Supporting your culture
protecting your reputation

Benchmark Report 2024

www.safecall.co.uk

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Introduction

We are an industry-leading whistleblowing solutions provider, covering 5 million+ employees across more than 1,000 organisations worldwide.

Since 1999, we have been facilitating reports of wrongdoing and empowering the voices of your employees. Over the years, we have seen shifts in trends and patterns of reporting, and of attitudes surrounding whistleblowing.

In 2023, we received not only the **most reports in the history of the company**, but the highest frequency of reports per employee count. As further emphasis is placed upon ethical business practices worldwide, we are seeing increased uptake, appetite for, and awareness of whistleblowing as a positive business practice. There are both legislative and cultural factors that contribute to this.

Notably, the EU Whistleblowing Directive continues to drive conversations surrounding whistleblowing. As of March 2024, **all but two EU member states** have passed new or reformed legislation compliant with the directive. This is a significant step towards fostering a culture of accountability and trust within the European business landscape.

This has also prompted neighbouring nations and non-EU countries to follow suit. For example, the proposed 'Protection for Whistleblowing Bill' would see regulatory measures introduced in the UK that fall closely to those mandated by the directive. The introduction, and proposition, of new laws which offer enhanced protections for whistleblowers evidences a growing appreciation of the positive impacts of whistleblowing.

In turn, this renewed focus on whistleblowing as a legislative matter has impacted the nature of the reports we receive. This year, more than ever, we have received reports related to Regulatory Compliance and Corporate Governance. This reinforces that organisations should be looking towards their own processes to ensure that their practices are compliant with all relevant legislation.

Due to the ever-increasing frequency of reports, companies need to be able to manage and track active investigations into wrongdoing. We recognise this and are constantly building and updating our service offerings accordingly. Our new Investigation Management module allows your organisation to effectively manage and track the actions that have been taken.

As is ever the case, the one thing abundantly clear from this year's Benchmark Report is the importance of offering true reporting channel choice to your employees. Provision of a whistleblowing process which allows a reporter to choose how they report and the level of anonymity with which the report is made is crucial to building trust. By offering a choice to your employees when they make a report, your organisation can demonstrate your commitment to combatting wrongdoing and empowering the voices of your employees.

At Safecall we are proud of the services we provide. We truly believe we offer the best independent whistleblowing support, training and investigations available. We want you to know what is happening within your organisation, and make sure you are as equipped as possible to respond to any concerns.

How we calculate our benchmarks

The benchmarks are calculated using our entire client base - no organisations are excluded due to their size. We do this to give as representative a sample of the landscape as possible: from start-ups to global companies.

To give an easily scalable figure, we provide a 'Number of Reports per Employee' figure (by industry sector). This allows a scale up or down approach, depending on an organisation's current number of directly or indirectly employed people.

Where applicable, we have removed statistically anomalous data to ensure the statistics we provide are as accurate and representative as possible.

When considering how your organisation's metrics match up against the benchmark, there are many factors to consider other than the size of business or number of employees.

For example, some of the largest contributing factors to the rate or nature of reporting are less tangible, such as: workplace culture; geography; or employee demographics.

We do not collect data for the number or severity of reports received via internal channels, only those received directly by Safecall. Therefore, it is important to point out that there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to your own reporting metrics.

Overview of the data

We now supply services, not only to direct employees, but to our clients' wider supply chain, contractors and even the public. 2023 saw our highest ever number of reports received from over 130 countries.

All the data used in this report is anonymised and aggregated. All data displayed has a minimum sample size of 20 records.

When receiving and processing reports, our focus is not throughput. Instead, we focus on the quality of the information gathered and the relationships we build with reporters and clients.

Whether a concern is about unfair treatment in a retail store, or a complex fraud in the banking sector, a comprehensive and actionable report will be created for the organisation and reporter. Similarly, whether a concern is submitted via the web or telephone, it will be handled by a specialist operator with extensive experience in investigations, interviews and evidence gathering.

The reports we receive from our industry sectors

Overall, 2023 produced a similar spread of reports across industry sectors to 2022.

However notable changes include:

- **a decrease (-3.9%) in the share of reports received from the Construction sector**
- **a decrease (-4.3%) in the share of reports received from the Healthcare sector**
- **an increase (+4.7%) in the share of reports received from the Education sector**
- **an increase in the share of reports received from the Logistics and Manufacturing sectors (+2.7%/2.2%)**

Airports / Airlines	-1.00%	Logisitics	2.70%
Banking and Finance	0.70%	Manufacturing	2.20%
Care / Support	0.20%	Mining	-0.70%
Construction	-3.90%	Non-Profit	-0.40%
Education	4.70%	Nuclear	-0.80%
Emergency Services	-0.50%	Oil & Gas	0.30%
Engineering	0.40%	Pharmaceuticals	-0.30%
Facilities Management	-0.90%	Private Equity	0.10%
Food Processing / Wholesale	0.00%	Professional Services	0.60%
Healthcare	-4.30%	Retail	-0.60%
Housing Association	-0.20%	Sport	-0.10%
Legal Services	0.10%	Support Services	0.00%
Leisure Industry	0.00%	Technology	-0.40%
Local Government	-0.50%	Utilities	-0.20%

Key Insights

The Education sector has experienced a sharp increase in report share from less than 1% to over 5% in the last year. The volume of reports we have received from the Education sector has increased a significant amount since 2022. This represents higher levels of uptake, adoption, and implementation of whistleblowing processes within the sector.

We have observed a decrease in the Healthcare sector, potentially due to the stabilising of the industry in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

It is important to note that in some industries the change in report share does not necessarily represent a change in the rate of reports.

This is more accurately reflected in the per-employee reporting numbers later in this report.

With increased awareness surrounding whistleblowing and confidential reporting, sparked by legislative reforms (EU Whistleblowing Directive) and high-profile whistleblowing cases (for example within the NHS, and the Post Office), external reporting facilities are becoming increasingly sought after.

When combined with the ever-increasing emphasis on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) and ethical business practices, this has resulted in an increase in our number of clients across all sectors.
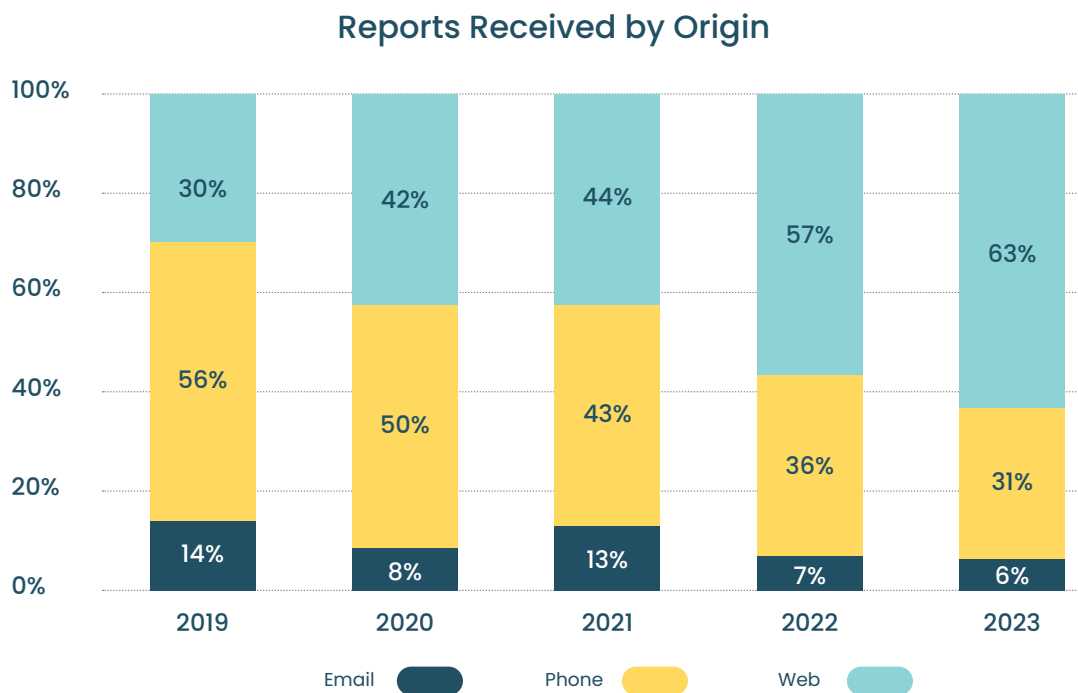
Our intake methods

Through Safecall, employees can raise concerns either by telephone or our dedicated online portal. Every concern raised is received by one of our expert report handlers - each with **a minimum of 25 years'** experience of recording and handling sensitive reports.

Telephone hotline answered by experienced call handlers

Our call handlers are all former UK police officers. This means whistleblowers - whether direct employees or supply chain workers - will always speak to a professional with experience in handling difficult conversations. These in-depth conversations usually result in more comprehensive reports leading to more thorough investigations with actionable outputs.

Advanced online portal

To make processing reports easier, we do not force reporters to remember codes, and our chat functionality enables continued contact between report managers and whistleblowers, whilst still allowing anonymity to be maintained and all conversations captured. We are continually investing in our portal, optimising its functionality, and adding new features.

Reports Received by Origin

Year	Email	Phone	Web
2019	14%	56%	30%
2020	8%	50%	42%
2021	13%	43%	44%
2022	7%	36%	57%
2023	6%	31%	63%

Email ⬤ Phone ⬤ Web ⬤

Below is the increase or decrease in each reporting mechanism between **2022** vs **2023**:

Web +6	Phone –5%	Email –1
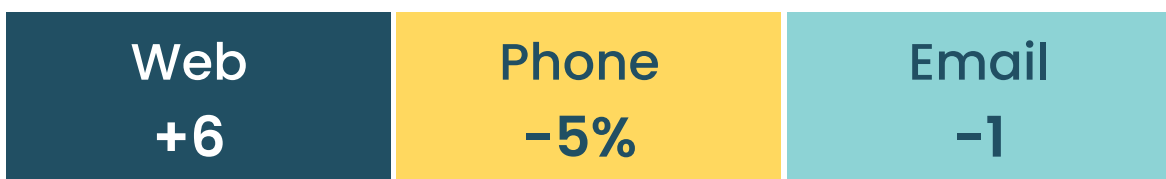
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Key Insights

The share of reports received by our Online Reporting Portal has increased for another year, now surpassing 60%. Our portal provides a simple, secure means of reporting that is convenient to use. It is highly accessible and allows reporters to: report in their own language; choose the level of anonymity of their report; and track the report's progress confidentially.

There are multiple social factors that contribute to the increased leaning towards online reporting:

- Normalisation and familiarity with technology – people of all demographics are becoming increasingly familiar with navigating online systems every year.

- Globalisation of our business – as our business expands, we are receiving reports from more and more countries, some of which may have a strong cultural preference towards making a report online.

- Age demographics – younger generations are more likely to engage with an online system than making a telephone call.

These factors all play into the increased uptake of this reporting method.

Although there has been a decrease in the share of reports originating from our telephone hotline, 1 in 3 concerns are still raised via this method. Provision of a whistleblowing hotline is still key for organisations who wish to capture as many reports as possible from their employees and stakeholders. Implementing a whistleblowing hotline optimises trust in your organisation and ensures your whistleblowing policy has true reporting channel choice.

We often find that reports made via our hotline, particularly those relating to sensitive or difficult issues, offer more insight and detail. This added depth to a report helps organisations more effectively investigate a concern.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is a key business topic, and it is important to remember that many organisations will have people within their employee base or wider supply chain who may struggle with literacy. For these individuals, their only way of communicating with an organisation may be by voice.

