



Espresa
Powering Great Workplaces®

2026

Lifestyle Spending Account (LSA) Benchmark and Trends Report

Navigating the 2026 Benchmark & Trends Report

Espresa's 2026 Benchmark & Trends Report is built for people leaders, total-rewards strategists, and consultants defining the next era of employee engagement.

Each section combines Espresa's proprietary global data with executive-level insights to help organizations measure, design, and scale programs that deliver real business impact.

Use this report as both a market lens and a strategic guide—showing how leading employers align flexibility, equity, and engagement to drive measurable impact across their global workforces.

About the Data

Espresa's 2026 Benchmark & Trends Report is grounded in our 2024–2025 (YTD) operational dataset, representing the activity, funding, and engagement behaviors of enterprise clients across 100+ countries.

This dataset spans multiple program types—including Lifestyle Spending Accounts (LSA), Rewards & Recognition, Wellbeing & Challenges, and Communities (ERG)—providing one of the most comprehensive global views of the modern total-rewards ecosystem.

Each data point reflects verified, anonymized activity drawn directly from Espresa's live client environments.

Analysis was conducted using multi-year trend modeling, cross-segment comparisons, and normalized participation metrics to ensure accuracy and comparability across industries and geographies.

The Espresa benchmark reflects what employees actually do, not just what they say they value.

Coverage & Composition

- **550,000+ employee claims** analyzed
- **\$547M** total managed LSA funds
- **\$250M** in new funding year-over-year (+45%)
- **Over 200 distinct program configurations** analyzed across enterprise, mid-market, and smaller-employer segments
- Representation across **technology, healthcare, financial services, manufacturing, energy, education, and nonprofit industries**
- **50% growth** in eligible populations
 - **30% growth** in international clients

Every data point in this report represents verified, real-world utilization, not survey intent or modeled projection.

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Part I | Market Overview

Executive Overview & Key Findings

Espresa is Powering Great Workplaces® through a personal benefits platform that creates one, globally-inclusive employee-centric program. Through Lifestyle Spending Accounts (LSA), Rewards and Recognition, Wellbeing and Challenges, and Communities, employers are breaking new ground in workplace total-rewards enhancements. With exciting new data to support their success, 2026 marks the year LSAs move from emerging trend to mainstream benefit for flexible, personal, culture-driven benefits.

LSAs Are Mainstream

Adoption of Lifestyle Spending Accounts continues to rise across all industries and employer sizes. Espresa's clients are a pillar for this insight, **adding nearly \$250M in new LSA funding, encompassing 218 unique plans and over 556,000 total claims.** Plans and eligible expenses continue to diversify as employers leverage design choices like funding cadence, rollover, communication strategies, enabling the LSA Debit Card, or implementing the LSA Marketplace.

In **2021**, rising benefits cost ranked

#6

on biggest issues facing their benefits strategy

In **2025**, rising benefits cost are now the

#1

concern for employers

Client Cost Challenges Are Driving Budget Reallocation

WTW found that in 2021, rising benefit costs were on employers' radar, ranking #6 on the biggest issues facing their benefits strategy. In 2025, rising benefits costs are now the #1 concern for employers. To combat rising costs, employers have shifted away from "new dollars" to put into their programs. Instead, they are adapting them to extract the most value out of their existing plans.

WTW also predicts that over the next three years, 57% of employers will prioritize "reallocating" or "rebalancing" over enhancing, reducing, or not changing their benefits plans.¹

Escalating healthcare and drug costs have created a breaking point: employers need benefits that deliver more with less. In fact, median per employee per year LSA funding has decreased from \$750 → \$660, despite consistent program participation and usage rates.

¹ WTW, Benefits Trends Survey 2025

Designing Personalized Benefits Within Guardrails

Flexibility and personalization are becoming baseline expectations, and employees want programs that reflect their unique needs. To that end, employers are implementing diverse programs, but managing their budgets with data-driven design choices.

Choices like Marketplace-enablement, carry-forward limits, and runout windows all impact a program's budget and engagement. Carry-forward options—which allow unused benefit funds to roll into the next plan period (within a plan year)—**increased by 42% YoY, now offered by 51% of programs**, increasing participation without adding new funds.



Global Growth and Adoption

Multinational adoption is rising as employers strive for globally consistent employee experiences. LSAs are emerging as a central element of global benefits modernization—scalable, adaptable, and equitable. The next wave of adoption is being driven by providers with robust and worldwide infrastructure, like multi-currency wallets and global card issuance, removing operational and compliance barriers that limit global execution. LSAs have made their footprint known, with 30% growth in our global client portfolio.

Disruption Is Raising the Bar

As the provider landscape evolves, employers are re-evaluating partnerships to ensure consistent value and long-term reliability. Market shifts and provider challenges have underscored the importance of executional excellence—accurate adjudication, responsive member support, effective account management, and sustained satisfaction.

In a maturing market, success is defined by performance. The long-term leaders are those who pair innovation with dependability, delivering measurable impact at scale.

LSAs have crossed a tipping point: with our eligible employee population growing nearly 50% between 2024 and 2025, they are now a standard in modern benefits portfolios. As organizations shift from scattered stipends and point solutions to unified, purpose-driven programs, LSAs have become the new model for scalable personalization.



Global Growth

LSAs have made their global footprint known, with 30% growth in our global client portfolio.



Raising the Bar

Our eligible employee population grew nearly 50% between 2024 and 2025, as LSAs continue to grow as a culture-defining tool.

Espresa and the 2026 Landscape

Espresa is a global leader in personal benefits platforms, bringing together Lifestyle Spending Accounts (LSAs), Rewards & Recognition, Wellbeing & Challenges, and Communities under a single, unified ecosystem.

Operating across more than 100 countries, Espresa enables organizations to deliver equitable, compliant, and globally inclusive benefits that reflect the diversity of the modern workforce.

The result is a model where employee engagement, benefits administration, and governance coexist seamlessly, allowing organizations to align culture, choice, and measurable impact.



2026 | The Era of Strategic Flexibility



Flexibility as Currency

Flexibility is no longer a perk; it's infrastructure.

Organizations that operationalize it create measurable cultural and financial value.

2026 marks a pivotal stage in the evolution of total rewards. LSAs have matured from experimental offerings into core infrastructure—a structural mechanism for flexibility, inclusion, and engagement.

Espresa clients drove this transformation with 50% growth in eligible employee participation and more than \$550 million in managed funds across 100 countries, 40+ currencies, and 200+ languages—evidence that benefits flexibility now operates as a strategic choice, linking employee support to business success.

