



DOING WELLBEING WELL

An assessment of health and wellbeing
programmes at multinational companies

Commissioned by
THE ADECCO GROUP
FOUNDATION

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Executive summary

Today's corporate workforce is under enormous pressure from globalisation, regulation, new technology and demographic change. Meanwhile, there is growing recognition of the impact of work and its role in worsening or improving health.

Organisations are responding with a range of initiatives, as shown in this Economist Intelligence Unit report, commissioned by the Adecco Group Foundation. There are policies and programmes spanning physical, mental, financial, digital and social health and wellbeing. Many companies have made health and wellbeing a boardroom issue and are putting in place a range of interventions, with monitoring and evaluation measures to check effectiveness and participation.

This report examines the extent to which multinational companies around the world are adopting these practices, how effective they have been so far and how important HR executives consider them to be.

It draws on a framework of policies and practices, developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit, and a global survey of more than 500 senior HR executives from multinational companies with annual sales of \$500m or more.

It accompanies a self-assessment tool that allows participants to compare the wellbeing priorities and practices of their organisation against those of our survey respondents. To use the tool, please visit workplacewellbeing.eiu.com.

Together, the report and self-assessment tool offer insight and guidance to HR executives and other senior leaders, as well as employees and their managers, as they consider the implementation and effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives in their organisations.

Key findings include:

- **Employers and workers value health and wellbeing programmes, but evidence for their impact is mixed.**

Executive boards recognise the value of health and wellbeing programmes, and that is reflected in the high degree of implementation of all the practices and policies examined in this study. However, some studies have called the benefits into question, challenging companies to identify and amplify interventions that really work.

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- **Health and wellbeing programmes should pay greater attention to the perspectives of employees.**

Incorporating the views of employees into the design of health and wellbeing programmes is of relatively low importance, and relatively poorly implemented, among the HR executives surveyed. This conflicts with the widely held view among wellbeing experts consulted for this study that tailoring programmes to the precise needs of the employees—as opposed to the convenience of the organisation—is vital for both participation and success.

- **Managers need better training on how to discuss physical and mental health with their employees.**

The survey reveals an apparent need for improved training for managers in discussing and addressing both physical and mental health and wellbeing with their employees. Respondents acknowledge the importance of this training, but report poor implementation compared to other measures. The extent to which an employee feels supported when they discuss a health or wellbeing issue can have an impact on the outcome, and managers should be equipped with the language and the corresponding tools to convey that support.

- **Human health and wellbeing have many dimensions, and organisations should treat them holistically.**

The growing recognition of the importance of financial, digital and social factors illustrates the holistic nature of wellbeing. The many dimensions of wellbeing are interconnected: financial worries affect mental health, and social exclusion could limit opportunities for physical and mental health improvements. This means employers must overcome organisational divisions to manage wellbeing holistically if their programmes are to be truly effective.

About this report

Doing wellbeing well presents the findings of a research project examining corporate health and wellbeing programmes, conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit and commissioned by the Adecco Group Foundation as part of its Workforce Vitality innovation project

The research began with a literature review that identified existing and emerging health and wellbeing practices, and important dimensions of programme implementation. That review formed the basis of a framework for scoring health and wellbeing programmes. Following consultation with a panel of experts, this framework informed the design of a questionnaire to assess the current state of health and wellbeing programmes.

The questionnaire was completed by more than 500 HR executives from multinational companies in various industries, including consumer goods, education, energy, entertainment, financial and professional services, healthcare and life sciences, manufacturing, retail, technology, transportation and travel. Survey respondents were drawn from 10 countries: Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Turkey, the UK and the US.

The responses to the questionnaire were used to create a self-assessment tool that allows companies to compare their own health

and wellbeing programmes to that baseline sample, in order to identify potential areas for improvement.

The questionnaire will remain open, and organisations are encouraged to complete it, so that over time a fuller picture can emerge.

To complete the self-assessment tool, visit workplacewellbeing.eiu.com.

This report analyses the survey results, alongside insights from in-depth interviews with business leaders and experts in health and wellbeing. We would like to thank the following for their insights and contributions to the research:

- **Ramkumar Chandrasekaran**, HR director, Tata Consultancy Services UK & Ireland
- **Judith Grant**, director of health and wellbeing, Mace Group
- **Cathryn Gunther**, vice-president, global population health, Merck & Co
- **Marcus Hunt**, vice-president global wellbeing, Barclays
- **Vickie Strickland**, director, health strategy & resources, Delta Air Lines

Jane Bird was author of the report; Pete Swabey was the editor.

Introduction

In the 21st century, work can be a health hazard. The sedentary nature of office work is especially lethal: physical inactivity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease or diabetes, and people who work in offices spend up to 75% of their time there sitting down¹. This lifestyle is more prevalent in high-income countries, but a 2012 study found that China and Brazil had the fastest-growing rates of physical inactivity, thanks in part to a shift away from agriculture towards manufacturing and services, and an increased use of labour-saving technology in the workplace².

Meanwhile, working long hours is associated with a higher risk of diabetes³ and stroke⁴ (although average hours worked is in decline globally), and accessing email out of working hours has been linked to increased levels of stress⁵.

Employers have long recognised the health risks of work, and many offer programmes that help their staff improve their health and wellbeing. As the survey behind this study reveals, multinational companies around the world and across industries have introduced policies and programmes that span physical, mental, financial, digital and social health. They range from fitness challenges and videos in which staff talk publicly about mental problems to payments for attending medical health screenings.

But the results of studies into the impact of these programmes are mixed. A 2010 meta-analysis of US programmes found that every dollar spent on health and wellbeing programmes reduced medical costs by \$3.27 and absentee costs by \$2.73⁶. And there is no shortage of apparent success stories: US manufacturer Turck, for example, says it has saved \$6.7m in healthcare costs since 2007 through employee health and wellbeing initiatives⁷.

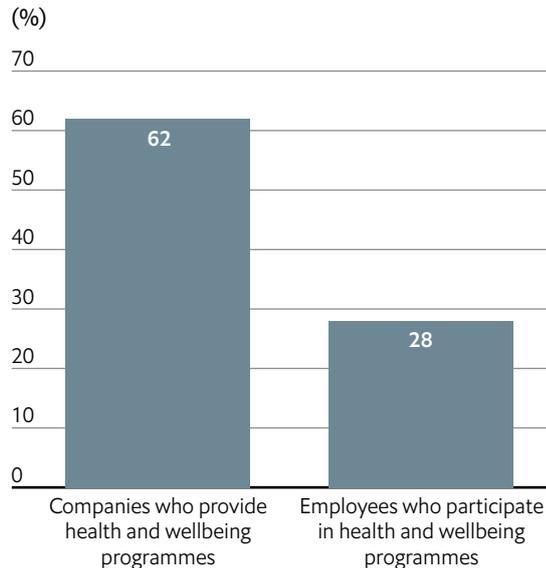
However, a comprehensive investigation of a workplace wellbeing programme at the University of Illinois found no difference in health outcomes, including self-reported health and productivity, between employees who took part and those who didn't, after one year of participation⁸.

1. <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/19154/1/Sedentary%20Office%20-%20JB%20final%20Expert%20Statement%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3401184/>
3. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(14\)70178-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(14)70178-0/fulltext)
4. <https://www.nhs.uk/news/neurology/working-long-hours-increases-stroke-risk/>
5. <https://www.nhs.uk/news/mental-health/checking-emails-out-of-work-can-reduce-wellbeing/>
6. https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0626?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acr%3Apubmed
7. <https://www.knowablemagazine.org/article/health-disease/2018/do-workplace-wellness-programs-work>
8. http://www.nber.org/workplacewellness/s/IL_Wellness_Study_1.pdf

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Chart 1: Provision versus participation



Source: *Britain's Healthiest Workplace*, Vitality.

While acknowledging that real benefits may materialise after one year, the authors of the study suggest that other factors might explain the reduction in healthcare costs. For example, the existence of a wellbeing programme may help a company to attract already-healthy employees.

A UK study by health insurance provider Vitality, based on a survey of 34,000 employees and 167 employers, found that workers value workplace health and wellbeing provisions such as on-site gyms or running clubs.

But it also revealed that companies struggle to identify which interventions actually work, as they typically introduce many measures at once, and that participation is often underwhelming. While 62% of employers offer health and wellbeing programmes, the study found, only 28% of employees use them⁹.

So, while it is clear that both employees and employers value health and wellbeing programmes, there is evidently a need for guidance on how to implement a programme effectively, and what practices and policies work well. The aim of this study is to provide that guidance.

To investigate the wellbeing policies and practices that are considered effective and important, The Economist Intelligence Unit first reviewed the current literature to create a framework of common and emerging practices. We then surveyed 506 HR executives around the world to examine the extent to which those practices had been effectively adopted, and how important they are considered to be. We also interviewed a selection of HR executives in greater depth, to provide perspective and insight into their own initiatives.

The research methodology of this study focuses on the perspectives of HR executives. The HR leader is just one stakeholder in an organisation's stakeholders, however, and the perspectives of employees, managers and other executives would be needed for a complete picture of corporate wellbeing in 2018. Nevertheless, few stakeholders have as holistic a view of health and wellbeing in their organisations as the HR leadership, and their perspectives offer a valuable, if incomplete, insight into the state of workplace wellbeing.

