

THE VOICE OF EHS: 2026 TRENDS AND PRIORITIES

Findings from new landmark research
across North America and Europe





Section One Charting the future of EHS

The EHS profession has always been subject to rapidly evolving demands. Sometimes these have been due to changes in regulations. Sometimes they've been driven by cultural shifts. And often, technology has played an outsized role.

Today, these demands are accelerating and dividing along a number of different vectors.

EHS professionals are simultaneously dealing with new expectations, changing objectives, and an AI-driven revolution in technology. These are combining to reshape how we keep people safe, healthy, and protect the planet around us.

This new, landmark research explores what it means to be an EHS professional today and the challenges others just like you are facing.

More than this, it also looks at priorities for the year ahead and what should be on your radar as you navigate current and emerging challenges in delivering successful EHS programs.



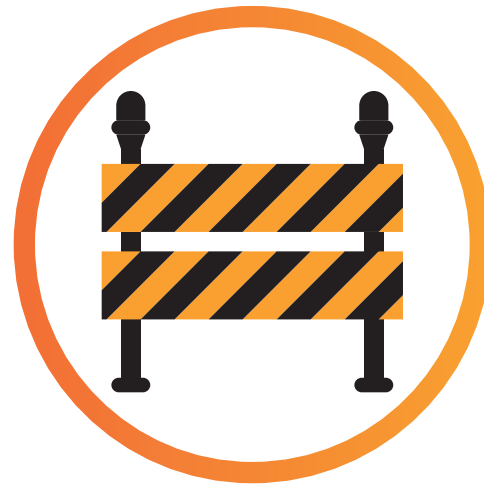
Three key learnings



ONE

On the whole, senior management is engaged with EHS initiatives. However, the criteria business leaders use to define success are often different from those applied by EHS professionals. The result could mean mismatched expectations and become a source of tension.

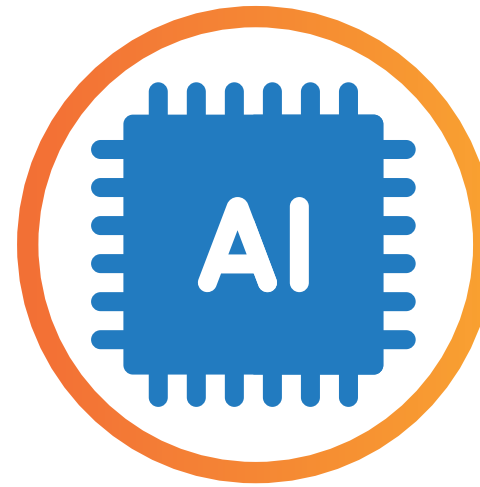
Addressing this should be a key focus area in 2026 to ensure everyone is on the same page.



TWO

Creating effective safety cultures is a key concern for many EHS professionals. However, many organizations are still simply reacting to events as they happen and looking to fix their processes after the fact.

Today's EHS pros need to explore how they can truly embed EHS into the culture of the business so that best practice becomes simply how people work every day.



THREE

Technology, and specifically AI, is having a significant impact on how EHS professionals operate. For the most part, this is delivering significant advantages. But implementation issues are slowing progress.

In the year ahead, AI is only set to grow in importance. EHS leaders need to ensure they and their people can fully harness the benefits.



Section Two

Taking the pulse of the EHS profession





To better understand where we are and where we're headed in 2026, we asked 864 senior EHS professionals across North America and Europe a series of in-depth questions. We asked about the level of senior management engagement and how business leaders view success.

We questioned how they are meeting the needs of a changing workforce, from evolving demographics to the widespread shift to hybrid working.

And we quizzed them about the technologies they are using to help make it happen—everything from IoT sensors to the burgeoning AI revolution.

Big challenges, promising future

The results show a profession whose mandate is broader than ever, but one that is also up for the challenge.

75%



Highlight ongoing issues with EHS talent shortage.

84%



Point to the need for new skills if they and their teams are to keep up with emerging technologies.

82%



Believe the EHS role will become more strategic and influential in their business.

85%



The the professional will play a key part in driving sustainability and environmental goals.

In this report, we'll explore just what it means to be an EHS professional today and highlight the key trends and challenges shaping the future.

Let's dive in.



The 7 big themes at a glance

This research covers multiple aspects of EHS today, from executive support and organizational safety culture to technology adoption and priorities for the future. As we've analyzed the data, seven core themes have emerged.

01. Senior leaders are engaged but tensions remain

The good news is that, on the whole, senior leaders are engaged with EHS. However, the way they judge success can be at odds with how EHS professionals measure it. This has the potential for mismatched expectations that could undermine long-term effectiveness.

We cover this on [page 9](#).

02. There is still a way to go in creating effective safety cultures

Creating a culture of safety is often high on EHS pros' wish lists. Once safety is embedded in how a business operates, doing the right thing becomes the default. In the research, mandated rules still dominate, but many companies are now focusing on fostering greater personal responsibility among employees. **Learn more on [page 16](#).**

03. Generational shifts are changing how we engage people

As we transition from Baby Boomers and Gen X to Millennials, Gen Z, and whatever comes next, EHS leaders are exploring new ways to make their programs and communications more effective. Training plays a big role of course. But the types of training and the technology being used are changing fast. **Get the full picture on [page 20](#).**

04. Getting to grips with mental health issues

At one time, mental health was largely ignored by many businesses. The stigma surrounding it meant that few would discuss mental health challenges and, as a result, support was lacking. Fortunately, this has changed in recent years. **Find out what your peers are doing on [page 24](#).**

05. The changing face of training

Training in one form or another has long been a mainstay of EHS. In the research, we ask about the popularity and effectiveness of over 10 different approaches. The results clearly show that what's popular and what's effective are not always the same thing.

See how different approaches rank on [page 28](#).

06. EHS professionals are embracing technology and AI

We see widespread enthusiasm for the benefits offered by a range of technologies, and artificial intelligence in particular. AI is being used across everything from optimizing workflows and analyzing trends to risk assessments and real-time hazard monitoring. There are challenges, but the benefits are clear. **Get the deep dive on [page 32](#).**

07. EHS professionals are investing more in ESG programs

ESG has been a key issue for businesses for a number of years. Driven by a range of factors—from governmental regulation to changing employee expectations—we're seeing organizations worldwide continue or increase their investments.

See what businesses are doing as a result on [page 40](#).



A man and a woman in industrial workwear are looking at a clipboard. The man is in the foreground, wearing a grey cap and a grey t-shirt, looking off to the side. The woman is behind him, holding a clipboard and looking in the same direction. They are standing in front of a large, dark, textured structure, possibly a piece of machinery or a building. A large, semi-transparent pink circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text.

Section Three
Do leadership and
EHS really see
eye-to-eye?



The processes and practices of EHS have a direct and lasting impact on the culture of a business. To succeed, EHS needs to be deeply embedded in the fabric of how the business operates. A critical factor is whether a firm's senior leadership is on board and clearly seen to be so.

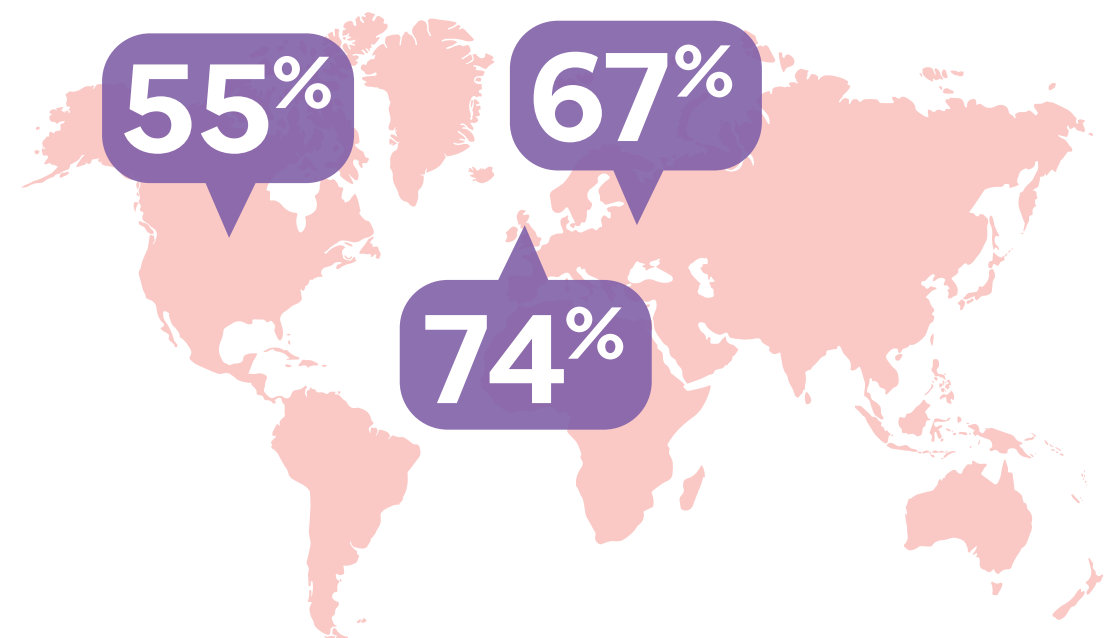
To assess the level of senior management support, we asked practitioners about the kind of engagement they are seeing from their firm's leadership. They could choose from options spanning minimal engagement and occasional involvement to providing support and actively participating and championing EHS.



