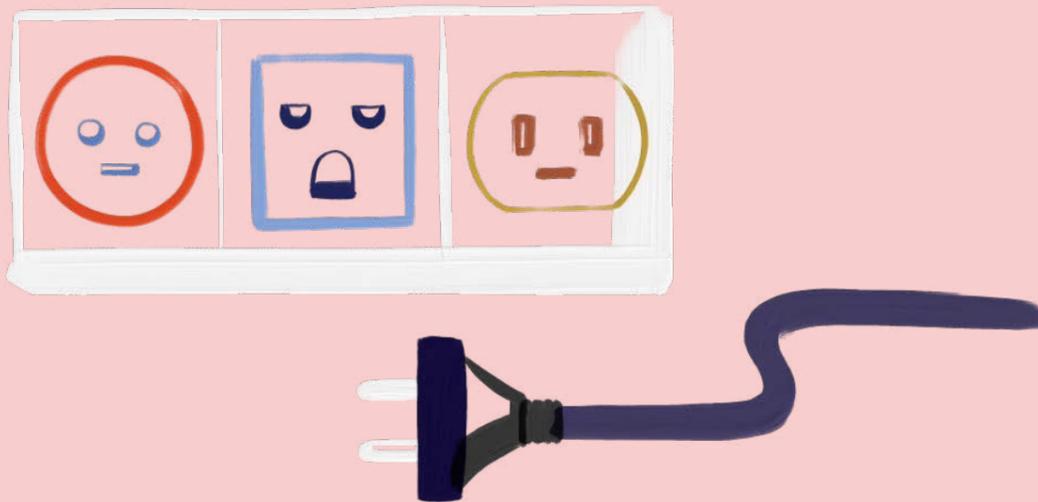
Evolution of *organizational support* scores from H1 to H2 in 2020



Source: Peakon, a Workday company. Database of over 150 million employee survey responses

2.0

How companies are *responding*



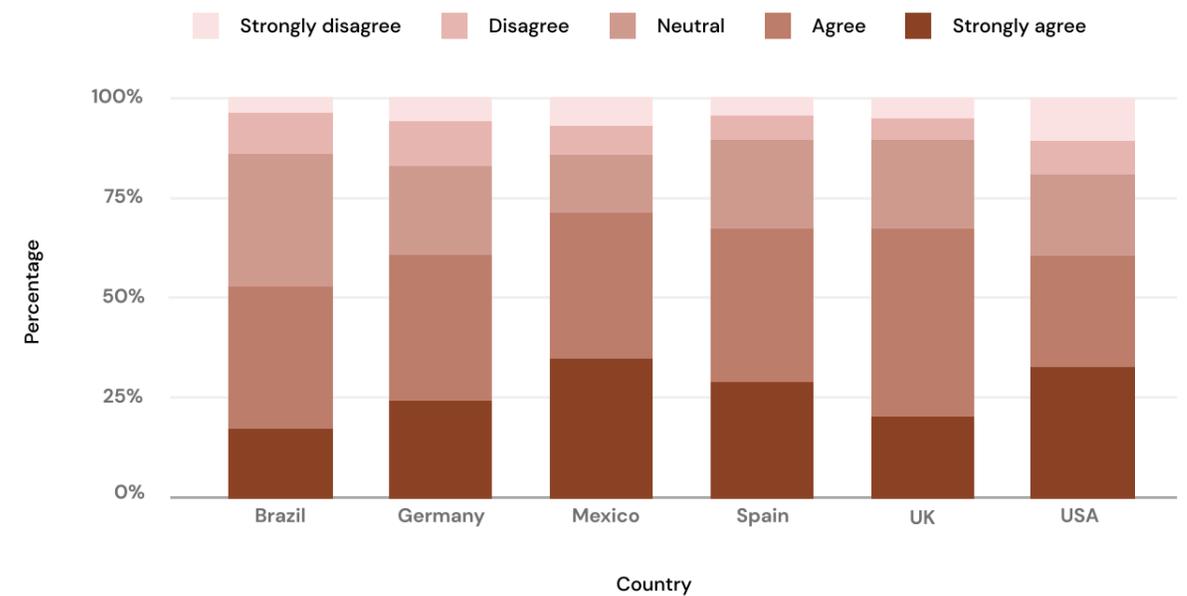
Based on a survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders around the world conducted by Gympass – a global corporate wellbeing platform – we’re able to establish a better understanding of how organizations are approaching employee health and wellbeing.

