



# Investing in employee health to offset risk

DR STUART SCOTT, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SOS

**A**fter consulting with nearly 1,000 risk professionals across 75 countries worldwide and drawing upon insights from the Workforce Resilience Council and International SOS, the results are in.

Organisations expect to increase their investment in the mental or physical health of their employees throughout 2022 - with over half (56%) intending to boost spending on both. The majority (68%) of organisations anticipate the number of risks to increase or stay the same in 2022. But what has instigated this welcome focus on employee wellbeing?

As we enter the third year of the pandemic, a multitude of risks are poised to affect the workforce - and employers increasingly recognise the

value in safeguarding the emotional and physical health of their teams.

Given the trajectory of the last two years, it's unsurprising to see that for many organisations, Covid-19 remains a significant operational challenge - with 33% of respondents expressing concern over having adequate resources to deal with the virus.

This figure was particularly acute in Asia (with this being the answer of 47% of respondents in the region), while those in Western Europe and the Americas were more likely to be challenged by testing and vaccine policies (36%).

The long-lasting psychological and physical effects of Covid-19 are only now beginning to be understood in detail. Over a third of respondents (36%) expect

mental health to cause a significant decrease in productivity in 2022.

The effects of Covid-19 and mental health disruption to a business can be tackled via a concerted effort between multiple functions, such as HR and risk management, creating a clear road map to success.

In addition to this potent cocktail of Covid-19 and mental health problems, perennial risks such as crime, civil unrest, terrorism or other geopolitical issues have returned to the fore as society has opened up post-pandemic.

With public concern about climate change growing, 21% of respondents indicated that natural disasters, including extreme weather, would be disruptive in 2022.

This was closely

followed by local, domestic and international transport concerns (19%), as well as security threats and civil unrest (16%).

In order to respond effectively to these challenges, organisations must identify internal and external crisis management blind spots and act early to strengthen their defences. Both domestic workforces and travelling staff must be informed of location-specific health and security information and remain aware of regulatory changes.

What will 2022 look like?

Drawing on the findings of this survey, the Workforce Resilience Council and International SOS's own research, we predict that the near future will be shaped by the following:

1. Covid-19, Long Covid,

and mental health will be primary employee productivity disruptors in 2022: escalating absenteeism and continuity issues.

2. The infodemic will continue to exacerbate the complex nature of protecting people, while duty-of-care obligations are reshaped by new health and safety measures, employee expectations and regulatory compliance.

3. Pandemic-disrupted activities will reach a degree of stability by 2023, as organisations utilise health and security risk management as a competitive advantage. This will support employee retention and boost willingness to return to related activities such as business travel.

4. Organisations risk being caught off-guard by rapidly changing security

environments, as civil disorder and geopolitical volatility will rise above pre-pandemic levels.

5. Climate change will increase the frequency and impact of climate-sensitive hazards, such as infectious diseases, extreme weather events, and socioeconomic tensions.

With many governments and healthcare systems worldwide facing unprecedented strain, proactive organisations can lead the way in assisting people to navigate changing working environments during this period of heightened risk. Those that do will be rewarded with happier, healthier, and more resilient employees as a result.

Download Risk Outlook 2022 in full here: <https://2022.risk-outlook.com/p/1>

## The Global Picture with Local Expertise

Tuesday 8 February 2022 | 15:30 GMT

Are you prepared for next year's complex risk outlook? Please join us as we forecast the major risks for 2022. Register at <https://my.internationalsos.com/RiskOutlookScotland>



**WEBINAR | RISK OUTLOOK 2022**

