

Investing in Employee Financial Health

The Problem

Employees confront an increased individual responsibility for their financial security. Because of systemic changes in the pension system, in financial markets, and in the education system as well, employees are faced with financial decisions with a long-lasting impact. According to research from the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center (GFLEC), there is an acute need to **invest in employee financial health**.

Many working-age Americans (age 25-60) struggle with their finances:

- 36% are **financially fragile**, i.e., unable to handle an unexpected shock.
- 57% have **not** tried to figure out how much they need **to save for retirement**.
- 48% feel they have **too much debt**.
- 46% are **not** satisfied with their **financial situation**.

Financial difficulties can be a major source of stress for employees. Our 2019 Personal Finance Index reports that one-third of working-age Americans state that debt and debt payments prevent them from adequately addressing other financial priorities. Further, GFLEC's research shows that several years after the financial crisis, financial fragility is still pervasive in the U.S. economy, even among those with middle and high income. And financial distress has **long-term consequences**, as financially fragile households are much less likely to plan for retirement.

The Solution

There is a growing demand for financial wellness programs and the most impactful way to reach the largest share of the adult population is through the workplace.

Effective workplace financial wellness programs should take a holistic approach to financial health:

- **Consider starting with a financial check-up.** Similar to how individuals visit their doctor for a regular check-up, employers can help their employees assess their financial health.
- **Focus on an integrated approach.** Our data shows that many employees carry many types of debt; programs should help employees manage both assets and debt. They should also help employees build not only long-term savings but also short-term savings.
- **Make it personalized.** Every employee has specific needs and financial circumstances. The more tailored the financial wellness program, the more effective it is.
- **Make it simple.** Our research shows that simple language and a step-by-step action plan is critically important to improve engagement and behavioral change.



Director Lusardi presented this information at the Fortune CEO Initiative meeting in New York. For GFLEC's workplace financial wellness programs visit: www.gflec.org/initiatives/workplace-financial-wellness