



# Working Well: A Global Survey of Workforce Wellbeing Strategies

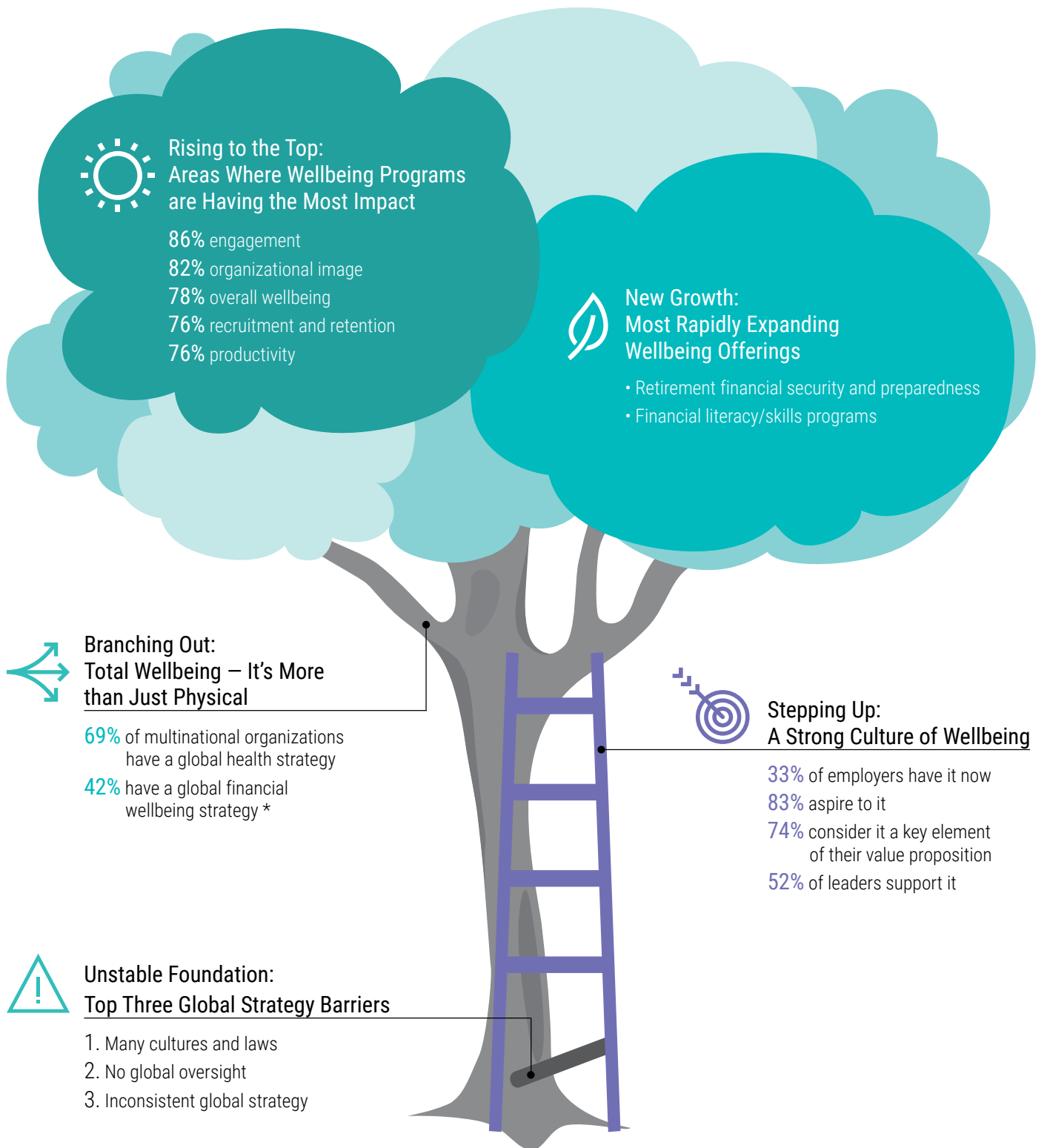
Executive Summary  
October 2016



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# Executive Summary

## Total Wellbeing: A Global View



\*Financial health strategy includes retirement readiness and financial literacy.



# Executive Summary

## Continued

Welcome to **Working Well: A Global Survey of Workforce Wellbeing Strategies**, seventh edition, October 2016. As a long-running global survey investigating trends in employer-sponsored health promotion and wellness programs, our 2016 research expanded to capture additional emerging trends. Because every aspect of an individual's life – personal and professional – influences his/her state of wellbeing, our 2016 research branched out to reflect a more holistic view of wellbeing, with a particular focus on financial wellness. Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their organizations are supporting employees' physical, mental/emotional, financial, and professional wellbeing and more.

Our findings confirm that supporting employees' total wellbeing has become a business imperative, even if quantifying the hard-dollar ROI is challenging. Globally, nearly 60% cite improving performance and productivity as their top objective, also recognizing the need to help reduce barriers to employee productivity, attraction and retention. In sum, supporting individuals' wellbeing is seen as a means to achieve superior organizational performance.

