

Expectations Are Changing: What Millennials and Gen Z Expect From Their Employers

2020 WebMD Health Services Report



WebMD
health services

What's Inside

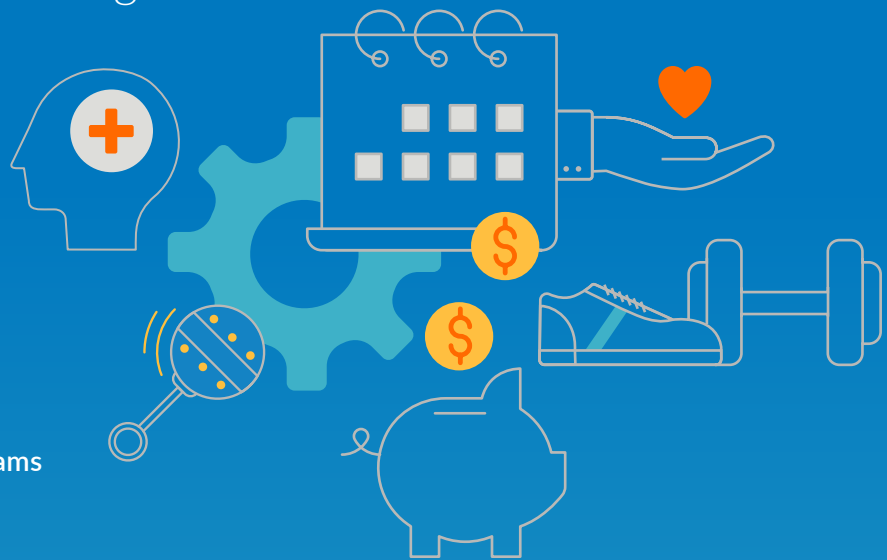
Introduction	3
Younger Generations Expect More	4
Millennials Use Company-Provided Programs the Most	6
Millennials and Gen Z Would Use Programs if Given the Chance	8
It's a social norm.	11
There's a lack of awareness.	12
The existing programs aren't good enough.	13
They want it, but don't think it's the employer's responsibility to offer—at least not yet.	14
The Takeaways	15
Provide holistic benefits.	16
Support your younger employees.	17
Evolve your program.	18
Methodology/About This Report	19
Definitions	20

INTRODUCTION

Wellness programs typically focus on things like physical activity, weight management and nutritional health.

Today, employers recognize that well-being programs extend beyond just physical wellness. They've evolved to include holistic benefits that support employees outside of the standard workday, including:

- Financial wellness programs
- Flexible work policies
- Time off to volunteer
- Onsite daycare
- Onsite fitness centers
- Mental and emotional health programs



There are so many benefits that employers can provide to attract and retain talent. But which ones matter the most to employees that are newer to the workforce? We wondered what millennials and Generation Z thought about well-being programs, including the benefits they think their employer should offer.

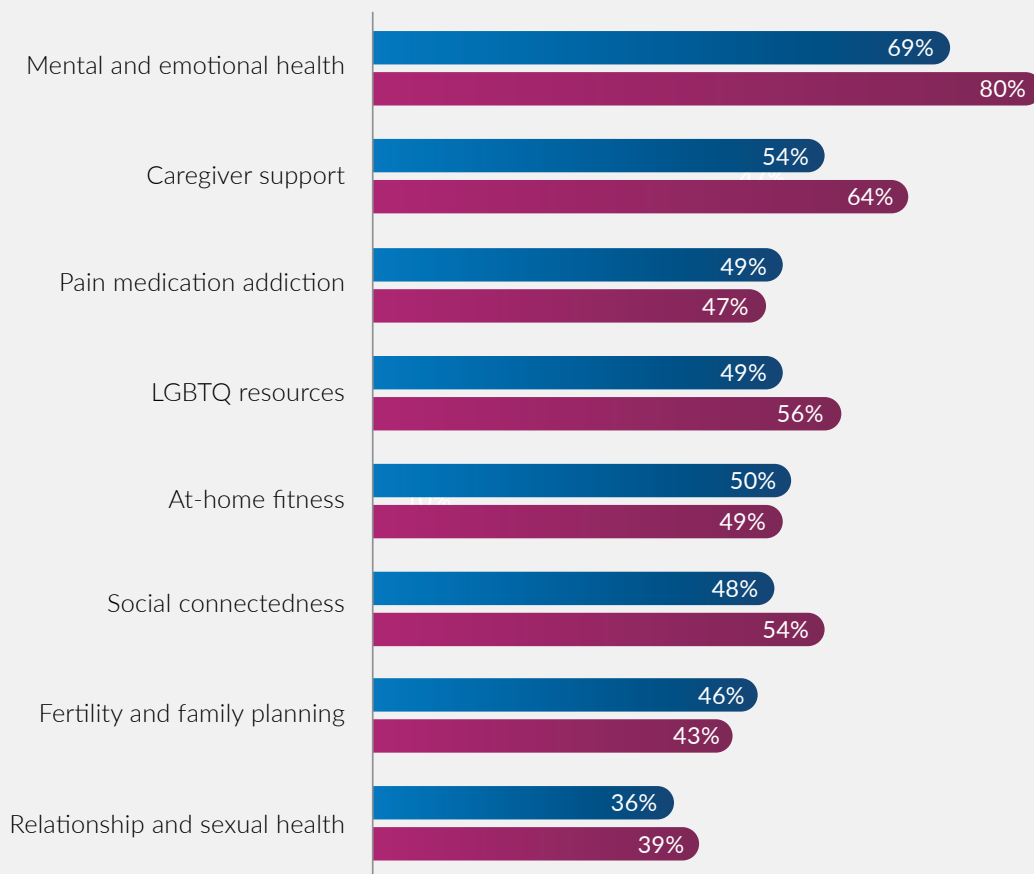
With this in mind, we commissioned Blue Research®, an independent research consultancy, to conduct a study with 1,002 adults working either full-time or part-time for U.S. companies with at least 1,000 employees. We asked them questions about which well-being offerings they expect from their employer, which ones they're most likely to use if they had access to them, and which ones they currently use. Here's what they told us. →

