

2025 Workplace Vision Health Report

Supporting Better
Eye Health for
Today's Workforce

Presented by

vsp
vision care





The state of workforce eye health

Each year, VSP® Vision Care partners with research firm Workplace Intelligence to survey 800 HR leaders and 800 employees at U.S. organizations. In last year's survey,¹ we found that workers are spending more than 96 hours a week looking at screens, and half of employees said they struggle with at least one eye issue.

This year, we took our research a step further and examined how the prevalence of eye issues has shifted, to what extent digital eye strain is to blame, and whether other factors may be contributing to declining workforce eye health.

Our findings revealed not only a significant increase in eye issues, but also an increase in screen time. In addition, workers reported that environmental factors are negatively affecting their eye health, an important consideration even for companies whose employees are mostly desk-based.

We also uncovered a surprising lack of awareness among both leaders and employees on topics pertaining to eye health. This could be the result of widespread misinformation available on the internet, coupled with a lack of regular care from a professional vision care provider.

Finally, our research examined the role of vision benefits in supporting workforce eye health, well-being, retention, and more. Like last year, we found that high-quality vision coverage is highly desirable among today's employees, yet many aren't completely satisfied with their vision carrier and some don't have access to these benefits.

By offering or improving vision benefits, managing factors that are contributing to worsening eye health, and encouraging regular vision care, employers can play a key role in supporting the health of their employees and also foster their loyalty and productivity.

“Access to eye care is essential for clear vision and the detection and management of hundreds of systemic health conditions. Continuing to educate the public on the greater role that vision care plays in our overall health is a must to help employers ensure their employees are as engaged and productive as possible.”

– Dr. Valerie Sheety-Pilon
Vice President of Clinical and
Medical Affairs at VSP Vision Care



¹ VSP 2024 Workplace Vision Health Report: <https://go.bc.vsp.com/annual-report-2024>



In this report, we highlight key findings around:

- **Worsening Eye Health:** 63% of workers have at least one eye issue—up from 50% last year—a concerning trend that could have serious impacts on workforce productivity and well-being.
- **Digital Eye Strain:** Over two-thirds of employees struggle with digital eye strain, suggesting the need for greater employer intervention and support.
- **Environmental Impact on Eye Health:** The majority of employees experience eye discomfort due to environmental factors, but these impacts aren't only felt by those who work outdoors.
- **Eye Health Misinformation:** Both employees and HR leaders lack awareness around how certain behaviors, medications, and lifestyle choices can impact eye health, underscoring the importance of professional vision care.
- **Importance of Vision Benefits:** Offering vision coverage is key for workforce satisfaction and retention, and over 9 out of 10 respondents agree that vision care is just as important as other forms of healthcare.
- **Underutilization of Vision Benefits:** 1 out of 3 workers doesn't get an annual eye exam, pointing toward a need for increased employer communication about the importance of regular vision care.
- **Technology in Vision Care:** Most employees are open to having Artificial Intelligence (AI) support their eye health, highlighting a growing interest in technology-enabled vision care.





The impact of worsening eye health

Workforce eye issues are increasing, with serious impacts on work and well-being.

Nearly two-thirds of employees (63%) say they have at least one eye issue. This number is up from 50% last year, representing a concerning 26% increase.

The largest shifts were seen in the top three issues workers are struggling with, specifically: blurred or poor vision, dry or itchy eyes, and eye strain/fatigue.

In addition, 73% of employees report that they wear contact lenses or glasses, up from 67% last year. Research has shown that contact lens wearers are 12 times more likely to report dry eyes than people with normal vision, and glasses wearers are two times more likely to report dry eyes.² Thus, it's important to consider the potential issues that could stem from an increase in the number of workers who require vision correction.

