



Workforce 2020

**Meeting the benefits needs of today's
diverse workforce in a changed world**

The Guardian Life Insurance
Company of America
New York, NY

guardianlife.com

Introduction

Rethinking diversity in the workplace

With the COVID-19 pandemic and protests about systemic racism and injustice shaping and changing our world, building a more diverse and inclusive workplace is more important — and more urgently needed — than ever before.

But for many, there remains a startling gap between words and action. While 6 in 10 employers say workforce diversity and inclusion (D&I) is a strategic priority for their organization, only 1 in 3 have a D&I team or individuals with strategies and initiatives in place.

Now is the time for companies to move beyond mere representation or talk. They must weave D&I into the fabric of their company and values to make lasting change. This report will provide some strategies and insights for companies to take action, extend a helping hand and create effective D&I strategies.

The definition of workforce diversity in 2020 goes well beyond the traditional demographic characteristics of age, race, and gender, and includes gender identification, sexual orientation, disabilities, cultural exposure, ideological views, and more. Tomorrow's workforce will be even more diverse than today's, and increasingly employers are getting prepared.

Companies with cultural and cognitive diversity are more innovative and creative, have a better understanding of customers, and have teams that make better decisions. Employees also feel more understood and respected in organizations that embrace diversity, which leads to higher engagement, satisfaction, and retention.¹

Shifts in US workplace demographics²

	2005	2015	2025
Older: <i>Share of workforce age 55 or older</i>	15.6%	21.7%	24.8%
More women: <i>Women's share of the workforce</i>	46.4%	46.8%	47.1%
Better educated: <i>At least some college</i>	45%	56%	64%
Racially diverse: <i>Non-white share of population</i>	32%	35%	41%
Foreign-born: <i>Citizens born outside the US</i>	11.6%	13.5%	14.6%

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this conversation — forcing many companies to find ways to quickly accommodate their employees' diverse needs. This includes caregivers working full time while caring for ill or disabled family suddenly being left with limited support, single parents caring for children at home while working who need a flexible work schedule, or employees with disabilities who've long sought remote work options. And it includes sick employees taking advantage of telehealth care for the first time. The pandemic has highlighted how employees can be successful when an inclusive workplace strategy is prioritized and put in place.



Employers with more diverse workforces are 35% more likely to outperform their industry counterparts in revenue and earnings growth³

Making employee benefits work for everyone

A diversity and inclusion benefits strategy

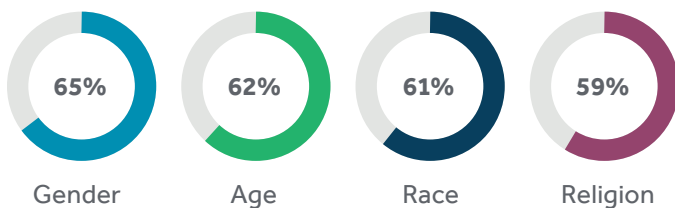
Employee benefits policies, programs, and their related communications have long been designed for the working majority. Today, this one-size-fits-all approach to benefits strategy is nearly obsolete. With a US workforce that is more diverse than ever, a pandemic pushing employers to accommodate more workers, and issues of racial injustice and inequality taking on new urgency, it's becoming a business and moral imperative for employers to address the unique benefits needs of their smaller, but growing, workforce segments.

As employers make workforce diversity and inclusion a higher business priority, many are applying that strategy to their employee benefits programs. In addition, legislation exists to ensure that employers are providing fair and equal treatment to all employees. Specifically, laws such as the Equality Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and others, require employers to review and update their employment and benefits policies to maintain compliance.

On average, about 6 in 10 employers say their benefits policies and communications are inclusive of workers by gender, age, race, and/or religion. Larger firms (with more than 1,000 employees), those in the high-tech, financial services, and professional services sectors, and those focused on improving workforce well-being are among the most likely to offer more inclusive benefits programs.

Benefits policies and communications are inclusive of various demographic segments

Percent of employers who strongly agree:



Most employers extend insurance, retirement, and other core benefits to their entire workforce, such as medical, dental, life, and disability coverage as well as 401(k) plans. However, the way those benefits are designed and communicated aren't always inclusive.

In the past three years, 55% of employers have acted to make their benefits and communications more inclusive.

Yet a minority of employers have policies in place and offer benefits programs to meet the unique needs of certain workforce cohorts. Relatively few offer student loan repayment benefits, flex time or paid time off for caregivers, benefits for same-sex couples, or utilize special efforts to recruit people with disabilities.

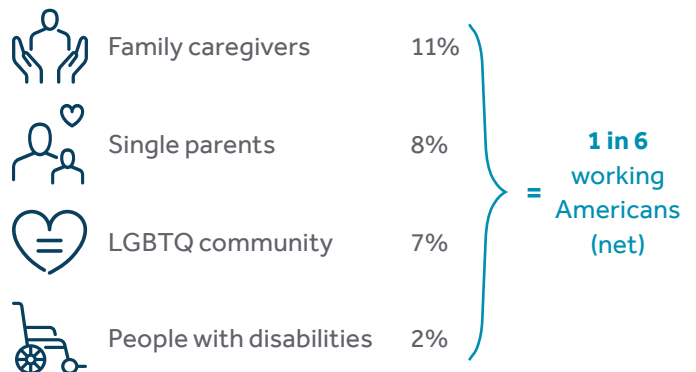
Benefits to address workforce needs and concerns

Percent of employers that offer each:

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)	34%
Benefits for same-sex couples	29%
Paid time off/Flex time for caregivers	26%
Special recruiting of people with disabilities	11%
Student loan repayment benefits	7%

Despite recent progress in the US on benefits equality and inclusion, the journey has just begun for many organizations, and much more work lies ahead. The remainder of this report focuses on the attitudes and needs of four workforce segments that traditionally have been underserved from an employee benefits perspective: family caregivers, single parents, people who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer), and people with disabilities.

Percent of US full-time workers





68%

of workers strongly agree ...

