WELLNESS AND WELLBEING IN THE OFFICE WORKPLACE IN CHINA

CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD
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ALL WELL AND GOOD

GREATER CHINA OCCUPIER RESEARCH March 2018

Contents

P1 / Executive summary

P2 / Introduction

P3 / Health in China

P4 / Wellness and wellbeing – Government drivers

P6 / Wellness and wellbeing – Corporate drivers

P8 / Wellness and wellbeing – Employee drivers

P10 / Wellness and wellbeing – The global standards

P17 / Wellness and wellbeing – Latest trends so far in China

P20 / Wellness and wellbeing – Current thinking in China

P26 / Key takeaways

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jonathan Wei
Managing Director
Head of Occupier Services
China

"For countless corporates, the cost of employee healthcare is a huge financial concern. In this context, wellness and wellbeing programmes, which were once treated as a fringe benefit, are now being viewed more as vital to the overall success of the company."

David Shi
Senior Director
Head of PBC
East China and Central China

"Wellness and wellbeing programmes aren't just about lessening the cost of employee healthcare; they are also about improving employee productivity. Healthy employees are happy employees, and the happier the employee is generally the more productive he or she tends to be."

A rising living standard in China is raising life expectancy. At the same time, new health problems are appearing as a result of societal affluence, and these are growing in volume as more workers switch to jobs in the tertiary sector.

For China, it is essential to make sure the workforce in the country remains operational and healthy. If workforce health declines, generally worker productivity, household incomes, savings, assets and consumption as well as corporate and personal income governmental taxation revenue can experience long-lasting attenuation.

For corporations in China, one key underlining reason to have healthy employees on their books is productivity and, especially, employee productivity. Any corporate wellness and wellbeing programme which makes certain a workforce is healthy and happy is a programme which is better at safeguarding the corporation's balance sheet.

Globally, there is an array of office workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes a corporation in China could bring into being. Out of the group of CRE professionals working in China we interviewed, the vast majority have heard of wellness and wellbeing.

Finally, most of those companies operating in China we surveyed have either adopted a wellness and wellbeing programme or will adopt a programme, which is very encouraging for workplace wellness and wellbeing implementation and execution in China in the future.

Shaun Brodie
Senior Director
Head of Occupier Research, Greater China

"With the overall workforce in China becoming more sophisticated, there is a rising mindfulness not only of the advantages of being healthy and happy as an individual but the ways that individual citizens can apply to make sure that they are healthier and happier, and an effective workplace wellness and wellbeing programme is one option."

INTRODUCTION

So what is wellness and what does wellbeing mean? According to the Oxford English dictionary, wellness is defined as a 'state of being in good health' and wellness as a 'state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy'.

In today's fast paced society, remaining in a state of good health can often prove taxing for many people. Some suffer work related stress, others don't exercise enough, some smoke or drink too much, and others don't have enough sleep. The health risk list is long. Office workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes, when properly implemented, can make the workforce healthier, even if it is simply a case of lessening work related stress.

This report commences with a section highlighting the general health issues China is expected to face in the years to come. The report also looks at why it is important for China to have a healthy workforce and what the government is trying to do to mitigate any potential issues. Next, the report examines why there is a need for companies in China to have healthy employees and why employees themselves need to remain healthy.

After this, the report focuses on the global certification standards surrounding wellness and wellbeing, with particular attention being paid to the WELL Building Standard. Further, details are provided on what has been achieved so far regarding wellness and wellbeing in the office workplace in China, with again some focus on WELL certification implementation in the country.

Finally, stemming from a 10 question questionnaire survey we conducted on companies and CRE professionals in China, the report provides insight on the current thinking surrounding workplace wellness and wellbeing issues and implementation in China before offering some key takeaways.

HEALTH IN CHINA

Due to an increase in living standards, people in China are living longer. According to Statista, in 2015, the average life expectancy at birth in China had reached about 76 years. However, with the rise in societal affluence and a transition to greater working population numbers employed in tertiary sector jobs, so new health problems are on the rise.

Looking at the bigger state-of-health picture today, every individual, be they employees in the office workplace or not, is at risk of contracting an illness or disease. In China, the major public health threat today is from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as of 2014, NCDs accounted for 87% of deaths in China and 82% of the total disease burden. NCDs pose a major challenge to China's healthcare system and its future economic growth.

Part of the reason for a rise in NCDs in China is lifestyle, and part of the reason lies in an aging population. The percentage of the total Chinese population aged 60 and above was 15.8% in 2016, more than twice as much as that in 1986 (at 7.8%) (Figure 1).

Another NCD rise linked factor in China is a change in lifestyle associated with the rapid pace of urbanisation and the life pressures associated with urban living plus the growth of the tertiary sector (which has further exacerbated the movement of people to urbanise as more jobs are created in this sector), and its predominance of sedentary deskbound jobs (Figure 1). As Dr. Winnie Wang from Bristol University said, "Urbanisation leads to lifestyle changes such as reduced physical activities, added living and working pressure and unhealthy dietary changes, all of which contribute to higher risks of having NCDs".

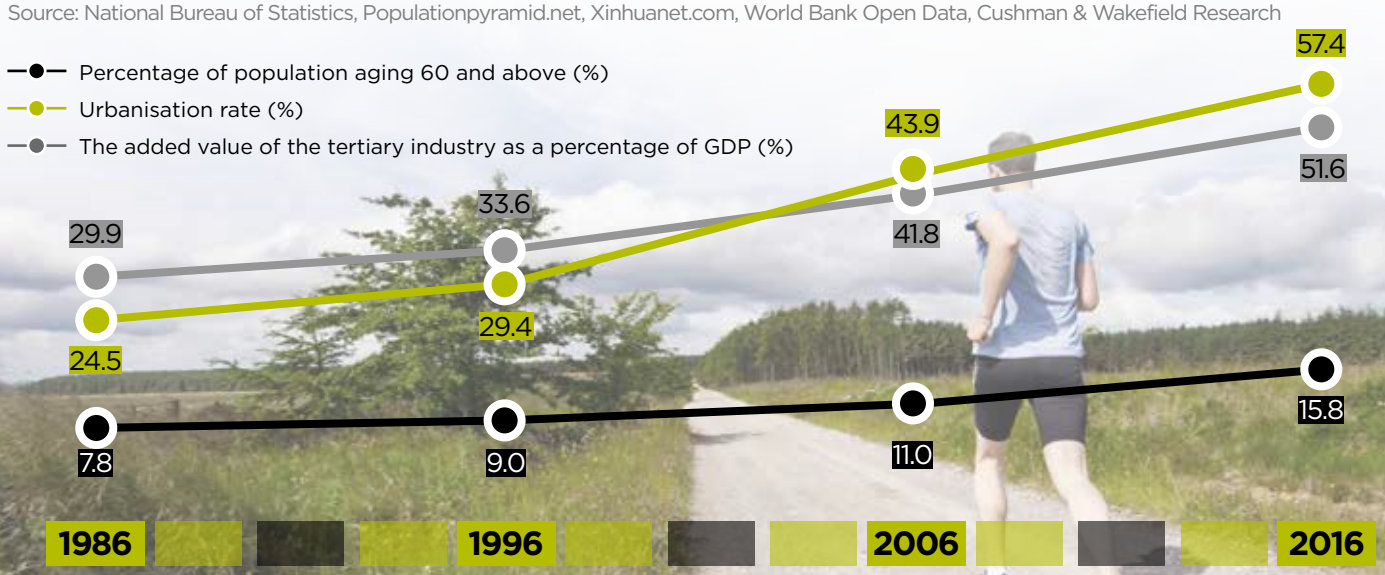
White collar workers in China are most at risk. Recent research conducted by the Shanghai Foreign Service Group indicated that only 64% of white collar workers in Shanghai had healthy lifestyles in 2016, down from 77% in 2015. It also found that 53% of males in the city are overweight, 46% of males suffer from fat build-up in their livers and about 26% of males have elevated levels of lipids in their blood. Being overweight, having high cholesterol and showing elevated levels of lipids in the blood have been identified by the WHO as key metabolic changes that underline most NCDs.

