Risk Recalibrated:

the 2026 Executive Leadership Report on AI, SIF, and Human-Centric EHS

Insights from the What Works Institute & Evotix 2025 Executive Roundtable & EHS Strategy & Innovation Survey

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Executive Summary

EHS leaders today face a convergence of challenges and opportunities. Serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs) remain a stubborn issue even as traditional safety metrics plateau. At the same time, emerging factors - from psychosocial stressors to artificial intelligence (AI) tools – are reshaping how organizations approach risk. In 2025, What Works Institute and Evotix partnered to explore these dynamics through a comprehensive survey of EHS leaders and a multi-industry executive roundtable.

This report distills those findings into actionable insights for practitioners. Key highlights include:

Serious Injury & Fatality Prevention Needs Recalibration

Organizations are pushing beyond compliance checklists to focus on preventing life-altering harm, yet there is no universal definition of a "SIF." Many companies are piloting SIF initiatives, but without a shared understanding, benchmarking and alignment are difficult. That said, the rise of SIF thinking is evident, and global practices offer new thinking in fatality prevention that doesn't require a non-existent silver bullet. In our survey, 80% of respondents indicated their company has at least started addressing SIF prevention in some form. However, inconsistent leadership commitment and resource constraints are top obstacles to progress.

Stagnant Metrics vs. Meaningful Measures

A recurring frustration is that standard safety metrics (like Total Recordable Incident Rate, TRIR) still dominate dashboards despite their limitations in preventing serious harm. Sixty-three percent of leaders say their current metrics only partially reflect the real drivers of serious injuries. Few organizations have successfully integrated leading indicators such as exposure rates, precursors, or psychosocial factors into their KPIs. There is growing recognition that "what gets measured" must change to focus on risk prevention over mere injury counting – but changing long-entrenched metrics and incentives has proven slow and challenging.

Technology and AI: Promise with Caution

EHS functions are rapidly adopting technology – 94% of survey respondents use some form of digital EHS management system – and many are moving gingerly into AI. Most organizations are in the early stages of exploring AI in safety (no respondents indicated they consider it a core part of EHS today, and only ~8% are expanding it across EHS functions; the majority are exploring concepts or piloting use cases). Popular applications include automated dashboards, predictive analytics, and AI "copilots" for training or incident analysis. However, leaders are cautious but curious: the biggest concerns around AI in safety are data accuracy/bias (58%), privacy (39%), and lack of explainability (36%). No respondents described their workforce as "resistant" to AI – instead most are open but careful (75%), highlighting the importance of trust and clear governance.

Culture, Leadership, and Integration are as Critical as Ever

Both data and dialogue affirmed that safety innovation is as much about culture as it is about technology. Leaders stressed that no new tool or program will succeed without trust on the shop floor and visible executive buy-in. Misaligned incentives (like bonuses tied only to low incident rates) can backfire, discouraging reporting and learning. True progress requires breaking down silos – for example, only 27% of EHS teams in our survey regularly collaborate with HR, DEI, or wellbeing departments, yet issues like mental health or fatigue cross these boundaries.

Rise of Human-Centric Safety

There is an emerging drive to make safety programs more human-centric – integrating psychological safety, cognitive load, and worker wellbeing into risk management. Roundtable participants emphasized that factors like stress, fatigue, and neurodiversity significantly shape frontline decisions and should be built into safety systems. Yet the majority of survey respondents (89%) admit these human factors are only partially or not at all embedded in their programs. Over 75% of leaders say they would consider using a shared tool or maturity model to better integrate psychosocial risk if one existed, signaling a clear need for practical frameworks. Work already taking place in the EU, UK, Australia, and Canada (among other places) offer new models, such as the 2019 Health & Safety Executive management standards approach to stress, or the widely-recognized ISO 45003 standard.

In summary, the EHS field is at an inflection point. Advances in technology and deeper understanding of human factors present an opportunity to radically improve risk prevention, but only if leaders recalibrate their approaches. This means refining definitions and metrics to match what truly drives harm, investing in human-centric systems, governing new technologies wisely, and fostering a culture of trust and learning.

The following report provides background and detailed analysis of these findings and outlines next steps to move from insight to action.

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Background & Overview

EHS Strategy at a Crossroads

In 2025, many organizations are finding their traditional safety efforts yield diminishing returns. Basic compliance and incident prevention programs have driven down minor incident rates over past decades, yet serious injuries and fatalities remain persistently high in many sectors. Leaders are asking why "plateaued SIF outcomes" persist and what new strategies can break through this ceiling. At the same time, the nature of work and risk is evolving - modern workplaces contend with complex psychosocial stresses, diverse workforces, and rapid technological change. These shifts are forcing a re-examination of what effective EHS (Environment, Health, and Safety) management should look like going forward.

About the Research

In response to these challenges, the What Works Institute (WWi) partnered with EHS software innovator Evotix to gather fresh insights on the state and future of safety strategy and innovation. Two primary inputs inform this report:

- **Executive Roundtable – July 2025:** WWi and Evotix co-hosted a high-level roundtable with EHS executives from aviation, logistics, manufacturing, utilities, construction, software and other sectors. Conducted under the Chatham House Rule for candor, this 3-hour facilitated discussion focused on what's working, what's failing, and what's next in SIF prevention, AI in safety, and human-centric risk management. The roundtable also served to pressure-test the survey topics – participants helped identify gaps and shape questions for relevance. Their qualitative insights provide rich context and real-world anecdotes.

- **2025 EHS Strategy & Innovation Survey:** To complement the qualitative data, a detailed survey was conducted from September 10 to October 6, 2025, targeting senior EHS leaders across industries. The instrument probed three critical domains – serious injury/fatality prevention, psychosocial risk integration, and technology/AI adoption – along with organizational demographics and future priorities.
    - Demographically, the survey garnered 52 responses, with participants spanning roles from EHS managers to VPs and diverse sectors like Manufacturing (38% of respondents), Utilities, Construction, Mining, and more.
    - Most respondents oversaw multi-site or global operations (90%), ensuring a broad perspective.
    - 31% of responses came companies employing fewer than 500 people; 8% from companies employing 500 – 1,000 people, and the remainder (~60%) split somewhat evenly between organizations with 1,001 – 5,000, 5,001 – 25,000, and more than 25,000 people employed.

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- Occupational Health and Safety was the top responsibility of respondents (88%), followed by Ergonomics (63%), and Training (60%). A full list of respondent remit areas appears below.

