



FRONTLINE WORKER **WELL-BEING** IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Corporate support for critical roles
during the pandemic and beyond

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About This Paper

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of individuals and communities across the globe as well as the way companies and supply chains do business. Over the past 18-24 months, food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors in the U.S. have faced significant operational challenges, including many related to human capital management and worker well-being. These sectors, and society more broadly, have relied on frontline workers to continue to work in-person and on-site to maintain the critical infrastructure and operations that bring food and staple items to our homes.

Through this paper, CECP, with the support of the Ford Foundation, explored the recent challenges faced by frontline workers employed in manufacturing, processing, and warehousing in these U.S. consumer staples sectors, as well as the response of the private sector to those challenges. The research explores best practices implemented by companies to support their workforce in the short term and for the future. CECP also explores how the crisis has influenced the outlook of society, frontline workers, and companies related to worker well-being, communications and worker voice, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the frontline workplace. Special attention is paid to the impact of the pandemic and associated corporate response on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) workers. Companies can use the findings and recommendations from this work to enhance and adopt new policies and practices geared towards future-proofing the well-being of these frontline workers while also supporting corporate resilience.

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FOREWORD

More than two years since COVID-19 first swept the world, our society is still reeling from the pandemic, and long-present inequalities have only grown starker.

This is especially apparent in workplaces. For some, office reopenings have been repeatedly delayed. Meanwhile, for essential workers in industries like service, manufacturing, and care, seeking refuge in remote work was never an option. Despite new variants, they remain on the frontlines, keeping factories, grocery stores, and care facilities running.

And yet, for all these people do to serve our communities—and all the public praise of “essential” work—the steps to tangibly support them have been insufficient. On the frontlines, these workers are both the most vital to recovery and the most vulnerable.

Indeed, not only are these workers more likely to be exposed to the virus, but they often lack adequate protective gear. If they do get sick, less than half of low-wage workers have access to sick leave. Many come from communities of color, who often face compounding social and economic inequalities, as well as disproportionate harms from COVID-19.

In short, we face a global reckoning around the nature of work—where it happens, how it happens, what it costs, and to whom. It’s time we reevaluate how our workers are treated, because if workplaces are among the greatest sources of risk, then employers bear some of the greatest responsibility to drive change.

Fortunately, business leaders can act with purpose and rapidly improve the lives of thousands of people. In fact, they’ve already proven their ability to do just that, innovating and adapting their operations to an ever-changing public health crisis. This is an opportunity for business leaders to reach their highest potential. In a recent survey, more than 60% of respondents said they expect businesses to assume leadership roles to address societal problems. By applying the same vision and innovation to the way they treat their employees, businesses can lift up workers, promote equity and inclusion, and reorient their organizations to serve all stakeholders.

Our collective call must be for a future that promotes human dignity, fairness, and equity for all, including workers. For our part at the Ford Foundation, we’re proud to support Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP), which has empowered businesses to make a positive impact on society for more than 20 years. Based on their research, it’s clear that worker well-being is essential to corporate well-being.

Through a combination of research, interviews, and survey data, CECP has brought together and synthesized key learnings from the pandemic. They’ve documented what many frontline workers feel: that while companies in food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors responded to the pandemic in innovative ways, they’ve fallen short in delivering solutions that adequately support their workers.

That’s why, in the following pages, CECP has identified best practices to improve how workplaces respond to the pandemic: engaging workers, bolstering worker health and safety, providing financial assistance, offering paid leave, and providing backup dependent care, to name a few.

Together, these interventions can help us build a stronger, more equitable economy—one that empowers and engages workers, then integrates and institutionalizes their insights. With that in mind, let us commit to creating workplaces as resilient and compassionate as our workers themselves.

Darren Walker
President,
Ford Foundation

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

COVID-19 is an epochal event, one that is very much still happening to us. But even as we have faced the worst of this catastrophe, tragedy has shed light on humanity. Vaccines were developed and went to market in record time, building on years of existing research. While some found themselves locked down at home, they made music from their balconies. Longstanding inequities were laid bare across society and an extra burden was placed on those on the frontline who stepped up to support societal needs.

Recognizing that so many frontline roles were essential during this crisis, we set out to learn more about those working behind the scenes in the U.S. to produce and distribute the foods and staple items that we all rely on daily. For anyone who has read about the current breakdowns in global supply chains, COVID-19 highlighted the challenges faced by the individuals who work within them and have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

What were companies doing to support frontline worker well-being during COVID-19? Why were so many BIPOC and women workers so adversely affected? What needs to change moving forward? These and many other questions started us on our journey in producing this paper. Thanks to the Ford Foundation and leading companies who participated in our research, we were able to dig deep to highlight what had happened during the pandemic and how companies were thinking about the future of their workforce.

We can state unequivocally that companies committed to stakeholder capitalism, as demonstrated by their efforts to protect and support their frontline workers, will emerge stronger as COVID-19 moves from pandemic to endemic. Additionally, those companies that reflect on lessons learned and implement changes accordingly will better weather future crises as well as ongoing challenges related to labor and the future of frontline work.

We hope you find this report insightful and helpful as you, your companies' leaders, look to build a just and equitable world for all.



You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.

—MAYA ANGELOU

Katherine Bostick

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Bostick".

Senior Advisor,
CECP

Nandika Madgavkar

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Madgavkar".

Senior Director,
Strategy & Growth
CECP

1

Context on the Pandemic and Corporate Responsibility

Since early 2020, COVID-19 has disrupted the way companies and supply chains conduct business. The food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors abruptly faced a new suite of challenges in their operations, including many related to human capital management. The role of frontline workers, or those who are unable to conduct their duties remotely, became paramount as businesses and society at large looked to them to maintain the sectors' critical infrastructure and operations. The events that unfolded over the past two years required an immediate and ongoing corporate response that has presented a significant opportunity for learning. In this paper, CECP looks back and gathers insight from the pandemic—to identify best practices and opportunities for the future to support frontline worker well-being and to facilitate better management of human capital. The paper also explores ongoing challenges and lessons from the pandemic about the relationship between corporate purpose and frontline worker retention and recruitment in today's tight labor market.

Any retrospective of this time period must also take into account social justice issues in the United States including the Black Lives Matter movement, which highlighted the extent and impacts of systemic racism in the U.S. and influenced corporate thinking on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. Among the impacts of COVID-19, there is an exacerbated effect on specific populations owing to societal inequalities related to race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender. CECP examines the relationship between these inequalities and the corporate response to the pandemic.

The pandemic hit at a time when the role of companies in society was under examination alongside growing trust in business and support for stakeholder capitalism and corporate purpose. A vast majority, 87%, of respondents to the Edelman Trust Barometer survey¹ conducted in 2019 agreed that stakeholders, not shareholders, are most important to companies' long-term success. That same year, approximately 180 CEOs signed Business Roundtable's *Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation*.² Previous work by CECP³ and others indicates a strong association between corporate purpose and financial performance, as influenced by productivity, growth, and employee retention. Investors want to see more detailed data on human capital, a

development supported by the Securities Exchange Commission's new rules, as of 2020, on human capital disclosure. As part of this trend, workers are increasingly understood to be a key stakeholder in business operations and outcomes.

The crisis of the pandemic, in combination with the social justice movement, put these ideas to the test, influencing how companies, investors, and society at large think about stakeholder capitalism, corporate purpose, and human capital management. In this research, CECP sought to understand how companies have supported the well-being of their frontlineⁱ workers during the pandemic and identified learnings to support human capital management moving forward.



None of us would be here without the frontline workers—they are the unsung heroes who have been carrying the torch.