63% of workers have at least one eye issue

41%	→	Blurred/poor vision
24%	→	Dry/itchy eyes
23%	→	Eye strain/fatigue
7%	→	Cataracts
2%	→	Glaucoma
2%	→	Diabetic eye disease
2%	→	Childhood or adolescent progressive myopia
1%	→	Macular degeneration

² Self-Reported Dry Eye Disease across Refractive Modalities. <https://iovs.arvojournals.org/article.aspx?articleid=2163728>



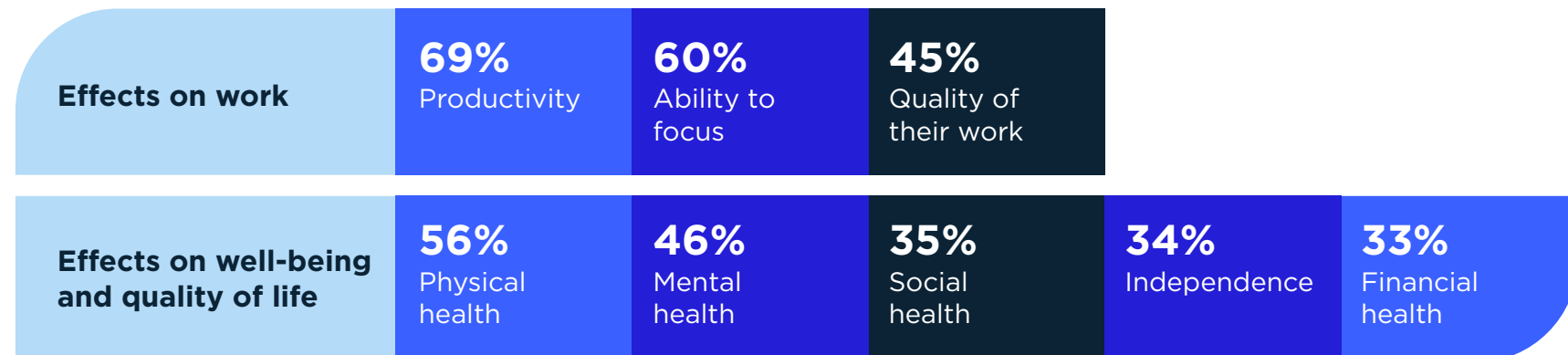
Similar to last year, many employees say their eye issues have worsened their productivity, focus, and the quality of their work.

In addition, 56% of workers say these issues have negatively affected their overall well-being and quality of life. This includes their physical health (e.g., fatigue, headaches), mental health (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression), independence (e.g., mobility, ability to care for themselves), and social health (e.g., loneliness, social isolation).

One out of three workers say their eye problems have negatively affected their financial health, noting that it's impacted their ability to make a living or burdened them with medical bills.

In the remainder of this report, we discuss several factors which may be contributing to the increasing prevalence of eye issues among today's workforce. We also suggest steps businesses can take to help address these factors and promote better eye health for their people.

Workers say their eye issues have negatively affected them, both personally and professionally:



How employers can support better eye health for today's workforce



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Help employees reduce digital eye strain

With screen time increasing, it's no surprise that 68% of workers are struggling with digital eye strain.

In a typical week, employees are spending 97 hours a week on screens—an increase of nearly an hour from 96.1 hours in our previous survey. While this may seem like only a small increase, in total this amounts to more than four full 24-hour days per week, or 210 days per year.

In a typical week, workers report getting **97 hours** of screen time.



34.2 hours
on a computer
for work



17.1 hours
on a computer
for personal use



22.9 hours
watching
television



22.8 hours
on a cell phone

Even when they're on vacation, workers say they're spending 7.7 hours a day looking at screens, including 36 minutes for work.

In addition, almost all employees (95%) admit they look at a screen at least a few nights a week before bed, with most (77%) reporting that they do so every night. Getting screen time late at night has been shown to impact both sleep quality and duration.³

70% of employees say excessive screen time is the #1 factor impacting their eye health.

³ The influence of blue light on sleep, performance and wellbeing in young adults: A systematic review.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9424753/>



Given these alarming numbers, it makes sense that 68% of workers say they struggle with digital eye strain. Notably, 17% experience digital eye strain 4 to 5 days a week and 10% struggle with it nearly every day (6 to 7 days a week).