**“It is important to work
for an employer that
creates an inclusive
workplace culture.”**

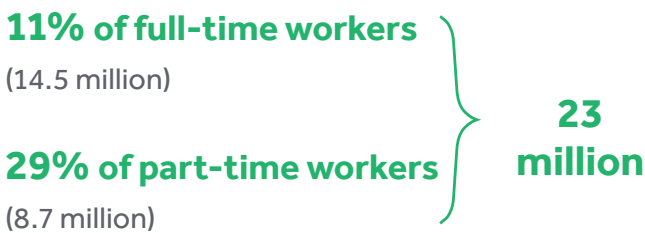


Family Caregivers

1 in 7 working Americans also act as a caregiver

In the past 60 years, life expectancy in the US has increased from an average age of 69.7 in 1960 to 79.8 in 2020.⁴ With Americans living longer, the number of adults requiring assistance with activities of daily living (eating, dressing, bathing, etc.) has risen as well. Many adults and children with special health care needs also require ongoing care. The COVID-19 pandemic may increase the number of family caregivers providing short-term or long-term care to ill or disabled loved ones, who are often at higher risk for serious illness from the coronavirus. With more family responsibilities falling on caregivers' shoulders, employer support and workplace benefits will be critical.

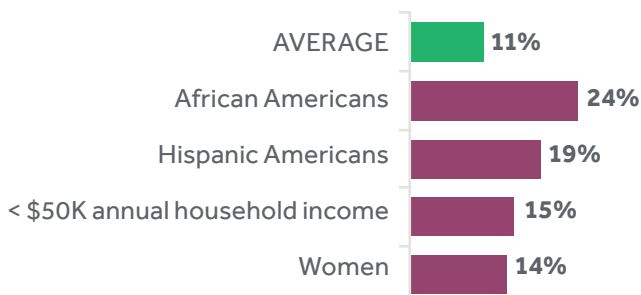
More than 13% of the labor force, or about 23 million Americans, work a full- or part-time job while also providing ongoing care for an ill or disabled parent, spouse, or child. This figure excludes millions more who aren't employed and provide care on a full-time basis.⁵



Caregivers in the workplace represent a wide range of demographic groups; the average age is 43, but people across all generations and life stages are involved in caregiving. Yet certain workforce segments are more likely than others to be balancing full-time work and caregiving responsibilities — differences exist by gender, household income, and race/cultural background. African and Hispanic Americans also suffered disproportionate coronavirus infections, putting further stress and hardship on these working caregiver groups.

Double duty: working and caregiving

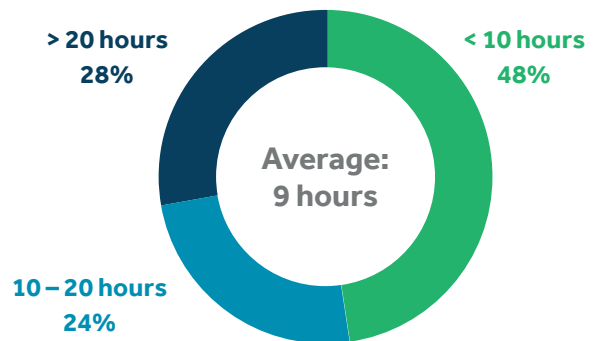
Groups more likely to work full time and provide care:



Caregivers who are also employed full time spend an average of about nine hours per week providing support for a loved one, while part-time workers spend just over 16 hours a week. This is in addition to time spent working, driving back and forth to provide care, tending to the needs of other family members, and handling day-to-day household activities like cooking and cleaning.

Time devoted to caregiving

Average hours per week:

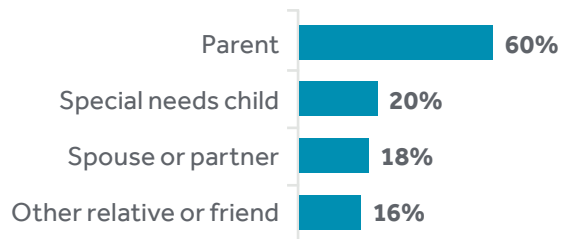


Among working adults who are also caregivers, 60% tend to the needs of an ill or incapacitated parent. 1 in 5 provide care for a child with special health care needs, either an adult child or a child under age 18. 1 in 6 working caregivers are assisting a spouse or partner.

Care for a parent is equally divided between the home of the caregiver and the parent's home. Most workers who care for a spouse/partner or a child provide that support in their own home.

Who is receiving care?

Groups receiving care from working adults:

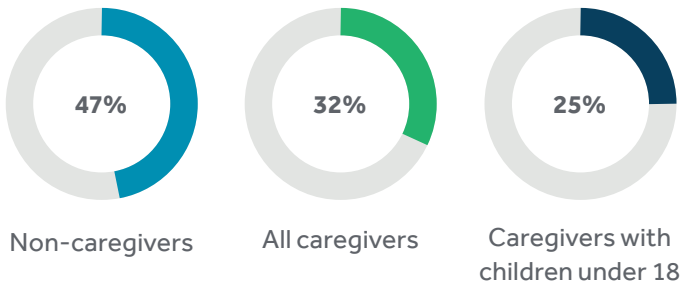


Being a caregiver while balancing work and family responsibilities can be stressful

The dual responsibility of working and being a family caregiver can feel like juggling two full-time jobs. The stress associated with working and caregiving, especially among those tending to an elderly relative while raising children, can take its toll on the well-being of caregivers and their families.

Caregiving impacts overall well-being

Well-being Index score* is "very good/excellent":



Caregivers often feel greater stress at home and at work, and they are more likely to rate their emotional wellness as "fair" or "poor" (28%) compared to their non-caregiving colleagues (18%).

2 in 3 workers feel their caregiving duties create more stress in their lives.



Specifically, caregivers tend to be more anxious about family health matters, their home life, and their social life compared to non-caregivers.

High anxiety among working caregivers

Areas of high self-reported stress:

	Caregivers	Non-caregivers
Family health matters	52%	16%
Home life	38%	16%
Social life	29%	18%



Caregivers are more likely to live paycheck to paycheck compared to non-caregivers (59% vs. 36%).

The financial burden of caregiving contributes to higher stress levels and comes in many forms, such as paying for caregiving expenses out of pocket, lost wages due to fewer hours or missed promotions, and — for those who ultimately leave the workforce — lost access to insurance and retirement benefits.

Less access to important financial products

Percent owning products via work or outside work:

	Caregivers	Non-caregivers
Medical coverage	77%	94%
Retirement plan	59%	81%
Disability insurance	35%	54%

Increasingly, working women over the age of 50 are carrying the financial burden for caregiving, as they are more likely to leave their jobs in order to provide the necessary care.⁶

Caregivers who work full time are even more likely than those working fewer than 35 hours a week to report that their caregiving responsibilities have a negative effect on their emotional and financial wellness, and on their work productivity.

