



ALLIANZ COMMERCIAL

# Allianz Risk Barometer

Identifying the major business risks for 2024

The most important corporate concerns for the year ahead, ranked by 3,069 risk management experts from 92 countries and territories

# Methodology

The 13th **Allianz Risk Barometer** incorporates the views of 3,069 respondents from 92 countries and territories. The annual corporate risk survey was conducted among Allianz customers (businesses around the globe), brokers and industry trade organizations. It also surveyed risk consultants, underwriters, senior managers, claims experts, as well as other risk management professionals in the corporate insurance segment of Allianz Commercial and other Allianz entities.

Respondents were questioned during October and November 2023. The survey focused on large, smaller and mid-size companies. Respondents were asked to select the industry about which they were particularly knowledgeable and to name up to three risks they believed to be most important.

Most answers were for large-size companies (>US\$500mn annual revenue) [1,340 respondents, 44%]. Mid-size companies (\$100mn+ to \$500mn revenue) contributed 792 respondents (26%), while smaller enterprises (<\$100mn revenue) produced 937 respondents (30%). Risk experts from 24 industry sectors were featured.

Ranking changes in the **Allianz Risk Barometer** are determined by positions year-on-year, not percentages.

All currencies listed in the report are in US\$ unless stated.

[➤ View the full regional, country and industry risk data](#)

3,069

respondents

92

countries and territories

24

industry sectors

Countries and industry sectors need at least 15 respondents to feature in the [Allianz Risk Barometer Appendix](#) results document

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Top risks for smaller and mid-size companies



## Cyber incidents

(e.g., cyber crime, IT network and service disruptions, malware / ransomware, data breaches, fines, and penalties)

# The most important global business risks for 2024

1  
36%  
→  
2023:  
1 (34%)



**Business interruption**  
(incl. supply chain disruption)

2  
31%  
→  
2023:  
2 (34%)



**Natural catastrophes**  
(e.g., storm, flood, earthquake, wildfire, extreme weather events)

3  
26%  
↑  
2023:  
6 (19%)



**Changes in legislation and regulation<sup>1</sup>**  
(e.g., tariffs, economic sanctions, protectionism, Euro-zone disintegration)

4  
19%  
↑  
2023:  
5 (19%)



**Macroeconomic developments<sup>2</sup>**  
(e.g., inflation, deflation, monetary policies, austerity programs)

5  
19%  
↓  
2023:  
3 (25%)



**Fire, explosion**

6  
19%  
↑  
2023:  
9 (14%)



**Climate change**  
(e.g., physical, operational, and financial risks as a result of global warming)

7  
18%  
→  
2023:  
7 (17%)



**Political risks and violence**  
(e.g., political instability, war, terrorism, coup d'état, civil commotion, strikes, riots, looting)

8  
14%  
↑  
2023:  
10 (13%)



**Market developments**  
(e.g., intensified competition / new entrants, M&A, market stagnation, market fluctuation)

9  
13%  
↑  
NEW



**Shortage of skilled workforce**

10  
12%  
↓  
2023:  
8 (14%)

**Key**

- ↑ Risk higher than in 2023
- ↓ Risk lower than in 2023
- No change from 2023
- (5%) 2023 risk ranking %

Source: Allianz Commercial

Figures represent how often a risk was selected as a percentage of all survey responses  
Respondents: 3,069. Figures don't add up to 100% as up to three risks could be selected

NEW New entry in the top 10 risks

<sup>1</sup> Changes in legislation and regulation ranks higher than macroeconomic developments based on the actual number of responses

<sup>2</sup> Macroeconomic developments ranks higher than fire, explosion based on the actual number of responses

[Watch our short film about the top 10 risks for 2024](#)

[View the full Allianz Risk Barometer 2024 rankings here](#)

# Allianz Risk Barometer 2024: Top concerns around the world

[View all country, regional and industry risk data here](#)

The graphics show the top three risks in **selected countries** and whether each risk is considered to be more or less important than 12 months ago or is in the same position.



