

Modern Wellness Trends Driving Change

Today's employee expects more than health benefits. Employee wellness has entered a modern era defined by personalization, priority and purpose. Driven largely by younger generations changing the workforce, wellness is shifting from a perk to a core business strategy. In 2026, organizations are rethinking how they support their workforce not just physically, but also emotionally, socially and professionally. Here are some key trends shaping workplace wellness in 2026.

Gen Z and Millennials Are Redefining Wellness

By 2026, Generation Z (Gen Z) and millennials make up the majority of the workforce—and they're reshaping wellness expectations. These generations (born between 1981 and 2012) prioritize holistic well-being, flexibility and inclusiveness. McKinsey's Future of Wellness research revealed that 30% of these cohorts are prioritizing wellness "a lot more" compared with one year ago, versus up to 23% of older generations. Stress, burnout, anxiety and worry are top mental health concerns for Gen Z and millennials, and they're prioritizing health and sleep.

Furthermore, these generations generally consider wellness a daily priority, rather than an occasional indulgence. In fact, McKinsey reports that these generations account for more than 41% of annual wellness spending. To put this into perspective, consumers aged 58 and older account for only 28% of wellness spending. These younger working generations are interested in a personal and holistic approach to wellness that's based on science-backed support and helps them focus on recovery and longevity.

Mental Health Becomes Mental Fitness

The conversation around mental health continues to evolve. In 2026, the focus is on mental fitness, which involves building resilience and emotional strength proactively rather than reacting to burnout or crisis. Mental fitness is the general ability to navigate life's challenges with resilience, focusing on a response rather than a reaction.

As such, more employers are introducing perks and benefits, including mental health coaching to develop coping strategies and emotional agility, as well as dedicated mental fitness days to recharge without stigma. Employers may be considering

ways to expand their employee assistance programs and subsidize mental health apps. A significant part of this shift involves normalizing mental health conversations in the workplace and training managers to recognize the signs of stress and burnout.

Spotlight on Women's Health Support

Driven by increasing demand from workers, women's health is driving change in workplace wellness. More employees are looking for fertility support, menopause care and maternal health resources. However, according to Maven's 2025 report, only 40% of organizations provide fertility services, 49% include prenatal support and 21% offer menopause-specific support in their benefits.

These initiatives reflect a growing recognition that women's health needs are not niche—they're integral to workforce well-being. Gen Z, millennial and Gen X workers alike are looking for access to women's health, including fertility and menopause support and everything in between.

Building Financial Resilience

Economic uncertainty and rising health care and living costs have pushed financial wellness to the forefront. Employees increasingly link financial stress to mental health challenges, making this an essential pillar of workplace well-being. Moreover, Vanguard research found that nearly 75% of Americans fell short of their saving and spending resolutions in 2025. However, they're ready to recommit in 2026 and are optimistic about it.

In response to the growing need for financial education and support, more organizations may offer the following types of benefits:

- Financial education workshops and debt counseling
- Flexible pay options and emergency savings programs
- Student loan repayment
- Retirement planning
- Employee assistance programs

Fortunately, employers are well-positioned to help workers gain their financial footing this year.

Summary

Health and wellness continue to evolve and can vary across different generations. Wellness is a very personal journey, but employers have the opportunity to offer meaningful support. As these trends continue to shape employee wellness, employers can evaluate their current wellness initiatives and consider ways to improve them to better support workers in 2026.