

Employee Wellness Analysis: Creating Data-Driven HR Policies That Help Save Lives

by **Roop Ranjan Ghosal,**

Analytics Head, EAS Oracle HCM Practice

The Rise of the Chief Medical Officer

Typically, business continuity and disaster recovery plans provide a strategy for when disruptive events—including natural disasters, manmade events or pandemics—impact the technology environment and result in its inability to adequately support the business. The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that employees are critical assets to enabling business continuity during such a pandemic event. With so many unknown factors related to this health crisis, organizations must be prepared for any scenario that could impact employees' safety, health and ability to perform their work in running critical operations.

One of the best ways to prepare for this type of an event is to measure and analyze the impact of contributing factors that could increase the probability of an employee becoming ill and not performing his/her role. With this information, organizations have better insight into factors (like vulnerability to pandemic infection and probability of being asymptotically infected), which can be used to develop human resources (HR) policies designed to help decrease risk. This type of data also helps HR to prepare a backup plan if an employee does become ill and cannot work.

Within the human resources organization, there is a role that manages employee wellness and health to ensure the organization abides by occupational health regulations and creates an injury-free and disease-free work environment. During this pandemic, the role of Chief Medical Officer (CMO)

or Chief Health Officer (CHO) has come into increased prominence. People in these positions are internal medicine physician executives with expertise in medical and pharmacy benefit plan design, occupational health, population health, business continuity planning, risk-mitigation, medical leave of absence, FMLA (USA), medical accommodations, and short-term and long-term disability. In a pandemic situation, organizations rely on the CMO to make decisions about employee health and well-being and continued utilization based on the prevailing medical conditions.

With their medical background, CMOs are tasked with analyzing data to assess employee wellness and the level of exposure of the organization to global hazards (like COVID-19) and reporting the findings to external government agencies as and when required. The CMO team typically uses a reporting application to access three categories of data (illustrated below) to make informed decisions: basic HCM data, global pandemic distribution data, and relevant employee medical data and travel history.

The employee wellness analytics data can be categorized into three parts:

- Basic human capital management (HCM) data including demographic and geographical distribution across the organization to identify specific segments to use for monitoring. (See Figure 1.)

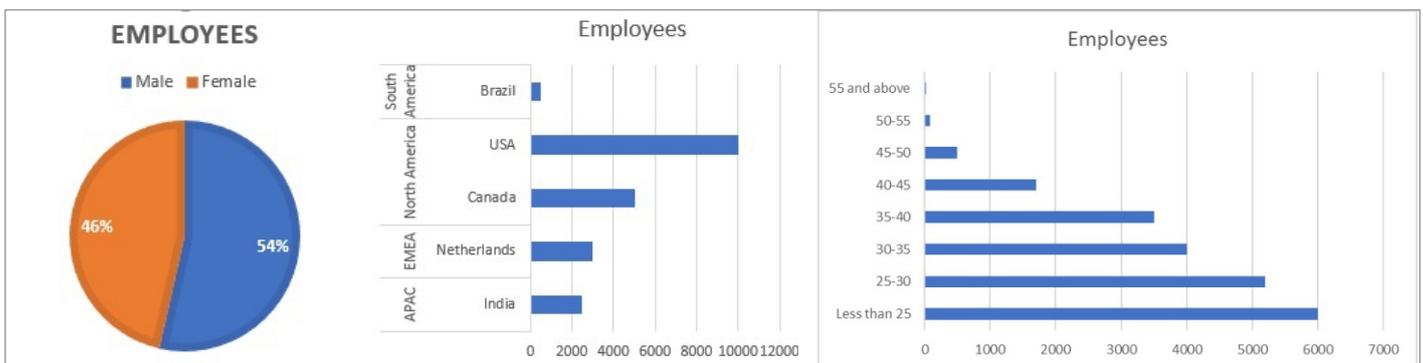


Figure 1: Illustrative demographic data (such as age, gender, location) are critical inputs for pandemic situations.

- Global pandemic data documented by government disease control agencies and other statistical organizations from academic institutions can be added to the basic demographic and geographic data to source the impact of the COVID-19 crisis across locations, gender and age group. (See Figure 2.) This data gives the CMO or public health authorities additional insight into employees' well-being.