## Australia

- 1 Cyber ↑
- 2 Natural catastrophes ↓
- 3 Shortage of skilled workforce ↑

Cyber incidents replaces natural catastrophes as this year's top business concern, while shortage of skilled workforce becomes a top three ranked peril.



## Brazil

- 1 Climate change ↑
- 2 Business interruption ↓
- 2 Cyber →

Climate change soars from #8 in 2023 to become this year's top risk for the first time.



## Canada

- 1 Business interruption ↑
- 2 Cyber ↓
- 3 Natural catastrophes ↑

Companies are worried about the increasing number of disruptive scenarios they face.



## China

- 1 Changes in legislation →
- 2 Macroeconomic developments ↑
- 3 Market developments ↑

Changes in legislation and regulation ranks as the top risk for the second year in succession.



## France

- 1 Cyber →
- 2 Business interruption →
- 3 Fire ↑

Fire and explosion moves up four positions year-on-year to become a top three risk, while political risks is a new peril in the top 10.



## Germany

- 1 Cyber ↑
- 2 Business interruption ↓
- 3 Changes in legislation ↑

Cyber incidents is the new top peril for businesses and changes in legislation and regulation is a new top three risk.



## India

- 1 Cyber →
- 2 Business interruption →
- 3 Natural catastrophes →

The top three risks are unchanged year-on-year, with cyber incidents ranking as the top peril for the seventh year in a row.



## Italy

- 1 Business interruption ↑
- 1 Cyber →
- 3 Climate change ↑

Climate change moves in to the top three risk threats with a third of responses.



## Japan

- 1 Cyber →
- 2 Natural catastrophes →
- 3 Business interruption →

Cyber incidents ranks as the top risk for the fourth year in succession.



## Nigeria

- 1 Changes in legislation ↑
- 1 Cyber ↑
- 1 Macroeconomic developments →

Macroeconomic developments ranks as the top risk for the second year in a row, alongside changes in legislation and regulation and cyber incidents.



## Singapore

- 1 Business interruption →
- 2 Cyber →
- 3 Natural catastrophes →

While the top three perils remain unchanged year-on-year, climate change climbs to become a top five risk.



## South Africa

- 1 Critical infrastructure blackouts →
- 2 Cyber →
- 3 Business interruption →

Fear of power disruption or failure ranks as the top risk for the second year in a row.



## Spain

- 1 Business interruption ↑
- 2 Cyber ↓
- 2 Fire ↑

Business interruption including supply chain disruption is the new top risk, up from #2 in 2023.



## Switzerland

- 1 Cyber →
- 2 Business interruption ↑
- 2 Changes in legislation ↑

Business interruption and legislative or regulatory change rank as higher concerns for companies than in 2023.



## UK

- 1 Cyber →
- 2 Business interruption →
- 3 Natural catastrophes ↑

Natural catastrophes is a new entry in the top 10 business risks after a number of storm and flood events during 2023.



## USA

- 1 Cyber ↑
- 2 Business interruption ↓
- 3 Natural catastrophes ↑

Cyber incidents is the new top risk for US businesses, while a record loss total from severe thunderstorms sees natural catastrophes rise to #3.

# Top global risks overview

The top risks in this year's **Allianz Risk Barometer** reflect the big issues facing companies right now – digitalization, climate change and an uncertain geopolitical environment. Many of these risks are already hitting home, with extreme weather, ransomware attacks and regional conflicts testing the resilience of supply chains and business models. The fast pace of change, and the growing interconnected nature of risk, likely necessitates a shift up in gear for many companies when it comes to risk management.

Against this backdrop, cyber and the closely interlinked peril of business interruption continue to rank as the business risks of most concern for companies around the globe. Meanwhile, the more traditional threats posed by natural catastrophes and fire and explosion climb back up the rankings. At the same time, those issues that have become more prominent in recent years, such as the energy crisis, pandemic outbreak, and economic risks, fall down the list of company concerns as some Covid-19-related issues have abated, although challenges still loom.

