

Health on Demand

executive summary

US Executive Summary

welcome to brighter



The ability of employers to have a positive impact on employee health and resiliency – and how employer support affects the way employees feel about their organizations – are some of the most important findings of our major new study, Health on Demand. Following a year like no other, this past April Mercer surveyed 14,000 employees across 13 countries – including 2,000 in the US – to find out how they were weathering the pandemic and to learn about the health and well-being support they receive – or would like to receive – from their employers. The results open a window on how the experiences of the past 18 months have changed what employees most want from their employers, from digital health solutions to mental health support to flexible work arrangements.

employer support during the pandemic

In the US, two-thirds (66%) of employees who reported receiving strong support from their employer during the pandemic feel their employer cares about their health and well-being, compared to only 17% of those employees who said they received poor support. They were also much less likely to view their personal experience of the pandemic as mostly or entirely negative – 25% vs. 49% of those who felt they had received poor support from their employer. However, vulnerable populations, including women and lower-wage workers, particularly part-time workers, were less likely to feel supported by their employer and more likely to be negatively impacted by the pandemic.



The importance of making employees feel cared for in times of crisis will not end with the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees are being subjected to growing societal and environmental pressures, from climate events to social unrest to cyber attacks. Employers can strengthen the bond with their employees by better understanding employee needs and developing a benefits strategy that purposely targets providing support when it matters most.



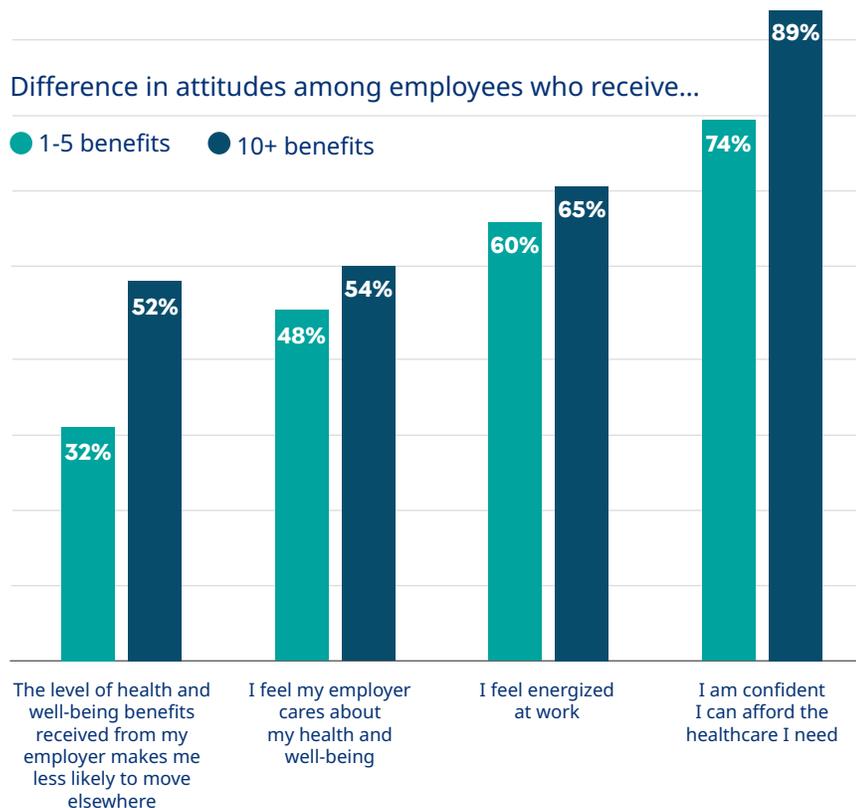
- Received **good support** from their employers during the pandemic
- Received **poor support** from their employers during the pandemic



varied benefits to provide something of value to everyone

The survey asked employees to identify the health and well-being benefits and resources offered by their employers. The results were clear: Being offered a broad range of benefits was correlated with believing the employer cares about employee well-being, feeling more energized at work, and being more likely to stay. This was true in our 2019 survey as well.

More varied benefits inspire positive feelings in more employees



Workers receiving the most varied health and well-being benefits were the most positive about their employers, their jobs and their ability to afford the care they need.