High urban working pressure has certainly played its part. In China, working overtime is common among white collar urban workers. As estimated by a researcher at Beijing Normal University, Chinese workers on average work 2,000 to 2,200 hours per year, 17% higher than their counterparts in the U.S. What's more, according to a survey initiated by Zhaopin.com, 56.6% of white collar workers in China complain that they have no spare time to exercise. This is certainly a factor in forcing people into living a more sedentary life and creating greater associated health, wellness and wellbeing concerns amongst the population down the road.

Figure 1

China: Percentage of the population aged 60 and above, the urbanisation rate and the added value of the tertiary industry as a percentage of GDP

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Populationpyramid.net, Xinhuanet.com, World Bank Open Data, Cushman & Wakefield Research



GOVERNMENT DRIVERS

For China, it is critical to ensure the workforce in the country remains active and healthy. It has been proven that productivity, household incomes, savings and assets suffer long-term depletion due to the chronic nature of incapacitating health, resulting in a long-lasting reduction in consumption within the economy.

As for firms, ill-health can also reduce productivity as well as efficiency, restricting their revenue, earnings and, ultimately for a government, the amount of fiscal income provided by corporations. Working population ill-health in turn can negatively impact government fiscal income as well as expenditure directly. Examples of direct negative impact include a reduction on received corporation and personal income tax and increased costs associated with health service financing and social security payments for debilitated workers.

Thus, potential GDP loss due to poor working population health can be significant. Looking at China in particular, recent research by the China Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham showed that from 2012 to 2030, because of four major NCDs, China is expected to lose around US$19 trillion in output worth, almost twice as much as its total GDP in 2014 at US$10.4 trillion.

Lower levels of consumption in the economy, lower taxation income, increased healthcare costs and potential GDP loss due to working population ill-health all have not been lost on the Chinese government. To mitigate these issues in a number of ways, in October 2016, the State Council released its 'Healthy China 2030' guideline plan. Under the plan, by 2030, China is expected to be able to reach the benchmarks set by high income nations regarding healthy lifestyle, services, security, environmental and industrial standards.

Furthermore, the government has recognised the severe prevalence of NCDs and has increased its commitment to NCD control mainly through general policy design and decentralised implementation. Already, China has launched the "National Plan on NCD Prevention and Treatment (2012–2015)" and has initiated a control programme on tobacco. Additionally, as stated by the Chinese Medical Association, to promote further healthcare reform and to strengthen primary care, the government plans to train a sufficient number of family physicians or primary care providers to better manage hypertension patients to better control their blood pressure.

Meanwhile, the government has initiated educational campaigns to promote healthy living. For example, the "National Campaign on Healthy Lifestyle for All" programme and the "Four Reductions" programme (a national programme to reduce intake of salt, sugar, oil, and alcohol) have been launched.

CORPORATE DRIVERS

Simply, employees are the most valuable assets of any company, whether the company is a global multinational or a domestic company solely based in China. As with governments, so corporations in turn have their own motivations to ensure their employees remain healthy and happy. For corporations in China, one major underlining factor is productivity and, in particular, employee productivity. Any corporate wellness and wellbeing programme which ensures a workforce is healthy and happy is a programme which is better at safeguarding the corporation's balance sheet. Amongst other aspects, employees who are satisfied at work are more prone to:

- **Remain at the company (thereby, ensuring top talent is retained);**
- **Innovate (thereby, ensuring a healthy pipeline of new goods and services is created and maintained);**
- **Work harder (thereby, ensuring the company gets the best out of the employee, and;**
- **Collaborate and cooperate as a team (thereby, ensuring an effective cross-feed of new ideas is effected and better work efficiency is established).**

One other major wellness and wellbeing programme implementation driver for corporates is the notion of protecting the bottom line (Figure 2).

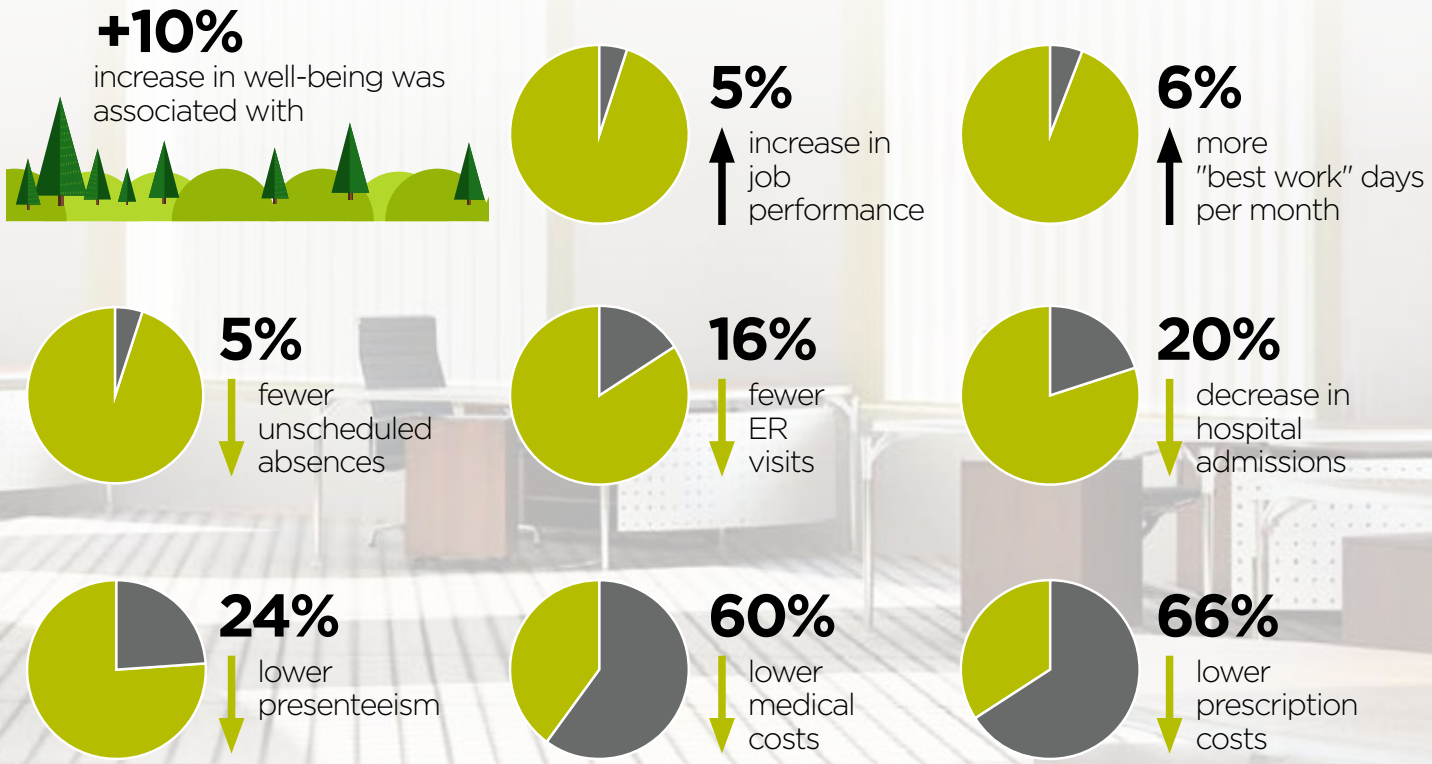
By investing in proven workplace wellness and wellbeing programme expenses, such as employee healthcare, general costs will be lowered as will costs related to employee absenteeism.

It is all well and good recognising the benefits of having an employee wellness and wellbeing programme in the office workplace but it is another thing in actually implementing and establishing a successful programme. To ensure programmes are effective, there are some simple guidelines to follow. Good wellness and wellbeing programmes are:

Figure 2

The impact of workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes on corporate cost and employee productivity

Source: Moderncities.com, Cushman & Wakefield Research



- Straightforward;
- Founded on employee's personal values;
- Built around the daily lives of employees;
- Appealing;
- Able to stimulate participation, and;
- Goal-oriented.

