

# 2021 Workplace Wellness Action Index

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# What you'll get out of this report.

After a year of uncertainty, America's workforce is returning to the workplace. Employers are balancing changing work models and financial concerns with their employees' evolving health needs.

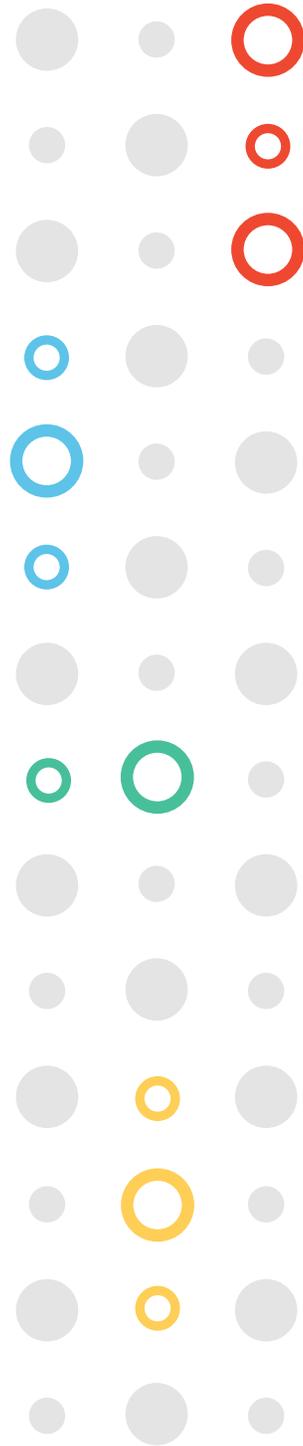
Now, a new study uncovers gaps between employer wellness offerings and employee health priorities—and points to the need for more meaningful data to assess benefits value as well.

The 2021 **Workplace Wellness Action Index**, commissioned by MOBE, was conducted by YouGov and Harris Poll in May 2021. The study surveyed 201 HR decision-makers at companies with 5,000+ employees and self-insured/self-funded health coverage, and 2,572 consumers across the country.

Findings reveal that employers are concerned about their workers' well-being, and are investing in benefits to offset health challenges. However, significant opportunity remains: employers must ensure that offerings align with employees' true health needs, and that vendors provide meaningful measurement of program impact.



# A guide to wellness in the workplace.



- 1** Employee well-being is a top concern for everyone.
- 2** Working from home impacted employee health in different ways.
- 3** Employers can help employees get more out of their health and wellness offerings.
- 4** Better data can guide employers to better benefits investments.
- 5** Connecting the dots helps to maximize benefits value.

## Employee well-being is a top concern for everyone.

But providing support isn't a one-size-fits-all endeavor. The majority of employees are facing health challenges outside of work, and cite the same core issues reported in our **2020 Chronic Care Action Index**.<sup>\*</sup> Employers are focused on anticipating employee health needs as they return to office settings, but may not be fully aligned with their workers' wellness priorities.



<sup>\*</sup>Report can be found at [go.MOBEforlife.com/careindex2020](https://go.MOBEforlife.com/careindex2020)

**Workers are juggling the same health struggles year after year.**

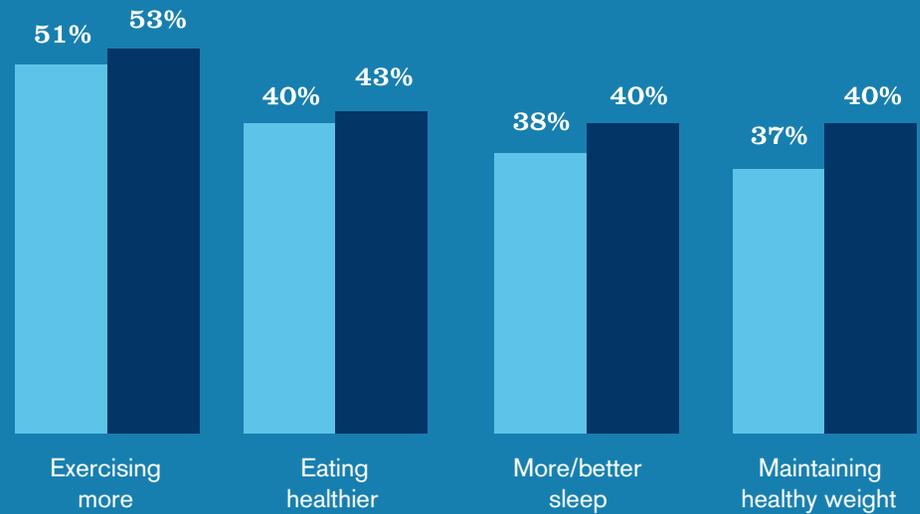
**75%**

report facing health challenges outside of work.

