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WORKERS

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How people feel about their employer's workplace practices and their day-to-day experiences on the job depends on their rank in the organization, according to the American Psychological Association's 2015 Work and Well-Being Survey conducted online by Harris Poll among more than 1,500 U.S. adults in January and February.

Compared to front-line employees (those who are directly involved with the production of products or provision of services), more senior leaders viewed their organization's culture positively, reported having opportunities available to them and said they regularly tap into programs and policies designed to benefit employees.

Senior leaders were more likely than front-line workers to say their organization values employee involvement (71 percent vs. 51 percent), work-life balance (68

percent vs. 55 percent) and recognition (63 percent vs. 52 percent). Compared to

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say they regularly participate in their employer's health and wellness programs, compared to less than a third (32 percent) of those with front-line jobs. With senior leaders benefitting disproportionately from available workplace programs and policies, it is no surprise that 70 percent say they feel valued by their employer, compared to just over half of front-line workers (51 percent).

“Business leaders need to consider that their perceptions of the organization and experiences at work may be very different from those of their employees,” says David W. Ballard, PsyD, MBA, head of APA's Center for Organizational Excellence. “This highlights the critical importance of effective communication and involving employees in decision making.”

In addition, the 2015 Work and Well-Being Survey included a validated scale used to identify potential cases of depression and anxiety. Findings suggest that 4 percent of working Americans were experiencing severe elevations in symptoms related to these common mental health disorders, with another 7 percent reporting moderate elevations and 17 percent describing mild elevations.

The survey also looked at positive mental health. Scores on a six-item resilience scale and an eight-item measure of psychological well-being suggest that working Americans have an average ability to recover from stress and that just under half (45 percent) are flourishing, defined as self-perceived success in important areas, such as positive relationships, feelings of competence and having a meaningful life. Senior leaders were significantly more likely to report higher levels of both psychological well-being and resilience, compared to front-line workers. Working Americans who reported higher levels of anxiety and depression were less likely to be resilient and also showed lower levels of psychological well-being.

“When people have access to and use programs and policies that are designed to create a psychologically healthy workplace, it's a win-win for the employees and the

organization,” Ballard said. “We need to ensure that all employees – no matter where

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valued. Similarly, 9 out of 10 working Americans who trust their employer and feel they are treated fairly say they are motivated to do their best work, compared to less than half (48 percent) of those who do not trust their employer and less than a third (31 percent) of employees who feel treated unfairly.

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