Digital eye strain is caused by using computers, smartphones, and other electronic devices for extended periods of time. The symptoms of digital eye strain include dry or irritated eyes, headaches, blurred or double vision, and eye discomfort. These symptoms can be exacerbated by poor lighting, screen glare, improper viewing distances, poor posture, and other factors.⁴

According to our survey, digital eye strain is bad for both employees and companies. Nearly 6 out of 10 employees say it reduces their productivity and effectiveness at work. Around half say it affects their well-being and quality of life, makes them too tired to enjoy after-work activities, and causes them to be more irritable at work. Over one-quarter (27%) have taken time off from work due to digital eye strain.

68% of workers struggle with digital eye strain, and many say it negatively affects the following:

59%

Productivity and effectiveness at work

51%

Well-being and overall quality of life

50%

After-work activities

48%

Irritability at work



⁴ Computer Vision Syndrome. <https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/computer-vision-syndrome>

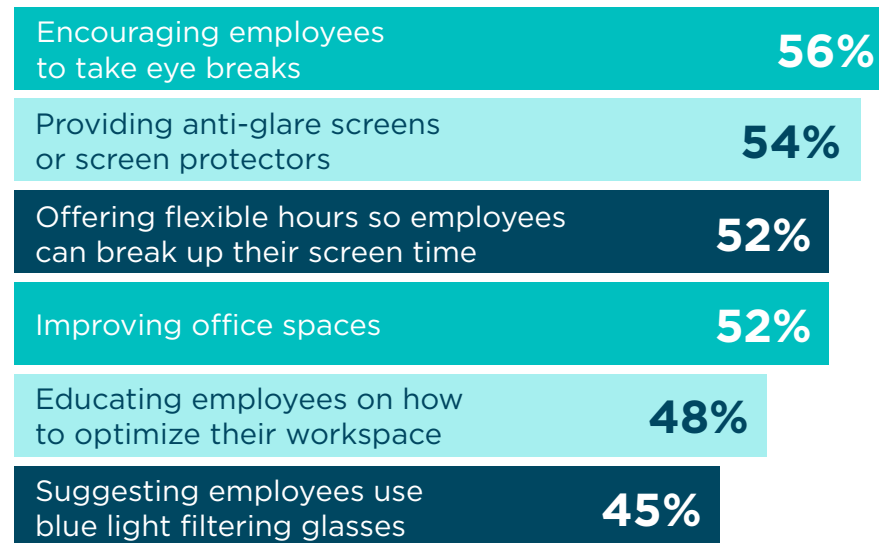


Despite the clear impacts on workforce well-being and productivity, 45% of employees feel their employer doesn't care whether digital eye strain affects them. And while 70% of workers admit they need to do a better job of managing their eye strain, 59% say their employer should do more.

According to our survey, however, HR leaders are largely aware of this issue and how it affects workers. The majority of leaders (87%) acknowledge that their desk-based employees struggle with digital eye strain, and nearly all (96%) believe it reduces workforce productivity and effectiveness.

In addition, 89% admit their organization should do more to help employees reduce digital eye strain. This makes sense, given that less than 6 out of 10 leaders say their company has taken steps such as encouraging employees to take eye breaks or providing anti-glare screen protectors.

Some companies are taking action to help workers reduce digital eye strain:





Create healthier office environments

Environmental factors can cause or worsen eye issues—even for people who work indoors.

Most people recognize that adverse environmental conditions can cause eye discomfort. In particular, air pollutants, extreme temperatures and humidity levels, excessive UV light exposure, and high winds can affect the eye's ability to lubricate and protect itself. This can lead to dry eye symptoms that include irritation, dryness, redness, and burning, to name a few.⁵

In our research, 83% of employees reported that they experience eye discomfort due to environmental factors. Nearly half (47%) say it's worsened over the past few years.

However, there's generally less awareness around the fact that people who work indoors can also experience eye discomfort. In fact, a wide range of studies supports associations between dry eye symptoms and indoor factors such as humidity and temperature, which can fluctuate depending on outdoor conditions.⁵

In addition, indoor exposure to reactive gases including ozone (O₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) has been associated with dry eye symptoms. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are found in many common cleaning products, can also react with NO₂ and lead to greater formation of ozone.⁵

Our research supported a link between suboptimal indoor conditions and workforce eye issues. Among employees who experience eye discomfort, 63% say it persists even when they're indoors, for example when they're in their company's offices, at home, or commuting/driving.

