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Many employers have begun placing a greater emphasis on benefits like flexible work options and dependent care services as well as expanding paid and unpaid leave options as they look for ways to help workers achieve a better work-life balance and reduce stress.

These strategies may prove to be mutually beneficial since stress and poor work-life balance were cited as top issues impacting worker productivity in a recent International Foundation wellness survey.¹ Proponents of flexible work and expanded leave say that these benefits can help workers better balance the demands of their careers and personal lives because they have more control over their schedules. In addition, providing assistance with dependent care and services can lift some of the cost and time burdens that are often stressors for employees.

The International Foundation report *Employee Benefits Survey: 2022 Results* reveals the prevalence of a wide variety of work-life balance benefits offered by corporate/single employer and public employer respondents.

Flexible Work Options

Access to flexible work options, including remote work, compressed workweeks and job sharing, can help workers achieve work-life balance. About three in four (74%) responding organizations offer hybrid work arrangements, allowing employees to work full- or part-time from home while maintaining communication with an office. As expected, the prevalence of this offering has jumped substantially since the COVID-19 pandemic. More than half (55%) take this concept a step further and have remote work arrangements where employees work 100% from home. A similar proportion (57%) offer flexible workhours, typically designed as flexible start and stop times.

One in five offers flexible work schedules for religious observances (20%), while a similar proportion (19%) of respondents offer compressed workweeks. Often in these scenarios, workers have a choice of working 40 hours through four ten-hour days instead of the traditional schedule of five eight-hour days. About one in six (17%) workplaces offers summer hours, while only 4% offer *job sharing*, a system in which two or more part-time workers share one full-time job.

Paid Leave

Paid leave benefits allow workers the flexibility to miss occasional time from work while not losing a substantial portion of their wages. While the most common types of paid leave offered are bereavement (87%) and jury duty leave (81%), paid family leave benefits are growing in popularity.

Paid family leave benefits, including parental and caregiving leaves, have drawn increased attention from federal, state and local governments over the last few years, and some states have passed or are considering laws mandating such benefits. More than two in five (43%) responding organizations offer paid maternity leave provided to a mother with the arrival of a new child. The gap is dwindling, but respondents are still less likely to offer paid paternity leave (33%) to the father of a new child. On a similar note, 43% offer paid parental/family leave, which is often taken for the care of elderly family members.

The prevalence of paid adoption leave has increased substantially over the years and is now offered by more than one in three (34%) organizations. Other family-friendly paid leave benefits include leave related to a miscarriage (15%) and foster care (11%). Respondents are slightly more likely to offer foster care leave on an unpaid basis (15%).

A similar group of responding organizations provides leave options that appeal to workers'

civic and community interests. These include paid leave to vote (38%), to volunteer or participate in community service, (32%) and for military service (29%). On a more general level, one in four (24%) offers paid personal leave and paid leave for inclement weather (22%).

To encourage employees to explore continuing education options, a small proportion of respondents (11%) offers paid leave to attend classes, a benefit more commonly offered on an unpaid basis (13%). About one in ten (10%) offers paid leave for victims of domestic violence, a type of leave more commonly offered on an unpaid basis (17%). A similar proportion offers paid leave to attend a child's activities (10%).

Smaller proportions offer paid leave for the following reasons: sabbaticals (7%), day off for workers' birthdays (6%), religious observances upon request (5%), volunteer firefighters service (3%) and a day off for workers' anniversary dates with their organization (2%).

Unpaid Leave

Organizations also commonly offer various types of unpaid leave. Two in three (66%) respondents offer unpaid leave that allows workers the flexibility needed to address out-of-office needs while maintaining employment.

More than one in four (27%) responding organizations offer unpaid parental/family leave beyond the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). FMLA requires that employers with more than 50 employees offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period if the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition. The same unpaid leave is available for the birth of a child, newborn care, adoption, foster care placement or care of an immediate family member.

Unpaid personal leave is offered by 44% of respondents, while 22% offer unpaid adoption leave. In addition, organizations offer unpaid leave to attend a child's activities (19%), for religious observances upon request (19%), for bereavement or to attend a funeral (18%), and to vote (17%). Workplaces also offer unpaid leave for inclement weather (14%), a miscarriage (13%), jury duty (12%), sabbaticals (12%), volunteer

firefighter service (12%), and to volunteer or participate in community service (12%) as well as menstrual leave (8%). On a less frequent basis (8%), workforces are offering unpaid pet paternity leave, which provides workers with time off to help a pet adjust to its new home.

Dependent Care/Services

Organizations offer a variety of benefits to assist in the care of dependents, including children, spouses, siblings and elderly parents. About three in four (74%) respondents offer *dependent-care flexible spending accounts (DCFSAs)*, which are employer-sponsored accounts that permit employers to use pretax dollars to pay for the care of a child or other dependent.

Respondents are realizing the impact that searching for child- or elder-care services can have on worker productivity. Therefore, more than one in three (34%) offer resource and referral services for child or elder care.

Financial assistance for adoption is offered by more than one in five organizations (19%). Financial assistance may come in the form of reimbursement for adoption agency fees, legal fees, pregnancy and hospital expenses of the birth mother, and immigration and naturalization fees. Similarly, 18% of respondents provide resource and referral services for the adoption of children, a process that can be complicated and time-consuming. Smaller proportions of respondents offer emergency/sick care for children (12%) and elderly relatives (10%). Finally, a small percentage of respondents (6%) offers financial subsidies for the escalating costs of child care.

The 2022 *Employee Benefits Survey* received 502 responses from single employer (including corporations), multiemployer and public employee plans in the databases of the International Foundation and the International Society of Certified Employee Benefit Specialists. International Foundation members and nonmembers may purchase and download the survey at www.ifebp.org/ebs2022.

Endnote

1. <https://ifebp.org/store/Pages/workplace-wellness-2022.aspx>.



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