



environmental
services
association

HEALTH & SAFETY

CULTURE SURVEY RESULTS 2022



ESA Health and Safety Culture Survey 2022

The Environmental Services Association (ESA) is committed to driving higher standards and improving the health and safety (H&S) performance of the resources and waste management industry in the UK. Therefore, as part of our H&S Strategy, we issued a survey to better understand the industry's H&S culture. The survey comprised nine questions and covered such matters as whether people feel safe at work, or feel confident that incidents are reported and investigated.

Headline results

The survey, conducted independently on ESA's behalf by Snap surveys, received 1634 responses from a diverse range of organisations across the waste industry, and is a statistically significant response rate for a voluntary, opt-in survey of this type. The results are presented below and the majority of responses are positive about the industry's approach to H&S, with 95% of respondents agreeing that they felt able to raise H&S concerns if they had any, while most (86%) agreed that they felt safe working in the waste industry.

Background

In 2020 ESA re-affirmed its commitment to continued improvement in health and safety with the adoption of a new H&S Strategy and with the formation of a new H&S Strategy Group to help with its delivery. The Strategy includes a headline target of a 25% reduction in days lost by 2025. Underpinning the Strategy is a workplan which, refreshed every 18 months, has tasked a number of working groups to deliver guidance and resources under key priority risk areas. An improved safety culture forms one such priority area, and the workplan includes a commitment to produce a survey to help better understand how the industry is performing at present and to produce baseline data on its H&S performance.

