



# The State of **Employee Safety** in 2022

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# The Future of Work Depends on the Safety of Employees

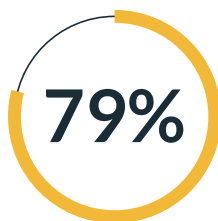
*The pandemic disrupted our perceptions of safety in all facets of life, whether at home, traveling, or at work.*

During the past two years, there have been lasting shifts in employees' relationships with their jobs and their employers, as well as how employees think about safety in the workplace. And while offices reopening and mask mandates lifting point to a return to some pre-pandemic norms, other shifts—such as a renewed focus on workers' rights, employee loyalty, and safety policies—illustrate a workforce with major concerns that are not fading as the pandemic winds down.

We surveyed 2,000+ U.S. workers to understand how safe they feel at work in 2022. This research carries major implications for employers as they attempt to navigate new risks and a highly competitive labor market.

This data shows that the future of work may ultimately depend on the safety of employees. It is up to businesses to ensure that their employees are protected.

This inaugural report on the State of Employee Safety outlines how employed Americans feel about safety in the workplace, what they expect from their employers, and how to make sure your teams are as prepared as possible for the modern threat landscape.



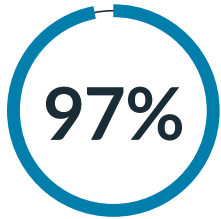
*of employees are more concerned with their safety than ever before*

*We found that safety is a top priority for employees, regardless of whether they are in the office or working from home. Employees expect their employers to prioritize their safety, communicate better, and prepare them for a broader range of emergencies. And they are willing to change their jobs to make that happen.*



# Employees Want Safety at Work Even More Than at Home

While safety is a priority across all facets of American workers' lives, they are specifically concerned about safety in the workplace.

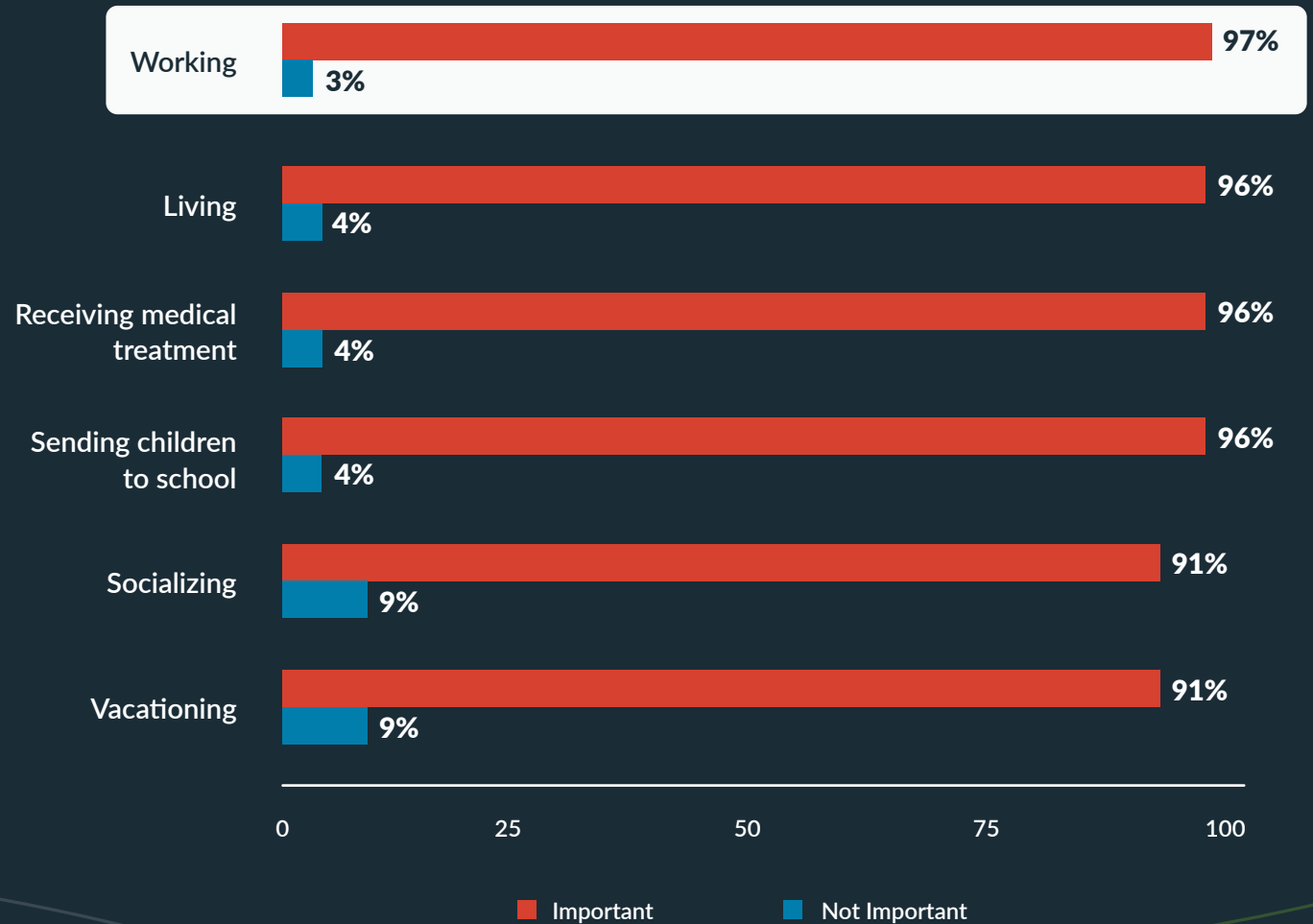


*of employees say that safety is an important factor when considering where they work*

In fact, respondents said safety factors into their decision about where to work even more than it does when deciding where to live, where they vacation, or even where they send their children to school.



