



JUNE 2026



The 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey Report

Table of Contents

- The 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey Report..... 1
- Executive Summary 1
- Workplace and Employee Survey..... 1
- Defining Holistic Well-Being 2
- Study Findings..... 3
- Drivers of Workplace Change 6
- Employee Readiness To Change vs. Organizational Support for Change..... 7
- The Care Compass: A Reimagined Approach 14
- The Guiding Principles: What It Means To CARE..... 16
- Conclusions..... 17



The 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey Report

Executive Summary

The 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, conducted by the Center for Research at WebMD Health Services, surveyed 3,872 full-time U.S. employees to examine the current state of workforce well-being and identify how organizations can better support their people.

The findings are clear: employee well-being is declining at a time when it is most needed. High well-being has fallen 11% since 2024, while low well-being has surged 39%. The decline is sharpest across mental health, work, social, and financial dimensions, deteriorating at a rate of 3 to 4 times greater than physical well-being. Financial well-being remains the lowest across all dimensions for the third consecutive year.

Three considerations define the workforce landscape. AI adoption in the workplace is near-universal, but the most productive AI users carry a burnout risk 4.5 times higher than their peers. Engagement and well-being are deeply unequal across role levels, with individual contributors reporting 3 times lower engagement than senior leaders, while middle managers carry the heaviest burnout burden of all. And trust—long absent from the well-being conversation—is one of the strongest predictors of both well-being and engagement in the dataset, driven almost entirely by how supported employees feel.

In response, this report introduces the Care Compass, a strategic framework that connects well-being programs, organizational care, and trust-building into a unified, people-centered approach. The goal is not more programs. It is a lasting impact, and that requires integration, intentionality, and a genuine commitment to every employee at every level.

Workplace and Employee Survey

Study Purpose

The 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey was launched in February 2026 and was designed to:

- Explore how individual and organizational factors influence employee perceptions of their well-being, work, and workplace.
- Understand employees' needs and identify ways that employers can support them.
- Provide practical guidance to inform employer strategies to meet evolving needs both at work and in daily life.



Research Methods

The online survey conducted by the Center for Research at WebMD Health Services included 3,872 full-time employees based in the U.S. and collected information on key concepts related to employee experience, including well-being and mental health, organizational care, employee engagement, burnout, and quality of life. Additional data was gathered on individual demographics, job details, and organizational factors, including industry, organization size, work arrangement, role, and tenure.

This report presents our latest survey findings on the state of workforce well-being, outlines key organizational considerations, and reintroduces organizational care as a foundational concept within the Care Compass, one that is deeply interconnected with individual well-being and the programs designed to support it.

Defining Holistic Well-Being

Defining Well-Being at WebMD Health Services

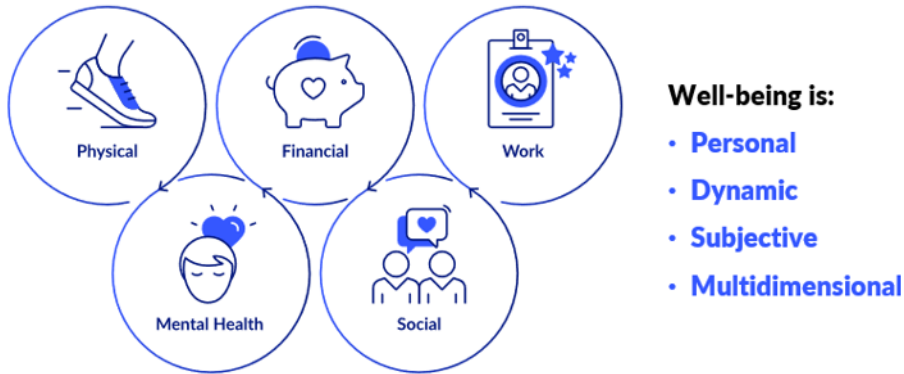
At WebMD Health Services, we view well-being as not a fixed concept, nor something that is experienced the same way by any two people. At its core, well-being is deeply personal and subjective. It is shaped by how an individual thinks and feels, and it reflects the unique circumstances, values, and lived experiences that define each person's life.

Well-being is also dynamic. Rather than a static destination with a defined endpoint, it is best understood as an ongoing process that shifts and evolves in response to life changes, challenges, and growth. This distinction is important: supporting well-being means supporting a journey and one that is consistently evolving, not simply delivering a one-time solution.