Furthermore, 37% of the world's population have never used the internet. If you only offer whistleblowing avenues that are written and online based, you may be excluding a significant demographic from making valuable reports.

Reports received via **email** stayed at roughly the same level as 2022. There is a preference to report via our portal rather than via email when reporting via a written method. A dedicated portal creates higher levels of trust due to the anonymity and security it assures.

Report Origin by Sector

Legend: Email (light teal) | Internal (yellow) | Phone (teal) | Web (dark navy)

Chart categories (top to bottom): Airports / Airlines, Banking and Finance, Care / Support, Construction, Education, Emergency Services, Engineering, Facilities Management, Food Processing / Wholesale, Healthcare, Housing Association, Legal Services, Leisure Industry, Local Government, Logisitics, Manufacturing, Mining, Non Profit, Nuclear, Oil and Gas, Pharmaceuticals, Private Equity, Professional Services, Retail, Sport, Support Services, Technology, Utilities

X-axis: 0% to 100%

Key Insights

Factors which may influence how an individual reports a concern to us include:

- **Local culture**
- **Industry culture**
- **Company culture**
- **Accessibility**

Across most sectors, reporting via our web portal is the most popular method. Emergency Services, Pharmaceuticals, and Legal Services show the highest tendency to report via web.

Construction, Support Services, and Retail workers are the most likely to make a report via our telephone hotline service.

Employment

This graph shows the employment status of individuals who make a report. As in previous years the vast majority of reporters are direct employees of our client organisations.

However, 15% of reports are made by indirect employees (e.g. sub-contractors), supply chain workers, or customers.

Reporter Employment Status

Year	Indirect	Direct
2020	11%	89%
2021	15%	85%
2022	16%	84%
2023	15%	85%
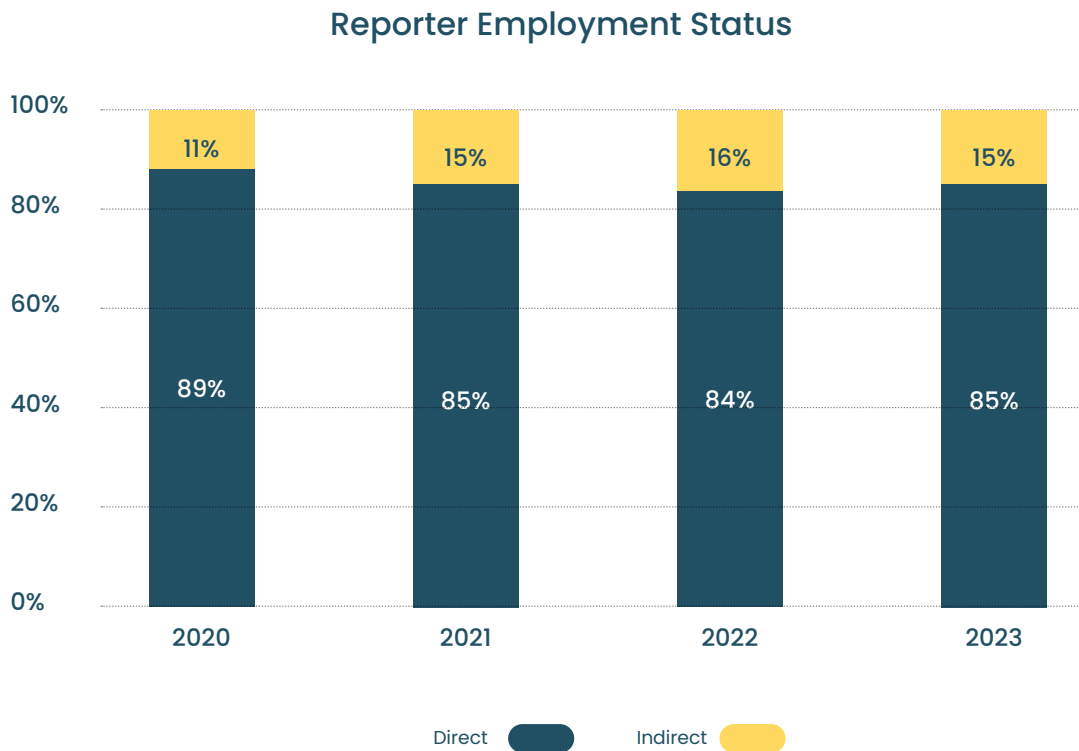
Direct ● Indirect ●

Key Insights

It is important, both from a legislative and ethical perspective, to consider how your whistleblowing policy caters for those who are not direct employees.

Key legislation such as the EU Whistleblowing Directive; CS3D; and the German Supply Chain Act, and growing concerns surrounding Modern Slavery, render considerations of supply chain due diligence absolutely necessary.

Is your whistleblowing policy sufficiently compliant? Is your organisation aware of, and safeguarded from, the concerns that arise outside of your direct operations?

Average number of reports per employee

Engagement with whistleblowing reporting systems is an important metric to monitor.

By tracking the rate at which reports are received, using the average number of reports per employee, we can estimate how many reports an organisation can typically expect to receive depending on their size and sector.

This value is calculated by removing any outlier companies (those that are the top and bottom 5% of reports received) and using the remaining number of reports and the total employee numbers covered.

Average number of reports per employee (All Sectors)

2020	2021	2022	2023
1/520	1/450	1/420	1/380
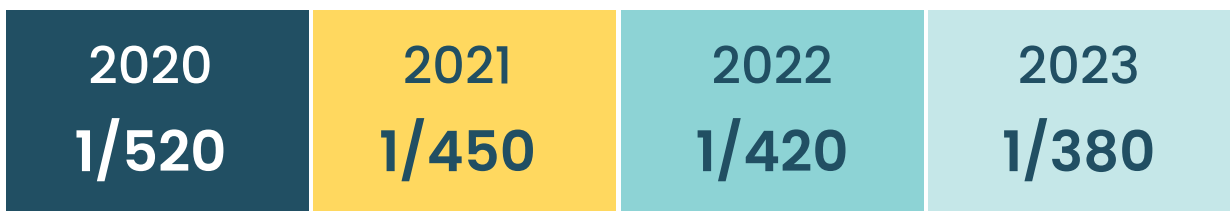
The figures above show that the rate of reporting is increasing year on year. Whereas in 2020, you would expect 1 report for every 520 employees, that figure has now dropped to 1 report for every 380 employees.

Key Insights

Although it may be a natural inclination to view this as an indicator that suspected wrongdoing is on the rise, this is not necessarily the case. It can, however, be inferred from this data that it is becoming more common for an employee or stakeholder to feel confident enough to make a report.
Holistically, this paints a picture of a cultural and corporate landscape that is becoming ever-more engaged with whistleblowing. Awareness of how to raise a report, and confidence in the systems available to do so, are increasing.

This can be attributed to:

• improved levels of communication from organisations to employees regarding their whistleblowing policies

• new legislative and regulatory requirements surrounding the promotion of whistleblowing mechanisms

• destigmatisation and shifts in culture and attitudes towards whistleblowing as a positive practice

• high profile cases covered in the media that highlight the importance of whistleblowing as a means of combatting wrongdoing

Average number of reports per employee (Industry Sectors)

Our client base is broken down into 28 industry sectors.

Like the "All Sectors" measure, the averages are calculated by removing the top and bottom 5% of reporting companies. All these figures are highly dependent upon the current understanding of a clients' employee numbers. If these employee numbers differ to those we currently hold, this will cause a large degree of variability, so we recommend that these figures are used for indicative purposes only.

We saw the highest number of reports per employee for 2023 in the Sports sector. We have also experienced a significant increase in the number of reports per employee in the Education sector, with report frequency increasing almost tenfold. Emergency services maintained a similarly high rate of reporting as previous years. Technology, Legal Services, and Professional services were the sectors with the lowest rates of reporting.

Key Insights

The sharp increase in reporting rates from both the Education and Sport sectors may be attributed to the relative turbulence experienced within those sectors in the last year.

Events such as the release of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket's (ICEC) report into the cultural issues faced within the cricketing world have sparked conversations surrounding misconduct within the industry.

According to the report, 50% of respondents have experienced discrimination in the previous five years, with the figures being substantially higher for people from ethnically diverse communities.

It was also recently reported that 'four in five female UK football coaches have experienced sexism.' Such findings indicate a need within the sporting world for action to be taken to address the pervading cultural concerns.

Similarly, within Education, high profile instances of industrial action have occurred within the last year – stemming from discussions surrounding unfair treatment of education professionals.

The same can be noted of Emergency Services, a sector which has consistently experienced high rates of reporting. The high-risk nature of the industry contributes to this, but in the last year, questions were raised about the performance of its internal reporting channels following the high-profile trial of Lucy Letby.

The current Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian scheme, while a positive step towards improving whistleblowing culture, appears to lack confidence among NHS employees. The FTSU's own report indicated that many employees remain hesitant to report serious concerns through an internal system due to doubts about confidentiality and impartiality. One worker told the FTSU Guardians that "the Guardian was excellent, but nothing has been resolved". The Guardians themselves have said that managers need to be trained about their obligations once they receive a report.

	Rate			
Industry	2020	2021	2022	2023
Airports / Airlines	1/700	1/450	1/530	1/450
Banking and Finance	1/750	1/600	1/780	1/710
Care / Support	1/380	1/250	1/380	1/250
Construction	1/330	1/300	1/400	1/455
Education	1/1000	1/860	1/1000	1/110
Emergency Services	1/130	1/120	1/155	1/161
Engineering	1/533	1/500	1/670	1/321
Facilities Management	1/604	1/400	1/425	1/500
Food Processing / Wholesale	1/589	1/500	1/450	1/650
Healthcare	N/A	1/300	1/220	1/480
Housing Association	1/350	1/300	1/250	1/920
Legal Services	1/1000	1/500	1/500	1/1000
Leisure Industry	1/670	1/300	1/350	1/385
Local Government	1/500	1/400	1/360	1/380
Logistics	1/1000	1/400	1/450	1/635
Manufacturing	1/700	1/500	1/830	1/350
Mining	1/300	1/300	1/160	1/350
Non-Profit	1/330	1/300	1/200	1/120
Nuclear	1/800	1/500	1/350	1/255
Oil & Gas	1/400	1/600	1/450	1/430
Pharmaceuticals	1/200	1/200	1/300	1/745
Private Equity	1/850	1/800	1/825	1/900
Professional Services	1/550	1/450	1/600	1/950
Retail	1/420	1/400	1/300	1/280
Sport	1/400	1/900	1/450	1/100
Support Services	1/1000	1/450	1/500	1/450
Technology	1/1000	1/900	1/750	1/1000
Utilities	1/380	1/400	1/500	1/440
Overall	1/520	1/450	1/420	1/380

NB: None of the above figures take into account the seriousness of a claim or concern. Whilst some organisations or industries receive significantly fewer reports through our service, they may carry higher risk (examples include financial fraud, reputational risk or health and safety concerns) to the company or organisation. Reporting rates vary year on year for every organisation.

Those companies that regularly advertise, refresh, and talk about their Speak Up services receive not only more reports but more consistent numbers of reports year-on-year and are far more likely to catch significant reports earlier. Some industry sectors also provide a wider range of reporting mechanisms for their employees. For example, many financially regulated customers will have additional SAR (Suspicious Activity Report) reporting mechanisms required by legislation; or a construction company will have dedicated health and safety reporting mechanisms.