Organizational commitment around the world

When asked whether or not they agree that employee wellbeing is a true commitment in their organization, it’s possible to see different trends emerging around the world.

HR leaders in both Mexico and the U.S. are in strong agreement about their commitment to wellbeing, at 35% and 33% respectively. While those in Brazil have the least confidence in their organization’s approach, with only 14% agreeing with the statement.

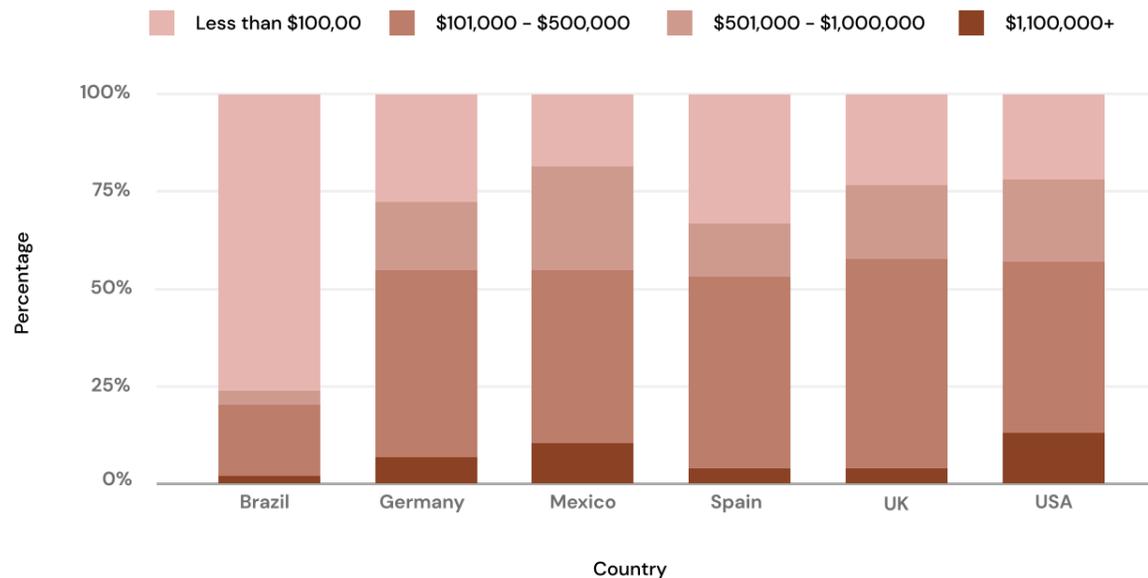
Is employee wellbeing a *true commitment* in your organization?



Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

One of the main reasons for these variations is likely down to the amount of budget available for health and wellbeing within different organizations. The majority of respondents in Brazil have a budget of less than \$100,000 per year, for example, while many in the United States and Mexico have access to over \$1 million.