## Cyber fears widen

**Cyber incidents** is the top global risk in the **Allianz Risk Barometer** – for the first time by a clear margin (36% of responses, 5 percentage points ahead). It ranks as the risk of most concern in the Americas, Africa and Middle East, Asia Pacific, and Europe regions, and across all company sizes, large (>US\$500mn annual revenue), mid-size (\$100mn+ to \$500mn), and smaller (<\$100mn), for the first time as well. Cyber is the cause of business interruption that companies fear most, while cyber security resilience is their most concerning environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risk issue. It is also the top company concern across a wide range of industries including consumer goods, financial services, government, public services, healthcare, leisure and tourism, media, professional services, technology, and telecommunications.

Cyber threats are constantly evolving as hackers and criminals gain access to new technologies or find new ways to exploit old vulnerabilities. Hackers are beginning to use artificial intelligence (AI) powered language models to increase the speed and scope of ransomware attacks, as well as create new malware and produce highly convincing phishing emails and deep fakes. Such attacks are likely to proliferate during 2024.

*“It’s no surprise that cyber is the top concern for businesses globally. Businesses and the wider economy are now reliant on digital services and infrastructure for both critical and everyday activities. Almost everything is now linked to technology. But once you are connected it opens the door to hackers to steal data or threaten disruption for extortion,”* says **Michael Bruch, Global Head of Risk Advisory Services at Allianz Commercial**.

Data breach is the cyber exposure of most concern, according to the **Allianz Risk Barometer**, followed by cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure and physical assets and an increase in ransomware attacks. In the context of turbulent geopolitics and this ever-deepening reliance on digital devices, the potential shutdown of critical infrastructure is likely to become a much more significant and concerning risk for businesses in the future, respondents believe.

| [Find out more about cyber risk trends](#)



### Allianz Risk Barometer risers and fallers at a glance

**#1** **Cyber incidents** is the top global business risk – for the first time by a clear margin – and across all company sizes



After another record-breaking year, **natural catastrophes** rises to #3 from #6



The most frequent driver of business interruption losses, **fire and explosion**, rises to #6 from #9



**Political risks and violence** rises again to #8 from #10 with more volatility and unrest expected in 2024



Energy crisis is the biggest faller from #4 to #11, although long-term concerns remain



Pandemic risk has plummeted to the bottom of the risk rankings

[View the full global business risk rankings for 2024](#)



## Extreme weather drives nat cat concerns

One of the biggest movers in this year's survey is **natural catastrophes** (26%). In a sign that companies are feeling the impact of extreme weather and climate events, it ranks #3, up three positions on last year.

2023 was again a record-breaking year on several fronts. It was the hottest year since records began, according to the World Meteorological Organization<sup>1</sup>, while insured losses in 2023 exceeded \$100bn for the fourth consecutive year. Losses from severe thunderstorms reached a new all-time high of \$60bn<sup>2</sup>.

The shattering of climate records<sup>3</sup> in 2023 included sea surface temperatures, sea level rise, and low Antarctic sea ice. **Climate change** (18%) may be a non-mover year-on-year in the **Allianz Risk Barometer** at #7, but this risk's importance is clearly also reflected in natural catastrophes' rise in the rankings. It is seen as a top risk priority for large companies (ranking #4, its highest ever position), is the top risk in Brazil and Turkey, and ranks higher year-on-year in many countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Nigeria, Singapore, Spain, UK, and the US.

Physical damage and business interruption are the two direct impacts of climate change businesses fear most. When it comes to mitigation actions, the major company implementations are: transitioning to low-carbon business models, and improving planning and response to climate events, including adopting measures to improve the ability of sites to cope with extreme weather. Businesses are also seeking protection and financing mechanisms to address the growing climate insurance protection gap, while boosting supply chain resilience is expected to be a key area of focus in 2024, the **Allianz Risk Barometer** results show.

