Verkada | The Harris Poll

The State of Healthcare Worker Safety

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Methodology

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of Verkada among 1,027 U.S. healthcare workers between April 21-May 7, 2025. These are U.S. adults who work full or part-time in the healthcare industry and frequently interact with patients and/or the families of patients.

Raw data were not weighted and are therefore only representative of the individuals who completed the survey.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the total sample data is accurate to within + 3.1 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. These credible intervals will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Foreword

Healthcare workers are at the heart of thriving communities, dedicating their lives to the care of others. But our research reveals that we're failing them when it comes to one of their most fundamental needs: safety.

Healthcare workers face a disproportionately high risk of workplace violence, accounting for a staggering 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence. They are almost four times more likely to suffer serious injury from workplace violence than workers in any other setting according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

The financial burden is also staggering: according to research from the American Hospital Association, violence costs U.S. hospitals an estimated $18.27 billion annually, with 80% of these costs stemming from post-incident care and recovery.

More troubling is that these increasingly widespread episodes of violence, threats, and aggressive behavior are taking a very real and measurable toll on nurses, doctors and medical staff. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 138,000 nurses have left the workforce since 2022 and 40% indicate intent to leave by 2029. The same data also reveals that workplace violence is among the primary drivers pushing them to pursue work outside of the industry. Left unaddressed, the foundation of our healthcare system – the dedicated professionals delivering care – is at risk at a time when it can least afford to lose skilled medical professionals.

To better understand the scope of this crisis and identify pathways forward, Verkada and The Harris Poll surveyed more than 1,000 U.S. healthcare workers.

The findings that follow reveal a snapshot of what safety looks like for healthcare workers today, and offers evidence-based insights and solutions for healthcare leaders, policymakers, and security professionals tasked with addressing this mounting crisis.

Thank you for reading.

Alana O'Grady Lauk, Vice President of Communications & Public Affairs at Verkada

Working in Healthcare Today

Working in healthcare has never been easy – but today, the more than 14.7 million Americans who deliver medical care have to contend with challenges that extend far beyond patient care. Safety, in our increasingly uncompromising world, has become a key issue for healthcare workers.

The data reveals a concerning reality: three in five (59%) healthcare workers report they worry about safety in the workplace. They are most concerned about verbal harassment and aggressive behavior/ threats from patients (81% and 77%) and non-patients (62% and 59%).

One in five (21%) say they worry about verbal harassment from patients most of the time or every time they go to work. This means nearly 3 million healthcare professionals begin each shift already anticipating conflict.
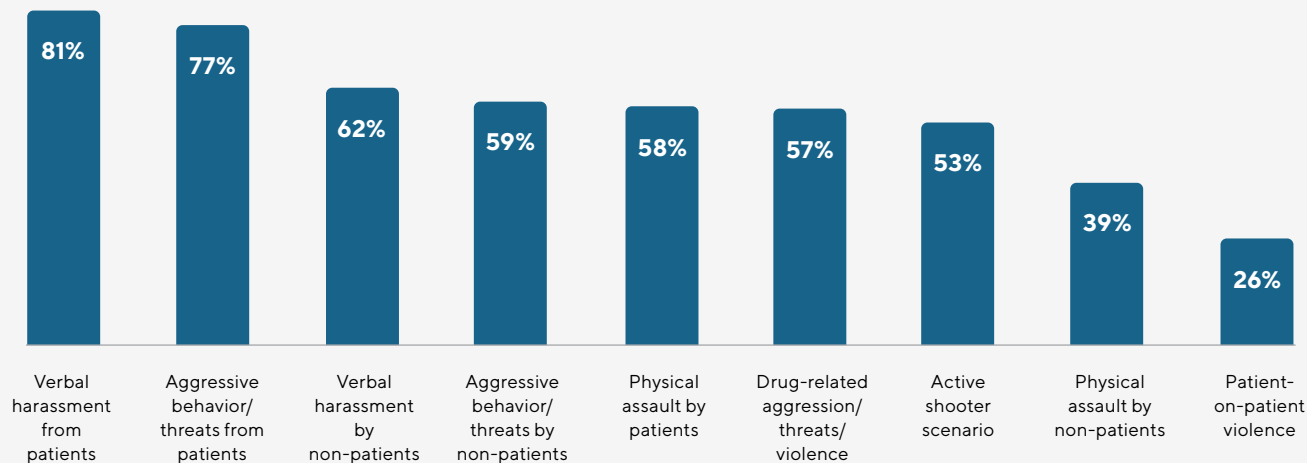
59%
worry about safety in the workplace