A Multi-Dimensional View

Because individuals are inherently complex and unique, a single-dimensional view of well-being is insufficient. Well-being encompasses multiple interconnected dimensions: physical, mental health, work, social, and financial. Each dimension influences the others. This understanding serves as a central tenet for how organizations should define their well-being strategy.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Well-Being



Study Findings

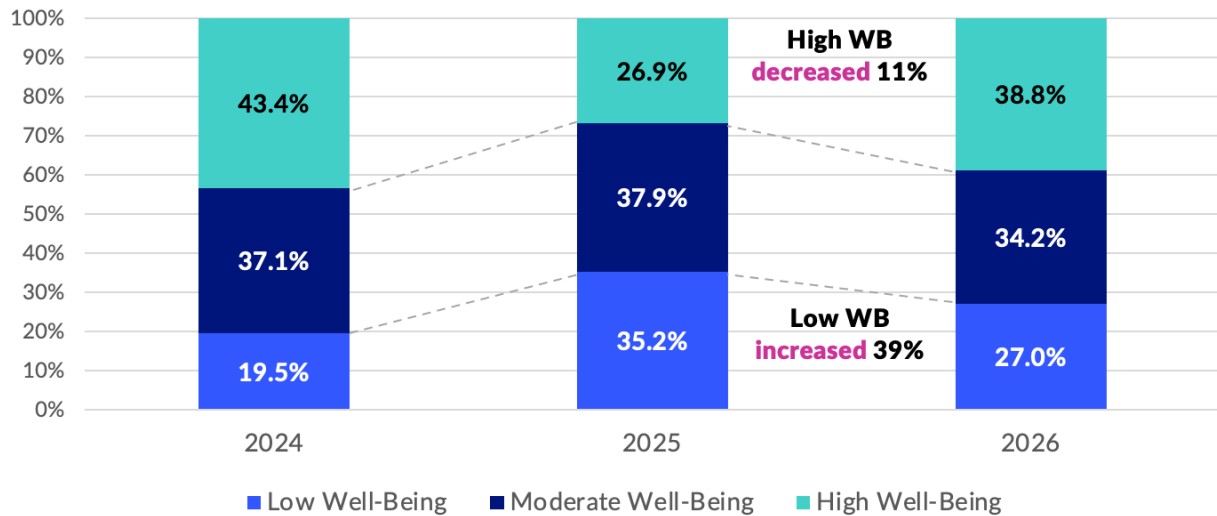
The Current State of the Workforce (2024-2026)

Longitudinal tracking of employee well-being reveals a trajectory that merits our attention. Comparing 2024 and 2026 survey results, the data surfaces a significant decline across the workforce.

Key Findings:

- High well-being has decreased by 11%, dropping from 43.4% in 2024 to 38.8% in 2026. Fewer employees are thriving today than they were two years ago.
- Low well-being has increased by 39%, rising from 19.5% in 2024 to 27.0% in 2026. More than 1 in 4 employees now report low well-being, a substantial and concerning shift.

Figure 2. The Current State of the Workforce (2024-2026)



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2024 Workplace and Employee Survey, n=3,653; 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

Year-over-year tracking provides important context for these findings:

- Well-being scores experienced a significant decline in 2025, representing the steepest single year drop in the tracking period.
- The 2026 data show a partial rebound, suggesting some positive movement following the 2025 low point.
- Despite this recovery, scores remain below 2024 levels, indicating that the gains of recent years have not been fully restored.

Breaking down the 2026 data across the five dimensions of well-being reveals a clear picture of relative strengths and persistent gaps within the employee experience.

Key Findings:

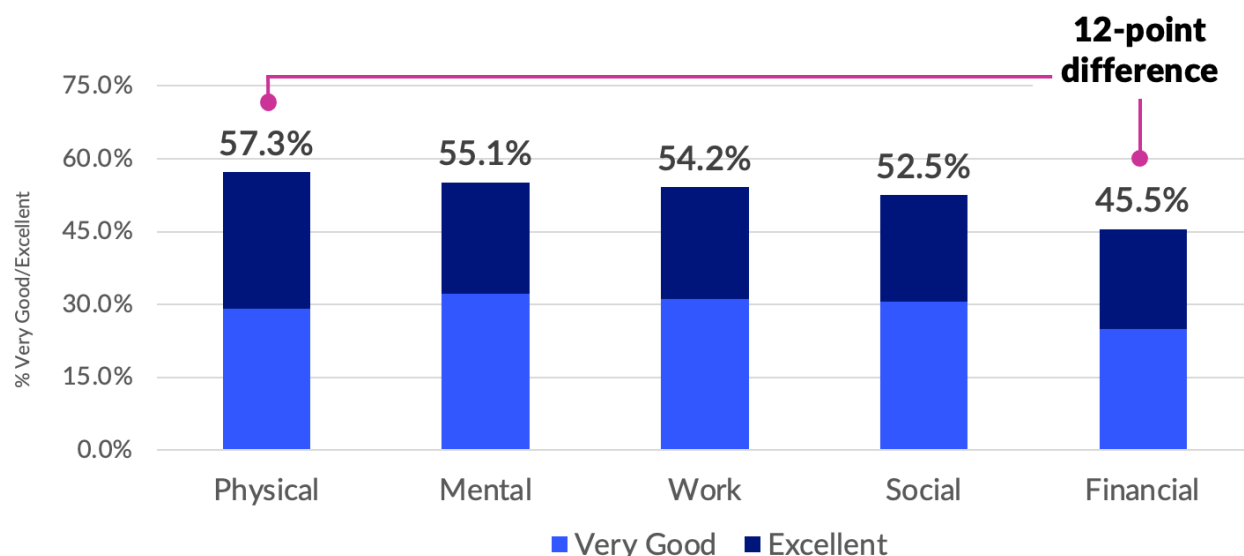
- Physical well-being ranks highest among all dimensions, with 57.3% of employees rating it as very good or excellent. This represents the strongest area of employee well-being in 2026.
- Financial well-being ranks lowest, with only 45.5% of employees reporting strong financial well-being. This gap of nearly 12 percentage points between the highest and lowest dimensions is notable.