9. <https://www.vitality.co.uk/media-online/britains-healthiest-workplace/pdf/2017/health-at-work.pdf>

Chapter 1: Implementing a health and wellbeing programme

Our review of the literature on health and wellbeing programmes identified that as much attention should be paid to the way in which such programmes are designed, implemented and managed as to the actual content of the programmes. The first half of the health and wellbeing framework, and the HR executive survey, therefore focused on implementation.

1.1 Organisational culture and support

A chief concern is the extent to which health and wellbeing are supported by a company's leadership and its organisational culture. The survey shows that HR executives from multinational companies believe their organisations are indeed supportive of health and wellbeing. Three quarters of respondents (74%) agree that health and wellbeing is firmly embedded in ways of working, and 71% say they are viewed as part of the purpose and values of their organisations.

Judith Grant, who joined UK-headquartered construction firm Mace in 2017 as the company's first director of health and wellbeing, agrees that companies now widely acknowledge the value of wellbeing. Even so, she says, investments in health and wellbeing still require an explicit business case.

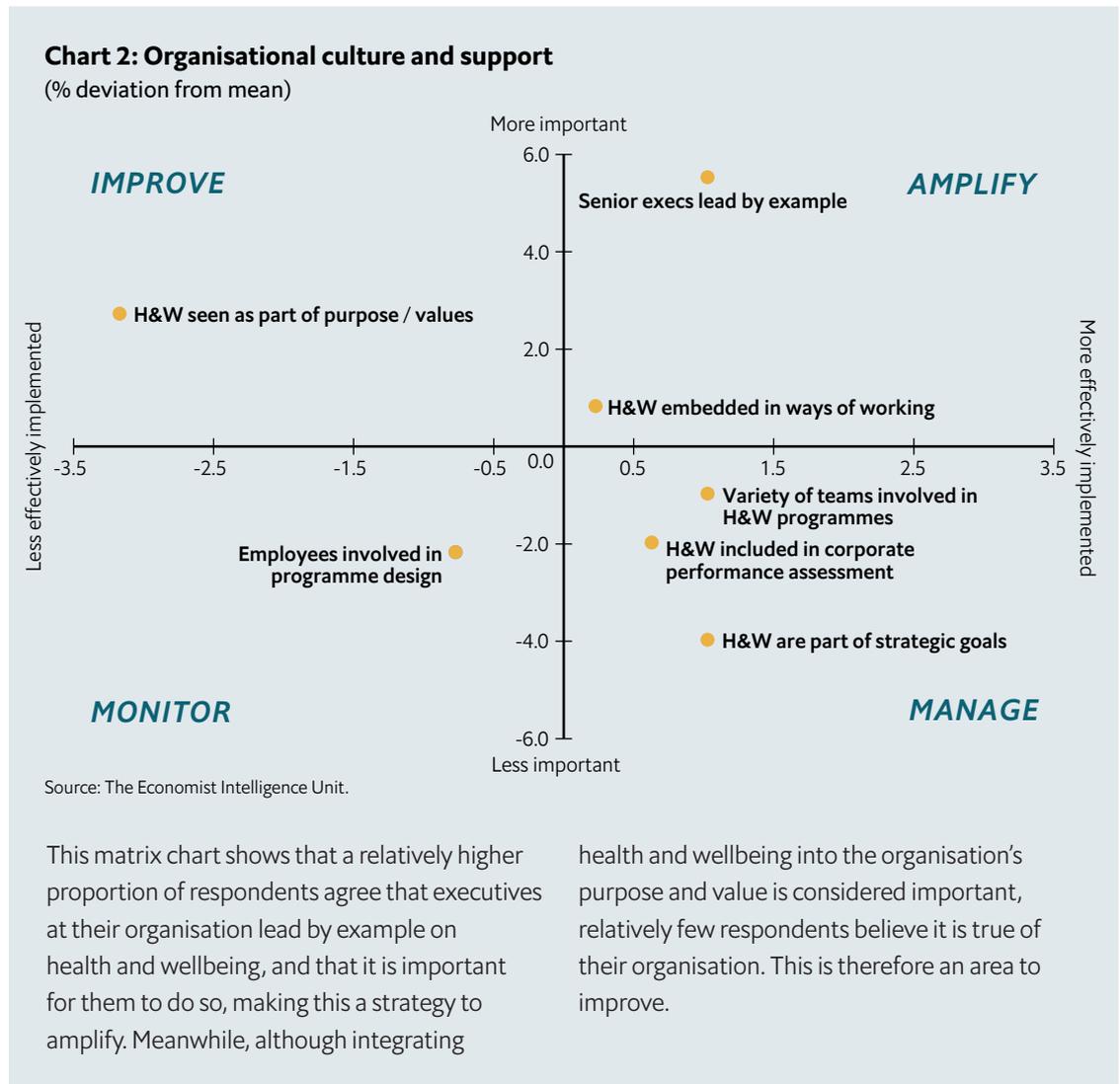
The most important factor in supporting health and wellbeing, respondents to the Economist Intelligence Unit survey believe, is whether or not senior executives lead by example; more than two-thirds (67%) consider this to be somewhat or very important.

Ed Bastian, CEO of US airline Delta Air Lines and a marathon runner, regularly invites employees to train with him, as he did recently in a 5K event to prepare for the New York marathon. "He is constantly reminding people of the benefits of keeping fit," explains Vickie Strickland, the company's director for health strategy and resources.

Although 73% of respondents say that employees are meaningfully involved in the design of their health and wellbeing programme, this is less likely to be viewed as important than other dimensions of organisational support (only 59% consider it somewhat or very important).

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This suggests that employee input into programme design is undervalued. In the view of many of the wellbeing experts consulted for this study, ensuring health and wellbeing programmes are relevant to the lives of the people who are supposed to use and benefit from them is vital for their success.

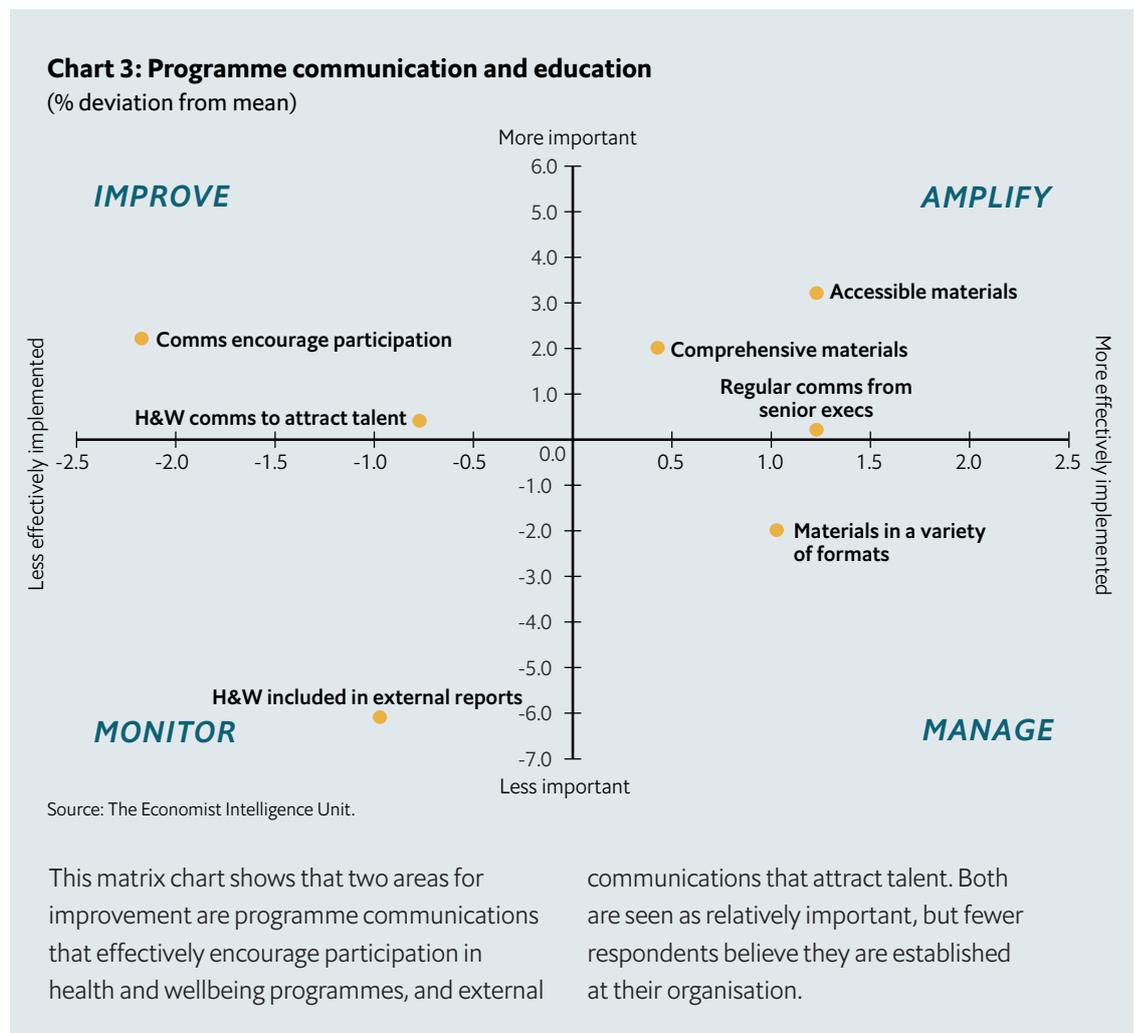
Ms Grant, for example, says that health and wellbeing strategies should not dictate to people what they should engage with. Instead, Mace has created a toolbox of resources for its 140 health, safety and wellbeing managers and 130 wellbeing 'ambassadors' worldwide so that they can use what is relevant to the workers in their particular business area.

