

HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR 2021

**SURVEY RESULTS FROM IBI
MEMBERS**

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SUMMARY FINDINGS

- Representatives from nearly 100 member companies ranked research topics from three major categories that they would find most valuable to promote health and productivity in their business in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Among 24 topics identified, respondents showed overwhelming interest in mental health, behavioral health and substance use issues. Also ranked highly were the value of telehealth and digital health solutions; and measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs.
- Additional topics rated of high interest included plan designs that address financial, social and structural barriers to care; and helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children.
- The results of this member survey provide guidance for IBI's research and analytics agenda in 2021. IBI will begin working with its Research Committee representatives in Q1 2021 to establish Issue Groups for the three top priority projects. Group members will advise on specific research questions, help identify potential data sources, and serve as subject matter experts to provide employer guidance in the final research products. Other priority topics will be considered as resources and member interests permit.

BACKGROUND

IBI's research agenda is developed annually to help show the link between healthy employees and their value to business in improved productivity.

In order to provide the most relevant research possible, IBI surveyed members to determine which research topics they would find most valuable to their organization's health and productivity efforts. Initially, a smaller group of Stakeholder and Charter members were asked open-ended questions to determine topic themes. These themes were developed and grouped into three major categories, with a strong emphasis on the ongoing and emerging challenges of managing workforce health and productivity in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Topic areas and items included in the survey

TOPIC AREA	SURVEY ITEM	ITEM LABEL (SHORTENED)
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)	mental/behavioral/SUD
	Maintaining care management for chronic conditions and comorbidities	chronic care management
	The implications of postponed screenings and preventive care	delayed care
	Helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children	balancing caregiving
	Encouraging employees to adopt and maintain healthy habits	healthy habits
	Financial wellbeing	financial wellbeing
BENEFIT DESIGN	Understanding the value of specialty, biologic, and biosimilar pharmaceuticals	pharmaceuticals value
	The role for voluntary benefits (e.g., critical illness, hospital indemnity)	voluntary benefits
	Plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care	erasing care barriers
	Employees' perspectives, preferences, values when it comes to health and well-being programs	wellness programs
	The value of telehealth and digital health solutions	telehealth
	Helping employees become smarter health care consumers	health care consumers
	Ancillary benefits (Dental, Vision, Life, Disability) as part of a health benefits strategy	ancillary benefits

TOPIC AREA	SURVEY ITEM	ITEM LABEL (SHORTENED)
ABSENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY	Leave policies for employees and family members impacted by COVID-19 (including school and business shut-downs)	COVID leave
	Helping work-from-home employees stay engaged	WFH employees
	The productivity impact of worksite COVID safety policies	COVID workplace safety
	Policies that address social and structural barriers to work (such as transportation, flexible scheduling)	barriers to work
	Measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs	measuring outcomes
	Evaluating leave and accommodation requests	leave requests
	Productivity implications of expanded parental and family leave laws	leave laws
	The impact of leave policies on employee recruitment, engagement, retention, satisfaction or well-being	leave policies
	Preparing for leaves due to delayed or postponed treatments	preparing for leaves
	Designing leave benefits that meet the needs of a multi-generational workforce	multi-generational leaves
	Administering Workers' Compensation claims for work-from-home employees	WC for WFH employees

ANALYTIC APPROACH

The survey was administered to representatives from IBI's employer, Charter, and Stakeholder supplier member organizations.¹ Respondents were asked to select the two most valuable topics in each area, for a total of six topics. The frequency of votes cast for each category were recorded. Out of each respondents' top six selected topics, they then ranked each from most to least valuable. To determine which topics had the most interest, we used three methods of analysis. First, we determined which topics received the most votes, overall. Then we determined which received the most first choice rankings. Finally, we applied a score to the rank given each topic, and further stratified by supplier and employer members.

¹ IBI considers organizations to be suppliers if they provide health and productivity products or services—such as healthcare benefits; disability insurance; return-to-work, absence, wellness, well-being, or care management programs; third-party benefits administration, consulting, or brokerage services; or medical and pharmaceutical products—to other organizations or payers as part of their business operations. Organizations that manage only the health and productivity of their own employees (or should do so, with or without utilizing suppliers' products and services) are considered employer members. Charter supplier members have representation on IBI's Research Committee. Stakeholder supplier members have representation on IBI's Board of Directors and Research Committee.