Table 1. Which of the following areas do you have EHS responsibility for? Select all that apply (n=52)

EHS Responsibilities	Percent
Occupational Health and Safety	88
Ergonomics	63
Training	60
Process Safety	58
Emergency Preparedness/Crisis Management	50
Industrial Hygiene	48
Contractor/Supply Chain Safety	48
Environmental & Sustainability (including ESG)[1]	46
Mental Health & Wellbeing	44
Security	25
Product Safety	17
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/Inclusive Safety	13
Ventilation	2

[1]May or may not include ESG

Scope of the Report

This report, "*Risk Recalibrated*," synthesizes findings from the roundtable and survey. It explores how organizations are redefining serious risk, striving for more human-centered approaches, and leveraging technology responsibly. The goal is to highlight emerging best practices as well as persistent barriers, offering readers both strategic perspective and practical tools. In the sections that follow, we present key insights that emerged from the research, and clear calls to action for EHS leaders.

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Key Insights

Below are five core insights that capture the current state and outlook of EHS strategy as revealed by our 2025 research. These insights were informed by both survey findings and the themes from the roundtable discussion:

1. Serious Injury and Fatality (SIF) Prevention is a Priority – But Lacks Consensus

Organizations broadly agree that preventing life-altering harm is critical, yet they lack a shared language for what constitutes a "SIF." Definitions vary not only across companies but sometimes within them - some restrict SIF to immediate, high-severity physical trauma, while others include long-latency occupational illnesses (e.g., silicosis) or even psychological trauma. The result is inconsistent classification, muddled data, and confusion about priorities. Leaders at the roundtable expressed that they need a flexible, modular SIF model: a core definition anchored in life-altering harm and aligned to emerging references (e.g., Edison Electric Institute, ASTM), surrounded by adjustable modules for industry-specific risks and contexts.

Most organizations surveyed are now engaging with SIF prevention, but maturity varies. Roughly 80% have begun at least pilots, while 20% have not yet started; among those engaged, a meaningful segment (28%) reported treating SIF as a core component of EHS strategy (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Which best describes your organization's approach to SIF prevention? (n=46)

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Common practices are coalescing: more than two-thirds incorporate SIF-potential criteria into investigations (explicitly asking "could this have been fatal or life-changing?") and nearly 60% define SIF precursors or high-risk situations to watch for. By contrast, only 16% report the use of formal energy-based assessments and frameworks (e.g., HECA, Energy Wheel) or curated "Stuff That Kills You (STKY)" lists - suggesting either complexity, perceived genericness, or simply early awareness. Many leaders at the roundtable described a maturity continuum: evolving from "arms-and-legs" hazard control toward systems that also account for cognitive and psychosocial contributors.

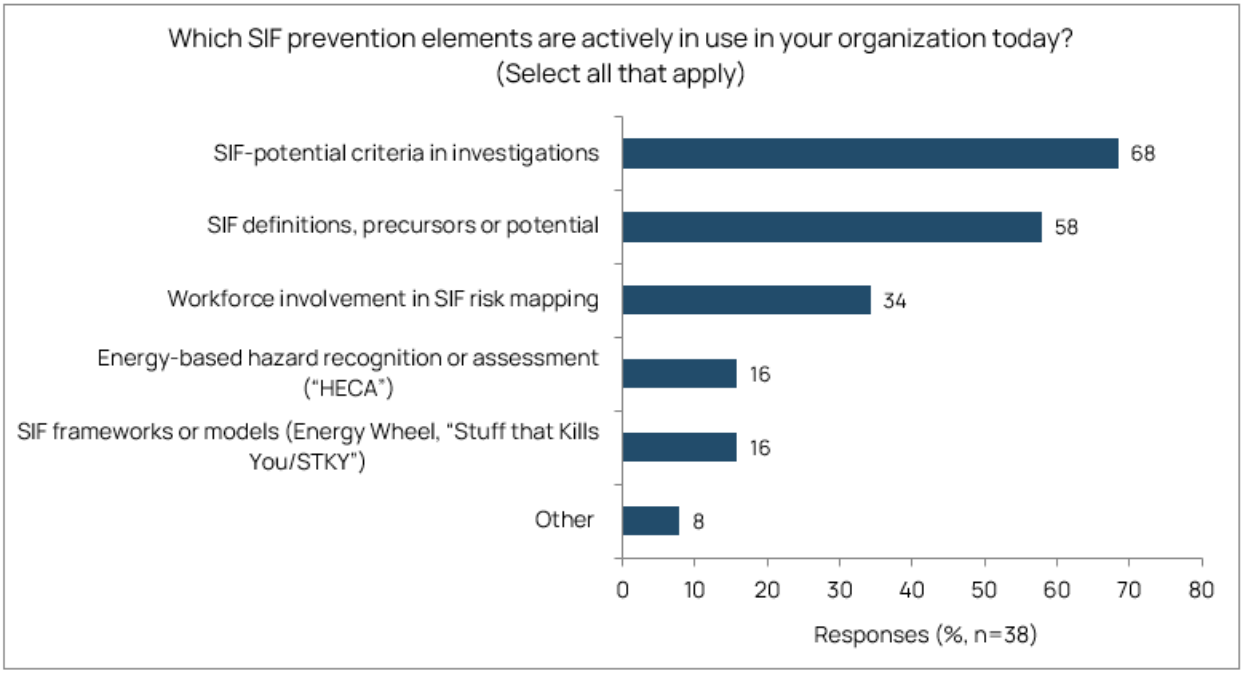

Figure 2. Which SIF prevention elements are actively in use in your organization today? (n=38)

Embedding SIF thinking into daily operations remains a leadership challenge. Insufficient resources ranked as the top obstacle, with inconsistent leadership support a close second. Participants emphasized the importance of visible executive sponsorship (e.g., CEOs making fatality prevention a non-negotiable value and opening quarterly operations reviews with serious-risk discussions). Where this occurred, leaders said EHS teams saw tangible shifts, such as middle managers proactively surfacing SIF-precursor data instead of hiding it. Without that alignment, SIF can devolve into the "initiative of the year" rather than a durable management system.

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Table 2. How is SIF risk communicated to your organization's leadership today? Select all that apply (n=40)

Answer Choices	Percent
SIF-potential incident reports (e.g., near misses, high-potential events)	53
Event Reviews/Deep dives	48
Dashboards or exposure analytics (e.g., leading indicators, risk-based data)	45
Lagging metrics only (e.g., recordable rates, TRIR)	38
Narrative briefings and storytelling (e.g., cases, personal impact)	30
Not regularly reported	20
Other	5

Table 3. What are the biggest challenges to your organization's SIF prevention approach? Please rank in order (n=29)

Rank	Average Score	Challenge
1	6.28	Insufficient resources (time, staffing, tools, technology)
2	5.86	Inconsistent leadership support or prioritization
3	4.59	Inconsistent definition of SIF
4	4.55	Confusion between severity and potential
5	4.31	Lack of worker buy-in or relevance
6	3.76	Poor quality incident data
7	3.45	Resistance to changing existing classifications or metrics
8	3.21	Overlap with other frameworks (e.g., HOP, DEI, process safety)

A parallel reframing is widening the scope of "serious harm" to include health and wellbeing. Some organizations now count severe occupational diseases or acute mental-health crises as serious incidents, reflecting a broader, human-centric view of harm that regulators and traditional metrics may not yet fully capture. This shift links directly to efforts to integrate psychosocial and cognitive factors into investigations, learning systems, and leading indicators.