## *How important is safety during the following activities?*



# Safety Is a Top Priority for Workers in 2022

After two years of negotiating health considerations both personally and professionally during the pandemic, safety is now at the forefront of employees' priorities in a way that has proved to be lasting and directly tied to job satisfaction. Our research found that today's workforce cares more about safety than nearly every other employment incentive. When asked about their top priorities for staying at a company long-term, employees say that compensation ranks first—followed closely by employee safety and then comprehensive benefits.

The data suggests that employers who are facing high turnover rates or are struggling to find new hires should make a point to emphasize their safety efforts, alongside salary and benefits, to put workers' minds at ease.



*Our research found that **today's workforce** cares more about safety than nearly every other employment incentive.*



## *What motivates you to stay with your employer for the long term?*



Employer offers competitive compensation

48%

Employer genuinely cares about employee safety

47%

Employer offers comprehensive benefits packages

46%

Employer cares about professional development

43%

Employer tries to ensure each employee is happy

38%

Employer cares more about safety than revenue

35%

Employer offers employee development programs

30%

Employer invests in making a positive impact in the world

28%



# There's a Disconnect About Safety in the Workplace

Employees' desire for safe working conditions is consistent across demographic groups; however, some groups feel more strongly than others. For example, Boomers are more likely than younger generations to say safety is an "extremely important" factor when determining where they work (Boomers 81% vs. Gen Z 66%, Millennials 67%, Gen X 74%).

Unfortunately, across all employee groups, many feel that their safety is not equally important to their employers.

***In fact, only 54% believe their safety is extremely important to their employers.***

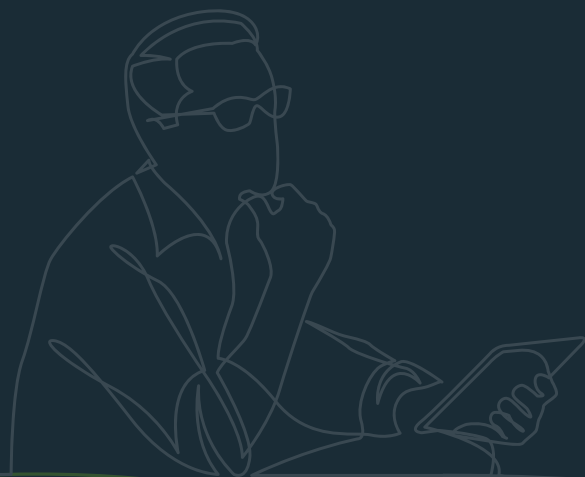
Whether employers are failing to articulate their stance on worker safety or this is a legitimate shortfall in safety measures, this perception gap highlights the need for clear, consistent, and ongoing communication with employees at all levels of the organization about how their well-being is prioritized.



***of employees think a safe workplace is more important than ever***

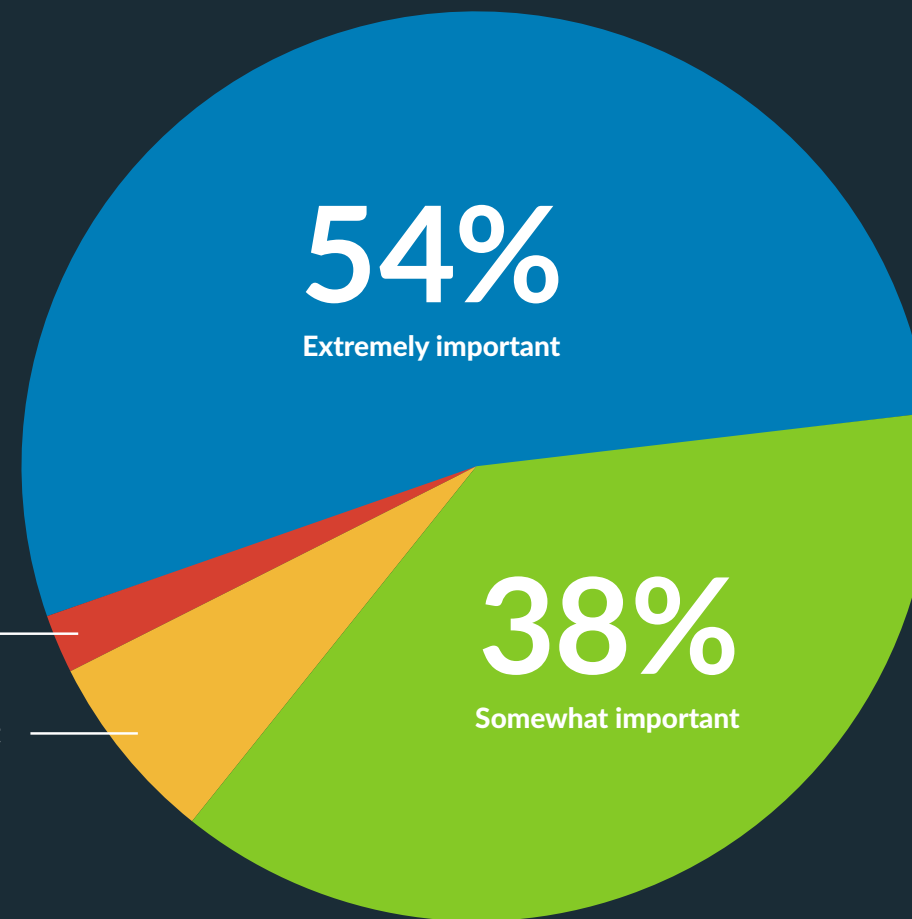


*How important is  
employee safety  
to your employer?*



2% Not at all important

7% Not very important



# These Are Employees' Top Safety Concerns at Work

While COVID-19 continues to weigh heavily on the minds of employees, it is only one of several potential threats that concern American workers.

Threats like public health emergencies, cyber attacks/cyber crime, severe weather, crime, or significant outages are concerns for the majority of employees. Roughly half are also concerned about natural disasters, workplace violence, structure fires, and protests & demonstrations.