FINDINGS

Responses were categorized by category, first choice rank, any rank among the top six, and scored overall and by whether a respondent was a supplier or employer member.

Figure 1: Mental health was chosen with greater frequency than any other topic

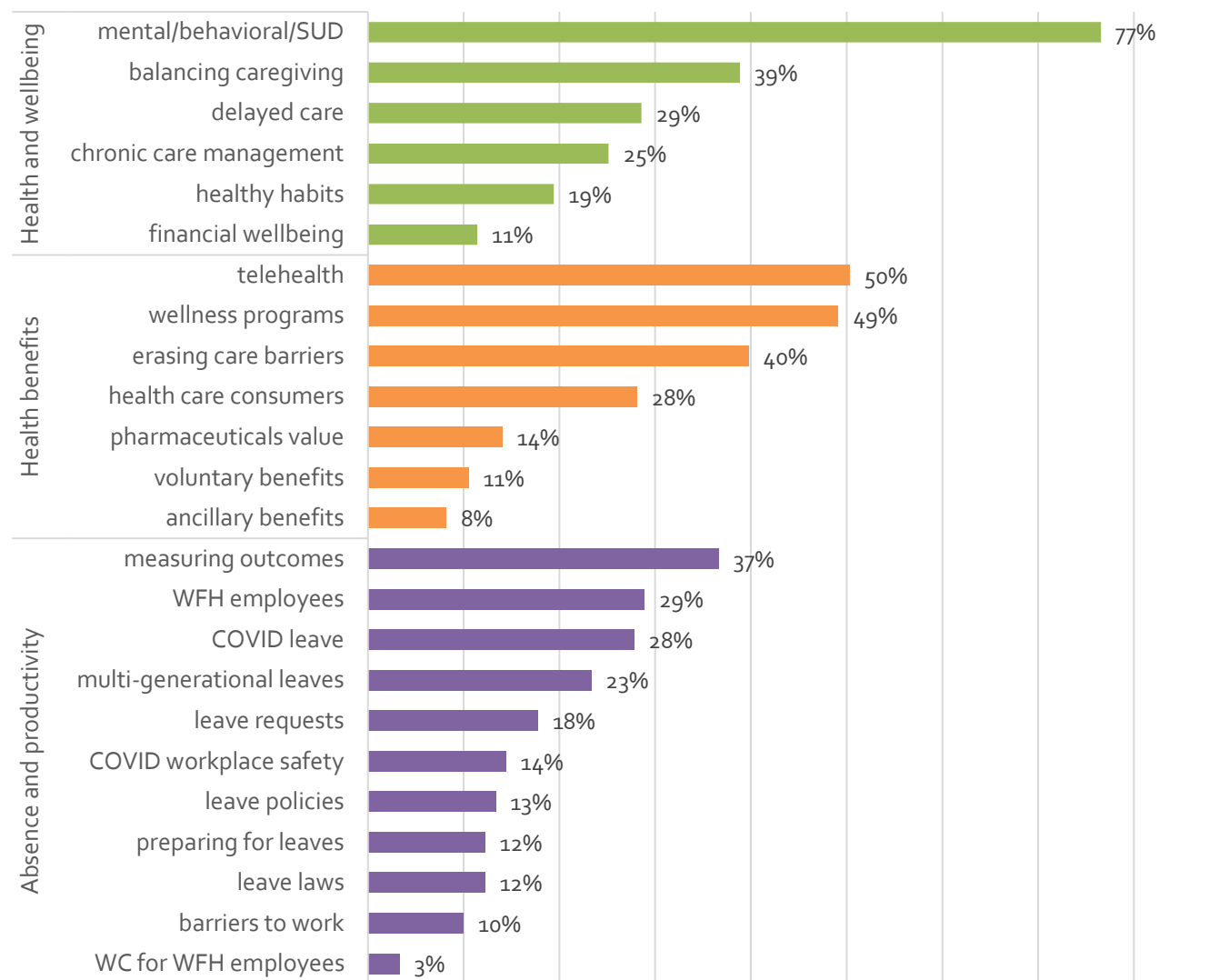


Figure 1 shows that within the category of health and well-being, 77% of respondents selected “mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)” as the topic that would be most valuable to employers’

efforts to manage issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining choices within this category were selected by fewer than 40% of respondents.