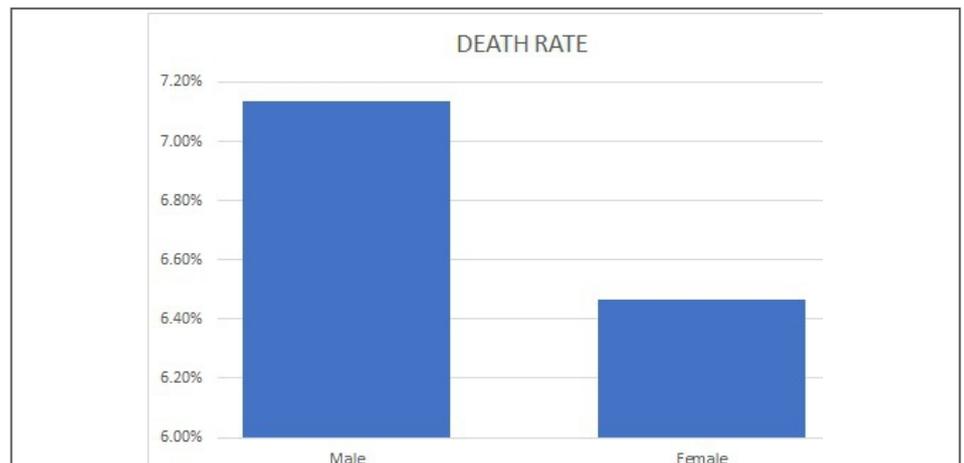
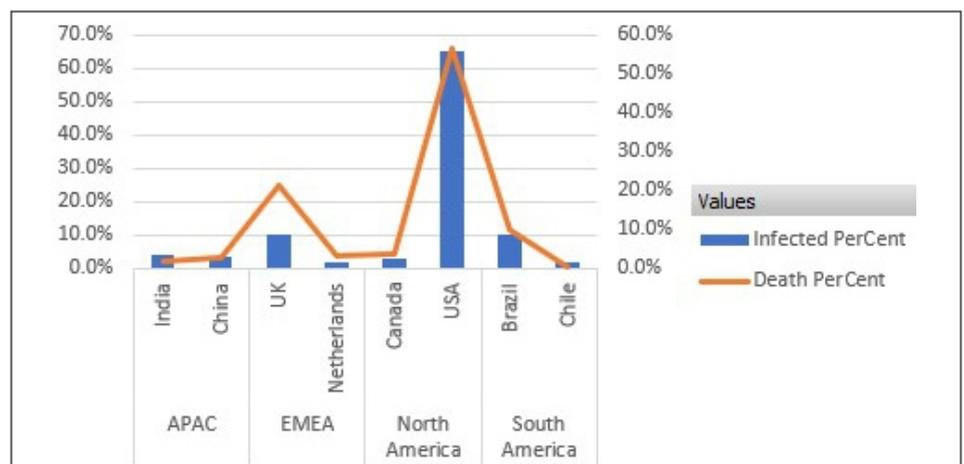
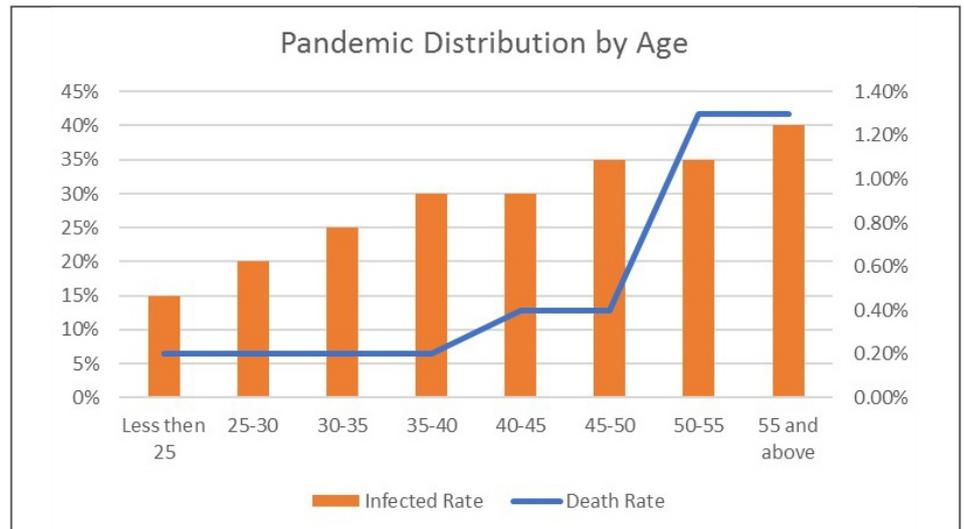


Figure 2. Pandemic outbreak-related external data.