The underperformance of financial well-being is not a new development. Financial well-being has ranked last across several consecutive years of tracking, making it an unresolved challenge for the workforce. When the data are examined over time, this sustained gap becomes even more apparent, reinforcing that financial well-being requires dedicated, targeted attention rather than a generalized well-being approach.

The 12-point spread between physical and financial well-being highlights an important imbalance in how employees are experiencing support across dimensions. While physical health initiatives appear to be resonating, financial well-being remains a persistent gap that organizations have yet to meaningfully close.

Given the interconnected nature of the five dimensions, prolonged financial stress may carry downstream effects on mental health, work engagement, and overall quality of life.

Figure 3. State of Well-Being in 2026



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

Dramatic Shift in Employee Well-Being

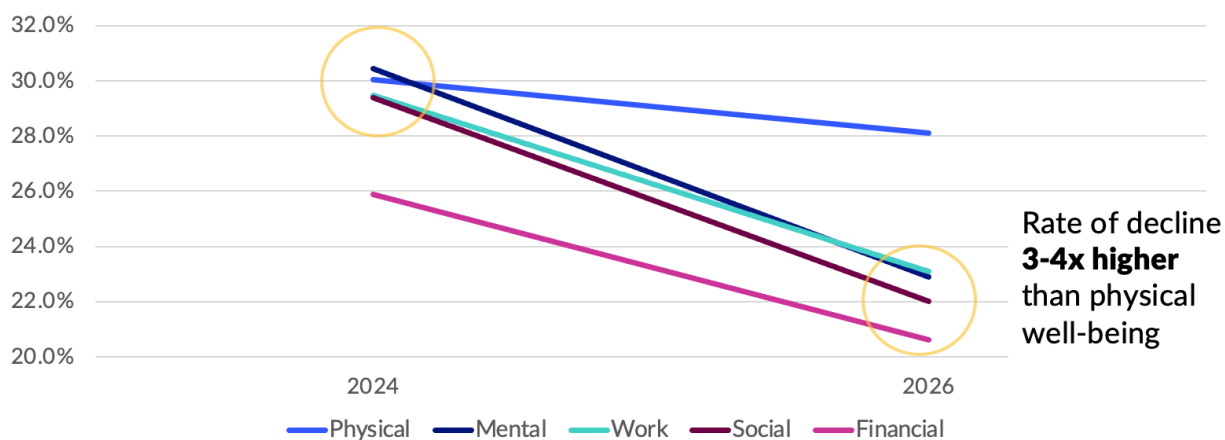
While overall well-being has declined since 2024, the rate of decline has varied across all five dimensions. This divergence presents important implications for how organizations should respond.

Key Findings:

- Physical well-being declined slightly from 2024 to 2026.

- Mental health, work, social, and financial well-being have experienced declines at a rate of 3 to 4 times greater than that of physical well-being. This acceleration suggests that employees are facing compounding pressures across the dimensions most tied to their sense of purpose, connection, security, and psychological health.
- The data also reveals a significant shift in the relationship between physical well-being and other dimensions. Where these dimensions once tracked more closely together, a visible and growing gap has emerged, with physical well-being pulling away as the sole area of relative stability.

Figure 4. Dramatic Shift in Employee Well-Being



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2024 Workplace and Employee Survey, n=3,653; 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872. % Excellent by well-being dimension.

The divergence between physical well-being and the remaining four dimensions reflects a meaningful change in the nature of the challenges that employees are facing. Physical health programs have long been the cornerstone of organizational well-being strategies, and their relative resilience suggests these investments are being held. However, the accelerated decline in mental health, work, social, and financial well-being reveals that the pressures employees face today extend well beyond what physical health programs alone can address.

This shift demands a recalibration of organizational well-being strategy. A portfolio weighted heavily toward physical health is no longer sufficient to meet the full scope of employee need. The dimensions experiencing the sharpest declines—mental health, work, social, and financial well-being—require targeted, evidence-based investment and a level of strategic attention that matches the urgency of the trend.

Drivers of Workplace Change

Employees today are navigating change at an unprecedented pace. For employees to effectively navigate the uncertainty naturally associated with change, they must first be well.



Static, program-based approaches designed for a more stable environment are increasingly insufficient in meeting the dynamic and diverse needs of today's workforce. Well-being is not a secondary consideration in times of change. It is a prerequisite for resilience, adaptability, and sustained performance.

