Perspectives

Improving Health Outcomes for America's Frontline Workers

Approximately 70 percent[1] (more than 100 million people) of the U.S. workforce are frontline employees. Essential to the continuity of critical functions and our nation's economy, they work in industries[2] like healthcare, retail, production and food processing, trucking, maintenance and agriculture, among others.

These individuals are the backbone of our society, and many endure physically and mentally challenging[3] work environments—which can make taking good care of themselves (and their families) difficult. This, along with a myriad of complex and interrelated socioeconomic factors,[4] contributes to a greater likelihood of certain medical conditions and lower likelihood of receiving routine care.

In fact, a study of essential workers[5] in 31 states found that 31 percent did not have a routine check-up within the past year (2017-2018). In comparison, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported[6] that 22 percent of Americans (overall) haven't had a routine exam in the past year.

Did not have a routine check-up in the past year
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Essential workers
31%

Americans (overall)
22%
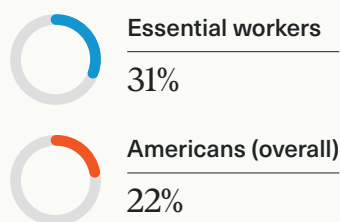
Retailing is one of the ten largest occupations, consisting of a high proportion of women and people of color[7] in frontline, non-managerial jobs.

Many are single mothers struggling to make ends meet, often working longer shifts, overtime or second jobs, leaving them more vulnerable to illnesses that keep them away from work.

Frontline retail employees face greater difficulty accessing maternity healthcare and parental leave,[8] increasing the likelihood of turnover. These employees may also lack awareness of or struggle to understand the maternity benefits available through their employers.

Trucking remains a male-dominated industry. Often driving long distances over extended shifts, truck drivers face several risks that directly impact their physical and mental health, according to an International Labor Organization (ILO) report.[9]

Those risks may include road accidents, physical hazards, limited bathroom breaks and exposure to harmful substances.

As a result, truck drivers can be vulnerable to a wide variety of work-related disorders, including stress, sleep deprivation and apnea, musculoskeletal problems, kidney disorders, obesity and substance use.

For decades, these industries have faced high workforce turnover.[10] And the global pandemic and ensuing Great Resignation exacerbated an already pressing issue. According to McKinsey,[11] 50 percent of the U.S. frontline retail workforce have considered quitting. Many employees leave—as they always have—for better paying jobs. But another reason for resigning can be tied to employee benefits. According to a 2022 survey[12] from Mercer, insufficient healthcare benefits was one of the top three reasons employees consider leaving their employer.

These compounding issues mean benefits managers at companies that employ frontline workers face a hard question:

> **How can we improve the health outcomes of our workforce and provide benefits that have staying power?**

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Celeste Health Solutions is a new company created to solve challenges like these.

Difficult working conditions in **food processing** and related agricultural industries contribute significantly to job churn, according to an American Public Health Association report.[13]

Workplace injury rates are high, especially those that require extensive time away from work or restricted duty. Meatpacking and poultry industries face some of the highest rates of work-related injuries and illnesses in the United States.

In addition, immigrants play an outsized role in food-related occupations,[14] which means the potential for language barriers that make it harder to access necessary and timely healthcare services.

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, **healthcare** workers have faced challenging working conditions[15] that expose them to injuries from sharp objects like needles and syringes, infectious diseases, hazardous chemicals, musculoskeletal injuries, workplace violence and the enormous stress that comes with caring for people who are sick.

The pandemic[16] intensified the challenges—bringing greater fatigue, burnout, emotional strain and symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder—leading many workers to quit their jobs or leave the profession entirely.

Let's take a look at three ways Celeste supports improving health for frontline workers across industries:

1 Leveraging data in new ways to intervene sooner

2 Giving members good reason to stay engaged

3 Making it easier for members to get the care they need

1 Leveraging data in new ways to intervene sooner

Most health plans and health navigation companies use medical claims history to identify members in need of intervention. However, high employee turnover, coupled with a lower likelihood to seek preventive care, means that claims history data can be sparse or even non-existent for some frontline workers.

To give members a better chance at better health, Celeste leverages more than just claims data. Socioeconomic, environmental, occupational, and additional data sources provide rich context and are used at both the macro and micro levels for populations and employees lacking claims history.

Macro data

Within each population there are important findings that are all but lost unless data is leveraged appropriately. In collaboration with health economists and behavioral and data scientists, Celeste finds valuable connections between things like:

+ Low income, single-person households and chronic kidney disease

+ Certain truck drivers, their likelihood to become diabetic and the effectiveness of a specific type of drug

+ Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, certain events (e.g., ER visits) and future pregnancy diagnosis

Every employer has an abundance of findings like these, and ongoing, deep analysis is important to determine the right targeted intervention strategies (population segment, timing, etc.), as well as to develop and implement an effective outreach campaign.