- Personal and medical data that can provide additional context to the analysis, including travel history within the past three months, lifestyle habits, preexisting medical conditions, family health conditions, travel history of immediate family members and current location.

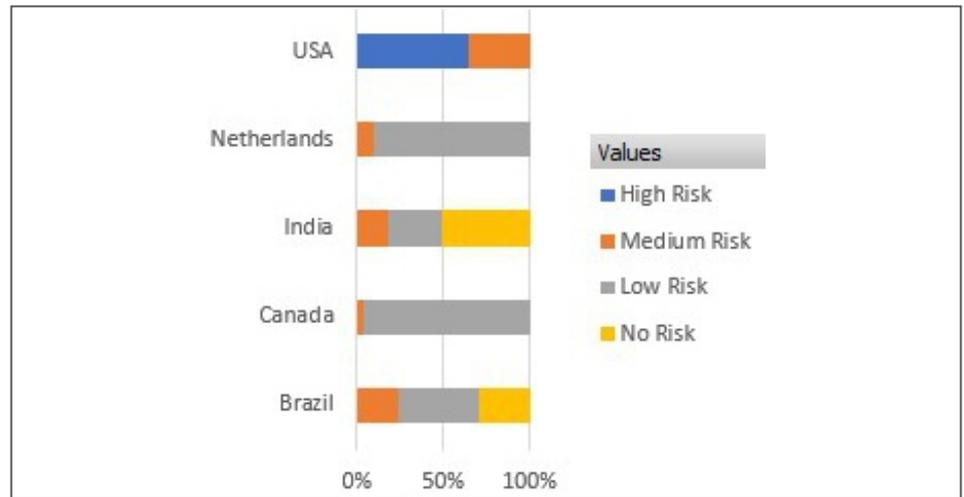
Since a pandemic analysis requires a lot of voluntarily shared employee data including information regarding preexisting medical conditions, this information must be used by the CMO with care and abiding by all privacy laws applicable to health data. It is a good idea (and should be an organizational best practice) to store the data in a separate database accessible only by the CMO office, where registered and authorized medical practitioners can run reports to access employee health and wellness profiles.

Pandemic Analysis of Employee Health Risk

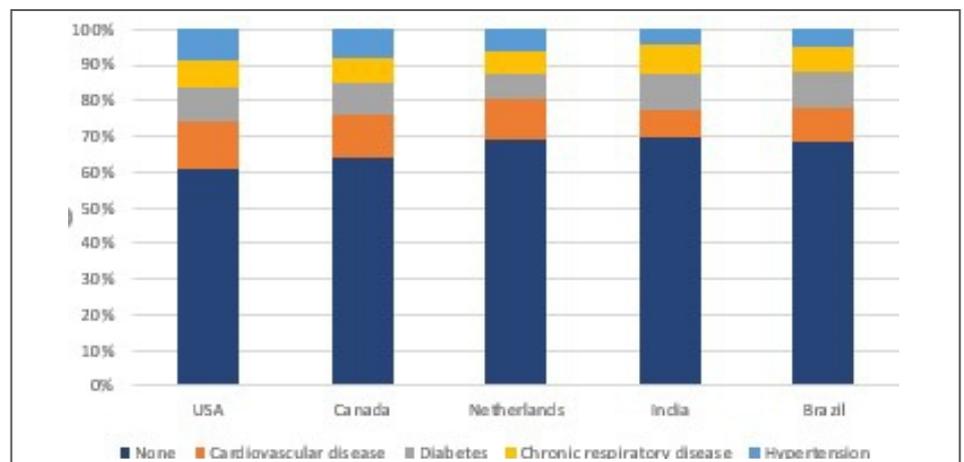
Now that we have defined the type of data typically used for wellness analysis, let's look at an example. The CMO of a global financial institution needed to provide recommendations for workforce deployment during the recent coronavirus outbreak. TCS implemented an application to help capture the voluntary employee travel and health data needed for analysis, along with the HCM data and pandemic data to identify workforce policies for vulnerable employees related to COVID-19. With access to this data, the CMO was able to analyze different contributing factors (like traveling to a hot-spot location of outbreak or vulnerability due to an existing health condition) that make the employee more vulnerable to infection. At the same time, this information allowed the CMO to make data-driven recommendations and policies ensuring safe working conditions and remote access-enabled workforce.

