

2026

Employee Wellbeing & Engagement

TREND REPORT

motion connected

worksite wellness council of massachusetts

Who Brought You this Report

Motion Connected

Motion Connected is an all-in-one employee wellbeing & engagement platform, helping employers engage their people, build healthier habits, improve healthcare confidence, and strengthen workplace connection. Trusted by over 300 organizations and in business for the last 15 years, our mission is to build a healthier tomorrow in organizations across the nation.

We field this survey annually so employers can benchmark against real peer data, not industry averages.

Worksite Wellness Council of Massachusetts

The Worksite Wellness Council of Massachusetts (WWCMA) is a community that seeks to transform workplace cultures, making them more supportive of wellbeing for all individuals. We provide safe spaces for sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, enabling organizations to prioritize the wellbeing of their workforce community.

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Executive Summary

Employee wellbeing continues to expand, but employers are also facing a practical challenge: getting employees to participate.

The 2026 findings show employees are navigating limited time and competing priorities while employers are supporting a broader range of needs. Mental and emotional wellbeing remains a leading priority, financial wellbeing continues to gain attention, and new areas of investment are emerging.

At the same time, the data suggests that program design matters. Higher-participation programs tend to pair meaningful incentives with clearer ownership, engagement resources and measurement.

For employers planning for 2027, the findings point to a practical question: How can we design wellbeing programs that employees value, can realistically fit into their day and want to participate in?

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2027 - Employers are balancing broader wellbeing needs with a workforce that has limited time and attention. Thoughtful program design will play an important role in bringing the two together.

The 2026 survey included 218 respondents across 26 states and a range of industries, organization sizes and professional roles. Participation was voluntary. Annual survey samples are not longitudinal cohorts, and more than one respondent from the same organization may be represented.

Questions about program participation and satisfaction are based on respondents reporting an employee wellness program. Effectiveness ratings are based on respondents offering the applicable initiative. Some questions use smaller subsets, including the healthcare-planning section (n=137).

Because this is observational survey research, comparisons between program characteristics and participation should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Suggested citation - Motion Connected. 2026 Employee Wellbeing & Engagement Trends Report.

KEY FINDINGS

4 Key Findings Shaping Employee Wellbeing in 2027

This year's findings show how employer priorities are evolving, and highlight several characteristics associated with stronger employee participation.

#1

Wellbeing priorities are evolving.
Mental and emotional wellbeing remains the #1 reason employers offer a program, while financial wellbeing continues to see increased investment.

#2

Time is the biggest barrier to engagement.
54% cite lack of employee time and 49% cite competing priorities as the biggest barriers to getting employees to engage.

#3

Higher-value incentives are associated with higher participation.
Average participation ranges from 43% among programs offering $0–$100 in annual incentive value to 66% among those offering more than $1,000.

#4

Higher-participation programs share several characteristics.
Programs reaching 50%+ participation report higher average incentive values and are more likely to have dedicated ownership, use an engagement platform and track participation.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Participant Profile & Demographics

A diverse perspective collected from across the country. A total of 218 respondents completed the survey. Respondents spanned 26 states.

218
Respondents
across 26 U.S. states

COMPANY SIZE

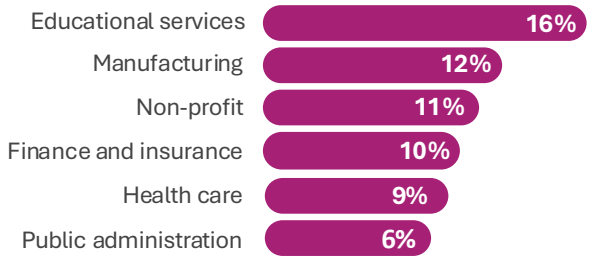


66%
500 or fewer

28%
501-5,000

6%
5,000+

INDUSTRY



JOB ROLES

- → **38%** - HR managers & directors
- → **20%** - Wellness & health professionals
- → **10%** - Benefits managers & consultants
- → **8%** - Executive & ownership

WORK ENVIRONMENT

46% In office

46% Hybrid

7% Remote
↓ from 12% in 2025

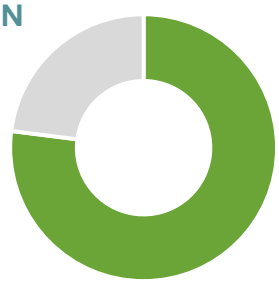
Methodology: voluntary participation each year, not a longitudinal cohort. Respondents may include more than one individual from the same organization. Participation and satisfaction figures are drawn only from respondents who report having a wellness program.