Classification of the reports we receive

All reports are classified into one of four main classifications:

In 2023 the share of classification of report types, from most to least frequent, was:

1. **Human Resources (58%)**

2. **Dishonest Behaviour (16%)**

3. **General (15%)**

4. **Health and Safety (11%)**

Classification
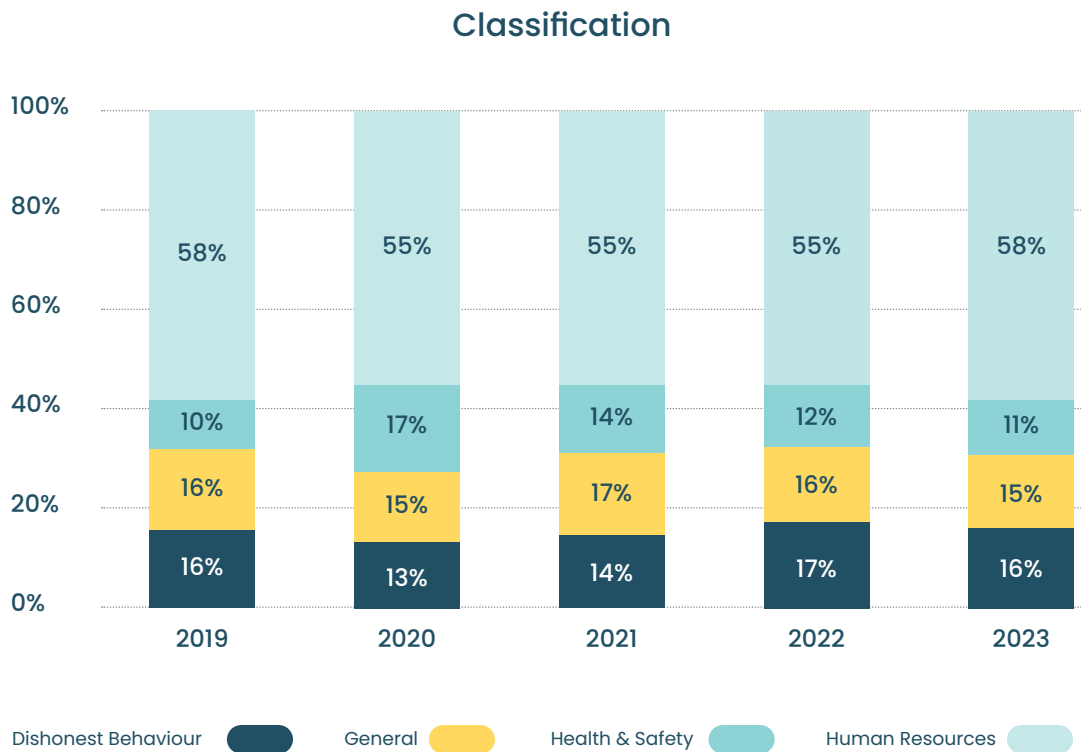
Key Insights

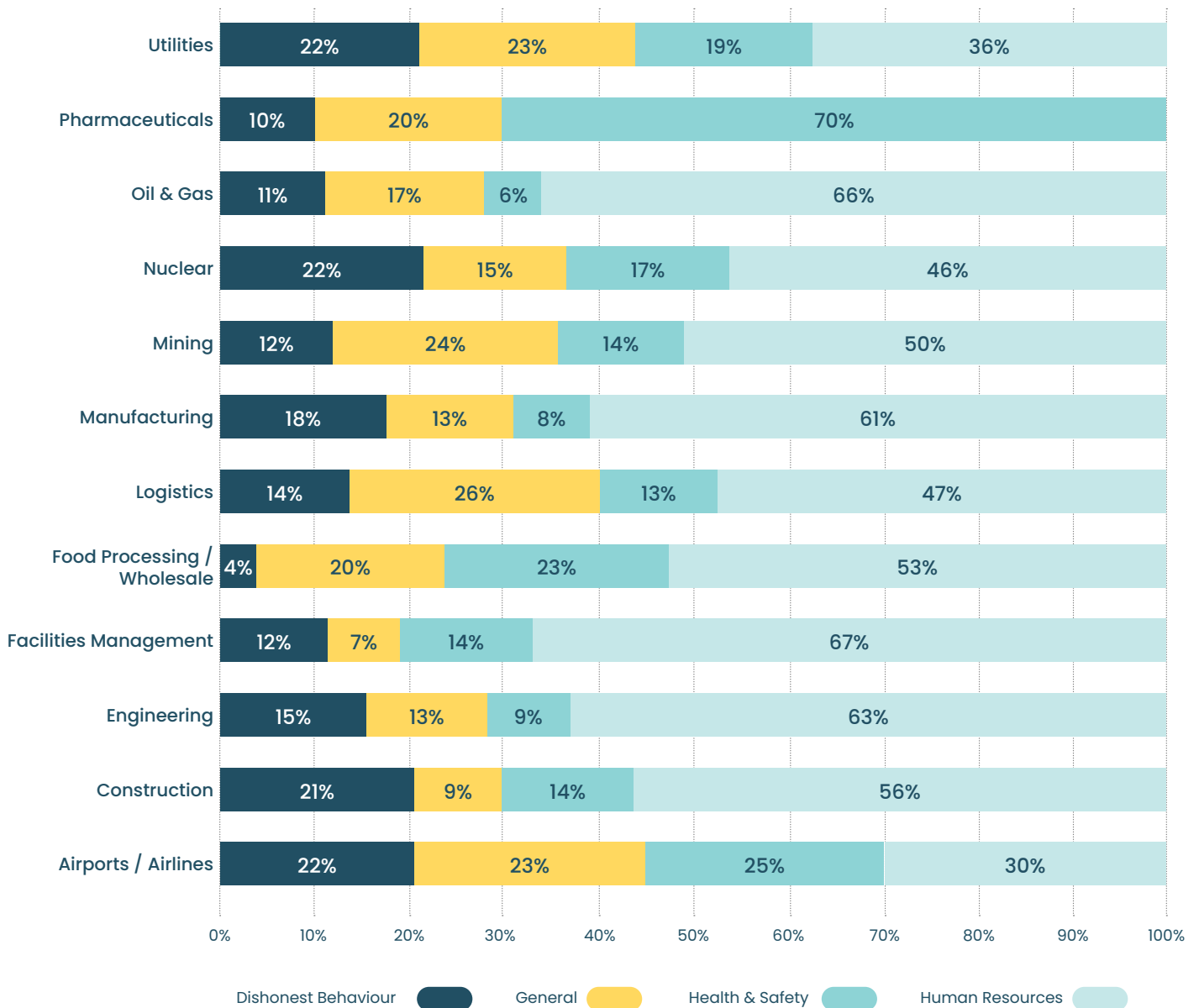**The share of Health & Safety reports received has continued to decrease from the highs of 2020, as the world moves into the post-COVID "new-normal".**

Reports continue to be predominantly HR related (e.g. Harassment, Bullying), with 58% of the share of reports in 2023 being classified as such. In 2023, there was a 3% increase of share in HR related reports, and this may be due to the continued return to 'office working'.
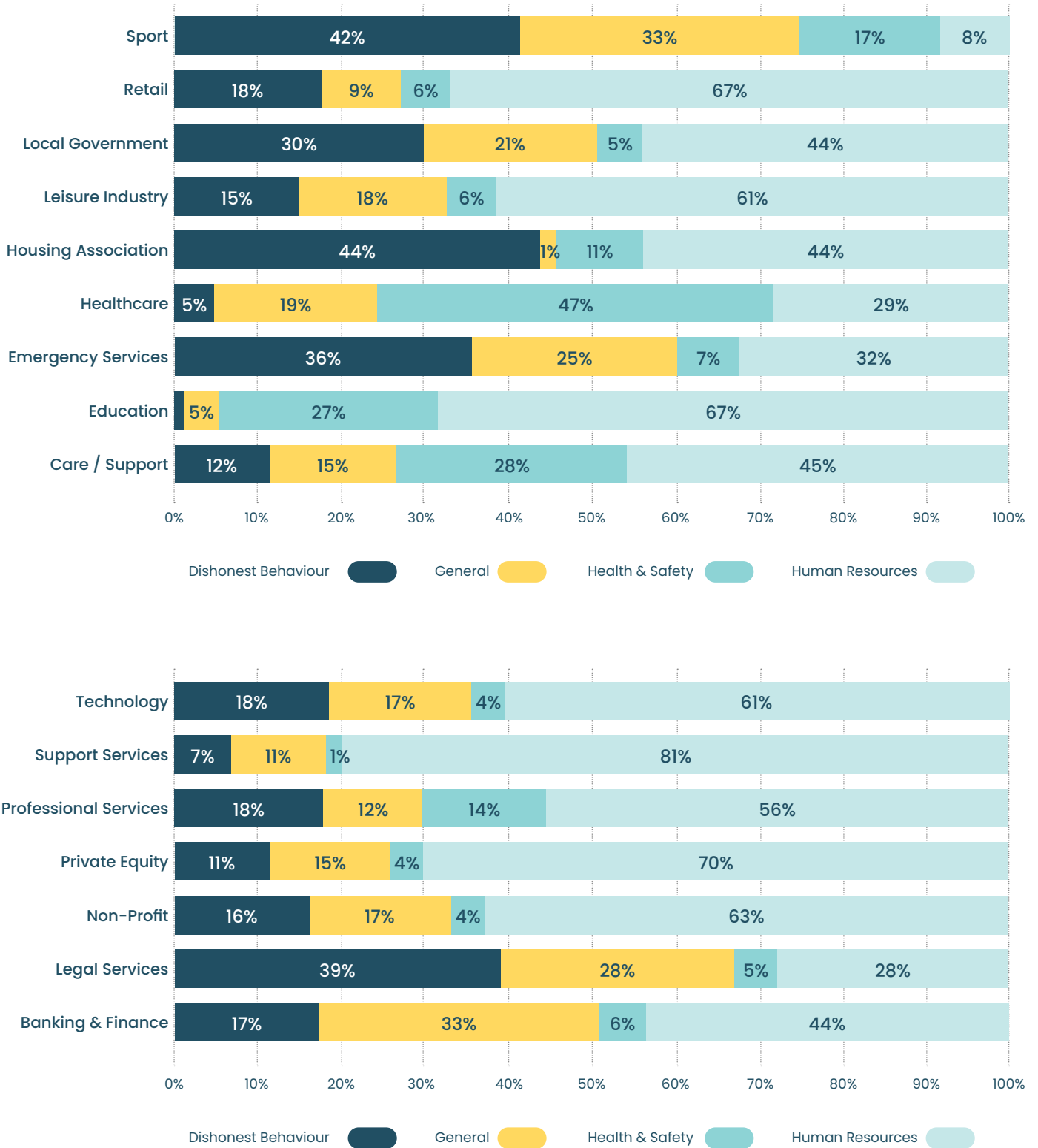
Classification of the reports we receive by industry sector

Below we can see the share of the classifications we track within each industry.

It is worth highlighting that each business is different and there are many reasons why an organisation may experience variations such as: company culture, geographic culture, employee demographics.

