

A man and a woman are shopping in a grocery store. The man, with a beard and wearing a dark green shirt, is pointing towards the right. The woman, with long brown hair and wearing a white t-shirt and a brown plaid shirt, is smiling and looking in the same direction. They are standing next to a blue shopping cart filled with orange and brown bags. The background is a blurred grocery store aisle.

EHS Maturity in Retail: How Does the Industry Compare?



The Road to EHS Maturity in the Retail Sector



The Global EHS Readiness Index (GERI) provides insights from over 1000 Global Health and Safety Leaders. This benchmarking report provides a comparison of EHS maturity in the Retail industry versus all industries in the study.

Retail workers face a variety of EHS hazards that impact both frontline staff and warehouse personnel. These include ergonomic risks from repetitive tasks, heavy lifting, and prolonged standing; slips, trips, and falls in high-traffic areas; risks of workplace violence and robbery; exposure to hazardous cleaning chemicals and stockroom dust; manual handling injuries; fire and electrical hazards; and potential risks associated with crowd management during peak shopping periods. Additionally, incidents of violent and abusive behaviour towards retail staff have been on the rise, particularly in customer-facing roles, creating significant concerns around worker safety and mental well-being. Long hours, shift work, and high-pressure sales environments further contribute to psychosocial risks, including stress and fatigue.

The recent HSI and Focus Network Global EHS Readiness Index (GERI) highlights major gaps in EHS posture in the sector and offers guidance on how to optimise EHS outcomes. Technology plays a key role in managing EHS risk in Retail.



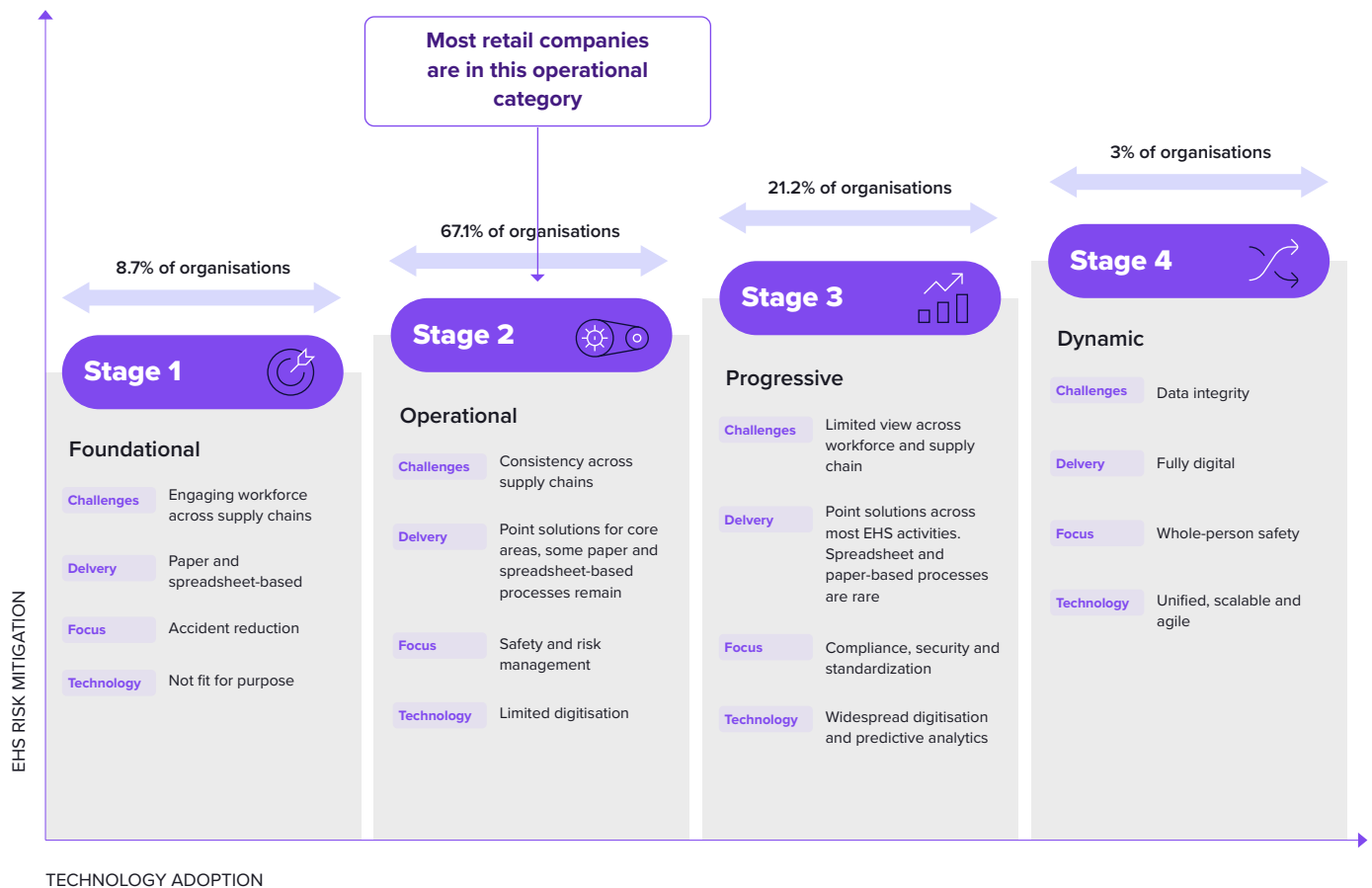
Retailers increasingly use point solutions to address core EHS issues. It is challenging to use digital EHS solutions across disparate, dynamic supply chains and complex franchise networks. Focus Network research shows that key issues to address with EHS solutions include incident management, supply chain management, workplace stress, bullying and aggression.