1.2 Programme communication and education

The mere existence of a health and wellbeing programme is not enough to make a difference. Employees need to know about it to be able to use it.

HR executives surveyed for this study mostly believe their health and wellbeing programmes are effectively communicated: 75% say educational materials about their programmes are accessible and comprehensible to all staff and that senior executives regularly communicate with employees about the benefits of participating in them.

There is less certainty that this communication is leading to participation, however. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) 'don't know' whether or not their communications around health and wellbeing effectively encourage all staff to participate.



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Interviewees for this report say that programme communications that feature typical employees, as opposed to HR or wellbeing experts, are more effective. US pharmaceuticals company Merck & Co., for example, made a video in which three employees explain how healthy eating and fitness programmes helped to change their lives for the better. It is “really quite moving”, says Cathryn Gunther, vice-president of global population health at the company, and has been highly effective.

Another way to encourage employees to participate is to reward them for doing so. At Delta Air Lines, for example, employees can earn up to \$700 a year for attending annual physical check-ups and screenings. The money goes into a health account that they can use towards medical expenses if something catastrophic happens. Similarly, Indian IT services provider TCS has found that making charitable contributions in return for every hour and kilometre that an employee runs, as measured by its internal Fit4Life app, has proved “a powerful motivator”.

Perhaps understandably, respondents typically consider external communication around health and wellbeing to be less important than internal communication (see chart). This may change, however, as potential employees increasingly consider the working experience a company offers.

1.3 Programme evaluation

Effectively evaluating the impact of health and wellbeing programmes helps employers discover what is working, and therefore how to plan their investments. This is widely recognised, and 79% of respondents say their health and wellbeing programmes include plans to assess their impact. Nearly as many (76%) say their assessments include a wide variety of measures. This helps a company to understand health and wellbeing, and its business impact, more holistically.

Mace has introduced key performance indicators (KPIs) for health and wellbeing, linking them to its five-year business plan. These go beyond traditional measures such as days of absence due to sickness, and include measures of proactive management of health risks, creating wellbeing opportunities, healthy buildings and community wellbeing, and influencing the construction industry and sharing best practice.

These KPIs have become part of business units’ internal reporting requirements, Ms Grant explains. “In Mace, a new way of reporting on wellbeing activities means that business areas across the globe will have to report at the end of the year on what they have done to achieve their KPIs, just as they do in terms of environmental issues such as responsible timber sourcing or carbon emissions in our construction sector. Having a leaderboard and reporting system should encourage a high level of completion.”

Survey respondents also acknowledge the importance of involving employees in the assessment of health and wellbeing programmes, with 71% describing it as somewhat or very important.

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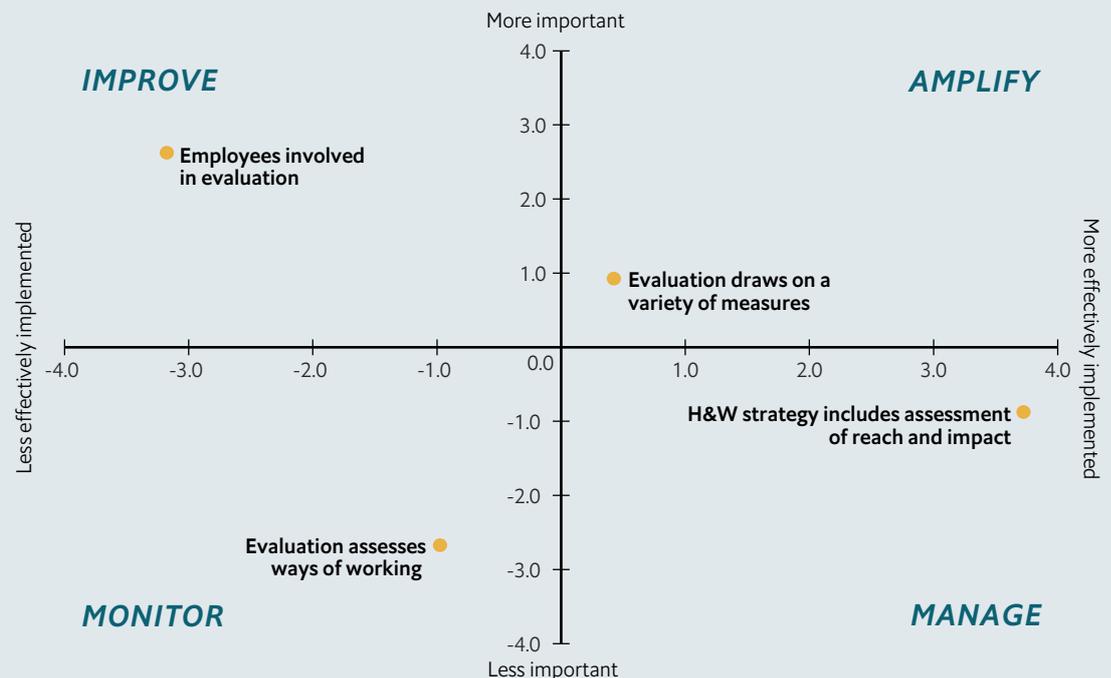
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Employee feedback is an important tool for refining the health and wellbeing programme at Delta Air Lines, explains Ms Strickland. “We are constantly reporting satisfaction rates. We listen to employee feedback and respond if we find that something is not working or could work better.” Now, the company is beginning to tie its health and wellbeing initiatives to employee productivity, “to know how much our efforts correlate to improved productivity and reduced injury,” she explains.

The use of digital channels to deliver health and wellbeing programmes has the benefit of measurability. TCS, for example, analyses the usage of its Fit4Life app to assess trends in participation. “If there’s a decline in activity, we can spot it early and investigate why,” explains HR director Ramkumar Chandrasekaran.

Of course, employers must be careful that their collection of data about employee health and wellbeing conforms to privacy regulations. In 2015, the city of Houston was forced to discontinue an online employee wellness service after it emerged that the terms of use suggested that the provider could share data collected with third parties, and an employee backlash ensued.¹⁰

Chart 4: Programme evaluation
(% deviation from mean)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

This matrix chart shows that a relatively high proportion of respondents agree involving employees in the ongoing evaluation of health and wellbeing programmes is

important, but relatively few believe it is true of their organisation, making this an area for improvement.

10. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/28/health/workplace-wellness-privacy-risk-exclusive/index.html>

Chapter 2: Delivering health and wellbeing practices and policies

The second half of the health and wellbeing framework and executive survey focused on the way in which the content of programmes—the policies, practices and tools that companies offer their employees in support of their wellbeing—is delivered, and how effective companies are at delivering it.

2.1 Physical health and wellbeing

Our literature review revealed that practices that support physical health and wellbeing are the most common form of health and wellbeing intervention by employers. Indeed, they alone are universal to all the programmes assessed in that review. This reflects the rise of non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease and cancer, which are exacerbated by lifestyle factors. Many of these, such as a sedentary lifestyle and poor diet, are directly related to work and the workplace.

Companies draw on both internal and external resources to support the physical health of their employees, the survey shows, but they are slightly more reliant on external expertise. Support for externally provided services, both financial and non-financial, is better implemented—59% of respondents say their organisation has implemented such support well or very well, compared to 54% who say the same of internal support—and more respondents consider external support to be somewhat or very important to their physical wellbeing programmes (74% versus 67%).

Employers have acknowledged the value of preventative measures to encourage good physical health. These measures might include screening programmes to help employees to find out their risk of diabetes, and their cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and providing support to employees to stop smoking or using tobacco to reduce their disease risk factors. In the survey, 61% of respondents say preventative physical health programmes have been well or very well implemented, and 70% say their organisations see them as important.

