

20  
26

# Well-Being Trends



4 Trends That Prove Workplace Well-Being  
Is the Smartest Investment of the Year

# Employee Well-Being Is at an Inflection Point

For years, organizations have recognized that supporting the well-being of their employees will lead to better health outcomes, help manage costs and foster an organizational culture where people are engaged and feel cared for. Those fundamentals remain true.

But today, employee well-being is at an inflection point. The conversation is shifting. Well-being is no longer a benefit—it's a business imperative. Forward-thinking leaders recognize that the health of their people is directly linked to the health of their organization. A well-supported workforce is healthier and also happier, more productive and more resilient. And that matters.

Yet, this moment also presents challenges. Economic uncertainty, rising costs, evolving employee expectations and the transformation of the well-being landscape are all testing how organizations respond. In 2026, organizations will be challenged with whether well-being is a true driver of growth, retention and culture, or if it remains an unrealistic promise.

So, yes, employee well-being is at an inflection point. Your employees are telling you their well-being is non-negotiable. The question is, are you paying attention? And how will you respond?

**With the challenges and opportunities ahead, we present you with four trends that will shape the future of workplace well-being:**

1. Advancing holistic well-being
2. Making organizational care your competitive advantage
3. Listening with greater intent
4. Redefining the ROI of well-being

## Trend 1

# Advancing Holistic Well-Being



In 2026, leading employers will advance holistic care by making it fully integrated and deeply personal.

The idea of supporting the whole person isn't new. We've long recognized that the dimensions of well-being—physical, mental, financial, social and work—are deeply interconnected. True well-being impact comes from a comprehensive, cohesive and human-centered approach.

What's different now? Leading organizations that are committed to well-being will move from broad-based initiatives to more **deeply personalized** support. Employers will go further to ensure solutions offered are tailored to meet the unique needs of their employees.

### An impactful well-being experience is:

**Holistic:** It supports employees' physical, mental, financial, social and work well-being.

**Integrated:** Rather than offering siloed programs, employers connect those resources so employees have a seamless experience.

**Personal:** Resources are tailored toward employees' needs, including their life stage or the depth of support they need.

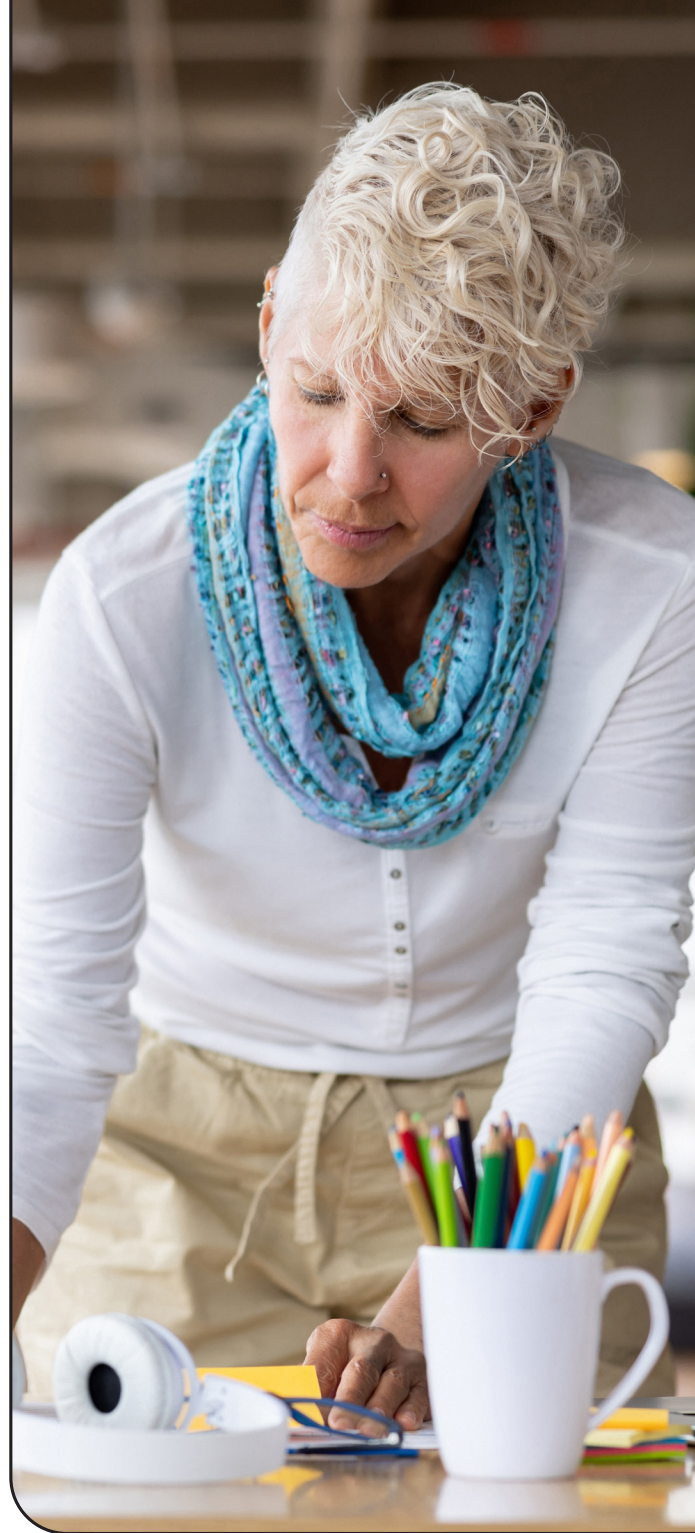
We see three areas where this shift will be most profound in 2026: women's health with an emphasis on menopause, mental health and financial well-being. Together, these will define the next frontier of holistic well-being.