Over two-thirds (68%) note that this discomfort worsens their productivity and ability to focus. Perhaps more alarmingly, 43% say it caused them to call out sick from work last year, highlighting that this may be an important area of intervention for employers—whether their team members are office-based, home-based, or in the field.

63% of employees experience eye discomfort due to environmental factors—even when they're indoors.

⁵ Impact of Air Pollution and Weather on Dry Eye. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7699870/>



Indoor air quality can often be improved through simple interventions—and some employers are taking action.

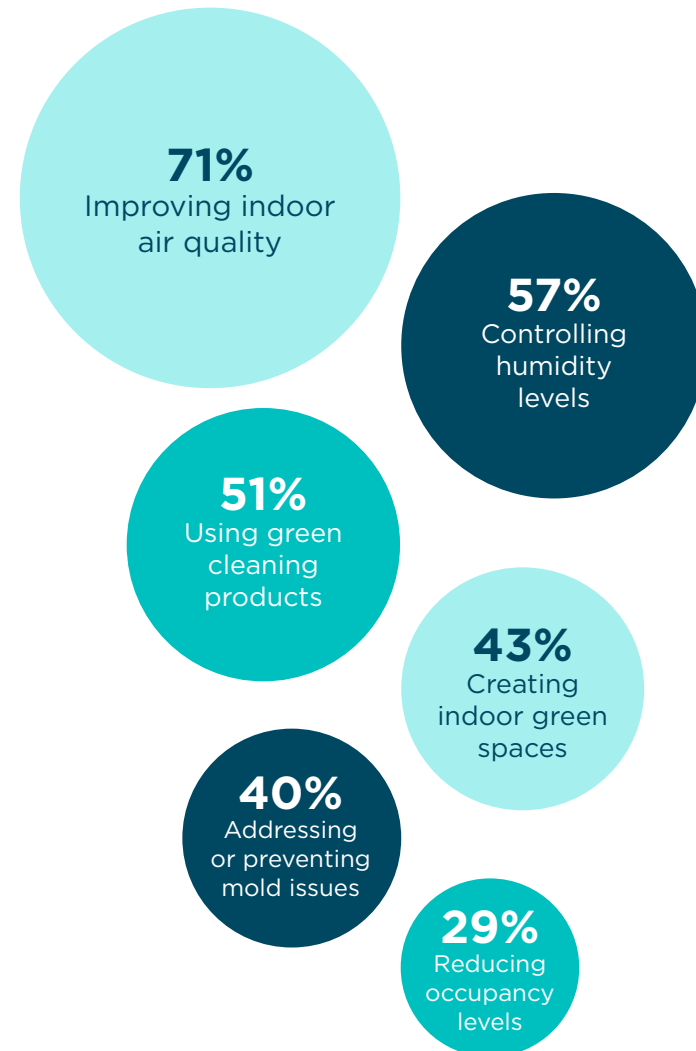
HR leaders are largely aware of the issue at-hand, with 92% agreeing that their desk-based employees experience eye discomfort due to environmental factors. Promisingly, nearly all HR leaders (96%) say their company is taking steps to address this concern.

For example, 71% say they're improving indoor air quality, and over half report that they've prioritized controlling humidity levels and using green cleaning products. However, somewhat lower percentages say that they're creating indoor green spaces, addressing or preventing mold issues, or reducing occupancy levels, underscoring the need for more action.

Furthermore, just 53% of leaders say their organization has policies in place allowing employees to work from home during extreme weather conditions, for example heat waves or periods of high pollution. Around one-third (35%) say it's decided on a case-by-case basis, and 11% say they don't have any such policies in place.



Businesses are taking the following steps to reduce the risk of health issues—including eye discomfort—that could be caused by indoor factors:





Combat eye health misinformation

Both employees and HR leaders lack awareness around how certain behaviors, medications, and lifestyle choices can impact eye health.

Many bad habits can negatively affect eye health. Surprisingly, however, HR leaders are less aware of these risky behaviors than employees. For example, many leaders believe it's okay to not wear sunglasses, buy contacts without a prescription, wear contacts overnight, or sleep with eye makeup on.