> "When I began working in the ED 3 years ago, I had no idea just how bad the physical, verbal, and emotional abuse is on nurses by patients and their families. It's something we as ED nurses experience every day."
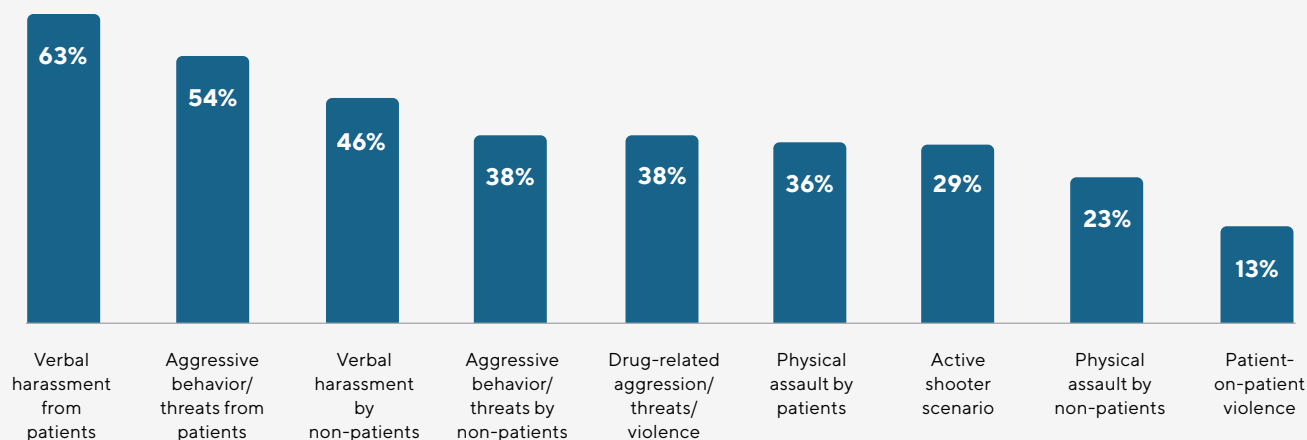
Workplace violence healthcare workers say they are concerned about

Percentage of healthcare workers who indicate yes

81%	77%	62%	59%	58%	57%	53%	39%	26%
Verbal harassment from patients	Aggressive behavior/ threats from patients	Verbal harassment by non-patients	Aggressive behavior/ threats by non-patients	Physical assault by patients	Drug-related aggression/ threats/ violence	Active shooter scenario	Physical assault by non-patients	Patient-on-patient violence

Prevalence of concern for workplace violence

Percentage of healthcare workers who indicate they worry about an incident every time, most of the time, or sometimes at their workplaces

63%	54%	46%	38%	38%	36%	29%	23%	13%
Verbal harassment from patients	Aggressive behavior/ threats from patients	Verbal harassment by non-patients	Aggressive behavior/ threats by non-patients	Drug-related aggression/ threats/ violence	Physical assault by patients	Active shooter scenario	Physical assault by non-patients	Patient-on-patient violence

When Concern Becomes Reality

These fears are grounded in lived experience. Healthcare workers report widespread exposure to aggressive incidents, with 79% experiencing or witnessing aggressive behavior and threats from patients, and 61% from non-patients.

More than half have felt threatened by patients or families (54%) or have heard coworkers express concerns about their safety (53%).
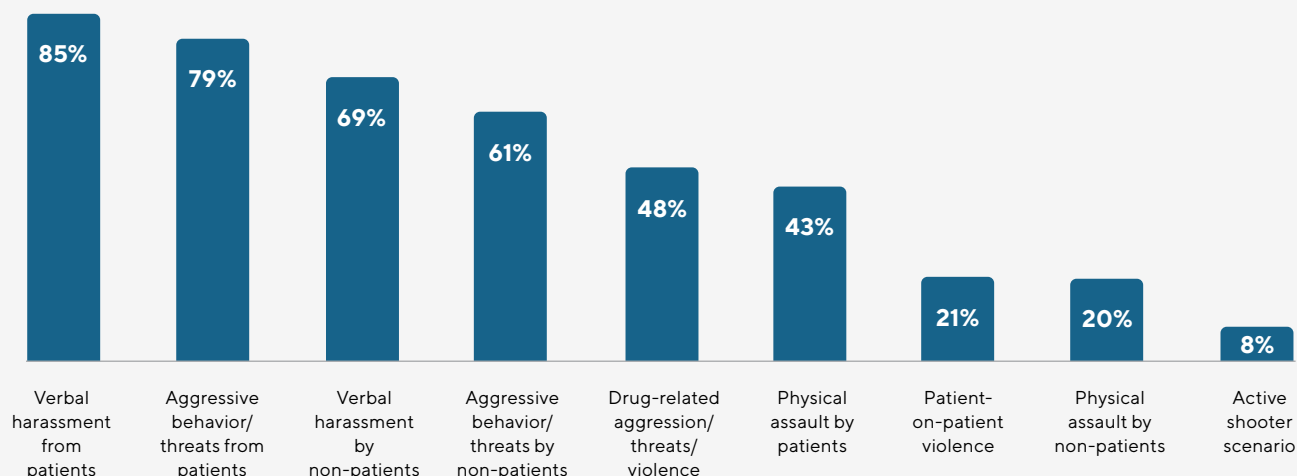
> "I have been personally threatened by angry patients. I've also had patients threaten my family due to being frustrated with care given by other healthcare providers. I'm just the messenger and angry patients often go off on the messenger."
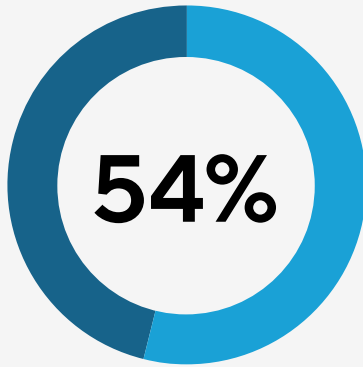
79%
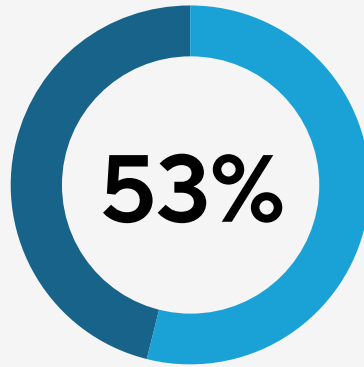experience or witness aggressive behavior and threats

