

# FYI® Roundup

## For Your Information®

Celebrating  
**40**  
years of FYI®

## Recent research in HR and employee benefits 2019 – fall edition

Our fall roundup highlights recent research publications relevant to HR and employee benefits. This issue tracks the latest on equal pay initiatives, global insights on the workplace, healthcare trends and coverage, retirement savings, capitalizing on educational assistance programs, and expanding the workforce in the gig economy. Also included is the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Employee Benefits in the United States*.

Volume 42

Issue 102

December 4, 2019

### Authors

Teresa Wilkins, MS (LIS)

Nancy Vary, JD

In this issue: [Compensation](#) | [Global HR](#) | [Health and welfare](#) | [Retirement and wealth](#) | [Workforce](#) | [Latest from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

## Compensation

Equal pay continues to be an area of concern for employers. Best practices to identify gaps in unintended pay disparities, utilized by all sized firms across all industries, were recently revealed.

[Pay Equity Practices and Priorities](#). Summarizes practices and identifies areas that contribute to unintended pay disparities. According to the survey, gender pay gap and broad equity analysis is becoming a standard practice in organizations, along with remediation strategy. Top areas in analyzing potential pay bias include: recruitment and hiring practices, individual compensation decisions, diversity and inclusion programs, and selection processes. (WorldatWork, 2019 — Note: Available to WorldatWork members.)

## Global HR

The potential impact of technology on the future of work is fueling employee concerns about staying relevant on the job. Recent reports provide employers with key insights on how to create an employee-friendly environment and business performance goals in a transformative workplace.

[Decoding Global Trends in Upskilling and Reskilling](#). Underscores two megatrends — technology advances and globalization — and analyzes input from 366,000 global survey respondents from 197 countries regarding their willingness to upskill and reskill. Detailed data supports insights specific to

employees' willingness to learn, learning preferences, and what they believe they'll need for future work. The report includes recommendations on how companies and governments can help individuals stay relevant on the job. (Boston Consulting Group; The Network, 2019. Note: This is the latest report in the Decoding Global Talent Series — focused on workforce changes and skills of the future.)

The Modern Workplace. Offers insights and identifies workplace trends based on information provided by C-suite and senior managers from six countries. The report provides a current and five-year perspective on hurdles organizations face as digital transformation invades the workplace. The study asks probing questions about the challenges of digitizing the workplace, adopting the physical workspace for efficiency, meeting room trends, and flexible work. The analysis is presented through a series of rankings, prioritizing business leaders' top challenges and concerns about their digital transformation initiatives. The research concluded that keeping ahead of workplace trends is a concern among business leaders across the globe and a key recruiting and retention tool to attract Millennials and Gen Z workers more than ever. (Condeco, 2019)

The Future of Work is Human. Analyzes the views of more than 3,500 full-time workers in the U.S., Canada, Ireland, and the U.K. to discover what motivates them to perform at top levels and what fosters emotional loyalty to their co-workers, managers, and employers. Survey data includes charts indicating industries with the highest risk of turnover, key factors to employees' careers, and the perks that matter most. (Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute, 2019)

## Health and welfare

In anticipation of this year's open enrollment season, recently released reports focus on self-insured plan trends, employer-sponsored plans, health insurance statistics, and healthcare reform options.

Self-Insured Health Plans Recent Trends: 1996-2018. Investigates enrollment and availability trends of self-insured plans among various sized private sector establishments. The research was conducted to assess the ACA's impact on these plans. Despite the prediction that the ACA would drive smaller employers to adopt self-insured health plans, it was the larger establishments where the post-ACA growth in offering these plans occurred. The report includes charts showing the percentage of establishments offering self-insured plans, the percentage of workers enrolled in the plans, and establishments that offered at least one plan by state in 2018. (EBRI, 2019 — Note: Access to full report may be limited to EBRI members only.)

Employer Health Benefits Survey 2019. Looks at trends in employer-sponsored healthcare plans. Based on survey responses from private and non-federal public employers, the report provides detailed data on premium costs, cost-sharing provisions, enrollment, wellness programs, sites of care (including telemedicine, retail health clinics, onsite/near-site clinics), retiree health benefits, and more. This is a reliable annual resource for plan benchmarking data. (Kaiser, 2019)

Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2018. Provides 2018 health insurance statistics based on information collected in the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Reports* and changes in coverage between 2017 and 2018. Data is available for employer-sponsored plans, union-based plans, and those purchased directly from an insurance company or private/public marketplace. Public sector data includes coverages under Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and CAMPVA plans. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019)

How Various Reform Options Compare on Coverage and Costs. Examines eight healthcare reform packages to address current issues affecting health insurance coverage including spending by government, households and employers. The analysis estimates the effects of each reform package, highlighting coverage and cost implications in relation to current law. Simulation modeling is used to analyze each of the following reforms: enhanced financial assistance, federal individual mandate and STLD prohibitions, filling the Medicaid eligibility gap, public option and/or capped provider payment rates, CARE, no ESI firewall, further enhanced financial assistance, single-payer lite, and single-payer enhanced. The research demonstrates that there are options to achieve healthcare coverage for all in the U.S. (Urban Institute, 2019)

## Retirement and wealth

Understanding why 401(k) plans and IRAs have not reached their full savings potential, saving habits of younger workers, and delayed retirement of older workers gives employers valuable information for rethinking their retirement benefit programs.