—CHERYL KENNEDY,
CHIEF HR AND SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER, WELCH'S

i For the purposes of this study, frontline workers are defined as those who could not do their jobs remotely. In the context of consumer staples manufacturing and processing plants as well as distribution centers and warehouses, the vast majority of individuals employed at those sites are considered frontline workers.

Where possible, research focused specifically on frontline workers in the food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors engaged in manufacturing, processing, and warehousing activities.ⁱⁱ This workforce has remained behind the scenes during the pandemic in comparison with frontline workers in more visible roles, such as those in health care or retail sales. Yet, they too have faced elevated risk of COVID-19 as they

have continued to go to work in person, helping ensure that consumers across the U.S. and around the world retain access to food, beverages, and other staples. Where sector-specific information was unavailable, or where it was not possible to parse out frontline workers from other parts of the workforce, research focused more generally on the blue-collar workforce and lower-income workers.



Findings presented in this paper are based on:

- » Desktop review of more than 70 sources ranging from peer-reviewed publications to reports by consulting firms and relevant news articles;
- » One-on-one interviews with eight individual food, beverage, and consumer staples companies with operations in the U.S.; and,
- » Results of CECP Pulse Surveys, distributed to 400+ senior corporate leaders at CECP-affiliated companies and other contacts.



ⁱⁱ Throughout this report, “consumer staples” is used to refer to the combination of the food, beverage, tobacco, consumer packaged goods, and consumer staples sectors. Interviews with companies focused on frontline workers employed in manufacturing, processing, warehousing, and distribution, though companies may also have frontline workers in retail operations.

2

COVID-19 and the Food, Beverage, and Consumer Staples Workforce

Millionsⁱⁱⁱ of frontline workers are employed in the manufacturing, processing, warehousing, and distribution of consumer staples in the United States. Due to the nature of their work and workplaces, many of these workers have faced significant risk of exposure to COVID-19. Baseline risk factors, which vary from facility to facility, include the proximity of workers on production lines and in shared breakrooms, background noise levels that lead to shouting (and increased droplets), lower temperatures, older ventilation systems, continuous production systems that make sanitization more challenging, and even the reliance of workers on carpooling and public transportation to get to work.

Data on COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in these sectors is not consistently tracked nor reported. Available information indicates a high degree of variability across the sub-sectors, potentially attributable to a combination of baseline working conditions and corporate response. For example, research found that early pandemic case rates in meatpacking, seafood processing, and baked goods manufacturing were higher than those at dairy or confectionary manufacturing plants.

Publicly available data on COVID-19 cases across the food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors tends to be focused on sub-sectors with the largest outbreaks. Without comprehensive data, it may never be possible to understand precisely the extent to which workers in each sub-sector were impacted, nor to identify better actors. What is clear, however, is that the measures taken by individual companies and facilities significantly influenced the experiences of their frontline workforce and the degree of risk they faced while at work. Such measures included health and safety protocols in facilities including temperature checks, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and social distancing as well as adaptations to attendance and paid sick leave policies to ensure workers who were infected or exposed could stay home. Evidence also suggests that implementing measures to control the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace influences community infection rates.⁴

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS IN MEAT PROCESSING FACILITIES AND SLAUGHTERHOUSES

According to the Food and Environment Reporting Network⁵ (FERN) and the results of a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee investigation,⁶ workers in at least 581 meatpacking facilities and 885 food processing facilities tested positive for COVID-19 during the first year of the pandemic. Total cases and deaths were significantly higher in meatpacking, however, with over 59,000 cases and at least 269 deaths across the five largest meatpacking conglomerates. In contrast, 18,793 cases and 61 deaths were reported in food processing over the same time period.

To put these numbers in context, approximately 500,000 people are employed at more than 7,000 slaughterhouses and meat processing facilities, and they are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and immigrants.⁷ The Center for Economic Policy Research estimates that 70% are Black or Hispanic and that half of frontline meatpacking workers are immigrants.⁸ Multiple facilities across the country experienced outbreaks where close to or more than half of the workforce became infected with COVID-19. Facilities with high case rates are suspected to have been a key driver of outbreaks within their local communities.⁹

Data on COVID-19 cases in meatpacking represents only the five largest companies, and even those cases are understood to be underestimated due to data reporting methodologies. The scale of impact was likely much greater.

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 5.4 million workers were employed in non-durable goods manufacturing in 2020, with food, beverage, and tobacco manufacturing accounting for 2 million of those workers. The Food Chain Workers Alliance reports that, in addition to those directly employed in manufacturing and processing, another 3 million workers are employed in transportation and warehousing of food products alone.

3

Best Practices in Corporate Response to COVID-19 in the Workplace

Stakeholders, including government, labor advocates, workers' organizations, and companies, identified a relatively consistent set of best practices for workplace^{iv} coronavirus response. Despite this alignment on best practices for frontline worker well-being and the risks to corporate well-being from COVID-19 outbreaks in facilities, studies found that many companies failed to implement a number of the recommended practices. Below are examples of the themes that arose in studies of corporate pandemic response. It is important to note, however, that studies reviewing corporate actions tend to be based either on analysis of publicly available information or responses to surveys. In short, information about actions had to be proactively shared by companies to be counted.

WORKER ENGAGEMENT: When frontline staff are empowered and have collaborative relationships with management, they can effectively support identification of challenges and solutions. Only 6% of companies surveyed by the World Benchmarking Alliance reported consulting with worker representatives and vulnerable populations within their workforce when identifying or assessing the risks and impacts of the pandemic, though 90% reported having a grievance mechanism that workers could use to raise concerns.¹⁰

HEALTH AND SAFETY: The implementation of health and safety precautions, including provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and physical distancing measures, was essential to protecting workers. JUST Capital found that 80% of food, beverage, and tobacco companies implemented such measures early in the pandemic, though only half provided free PPE to workers.¹¹ A global study of manufacturing and supply chain operations by the World Economic Forum found that only half of the companies assessed mandated the use of PPE in early months of the pandemic.¹²

PAID LEAVE: Access to paid sick leave is essential to enabling frontline workers to stay home when ill, quarantine after COVID-19 exposure, and slow the spread of coronavirus in the workplace. While smaller employers (<500 employees) were mandated to provide sick leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), JUST Capital found that by late June 2020 only 40% of the food, beverage, and tobacco companies

in the Russell 1000 had offered paid sick leave in response to COVID-19.¹³

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: The pandemic further shifted the spotlight to the financial health of frontline and lower-income workers, as well as to their societal value during a crisis. All of the companies CECP interviewed, and approximately half of companies in the consumer staples sectors, provided either a short-term or a permanent increase in pay, bonus, or employee assistance grant to their frontline workforce. Interviewees also noted increased opportunities for workers to take on overtime shifts at premium rates during the pandemic.

BACK-UP DEPENDENT CARE: Childcare moved to the forefront as a concern for many frontline workers during the pandemic, as schools and daycare centers closed across the country and individuals assessed the health risks of relying on older relatives as caregivers. According to JUST Capital, one-fifth of food, beverage, and tobacco companies supported workers in accessing and/or covering the cost of dependent care early in the pandemic. This compared to only 9% of the Russell 1000 offering such support in the same timeframe.¹⁴

In practice, however, corporate response to the pandemic has been more nuanced than can be captured in large surveys or reviews of publicly available information. CECP also believes that these approaches undervalued the role companies played in information

^{iv} While the focus of this report is on corporate actions taken within the workplace, many other measures were recommended related to corporate response in relation to workers that were furloughed or laid off and in relation to the communities in which they operate, as well as measures that should be taken by the government to support worker well-being and populations more vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

sharing and education about COVID-19 within their frontline workforces. CECP's interviews underscored that, although there are some universal best-practice measures, much of the response has not been viewed as "one size fits all," with each facility facing a different subset of challenges based on type of operation, age and size of facility, location or region, workforce demographics, and more.