Engagement levels are high but varied

The good news is that executive teams are, on the whole, highly engaged with EHS initiatives. Some **63%** of respondents say their senior management is participating and championing EHS within their businesses.

There are regional differences, however. North America sees lower engagement than Europe—just **55%** say their senior management is highly engaged. This is significantly lower than in mainland Europe, where the number is **67%**, and the UK, where it's **74%**.



We also see variance at an industry level. The Energy, Oil, and Gas sector rates lowest with just **45%** of senior management actively engaged. At the other end of the spectrum, the Construction industry has the most engaged senior managers (**79%** say they are actively engaged).

But what are management's expectations of EHS in their organizations?

How engaged is your executive team with your EHS programs?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
Highly engaged - they actively participate and champion EHS initiatives	63%	55%	74%	67%
Somewhat engaged - provide support but are not deeply involved	31%	36%	23%	30%
Occasionally engaged - involved only when major issues arise	3%	4%	1%	3%
Minimally engaged - rarely participate or show interest	2%	3%	2%	0%
Not engaged at all - EHS is not a leadership priority	1%	2%	0%	0%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

A possible source of friction

There will always be room for tension when one part of the business measures success differently from another. Often, they may agree on general principles but view things through very different lenses. We see this clearly in the research data when we ask how senior management and EHS professionals measure success.





Management focuses primarily on outcomes

For senior business leaders, the number one marker of success is injury reduction (selected by **67%** of respondents), with workforce engagement second (**65%**), and gaining better quality data third (**60%**).

This is reasonably consistent across regions—though the UK places engagement above injury reduction.

Company size has an impact. Leaders in businesses with over 1,000 employees prioritize workforce engagement (**78%**), with better quality data in second (**72%**) and time savings just ahead of cost reduction (both rounded up to **69%**). Injury reduction, surprisingly, comes in last place—although only by a single percentage point (**68%**).

How does your management team expect to realize a return on investment from EHS initiatives and investments?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
Injury reduction	67%	62%	75%	67%
Workforce engagement	65%	57%	78%	69%
Better data/information	60%	53%	71%	61%
Cost reduction	56%	47%	65%	65%
Time savings	56%	46%	70%	61%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.

EHS professionals focus more on actions

While senior leaders prioritize outcomes, EHS professionals tend to focus on programs and activities.

The clear number one measure of effectiveness for them is the percentage of managers and workers with adequate EHS training (cited by **47%** of respondents).

This is significantly above the next three measures, which share a three-way tie, rounded to **36%**:

- Speed of resolution for issues, complaints, and suggestions
- Injury frequency, volume, and severity
- And the number of near-misses and close calls

This difference is even more pronounced in smaller businesses, where **half** say the percentage of trained workers is the number one measure.



How do you track and measure the effectiveness of your EHS programs?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
Percentage of managers and workers with adequate EHS training	47%	50%	52%	36%
Speed of resolution for issues, complaints, and suggestions	36%	30%	55%	30%
Injury frequency, volume, and severity	36%	25%	55%	39%
Number of near-misses and close calls	36%	25%	56%	36%
Root cause analysis to determine why incidents occur	35%	28%	53%	31%
Environmental incidents and near misses	34%	26%	55%	29%
Regulatory fines, citations, and notices of violations	33%	27%	45%	33%
Serious incidents and fatalities (SIFs)	32%	23%	49%	33%
Lost time injuries (LTIs) and lost workdays	31%	23%	44%	34%
Workers' compensation claims and costs	31%	23%	44%	32%
Number and severity of mental health issues	31%	23%	47%	32%

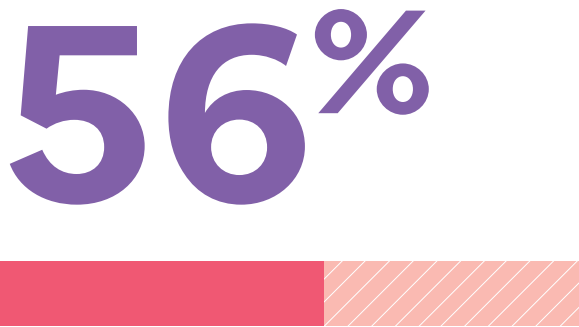
NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.

A source of tension?

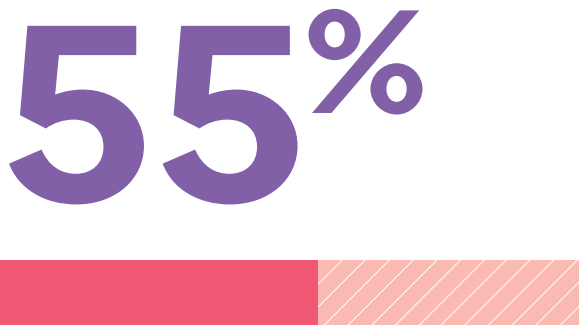
These findings suggest that the focus for EHS professionals is more on the activities associated with running EHS programs than on the outcomes achieved.

This is understandable through an EHS lens. These activities are what lead to results. However, unresolved, this mismatch could become a significant point of friction with senior management.

The UK bucks this trend. The primary measure used by UK EHS professionals is the number of near-misses and close calls (**56%**).



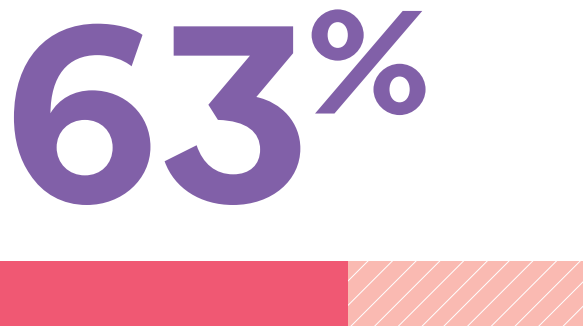
This is a fraction ahead of a three-way tie of: injury frequency, the number of injuries, and their severity; environmental incidents and near misses; and speed of resolution for issues, complaints, and suggestions (all rounded to **55%**).



Perhaps this is why **75%** of UK respondents say their leadership is highly engaged



with EHS compared to the average of **63%** across the survey as a whole.



If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Strengthening leadership’s commitment to safety culture and making safety visible in leadership decisions.”

- Survey respondent

Section Four

Creating a culture of safety





Success in EHS often comes down to cultural factors—do workers genuinely and actively value EHS or are they simply meeting basic requirements?

If it's the former, they will enthusiastically collaborate as partners. If it's the latter, the business may struggle to see meaningful, lasting improvements.

Different regions, different cultures

In the research findings, the most common description of respondents’ safety cultures overall is, “We have mandatory protocols that every employee must learn and follow” (cited by **35%** of respondents). This is even more pronounced in the UK (**55%**) and mainland Europe (**44%**).

In North America, however, the focus is more on personal responsibility. The most popular response is, “We expect employees to take responsibility for their own safety and we provide everything they need to do so” (cited by **29%** of respondents). Perhaps this is a reflection of the wider cultural differences across regions.

Which of the following best describes the safety culture within your business?

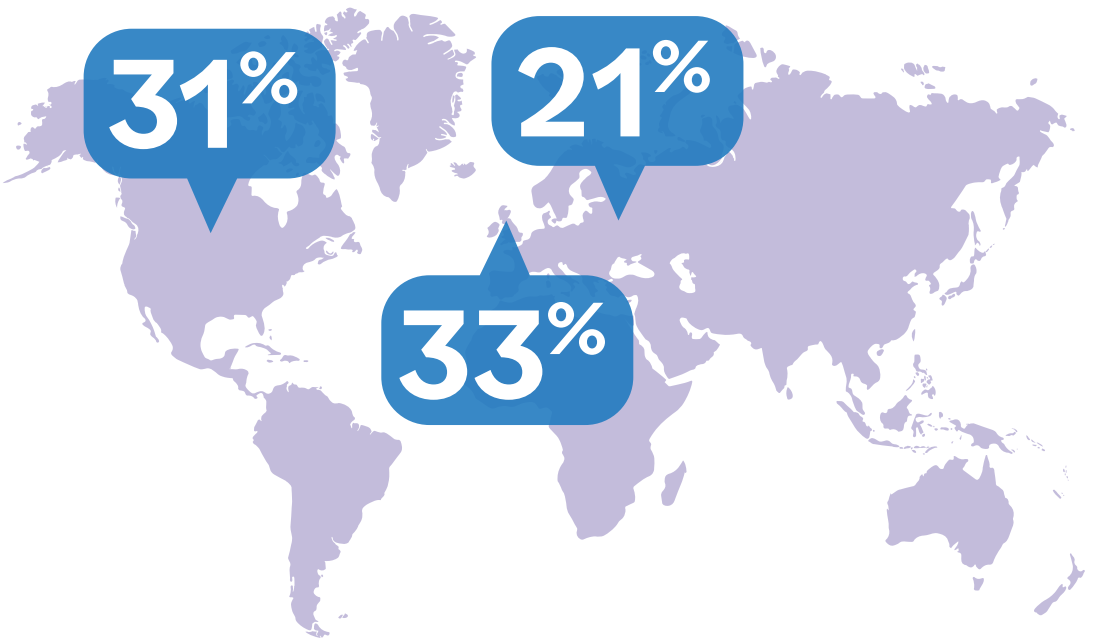
	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
We have mandatory protocols that every employee must learn and follow	35%	21%	55%	44%
We largely respond to incidents, creating protocols to avoid a repeat	29%	31%	33%	21%
We expect employees to take responsibility for their own safety and provide everything they need to do so	18%	29%	3%	11%
Our employees actively take responsibility for both their own safety and the safety of their co-workers	18%	19%	9%	24%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Many businesses are still simply reacting to events

While there is a welcome maturity in many respondents’ approach to safety, we also see a significant number of companies still simply responding to incidents and retroactively putting protocols in place to prevent further occurrences.