Younger Generations Expect More

We asked millennials—ages 26 to 39—and Generation Z—ages 18 to 25—which well-being offerings they think employers should offer. Their answers were similar in several categories.

- **MILLENNIALS**
26-39 yrs. old
- **GEN Z**
18-25 yrs. old

Programs Employees Believe Should Be Offered:



To us, it's not surprising that 8 in 10 Gen Zers think employers should offer support for mental and emotional health. They've grown up in an era of increased anxiety, stress and mental health concerns. Now that they're in the workforce, they're expecting non-traditional benefits like mental health programs to help them with these areas.

Millennials keep pace in several categories, meaning that they have similar expectations in what they think employers should offer them. Expectations for at-home fitness, fertility and family planning, relationship and sexual health, and pain medication addiction support are all generally consistent between both generations.

However, it seems like millennials and Gen Z differ in their expectations of other non-traditional benefits. There's a broader gap between offerings like mental health (an 11% difference), caregiver support (a 10% difference), LGBTQ resources (a 7% difference), and social connectedness support (a 6% difference).

Why is this? Millennials set the stage for expecting modern offerings, and we predict that Generation Z will take these expectations to the next level.

This is an amazing thing—as work blends even more so with our daily lives, a well-being program must help in all areas, especially outside of working hours. As employees spend a significant amount of their day working, it only makes sense that Gen Z would expect their employers to provide that level of support.

It's also noteworthy that no less than 4 in 10 employees expect any particular well-being offering, outside of relationship and sexual health support (36% of millennials and 39% of Gen Z think employers should offer that program). If you're trying to recruit and retain these generations, make sure your benefits cater to their needs and expectations. They're going to expect a different level of support than a traditional benefits package will provide.

This data tells us that many employees think benefits should be offered to them, but how many actually use them?

WANT MORE INSIGHTS?