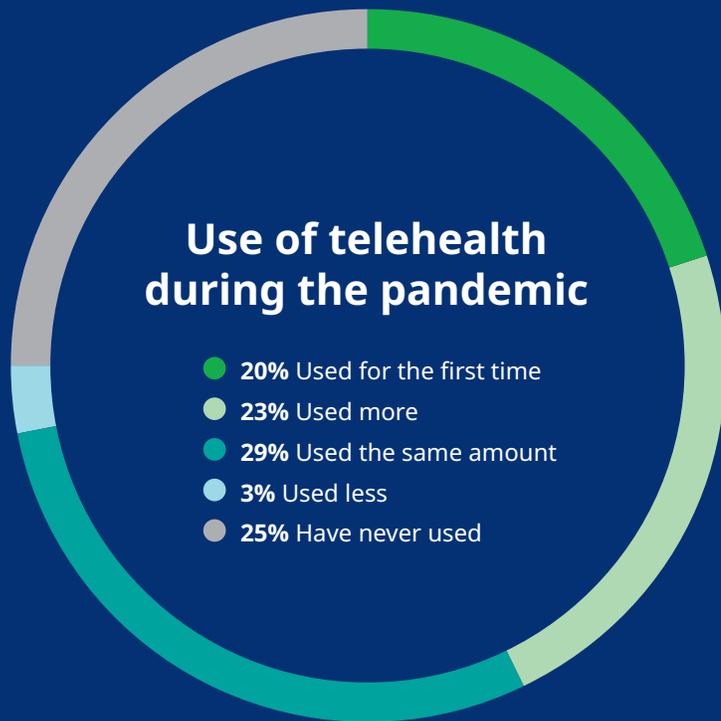
The survey asked not only about the benefits currently offered, but also presented respondents with nearly 50 possible ways employers can support health and well-being, across six categories such as work environment, digital health solutions, and mental health support. They were asked to rate each one in terms of how valuable it would be to them and their families.

Across all six categories, flexible working emerged as the most valued type of health and well-being support. Well over half (59%) of employees say that flexible working arrangements are highly or extremely valuable (rating it 6 or 7 on a scale of 1-7). Employers that commit to offering

flexible working will need to support employees working remotely in new ways, such as by addressing ergonomic health and social connectivity.

It's notable that significant pockets of the workforce placed high value on a number of benefits that were almost unheard of a couple of years ago: for example, platforms to connect socially with colleagues, home testing kits for common health conditions, and digital helpers for elderly relatives. Understanding the preferences of your workforce through surveys and focus groups is a critical step in designing an optimized total rewards package.

the shift to digital health is real



The pandemic has driven a marked change in attitude toward digital well-being and self-care solutions. The value assigned by survey respondents to telemedicine and apps to self-manage health conditions, in particular, has risen significantly since our 2019 survey, but we are seeing greater acceptance of many other forms of digital health solutions as well. Even among those employees who only accessed digital healthcare for the first time last year, almost three-quarters (72%) say they intend to keep using them. Overall, eight out of ten employees want to continue using digital healthcare. Incorporating digital health as a specific aspect of your overall strategy can provide savings and quality improvement as well as better meet employee needs.

8 out of 10

employees who used digital healthcare during the pandemic intend to continue



employees acknowledge a need for more mental health care

With 25% of employees saying they feel highly or extremely stressed in their everyday life (and another 34% feeling somewhat stressed), digital health also has a major role to play in broadening access to much-needed mental health care. Half of employees (49%) say benefits or resources that make mental health care more affordable would be highly or extremely valuable to them, and many are eager for digital options. More than 2 in 5 employees (42%) see the opportunity to have a video chat with a therapist as highly or extremely valuable, and nearly as many assigned this level of value to tools that help build mindfulness and resilience skills to better cope with pressure.

Employees value a wide range of mental health supports, with less costly treatment options topping the list

US | Percent of employees that rated the below solutions highly valuable or extremely valuable

Insurance coverage or program that reduces cost of mental health treatment (counseling, medication)	49%
Virtual mental health counseling via video chat with a therapist to manage anxiety, sadness or personal relationship issues	42%
Tools to help me build skills like mindfulness and resilience to better cope with pressure	40%
Virtual support groups for those who are feeling lonely and isolated	39%
Virtual mental health counseling via text with a therapist to manage anxiety, sadness or personal relationship issues	39%
Targeted services (including support, clinical diagnosis and treatment) for children, teenagers and parents to assist with mental health issues faced by youth	38%
Tools that provide training on how to identify and support others facing mental health challenges	38%
Virtual mental health advice via chat, powered by artificial intelligence (no human involved), to address anxiety, sadness or personal relationship issues	31%

49%
of employees say reducing the cost of mental health treatment would be highly or extremely valuable

31%
of employees would highly value virtual mental health advice via chat, powered by AI

MMB Health on Demand 2021; Q13. How valuable to you and your family are the following services to provide support with mental health, resilience and personal relationship concerns? (Including those not asked); Highly valuable or extremely valuable

advancing diversity, equity and inclusion goals with a broader range of benefits

The survey highlighted the extent to which some groups have less access to benefits. Looking at results based on household income (HHI), 21% of employees in the bottom quartile indicated that their employer provides six or more health and well-being benefits or resources (picked from a list of 16), compared to 59% of those with HHI at the median or above. Further, some segments of the population might need different support to that being offered. For example, the survey found that LGBTQ+ employees placed higher value on mental health resources than other employees, while employees in racial and ethnic minorities placed higher value on resources that foster social connections.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity highlighted by the research is in understanding the range of employee preferences and providing benefits and resources that feel meaningful and personal for all. That's an important step towards the goal of creating a culture of health aligned with the organization's environment, social and governance principles.

Click here to see more insights from Mercer's Health on Demand study and to download the global report.