**Culture of Wellbeing.** The aspiration to create a strong culture of wellbeing, described in our previous surveys as a culture of health, is strong and increasing across all regions. While just 33% report having a strong culture of wellbeing currently, 83% aspire to achieve a strong culture of wellbeing in the future. When comparing region results, Australia/New Zealand and the US/Canada cite the most aggressive goals in driving culture change, followed by Europe.

Almost three-fourths (74%) view their wellbeing program as an important element of the organization's employee value proposition (EVP). Top-down leadership support is vital to driving culture change, and continues to grow – from 43% citing strong support from leaders in 2014, to 52% in 2016. From the bottom-up, an overwhelming 92% credit their local ambassadors' efforts in supporting a culture of wellbeing.

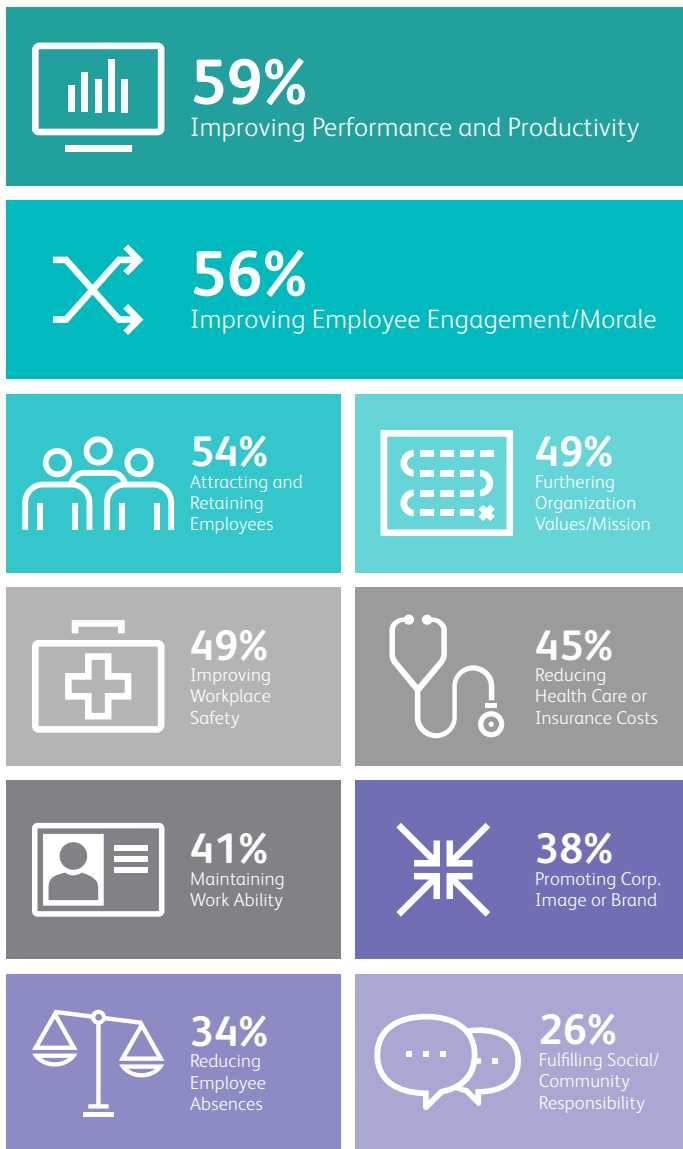
**Global Strategy.** Multinational companies' global strategies for health promotion continue to rise rapidly, from 34% of employers with a global strategy in 2008, to 56% in 2014, to 69% in 2016. Meanwhile, in this first year of inquiry, 42% say they currently have a global strategy for financial wellbeing.



**59%**

top objective is to improve performance and productivity

**Top Objectives.** Top wellbeing objectives globally include:



**All Regions:** Productivity #1 vs. #4 in 2014; talent concerns now higher.

Reducing health care or insurance costs ranks sixth in priority globally but remains the top objective for US/Canada and Latin America, due to the heavy weighting of US employer concerns about health care costs. In contrast, improving workplace safety is tops in importance for Australia/New Zealand.

Improving employee engagement/morale is the top priority for Europe but improving performance and productivity is close behind. The greater global emphasis on furthering organizational values/mission implies an increased perceived alignment between investing in wellbeing and supporting the fundamental goals of the organization.

**Issues Driving Program Priorities.** Health-related population risks and challenges prevail as top drivers behind specific wellbeing programs. Physical activity/exercise ranks at the top globally (70%) and in the top five concerns for all regions. Workplace safety and environment rank sixth globally (55%) but in the top five priorities for all regions except US/Canada. Australia/New Zealand and Europe cite stress and work-life issues among their top concerns. And for both Latin America and the US/Canada, physical activity/exercise, nutrition/healthy eating, access to health care services and obesity are among their top five drivers.