Across industries and geographies, budgets are being reallocated toward programs that combine autonomy with fiscal discipline, making flexibility a structural element of their employee engagement plans. Flexibility is now the defining currency of employee experience as they continue to demand benefits personalization.

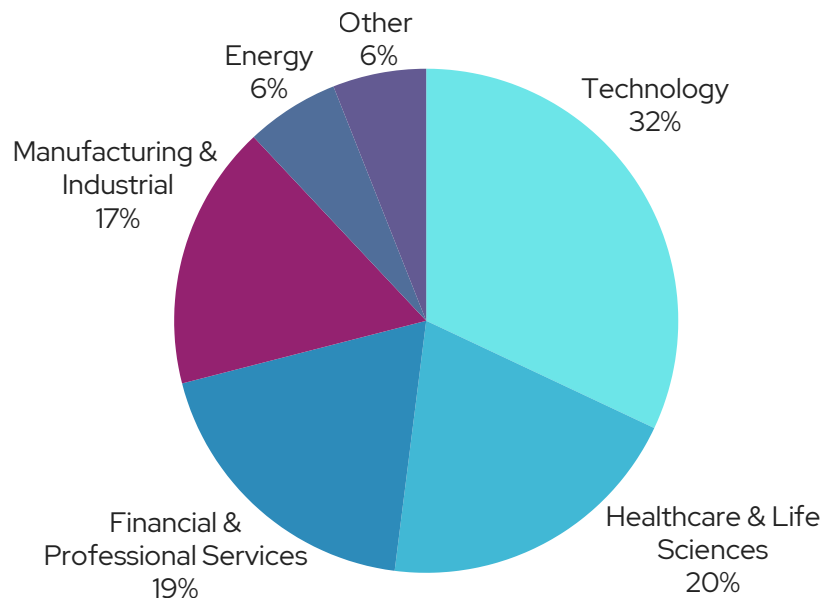
The Market at Scale | LSAs as Strategic Infrastructure

Between 2024 and 2025, LSAs became a defining component of total rewards strategy. Employers increasingly view them as both a benefits vehicle and a cultural instrument—enabling personalization without sacrificing governance.

2024 vs. 2025

- ✓ Technology saw a 3% decrease
- ✓ Energy remained the same
- ✓ Financial & Professional Services had a 4% increase
- ✓ Manufacturing & Industrial saw a 5% increase
- ✓ Healthcare & Life Sciences remained the same

Portfolio Industry Composition 2025



Technology and Healthcare continue to lead in scale, but 2025 saw outsized gains across Financial Services and Manufacturing & Industrial sectors—moving from experimentation to established program maturity.



Macro Market Shift

LSAs now represent the operational bridge between flexibility and governance, enabling personalization at scale within a controlled, compliant framework.

Defining the New Engagement Equation

As expectations evolve, LSAs have become the bridge between employer intent and employee experience. Espresa's data shows that when programs are designed with choice, governance, and inclusion, engagement is consistent and sustainable. Employee engagement is now a measurable return, and LSAs are the operational mechanism translating culture into meaningful action.

Three macro forces shape this market:

- 1 Cost Efficiency with Empathy** – Organizations are finding smarter ways to manage costs without sacrificing care, connection, or culture
- 2 Engagement through Choice** – Employees interact more deeply with benefits that reflect their own priorities
- 3 Flexibility at Scale** – Global programs achieve local relevance through unified delivery, governance, and glocalization

If it enhances wellbeing, we're open to reconsidering our policies. We take employee feedback seriously and regularly review what we've denied in the past. Our goal is to create a supportive environment where everyone's needs are acknowledged and met.

Tabitha Mondragon, Sr. Director,
Global Benefits, Avalara



Part II | Program Design and Employee Experience

Design Maturity Defines Differentiation

The sophistication of program design determines impact. Mature LSA programs balance structure with freedom—establishing categories that encourage personalization while maintaining fiscal alignment and compliance. Design maturity is the differentiator: how effectively an organization translates intent into flexible funding, equitable access, and measurable outcomes.

Programs operating at the fully integrated stage connect Lifestyle Spending Accounts with Recognition, Wellbeing, and Community investments, creating a cohesive culture that reinforces company values with meaningful benefits.

From Flexibility to Framework

The adaptability and depth of LSA plan designs have become key differentiators of total rewards strategy. Leading organizations are evolving beyond “what’s funded” to focus on how programs are structured and managed.

Common design features among high-performing programs:

- Categories that mirror organizational values and support diverse employee populations
- Predictable funding models supporting fairness and cost control
- Administrative simplicity that is sustainable and allows for scalability

These design principles anchor flexibility in structure. Transforming LSAs from helpful stipends into company infrastructure.



Our team finally has more room to breathe, and our budgets haven't shifted at all. If anything, we've saved money since we used to just provide wellness stipends. Now, employees can choose their benefits, and our people teams can rest a bit easier.

Ashura Jackson, Sr. Benefits Manager, Digital Realty



Funding Models and Distribution

Espresa’s dataset shows improved cost efficiency through plan consolidation as employers balance plan funding, participation, and usability.

Even amid cost pressures, a significant portion of employers are sustaining or even expanding premium-level wallets for targeted higher value benefit programs, commonly concentrated in industries with stronger margins or fierce talent competition. Those plans tend to focus on higher value, but targeted plans, like tuition reimbursement, childcare, or professional development.