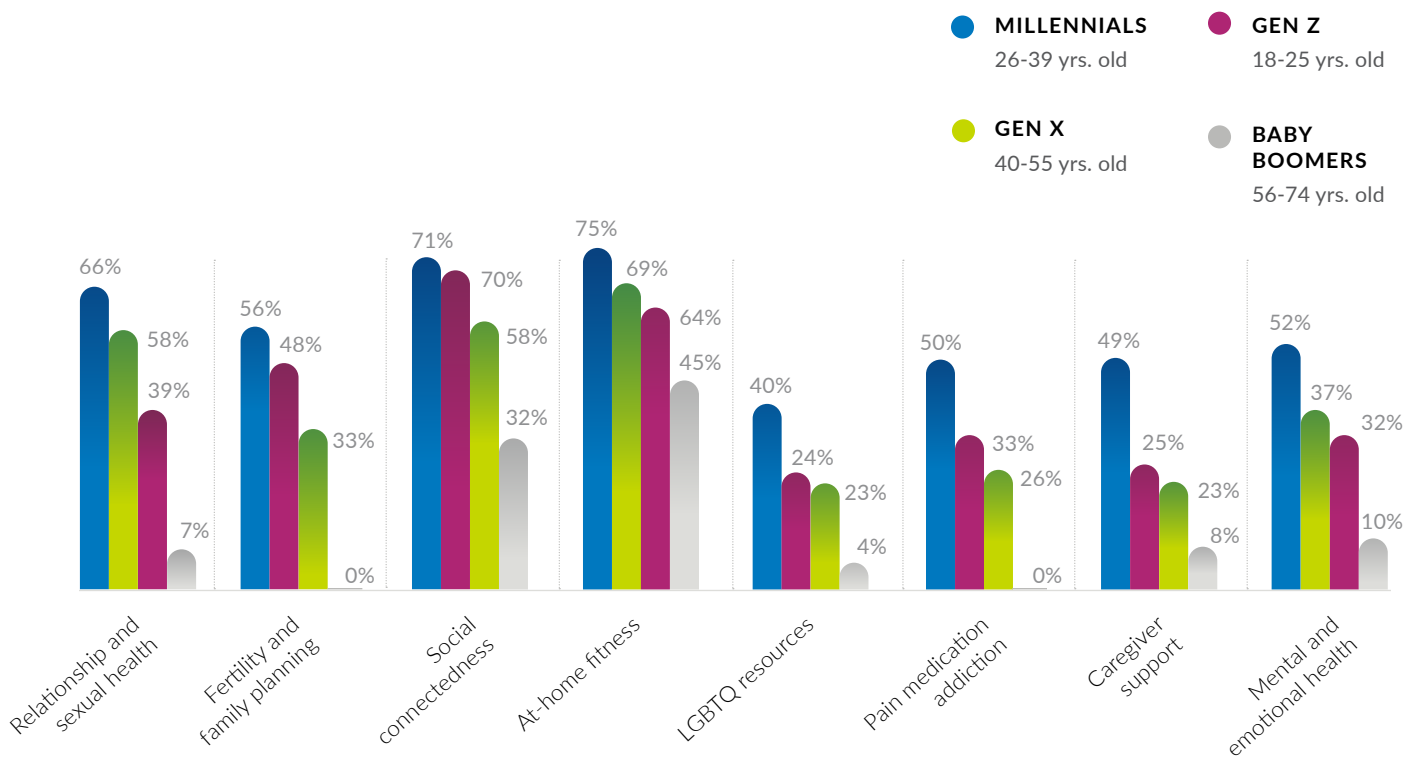
Check out our other whitepaper, **Well-Being Disconnect: Employees Want More From Employers**

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Millennials Use Company-Provided Programs the Most

Of those who currently have access to the well-being programs we asked about, millennials lead in the percentage of users—and not just compared to Gen Z. Across all four generations currently in the workforce—baby boomers, Gen X, millennials and Gen Z—millennials tend to use the programs the most.



This could be for any number of reasons. First, they’re known to be the most likely of all the generations to want their employers to play an active role in supporting their well-being.¹ Since they expect the support, they’re more likely to use the offered programs. We also speculate that older

generations may not think that certain well-being programs should be provided by an employer, as they’re used to a more traditional package and are more motivated by monetary rewards than modern offerings.²

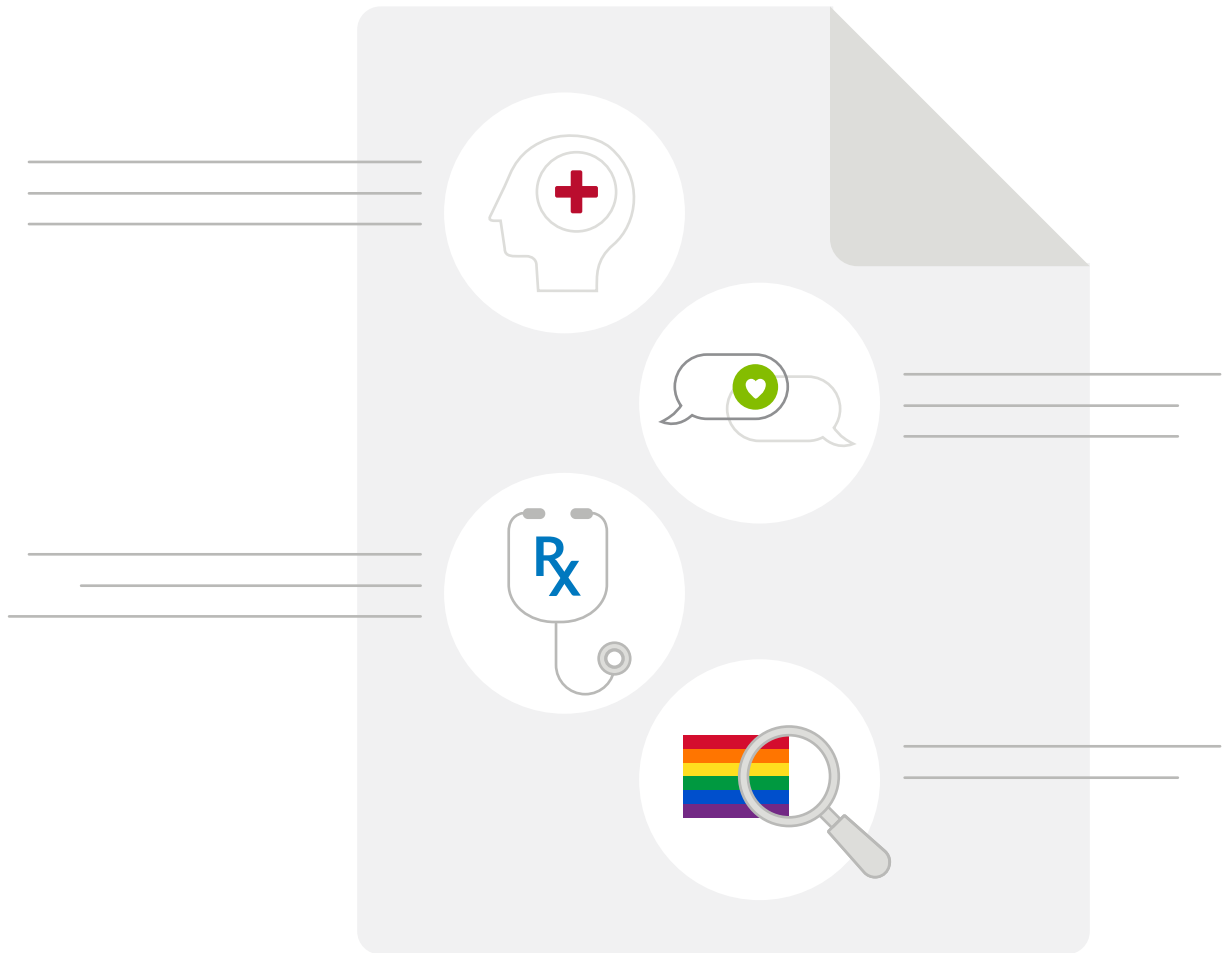
1. SHRM. Millennials Most Receptive to Wellness Outreach. December 10, 2014.
 2. SHRM. What Motivates Your Workers? It Depends on Their Generation. May 9, 2016.