According to the Head of Health and Safety at a retailer with over 10000 employees “We have too many point solutions that are not integrated and are usually built internally. The use of paper and Excel for EHS activities still exists. We are trying to get away from this.”

“We have too many point solutions that are not integrated and are usually built internally. The use of paper and Excel for EHS activities still exists. We are trying to get away from this.”

Figure 1

Evolution of the EHS Function in the Retail Industry





The Key Challenges Faced in the Retail Sector



The GERI report identified some common challenges within Retail.

Increasingly, retailers are seeking to enforce EHS policies across global supply chains and franchise networks. It should be noted that the policies may not be the same and will vary depending on local conditions and requirements. According to VP of EHS at a retailer with more than 10000 employees, “Interpreting local requirements and standards and aligning them with our business is very difficult. We have too many disconnected systems in different countries, and we spend days trying to make consistent reports.” Nevertheless, retailers are seeking to ensure that at least basic EHS policies are applied in jurisdictions where health and safety legislation is minimal, and enforcement is weak.

According to VP of EHS at a retailer with more than 10000 employees,

“Interpreting local requirements and standards and aligning them with our business is very difficult. We have too many disconnected systems in different countries, and we spend days trying to make consistent reports.”



Leading EHS implementation challenges faced by retail companies include:



Brand & Franchise network complexity

The disparate, dynamic nature of retail networks makes it difficult to get visibility across all activities and workers— visibility is essential for EHS in this sector.



Cybersecurity issues

Security and privacy issues are amplified by complex supply chains and increased eCommerce activity. The complexity of managing multiple-point solutions makes securing data across supply chains an urgent challenge.



Psychosocial factors and fatigue

Psychosocial factors are often overlooked in the retail industry. Stress associated with long shifts, fatigue and insecure working conditions make mental health issues more likely to occur. Bullying and aggressive customer behavior are also highlighted as major psychosocial risks.



Supply chain management

Retail companies typically have complex and often global supply chains. Ensuring that supply chain partners are adequately trained and that they follow safety procedures is an ongoing challenge. This challenge is exacerbated by changes in organisation and employment relationships.



