



FIRST SUN
EAP

Trends Report

2024



From the Desk of Nancy Grunnet

Chief Operating Officer

Hello to all within the EAP community.

Looking back on the last year, we've seen the dust begin to settle from recent turbulent years. As organizations have adapted, we're witnessing a prioritization of employee well-being like never before.

This year's First Sun EAP Trends Report sheds light on the key trends we have witnessed from three perspectives:

1. **The world of work** and how it is adjusting to a new hybrid and remote culture
2. **The employee's perspective** and how individuals adjust to hybrid or remote work and support children post-COVID within existing economic challenges

3. **The mental health and well-being benefits front** and how the stigma of mental health is lifting, well-being is becoming a part of prevention, and about chronic disease and comorbidity management practices

I encourage you to explore the report further and consider how to leverage these insights within your organization to foster a supportive and empowering workplace environment.

First Sun is working hard to set new standards of service and respond to the emerging trends we've listed. I am excited to see how we will continue to evolve and grow together in the coming year.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to advancing workplace well-being.

My best to each of you,



Mary D. Hunt

2024TrendsReport

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WHAT WE SAW IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Hybrid Work Arrangements

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work. By 2023, many organizations adopted hybrid work models as a permanent solution. This solution meant employees split their work time between the home and office, offering flexibility and addressing the demand for better work-life balance.

Digital Collaboration Tools

Digital collaboration platforms (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) became more entrenched in daily workflows to support remote and hybrid work environments, enhancing communication and collaboration across dispersed teams.

Rise of "Gig" and Contract Work¹

The gig economy continued to expand with more professionals opting for freelance or contract work for flexibility and autonomy. This shift challenged traditional employment models and prompted discussions around labor laws, benefits and protections for gig workers.

Restructuring and Managerial Stress

A large percentage of organizations have given employees additional job responsibilities, restructured teams, and reported budget cuts. These changes have put pressure on managers, affecting their engagement and well-being.

↓22%

FIRST SUN
CALLERS

Managers seeking support through consultations decreased.

↑10%

Calls about grief rose 10% as depression went down 8%.

OUR TOP 5
CALLER TOPICS

- 1 ANXIETY: ↓ 1.7%
- 2 EMOTIONAL OTHER: ↑ 21%
- 3 MARITAL RELATIONSHIP: ↓ 7.7%
- 4 DEPRESSION: ↓ 8%
- 5 FAMILY OTHER: ↑ 28%

Heightened Focus on Employee Well-being²

Companies increasingly offered resources and benefits such as mental health days, wellness programs and access to counseling services to support their employees.

Increased Focus on Work-life Balance

Companies were more aware of the importance of work-life balance. They sought to implement policies that prevent burnout such as flexible scheduling, vacation policies, and a “right to disconnect” policy that dissuades emails outside of work hours.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

(DE&I) Initiatives

Organizations placed a greater emphasis on DE&I efforts, recognizing the importance of creating inclusive work environments. Efforts to increase representation, foster a culture of belonging and address systemic

inequalities were prominently featured in corporate policies and practices.

Push for Protection From Harm²

Employers emphasized physical and psychological safety by prioritizing workplace safety measures, enabling adequate rest, normalizing mental health focus, zero tolerance for workplace bullying, and operationalizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) norms.



How First Sun Is Responding

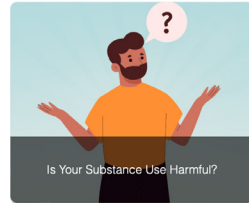
More Online Options

We continue expanding our national network with over 30,000 providers capable of video, messaging, chat, and telephonic sessions.