It could also be that these younger generations need some of these offerings more than others right now—especially as it pertains to benefits like family planning and caregiver support.

No matter the reason, it's clear that millennials use programs like mental health, caregiver, pain medication, and LGBTQ support far more than other generations do. If your organization currently offers these types of programs, make sure that

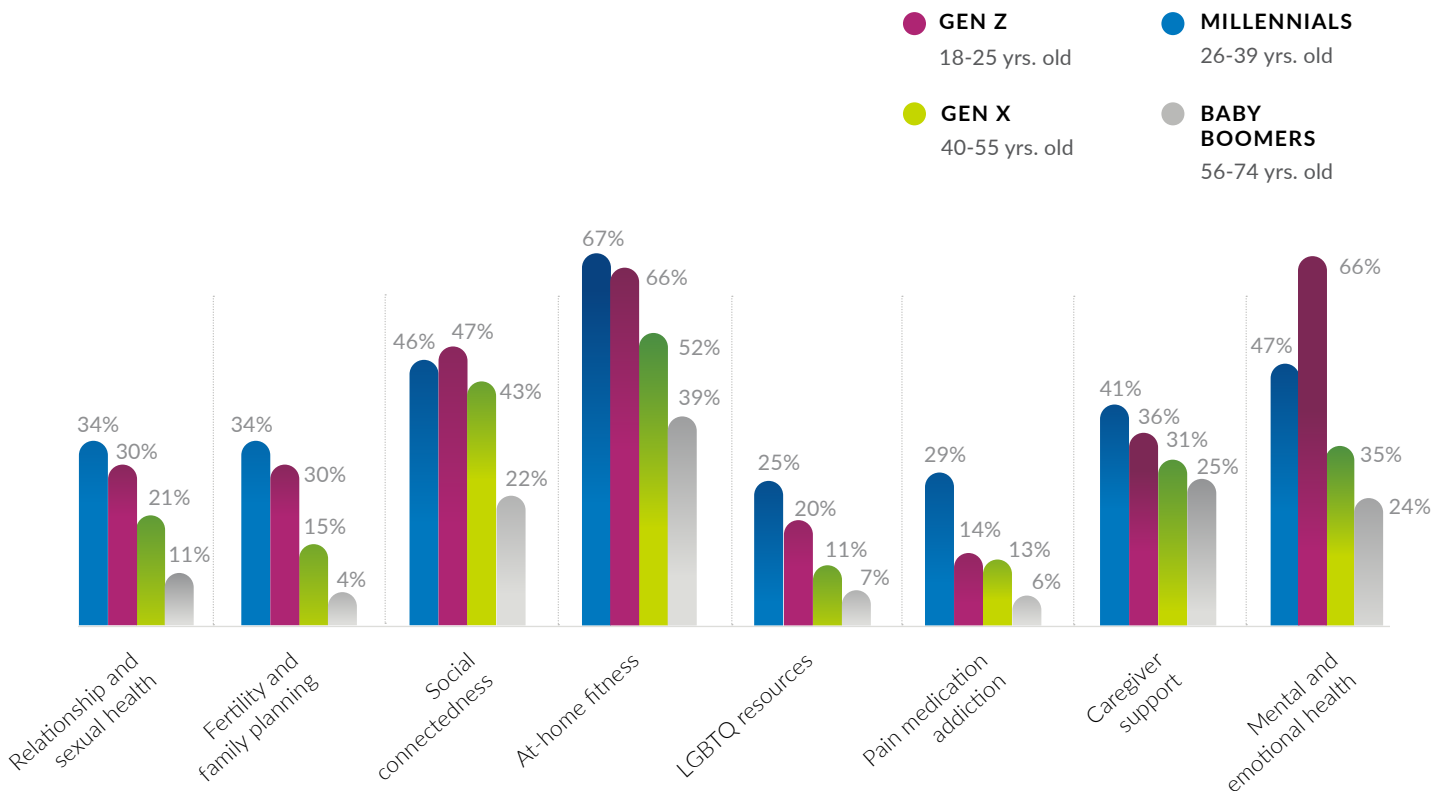
your employees know they exist. That way, you're likely to get more use out of your investments.