Environmental impact risk and ESG compliance

Retail and the transportation associated with it, is a large contributor to air pollution. Retail companies are under increased regulatory pressure to reduce their environmental footprints and to measure their environmental impact. ESG policies are also placing increased emphasis on reporting across a range of activities and increasingly across supply chains.



Ensuring EHS process compliance and adoption across retail supply chains

Compliance and adoption are major challenges, as is knowledge management across complex ecosystems. Increased emphasis must be placed on weaving EHS processes into retail operations across supply chains.



EHS Maturity in Retail: Areas of Focus

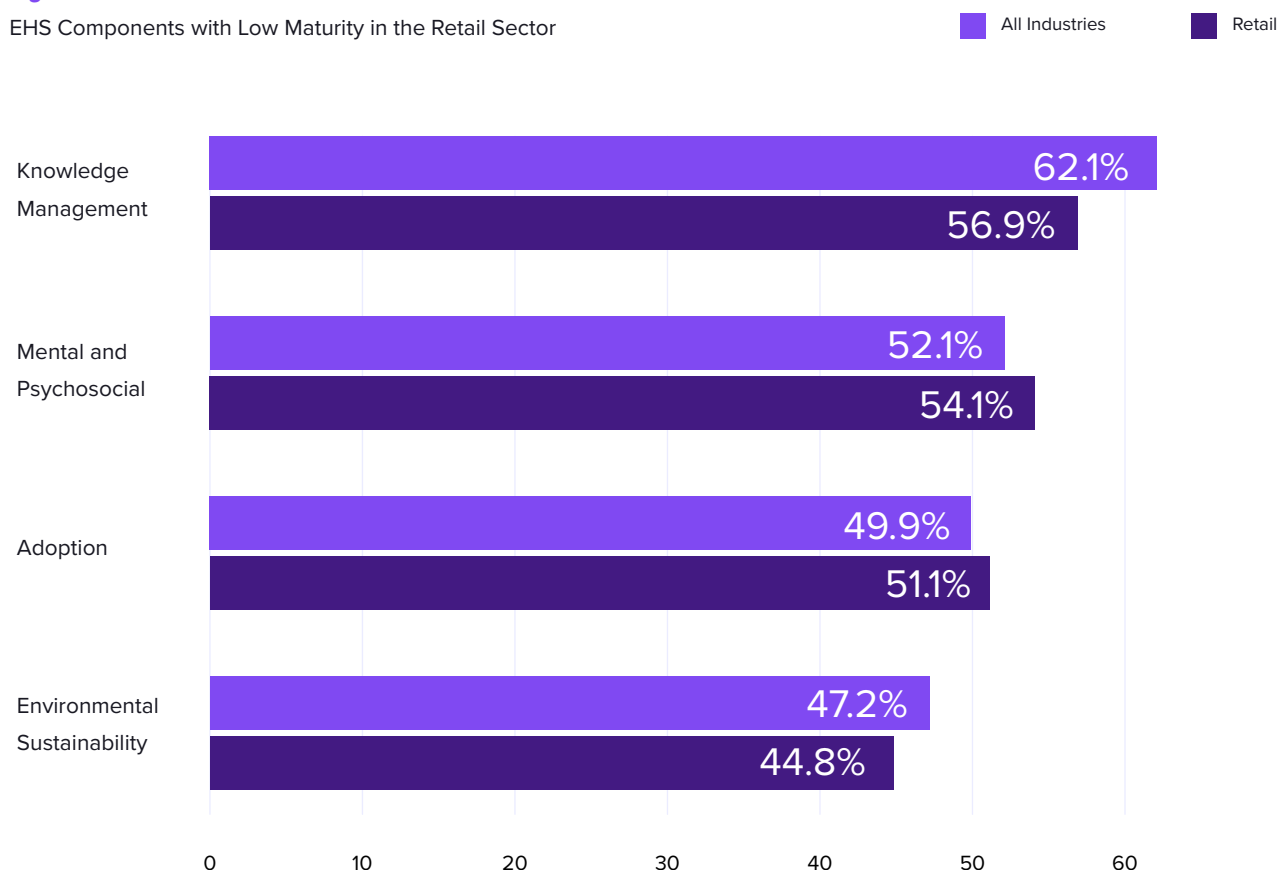
Focus Network's recent Global EHS Readiness Index (GERI) report reveals mean maturity scores by attribute for the retail sector, in percentages, where 100% is the highest score. Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to each component of the EHS function. Responses to these questions were then used to determine maturity for each component. For example, an organisation that indicates it cannot detect mental health incidents is given a very low score for psychosocial and mental health maturity. Another example is an organisation that indicates it has a centralised compliance management system in place. This contributes to a higher maturity score for compliance obligations. Maturity levels for each component are then aggregated to give an overall mean EHS maturity score.