In addition, less than 1 out of 5 employees and 1 out of 3 HR leaders realize that many common medications can affect eye health.⁶ These include acne medicines, antidepressants, antihistamines, antibiotics, beta-blockers, birth control pills, cholesterol-lowering drugs, cortisone steroids, diuretics, NSAIDs, and weight-loss drugs.

People also lack awareness about the impact of substance use on eye health.⁷ While over half of both audiences recognize that cigarettes, cigars, and alcohol can adversely affect eye health, fewer respondents believe vape products, marijuana, and other recreational drugs can impact their vision.

HR leaders are more likely than employees to say the following risky eye behaviors are okay:

Not wearing sunglasses	77% of HR leaders	64% of employees
Buying contacts without a prescription	61% of HR leaders	27% of employees
Wearing contacts overnight	45% of HR leaders	28% of employees
Sleeping with eye makeup on	39% of HR leaders	31% of employees

⁶ Medications: Eye Problems and Vision Changes. <https://www.webmd.com/eye-health/features/medications-cause-vision-problems>

⁷ Illicit Drugs: Effects on Eye. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6886135/>



One reason for people’s lack of awareness about eye health could be the widespread prevalence of misinformation, especially on the internet.

For example, employees say they’ve received bad advice about eye health or vision care from social media (43%), websites (39%), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (24%). Notably, younger workers are much more likely to have received bad advice from these sources.

Despite these negative experiences, almost half (47%) of employees—including 68% of Gen Z—say they would seek out advice about eye health from these sources rather than see an eye doctor. And this isn’t because they prefer online sources over professional guidance. Rather, workers report that they would turn to the internet because they’re too busy to see an eye doctor, it’s too hard to schedule an appointment, and it’s too expensive.

Workers are getting bad advice about eye health from online sources—and Gen Z is most affected:

	All workers	Gen Z
Social media	43%	68%
Websites	39%	56%
AI tools	24%	38%





Professional vision care is key, especially because eye exams can play a crucial role in preventive healthcare.

It's critical that people see a vision care provider, especially when it comes to serious eye health concerns. Not only can an eye doctor provide more accurate information about eye health, but they can also detect symptoms of a wide variety of non-eye-related health conditions. In fact, signs of over 270 health conditions can be identified through an eye exam.⁸

In our survey, over 7 out of 10 employees and HR leaders correctly identified that an eye exam can uncover conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts. However, few were aware that signs of other health conditions can be detected, including diabetes (30%) and hypertension (25%), as well as high cholesterol, stroke, cancer, thyroid disease, multiple sclerosis, and arthritis.



Alarming, many of the people living with these conditions are unaware they have them. For example, 1 in 5 don't know they have diabetes and 84% don't know they have prediabetes.¹⁰

An eye exam is often the first point of detection for these chronic conditions. **In fact, 12% of the employees surveyed reported that they've had an eye doctor make them aware of at least one non-eye-related condition.**

While this number may seem small, the benefits of early diagnosis could be enormous. The most recent total estimated cost of diagnosed diabetes in the U.S. is \$412.9 billion, including \$306.6 billion in direct medical costs and \$106.3 billion in indirect costs associated with lost productivity at work, unemployment from chronic disability, and premature mortality.¹¹



122 million
Americans have
hypertension⁹



86 million
Americans have
high cholesterol⁹



38 million
Americans have
diabetes¹⁰



98 million
Americans have
prediabetes¹⁰

⁸ Full Picture of Eye Health. <https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/caring-for-your-eyes/full-picture-of-eye-health>

⁹ Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2023 Update. <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001123>

¹⁰ Diabetes in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/communication-resources/diabetes-statistics.html>

¹¹ Economic Costs of Diabetes in the U.S. in 2022. <https://diabetesjournals.org/care/article/47/1/26/153797/Economic-Costs-of-Diabetes-in-the-U-S-in-2022>



Add or improve vision benefits

Offering vision benefits can play an important role in employee well-being, job satisfaction, and retention.

Over 9 out of 10 employees and HR leaders agree that getting regular eye exams can improve overall health, boost productivity, and play a role in preventive healthcare. In addition, 93% of both audiences agree that vision care is just as important as other forms of healthcare. Employees and leaders also recognize that regular vision care can lower healthcare costs, both for workers (77% of employees agree) and companies (91% of HR leaders agree).

