



Shifting Perspectives:

Weight Health and the Workplace

Attitudes about weight health-related benefits are evolving. New research from WeightWatchers for Business captures what's driving the changes – and identifies how organizations can anticipate and support shifting expectations.

WeightWatchers
for Business



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What people believe about weight and health

Recent scientific advances are reshaping what we know about obesity. Scientists and the medical community now recognize obesity as a chronic condition that's driven by a complex mix of metabolic, genetic, and environmental factors. Prevention and treatment are no longer seen as solely a matter of willpower.

These rapidly evolving insights point to a need for a more holistic approach to weight care. The interconnectivity between weight and overall health also raises important questions for employers looking to provide weight care to employees, improve health outcomes, and reduce healthcare costs, including:

- What do employees think about weight health?
- How do they expect their employers to deliver weight care?
- What is the potential impact of improved weight health on employee well-being? On key business objectives?

To understand employee perceptions, we went straight to the source. In 2024, WeightWatchers for Business commissioned a nationwide survey to understand how today's population views weight health and what employees want from their employers. This report breaks down the findings and explores how organizations can apply the insights to achieve tangible results.

About the research

Commissioned by WeightWatchers for Business, the nationwide survey was conducted by Dynata in July 2024 of 1,000 U.S. consumers 18+ in age. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points at the 95% confidence level at the country level, and plus or minus one percentage point at the total level.

Recognizing obesity as a chronic condition

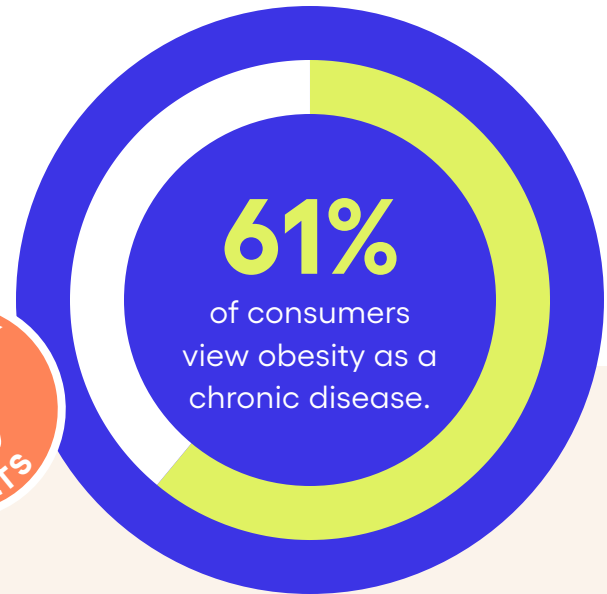
Then and now:

A dramatic shift in public perception

2013

- ▶ Obesity officially categorized as a chronic condition by the American Medical Association (AMA).

2024



Scientific research continues to expand society's understanding of weight and how it affects overall health. As a result, the medical community recognized obesity as a chronic condition in 2013. The recognition opened the doors to treatments that acknowledge diet and lifestyle changes alone aren't drivers of weight health for everyone. Over the last decade, the spectrum of prevention and treatment options for overweight and obesity has expanded alongside the developing science.

Public perceptions are shifting, too. **Today, six in 10 consumers say obesity is a chronic disease, like diabetes or heart disease.** The increased awareness encourages more open discussions about weight, empowers people to seek weight care, and begins to create more compassionate societal attitudes toward people living with overweight and obesity.

Advancing science and public perceptions are crucial elements in addressing obesity and improving health outcomes. One-third of American adults are classified as overweight, and 43% meet the clinical definition of obesity.¹ The World Obesity Federation projects the number of adults in the U.S. with obesity will reach 58% by 2035.² In tandem, rising obesity rates will drive increases in the more than 200 chronic conditions³ and 18 cancers⁴ linked to obesity. Beyond recognition and perceptions, reducing and preventing obesity also requires a shift in access to weight care.

Obesity in the U.S.