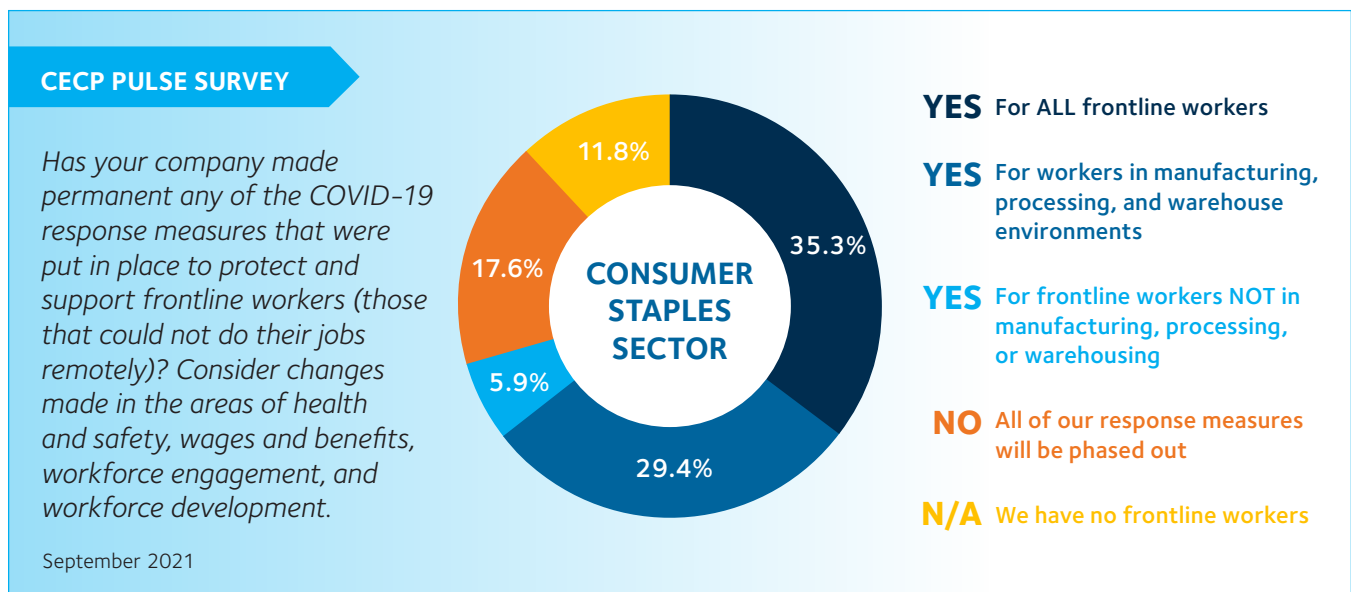
In interviews, CECP heard more details about companies' efforts to support frontline worker well-being. With regards to health, for example, several companies referenced adding or facilitating employee access to telehealth, given new risks and hurdles to in-person health care. Others raised the topic of mental health, noting that frontline workers are both mentally and physically exhausted as the pandemic lingers. Some currently offer mental health services to workers and sought ways to encourage their use, and one expressed interest in finding better ways to support mental health going forward.

More generally, interviewed company representatives spoke of their efforts to ensure frontline workers felt valued and supported at work. Examples included:

- » Increasing the visibility of, and opportunities to engage with, senior leadership and headquarters staff at facilities.

- » Highlighting the connections among the company, the workers, and the community via recognizing the role of workers in making product donations or other community support measures possible.
- » Compiling and distributing up-to-date information about school closures for workers struggling to navigate the system.
- » Providing meals during shift breaks and food or drink for frontline workers to take home to their families.
- » Adapting approaches to shifts, attendance, and schedule changes/swaps based on workers' needs, where this was allowed by union contracts.
- » Ramping up communications to ensure frontline workers understood and could access all available benefits and services.

Changes made during the pandemic are influencing operations long-term, as many companies have decided to make permanent some of the support measures they put in place. According to a September 2021 CECP Pulse Survey, 65% of consumer staples companies were retaining and making permanent at least some of the measures they put in place to support frontline workers in manufacturing, processing, and warehousing environments.¹⁵ Updates to health and safety policies and practices, as well as changes to workforce engagement and communications approaches, were noted as areas where COVID-19 response measures have been made permanent.



Evolving Approaches to COVID-19 Vaccination

Numerous surveys and studies from the first half of 2021 indicated that the vast majority of employers were taking steps to encourage vaccination and communicate its value. Studies consistently showed that only a small percentage of employers were requiring or considering requiring vaccination as a condition of employment, but also that this percentage was gradually increasing.

However, the latter half of 2021 has seen significant changes, attributed to the rise of the Delta variant, the Biden administration's push for vaccination, and the administration's September 2021 announcement that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) would develop an Emergency Temporary Standard requiring companies with 100 or more employees to develop, implement, and enforce a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination-or-testing policy.^v Companies such as Tyson Foods, which made headlines early in the pandemic for high coronavirus rates and deaths in their plants that were seen as preventable, are now in the news for high (>90%) vaccination rates in those same plants.

CECP's own Pulse Survey in June 2021¹⁶ found that only 13% of companies were requiring vaccination for all employees, or for all employees with some exemptions (e.g., medical, religious). Another 8% required vaccination for some positions.

More recent surveys reflect a shift, including a survey of consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies by the Consumer Brands Association¹⁷ conducted in late July 2021 in which 66% of respondents said they were considering requiring vaccination in light of the Delta variant.

CECP conducted a follow-up Pulse Survey in November 2021¹⁸ and found that 40% of respondents were requiring all employees be vaccinated and an additional 10% were requiring frontline workers only be vaccinated. Overall, two-thirds of respondents were requiring either vaccination or weekly COVID-19 testing for all workers.

Interviews with consumer staples companies to discuss COVID-19 response in their manufacturing, processing, and warehouse facilities were consistent with survey findings. All but one of the companies CECP spoke with were strongly encouraging vaccination through internal awareness-raising campaigns and/or monetary and

Surveys Show Increase in Vaccine Mandates

JUNE 2021
13% of companies **required** vaccination for all employees

IN JULY 2021, 66% of respondents said they were **considering** requiring vaccination in light of the Delta variant

NOVEMBER 2021
50% **required** vaccination for frontline workers and **two-thirds required either vaccination or weekly testing for ALL workers**

^v Under the Standard, companies' vaccination policies may permit employees to choose to opt out of vaccination so long as they undergo regular testing and wear a face covering. The OSHA Standard also requires employers to allow for medical and religious exemptions.

time-off incentives, but only one had implemented a vaccine mandate. Interviews also illuminated companies' concerns about how to implement such a mandate (e.g., questions around logistics and costs of implementation). CECP also heard concerns about the potential for employee backlash to such a requirement, especially for facilities located in more vaccine-hesitant pockets of the country, which may overlap with regions experiencing more significant labor shortages.

These concerns are not without basis, as one company shared with us that at least some frontline workers quit, citing the freedom to forgo masks at other companies' plants. Additionally, there have been some small protests related to vaccine mandates

at consumer staples manufacturing plants, such as one at P&G in Missouri¹⁹ after the company took a strong stance on vaccination and testing^{vi} in order to protect the workforce. That said, there is evidence that COVID-19 vaccine and/or testing mandates have not had significant impacts on employee turnover for the majority of employers, with most workers choosing to get vaccinated, request medical or religious exemptions, or submit to weekly testing where permitted.^{20,21} Regardless, representatives from interviewed companies expressed more comfort in moving forward with vaccine requirements together with their peers, with guidance from OSHA on implementation. At the time of the writing of this paper, the OSHA ruling is undergoing litigation and its fate remains uncertain.^{vii}



vi P&G has provided employees with the options to receive a vaccine, qualify for an exemption, and/or participate in weekly COVID-19 testing.

vii The rule was initially stayed by the Fifth Circuit, and after the case was transferred, the stay was lifted by the Sixth Circuit on December 17, 2021. OSHA began enforcing key portions of the rule on January 9, 2022. On January 13, 2022, the Supreme Court stayed OSHA's relatively broad vaccine-and-testing emergency temporary standard while still recognizing OSHA's authority to regulate occupation-specific risks related to COVID-19. On the same day, the Court allowed a vaccination mandate for healthcare workers set forth by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to go into effect.