Heavier burden for full-time workers

Percent reporting a significant impact from caregiving:

	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
Emotional stress	49%	38%
Financial burden	41%	29%
Reduced productivity	34%	24%

*Guardian's Workforce Well-being Index™ is based on self-reported physical, emotional, and financial health and is a component of the Workplace Benefits Study.



“My caregiving responsibilities can be overwhelming at times, but they are also incredibly rewarding ... I’m very grateful for my employer’s support.”

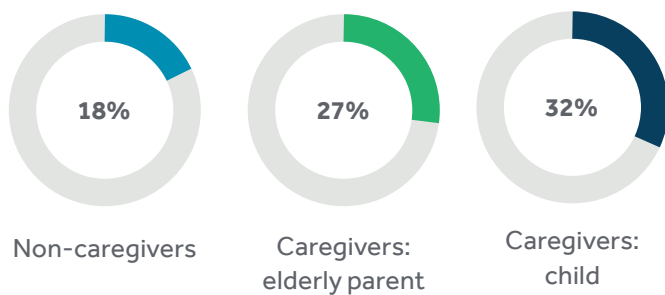
Woman, age 52, retail worker
Pennsylvania

Caregivers may neglect their own health and jeopardize their job and relationships

Not only do working caregivers self-report higher emotional and financial stress, but they also may be at a higher risk of experiencing their own health issues as a result of the time and energy they expend providing care. For example, caregivers — especially those caring for a sick, injured, or disabled child — are more likely to rate their physical health as “fair” or “poor” compared to non-caregivers.

Impact of caregiving on physical health

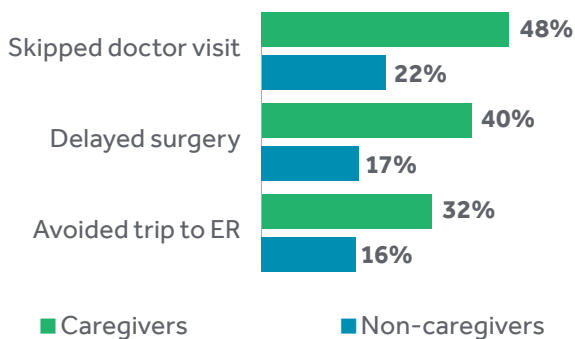
Percent rating their physical health as “fair/poor”:



In the past 18 months, 56% of working caregivers (vs. 40% of non-caregivers) avoided one or more of the following: a doctor visit, filling a prescription, blood tests, X-rays, the emergency room, or a recommended surgical procedure.

Recent changes to health care behavior

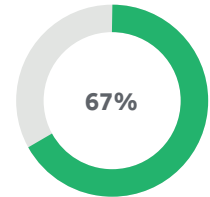
Percent doing each at least once in the past 18 months:



Workers who care for a relative who is disabled or chronically ill for a long period are vulnerable to developing health conditions of their own. Issues with the presence of disability or illness within a family aren’t just limited to the person with the disability — they concern the whole family, as the mental and financial burden is shared.⁷

In fact, workers who have used the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to care for a loved one are three times more likely to experience their own short-term disability claim the following year.

2 in 3 working caregivers have taken a career detour due to their caregiving responsibilities.



Providing care for a loved one can also have career implications. Two-thirds have experienced at least one change in their employment due to caregiving. Most have had to take time off from work to look after a loved one and/or reduce their overall work hours. Others have had to quit a previous job, take early retirement, and/or pass on a promotion or better job opportunity.

Impact of caregiving on employment status

Percent who made/are planning changes due to caregiving:



Nearly half of working caregivers have not revealed their caregiving duties to their employer because they are concerned it will negatively impact their career. Other research shows that 28% say caregiving did, in fact, hurt their careers, through lack of challenging assignments, smaller salary increases or bonuses, and an unsatisfactory career path.⁸

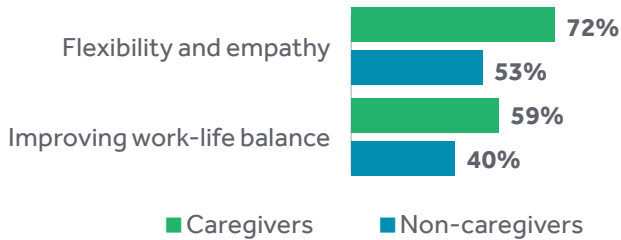
Caregiving’s negative impact on employment translates into financial stress for many. 7 in 10 caregivers believe that taking time off or leaving the workforce altogether to care for a loved one had a significant financial impact on their family.

Employer support is critical for caregivers to achieve work-life balance and job satisfaction

Working caregivers increasingly look to their employer for support as they try to juggle their work and caregiving responsibilities. Work-life balance, flexibility, and empathy are of even greater concern to caregivers compared to other employees.

Caregivers want employer flexibility

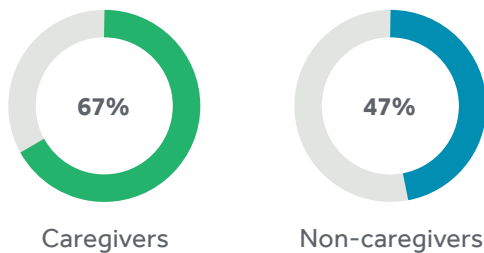
Percent rating each “highly important”:



Many working Americans believe that their financial wellness depends to a great extent on their workplace benefits. In fact, more than half agree that they would likely face financial hardship without their benefits. Among working caregivers, an even larger proportion, or two-thirds, feel their household’s finances would be negatively impacted without their benefits.

Dependence on workplace benefits

Percent who would face financial hardship without them:



Despite relatively few employers offering benefits policies and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of working caregivers, many caregivers rely heavily on and value the benefits they do receive through the workplace.



8.2 Benefits Value Index™* score among working caregivers vs. 6.3 for non-caregivers.

*Guardian’s Benefits Value Index™ is based on working Americans’ attitudes toward their current benefits package and is a component of the Workplace Benefits Study.

Paid time off to care for a sick or injured loved one, flexible work schedules, and telecommuting are of interest to many employees, but they appeal particularly to working caregivers. Such benefits can help in attracting and retaining talent, especially workers who may have difficulty remaining employed without access to policies and services designed to help them meet their personal needs and family responsibilities.