[➔ Find out more about natural catastrophe and climate change risk trends](#)



## Regulatory and political risks rise

Despite vows to reduce bureaucracy, companies will still face new rules and regulations in 2024 that will not only require a high administrative burden but could also impose restrictions on their business activities, ensuring **changes in legislation and regulation** (19%) rises one place to #4 in the 2024 survey. Increasing intervention by policymakers, a trend that first began out of economic necessity during the Covid-19 pandemic, continues, driven by factors such as the energy crisis, green transformation, or in the interests of national security or economic self-sufficiency. Emerging regulations and legal developments in areas like artificial intelligence (AI) are also on companies' risk radars, as is the growing number of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosure and reporting requirements, such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive in the European Union.

*“ESG issues are of increasing importance for companies, as they should be. However, ESG is also becoming a systemic risk that impacts almost all aspects of operations, including climate change, biodiversity, human rights, workers' wellbeing, and supply chains,” says Bruch. “The effort involved in obtaining the required data to comply with the growing number of reporting mandates is enormous and can be almost impossible for smaller companies.”*

Organizations communicating a strong sustainability agenda can find themselves in a bind – they can be litigation targets for groups who believe they are not doing enough to meet their climate or societal commitments, as well as those who claim they are making commitments they can't meet. This is leading to cases of 'green hushing', whereby companies deliberately under-report or hide their ESG credentials from public view to avoid scrutiny. The lack of transparency makes it harder to understand the true impact of sustainability strategies and investments, which could inhibit the adoption of ESG activities by other companies.

| [Find out more about regulation and ESG risk trends](#)



Unsurprisingly, given ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, and tensions between China and the US, **political risks and violence** (14%) rises up the survey year-on-year to #8 from #10. The geopolitical environment continues to be uncertain and volatile, and an increasingly relevant source of risk for supply chains and international trade. The recent disruption in the Red Sea – a vital trade route between Europe and Asia – due to Houthi rebel attacks on vessels is the latest risk to supply chains. Cargo-carrying ships have had to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope around the southern tip of Africa, prolonging journeys.

2024 is also a record-breaking election year, when as much as 50% of the world's population could go to the polls. In addition to the increased risk of election related civil unrest, there is also an increased risk of terrorism in Western Europe and North America. This is primarily driven by the Israel and Gaza war leading to a radicalization of certain parts of the population in these regions. The risk of pre-emptive cross-border wars is also expected to grow.

| [Find out more about political risks and violence trends](#)



## Complexity and interconnectivity drive business interruption fears

Despite an easing of post-pandemic supply chain disruption in 2023, and risk management actions taken by companies, **business interruption** (31%) retains its position as the second biggest threat in the 2024 survey. The **Allianz Risk Barometer** results show that the most common actions businesses are taking to de-risk their supply chains are: developing alternative suppliers; improving business continuity management; and identifying and remediating supply chain bottlenecks.

However, business interruption (BI) is closely linked to many of this year's highly ranked risks, such as cyber, natural catastrophes, and fire, and remains a key concern in a rapidly changing world.

| [Find out more about business interruption risk trends](#)

Ranking #6 overall, **fire, explosion** (19%), up from #9 in 2023, is a significant peril for companies and global supply chains, particularly where critical components are concentrated geographically and among a small number of suppliers. Disruption from fire can be very high, as it can take longer to recover from than many other perils, and the impact on suppliers can often be great. For sectors such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals, which deal with highly flammable and explosive materials, damaged facilities can sometimes take years to rebuild and get production back up and running to full capacity.