The retail sector is defined as progressive from an EHS perspective, relative to other industries. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the EHS areas that require the most focus.

Figure 2 shows EHS components for the retail sector that are the least mature. These reveal the biggest gaps in EHS posture for retail organisations. It is these areas that require particular attention. It also illustrates the mean percentage score across all industries. Notably the sector is less mature than the mean for all industries in knowledge management and environmental sustainability.

Figure 2

EHS Components with Low Maturity in the Retail Sector



Single Platform Enables Real-Time Visibility, and Data Analytics Across Assets and Workforce



Given the increasing challenges, EHS leaders need to use technology to take a platform-based approach to EHS risk mitigation in the retail industry. This means that the industry needs to:

Have visibility across EHS activities including supply chains, franchises, workers and customers. Ongoing monitoring is required with corrective action taken instantly. Indeed, a single universal view of risk is critical in retail, given the complex nature of businesses in this sector. According to the GERI report, only 11% of retail organisations have a single view of risk across their supply chains.

Have a consistent and unified view of all activities across the supply chain. All documentation and data should be found in one place. Management and individual workers need visibility of all EHS processes and their implementation. Increasingly retail firms need to go beyond monitoring and have greater observability that offers contextual insights.

Rapidly respond to incidents from remote locations and ensure reporting to appropriate regulatory authorities. Compliance controls, critical controls and risk registers need to be on one platform for automated and integrated cross-referencing and actioning.

Training and certification. Supply chain partners, franchisees, and machine operators such as forklift truck drivers, need training to ensure compliance and safety across the organisation. Modern centralised EHS platforms allow the workforce to engage with the EHS function from any device and from any location. The GERI study reveals that only 11% of retail organisations have a robust and comprehensive EHS training program.