If you don't currently offer programs like these, it may be wise to do so soon—we suspect that those who use these programs appreciate the gesture and may be more likely to stay in their current organization, rather than seek out a new employer who will give them these benefits.



Millennials and Gen Z Would Use Programs if Given the Chance

We also asked respondents who don't have access to certain programs which ones they'd likely use if their employer started offering them. The data indicated that, across all categories, millennials and Gen Z were most likely to use all the programs listed if they were given the opportunity to do so.



We found that employers' largest opportunity was to provide these generations programs for mental health, at-home fitness, and social connectedness, as a higher percentage of employees would use them. However, it's important to note that organizations shouldn't just focus on these three

key areas. Remember that a significant number of millennials and Gen Zers who have access to programs like pain medication addiction support and family planning still use them.

Clearly, gaps exist between which programs people have access to, which ones they use, and which ones they'd likely use if their employer offered the program. Where are the most significant gaps, and why do they exist?

- **MILLENNIALS**
26-39 yrs. old
- **GEN Z**
18-25 yrs. old

	Should Offer	Currently Have and Use	Don't Have, But Would Use If Offered
Mental and emotional health	69%	52%	47%
	80%	32%	66%
Caregiver support	54%	49%	41%
	64%	25%	36%
Pain medication addiction	49%	50%	29%
	47%	33%	14%
LGBTQ resources	49%	40%	25%
	56%	24%	20%
At-home fitness	50%	75%	67%
	49%	64%	66%
Social connectedness	48%	71%	46%
	54%	70%	47%
Fertility and family planning	46%	56%	34%
	43%	48%	30%
Relationship and sexual health	36%	66%	34%
	39%	39%	30%

In some cases, there's a large gap between what these generations think employers should offer, what they currently have and use, and what they'd use if they had access. For example:

GEN Z EMPLOYEES

Mental and emotional health programs



8 in 10

think employers should offer

7 in 10 (66%)

would use these programs if provided

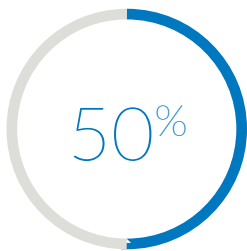
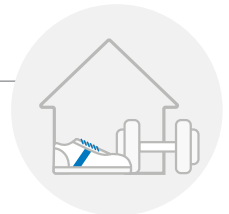
3 in 10 (32%)

have access to and use these programs

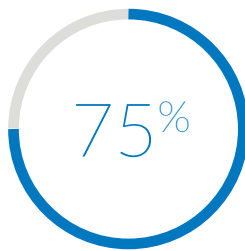
That's a significant drop!

MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

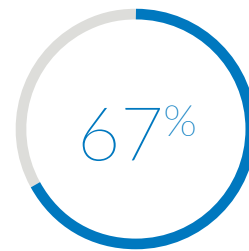
At-home fitness



think employers should offer



use this benefit



would use benefit if provided

The data indicates that more people use programs like at-home fitness, even though they don't think their employer should offer it. Why is there such a gap between these areas? There could be several reasons.

It's a social norm.

These generations—especially Gen Z—are known for being inclusive and passionate about the causes they care about. They're more community-oriented, loyal to causes, and empathetic to others' unique experiences. And, they may be more likely to want to work for a company that supports diverse populations and supports the causes they care about most.

This could lend itself to the high expectations for things like pain medication addiction support, LGBTQ resources, and caregiver support. These generations might expect that programs should be available for those who need that type of support, even if they don't need to use it themselves.



There's a lack of awareness.

It's up to the employer to make sure they're communicating about their offerings well. If not, organizations risk losing out on their investments, since people can't use these programs if they don't know they exist. For millennials and Gen Z, perhaps they're unaware that their employer offers benefits like mental and emotional health support, which could explain the low usage rates for these cohorts.