We identify three primary forces fundamentally altering the workplace landscape:

- **Evolving Work Practices:** The rapid pace of technological advancement, compressed work cycles, and evolving processes.
- **Distributed/Hybrid Work:** Coordination demands and distinct needs arising from a mix of in-office, remote, and hybrid arrangements.
- **External Pressures:** Market volatility, societal stress, changing talent expectations, and demographic shifts.

The encouraging reality is that the field of employee well-being continues to advance. Research is deepening the understanding of what employees need and expect from work, providing organizations with a stronger foundation on which to build strategies that are responsive, relevant, and genuinely impactful. The challenge for organizations is to keep pace with that understanding and to translate it into action before the gap between what employees need and what they receive continues to widen.

Employee Readiness for Change vs. Organizational Support for Change

What determines whether employees thrive or struggle through periods of transition is not the nature of the change itself; it is the degree to which they feel supported along the way.

This study examined two critical dimensions: employees' confidence in their own ability to manage change and their perception of the support provided by their organizations.

Key Findings:

- **90%** of employees report feeling confident in their ability to handle and adapt to changes at work.
- Despite this personal resilience, **more than 1 in 3 employees** feel their organization is not providing adequate support to help them navigate change effectively.

This gap between individual readiness and organizational support represents a significant risk. While employees demonstrate strong personal resilience, unmet expectations for organizational support can erode engagement, trust, and long-term adaptability.

To deepen the understanding of what employees are experiencing today and to identify opportunities to better support them through change, this study explores several key areas across the current landscape.

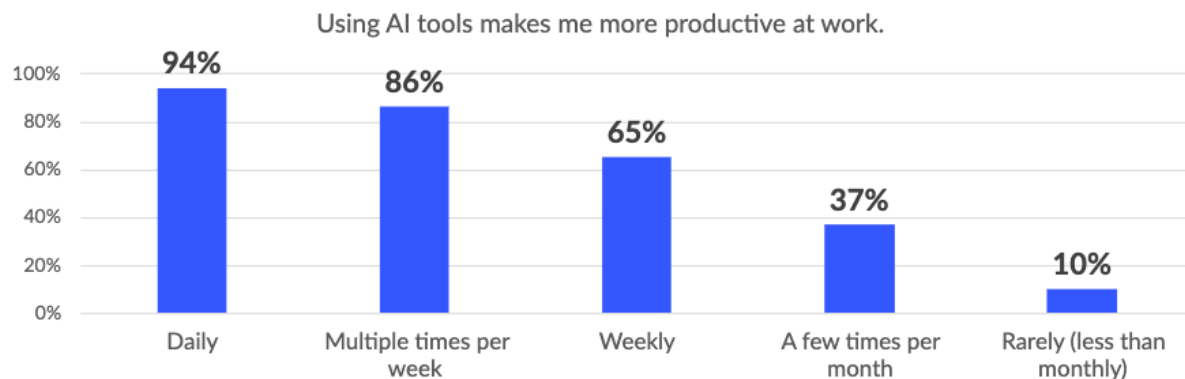
Consideration #1: Use of AI in the Workplace

Our research shows a rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, with 80% of employees already using AI at work. AI integration is a present reality rather than a future ambition for most organizations.

Key Findings:

- There is a direct correlation between frequency of use and felt productivity. The more regularly employees engage with AI tools, the more productive they feel. Among daily AI users, 94% believe these tools make them more productive at their jobs, compared to only 10% of those who rarely use AI.

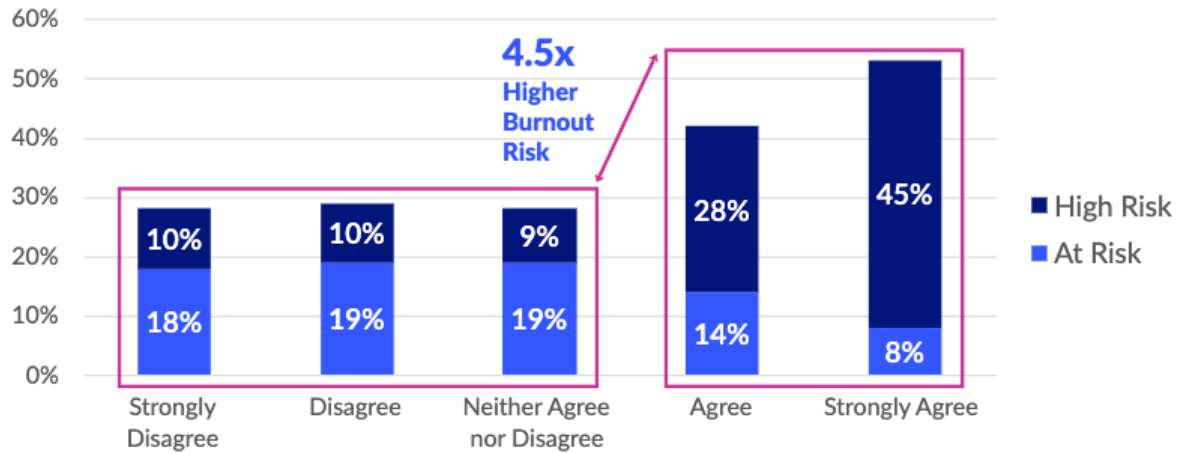
Figure 5. Use of AI and Productivity



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872. Respondents rated their agreement with: "Using AI tools makes me more productive at work."

