

IBI's 2022 Research Priorities Include Mental Health, Wellbeing, Benefit Design and More



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2022: The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge almost every aspect of how we work and do business. It has removed the boundaries between office and home life, shifted working arrangements and programs online, and greatly altered the kind of support employees need to stay healthy and engaged. Employers continue to struggle with re-defining old norms, attracting, and retaining happy healthy workers, and controlling costs.

Throughout this evolving landscape, IBI remains dedicated in our efforts to align our research, programs, and tools with the information needs of our members. I am excited to announce our research agenda for 2022. We directly surveyed our more than 1,300 Supplier and Employer members to understand their interests, concerns, and informational gaps. This process ensures our research meets our members needs and brings greater value to their membership. Our 2022 priorities include:

Priority 1: Supporting Mental Health

Mental health continues to be top of mind, as anxiety and depression among employees increased and remains high during the pandemic. Last year, IBI [analyzed](#) pre-pandemic, 2020 and preliminary 2021 data on mental health, with employer guidance focused on what changes were made during the pandemic. This year, we will be focusing on emerging strategies employers are undertaking to support their staff's mental health. We will look further into recent data, and analyze behavioral health claims in more detail, including demographics such as gender and location. This study also aims to understand how employers are improving access to mental health services, what workplace practices have been incorporated (such as leadership training), and how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is considered as employers continue to tackle this crisis.

Priority 2: Redesigning Health and Wellbeing for a Remote/Hybrid Workforce

The number of employees working fully remotely will [nearly double](#) from pre-pandemic levels by 2025 with an increase in a partially remote workforce as well. Companies are now having to redefine what health and wellness programs and engagement looks like to meet their employees and their family's unique needs. This study will take a deep dive into the redesign of health and wellness programs to support a remote/hybrid workforce by analyzing how employers will measure success, including analyzing employee engagement and retention/attraction. Looking beyond the pandemic, we will also

focus on what elements of benefit design might change long-term, with special attention paid to DE&I, ensuring that benefit plans reach all employees.

Priority 3: Evaluating Benefit Design and Workplace Policy

Do employers understand the potential gaps in their benefit design strategy in their employees' eyes? Are employers using the right data, tools, and processes to communicate with their employees to better understand their needs? How will employers design curated, personalized benefits without breaking the bank? We strive to find answers to these tough questions, as employers rethink their benefits and policies to attract and retain talent and sustain a happier, healthier, productive workforce. This study will determine what changes employers have made or are contemplating during the pandemic, and which long-term strategies will be here to stay.

Priority 4: The Productivity Costs of COVID-19

This study will rely on expanding our 2021 benchmarking database to examine COVID-19 across many variables. Our 2021 benchmarking could then examine COVID-19 diagnoses across STD and LTD and determine productivity costs, such as lost workdays and cost of leave. Demographics would be expanded on to analyze and compare different factors such as sex, age, race, and income. Additionally, this study will analyze different reasons for leave potentially affected by the pandemic, such as caregiving in FMLA, and compare to previous years.

Priority 5: Effects of Delayed Care

More than half of households that delayed care of a serious condition due to the pandemic [reported](#) negative health effects. Additionally, adults and their families are skipping or delaying preventive care, elective surgeries, and/or dental care. This study will examine the type of care still being delayed and will analyze different demographic factors of the patients who are delaying care. We will study the impacts to health and productivity for employees with certain chronic conditions who delayed care during the pandemic. In addition, we will determine the potential cost of delayed care, such as preventive care, chronic conditions including cancer, medication adherence, etc., from a productivity perspective. We will also poll employers for current best practices to mitigate the long-term costs of this challenge.

Please look for updates on our research agenda throughout the year. Be well,

Kelly