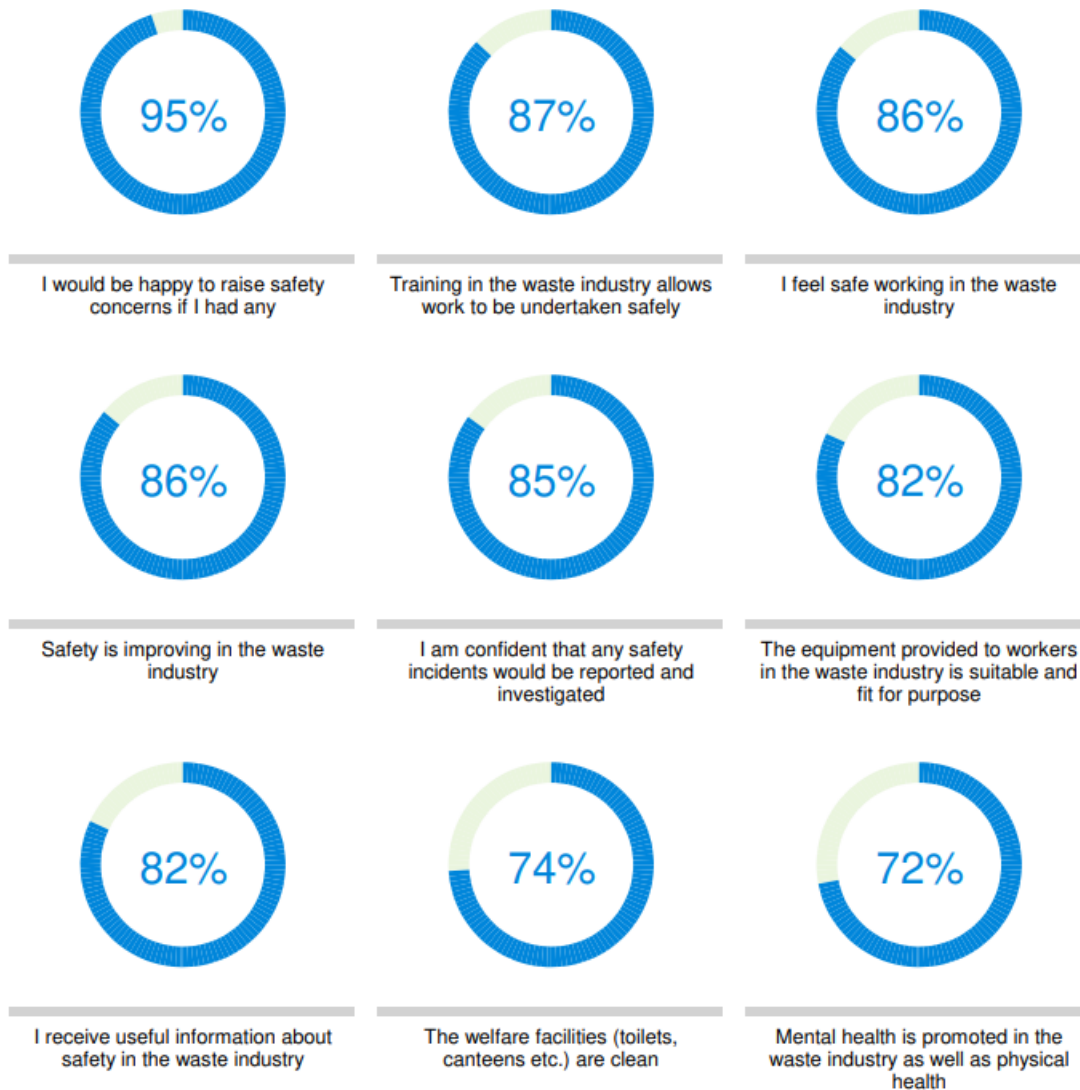
The survey

The survey was promoted both within and beyond the ESA membership to obtain the views from as wide a cross section of the waste industry as possible. The survey consisted of nine statements on the following subject matters and respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each:

1. Reporting and investigating H&S incidents
2. Safety information
3. Mental health
4. H&S training
5. Use of equipment
6. Raising safety concerns
7. Safety at work
8. The industry's safety performance
9. Welfare facilities

Summary results (% agree)

The charts below show the proportion of respondents who agreed with each of the nine statements about working within the waste industry, ranked from highest level of agreement to lowest.



Results

The majority of responses to the survey were highly positive on the industry's approach to H&S.

A positive H&S culture in the workplace should allow for questions around H&S to form part of everyday work conversations. It is therefore encouraging that, of all the statements posed in the survey, the ability to

raise H&S concerns ranked highest (95% agreed) and there was also strong consensus that safety is improving in the waste industry (88% agreed).

This perhaps reflects a concerted effort made by many in the industry in recent years to improve in this area. For its part, ESA Members have reduced RIDDOR reportable injuries by 85% since the launch of our first H&S Strategy in 2004 and, year on year, have achieved an injury rate consistently below that reported by HSE for the waste sector as a whole.

There was strong agreement that H&S training is adequate; that work equipment is fit for purpose; and that the reporting of H&S incidents is taken seriously and investigated. This perhaps points to signs of a maturing industry, with an ability to share best practice and work collaboratively to raise industry standards through organisations like ESA and [WISH \(Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum\)](#).

However, the survey did reveal a couple of areas in need of attention, with respondents less convinced that mental health is given the consideration that it deserves. This matter was recognised by ESA's Board in approving our revised H&S Strategy which now includes a strong commitment to mental health. A dedicated ESA Mental Health working group has since produced a suite of guidance available [here](#).

The survey also identified welfare facilities as another potential area of improvement, with only 74% agreeing that these were adequate. This is likely an area that would benefit from a targeted waste sector promotional campaign to raise awareness of obligations in the provision of welfare facilities and the importance of these in maintaining health and hygiene in the workplace. The results of HSE's 2021/22 waste sector intervention campaign underlines the importance of this matter, with enforcement notices served for inadequate welfare facilities. This matter is likely to be a continued focus for further HSE activity and intervention.

Recommendations

ESA will revisit the H&S culture survey biennially so that progress in meeting our objective for improved safety culture can be measured and assessed against 2022 baseline data. Those areas identified by the survey in need of improvement will be incorporated into ESA's H&S work programme as priority risk areas and with relevant resources, guidance and promotional material developed for dissemination across the industry.

Contact

For questions or queries about this report, or the ESA's wider health and safety programme, please contact Stephen Freeland via email at s-freeland@esauk.org

ABOUT THE ESA

The **Environmental Services Association (ESA)** is the trade association representing the UK's resource and waste management industry. Our members are directly delivering the UK's transformation to a more circular economy and are leading the sector's efforts to decarbonise recycling and waste management operations.

The ESA works with government, regulators and the public to deliver sustainable and high-performing waste and resource management solutions for the UK. Our strategic priorities are to set high operational standards for the sector; to deliver more recycling and focus on up-stream interventions to eliminate waste; and to decarbonise our sector by 2040. You can find out more about the ESA and our members' work in our [Annual report for 2020/21](#).

For further information, please visit www.esauk.org