



**HERO EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE  
SURVEY RESULTS:**

**A FOUNDATIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING**

# ABOUT HERO

The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a national nonprofit dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of workplace health and well-being (HWB). HERO was established 25 years ago to conduct and share research, policy, leadership, and strategy to advance workplace HWB and provide leadership of the nation's workforce. Much of the good work that HERO does is achieved through the efforts of its volunteer committees. This report was produced by one such committee--the Employee Experience Study Committee and their Data Analysis and Summary Report Workgroup.

# CONTRIBUTORS

Development of this report and content was led by HERO staff and its Data Analysis and Summary Report Workgroup. Contributors to the report are listed alphabetically below.

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*The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the organizations listed.*



# OVERVIEW

Significant evidence exists on the positive impact employee health and well-being (HWB) strategies can have on an organization's healthcare costs, workplace performance, and overall culture of health. At the same time, there is increasing evidence that a positive employee experience (EEx)—currently a growing area of focus for employers—may also achieve other important human resources (HR) and business objectives. However, HWB and EEx are often “owned” by different functions within an organization. Currently, the bi-directional influences between HWB and EEx are not well established within most organizations, limiting collaboration and integration between the two functions (e.g., talent management, employee engagement, leadership development, diversity, inclusion, etc.). Improving this relationship may help optimize strategies to improve both HWB and EEx. Organizational success and sustainability will increasingly depend on multi-dimensional strategies to attract, develop, and support employees in an ever-evolving workforce and workplace.

To better understand the current EEx landscape, HERO's Employee Experience Study Committee implemented an employer survey focused on existing industry definitions and assumptions related to EEx and HWB. The survey centered around qualitative data regarding:

- How organizations define EEx
- Strategic prioritization of EEx
- Which function(s) in the organization “owns” the overall EEx objective
- How EEx is connected (if at all) to the HWB function
- How EEx is measured
- Evolution of EEx as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, issues of racial equity and justice, and the future of work and health

## PHASE 1 ► DEVELOPMENT

EEx Committee volunteer members are industry leaders and subject matter experts representing HERO members across industries, from universities, benefits consultants, employers, and healthcare organizations. In early 2020, the EEx Committee was formed and drafted a charter identifying key objectives and deliverables. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic paused committee work. In June of 2020, EEx Committee members resumed monthly meetings discussing the changing workplace landscape, the evolving EEx and various definitions and elements associated with EEx, while also researching the topic seeking guidance from HERO members, grey literature, and open-access reports. From the five key EEx focus areas as noted above, eight survey questions were developed to gather data, with a total of 22 possible questions after survey branching. Multiple survey drafts were reviewed with HERO committee members meeting regularly to refine questions until consensus was achieved.