4 Key Themes and Learnings

4.1 Accelerating Trends in Expectations

The pandemic has influenced the expectations not only of the frontline and blue-collar workforce, but also of society in general and of companies for themselves, related to worker compensation, engagement, and well-being.

SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVES

The pandemic has reinforced the growing expectation that businesses act as a force for good within communities. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, more than 60% of Americans expect businesses to step in and even lead change around societal issues and problems.²² In the context of COVID-19, three-quarters of Americans agree that businesses have a responsibility to protect both their employees in the workplace and the local community from the coronavirus.²³ Society is placing increasing trust in businesses, with trust in business in the U.S. in general increasing 4% in the last year.²⁴ Those gains are not universal, however, as trust in the food and beverage sector globally declined dramatically from May 2020 to January 2021 (after it surged between January 2020 and May 2020), perhaps reflecting disappointment in the sector's response to the pandemic. Trust in the consumer packaged goods sector is also failing to keep pace with overall business trust gains.²⁵

Simultaneously, the pandemic and social justice movements have been credited with prompting individuals across society to re-think their views on work, health, family, and societal safety nets. The media is rife with stories highlighting inequalities and calling for both government and corporate entities to provide better support for workers, in particular lower-wage and frontline workers. Many of these issues are reflected in policy discussions today and in broader research and advocacy related to "good jobs," the care economy, paid leave, and the financial wellness of workers.

Leading companies seeking to retain society's trust and wishing to be seen as good employers should take steps to meet or exceed these shifting societal expectations, staying in front of the policies and regulations that will push laggards to implement change.

WORKFORCE PERSPECTIVES

Frontline and blue-collar workers' expectations have also been changed by the pandemic, attributed both to shifts in the demographics of the workforce as well as shifts in workers' individual priorities. Baby Boomers, who perform much of the nation's blue-collar work, were already leaving the workforce in droves, and that was exacerbated by the pandemic.^{26,27} J.P. Morgan found that 1.5 million more people retired than usual during the pandemic and that retirements spiked starting in March 2020.²⁸ Employers are looking to Gen X or other younger workers to replace them. Frontline workers' priorities were also influenced by the changing world around them and their personal experiences at work during the pandemic. More than 40% of frontline workers reported worsening job quality during the pandemic, with the Gallup Great Jobs survey seeing drops almost across the board on all of the measured dimensions. However, workers who were already in a "good job" ^{viii} when COVID-19 emerged fared better.²⁹

In general, society finds itself in a moment where frontline workers are dissatisfied and demanding more, potentially with more leverage than in recent years. Workers are striking in the consumer packaged goods

viii Both Gallup and The Good Jobs Institute have methodologies for defining a "good job." In general terms, a good job is one that meets workers' basic needs with regards to pay and benefits, schedules, career advancement, and security and safety. Good jobs also enable workers' sense of purpose, dignity, and meaning in their work; enjoyment and belonging at work; and agency, achievement, and growth.

and consumer staples sectors, for example at food manufacturing plants across the U.S. They are also leaving the workforce: the “Great Resignation” played out disproportionately in the blue-collar workforce in the midst of the pandemic. In early 2021, the Federal Reserve reported that in the previous 12 months employment for workers in the lowest quartile of wage distribution had declined by 17%, compared to a 4% decline for workers in the top quartile.³⁰

Leading companies should seek innovative ways to understand and meet the shifting needs and expectations of the frontline workforce in order to attract and retain talent.

CORPORATE PERSPECTIVES

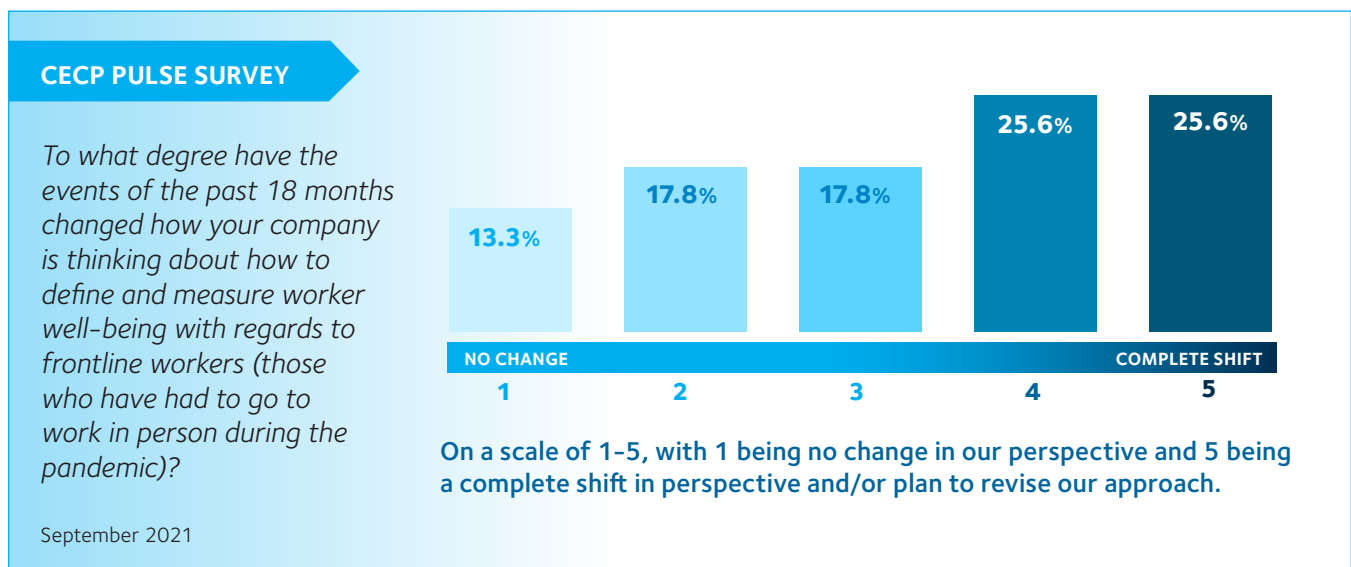
Consumer staples companies also recognize the pandemic as a turning point—in the words of one interviewee: “we’ve all been changed by this, we can never go back.” Business has been booming for many in the sector, with the Consumer Brands Association reporting year-over-year growth in demand for consumer packaged goods almost every month since the pandemic began.³¹ High demand, along with surges in e-commerce, correspond with strong demand for frontline jobs in production as well as warehousing and transportation. Early in the pandemic, food processors and packers highlighted retaining employees and keeping them safe as the biggest challenge they were facing, bigger than supply chain and sales issues.³²

Companies are re-examining what it means to be a good employer, how to consider the needs of their frontline workforce, how to retain workers, and how these considerations affect corporate resilience. In a recent CECF Pulse Survey, half of respondents overall and just under half of respondents from the consumer staples sector indicated their company was making major changes to how they define and measure frontline worker well-being.³³

Leading companies should clearly define and measure frontline worker well-being as well as identify how worker well-being relates to business goals and strategies.