Offering vision benefits is key for workforce satisfaction and retention:

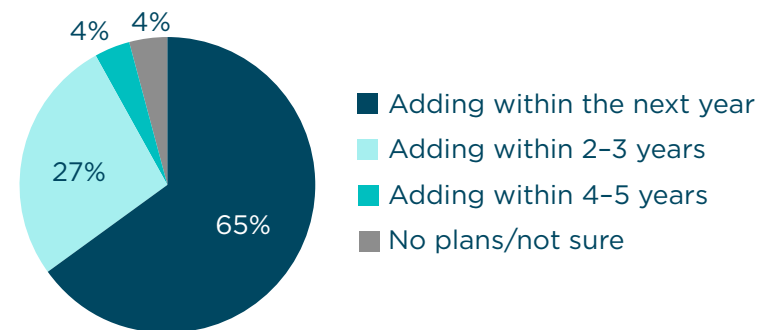
- 93%** of employees say vision care benefits are important to them.
- 77%** would be more likely to take a job at a company that offers vision benefits.
- 63%** are seriously considering finding a job that offers vision benefits*

*Among employees whose companies don't offer vision benefits



Of course, offering a vision plan is a critical first step toward realizing these benefits. Among HR leaders whose organizations don't offer vision insurance, nearly all (96%) say they plan to offer it, with 65% reporting that they'll add it within the next year.

At companies that don't offer vision coverage, 96% plan to add this benefit.





While adding a vision plan is a step in the right direction, it's important to recognize that not all benefits are created equally.

In fact, at organizations that offer vision benefits, 79% of employees and 95% of HR leaders say they are not completely satisfied with their vision insurance carrier.

This is likely one reason that nearly a third of employees (31%)—up from 25% last year—are seriously considering finding a job with a company that offers better vision benefits.

Workers and HR leaders say they'd like to see the following improvements from their vision carrier:

- 1** Faster and more convenient access to care
- 2** A better selection of plan options
- 3** Higher-quality doctors and facilities
- 4** More innovative product offerings
- 5** Increased customization
- 6** Lower costs
- 7** A larger network size

Customization is critical. When it comes to benefits customization—a top priority for employees—there are clear opportunities for improvement. Right now, less than 6 out of 10 HR leaders say employees can customize the types of vision coverage they have (58%), where they can use their vision benefits (56%), the types of coverage their family members have (50%), and how they pay for their vision coverage (49%). Just 28% say their staff can choose when they can enroll in their vision plan.

Cost-effective vision care is essential. With employees indicating that the #1 improvement they'd like to see is lower costs, a focus on making vision care more economical is paramount. Leaders also recognize the need for more cost-effective plans, with most reporting that the cost of their 2025 vision plan increased for both their company (78%) and their employees (71%).





Encourage regular vision care

Although employees agree on the importance of regular vision care, some aren't using their benefits.

HR leaders estimate that 72% of their workforce is signed up for their company's vision insurance plan. However, they say just 63% of enrolled employees actually used their vision benefits last year, either for themselves or a family member.

This aligns with what employees reported as well: just 66% say they get an eye exam every year. Although this number is up from 55% last year—a notable increase—there's clearly still room for improvement.

There's also room for improvement when it comes to how often people are getting care for their dependents. It's promising that 73% of employees get annual eye exams for their children and 65% get exams for their dependent parents or relatives. However, ideally these numbers should be closer to 100%, given that many common eye issues first develop during childhood/adolescence¹² and then may worsen later in life.¹³



1 out of 3 workers doesn't get an annual eye exam, and some are skipping regular vision care for their dependents.

66% of employees get an annual eye exam

73% get annual exams for their dependent children*

65% get annual exams for their dependent parents/relatives*

*Among those who have dependent children or parents/relatives

¹² Childhood Eye Diseases and Conditions. <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/common-childhood-diseases-conditions>

¹³ Aging and Your Eyes. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/vision-and-vision-loss/aging-and-your-eyes>



Here's why workers aren't getting regular vision care—and how employers can help.