In sum, the field is converging on the goal - eliminating fatalities and life-altering injuries - while still diverging in terminology and tooling. Progress will hinge on shared but adaptable definitions, disciplined use of SIF-potential and precursor analytics, selective adoption (and

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simplification) of formal frameworks, and sustained executive sponsorship that embeds serious-risk management into everyday decisions.

Lessons, Pivots, and Breakthroughs in SIF Efforts (2024–2025)

Participants were asked to share one lesson, pivot, or breakthrough in their organization's SIF efforts from the past year. Respondents described a range of advancements and reflections in their organizations' serious injury and fatality (SIF) prevention strategies, highlighting both cultural and systems-level evolution.

Strengthening Learning and Awareness: Organizations increasingly emphasized learning from real-world examples and localized engagement. Several reported using case studies to teach risk awareness and improve understanding of potential incidents at the site level. Heightened focus on hazard visibility and control implementation, particularly in laboratory environments, was linked to measurable reductions in chemical exposure risks.

Evolving Frameworks and Terminology: A number of respondents reported a shift from SIF-only focus toward potential SIF (PSIF), expanding attention to precursor events and early warning signs. Others indicated movement toward critical risk and control frameworks rather than traditional SIF labeling, reflecting broader integration of risk-based thinking and verification processes.

Leadership and Cultural Shifts: Some organizations credited increased senior leadership understanding of SIF concepts with transforming how safety is led and communicated. This leadership engagement has helped align prevention priorities and elevate SIF from a technical to a strategic issue.

Systemization and Measurement Improvements: Participants described standardized enterprise processes for communicating SIF events and tracking precursors, and one noted that 20% of near misses involve SIF precursors. Several also referenced adoption of structured tools such as HECA and STKY (Stuff That Kills You) frameworks, supporting data-driven prevention and learning.

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Assurance and Validation of Critical Control: One standout example was an award-winning critical control assurance program requiring evidence from managers and frontline confirmation of control effectiveness, demonstrating tangible success in embedding verification into safety governance.

Research Advances: One organization highlighted a six-year research initiative linking head injury rates with neurodegenerative outcomes, underscoring the field's growing scientific depth and focus on long-term health implications.

Continuing Challenges: Respondents noted ongoing challenges in achieving organization-wide adoption ("still trying to bring them along") or limited personal involvement in SIF efforts.

2. Metrics & Incentives - Reimagining How We Measure Safety Success

A persistent disconnect exists between what most organizations measure and what actually prevents harm. Lagging indicators such as TRIR and compliance tallies remain dominant, yet they obscure exposure to catastrophic events and can create perverse incentives - especially when tied to executive compensation or public ESG targets. Our survey underscores the gap: only 19% of leaders believe their metrics closely track the drivers of risk; 63% say metrics only partially reflect those drivers; and nearly 20% report little or no connection to true risk.

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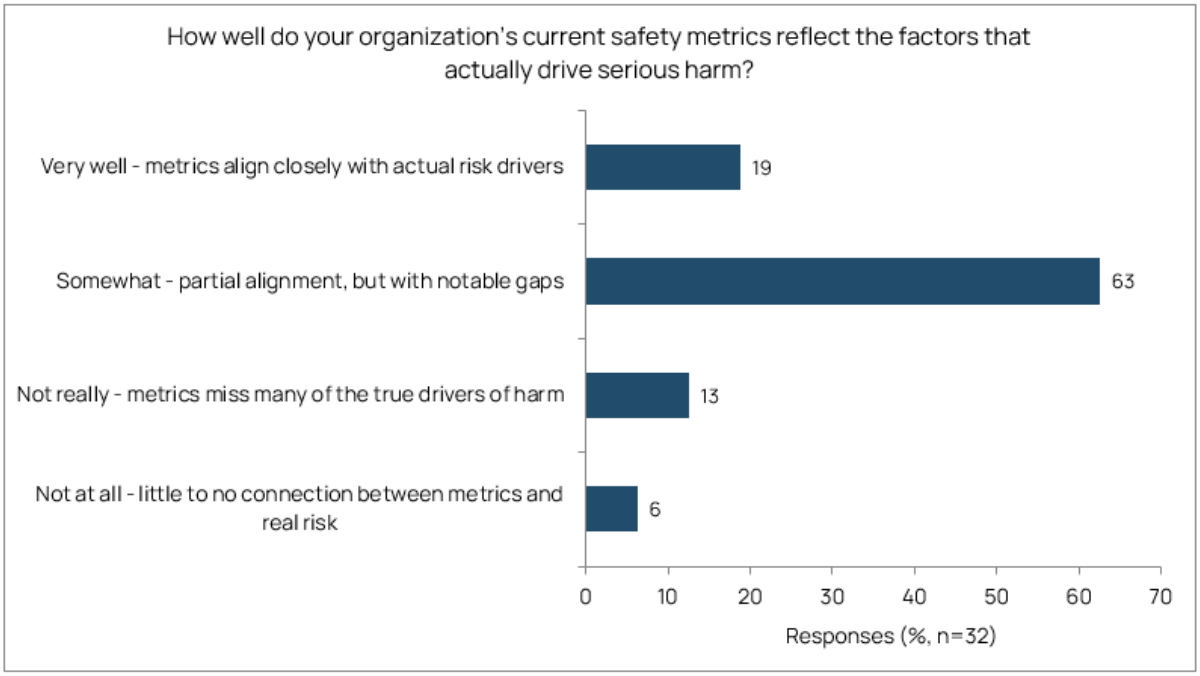

Figure 3. How well do your organization's current safety metrics reflect the factors that actually drive serious harm? (n=32)

> Despite broad recognition of these shortcomings, inertia and external pressure (from regulators, industry bodies, investors, and legacy incentive schemes) keep traditional measures in place, fostering what one roundtable participant called "performance theater"- managing the optics of injury rates rather than the reality of serious-risk control.