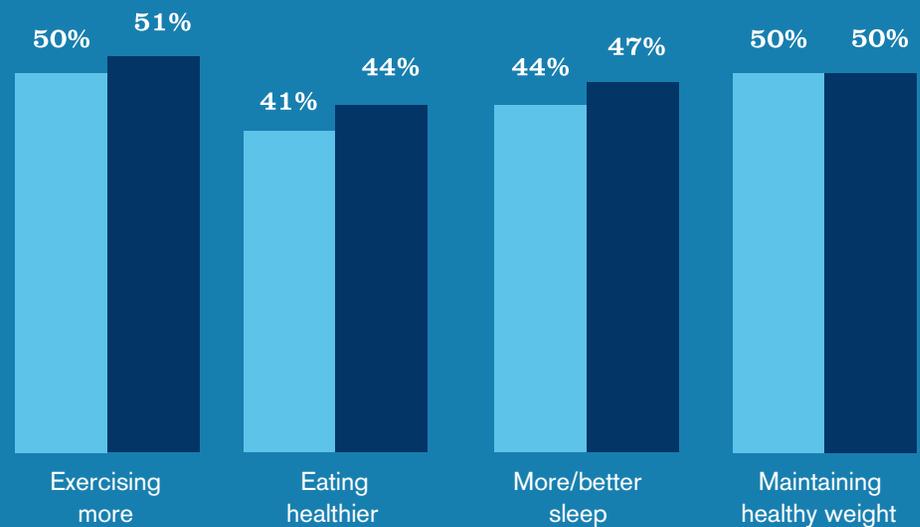
When asked which changes U.S. adults most wanted to make in relation to their health, but found difficult to make, four core challenges rose to the top:

■ 2020  
■ 2021

**OVERALL POPULATION**



**THOSE WITH MULTIPLE CHRONIC CONDITIONS**

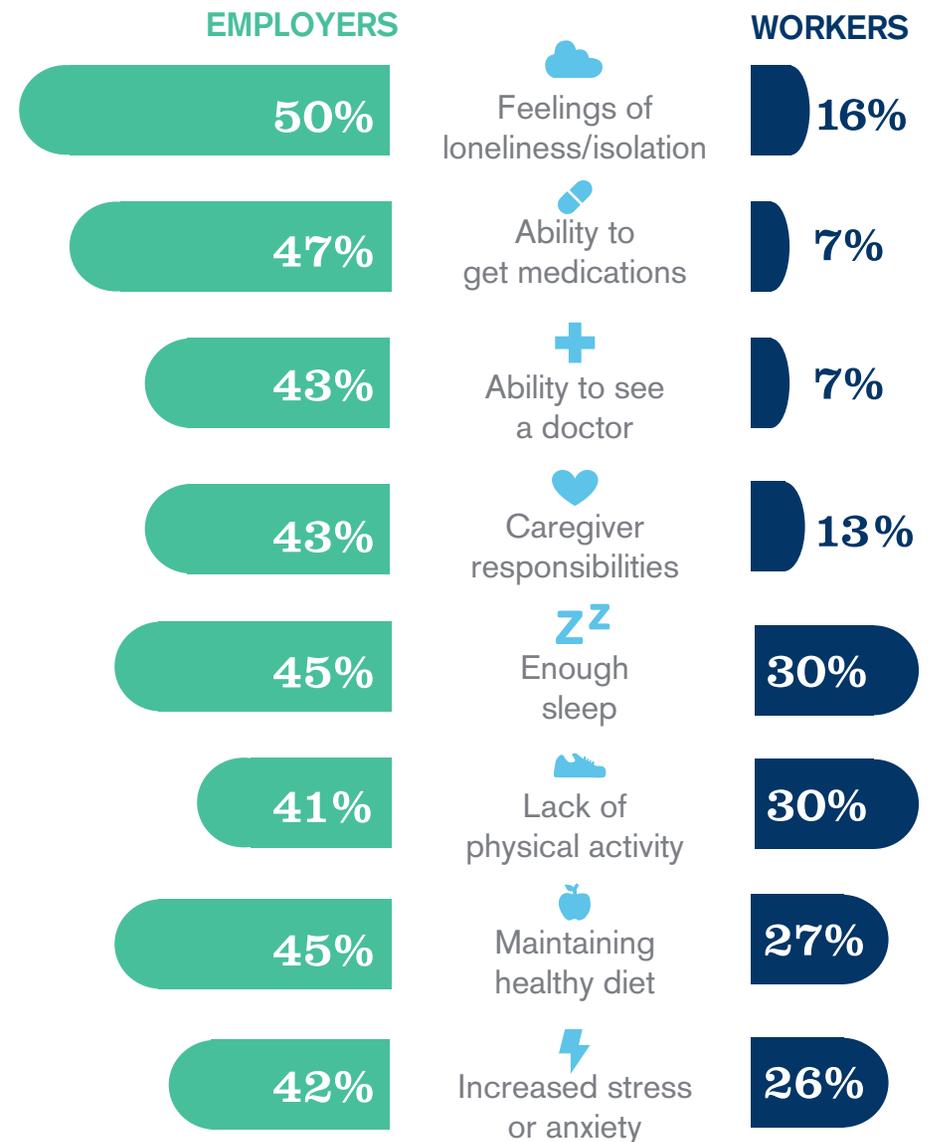


**Employers are concerned about the well-being of their workforce.**

**But, they prioritize some health needs differently than employees.**

While pandemic-related challenges like loneliness, access to care, and caregiver concerns are top-of-mind for employers, **employees emphasize basic health needs** like sleep, activity, diet, and stress as their biggest health-related challenges.

**The biggest health-related challenges facing employees outside of the workplace, according to:**



Despite reporting it as a concern, consumers aren't getting mental health support—and access isn't the main issue.



**44%**

of respondents with **mental health concerns** did not visit or call a mental health specialist during the past year, despite most (76%) reporting access to a mental health benefit.

**59%**

of consumers with **multiple chronic conditions** did not visit or call a mental health specialist during the past year.

## ARE EMPLOYERS OFFERING THE RIGHT MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS?

Among workers who reported chronic mental health concerns, **the majority (76%)** said their companies offer mental health benefits.

However, more than **1 in 3**

weren't satisfied with or didn't use the offerings:

**14%**  
weren't satisfied

**22%**  
didn't use benefit

**18%**

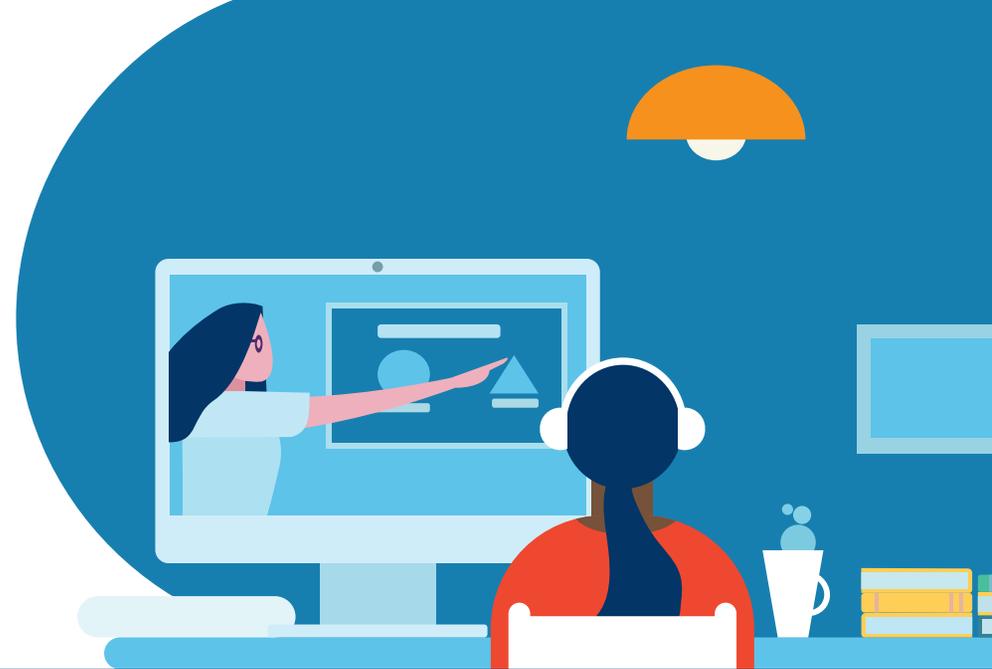
Overall, nearly **1 in 5** workers reported that **access is an issue**: their companies do not offer a mental health benefit.