Industry	Dishonest Behaviour	General	Health & Safety	Human Resources
Utilities	22%	23%	19%	36%
Pharmaceuticals	10%	20%	70%	
Oil & Gas	11%	17%	6%	66%
Nuclear	22%	15%	17%	46%
Mining	12%	24%	14%	50%
Manufacturing	18%	13%	8%	61%
Logistics	14%	26%	13%	47%
Food Processing / Wholesale	4%	20%	23%	53%
Facilities Management	12%	7%	14%	67%
Engineering	15%	13%	9%	63%
Construction	21%	9%	14%	56%
Airports / Airlines	22%	23%	25%	30%

Legend: Dishonest Behaviour · General · Health & Safety · Human Resources

Classification of the reports we receive by industry sector *continued*

Sector	Dishonest Behaviour	General	Health & Safety	Human Resources
Sport	42%	33%	17%	8%
Retail	18%	9%	6%	67%
Local Government	30%	21%	5%	44%
Leisure Industry	15%	18%	6%	61%
Housing Association	44%	1%	11%	44%
Healthcare	5%	19%	47%	29%
Emergency Services	36%	25%	7%	32%
Education		5%	27%	67%
Care / Support	12%	15%	28%	45%

Dishonest Behaviour ● General ● Health & Safety ● Human Resources ●

Sector	Dishonest Behaviour	General	Health & Safety	Human Resources
Technology	18%	17%	4%	61%
Support Services	7%	11%	1%	81%
Professional Services	18%	12%	14%	56%
Private Equity	11%	15%	4%	70%
Non-Profit	16%	17%	4%	63%
Legal Services	39%	28%	5%	28%
Banking & Finance	17%	33%	6%	44%

Dishonest Behaviour ● General ● Health & Safety ● Human Resources ●
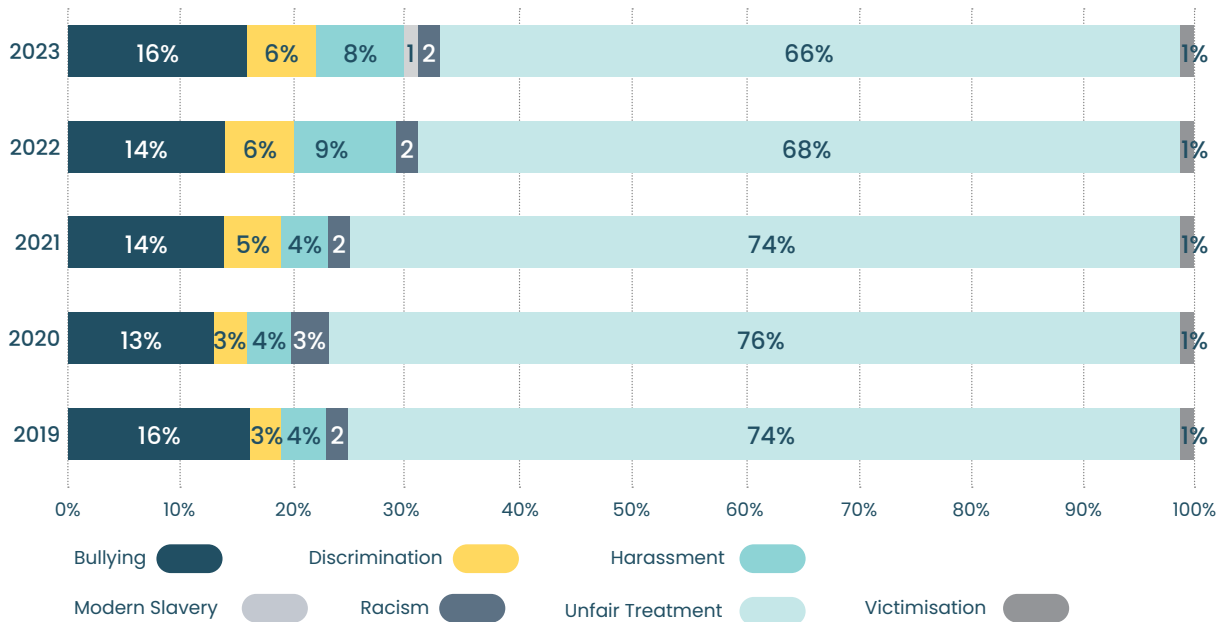
Subclassifications of the reports we receive

Whilst all reports are classified into four major categories, they are also subclassified into 1 of 21 subclassifications.

The following charts show the changes experienced for each subclassification. These will be given in absolute increases or decreases year-on-year along with the percentage shares for 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Here are the summaries of the report share of each subclassification from 2020-2023.

Subclass – HR

Within HR reports, we are seeing a continuing decrease in the share of reports classified as 'Unfair Treatment.' However, they remain the largest contingent of subclassification. Reports related to 'Bullying' have returned to the share we had seen in 2019.

'Modern Slavery' reports have registered as statistically significant for the first time.

Year	Bullying	Discrimination	Harassment	Modern Slavery	Racism	Unfair Treatment	Victimisation
2023	16%	6%	8%	1	2	66%	1%
2022	14%	6%	9%		2	68%	1%
2021	14%	5%	4%		2	74%	1%
2020	13%	3%	4%		3%	76%	1%
2019	16%	3%	4%		2	74%	1%

Legend: Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment, Modern Slavery, Racism, Unfair Treatment, Victimisation

Key Insights

Looking at the trends emerging within HR related reports, we can infer that the return to office working may have had an impact on rates of reports relating to unacceptable interpersonal conduct (Bullying, Harassment etc.) in the workplace.

Subclassifications such as Bullying and Harassment either returning to, or surpassing, their pre-Covid report shares suggests that visibility of, or prominence of these issues, is linked to in-person working. Instances of bullying are harder to identify, or indeed less common, when organisations are operating remotely, so it is crucial for organisations to foster open lines of communication and provide confidential channels for employees to report instances of bullying.

Alternatively, it could be interpreted that the rise in reports related to Harassment is linked to the increased confidence and awareness of employees in reporting this type of misconduct. Modern slavery has emerged as a statistically significant area of concern within organisations for the first time in our Whistleblowing Benchmark Report.

Sub-Classifications of the reports we receive

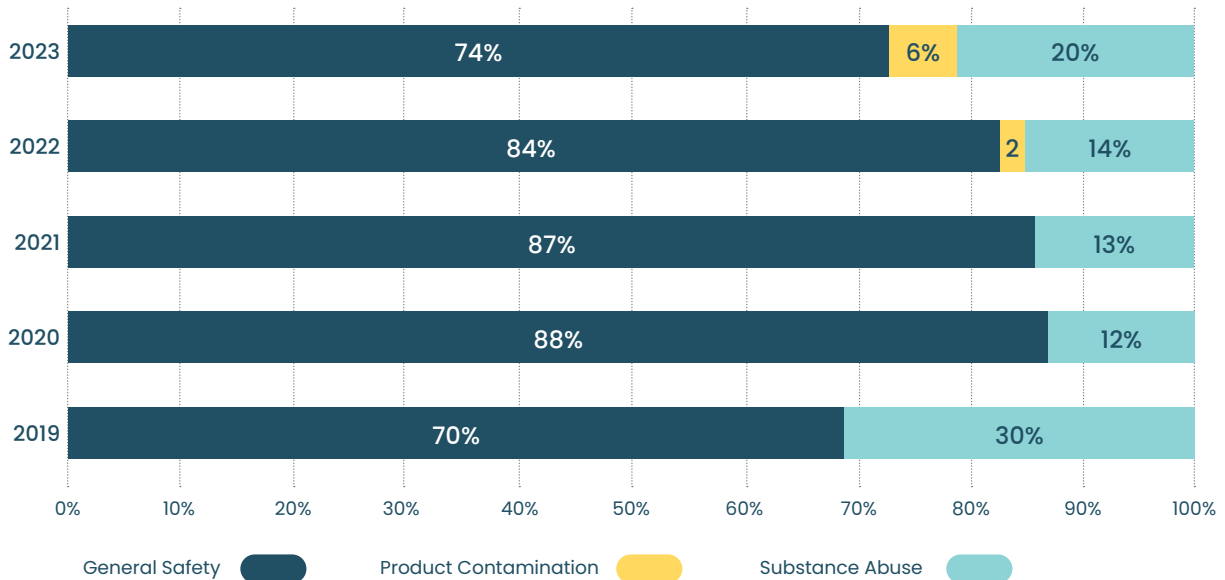## Key Insights - Continued

There has been growing concern amongst UK businesses regarding modern slavery over the past year, and the findings of our Benchmark Report support this as an issue. Construction companies have been identified as hotspots for reports surrounding modern slavery.

The emergence of Modern Slavery reports does not mean that it has become an issue for the first time, rather it is an indication of a growth in awareness and confidence in raising such concerns.

Whistleblowing requirements have been extended to supply chains in many national legal frameworks. This now means organisations must take proactive measures to identify and eradicate these exploitative practices from their supply chains, and a crucial first step is through facilitating the reporting of suspected wrongdoing at the ground level.

Subclass – Health and Safety

The share of General Safety reports remains higher than pre-COVID levels but continues to decline year on year – dropping significantly by 10% since 2022.

Year	General Safety	Product Contamination	Substance Abuse
2023	74%	6%	20%
2022	84%	2	14%
2021	87%		13%
2020	88%		12%
2019	70%		30%

Substance Abuse reports are a growing issue, particularly within the Construction and Manufacturing sectors. There has also been a continued uptick in Food Product Contamination concerns.

Key insights - Health and Safety

Pre-COVID, reports indicated that 30% of Health and Safety whistleblowing cases were related to Substance Abuse. While the rate temporarily decreased during the pandemic, it has risen to 20% by 2023.

Organisations should implement and enforce comprehensive substance abuse prevention and support programs to address this growing issue and ensure a safe and healthy work environment. As more workers return to their offices or work sites, it could be that reports pertaining to **Substance Abuse** are returning to pre-COVID levels due to increased visibility of the issue.

The share of General Safety related concerns has dropped, indicating an imminent return to pre-Covid levels of this subclassification. This may be due to the decreasing levels of health anxiety and risk as we move further away from the height of the pandemic.

Socioeconomic factors may have influenced the increased share of product contamination reports we are receiving. In an increasingly volatile economic landscape, manufacturing organisations may be feeling pressure to increase efficiency and productivity. This must not be at the expense of due care and diligence in the manufacturing process. Organisations should be aware of, and take steps to mitigate, improper conduct which may lead to product contamination.

Subclass – Dishonest Behaviour

In 2023, the share of reports within Dishonest Behaviour's subclassifications remained stable.