Momentum is building to modernize safety measurement around exposure, readiness, and learning. Leading organizations are layering in indicators that more directly reflect serious-risk control and organizational reliability, while acknowledging that many of these practices are still nascent and unevenly adopted. The emerging direction includes:

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- **Exposure and critical control performance**: tracking how often workers encounter high-energy or high-hazard tasks and whether critical controls are proven effective (e.g., number and quality of confined-space entries, lockout verifications, permit integrity, and real-world tests of control reliability).
- **Precursors and high-potential learning signals**: monitoring high-potential near misses, unsafe conditions found, and closure effectiveness. Mature programs interpret rising near-miss reports as cultural engagement (when paired with timely corrective action), not as failure.
- **Safety climate and worker engagement**: surveying trust, speak-up confidence, and perceived management commitment; using interviews and pulse tools to detect weak signals before they manifest as incidents.
- **Process and system health**: measuring whether investigations are timely and high quality, audits are completed as planned, and training moves beyond "completed" to demonstrated retention and on-the-job application.
- **Wellbeing and psychosocial risk**: adding indicators for fatigue and stress (e.g., overtime profiles, targeted surveys, or ethically-governed wearable insights) to capture latent contributors to serious harm.

Where to start is increasingly clear from our data. Fifty-nine percent of respondents identified Training & Onboarding as most in need of redesign, signaling a desire to focus on prevention upstream of events; 47% flagged Investigations & Learning Systems as priority rebuilds, recognizing that weak learning architectures undermine both metrics and improvement. At the same time, the external reporting landscape is shifting: 67% of organizations surveyed now include safety metrics in ESG/sustainability reports, creating an opportunity to broaden what "good" looks like beyond outcome rates by adding exposure and control health narratives that build credibility and reduce incentives for under-reporting.

> Piloting helps convert skeptics: during the roundtable, we heard this loud and clear. One company leader noted *"Our internal pSIF rate was predictive over a year, which let us feel confident we could scale it into our corporate metrics."* Another shared a specific risk-oriented approach: *"For us, fatigue was a clear driver of injury and allowed us to make changes to scheduling and workload."*

Adoption hinges on reframing and incentives. Several leaders are repositioning safety as operational risk management for executives and boards, bringing SIF exposure profiles,

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critical-control status, and scenario-based risk assessments to the table instead of abstract frequency rates.

As organizations roll in these measures, incentive systems must shift to reward proactive risk reduction, transparency, and learning (e.g., surfacing precursors, validating controls, closing actions with quality) rather than celebrating cosmetically low rates.

Ultimately, the goal is realignment: measure what prevents fatalities and life-altering harm, not what flatters dashboards. The near-term focus areas our respondents named - SIF exposure tracking (top priority over the next 18–24 months), along with other top-five priorities such as AI and workforce wellbeing - point to a future where metrics illuminate serious-risk control, strengthen culture, and make it easier for leaders to fund what works.

3. Technology and AI Are Emerging Enablers – But Need Governance

EHS is now largely digital, creating a foundation for more advanced tools. A strong majority (84%) use commercial EHS software (40%) or a hybrid system of commercial software and internal tools (44%), and only a small minority (6%) remain on paper or basic spreadsheets; the rest rely on in-house systems (10%).

Building on this base, organizations are cautiously moving into AI: 17% have not started, 33% are exploring use cases, 42% are piloting in limited scopes, and 8% report they have started strategically scaling the use of AI across multiple EHS functions (Figure 4). Early efforts concentrate on practical, workflow-adjacent applications -automated analytics and dashboards and chatbot/copilot support (each cited by 44% of AI users) - with pilots also spanning computer vision (e.g., ergonomic or hazard detection), predictive analytics, and NLP to mine free-text reports or safety meeting transcripts (Figure 5).

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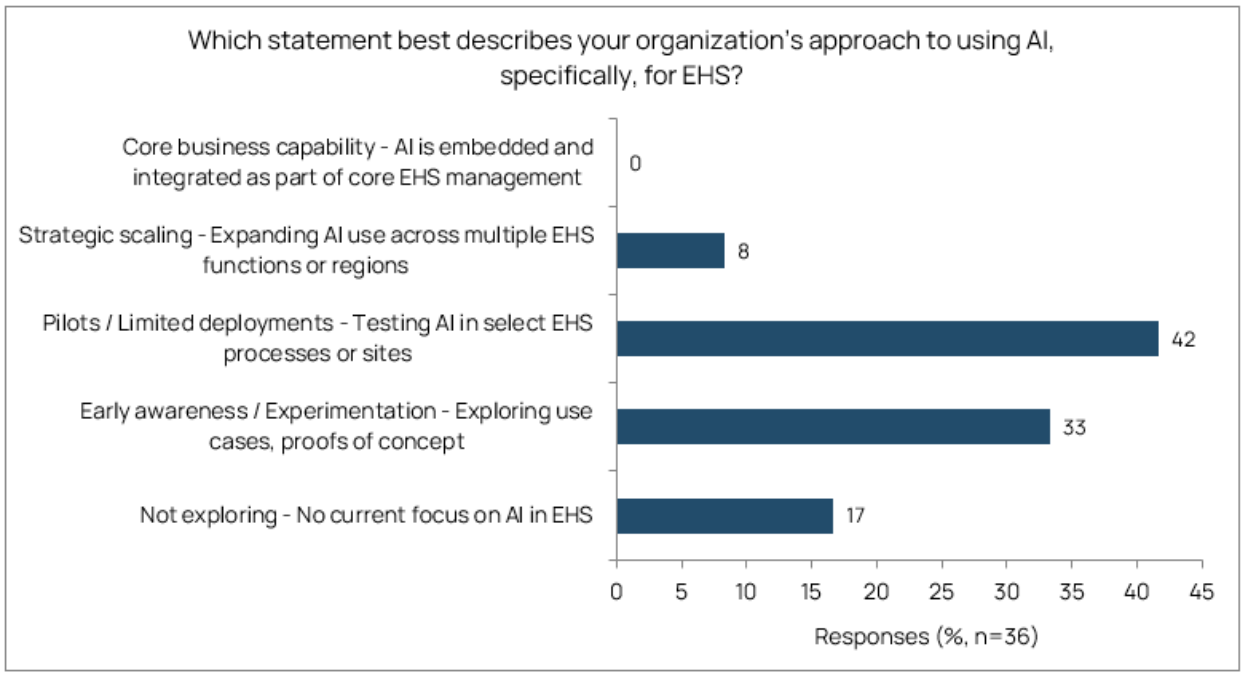

Figure 4 Which statement best describes your organization's approach to using AI, specifically, for EHS? (n=36)

