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New Research from EBRI:

Health & Retirement Plans Still a Strong Draw to Workers, Benefit to Employers

WASHINGTON—Even though American workers are evenly split in their satisfaction levels with employer-provided benefits, the latest “value of benefits” by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) continues to find that companies offering benefits have a competitive advantage over those that do not.

“Employers that offer a strong employee benefits package—especially health coverage—that balances costs and choice should find themselves with a competitive advantage over other companies when it comes to attracting and retaining desirable workers,” said Paul Fronstin, director of EBRI’s Health Research and Education program and co-author of the new report. “They also will have more satisfied employees overall.”

Among the key findings of the latest EBRI/Greenwald & Associates Health and Voluntary Workplace Benefits Survey (WBS):

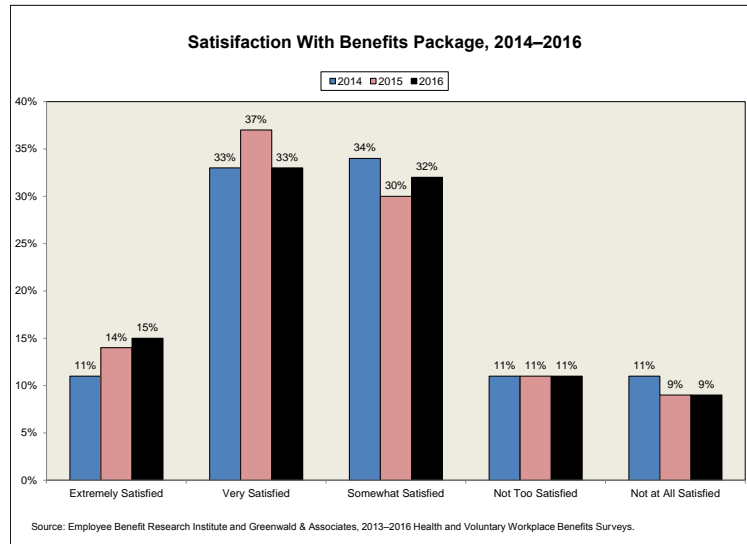
- Eighty-seven percent of workers report that employment-based health insurance is extremely or very important, followed by a retirement savings plan (77 percent) and dental or vision (72 percent).
- Workers identify lower cost, choice, and the convenience of paying pre-tax and through payroll deductions as strong advantages of voluntary employment-based benefits.
- One-third of workers (32 percent) are only somewhat satisfied with the benefits offered by their current employer, and 20 percent are not satisfied.
- One-half (49 percent) are extremely or very confident that their employer will continue to offer a similar benefits package three years from now. Those who are less confident that their benefits will remain the same tend to believe their benefits will weaken.
- Two-thirds are confident in their ability to make informed benefits choices. Yet, nearly as many would welcome benefits advice from a third-party advisor or an online program.

The EBRI report notes that with the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and continued trends shifting costs to employees, many workers remain confident that their employers will continue to offer similar benefits into the future. Some, however, have expressed concern about their benefits weakening in the coming years.

The WBS finds that workers clearly preferred that their employers continue to pay for benefits. Approximately 4 in 10 each expressed a preference for employers continuing to offer and pay for benefits the way they have in the past (42 percent) or choosing benefits from a list provided by the employer, with

the employer continuing to pay the amount they currently spend toward these benefits and the worker paying any remaining amount (39 percent).

Just 2 in 10 (20 percent) preferred shifting toward a system where the employer gives the worker the money they currently spend on benefits and leaves it up to workers to decide whether to purchase benefits on their own and how much to spend.



The full report, “Value of Workplace Benefits: Findings from the 2016 Health and Voluntary Workplace Benefits Survey,” is published in the April 18, 2017, *EBRI Notes* available online at www.ebri.org

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