Current Workplace Wellness Landscape

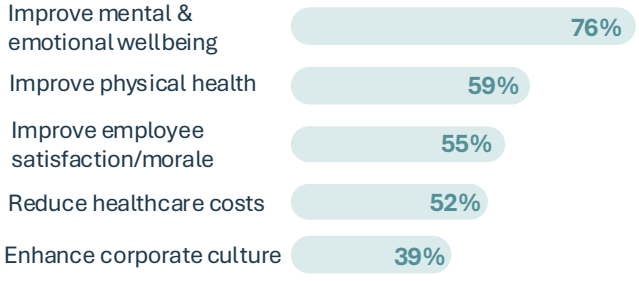
PROGRAM ADOPTION

77%

of respondents offer an employee wellness program



TOP REASONS FOR OFFERING



RESOURCES & PERSONNEL USED

- #1 **85%** - Human Resources
- **39%** - Wellness committee or champions
- **32%** - Wellness or engagement platform/vendor
- **30%** - Internal technology (Slack, intranet, email)
- **28%** - Dedicated wellness specialist
- **15%** - Health insurance carrier offering
- **10%** - Onsite clinic professionals
- **9%** - External consultants / coaches
- **8%** - Other employee

WHY OTHERS DON'T OFFER IT

44%
Concerns over employee interest

44%
Limited resources or capacity

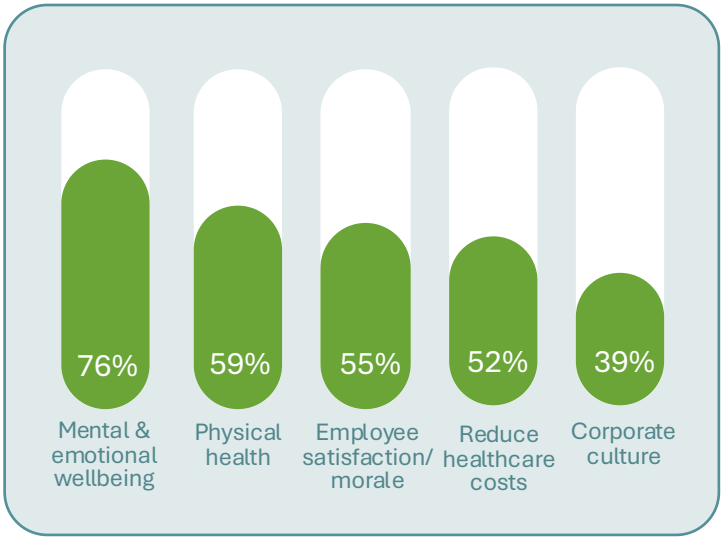
40%
No budget for wellness

28%
Uncertain how to implement

KEY FINDING #1

Wellbeing Priorities are Evolving

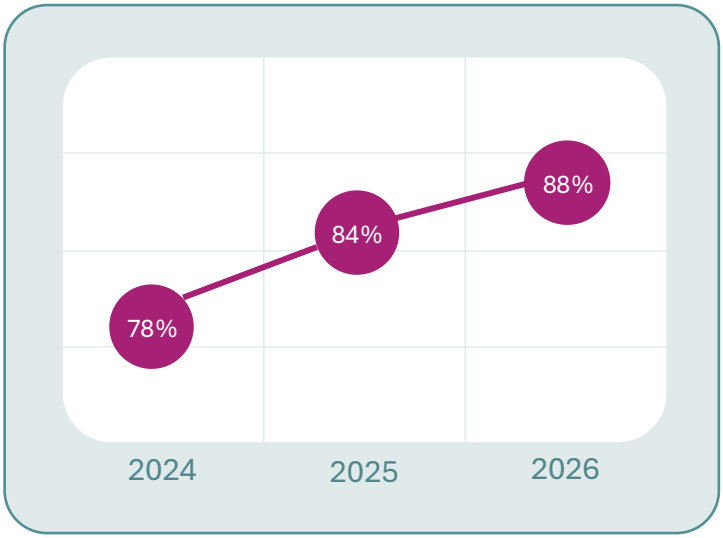
Employer wellbeing priorities increasingly extend beyond physical health, with mental health and financial wellbeing playing a prominent role in how organizations are thinking about employee support.



#1 since 2024

Supporting mental and emotional wellbeing

For the third consecutive year, supporting mental and emotional wellbeing is the leading reason employers report offering a wellness program.



Continued growth

Financial wellbeing is trending

Financial wellbeing continues to gain attention. The share of employers planning to maintain or increase investment has grown each year, from 78% in 2024 to 88% in 2026.