Geographic risk: The CMO must first identify which employees are in high-risk locations. If a CMO categorizes risk exposure in geographies as "High, Medium and Low" based on the infection-rate percentage, the degree of risk can be associated with the profile of employees operating out of those geographies. This information can enable additional drill-down to decide on risk mitigation actions like "stay at home" mandates or "remote work" facilities. Using the geography hierarchy, the CMO can drill down

to the state- or county-level risk exposure that an employee may be subjected to due to his or her presence at that location.

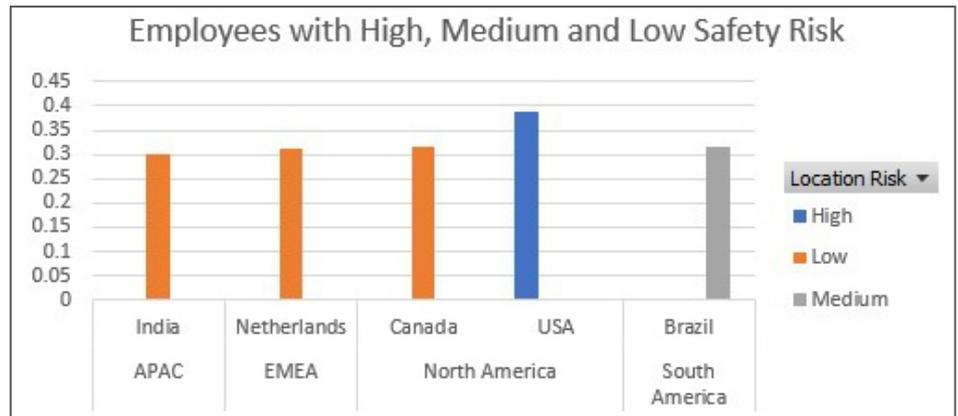


Health risks: While employees are impacted by risks associated with a location-based infection outbreak, certain preexisting health conditions make an employee even more vulnerable. Using the data around voluntarily disclosed recent travel and prevailing health condition of employees in high-risk locations, the CMO can now classify the set of employees who needs additional precautions of quarantine or self-isolation. The most relevant conditions for this type of analysis are generally broad-based cardiovascular disease conditions, respiratory illness, diabetes (DBT) or hypertension (HT) that make an employee more susceptible to COVID-19 infection as compared to any other employee. The organization needs to identify these employees and provide a safe working environment.

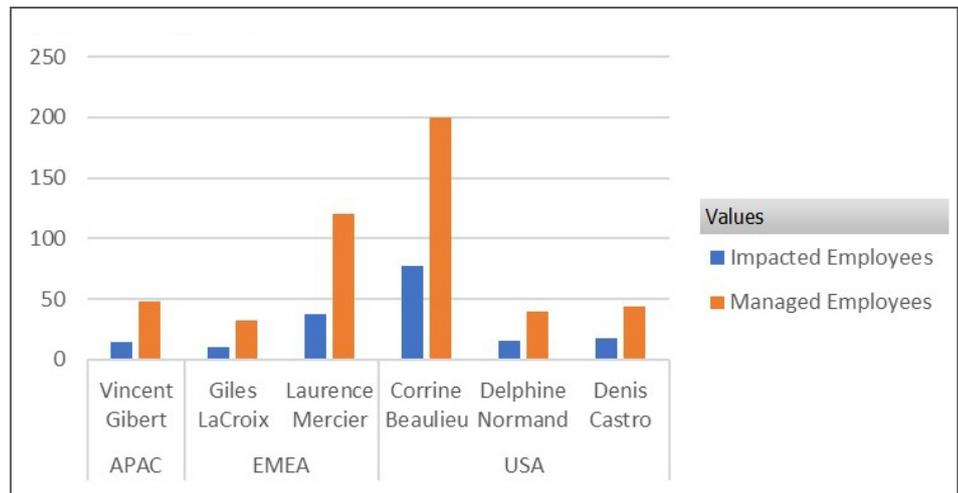


Employee assignments: Health advisories coming from government organizations are advisable for all employees to follow, but certain employees whose wellness and health can be easily compromised should also be advised by the employer for additional mandatory safety precautions to avoid infection of self,

family and larger community. If we correlate this health condition to the location risk profile, the CMO can confidently suggest a pandemic safety advisory to that set of employees within the organization. The CMO can now drill down to the details of these employees and share isolation advisories as applicable as per government and disease control authorities.