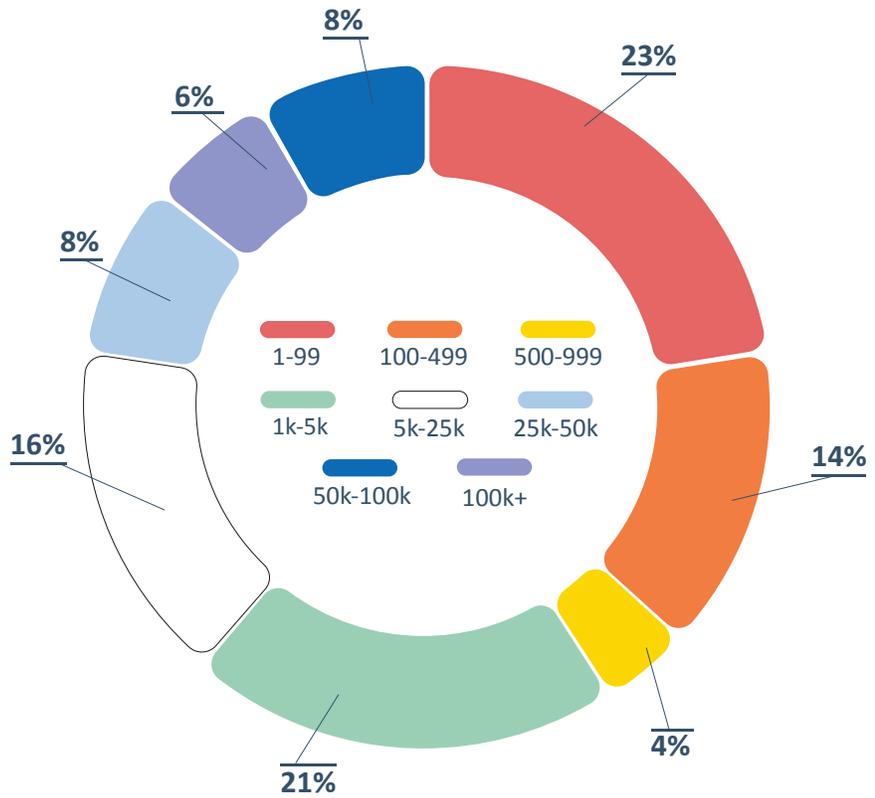
## PHASE 2 ► SURVEY DEPLOYMENT

The EEx Survey was piloted (Phase 1) in February 2021 among EEx Committee members to ensure ease of use and identify needed changes and gaps in terms of EEx data collection opportunities. Phase 2 survey dissemination occurred in April 2021 with an email invitation sent to HERO members and the full HERO contact list. The survey link was sent via email to the primary contact on file with HERO, but employers were encouraged to include colleagues across departments to answer questions. The following note was included as an introduction to the survey:

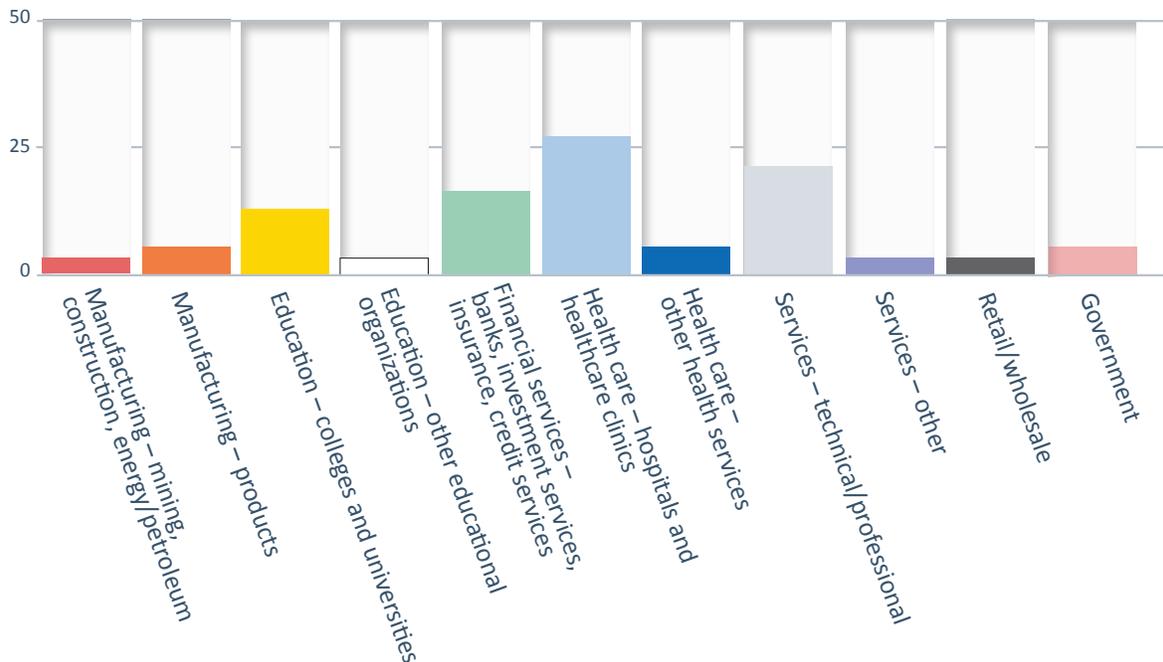
*Through the **Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO)**, the Employee Experience Study Committee is seeking responses to the following survey focused on workplace employee experience (EEx) practices. This survey will help uncover how organizations approach EEx, including definition and measurement, its connection to the health and well-being strategy, and where accountability falls within the organization. We also seek to understand how COVID-19 and racial justice issues have impacted the organization's approach to EEx. This survey will assist the Employee Experience Study Committee in developing deliverables to provide HERO members with best practices and key considerations surrounding an EEx strategy. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time in completing this survey.*

Data was collected from 53 responding organizations representing a range of industries and business sizes.

**APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION**



**PRIMARY TYPE OF INDUSTRY/BUSINESS**



Future survey efforts include an opportunity to expand outreach to the following industries not represented in the current sample: Transportation, Communications and Utilities, Real Estate, Food Services/Hospitality/Entertainment.

# PHASE 3 ► KEY RESULTS & OBSERVATIONS

## (SEE TABLE 1)

### Defining EEx

The majority of respondents defined EEx as *the journey an employee takes within the organization, including every interaction and experience that involves their role, workspace, manager, and well-being and everything that the employee learns, does, sees, and feels*. Others defined EEx as *the extent to which employees feel the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being*. Table 1 outlines the most prevalent EEx definitions selected by respondents.

### Strategic Prioritization of EEx

Most respondents agreed that EEx is a strategic priority within their organization, with 67% of respondents stating it is a top priority and 24% indicating it is a priority (but not a top priority). Of the organizations that indicated EEx is a priority (91%), respondents reported focusing on EEx to attract and retain employees and clients and achieve organizational missions and priorities. Other top reasons for interest in EEx included supporting employee health and well-being, improving retention, and recruitment. A handful of respondents indicated they experienced barriers to making EEx a top priority at their organization due to competing priorities, lack of leadership buy-in, resources, and funding. Refer to Table 1 for specific survey results.

### Organizational Approach

While most respondents (56%) reported having a specific EEx budget, organizational accountability ranged greatly and has yet to be clearly defined. Of the 44% of respondents who indicated they do not have a specific budget allocated to EEx, these organizations are currently sourcing funding from existing HR, Employee Engagement, and Talent Management budgets. An EEx lead or team manages accountability for EEx initiatives in some organizations surveyed. In contrast, other organizations utilize various established departments, including Organizational Development, Employee Engagement, Benefits, HWB, Operations/Facilities, and Leadership, especially for smaller organizations.

Many organizations (56%) align EEx and HWB strategies into a singular business approach that connects to DEI practices and work-life balance. Respondents reported that EEx and HWB strategies drive similar organizational goals, objectives, and communication strategies. Many organizations integrate EEx with work-life balance and holistic well-

being. Themes across organizations indicate it is critical for DEI and business strategy to integrate both. Similarly, organizations report cross-functional collaboration related to EEx and HWB objectives, with 39% of respondents indicating that teams work very closely together. While Human Resources owns this strategy at most organizations, opportunities exist for EEx and HWB teams and strategies to integrate further (e.g., deeper connections and more ties to linked goals/objectives). Where collaboration is successful, best practices include a multi-department approach to EEx, quarterly collaboration meetings, utilization of talent acquisition data to inform the process, and ensuring frequent pulse surveys and ongoing measurement. Barriers to close collaboration were reported to be a lack of leadership support and communication issues among a multi-disciplinary group.

### **Measuring Success**

Survey results indicate key success measures are retention and recruitment, employee HWB, employee satisfaction, and engagement scores. Perception of company support and culture scores are less utilized as measures of success.

### **The Evolution of EEx**

The emergence of both the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest has indirectly created an opportunity for organizations to take a step back and refocus on employee HWB and EEx initiatives. There is a renewed charge to support employees in their daily lives and create a sense of belonging. While this survey included limited data collection related to this area, we identified areas of focus for future research based on qualitative data collected. Organizations noted an increased focus on employee mental health and the impact of EEx, in addition, how providing and developing flexible work arrangements impacts employee experience. A renewed focus on DEI initiatives and building an inclusive and employee-informed workplace culture that supports Black, Indigenous, and people of color are critical elements associated with EEx. In addition, how employers communicate the organization's dedication to creating and monitoring meaningful change is equally important.

Regarding workload demands and time management, the impact on employee HWB is also critical to understand and address within the business and HWB strategy. Given recent disruption in the physical workplace and increased hybrid work arrangements, decreased social connectedness has impacted EEx and the overall sense of community and workplace culture. Organizations must understand and establish effective ways to bolster the EEx for employees with flexible work arrangements, such as through virtual culture sessions, virtual team activities, and intentional communication strategies.