Wellbeing Initiatives Employers Are Investing In

TOP 5 AREAS MAINTAINING OR INCREASING INVESTMENT:



94%
Activity challenges



88%
Financial wellbeing



80%
Preventive exams

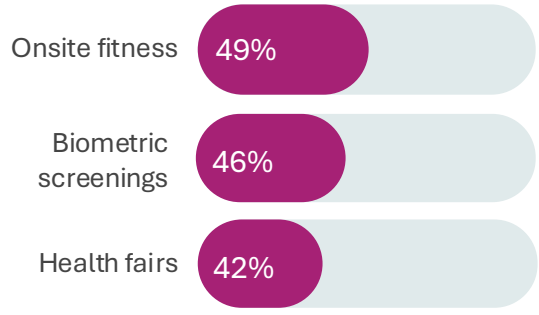


77%
Webinars + lunch & learns



74%
Low, no-cost initiatives

Lowest 3 maintaining or increasing investment



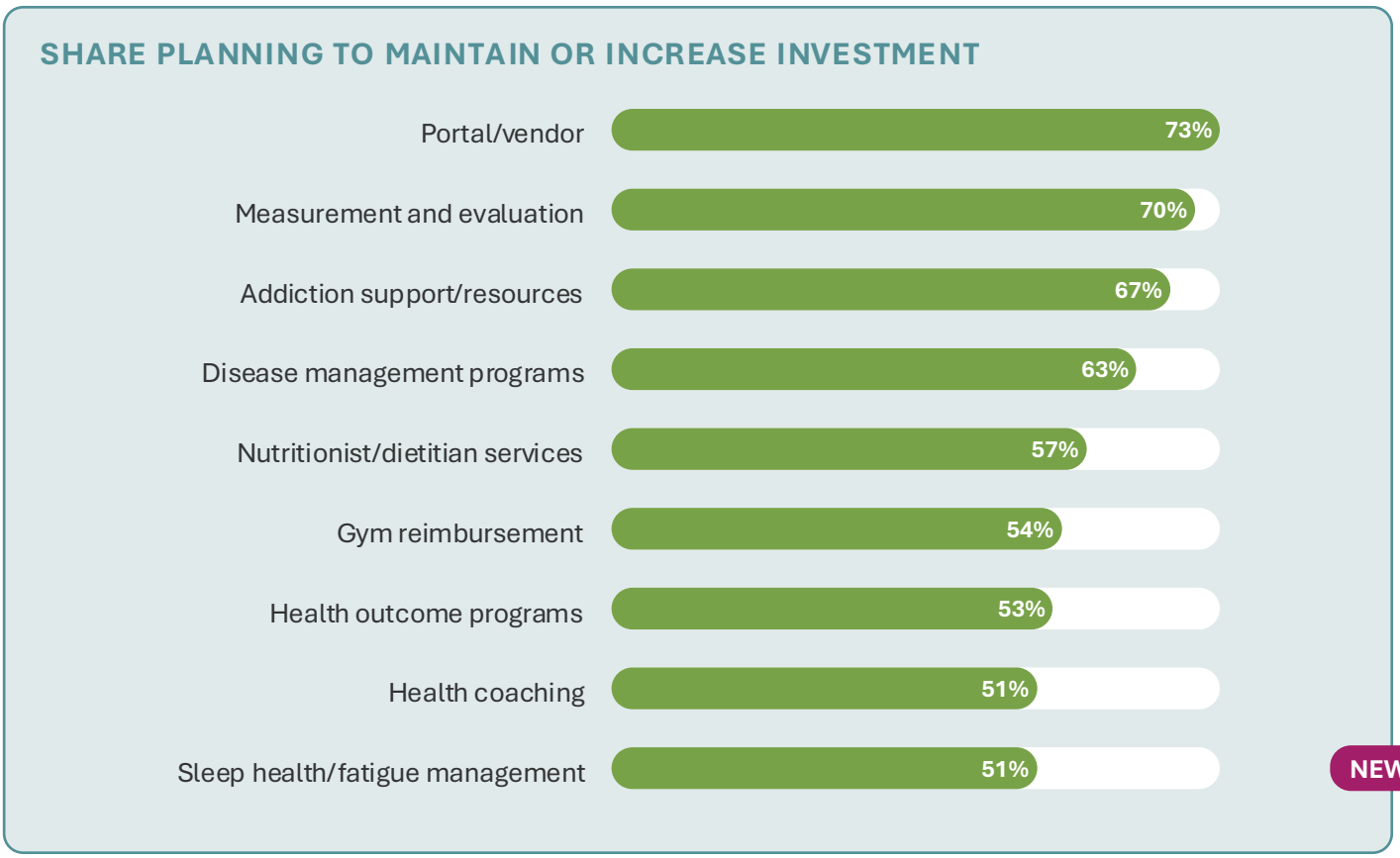
Ideas in action: wellbeing beyond the traditional

> "We offer a wellbeing room for quiet time, relaxation, meditation or reflection. It is a low light, no work zone with comfortable furniture and mindfulness resources."

> "Menopause support group."

> "Pet care included in the reimbursement program."