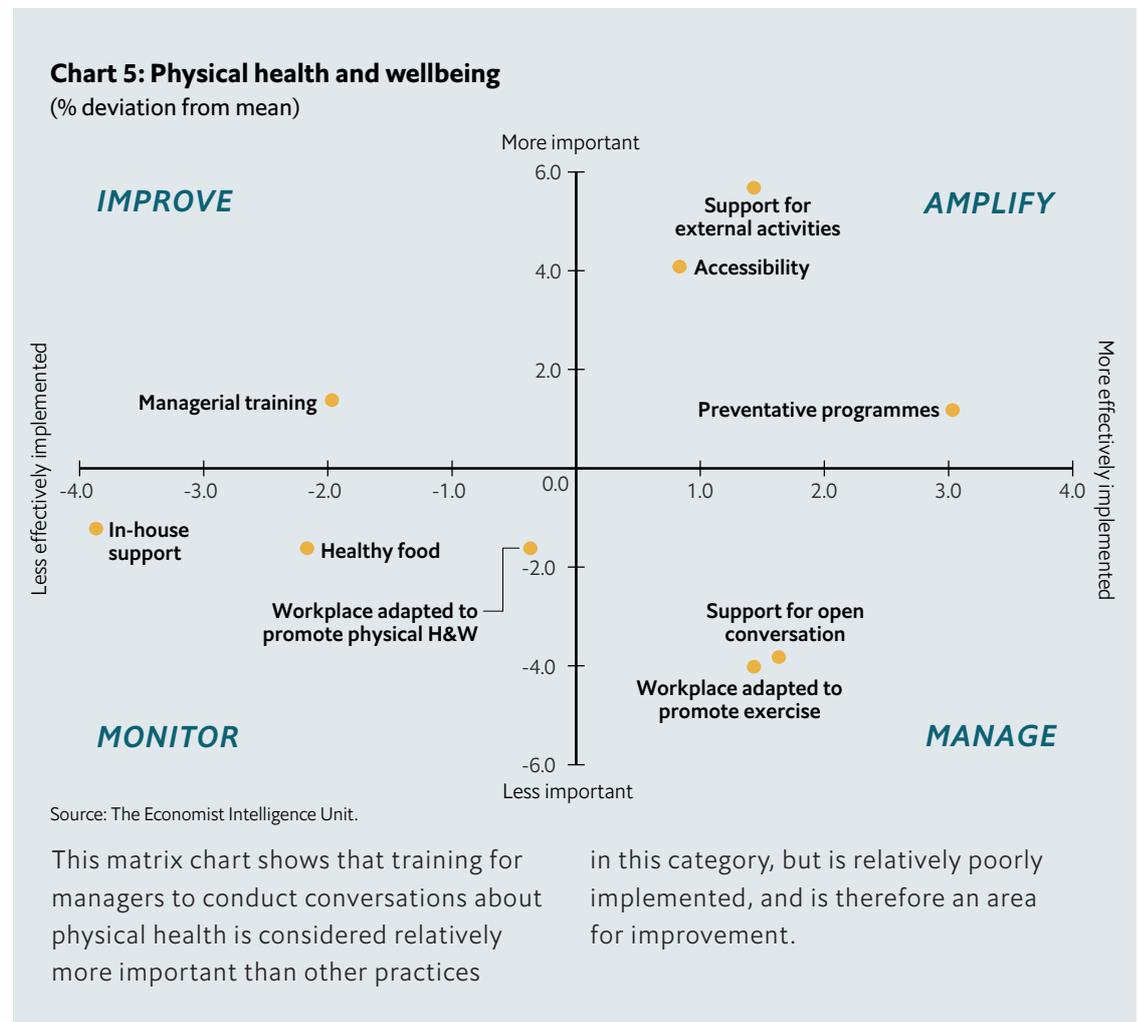
They have also acknowledged the need for physical health and wellbeing programmes to be accessible to all: 59% say this is well implemented, and 73% consider it important. When implementing an initiative to encourage vaccinations among its employees, Merck realised that participation was better among office-based workers than among remote and itinerant staff. It therefore introduced vaccination clinics at meetings for bringing remote teams together. Within three months, Merck had administered more than 500 vaccines and increased its coverage of employees based outside the office by 20%. “Convenience is a critical success factor for vaccination uptake,” Ms Gunther says.

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An area for improvement revealed by the study is training for managers to discuss physical health with their team members. Seventy percent of respondents say their organisations consider this to be important, but only 56% say it has been well implemented.

Research suggests that the way in which a manager talks to an employee about a health issue can affect the outcome. A study by NatCen Social Research, on behalf of the UK's Department of Work and Pensions, found that having a supportive employer and discussing any health condition at an early stage reduced the likelihood of sickness absence of more than two weeks¹¹. It is therefore evident that managers should be equipped with the ability to talk about physical health in an effective and supportive manner.

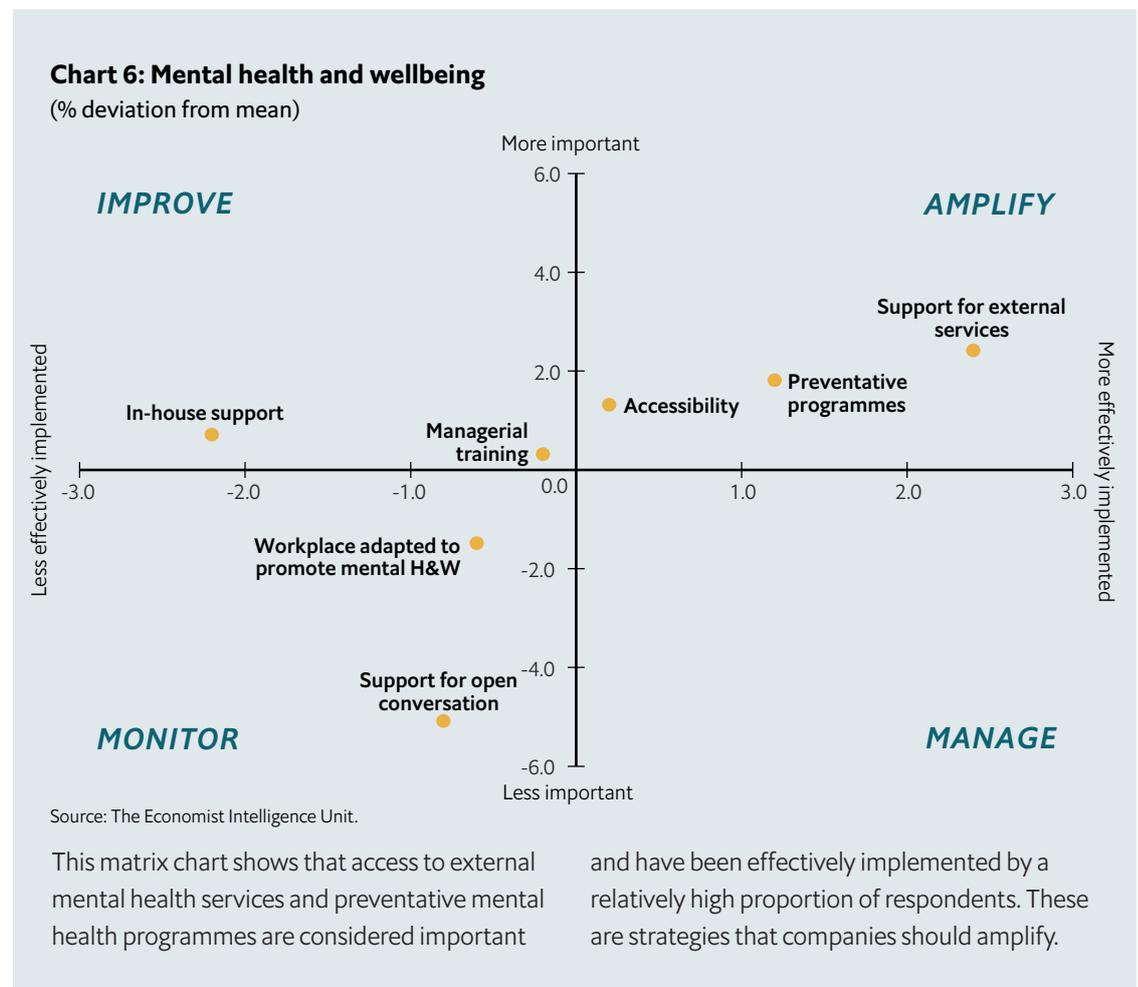


11. http://www.theworkfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/387_Health-and-wellbeing-at-work.pdf

2.2 Mental health and wellbeing

There is increasing global awareness of the burden of mental illness, and the role that the workplace can play in exacerbating or alleviating it. This awareness is reflected in the health and wellbeing programmes of multinational companies, the majority of which include provision for mental health support.

As with physical health and wellbeing, the survey reveals that companies are more reliant on services provided by external parties than on in-house support for mental health. These services might include access to counsellors or other mental health professionals. At Delta Air Lines, for example, employees can call and speak to an external mental health specialist at any time and can have free face-to-face consultancy for mental health problems. Merck, meanwhile, has invited a speaker from the National Association of Suicide Prevention to provide a webcam presentation which will be available to its 65,000 employees worldwide on mental health and what can be done in the workplace to help.



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Not only does the use of external services provide a wider set of expertise than companies may have access to internally, it has the added advantage of offering employees a neutral party with which they can discuss issues they may not want to reveal to their employer.

However, management training to discuss mental health issues is again an area for improvement: 70% consider it to be important, but just 57% say they have implemented it effectively. Fewer still (56%) say they successfully provide support for open conversations about mental health without fear of reprisal, although this is not believed to be important by as many respondents either.

UK bank Barclays has taken considerable effort to encourage a culture of open conversation about mental health. Its widely emulated “This is Me” campaign invites employees to talk openly on video about how they have tackled mental health challenges. The goal is to create an open culture where people can discuss problems such as anxiety or depression with line managers without stigma.