Incidents healthcare workers say they have experienced at their workplace

Percentage of healthcare workers who indicate yes

Incident	Percentage
Verbal harassment from patients	85%
Aggressive behavior/threats from patients	79%
Verbal harassment by non-patients	69%
Aggressive behavior/threats by non-patients	61%
Drug-related aggression/threats/violence	48%
Physical assault by patients	43%
Patient-on-patient violence	21%
Physical assault by non-patients	20%
Active shooter scenario	8%

54%

have felt threatened by patients or their families/visitors at work

53%

agree their coworkers have expressed concerns about their safety on the job
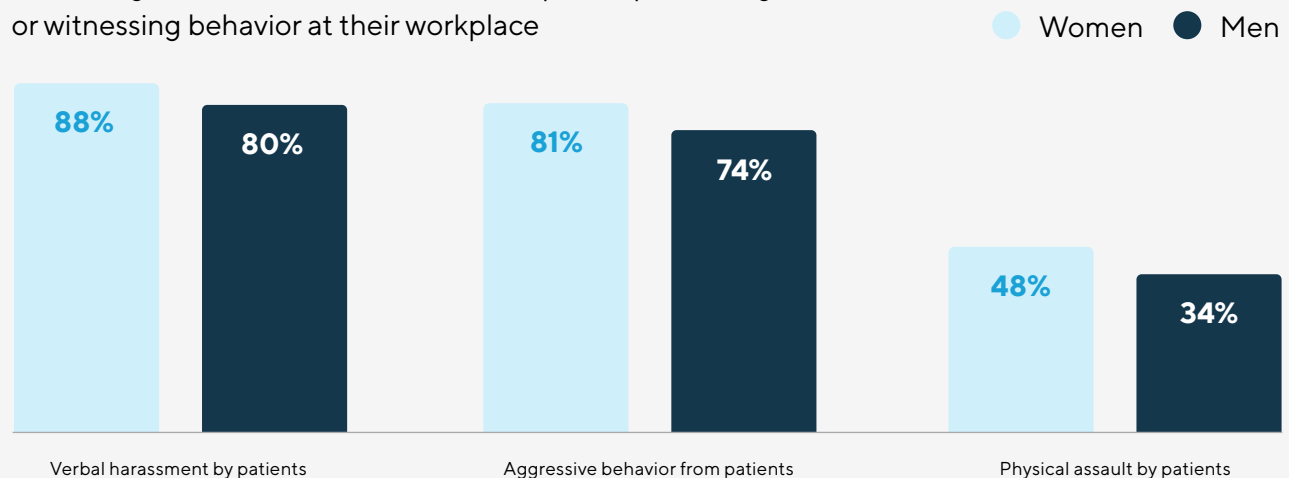
In Focus | Demographic Trends

While workplace violence affects all healthcare workers, certain groups face disproportionately higher risks. These demographic disparities highlight that healthcare violence is not distributed equally – and that targeted interventions are necessary to protect workers who face amplified risks.

Women working in healthcare consistently report higher exposure to workplace violence across all categories.