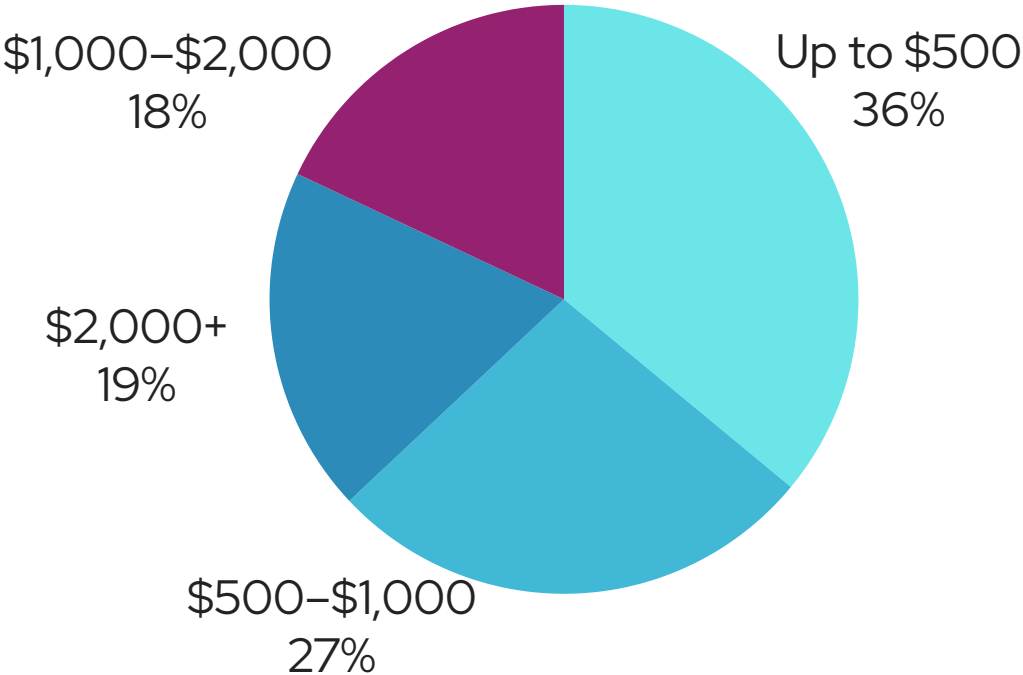
These shifts reflect a maturing market, where flexibility operates within defined financial boundaries—empowering inclusion while maintaining cost control.

Funding Highlights

Despite consistent engagement and VOI, **median wallet funding fell from \$750 → \$660** per employee in the last year.

- ≤ \$500 wallets: **21% → 36%**
- \$1,000–\$2,000 wallets: **26% → 18%**
- \$2,000+ wallets: **11% → 19%**

Wallets by Funding Amount



Median Wallet Funding by Employee Headcount

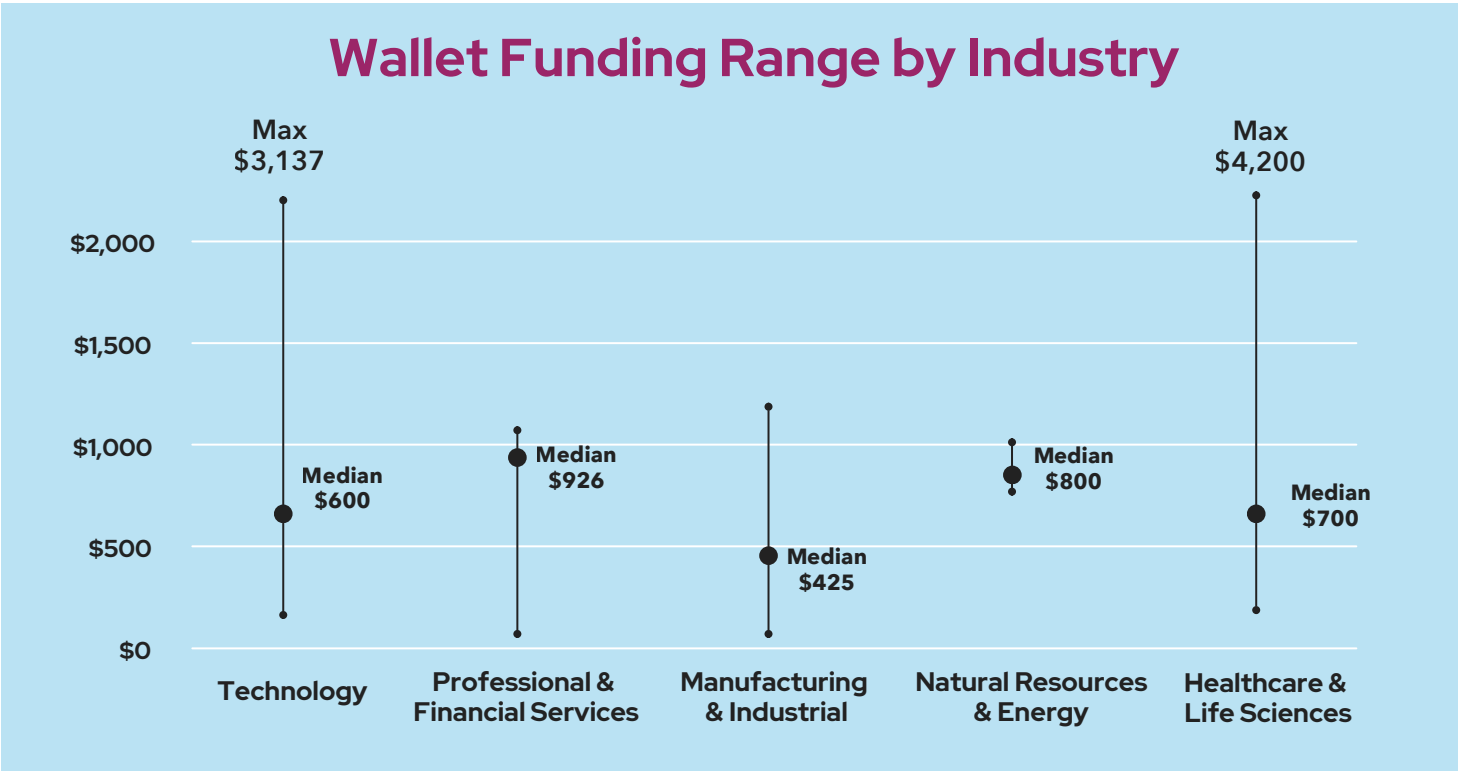
Employees	Median Allocation	YoY Change
<1,000	\$464	↓ -23%
1,000-9,999	\$921	↑ +23%
10,000+	\$517	↑ +3%

Financial and Professional Services grew from ~\$750 → \$926, overtaking Technology as the top-funding industry in our portfolio. Healthcare & Life Sciences rose from ~\$605 → \$700, reflecting growing focus on holistic wellbeing, burnout prevention, and workforce resilience.

Technology median funding decreased from \$866 → \$600. Technology clients are maintaining high-value, choice-rich programs despite cost pressures in many parts of the industry. Manufacturing & Industrial median funding declined from \$675 → \$425, reflecting continued cost sensitivity across lower-margin sectors.

Flexibility to Framework

Maturity is measured not by budget size, but by design discipline.



Funding & Configuration Trends

Insight: Employers are spending 12% less per employee while engagement remains stable—demonstrating cost resilience, design maturity, and flexibility as an efficiency engine.