Many of these threats, like cyber attacks, severe weather, and natural disasters, are growing in number and severity, which is likely to only increase employees' concern. The best way to reassure employees is to have comprehensive emergency preparedness plans and to constantly communicate any efforts to mitigate these specific threats.

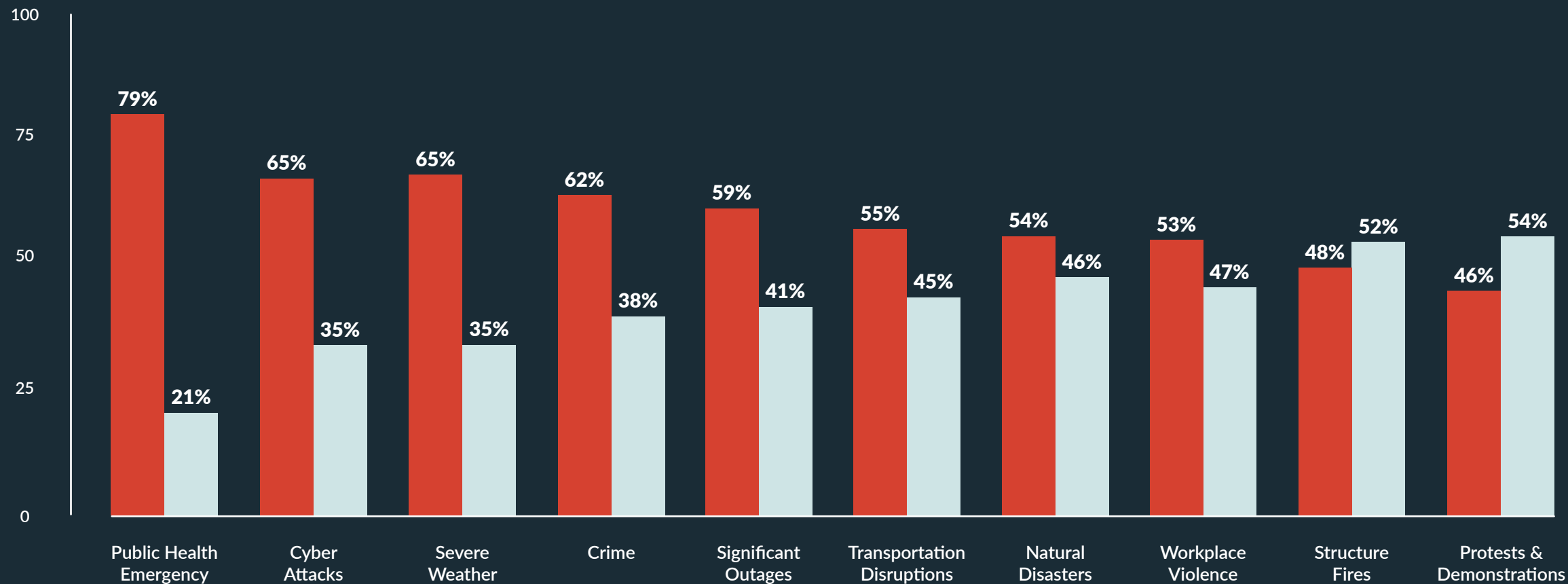


*The best way to reassure employees is to **have comprehensive emergency preparedness plans and to constantly communicate** any efforts to mitigate these specific threats.*

## How concerned are you about these emergencies at work?

Extremely or somewhat concerned

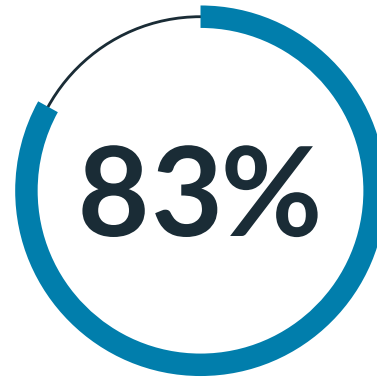
Not very or not at all concerned



# Most Employees Have Experienced an Emergency at Work

These workers are concerned for good reason. More than 4 in 5 working Americans have encountered at least one emergency situation while working across their career. The most frequent emergencies they have faced are severe weather or a significant outage. Other common emergencies impacting American workers include public health crises (outside of COVID-19), transportation disruptions, workplace violence, and crime.

Employees that have experienced a workplace emergency are also more likely to leave if their employer fails to respond effectively.