Benefits that meet caregiver needs

Percent rating each “highly important”:

	Caregivers	Non-caregivers
Paid leave for caregiving	68%	54%
Long-term care insurance	64%	48%
Telecommuting options	58%	36%
Flexible work schedules	46%	35%
Mental health/substance abuse counseling/rehab	33%	22%

The growing population of working caregivers highly value the support received from employers in juggling their work and caregiving obligations. Organizations that take a more flexible and empathetic approach to benefits policies and programs for caregivers are viewed more favorably and are rewarded with a more loyal and committed caregiver workforce.

Caregivers want to work for employers that care

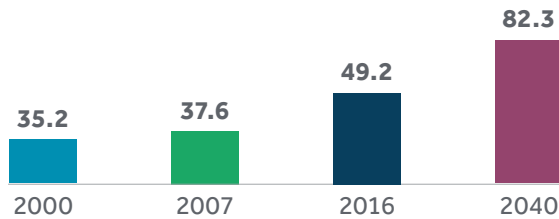
	Strongly agree	Disagree
Caregivers who agree their employer cares about their well-being ...	68%	46%
Are more satisfied with their job ...	74%	52%
And prefer to stay with their employer longer (10 years or more)	74%	56%

State legislatures and large employers aim to better support working caregivers

In the next 20 years, the population age 65 and older will exceed 80 million (or 22% of Americans) — more than doubling in size since 2010; those age 85 or older are expected to triple.⁹

An older America will require more caregiving

US population of those age 65 or older (millions):



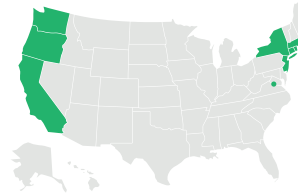
Yet employers have been slow to respond to the aging population trend. Many organizations have underestimated the extent to which caregiving duties affect their workforce. While 7 in 10 employers believe that caregiving impacts employee health and productivity, only about one-third say offering benefits and services to support their caregiver workforce is a priority.

Caregiving: an employer blind spot?

Percent of employers who strongly agree:



The FMLA provides 12 weeks of job-protected leave to eligible employees to care for a parent, spouse, or child who has a serious health condition. However, the leave is unpaid and roughly half of working Americans feel they cannot afford to take FMLA leave because they need a paycheck. Consequently, more states are enacting paid family and medical leave laws, and increasingly, larger employers (with 1,000 or more workers) are implementing their own, more generous paid family and medical leave policies.



8 states and the District of Columbia passed or enacted paid family/medical leave laws.



47% of large employers have paid family/medical leave policies.

Recently, more employers appear to be focusing on the needs of their caregiver workforce. Today, more than 1 in 5 organizations offer paid family/medical leave or elder care resources and referral services. Nearly half of all employers offer flexible work hours (e.g., employees choose their own start time or work four 10-hour days), and almost 4 in 10 allow employees to work remotely for at least a few days a week.

More flexible workplace policies/benefits

Percent of all employers offering each:

	2019	% change from 2012
Paid family/medical leave	22%	+70%
Telecommuting	38%	+46%
Flexible hours	48%	+20%
Elder care resources	23%	+10%
On-site day care	12%	+9%

Greater workplace flexibility, benefits programs, and HR policies to support the growing caregiving workforce not only have a positive impact on recruiting and retention efforts but also contribute to an organization's cost containment efforts. Meeting the work-life balance needs of caregivers can help to improve workforce health and productivity, resulting in considerable cost savings.

Caregiving can cost organizations up to \$38 billion per year in medical costs, turnover, and lost productivity.¹⁰

Children with special health care needs often have unique learning and behavioral challenges. Access to support services and resources can make a major difference in their lives.



1 in 5 working caregivers has a child with special health care needs

Among the 23 million working family caregivers in the US, 1 in 5 provide and/or coordinate care for a child with special health care needs; half of them are supporting an adult child, age 18 or older. Special health care needs involve chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions, including autism, Down syndrome, a learning impediment, speech or language problem, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD).

1 in 6 US children have been diagnosed with special health care needs.¹¹



Parents balancing job and caregiving responsibilities for a child with special needs are more likely to experience stress related to financial hardship, home life, and job stability compared to other workers.

Greater stress at home and work

	Have a child with special needs	
	Yes	No
Live paycheck to paycheck	51%	33%
Home life is stressful	49%	20%
2+ jobs in past 5 years	88%	68%
Job-related stress	29%	17%

Working parents of children with special health care needs also report lower levels of physical, financial, and emotional health compared to those caring for elderly parents.

Family caregivers report lower well-being

Percent self-reporting "excellent" or "very good" health:

	Caring for ...	
	Special needs child	Elderly parents
Financial health	23%	44%
Physical health	20%	44%
Emotional health	29%	42%



Families caring for children with special health care needs collectively lose more than \$17 billion in income every year.¹²

Most children with special needs have parents who are employed; therefore, flexible work arrangements, health care benefits, and other related services are even more critical to these families.

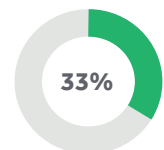
Need for flexible workplace policies/benefits

Percent using each benefit in past 18 months:

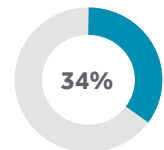
	Have a child with special needs	
	Yes	No
Telecommuting	60%	25%
Flexible work schedule	55%	39%
Employee Assistance Program	26%	7%

Just 1 in 3 organizations have policies in place and offer benefits that specifically support employees who have children with special health care needs. Likewise, 2 in 3 parents of special needs children believe their employers could do more to meet their needs, such as flexible work arrangements and resources to help with government financial assistance.

Employers who say they provide support and services for parents of children with special needs



Parents of special needs children who feel their employer is addressing their specific needs



Subsidized access to these support services are of particular interest:

- Tax/estate planning, special needs trust
- Video-based training and in-person coaching on caring for children with special needs
- Referral services for special education programs
- Back-up care services
- Coaching and wellness support for caregivers



People with disabilities

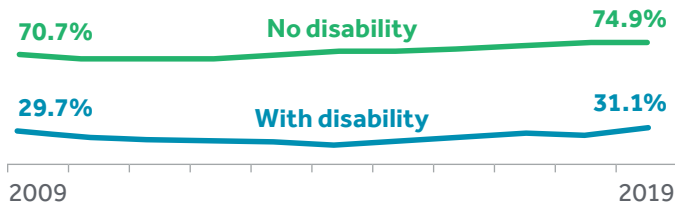
Nearly 6 million Americans with a disability are employed

The coronavirus has highlighted what people with disabilities have known for some time: with the proper work accommodations at home, employees can be successful. The silver lining is that employers may now recognize that accommodating employees with disabilities with work arrangements and benefits is not only possible, but is critical to their long-term strategy.