New Look and Feel

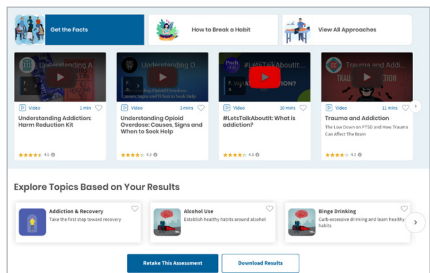
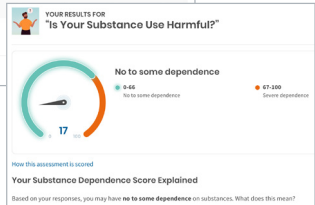
New! Our Well-being Center is organized by easy-to-use benefits tiles that outline the most used life management services and a **My EAP tile** walking users through their benefit plan. It also features the Learning Center with engaging short-form learning experiences.

New! Clients can now empower themselves with mental well-being assessments and receive recommended self-care tools.



1. For the following questions, think about the past week, think about the following main substance groups—alcohol, marijuana, prescription medications—and choose the answer that is most appropriate to you.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Nearly Always
Do you find yourself thinking about when you will next be able to have another drink or use drug?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is drinking or taking things more important than anything else you might do during the day?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel your need for drink or drugs is hard to control?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you often feel down, stressed, grumpy and taking a drink or drug?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you take or use drugs in a particular way in order to increase their effects on you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Get the Facts | **How to Break a Habit** | **View All Approaches**

- Understanding Addiction: Harm Reduction Kit
- Understanding Opioid Overdose: Causes, Signs and When to Seek Help
- Be in the Moment: What is Addiction?
- Trauma and Addiction: How Can Trauma Affect Your Substance Use?

Explore Topics Based on Your Results

- Addiction & Recovery: Take the first step toward recovery
- Alcohol Use: 4 common healthy habits around alcohol
- Single Drinking: Look outside of drinking and learn healthy habits

[Retake This Assessment](#) | [Download Results](#)

EAP Plans Available for Contract or Gig Employees

New! We now offer extended coverage for employee groups such as PRN, retirees, vendors, and contracted and seasonal employees.

More Support for Managers and Supervisors

New! We have added workplace topics to our training library to boost the employers' ability to reach their goals.

Our enhanced manager and supervisor skill-building training program addresses the latest manager skills.

New! Risk management services now include coaching for managers and supervisors struggling with work performance. We continue to provide developmental lead-

ership coaching (fee-based) for new and upcoming leaders or leaders ready to grow.

DE&I Leader and Executive Coaching

One-of-a-kind, online, strengths-based leadership coaching (fee-based) focuses on creating positively diverse leaders.



WHAT WE SAW FROM THE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

Rising Concerns With Child and Parenting Issues

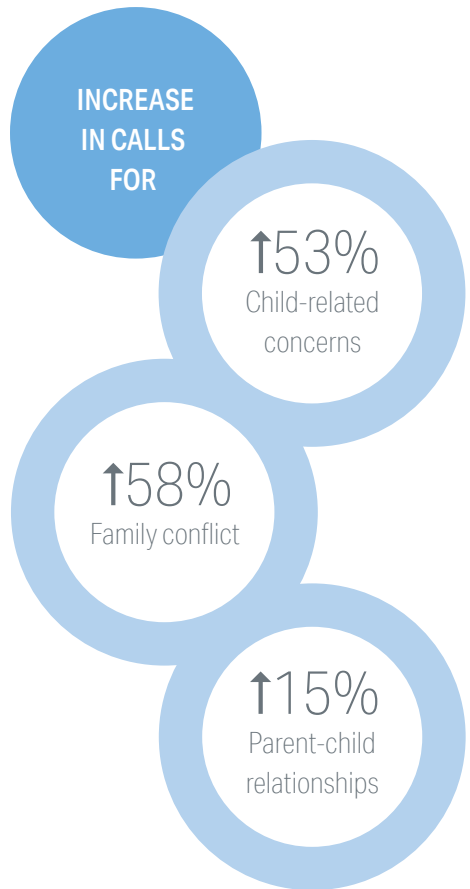
Children are navigating complex challenges that span the social, financial, and academic realms.

Cyberbullying and social media pressures are affecting children's mental health and self-esteem.

Financial instability, work-life balance, and the cost of raising children are significant concerns for many families.