## **Working from home impacted employee health in different ways.**

Everyone's health needs are different, and vary based on lifestyle. Remote work during the past year actually helped some people reach their health goals, but for others, that wasn't the case—and certain health concerns impacted the remote workforce disproportionately.

Overall, employees who worked from home over the past year were divided on how it impacted their ability to reach health goals.



**49%**

SAID WFH MADE  
IT **EASIER**

**28%**

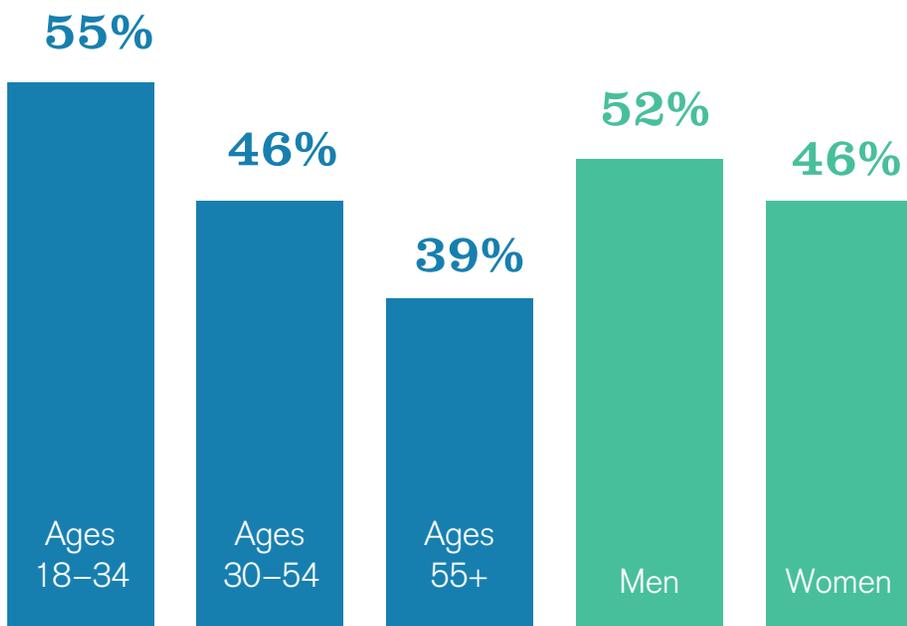
SAID THERE WAS  
**NO DIFFERENCE**

**23%**

SAID WFH MADE  
IT **HARDER**

## And, working from home during a pandemic didn't have the same positive result for everyone.

Younger, male employees who worked from home were more likely to report a positive impact on their health goals:



## People who worked from home were more likely to face certain health challenges.

Compared with those who did not work from home, remote workers were:

**72%**

more likely to report feelings of **loneliness or isolation** that impact their mental health

**183%**

more likely to report increased **caregiver responsibilities** (e.g., childcare/remote schooling; managing an elderly relative's health needs, caring for a sick family member, etc.)

**77%**

more likely to want more benefits options with **one-to-one support**

**107%**

more likely to want more **accessible benefits options** (i.e., 24/7 access, mobile applications, etc.)

**133%**

more likely to want more **virtual benefits offerings**

**155%**

more likely to want increased benefits offerings **tailored to identity-based needs** (i.e., programs designed for members of the Black, Latinx, LGBTQIA+ communities, etc.)