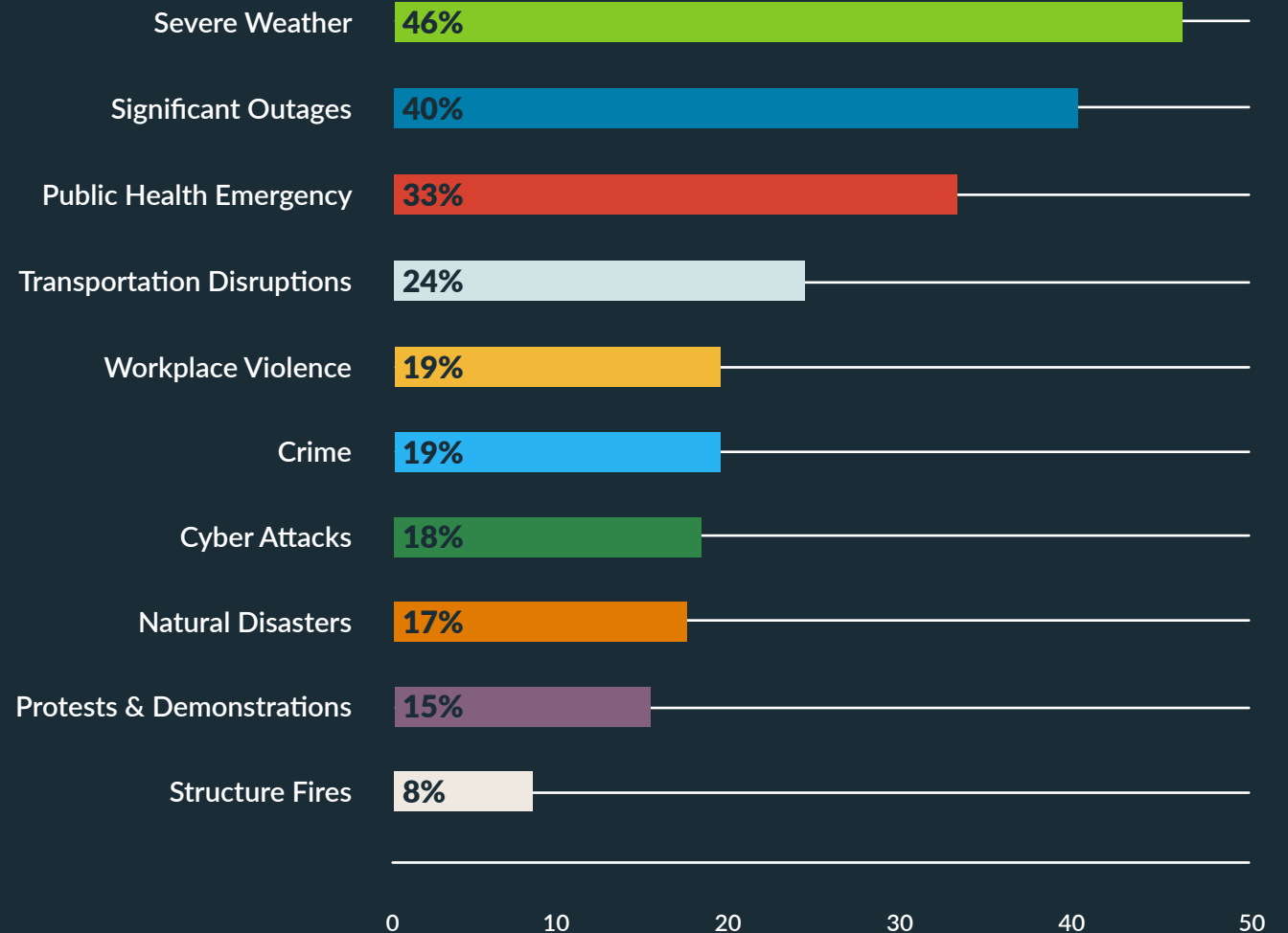
*of U.S. employees  
have experienced an  
emergency at work*

**58%** *say they would begin looking for a new job or reconsider their employment should their organization fail to notify them during an emergency.*





## *Which emergencies have you encountered at work?*

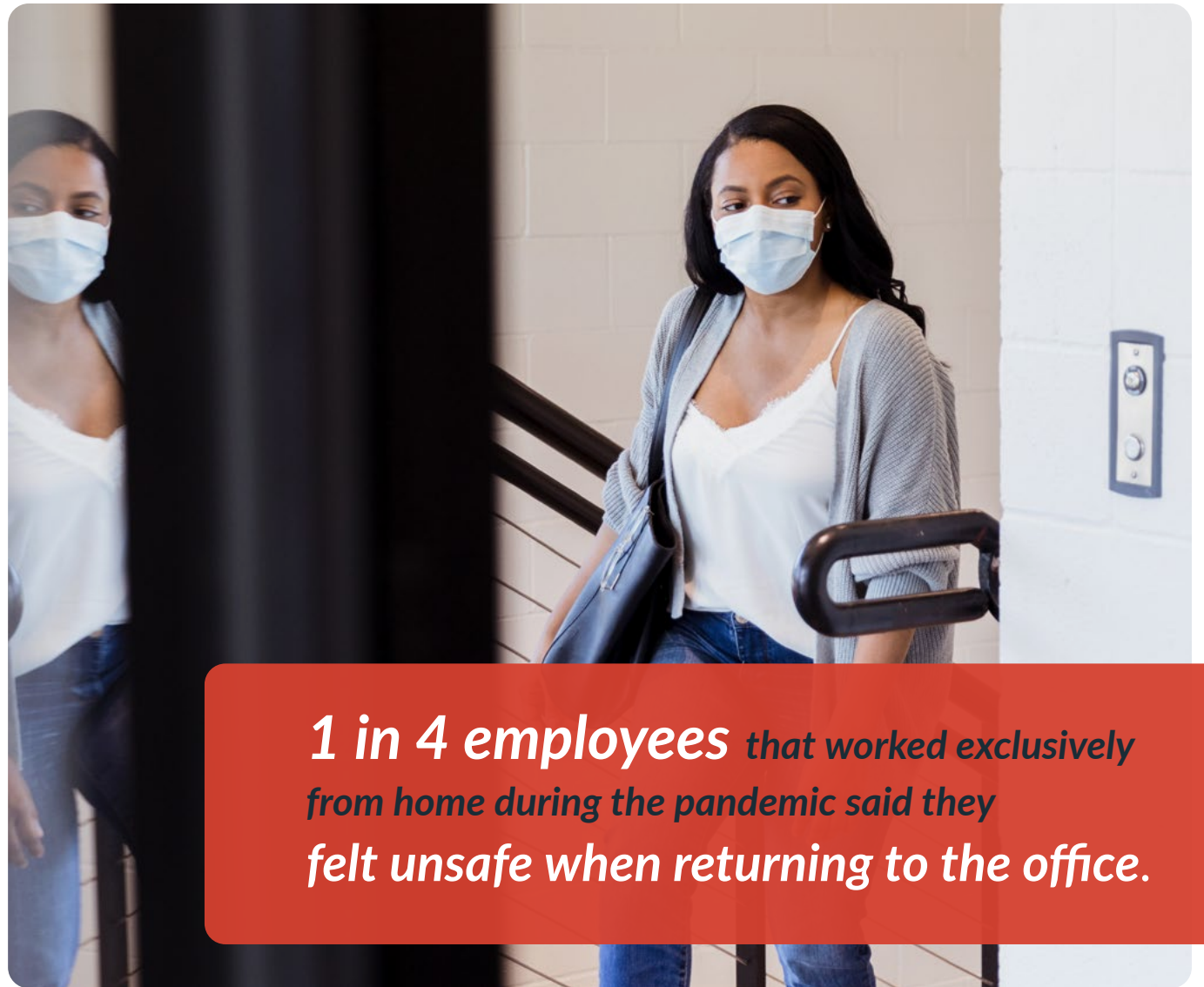


# Some Employees Feel Unsafe Returning to Work

Millions of employees were forced to adapt to remote working conditions during the last two years. Additionally, many were left without clear answers about when to expect a return to normalcy due to multiple false starts and delayed return-to-office plans as COVID-19 cases rose and fell. Our research suggests that, as a result of this uncertainty, employers now face significant communication hurdles to help WFH employees feel secure about their eventual return to the physical workplace.