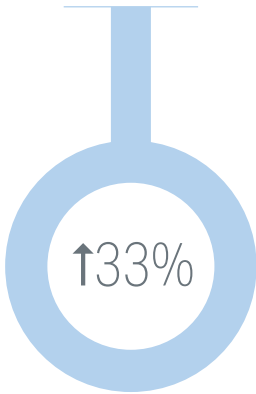
Academically, the shift to remote learning during the pandemic highlighted and deepened existing educational disparities, with

many students facing significant learning losses, particularly in math and reading.



Americans Face Rising Inflation

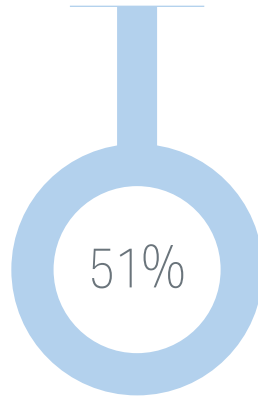
Housing, transportation, food and utility costs surged in 2023. A surprising 57% of people reported cutting back on entertainment expenses, and nearly half of Americans plan to modify or cancel travel plans, opting for “staycations” instead. Many indicate having to slow retirement savings. Lastly, 14% of Americans took on a second job or side gig to cover expenses.



We experienced an increase in calls for financial concerns from 2022 to 2023.

Constant Social Media Hacking and Data Breaches

Cybercrime on social media platforms accounted for \$3.25 billion in annual global revenue with social media-generated computer crime revenue spiking by 83% in September 2023.



Workers say they've taken 6-10 hours at work trying to fix identity theft problems.

Workplace Stress and Burnout

Workplace stress remains at a concerning level with 57% of workers experiencing symptoms of burnout:

- Emotional exhaustion (31%)
- Not motivated to do their best (26%)
- A desire to keep to themselves (25%)
- A desire to quit (23%)
- Lower productivity (20%)
- Irritability or anger with co-workers and customers (19%)
- Feelings of being ineffective (18%)

**CALLS
ON THE RISE FOR
work-life balance and
workplace violence
concerns.**

**INCREASE
IN CALLS ABOUT
the workplace**

↑54%
Job performance
(self-reported)

↑32%
Relationship
with co-worker


↑83%
Relationship
with supervisor

↑45%
Anger
management

Appreciation From Employers for Mental

Health and Well-being Support ³

- 77% of workers reported being satisfied with their employers' support for mental health and well-being.
- More than half of workers agree that their employer regularly provides information about available mental health resources.
- 72% of workers agree that their employer helps them develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- 92% of workers said working for an organization that values their emotional and psychological well-being is essential.
- 92% of workers said it is important to them to work for an organization that supports employee mental health.
- 95% of workers said it is important to them to work for an organization that respects the boundaries between work and nonwork time.




CALLERS SAY
they are tired
of waiting.

As more workers seeking mental health services has risen, so too has the shortage of providers. There are 350 individuals for every one mental health provider. This has increased the wait time for appointments leaving workers frustrated.



350 to 1
individuals per
every one provider



IN-PERSON
sessions take
the longest to
schedule.

How FIRST SUN Is RESPONDING

More Resources for Parents

Our provider network has expanded the number of providers who serve our parent and child population. And our Well-being Center provides more articles, videos, and webinars on a variety of parenting topics.

Expanded Financial Support

We have strengthened our support for budgeting, debt, retirement, student loans, college planning, cash management strategies, contingency planning, investments, asset allocation, retirement planning, education planning, estate planning, divorce impact planning, and tax preparation resources.

Identity (ID) Theft Resources

Free identity theft webinars are available to all our clients.

Add fee-based identity theft services for your population.

- Callers receive a free consultation, up to 60 minutes, with a Fraud Resolution Specialist™ (FRS) who helps with seven emergency response activities.
- The FRS assists callers with restoring their identity and good credit.
- ID theft victims receive a free ID Theft Emergency Response Kit™ .