More than 19 million working age adults have a “work disability” (i.e., a physical or psychological condition that impairs their ability to work). Of those, more than 3 in 10 work at least part time. The employment-population ratio among people with disabilities has been rising in the past decade. Yet regardless of age or education, individuals with a disability are much less likely to be employed compared to those with no disability. Furthermore, most workers with a disability (82%) are employed on a part-time basis.¹³

Employment rate among people age 16-64

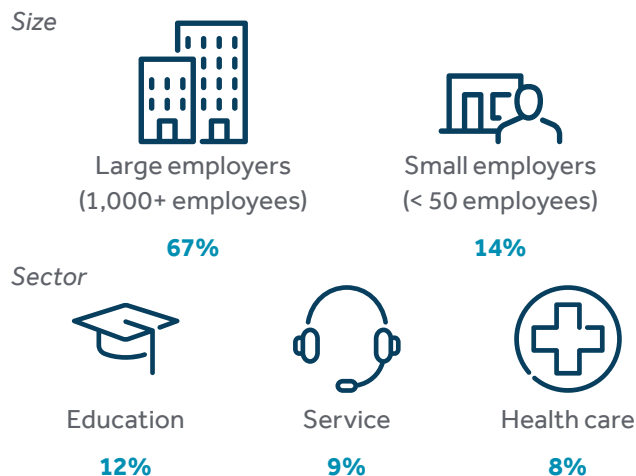
Among those with vs. without a disability:



People with disabilities tend to work for larger organizations (i.e., 1,000 or more employees) and in service or administrative roles rather than management or sales. Industries such as education, service, and health care are more likely to employ individuals with disabilities compared to the technology, professional, and finance sectors.

Where do people with disabilities work?

Percent of full-time workers with disabilities:



Workers with a disability account for about 2% of the full-time US workforce, or more than 2.5 million persons.¹⁴

People with disabilities who work full time are less likely to have a college degree and earn less income than those without a disability. They also tend to be older and are more likely to be US military veterans compared to those with no disability.

Demographic differences

Workers with vs. without a disability:

	Have a disability	No disability
Baby boomers (age 55+)	37%	22%
Less than \$25,000 annual household income	37%	26%
No college degree	69%	54%
US military veteran	25%	8%

Physical health is a key stressor among workers with a disability, who are twice as likely as non-disabled workers to consider their personal health a major source of stress in their life. In addition to physical health, they also report lower levels of emotional and financial wellness than those with no disability.

Discrimination and underemployment can negatively impact the self-esteem and fulfillment of people with disabilities. Costs associated with special transportation and housing needs increase their cost of living, further exacerbating the income gap with nondisabled workers.

People with a disability report lower well-being

Percent self-reporting “excellent” or “very good” health:

	Have a disability	No disability
Financial health	29%	47%
Physical health	16%	38%
Emotional health	26%	37%

People with disabilities seek workplace inclusivity and support to thrive personally and professionally

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is intended to ensure that qualified people with disabilities have an equal chance of getting a job and performing it well. The law requires that reasonable accommodations be made for those with disabilities (e.g., modifications to jobs, schedules, work environment). Yet a majority of workers with disabilities feel their employer could be more supportive and flexible.

Less than 4 in 10 workers with a disability feel their employer is making adequate workplace accommodations.



Does the workplace culture feel supportive?

Percent “strongly agree”:

	Have a disability	No disability
My employer cares about my overall well-being	17%	36%
My employer fosters a culture of flexibility and empathy	31%	44%

Unemployed people with disabilities are much less likely to have their own medical insurance or a retirement plan. However, even among full-time workers with disabilities, many feel that the benefits offered by their employer don’t meet their specific needs.

Benefits are falling short

Percent “strongly agree”:

	Have a disability	No disability
My company’s benefits positively impact my physical health/wellness	34%	47%
My company’s benefits positively impact my financial security	28%	46%

1 in 8 employers say targeted recruiting for people with disabilities is a priority.

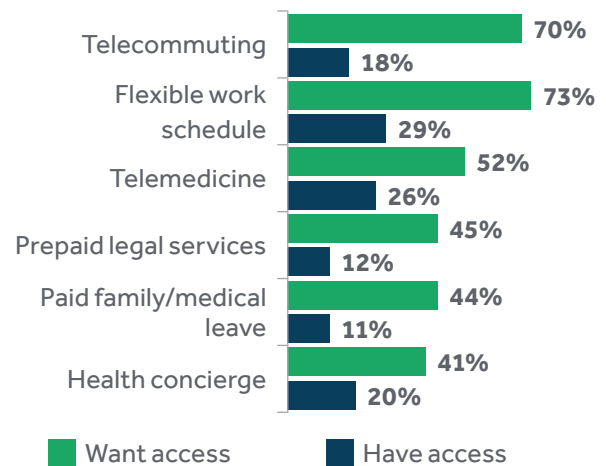


While many employers have installed ramps, accessible restrooms, and ergonomic workstations, far fewer have restructured jobs, adjusted work schedules, offered telecommuting, provided readers/interpreters, or made web content accessible for those with disabilities.¹⁵ Only half of all employers say that providing such accommodations for workers with disabilities is a priority for their organization.

Workers with disabilities express considerable interest in work arrangements and benefits that offer virtual options, such as telecommuting and telemedicine. More flexible work arrangements also have appeal, including flexible schedules and paid parental leave.

Desire for greater flexibility

Percent of workers with disabilities:



In general, people with disabilities are more likely to have worked for multiple employers in the past three years compared to those with no disabilities (average of 5.6 vs. 2.1 jobs). However, like most workers, but to a greater degree, those with disabilities who feel supported by their employer’s policies, culture, and environment are more loyal. Those who strongly agree that their employer is making adequate accommodations for people with disabilities are twice as likely to prefer to stay with their employer for at least 10 years compared to those who don’t feel supported (82% vs. 43%).

“Disability does not mean inability.”

Feranmi Okanlami, M.D., M.S.