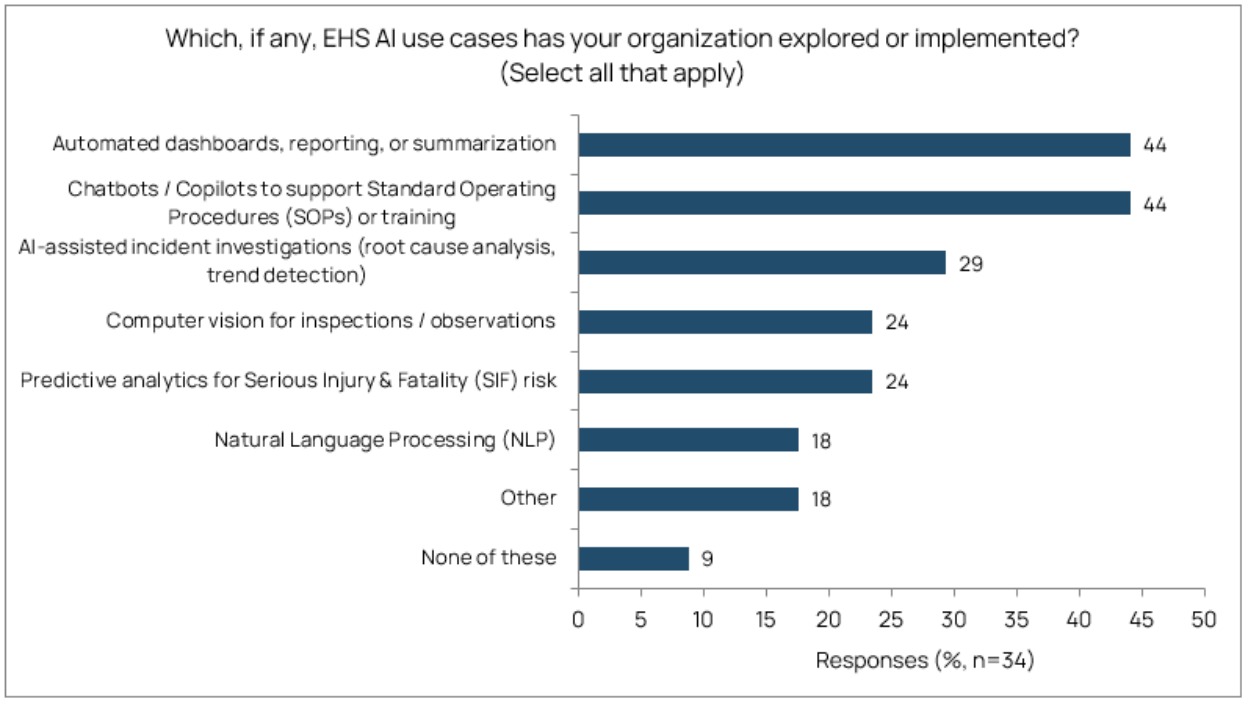

Figure 5. Which, if any, EHS AI use cases has your organization explored or implemented? Select all that apply (n=34)

The promise is tangible: AI can accelerate reporting, surface precursor patterns otherwise lost in noise, and deliver just-in-time guidance to the field (e.g., PPE lookups, checklist

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walkthroughs, first-draft incident summaries). But enthusiasm is tempered by realism about preconditions and limits. "Garbage in, garbage out" is the headline risk discussed at the roundtable: inconsistent taxonomies, unstructured narratives, and variable data quality were the top barriers, often necessitating data cleanup and standardization before models add value. Leaders at the roundtable also stressed that certain tasks - investigations, interviews, causal analysis - require human judgment and context that AI cannot replicate today; "human-in-the-loop" is non-negotiable for sensitive decisions.

Governance and ethics are emerging as make-or-break. Many EHS teams lack domain-specific formal policies, and concerns are widespread: 58% worry about accuracy/bias, 39% about privacy and surveillance, and 36% about transparency/explainability (i.e., how AI reaches decisions). Effective programs involve cross-functional partners (IT, Legal, Operations, worker representatives) engaging early to set guardrails on data permissions and anonymization, model validation against known cases, monitoring for drift and bias, and establishing clear boundaries on use (e.g., no AI-only disciplinary actions; AI recommendations require human review). This clarity shortens approval cycles, aligns expectations, and reduces the risk of fragmented, ad hoc tool adoption.

Table 4. What concerns you most about the use of AI in safety? Select up to 2 (n=33)

Answer Choices	Percent
Accuracy, reliability, or algorithmic bias	58
Data privacy & potential surveillance of workers	39
Explainability / transparency (how AI reaches decisions)	36
AI use in hazard analysis (risk of over-reliance, misclassification, or false confidence)	27
Lack of clear standards, regulation, or oversight	27
Worker trust, acceptance, or cultural resistance	21
Resource demands (cost, skills, complexity)	12
None of the above	12

Workforce adoption hinges on trust and clarity of purpose. Most describe employees as "curious but cautious" (75%), with virtually no active resistance reported - yet approximately a quarter of organizations have not discussed AI with workers at all (Figure 5). Transparent communication about what a tool will and won't do, how data is protected, and how roles may change helps shift AI from a "black box" to a credible assistant. Piloting is a practical on-ramp: several organizations at the roundtable are exploring how targeted metrics (e.g., a SIF-

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precursor rate or fatigue signals) correlate with reductions in serious events, building the case to scale into scorecards and routine management reviews.

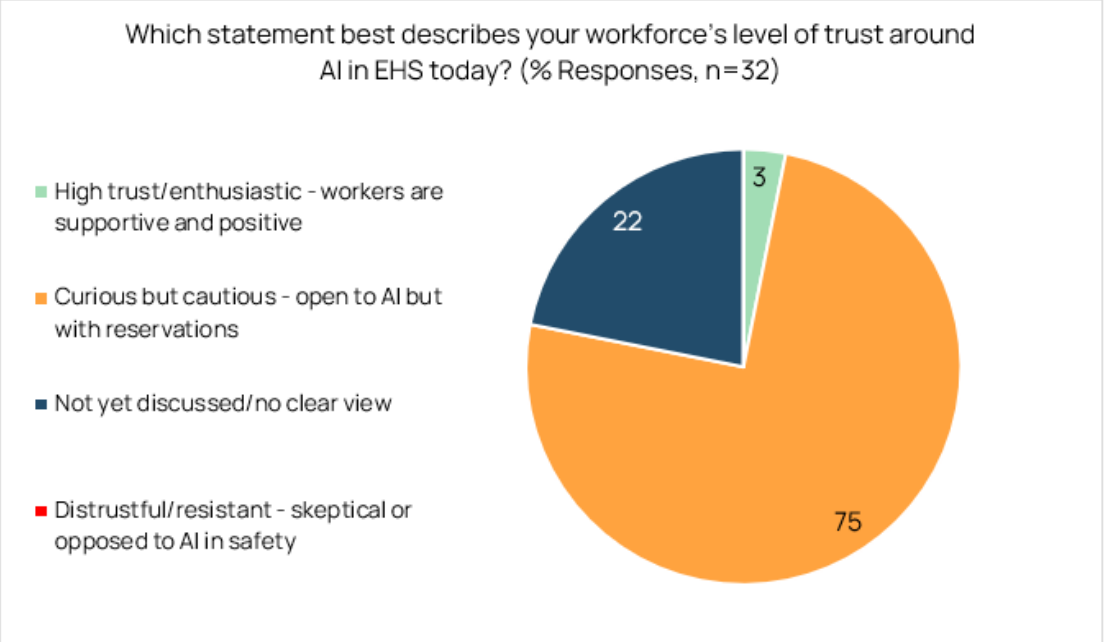

Figure 6. Which statement best describes your workforce's level of trust around AI in EHS today? (n=32)

The upshot is a need for disciplined enablement: start with real problems (not novelty), get the data and definitions right, embed human expertise at critical decision points, and install governance that protects privacy, fairness, and accountability. Done this way, technology amplifies, rather than replaces, human insight - and strengthens the culture of learning. As one roundtable participant summarized, AI should reinforce, rather than erode, the trust that underpins effective safety culture; once lost, that trust is hard to regain.