Additional Areas of Employee Wellbeing Investments



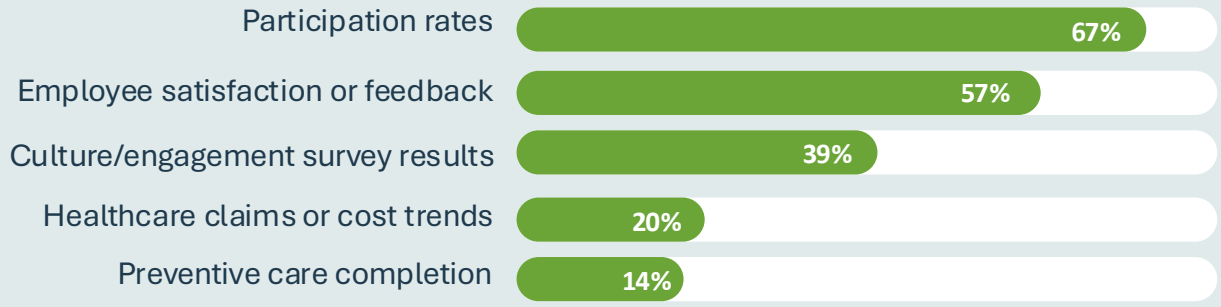
DATA INSIGHT

New this year: 51% of employers plan to maintain or increase investment in sleep health and fatigue management, making it an area to watch in 2027.

MEASUREMENT

How Employers are Measuring Success

TOP 5 MEASURES USED:



24%

do not formally measure success

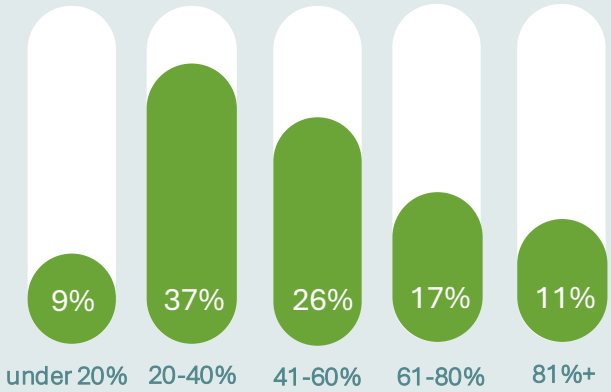
LESS THAN 10% USE THESE MEASURES

- 7% — Retention or turnover data
- 7% — Manager feedback
- 6% — Productivity or performance indicators
- 2% — Absenteeism

DATA INSIGHT

Respondents using at least one formal measure report higher average participation and greater satisfaction with their programs than those who do not formally measure success.

Participation & Program Satisfaction

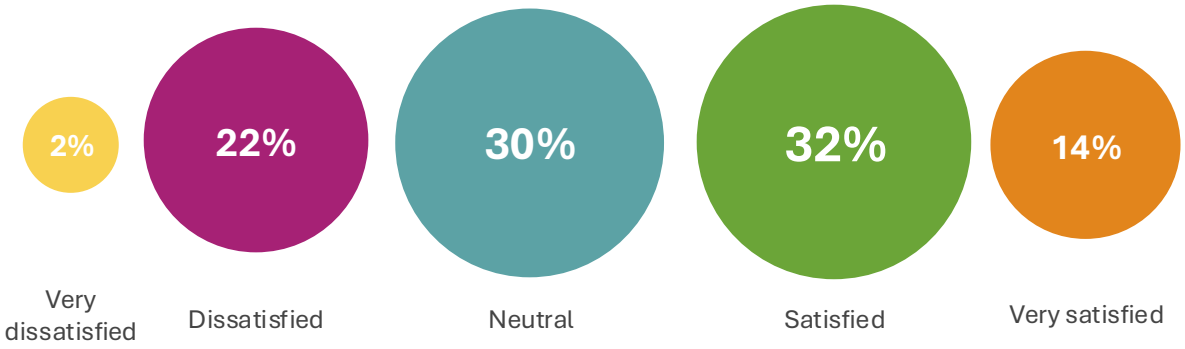


48%

2026 average participation

Average participation reached 48% in 2026, compared with 43% in 2025 and 46% in 2024.

SATISFACTION WITH PARTICIPATION



DATA INSIGHT **Program satisfaction rises sharply above 40% participation.**

Among programs with 40% participation or less, 17% of respondents are satisfied and 46% are dissatisfied. Satisfaction rises to 58% among programs with 41–60% participation and 79% among those above 60%.

KEY FINDING #2

Time is the Biggest Barrier to Engagement

Employee time and competing priorities are the two most commonly reported barriers to engagement. Together, the findings point to the importance of making wellbeing easy to access, understand and fit into the workday.

54% Lack of employee time

49% Too many competing priorities

OTHER BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Difficulty measuring impact	28%
Limited budget	27%
Incentives are not strong enough	26%
Lack of awareness or communication	26%
Hard to engage remote/hybrid employees	23%
Lack of leadership or manager support	23%
Limited staff or resources to manage	19%
Program does not feel relevant	17%

Ideas in action: making wellbeing fit the workday

How respondents are overcoming the time barrier

> "We offer a Well Day, a paid day off to attend health screenings."