What's in a Typical LSA Configuration

Typical LSA configurations in 2025 include **6–8 categories**, spanning wellbeing, learning, caregiving, professional development, sustainability, and more. Employers increasingly tier funding by employment status and region, creating global equity with **local cost parity** while offering a balanced mix of choice and coverage.

Funding Levels are Leaner, Programs Continue to Perform

Funding patterns in 2025 reflect **fiscal tightening and strategic reprioritization**. **Median LSA funding declined from \$750 → \$660 per employee per year (PEPY)** as employers adjusted budgets in response to macroeconomic pressures. Yet participation remains strong—signaling that flexibility, inclusion-centered design, and category structure are sustaining engagement even in leaner budgets.

Shift Toward Lower-Funded Tiers

Programs are increasingly concentrated in lower-funded tiers, with plans below **\$500 growing from 21% → 35%**, and plans below **\$1,000 now representing 68%** of all LSAs.

Mid-range tiers between \$1,000–\$2,000 have decreased, while premium programs over \$2,000 rose from **11% → 20%**, largely in industries with higher margins and stronger competition for talent.

Funding & Configuration for All Clients



Median allowance: ↓ \$660 per employee (from \$750)



High-participation median: \$827+ per employee



63% of plans provide funds < \$1,000 annually



Average categories per plan: 7



Programs with 6–8 categories show the strongest participation, inclusion, and spend efficiency



Funding Efficiency

Employers are achieving stable engagement with leaner budgets, driven by smarter plan design and predictable funding behavior.

LSAs Deliver More with Less

- **Median Funding (PEPY):** ↓ from \$750 → \$660
- **Participation:** Holding strong
- **Insight:** Flexibility and design discipline create value even in a constrained budget environment

Funding Cadence

Employers continue to refine how and when funds are distributed to optimize engagement and budget usage.

Funding Cadence	2024	2025	YoY Change	Budget Usage
Annual	22%	37%	↑ +15%	65%
Quarterly	23%	33%	↑ +10%	57%
Monthly	55%	30%	↓ -25%	53%

Cadence influences budget utilization patterns and participation stability—annual and quarterly models drive stronger sustained engagement. Programs funded quarterly or monthly report more efficient budget utilization, using less of their allocated budget while still receiving strong engagement. Annual plans drove greater engagement and budget usage.

Funding cadence allows employers to define the success of their LSA programs, informing how much of their budget they anticipate using without actually changing what they offer. It also allows for more predictive budget behaviors, especially when used with other plan design choices like wallet amount and carry-forward options.

Carry-forward options increased by 42% YoY, now offered by 51% of programs.

This pattern reflects an emphasis on predictable funding, simplified accounting, and sustainable engagement over time. Programs that include carry-forward features also report higher participation and usage, as the added flexibility encourages employees to fully utilize their available funds. If high participation is the goal, carry-forward facilitates that growth.

Carry-forward increases both participation and satisfaction without increasing funding



Carry-forward options increased by

42%
year-over-year

Configuration and Equity

Plan design continues to expand in both inclusivity and administrative sophistication.

- ✓ **Configurable, multi-solution plans** (multiple modules like LSA and R&R enabled together) engage employees at higher rates, demonstrating the multiplier effect of a united, personalized employee experience
- ✓ **Caregiving categories** (wellness, growth, family) recorded double-digit expansion as organizations design for diverse needs
- ✓ **Clear governance in program design** (transparent rules, consistent approvals, and well-defined processes) builds employee confidence and drives gains in both participation and trust
- ✓ **Average number of covered categories** by company grew 14%, allowing employees a wider range of expenses to encourage engagement
- ✓ **Incentivized wallets** link a wellness incentive program to an LSA wallet, streamlining administration, budgeting, and tracking while reducing employee app fatigue
- ✓ **Expanded choice in how to spend** from reimbursements to curated LSA Marketplaces, and debit cards, adding personalization while maintaining compliance and reducing out-of-pocket spend from employees

Organizations with thoughtfully designed programs, clear communication, and transparent spend parameters report 20% higher participation and 11% higher satisfaction scores.

This evolution signals a move from narrow wellness stipends toward comprehensive wellbeing frameworks encompassing physical, mental, and social health.

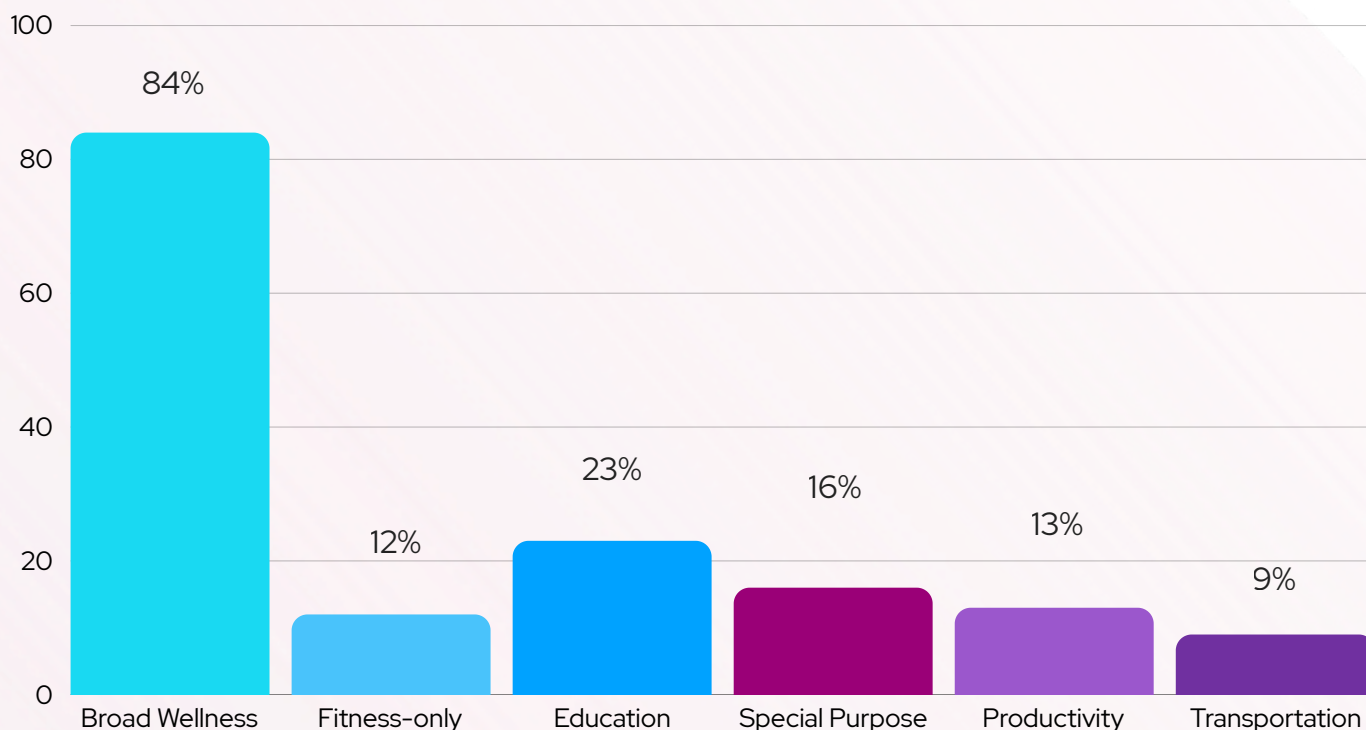
Control without constraint defines program maturity—empowering choice within a governed framework.