The bank has paid particular attention to the language around mental health that is used within the organisation, explains Marcus Hunt, vice-president global wellbeing, in order to foster a more human, less medical conversation. This helps both the employee articulate their feelings and the manager in deciding how to respond, he says.

“We are trying to move away from stigmatisation and attaching labels such as anxiety and depression. This prevents us seeing the whole person, inhibits openness and can be a barrier for some if we are blinkered to the valuable contribution all colleagues make by just focusing on a label,” he explains. “With our busy lives, some of us may have anxious thoughts or feel under pressure with balancing a busy home and work schedule. This is difficult to manage if these thoughts disrupt our sleep or healthy lifestyle habits. This can further compound our negative feelings.”

This kind of language makes it easier for managers to solve problems, compared to medical concepts that they may not be equipped to handle. “If you just say ‘I have anxiety’, people can be unclear on what to do.”

2.3 Emerging dimensions of health and wellbeing

While most programmes included provisions for physical and mental health and wellbeing, there are a number of emerging categories of wellbeing that some companies are beginning to address. This reflects an increasing awareness of the holistic nature of wellbeing, and the many facets of our lives that impinge upon it.

Financial wellbeing

The first of three emerging categories included in this study is financial wellbeing, meaning the absence of undue stress and worry related to financial matters. “If you’ve got a workplace that has a prevalence of stress then it’s likely that financial stress is contributing to that,” explains Ms Gunther.

Typical measures to support financial wellbeing include consultation with financial planners to provide advice on budgeting, tax and retirement plans. Merck offers financial planning resources and guidance, for example, to support families with children entering higher education. Delta Air Lines helps staff plan for retirement, offering online classes with a financial assistant and consultations with advisors, and has introduced health savings accounts.

Survey respondents report that their organisations have been effective at offering support for financial wellbeing, with roughly the same proportion saying they have implemented in-house support (56%) and access to externally provided services (57%) either well or very well. Both are considered somewhat or very important by 70% of respondents or more.

Delta’s Ms Strickland warns that accessibility is a particular concern for financial wellbeing measures, as financial jargon can be exclusionary. “We used to put out materials with a lot of words which people found very confusing. An improvement we’ve made presents information at a high level with employees in mind, giving them instructions about where to go for more detail.”

Digital health and wellbeing

There is a growing recognition that particular behaviours associated with digital technology can have a negative impact on our wellbeing. In particular, the ability to access work communications at all hours of the day can make it difficult for some people to switch off.

Typical digital health and wellbeing measures include policies that limit email use outside of working hours, or tools that help employees to track their digital consumption and offer guidance on healthy behaviours.

Although this is a relatively new dimension of wellbeing, 72% of respondents believe that initiatives that consider the impact of digital consumption on overall health and wellbeing are important. Seventy

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percent believe the same of policies that encourage responsible digital consumption and promote digital health and wellbeing. And the majority of respondents say they have implemented such measures well or very well: 57% and 56% respectively.

One example is Vodafone: the company provides employees with an app to help them manage various dimensions of their wellbeing, including digital. The app monitors their use of various online services and makes recommendations for healthier behaviours. The app has been released to 18,000 UK-based employees and is currently being locally customised for global adoption.

Meanwhile, a number of employers, including carmaker Volkswagen¹² and supermarket chain Lidl¹³, have introduced policies limiting access to email outside of working hours. In France, it has been mandated by law.

The role of digital technology in our working lives is a “massive conversation”, says Barclays’ Mr Hunt, because it offers both opportunities and threats in the area of workplace and mental health. The bank is currently running pilot workshops to explore how technology can disrupt ways of working and how to harness its power. “We can’t ignore technology,” he says. “We must embrace it and explore new ways of innovating and using it to our advantage without it compromising our wellbeing and without getting left behind in this fast-evolving world.”

Social health

Human beings are social creatures, and increasing attention is being paid to the impact of social factors on our health and wellbeing. As the companies we work for are the social organisations we spend most of our time engaged with, it is a growing consideration for employers.

The aim of many social health interventions is to help employees feel integrated into the social fabric of the company, so that they feel welcomed and supported.

Some companies link their social health initiatives to their overall health and wellbeing programmes. Both Merck and Mace, for example, have set up “inclusion” groups to help promote their health and wellbeing programmes among employees with shared interests, such as women, veterans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff and those with physical or mental challenges.

TCS, meanwhile, has created its own social network, Knome, which employees use to collaborate on professional or personal projects. It incorporates elements of social networking and gamification to encourage users to connect with their colleagues from other countries, to share ideas, socialise and learn.

Survey respondents say their organisations acknowledge the importance of supporting social health

12. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/12/20/porsche-could-ban-out-of-hour-emails-companies-already-have/>

13. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/lidl-bans-work-emails-after-13187288>

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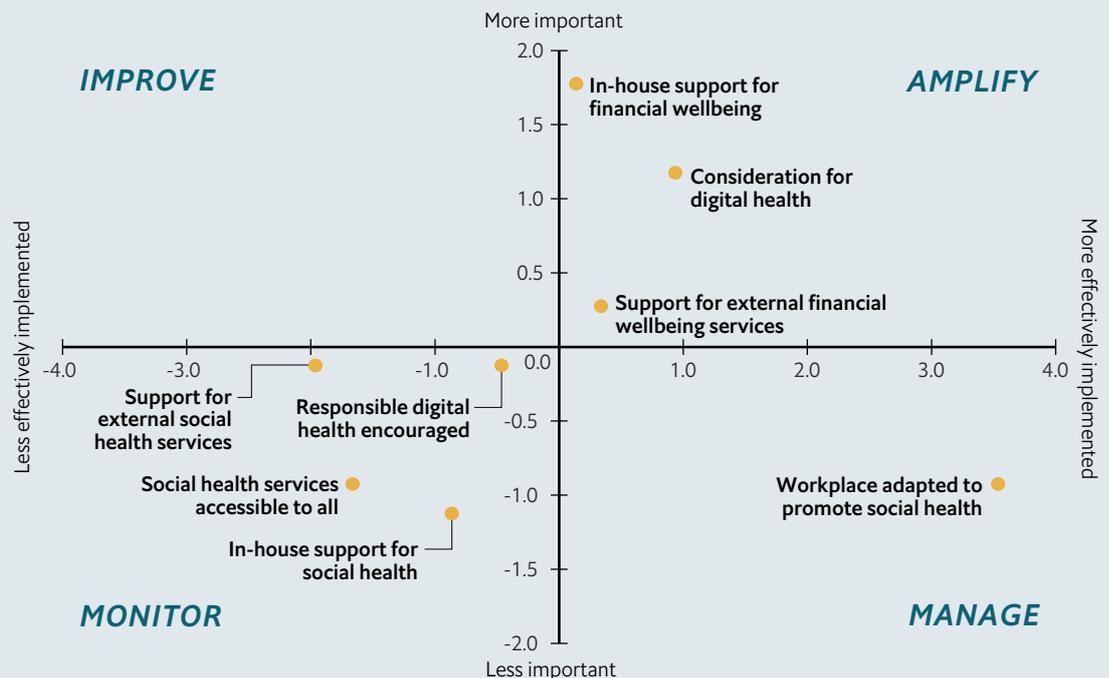
among employees. Around 70% rate in-house support for social health, access to external services, accessibility of social health support and adaptation of the work environment to promote social health and wellbeing as all being somewhat or very important.

The best-implemented of these is the latter, with 60% of respondents saying they have adapted the work environment for social health either well or very well. But interventions need not be limited to the workplace: one programme identified in the literature review encouraged employees to participate in local cultural activities by going to local galleries and exhibitions.

Even encouraging people to take part in activities such as volunteering and mentoring can have a powerful effect, Mr Chandrasekaran says: “These activities can be exceptionally good for mental health and physical wellbeing, and we see clear benefits in staff engagement from our wider corporate social responsibility programmes.”

Chart 7: Emerging dimensions of health and wellbeing

(% deviation from mean)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

This matrix chart shows that in-house and external support for financial wellbeing, and initiatives that consider the impact of digital technology on wellbeing, are considered

important and have been effectively implemented by a relatively high proportion of respondents. These are therefore strategies that companies should amplify.

Conclusion

The need for companies to look after the health and wellbeing of their employees is now widely established and understood. Not only that, the survey reveals that companies are taking action. This is reflected in a high degree of implementation of, and importance placed upon, all the health and wellbeing practices included in this study among survey respondents.

However, this is new territory for many companies, and our research reveals some areas on which organisations should focus their attention to deliver truly effective health and wellbeing programmes.

1. Involve employees in the design, implementation and assessment of wellbeing programmes

Many of the experts consulted for this study agree that this is crucial not only for effectiveness of the programmes, but also participation within them. However, the survey reveals that this is currently of relatively low priority for HR executives. “A programme is only as good as the engagement it attracts, so it’s important to find out what employees actually want and how they want it communicated,” says Mr Chandrasekaran. “And once in place, it’s important to keep refreshing and reviewing the programme to ensure it continues to meet ever-evolving staff needs.”