## **Employers can help employees get more out of their health and wellness offerings.**

Employers are focused on doing right by their workforce. More communication and personalized guidance are factors that can maximize offerings and help employees better manage their health concerns.

**Companies can do more to inform employees about solutions that address their health concerns.**

**95%**

of HR decision-makers say employees are informed of health and wellness offerings



...but employees said **better communication** about benefits is the

**#1 way**

employers can improve benefits offerings.

## Workers crave more information and better personalized support.

When asked how employers could improve health and wellness offerings, employees suggested:

**Better communication**  
about how to  
best access the  
options available

**35%**

Adding more  
options with  
**one-to-one support**  
**20%**

Adding **more**  
**accessible options**  
**24%**

More offerings tailored to  
**identity-based needs**

**18%**

(i.e., programs designed for  
members of the Black, Latinx,  
LGBTQIA+ communities, etc.)

# Employees can benefit from a whole-person approach: individualized guidance on sleep, mental health, exercise, and diet.

The top health concerns that workers most want to change, yet struggle to make...



Getting better sleep



Exercising more



Eating healthier



Maintaining or achieving a healthy weight

...mirror the health and wellness benefits they say would have the biggest impact on their health:



More guidance on sleep



More guidance on exercise



More guidance on diet



More mental health guidance

# Traditional benefits options don't always cater to workers' basic health needs.

When asked if their benefits offerings address commonly reported health challenges, many HR decision-makers reported that they do not provide offerings targeted toward:



## **Better data can guide employers to better benefits investment.**

ROI is an essential consideration for employers, and they weigh both financial results and health outcomes when judging benefits options. But while most HR decision-makers plan to expand health and wellness benefits next year, the data they use to evaluate and demonstrate results may be incomplete.





**99%**

of employers reported that it is important for health and wellness benefits solutions to be able to demonstrate ROI within 12 months.

**79%**

felt it was very important or absolutely critical.

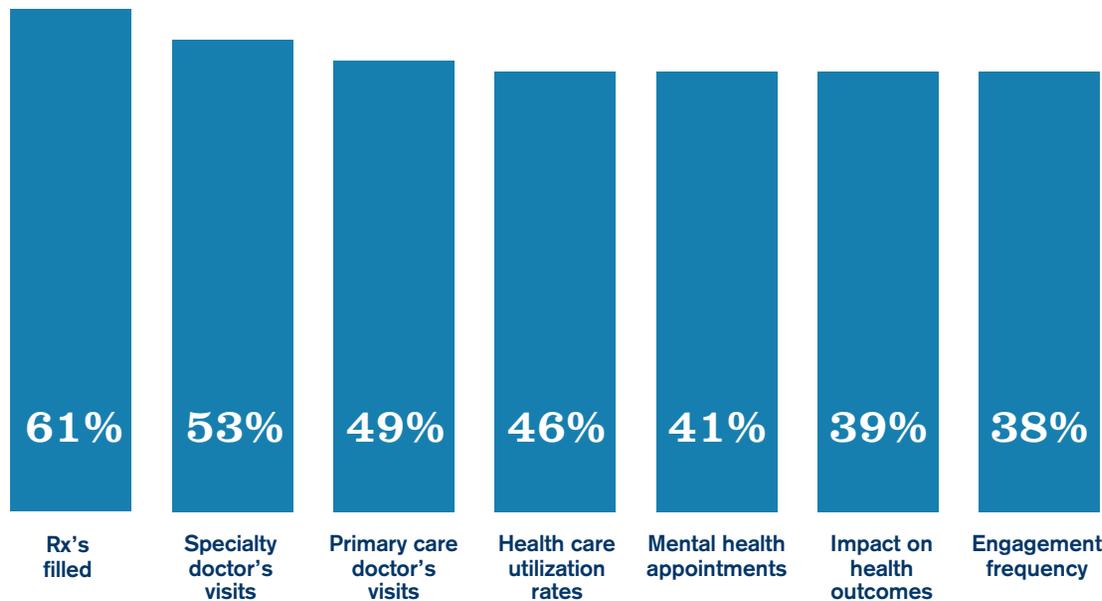
## Financial results and health outcomes are key when considering benefits options.