In the category of health benefits, “the value of telehealth and digital health solutions” and “employees’ perspectives, preferences, values when it comes to health and well-being programs” both were selected by about half of respondents, and “plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care” was selected by 40% of respondents.

In absence and productivity, no single topic was selected by more than 50% of respondents. The three most frequently chosen topics were “measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs,” “helping work-from-home employees stay engaged” and “leave policies for employees and family members impacted by COVID-19 (including school and business shut-downs)” which were selected by 37%, 29% and 28% respondents, respectively.

Figure 2: The highest ranked choices and top two choices from each category had inconsistent overlap

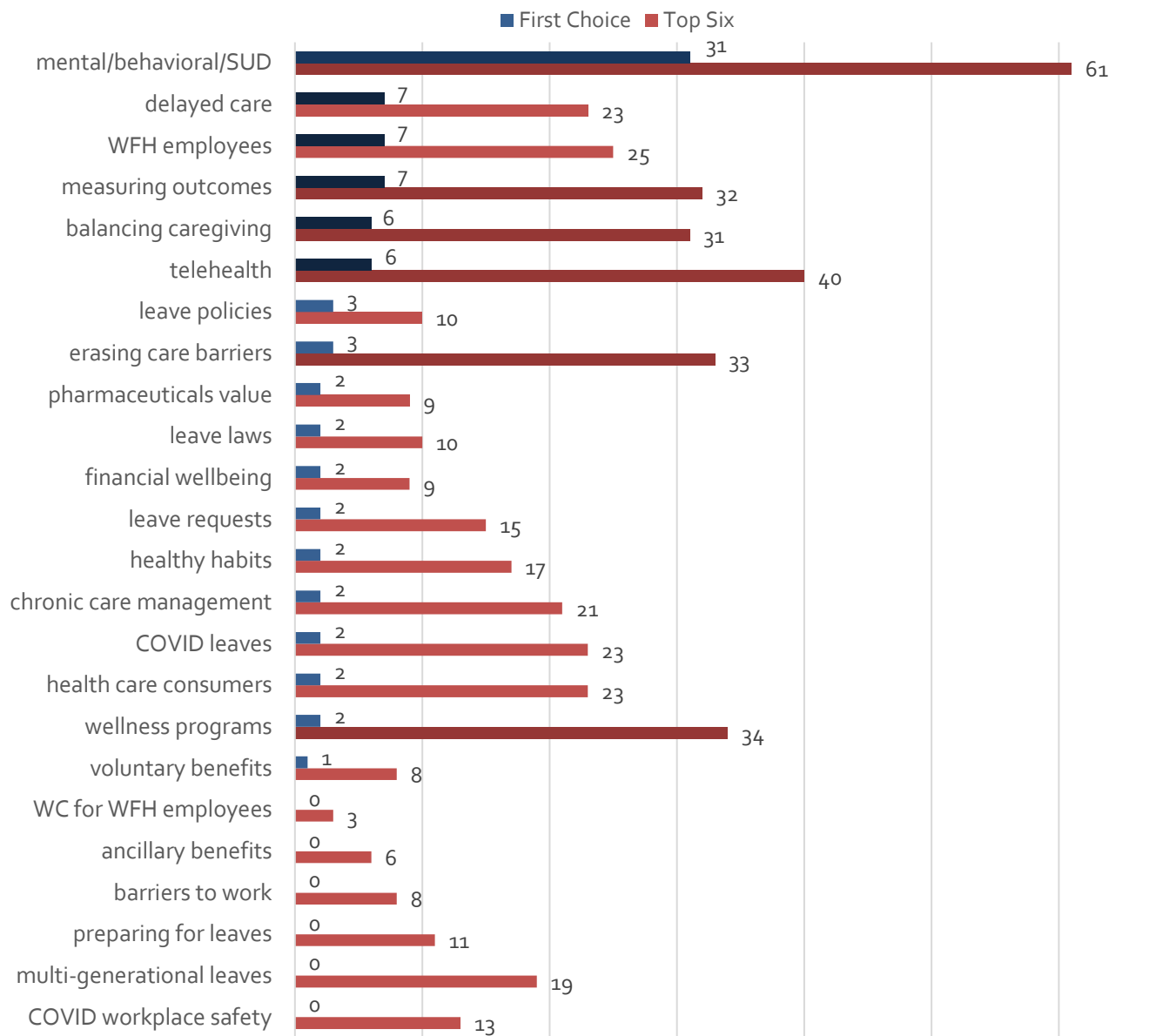


Figure 2 shows that when given the opportunity to rank their top choice of the six selected topics of interest, the most common first choice pick was for “mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)” —chosen as the top item by 31 out of 89 respondents (or 35%). The next three items were each chosen as the first choice seven times: “measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs,” “helping work-from-home employees stay engaged” and “the implications of postponed screenings and preventive care.” The next most frequently selected as the top choice were “the value of telehealth and digital health solutions” and “helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children,” each selected as the top choice six times.

Of the top 6 first choice ranked topics, four were also in the top 6 topics chosen, overall – regardless of rank. Among all topics, the most frequently chosen was also the top ranked choice: “mental, behavioral health and substance abuse issues” was ranked in the top 6 by 61 out of 89 respondents (68%). The second most frequently selected was “the value of telehealth and digital health solutions,” which was also chosen in the top 6 by first choice rank. The third most frequently chosen were “employees’ perspectives, preferences, values when it comes to health and well-being programs” and “plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care” – which were only selected as the top choice by two and three respondents, respectively. The next two topics selected overall were “measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs” and “helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children” which were ranked first seven and six times, respectively.

Figure 3: Employers and suppliers had some differences in priorities for IBI's research