TRENDS IN WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS

Compensation for frontline workers across consumer staples sectors is clearly on the radar. Interviewed companies spoke to it being top of mind with regards to their manufacturing and warehousing workforces, and CECF sees a broader trend of rising wages in a range of frontline jobs traditionally associated with lower wages, including those in food and consumer staples manufacturing. Consumer packaged goods manufacturing wages are estimated to have risen almost 8.9% in the year prior to October 2021.³⁴ Though it’s a common impression that wages are increasing at most companies, in CECF’s October 2021 Pulse Survey just under half of respondents indicated that their company has or is in the process of increasing



wages and/or benefits for their frontline workforce.³⁵ In line with this, approximately half of the interviewed companies indicated they were either retaining or further improving wages moving into 2022, though all of them provided additional financial incentives to frontline workers early in the pandemic and most continued into 2021. It is worth noting, however, that the rise in cost of living may have outpaced wage increases for some workers.³⁶

While wage is a critical factor for workers, evidence suggests other factors are equally important for consumer staples companies to consider as they seek to attract and retain talent in manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution operations.

STABILITY OF PAY: *Stability of pay outranked level of pay in terms of importance for lower-wage workers, both pre-pandemic and at the height of COVID-19, according to Gallup surveys.*^{37,38}

PAID TIME OFF (PTO): Frontline workers in these sectors, even those employed full time, often receive no PTO. The pandemic reinforced the importance of paid sick leave, both for worker and workplace well-being, with evidence indicating that provision of paid sick leave reduced COVID-19 cases in workplaces and nearby communities. Despite many companies temporarily providing paid sick leave associated with COVID-19, Gallup found that only half of lower income workers felt that they could take time off if sick.³⁹ The value of leave to workers is reflected in EmployBridge's nationwide survey of blue-collar workers, in which 73% of respondents would trade a \$1/hour raise for 5 days of PTO.⁴⁰ Interviews indicated that at least some companies are revisiting whether to provide sick leave as a core benefit in the future.

SAFETY: Even pre-pandemic, safety was a top issue for blue-collar workers, and it remains so today. Seventy-one percent of respondents to EmployBridge's survey reported feeling as concerned for their health and safety in 2021 as they had been in 2020.⁴¹ In CECP interviews, company representatives highlighted the

importance not only of ensuring that frontline workers *are* safe, but also that they *feel* safe.

SHIFT SCHEDULE AND FLEXIBILITY: Scheduling and flexibility were common themes in CECP's interviews and presented challenges for some companies who noted that different workers have different desires and needs in these areas, with some wanting to work only on weekdays, others wanting partial shifts, and still others desiring some of the flexibility they saw afforded to white-collar workers during the pandemic. Given the need for many operations to run consistently 24-7-365, companies found it can be challenging to find solutions that work for everyone.

SENSE OF PURPOSE AND DIGNITY: Having a sense of purpose and dignity in one's work has long been understood to be a key benefit of a good job. It is also the only job quality dimension that improved for frontline workers surveyed by Gallup during the pandemic.⁴² Purpose, dignity, and the sense of being valued by leadership and society were raised in interviews as being closely linked to employee morale. During the pandemic, frontline workers wanted to feel not only that they were supported by their employer, but also that their employer (and by association that they as employees) were playing an important role in supporting their communities during a time of crisis. In these instances, corporate purpose contributed to employee purpose, dignity, and fulfillment.



Candidates and workers are also looking for 'skin in the game' from employers, saying 'How are you going to help me, my family, and my community since we are taking the risk to come into work? You aren't just recruiting me; you are recruiting my family and community'.

—THEMBI MACHABA, SVP, HUMAN RESOURCES, FRESHPET

THE FRONTLINE LABOR SHORTAGE IN THE FOOD, BEVERAGE, AND CONSUMER STAPLES SECTORS

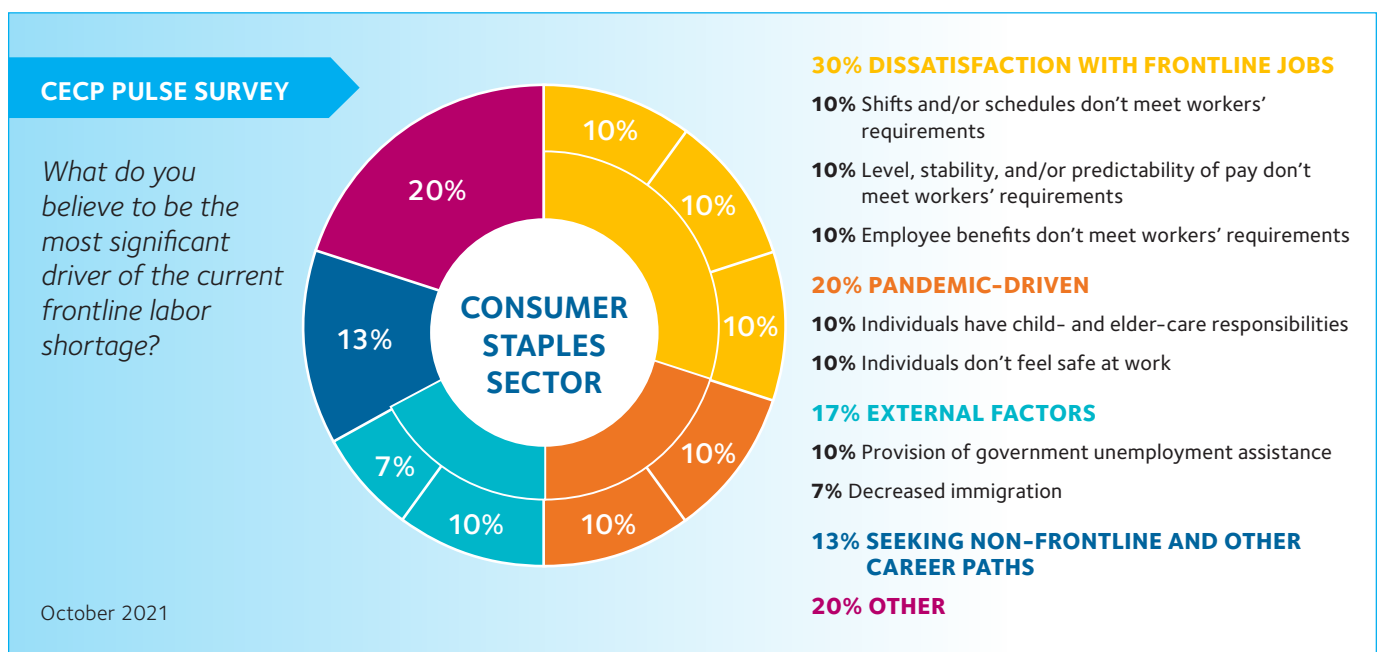
A shortage of frontline labor is top of mind for many companies, especially so for those in the food, beverage, and consumer staples sectors. Labor force participation is at historic lows.⁴³ Recent analyses by J.P. Morgan⁴⁴ and Goldman Sachs⁴⁵ of the U.S. labor market found that spikes in retirement, declines in visas for immigrants and non-immigrant temporary workers, and an increase in self-employment, including people leaving manufacturing and agriculture for construction and transportation, all play key roles in worker shortages, which presented challenges even before the pandemic. Concerns about COVID-19 and childcare constraints were also noted as drivers after the start of the pandemic, though their importance lessened after vaccines became available and schools re-opened. The analyses also highlight that the impact of COVID-19 unemployment benefits remains unclear, though approximately half of unemployment recipients, some 2.7 million individuals, received benefits that exceeded their prior wages.