This is particularly so in the UK (**33%**) and North America (**31%**). However, it is significantly less prevalent in mainland Europe (**21%**).



There are also some stark differences by sector.

The Construction industry is very much in the reactive camp. Over half (**51%**) describe their cultures this way. Manufacturing, however, skews more towards relying on mandatory protocols (**46%**). At the other end of the spectrum, Energy, Oil, and Gas companies predominantly expect employees to take responsibility for their own safety (**35%**), with just **11%** favoring the reactive approach.

Colleagues looking after colleagues lags behind

Relatively few businesses (**18%** overall) expect employees to also take responsibility for their colleagues’ safety as well as their own.

18%



This plummets to just **9%** in the UK.

9%



Achieving this kind of interdependence can be seen as the gold standard for an EHS safety culture. Simply, it multiplies opportunities for incidents to be spotted and avoided.

No amount of procedures and technologies will offset the benefits of someone in the moment preventing a colleague from making a dangerous mistake.

We would love to see this kind of culture become further embedded in more organizations. However, at present, it is only the largest businesses—those with over 5,000 people—that over-index the average (**23%** say this best describes their safety culture).

23%



If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Create a strong safety culture because this is the foundation for all other EHS efforts. It goes beyond mere rules and regulations, embedding safety as a core value throughout the entire organization. - Survey respondent

Section Five Dealing with a changing workforce



The makeup of any business's workforce is in constant flux. Previous generations mature and leave, and new ones, with new ideas, arrive. In recent years, EHS professionals have repeatedly debated the impact of generational shifts and changing work patterns on delivering effective programs.

This is borne out in the research. Just **5%** say that generational shifts in their workforces are having no impact. But we see a stark difference between how North American and European businesses are responding.

More than half (**51%**) of European respondents say generational shifts are leading them to adopt new approaches to how they engage workers with EHS initiatives.

In North America, it's just **37%**.

To be clear, it's not that businesses in North America aren't responding to these changes, it's just that they are doing so to a lesser degree across the board.



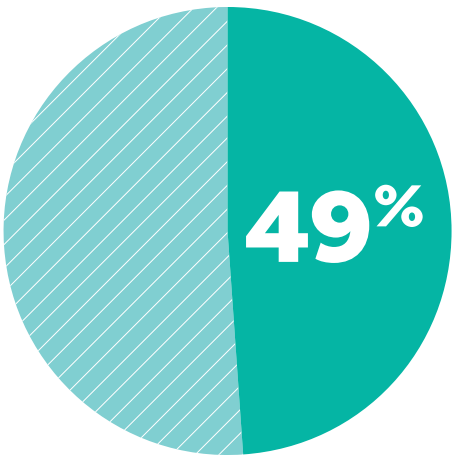
How is the changing generational makeup among workers influencing your approach to EHS?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
We are delivering just-in-time guidance that workers can access during tasks	49%	45%	59%	47%
We are training our managers on how to communicate across the generations	45%	38%	58%	46%
We are adopting new approaches to how we engage workers in EHS	44%	37%	61%	40%
We are making EHS guidance available in shorter, mobile-ready formats	43%	36%	56%	44%
We are creating guidance materials in a broader range of formats	42%	35%	60%	38%
We are delivering less in-person training	25%	23%	26%	28%
It has no material impact on how we deliver EHS	5%	6%	4%	3%

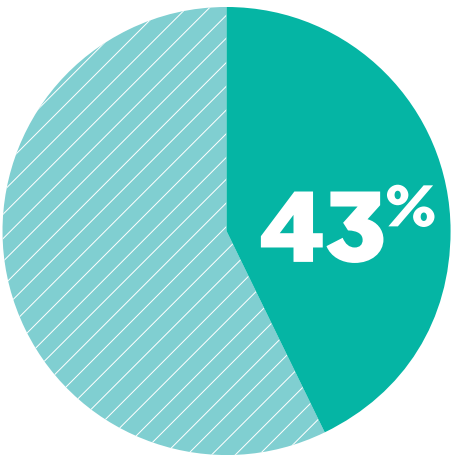
NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.

More tech, more mobile, better communication

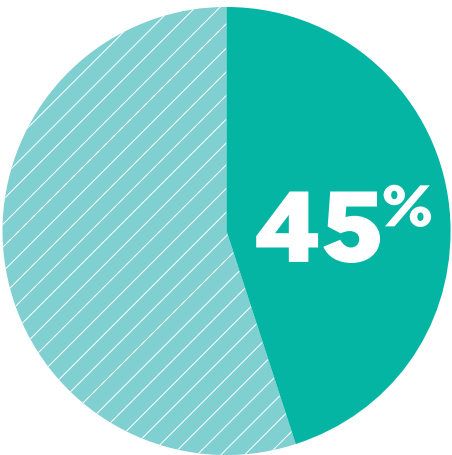
The latest generation of workers tends to be more tech-savvy, more questioning, and less likely to prefer traditional training as a route to knowledge.



In response, the number one approach used by EHS professionals is to deliver more just-in-time guidance that workers can access during tasks (cited by **49%** of respondents). This meets the in-the-moment preferences of many younger employees.



The data shows that **43%** of companies are also adopting more mobile-friendly formats. This ensures workers always have access to the information they need, no matter where they are.



And **45%** say they are also training managers on how to communicate across generations, enabling them to have more effective conversations about what really matters.



Meeting the hybrid challenge

Beyond generational shifts, another change post-COVID revolves around the number of front-line employees who work remotely or in a hybrid environment. These workers now sit alongside the traditional in-the-field workforce that has long defined many industries.

This has led to a significant number of organizations (78%) adapting their approach to risk assessment. In the research, we see the EHS profession embracing a range of digital approaches to address this challenge.

Just over half (51%) are employing tools such as virtual inspections, IoT sensors, and AI-driven analytics. In addition, 46% now use cloud-based EHS platforms to centralize risk data from multiple locations. And more than a third (35%) conduct virtual risk assessments via video calls.

Outside of technology, 43% tell us they are providing tailored training for employees and managers who work remotely. And 42% are now integrating mental health risk factors into their assessments.

This last one is likely a response to potential challenges when people are separated from their traditional in-office or on-site support networks. It’s a key issue for many businesses and one we explore in more detail in the following section.

How is the changing generational makeup among workers influencing your approach to EHS?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
We use digital tools like virtual inspections, IoT sensors, or AI-driven analytics	51%	50%	59%	46%
We use cloud-based EHS platforms to centralize risk data	46%	42%	51%	49%
We provide tailored training for employees and managers	43%	35%	67%	36%
We integrate mental health risk factors into our assessments	42%	36%	54%	42%
We have modified risk assessment checklists	37%	27%	52%	40%
We conduct virtual risk assessments via video calls	35%	31%	47%	30%
We have not yet adapted our risk assessment methodologies	22%	23%	19%	23%