> "We recently started a virtual walking group where employees get together for a *monthly 30-minute* walk. Employees feel grateful for the dedicated time on their calendars and report feeling noticeably better afterwards."

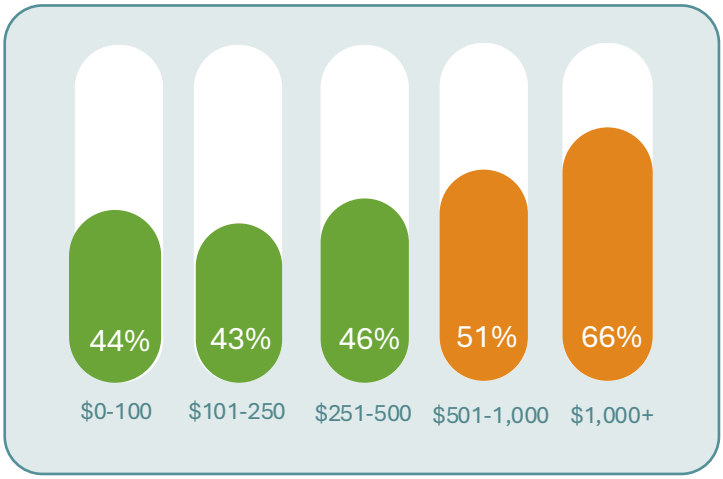
> "Monday and Friday brain breaks in the afternoon. Activities include trivia, meditation, stretching and games."

> "We provide 3 wellbeing hours a week."

— 2026 survey respondent examples

KEY FINDING #3

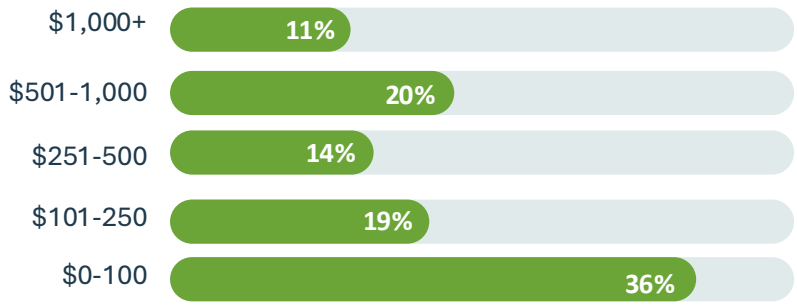
Higher-value Incentives Associated with Higher Participation



The takeaway

Higher incentive values are associated with higher average participation, ranging from 43% in the $0–$100 category to 66% above $1,000.

AMOUNT ORGANIZATIONS ARE INVESTING



$491

average annual incentive value per eligible employee

What Employers are Using to Motivate Participation



INCENTIVE IDEAS FROM RESPONDENTS

Respondents reported using a wide range of incentives, combining financial rewards with recognition, experiences and time off.

- Charity donation
- Well day
- Bluetooth earbuds
- PTO
- Prizes
- Activity trackers
- Bikes
- HRA
- Appliances
- Volunteer day
- Extra PTO
- Mattress
- Gaming devices
- Tumblers
- 5K shoe stipend
- Exercise equipment

> "We implemented a Lady/Lord of the Steps that runs the entire year. Whoever completes the most steps is crowned the Lady or Lord of the Steps. We will ceremoniously give them a cheesy crown and a gift card."

> "Passport program where people earn stickers for completing engagement activities, get entered into a quarterly gift card drawing, and earn unique swag when they complete the passport."

> "Peer to peer nomination for going above and beyond. Ten times and you receive a free day off of work."