Most remote workers have begun to return to the workplace, with 69% of those who worked from home during the pandemic stating they are already returning in person in some capacity or plan to in the coming months. However, many have done so while feeling unsafe.

These concerns should be a top priority for employers. ***But it's important to keep in mind that 47% of workers are still working from home at least part time.*** These remote workers should not be forgotten in return-to-work planning.



***1 in 4 employees*** that worked exclusively from home during the pandemic said they felt unsafe when returning to the office.

## *What best describes your organization's return-to-work plans?*



All or some employees  
already returned to the  
office/workplace

33%

36%

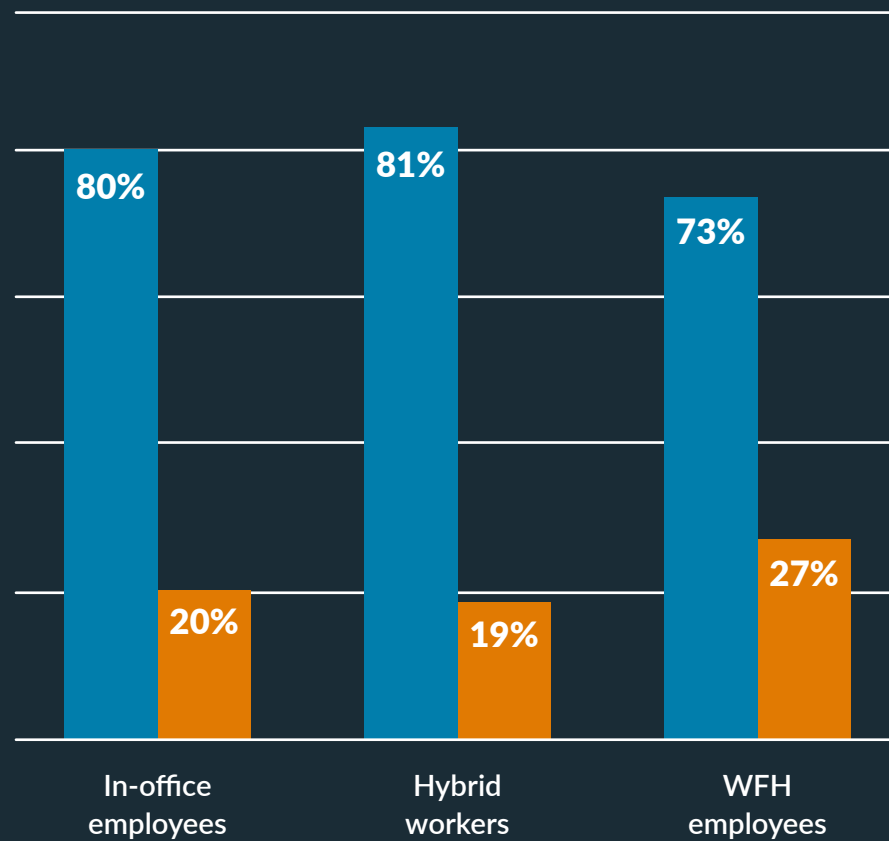
All or some  
employees will  
return to the  
office/workplace  
in 2022

16%

Employees will continue  
to WFH indefinitely

15%

Unsure



*How safe did you  
feel returning to  
work in person?*

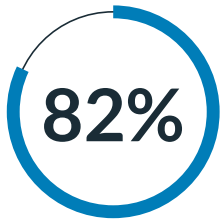
■ Safe  
■ Unsafe





# Employers Are Obligated to Protect All Workers

90% of U.S. workers believe that their employers have a duty of care—a moral and legal obligation—to protect them from harm when working or traveling on their behalf.



*say that duty of care responsibility extends to those working remotely*

It is no longer an option for employers to limit their emergency planning to a single business location. With employees working remotely across the globe, businesses have an obligation to keep their dispersed workforce safe and informed about emergencies they may face.



***9 in 10 employees believe it's their employer's responsibility to protect them from unnecessary risk or harm while working.***

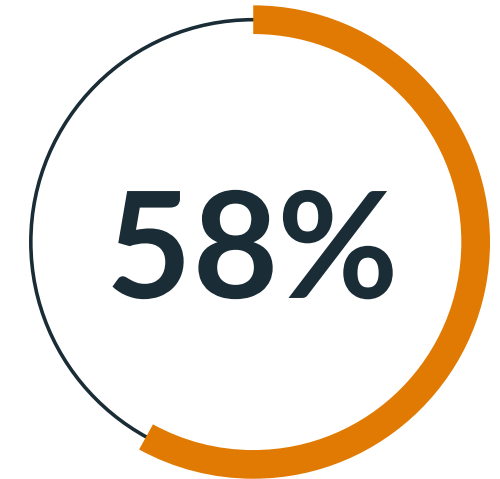


# Safety Measures Don't Always Meet Employee Expectations

While 86% of workers say their employers have the right intentions to keep them safe, only 50% think that their employers' actions show how much they care. Having the right intentions is great, but actually putting procedures and actions in place to keep employees safe is necessary to ensure the overall well-being of today's workforce.