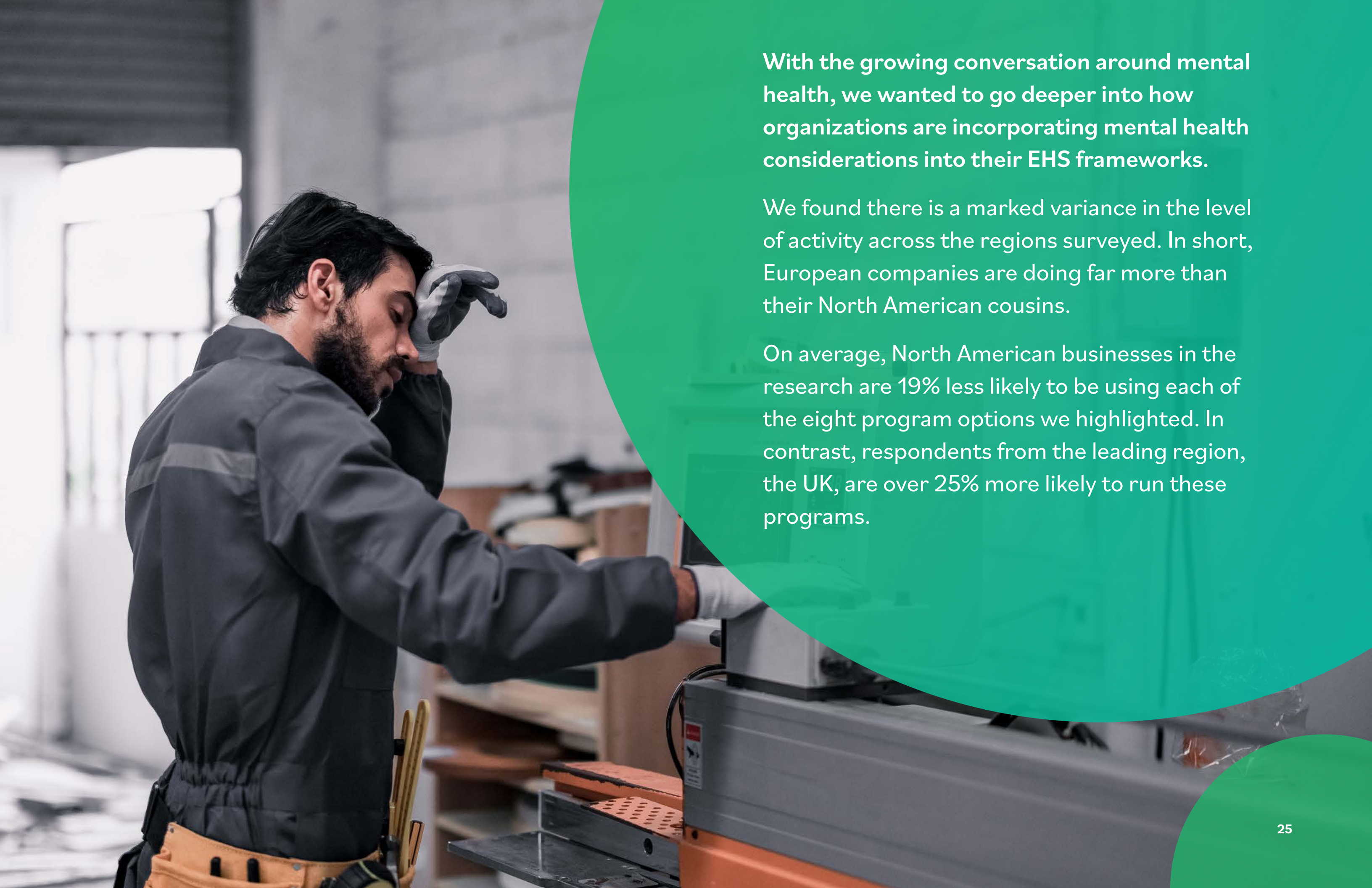
NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.



Section Six

A focus on mental health





With the growing conversation around mental health, we wanted to go deeper into how organizations are incorporating mental health considerations into their EHS frameworks.

We found there is a marked variance in the level of activity across the regions surveyed. In short, European companies are doing far more than their North American cousins.

On average, North American businesses in the research are 19% less likely to be using each of the eight program options we highlighted. In contrast, respondents from the leading region, the UK, are over 25% more likely to run these programs.

Training sits at the core

The most common tactic used focuses on training managers to support mental health. Typically, this involves programs such as mental health first aid training, help with conversational skills, and specialist risk management frameworks.

Some **47%** of businesses have put some form of mental health training in place. This figure is relatively consistent across geographies.

Removing the stigma around mental health

The second most popular tactic approaches the issue from the ground up: encouraging employees to voice concerns without fear of retaliation. In the research, **42%** of organizations say they are doing this.

This number masks the fact that just a third of North American businesses have adopted this approach. In contrast, over half (**51%**) of European companies have done so. However, it is important to note that regulatory differences are likely to be playing a key role here. Mental health is a reportable issue in Europe. This is not the case in North America.



How are you incorporating mental health considerations into your EHS frameworks?

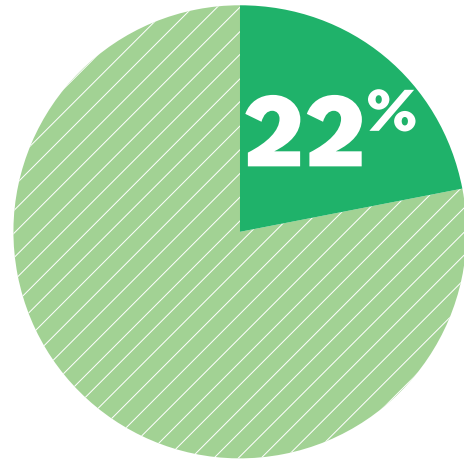
	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
We provide managers with training focused on supporting mental health	47%	45%	60%	40%
We encourage employees to voice concerns without fear of retaliation	42%	33%	58%	44%
We provide regular training and awareness programs	39%	30%	62%	33%
We offer access to employee assistance programs (EAPs)	39%	29%	57%	39%
We include mental health in our EHS communications	39%	32%	52%	40%
We identify and mitigate workplace mental health hazards	37%	31%	48%	37%
We have implemented mental health risk assessments	36%	26%	56%	36%
We measure and track mental health metrics	34%	29%	46%	33%
We have not yet incorporated mental health considerations into our EHS framework	1%	2%	1%	0%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.

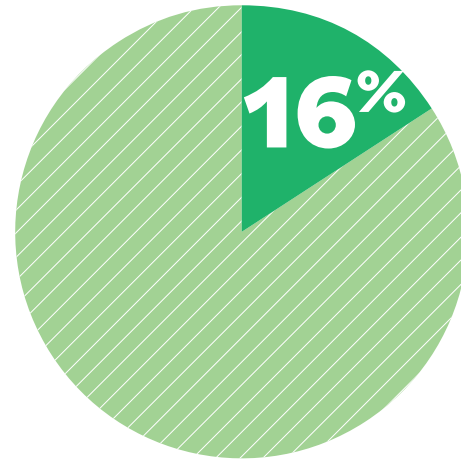
What else are businesses doing?

Close behind the top two approaches come a range of additional measures:

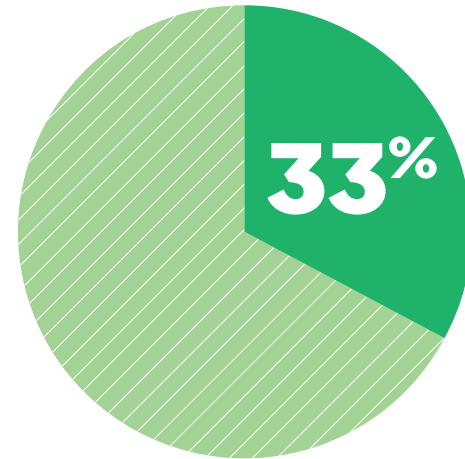
- Regular training and awareness programs
- Employee assistance programs (EAPs)
- Including mental health in EHS communications



On average, North American companies are around a fifth (**22%**) less likely to offer these. This, again, is likely influenced by the lack of regulatory demands in the region.



Mental health support is another area where larger businesses simply do more than smaller ones. Organizations with over 1,000 employees are around **16%** more likely to run these programs than smaller companies.



In terms of sector differences, Energy, Oil & Gas underperforms the average by quite some degree. These businesses are **33%** less likely to be running each of the mental health programs listed. Both Construction and Manufacturing do more across the board.



If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Focus more on employee mental health. A lot of people want to keep it to themselves and not share what they are going through.”

- Survey respondent

A man with a beard, wearing a high-visibility yellow and grey jacket, is standing in a warehouse. He is holding a tablet and looking at the screen. In the background, there are tall metal shelving units filled with cardboard boxes. One box has a 'FRAGILE' label. The lighting is warm and focused on the worker.

Section Seven

Getting employees up to speed

Training in various forms is a key component of any modern EHS program. While a quarter of respondents say they are planning to reduce in-person training, traditional approaches are still the predominant format.

In the data, 78% of respondents use on-the-job, hands-on training, 77% run regular refresher courses, and 73% employ instructor-led classroom-style sessions (see the table on [page 31](#) for the full list).

But not all training is created equal.



Popular vs effective training

We not only asked about the types of training EHS professionals are running, we also had them rate the effectiveness of each. They could rank individual approaches as not effective, moderately effective, or very effective.

On-the-job training takes top spot on both the popular and effective lists. However, the approach that's in second place for effectiveness, using AI chatbots, comes in last place for popularity.

This shows that the interest and enthusiasm for AI is not misplaced (more on that later) but it is yet to hit mainstream use.

Perhaps surprisingly to some, the traditional instructor-led training that many respondents are scaling back on still ranks number three for effectiveness. So maybe companies shouldn't be too quick to abandon it.

Finally, written materials, that staple of so many programs, rank dead last for effectiveness. It could be that the days of the traditional handout and printed safety manual are finally coming to a close.