Today:

43% of adults¹

By 2035:

58% of adults²

Addressing the barriers to weight care

Despite the recognition of obesity as a chronic disease, there are often significant barriers to quality care. Since the AMA's designation of obesity as a chronic condition in 2013, nearly 15 times more physicians have earned a certification in obesity medicine.⁵ However, the number of certified physicians still represents less than 1% of doctors in the U.S.⁶ Most consumers reported limited access to specialized weight care or being unsure about its availability.

The lack of specialized training in obesity medicine contributes to another barrier to care – weight stigma. Defined as unfair treatment, discriminatory behaviors, or abuse because of weight or body size, weight stigma plays a role in people seeking care and the quality of care they receive. Two in three patients report experiencing weight stigma from their doctors.⁷ This type of stigma against patients living with overweight and obesity does more than affect the quality of care. It can also result in delays in the diagnosis and treatment of other conditions.⁸

Limited access to specialized care

1 in 5 consumers report that their access to weight healthcare and obesity specialists is limited or non-existent. Another 44% say they're unsure about the availability of specialized care.



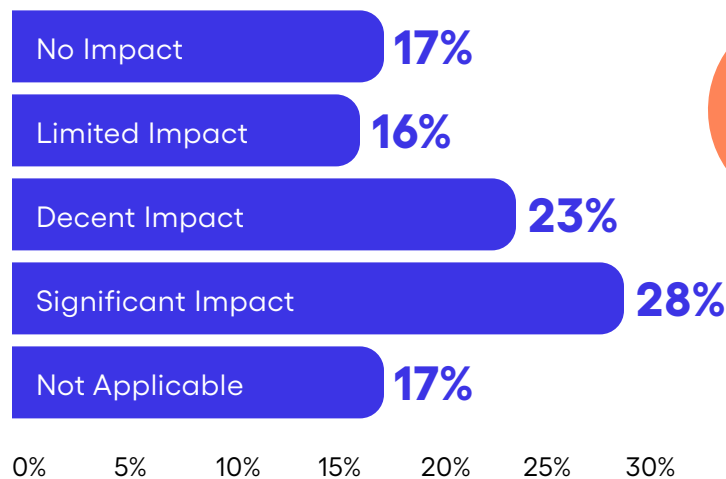
▶ **Learn more**

Weight Stigma at Work:
How employers can shift the narrative to enhance culture, performance, and overall health.



Cost concerns and the impact on weight care

Cost is another major barrier to weight care. Half of consumers (51%) say cost impacts their ability to access care. Not surprisingly, many employees are looking to their employers to help them address their concerns about weight healthcare access and costs.



Meeting employee expectations for weight care

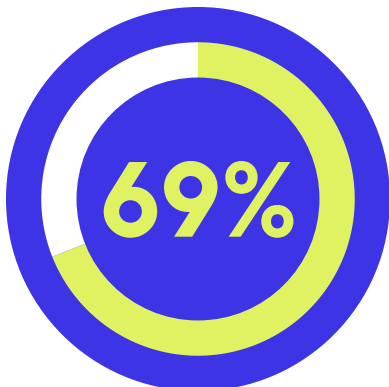
Employees rely on their employers to provide support and benefits to help them manage their health and well-being. In recent years, benefits have expanded to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the workforce. Well-rounded programs now include table stakes benefits like medical, dental, and life insurance, as well as non-traditional options like financial wellness, identity theft protection, and pet insurance.

Today's workforce wants employers to support weight health. Sixty-nine percent of consumers would like to have access to weight health solutions in the workplace, such as weight management or weight-loss support with access to behavior and lifestyle change programs and prescription weight-loss drugs. **In fact, interest in weight health benefits ranked highly behind behavioral and mental health services for consumers.**

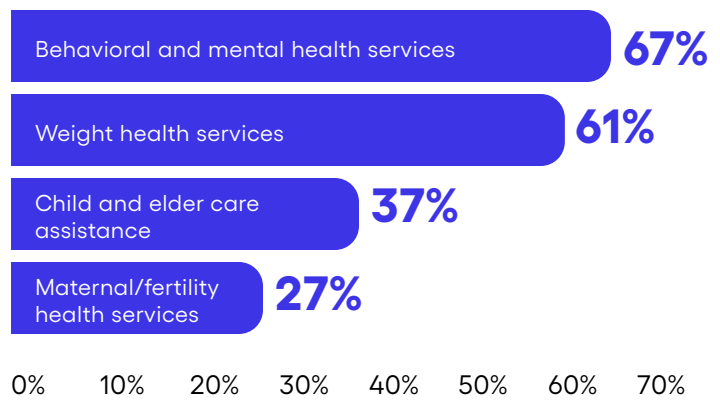


High interest in weight healthcare benefits

Consumers who would like their employer to offer weight health solutions:



Interest in weight health services ranked second by consumers.



