EcoOnline

Global view of safety in the workplace

How has safety changed in 2026?

Over 5,900 employees were surveyed in North America, the UK and Ireland and the Nordics. Our goal? To understand how safety is really perceived in 2026. Responses were gathered from workers across a wide age range and in a variety of industries.

Respondents were surveyed on their workplace environment, safety initiatives, digital tool use and lone worker safety, among other topics.

Explore the results below and see how your region compares!

Workers strongly link safety to productivity

91% of workers believe a safer workplace makes them more productive

North America | 92%
UK and Ireland | 90%
Nordic countries | 91%

74% would feel safer at work if they used more digital safety tools*

North America | 73%
UK and Ireland | 71%
Nordic countries | 75%

*depending on implementation

AI for safety

Globally there are quite mixed opinions on the use of AI. When asked if they believe AI could improve workplace safety, 47% of North American respondents and 47% of UK and Ireland respondents said 'Yes, definitely' or 'Yes, I see potential'. This number drops to just 26% in the Nordics.

Most workers *feel* safe in the workplace

78% of all employees believe their workplace is safe

North America | 80%
UK and Ireland | 83%
Nordic countries | 76%

66% of all employees say their employer actively works to resolve workplace issues

North America | 70%
UK and Ireland | 72%
Nordic countries | 64%

70% of all employees say their employer makes an effort to assess physical workplace hazards

North America | 73%
UK and Ireland | 80%
Nordic countries | 67%

But...

Excepting the UK & Ireland, incident rates have only marginally shifted since 2025

Have you or a relative been affected by a workplace accident or illness (including mental health)?

North America	47% Yes (2026)	46% Yes (2025)
UK and Ireland	39% Yes (2026)	45% Yes (2025)
Nordic countries	52% Yes (2026)	53% Yes (2025)

Stress continues to be the main driver of workplace accidents and illnesses

57% of workplace accidents and illnesses were related to stress, essentially unchanged from 2025.

North America | 56%
UK and Ireland | 61%
Nordic countries | 56%

Despite this, workers say that employers are putting the least amount of effort into preventing stress, which **ranked the lowest** out of the five options provided during the survey. This is particularly obvious in the Nordics.

Underlining this result, EU-OSHA reports that psychosocial risks such as stress, anxiety and depression are the 2nd most common work-related health problem affecting European workers, behind musculoskeletal disorders.

Cyberattacks rank overall as the no. 1 perceived threat to business operations

Global top 3 perceived threats to company operations:

1. **Cyberattack or data breach**
2. Pandemic or infectious disease outbreak
3. Serious workplace injury or medical emergency

Differences in perceived risks become apparent as we look at results on a regional level.

Regional top 3 perceived threats:

North America	UK and Ireland	Nordic countries
1. Cyberattack or data breach	1. Cyberattack or data breach	1. Cyberattack or data breach
2. **Severe weather or natural disaster (e.g.: storms, flooding, heat events)**	2. Serious workplace injury or medical emergency	2. **Pandemic or infectious disease outbreak**
3. Cyberattack or data breach	3. **Fire or evacuation-related incidents**	3. Serious workplace injury or medical emergency

Chemical safety digitisation progresses at a mixed rate

Overall **51%** of workers handle chemicals at their workplace, though the UK and Ireland lags. This is a slight increase on 2025's 48%.

North America	↑ 53% Yes (2026)	44% Yes (2025)
UK and Ireland	↑ 44% Yes (2026)	42% Yes (2025)
Nordic countries	↓ 53% Yes (2026)	57% Yes (2025)

The global results showed a rather worrying trend: the Nordic countries are **lagging behind** North America and the UK and Ireland in several key elements of digital chemical safety access. Of the workers that handle chemicals:

70% of respondents in North America and **70%** of respondents in the UK and Ireland have access to chemical safety via digital system, vs. just **57%** in the Nordics.

77% of respondents in North America and **74%** of respondents in the UK and Ireland say that they know how to find SDSs in the workplace, vs. **64%** in the Nordics.

72% of respondents in North America and **68%** of respondents in the UK and Ireland can access chemical safety information via QR code and mobile, vs. **51%** in the Nordics.

In 2026, approximately 1 in 3 workers are lone workers

An overall **32%** of employees identified as lone workers

North America | 35%
UK and Ireland | 32%
Nordic countries | 31%

Of this number, **32%** said they experienced an accident while working alone in 2025

North America | 33%
UK and Ireland | 30%
Nordic countries | 32%

Stress and mental health issues are the no.1 concern for lone workers globally

As in 2025, stress and mental health issues ranked as the highest concern for lone workers in 2026.

1. **Stress and mental health issues**
2. Fatigue
3. Accidents

We noted in the results that North American lone workers reported the highest rate of concern in 7/8 risk factors. This is a change from 2025, where the Nordics showed slightly higher worry levels.

Sustainability focus is growing – but is hampered by knowledge gaps

75% of all workers say it's important that their employer actively works to reduce their environmental impact.

North America | 78%
UK and Ireland | 79%
Nordic countries | 73%

51% of all workers said their company focused more on sustainability in 2025 than in previous years

North America | 55%
UK and Ireland | 58%
Nordic countries | 48%

However, gaps are appearing when it comes to ESG frameworks and guidelines.

The UK and Ireland lead in businesses that operate according to an ESG framework at 55%. North America follows with 47% and the Nordics lags at 38%.

Perhaps most worryingly, 39% of Nordic respondents said that they **did not know what an ESG framework is**, compared to 23% in the UK and Ireland and 27% in North America.

What do employees want?

What workers want from employers (global):

1.	Conduct more safety training	38%
2.	Hire more staff with safety expertise	36%
3.	Spend more time on workplace environment efforts	29%

Global perceived benefits if employers invest more in safety:

1.	More satisfied workers	43%
2.	Fewer sick days	32%
3.	More focus on safety	26%

What's next?

We can see from the data presented here that workers are now firmly linking safety with productivity. While the majority of workers see the benefit of digital tools for workplace safety, there is gap in the provision of these tools, particularly in the Nordics.

A connected software solution that spans EHS, chemical safety, lone working, sustainability as well as training and learning can go a long way towards mitigating these risks.

Find out more about EcoOnline's software options