Most popular training formats	Most effective training formats*
1. On-the-job, hands-on training	1. On-the-job, hands-on training
2. Regular refresher training sessions	2. AI chatbots
3. Online and self-paced e-learning	3. Instructor-led classroom-style training
4. Toolbox talks	4. Immersive simulation training
5. Written training materials	5. Regular refresher training sessions
6. Mobile-focused bite-sized modules	6. Toolbox talks
7. Peer mentoring and shadowing	7. Peer mentoring and shadowing
8. Instructor-led classroom-style training	8. Mobile-focused bite-sized modules
9. Virtual and on-demand training	9. Virtual and on-demand training
10. Immersive simulation training	10. Online and self-paced e-learning
11. AI chatbots	11. Written training materials

* Rated “very effective” by respondents.

If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Focusing on enhancing employee training. It’s crucial everyone understands our safety protocols and environmental practices.”

- Survey respondent

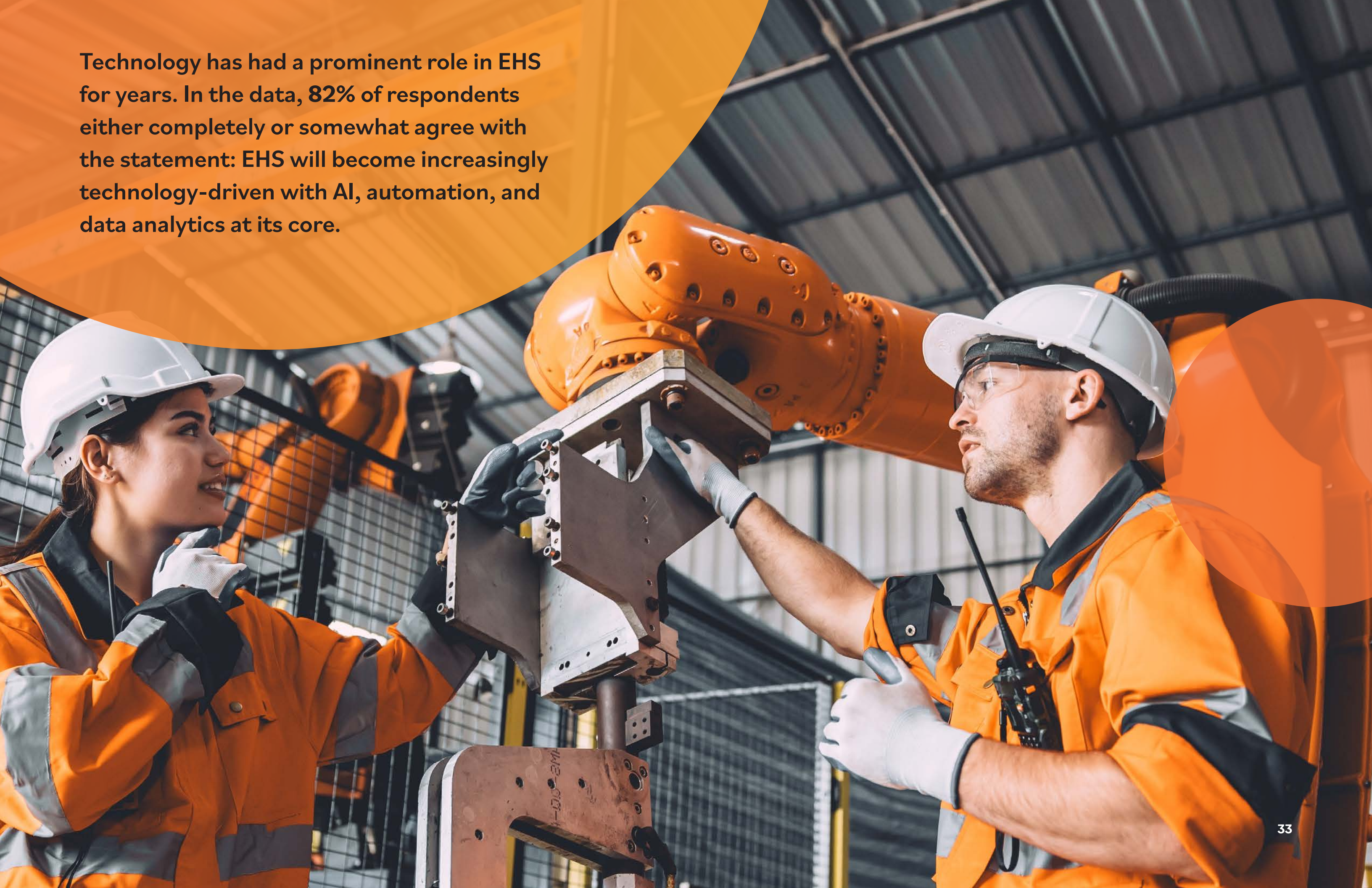


Section Eight

The role of technology



Technology has had a prominent role in EHS for years. In the data, **82%** of respondents either completely or somewhat agree with the statement: EHS will become increasingly technology-driven with AI, automation, and data analytics at its core.



In the research, we see a wide range of solutions being explored by our respondents.

The top three that have already been implemented are:

- 1. Integrated EHS software platforms
- 2. Video monitoring
- 3. Mobile EHS apps and reporting tools

Each of these is being used by around half of the respondents. This figure is reasonably consistent across different-sized companies and sectors. However, the UK has a higher rate of adoption than North America or mainland Europe.

Looking further ahead, we asked which technologies EHS pros are piloting in advance of possible rollout. The top three are:

41%



- 1. IoT-based sensors and remote monitoring (currently piloting)

40%



- 2. Wearables and smart personal protective equipment

40%



- 3. Predictive risk assessment and hazard detection technologies (40%)

This pattern is consistent across sectors and geographies. Where we see dips, this is generally a reflection of how many in the sector have already moved beyond piloting and into the implementation phase.





Top 5 technologies that have been implemented or are being piloted by EHS professionals

Top 5 implemented technologies	Top 5 technologies being piloted
1. An integrated EHS software platform	1. IoT-based sensors and remote monitoring
2. Video monitoring	=2. Wearables and smart personal protective equipment =2. Predictive risk assessment and hazard detection technologies
3. Mobile EHS apps and reporting tools	=3. 3D video analysis for ergonomics
4. Wearables and smart personal protective equipment	=3. AR/VR simulation technology
=5. IoT-based sensors and remote monitoring	4. Video monitoring
=5. Predictive risk assessment and hazard detection technologies	5. An integrated EHS software platform

If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Implementing AI-powered predictive risk analytics for real-time hazard detection in robotic workcells.”

- Survey respondent

The AI question

Outside of the specific technologies already mentioned, the big debate across the industry in recent years has been if, how, and when to use AI.

Around a third (**34%**) of respondents have already implemented AI in a number of areas across their EHS programs. This number rises to **38%** in North America and **35%** in mainland Europe. The UK, by contrast, sits lower at **28%**.

Almost a quarter (**24%**) have gone further and are using AI in some fashion across the majority of their EHS programs. Again, this number is higher in North America (**27%**) and lower in the UK (**19%**). This figure is also higher in larger organizations than in smaller ones.

The rest of the respondents are either in the research or piloting phases, with just **9%** saying they have no plans to use AI at all.

To what degree is your organization adopting AI into EHS?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
We have implemented AI in a number of areas of our EHS programs	34%	38%	28%	35%
We are using AI across the majority of our EHS programs	24%	27%	19%	24%
We plan to use AI and are currently researching our options	21%	20%	29%	13%
We are piloting AI technology	12%	8%	20%	14%
We have no plans to use AI in our EHS programs	9%	8%	5%	14%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.



34% of respondents have already implemented AI in a number of areas across their EHS programs.



Where is AI having the greatest impact?

In the survey, we had respondents rank AI's effectiveness across a number of use cases. They could choose between AI delivering poor value, promising results, significant improvements, or revolutionary performance.

The top 10 areas where AI is either delivering significant or revolutionary improvements are:

1. Trend analysis, insights, and decision support
2. Automated data capture and reporting
3. Training and simulation
4. EHS workflow optimization
5. Real-time environmental monitoring
6. Compliance management and regulatory updates
7. Incident prevention and anomaly detection
8. Ergonomic risk evaluation and analysis
9. Resource management and maintenance scheduling
10. Predictive risk assessment, prioritization, and hazard detection

If we simply focus on where AI is having a revolutionary impact, the top three are:

1. Compliance management and regulatory updates
2. EHS workflow optimization
3. Resource management and maintenance scheduling

Around a third of respondents report this level of impact.

This indicates that, for all the AI hype, today's EHS professionals are seeing real-world benefits across multiple use cases.

Barriers to making AI work

Of course, every new technology faces barriers to successful adoption. In our research, just 8% of respondents claim to have no issues in this regard.

The rest face a range of challenges.

What challenges are you facing when integrating AI technology with your existing EHS management approaches?