Exposure to violence on-the-job, by gender

Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing behavior at their workplace

Women ⬤ Men

	Women	Men
Verbal harassment by patients	88%	80%
Aggressive behavior from patients	81%	74%
Physical assault by patients	48%	34%

Looking at generational trends, younger workers have experienced or witnessed violence more than their older peers. The 41-percentage-point gap between Gen Z and Boomers when it comes to experiencing physical assault suggests entry into the profession can be a struggle.

Exposure to verbal harassment on-the-job, by generation

Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing verbal harassment at their workplace

Gen Z 94%

Millennials 88%

Gen X 82%

Boomers 67%

Exposure to physical assault on-the-job, by generation

Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing physical assault at their workplace

Gen Z 60%

Millennials 49%
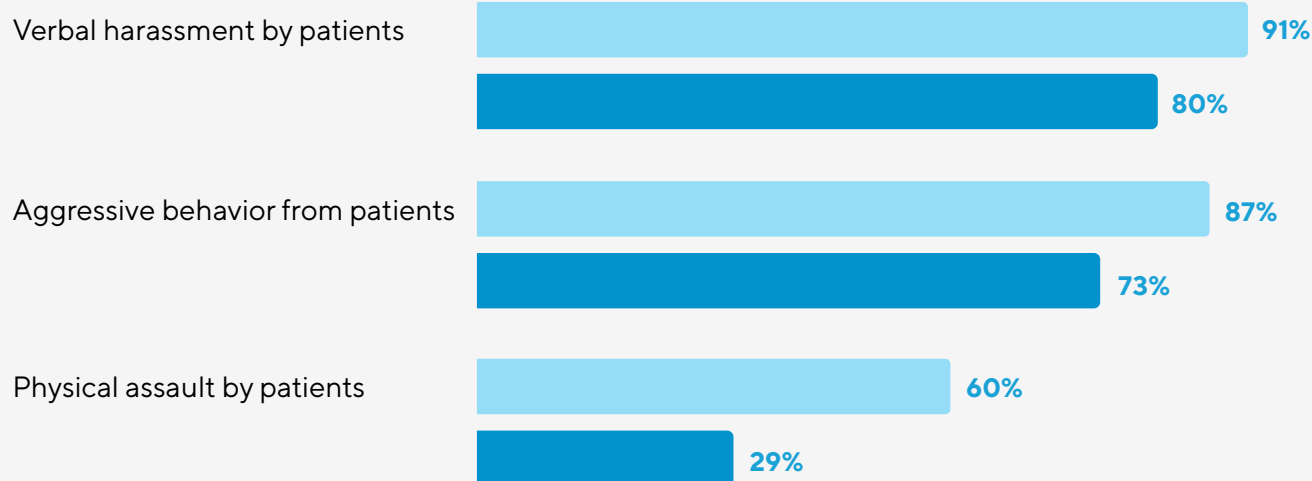
Gen X 35%

Boomers 19%

Nurses, who typically have more direct and prolonged patient contact, face substantially higher violence rates than physicians.

Exposure to violence on-the-job, by job function

Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing behavior at their workplace

● Nurse   ● Physician

Verbal harassment by patients
- Nurse: 91%
- Physician: 80%

Aggressive behavior from patients
- Nurse: 87%
- Physician: 73%

Physical assault by patients
- Nurse: 60%
- Physician: 29%

2x Nurses are twice as likely to be physically assaulted by patients than doctors

The data also reveals that even within hospital settings, your location influences safety. While both ER and non-ER hospital workers face high violence rates, the patterns vary.

Exposure to violence on-the-job, by facility
Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing behavior at their workplace

Physical assault by patients

61% Non-ER

80% ER

Aggressive behavior/threats from patients

84% Non-ER

93% ER

In Focus | Regional Trends

While healthcare workers across the country have similar lived experiences, there are some regional nuances to explore.

Despite its residents carrying the "Midwest nice" moniker, healthcare workers in the Midwest are most concerned about verbal harassment than others.

Drugs are a key driver of concern on the West Coast. Healthcare workers in the West are more concerned with drug-related aggression/threats/violence (64%) compared to those in the Northeast (54%) and South (54%).
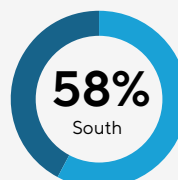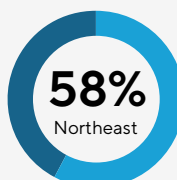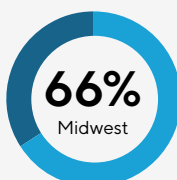
Exposure to violence on-the-job, by geography
Percentage of healthcare workers who report experiencing or witnessing behavior at their workplace

Verbal harassment from patients

86% Midwest

78% Northeast

77% South
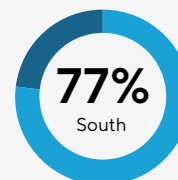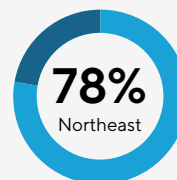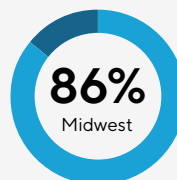
Verbal harassment from non-patients

66% Midwest

58% Northeast

58% South

On-the-job Conditions Are Deteriorating

When examining how safety perceptions have evolved over time, the trend is clear: safety is not improving. In fact, it may be getting worse. When looking at nurses in particular, three in five (61%) report being more concerned about their safety at work today compared to when they started working in healthcare and 40% of nurses are more concerned about their safety than they were just one year ago.