Annual *budget* designated for employee health and wellbeing



Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

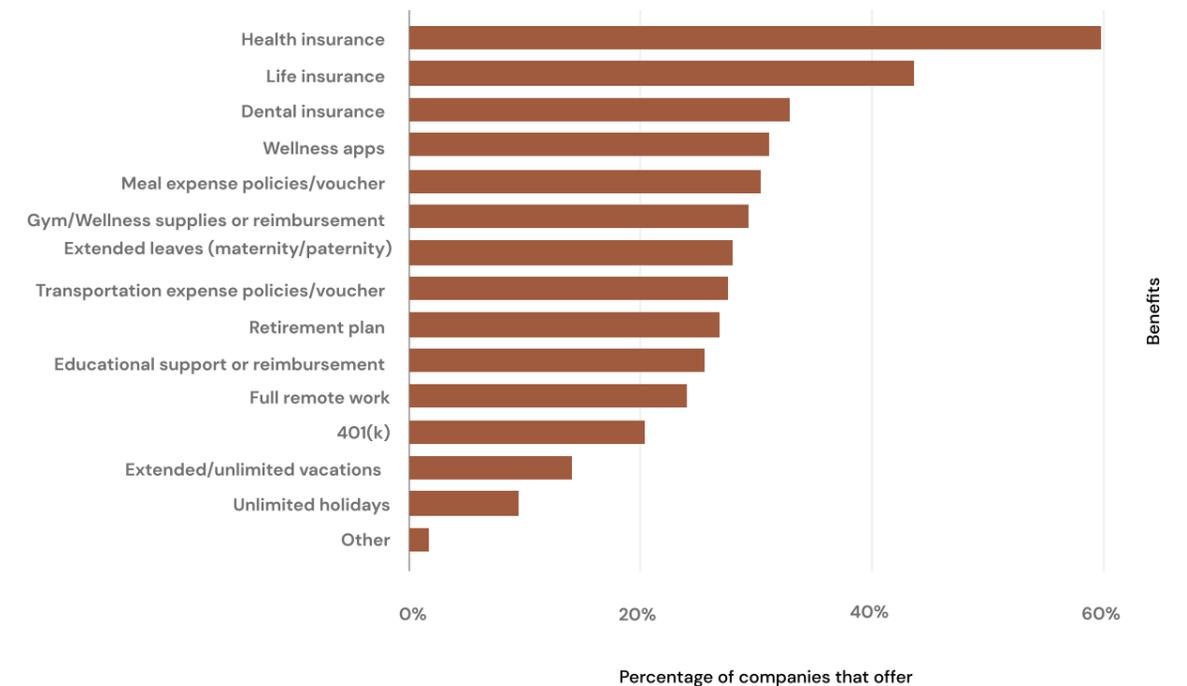
Gympass is a complete corporate wellbeing platform, with a results-driven strategy and inclusive plans that will meet the needs of all your employees. We're on a mission to reinvent wellbeing, making it universal, engaging, and accessible for your team. Worldwide companies rely on Gympass' unmatched variety, convenience, and flexibility to support their employees' health and happiness. With over 50,000 fitness partners, 1,300 on demand classes, 2,000 hours of meditation, 1,000 healthy recipes, weekly 1:1 therapy sessions, and hundreds of personal trainers, Gympass supports every wellbeing journey. We partner with best in class wellbeing providers in multiple markets across North America, Latin America, and Europe.

Gympass

What initiatives are being implemented?

Among the most common offerings are things you would expect to see, including health, life, and dental insurance, as well as retirement planning and 401(k)s. What's interesting to note is the popularity of wellness apps, which outrank most other forms of wellbeing support. There is also a lack of dedicated support for mental health.

Different types of *wellbeing* benefits that companies offer



Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

Wellness apps provide organizations with a way to offer a more varied health and wellbeing offering, which could include everything from physical exercise to meditation, mental health training and nutrition – and in some cases even additional support and education for financial planning.

This is a positive trend overall, but there is still a distinct lack of support for mental health, which has been one of the main areas of concern for employees throughout the pandemic, and will continue to impact engagement and productivity in a post-COVID world.