Fire has also become an elevated risk with electrification and the growing prevalence of lithium-ion batteries. Inadequate handling and transportation of these batteries has been linked to several large fire incidents at sea and on land in recent years. Allianz Commercial analysis of more than 1,000 business interruption insurance claims over the past five years, worth more than US\$1.3bn, shows fire is the most frequent driver of these claims and ranks second in terms of loss value.

| [Find out more about fire risk trends](#)



## Economic and energy crisis concerns ease but market fears rise

Despite the ongoing uncertain global economic outlook, rising insolvency levels (global insolvencies are forecast to increase by +8% in 2024) and still-high interest rates, **macroeconomic developments** (19%), which ranked #3 last year, falls to #5 in 2024. Growth outlooks remain weak, although there is some hope among respondents that 2024 could see the wild economic ups and downs experienced since the Covid-19 shock settle down and pivot to more usual levels. However, the record-breaking number of elections<sup>4</sup> brings the risk of further upheavals to business, with the potential for more protectionism a concern.

[Find out more about macroeconomic developments and insolvency risk trends](#)

Protectionism is one of three paradigm shifts identified as being behind **market developments** (13%) rising to #9 in the top global risk rankings in 2024 (#11 in 2023). The perceived end of the steady expansion of access to production factors, especially labor, and uncertainty around the extent of AI's anticipated transformative impact on every industry sector are the others.

[Find out more about market developments](#)

Several other risks linked to the fallout of Covid-19 are also down in this year's rankings. For example, **shortage of skilled workforce** (12%) falls from #8 to #10, although demographic change still means a shortage of skilled labor in many sectors worldwide. It ranks #8 in Europe and #10 in the Americas, as well as being a top four risk in countries such as Australia, Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. Meanwhile, **pandemic outbreak** itself, ranked second in 2021, now ranks #19 (only 4% of responses), following the successful roll-out of immunization programs around the world.

[Find out more about the shortage of skilled workforce](#)

The **energy crisis** (12%) is the biggest faller in this year's **Allianz Risk Barometer**, down to #11 from #4. However, although the immediate threat appears to have receded, the risk has far from gone away.

*"The energy crisis is now seen as less of a looming threat with steps taken over the past 12 months to reduce reliance on Russian gas and reduce energy consumption," says Daniel Muller, Emerging Risks and Trends Manager at Allianz Commercial. "However, longer term, energy security is strongly linked to geopolitical risks, climate change and critical infrastructure failure. The transition from fossil fuels to green energy will be difficult for carbon-intensive industries and a major challenge for the mobility sector and associated infrastructure."*



## Risks continue to converge

Compared with pre-Covid-19 times, many companies are now much better prepared for business interruption or supply chain events. However, since the pandemic, the pace of technological, societal, and geopolitical change has also quickened, often faster than companies, regulators and legislators can keep up with. Increasingly the related risks overlap, and developments in one area can trigger a chain of events or causal effects in others.

Many of the top risks in this year's **Allianz Risk Barometer** are closely interconnected. For example, the development of cyber risk is linked to the evolution of technologies like AI, and, in the near-future, quantum computing. But cyber is also tied to political instability and war, with numerous hacking groups supported by states to develop cyber weapons and target foreign supply chains, businesses, and critical infrastructure.

Environmental, technological and political risks are also converging.

*"Business interruption is also closely linked to natural catastrophes, which are becoming more extreme with climate change and inadequate infrastructure," says Muller. "At the same time, climate change is driving decarbonization and the energy transition, which creates new opportunities but also risks from new usage of technologies, like electric vehicles with lithium-ion batteries, hydrogen and the need for new supply chains. Rare earth minerals and metals, for batteries, for example, are often found in the most underdeveloped and politically volatile areas, potentially leading to future political and environmental issues."*

## Shift up a gear

Given the fast pace of change, and the growing interconnected nature of risk, businesses will need to up their game when it comes to risk management, increasing their prediction and prevention capabilities across risk types, and using advanced analytics and data to better understand their exposures.