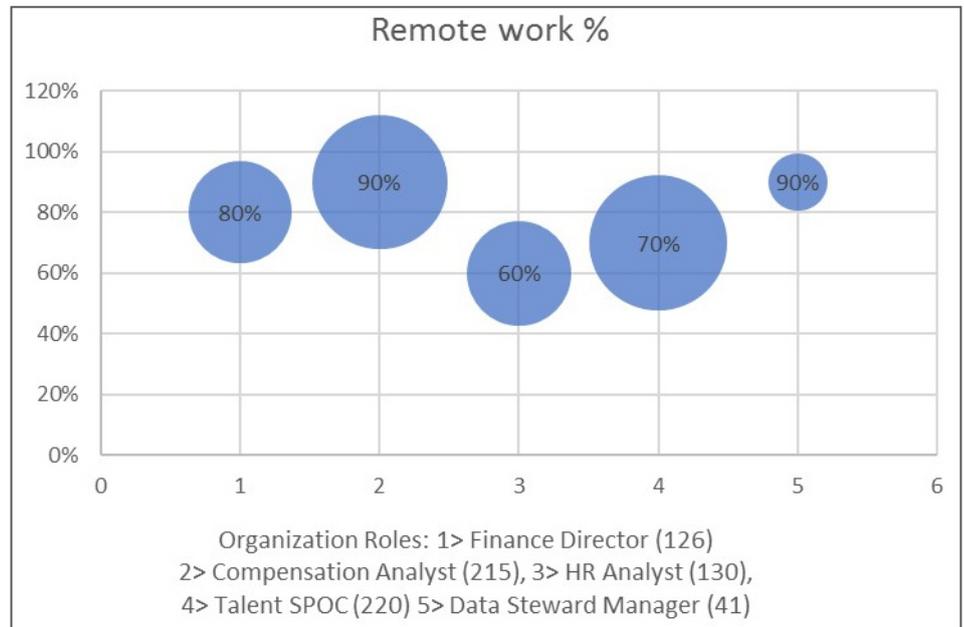


Management communications: Ideally the supervisors should communicate instructions regarding safe isolation of employees and additional remote working instructions and logistics to the impacted employees. The CMO can publish the requisite medical care to be taken by those employees. Additional instructions can be sent through the managers as per the organization hierarchy.



Remote-enabled roles: In many cases, like personnel handling cash distribution in ATMs or essential services providers, few employees will need to continue to work from office locations or to travel to service locations. This data will need to be captured within the HCM system and can be utilized by the CMO in agreement with line managers or supervisors and HR officers to determine the remaining set of the employees who can be advised to work from remote location (in isolation).

It is important to note that not all types of work can be done with the same level of efficiency from remote locations. A new benchmark of throughput or productivity during the isolation period has to be set by managers.



Employee Data Helps Ensure Wellness and Business Continuity

The current COVID-19 situation is unprecedented. However, due to digital investments, many larger organizations have an advantage from a streamlined access to an abundance of data that yields actionable insights during this crisis. Within the human resources organization, large amounts of precious data are available that hold the key to employee wellness. By working with the CHRO in the context of a widespread pandemic situation, the CMO is able to access private and sensitive medical data needed to conduct critical analysis. The CHRO can gain insights from the professional expertise and analysis of the CMO to then roll out workforce engagement benefits that mitigate employee health risks and ensure business continuity of their operations. The combination of an enterprise HR application and analytics can empower a CMO to guide their company to quickly make data-driven decisions around policies and employee safety and health, in any environment. By adopting this kind of approach, the organization becomes more agile and ends up with stronger, tighter policies and better employee safety, while protecting personal data every step of the way.

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