

The American Heart Association's 2026 Voice of the Employee Survey



Uncovering the evolving health needs, expectations, and priorities of today's workforce

Key highlights from the Voice of the Employee Survey. Research conducted online by The Harris Poll from February 26-March 12, 2026 among 2,001 US full-time/part-time employed adults at companies with 25+ employees, who are enrolled in / provided coverage through a health plan offered by their employer.

Employees Are Motivated to Improve Their Health - But Face Serious Challenges



Are currently trying to improve their health and well-being.



Agree that their job makes it difficult to prioritize their health.



Financial Strain: Rising Healthcare Costs Forcing Tough Choices for Workers

Around half of employees are struggling to afford day-to-day expenses or contribute to retirement savings due to unaffordable healthcare costs.

50%

Report that rising healthcare costs have made it difficult for them to pay for basic day-to-day expenses such as food, rent, and childcare.

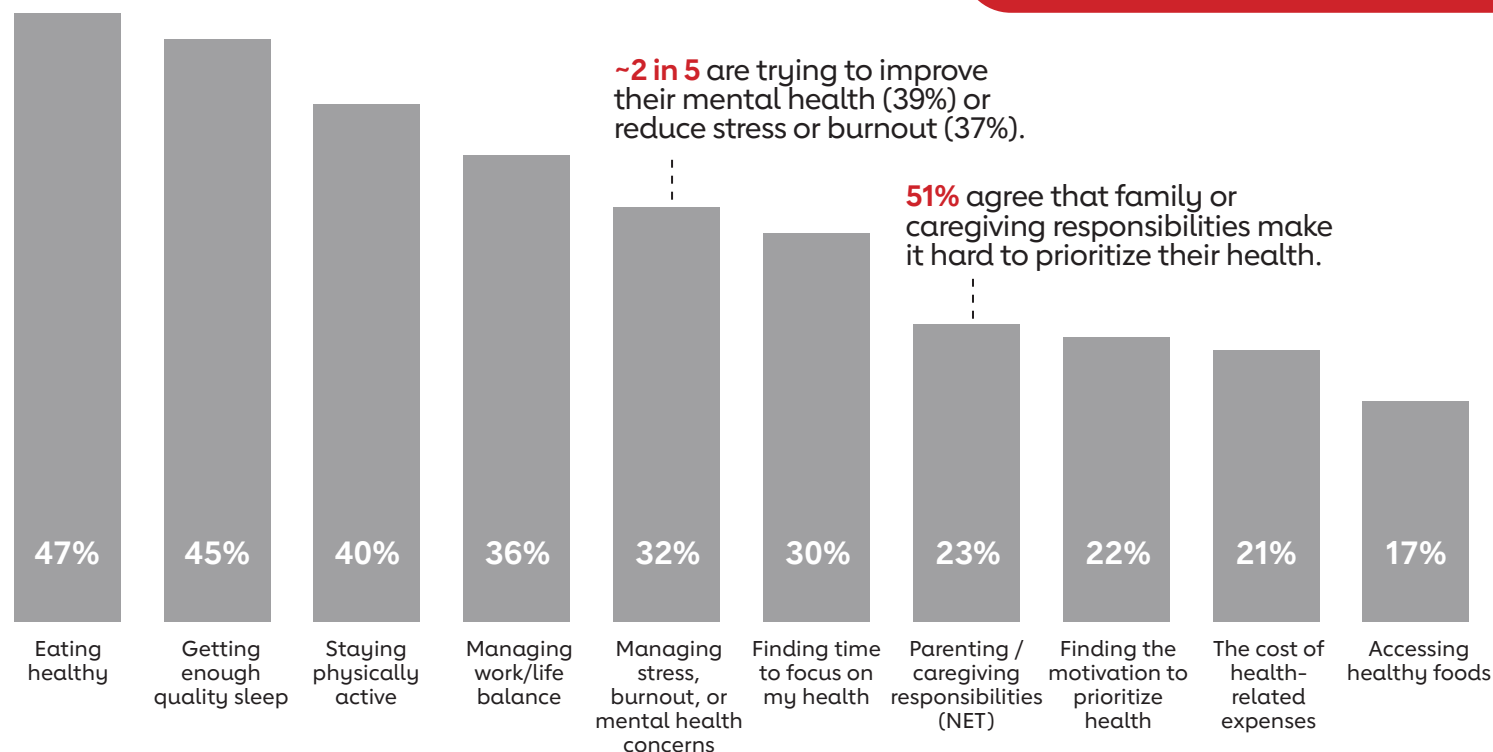
Even a third of those with higher income levels (\$200K+) agree with this (35%)

47%

Report that to afford healthcare costs and maintain a healthy lifestyle, they have had to reduce or stop contributing to retirement savings.

Even over a third of those with higher income levels (\$200K+) agree (37%).

Top Challenges to Managing Health



| Support for Caregivers is Critical

Employees want meaningful caregiving support reflected in benefits, with strongest demand centered on childcare and parental leave and added interest in elder and respite care.

~1 in 3

Identify as a caregiver (35%), providing unpaid care or support to a friend or family member.

Nearly half

of caregivers (47%) say one of their top health and lifestyle goals is improving their mental health.

~3 in 5

Caregivers believe employers should provide caregiver support to their employees (childcare (43%), elder care (27%), and respite care (23%)).

70%

of caregivers agree that family or caregiving responsibilities make it hard to prioritize their health.



Key Takeaways

01

Employees want to prioritize their health, but are limited by competing demands in their work and personal lives.

02

Rising costs, including a growing healthcare affordability crisis, make health and financial decisions even more difficult.

03

Caregivers, who make up a large share of the workforce, need targeted support to manage complex responsibilities.

EMPLOYEES SEEK SOLUTIONS TO MAXIMIZE THEIR WELL-BEING

84%

Cite challenges navigating employer-provided health benefits, including estimating costs (33%) and understanding what is covered (27%).

86%

Employees are already using a variety of tools (e.g., gym memberships, wearables, and health/fitness apps) today to help them manage their health.

INCLUDING

~1 in 4



Who are using AI tools (28%) to address their top health challenges, most commonly for:

48% 

Suggestions for managing stress or anxiety

47% 

Creating workout routines

42% 

Tracking health goals or wearable fitness data

41% 

Identifying possible causes of symptoms

41% 

Developing meal plans or nutrition guidance

| Employees Look to Leaders to Set the Tone on Health

Employees are looking to their company leaders for guidance on how to harmonize their health and work responsibilities, and desire support in navigating the benefits that are available to them.



Health and well-being should be reflected in their organization's values and policies.



Employee health and well-being should be supported through how they work day-to-day, not just through policies or program offerings.



Would welcome more health-related support from their employer.



Senior leaders should model healthy behavior to contribute to a workplace culture that supports healthy living.



Believe their employer genuinely wants to support their health and well-being.



It is important that their employer provides opportunities to engage or volunteer with health causes.

Organizations that address these opportunities through practical, accessible solutions that are embedded in daily work are better positioned to improve well-being, sustain performance, and retain talent.

The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Heart Association among 2,001 employees (defined as U.S. adults age 18+ who are employed full or part time (not self) with a company with 25+ employees, are enrolled in a health plan offered by their employer, and their coverage is provided by their employer (i.e., they did not receive a stipend)). The survey was conducted February 26 – March 12, 2026.

Data are weighted where necessary by age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, employment, household income, as well as company size in order to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.