Well-being Center

Our online center sports a new layout, learning center and enhanced search features to amplify the user experience. It is organized using topic tiles that allow users to efficiently locate the services included in their plan.

New! The **Learning Center** features the most popular topics like stress, money, sleep and mindfulness. It is training and education-focused to include short courses, webinars, micro-learning videos and more.

New! **Mental well-being assessments** provide users their scores, recommended tools and self-care resources based on their results.

Other updates include self-help articles, recipes, calculators, and recommended APPs, podcasts and books to further the well-being experience.

Topic tiles and the Learning Center



New Benefit! Mental Health Coaching

Employees can now choose mental health coaching in addition to clinical and spiritual services. The expected turnaround time for an appointment is within one week.

EAP Management

The **account management team** offers a variety of ways to manage your EAP. Sign up for a guided consultation about EAP goal setting and program promotions. You can also attend EAP 101. This online webinar is held regularly and reviews how to use the program to benefit employees, managers, and your organization. Next, receive our monthly newsletter, Neighborhood News. It shares workplace tips, new services, discounts and events. And invite us to help support your benefits fair with educational materials and giveaways.

Workplace Resources

Disruptive Event Management (DEM)

provides fee-based support for an accident, death, robbery or reduction in force. Disruptive events can overwhelm employees and stall productivity. First Sun will help with strategies to manage these incidents and provide on-site employee support.

Security consulting sessions are provided by our partner. They locate vulnerabilities to protect your facility from risks like acts of violence entering your organization. You receive a discount through this partnership.

WHAT WE SAW IN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BENEFITS TRENDS

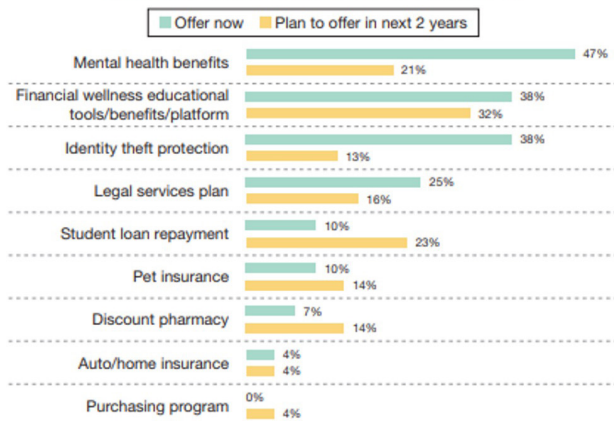
Rise in the Cost of Benefits

Figures suggest that health benefits costs continue to outpace inflation. The increases reflect broader economic pressures, including the effects of inflation and labor shortages in the mental health and health care industries. Employers need to manage these costs while attracting and retaining employees with competitive benefits.

Rise in Flexible and Nontraditional Benefits

Companies expanded their benefits packages to attract and retain talent. Mental health and other benefits such as financial, identity theft, and legal services rose to the top.

Nontraditional Benefits Offered and Planned⁴



How FIRST SUN Is RESPONDING

New! Updated Pricing Model

The trend toward customized services is projected to increase, reflecting a shift toward more individualized and comprehensive approaches to EAPs. This mindset can be linked to the growing emphasis on holistic well-being and mental health support as well as a genuine desire from purchasers to actively support individuals under their care.

In response to this, we transitioned from a per employee per month (PEPM) model to an annual fee. The fee is based on the average number of covered lives and the anticipated program utilization. Customers with this pricing model appreciate its personalized and transparent nature.

Enhanced Product Variety and Flexible Pricing Options

We have also acted on the desire for more personalized solutions by creating additional ways to select benefits tailored to fit their population. Customers can choose solutions that align with their specific requirements, goals and budget constraints.

Organizations will enjoy the extended coverage for their groups, the enhanced Well-being Center, the addition of mental health coaching, increased third-party vendor offerings, and workplace training topics. This flexibility ensures companies will remain competitive in their market and that their population has access to quality mental health and well-being tools.