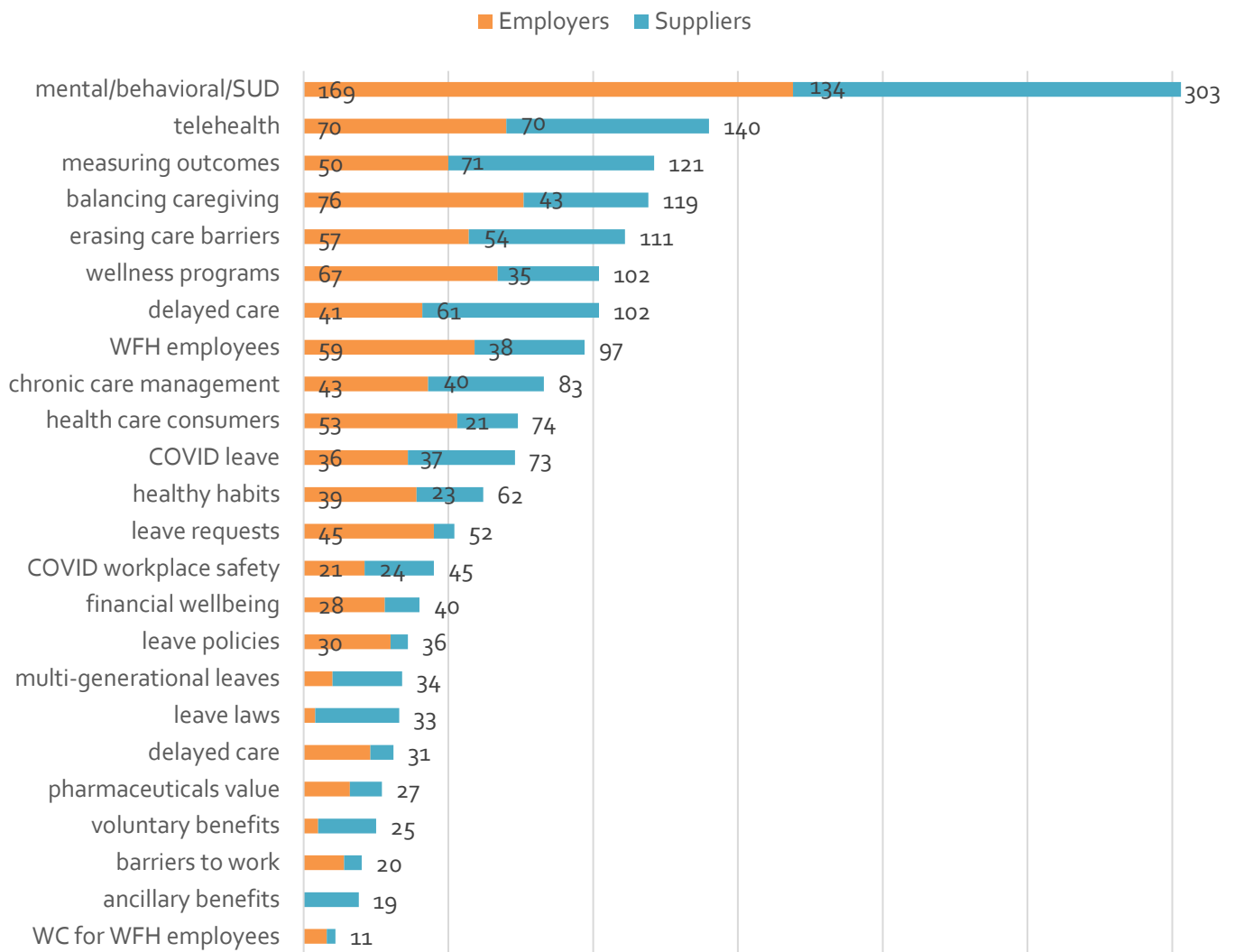


Figure 3 shows the overall rank order of respondents' choices when we apply scores based on the number of times an item was chosen as most important, second most important, and so on. When we score the ranked choices, the top priorities are "mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)," "the value of telehealth and digital health solutions," "measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs," "helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children" and "plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care."

However, there are some differences between employers' and suppliers' responses. Employers' top topics, when scored by rank, are "mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)," "helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children," "the value of telehealth and digital health solutions," "employees' perspectives, preferences, values when it comes to health and well-being programs," "helping work-from-home employees stay engaged," "plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care" and "measuring the total impact of

workplace health and productivity programs.” The top five overall categories were therefore found in the employers’ first, second, third, sixth and seventh topics.

Suppliers also ranked “mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD)” first. They ranked “measuring the total impact of workplace health and productivity programs” second, which employers’ ranked seventh. Like employers, suppliers also ranked “the value of telehealth and digital health solutions” third. Their fourth ranking topic was “the implications of postponed screenings and preventive care. Fifth was “plan designs that address financial, social, and structural barriers to care,” compared with employers’ sixth place ranking. Suppliers ranked “helping employees balance work responsibilities with providing care for elderly or ill family members, or young children” sixth, in contrast with employers’ second place ranking.

DISCUSSION