3.0

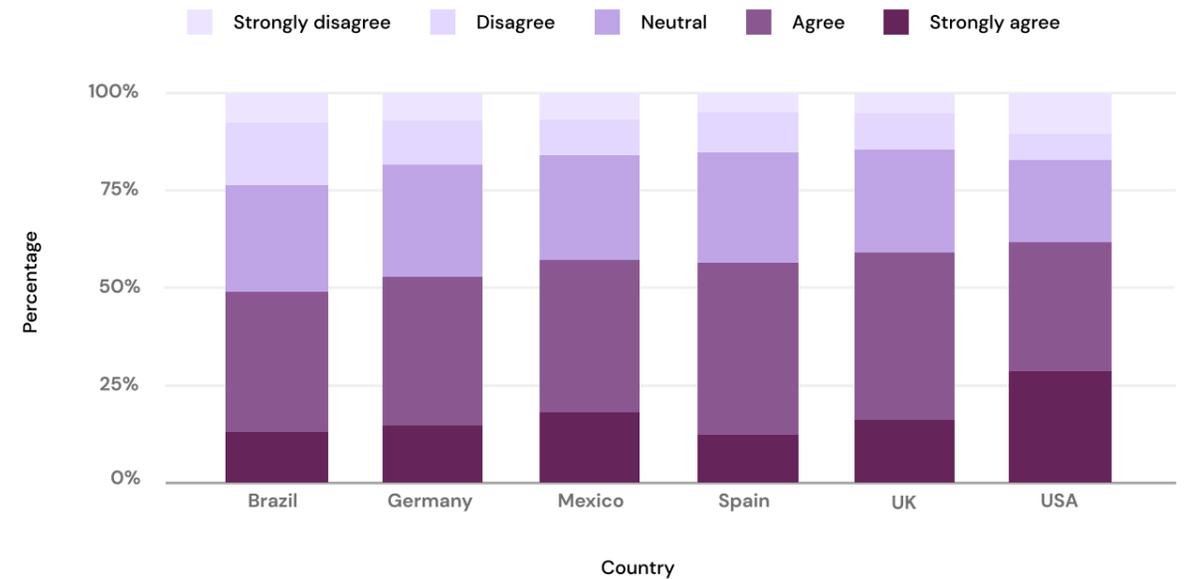
Measuring *the impact* of wellbeing initiatives



Organizations from around the world understand the importance of data, which is why it is one of the main criteria for selecting a wellness benefit provider.

However, the reliance on data to make decisions about benefits varies between different countries. In the United States, 29% of respondents strongly agree that they rely on data, while only 13% say the same in Brazil. While the majority agree that data is important, one quarter of respondents positioned their companies in a neutral space.

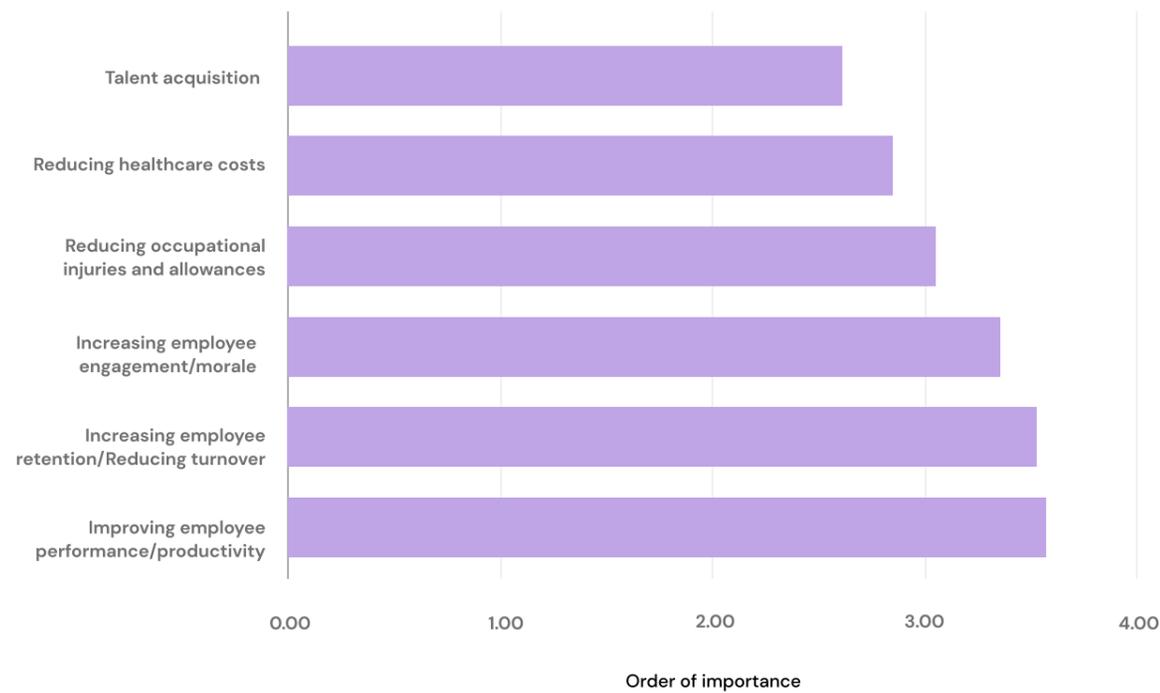
Does your company *rely on data to make decisions* about employee benefits?



Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

There are also clear expectations about what kind of business outcomes a wellness program should contribute to, including talent acquisition, reduced healthcare costs, and higher levels of engagement, retention, and productivity.

What are your *main expectations* of a wellness program?



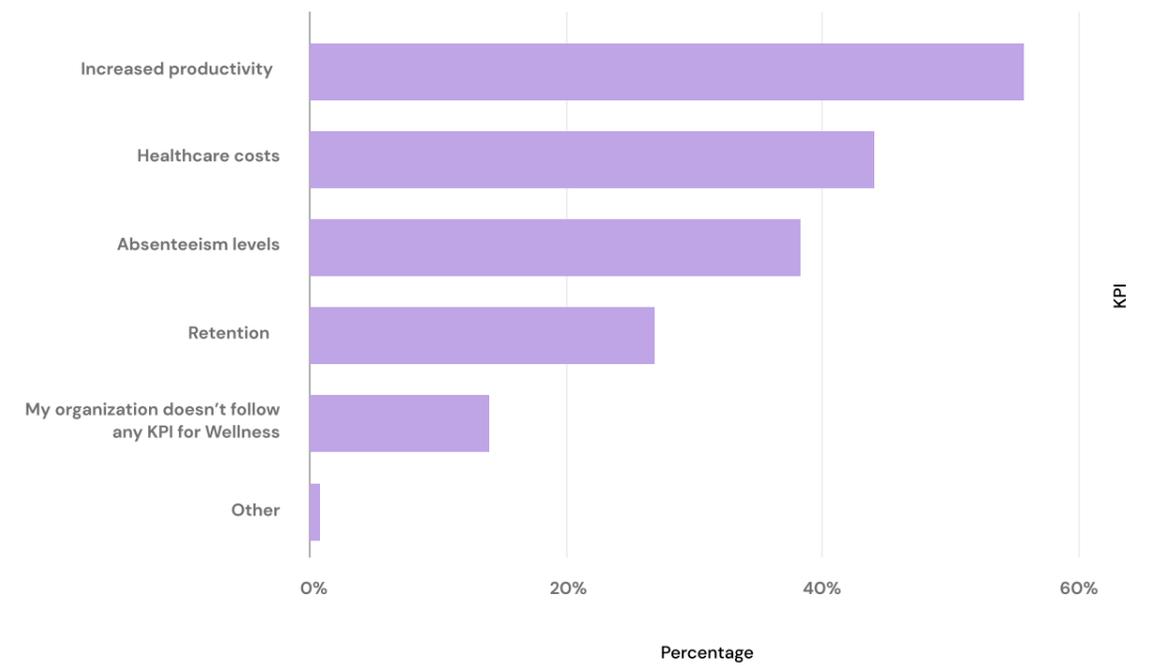
Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

The challenge for many organizations is that there is a disconnect between expectations and reality. The KPIs being measured to assess the benefits of wellness only cover a handful of business outcomes.

Overall, it's clear that organizations are making a commitment to employee health and wellbeing, but where these efforts fall down is with establishing a clear link between employee needs, individual offerings, and business outcomes.

This data would not only make it easier to demonstrate the real ROI of investing in health and wellbeing, it would also enable companies to adapt their offerings based on the current expectations of employees, contributing directly to drivers of engagement, and in turn improving business outcomes such as performance, retention, and hiring.