Integrity reports, once more, represented the highest proportion of concerns, increasing to 57% of the share. Theft, Corruption, Bribery, and Fraud related reports all experienced a 1% or 2% variation since 2022.
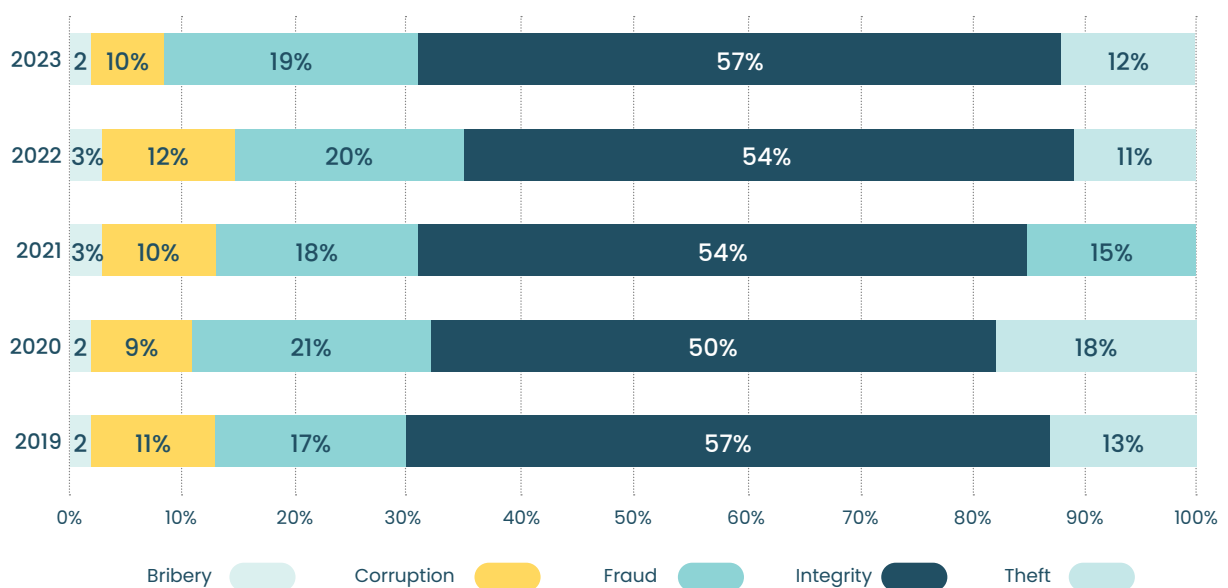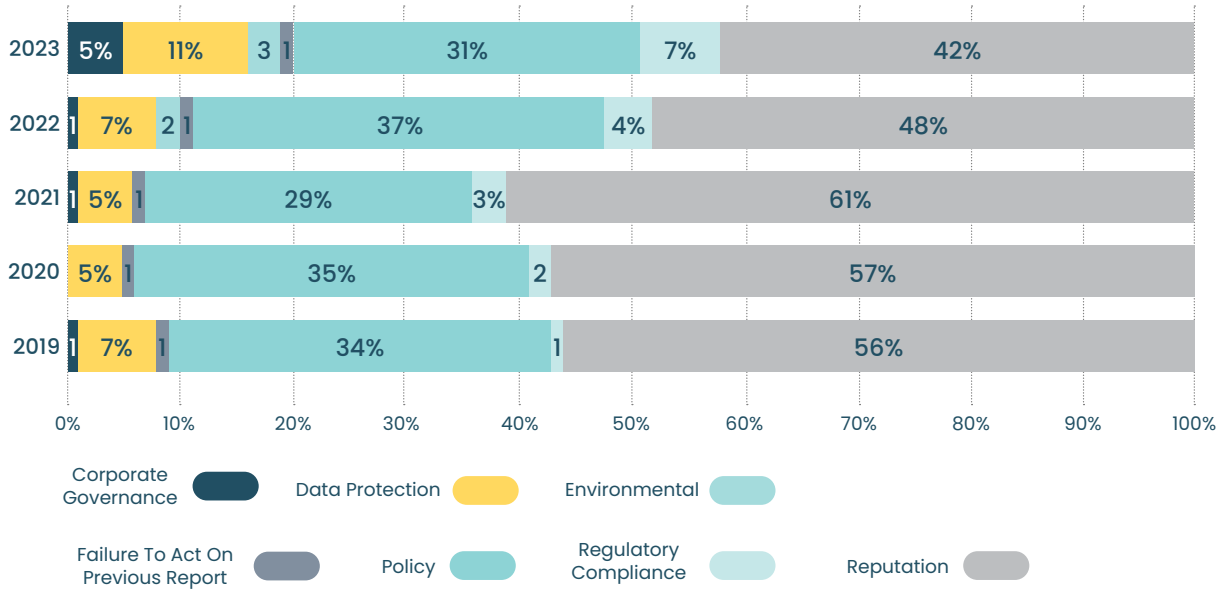
Key Insights - Dishonest Behaviour

The percentage of Integrity reports remains highest, potentially due to variance in severity of reports classified as such.

However, suspicions surrounding Corruption, Fraud, Money Laundering, Theft, and Bribery tend to be some of the most serious that we receive. Substantiated claims under these subclassifications may often constitute a 'qualifying disclosure' under various legislations – including the UK's Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA). This level of severity may explain why such concerns are reported less frequently.

Subclass – General

We have seen shifts in report shares under the General classification in recent years. Concerns surrounding Reputation continue to decline in proportional share and have now fallen 19% since its peak in 2021.

Concerns surrounding Data Protection, Corporate Governance, and Regulatory Compliance have continued to rise. After its emergence as statistically significant for the first time in 2022, Environmental concerns have maintained a similar share of reports.

Year	Corporate Governance	Data Protection	Environmental	Failure To Act On Previous Report	Policy	Regulatory Compliance	Reputation
2023	5%	11%	3	1	31%	7%	42%
2022	1	7%	2	1	37%	4%	48%
2021	1	5%	1		29%	3%	61%
2020		5%	1		35%	2	57%
2019	1	7%	1		34%	1	56%

Legend: Corporate Governance, Data Protection, Environmental, Failure To Act On Previous Report, Policy, Regulatory Compliance, Reputation

Key Insights

This data indicates an increase in instances of regulatory non-compliance and GDPR violations. This trend highlights the need for organisations to enhance their corporate governance practices and ensure strict adherence to regulations.

Although it is evident that companies should be focusing on their corporate governance now more than ever, reports indicate a decline in adherence to corporate governance.

We are seeing an increase in reports related to environmental concerns. This trend is expected to persist over the coming years as organisations become even more committed to ensuring they are fulfilling their environmental obligations – both from an ethical and regulatory perspective (e.g. CS3D - Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.
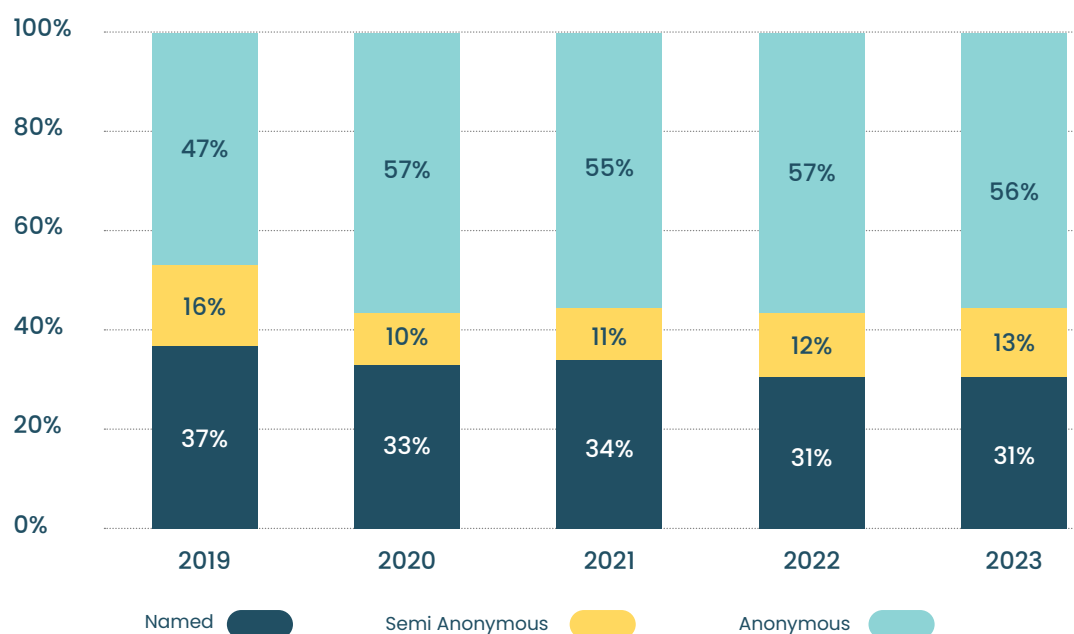
Anonymity of Reporters

Every reporter has a choice regarding anonymity when making a report through our system:

- **anonymous**
- **semi-anonymous**
- **named**

An anonymous report is from an unknown person with no contact details or identifying information left by the reporter. With the introduction of our messaging facility within the Safecall portal, a client can still communicate in real time with an **anonymous reporter** whilst maintaining their anonymity.

A semi-anonymous reporter is partially anonymised. The reporter is comfortable revealing their identity to us but does not wish for their identity to be passed onto the client organisation. Again, the messaging facility can be used with full functionality and messaging alerts if the reporter has provided an email address.

With a named reporter, a combination of contact details will be available and provided by Safecall to the employer. The reporter **can** also specify if they are happy to communicate directly with the organisation outside of the Safecall portal.
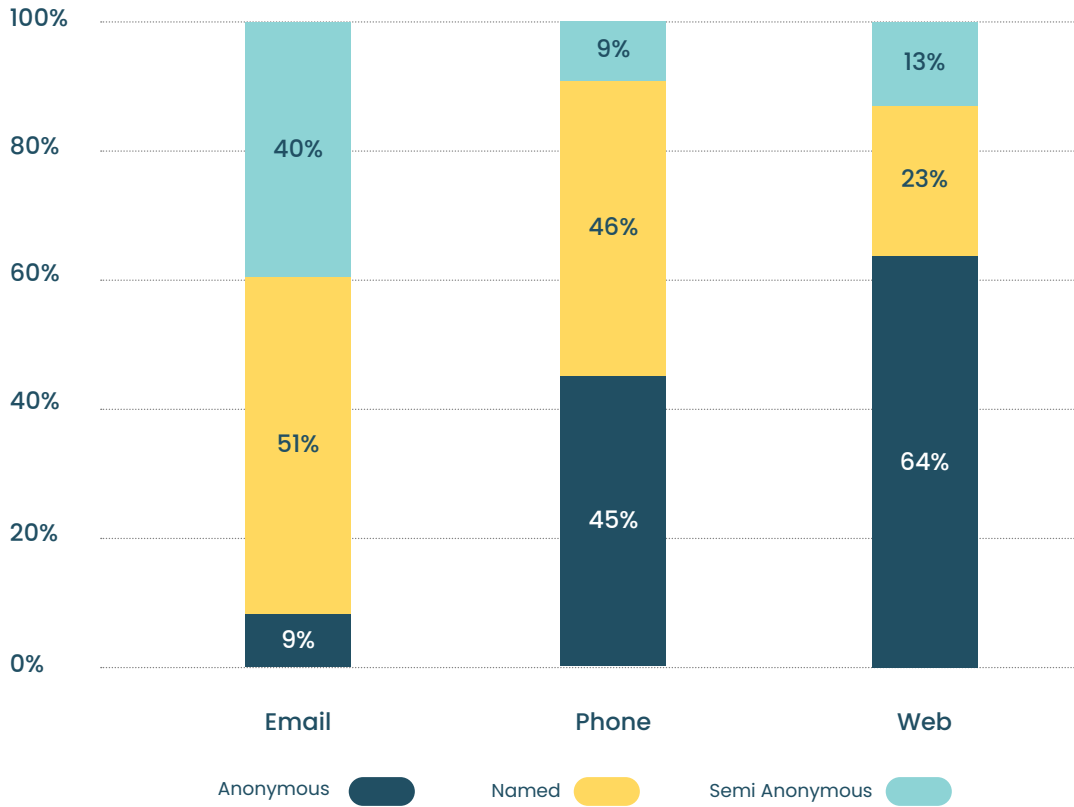

Key Insights

The spread of anonymity levels in 2023 experienced minor change from 2022. In 2023, 44% were happy to provide their name to Safecall and 31% of reporters were willing to be named in their report. This demonstrates the important levels of trust we foster.

Once more, 'anonymous' was the most popular choice amongst reporters, emphasising the value of an external provider when wanting to voice a concern with true anonymity.

Anonymity by Report Type

The below chart shows the spread of anonymity selected by reporters when using each reporting channel.

Legend: Anonymous, Named, Semi Anonymous

Key Insights

As seen in the chart, when reporting by phone, electing to be a named reporter is the most popular option. When reporting via web, to do so anonymously is the most popular route.

Our data shows 22.7% more whistleblowers choose to provide their name to us when talking directly to one of our call handlers than when reporting via written methods. This demonstrates the higher levels of trust engendered by this reporting avenue and the value of offering a telephone hotline option to employees and stakeholders.

Anonymity by Sector

The below chart shows the spread of anonymity selected by reporters from each sector.

