



[Accompanying graphics available here](#)

INVESTMENT IN EMPLOYEE HEALTH TO INCREASE IN RESPONSE TO COMPLEX RISK OUTLOOK

Finding the blind spots key to protecting business continuity

30 November 2021, Geneva – Organisations worldwide are set to increase investment in employee health. That's the findings of the **International SOS Risk Outlook 2022**. [The report](#) and updated [global risk maps](#) also signal that organisations are grappling with an increasingly complex risk landscape.

The survey of nearly 1,000 risk professionals across 75 countries¹, coupled with insight from the Workforce Resilience Council and International SOS proprietary data, indicates that both mental and physical health support will see increased investment. In fact, over half (56%) of organisations intend to increase spending on both.

Organisations are facing a dual challenge on the health front. Along with the physical aspects of COVID-19 safety, the pandemic has significantly contributed to a mental health crisis. Over a third of respondents (36%) expect mental health to cause a significant decrease in productivity in 2022.

The need for increased investment comes as organisations expect to face increased risks in 2022. Over two thirds (68%) of organisations anticipate risks to increase or stay the same next year. In particular, decision makers responsible for business travel (69%) and international assignees (67%) expect risk levels to increase or stay the same in 2022.

TOP FIVE EXPECTED CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY DECREASES IN 2022

- COVID-19
- Mental health issues
- Natural disasters including extreme weather
- Transport concerns
- Security threats and civil unrest

Dr Neil Nerwich, Group Medical Director at International SOS comments, "In 2022 we are facing a layered threat environment. Entering the third year of the pandemic, while COVID-19 and the fallout from lockdowns continue to be major disruptors, other risks are coming back to the fore as travel resumes. With many experts predicting 2022 will be the year of the 'great resignation' organisations must act to ensure they provide the necessary support for employees. Investing in both emotional health and physical wellness support will be essential for employee retention. This will also help to avoid a vicious cycle of productivity issues. With many governments and healthcare systems under increased strain, proactive organisations can lead the way. Those that can best help employees navigate changing working environments, will be rewarded with increased employee resilience, loyalty and productivity."

COVID-19 continues to disrupt, as organisations struggle to respond

For many organisations COVID-19 will continue to be a significant operational challenge. A third (33%) of respondents said that having adequate resources to deal with the virus was a top challenge for 2022. Surprisingly, this increased to nearly half (47%) of organisations based in Asia. This suggests that the continent first impacted by COVID-19 may still be dealing with disruption for some time to come.

¹ The annual risk outlook study exposes gaps in the protection of employee health and security such as risk perception, mental health, productivity impacts and operational challenges. The survey* is complemented with interpretations and predictions from the Workforce Resilience Council, as well as extensive proprietary data and analysis from International SOS. The Workforce Resilience Council is made up of representative experts of all health, security, and safety fields. The participants in this year's Council are from a mix of think tanks, associations, advisory boards, NGOs, and IGOs, relevant to the risks of working at home or abroad.



Meanwhile, respondents from Western Europe and the Americas were more likely to be challenged by COVID-19 policies and more specifically, the need to define testing and vaccine policies for COVID-19. 36% of respondents in Western Europe and the Americas cited this as an issue compared to a global average of 25%.

To respond to these challenges the management of the ongoing significant impact of COVID-19 needs to be carefully considered. Organisations will need to draw on expertise of business leaders as well as functions such as HR and risk management.

Perennial security concerns a continued risk

While the pandemic tops the lists of concerns, other perennial security risks are expected to cause disruption in 2022.

With concern growing over climate change, 21% of respondents predicted that natural disasters including extreme weather would be disruptive in 2022. This was closely followed by transport concerns – for local, domestic and international travel – (19%) and security threats and civil unrest (16%).

Gautier Porot, Security Director Switzerland and Italy at International SOS, said, “In 2022 organisations must be aware that perennial security concerns such as crime, civil unrest, terrorism or other geopolitical issues have not gone away due to the pandemic. In many cases the risks from these concerns have actually grown. Tensions around pandemic lockdowns, vaccine rollouts, and perceived infringements on civil liberties have fuelled civil unrest and violence in some locations. With the increased use of vaccine mandates or restrictions on unvaccinated individuals around the world we can expect to see tensions heighten throughout 2022. Aside from the COVID-19 related triggers, natural disasters, geo-politics, domestic conflict and crime will continue to impact organisations globally. This impact will further increase in 2022 with a growing return to travel and an increased focus on the Duty of Care requirements of an in-country workforce.

In response, organisations must identify internal and external crisis management blind spots and act now to make effective decisions and strengthen their resilience. They must keep travelling staff, as well as domestic workforces, reliably informed with objective, forward-leaning location specific health and security information. Staying on top of regulatory changes will also be critical, making sure that they have the right processes in place to fulfil Duty of Care obligations.”

THE INTERNATIONAL SOS VIEW

Five predictions for 2022

Drawing on the findings of the Risk Outlook survey, the Workforce Resilience Council and the organisation's proprietary data, International SOS' top five predictions for next year are:

- 1.** COVID-19, Long COVID, & 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 & safety measures, employee expectations, & regulatory compliance
- 3.** Pandemic-disrupted activities will reach a degree of stability by 2023, as organisations utilise health & security risk management as a competitive advantage: supporting employee retention, and willingness to return to activities incl. 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](#)

Risk Outlook 2022 will be presented at global webinars between 7-9th December 2021. To register, [click here](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors:

International SOS Risk Maps can be embedded [here](#). Downloadable accompanying graphics are available [here](#).

¹On behalf of International SOS, Ipsos MORI carried out an online survey among 987 risk professionals across 77 countries who chose to take part in the survey. International SOS provided Ipsos MORI with the sample which consisted of customers and contacts. Fieldwork took place between 21st September and 25th October 2021. Within this news release, we report upon the following sub-sample bases:

Sub-sample	Base
Responsible for Domestic Employees	697
Responsible for Assignees	372
Responsible for Remote Workers	427
Responsible for Business Travellers	647
Asia	358
Europe (including Russia)	255
Western Europe	129
Americas	234

About International SOS

The International SOS Group of Companies is in the business of saving lives, protecting your global workforce from health and security threats. Wherever you are, we deliver customised health, security risk management and wellbeing solutions to fuel your growth and productivity. In the event of extreme weather, an epidemic or a security incident, we provide an immediate response providing peace of mind. Our innovative technology and medical and security expertise focus on prevention, offering real-time, actionable insights and on-the-ground quality delivery. We help protect your people, your organisation's reputation, as well as support your compliance reporting needs. By partnering with us, organisations can fulfil their Duty of Care responsibilities, while empowering business resilience, continuity and sustainability.

Founded in 1985, the International SOS Group, headquartered in London & Singapore, is trusted by 12,000 organisations, including the majority of the Fortune 500, as well as mid-size enterprises, governments, educational institutions and NGOs. 12,000 multicultural medical, security and logistics experts stand with you to provide support & assistance from over 1,000 locations in 90 countries, 24/7, 365 days.

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