Vendor consolidation has transformed our approach to employee benefits. Now, we manage just one vendor while empowering employees to choose from endless options. This means they can select services that truly resonate with them and easily submit for reimbursement, all through a single platform.

Sarah Schutzberger, Wellness and Benefits Sr. Manager, Samsung

SAMSUNG

Percent of Clients that Offer Each Wallet



Emerging Health-Linked Allowances | Medical Travel, Pharmacy, and Specialty Support

A growing set of employers are extending flexible benefits into health-adjacent areas such as medical travel, pharmacy support, and specialty stipends for fertility or high-cost care. While still representing a low percentage of plans, these programs are growing, reflecting an early shift toward targeted affordability and access.

Employers are getting increasingly creative in their support of out-of-pocket medical and location-based needs. Organizations are now leveraging configurable wallets that offer flexibility similar to LSAs—positioning benefits as a protective infrastructure that bridges financial, medical, and emotional wellbeing.

This movement aligns with employee expectations: **71% say flexible benefit spending options increase their intent to stay with their employer**, reinforcing flexibility as a retention and care-access strategy.²

The Health Convergence

The next evolution of flexibility is health-linked choice, where benefits align with whole-person wellbeing and financial security while maintaining compliance.

As employers modernize access and affordability, LSAs and traditional health benefits have the opportunity to work increasingly in tandem.

[Explore Specialty Allowances](#)



² MetLife, What Employees Want

Cost Pressure Meets Benefit Demand

Escalating healthcare and pharmacy costs are redefining benefits strategy. Employers are under mounting pressure as employee demand for high-cost therapies like GLP-1s continues to surge.

Employer Signals

- 64% report significant budget strain³
- GLP-1s now 10.5% of Rx claims, up from 6.9% in 2023⁴
- Employer GLP-1 spend doubled: \$11 → \$24 PMPM⁴
- GLP-1 coverage widely offered: 70% cover, 78% apply controls⁵
- 62% rank controlling health benefit costs as a top priority⁵



~34%

of employers are increasing medical benefits for retention⁶

Employee Signals

- Cost pressures are changing behavior:
 - 59% of employees delayed medical care due to cost⁷
 - 45% report being “cost insecure” or “cost desperate” paying for healthcare and prescriptions⁸
- GLP-1 demand rising:
 - 53% cite cost and 41% note lack of coverage as top barriers⁹
 - 1 in 4 say GLP-1 access affects perception of employer benefits¹⁰



72%

would consider GLP-1s if affordable⁷

Bottom line: Employers must balance rising costs with expanding expectations for care access and personalized support.

³ Brown & Brown, State of GLP-1 Coverage Report 2025 ⁴ IFEBP, GLP-1 Report ⁵ Brown & Brown, Employer Health & Benefits 2025

⁶ Gallagher, Workforce Trends Report 2025 ⁷ KFF, 2024 Employer Health Benefits Survey ⁸ West Health, Healthcare Affordability Index

⁹ GoodRx, Weight Loss Medications Tracker ¹⁰ Mercer, National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans

Strategic Wellbeing & Value-Based Benefits

Despite cost pressures, wellbeing remains core to talent strategy:

- 78% of employers prioritize wellbeing (financial wellbeing rising fastest)¹¹
- 70% are maintaining or increasing wellbeing budgets¹²
- 65% say talent attraction & retention is top priority¹³

Employers are protecting and evolving wellbeing programs—emphasizing flexibility, affordability, and values-based benefits design as foundational to workforce permanence and resilience.

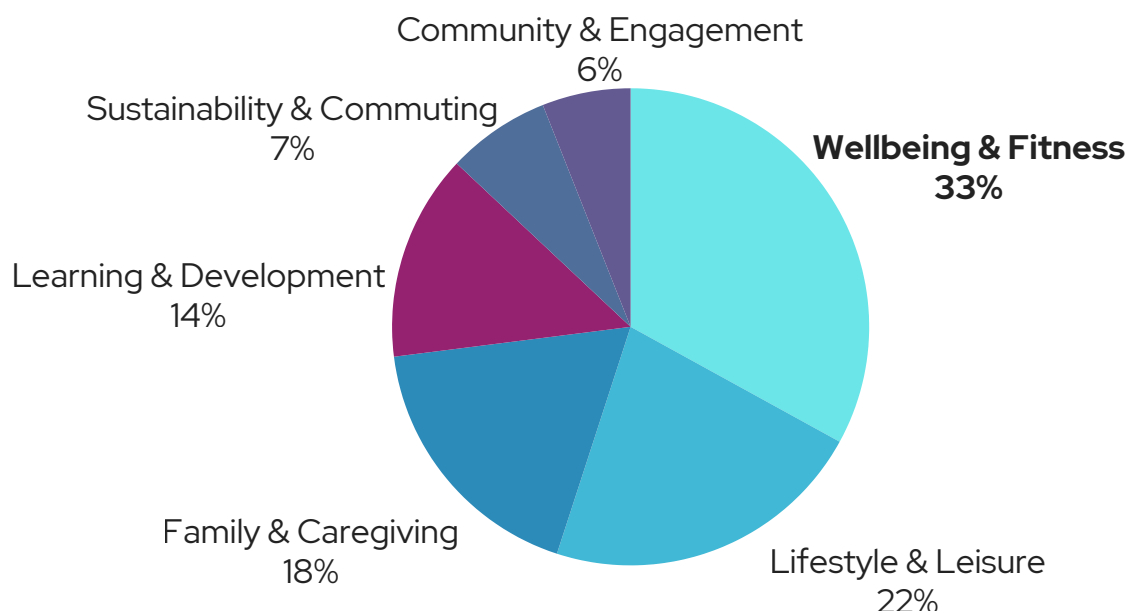
Flexibility → Affordability → Retention → Whole-Person Health

Organizations are moving toward a unified benefits model that strengthens financial and medical wellbeing while improving access, personalization, and loyalty.