*"In this new world of more interconnected and complex risks, companies will need proactive and holistic risk management if they are to get a complete overview of the risks they face and the effects of evolving technology and regulations. Analytics tools and data can help companies get much higher levels of transparency of the future risk landscape and how they can best protect their business," says Bruch.*

*"Risk management must be integrated into the entire value chain of a company across all stakeholders, and needs to be even more closely interlinked and take on a more strategic role within an organization so that it is anchored in its DNA."*

*"In times of rapid change, it is hard for executives to separate fact from fiction; it is easy to be seduced by the latest trend, and tempting to be drawn into blindly copying what the competition is doing," adds Deniz Güney Akkor, a Senior Risk Analyst at Allianz Commercial. "Following the crowd is not the answer, however. The most successful companies understand that they have to build a strong and distinctive identity which allows them to carve out their own market position, rather than reacting to a market created by others."*

Yet global collaboration will also be crucial to mitigating future risks and avoiding unintended consequences.

*"Risk management can transform risks into opportunities," Muller explains. "At Allianz, we collaborate with our internal expert teams to develop technical standards and guidance aimed at facilitating the faster adoption of new green technologies by enhancing our understanding of the associated risks."*

## Resilience gap widening between large and small

The **Allianz Risk Barometer** results also show that the resilience gap between large and smaller companies is widening, as bigger firms take on lessons learned from the pandemic and apply them to risks like cyber and natural catastrophes.

Among large companies, risk awareness has grown since the pandemic, and there has been a notable drive to bolster resilience. Typically, big companies have more resources and expertise to invest in loss prevention and mitigation than smaller companies, which often lack resilience expertise. Smaller companies are more vulnerable in the event of a cyber-attack or natural catastrophe and can easily end up paralyzed or even out of business.

As the resilience gap widens, mid-size and smaller companies will increasingly rely on tailored insurance solutions to protect themselves. However, in a world of complex and changing risks they will also need more risk management support, including loss prevention and resilience advice, to mitigate the business impact of surprise events.

Insurers can help to create awareness, educate, train, partner with, and proactively support these companies with insights and risk management services, in addition to insurance products. Helping these companies prepare for risks, whether that be a cyber-attack or climate change, directly results in the lower likelihood of potential long-term business interruptions.

[➤ Find out more about the top risk trends for mid-size and smaller companies](#)



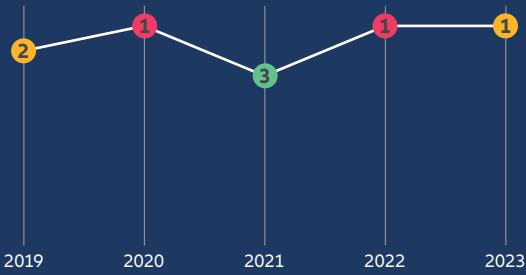
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Cyber incidents

