Johns Hopkins Carey Business School | Human Capital Development Lab

WELL-BEING AT WORK IN THE USA

Research Update

November 2025

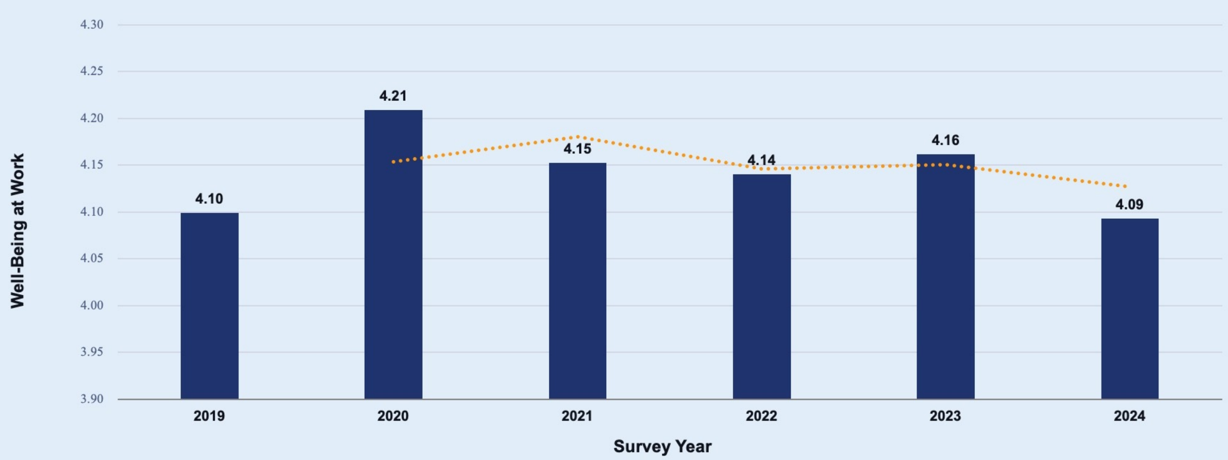
Employee well-being continues to surface as an important management topic around the world. A positive workplace that supports employee well-being has been identified as a significant factor associated with engagement and work outcomes. Fostering a positive organizational climate can be achieved through various initiatives aimed at building trust, recognition, and supportive relationships among employees. Such interventions not only benefit employee health and well-being but also contribute to improved work-related outcomes, aligning with the principles of humanistic management and ethical caring in the workplace. As such, the topic of well-being at work continues to be a priority for the Human Capital Development Lab.

WELL-BEING IN THE USA

Following our research study released in November 2024, this update provides additional perspectives using recently compiled data. Over the past year, we have analyzed 2,769 organizations and data from more than 1.3 million survey respondents to better understand the trends associated with well-being at work.

Overall, we find a decline in employee well-being as shown in Figure 1. Our findings seem consistent with other research reports that consider national measures related to well-being of employees. In some cases, the lower scores represent a reduction in employee flexibility for either flexible hours or remote work. In other cases, these scores could be related to challenges associated with macro-level shifts related to inflation or productivity needs.

FIGURE 1: WELL-BEING AT WORK IN THE U.S.



Consistent with prior years, we find gender differences and note that males generally score higher than females when it comes to well-being at work. We continue to see differences by ethnic group with Caucasians and Asians scoring higher than Hispanics. Those identifying as Black or multi-racial score significantly lower than the others.

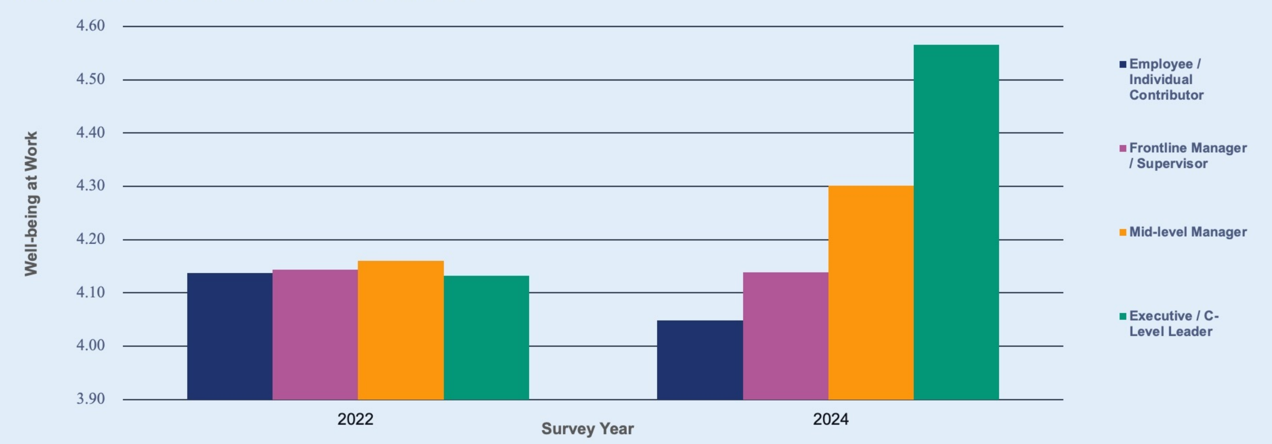
When it comes to age differences, we see a wider dispersion by age group as shown in Figure 2. While each age group's well-being declined since the previous year, we continue to see a marked difference between the age groups within the same workforces. It is particularly noteworthy that the scores of those in the under 25 age group have seen a steady decline since the pandemic, which seems consistent with research in the social sciences. These differences help highlight the importance of addressing the needs of each segment of the workforce.

FIGURE 2: WELL-BEING AT WORK BY AGE GROUP

One area that has changed over the past two years is the sense of well-being across different levels in the organization. In prior years, we did not find a big difference between managers and employees in terms of well-being scores. In fact, during the pandemic we saw the well-being for managers and top leaders at a lower level than employees, which reflected the extra burden of management during this period.

Over the past two years we have seen a rise in the well-being scores for managers and senior leaders as shown in Figure 3. This may reflect the return to regular operating conditions and the increased flexibility with work modalities and schedules. Given these differences, there is a cautionary note to leaders –the sense of well-being felt by leaders may not be reflective of the well-being of employees.

FIGURE 3: WELL-BEING AT WORK BY MANAGERIAL LEVEL



CALL TO ACTION

Our ongoing research shows that more must be done to address employee well-being across the country. We note a general decline nationwide with notable drops in some industry sectors such as professional services, information technology, healthcare, and education. While each organization may have unique aspects to address for their workforce, our research shows that significant differences can occur when leadership proactively addresses the organization culture and management practices that impact the key elements of well-being. Given the overall trend, the time to take action in now.

JOHNS HOPKINS
CAREY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Human Capital Development Lab

ABOUT THE WELL-BEING AT WORK INDEX

Over the past few years, the Human Capital Development Lab and Great Place To Work® have been measuring several key dimensions that comprise our Well-Being at Work Index. These factors have been shown to contribute to positive employee well-being in our studies across more than 30 countries with over five million survey respondents. The Well-Being at Work Index includes:Mental and emotional support; Sense of purpose; Personal support; Financial health; and Meaningful connections.

To provide this index at scale, we use factors to measure the organizational climate based on individual survey responses that reflect positive employee well-being. We have used this approach to conduct detailed reviews of the well-being at work trends in countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, and Singapore with robust findings. Additional information can be found at hcdlab.carey.jhu.edu

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