However, productivity gains come with a notable psychological trade-off. Employees who strongly agree that AI makes them more productive carry a burnout risk 4.5 times higher than those who are neutral or disagree. This paradox reveals a critical tension: the very employees delivering the greatest productivity gains through AI are simultaneously the most vulnerable to burnout.

Figure 6. The AI Productivity Paradox



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872. Based on the 80% of respondents who reported using AI at work.

As AI adoption accelerates, organizations must recognize that increased output and increased risk are rising together, and act accordingly to protect the well-being of their highest-performing employees.

Consideration #2: Differential Workforce Experiences

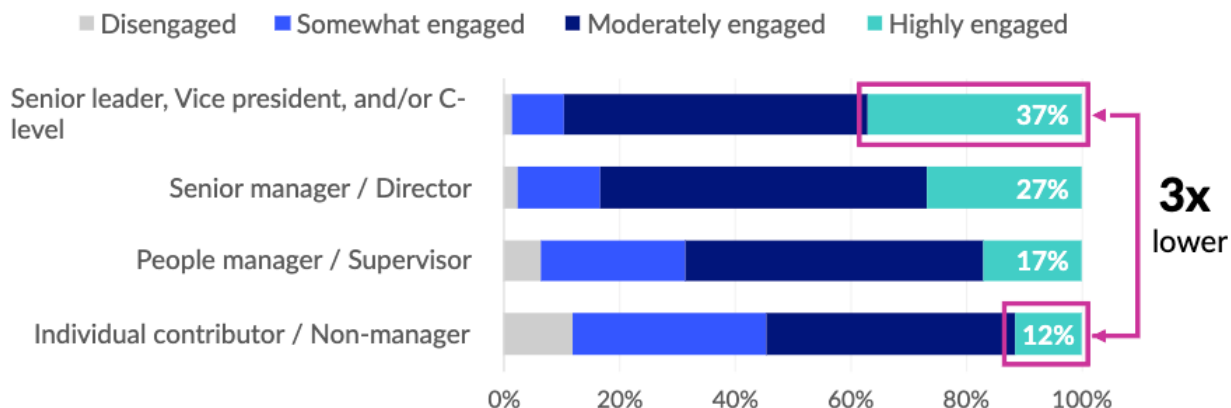
Employee engagement has reached a critical inflection point. Consistent with [Gallup's findings](#) of record-low engagement globally and in the United States¹, our research surfaces an equally pressing concern: a widening engagement divide within organizations themselves.

Employee Engagement

When engagement data is examined by role, a stark disparity emerges across the workforce. Only 1 in 10 individual contributors report being highly engaged at work—that's 3 times lower than the engagement levels reported by senior leaders. Given that individual contributors represent the largest segment of the workforce, this gap has significant implications for overall organizational health and performance.

¹ Gallup's Report

Figure 7. The Engagement Divide

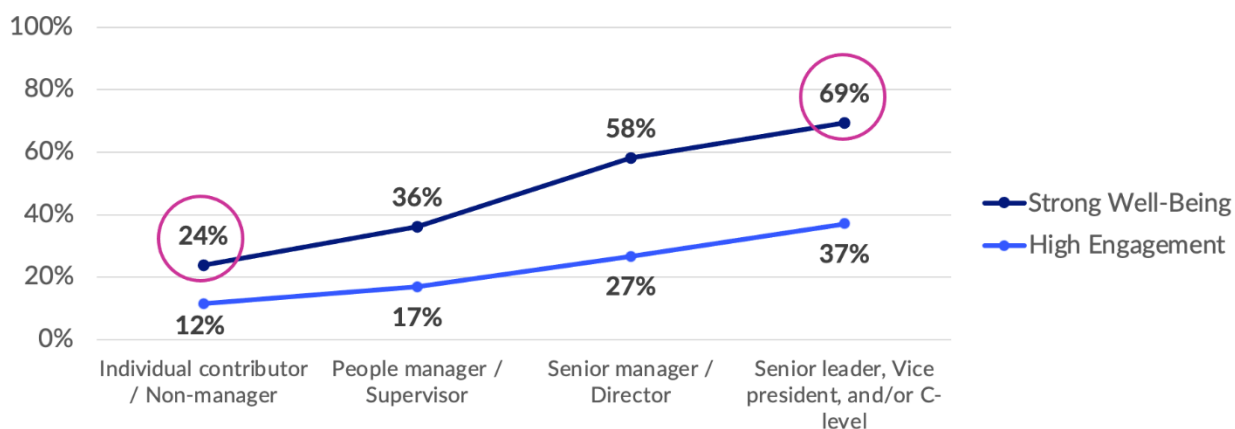


WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

Well-Being

The divide between individual contributors and senior leaders extends beyond employee engagement, and it is equally reflected in employee well-being. Senior leaders report strong well-being at nearly 3 times the rate of individual contributors, mirroring the same disparity seen in engagement levels.