2. Train managers to be able to discuss health and wellbeing with staff and respond appropriately

Managers are, for most of us, the ‘face’ of the organisation we work for, and the way in which they react to our health and wellbeing issues dictates whether we feel supported or otherwise. This is easier said than done, however, at a time when social norms around talking about, in particular, mental health are evolving, although not at the same pace for everyone. The example of Barclays, which is actively managing the language its employees use around mental health, shows the care and attention with which this must be handled.

3. Manage health and wellbeing holistically

The growing recognition of financial, digital and social wellbeing reveals the breadth of factors that impinge upon our health and wellbeing. This holistic nature of wellbeing means it cannot be managed by a single team or division alone. “It’s important to integrate the various departments that touch employees including HR, health services, learning and development, and leadership,” explains Merck’s Ms Gunther. “And bring those groups together to build and commit to a holistic strategy.”

Mr Chandrasekaran agrees: “You can’t split health and wellbeing into silos. Physical, mental, financial and digital wellbeing all impact one another. For example, if someone is concerned about their finances they may sleep less, which has an impact on both their physical and mental health.”

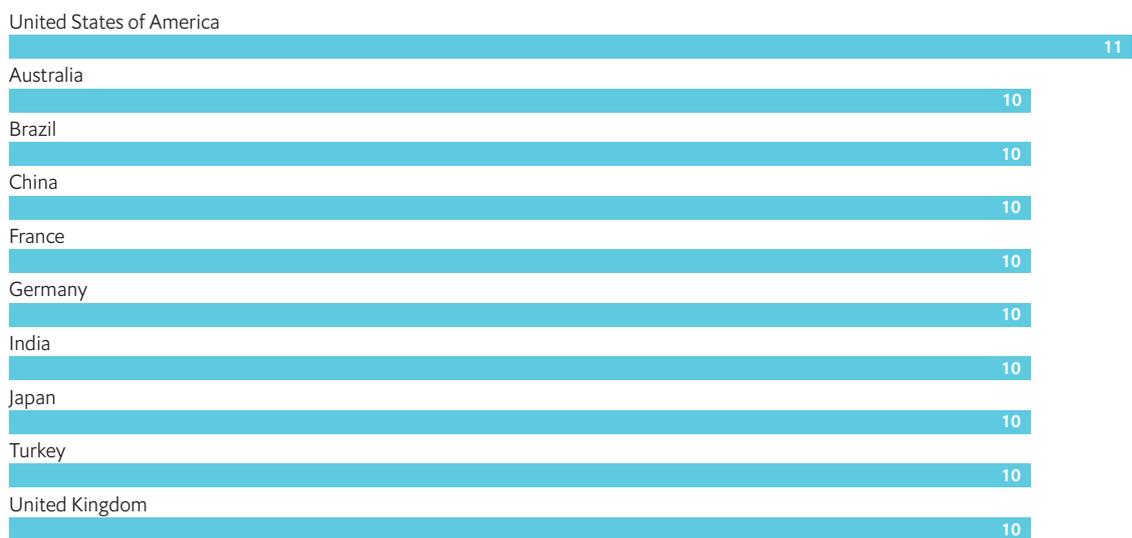
DOING WELLBEING WELL

An assessment of health and wellbeing programmes at multinational companies

In summary, our study reveals that HR executives mostly believe their health and wellbeing programmes are effective and important. However, we know from academic studies that the benefits of wellbeing programmes can be difficult to prove. They would therefore be advised to identify and amplify the interventions that work now, before the next cost-cutting drive forces them to roll back investment.

1. In which country are you personally located? Select one

(% respondents)



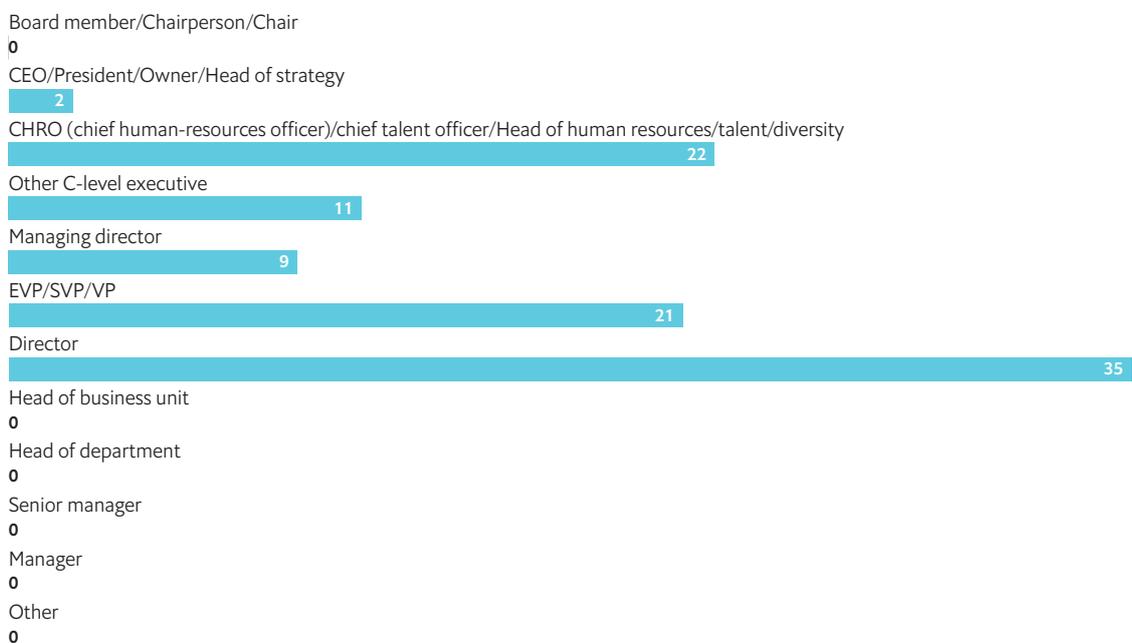
2. Which of the following best describes your main functional role? Select one

(% respondents)



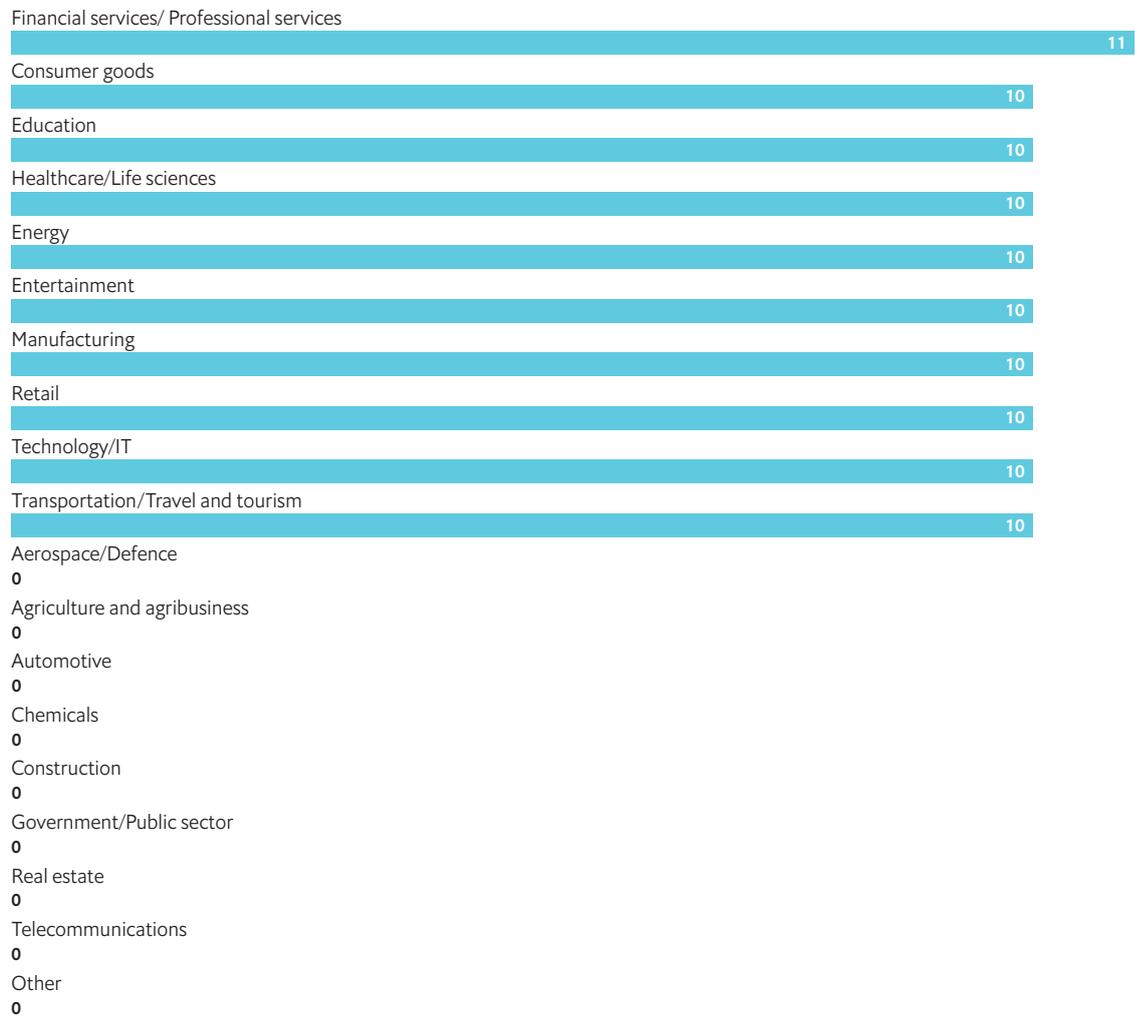
3. Which of the following best describes your job title? Select one