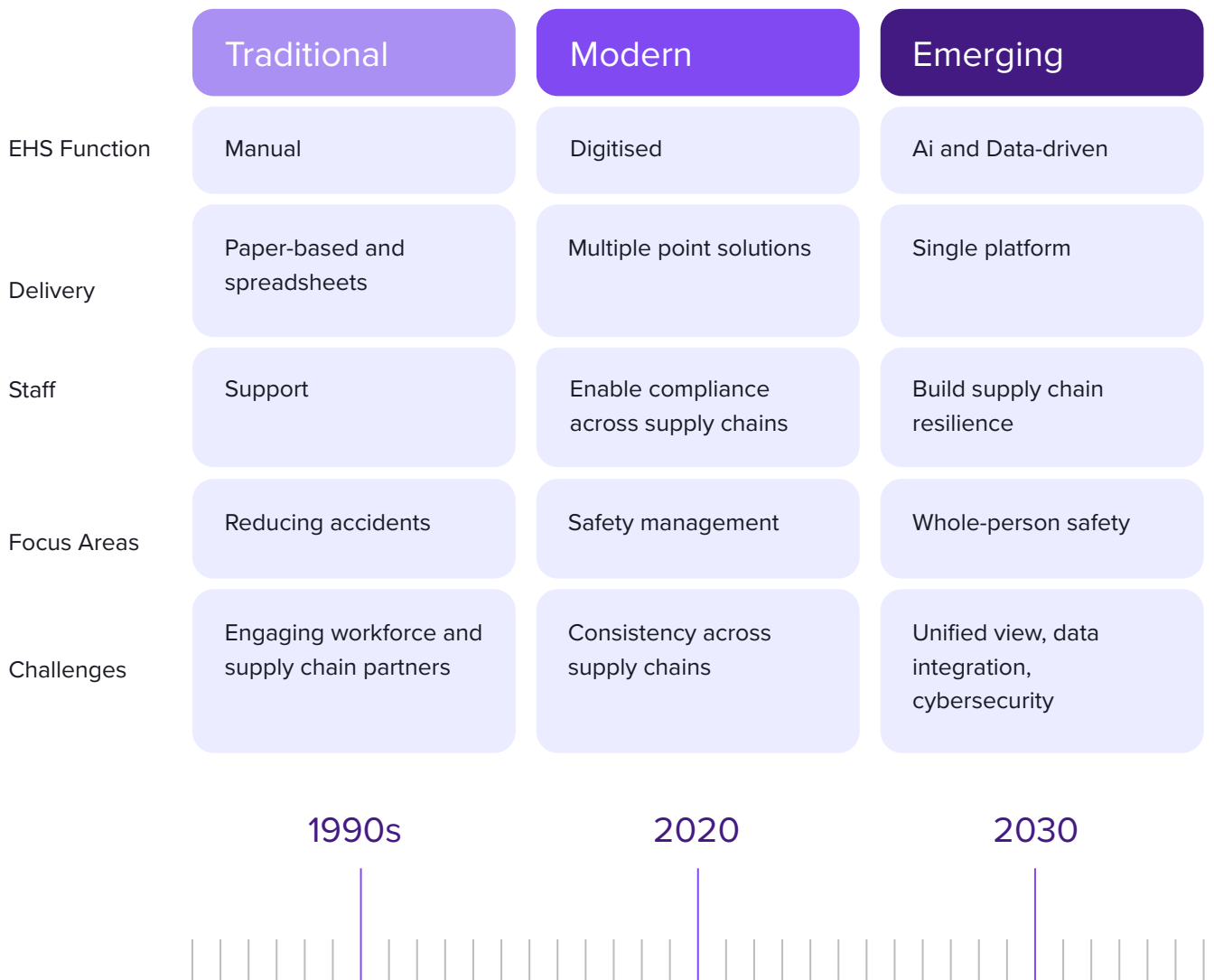


Emerging EHS Trends in the Retail Industry

As complexity increases within the Retail sector, so does the move to more advanced EHS processes and systems. These trends are summarised below.

Figure 3

The Evolution of the EHS Function





About Focus Network

Focus Network is a data-driven networking, research, and advisory hub dedicated to delivering localised insights and assessments for businesses around the globe. Our aim is to support senior executives and their teams in accelerating their overall strategies and investments.

focusnetwork.co

About HSI Donesafe

HSI Donesafe simplifies safety, compliance, and risk management with an easy-to-use, configurable platform. Trusted by 2,000+ companies globally, it offers 60+ modules, AI capabilities, and built-in reporting. A Verdantix 2025 EHS Software Leader, it empowers teams to streamline safety while ensuring scalability, flexibility, and efficiency - without reliance on technical support.

donesafe.com

Disclaimer

Whilst reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the information and content of this product was correct as at the date of first publication, neither Focus Network nor any person engaged or employed by Focus Network accepts any liability for any errors, omissions or other inaccuracies.

Readers should independently verify any facts and figures as no liability can be accepted in this regard - readers assume full responsibility and risk accordingly for their use of such information and content.

Any views and/or opinions expressed in this product by individual authors or contributors are their personal views and/or opinions and do not necessarily reflect the views and/or opinions of Focus Network.