## Menopause has a place at work.

About 20% of the 79 million women in the U.S. workforce are between the ages of 45 and 55 years.<sup>1</sup> Now consider that 75% of them could be experiencing symptoms associated with menopause. Employers should care because research demonstrates a connection between menopausal symptoms and adverse work-related outcomes, such as absenteeism and presenteeism.<sup>2</sup>

With more women speaking openly about their experiences during perimenopause and menopause, there has never been a greater opportunity for organizations to better understand women's unmet health needs and equip employees with facts, support and confidence.

In fact, more than two-thirds of women surveyed in WebMD's 2025 Menopause in the Workplace Study feel employers actually have a responsibility to offer menopause support. Over 60% reported that benefits such as education, leave and coverage for treatment would help them feel more supported at work, with 54% saying it would positively influence how they view their employer and 41% saying their productivity would improve.



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Women in the Labor Force.

<sup>2</sup> Faubion, SS, et al. Impact of Menopause Symptoms on Women in the Workplace. Mayo Clinic Proceedings, volume 98, issue 6, 833-845.

**What does a menopause-friendly workplace look like? At least half of respondents in our survey identified the following elements as helpful:**

- Paid leave or sick days for menopause symptoms and other flexible work options
- Benefits and coverage for menopause-related care and treatment, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and alternatives
- Educational content and support for all employees addressing the physical, social, mental and financial symptoms women face during this period
- Access to providers specializing in menopause care
- Menopause health coaching to track symptoms; connect women with relevant resources for mood, anxiety and depression; and deliver personalized recommendations
- Education for managers on menopause awareness and support



Nearly 45% of respondents indicated that support groups, employee resource groups or safe spaces to connect with others would be extremely helpful as they navigate menopause-related challenges. Want to go further? Consider pursuing Menopause Friendly Accreditation through a program such as MiDOViA to help your organization create a supportive, inclusive workplace.

With less than half of employers offering menopause resources today,<sup>3</sup> the opportunity is clear: It's time to move beyond checking the box to leading with care, reducing stigma and creating a workplace where every woman feels supported to thrive.

<sup>3</sup> Business Group on Health. 2026 Employer Health Care Strategy Survey.

## Mental health is a workplace essential.

The workplace mental health movement has progressed over the years from focusing on awareness to education to integrated support. Just as menopause care is becoming more personalized and holistic, mental health strategies have broadened to connect physical health, social connection and work-life balance.

This year, leading employers are integrating strategies to bring mental health and other well-being needs into one cohesive experience. Personalization—through tailored content, coaching and guidance—ensures employees get the right support. Leaders are prioritizing mental health because they see it as a driver of well-being, workplace culture, stability and business performance.



By connecting mental health support to a broader well-being strategy paired with a deeper look at organizational culture, employers will create a cohesive approach that anticipates needs, empowers employees and drives long-term engagement and outcomes.

**47%** of employers say mental health is the most important dimension of well-being for their organization.

Source: Business Group on Health's 2025 Employer Well-Being Strategy Survey

## Expect to see:

- Organization-level efforts to address the root causes of burnout, such as workload, schedules, leadership support and manager training.
- Improved accessibility to employee mental health support through digital solutions and other mental health partners.
- AI used to identify needs and deliver services at scale.
- On-demand digital access to therapy, coaching and other human-centered solutions.
- Integrated mental health resources with broader health and lifestyle support. For example, individuals taking GLP-1 drugs for weight loss may also need support for the mental aspect of their journey.
- Care offered across the continuum of need—not just counseling or therapy.
- Designated mental health champions charged with raising awareness and encouraging engagement when needed.
- Mental health training and accountability programs tailored to people managers.