(% respondents)



What is your organisation’s primary industry? Select one

(% respondents)



Questions

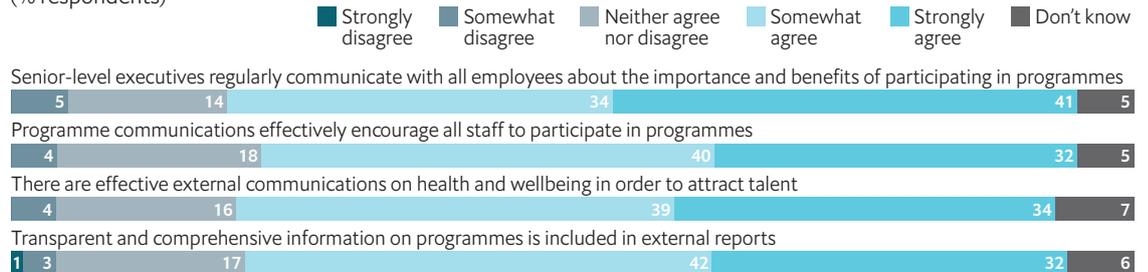
1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the health and wellbeing programme in your organisation?

(% respondents)



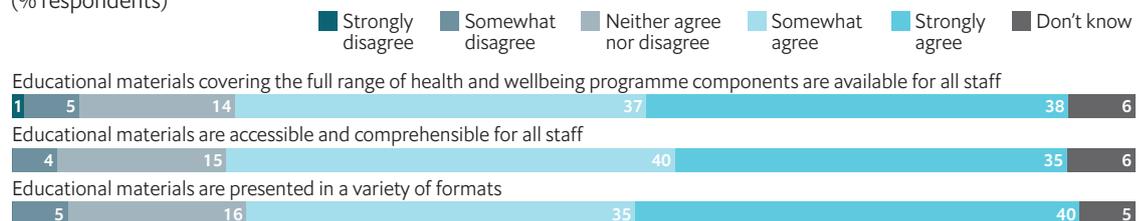
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the health and wellbeing programme in your organisation?

(% respondents)



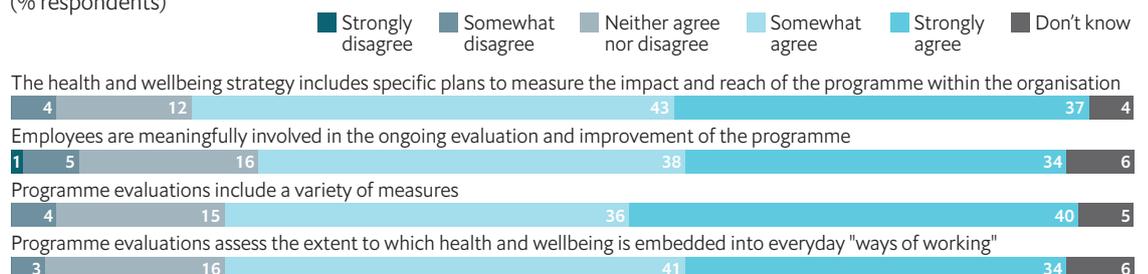
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the health and wellbeing programme in your organisation?

(% respondents)



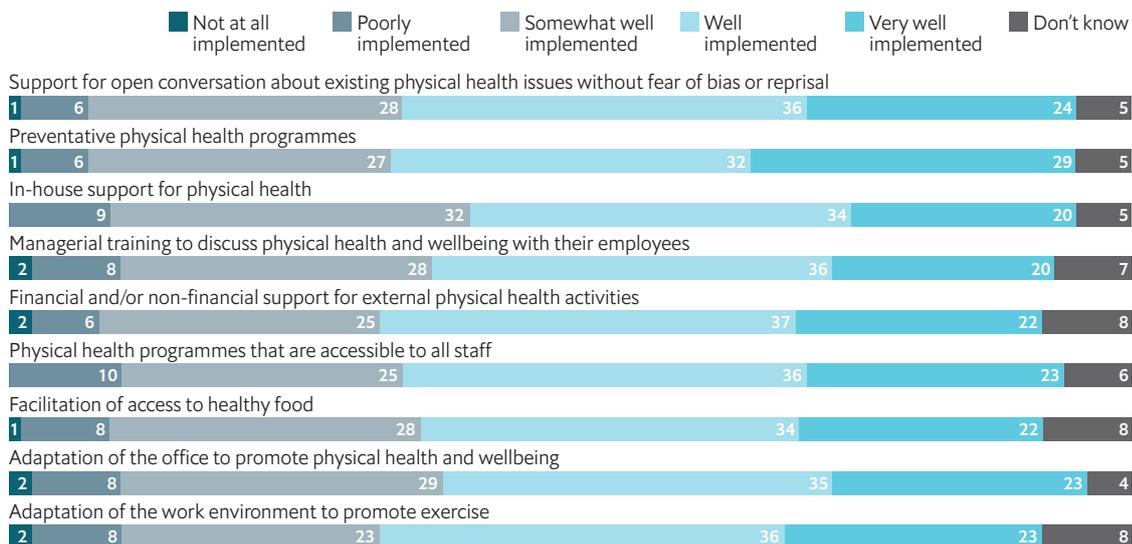
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the health and wellbeing programme in your organisation?

(% respondents)



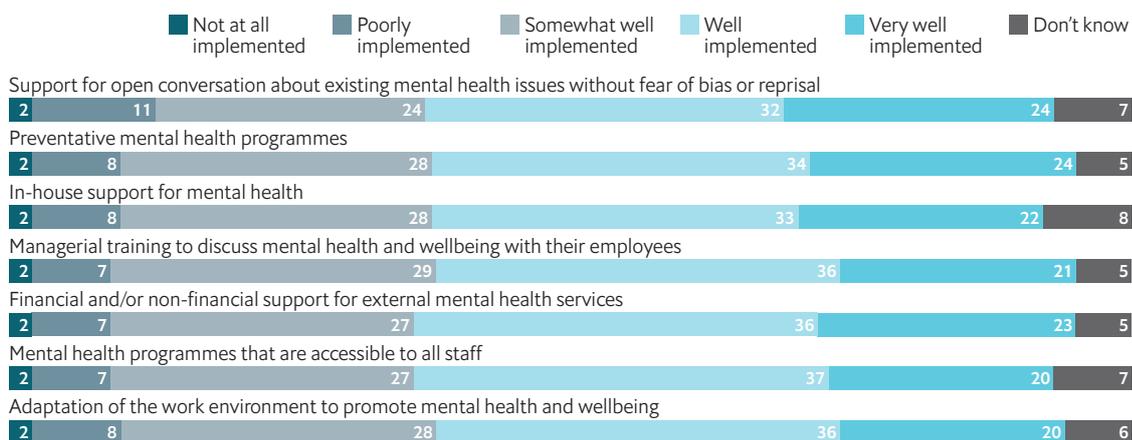
5. To what extent has your organisation implemented the following health and wellbeing policies?

(% respondents)



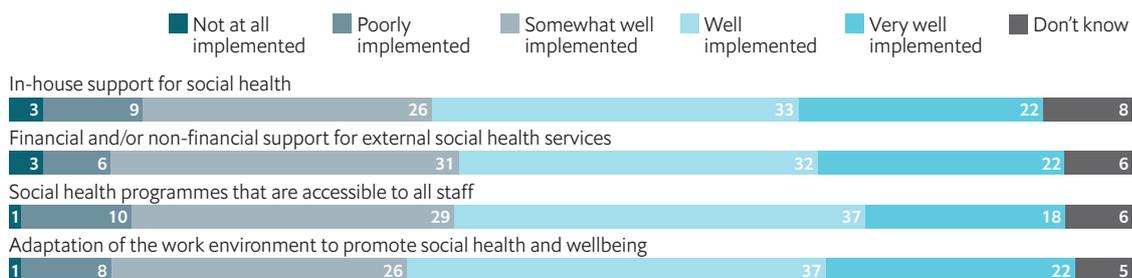
6. To what extent has your organisation implemented the following health and wellbeing policies?