Beyond this, it is also important for a corporation to create and install measurable metrics for each wellness and wellbeing programme, where success (or not as the case may be) can be evaluated and feedback provided. For example, wellness and wellbeing programmes related to employee metabolism can be measured by the reduction of related health risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, etc.

When implementing a wellness and wellbeing programme, it is important:

- That the programme gets full buy-in commitment from senior management and overall approval at the general employee level;
- That all wellness resources are researched and those resources required are thoroughly vetted and secured before programme enactment;
- That full awareness of the programme is rolled out throughout the company, and;
- That the programme is fully integrated into and across the whole organisation.

At the initial stages of office workplace wellness and wellbeing programme implementation, some of the work can be executed simultaneously. For example, programme marketing and resource evaluation and acquisition can all be conducted simultaneously. Additionally, leading the programme with activities which secure quick wins is a great way to ensure overall programme success.

EMPLOYEE DRIVERS

Here, it gets personal. With the general workforce in China becoming better educated, there is a growing awareness of not only the benefits of being healthy and happy as an individual but the means that individual citizens can utilise to ensure that they are healthier and happier.

A key employee benefit stemming from a well-executed workplace wellness and wellbeing programme is the solidification of a sense of belonging and camaraderie amongst co-workers. Under such programmes, employees will be able to participate in activities which aren't linked to work, be it physical training in an office-located gym or by lunching together in a specially designated office social area. By interconnecting more, employees will feel and will continue to feel an important part of the overall team.

Critical to any office workplace wellness and wellbeing programme implementation and establishment is the level of interest from the employees. In some companies in China, it is sometimes the nature of the company which dictates which employee level group drives a wellness and wellbeing programme. For example, in start-ups (where there is a large number of younger employees) it is the junior employees who tend to take the lead in paving the way and providing wellness programmes within the company. In fact, when looking at the picture outside of China, according to the U.S. Small Business Association, 85% of start-ups said wellness programmes are worth the investment and 63% are already embracing such programmes.

THE GLOBAL STANDARDS

Throughout the world there is a plethora of office workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes a company in China could implement. However, one programme which has caught the imagination of individual employees and corporates alike, and has seen a fair degree of project implementation, is the WELL Building Standard.

Unveiled in the U.S. in 2014, WELL looks at 'how design, operations and behaviours within the places where we live, work, learn and play can be optimised to advance human health and wellbeing'...and essentially over the last couple of years, this standard is changing people's perspective on how they view their workplace in China. Encompassing seven central wellness and wellbeing concepts, such as air, water, comfort, fitness, nourishment, light and mind, WELL is an adaptable standard and is a cornerstone for office workplace design now and in the future.

The seven concepts are further distilled into a hundred features which are then scored to complete the whole certification evaluation. Looking at the evaluation weighting for each concept, with a weighting of 29%, air is the most important and with a weighting of 8%, both water and fitness are the least important (Figure 3).

Following the launch of WELL, in January 2017, China also initiated its own 'healthy' building standard titled "The Assessment Standard for Healthy Buildings" /ASC 02-2016. This standard has six categories which include air, water, comfort, fitness, humanities and service. Like WELL, air is weighted the most, at 24%, while at 10% only fitness has the least weighting (Figure 4).

Figure 3

WELL: The seven key wellness and wellbeing concepts

Source: IWBI, Cushman & Wakefield Research

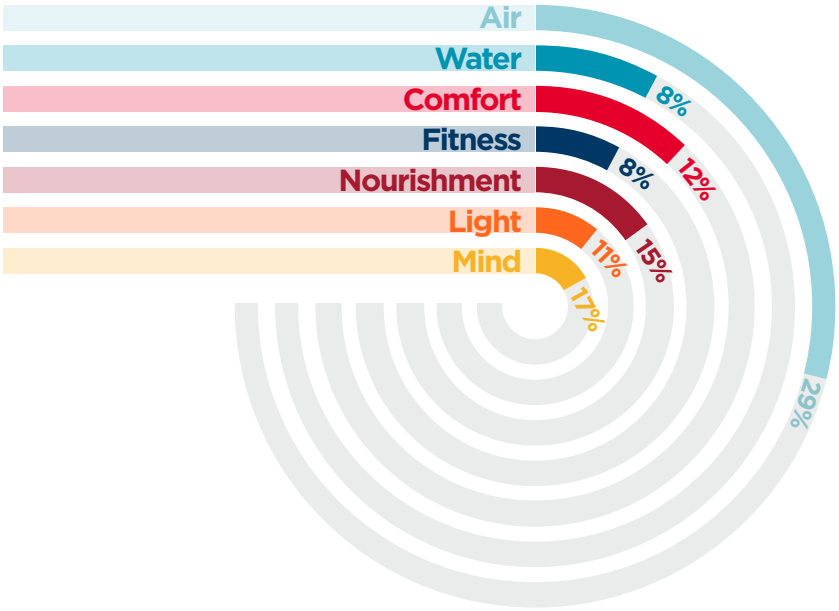
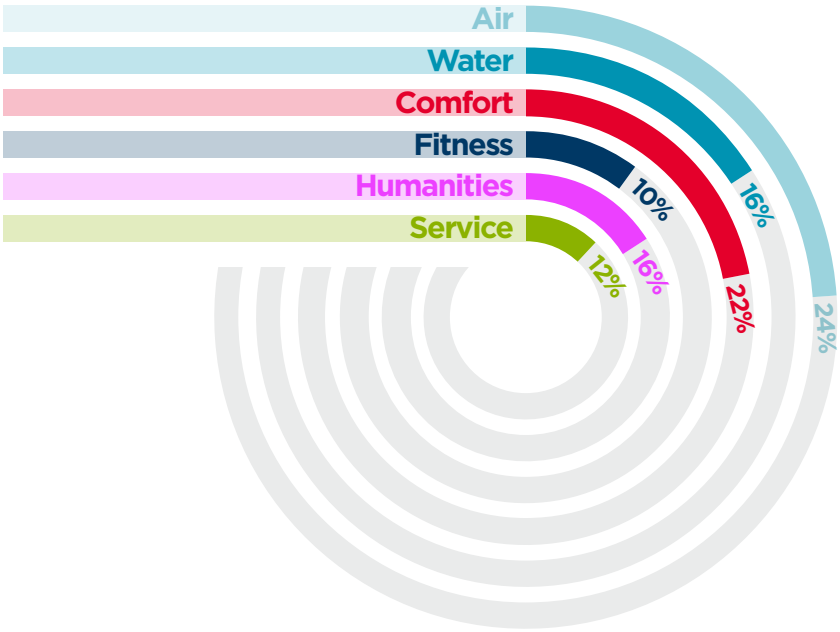


Figure 4

The Assessment Standard for Healthy Buildings: The six key wellness and wellbeing concepts

Source: Architectural Society of China, Cushman & Wakefield Research



THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Air

Inhaling clean air is critical for sustained life. We expect air to be clean but we often don't question the condition of the air we take in. However, in recent times in China, there is an increased awareness of the relationship between health and poor air quality in many Chinese cities (Figure 5).