Significantly, stress fell from the number one global driver in both the 2014 and 2012 surveys, to third in 2016 – perhaps a sign that some global impacts of the recession have eased. Nonetheless, stress remains the top driver for Europe (including depression) and third for Australia/New Zealand. Yet stress is not in the top five drivers for other regions of the world, including Asia, Latin America and the US/Canada.

As evidence of Europe’s action orientation in program design, while just 42% of employers offer stress management or resilience-building programs today, such programs are among the most rapidly growing programs to be added regionally by another 32% in the next year, plus by another 10% planning offerings in the next two to three years.

**Financial is Stepping Up.** Retirement financial security and preparedness programs have been around for at least one or more years for 92% of respondents, while financial literacy/skills programs, by 91%. However, programs focused on financial literacy and skills are the fastest growing, with 24% having programs in place one year or less and another 39%, for just the past two to five years.



Among multinationals, 69% have a global physical health promotion strategy, while 42% have a global financial health promotion strategy. Of the latter, 92% are focused on retirement readiness and 91% address financial literacy.



**Global Strategy**  
69% for physical health  
42% for financial health

It remains difficult for employers to gather objective data that demonstrates a negative impact from financial stress of poor financial wellbeing. Employers in the US/Canada and Latin America are most likely to cite both anecdotal and objective data confirming negative effects, versus respondents in other regions. Still, the many employers saying “don’t know” (as high as 52% in the US/Canada and 58% in Asia) indicates that many employers are moving forward with financial wellbeing support based on intuition regarding effectiveness, or perhaps factors such as competitiveness.

Two-thirds see lowered productivity as a direct impact of poor financial wellbeing, with half citing greater absence from work due to financial distractions. Another 45% cite a delayed ability to retire and 36% see unwanted turnover as an issue.



**2/3**  
see lowered productivity due to financial wellbeing

**Barriers to Achieving a Culture of Wellbeing.** The top barriers cited by those multinationals without a global strategy for health or financial wellbeing are the same top barriers as in our 2014 survey – differing cultures, laws, and practices as well as the lack of global oversight for health or financial strategy. However, while these differences represent a larger barrier for financial global strategy, other barriers were less problematic for a global financial strategy than for health. So while global financial wellbeing strategies may be less mature, they also may have fewer barriers hindering a rapid rise in employer sponsorship.

**Employee Barriers to Wellbeing.** Gains were made in reducing barriers to employees’ engagement in wellbeing efforts. The top challenge, insufficient time to anticipate and change health habits, is still significant but declined from 66% in 2014 to 54% in 2016. Difficulty in finding personal motivation declined from 55% to 49%. In other positive news, mistrust of the employer’s intentions declined from 24% to 14%, while privacy concerns declined from 36% to 21%. These findings are key, as perceived sincerity of employers’ intentions and support for wellbeing is vital.

**Strategy Documentation.** Globally with respect to strategy documentation, employers are most likely to have a written communication strategy, with many stating that they also have documented measurable goals (second) and/or an articulated charter or mission statement (third).

**Measurement Matters.** While just 36% say they have measured specific outcomes from wellbeing programs globally, a significant majority of respondents say their wellbeing initiatives have produced a medium or high impact with significant improvements in factors including: employee engagement/morale, organization image, overall employee wellbeing, ability to attract and retain employees, and performance and productivity.

**US Health Care Cost Reduction.** While reducing health care costs remains a top US goal, 64% of employers have not measured specific outcomes. Of the 24% who have successfully measured and achieved a reduction in healthcare trend rate, 64% say they have achieved reductions of two- to five-percent, vs. 57% citing this level of trend reduction in 2014.

**Incentives – Not for Everyone.** The US and Canada continue to well outstrip other regions in offering incentives (or penalties), with 77% currently offering plus another 10% planning to offer them in the future, leaving just 13% with no intentions to offer them. In contrast, Europe and Latin America are least interested in incentives, with 52% and 51% citing no plans to offer incentives.



For the US, average cash incentives for almost all types of incentivized activity increased over 2014 values. However, rewards for simply participating in workplace health challenges, such as walking for fitness or weight loss, decreased in incentive size. The largest average incentives included saving for retirement (\$3,696), as expected due to employer-sponsored savings plans, and for health, refraining from tobacco use (\$428) and achieving or maintaining measurable health status (\$303).

**Communication.** Identical to 2014 responses, 43% have a distinct wellbeing theme or identity but an increasing number link it to the organizational brand. Top tools to influence strategy by over half of the respondents include surveys or focus groups. Portals or intranets remain the top channel, with emails and posters or flyers close behind. Fairs and meetings remain important ways to deliver messages and show support face to face.

**Tying it All Together.** By aligning employees' career, health and wealth needs with the goals of the business, individuals can achieve their full potential and organizations can achieve greater results.



**71%**

rely on portals or intranets as top communication channel



Employees with stronger wellbeing for their health, wealth and career...



... can be less distracted, more productive and committed, and better able to help drive greater business results.