Some workers say they aren't getting annual eye exams simply because they're too busy or it's too expensive. Others report that this is because they believe going every few years is fine (30%), or they think they don't need to because they have good vision (29%).

A lack of employer communication around the importance of regular vision care could be part of the problem. Around two-thirds (67%) of employers communicate with employees about their vision benefits just two times a year or less, and 85% admit they need to communicate more with employees about their coverage. What's perhaps most telling, however, is the fact that 26% of employees don't know the name of their company's vision care carrier.

Beyond simply communicating more, employers can also offer incentives to encourage workers to seek out regular vision care. Right now, 76% offer paid time off for preventive care (which includes vision care), 73% match contributions to HSAs or FSAs, and 51% offer gift cards or coupons for eye exams, glasses, or contact lenses. Notably, all of these numbers increased since last year, indicating that a growing number of organizations are committed to improving workforce eye health.

Employee sentiments reflect a need for more communication and support:



58% wish their employer would communicate more about their vision benefits.



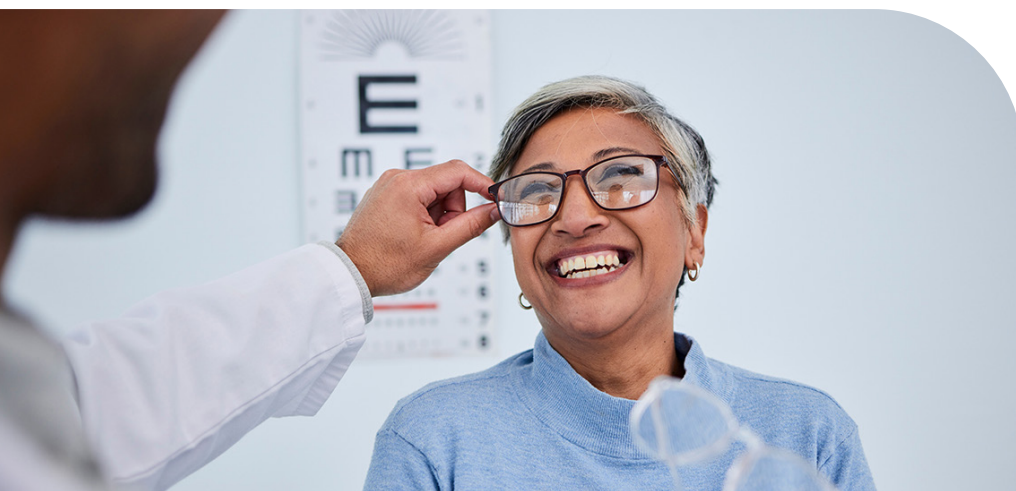
52% aren't sure they're making the most of their vision benefits.



34% say their vision benefits are complex and difficult to navigate.



26% don't know the name of their company's vision care carrier.





Focus on the future of vision care



Many workers are interested in how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technology-based solutions can support their eye health.

Nearly two-thirds of employees (63%) already own or would consider purchasing smart eyewear—up from 54% last year. Smart eyewear includes glasses that integrate augmented reality displays or health monitoring features. An even higher number of workers own or are interested in blue light filtering lenses (72%), which defend against light that is emitted from screens and may disrupt sleep patterns.¹⁴

And despite some of the challenges with Artificial Intelligence tools not always providing accurate information, workers are still quite open to having AI support their eye health. For example, over 2 out of 3 say they'd be open to having AI help them understand vision care benefits (75%), educate them on an eye condition (74%), help them select a vision plan (69%), or personalize eye health content (68%).

However, workers are less convinced about having Artificial Intelligence involved in actual procedures. Still, almost half would be willing to have AI conduct an eye exam (47%) or diagnose an eye condition (47%), and 32% would be open to having eye surgery performed by AI.

Remarkably, 26% of employees—including 34% of Gen Z—would prefer for Artificial Intelligence to handle all aspects of their vision care. Beyond potentially offering a better vision care experience, incorporating AI could also increase care-seeking behaviors among today's workforce. In fact, nearly a third (32%) of employees say they'd be more likely to get regular vision care if their provider used AI.