Perception of personal safety, by job function

Percentage of healthcare workers who report they are more concerned about personal, physical safety at work
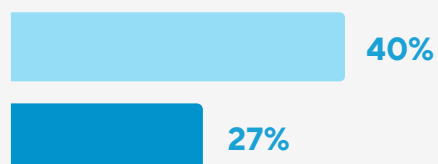
● Nurse ● Physician

Compared to when you started working in healthcare

Nurse: **61%**
Physician: **53%**

Compared to before Covid-19

Nurse: **59%**
Physician: **53%**

Compared to 1 year ago

Nurse: **40%**
Physician: **27%**

"My initial role in nursing was in the pediatric ICU setting. I worked in that specialty for 6 years, in some of the more recent years, parents especially have become more verbally abusive towards staff; sometimes even threatening physical violence."

"Patients are becoming more aggressive and threatening towards staff. Not having the proper barriers in place such as a metal detector, security or finite rules in place for patients who act out or threaten staff."

Change Isn't on the Horizon

Despite growing concerns about safety, three quarters (77%) of healthcare workers report seeing no change in the level of security in the past 12 months – including 68% of those working in hospitals where violence rates are highest.

Perhaps most telling is that more than a third of healthcare workers say negative events might have been preventable if there were better or more security measures in place.

This sentiment is particularly pronounced among nurses, who are more likely to say better or more security measures may deter events from happening in the workplace. Over half (58%) of nurses believe that aggressive behavior from patients could be prevented if there were better or more security measures in place, and 56% believe the same when it comes to aggressive behavior from non-patients.
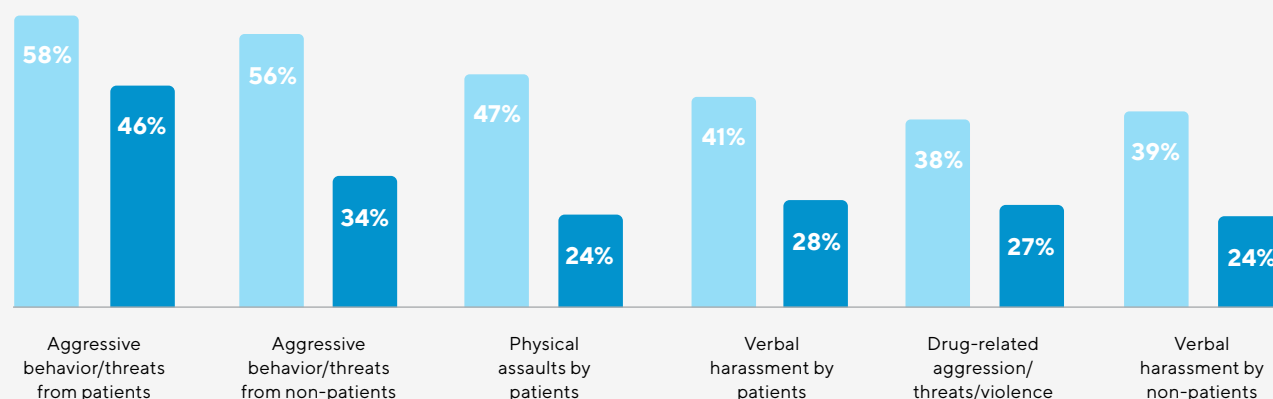
> "The longer you are at a facility and the more negative/unsafe interactions you have with patients/family members, the more you realize the system has a LOT of faults when it comes to safety. Lack of security guards, lack of security cameras, a lot of blaming the staff for escalating a situation rather than punishing patients/family members for behaving inappropriately. You also notice which doors don't lock, how long it takes to repair locks, and when concerns are raised, you notice how you are ignored or brushed off."

Incidents healthcare workers say might have been preventable, by job function

Percentage of healthcare workers who indicate yes

● Nurse ● Physician

	Aggressive behavior/threats from patients	Aggressive behavior/threats from non-patients	Physical assaults by patients	Verbal harassment by patients	Drug-related aggression/ threats/violence	Verbal harassment by non-patients
Nurse	58%	56%	47%	41%	38%	39%
Physician	46%	34%	24%	28%	27%	24%

The State of Security in Healthcare

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So what does security in healthcare look like today? The truth is that security at healthcare facilities can vary greatly based on a whole host of factors: the care that's being delivered, local laws and regulations, volume of patients, and available resources.

