

Survey Highlights

The Road Ahead: Emerging Health Trends

Hewitt's Annual Health Care Survey

2008

Mapping the Road to Success

Hewitt's ninth annual employer health care survey, The Road Ahead—Emerging Health Trends 2008, continues our examination of the “roads” available to employers as they consider their role in the increasingly dysfunctional U.S. health care system. To our great surprise, this year's survey finds that employers have not backed away from their role in health and health care. In fact, they seem to be embracing it even more than in last year's survey.

A majority of survey respondents, 82 percent, reported that their organizations make “significant investments in longer term solutions that are aimed at improving the health and productivity of [their] workers.” And, 88 percent indicated they aim to continue making these kinds of investments over the next three to five years. These results compare with 63 percent of employers responding positively to a similar question in last year's survey.

U.S. employers clearly continue to be concerned about reducing health care costs, but also have moved toward a more direct role in driving the health and productivity of their workforce. Increasingly, health and productivity are seen as business issues as well as benefits issues as employers focus on health-related outcomes from their health care programs.

This year, survey respondents were asked questions in the following areas: Strategy and Planning, Promoting Employee Accountability, Improving the Health and Productivity of Employees, and Health System Management and Influences.

Results of the study demonstrate a shift in organizational mind-sets from health care as a cost that needs to be managed to health and productivity as a critical business investment. In short, employers are counting on this investment to translate into a strategic business advantage.

The survey findings include:

- Employers are beginning to acknowledge that cost-shifting and cost-cutting strategies alone will not maximize the value of their health care investments—in fact, cost-shifting to employees has virtually stalled.
- Employers seem to be in a year of reflection—adoption rates have slowed for many “silver bullet” solutions (e.g., consumer-driven health care), but employers are still considering many options for future implementation.
- With no easy answers, employers are beginning to use data mining techniques to help guide them to specific solutions for their population.
- There will be new ideas—value-based design, for example, shows strong interest. However, at the same time, employers are rolling up their sleeves to identify the health and health care needs of increasingly narrow segments of their populations, and to craft solutions that fit those segments.
- Measurement, particularly around health and productivity, is becoming a more urgent need as employers work to find and implement more sophisticated solutions.

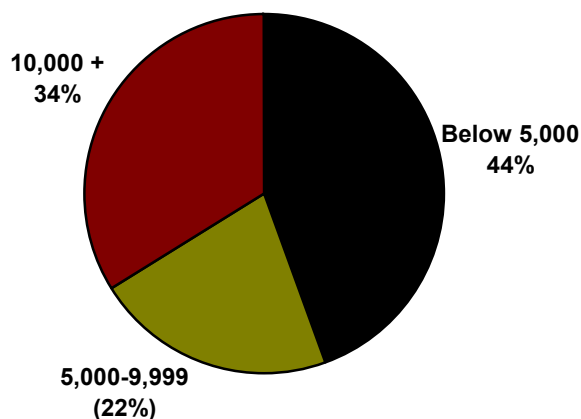
The full report will be released shortly—a copy may be requested from your local Hewitt consultant or by sending an e-mail to Maureen Mersch at maureen.mersch@hewitt.com.

About This Survey

For over two decades, Hewitt Associates’ health care survey has tracked employer health care practices, benefit programs, and efforts to provide and manage workforce health benefits. This report highlights employer-sponsored health care programs and other benefits including short- and long-term cost trends, strategy, and design features. In addition, it covers employers’ practices, views, and perspectives regarding managing health care costs, improving workforce health and productivity, and cost prevention—allowing us to identify trends, critical business issues, and opportunities as they develop.

This year, 508 executives responded to the survey. Survey participants collectively represent over eight million employees from a broad spectrum of industries. Their responses were collected in December 2007 and reflect their current health plan decisions as well as strategies for the next three to five years.

Number of U.S. Benefit-Eligible Employees



Industry Profile