Some employers have stepped up to the challenge, however. 55% of workers believe their employers are making more of an effort to keep them safe. Still, **1 in 10 respondents said their employer is making less of an effort compared to a year ago**, further illustrating there is a sizable portion of the workforce that feels like their employers' safety policies have fallen short.

These employees, as discussed earlier in the report, are less likely to want to stay at their job long-term. So while employers might save some money by not implementing better safety practices, that number would likely pale in comparison to the cost of replacing and training lost workers.



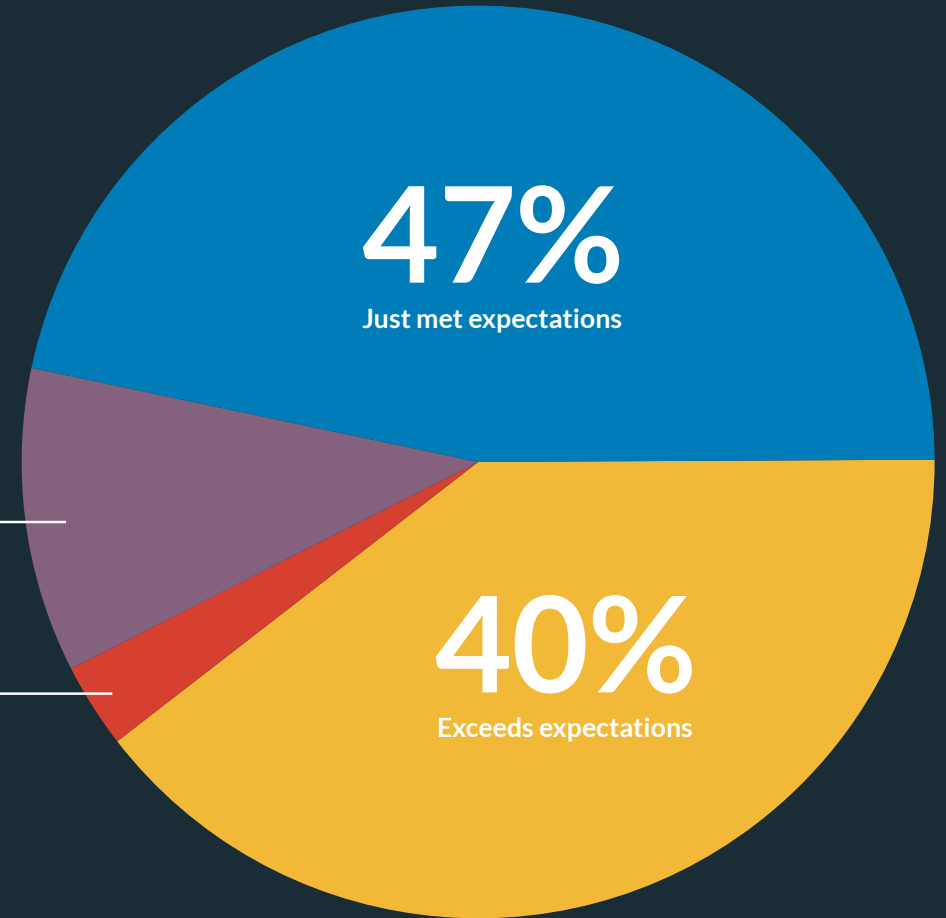
*of employees say that safety efforts only just met or failed to meet their expectations*

*Do your employer's  
safety efforts meet  
your expectations?*



**11%** Did not meet expectations

**3%** I don't know what efforts  
my employer is making





## Safety Training Helps (When It's Offered)

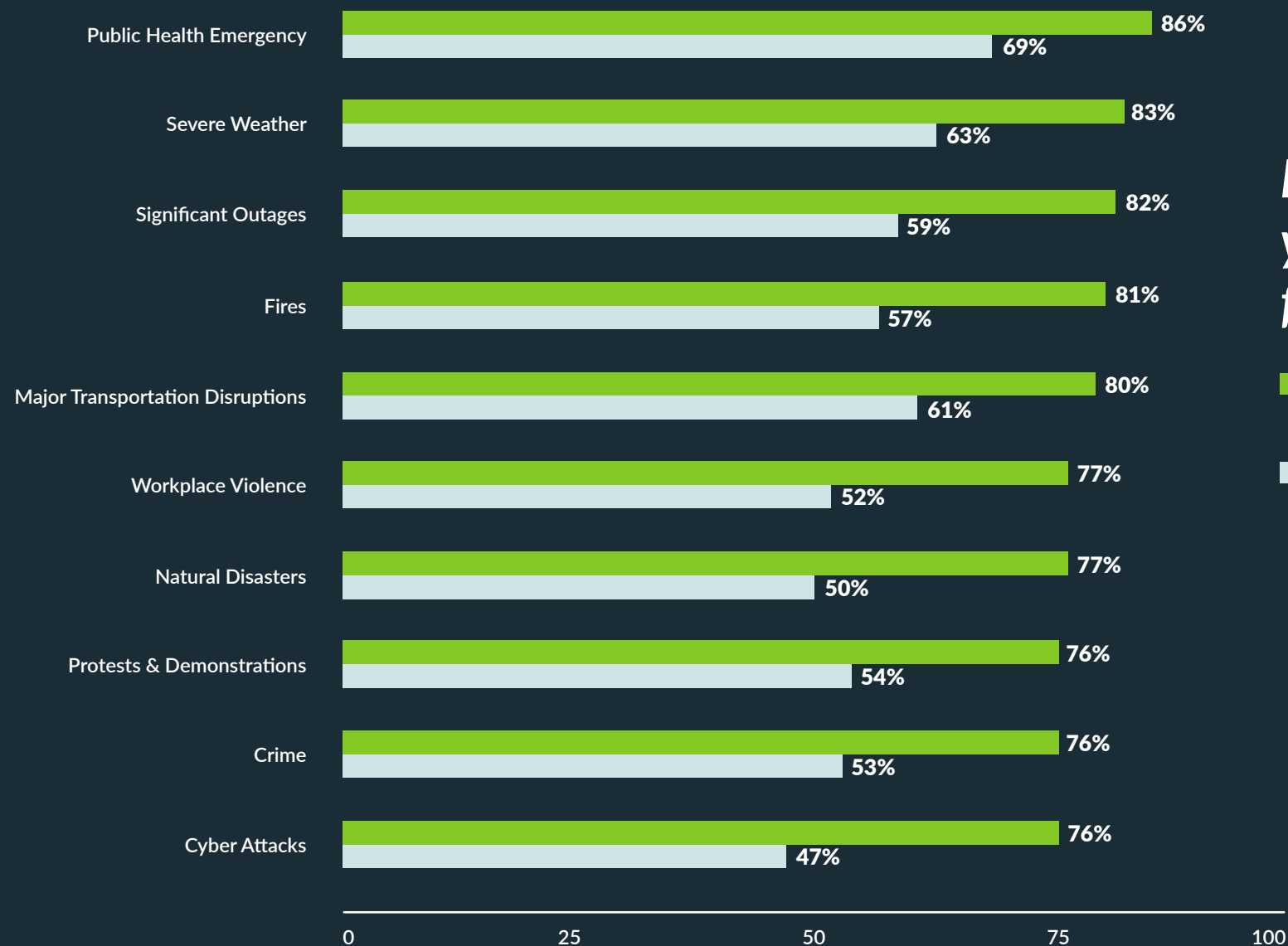
When companies truly prioritize safety, a key priority is training employees on how to handle emergencies. Only 38% of working Americans strongly agree that they'd know what to do in the event of an emergency at work, which leaves 62% of employees hesitating, guessing, or outright not reacting to crisis situations. This poses a significant hazard to both the employees themselves and the business operations of the company.