In an October 2021 Pulse Survey, CECP asked companies for their thoughts on the drivers of the shortage.⁴⁶ Thirty percent of respondents from consumer staples sectors said they believed that dissatisfaction with aspects of

frontline jobs (e.g., pay, benefits, or shift schedules) was the primary driver. Caretaking responsibilities and feeling unsafe at work, two issues brought to the forefront during the pandemic, accounted for another 20% of responses, while 17% felt like the shortage predominantly came from external factors (e.g., unemployment assistance and low immigration). An additional 13% of respondents said frontline workers are taking the opportunity to pursue careers outside of frontline work.

Consistent with these responses, CECP’s interviews revealed that although outside factors such as the remote locations of some plants or the number of similar employers in a given area influence the degree to which this shortage is felt at any given facility, company representatives believed that companies that have supported their frontline workers well have also been more successful in attracting and retaining them.

Interviews also reinforced how pandemic-accelerated challenges of attracting and retaining talent in consumer staples manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing have pushed companies to rethink core operations and strategies for the short and long term. Highlights from these conversations include:



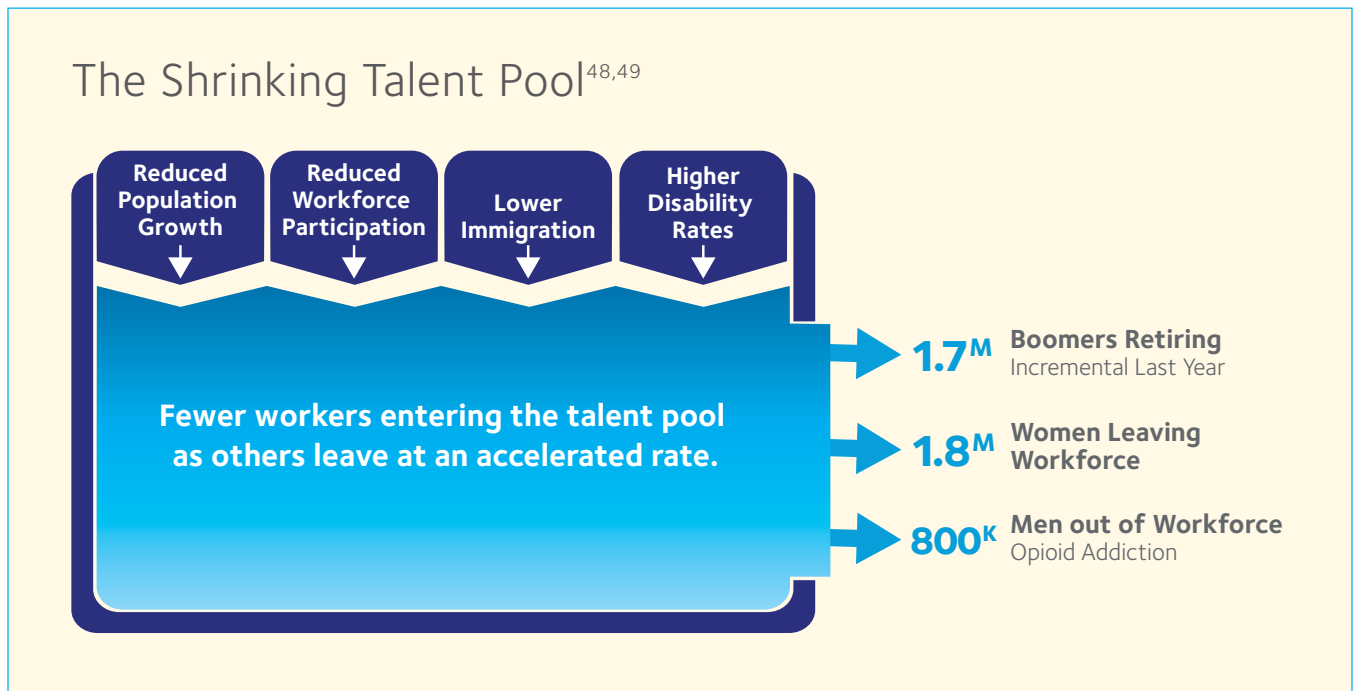
RETHINK RECRUITMENT: Leading companies are exploring how to tap all potential talent across society. As they do so, however, they must consider how to shatter the barriers to entry faced by those populations, both in the recruitment process and in daily operations. In the immediate term, companies became creative—bringing back retirees to take on shifts or support training and even having headquarters staff take a few shifts on the production line.

THINK SMARTER ABOUT JOB DESIGN: In the long term, companies see the need to take a closer look at job design and flexibility within and across roles in order to meet the demands of today’s workforce and also to better attract and retain those segments of the workforce that may need different schedules (e.g., the partially retired, students, and working parents, in particular women).

ENSURE THE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR EMPLOYEES IS CLEAR: Companies that look beyond wage as a core part of the compensation and value they provide to frontline workers (e.g., employee equity, pensions, and training) not only need to articulate these benefits clearly and directly; they also need to look to and empower frontline workers themselves to champion workplace benefits among their peers.

UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO WHAT IS MEANINGFUL IN THE LABOR MARKET: Listening to frontline workers to understand what’s meaningful to them is essential. Equally important is to recognize that what’s meaningful may vary across regions and facilities. Larger companies are re-examining what policies and resources are centralized versus localized to create greatest efficiencies while enabling individual facilities to meet their local workforce needs.

Labor shortages are expected to remain a challenge for consumer staples companies for years to come: The Conference Board estimates this problem will continue through at least 2030.⁴⁷ Leading companies will develop and implement talent strategies to support business needs, pulling from and building on activities such as those highlighted in CECP’s interviews.



4.2 The Value of Communication and Worker Voice

The pandemic has reinforced the importance of communication and worker voice in corporate resiliency and worker well-being.

THE POWER OF TRUST

Transparency and trust in the workplace have been essential to weathering the pandemic, from maintaining production and distribution of goods and services to keeping workers safe. Strong communication is also critically important for companies seeking to understand and react to shifting expectations related to attracting and retaining talent. Yet, communicating with and engaging frontline workers in manufacturing, processing, and warehousing or distribution centers can be particularly challenging. For many consumer staples companies, COVID-19, social justice movements, and the current labor shortage serve as reminders to be intentional in their engagement with their workers and of the value of investing in communication approaches.

The pandemic and a polarized political climate also pushed companies and employers into a role where they became, for many frontline workers, the most trusted source of information about the coronavirus. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, information about COVID-19 from employers was more trusted and readily believed than information from the government and media, and significantly more so than that from social media.⁵⁰ Employers with strong communications approaches were better positioned not only to educate frontline workers on the coronavirus but also to implement updated health and safety protocols in the workplace and to support workers seeking access to services and care.

SHORTFALLS IN COMMUNICATIONS

In CECP's interviews, however, many companies highlighted the need to improve how they communicate with and engage frontline workers. This was raised in the context of COVID-19 health and safety protocols as well as that of building awareness of changes to other policies and services (e.g., wage changes,

attendance and call-out policy updates, support measures). Other opportunities for improvement related to communications' role in workforce morale and the importance of articulating more complex compensation packages and new employee value propositions, especially in a time when some competitors are putting base wage front and center.

As might be expected in a time of crisis, there was a greater emphasis on communicating *to* workers than on hearing *from* frontline workers or engaging them. While essential, this strategy alone is short-sighted—creating space for worker voice is essential to building trust, underpinning workplace safety by understanding workers' concerns and proposed solutions, and supporting worker retention and productivity. In addition, listening must be followed up with feedback loops and, where relevant, action.

Jim Donald, former CEO of Starbucks and Albertsons, is known for his approach to engaging the frontline and creating a culture of caring, while also turning around struggling businesses.



People don't want to be a headcount...They want to make their heads count.^{51,52}

What CECF Heard

CHALLENGES:

- » Frontline worker access to and familiarity with technology varies—many don't have email at work or access to phones or computers on shift, and some prefer low-tech communications.
- » Consumer staples facilities are often multilingual and multicultural, sometimes with many employees for whom English is a second language.
- » Feedback from workers can be contradictory—different workers have different priorities—meaning it's not always clear how to respond.