Younger generations also expect things to be quick and convenient, so if they must dig deep into a benefits list to find the information they need, they'll likely quit before they even begin. Organizations must make sure their benefits are front and center, easy to find, and easy to use if they want to make the most of their investments.

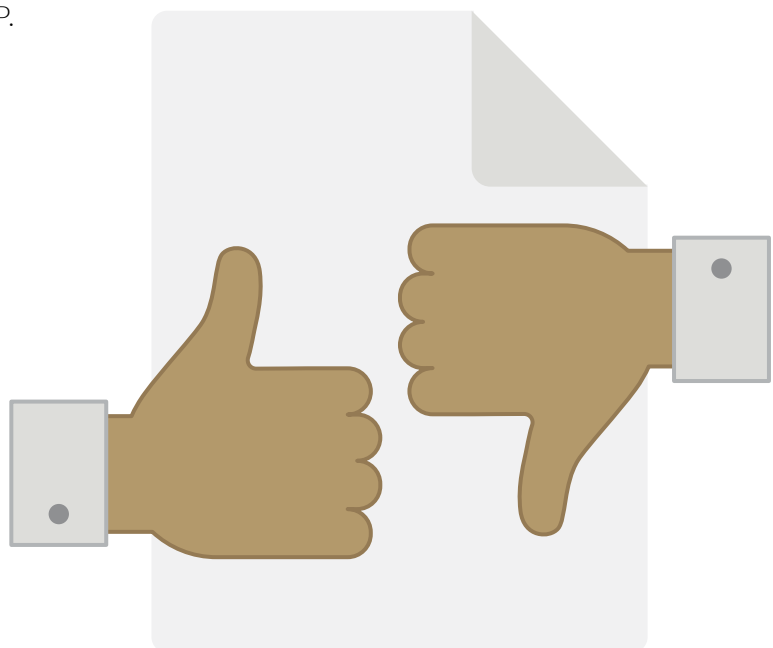


The existing programs aren't good enough.

Many decisions go into creating a well-rounded benefits package. And while some offerings may have been well-meaning when added into an organization's perks, they might be falling flat. It's essential to ensure every offering has been thought through, and is meaningful for populations.

For example, many companies simply offer an employee assistance program (EAP) and call that their mental health support. But is that enough? If the engagement metrics are low, it might not be. There are other mental and emotional health capabilities that organizations can add to better support their workforce. For example, offering a wide variety of modalities such as meditation apps, resilience training, mental and emotional health podcasts, and more are likely to appeal to a wider population than only offering a standard EAP.

Adding a variety of support helps increase the chances that there's something meaningful for every employee. When this happens, they're more likely to interact and engage with the program. And it doesn't stop there. We conducted a study that showed that the more touchpoints a participant has with a well-being program, the greater the reduction in health risks.³ Following this logic, it's fair to reason that the more meaningful your offerings are to your population, the more they'll use them—and it can improve their health. This creates an array of benefits, including greater productivity, better morale, higher retention rates, and lower healthcare costs for both the employee and the employer. It's a win-win.



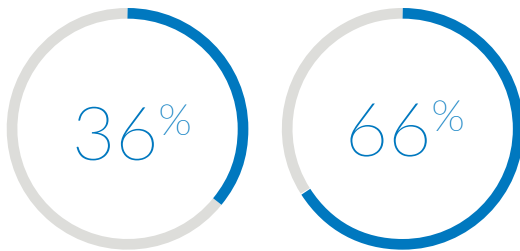
3. Seaverson, E. L., Gingerich, S. B., Mangen, D. J., & Anderson, D. R. (2019). Measuring Participation in Employer-Sponsored Health and Well-Being Programs: A Participation Index and Its Association With Health Risk Change. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 33(7), 1002-1008. doi:10.1177/0890117119838800

They want it, but don't think it's the employer's responsibility to offer—at least not yet.

It's likely that these generations don't think employers should be responsible for offering some of these modern benefits, such as relationship and sexual health support. The data supports this:

MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

Relationship and sexual health



think employers should offer

use this benefit

MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES GEN Z EMPLOYEES

Social connectedness



think employers should offer

use this benefit

These generations may think that they can find support on their own instead of expecting their employer to give them access to things like sexual health support, social connectedness, and fitness

programs. However, it's clear that they still appreciate it when their employer does offer some kind of benefit in these areas, as they use them in much higher percentages.

THE TAKEAWAYS

It's not that younger generations want more—it's that they expect more, and, truthfully, they need more.