Safety training is a common solution to this problem and, fortunately, 82% of respondents say that their employers offer it—with 56% saying it was offered more than once a year. Even more encouragingly, 81% say those trainings are mandatory, which is a major boost to safety, as those who were offered safety training were over 25% more likely to say they know what to do in an emergency at work. ***Offering regular safety training that is mandatory will dramatically increase an employee's ability to react to emergencies, which will lower the potential for negative impact since employees know what to do.***



**Only 38%** *of working Americans strongly agree that they'd* **know what to do in the event of an emergency at work**





*How prepared do  
you feel for the  
following situations?*

■ Employees who are  
offered safety training

■ Employees who are not  
offered safety training

# Employees Want Better Safety Communication

Communication is the most important thing employers can do to make their employees feel safe. But this research identified crucial failings in communication that need to be addressed.

50% of respondents said that their employers are not prepared to handle communications during an emergency. More importantly, that poor communication would cause serious problems for businesses. **38% of employees say they would feel unsafe and 1 in 4 (26%) say they would lose trust in their employer if their company failed to alert them about an emergency.**

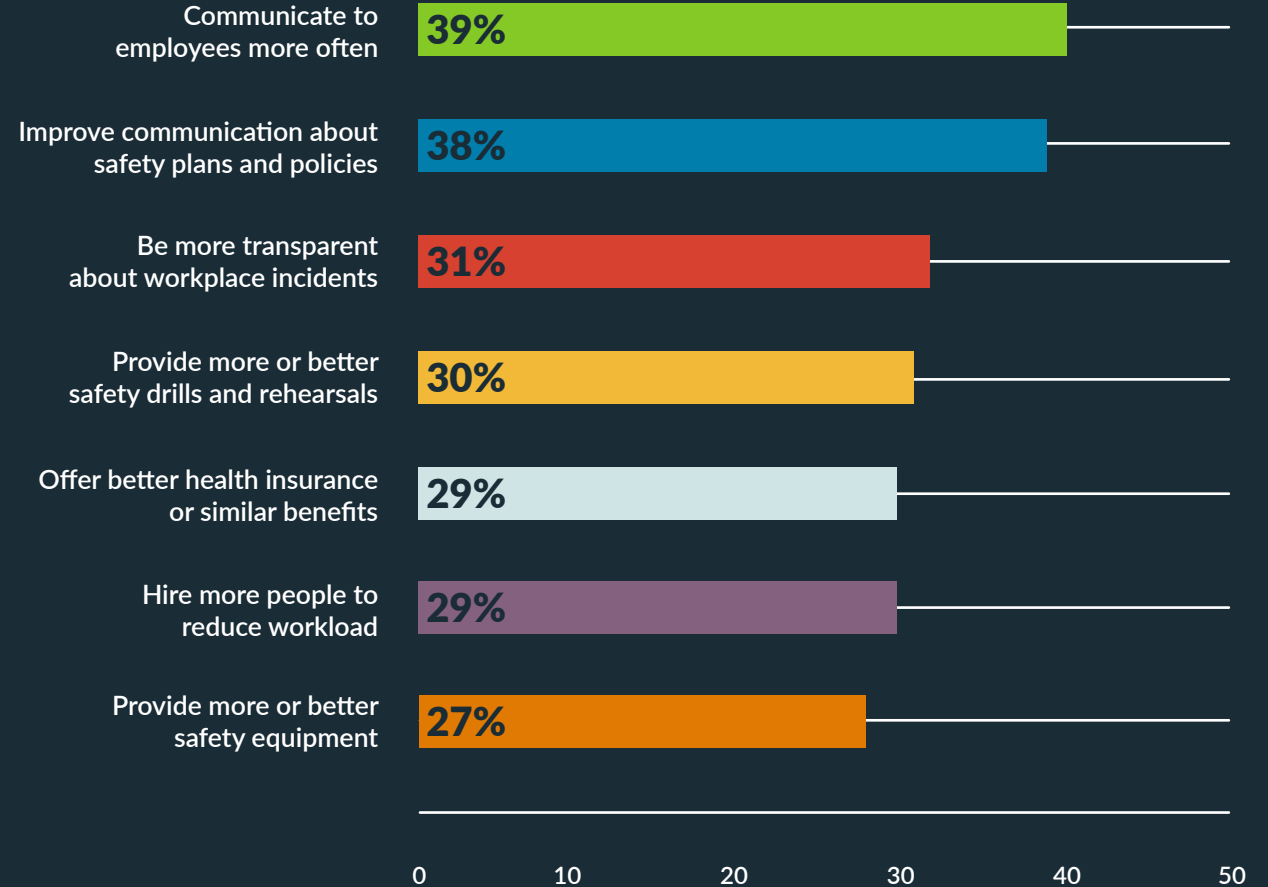
This is a clear area of opportunity that does not need to have an immense overhaul of business operations to fix. 38% of employees would like their employers to improve how they communicate about safety plans and policies.