— 2026 survey respondent examples

AI in Wellbeing Administration

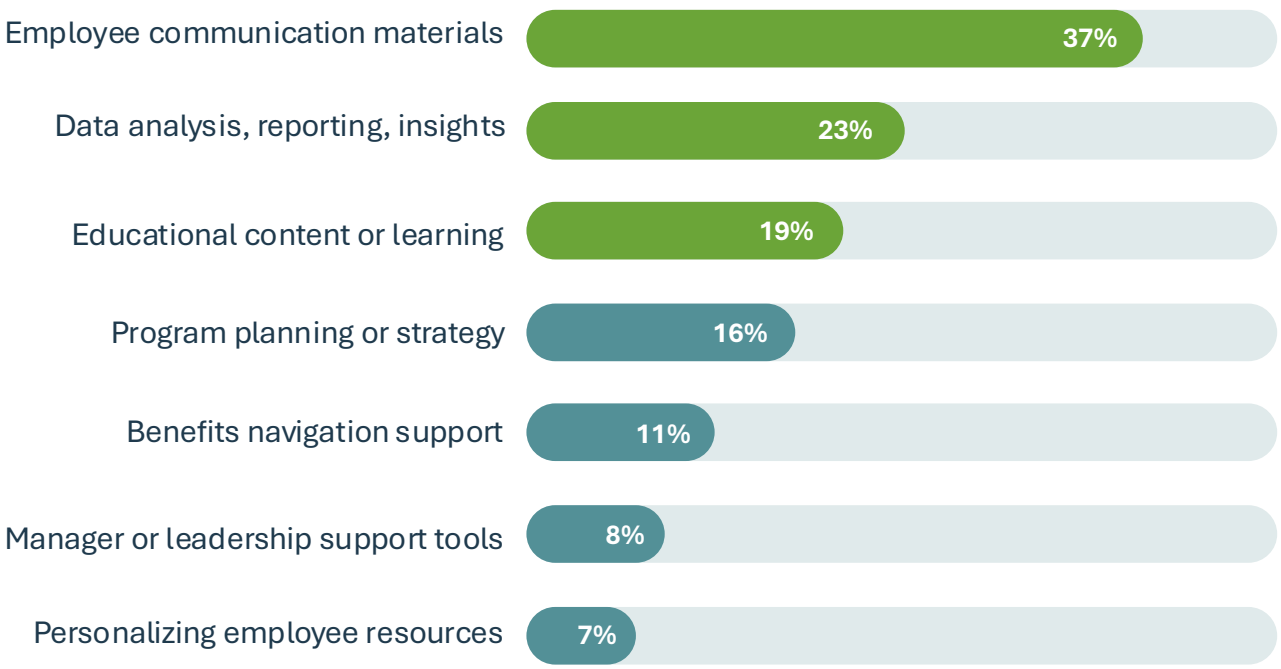
Asked for the first time this year, 49% of respondents report at least one active AI use case in wellbeing administration, while 36% are still exploring potential uses

49%
report at least one active AI use case

36%
say they are still exploring AI use cases

26%
Have no plans to use it in the next year

WHERE AI IS BEING USED



KEY FINDING #4

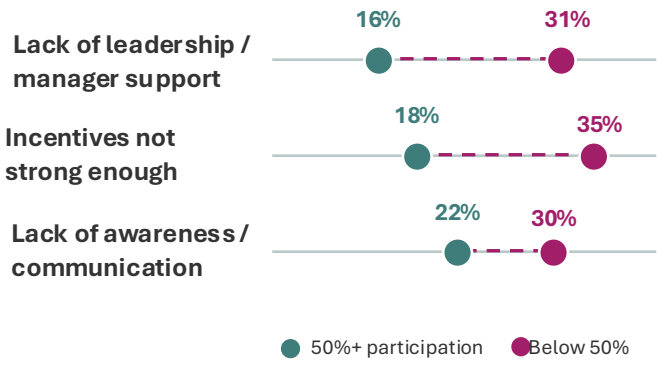
What 50%+ Participation Programs Have in Common

82 organizations reached 50%+ participation. Compared with programs below 50%, they report higher incentive values and are more likely to have dedicated ownership, use an engagement platform and track at least one formal measurement.

Program characteristic	50%+ participation	Below 50%
✓ Average incentive value	**$611**	$370
✓ Premium discount offered	**37%**	16%
✓ Dedicated wellbeing specialist	**34%**	21%
✓ Engagement platform / vendor	**40%**	23%
✓ Formally measures the program	**83%**	68%

BARRIERS CITED AS A PROBLEM:

Organizations reaching 50%+ participation are less likely to cite communication, leadership support and weak incentives as barriers



Ideas in action: creating reasons to participate together

> "We had a Jingle Jog 5K where the winners were for best costume and most participation. This allowed employees to be active but not feel pressure."

> "We are intentional when creating teams for events, to put people together who do not always get to work together and build bridges across the organization."

> "We do an annual company-wide camping trip every year. We had very high participation this past year, 75 percent."

— 2026 survey respondent examples

Employee Mental Health Support

Perceived effectiveness reflects the percentage of employers offering each initiative who rated it as somewhat or highly effective.

WHAT'S WORKING

1. Policy adjustments
2. EAP services
3. Environmental enhancements
4. Mental wellbeing & stress education
5. In-person therapy or counseling
6. Online/telehealth behavioral health
7. Employee resource/peer groups