Two in five (41%) healthcare workers feel they have minimal security at their workplace. Among those that feel they have moderate to high security, on average, attributed this sense of safety to eight security measures:

Enhanced access control (85%)

On-site security guards/staff (77%)

Training on how to de-escalate heightened situations (80%)

Proactive security alerts or mass notifications technology (71%)

Video security monitoring (79%)

Parking lot surveillance (66%)

Alarm systems (78%)

Controlled entry into the facility (65%)

41%

say they have **minimal security** at their workplace

Critical Implementation Gaps

Even though healthcare workers report measures are in place, the data reveals that those measures may not always be sufficient or implemented effectively. Take, for example, controlled entry into the facility and visitor management systems.

Two-thirds (67%) of hospitals, which see the highest volume of patients and the highest rates of violence, have visitor registration/check in – yet the data shows that only 40% of them require ID checks.

Further, most of these visitor registration/check in and ID checks are still done manually (80% and 76%, respectively). Yet, 43% percent of hospital workers don't feel that manually completing visitor registration/ check in is effective, and 28% disagree with the effectiveness of ID checks being completed manually.

Doctor's offices are less likely to have these visitor management systems in place at all, when compared to hospitals or clinics. Equally troubling, only 20% of non-ER hospitals have a way to identify high-risk or banned individuals.
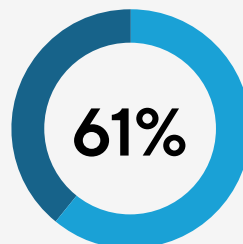
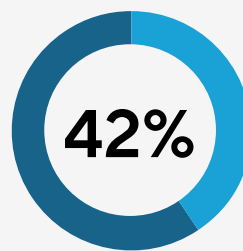## In Focus | Facility Trends

Security absent from doctor's offices

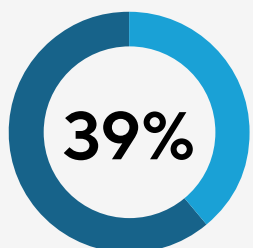Percentage of healthcare workers who work in a doctor's office and indicate the absence of security measures

61% don't have panic buttons
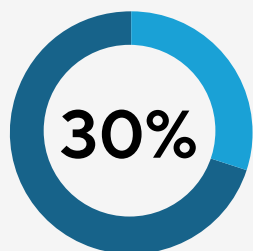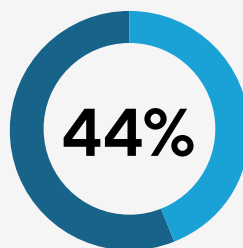
30% report they don't have alarm systems

42% don't have training on how to de-escalate heightened situations
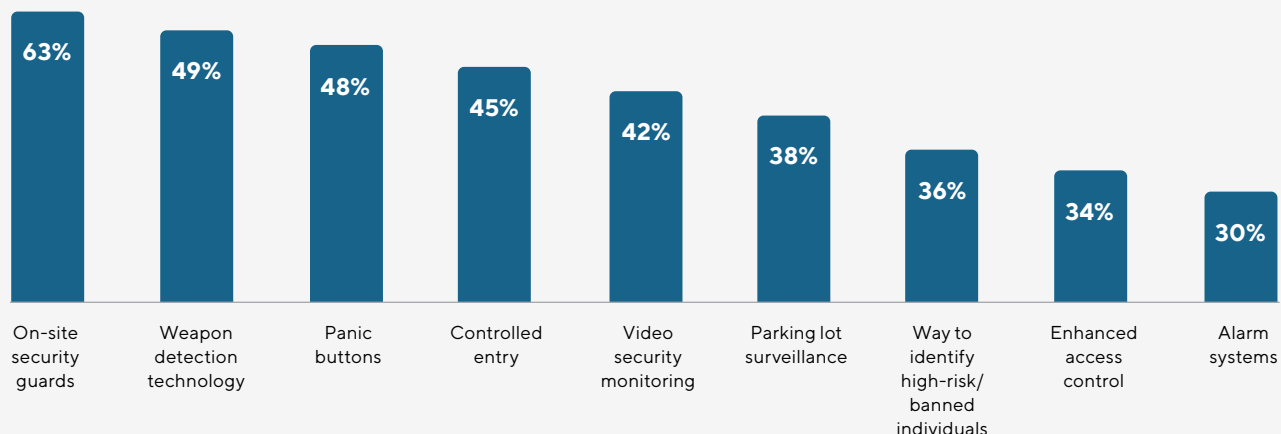
39% report they don't have CCTV

44% don't have badges or enhanced access control

What Workers Want

More than half (52%) of healthcare workers agree that aggressive behavior and threats from patients could be prevented with better security measures in place. When asked about specific security measures that would give them the most peace of mind, some of their responses overlap with the security solutions that they report already exist in their workplaces.