The results of this member survey provide guidance for IBI's research and analytics agenda in 2021. Members clearly expressed a preference for work focused on the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on workforce mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorders (SUD). Topics for consideration will focus predominately on mental health and productivity, and will include the pandemic's effect, how this differed by location of work (work from home or on-site), whether their employer offered paid leave and whether they took advantage of paid leave policies, and how mental health and productivity were impacted by health behavior (i.e., physical activity, smoking).

Projects on the effectiveness, delivery, and accessibility of telehealth and digital health solutions will also be a priority for IBI in 2021, as will the measurement and availability of workplace programs designed to promote workforce health and productivity during the pandemic and the recovery. Where possible, we will also make every effort to incorporate other high-value topics into the priority projects, with particular attention to the health and productivity challenges facing caregivers, and addressing financial, social, and structural barriers to care. Other priority topics will be considered as resources and member interests permit.

IBI will begin working with its Research Committee representatives in Q1 2021 to establish Issue Groups that will advise on specific research questions, help identify potential data sources, and serve as subject matter experts to provide employer guidance in the final research products.

For information on how your organization can participate in these efforts, please contact Brian Gifford, Ph.D., Director of Research and Analytics at bgifford@ibiweb.org.

APPENDIX

Relevant characteristics of respondents' industries are reported below. Respondents are in both supplier and employer industries – of employers, most respondents come from finance and insurance, followed by educational services, manufacturing and utilities. Other categories include government, IT-CCAMSS, telecommunications, higher education, non-profit and global development. In employer industries, more than one-third of respondents are responsible for employee benefits, and nearly half of respondents work for employers with at least 10,000 employees.