The mental health and substance abuse crisis in the US is a growing workplace challenge as well

Today, more than 60 million adults (or 1 in 4 adults) are dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues — and eight million are dealing with both. Higher rates of drug abuse and overdose have been tied to the rising suicide rate: 129 Americans die each day from suicide. Those addicted to painkillers are 50% more likely to have contemplated suicide.¹⁶ And research by Psychology Today found that systemic racial discrimination can contribute to health problems, including depression and anxiety.

Mental health and substance abuse have long been stigmas in the workplace. Given the recent rise in issues like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and the growing opioid epidemic, more employers are seeking ways to address these issues among their workforce. And, it turns out, COVID-19 could be creating a great deal of mental health issues for Americans. According to recent research from YouGov's COVID-19 tracker, Americans are reporting increased symptoms of depression and anxiety since isolation orders began in March 2020. In addition to the human toll, the cost to business and productivity is significant (\$210 billion in lost earnings per year).¹⁷

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among millennials in the US.¹⁸

Nearly 50% of all employers offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that can provide needed support for workers struggling with mental health or substance abuse. Yet workforce utilization of EAPs has historically been very low and is close to 5% on average. Low utilization is primarily due to lack of employee awareness of the EAP, the services included, or that most services are available at no cost to the employee.

More than 2 in 5 employers rate expanding the use of mental health and substance abuse resources, including EAPs, as an important benefits strategy for their organization. Yet most say their efforts to date to improve access have been unsuccessful.

Ironically, 1 in 4 working Americans cite mental health counseling and substance abuse rehabilitation services as a benefit they wish their employer made available. Many of them have access to an EAP through work but are simply unaware that they do.

Depression is the leading cause of disability claims in the US¹⁹



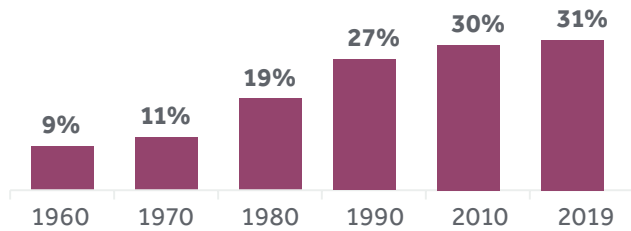


Single parents

About 10 million single parents are working full time while raising one or more children

Since 1960, the percentage of US families with children under age 18 living in a single-parent household has more than tripled, from less than 10% to more than 30%. In most of those households, a single parent is working at least 35 hours a week to provide for the family. Today, 8% of all full-time workers, or approximately 10 million adults, are single parents.²⁰

Percent of US families with children under age 18 and one parent living in the household:

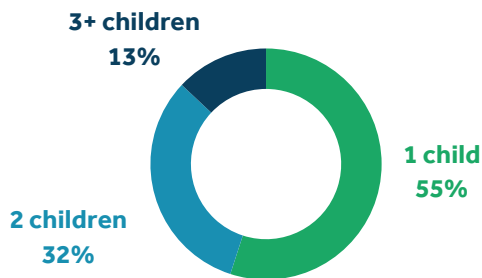


Also in the past 60 years, the percentage of US households with two incomes has more than doubled, from 25% in 1960 to over 60% in 2019.²¹ Inflation, especially for health care and education costs, has significantly outpaced average wage growth the past few decades, putting even more financial strain on single working parents — especially among the 45% who are supporting more than one child under age 18.

It's harder than ever for families to get by on a single income.²²

Number of children under age 18 per single parent household

Among working full-time workers:



2 in 3 single working parents are mothers.



In the past five years, unemployment reached 50-year lows, and young single mothers have been entering the workforce in a way they haven't since the 1990s. Studies suggest that increases in the minimum wage and the expansion of Medicaid and paid family leave laws have also contributed to the rise in single parent employment.²³

Today, a majority (65%) of single, full-time working parents are women, by a 2 to 1 margin. Single mothers are usually not as well educated or as well off as other women their age: about 50% make under \$30,000 per year and nearly 50% have a high school education or less, compared with 20% and 29%, respectively, of other working women.

50% of all single mothers are employed full time; 20% are unemployed.²⁴

Compared to partnered parents in the workforce, single working parents are more likely to be Black or Hispanic women, somewhat younger, with lower household income and less formal education. They are also more likely to work for smaller firms (less than 50 employees) and to work a second job in addition to their full-time position.

Who are single working parents?

Key differences between single and partnered parents:

	Single working parents	Partnered working parents
Annual household income (mean)	\$35,400	\$85,300
At least a 4-year college degree	27%	45%
Millennial (age 24–39)	36%	23%
Black	19%	7%
Hispanic	14%	8%

Insurance benefits and flexible work policies help improve well-being among single parents




Single-parent households face challenges that are often exacerbated by having just one wage earner in the family as well as the need for one person to combine work, household, and child-rearing duties. With financial pressures and little time to look after themselves, it's no surprise that single working parents have relatively low well-being scores based on Guardian's Workforce Well-being Index.™

And these challenges have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finding a work-life balance with less family and caregiver support due to social distancing, and closed schools and daycares, has made for an overwhelming and stressful time. It's also highlighted that benefits and flexible work policies for single parents are urgently needed now more than ever before.

In contrast to partnered parents, single parents are less likely to report eating healthy, getting enough exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight.

Single working parents report low well-being

Percent self-reporting "excellent" or "very good" health:

	Single working parents	Partnered working parents
 Financial health	26%	44%
 Physical health	33%	45%
 Emotional health	43%	51%

Single parents tend to be more stressed about their financial situation and job security. 6 in 10 indicate they're living paycheck to paycheck, and relative to their partnered co-workers, they have less money saved for emergencies, retirement, and their children's college education.

Greater financial vulnerability

Single parents vs. partnered parents:

- With only one income per household, single parents **have a lower annual household income** — \$57K vs. \$103K
- On average, they have **much less saved for unexpected or emergency expenses** — \$8K vs. \$23K
- Are more likely to **live paycheck to paycheck** — 59% vs. 38%

➤ **Fewer have a retirement savings plan** — 71% vs. 83%

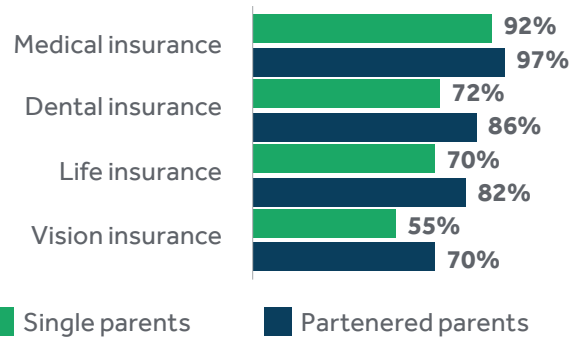
➤ Are less likely to **be saving for their children's education** — 47% vs. 61%

1 in 3 single working parents have no life insurance coverage at all.