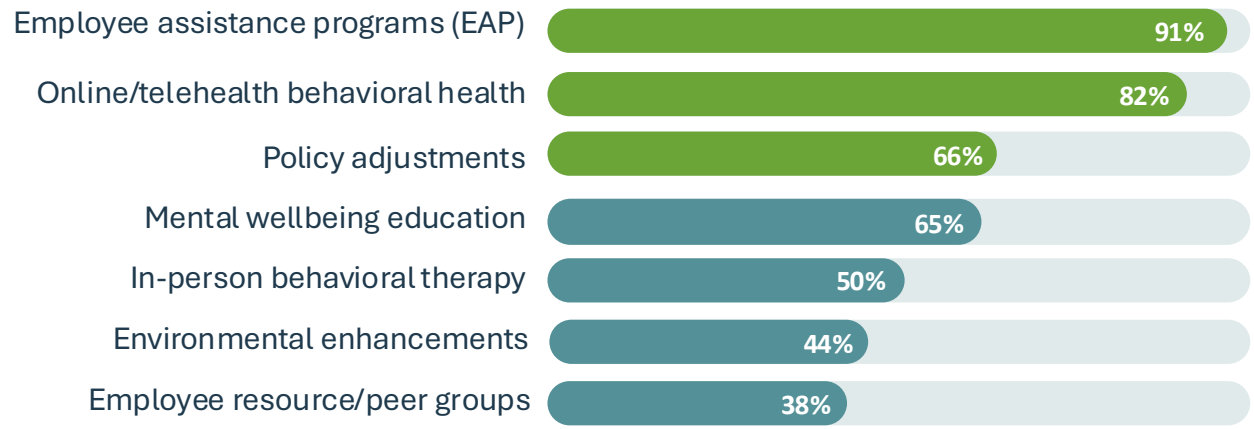
Ranked most effective

Policy adjustments

Flexible schedules and gradual returns from leave received the highest "somewhat, to highly effective" rating.

EAP most popular offering for **3rd year**

MOST COMMONLY OFFERED



Employee Engagement & Perks

Perceived effectiveness reflects the percentage of employers offering each initiative who rated it as somewhat or highly effective.

WHAT'S WORKING?

1. Lifestyle spending accounts
2. Flexible work hours
3. Earned/extra PTO

Ranked most effective

Lifestyle spending accounts

Lifestyle spending accounts received the highest perceived effectiveness rating.

4. Community engagement initiatives
5. Formal employee recognition program
6. Team building activities or events
7. Employee feedback or culture surveys
8. Tuition reimbursement/professional development
9. Peer to peer recognition programs
10. Employee connection/belonging
11. Childcare or family care dollars

TOP 5 MOST COMMONLY OFFERED



Employee feedback / culture surveys



Team building activities or events



Formal employee recognition program



Tuition reimbursement or professional dev.



Flexible work hours

An area of opportunity

Lifestyle spending accounts, flexible hours and extra PTO received some of the highest effectiveness ratings, yet extra PTO is offered by fewer than half of respondents (46%) and Lifestyle spending accounts are even less common at 31%.

Healthcare Cost-Savings Strategies

Perceived effectiveness reflects the percentage of employers offering each initiative who rated it as somewhat or highly effective.

WHAT'S WORKING?

1. HSA (health savings account)
2. Telehealth
3. Onsite/ near-site clinic

Ranked most effective

Health savings accounts

Leveraging HSAs received the strongest perceived-effectiveness rating among the healthcare cost-saving strategies shown.

4. Direct primary care
5. Benefits navigation platform
6. Transparency tools
7. Healthcare advocacy or concierge
8. Family-friendly or caregiving benefits
9. Benefits/healthcare consumer education
10. Chronic condition management

TOP 3 MOST COMMONLY OFFERED

- **89%** Telehealth or virtual care
- **73%** HSA (health savings account)
- **69%** Benefits navigation platform

Ideas in action: healthcare strategies in practice

> "We are offering an ICHRA for our employees this year for the first time so that they can tailor their healthcare for their specific needs instead of having to enroll in a "one size fits all" approach."

> "We joined a healthcare pool to help keep the quality of benefits high and keep costs a little lower."

> "We continue to explore changes in the PBM, prescription and specialty prescription landscape as new regulations take effect. International sourcing, incentives to use biosimilars, price transparency, chronic disease management and care navigation."

— 2026 survey respondent examples

Closing Summary

The path forward starts with understanding what employees will realistically use and value.

This year's data points to a clear opportunity for employers heading into 2027. Employees want support across a broader range of needs, but time and competing priorities make their attention increasingly difficult to earn.

The programs reaching more employees tend to approach engagement from multiple angles: meaningful incentives, clear ownership, accessible resources and consistent measurement. At the same time, employers are expanding their focus beyond traditional physical health to areas like mental, financial and everyday wellbeing.

The takeaway for 2027: Build with participation in mind. Make wellbeing easier to access, worth engaging with and relevant to the people you're trying to reach.

Because a wellbeing program can only make an impact when employees actually use it.

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Supporting Healthier Workplaces

Learn more & join at
wwcma.org/membership



About WWCMA

The WWCMA is a purpose-driven community dedicated to transforming workplace cultures by prioritizing well-being for all individuals. It creates safe spaces that encourage open dialogue, resource sharing, and the exchange of evidence-based practices, all aimed at supporting meaningful organizational change.