*Nearly 4 in 10 employees say that communicating more often would make them feel that their safety is important to their employer.*

Simply improving the rate and quality of communications to employees, particularly communications about safety, would lead to better worker satisfaction and retention.



## *What could your employer do to show that they care about your safety?*





# Employers Need To Show That Safety Is a Priority

The need for better communication is damaging employees' relationships with their employers. The majority of employees (59%) believe that it will take an emergency happening at their place of work for their employer to truly care about the safety of the employees. Even more surprising, fewer than 2 in 5 (38%) strongly agreed that their company's leadership team cares about employee safety.

***This indicates that employers haven't expressed safety as a clear priority.*** Without that assurance, employees are going to feel like their safety is being set aside, not to be considered until after it is already threatened. This fracture could have lasting consequences to the growth and success of a business.



***of employees believe it would take an emergency occurring at their workplace for their employer to realize the need for better communication***



# Key Takeaways

The message from American workers is clear in the results of this report. Safety is their top priority at work, and they want to know that their employers feel the same.

Today's workforce is demanding that their employers step up and prioritize communication and safety. They often feel unprepared and out of the loop when it comes to emergencies they face at work. And with the majority of employees having faced an emergency at work, they know just how dangerous this can be.

Increasing safety efforts and communication is not only going to protect workers, but it will also lead to better retention, better employee engagement, and a better ability to navigate an increasingly complex threat landscape. Here are our key takeaways from our research and how employers can use them to bolster your safety planning for 2022 and beyond.

## Methodology

**Respondents:** Working American sample: n=2,002

- U.S. residents
- 18+ years old
- Full-time employed workers
- Nationally representative sample

1

**Safety is a top priority for employees, especially in the workplace.**

Employers should weave safety into every aspect of their business operations, and should make sure that all their employees know exactly how they are keeping everyone safe. They should integrate safety into the very foundation of their business's culture, and employees should know exactly how important their health and well-being is to their company.

2

**Employers have a responsibility to protect workers, whether they are in an office/facility, or at home working remotely.**

Employers should be building out preparedness plans and safety protocols to ensure that all their employees are safe while working—including those working from home, remote offices, while traveling, or any other location. Companies should also ensure they have a scalable process for identifying emergent risks near their people to ensure those in harm's way are safe, informed, and connected—no matter the situation.

3

**Employers need to improve communication about safety and preparedness.**

Employers should make sure that good communication is happening consistently about any potential safety hazards, as well as what is being done to prepare for threats. Building out a crisis communication plan and informing employees about what to expect during critical events will both ensure that everyone knows where to turn for important information and how to ask for help when it's needed.

4

**Safety training makes employees feel more prepared.**

Employers should offer comprehensive safety trainings at regular intervals throughout the year to prepare employees for what to do in different emergency situations. These trainings should be mandatory for all employees and should cover the most common or most impactful threats relevant to your specific business. Designated safety leaders should also participate in regular drills and tabletop exercises to ensure that employees with critical roles can perform their duties effectively when the time comes.

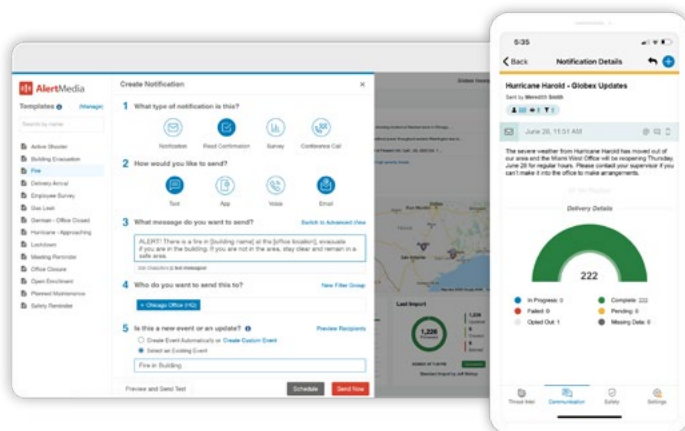
5

**Increasing safety communication and improving transparency should be part of your retention strategy.**

Employers should integrate their safety efforts and communication improvements into their regular internal communications with employees in order to improve retention. By showing exactly what is being done to keep employees safe, employers can foster goodwill with their teams and strengthen the company's overall culture of safety. These efforts can also be integrated into hiring efforts to lure safety-conscious candidates who want and expect to work where their personal safety is a top priority.



# The Industry Leader in Employee Safety



With employees more dispersed than ever, reaching those in harm's way at a moment's notice has become increasingly complex. With a modern, emergency communication system, such as AlertMedia, organizations can rapidly and easily connect with their people to improve employee safety and well-being—while also ensuring business continuity and protecting the bottom line. And by creating an environment where employees feel valued, protected, and supported no matter where or how they work, you can build a culture of trust that yields higher productivity, happier employees, and better performance.

Thousands of organizations—including DHL, JetBlue, Coca-Cola Bottling, and Walmart—in more than 130 countries rely on AlertMedia's award-winning, two-way multichannel messaging system and threat intelligence to protect their business and people through all phases of an emergency.



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