Legend: Semi Anonymous | Named | Anonymous
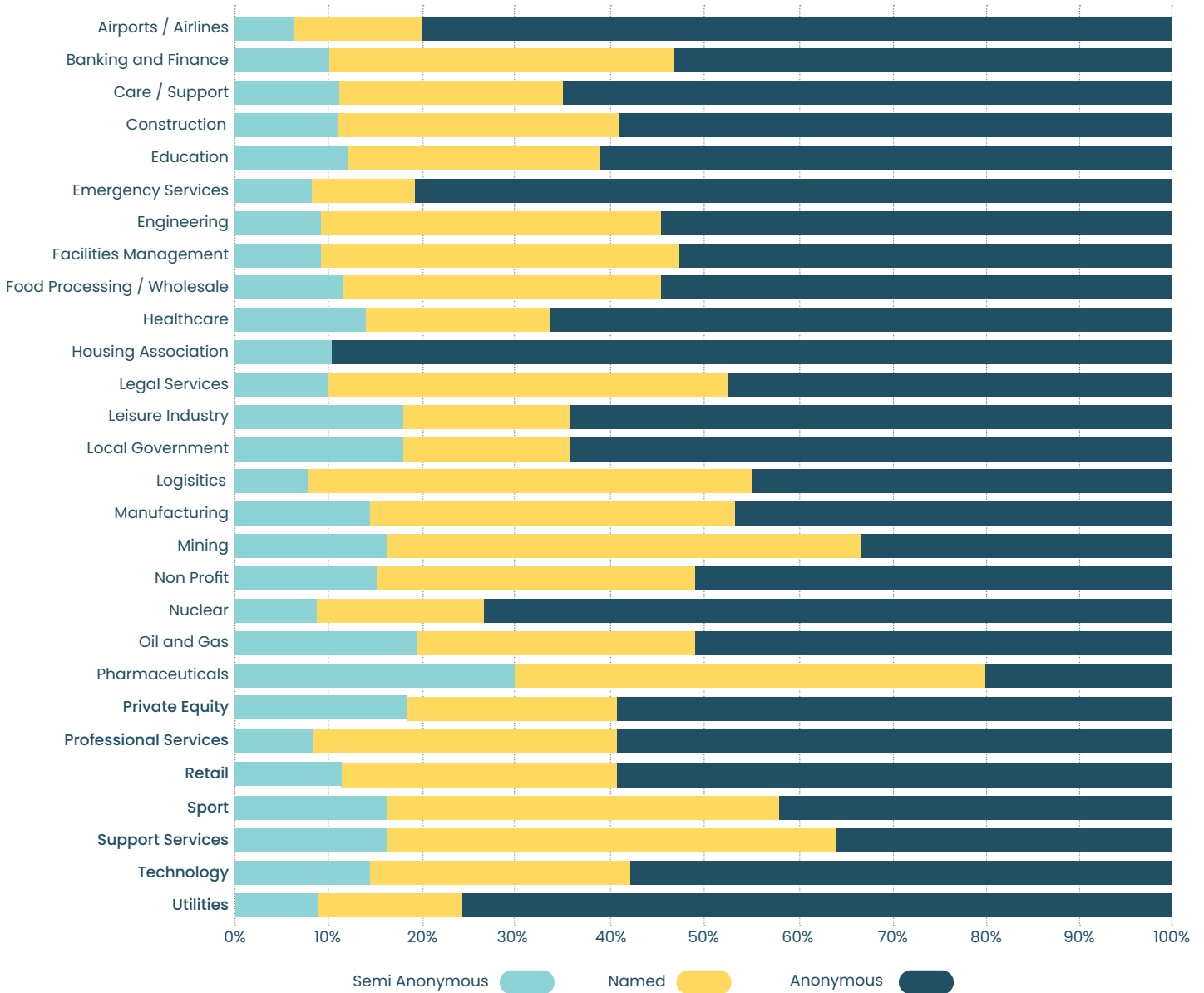
Key Insights

As can be seen above, preferences of anonymity level vary from industry to industry. Amongst those most likely to report anonymously, with an anonymous reporting rate of over 80%, are:

- **Airports/Airlines**
- **Emergency Services**
- **Housing Associations**

Those most likely to offer a named report may work in:

- **Pharmaceuticals**
- **Mining**
- **Sport**

This will, of course, vary between each organisation within these sectors. Company culture, and the nature of the reports made, will have a strong influence on the level of anonymity with which a report is made.

Report Closure

In 2019, we started tracking the substantiation of the reports that we received, and whether further action was taken based on the information they provided.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
No Further Action	0	4	5	6	37
Part Substantiated	8	19	19	18	14
Substantiated	35	21	31	23	18
Unsubstantiated	57	56	45	53	31
	100	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Key Insights

Following a drop in 2020 (due to the COVID 19 pandemic), we saw a steady increase in the number substantiated cases throughout 2021. With more organisations resuming on-site operations, they once again had the ability to investigate suspected misconduct in person.

In 2022 and 2023, we have seen a decrease in the share of substantiated reports. This may be due to the increasing volume of reports we receive.

We have also experienced a large shift in the share of reports classified as 'Unsubstantiated' and 'No Further Action.' Reports treated as 'No Further Action' have risen significantly whereas those labelled 'Unsubstantiated' have decreased from a **53%** to a **31%** share.

It is important to note that 'No Further Action' does not mean that no action was taken whatsoever. Rather, it indicates that the concern, whilst potentially valid, was no longer treated as a whistleblowing concern. Follow-up may have been made internally and action may have been taken to address the issue raised.

This shift demonstrates that report recipients and clients are using the reporting service and triage process more appropriately. Organisations' commitment to adhering to the standards set out by the EU Whistleblowing Directive has led to more effective triaging and improved understanding of what constitutes a legitimate whistleblowing report.

Report Closure by Subclassification

Below are the substantiation rates within each classification.

It should be noted that these figures do not record the outcomes related to other allegations, or further concerns raised during an investigation - only to the initial allegation.

Subclassifications which display an overwhelming weight towards one substantiation result could be due to a small number of reports. For example, we only received one report related to 'Victimisation' in the last year, and so we see a **100%** substantiation rate.

Report Closure - HR
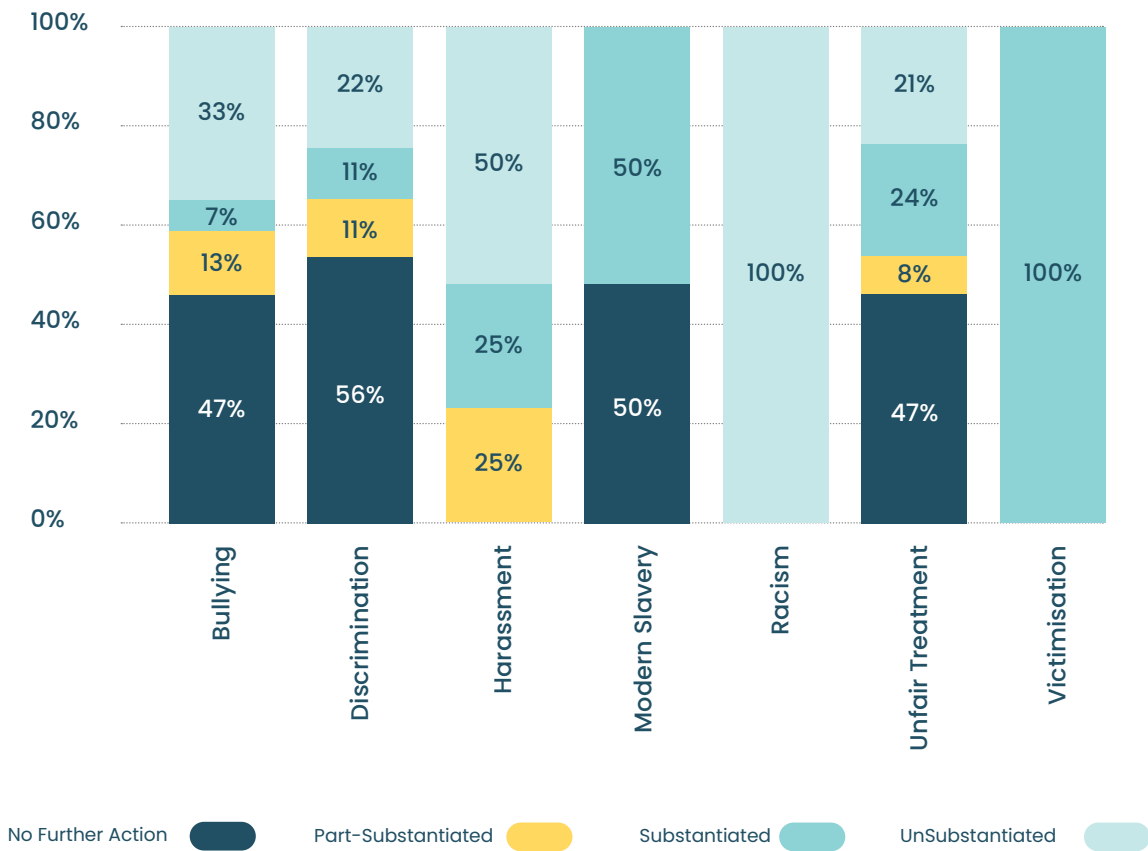
In 2023, we saw an increase in the number of reports that were deemed as requiring 'No Further Action'. This was markedly the case within the HR subclassification.

Reports related to issues such as Unfair Treatment and Bullying may often be categorised as a workplace grievance as opposed to a bona fide whistleblowing concern, meaning that 'No Further Action' was taken via the whistleblowing channel.

Report Closure by Subclassification

Report Closure – Dishonest Behaviour

No Further Action   **Part-Substantiated**   **Substantiated**   **UnSubstantiated**
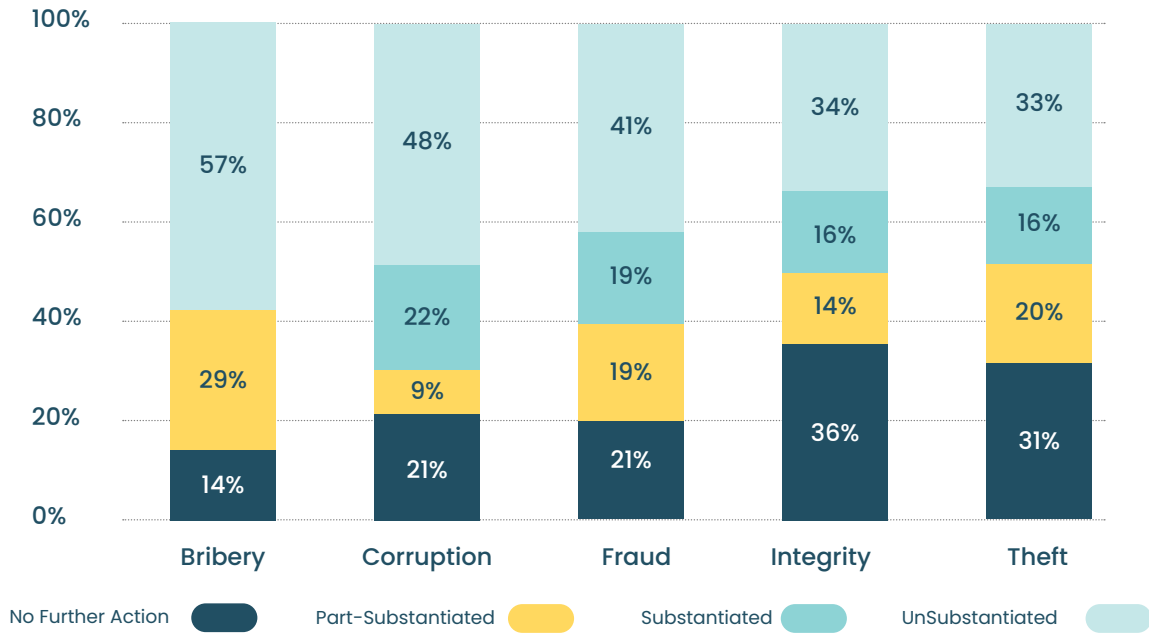
The high levels of unsubstantiated reports related to subclassifications such as Bribery are due to the severity of the concern reported – there is a higher threshold for such a concern to be considered substantiated