Our Mission

Through meaningful partnerships and inclusive dialogue, our mission is to foster collaboration within the WWCMA community, promoting evidence-based knowledge and resource sharing among individuals and organizations who share our vision of endorsing workforce wellbeing.



WWCMA Benefits

Resources

Access industry-specific insights, practical, evidence-based takeaways, and benchmarks from WWCMA partners.

Platform

WWCMA members may contribute blogs or vlogs that, if selected, can be shared on our website, social channels, and email campaigns with a full credit bio and backlink of your choice.

Networking

Attend any of our events to expand your network through our expansive and diverse community.

Free Events

Members receive free entry to WWCMA-sponsored in-person and virtual events.

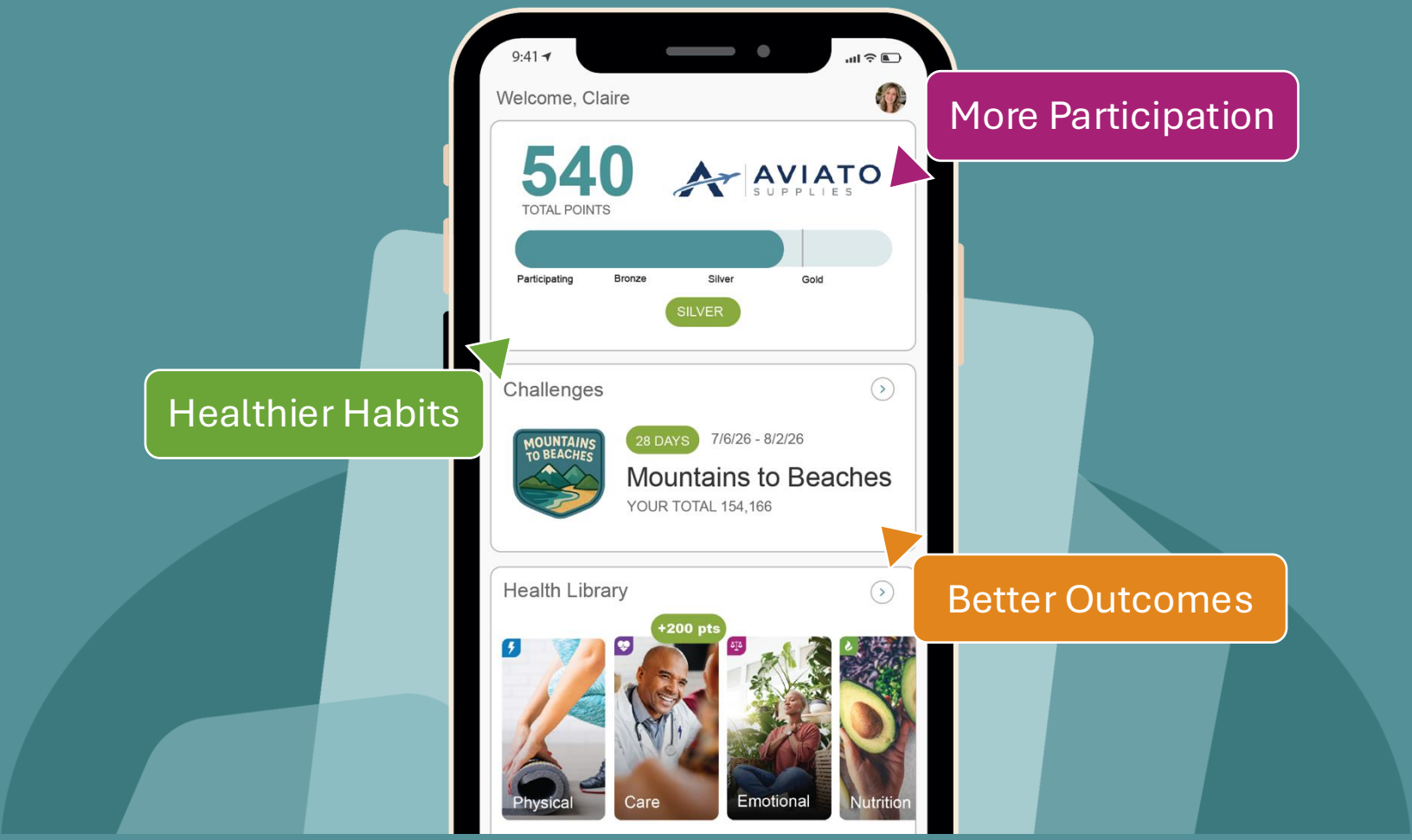
Members

WWCMA is a diverse and inclusive network of professionals, students, and organizations united by our shared dedication to making workplace wellness a reality for everyone.

Regardless of your background or profession, our programming and network provide value to anyone who shares our values. Join today and be part of a community dedicated to making workplace wellness a reality for everyone.

ALL-IN-ONE WELLBEING PLATFORM

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