Security measures that would give healthcare workers most peace of mind

Percentage of healthcare workers who indicate yes

Measure	Percentage
On-site security guards	63%
Weapon detection technology	49%
Panic buttons	48%
Controlled entry	45%
Video security monitoring	42%
Parking lot surveillance	38%
Way to identify high-risk/banned individuals	36%
Enhanced access control	34%
Alarm systems	30%

The call for enhanced security is near unanimous: more than four in five (82%) healthcare workers want their employer to increase security measures. Those most at risk show the strongest support: nurses outpace physicians (91% vs. 74%), women outpace men (88% vs. 70%), and Gen Z leads all generations (94% vs. 70% of Boomers).

Healthcare workers who agree their company should increase security

Nurses	91%
Physicians	74%
Women	88%
Men	70%

Gen Z	94%
Millennials	85%
Gen X	77%
Boomers	70%
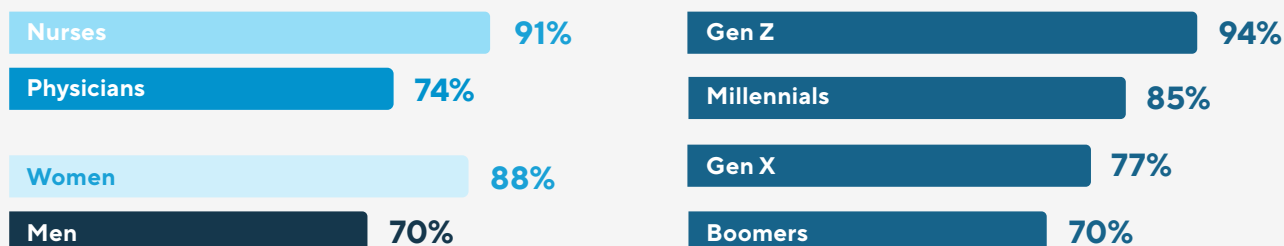
Quantifying the Impact

The impact of security concerns in healthcare is a threat to the industry's workforce – both today and looking ahead.
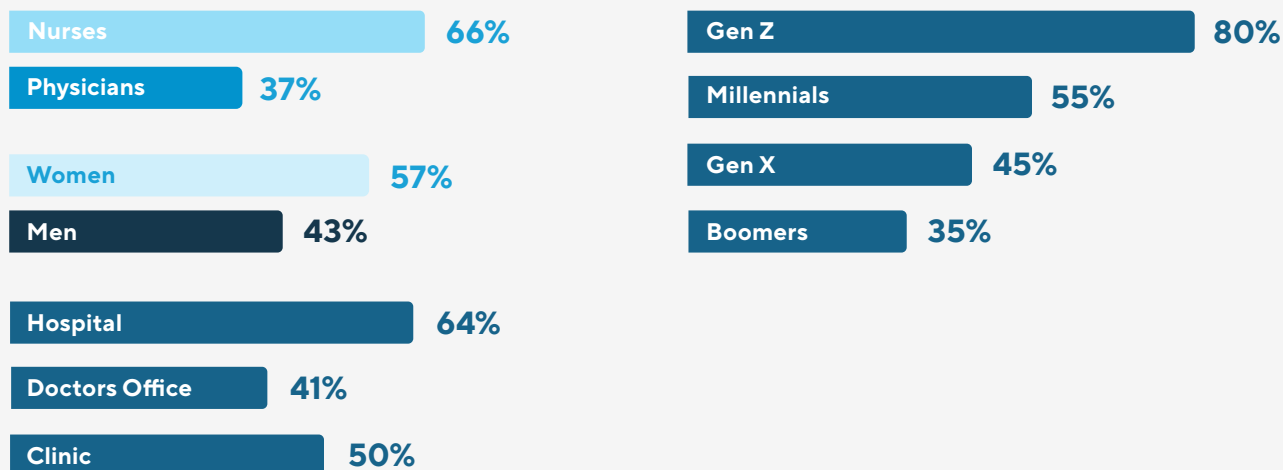
Nearly two in five healthcare workers have considered leaving their positions due to safety concerns. Almost half are likely to leave their current jobs within the next 12 months if safety issues persist – with nurses showing particularly high departure intentions (50%) compared to physicians (39%).

More alarming is the long-term implication of these trends. Regardless of whether workers have personally experienced workplace harassment or aggression, half (52%) of healthcare workers agree that personal safety concerns are actively deterring people from entering the profession.

