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Employer Investments:

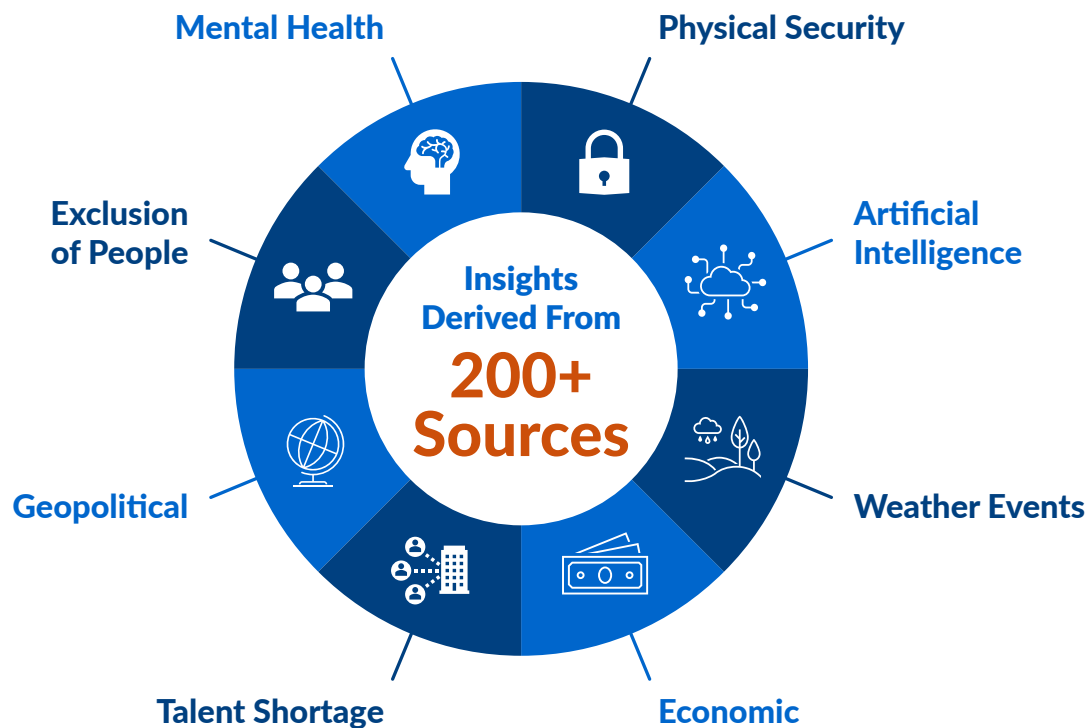
Mitigating Risk to Maximize Business, People, and Community Resilience and Performance

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The workplace is a community, in and of itself, that brings together people in pursuit of a shared mission and purpose. Employers are trusted entities whose reach offers them a unique opportunity to advance public health priorities, including whole-person health investments that extend beyond their employees and their families to the communities in which they operate.

As a part of our ongoing Milken Institute Employer Action Exchange platform led by Sabrina Spitaletta, senior director, Public Health, we held an executive briefing in April 2025 in New York to discuss ways that employers can mitigate risk and maximize business resilience and performance. We convened nearly 20 executives from a wide range of backgrounds, roles, and industries, including venture capital, technology, finance, fashion, biotech, health care, engineering, defense, and consumer packaged goods, collectively representing more than 500,000 employees. We presented findings from our employer action-focused research projects and work, including insights and actions employers can take to address eight emerging and escalating risks (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Emerging and Escalating Risks Facing Employers



Source: Milken Institute (2025)

In addition, we presented six key action areas, which we identified through years of work with employers across industries and sectors, which are as follows:

- Listening and transparent communication
- Purpose and organizational values that provide line of sight
- Collaboration and community
- Safety
- Agility and adaptability
- Data-driven decision-making with customized delivery

A forthcoming article will expand upon and explore the actionable steps that employers can take in these areas.