Report Closure – Health and Safety

No Further Action   **Part-Substantiated**   **Substantiated**   **UnSubstantiated**
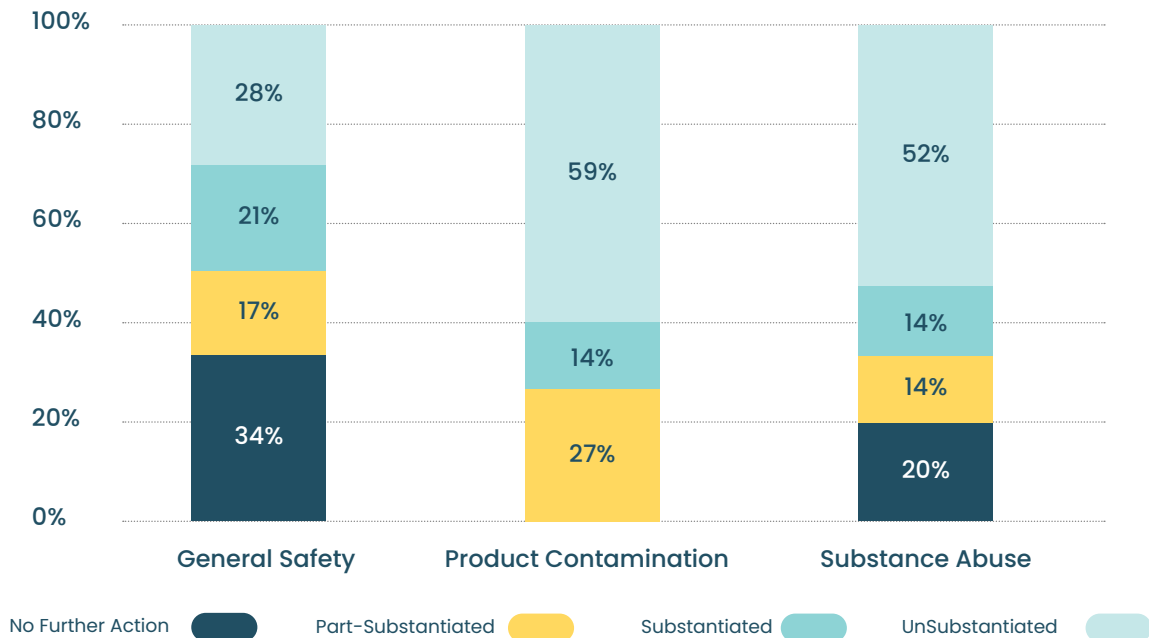
Organisations should ensure that they are facilitating and encouraging reports surrounding Health and Safety concerns. A strong proportion of these reports are found to be at least part-substantiated, and it is an organisation's duty to ensure that their workers are operating within a safe environment, and manufacturing products which are safe for use/uncontaminated.

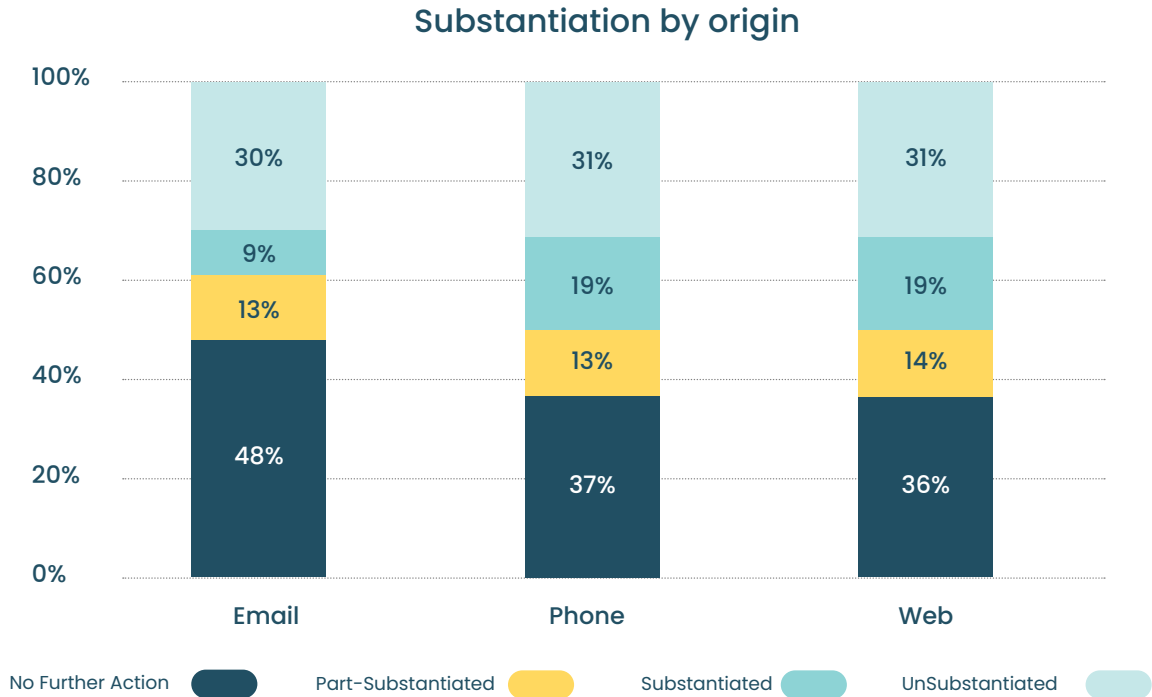# Report Closure by Subclassification

Report Closure – General
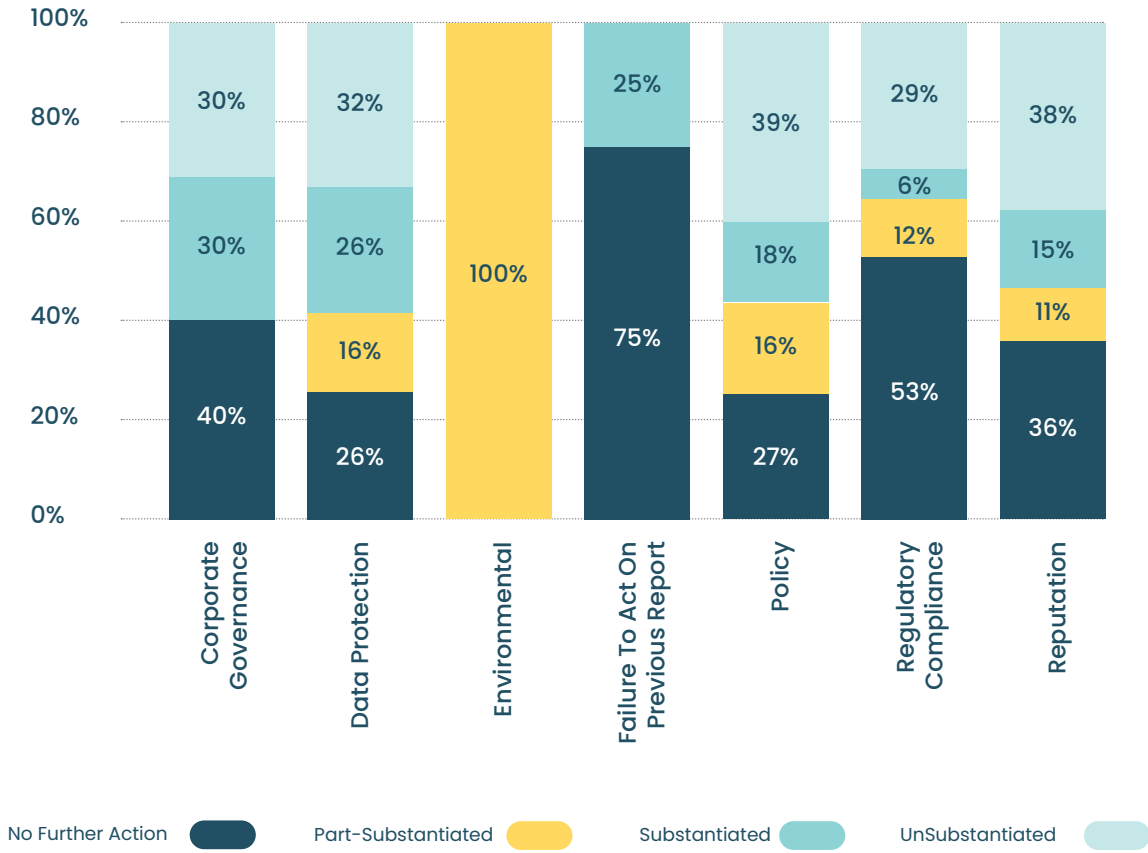
In 2023, reports of **GDPR violations** and poor **corporate governance** were often found to be substantiated. This trend highlights the need for organisations to enhance their corporate governance practices and ensure strict adherence to regulations, to safeguard their reputation and protect their employees.

Substantiation by origin

We have also looked at the substantiation rates of the different intake methods that we provide.

Concerns raised via our web and phone experience similar levels of substantiation across the board, whereas emailed reports had lower levels of substantiation.