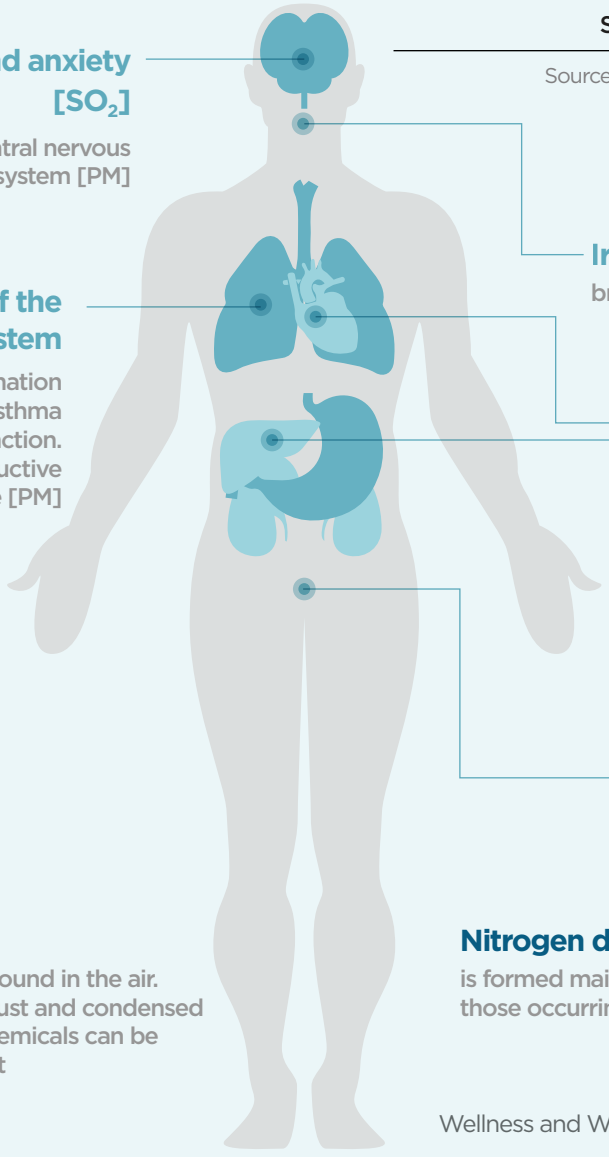
Certain health effects may appear immediately after one exposure or multiple exposures to a contaminant. These can involve eye, nose and throat discomfort. They can also include headaches, dizziness and fatigue. Other health effects may appear years later. These effects can involve respiratory disease, heart disease and cancer and can either prove debilitating or fatal. In fact, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, air pollution causes 200,000 early deaths each year in the U.S.

Polluted air can arise from a number of different sources, from agriculture, from power plants, from factories, from vehicles and from the built environment. Polluted air can work its way into an office building via a poorly run and/or designed ventilation system. Indoor air quality can also suffer from indoor materials emitting volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and microbial pathogens, which can all lead to sick building syndrome (SBS), days off work and lower levels of employee productivity.

Figure 5

Some effects of air pollution on the human body

Source: learnaboutair.com, Cushman and Wakefield Research



Headache and anxiety [SO_2]
impact on the central nervous system [PM]

Irritation of eyes, nose and throat
breathing problems [O_3, PM, NO_2, SO_2]

Impacts of the respiratory system
imitation, inflammation and infections. Asthma and reduced lung function. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [PM]

Cardiovascular diseases
[PM, O_3, SO_2]

Impacts on liver
spleen and blood [NO_2]

Impacts on the reproductive system
[PM]

Fine Particles [PM]
are particles that float around in the air. Sea salt, black carbon, dust and condensed particles from certain chemicals can be classed as a PM pollutant

Nitrogen dioxide [NO_2]
is formed mainly by combustion processes such as those occurring in car engines and power plants

THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Water

Like clean air, clean drinkable water is essential for human health. Around 70% of the human body is comprised of water and it very important for the optimal functioning of our bodies – from waste removal, to nutrient transportation, to temperature control and more (Figure 6).

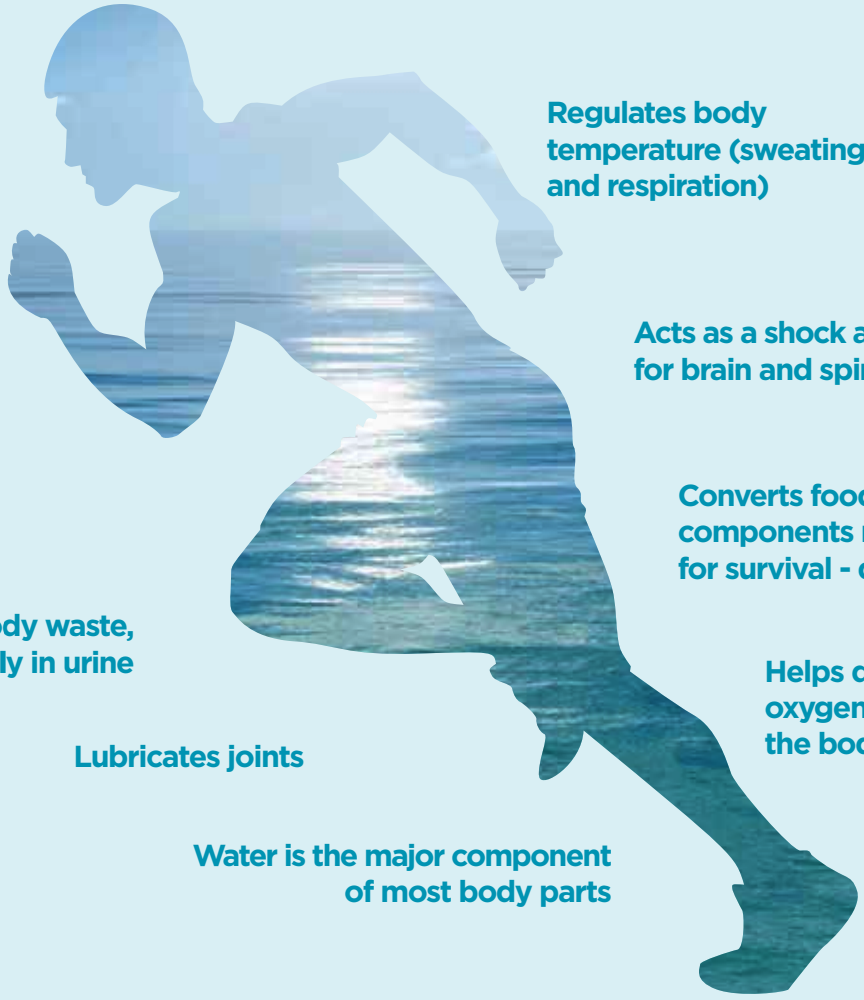
Access to safe water is critical. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around two million people throughout the globe die on an annual basis due to polluted water and poor sanitation and hygiene.

Water contaminants, such as heavy metals, arsenic, microbes, pharmaceuticals, personal care products (PPCPs) and water additives, such as chlorine and chloramine (which can produce trihalomethanes (THMs) and haloacetic acids (HAAs), as well as N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)), all pose a threat to human health.

For employees in China to remain fit, healthy and productive, it is important for office workplace drinkable water sources to have adequate filtration systems in place to prevent any harmful substances from passing from the municipal water supply system to office employees.

Figure 6
Your liquid asset:
What does water do for you?

Source: USGC,
Cushman & Wakefield Research



THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Comfort

The office workplace in China should be a comfortable place to work in. Comfort mitigates stress, injury and ill health. On this note, it is very important for an office space to have good acoustics, ergonomics and thermal comfort to ensure employee wellbeing and work output are maximised.

Acoustics can be enhanced by good office layout and design, solid office workplace behavioural policies and practices and effective use of technology. Meanwhile ergonomics can be improved by designing navigable office spaces and by providing well designed furniture (Figure 7).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S., the ratio of musculoskeletal and nervous systems disorders in 2014, such as back and neck pain, among the working population was 31.9 newly diagnosed disorders per 10,000 full-time workers. In 2014, the median days away from work due to these disorders was 13.