Much like mental health benefits, which became a standard and prioritized component of employee benefit programs by the early 2000s, weight health benefits present an opportunity for employers to meet evolving employee needs and expectations. In addition, employers can realize a return on their weight health investment while also achieving key business objectives.

Weight healthcare benefits that offer a full spectrum of care to support a range of employee needs drive tangible improvements in employee health. In turn, benefits aimed at reducing and managing weight help lower employers' costs associated with obesity, including those related to healthcare, absenteeism, and productivity.



▶ **Learn more**

The Business Case for Weight Health Benefits



The value of a healthy workplace

\$1.4 trillion

The all-in annual cost and economic impact of obesity in the U.S., including:⁹

- healthcare costs
- attendance and productivity costs at work

Investing in weight healthcare generates tangible returns and reduces costs.

For every dollar spent on health and wellness programs:¹⁰

\$3.27

in reduced healthcare costs

\$2.73

in reduced absenteeism



Weight health in the workplace

Employers offering covered weight healthcare benefits have a unique opportunity for differentiation as they compete to attract, engage, and retain top talent.

WeightWatchers for Business is a trusted partner that helps employers provide integrated, whole-person weight healthcare across the full spectrum of behavioral, community, and clinical care.

Working closely with employers and payers, we take a consultative approach to building long-term partnerships by tailoring solutions to match an organization's needs. Our platform, with our science-proven and research-backed behavioral weight management program as the foundation, helps to prevent and treat obesity plus other cardiometabolic conditions like diabetes. Across the full spectrum of weight care, we focus on helping our partners realize the benefits of improved weight health while effectively managing cost pressures driven by healthcare claims and GLP-1 utilization.

Rather than fragmenting care, our platform individualizes the experience based on true clinical need to deliver:

- Full-spectrum, scalable, and science-proven behavior change programs, including Diabetes and GLP-1 Programs
- Virtual clinic and medication management
- 24x7 individualized coaching and highly active digital and IRL communities
- Integrated personal health insights

Explore how WeightWatchers for Business fits into your employee benefits offering.

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¹ Fryar CD, Carroll MD, Afful J. (2020). Prevalence of overweight, obesity, and severe obesity among adults aged 20 and over: United States, 1960–1962 through 2017–2018. NCHS Health E-Stats, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² World Obesity Atlas 2023. World Obesity Federation, March 2023.

³ AMA. Obesity. <https://www.ama-assn.org/topics/obesity>. Accessed July 1, 2024.

⁴ Recalde, M., Pistillo, A., Davila-Batista, V. et al. Longitudinal body mass index and cancer risk: a cohort study of 2.6 million Catalan adults. *Nat Commun* 14, 3816 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-39282-y>

⁵ American Board of Obesity Medicine, 2023. <https://www.abom.org/stats-data-2/>

⁶ America's doctors need more obesity medicine training. Axios, May 2024.

⁷ Puhl RM, Lessard LM, Himmelstein MS, Foster GD. (2021) The roles of experienced and internalized weight stigma in healthcare experiences: Perspectives of adults engaged in weight management across six countries. *PLoS one*, 16(6), e0251566.

⁸ Tomiyama, A., Carr, D., Granberg, E. et al. (2018). How and why weight stigma drives the obesity 'epidemic' and harms health. *BMC Med* 16, 123.

⁹ How Much Does Obesity Cost the U.S? Obesity Medicine Alliance, July 2023. <https://obesitymedicine.org/blog/health-economic-impact-of-obesity/>.

¹⁰ Baicker K, Cutler D, Song Z (2010). Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings. *Health Affairs*. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0626 <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0626>