Fewer than 1 in 5 single parents have someone they consider their personal financial advisor; however, about 40% say it would be helpful to have access to an advisor, especially during benefits enrollment. Single parents generally own fewer insurance and financial products compared to partnered parents, including health care coverage, life insurance, and a last will and testament, leaving them more financially vulnerable.

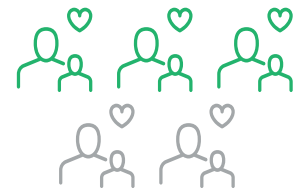
Single parents lag behind on insurance ownership

Percent owning each type of insurance:



It's a challenge for many single working parents to strike a balance between their work and family life: two-thirds wish their employer did more to help, such as offering flexible work schedules and telecommuting. Other benefits of high interest to single working parents include on-site day care, referrals to/discounts on day care facilities, paid family and medical leave policies, and access to financial planning and legal services.

3 in 5 single parents want flexible schedules or telecommuting options.



Fortunately, employers are increasingly instituting policies and offering benefits that don't discriminate against single parents and better accommodate their specific needs. In 2019, 3 in 4 employers said addressing the needs of their single-parent workforce was becoming a higher priority for their organization.



For single parents, the pressures of child rearing and being the sole wage earner can be daunting

 LGBTQ community

LGBTQ workers acknowledge progress on workplace and benefits equality but agree there is a long way to go

In June 1969, a clash between police and patrons at a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York, marked a turning point in the country's gay rights movement. In the 50 years since the uprising at the Stonewall Inn, where LGBTQ patrons stood up to police and protested in the streets of Manhattan for six days against discrimination, headway has been made toward greater equality for the LGBTQ community. That includes progress on equal rights in employment and workplace benefits as well.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, federal court rulings, state laws, and local ordinances form a patchwork of employment nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ individuals. Yet in the absence of an explicit federal law or amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, more than half of all LGBTQ Americans live in a state that doesn't clearly prohibit employment discrimination (52%) or benefits discrimination (63%) based on sexual orientation and gender identity.²⁵

Perhaps because of limited legal protections, LGBTQ individuals who work for employers that provide equal access to medical, retirement, and other benefits tend to be highly satisfied with their job and overall benefits package. In fact, they are more positive about their job and benefits compared to non-LGBTQ workers, and more likely to feel their employer cares about their overall well-being. And 4 in 10 value their benefits more now than they did five years ago.

Attitudes toward job and benefits LGBTQ vs. non-LGBTQ workers:

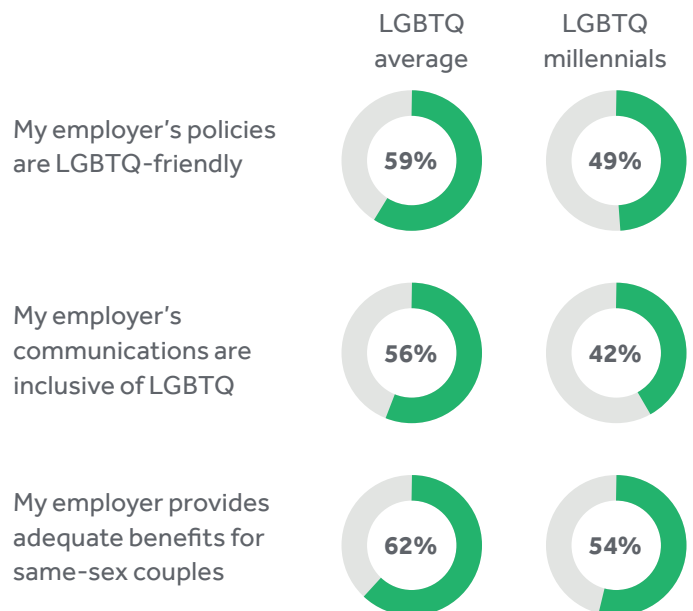
	LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
Benefits satisfaction (% highly satisfied)	66%	59%
"I value my benefits more than I did five years ago." (% strongly agree)	44%	32%
Job satisfaction (% very happy)	59%	54%
"My employer cares about my overall well-being." (% strongly agree)	58%	46%

In 2020, 7% of working adults, or nearly 12 million Americans, identify as LGBTQ.

LGBTQ self-identification is correlated with age. Young millennial workers in their 20s are twice as likely to self-identify as LGBTQ (11%) compared to working baby boomers, age 55 to 65 (5%). LGBTQ millennials have the least positive attitudes toward their employer regarding inclusive LGBTQ policies, communications, and benefits equality for same-sex couples.

LGBTQ-friendly workplace indicators

Percent of workers who strongly agree:



Workplace culture is of growing importance to today's workforce and particularly to those who identify as LGBTQ. They are even more likely than non-LGBTQ workers to place importance on working for an organization that is inclusive, flexible, and empathetic.

"I believe employers today should create a workplace culture that is ..."

	LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
Inclusive	63%	48%
Flexible and empathetic	75%	64%

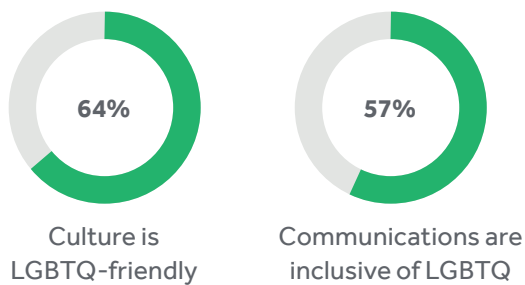
Employers are taking steps to create a more LGBTQ-inclusive culture, yet access to partner benefits remains limited

In the past two decades, the number of employers adopting LGBTQ-friendly policies has risen rapidly. Many employers recognize that their handling of LGBTQ inclusion not only impacts their LGBTQ workforce but also “allies,” or non-LGBTQ workers, who agree with and advocate for the rights of LGBTQ persons in the community and workplace.