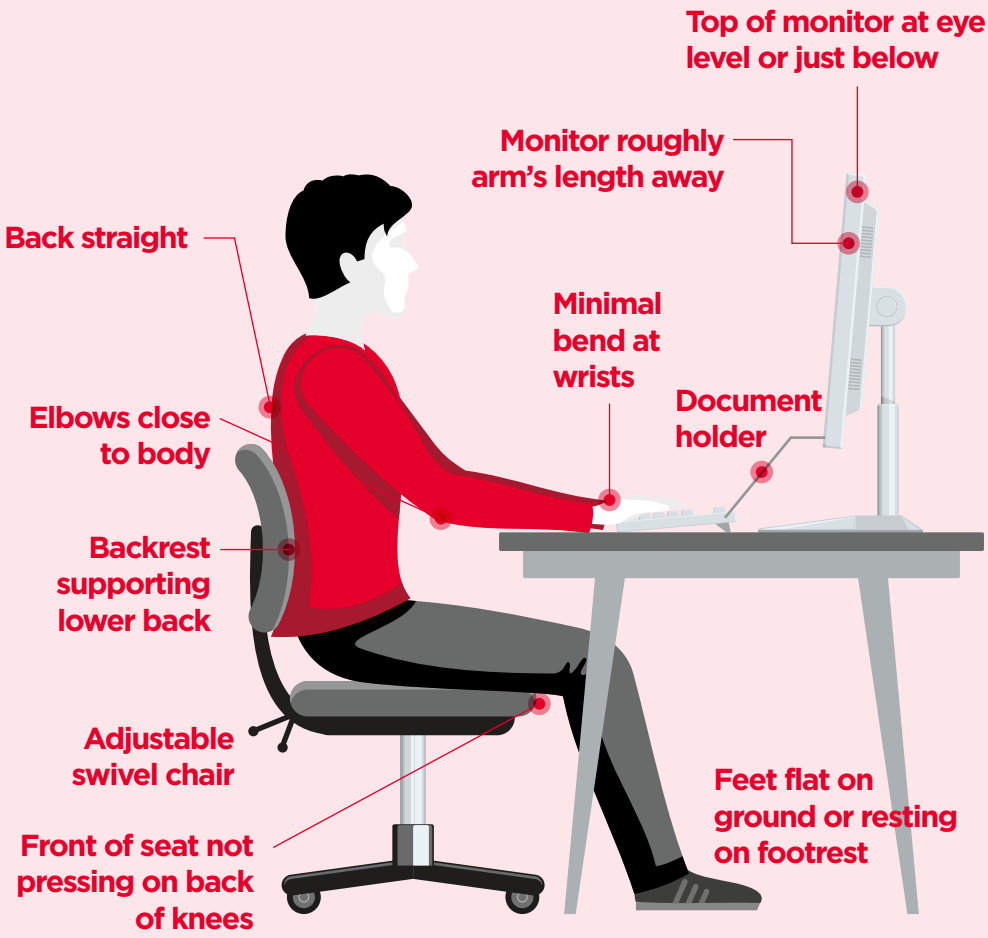
As for thermal comfort, according to WELL, 'six primary personal and environmental variables contribute to an occupant's thermal comfort:

- Air speed;
- Dry bulb temperature;
- Radiant temperature;
- Humidity;
- Metabolic rate, and;
- Clothing or other insulation...

...all of which interact to create a subjective, individualised response'. Being subjective, it is important to take a holistic several-strategy approach when looking to augment thermal comfort in the office workplace.

Figure 7
Workstation ergonomics: The ideal set up

Source: myDr.com, Cushman & Wakefield Research



THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Fitness

Given increasing urbanisation and augmented convenience throughout society, today, many people in China lead fairly sedate lives. This has led to a decrease in fitness and an increase in certain diseases, like type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Fitness as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is, 'The ability to carry out daily tasks with vigour and alertness, without undue fatigue, and with ample energy to enjoy leisure-time pursuits and respond to emergencies'. Following on from this, it is imperative that companies in China be able to provide time for office employees, and maybe an environment in the office as well, for regular physical activity, so that their vigour and alertness are carried throughout the working day and their work levels are optimised.

THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Nourishment

Alongside physical sedentariness, increasingly poor eating habits have contributed to more people in China becoming overweight. This has also led to a rise in heart disease type 2 diabetes and even cancer. Good nutrition is important because it performs a significant role in health preservation, weight control, cognitive agility and disease preclusion (Figure 8).

However, the level of observance to dietetic advice in China is falling and this has led to health problems, like obesity, becoming greater wellbeing issues in the country. As a society becomes more urbanised, as the number of tertiary sector jobs rise, so obesity rates also tend to rise. The U.S. is a prime example, where according to the CDC, obesity levels have more than doubled in the last 30 years among adults, going from 15% to 35%.

To guarantee that the right food and/or the right nutrition advice is made available to office employees, it is necessary for companies in China provide healthy snacks around the office and/or healthy food menus in the staff canteen and/or regular food and nutrition training programmes. By taking care of their employees in this way, companies will reap the work production benefits in the future.

THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

Light

Light is essentially electromagnetic radiation which lies within a certain segment of the electromagnetic spectrum. Visible light is perceptible to the human eye and is a key component in the sense of sight. Light enters the eye and the information is then sent to the brain. Daytime vision, peripheral vision, vision in dim lighting environments and colour discernment are all facilitated by the eye and by the brain. Additionally, light also facilitates the circadian rhythm, or 'body clock' on a 24 hour basis.

Today, lighting codes (such as the guideline produced by the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES)) offer illuminance suggestions for various internal areas of a property, including office workspace. These codes ensure the brightness of light in the internal areas is at a certain level to make sure eyestrain and headaches are minimised. If more office space in China were illuminated to the right level, then greater employee comfort, job satisfaction and productivity would be achieved (Figure 9).

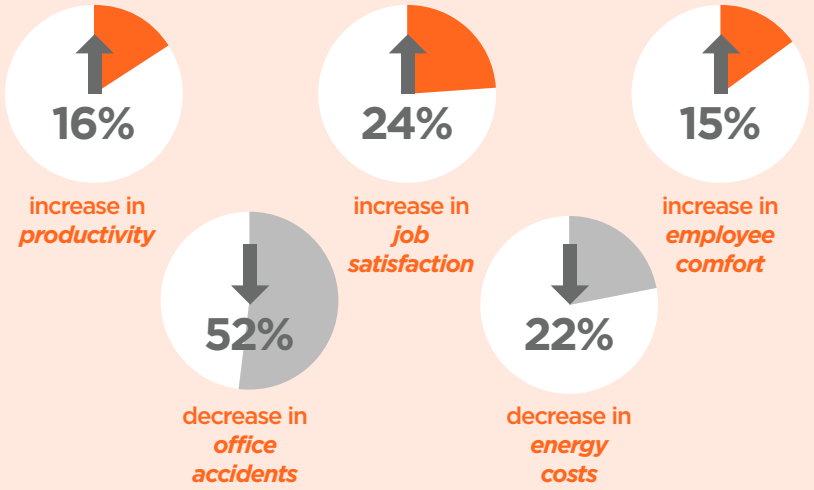
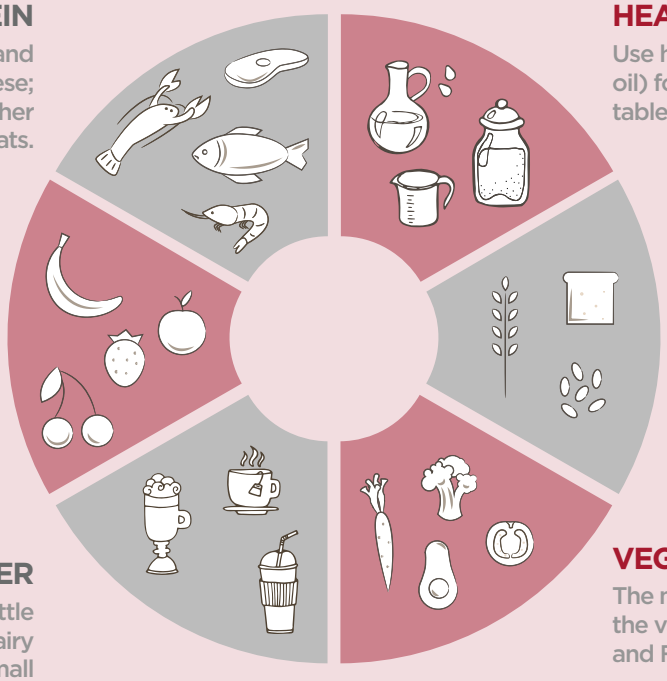


Figure 9
The benefits of good office lighting

Source: Eden Springs, Cushman & Wakefield Research

Figure 8
The healthy eating plate

Source: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard Medical School, Cushman & Wakefield Research



HEALTHY PROTEIN
Choose fish, poultry, beans, and nuts; limit red meat and cheese; avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.