Perceived Promise & Challenges of AI in EHS (2024–2025)

When asked which AI use cases in EHS feel most promising, respondents identified a diverse range of applications spanning automation, analytics, and human–machine collaboration, while also signaling early-stage uncertainty and caution about reliability.

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Advancing Predictive and Analytical Capabilities: Many saw potential in predictive analytics and trend detection for identifying SIF precursors and emerging risks. AI-driven data synthesis, especially through dashboards and automated reporting, was cited as a pathway to more proactive, insight-led decision-making.

Leveraging Computer Vision and Video Intelligence: Respondents highlighted growing interest in video- and computer-vision-based systems to detect unsafe acts, near misses, and at-risk behaviors that might otherwise go unreported. Applications such as collision avoidance and automated field monitoring were seen as transformative for high-risk environments.

Supporting Daily Operations and Worker Interaction: Several participants mentioned chatbots and copilots as promising tools to assist workers and leaders in navigating EHS programs, completing JHAs, and answering compliance questions in real time. These applications align with broader moves toward human-centric digital enablement.

Training, Program Development, and Continuous Improvement: Some respondents identified potential for AI in developing tailored training content, identifying skill gaps, and supporting overall program design and improvement through data-informed feedback loops.

Hesitation and Uncertainty Remain: While enthusiasm was evident, a subset of respondents expressed skepticism or uncertainty, citing concerns about AI accuracy, data validity, and readiness for practical deployment. A number of participants indicated that they are still exploring where AI could add real value ("not sure," "no idea yet," "nothing yet").

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When asked which AI in EHS use cases feel most challenging, respondents underscored a blend of data integrity, ethical, organizational, and governance concerns that currently limit broader adoption.

- **Data Quality and Reliability Barriers:** The most common theme was poor or inconsistent data quality across EHS systems. Participants noted that many existing records lack the precision or completeness required for effective AI training and validation. Respondents cautioned that without clean, structured, and trustworthy datasets, outputs such as predictive models, dashboards, or heat maps risk being misleading or inaccurate.
- **Human Factors and the Limits of Automation:** Several practitioners expressed strong reservations about AI-assisted incident investigations, emphasizing that human judgment, contextual understanding, and witness interpretation remain essential. One respondent, drawing on OSHA investigative experience, stressed that the collection and analysis of witness statements must remain human-led, as timing, emotion, and credibility are critical to understanding events accurately.
- **Governance, Security, and Oversight Concerns:** Respondents cited data privacy, cybersecurity, and corporate IT approval processes as persistent hurdles to implementing AI tools. Governance structures and inconsistent business-unit approaches were also highlighted as complicating factors, making it difficult to standardize or scale AI adoption across global organizations.
- **Overreliance and Judgment Risks:** Concerns about overreliance on AI outputs were frequently mentioned, with participants warning that professional judgment must remain central, particularly in areas involving predictive risk assessment or regulatory interpretation. Some respondents questioned whether current AI tools can yet provide sufficient accuracy and contextual sensitivity for compliance or investigation purposes.
- **Organizational Readiness and Knowledge Gaps:** A smaller subset of respondents indicated uncertainty or limited familiarity with AI's practical applications, reflecting early-stage adoption and varying levels of digital maturity across organizations.

4. Culture Leadership, and Integration - The Bedrock of Sustainable Improvement

Data and dialogue converge on a simple truth: people and culture determine whether innovative practices take root. Trust is foundational; workers must feel safe to surface hazards and near-misses without fear of blame. When senior executives treat safety as a core value and business enabler rather than a compliance chore, engagement multiplies. Yet many organizations experience a "friction of complexity": overlapping initiatives (behavior-based safety, SIF campaigns, wellbeing programs, etc.) that aren't integrated, creating confusion and fatigue on the front line.

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The antidote is clarity and simplification, built through integration. Consolidate programs under a clear purpose and co-design with the workforce so systems make sense to those who use them. Break down silos: only 27% of EHS teams report strategic and routine collaboration with HR/wellbeing, and about half collaborate only occasionally - leaving health, safety, operations, and IT too often disconnected (Figure 7). Cross-functional co-design reliably yields stronger outcomes, whether the goal is integrating mental health into safety practice or aligning operations and EHS on serious-risk controls.