Zooming in closer, the data reveals that the cohorts of workers that healthcare needs most – women, who comprise the majority of nurses, and Gen Z, who represent the future workforce – are most likely to view healthcare as too dangerous, reporting in higher amounts that personal safety concerns are actively deterring people from getting a job in healthcare.

Concerns about personal safety in healthcare have deterred people from joining the industry

Percentage of healthcare workers who agree

Nurses	66%
Physicians	37%
Women	57%
Men	43%
Hospital	64%
Doctors Office	41%
Clinic	50%

Gen Z	80%
Millennials	55%
Gen X	45%
Boomers	35%

Healthcare workers in facilities with minimal security also face compounding challenges. These workers report significantly higher levels of burnout and mental health impacts, creating a cycle where inadequate security contributes to workforce attrition, further straining remaining staff and potentially compromising both worker safety and patient care.

For an industry that's already facing critical staffing shortages, this kind of impact can't be left unaddressed.

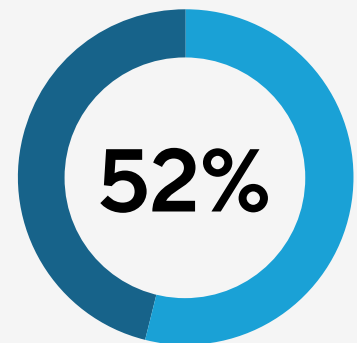## Impact of security measures on overall job satisfaction

Percentage of healthcare workers who strongly or somewhat agree

- Non-Existent/Minimal
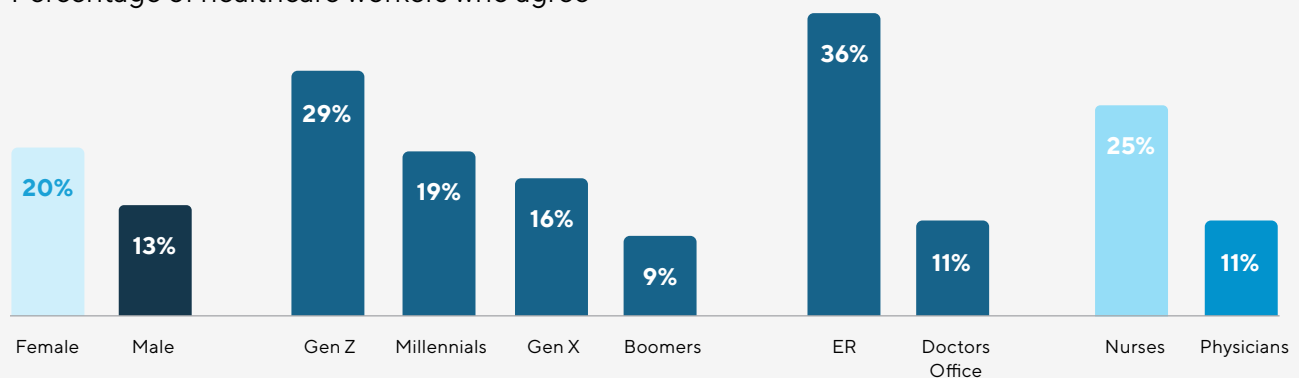- Moderate/High

My job takes a toll on my mental health

74%
66%

I feel burnt out at my job

66%
58%

52%

agree that concerns about personal safety in healthcare have deterred people from joining the industry

Healthcare workers who are looking for new jobs due to personal safety concerns

Percentage of healthcare workers who agree

Female	Male	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers	ER	Doctors Office	Nurses	Physicians
20%	13%	29%	19%	16%	9%	36%	11%	25%	11%

Call to Action

While this data reveals significant gaps in healthcare organizations, it also uncovers opportunities to address them.

Healthcare workers want increased security. The vast majority (84%) say that they would feel safer on-the-job if there were more security measures in place and that they want to see an increase in security (82%).

But there is a disconnect between healthcare workers' experiences and what they (and their employers) are doing about them. Only 39% of healthcare workers say their company leverages the latest security technology, and 77% say that their company hasn't changed the level of security measures in their company in the last 12 months. Healthcare organizations are either failing to enhance their security posture or failing to effectively communicate security improvements to frontline employees.

We shouldn't accept either scenario. Enhanced security measures are not just operational improvements – they are essential investments in the healthcare workforce and, ultimately, in the quality of care provided to patients across America.

✔ Verkada

Verkada is a pioneer in cloud-based physical security solutions by enabling over 32,000 organizations in over 93 countries to protect their people and property in a way that respects individuals' privacy. Designed with simplicity in mind, Verkada offers six product lines — video security cameras, door-based access control, environmental sensors, alarms, workplace, and intercoms — that provide exceptional visibility through a single cloud-based software platform.