Substantiation by origin

Email	**Phone**	**Web**
30%	31%	31%
9%	19%	19%
13%	13%	14%
48%	37%	36%

Legend: No Further Action · Part-Substantiated · Substantiated · UnSubstantiated
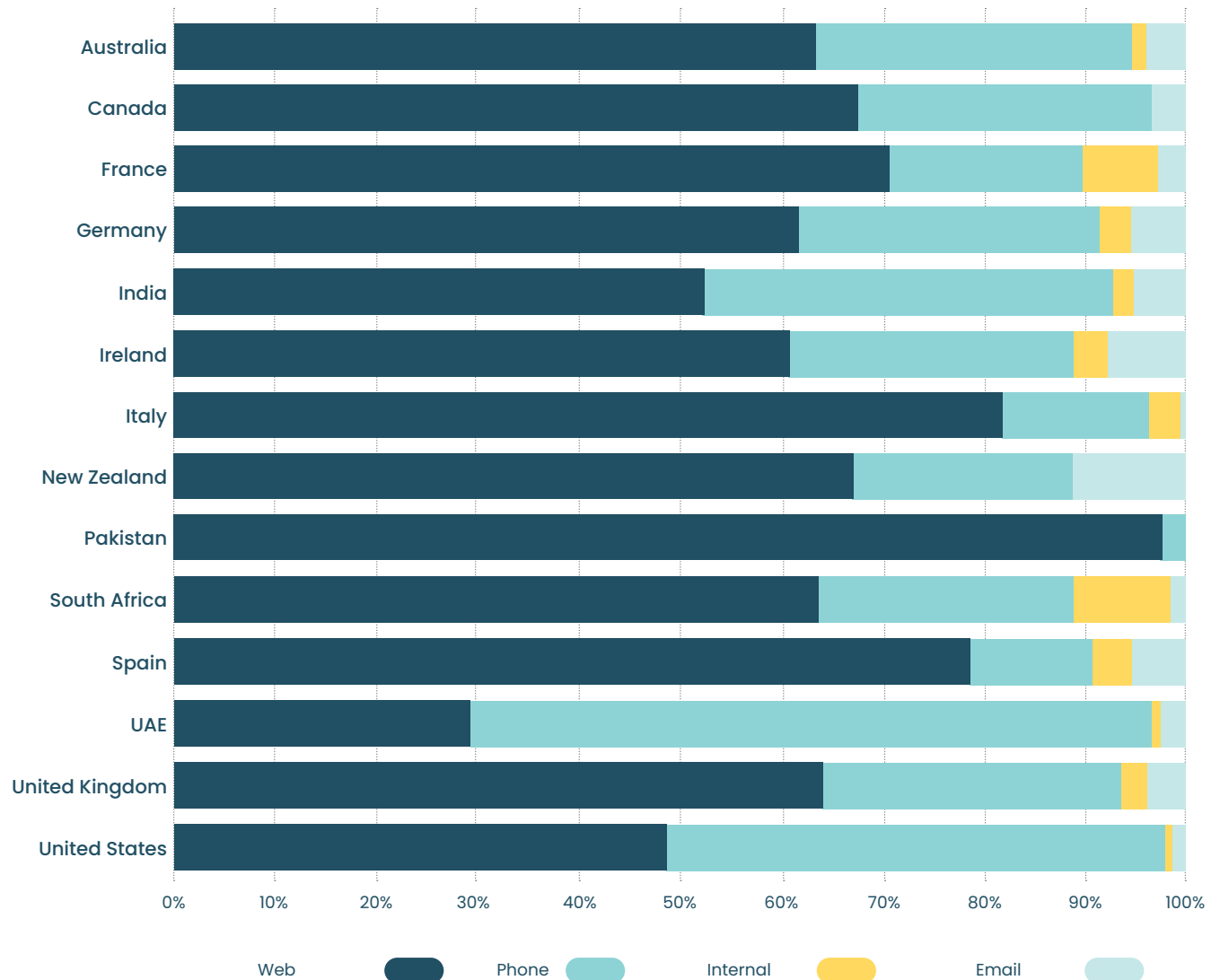
Key Insights

There is a relatively high rate of substantiation for our web and phone intake methods. The reports received by these methods are almost always more comprehensive than the email intake. We are able to obtain more details and facilitate a live conversation with the reporter.

Reports made via email are much more likely to be classified as 'No Further Action.'

Report Origin by Country

We have compiled the reporting channel preferences for each of our top-reporting countries.

There are many cultural, educational, and political factors that contribute to the various channel preferences. This will give a broad overview of the reporting channel preferences for workforces in these countries.

Legend: Web · Phone · Internal · Email

Key Insights

Although most of our top-reporting countries demonstrate a preference for web reporting, it is evident that reporting via telephone is still a crucial provision across all territories.

In the United Arab Emirates, our telephone hotline remains the preferred reporting channel. Similarly, India, the United States, and Saudi Arabia all demonstrate the global need for a verbal reporting method.

Offering true choice of channel, particularly through a specialist external provider to ensure competence and impartiality, is the most effective way to allow your employees to make a report in the way which is best suited to them.

Report Anonymity by Country

We have also compiled the anonymity preferences for each of our top-reporting countries.

Legend: Anonymous, Named, Semi Anonymous
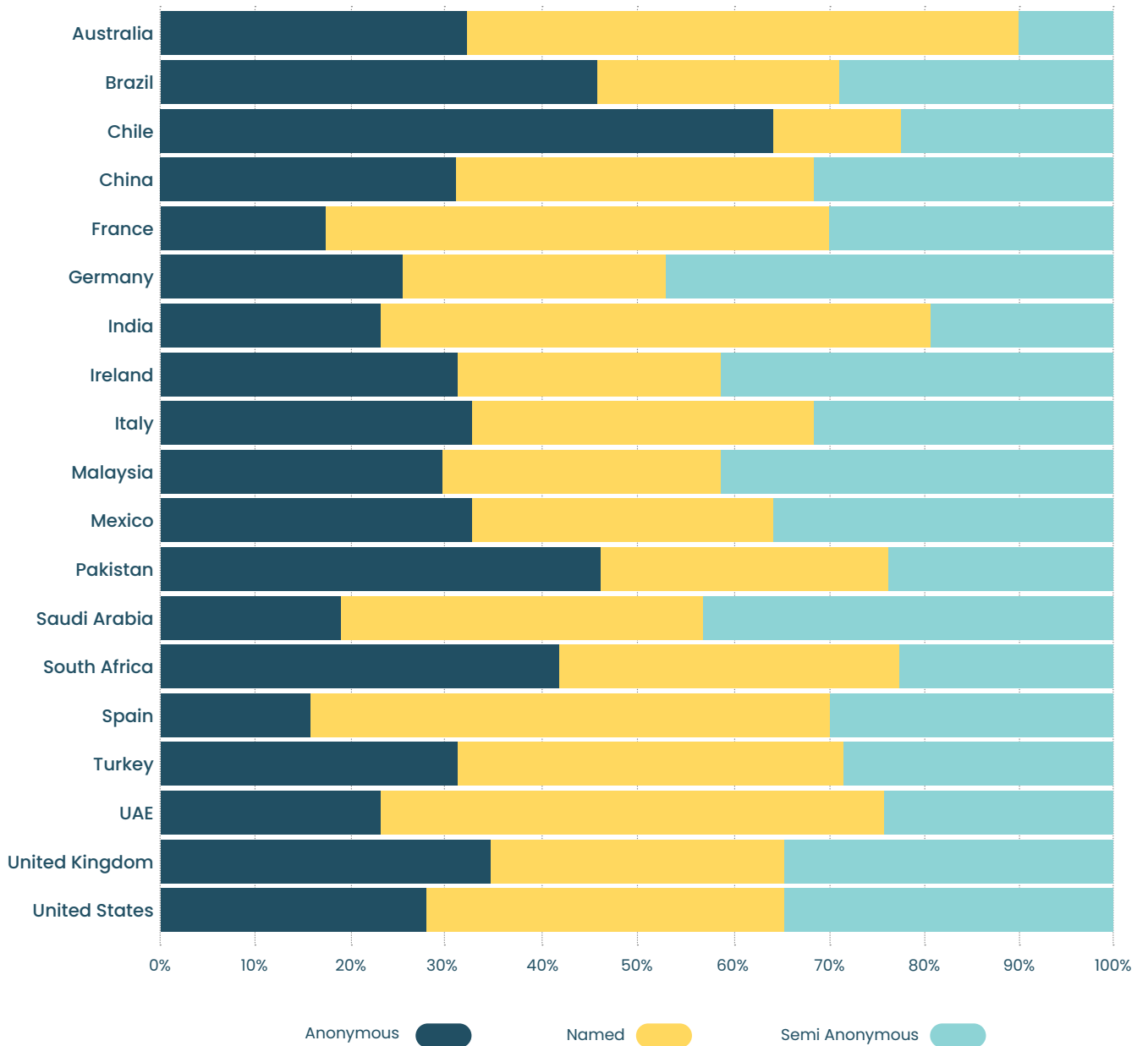
Key Insights

Countries with less stringent whistleblower protection laws may experience higher levels of anonymous reporting. These nations may harbour social attitudes, or a culture, which foster a fear of retaliation amongst employees. Therefore, reporting anonymously via our secure channels, offers them peace of mind and confidence to raise concerns.

We can also see a correlation between the proportion of named reports to the preference for telephone hotlines as reporting method. In the UAE, a nation with a preference to report via telephone, we see a large share of named reports. This can be attributed to the confidence and trust engendered by this channel.

Summary

The trends identified in our Whistleblowing Benchmark Report offer some key insights into shifts in operations and attitudes in the whistleblowing landscape.

The continued uptake for telephone reporting highlights the importance of providing a human touch in whistleblowing services and highlights just how many valuable reports organisations could be missing through failing to provide an anonymous **verbal reporting solution.**

There has been improved understanding and utilisation of whistleblowing services by organisations and employees, which is potentially attributable to awareness brought about by the EU Whistleblowing Directive.

The rising reporting rates in certain industries could indicate the need for increased vigilance and proactive measures to address potential risk. Conversely, the increase in uptake could denote a rise of employee confidence and a cultural shift towards whistleblowing within those industries.

Organisations should actively address misconduct at all levels. In a time of socio-economic instability, against a landscape that is increasingly focused on ethical practices and corporate governance, it is key to ensure that your organisation is doing all it can to identify and mitigate potential wrongdoing and risk-taking.

By embracing whistleblowing solutions and continuously improving their processes, organisations can strengthen trust, protect their reputation, and create a more ethical work environment.

How can Safecall Help?

With our ever-expanding selection of products and services, we are always on hand to help you create a world-class ethics and compliance programme.

Products and Services

Whistleblower Hotline Channel

Our telephone reporting channel is staffed exclusively by experienced investigators. Our report handlers are skilled at speaking with people from all walks of life, often in difficult and emotional circumstances; giving people the time and space to relay valuable information in their own words.

For more information visit: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/whistleblower-hotline-channel/

Online Reporting Channel

Our online reporting process helps people raise concerns securely at any time of day and in their preferred language.

For more information visit: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/online-reporting-channel/

Case Management Software

Our whistleblowing compliance management system is a robust solution designed to manage whistleblowing cases efficiently. It serves as a single source of information for all cases, integrating reports from various channels into a cohesive platform.

For more information visit: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/case-management-software/

Investigation Management Software

Manage single or multiple investigations that result from whistleblowing reports. Assign multiple investigators to either a single investigation or multiple investigations; set priorities and tasks; review progress of cases, and export reports for senior managers and stakeholders. Can be used in stand-alone format or connects seamlessly with other Safecall whistleblowing products.

For more information visit: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/investigation-management-software/

Whistleblower eLearning

Our 'Whistleblowing Training for All Staff' course is a basic eLearning course designed to educate staff on the whistleblowing and speak up processes, and to build confidence that the whistleblower hotline process works and can be trusted.

For more information visit: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/whistleblower-elearning-for-all-staff/

Our Whistleblowing Training for Managers course focuses on what managers, and other senior members of staff, need to know in order to better support whistleblowers throughout the entirety of the complaints and investigation processes.

For more information go to: https://safecall.co.uk/service/whistleblowing-elearning-for-managers/

Investigation Training

Our Investigation Training course is designed to give workplace and whistleblowing report managers the tools and knowledge they need to manage and conduct effective investigations into workplace, HR, and other issues.

For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/investigation-training/

Interviewer Training

Our Interviewer Training workshop is essential for managers and practitioners to develop their knowledge and skills enabling them to scope, plan and conduct professional interviews. Interview evidence can often not be heard if it is ruled inadmissible due to poor or oppressive practice.

For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/interviewer-training/

Outsourced Investigations

If the best option for your business is to fully outsource the investigation process, we offer independent investigation services – from carrying out interviews to creating an independent unbiased written investigation report.

For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/outsourced-investigations-investigation-services/

Managed Investigations

You can set the terms and our whistleblowing experts will manage the day-to-day running of the investigation – leaving your team with oversight of the entire process to ensure your investigations are thorough, proportionate, and effective. .

For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/managed-investigations-investigation-services/

Investigation Desktop Review

Once an investigation has concluded we can provide advice and critical analysis to inform future investigations. This would include an audit to help you improve your current processes to ensure the effective results and assurances moving forwards. .

For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/desktop-review-investigation-services/

Investigation Critical Friend

We can offer advice and critical analysis of ongoing investigations into wrongdoing to help advise on the direction of the case and the best approach to move forward – acting as an extension of your own investigation team. .
For more information go to: https://www.safecall.co.uk/service/critical-friend-investigation-services/

Safe call

A Law Debenture company

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