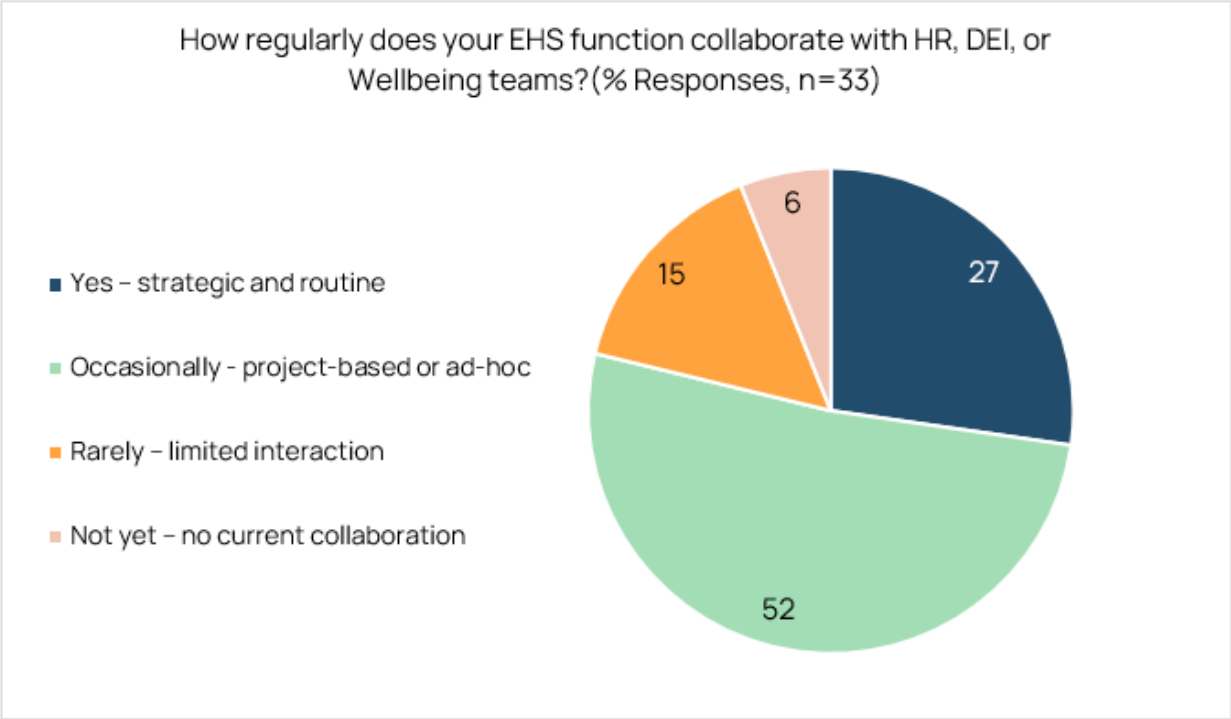

Figure 7. How regularly does your EHS function collaborate with HR, DEI, or Wellbeing teams? (%Responses, n=33)

Incentives must reinforce transparency and learning. If leaders reward honest reporting and high-quality analysis (e.g., celebrating hazard identification, near-miss learning, and effective action closure) rather than merely low injury rates, they signal that improvement, not optics, is the priority. Several organizations are already revising bonus structures and recognition to emphasize proactive risk reduction and continuous learning over lagging statistics; that said, care must be taken to not create the opposite effect by "gamifying" reporting or proactive action in a way that leads to hiding or minimizing risk or incidents.

Integration over invention is the practical path forward. Examples from the roundtable include forming a cross-functional "Serious Risk Council" (safety, operations, maintenance, HR, finance) that reviews both safety performance and business changes that shift risk; merging

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multiple checklists into a single integrated daily safety scan covering physical safety, mental readiness, and operational risk; replacing fragmented program meetings with one holistic risk review; training safety observers to note psychosocial stressors; and sharing EHS-HR data to spot correlations (e.g., overtime spikes preceding near-miss increases).

Complexity also arrives from outside the organization. Leaders at the roundtable reported duplicated effort across clients and systems and administrative burden from layered requirements (e.g., ISO adaptations). Part of simplification is upstream influence - working with industry groups and regulators to streamline reporting toward what truly reduces serious risk rather than what is easiest to count.

The field feels both urgency and optimism: urgency because preventing fatalities demands new ways of working, optimism because capabilities and will are rising. Appetite for peer learning is strong (56% "definitely," 38% "maybe" see value in benchmarking and shared insights). As the table below indicates, the desire for change is broad, but the through-line is clear: sustained results come from leadership commitment, an inclusive, trust-based culture, and disciplined integration that connects what organizations already have into simpler, smarter systems.

Table 5. Which EHS systems or processes in your organization are most in need of redesign or significant improvement? Select up to 3 (n=32)

Answer Choices	Percent
Training & onboarding programs	59
Investigations & learning from incidents	47
Risk assessments & control implementation	41
Data dashboards & analytics	38
Compliance/audit workload & burden	34
Incident classification & reporting systems	25
Communication, signage, & awareness tools	22
Other	3

5. Human-Centric EHS - A New Frontier Gaining Traction

Traditional, one-size-fits-all programs fall short because real people differ - in perception, cognition, capability, and context. Human-centric EHS reframes safety to account for factors such as fatigue, stress, cognitive load, neurodiversity, and psychological safety, moving

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beyond checklist compliance toward inclusive design. Leaders cited frameworks like Human and Organizational Performance (HOP) and NIOSH's Total Worker Health® (TWH) as starting points for integrating safety with wellbeing. Practical shifts are already visible: revamping investigations to consider emotional and cognitive state, adapting training and signage for differing literacy and processing styles, and, in some cases redefining "pSIF" events to include near misses with significant psychological impact.

That said, recognition is outpacing integration. Many organizations acknowledge psychosocial contributors, such as "control of work conditions" (71%), mental-health strain (66%), fatigue/cognitive overload (60%), and emotional harm/trauma (34%) (Table 6). Yet embedding remains limited: only 3% report these factors are fully integrated into the EHS management system, 8% mostly, and 89% say they are not or only partially embedded (Table 7). Progress correlates with leadership posture: where senior executives treat mental health, fatigue, and inclusion as core to safety (not "HR issues"), programs gain traction and credibility.

Table 6. Which of these psychosocial contributors to SIF or EHS management are utilized in your organization? Select all that apply (n=35)

Answer Choices	Percent
Control of work conditions	71
Mental health strain (stress, burnout, anxiety)	66
Fatigue or cognitive overload	60
Emotional harm or grief (including impact after incidents)	34
Language, literacy, or neurodiversity barriers	26
Cognitive complexity or task ambiguity	17
Community or socioeconomic factors	11
None	3

Closing the "knowing–doing" gap requires integration and simplification, not more parallel initiatives. This might include breaking the silos among EHS, HR/occupational health, operations, and IT; and co-sponsoring efforts such as fatigue management, workload redesign, and supervisor skills in empathetic leadership. Perhaps more directly, embedding and integrating psychosocial risk might be best approached through high-visibility initiatives such as SIF prevention, where the topic is gaining increasing traction.

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Table 7. Which statement best describes your organization's approach to embedding psychosocial and cognitive factors in its SIF or EHS management strategy? (n=36)

Answer Choices	Percent
Not at all embedded – Our organization does not currently consider these factors in our SIF or EHS strategy.	14
Early awareness – We are beginning to recognize these factors, but have not yet integrated them into policies, programs, or risk assessments.	39
Partially embedded – Some initiatives, training, or assessments include psychosocial and cognitive elements, but they are not consistent across the organization.	36
Mostly embedded – Psychosocial and cognitive considerations are regularly incorporated into risk management and prevention strategies, though not yet fully standardized or measured.	8
Fully embedded – These factors are integrated across all aspects of our SIF and EHS management strategy, with clear policies, practices, and performance metrics.	3

Barriers certainly remain, and survey participants were not shy in calling them out. Top challenges included competing priorities (44%), lack of clear measurement methods or standards (19%) and unclear ownership (14%); other sources causing friction appear in the figure below (Figure 8).