**TABLE 1**

Topic	Current approach	Opportunities
<b>Defining EEx</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The journey an employee takes with the organization, including every interaction that happens along the employee life cycle, plus the experiences that involve an employee’s role, workspace, manager, and well-being.” (30%)</li> <li>• “The extent to which employees feel the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being.” (23%)</li> <li>• “From the moment a potential candidate looks at a job ad, to the moment they leave the organization—everything that worker learns, does, sees and feels contributes to their employee experience.” (19%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity exists to explore consensus and develop an accepted industry definition of EEx.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Prioritization</b>	<p><b>Top priority</b> (67%)</p> <p><b>Priority, but not a top priority</b> (24%)</p> <p><b>Reasons stated:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee and client retention</li> <li>• Achieving organizational mission and priorities</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasons for interest in EEx:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support employee HWB (92%)</li> <li>• Improve retention (84%)</li> <li>• Recruitment (76%)</li> <li>• Support corporate culture (71%)</li> <li>• Understand needs/wants of employees (66%)</li> <li>• Impact on business results (e.g., profit, shareholder value) (61%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Barriers to making EEx a priority:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing priorities</li> <li>• Lack of leadership buy-in</li> <li>• Lack of allocated resources/funding</li> </ul>



**TABLE 1 CON'T.**

Topic	Current approach	Opportunities
<b>Organizational Approach (Budget &amp; Accountability)</b>	<p><b>Budget Allocation Specific to EEx (56%)</b></p> <p><b>Sourced from other areas (44%)</b>  <b>Specific areas noted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR (50%)</li> <li>• Engagement (19%)</li> <li>• Talent management (19%)</li> <li>• HWB (13%)</li> <li>• DEI (13%)</li> <li>• Organizational development (6%)</li> </ul> <p><b>Accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EEx Lead/Team (18%)</li> <li>• Organizational Development (16%)</li> <li>• Employee Engagement (10%)</li> <li>• Benefits (10%)</li> <li>• HWB (10%)</li> <li>• Talent Management (5%)</li> <li>• Operations (5%)</li> <li>• Other (26%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational EEx accountability is yet to be clearly defined in survey responses.</li> <li>• Some organizations report there is no accountable group managing EEx or alternatively that everyone in the organization is tasked to manage EEx.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Approach (Reasoning)</b>	<p><b>Relationship between EEx &amp; HWB objectives and overall cross-function collaboration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared Strategy (56%)</li> <li>• Teams work together, but it could be more (50%)</li> <li>• Teams work closely to support shared objectives (39%)</li> <li>• Separate, but well-linked (21%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EEx and HWB alignment continues to be a work in progress, especially in forming connections across the organization to address gaps and opportunities.</li> <li>• Leadership teams and key stakeholders need to ensure there is organizational commitment and departmental support to have a successful strategy.</li> <li>• Continue to highlight the crossover between EEx and HWB strategies; leadership needs to be genuine in their support of the strategy and communication to employees.</li> </ul>
<b>Measuring Success</b>	<p><b>Success is measured by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention/attrition rates (77%)</li> <li>• Employee health &amp; well-being (74%)</li> <li>• Employee satisfaction (67%)</li> <li>• Employee engagement scores (54%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of company support and culture scores are less measured as a success factor, 38% of organizations measure both factors.</li> </ul>



# APPENDIX 1 ► METHODS

A workgroup of five EEx Committee members completed a data analysis and in-depth review of survey results from 53 respondents to identify EEx key organizational findings and opportunities for further research and exploration. A workgroup of four EEx Committee members then conducted a final review of the survey data and developed detailed written findings around five EEx organizational approach considerations, including:

1. Defining EEx,
2. Strategic prioritization,
3. Organizational approach,
4. Measuring success, and
5. Maintaining a dynamic approach or EEx evolution.

## Next Steps

To help further our understanding of how workplace well-being and employee experience intersect, the current Employee Experience Study Committee will begin conducting video case study interviews among selected employers that responded to the initial Employee Experience Survey, as well as other employers identified as taking a leadership role as it relates to EEx. Along with continuing to explore the key EEx focus areas from the initial survey, the committee also aims to highlight:

- Connections and interplay between HWB and EEx;
- Existing and promising employer EEx practices as examples to model;
- Guidance on integrated measurement and evaluation;
- Real world practical examples; and
- Evolution of EEx as a result of COVID-19, issues of racial equity/justice, and the future of work and health.

The video case studies will include up to 11 questions and last approximately 30 minutes. Each video case study will be attended by one HERO staff member and up to two employer representatives. The committee will publish recordings for HERO membership in the HERO Think Tank Library.

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