WHAT LIES AHEAD IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Hybrid Culture Development

HR strategies must be adaptable to manage the evolving workplace dynamics, focus on talent management, enhance employee engagement, and offer hybrid work models.

DE&I Is a Priority

Younger employees prioritize DE&I in their workplace. They grew up with diversity and expect their employment choices to reflect respect, equity, and inclusion. For them, DE&I is not optional but imperative. It influences their perception of their employer and their decision to join or stay with an organization.

Increased Focus on Manager Support

As organizations restructured, we saw a

decline in consultation and support for managers. Providing supportive resources to managers is crucial for the sustainability of a healthy work environment, effective leadership, and the overall success of an organization. Support them with First Sun's leadership training and free manager consultations.

Managers are better equipped to manage stress and emotions and think clearer when supported. It is critical for making informed decisions and leading a team effectively.

Supported managers model healthy behavior to their employees. They encourage employees to seek help, reduce the stigma around mental health issues, and support better work-life balance.

WHAT LIES AHEAD FROM THE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

Wellness Programs

Wellness programs continue to aid in creating a health-conscious work culture, enhancing productivity, and reducing health care costs. Organizations with wellness programs factor more heavily into an employee's decision to accept or stay in a position.

Renewed Employee Engagement

Engagement will morph from being productive to all members of an organization giving their best each day, committed to their organization's goals and values, and motivated to contribute to organizational success with an enhanced sense of their well-being. A push for everyone to "be better."

Work Relationships Enhance Performance

Management²

Hybrid and remote workers must develop and maintain relationships with co-workers and managers. It is for performance expectations and reflects a broader shift towards strategic, inclusive and people-focused management.

WHAT LIES AHEAD IN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BENEFITS TRENDS

Point Fatigue

Because health plans and well-being programs can't address every employee's needs, organizations often contract with multiple vendors to provide point solutions.

Fifty percent of organizations offer access to between four and 12 point solutions.

While point solutions ensure you provide the latest and greatest health and well-being benefits, having too many is confusing. Employees don't know where to go for what they need.

Add to Your Existing Program

Mental health components such as advanced primary care, conditions-specific programs, navigator and advocacy plat-

forms, and caregiver programs supplement the existing program.

Mental Health as Prevention

Stress reduction improves immune system function, reduces inflammation, and improves healing and recovery. Behavioral health assists with the prevention of substance abuse or dependence.

Chronic Disease and Comorbidity

Management

People with these conditions may be more likely to develop mental health issues. Mental health support can improve or prevent depression and anxiety, assisting patients in following treatment regimens and enhancing quality of life.

How First Sun Is Positioned For The Future

Integrated Product

In answer to point fatigue, First Sun integrates the often left-out well-being services, reducing the need to purchase multiple point options.

New! Pricing Structure

The structure prioritizes flexibility and transparency — paying based on the services you need. Customers can select a plan that best suits their needs and budget, empowering them to pay for the services they use. We provide a range of program options from streamlined standard plans to comprehensive unlimited full-service EAP packages.

New! Mental Health Coaching With

Swift Scheduling

Employees can now choose mental health coaching in addition to clinical or spiritual services. The expected turnaround time for an appointment is within the week.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

New strategies for follow-up and feedback allow our teams to adjust our offerings to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

Newly designed utilization reports will assist organizations in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their EAP.

RESOURCES

1 Investopedia

Gig Economy: Definition, Factors Behind It, Critique & Gig Work

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gig-economy.asp#What%20Is%20A%20Gig%20Economy?>

2 American Psychological Association

2023 Work in America Survey: Workplaces as engines of psychological health and well-being

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-in-america/2023-workplace-health-well-being>

3 Mental Health America

2023 The State of Mental Health in America

<https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2023-State-of-Mental-Health-in-America-Report.pdf>

4 Eastbridge Consulting Group, Inc.

The Forecasting Voluntary Sales Spotlight™ Report

<https://eastbridge.com/news/PressRelease/2023/09-21.html>

Thank you for championing mental health and well-being. Your support is invaluable. We couldn't make a difference without you!



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