Micro data

Celeste also uses unconventional data to target members on an individual level. For example, attribution data provides insight into whether a member has a primary care doctor and the strength of their relationship. Additionally, members with little-to-no claims data might provide reason enough for outreach when paired with other socioeconomic or occupational risk factors. And Celeste strategically uses data like channel preference and language to help improve the odds that a member will engage.

2 Giving members good reason to stay engaged

When a member engages in their health, the challenge of *keeping* them engaged begins. And this doesn't just apply to frontline workers. In fact, a recent study conducted by The Harris Poll[17] last year found that 65 percent of Americans say coordinating and managing their health and the healthcare system is overwhelming and time-consuming. And 49 percent say that healthcare is not coordinated among their various providers.

While numerous strategies and solutions aim to simplify healthcare, achieving this goal remains a challenge. This is especially true for Black and Hispanic workers, who are more likely to be employed in frontline occupations[18] compared to their non-Hispanic Caucasian counterparts, highlighting the need for more equitable access to healthcare.

Average Time Spent Coordinating Care (per week) ↓

Latino adults
3.0 hours

All BIPOC adults
2.6 hours

White adults
1.6 hours
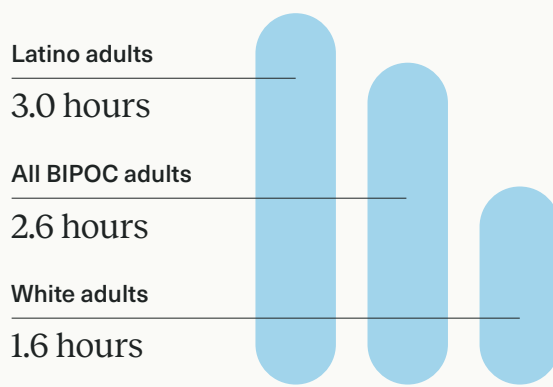
It can be helpful to think about simplifying healthcare from an "experience" perspective. Though sometimes thought of as just a "buzzy" marketing term, how a member experiences something and how this experience makes them feel is key to engagement. Experiences that feel simple require less mental load, are less stressful and easier to engage with time and time again.

What makes for a simplified healthcare experience? Integration is crucial, and the reason it is core to Celeste's platform. It connects multiple components that are typically siloed into a single, integrated platform—and then makes them easily accessible for members via an all-in-one digital app.

Successful integration requires robust, two-way data sharing so everyone behind the scenes has the same view of the member and all components can work together.

Successful integration is also tied to another element that's core to Celeste's model and a simplified healthcare experience: our Care Advocates. They leverage this integrated data to provide each member with personalized support, helping members coordinate their healthcare and providing step-by-step guidance.

Together, integration and guidance result in a seamless experience for the member. And when members experience healthcare in this way, they are more likely to stay engaged.
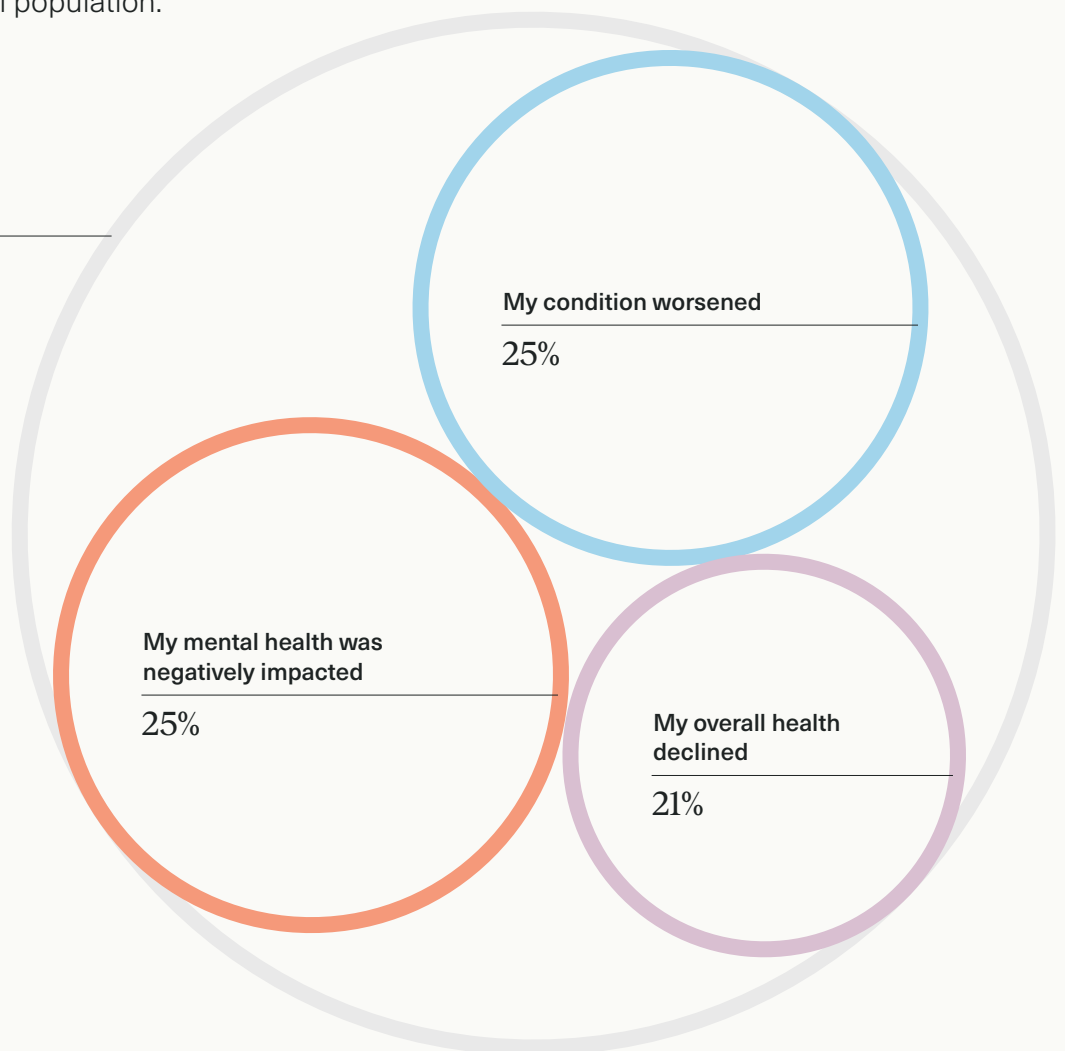
Celeste Integrates:
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- Navigation and advocacy
- Complex care management
- Benefits and claims management
- Point solutions
- Health decision support
- High-quality care
- Data-driven, proactive outreach