HEALTHY OILS
Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salad, and at the table. Limit butter. Avoid trans fat.

FRUITS
Eat plenty of fruits of all colours.

WHOLE GRAINS
Eat a variety of whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice). Limit refined grains (like white rice and white bread).

WATER
Drink water, tea, or coffee(with little or no sugar). Limited milk/dairy (1-2 servings/day) and juice (1 small glass/day). Avoid sugary drinks.

VEGETABLES
The more veggies - and the greater the variety – the better. Potatoes and French fries don't count.

THE SEVEN CONCEPTS OF WELL: A LITTLE MORE DETAIL ON THE REASONING

With our brains and bodies indissolubly linked, mental health is a level of psychological wellbeing. When we exercise, serotonin is released and this can make us feel good. Worrying about such things as work, pay and self-confidence, conversely, can generate physiological stress. In fact, information suggests 450 million people around the world are adversely affected by mental health (Figure 10).

Globally, depression places fourth amongst the top 10 prominent causes of disease. It is predicted that within 20 years, mental illness will become the primary cause of disease globally.

To help relieve the levels of stress at the office workplace for employees in China, again it is important for companies to provide time and/or space to office employees, so that they can regularly exercise. Regular training programmes focusing on mental health and stress management should also be implemented. The less employees spend time worrying, the more time employees can spend on productive work.

Figure 10
Mental health – A few facts

Source: Mental Health First Aid, Cushman & Wakefield Research

American adults has a mental illness

Mental illnesses are the leading cause of disability worldwide

1 in 10 full-time employees has an addiction

40% of employees with a mental illness take time off because of it – up to 10 days a year

More than 35% of managers feel they receive no formal support or resources to help employees

HR managers know the toll mental illness can take on the company. Yet, only 15% feel managers are training to recognize the problem and share support and resources.

WELLNESS AND WELLBEING

LATEST TRENDS SO FAR IN CHINA

WELL certification

Encompassing various types of properties, today, over 530 projects have been WELL certified globally. In China, 114 projects have the WELL designation and by country comparison, only the U.S. has more WELL certified projects (Table 11).

Office space design and wellness and wellbeing

Office space design elements which are quick and easy wellness and wellbeing wins and which are increasingly working their way into office space in China are:

1 Colour utilisation in the workplace

Colour affects mood. Red raises the energy level, while blue reduces blood pressure and slows respiration and heart rate. When thinking about the purpose of a room in an office workplace, such as a brainstorming meeting room or a quiet refuge area, it is important to choose the room colour well. The right colour will further enhance the room's work purpose.

2 Natural light in the workplace

Evidence has shown that natural light at work ensures better sleep at night, promotes greater work communication, increases happiness, lowers blood pressure and augments the level of alertness.

Table 11

Number of WELL certified property projects by country (November 2017)

Source: IWBI, Cushman & Wakefield Research

Rank	Country	No. of certified projects
1	United States	253
2	China	114
3	Australia	45
4	France	40
5	Canada	24
6	United Kingdom	24
7	Netherlands	11
8	Spain	11
9	Mexico	10
10	United Arab Emirates	10

3 Plants in the workplace

Greenery in the office can reduce stress, contribute to purer air quality and improve productivity.

Other wellness and wellbeing office space design elements which could be incorporated more in office workplaces in China are:

1 A space that looks out on to nature

A line of sight with the natural environment outside an office workplace is both stimulating and calming to an employee and is beneficial to overall wellbeing of the working staff.

2 A space with a good presence of water

Likewise, water in and around the office is enthralling and palliative and again instils a strong sense of wellbeing amongst the employees.

3 A space that mimics nature

feels salubrious and well balanced and makes an office working environment that much more comfortable for the employees. This designed office space can have:

- Broadcasted sounds of natures, such as birdsongs;
- Automatically released plant oil scents;
- Artificial airflow and temperature variation;
- Dynamic and diffused lighting, and;
- Biomorphic design forms and patterns.

4 A quiet refuge space

feels safe and offers a sensation of retreat and rest. A good refuge space feels distinct or exclusive from the surrounding office space without being totally disengaged. After spending a part of the day in this space, an employee will feel rested and reinvigorated to work.

Implementation challenges are ever present and have to be dealt with

When executing on office workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes and office design, challenges to implementation do occur, not just in China but also around the world. A few of them include:

- Buy-in from the top management – For any wellness and wellbeing programme and/or office space design to succeed, the upper management of a company need to be fully on board and endorse the programme and/or design. Once on board, effective rollout stands a better chance of success;
- Mitigating air and water pollution – This is an ever-present issue. For example, if internal ventilated air is purified but an employee opens a window on a polluted day, then all the good work can literally go out the window;
- Optimising the use of wellness and wellbeing inspired office space – Office space designed with wellness and wellbeing in mind needs to be used in the appropriate manner it was designed for. For example, a refuge space should not be used for loud brainstorming meetings and visa-versa, and meeting rooms used for energetic brainstorming should not be used for rest and recuperation;
- Optimising wellness and wellbeing inspired programmes – These programmes can vary from fitness training to providing healthy snacks around the office for employees. Awareness of the existence of these programmes needs to be constant so that employees within the office are fully cognisant of all the programmes on offer at any one time, and;
- Committing to maintaining wellness and wellbeing certified space performance – Certification for many standards is not a one-off award but is reviewed on a regular basis. Therefore, it is important that a company which is thinking of going for certification understands that it is an ongoing long term commitment.

Challenges aside, many companies in China have forged ahead and have set about transforming their workspace to being one that is more wellness and wellbeing friendly. Two examples happen to be in Shanghai: Cushman & Wakefield's office on Nanjing West Road and Haworth's office along the same road, which also happens to be the first WELL certified space in Asia.

CASE 1

Cushman & Wakefield's Shanghai Office

Incorporated wellness and wellbeing elements include:

- Air purification and online monitoring system;
- Sound dampening walls;
- VOC free sealants and paints;
- Direct drinking water system and water purification system;
- Ergonomic office furniture;
- Aesthetic space design;
- Smart lighting system, and;
- Indoor fitness equipment.

CASE 2

Haworth's Shanghai Office

Incorporated wellness and wellbeing elements include:

- Ventilation system which allows for and incorporates increased levels of fresh air exchange;
- Installation of ergonomic furniture;
- Sit-stand desk options available;
- Non-toxic and non-off gassing materials used;
- Air and water quality filtering and testing employed;
- Task lighting for workstations;
- Space set aside for fitness training, and;
- Space acoustic performance set according to the WELL standard.

CURRENT THINKING IN CHINA

Now that we have discussed several fundamental wellness and wellbeing topics, based on a 10 question questionnaire survey, it's time to consider the on-the-ground feeling concerning companies implementing wellness and wellbeing programmes and design in their office space in China from the perspective of companies and real estate practitioners working in these companies.

Question 1

Are you aware of the concept of wellness and wellbeing in the workplace?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research

Out of the group of companies and CRE professionals working in China we interviewed, at 90%, the vast majority had heard of wellness and wellbeing. This is quite understandable because even though the concept and organisations like WELL have been around for a relatively short period time in China, related wellness programmes and WELL space/project certifications have been readily and rapidly adopted in the region. As mentioned previously, for example, the total number of WELL certified projects in China, now tallies to rank number two in the world, just behind the U.S.

Question 2

When considering wellness and wellbeing in the workplace in China, your company...

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research

Our results emphatically show that around 60% of those surveyed companies operating in China have either adopted a wellness and wellbeing programme or will adopt a programme in the future. From an office employee working in China standpoint, this is good news.

Over the last five to six years, we have seen an increase in disposable incomes amongst Chinese tertiary sector workers. Many within this educated group understand the importance of health and fitness in contributing to a healthy life. Over the last half decade, many have taken the initiative themselves to improve their own health by spending money on signing up to the local gym, or a sports bike to cycle on the weekends or the latest running shoes to run around the local park. Now, with this generation moving up the career ladder and into decision making positions within the corporate hierarchy, over the last couple of years we have seen the emergence of health conscious wellness and wellbeing programmes (and WELL certification) being adopted by companies in China. Given our survey results, we expect there to be no let-up in this movement for the foreseeable future in China.