Employee Behavior – How and Where They Spend

Employees are redefining what flexibility means in practice. Analysis of 550,000+ claims reveals consistent patterns in how LSA funds are used. Marketplace adoption continues to grow as employees can stretch their funds further with **partner discounts and zero markups**.

The Distribution of Benefit Spend



¹¹ WTW, Benefits Trends Survey 2025

¹² Lockton, 2025 Global Wellbeing Strategy Survey

¹³ Brown & Brown, Employer Health & Benefits 2025

Top 20 Most Popular LSA Purchases

- 1 → Fitness, sports, dance classes
- 2 → Fitness and sport equipment purchase, rental, and repair
- 3 → Personal trainer fees
- 4 → Fitness apps/memberships/subscriptions (online, in person)
- 5 → Nutrition Programs
- 6 → Smartwatch, smartphones, e-reader
- 7 → Spa services (e.g., massages, manicures, pedicures)
- 8 → Financial advisor and planning
- 9 → Meditation/mindfulness/cognitive improvement apps/classes
- 10 → Scale, Smart scale
- 11 → Tax preparation services
- 12 → Family support apps
- 13 → Vitamins and supplements
- 14 → Music classes, instruments, or equipment
- 15 → Pet care/pet support services
- 16 → Headphones, earbuds, AirPods
- 17 → National/state park passes
- 18 → Fitness apparel
- 19 → Hobby-related fees, equipment, classes
- 20 → Personal or life coaching

Employees **averaged 4 claims per person in 2024, and 5 in 2025**—each representing a distinct engagement moment and a tangible expression of appreciation for personalized benefits.

Most Popular LSA Marketplace Vendors

Popular vendors typically mirror the spending habits of employees and their everyday lives, using their LSA to support where they already shop.

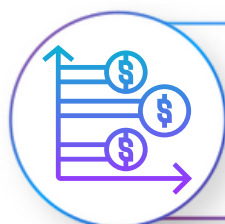


The LSA Marketplace provides unique wellness **partner discounts, ranging from 5–30%**. Without any markups, it has become a high driver of employee engagement that stretches their LSA funds further.



Participation & Utilization Patterns

Participation remains one of the most visible indicators of LSA engagement, and it's often misunderstood. Industry benchmarks frequently cite participation rates of 80% or higher, yet those figures don't tell the full story. Participation alone reflects access and activity, not necessarily the maturity or strategic intent of the program.



Engagement Threshold

Programs in the **\$250–\$500 range** sustain the most cost-effective participation levels



Best Practice Clients

See a **median participation of 70–90%**, linking program design and engagement



Funding Cadence

Quarterly funding and annual funding models yield stronger, sustained participation



Marketplace-Enabled

Programs with the LSA Marketplace see an average of **13% higher engagement**

Integrated programs increase participation by ~24%

Consistent Participation Amplifiers From Best Practice Clients



Funding level

Influences participation once employers cross the \$250 PEPY threshold, and then levels off until \$1,000



LSA Plus™

Combining other Espresa solutions (R&R, Wellbeing) into one ecosystem increased participation by ~24%



Employer goals

Employers that prioritize participation above all else can build their plan with design elements proven to increase engagement



Workforce demographics

Different employees may find value in different benefits based on their location, age, and more



Broad wallets

Outperform narrow counterparts by 20%



Plan configuration

Carry-forward rules and funding cadence can be augmented for desired outcomes

High participation remains a hallmark of well-designed LSAs; however, framing it as the sole success measure risks oversimplification.

True success depends on design quality—how programs align structure, communication, and perceived value to meet employer objectives. Some organizations prioritize broad participation, while others intentionally target specific outcomes such as equity, inclusion, or spend control. In these models, lower participation can actually indicate focused impact, not underperformance.

Programs built with clear structure and an intentional cadence consistently achieve stronger, sustained engagement across all budget tiers. The most effective programs use participation as one dimension of success, alongside satisfaction, cultural alignment, and cost sustainability.

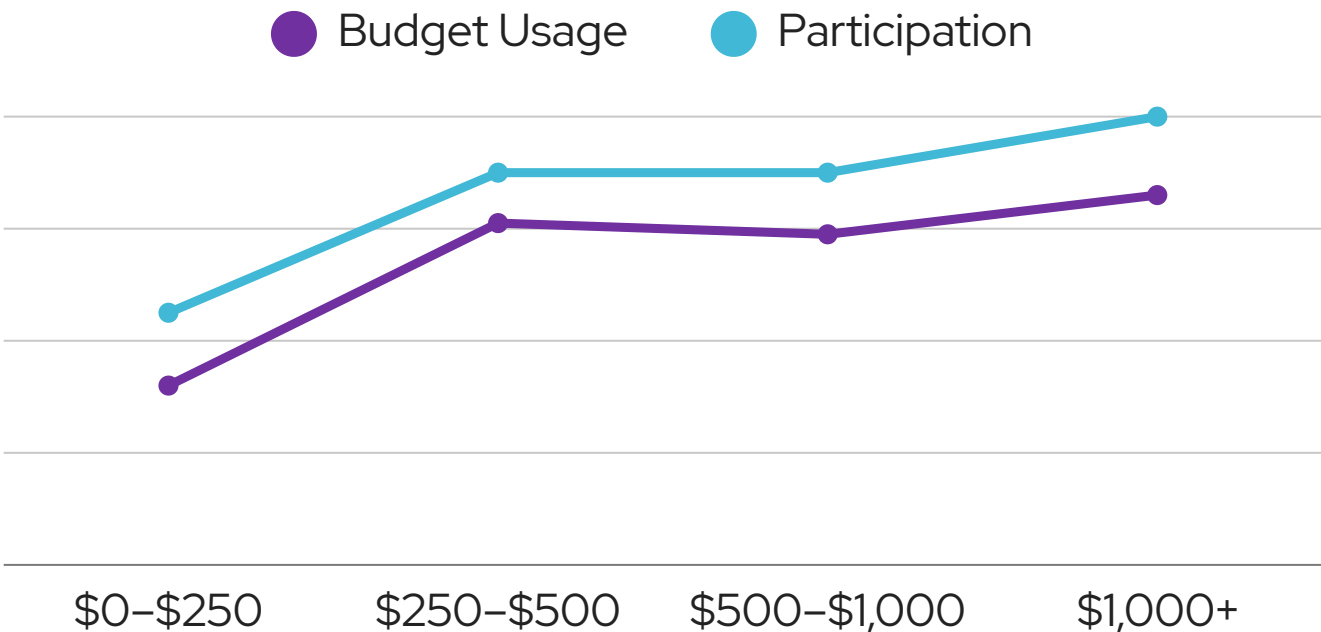
The benchmark for strong LSA design is program design and intentionality. Design maturity, not dollar amount, determines sustained impact.