## Financial well-being moves beyond education.

Finances are a significant source of stress for many people, especially in this uncertain economic climate. In WebMD Health Services' Center for Research 2025 Workplace and Employee Survey, employees rated their financial health the lowest of the five well-being dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

Financial stress doesn't exist in isolation. Struggling to save or manage bills can ripple across all areas of life, affecting mental health, productivity at work and even physical well-being. In 2026, comprehensive financial well-being strategies will support positive behavior change by providing employees with tools, resources and personalized support.

Financial health needs shift in different phases of life, and your support must evolve with your people. For example, Gen Z employees may be focused on paying off student loans, while your mid-career employees may be burdened by child- and elder-care costs. Meanwhile, pre-retirees worry about portfolio risk and healthcare expenses in retirement.



**92%** of employers addressed financial health in their 2025 well-being strategies; by 2026, that figure will climb to 100%.

Source: Business Group on Health 2025 Employer Well-Being Strategy Survey.

<sup>4</sup> WebMD Health Services. Workplace Well-Being in 2025: Insights From the Workplace and Employee Survey.

## Employers can level up support for financial well-being with an approach that is:

**Personalized.** One-on-one coaching meets employees where they are, across income levels and life stages.

**Understanding of different needs.** It's important to assess, measure and monitor the needs of your people. Take action based on the data.

**Resiliency-focused.** Emergency savings programs help employees handle the unexpected without derailing long-term goals.

**Practical.** Financial literacy programs demonstrate how concepts like market volatility, inflation and debt have a real impact on employees and their families.

**Milestone-driven.** Support is aligned to major life events, such as buying a home, caregiving and planning for retirement.

What feels optional today will be table stakes tomorrow. Companies that address financial stress across life's complexities will reap the benefits of increased productivity and retention and better employee mental health down the road.



## Trend 2

# Organizational Care Is Your Competitive Advantage



**Care at work isn't optional—it drives success.**

Yet only one in four employees strongly agrees that their organization truly cares about their well-being, according to WebMD Health Services' Center for Research. That means three out of four don't—the lowest level since 2022.<sup>5</sup> Since we spend up to one-third of our lives at work, it's not an understatement to say that how our workplaces care for us has a big impact on our well-being.

Our research also revealed that senior leaders were twice as likely as individual contributors to say their organization cares. This data is a wake-up call: If you are not caring for your people, you will be falling behind.

## What is organizational care, and why does it matter?

Organizational care describes the extent to which employees believe their organization is genuinely committed to supporting their well-being. Employees who feel truly cared for don't just show up; they thrive. In our study, employees who felt cared for by their employer were 56% more engaged at work, 34% more likely to stay, 34% less likely to experience work stress and 37% less likely to feel burned out.

<sup>5</sup> WebMD Health Services. Workplace Well-Being in 2025: Insights From the Workplace and Employee Survey.

## So how can employers lean into greater organizational care in 2026?

**Keep employees in the loop.** Share updates, policies and plans. People feel cared for when they're not left guessing.

**Listen and really hear your people.** Ask for feedback and, most importantly, show that you value it. Leadership that listens sets the tone for your organization.

**Turn feedback into action.** Don't just collect opinions—act on them. Showing employees their voice makes a difference.

**Build psychological safety.** Employees should feel safe speaking up, taking risks and even making mistakes.

**Foster belonging.** Make people feel valued, included and part of the team. Caring is felt when everyone belongs.

**Empower managers.** Give managers the tools and training to support their teams. When managers care, employees notice.

Our research found that employees who feel cared for rate their experience with these six key areas up to 91% higher than those who don't. The difference isn't just a number—it's how your employees experience their work every day.

Organizations that embed well-being into day-to-day work and consistently show care, build trust, foster belonging see real results: Higher engagement, stronger performance and a brand that stands out as a great place to work.

The bottom line? Caring matters. By prioritizing these six elements in 2026, your organization can create a workplace where people truly thrive.

# \$11.7 trillion

Global economic value that enhanced employee well-being could generate.

**Source:** McKinsey Health Institute Thriving workplaces: How employers can improve productivity and change lives.



## Trend 3

# Listening With Greater Intent

**Engagement isn't a once-a-year survey.**

Annual engagement surveys can be a useful tool to understand how engaged employees are at work, gauge their intent to stay and ask whether they feel valued. But what do you do with that data? Too often, the actions that should be taken following the survey aren't apparent, are slow to be implemented or feel disconnected from real employee needs.

“

One question a week, and over time, having that trend has really made it easy for us to get a snapshot of what engagement looks like for the company.”

**Kacie Alexander,**  
Employee Engagement Manager,  
1st Financial Credit Union



Many organizations are facing the same challenges: limited resources, tight budgets and decreased capacity to take on more work. Yet they still recognize the importance of listening to employees, especially during uncertain times.