ACTIONABLE IDEAS:

- » Share essential information consistently, in multiple methods and in all applicable languages—via video or PowerPoint on monitors in break rooms, signage on bulletin boards around the facility, briefings at start of shift, and direct outreach via email, voicemail, text, or even home mailers as is appropriate.
- » Enable access to technology in order to hear from workers: ask them to complete a pulse survey question on a tablet when they clock in, and/or implement and educate workers in the use of QR codes facility-wide to make it quick and easy for everyone to note health and safety concerns.
- » Create space for workers to share concerns and ideas—both in groups (e.g., focus groups, employee resource groups) and individually, and ask departing workers to share their reasons for switching jobs.
- » Learn from all parts of the business: bring together HR or other relevant representatives (e.g., plant managers or Employee Resource Group representatives) from different facilities to exchange ideas with each other.

4.3 The Intersection of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Structural Inequality, and COVID-19

The pandemic has served as a stark reminder of how structural societal inequalities related to race and ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status influence the experience of individuals across America. These issues are intersectional and compounding in nature, heightening the risks and challenges faced by various populations of frontline workers.

The pandemic has also underscored the importance of measures taken by employers to support well-being of their frontline workers as well as opportunities to improve equity and inclusion in the long term. Many of the best practices implemented by companies to support frontline workers were especially important for individuals disadvantaged by these disparities.

Income inequality in the U.S. has been on the rise for decades, and the wealth gap is growing even more rapidly.⁵³ Socioeconomic status influences not only the risk faced by individuals from an infectious-disease outbreak but also their ability to access and pay for testing and care, keep children in school, and absorb shocks to their earnings. Whether implemented as

increases in base wage, hazard pay, or increased overtime pay, **financial incentives were essential for lower-income frontline workers to weather the pandemic economically.**

Research shows that BIPOC individuals had both higher risk of contracting the coronavirus and of having serious outcomes as a result. One study found that 83% of confirmed COVID-19 cases among U.S. food manufacturing and agricultural workers in the first three months of the pandemic occurred among racial and ethnic minority workers.⁵⁴ Another found that Black frontline workers were nearly twice as likely as their white counterparts to be concerned about the risk of infection.⁵⁵ **Effective implementation of strict health and safety protocols, including the provision of personal protective equipment, was even more essential for BIPOC individuals** due not only to their individual likelihood of serious outcomes from COVID-19, but also given the increased likelihood that they live in multigenerational or larger households where the virus has more opportunities to spread.

Women disproportionately bear the burden of the unpaid “second shift,” work in the home and with family including childcare and elder care. Yet according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics only 23% of American private sector employees had access to paid family leave in 2021.⁵⁶ This burden on women, and women of color in particular, drastically increased during the pandemic as schools and day-care facilities closed and elder-care situations were in flux. **Employer-provided support for accessing and paying for back-up dependent care, along with adaptations to attendance policies and shift schedules that enabled greater flexibility, were especially important for women and caregivers.**

Lastly, the relationship between worker voice and equity and inclusion must be acknowledged. Despite the evidence that trust, transparency, and worker engagement support both health and safety and business resiliency, research demonstrates that BIPOC

workers are at a disadvantage in terms of their freedom to speak up without negative repercussions. The National Employment Law Project found that Black workers on the frontline are more than twice as likely as their white peers to have raised concerns to their employer that they felt were not addressed and/or that they did not raise their concerns due to fear of retaliation.⁵⁷ **Engaging and ensuring fair treatment of all workers was especially important for BIPOC workers during the pandemic and should be considered a foundational measure for employers committed to equity and inclusion.**

Generally speaking, it appears that corporate workplace response to COVID-19 has not consciously considered issues of structural inequality, social justice, or corporate goals on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. According to both research and interviews, it appears that most companies were not explicitly considering risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities of specific populations within their frontline workforce as they determined what measures to implement to support worker well-being. Clear and proactive communication about policies, services, and the coronavirus were, however, highlighted as being a critical tool for reaching and supporting all workers, including the most vulnerable.



The pandemic further exposed an already existing gap when it comes to communicating with our frontline team.... There was never much of a sense of urgency to address this issue before, and it's now a top priority.

—ANONYMOUS

By the Numbers

Inequality and COVID-19 in the U.S.*



The hospitalization rate from COVID-19 for Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native persons is **2.8 to 3.5** times higher than that of whites...



...and the death rate is more than double.

PAID LEAVE

Fewer than half of lower-wage workers^{ix} have access to paid sick leave, even when working at least 40 hours a week.

64% of Latinos
73% of Blacks

reported going to work at frontline jobs even though they believed doing so during the pandemic presented a serious risk to their health or that of a family member.

Black workers are

60% more likely to be uninsured than white workers.



Black workers are more than twice as likely as white workers to experience retaliation for raising COVID-19 concerns in the workplace.

Respectively, Hispanic and Black women are **2-3.6** times as likely as white women to be single heads of households with children.



In order to provide care during the pandemic, working mothers reduced working hours **4-5** times more than working fathers.



Food production workers are more likely to have household incomes below **200%** of the federal poverty level.

*Endnote citations 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64

^{ix} Refers to private industry workers in the first quartile of wage distribution.

5

Looking Forward and Recommendations

The events of the past two years have reinforced the role of the frontline workforce in society, the relationship between worker well-being and workforce and corporate resilience, and the capacity of companies either to support or fail their frontline workers in times of crisis. Going forward, leading companies must ensure that their frontline workforce is incorporated into their human capital strategy and that frontline workers are considered a value-added asset rather than a commodity cost. The somewhat paradoxical juxtaposition of trust in business being at an all-time high with the broader dissatisfaction about the compensation and valuation of frontline and lower-income workers could be interpreted as a sign of optimism—that businesses will lean into their efforts to support this essential workforce in the future, and that doing so is good for business itself.

As COVID-19 shifts from pandemic to endemic, CECP believes learnings will support and even accelerate existing trends towards corporate purpose, stakeholder capitalism, and the movement for “good jobs.” Those companies that identified and acted on the business and moral reasons to protect and support their frontline workers will emerge stronger. The past 18 to 24 months provide lessons related to both immediate and ongoing crisis management. These lessons, as well as best practices outlined in this report, should be embraced as a prototype for how companies respond to future crises as well as continuing challenges.

Recommendations for Corporate Practitioners

Moving forward, there is an opportunity for companies to take an integrated approach that protects, engages, and develops their frontline workers in a way that also strengthens their competitive position, minimizes risks, and creates new opportunities.

SHORE UP THE FOUNDATION

By revisiting health and safety, as well as the frontline employee value proposition, companies can ensure that their approaches to protecting, attracting, retaining, and upskilling frontline workers provide a strong foundation for corporate resilience.

ENSURE APPROPRIATE INDUSTRY-LED SAFETY

PROTOCOLS: Health and safety is essential for frontline worker well-being, and the pandemic underscored the critical role of the employer in supporting it.

- » Solidify the foundation of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs via common-sense efforts and a review of the efficacy of pandemic protocols.
- » Engage in pre-competitive opportunities to ensure the workplace is safe and accessible, while also leveraging appropriate metrics to measure improvement and reduce costs (e.g., of insurance, lost time, or turnover).

- » Look to organizations such as the Health Action Alliance^x for tools to support ongoing corporate actions related to COVID-19 and vaccinations and to the Consumer Brands Association^{xi} for sector-specific news and resources.