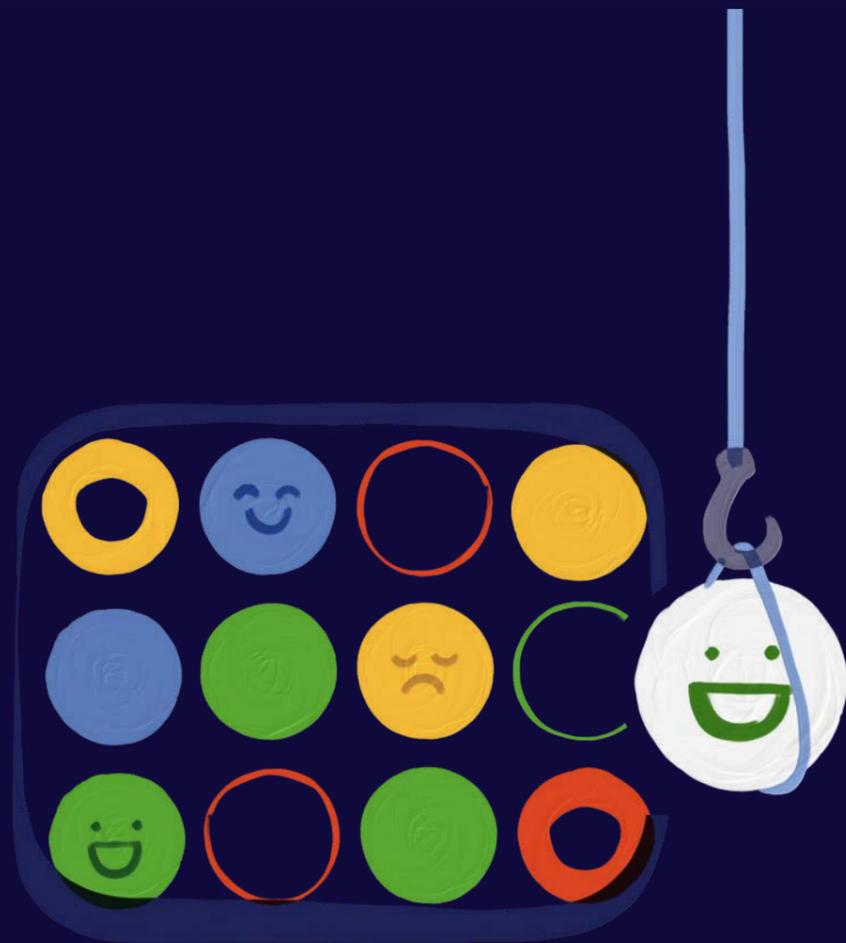
Which of the following *KPIs* does your organization use to *assess wellness benefits*?



Source: Gympass. Global survey of over 2,700 benefit managers and HR leaders

4.0

2021 and *beyond*



Employee health and wellbeing needs vary by industry, region, and even employee demographics, which means there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The only way to build a solid foundation of health and wellbeing that supports your business goals, is to adapt your health and wellbeing offerings to the evolving needs of your people.

To solve this problem, it needs to be approached from two different angles. The first is ensuring that you have accurate and ongoing feedback about employee health and wellbeing. And the second is implementing a complete corporate wellness platform that encompasses thousands of virtual and in-person opportunities for fitness, nutrition, 1:1 therapy sessions, and so much more.

Over time, it's possible to establish a link between the health and wellbeing of your employees, and core KPIs such as sales, customer satisfaction, and turnover.

With companies embracing new and varied ways of working — whether it's remote, hybrid, or on the frontlines — employee health and wellbeing needs to be at the forefront of business agendas. Organizations are continuously seeking new ways to engage employees so that they feel heard, supported, and included, while also staying competitive.

By equipping employees with the appropriate tools and resources, organizations can greatly enhance their overall health and wellbeing, which in turn will contribute to the high levels of performance and productivity needed to succeed in the coming years.

Learn more about how Gympass can help employees fit wellness into their lifestyle.

[Get in touch](#)