Maintaining a strong culture during our rapid growth is vital, and the success of our LSA program reflects our commitment to transparency and employee satisfaction across all regions.

Zack Rokos, Sr. Director of Total Rewards, Snyk

snyk

Participation and Budget Usage by Average Plan Limit



Access Models and Participation

In the past, LSAs were more defined by what they covered and which eligible expenses mattered most to employees. While still essential, LSAs have continued their growth beyond it, even refining the reimbursement process and delivery design, which strongly influences engagement.

Programs offering multi-channel access for funds (e.g., Marketplace, debit card, and reimbursement options) show **~20% higher utilization compared to single-method models**, as easier access drives frequency of claims and broader benefit exploration.

To best support employees on either end of the spectrum, other fund usage models are taking shape, guiding even greater choice, eliminating out-of-pocket spend, and allowing greater employee control.

LSA Marketplace

The Espresa Marketplace is a high adoption driver among clients, as evidenced by its **20% YoY growth**. With more Marketplace programs in action, we found that **spending grew around 30%**, affirming our 2024 Benchmark & Trends Report predictions.

Now, **24% of LSA customers implement the LSA Marketplace**, with **17% of total LSA claims submitted directly through the Marketplace** without requiring employee out-of-pocket spend.



LSA Debit Cards

LSA Debit Cards are another popular way for employees to access their LSA funds, offering a streamlined method to purchase eligible expenses internationally or locally. The card is powered by Espresa's programmable rules engine, enabling eligibility rules to be updated globally in minutes.

Recent enhancements now support global card issuance, extending accessibility for multinational employers. Accepted almost everywhere worldwide and adaptable to local currencies, LSA Debit Card adoption is surging, since as of this writing, Espresa is the only vendor with a global LSA Debit Card.



Part III | Platform Integration and Global Reach

Integration and Ecosystem Impact

Integrated benefits ecosystems are displacing stand-alone solutions. Plans utilizing LSAs, recognition, wellbeing, and community programs continue to redefine how organizations think about employee experience, especially when used together. We also find that combining LSAs with **employer-funded programs** instead of **employee-funded programs** (HSAs and FSAs) communicates a greater depth of care for employees.

Unified delivery improves data visibility, simplifies administration, and enhances consistency across cultures and regions while also amplifying the success of combining complementary solutions.

Integrated programs connect purpose, wellbeing, and recognition—transforming employee experience from isolated touchpoints into a single, intuitive experience that activates employee engagement across every channel.

Employers that align wellbeing, recognition, and personal benefits into unified programs see higher engagement and stronger intent to stay¹⁴

Organizations that integrate wellbeing and culture investments into a cohesive employee experience report high performance, loyalty, and cultural alignment¹⁵

Participation Rate Based on Program Integration



“MaineHealth’s goal was to bring the breadth of our wellbeing and recognition programs together in one place—making it easier for our employees to engage in ways that matter most to them. Our revamped recognition and wellbeing platform now unites everything under one umbrella. Espresso’s platform now serves as the front door to wellbeing for all of our employees, accessible anytime, anywhere through the platform and app.

Laura Robbins, Health and Wellbeing Manager, MaineHealth

¹⁴ MetLife, Employee Benefit Trends

¹⁵ Deloitte, Human Capital Trends

Client Case Study Examples

Integration is translating strategy into measurable engagement and cultural alignment across industries and geographies. Each example demonstrates how program coherence translates to measurable engagement and lasting cultural alignment.

Solution: LSA



Engagement Rate → **91%**

Countries Supported → **23**

Eligible Employees → **~7K**

Integrated LSAs to scale global belonging initiatives globally with industry-leading engagement.

Solution: LSA & Recognition



Participation Rate → **92%**

Countries Supported → **25**

Eligible Employees → **~5K**

Unified recognition, wellbeing, and lifestyle benefits under one program and record engagement within a year.

Solution: LSA & Wellbeing



Program Engagement → **78%**

Member Satisfaction → **92%**

Eligible Employees → **~5K**

Consolidated LSA, wellness, and challenges within a unified LSA framework—boosting participation while maintaining budget-neutral redesign.

Solution: LSA



Annual LSA Wallet → **\$1,200**

Employees Using LSA → **84%**

Wellbeing Categories → **4**

Streamlined multiple reimbursement point solutions into a unified, future-ready LSA that increased satisfaction and simplified administration.

Solution: LSA, Wellbeing & Communities



Fitness/Wellness Spend → **80%+**

Countries Supported → **20+**

Challenge Participation → **~2.2K+**

Delivered a unified wellbeing experience for agricultural and corporate teams, increasing challenge participation and expanding global access to fitness and wellness programs.



**Explore More
Case Studies**



Global Expansion | Local Flexibility, Global Cohesion

Espresa continues to scale globally as multinational employers prioritize consistent, equitable experiences across regions. **~65% of Espresa clients now operate globally**, with employees supported in 100+ countries across all employee solutions.

This growth reflects accelerating demand for benefits that maintain local sensitivity within a unified global framework.

Localization in Practice

- Tax configurability by market
- Localized categories and culture-aligned spending (e.g., healthcare-related expenses commonly included in APAC)
- Multi-currency and multilingual support
- Regionally balanced budgets for cost-of-living equity

Our goal was global equity. Ensuring every employee, regardless of location, has meaningful benefits access. We have a headquarters in the UK, with a handful of other people scattered across Europe in various countries. We had to find a solution that allowed us to provide global equity to all of our people. Espresa enabled us to deliver a consistent experience with local flexibility across every region we operate in.



Tabitha Mondragon, Sr. Director,
Global Benefits, Avalara

Global Tax Guides

Espresa partners with a leading Global Tax Advisory to develop LSA tax guides across major regions—providing organizations with clear, compliant insights for program administration worldwide.