Figure 4: Respondents' industry

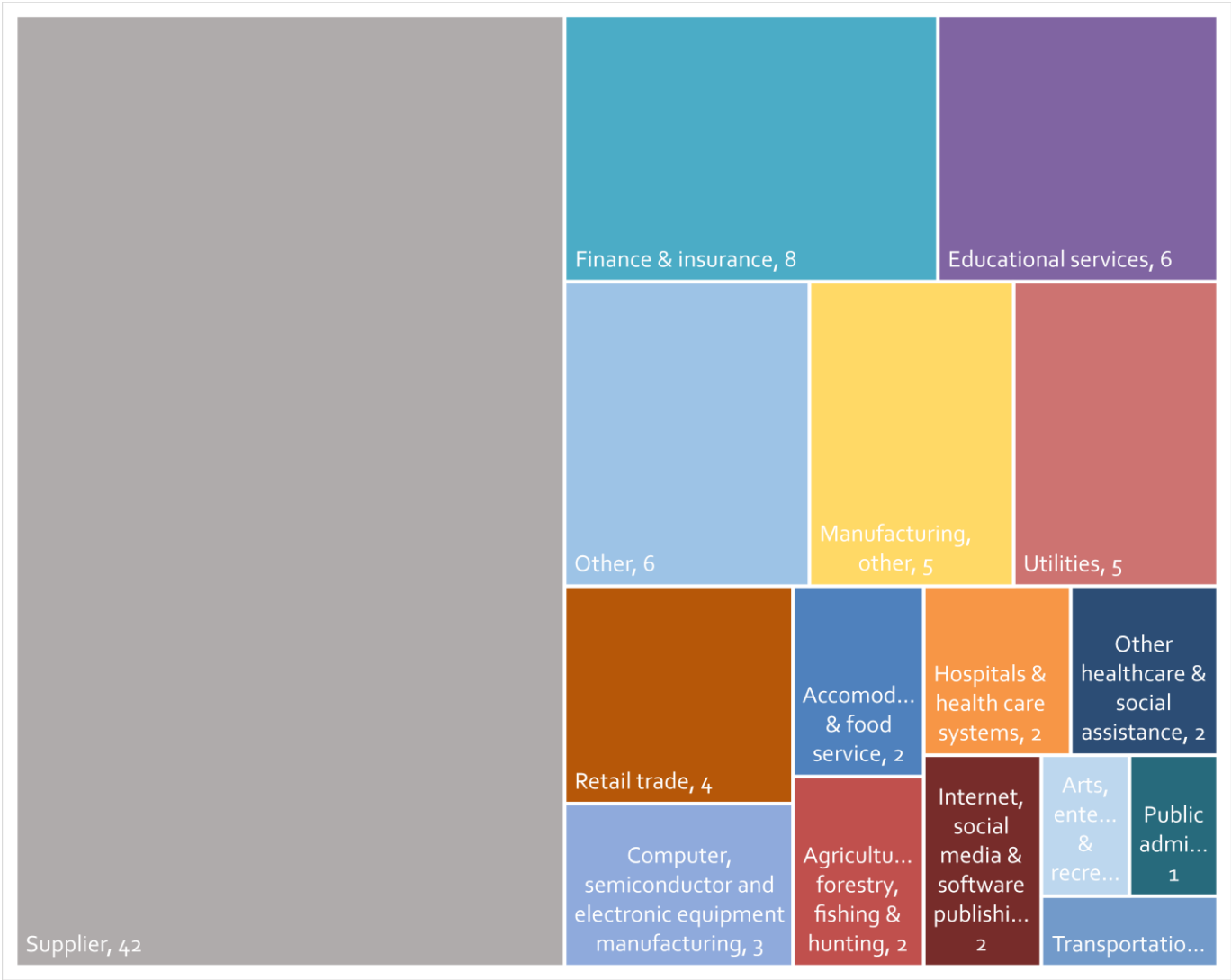


Figure 5: Respondents' functions (more than one may apply)—Employer companies only