Question 3

If your company has a wellness and wellbeing programme in place in China (or is considering or could consider one), how would you describe it?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research

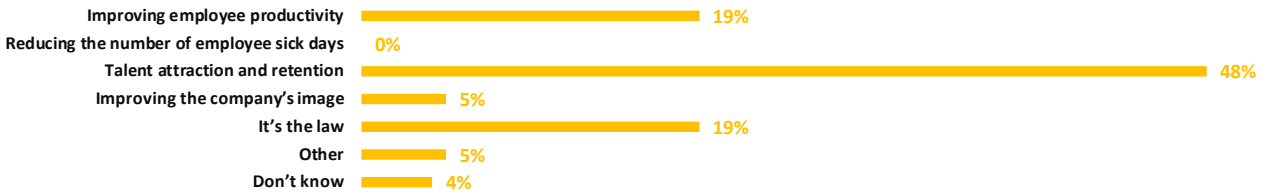
Even after such a short period of time since when the first wellness and wellbeing programmes (and WELL certification) were implemented by companies in China, it is encouraging to see that around 30% of companies have well-developed programmes. 40% of companies did say they have already established partially developed programmes.

Going forward, given the programme acceptance momentum already built up amongst office employees in China, we expect the number of partially developed wellness and wellbeing programmes to decrease as they become further advanced and move into the well-developed programme category.

Question 4

If your company has already established a wellness and wellbeing programme in China (or is considering or could consider one), what was/is expected to be the most important motivation for doing so?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research



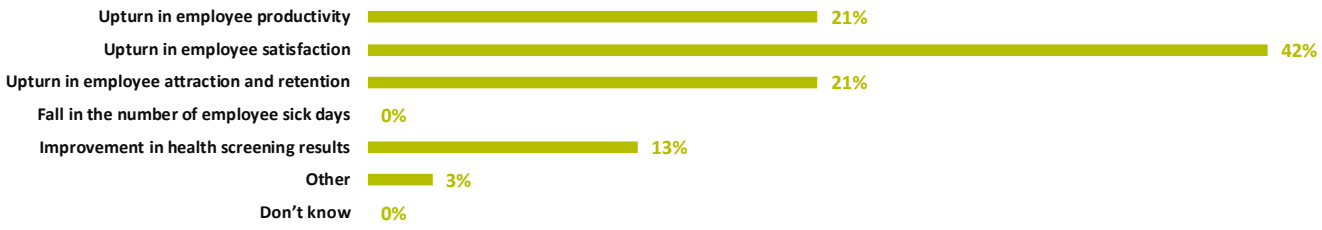
Overwhelmingly, at 48%, our survey results show the main motivation for companies in China to adopt a wellness and wellbeing programme is talent attraction and retention.

The office working environment is now becoming a key differentiator for many employees when weighing up whether to join or leave a company if two employment choices have other attributes which are similar. For service sector companies, their people are their greatest assets, and to stay ahead, it is vital for these companies to attract and retain the most talented people out there. A well-developed wellness and wellbeing programme better ensures talent is drawn and remains.

Question 5

If your company has established a wellness and wellbeing programme in China (or is considering or could consider one), what would be the most important measurement indicator you would use to measure its impact?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research



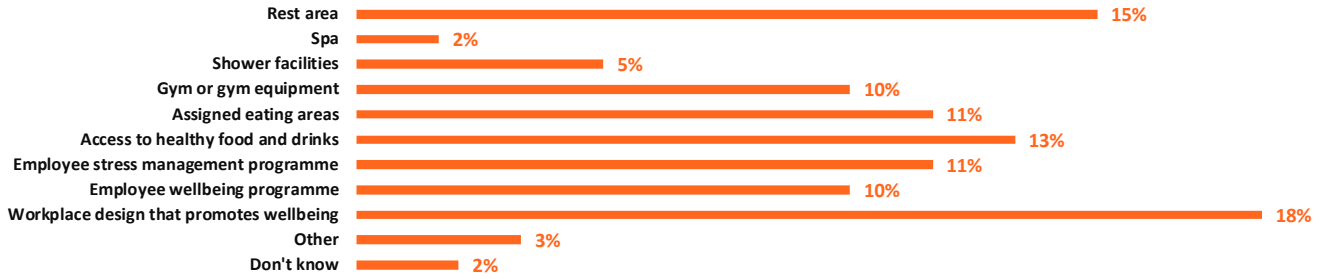
At 42%, an upturn in employee satisfaction came out as the top means to measure the success of an implemented corporate wellness and wellbeing programme in China. An upturn in employee productivity and an upturn in employee attraction and retention tied for second place in our survey, at 21%.

Employee satisfaction will certainly influence the next two most popular forms of programme measurement. The happier an employee is, generally the harder he or she will work and the longer he or she will commit to stay at the company.

Question 6

Which wellness and wellbeing features are currently provided at your workplace in China?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research

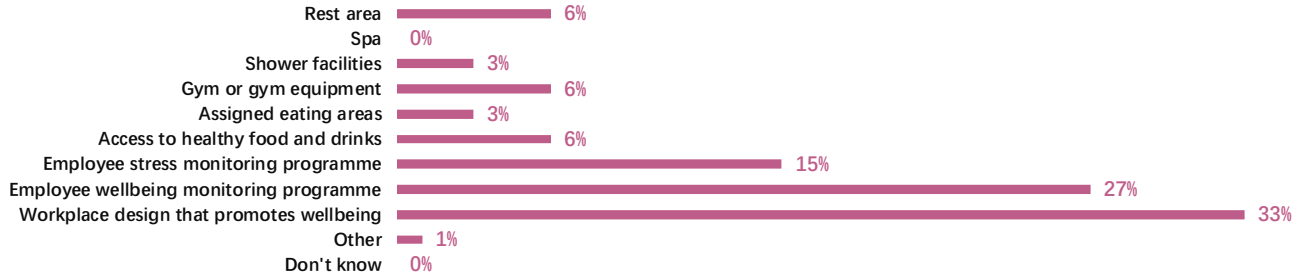


From the results from our survey for Question 6, it was encouraging that all of the many listed features of wellness and wellbeing programmes were marked up on the scoreboard. 2% of those companies mentioned said they had even installed a spa. At 18%, way out in front though, was workplace design that promotes wellbeing. Under the others category of those features not listed, there were several respondents who said their company does provide a play area for games, such as badminton and table tennis – two popular sports in China. These sports can quite easily be played within a high ceiling vestibule of an office building, if the company owns the building or has the right to use this type of space.

Question 7

Which wellness and wellbeing feature in your workplace in China do you think is the most important feature?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research

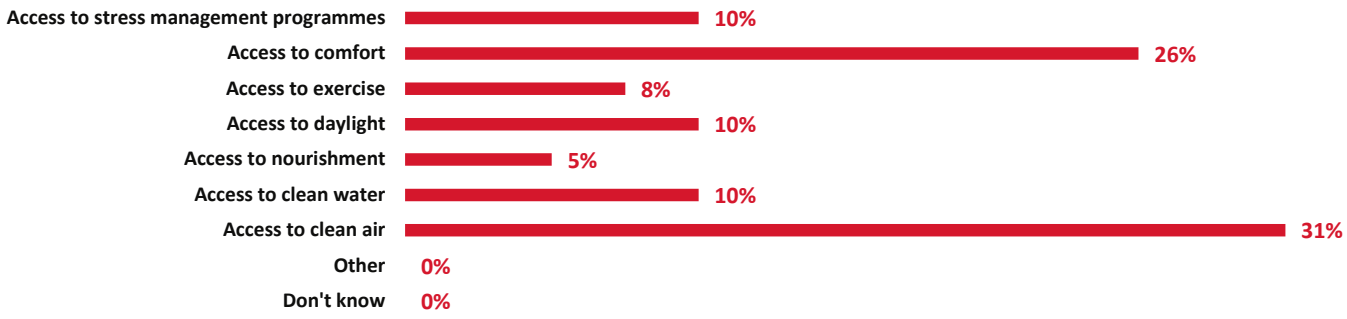


Out of the listed wellness and wellbeing features in Question 7, the three most important features, as stated by our surveyed CRE professionals working in China, were workplace design that promotes wellbeing (33%), employee wellbeing monitoring programmes (27%) and employee stress monitoring programmes (15%). Given that most of those surveyed work in CRE, it is understandable that these three came out on top as these three features are particularly close to the heart of these professionals and what they do on a daily basis. If the same question were posed to purely company employees, it is likely that the results would be different, with access to a rest area, access to healthy food and drinks and access to gym or gym equipment probably appearing as the most important Question 7 listed wellness and wellbeing programme features.

