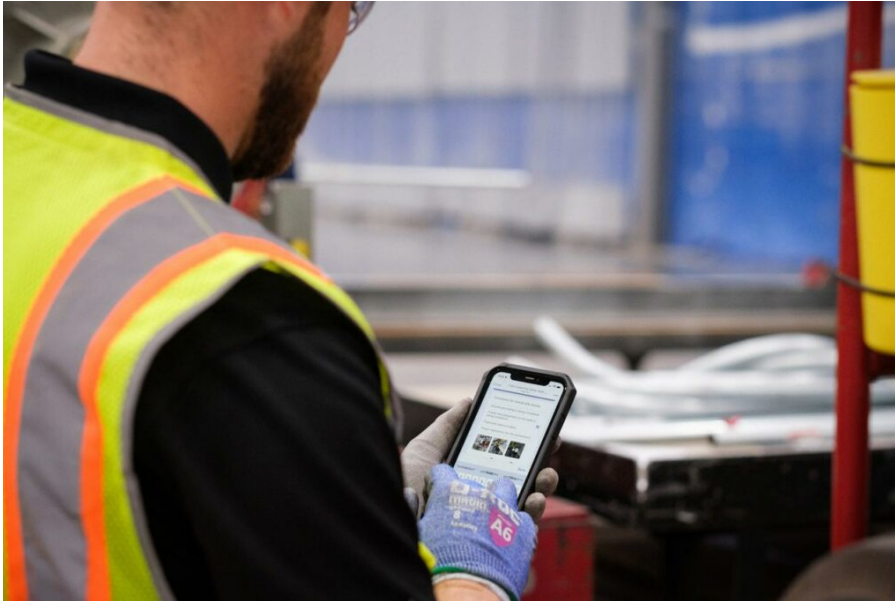# Frontline workers perceive health and safety professionals as 'innovative and helpful' – research

1 year ago

Most workers in the UK have a positive perception of health and safety (H&S) professionals, according to a survey of more than 1,200 frontline workers by global technology company SafetyCulture.

The majority of those surveyed view H&S professionals in a positive light, with the top three descriptions being 'necessary' (48%), 'important for driving improvements in the workplace' (25%), and 'innovative and helpful' (20%).

The findings come as frontline workers also say they're having to cut corners and risk their safety to meet the demands of their job. More than half of respondents (56%) said they'd risked their own health and safety at work, with a quarter (27%) having done so 'several times'.

Workers who admitted cutting corners on health and safety said they did so because they were under pressure to meet deadlines or quotas, understaffed, and poorly equipped.

Research was conducted across six sectors: construction, healthcare, hospitality, logistics, manufacturing, and retail. Frontline workers – defined as people who must physically show up for their job – represent 80% of the global workforce[1].

Alex Brooks-Sykes, SafetyCulture's lead for UK & Ireland, said: "Health and safety has had something of a PR problem in the workplace, so our findings should be encouraging for the dedicated people working hard in this profession.

"Clearly frontline workers are under pressure to be productive and efficient – when faced with clunky processes and workplace pressures, even sensible people can be tempted to cut corners. We see H&S professionals as absolutely vital to correcting this problem, and thankfully most workers seem to agree."

However, research also suggests the health and safety profession hasn't been able to entirely overcome stereotypes. Some frontline workers surveyed perceived health and safety professionals as 'annoying' (17%) and 'old fashioned' (18%), as well as 'out of touch', 'obstructive' and having 'no common sense'.

Even workers who believe health and safety practices have a positive overall impact think that they negatively impact some areas of work. Approximately 7 in 10 workers said health and safety can hinder productivity and slow them down.

Alex added, "Thanks to technology, the traditional concept of an H&S role is evolving. These professionals have always been essential, but what we're seeing now is that in many cases, people in these roles are not only helping to keep people safe, they're also helping to identify and drive improvements right across their organisations."

"Today we have the technology to react in real-time, minimise disruption and keep workers safe by ensuring they've got the right equipment and training to handle every situation. They're simple principles, but they can make a big impact in almost every business."

SafetyCulture's mobile-first workplace operations platform enables over a billion checks each year, delivers approximately 75,000 lessons per day, and informs millions of corrective actions. It is used by more than 18,000 businesses in the UK including National Grid, Network Rail and Transport for London.

[1] Emergence (2018). The rise of the deskless workforce