Figure 8. The Well-Being Gap



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872. "Strong Well-Being" is defined as a high composite score (>= 20) across five dimensions—Physical, Mental, Work, Social, and Financial.

Burnout

The effects of this hierarchical divide do not remain contained at either end of the organization. The impact flows inward, placing significant strain on those who serve as the connective tissue between leadership and the frontline: middle managers.

Middle managers are uniquely positioned to bridge organizational gaps. They are expected to manage both upward and downward, drive culture, champion strategy, and support their teams. Yet the data reveals that this responsibility comes at a steep personal cost. Senior managers carry the heaviest burnout burden across all role levels, registering burnout rates more than 3 times higher than individual contributors and surpassing even senior leaders. This level of burden is especially concerning given that it is not reflected in a corresponding level of engagement or well-being. Middle managers are being asked to hold the organization together while quietly bearing the greatest strain within it.

Figure 9. The Middle-Manager Burnout Crisis



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

Implications

The data reveals a workforce that is deeply divided along hierarchical lines. Individual contributors report consistently lower engagement and well-being than senior leaders, while middle managers absorb the pressure from both ends without adequate support in return.

Every employee, from individual contributors to senior leaders, deserves to feel engaged, valued, and well at work. While roles and responsibilities differ across levels, the fundamental need to feel supported should not. This is particularly relevant when designing personalized well-being programs, where a one-size-fits-all approach risks overlooking the distinct and

varied experiences across the workforce. The goal must be to understand and support every employee at every level.

Consideration #3: The Trust Relationship

AI is reshaping how people work. Beneath that sits a workforce deeply divided by experience across hierarchical levels. In this environment, the critical question becomes: how do organizations equip their workforce to navigate ongoing change and sustain resilience over time? The data points to a clear and perhaps underrecognized answer: trust.

Reframing Trust as a Well-Being Imperative

Trust has historically been absent from the well-being conversation. It was often perceived as too intangible or too far outside the scope of a well-being program. The data challenges that assumption directly. Trust is not peripheral to well-being. It is one of its most powerful drivers and must be treated as a core component of any well-being strategy.

Employees with high organizational trust are nearly 6 times more likely to report strong well-being than those with low trust. The role, the job, and the company remain the same. The differentiating factor is trust alone. The relationship between trust and employee engagement with work is even more pronounced. High-trust employees are 27 times more likely to be highly engaged than their low-trust counterparts. This is not a 27% difference—it is a 27-fold difference.

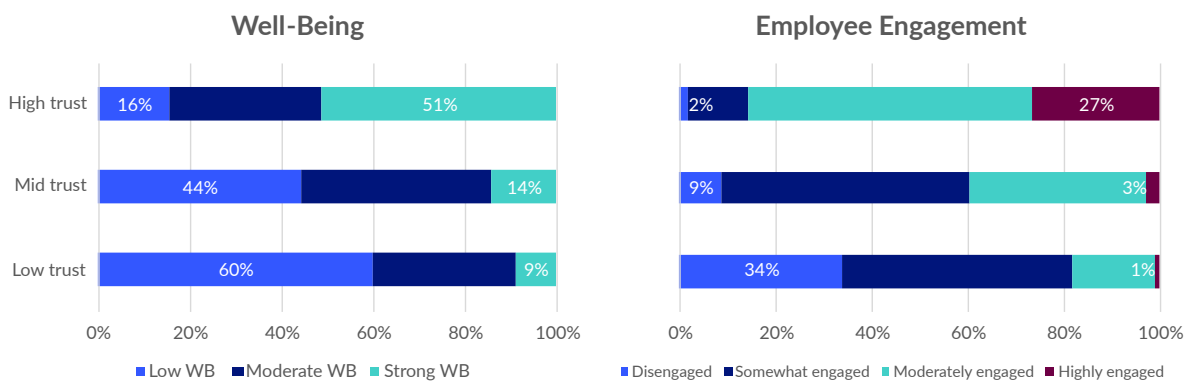
The pattern is consistent and compelling: where trust is high, well-being and engagement follow. Trust is not a byproduct of a healthy organization. It is the foundation upon which one is built.

Figure 10. The Impact of Trust on Well-Being and Engagement

High Trust Employees Are:



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

The Path To Trust

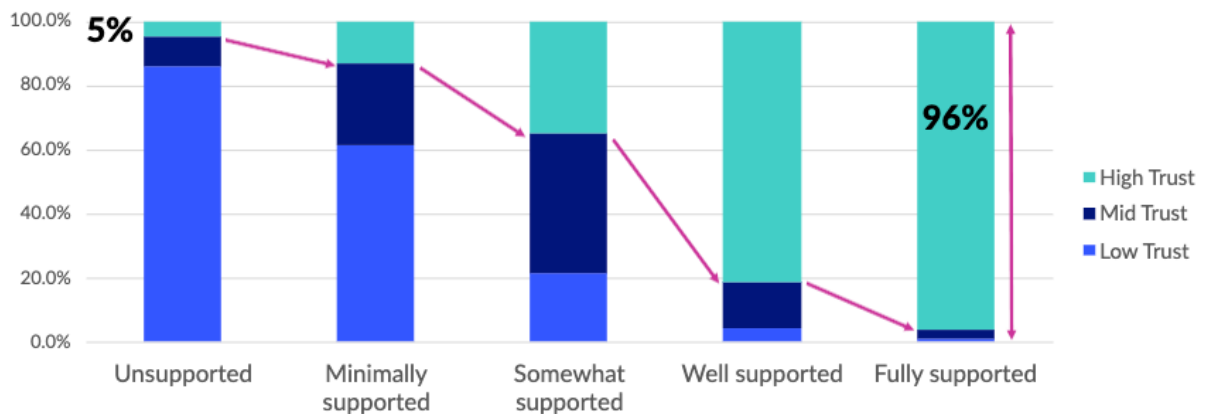
Understanding the value of trust raises an important and practical question: how is trust actually built? The data provides a clear answer, and it connects directly to findings explored earlier in this report.

When employees' sense of personal readiness during change was cross tabulated with their level of organizational trust, one of the strongest relationships in the dataset emerged. How supported an employee feels during times of uncertainty is nearly a perfect predictor of how much they trust their organization.

- Only 5% of employees who feel completely unsupported report high organizational trust.
- 96% of employees who feel fully supported report high organizational trust.

From 5% to 96%, the only variable that changed is how supported employees feel. This finding reinforces that support is the primary means through which employees experience organizational care, and that care is the currency of trust.

Figure 11. The Path To Trust



WebMD Health Services, Center for Research, 2026 Workplace and Employee Survey, n = 3,872.

Implications

Building trust requires deliberate, intentional, and consistent action over time. This is precisely why well-being programs carry significance well beyond their individual offerings and benefits, particularly during periods of uncertainty and change. A well-being program, designed and executed with genuine intention, is one of the most consistent and visible signals an organization can send that it truly values its people.

This reframes from how well-being programs should be understood and measured. They are not simply vehicles for benefits delivery. They are strategic instruments for building trust, support, and care that enable employees to thrive, regardless of role, level, or the changes they face.

The imperative, then, is to move from isolated well-being initiatives to a connected, intentional strategy that integrates trust, support, and care into a cohesive approach that reaches every employee and builds the culture in which well-being can genuinely flourish.

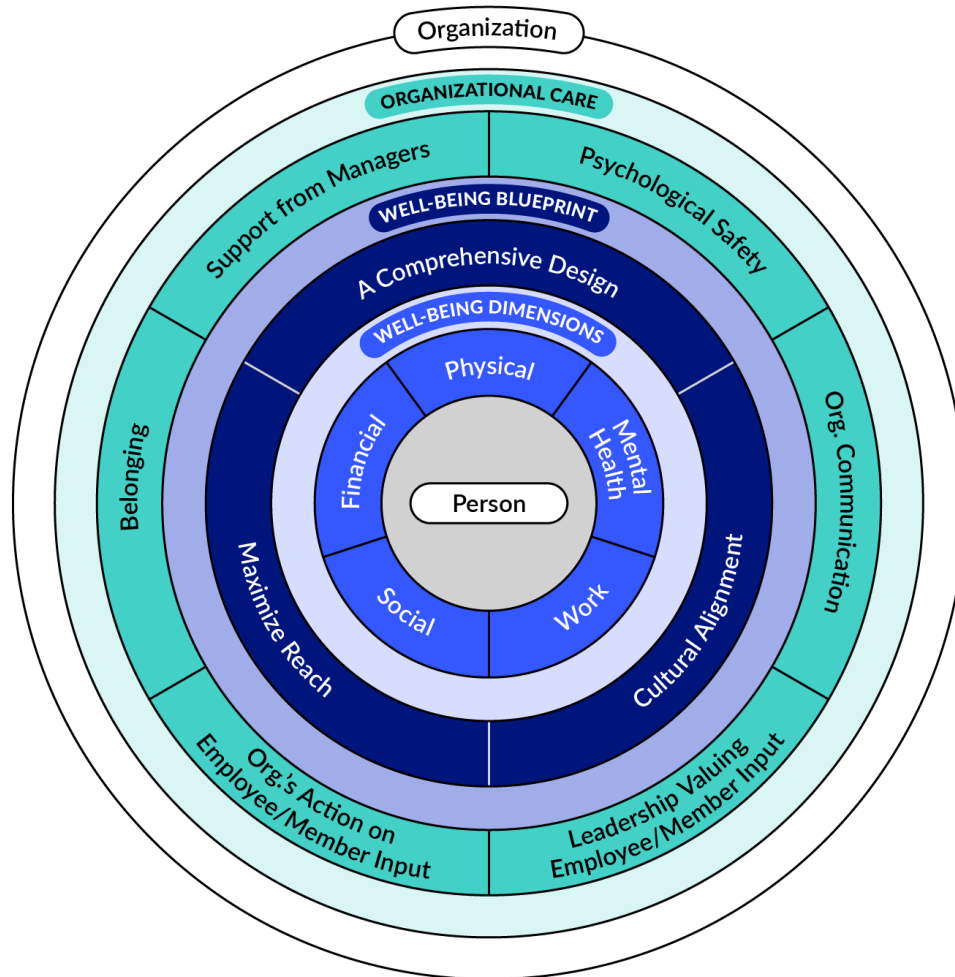
The Care Compass: A Reimagined Approach

The data presented throughout this report raises an essential question: given what we now know, what does a meaningful organizational response look like?