According to HR decision-makers, when deciding which health and wellness benefits to offer to employees, the considerations that are absolutely essential or very important include:



## Employers want to demonstrate ROI, but the vendor data they analyze might not provide a complete picture.

When asked which metrics they consider most important for benefits vendors to provide in order to demonstrate impact on employee health outcomes after 12 months, employers favored measuring prescription refills and doctor's visits over engagement frequency and impact on health outcomes.



**MOST IMPORTANT METRICS FOR VENDORS TO PROVIDE**

The majority of employers still rely on anecdotal feedback to determine benefits value.

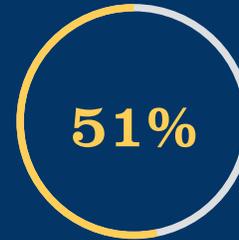


**59%**  
say they determine the value of investment in health and wellness benefits through positive feedback from employees.

Looking ahead to 2022, more than half of HR decision-makers plan to expand their health and wellness benefits.



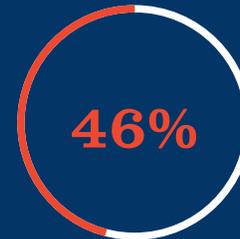
HERE'S HOW THEY PLAN TO INVEST:



In solutions targeted specifically to the needs of employees in diverse communities



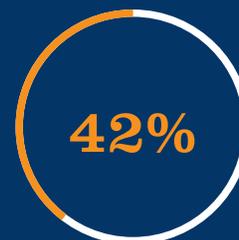
Adding more virtual care options



Adding medication management options



Adding more fitness options



Investing in high-cost claimants



Adding more options that support mental health



**Where do we  
go from here?**

# Connecting the dots helps to maximize benefits value.

After a tumultuous year, employers are prioritizing the evolving health needs of their workforce, and are taking action to expand their benefits mix.

However, challenges remain. Workers want benefits options that address a wide range of individual needs in a personalized way. The basic elements of sleep, movement, diet, and emotional health remain central unmet health needs. And lack of meaningful data on program ROI means organizations aren't able to assess accurately whether they're gaining traction against their goal of improving workforce health.

**Employers can make a significant impact on employee health—and their bottom line—in the year ahead by:**

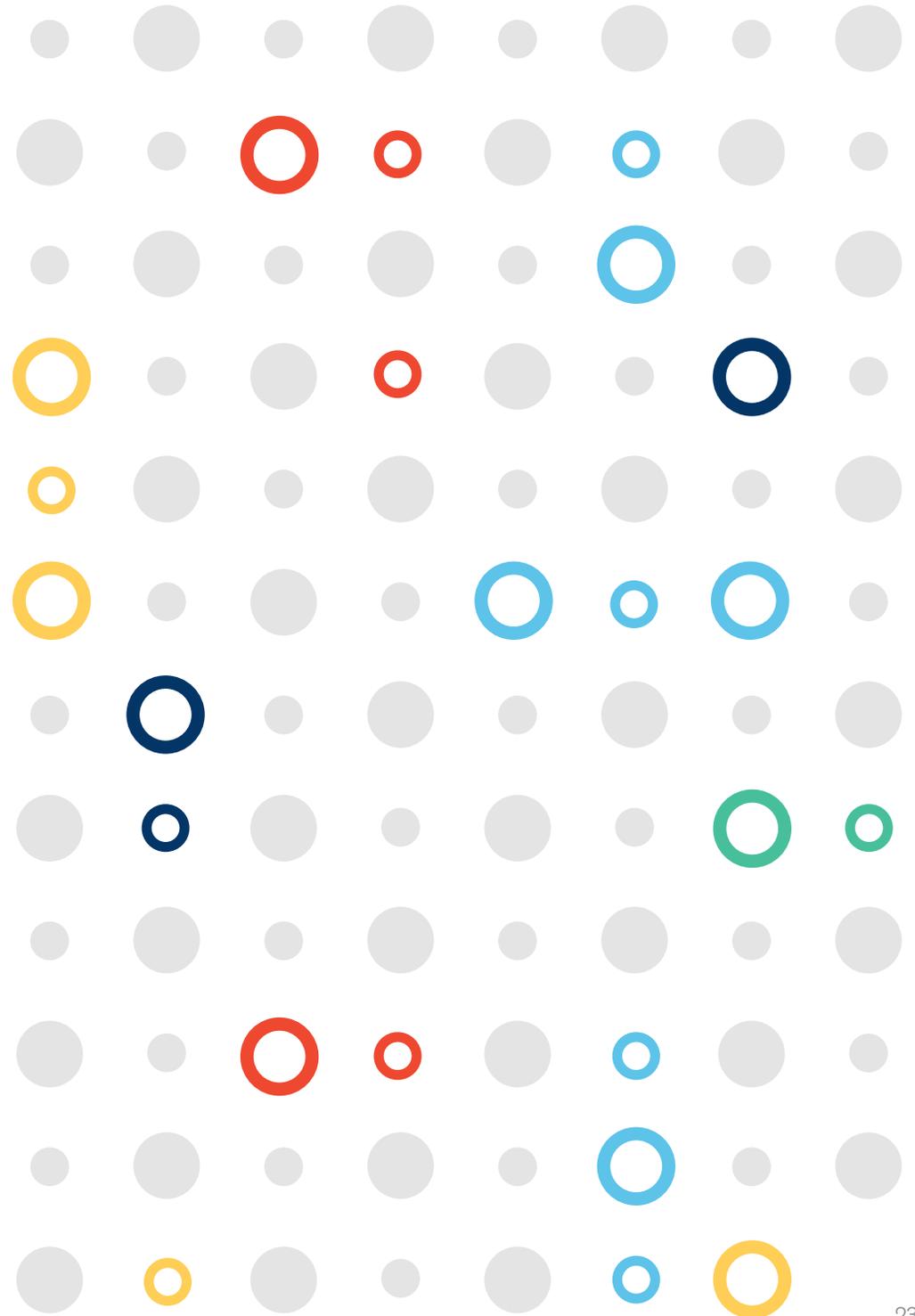
- Prioritizing benefits offerings that focus on employees' top concern—basic health needs
- Acting urgently to reverse low employee awareness of available benefits
- Using a meaningful combination of claims data to assess true ROI