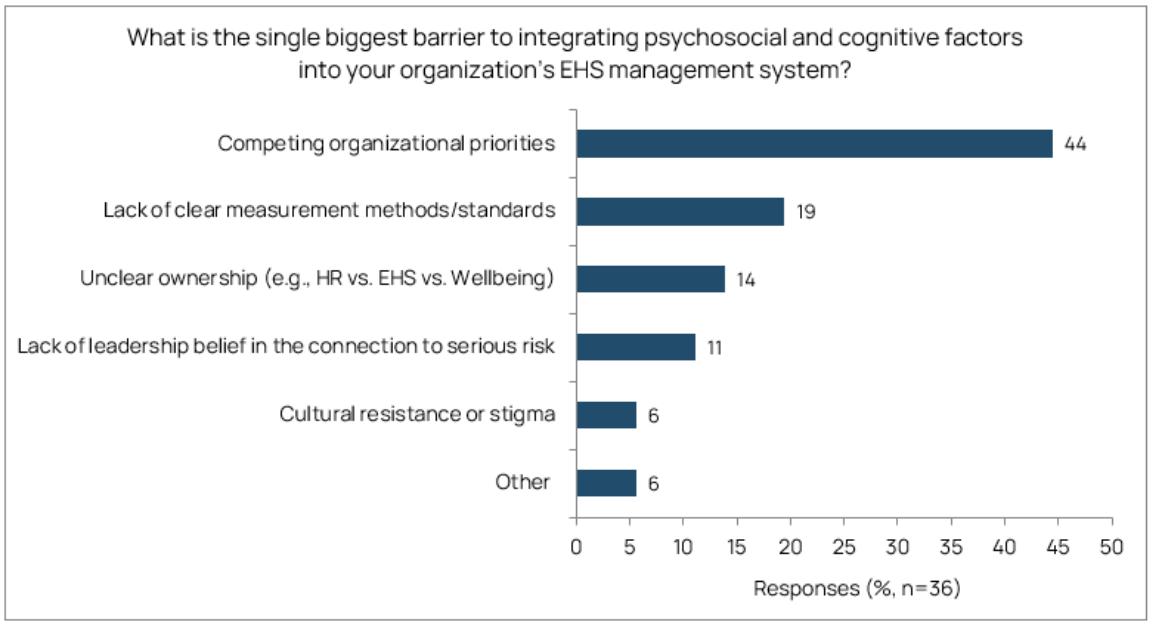

Figure 8. What is the single biggest barrier to integrating psychosocial and cognitive factors into your organization's EHS management system? (n=36)

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Yet momentum exists for a common roadmap. Seventy-eight percent would consider a shared maturity model or tool for psychosocial-risk integration. A practical model can map a path from reactive (episodic EAP and post-incident support) to embedded (psychosocial considerations in design reviews, pre-job planning, investigations, and KPIs for workload and culture). Such a scaffold helps organizations prioritize high-leverage changes, pilot, measure, and scale what works.

The direction is clear: making safety human-centric is not optional if the goal is to prevent life-altering harm. One roundtable participant put it succinctly:

Sustained results depend on leadership commitment, a trust-based culture, and deliberately integrated systems that make it easier for people to do the right thing under real-world pressures. In short, human-centricity is not a side initiative - it is the organizing principle for how modern safety must evolve.

Future Trends and Next Steps

Finally, the survey looked at anticipated trends, priorities, and areas of focus for EHS leaders. Their responses followed naturally from the themes outlined above:

- **SIF exposure tracking** was ranked as the highest priority by respondents when asked to rank their focus areas for the next 18-24 months.
- **Simplifying and streamlining** safety systems came second, underscoring the amount of operational clutter.
- **AI & predictive analytics** for safety rounded out the top three, a priority we see play out daily in the number of news articles on the topic.
- **Contractor risk and workforce wellbeing** also ranked in the top five priorities; these represent two persistent challenges that have plagued EHS leaders.

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- **Workforce mental health and wellbeing** was also identified in the top five priorities, reflecting growing recognition that psychological safety and overall wellbeing are integral to sustaining engagement, retention, and long-term safety performance.

Additional trends included:

- **Integration across multiple systems and clients**: the difficulty of aligning EHS requirements across multiple customer sites, each operating with its own reporting platform. This fragmentation creates duplication of effort and underscores the need for system interoperability and centralized reporting solutions.
- **Increased administrative burden from system upgrades**: The recent transition to frameworks such as ISO 45001 has introduced additional reporting and documentation requirements, increasing workload and the need to bring other sites up to the same EHS performance level.

Table 8. Please rank your top focus areas for EHS in the next 18–24 months, from highest to lowest priority

Rank Order	Average Weighted Score	Priority Focus Area
1	7.56	Serious Injury & Fatality (SIF) exposure tracking
2	6.46	Simplifying/streamlining safety systems
3	5.75	AI & predictive analytics for safety
4	5.43	Contractor & supply chain safety risk
5	5.11	Workforce mental health & wellbeing
6	5.07	Human performance & learning
7	4.66	Emergency preparedness & crisis readiness
8	3.88	ESG, sustainability & climate alignment
9	2.61	Safety + DEI integration

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Armed with the findings and insights above, what should EHS leaders and organizations do next?

We close this report with eight clear calls to action, paired with a simple first step organizations can take to close the gap between knowing and doing:

1. **Align on Serious Risk Definitions and Priorities:** Convene your key stakeholders (safety team, operations leaders, perhaps HR/health reps) to develop (or consider updates to) a clear definition of SIF for your organization.

2. **Modernize Your Metrics and Incentives:** Add (or change) at least one meaningful leading metric on your regular reports – for instance, number of high-potential near-misses reported, or % of inspections that include a psychosocial risk observation.

3. **Develop an AI Adoption Strategy with Governance:** Form an internal working group that includes EHS, IT, data analytics personnel, and frontline workers.

4. **Integrate Human-Centric Elements into Safety Programs:** Pick one or two tangible ways to start embedding psychosocial risk. For example, add a question about potential human factors (fatigue, workload, job control etc.) in your incident learning template.

5. **Simplify and Unify Safety Systems:** Take stock of all your safety and health initiatives and see where things can be streamlined. Are there overlapping programs that could be combined under one umbrella? Could a single risk assessment or management of change process cover safety, health, *and* wellbeing?

6. **Foster Cross-Functional Collaboration:** If you don't have a regular sync between EHS and HR (or occupational health, or wellbeing teams), set one up. Even a quarterly meeting to share plans and concerns can uncover synergy opportunities.

7. **Engage in Peer Learning and Benchmarking:** Don't reinvent the wheel in isolation. Join industry forums, What Works Institute Learning Communities, or create informal peer networks to swap experiences on these emerging challenges.

8. **Maintain the Momentum:** Perhaps the most important next step is to maintain the momentum from insight to action. The themes in this report – SIF prevention, human-centric safety, AI integration, metrics overhaul – are not quick fixes; they require sustained effort and adaptation. Regularly revisit these topics, measure progress, and adjust strategies.

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