3 Making it easier for members to get the care they need

61 percent of adults[19] seek care only when they are sick. And for those skipping or delaying care, 30 percent[20] cite the inability to take time away from other responsibilities, while 25 percent[21] cite it takes too long to get an appointment.

Deprioritizing healthcare is something that can happen when life gets in the way. And it has negative consequences for not just frontline workers but also the general population.

60 percent of those who have skipped or delayed healthcare in the past two years experienced some type of impact as a result →

My condition worsened

25%

My mental health was negatively impacted

25%

My overall health declined

21%

Virtual care shows promise[22] in making it easier for employees to access care and is an important component of any integrated solution. However, not all virtual care is created equal. Celeste's model incorporates the following elements:

✓ **Robust primary care** that prioritizes things like:

+ Being virtual-first (the ability for a member to make their virtual doctor their regular primary care provider)

+ Offering a comprehensive spectrum of services, from urgent care to preventive care to treatment of ongoing and chronic conditions

+ Offering same-day appointments and 24/7 care team support

+ A board-certified physician panel with broad expertise

+ Coordination and EMR-record-sharing with in-person PCPs and specialists

✓ **A strong emphasis on mental health.**
Frontline workers were particularly impacted by mental health challenges during the pandemic, and these challenges are still on the rise[23] post-pandemic. Like primary care, fast access to comprehensive mental health support is critical to engagement.

✓ **A collaborative model that integrates physical and mental health.** Physical and mental health are deeply intertwined[24] and models that make it easier for providers to be connected allow for better whole-person care.

72% of patients who seek mental health therapy through us are managed by our advanced primary care

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✓ **Continuity of care.** Our frontline care team and PCPs collaboratively work from the most complete data set in the industry to help patients take advantage of their benefits to the fullest. From proactively reaching out to members who look like they may benefit from our advanced virtual care and to help them get an appointment scheduled, to recommending point solutions that complement a patient's care needs, like physical therapy or diabetes support.

Beyond virtual care, Celeste's best-in-class virtual medical opinion service provides a network of 700+ specialists to help members make the right decision about their health. For those with limited access to high-quality specialty care, this service is extremely critical.

In addition, Celeste provides members with access to a range of point solutions that also help with engagement. Like virtual care, point solutions offer convenience, as well as personalized coaching and tools, for numerous health conditions, challenges and goals. For someone who lacks sufficient access to traditional healthcare options, the right point solutions can be very beneficial.

In practice, the three strategies laid out in this report have the potential to improve health outcomes for frontline workers—as well as the general population. In doing so, they also have the potential to improve retention rates by offering employees something they highly value—better benefits.

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Celeste Health Solutions is a first-of-its-kind company created by industry veterans to solve healthcare's biggest challenges for employers and their workforce.

Celeste offers the only solution on the market that brings together the key components that members need to take care of their health. We pair an all-in-one digital platform with high-touch navigation and data-powered outreach from real people. In addition, we provide access to integrated, high-quality care across the spectrum of needs. Together these capabilities work to provide members with a better experience and to improve health outcomes.

Our ability to leverage data in new ways and to work flexibly with each client allows us to provide them with tailored health strategies that are right for their population.

To join the conversation and learn more about how Celeste can help your business or client, visit

MeetCeleste.com