To learn more about Espresa's regional tax guidance and resources, contact our team at sales@espresa.com.



How Global Teams Use LSAs

Emerging patterns suggest regional differentiation driven by cultural and cost-of-living factors, with wellbeing universal and lifestyle + productivity categories varying by region.

- Physical wellbeing = 45% of global spend
- Living & lifestyle support is heavily used in LATAM + Southeast Asia, lower in the US and EU
- Productivity & remote-work support is particularly high in the EU

Global Marketplace Trends by Country



Emerging Directional Patterns

Region	Notable Trend
North America	Broadest participation and LSA-wellbeing/recognition integrations
EMEA	Wellbeing and sustainability take precedence
LATAM	Lifestyle and daily-living support prominence
APAC	Professional and family-support categories growing

Part IV | Operational Excellence and Outlook

Operational Excellence as Advantage

As LSAs mature into enterprise infrastructure, operational excellence becomes the competitive differentiator. Execution quality—not intent—separates leading organizations from the rest.

High-performing employers share three defining characteristics:



Experience Integration

LSAs, recognition, wellbeing, and community programs function as a single cultural engine



Governance Discipline

Policies are transparent, auditable, and globally compliant



Data-Driven Agility

Analytics guide continuous optimization of funding, engagement, and equity

Espresa Data Confirms

Organizations that integrate thoughtful benefits planning within a unified ecosystem experience see:

- **1.3x higher** employee participation
- **18% reduction** in administrative time
- **22% greater** program renewal intent
- **Double-digit reduction** in administrative time with integrated HR/benefits platforms

Higher renewal likelihood where employees realize clear benefits value.¹⁶

I love working for a company like Radian that genuinely invests in both its employees and the community. We're dedicated to easing the challenges employees face by building a culture where they feel truly seen and supported—and it shows in our low turnover rate. Espresa has been an essential part of making that possible.

radian

Jessica Dillon, AVP Benefits,
Radian Group, Inc.

¹⁶ MetLife, Employee Benefit Trends

Operational Excellence Metrics (2024)

Metric	Result	Industry Benchmark
Claim Approval Time	<24 hours	3–5 days
First-Pass Accuracy	99.9%	96%
Platform Uptime	99.98%	99%
CSAT	98%	88%
MSAT (Support)	95%	94%

These results demonstrate that operational infrastructure can directly reinforce engagement outcomes; trust, speed, and reliability shape perception as strongly as policy design.

Efficiency Through Empathy

Automation and human support operate in tandem to deliver a consistent, transparent experience for employees and administrators alike. Efficiency and empathy are treated as complementary, not opposing, forces.

Observed Results

- ✓ 45% average reduction in administrative overhead post-implementation
- ✓ 91% of users rate Espresa “intuitive or easy to use”¹⁷

¹⁷ Espresa, Support Satisfaction Report

Strategic Outlook | The Future of Flexibility

The next era of total rewards will be defined by strategic flexibility—benefits that are both personal and predictive. **Across Espresa’s 2026 benchmark dataset, three macro forces shape the landscape ahead:**

Automation of Personalization

AI-driven insights will continue to refine the benefits process, managing remedial tasks like claim adjudication and eligibility questions. While human oversight continues to inform eligible expense categories and program refinements. AI-driven personalization will move LSAs from choice-based to intent-based, anticipating needs before request.

Integration as Infrastructure

LSAs will increasingly act as the link for total rewards—connecting recognition, wellbeing, and community programs through shared data and consistent delivery. The distinction between benefits and culture investments will dissolve as experience becomes the product.

Flexibility as Return

Flexibility will emerge as a financial and cultural VOI metric. Employers will measure impact through engagement velocity, utilization consistency, and cross-category equity.

From Administration to Intelligence

The benchmark data signals a market moving from administration to intelligence.

Organizations are increasingly measuring:

- **Utilization depth** (per-employee spend vs. diversity of claims)
- **Cultural participation metrics** (frequency of engagement across benefits)
- **Governance efficiency** (cost per employee vs. admin hours saved)

Espresa’s analytics now help clients forecast participation curves, helping clients forecast engagement outcomes based on funding, category design, and cadence.

Different configurations drive specific outcomes. Employer opportunities:

Design for flexibility within guardrails –
empower employee choice while preserving fiscal control

Prioritize breadth over spend –
programs with diverse categories deliver higher sustained engagement than those with larger budgets but narrower eligible expenses

Use configuration levers to support funding –
carry-forward options or combining categories into a flexible offering maintain perceived value without increasing cost

Strategic Takeaways for Employers

The 2026 Benchmark & Trends Report indicates a structural transition: flexibility is now an operational expectation, not a differentiator. Organizations that integrate flexibility with strong governance are achieving tangible outcomes in retention, satisfaction, and productivity.



LSAs have become a mainstream pillar of modern benefits strategy. Employees expect choice and personalization, while employers need simplicity, consolidation, and measurable impact. Espresa is proud to lead this evolution—delivering flexibility at scale through a unified, consumer-grade platform that’s incredibly easy to use.

Alex Shubat, CEO and
Co-Founder, Espresa



Large companies need flexibility, but they also need control. We built our technology to deliver both. Employers set the rules, and the platform handles the rest. The result is steady engagement allowing HR teams to focus on strategy instead of fixing processes.

Raghavan Menon, CTO and
Co-Founder, Espresa

Key Insights for 2026

- ✓ **Success is Contextual, Not Universal**
LSA programs align with the employer’s intent (broad reach, targeted impact, or financial control)
- ✓ **Flexibility as Infrastructure**
LSAs are a platform for personalization at scale
- ✓ **Choice Drives Connection**
Personalization and choice drive retention and participation
- ✓ **Integration Multiplies Impact**
Unified systems reinforce culture and VOI
- ✓ **Operational Excellence Builds Trust**
Governance and reliability now define quality
- ✓ **Global Parity Is the Standard**
Consistency with local context defines fairness

Espresa's Leadership Perspective

As workforces evolve, organizations are redefining value through autonomy, inclusion, and accountability.

Espresa continues its focus on advancing flexibility as infrastructure—through data, integration, and governance innovation—so that employee experience functions as a business system rather than an initiative.

Powering Great Workplaces® is more than a tagline; it represents the capability to translate culture into measurable experience.

The organizations that lead in 2026 will treat engagement not as a program but as a system—and Espresa provides the framework that makes it possible.

Contact us today to get started.