These generations grew up with more stress and anxiety than ever before, and they need help. They're struggling with finances, mental health, physical wellness, social connectedness, and more at unprecedented levels.⁴



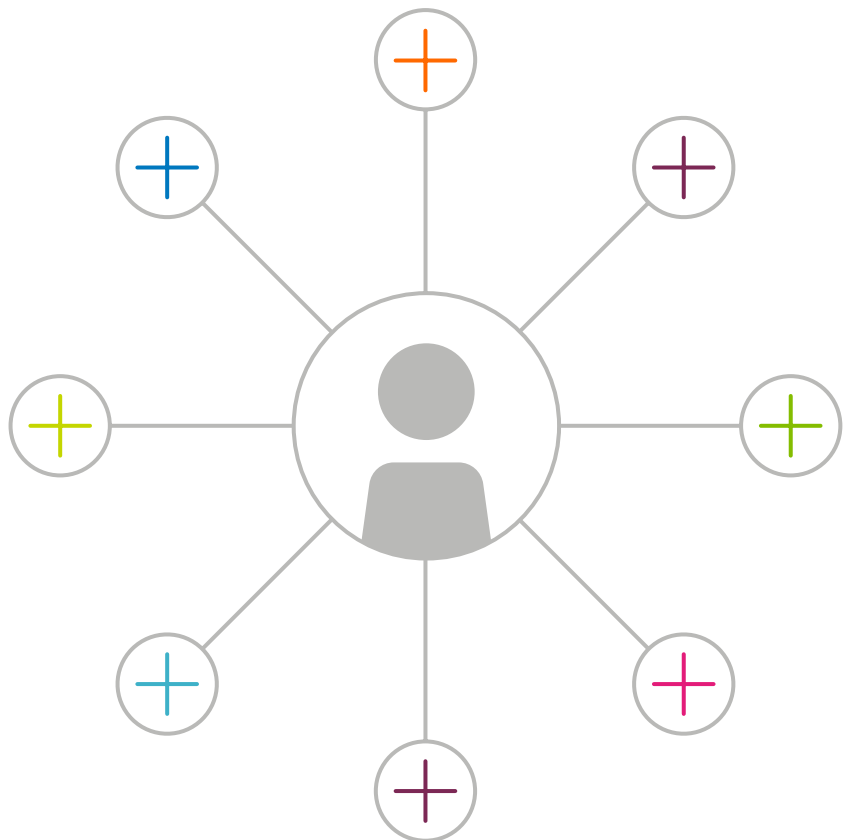
If you're trying to attract and retain these younger generations, it's critical to offer programs that will help support them in these key areas. And, as more and more people from Gen Z enter the workforce, programs must continue to evolve to support their needs and expectations.

Here are some things organizations should do now to better support millennials and Gen Z in the workforce. →

4. WebMD Health Services. The Impact of COVID-19: What Employers Need to Know. 2020.

Provide holistic benefits.

Like we said before, a traditional benefits package won't cut it anymore. The newer employees have entered the workforce, and they need more than just decent wages and a physical wellness component to be satisfied with their job. To attract and retain these workers, it's critical to provide support for all aspects of their lives—even ones that may not necessarily be considered an employer's responsibility to offer. These include areas like relationship and sexual health, fertility and family planning, and caregiver support.



Support your younger employees.

Well-being programs designed to support the needs of millennials and Gen Z may have the most impact on your bottom line. These generations are more likely to use programs that support their lives, even outside of working hours, so it's critical to include a well-rounded, holistic program that meets all their needs.

Based on these generations' interests, needs and usage, we've identified four programs that are absolutely essential to incorporate into your organization's benefits: mental and emotional health, caregiver support, at-home fitness, and social connectedness.

Across all types of well-being programs offered, this population is most likely to have used them, so it's fair to reason that they'll use more offerings you provide in the future as well. Some examples of holistic offerings you can add to your benefits package include:



Mental and emotional health programs

- Resilience training
- Meditation apps
- Mental health podcasts
- Educational workshops



Caregiver support

- Onsite daycare
- Flexible work arrangements
- Additional paid time off



At-home fitness

- Virtual group exercise classes
- 1:1 fitness coaching
- Stream videos for individual exercises, yoga, meditation and more
- Team and individual wellness challenges