In 2026, strategies will shift from once-a-year comprehensive surveys to smaller, more frequent and focused surveys that aim to capture the full employee experience and deliver actionable results. After all, why ask if you're not going to act? These surveys will capture real-time, nuanced insights into the drivers of employee engagement and their overall workplace experience, including how well their organization supports their well-being. In short, they'll measure not just employee satisfaction but how employees are truly doing.

### Listening strategies in 2026 will include more:

- Continuous listening via pulse surveys, sentiment analysis and manager check-ins.
- Focus on holistic well-being—mental, emotional, financial and physical—and how it changes over time.
- Use of employee voice (what they say and don't say) to directly inform well-being, retention and performance strategies.



### In action, these strategies result in a workplace where:

- Appreciation is embedded into daily workflows and leadership behaviors.
- Managers are trained to recognize and respond to the needs of employees beyond their performance review.
- Feedback data is used to understand the state of mental health, retention and team dynamics.
- The culture encourages peer-to-peer feedback and recognition to build trust and collaboration across teams.

The bottom line is that more regular employee listening opportunities will produce actionable insights that shape benefits, culture and leadership strategies, and drive proactive support.

## The five stages of engagement and listening.

WebMD Health Services has identified key stages in the engagement cycle that a true intentional listening strategy should target and impact:

1. Identify key focus areas
2. Create an engagement strategy that drives real change
3. Dig deeper to discover the true "why" behind employee feedback
4. Take action and target organizational needs, avoiding wasted investment
5. Monitor progress and measure impact

## Trend 4

# Redefining the ROI of Well-Being



It's time we break the myth: Well-being isn't soft—it's strategy. Those who recognize this will be standing firm on employee well-being as an investment in their organization.

In 2026, future-ready companies aren't viewing well-being programs as **expenses to cut** when budgets tighten. Rather, they see well-being as a **strategic investment** in their people and the future of their business. In these organizations, leadership understands that well-being impacts everything: productivity, retention, brand trust and organizational resilience.

And, importantly, it's part of the business strategy, company culture and even public identity. As employees become harder to keep engaged and retain, well-being will be part of the organization's talent strategy. Top employers will use well-being as a differentiator to attract and engage high-performing, value-aligned talent.

To this point, a recent survey found that over 90% of employees value their well-being as much as they value their compensation, and 96% would only consider working for companies that emphasize employee wellness.<sup>6</sup> When evaluating opportunities, today's workforce isn't just asking, "What's the salary?" They're asking, "Will this place take care of me?"

“

For those of us in the industry, employee well-being has long been known as a key business driver. It's thrilling to see organizations start to really 'get it' and view well-being as a strategic investment in their people and the health of their business.”

**Erin Seaverson,**  
Head of Research,  
WebMD Health Services  
Center for Research

<sup>6</sup> Wellhub. The State of Work-Life Wellness 2024.

## A new lens for ROI.

All this signals a new way to think about your investment in and return on your well-being program.

Organizations can use well-being proactively to drive results that have an impact on your business and people, such as reduced burnout, stronger loyalty, lower absenteeism, higher productivity, better team performance and ultimately, stronger company reputation.

ROI isn't going away. It continues to be a critical measure of success—and it's absolutely achievable. Organizations that implement well-being best practices consistently see meaningful improvements in both employee health and in business outcomes. Analysis of year-over-year population health trends demonstrates that even among the highest-risk groups, thoughtful well-being strategies can deliver measurable results.

“

The real ROI of well-being isn't measured in dollars—it's measured in trust, retention and performance.”

**Christin Muldoon,**  
SVP Marketing and Strategy,  
WebMD Health Services



Our research has demonstrated time and time again that, when organizations follow best practices, not only do they experience year-over-year health risk improvement, but these improvements can lead to favorable ROI and improved employee performance. In our experience working with clients for more than 25 years, we've seen long-term, strategic investments in employee well-being translate into an ROI of up to 3:1 for organizations willing to do the hard work.

Well-being is not just a cost to manage—it's a strategic investment that pays dividends across your organization. When approached thoughtfully, well-being programs drive measurable results for both employees and the business, reinforcing a culture where people can thrive.



# In 2026, Employee Well-Being Will Be Your Game-Changer

As we move into 2026, the message is undeniable: Well-being is no longer optional—it's a strategic differentiator. Organizations that prioritize it will not only support their people more effectively but also unlock stronger engagement, improved performance and a company that stands out in the marketplace for truly caring about its people. The stakes are high, and the opportunity to lead through well-being has never been greater.

This is the year to make well-being a strategic priority not to just reduce costs but to boost employee engagement, loyalty, trust and productivity. Don't make well-being just another initiative; invest in it as the cornerstone of your workforce and business success.

Are you in? [Contact us](#) to help you build a winning well-being strategy for the future.



**WebMD**  
**HealthServices**

Your **everything** well-being partner.

To make the most of your well-being program,  
visit [webmdhealthservices.com](https://www.webmdhealthservices.com).