Question 8

Out of the following criteria, which is the most important one for wellness and wellbeing in the workplace in China generally?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research



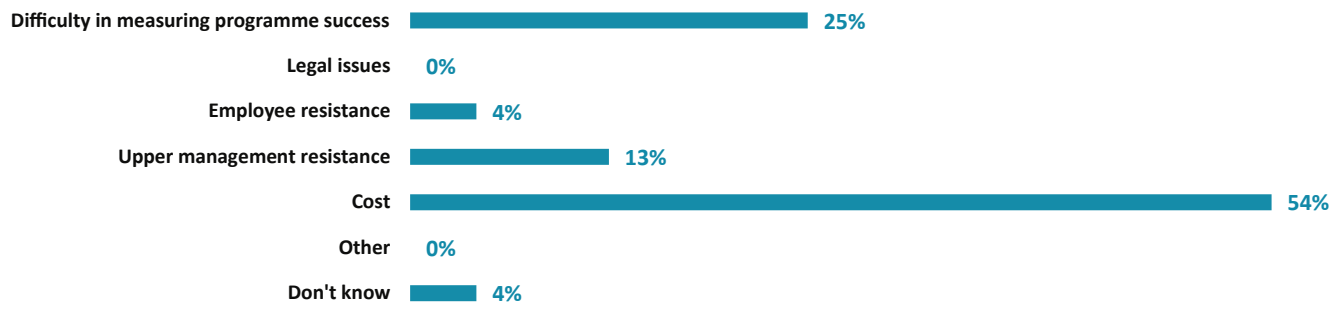
Looking at Question 8's listing of wellness and wellbeing criteria in China, at 31%, it is no surprise that access to clean air is held to be the most important criteria currently for office employees. Given the greater awareness by citizens and public bodies in China, both exterior and interior air quality has improved from the levels they were at 10 years ago. However, on this subject, there should not be any let up, and further improvement is needed and is necessary to reach acceptable health standards.

Interestingly, at 26%, access to comfort came in as the second most important criteria. There are many offices out there in China where acoustics, ergonomics and thermal comfort can be improved and by improving these features so employee wellbeing and work output can be maximised.

Question 9

What is the top obstacle you faced/expect to face in establishing a wellness and wellbeing programme in your workplace in China?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research



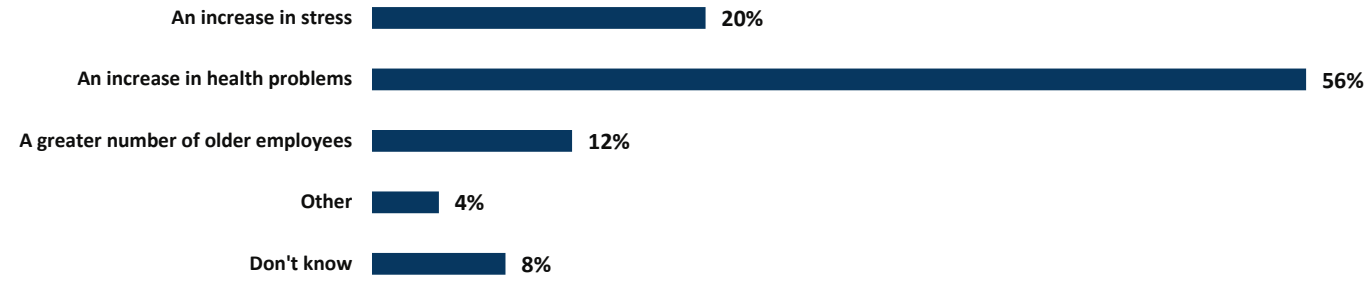
According to our survey, at 54%, the biggest obstacle for implementing a wellness and wellbeing programme, citied by CRE professionals working in China, is cost. At 25%, the next foremost obstacle is the difficulty in measuring programme success, and this is understandable as some aspects related to wellness and wellbeing can be very subjective. Interestingly, employees are all for wellness and wellbeing programmes as they are seen to be low down in the resistance rankings at 4%, while upper management resistance is a little higher at 13%.

Going forward, as the younger generation in China rises through into upper management positions and there is even greater awareness of the value of workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes (and WELL certified space), then we expect the level of upper management resistance to fall.

Question 10

In the next 10 years, which of the following do you expect to impact your workforce in China the most?

Source: Cushman & Wakefield Research



The results to our final survey question show that most companies operating in China (at 56%) expect to see an increase in health problems impacting their workforce. Additionally, given the pressures to quickly adjust to the fast changing nature of work (and life) in China and a more results-driven way of working culture and the anxieties stemming from the ever-increasing cost of living, at 20%, an increase in stress came in second.

China is also experiencing an aging society. That this factor is expected to impact the workforce was also picked up by companies in the region responding to our survey. 12% of responding companies believe they will need to continue to employ older talent. Thus, any viable workplace wellness and wellbeing programme will increasingly have to be tailored to this generation in China for both them and the company to get the best out of such programmes in the future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A rising living standard in China is increasing life expectancy. However, new health problems are arising due to societal affluence and a transition to greater working population numbers employed in tertiary sector jobs.

For China, it is vital to make sure the workforce in the country stays active and healthy. If workforce health deteriorates, generally worker productivity, household incomes, savings, assets and consumption as well as corporate and personal income governmental taxation revenue can suffer lasting diminution.

For corporations in China, one main underlining incentive to have healthy employees on their books is productivity and, in particular, employee productivity. Any corporate wellness and wellbeing programme which makes sure a workforce is healthy and happy is a programme which is better at safeguarding the corporation's balance sheet.

With the overall workforce in China becoming more sophisticated, there is a rising mindfulness not only of the advantages of being healthy and happy as an individual but the ways that individual citizens can apply to make sure that they are healthier and happier, and an effective workplace wellness and wellbeing programme is one option.

Throughout the world, there is a multitude of office workplace wellness and wellbeing programmes a corporation in China could effect. However, one programme which has caught the imagination of individual employees and corporates alike and has seen a fair degree of project implementation is the WELL Building Standard.

Embracing a variety of property types, today, over 530 projects have been WELL certified globally. In China, 114 projects have the WELL designation and by country comparison, only the U.S. has more WELL certified projects.

Finally, some highlights from our wellness and wellbeing survey of corporate and corporate real estate (CRE) professionals working for Chinese companies are:

Out of the group of CRE professionals working in China we interviewed, the vast majority have heard of wellness and wellbeing

Most of those surveyed companies operating in China have either adopted a wellness and wellbeing programme or will adopt a programme in the future

Our survey results show the main motivation for companies in China to adopt a wellness and wellbeing programme is talent attraction and retention

An upturn in employee satisfaction came out as the top means to measure the success of an implemented corporate wellness and wellbeing programme in China

It is no surprise that access to clean air is held to be the most important criteria currently for office employees in China

The biggest obstacle for implementing a wellness and wellbeing programme, citied by CRE professionals working in China, is cost

The three most important features, as stated by our surveyed CRE professionals working in China, were workplace design that promotes wellbeing, employee wellbeing monitoring programmes and employee stress monitoring programmes

The results to our final survey question show that most companies operating in China expect to see an increase in health problems impacting their workforce

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