1	Difficulty connecting AI tools with existing processes and systems
2	Training requirements and lack of AI expertise
3	Data privacy, security, and ethical concerns
4	Compatibility issues with existing EHS systems
5	The investment required to implement AI
6	Lack of trust in AI-driven decisions among stakeholders
7	Resistance to change by employees and management
8	Difficulty aligning AI insights with existing workflows
9	Regulatory compliance and legal concerns
10	Potential negative impacts on worker mental health
11	Poor quality or incomplete data

The number one barrier, cited by **30%** of respondents, is difficulty connecting AI tools with existing processes and systems.

This could be due to a number of reasons. There may be incompatibility issues with legacy systems. They may face data quality challenges or have trouble extracting what AI needs from their current data silos. Or there could be security and compliance concerns that are difficult to resolve, particularly in more risk-averse organizations.

The fact is, many businesses are finding it is still simply too difficult to integrate AI with what their organization already has in place.

This is also seen among the **23%** of respondents who are being held back by challenges around making the workflow side of the integration work. The fusion of old and new doesn’t always come easily.

The overarching issue of accuracy is pointed to by just under a quarter (**24%**) of respondents. This is almost certainly a factor of AI’s well-publicized tendency to hallucinate.



The number one barrier is difficulty connecting AI tools with existing processes and systems.

People concerns and resistance

Outside the technical challenges, the people part of the equation concerns many EHS professionals.

Ensuring employees can use the technology is a struggle for **29%** of respondents. This is reasonably typical of any new technology. People need time, training, and support to make it work for them.

Some **24%** are facing resistance to change from employees and management. There are many strong opinions around AI. For some, it's the answer to everything. For others, it's a threat. And if you see it as a threat, you're unlikely to welcome it with open arms.

The reality is somewhere in the middle. Employees need open, honest communication if they are to better understand how AI can help them in the real world every day. The challenge is to deliver this effectively.

Finally, a fifth of our respondents are concerned about the mental health impact of the technology on their workers. Many employees are simply worried about AI and its potential impact on their work and wider lives.

If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Invest in modern technology to monitor, analyze, and respond to environmental and safety metrics.”
- Survey respondent

The need for clarity

Businesses can be opaque about their plans for AI. Sometimes this is because the technology is changing so fast. However, this lack of clarity and transparency can lead to further anxiety. And this can compound the issues detailed above.

The benefits of AI are evolving fast. Across the research, we're seeing significant enthusiasm for the technology to help EHS professionals do a better job of keeping people safe and protecting the environment.

However, the path to realizing these benefits requires navigating obstacles along the way.



Section Nine From EHS to ESG



A photograph of several wind turbines silhouetted against a bright, hazy sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The turbines are positioned at different distances, with one in the foreground on the left and others receding into the background. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds.

EHS professionals are increasingly focused on ESG (environment, social, governance) initiatives within their organizations.

In our previous research, Engaging Workers, Growing Business, Protecting the Planet ([available for download here](#)), we saw respondents acutely aware of the importance of focusing more efforts on ESG.

In the data, **74%** of respondents said a failure to improve ESG performance could negatively impact their brand reputation. Yet, just **45%** were very confident in the accuracy of their ESG data. And under half (**48%**) were very confident in their compliance with all ESG regulations.

Our latest study shows that ESG continues to be a key driver for EHS professionals. According to the data, **44%** of respondents completely agree with the statement: the profession will play a key role in driving sustainability and environmental goals. And when we asked about their investment in ESG, half the businesses surveyed said they are increasing it.

Again, we see a North American versus European split. Just **41%** of North American companies are planning to increase their ESG investment versus **57%** of European firms.

Larger businesses are also increasing investment more than smaller ones (**58%** to **44%**).

Over the past 12–18 months, has your organization reduced, maintained, or increased its investment in ESG?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
Increased ESG investment	50%	41%	61%	57%
Maintained ESG investment	41%	49%	30%	38%
Reduced ESG investment	7%	9%	7%	5%
We haven’t invested in ESG initiatives	1%	1%	1%	0%

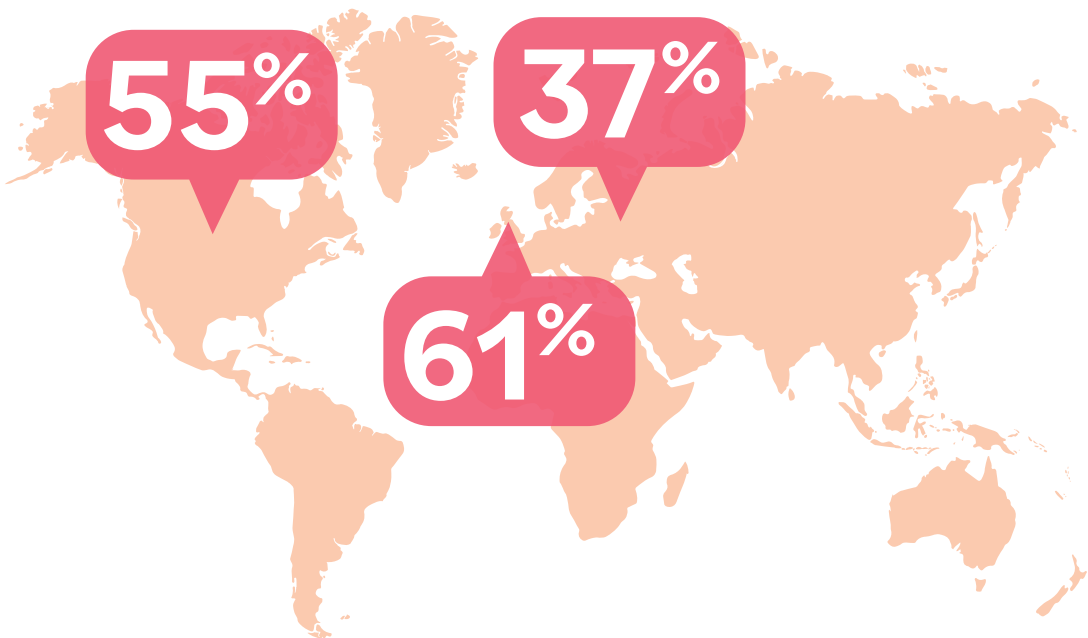
NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.



What’s influencing investment decisions?

The number one factor is employee expectations (cited by **52%** of respondents). An organization’s staff can be highly influential in holding a business to a set of stated and unstated values. And they vote with their feet when they don’t like what they see.

Employee influence increases slightly in North American businesses (**55%**) and significantly in the UK (**61%**). However, it doesn’t make the top spot across the rest of Europe, coming in at number five (cited by just **37%**).



Other drivers are external.

41%



In joint-second place come regulatory pressures and investor expectations

The number of ESG regulations has increased by **155%** over the past decade.

In fact, today, there are over **2,400** regulations in force worldwide. And this number is growing by over **100** every single year. The research shows EHS professionals are acutely aware of the challenge.

For investors, ESG reporting is now a core requirement when valuing a business. Companies unable to quantify and explain ESG risks and opportunities risk exclusion from tenders, contracts, and financing. Businesses that can link ESG activities to clear financial outcomes—cost savings, mitigation of risks, or revenue growth—are often viewed as higher-value investment targets.

(You can learn more about this in our report on The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

[Get your copy here.](#))



There is a global divergence in what is being regulated and where. Some jurisdictions are rolling back earlier positions, others are pushing ahead with new policies and directives.

41%



So it’s no surprise that respondents completely agree with the statement: There will be increasing national differences in regulatory and compliance demands.

39%



Reputational considerations round out the top five. For some organizations, this will be a case of crisis avoidance and protecting brand value. Others take a more progressive view, looking to use their ESG performance to gain a competitive advantage in tenders for business.

What is influencing your ESG investment decisions over the next 12 months?

	TOTAL	North America	UK	Europe (excl UK)
Employee expectations	52%	55%	61%	37%
Regulatory pressures	41%	33%	59%	40%
Investor expectations	41%	38%	48%	41%
Public policy direction	40%	34%	51%	42%
Reputational considerations	39%	32%	57%	35%
Recruitment objectives	38%	36%	43%	38%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.

