

McKinsey Explainers

What is the future of wellness?

Wellness is about more than feeling good. It's a thriving business that is poised to keep growing.



Health is wealth, for all of us—and increasingly, for organizations that operate in the wellness space. The business of health is thriving. According to McKinsey's latest Future of Wellness research, which surveyed more than 5,000 consumers in China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the global consumer wellness market has reached [\\$1.8 trillion per year](#). In the United States, the wellness market is growing as much as 10 percent per year and is now worth \$480 billion. Eighty-two percent of US consumers now consider wellness a top or important priority in their everyday lives—similar to the 87 percent and 73 percent who say so in China and the United Kingdom, respectively. “We knew that consumers were increasingly treating wellness as a priority,” says McKinsey partner [Anna Pione](#). “What surprised us and continues to surprise us every year is [how much of a priority it is](#).”

Most of us realize intuitively that health is much more than the presence or absence of disease. But what do we mean when we talk about wellness? McKinsey defines wellness along six dimensions: better health, fitness, sleep, mindfulness, appearance, and nutrition. In this *Explainer*, we'll delve into what people care about when it comes to their health and the changes we can expect in this space in the future.

Learn more about the [McKinsey Health Institute](#).

What are the top trends shaping the consumer health and wellness space?

In a world where people are prioritizing health more than they used to, consumers are increasingly focused—and spending—on products and services that are supported by data and science. Their emerging priorities can be grouped into [five trends](#):

— *Health at home.* The COVID-19 pandemic made at-home testing kits a household item. Now that the pandemic is less front of mind, many consumers are showing interest in other at-home kits, for everything from vitamin and mineral deficiencies to cholesterol levels. This is an emerging trend throughout the countries surveyed. In China, for instance, 35 percent of consumers reported that they had replaced

some in-person healthcare appointments with at-home diagnostic tests.

- *Biomonitoring and wearables.* About half of all surveyed consumers have purchased a fitness wearable at some point. Watches are the most common fitness tracker, but other types of technology are becoming more popular. These include wearable biometric rings paired with mobile apps and continuous glucose monitors, which can be applied to the back of a user's arm to track their blood sugar levels. More than three-quarters of respondents said they would be open to using a wearable device in the future.
- *Personalization's gen AI boost.* People like personalization: nearly one in five US consumers and one in three US millennials prefer personalized products and services. Some are even willing to part with their biometric data in exchange for personalized recommendations. There's an opportunity here to pair these tools with generative AI (gen AI) to enable more precise personalization: for example, designing customized workouts for users based on their fitness data, which some wearables are already using gen AI to do.
- *Clinical over "clean."* Users are beginning to move away from wellness products that tout “clean” or natural ingredients and toward those with clinically proven ingredients. Roughly half of UK and US consumers reported clinical effectiveness as a top purchasing factor; only 20 percent said the same for clean ingredients. In the United States, this trend is most pronounced in over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements, and beauty products.
- *The rise of the doctor recommendation.* As the influencer economy grows—and with it, potentially dubious or compromised health opinions—consumers value recommendations from doctors more than ever. Consumers say that doctors' recommendations matter most when they're seeking care related to mindfulness, sleep, and overall health (including the use of vitamins and over-the-counter medications).

What are the biggest areas of growth in the wellness industry?

McKinsey's Future of Wellness research, begun in 2020, indicates noteworthy growth in [several key areas](#):

- *Women's health.* In the past, women seeking healthcare have been [underserved](#). Women's health products are more available today than ever before—and purchases are up, too. The largest shares of respondents said they purchased menstrual-care and sexual-health products in the past year, yet consumers said they spent the most on menopause and pregnancy-related products. But there are still [unmet needs in this space](#), particularly related to menopause.
- *Healthy aging.* A move toward preventative medicine, the growth of health technology, and advances in research on antiaging products are propelling demand for products and services that support [healthy aging and longevity](#). Around 70 percent of consumers in the United Kingdom and United States and 85 percent in China said they purchased more in the healthy-aging category in the past year than in prior years. The results were similar across age groups.
- *Weight management.* Nearly one in three US adults has a body mass index of 30 or higher, which is the threshold for obesity. And 60 percent of US respondents to our survey said they are currently [trying to lose weight](#). Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) drugs, including Ozempic and Wegovy, are rapidly growing in popularity. This is especially true in the United States, where more than 50 percent of American consumers consider prescription medication to be a "very effective" weight management intervention.
- *In-person fitness.* Fitness is moving from a hobby to a core part of people's identities, especially among Gen Z consumers. Fifty-six percent of US Gen Zers surveyed considered fitness a "very high priority," compared with 40 percent of US consumers overall. Based on McKinsey analysis, we expect consumers to maintain their spending on fitness club memberships and fitness apps and increase their spending on in-person fitness classes and personal training.
- *Gut health.* More than 80 percent of consumers in China, the United Kingdom, and the United States consider gut health to be important—and more than half of respondents said it will be a higher priority over the next two to three years. People in China and the United States are more likely to take probiotic supplements, whereas UK consumers typically choose foods with probiotics, including kimchi, kombucha, or yogurt.
- *Sexual health.* We've seen growing demand for sexual-health products, likely due to expanded conversations around sexuality, improvements in sexual education, and growing support for female sexual-health challenges. Eighty-seven percent of US consumers report having spent the same or more on sexual-health products (such as contraceptives and adult toys) in the past year than the year prior.
- *Sleep.* Sleep is the second-highest health and wellness priority for consumers—and also where consumers say they have the most unmet needs. A large number of factors can affect a good night's sleep, including diet, exercise, caffeine, screen time, and stress. Few, if any, tech players have been able to develop a holistic solution to consumers' sleep issues—though sleep tech is a [fast-growing industry](#). Looking ahead, there's a major opportunity for companies that can use consumer data to address specific sleep-related pain points.

Learn more about the [McKinsey Health Institute](#).

What matters most to older adults?

Of course, there's as much diversity and variance in lifestyles and preferences among older adults as there is among younger people. But a 2023 McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) survey of more than 21,000 people aged 55 and older across 21 countries found that there were [some commonalities](#). Respondents typically agreed with the importance of having purpose, managing stress, enjoying meaningful connections with others, and preserving their independence. Many of these factors intersect with a subject's real and perceived health across four dimensions: mental, physical, social, and spiritual.

Overall, survey respondents' perceived health in every dimension—and in physical health most of all—declines as they age. Mental health is the most positively rated dimension for those aged 55 to 64; for people aged 65 and older, spiritual health is the most positively rated dimension.

Money also matters to older adults' well-being. Across countries, older adults who are financially stable are more likely than their counterparts to be able to adhere to healthy habits, including those that boost cognitive health. Notably, though, respondents in high-income economies aren't necessarily thriving more than their peers in economies where incomes aren't as high. For example, nearly 20 percent of respondents in high-income economies say they would like to work in their old age but aren't currently doing so. Older adults in high-income economies also report much lower levels of societal participation than their counterparts in other economies.

Another key finding is that participation pays off. Survey respondents who work, volunteer, attend classes, or otherwise engage in their communities report better overall health than those who don't. McKinsey's analysis also indicates that older adults who engage in their communities have lower healthcare costs.

Learn more about the [McKinsey Health Institute](#), and click here to learn about [health-related job opportunities](#) if you're interested in working at McKinsey.

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- “[Wellness worldwide: Consumer insights from four countries](#),” April 8, 2021, [Shaun Callaghan](#), Eric He, Sara Hudson, and [Stefan Rickert](#)

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