For companies and vision carriers alike, these findings should provide a strong impetus for more growth and experimentation in this area. At the same time, it's important that employers proceed with caution and a healthy dose of skepticism. Most AI technologies that support patient care are still in their infancy and should be viewed as tools that can assist—but not replace—a qualified vision care provider.

¹⁴ The influence of blue light on sleep, performance and wellbeing in young adults: A systematic review. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9424753/>



Our call to employers

The research findings highlighted in this report reveal a concerning trend toward worsening eye health among today's employees.

Employers have an opportunity to rise to the occasion and step up their support for their people. By taking action to address digital eye strain, improve their office environment, encourage regular vision care, and offer better benefits, they will reap the benefits of a healthier, more satisfied, and more productive workforce.

“Leaders have a responsibility to pave the way to care, providers, and resources that preserve the well-being of each and every employee. When you consider the importance of our vision and its link to our health and day-to-day work, it’s imperative that there’s a collective effort to support better workplace health through exceptional vision care.”

– Kristi Cappelletti-Matthews
Chief Human Resources Officer at VSP Vision™





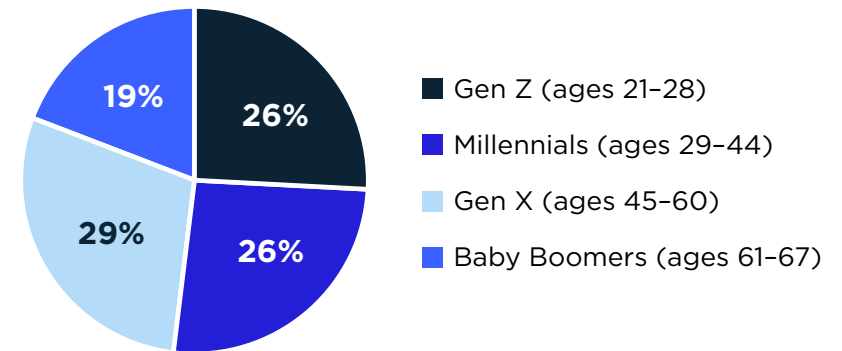
Research methodology

Research findings are based on a survey conducted by Workplace Intelligence and VSP between September 25 – October 1, 2024. The survey audience included 800 human resource / employee benefit leaders and 800 employees who were working full-time, between the ages of 18 – 67 years old, and living in the U.S.

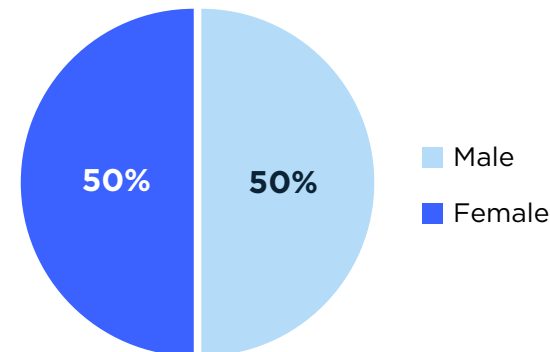
Employees who took part in the survey were required to be using their employer's medical plan and needed to be at least somewhat involved in making healthcare decisions for their household. Employees were also required to be using a computer or laptop for their work at least "sometimes." Similarly, HR leaders had to be working at an organization where at least some non-management employees require a computer for their work.

The survey included an even mix of male and female employees, and respondents from four generations were evenly represented. The survey also sampled a mix of employees with hybrid, remote, and on-site work arrangements.

Employees - Age



Employees - Gender





About the research sponsors



About VSP Vision Care

Celebrating 70 years in business, VSP was founded in 1955 as the first not-for-profit eye health company. At VSP Vision Care, we believe in providing vision care that goes beyond just correcting eyesight. We're dedicated to offering comprehensive eye care solutions that enhance not only our members' vision but also their overall well-being. As a leading vision insurance provider, we aim to foster eye care connections for a lifetime of well-being.

Interested in reviewing your benefits? We want to help.

Get in Touch



About Workplace Intelligence

Workplace Intelligence is an award-winning thought leadership and research agency focused on the world of work. We help companies, and their executives, tell their workplace story in a meaningful, relevant, and impactful way using primary data, insights, and interviews. For more information go to our website and subscribe to our Insider newsletter.