Social connectedness

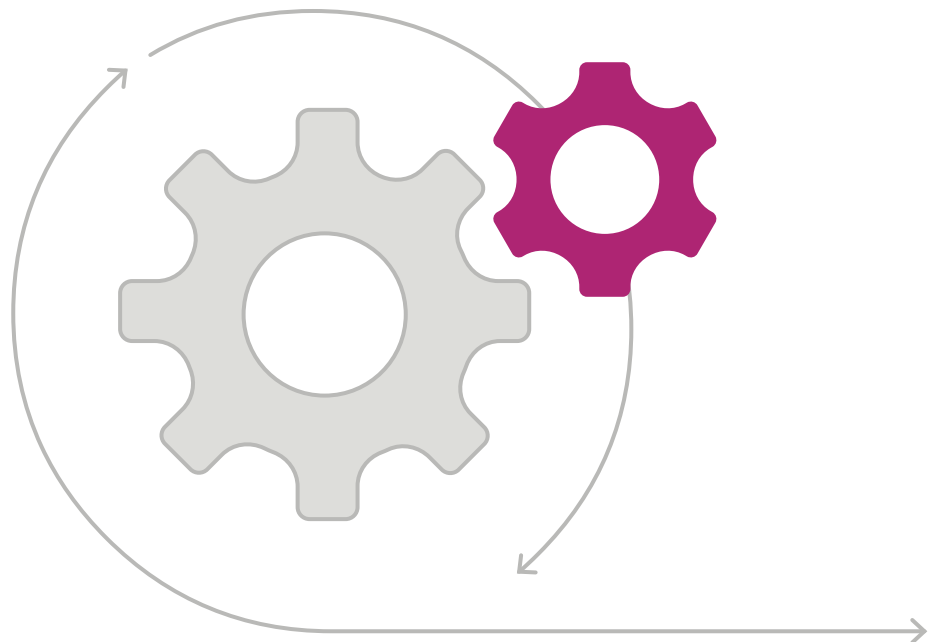
- Community virtual groups, like book clubs or wine tasting events
- Volunteer committee
- Team stand-ups to stay connected
- Town halls and employee recognitions

Evolve your program.

As younger generations continue to enter the workforce, we predict that they'll expect even more from their employers. Make sure your benefits package is agile enough to pivot when things need to be altered or added, so you can maintain the level of support your employees need.

If you aren't sure what types of benefits your workforce needs most, ask them. We recommend distributing pulse surveys to collect information on

which programs you offer that they like using, as well as which programs they may want to see from you in the future. That way, you can ensure that everything you do is designed with the employee's experience—and your company's positive culture—in mind.



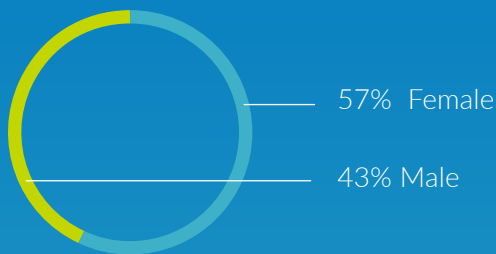
METHODOLOGY/ABOUT THIS REPORT

To better understand which programs employees want from employers, WebMD Health Services commissioned Blue Research® to conduct an independent study with 1,002 U.S.-based employees of companies with at least 1,000 employees. This ~15-minute survey was conducted blind without disclosing the research sponsor and included the flow, logic, and quality control metrics needed to ensure valid and reliable data, while minimizing respondent fatigue.

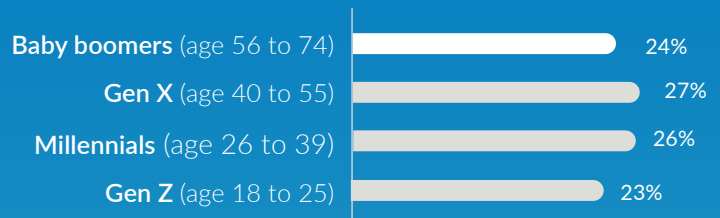
The sampling framework ensured the data was not biased to any specific industries, locations, or functional roles within organizations, such as factory floor vs. office personnel. We also gathered data from a close representation of all four generations currently in the workforce: baby boomers, Gen Xers, millennials, and Gen Zers. We asked respondents about the programs they think employers should offer, which ones they currently use, and which ones they would likely use if given the opportunity.

Participant Demographics

GENDER



GENERATION



Definitions

A guide to terminology used in the study and its findings.

Fertility and Family Planning:

Helps employees who are trying to start a family, but are having trouble doing so, by providing help in finding the right doctor for them, helping them understand their options and providing emotional support.

Relationships and Sexual Health:

Helps employee couples of all types (straight, gay, polyamorous, etc.) improve their relationships and sexual health.

Mental and Emotional Health:

Offers on-demand access to coaches or services that can help employees manage symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress or focus attention on mindfulness, meditation and gratitude.

LGBTQ Resources:

Offers tools such as support groups, educational content, etc., to help support employees dealing with challenges such as questioning their sexuality, coming out at work, exploring gender reassignment, parenting a gay youth, etc.

At-Home Fitness:

Offers employees reimbursement on in-home fitness equipment and/or offers access to on-demand and live streaming exercises or access to a fitness trainer.

Caregiver Support:

Offers employees guidance and benefits for caring for a family member (aging parent or child).

Paid Medication Addiction:

Offers employees online or phone access to support for addiction to pain medications (such as opioids) through a variety of approaches including educational content and coaching.

Social Connectedness:

Offers employees the opportunity to host or participate in virtual social events (such as book clubs, happy hours, exercise classes, etc.) with coworkers, friends, family or others with similar interests.

Are you **Ready?**

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partner you can trust.

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