APPROACH THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION (EVP) HOLISTICALLY AND THOROUGHLY:

Leading companies are looking at their frontline EVP in a comprehensive manner, seeking not only to be market competitive but also to attract new pools of talent, increase retention, improve engagement, and build and reward expertise.

- » **Understand wages and related context:** Companies that have not already done so should conduct a wage and compensation assessment that considers pay rates for their lowest paid frontline workers as well as factors such as stability of pay in addition to level

x <https://www.healthaction.org>

xi <https://consumerbrandsassociation.org/coronavirus/cpg-and-the-covid-19-vaccine/#get-resources>

of pay. Findings should be put into context with local living wage information. The Good Jobs Institute^{xii} and the Worker Financial Wellness Initiative^{xiii} have resources to support assessments and the Aspen Institute has relevant research on workers' financial security.^{xiv}

- » **Explore provision of Paid Time Off (PTO):** Companies would also benefit from a review of their approach to paid time off for the frontline workforce, as a shift in approach could remove key barriers for workers. Such a review should take into consideration the value of paid family leave for women in particular and working parents and caregivers in general, as well as how such leave might broaden the talent pool.^{xv} Paid sick leave should also be reviewed, taking into consideration how workers' and society's expectations shifted as a result of the pandemic, in addition to the evidence that such leave was essential for worker, and company, well-being and resiliency.
- » **Be clear on other components of the EVP:** Many other factors, including employee equity via shares in the company, shift flexibility or on-the-job training, and childcare support or tuition reimbursement can be clear components of a company's value proposition for their frontline workforce. Some of these variables may be prioritized differently across regions or facilities based on workforce needs. EVP can also go beyond the tangible to include prerogatives such as purpose and dignity at work, which should be universal. Leading companies are able to clearly articulate what they offer, how it benefits their workers, and how it supports corporate resilience. They also empower workers to champion the EVP.

EMPOWER AND ENGAGE

By empowering and engaging not only their frontline workforce but also their extended communities,

companies will benefit from the creativity and knowledge of experts on the ground to address current challenges and position themselves ahead of the curve on future ones.

LEAN INTO EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND BUILD WORKER VOICE:

Effective communication between frontline workers and their employers was arguably one of companies' most important tools for weathering the pandemic in production and distribution facilities. In the future, communications and worker voice will become even more important as companies seek to expand their frontline workforce to new populations, innovate their employee value proposition, and update job design and flexibility.

- » Create space for learning and improvement by conducting, at minimum, a rapid but intentional SWOT analysis on bi-directional communication during the pandemic to inform future improvements.
- » Expand employee engagement efforts to include frontline workers and use tools such as Gallup's Sustainability 5 to monitor and benchmark trends in workforce perceptions, supplementing questions as are appropriate to the workplace context.
- » Test out some of the actionable ideas highlighted by peer companies earlier in this report.
- » Let CECP know if you are interested in pre-competitive collaboration on this issue. This topic feels ripe for a collaborative deep dive that would engage corporate and worker representatives on how to build better communication and worker voice structures that would benefit frontline workers as well as support corporate well-being and resiliency. CECP is prepared to support this dialogue should companies be interested and believes such conversations could yield creative and effective solutions.

xii <https://goodjobsinstitute.org/tools/>

xiii The Initiative is a collaboration of JUST Capital, PayPal, the Financial Health Network, and the Good Jobs Institute. <https://justcapital.com/reports/worker-financial-wellness-initiative/> and <https://justcapital.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Assessing-Workers-Financial-Wellness-Where-to-Start-.pdf>

xiv <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/a-call-to-reimagine-work-and-benefits64763/> and <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/the-complete-financial-lives-of-workers/>

xv At the time of the writing of this paper, the Build Back Better Act is being debated by Congress and includes paid family leave for private sector workers that would go into effect in 2024. It also includes provisions to make childcare more affordable.

BROADEN YOUR OUTREACH AND NETWORK OF ADVISORS:

Companies cannot separate themselves from the communities in which they operate and going forward they should recognize and reconsider their role as part of the community.

- » Broadening outreach in the communities in which they operate can help companies bring new voices to the conversation and lead to new solutions, from identifying talent pools and the necessary skills for today and tomorrow to troubleshooting during the next, inevitable crisis.
- » Broadening engagement with communities can also contribute to uplifting workforce morale and a sense of purpose, perhaps in unforeseen ways.
- » Let CECP know if you are interested in a conversation on lessons learned from other sectors. Initiatives such as IBM's P-Tech^{xvi} operate at the intersection of company and community.

INNOVATE AND INTEGRATE

By taking an integrated approach to ensuring that work “works” for everyone and aligning on purpose and priorities across the business, companies will be better positioned to reach expanded talent pools, to innovate, and, as a result, thrive.



We always say you don't bolt on D&I; you bake it in.

—KRISTYN RAMDIAL, SENIOR HR MANAGER,
GLOBAL TALENT ACQUISITION, P&G

CONTINUE TO INTEGRATE DEI: The pandemic, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement and its repercussions, have served to remind us of challenges around equity and inclusion within the frontline and blue-collar workforce, which in many companies is already diverse. The more that DEI, and in particular equity and inclusion, are integrated into daily operations, the more likely it will be automatically incorporated into responses to the next crisis and taken into account as workplaces implement operational changes such as increasing automation.

- » Ensure that equity is part of any wage and compensation assessment related to the frontline workforce.
- » Take a step back and assess how corporate response to the pandemic affected various populations within the frontline workforce and whether it was equitable and inclusive. Were communications linguistically and culturally appropriate? Were some workers valued over others? Did all workers feel safe at work, did they have equal voice to raise concerns without retribution, and did they have equitable access to measures and services implemented to support frontline workers? What systems were in place that drove inequities in corporate response?
- » As Human Resources teams work to reach all talent, whether they be individuals with child- and elder-care responsibilities, the partially retired, refugees, or the previously incarcerated, they should explicitly consider equity and inclusion as they do so. Leading companies will address key barriers faced by expanded talent pools.
- » Companies should consider engaging experts such as the Groundwater Institute^{xvii} to help ensure that work on equity and inclusion within the frontline context is effective and meaningful.

BUILD INTERNAL ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE BUSINESS:

Times of crisis can result in significant change. As individual business units refresh or even overhaul business goals, priorities, and operational strategies, it will be essential to build alignment across them.

- » Utilizing a comprehensive and integrated approach to the frontline workforce is essential for those companies seeking to make bold and creative moves to adapt to new challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.
- » For example, the government relations team should understand business goals related to DEI and to attracting and retaining talent in the frontline workforce, as well as internal initiatives related to wages and benefits, to inform their engagement in relevant policy initiatives.
- » Similarly, if Human Resources and plant management are rethinking strategies for job design and flexibility, or if they are exploring new ways to solicit worker voice, the labor relations team should be engaged.

xvi <https://www.ibm.org/initiatives/p-tech>

xvii <https://www.groundwaterinstitute.com>

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Walmart

Welch's

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Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose®



Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose® (CECP) is a trusted advisor to companies on their corporate purpose journeys to build long-term sustainable value and tell their impact stories. Working with CEOs and leaders in corporate responsibility, sustainability, foundations, investor relations, finance, legal, and communications, CECP shares actionable insights with its CEO-led coalition to address stakeholder needs.

Founded in 1999 by actor and philanthropist Paul Newman and other business leaders, CECP is a movement of more than 200 of the world's largest companies that represent \$11.2 trillion in revenues, \$23 billion in total community investment, 14 million employees, 30 million hours of employee engagement, and \$21 trillion in assets under management. CECP helps companies transform their strategy by providing benchmarking and analysis, convenings, and strategy and communications in the areas of societal/community investment, employee engagement, environmental social governance/sustainable business, DEI, and telling the story.

Authors of the report are available to speak on the topic to corporate leaders and media.

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