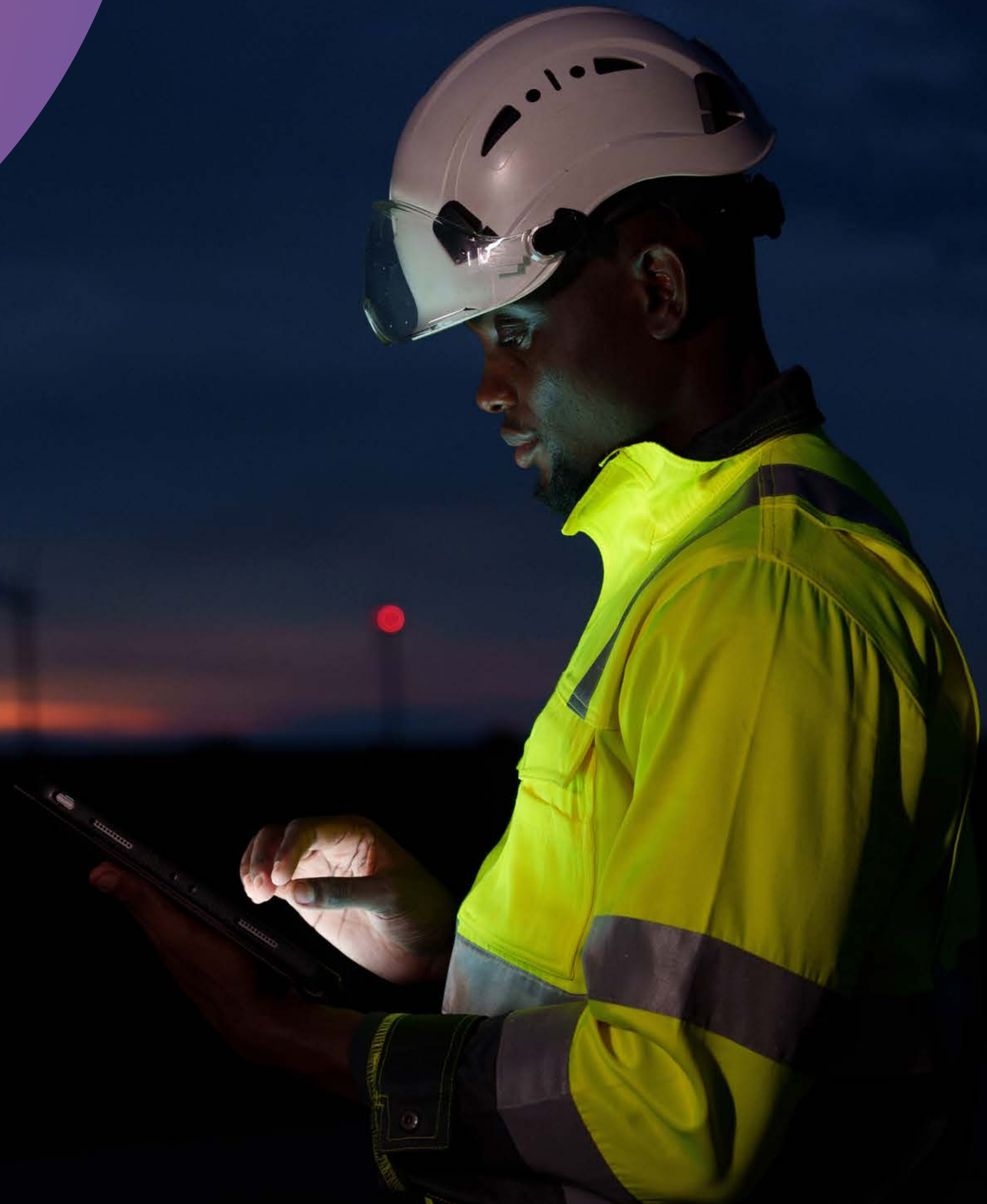
If you could focus on just one thing to improve EHS effectiveness, what would it be?

“Minimizing the effects on the environment by managing waste and energy.”
- Survey respondent



Section Ten

A focus on the future



EHS is a profession that never stands still. As we've seen in this report, businesses are doing more, in more areas, and in more ways than ever before.

When we asked respondents what they'll be doing in the coming year, "we'll do more" options outweigh "we'll do less" by around eight to one.

This covers everything from how to support mental health and tracking performance to preventative safety measures and, of course, AI. More. More. More.

In fact, in the data, we see relatively few businesses (around 10%) reducing their range of activities. As before, there is a slight geographic split. North American companies are the least focused on expanding their scope and UK businesses the most. But the differences are relatively modest.



What’s on EHS professionals’ to-do lists?

Across the research, we see five core areas where EHS pros will be placing most of their attention in the coming year.

ONE

Number one is experimenting with AI tools and capabilities—we’ve seen this in the data already. EHS pros who aren’t already exploring AI will be doing so in the months ahead. We see **38%** of respondents saying they’ll do much more in this area.

TWO

The shift from reactive to proactive safety approaches comes second, with respondents focusing more on analyzing incident trends to drive preventive actions. Again, this is something that AI and machine learning are making far more achievable for an increasing number of businesses.

THREE

The expanding focus on mental health initiatives comes next. As we’ve seen, mental health is of growing concern across businesses and industries. It is now gaining the attention it deserves.

FOUR

The increasing focus on ESG takes fourth spot. EHS professionals are spending more time monitoring and improving ESG and sustainability performance. As we’ve seen, sometimes this is a result of changing regulations, but most often it’s driven by internal employee expectations.

FIVE

Lastly, the focus on gaining greater clarity on what good looks like makes the list. We see **36%** of respondents saying they will focus much more on benchmarking their EHS performance against industry standards.

Which of the following activities do you plan to focus more on in the coming year?

	Much More
Experimenting with AI tools and capabilities	38%
Analyzing incident trends to drive preventive actions	37%
Implementing mental health initiatives	36%
Monitoring and improving our ESG and sustainability performance	36%
Benchmarking EHS performance against industry standards	35%
Consulting with employees on EHS risks and preventive measures	34%
Deploying digital tools such as mobile applications and wearable devices	33%
Integrating EHS data with other business management systems	33%
Capturing, analyzing, and reporting EHS data and incidents	33%
Engaging with stakeholders on EHS performance and initiatives	31%

NB: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Respondents could select multiple options.



Ready for what tomorrow brings

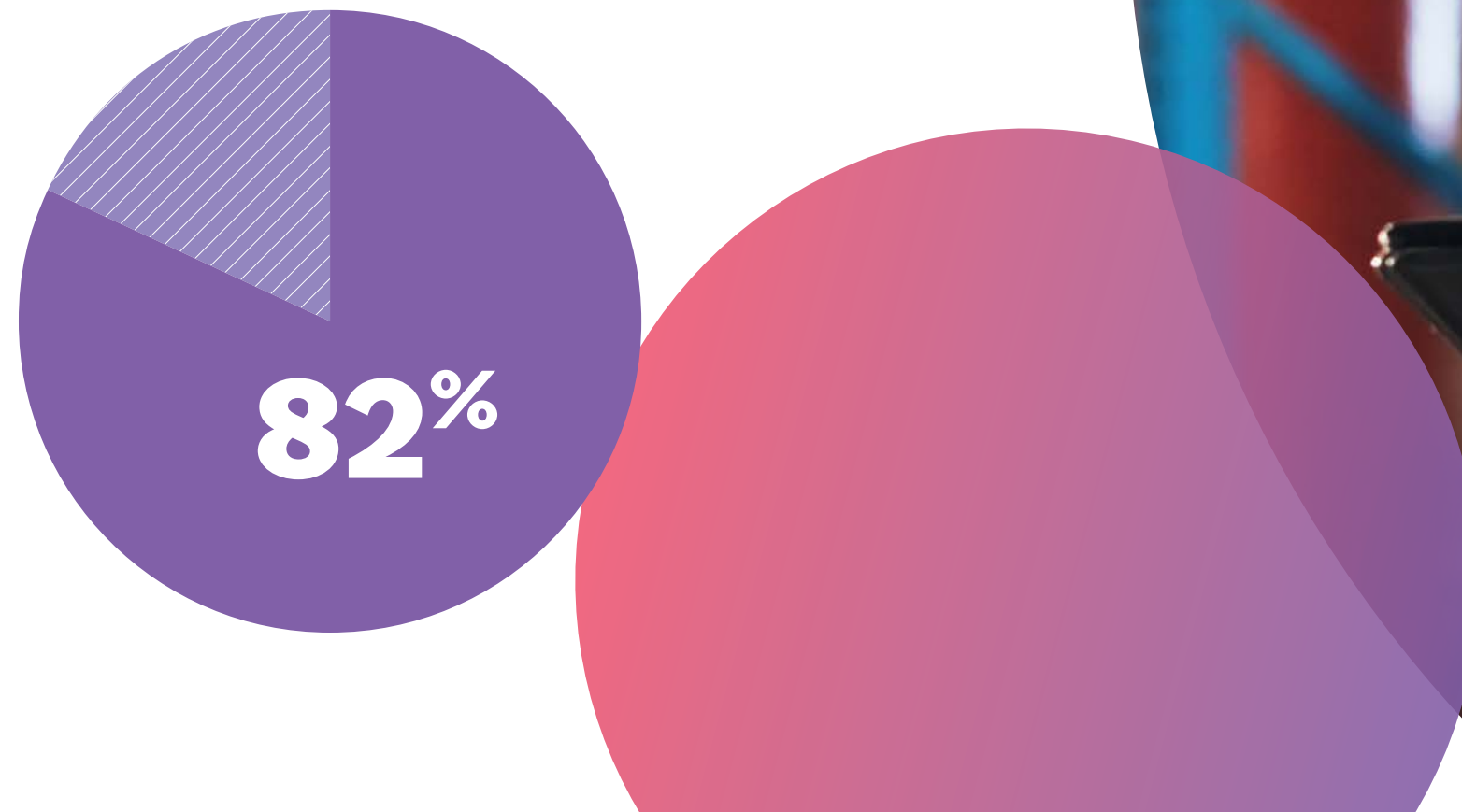
The EHS profession is one in transition. To be fair, this has always been the case. But today, the changes are happening faster and across more areas than ever before.