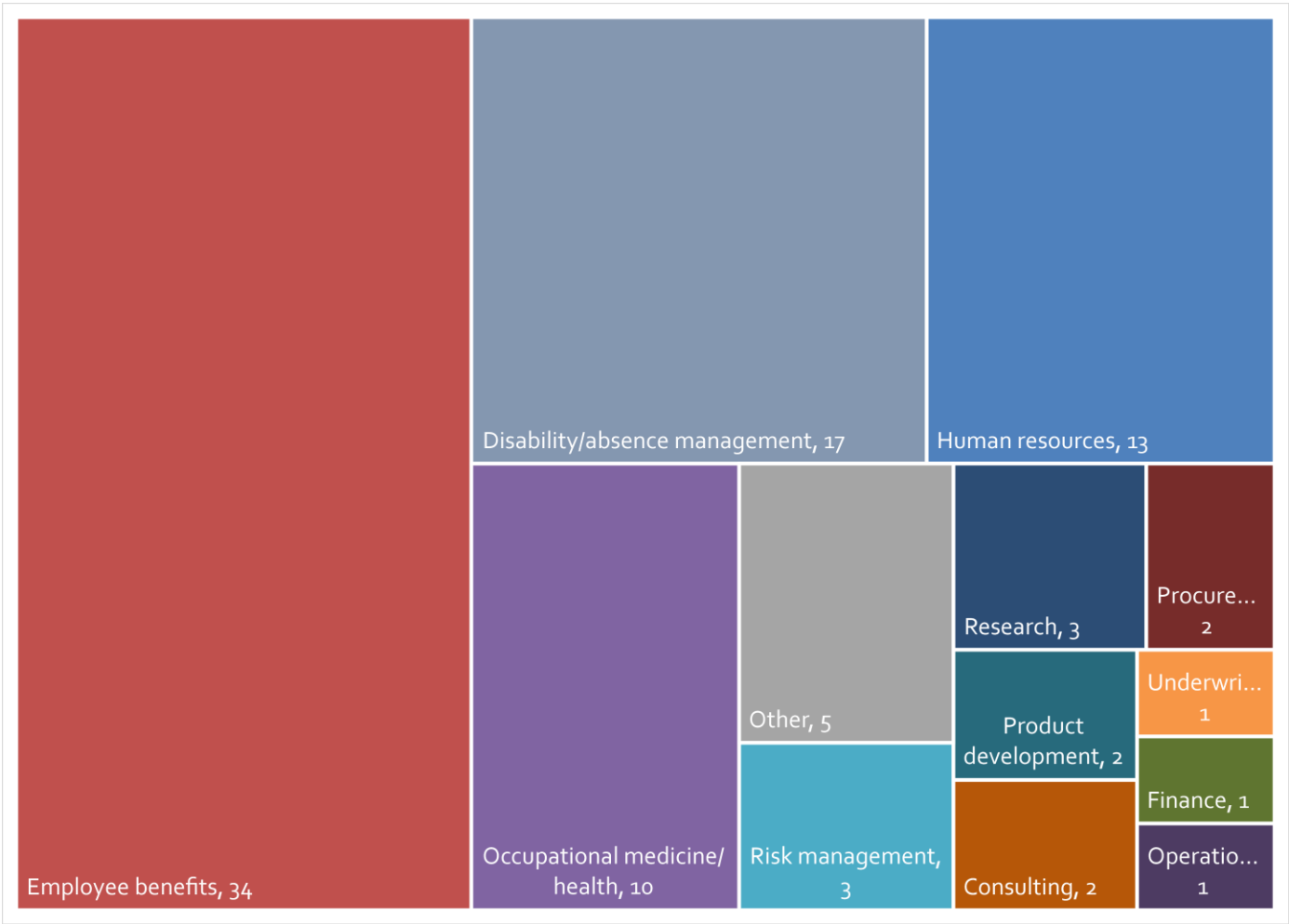


Figure 6: Size of respondents' employer—Employer companies only

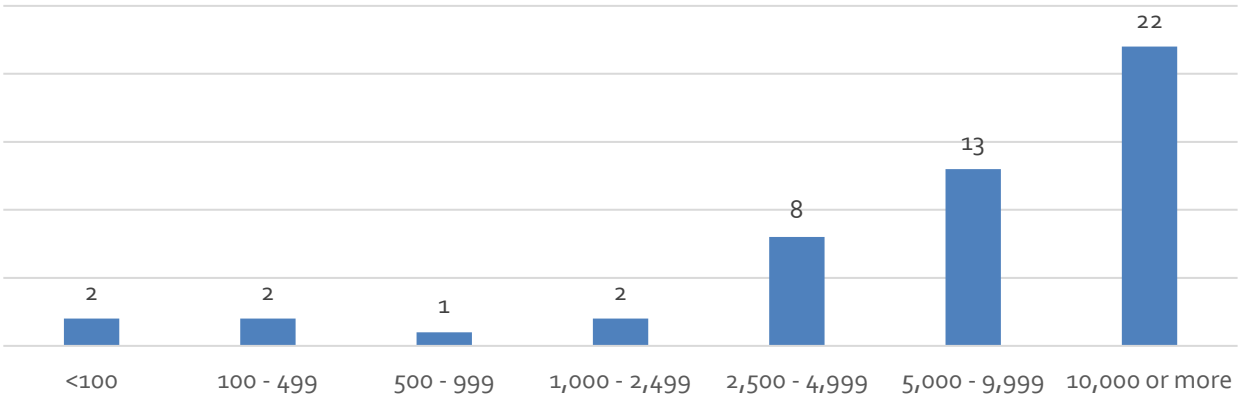
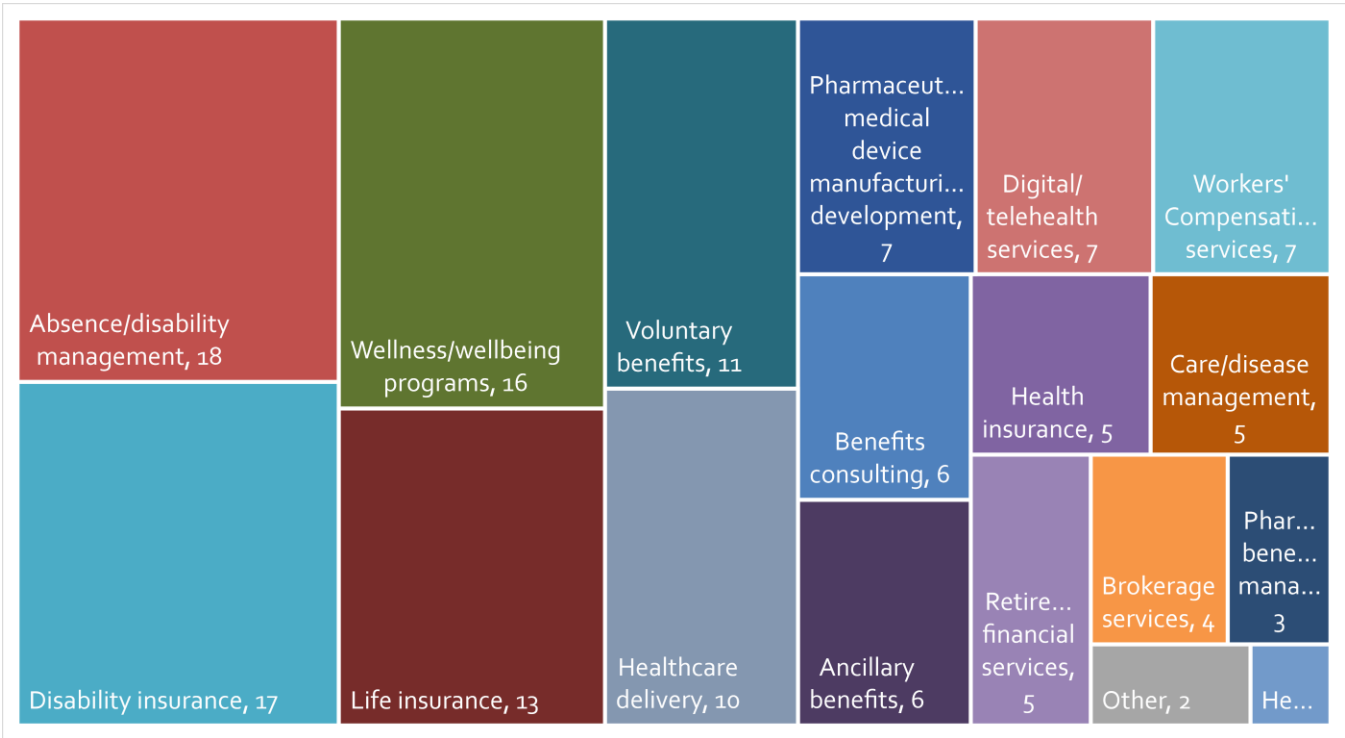


Figure 7: Services offered by supplier organization (more than one may apply)





Founded in 1995, the Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI) is a national, nonprofit research and educational organization focused on workforce health and productivity. IBI provides data, research, tools and engagement opportunities to help business leaders make sound investments in their employees' health. IBI is supported by more than 1,200 member companies representing over 20 million workers.

IBI's Board of Directors includes the following leaders in health and productivity:

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