Although uncertainty is not a new challenge, periods with particularly high levels of uncertainty have historically led to increased cognitive load for employees, which impacts their performance and decision-making and, by extension, business performance. Throughout the briefing, participants leaned into three areas that they perceive as unchanging constants in the face of evolving risks and uncertainty.

1.

The Critical Role of Community, Whether Internal or External to the Workplace, Among Peers

Insights

“The piece we need is community,” one executive explained during our briefing. “People want it and don’t have it the way they used to have it.” Leaders must be able to speak freely with, and seek advice from, other leaders without fear of judgment or competition.

Applying the Insights

The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) has raised concerns among employees across generations who fear it will replace their jobs. This concern has led to conversations about redefining work, what it means to be human, and the importance of emotional intelligence. Uncertainty about the ways that AI will change the way we work opens the door for different thinking, and community—whether in the form of a peer network or people united by a common mission—enables us to reflect on how we faced similar challenges historically and to exchange ideas on innovative ways to move forward.

2.

The Need for Transparent Communication from Leadership—Even During Times When Leaders May Not Immediately Have All of the Answers

Insights

Communication as a vehicle to maintain a culture of openness and trust was a recurring theme throughout the briefing. During a discussion on ways to guide employees through times of uncertainty, one executive emphasized the need for visibility and approachability, saying, “You need someone in leadership that people think they can come and talk to.”

Applying the Insights

Leaders fully supported the information we presented emphasizing incorporating the human aspect and empathy and storytelling when communicating data-driven decisions. As one executive noted, “Storytelling is so important. When you talk about metrics and standards, you’re talking about people. We need to bring those stories forward.” Further stressing the importance of communication, another executive reiterated the critical nature of transparency, particularly in response to fears around the use of AI.

3.

The Importance of Sense of Purpose, in Which Employees Have a Line of Sight and Feel Connected to the Mission and/or Values of Their Organization

Insights

One executive described their organization's recent adoption of a new policy and implementation of new benefits consistent with its mission, giving employees the space and time needed to care for themselves or a loved one navigating health challenges. Such demonstrations of commitment to company values can help reinforce employees' sense of purpose in their everyday jobs, understanding that they play a critical part in the advancement of the organization's mission, regardless of their functional role. Another executive explained that their organization has invested in its employees and community by establishing a specialized high school and other training opportunities to create a local career pipeline. As he stated, "You need to be an optimistic promoter of change."

Applying the Insights

We need leaders who can assess the landscape and make decisions with evolving information—whose openness to trying new things and ability to pivot as needed help their organizations thrive, even in times of uncertainty.

If there is one thing we can count on, it is that the challenges we face will continue to evolve. How employers respond in the face of uncertainty will help build resiliency within their workforces and benefit the overall performance of their businesses. It is within their control to maintain open lines of communication, to leverage the community aspect of the workplace, to provide a sense of stability, to remain committed to their organizational mission and purpose, and ultimately, to lead with empathy. As one executive shared during the session, "Leaders who look after their team and communities will change the world."

About the Milken Institute

The Milken Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan global think tank focused on accelerating measurable progress on the path to a meaningful life. With a focus on financial, physical, mental, and environmental health, we bring together the best ideas and innovative resourcing to develop blueprints for tackling some of our most critical global issues through the lens of what's pressing now and what's coming next.

About Milken Institute Health

Milken Institute Health bridges innovation gaps across the health-care continuum to advance whole-person health throughout the lifespan by improving healthy aging, public health, biomedical science, and food systems.

About Public Health at the Milken Institute

Public Health at the Milken Institute develops research, programs, and initiatives to activate sustainable solutions leading to better health for individuals and communities worldwide. To catalyze policy, system, and environmental change in public health and sustain impact, we approach our work in four interconnected areas: Prevention and Chronic Disease, Mental Health, Health Equity, and Employers and Public Health Priorities, which includes the Employer Action Exchange.

About the Milken Institute Employer Action Exchange

The Employer Action Exchange provides a trusted platform and includes expert guidance from key opinion leaders, briefings, and networking to advance customized, tangible actions on whole-person health priorities and investments. It offers a cultivated experience for employers representing diverse sectors and industries.

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