The WebMD Health Services Care Compass is the answer to that question. Developed as a strategic visual framework, it offers organizations a complete, 360-degree view of what it truly means to support their people. It is not a new program; it is a reimagined approach that

brings together the most critical elements of organizational and individual well-being into a single, cohesive strategy.

Figure 12. The WebMD Health Services Care Compass



The Care Compass is built on several interconnected foundations:

- **The Person (Center) and [Well-Being Dimensions](#):** The multi-dimensional nature of well-being undergirds everything within the framework, ensuring that support addresses the whole person, not just isolated aspects of health or performance.
- **[The Well-Being Blueprint](#):** A set of evidence-based best practices used to design effective well-being programs that meaningfully influence employee well-being outcomes.



- Comprehensive Program Design
- Maximize Reach
- Cultural Alignment
- **Organizational Care:** Grounded in [research](#) on how employees perceive care, the framework incorporates six key elements that shape whether employees feel genuinely valued and supported by their organization.
 - Psychological Safety
 - Organizational Communication
 - Leadership Valuing Employee Input
 - Organization's Action on Employee/Member Input
 - Support from Managers
 - Belonging

The Care Compass represents a strategic point of view on how organizational and individual well-being initiatives work in concert, not in silos, to support employees and foster a strong, lasting culture of well-being.

At its core, the Care Compass reflects best practices for supporting individuals in a way that is intentional, integrated, and enduring. It is a call to move beyond fragmented programs and toward a unified approach that places people at the center of organizational strategy.

The Guiding Principles: What It Means To CARE

Years of research, extensive data, and ongoing dialogue with organizations have consistently pointed to a single, fundamental truth: the organizations that do well-being best are not those with the most programs. They are the ones that genuinely care for their people and demonstrate that care in ways their employees can see and feel.

The Care Compass is built around four guiding principles that together define what it means to truly support a workforce. Each principle is reflected in the acronym CARE:

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
C - Connect	Brings together what can feel like separate well-being efforts into one coherent, cohesive picture, creating clarity and alignment across the organization.
A - Action	Grounded in deep research and designed for immediate, real-world impact, translating evidence into practical strategies that strengthen organizational culture.
R - Resonates	Built on evidence rooted in how employees actually live and work, ensuring that well-being initiatives feel relevant, meaningful, and deeply human.
E - Encompasses	Addresses every stakeholder in the well-being ecosystem: the individual who experiences it, the program that delivers it, and the employer who drives it.

What distinguishes the Care Compass from conventional approaches is not the addition of more programs or greater complexity. It is the deliberate, intentional connection of what organizations already have into a strategy that is smarter, more integrated, and more impactful.

The goal has never been more activity. The goal is lasting impact. The Care Compass is how organizations get there.

Conclusions

The findings presented throughout this report converge on a clear and urgent message: employee well-being is declining at precisely the moment it is needed most, and organizations must respond with intention, integration, and a genuine commitment to their people. Three overarching conclusions emerge from the data.

1. Navigating Uncertainty Requires Well-Being

Employee well-being is trending downward at a time when the capacity to adapt, recover, and perform is most critical. Market volatility, technological disruption, and societal pressures are placing significant demands on the workforce. Organizations that treat well-being as discretionary risk undermining the very foundation of their people's ability to navigate what lies ahead. Well-being is not a benefit reserved for stable times. It is a strategic necessity in uncertain ones.



2. Personal Resilience Is Not Enough

Employees demonstrate a meaningful degree of personal resilience, but individual resilience alone cannot sustain a workforce through prolonged and compounding change. Resilience requires reinforcement. Without structured organizational support, even the most capable and adaptable employees will face limits. Organizations have a responsibility to build the systems, programs, and culture that sustain and strengthen resilience at scale, not leave it entirely to the individual to maintain.

3. Integration Is the Strategic Advantage

Investing in people is one of the most consequential decisions an organization can make. However, investment alone is insufficient without alignment. The organizations best positioned to support their people are those that connect individual-level well-being programs to the broader organizational culture, trust-building efforts, and to a cohesive strategy that reinforces care at every level. Integration transforms isolated initiatives into a unified approach capable of delivering lasting impact.

The path forward is clear. Organizations that move beyond fragmented programs toward a connected, trust-centered, and people-first well-being strategy will be better equipped to support their workforce, strengthen their culture, and build the resilience needed to thrive in a world that will continue to change.



WebMD
HealthServices

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