Why are 401(k)/IRA Balances Substantially Below Potential?. Explores the gap between potential and actual balances in 401(k) plans and IRAs. Using a five-step analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's *Survey of Income and Program Participation*, the report found that the immaturity of the 401(k) system, lack of universal coverage (defined as the main "culprits"), leakage, and fees prevented workers from accumulating substantial retirement assets. It also noted that a large gap between potential savings and actual assets is likely to persist even after the 401(k) system is fully mature. (Boston College, Center for Retirement Research, 2019)

Super Saver 2019 Survey Results. Looks at the financial habits (spending, savings behavior, planned retirement age, use of financial advisors, savings influencers) of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z supersavers (those saving 90% or up to 15% or more of the IRS maximum contribution in a tax-deferred retirement plan) and pre-supersavers (those saving up to 89% or up to 15% of the IRS maximum contribution in a tax-deferred retirement plan). The survey revealed that younger workers are serious about saving for retirement, prefer using online tools to track retirement savings goals, and are confident about their ability to save. They credit their parents with having the most influence on their savings habits. One key takeaway: financial literacy is a critical component of savings programs, and most of those polled felt financial education should be introduced at the high school level. (Prudential, 2019)

The Effects of Job Characteristics on Retirement. Investigates how economic, social, and other factors affect the retirement age of older workers, as well as preferred retirement pathways, job characteristics, and the probability of working after age 70. The research found retiring directly from full-time retirement was the most frequently preferred work-to-retirement pathway; most workers worried about health and job demands when considering working longer; and most workers prefer preretirement jobs to be less cognitively and physically challenging and more sociable than their current jobs. The study concluded that flexible work hours and short commutes were the most important considerations in delaying retirement. It also identified stress and cognitive demands as strong predictors of retirement. (Rand, 2019)

## Workforce

The resurgence of interest in educational assistance and workplace learning opportunities as a valuable employer-sponsored benefit is trending. Other recent trends to attract and retain talent in the modern workforce include the emergence of the “caring organization” to create a culture of happiness and utilizing gig workers as an extended part of the workforce.

Working Learner Index. Polled over 30,000 participants in employer-sponsored tuition reimbursement programs to garner insights about education benefits. The research disclosed most workers value learning as a way to remain relevant in the face of increasing automation; and educational assistance and student loan repayment are among the most desired voluntary benefits. The implication for employers is that education assistance benefits could be a key factor to retaining employees who upskill and continue their education to add value to the firm and to attracting top talent. (Bright Horizons, 2019. Note: Registration required to download the full report.)

The Science of Care. Examines the characteristics of the caring organization and how it influences employee perceptions of their employers and fosters favorable outcomes such as commitment, engagement, performance, loyalty, and less turnover. Two studies provided in the report illuminate the new workforce paradigm shifting from the needs of the employer to a rewarding employee experience. (Limeade, 2019)

The Gig Economy: Opportunities, Challenges and Employer Strategies. Identifies the characteristics of gig workers by examining who they are, why the gig economy appeals to them, and what keeps them up at night. The report addresses the unique workplace concerns the gig economy brings and suggests how employers can develop a successful strategy to attract and retain top talent, including for short-term and contract needs. (MetLife and Engine Group, 2019. Note: Information and data from MetLife’s 2019, 17<sup>th</sup> Annual U.S. Employee Benefit Trends Study.)

## Latest from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2019. Covers health insurance, retirement plans, leave benefits, insurance (life, short term and long-term disability), and quality of life benefits. The latest bulletin was released September 19, 2019.

**Produced by the Knowledge Resource Center**

The Knowledge Resource Center is responsible for national multi-practice compliance consulting, analysis and publications, government relations, research, surveys, training, and knowledge management. For more information, please contact your account executive.

You are welcome to distribute *FYI*® publications in their entirety. To manage your subscriptions, or to sign up to receive our mailings, visit our [Subscription Center](#).

This publication is for information only and does not constitute legal advice; consult with legal, tax and other advisors before applying this information to your specific situation.