EHS professionals are no longer simply “the safety people.” They are increasingly “the safety, well-being, environment, culture, and technology people.” And that is just scratching the surface.

To achieve all that’s expected of them is a big ask.

What we see in the research, however, is a profession with the skills and appetite to adapt to changing circumstances. This is just as true when they are faced with yet another regulatory change as when they are forging ahead with AI.

It’s no wonder that **82%** of respondents believe that their role will become more strategic and influential in the business. If the results of this research are anything to go by, they are almost certainly right.



Section Eleven

About the research



To help EHS executives better understand and prepare for how the industry is evolving, Intalex commissioned research spanning North America, the UK, and mainland Europe. The study surveyed EHS executives and senior management across 864 businesses, each with more than 250 people.

Data collection

Online. Respondents screened for seniority level and EHS decision-making responsibilities.

Markets surveyed

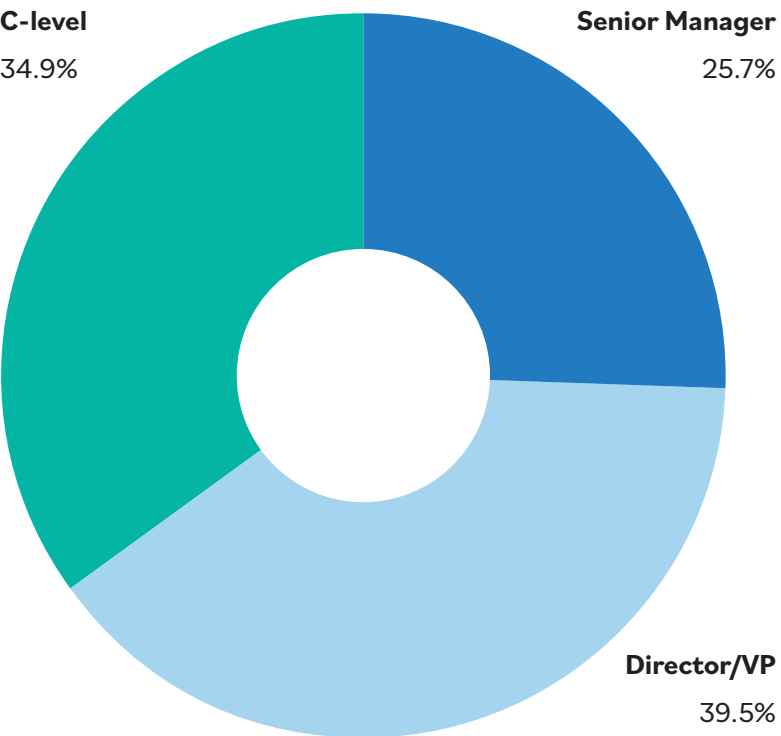
North America (426 respondents), the UK (220 respondents), and mainland Europe (218 respondents)

Date of survey

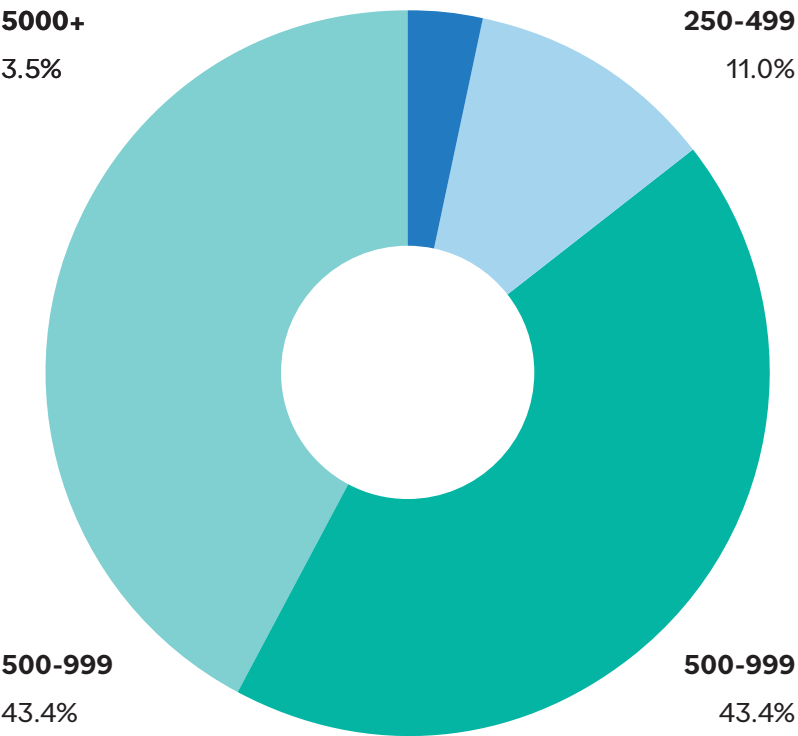
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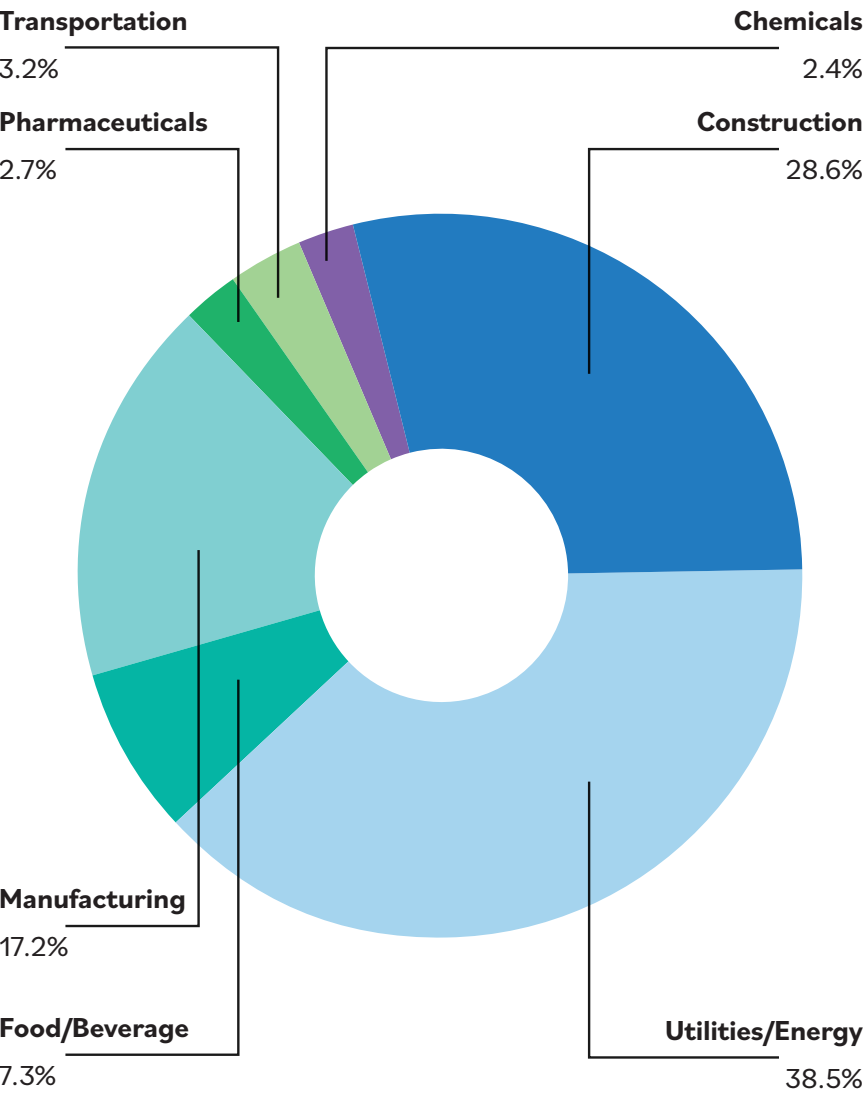
Seniority



Company Size



Industry Breakdown





Let's Talk

We would love to talk to you about how Intalex can help you on your journey and show how businesses like yours have already seen success.

To begin a conversation, contact us at intalex@intalex.com and we'll arrange a convenient time to talk. Alternatively, you can learn more about us at [intalex.com](https://www.intalex.com) and on [our LinkedIn page](#).



About InteleX

For over 30 years, InteleX has been making a difference in the world by helping our 1,400 customers achieve safer, more sustainable operations. Our web and mobile solutions streamline and simplify environmental, safety, quality and risk management, empowering organizations to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex marketplace while minimizing negative social, environmental and human impacts. InteleX is proud to be an operating company of Fortive Corporation, which provides strength in numbers, strength in skills and perspectives and strength in our shared conviction to make an impact.

For more information about InteleX, visit www.inteleX.com

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