# MOBE<sup>®</sup>

MOBE was founded in 2014 by health industry veterans who uncovered a way to use deep data science to identify people whose health care needs (and costs) are going up, but whose health concerns are not resolved.

MOBE combines this deep data science with digital health and a novel one-to-one personalized approach to create a value-based wellness solution—engaging and supporting participants to achieve healthier and happier lives without any additional cost to the health system, employers, or insurers.

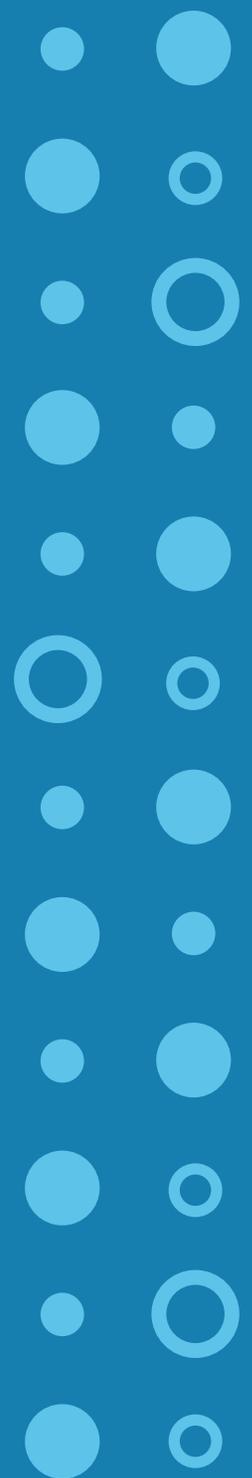
**For more information on MOBE, visit [MOBEforlife.com](http://MOBEforlife.com)**



# Methodology

The HR decision-maker survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of MOBE between May 14 and May 27, 2021 among 201 HR decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or part-time at the Director level or above in the Human Resources function at a company with 5,000 or more employees and has self-insured/self-funded health coverage). Data are weighted where necessary by employee size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

All consumer survey figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. For the consumer survey, total sample size was 2,572 adults, and fieldwork was undertaken between May 27 and May 31, 2021. The survey was carried out online. The consumer survey figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).



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