A majority of employers say creating an LGBTQ-friendly culture and inclusive communications are priorities; however, larger organizations are more likely than smaller ones to report it as a priority. Government entities and firms in the health care and retail sectors tend to place greater importance on creating an LGBTQ-friendly culture.

LGBTQ inclusion is a priority

Percent of employers who strongly agree:



About 3 in 10 employers extend workplace benefits to same-sex couples or to those living as married. Again, the larger the organization, the more likely it is to offer them benefits. High-tech, professional, and financial services firms are among the sectors most likely to provide benefits to same-sex couples and domestic partners.

Walking the talk

1 in 3

employers offer benefits to domestic partners



3 in 10

employers offer benefits to same-sex couples



Larger organizations lead the way

Number of employees ->	<50	50 - 999	1,000+
Domestic partners	32%	42%	51%
Same-sex couples	26%	38%	47%

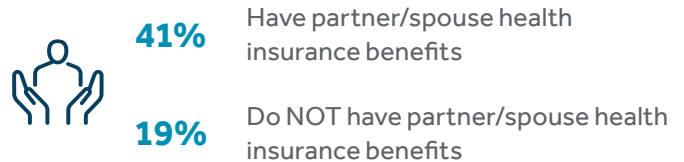
Financial stress is high among LGBTQ workers whose employers don't offer benefits to same-sex couples.

The federal government does not require states to recognize domestic partnerships. States maintain their own guidelines and requirements for determining whether a relationship is eligible for benefits. Some states are more lenient than others when requesting documentation.

Among LGBTQ workers with workplace benefits such as group life and health insurance, a retirement plan, and paid leave, 64% feel that they would face financial hardship without their benefits, compared to 52% of non-LGBTQ workers. Furthermore, those with spouse/partner health insurance are twice as likely to rate their financial wellness as “excellent/very good,” compared to those with no partner/spouse coverage.

LGBTQ self-reported financial wellness

Percent who reported “excellent” or “very good”:



Financial stress tends to be higher among LGBTQ workers than non-LGBTQ workers. Aside from partner health insurance coverage, two other financial areas of particular concern to LGBTQ persons are “paying for long-term care expenses” and “paying off college debt.” LGBTQ workers express even greater interest than average in benefit solutions to address these pressing challenges.

LGBTQ financial concerns

Percent who are highly concerned:

	LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
Long-term care costs	67%	55%
Paying off college debt	51%	40%

“Ensuring LGBTQ-inclusive benefits is an overall low-cost, high-return proposition for employers. When denied equal benefits coverage, the cost to LGBTQ workers and their families is profound.”²⁶



Addressing the needs of workforce 2020

Making employee benefits work for everyone begins with identifying and responding to the specific needs of underserved segments of your workforce. How you support and prioritize these needs will depend on your workforce's demographic breakdown and your company's current policies, benefits plans, and communications. By establishing policies and providing access to benefits and resources that are inclusive, you'll contribute to improved health, financial wellness, and productivity. And, as we are all experiencing, this type of needed support is not only possible, but essential for a diverse workforce to thrive. The following are helpful ways in which you can better address your workforce's needs:



Paid leave

- **Paid time off (PTO)** programs, which group all time-off reasons into a single category, give employees greater flexibility to take time off when they need it, for whatever purpose.
- **Paid family and medical leave** policies permit workers to take time off for parental bonding or to care for sick/injured loved ones.
- **Paid sick leave** allows employees to receive pay when they are sick and unable to work or when they should not be working around others.



Flexible work arrangements

- **Telecommuting** options enable employees to work from home on a full-time, part-time, or as-needed basis and may be contingent upon an individual's personal needs, job function, or ability to perform.
- **Flexible scheduling** allows employees to adjust their work hours to accommodate their personal situation, including caregiving responsibilities, health conditions, or transportation needs.



Well-being resources

- **Employee assistance** programs typically offer a range of services, including mental health and substance abuse counseling, crisis intervention, and financial, legal, and wellness services.
- **Wellness initiatives** that promote better nutrition, fitness, and overall health awareness.
- **Health savings accounts (HSA)** and **health reimbursement arrangements (HRA)** help workers reduce out-of-pocket medical costs associated with high-deductible health plans.
- **College savings and student loan reimbursement** plans allow workers to save for their children's college education or pay down their own college debt.



Inclusive policies & communications

- **Create benefits communications that are inclusive** of all workers, regardless of age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identification (e.g., being sensitive to the multiple, distinct groups within the LGBTQ community and their unique experiences, interests, and challenges).
- **Training**, such as unconscious bias courses, are important to help avoid misunderstandings or discrimination among colleagues or managers and employees (e.g., accommodations made for workers with disabilities or caregiving duties).
- Reinforce and review recommendations from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to ensure compliance with **nondiscrimination guidelines**.



Access to virtual services

- **Telehealth and teledentistry** offers medical and dental consultations, evaluations, diagnosis, and treatment using a variety of digital and online channels. Virtual access to health care professionals is particularly appealing to busy single parents, people with disabilities or restrictive health conditions, and those living in areas where access to health care is limited.
- **Referral services** and online resources for information about adult care or child day care facilities, government financial assistance programs, support groups, and in-home care.
- **Health concierge** or health care advocates who can help address health care issues during business hours, such as assisting with complex medical conditions, locating doctors, arranging transportation, and interacting with insurance companies and providers.

Appendix

Methodology and sample characteristics

The Guardian 8th Annual Workplace Benefits Study was fielded in January and February of 2020 and consisted of two online surveys: one among benefits decision-makers (employers) and another among working Americans (employees), allowing us to explore benefits issues from both perspectives. Survey data collection and tabulation were managed for Guardian by Zeldis Research, an independent market research firm located in Ewing, New Jersey.

Employer survey

Employer results are based on a national online survey of 1,700 employee benefits decision-makers. Respondents include business executives, business owners, human resources professionals, and financial management professionals. The survey covers all industries and is nationally representative of US businesses with at least five full-time employees.

Data shown in this report have been weighted to reflect the actual proportion of US businesses by company size based on data from the US Census Bureau. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.2%.

Employee survey

Employee results are based on a survey conducted among 2,000 employees age 22 or older who work full time or part time for a company with at least five employees. The survey sample is nationally representative of US workers at companies with at least five employees.

Data shown in this report have been collected in a way to reflect the actual proportion of US workers by gender, region, race, ethnicity, education level, household income, age, and employer size, based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.1%.

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Photo on pg. 16 by Dr. Rana Kabeer

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