(% respondents)



7. To what extent has your organisation implemented the following health and wellbeing policies?

(% respondents)



8. To what extent has your organisation implemented the following health and wellbeing policies?

(% respondents)



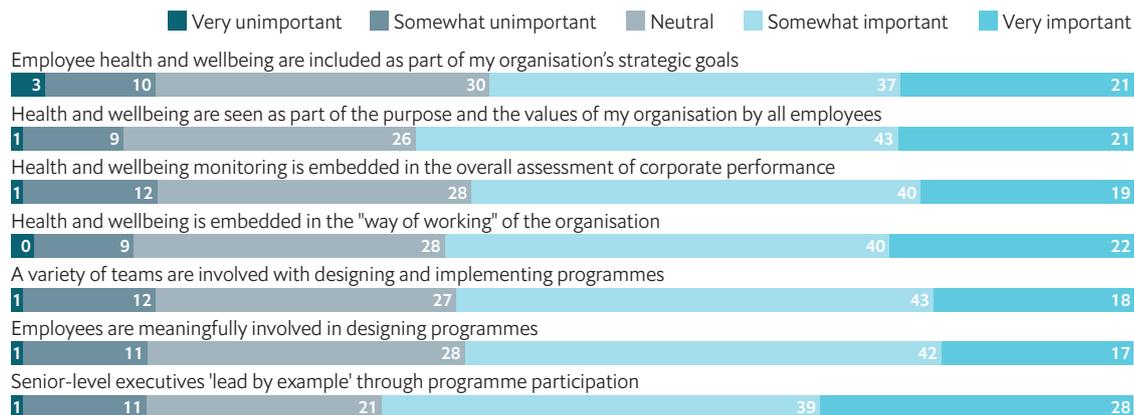
9. To what extent has your organisation implemented the following health and wellbeing policies?

(% respondents)



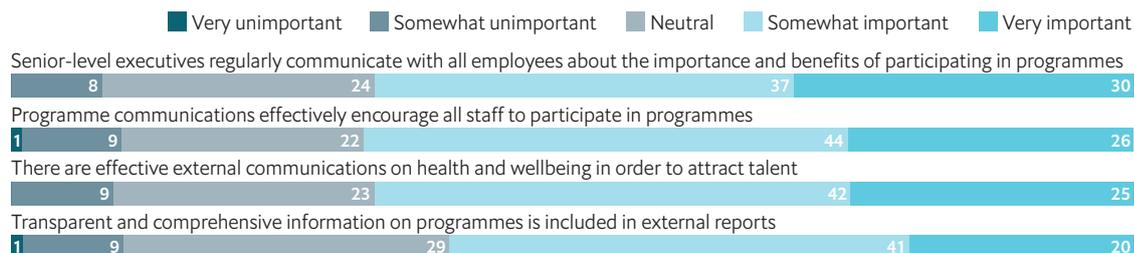
10. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to organisational culture & support of workplace health & wellbeing?

(% respondents)



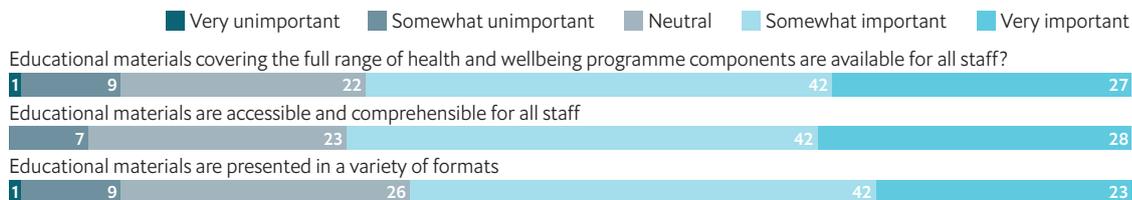
11. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to programme communication?

(% respondents)



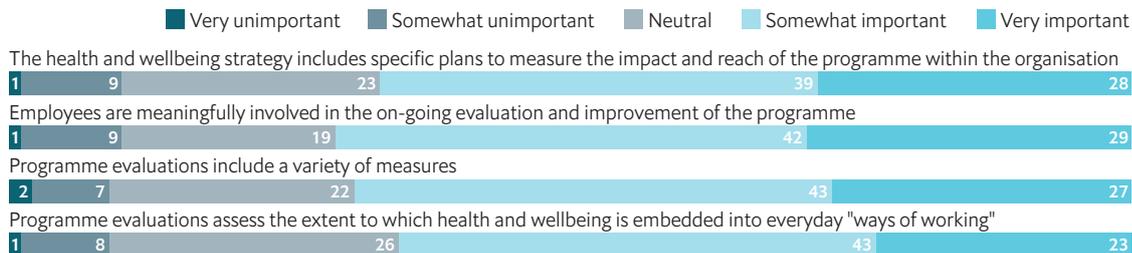
12. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to programme education?

(% respondents)



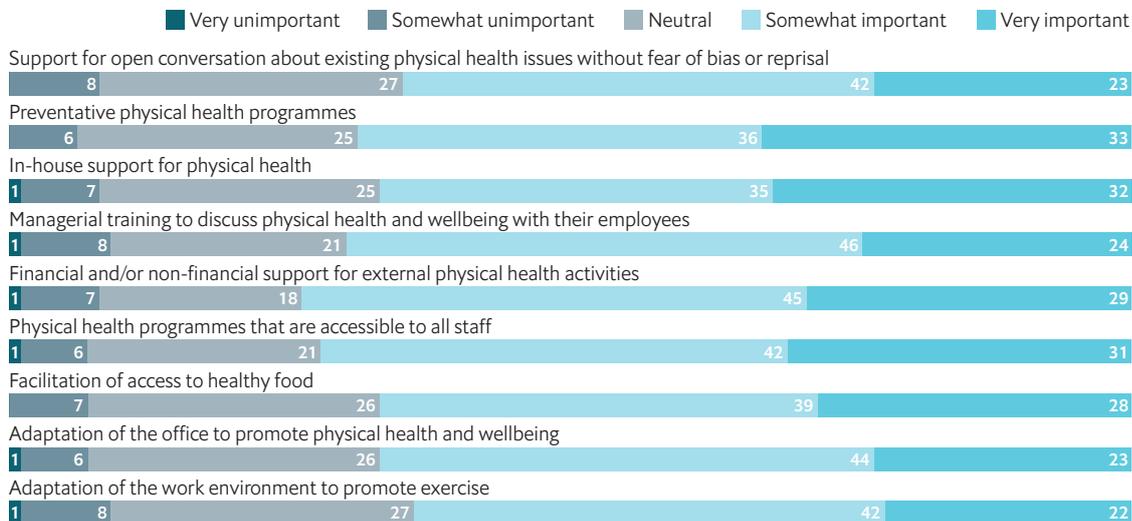
From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to programme evaluation?

(% respondents)



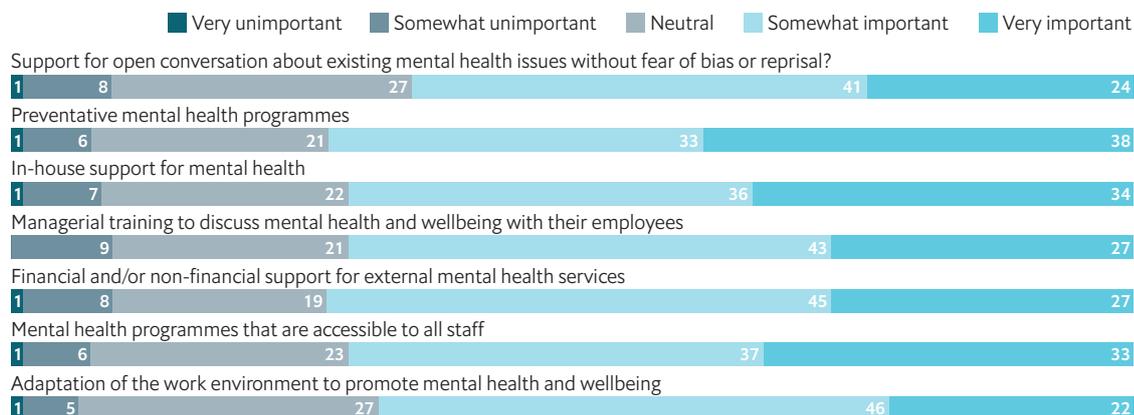
14. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to physical health promotion?

(% respondents)



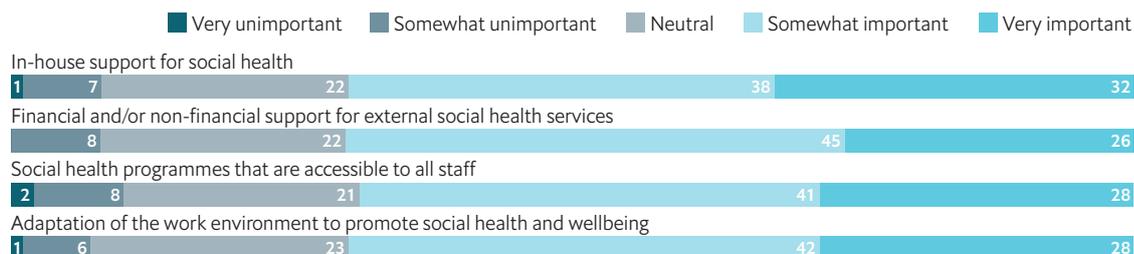
From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to mental health promotion?

(% respondents)



16. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to social health promotion?

(% respondents)



17. From the perspective of your organisation, how important would you say each of the following aspects are to digital health and wellbeing?

(% respondents)