36% →

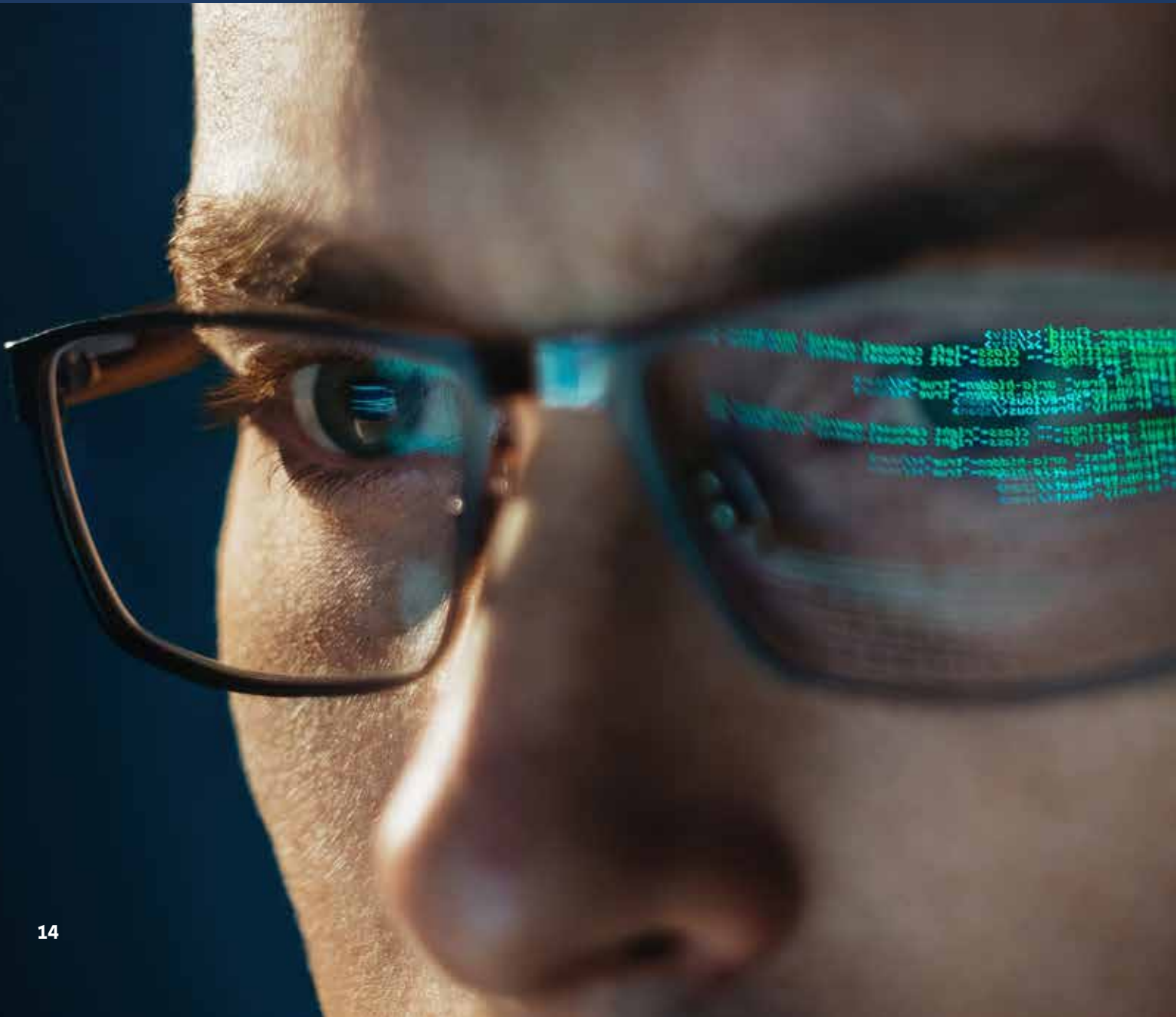
## Ranking history:

● Up on previous year ● No change  
● Down on previous year



## Top risk in:

- |             |             |               |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| ● Argentina | ● India     | ● Portugal    |
| ● Australia | ● Italy     | ● Switzerland |
| ● Austria   | ● Japan     | ● Uganda      |
| ● Belgium   | ● Kenya     | ● UK          |
| ● France    | ● Mauritius | ● USA         |
| ● Germany   | ● Nigeria   |               |



Cyber incidents such as ransomware attacks, data breaches, and IT disruptions, rank as the top global risk in the **Allianz Risk Barometer** – and by a clear margin for the first time. What are the main trends set to drive cyber activity in 2024?

Following two years of high but stable loss activity, 2023 saw a worrying resurgence in ransomware and extortion losses, as the cyber threat landscape continues to evolve. Hackers are increasingly targeting IT and physical supply chains, launching mass cyber-attacks, and finding new ways to extort money from businesses, large and small. It's little wonder that companies rank cyber risk as their top concern (36% of responses – 5% points ahead of the second top risk) and, for the first time, across all company sizes, large (>US\$500mn annual revenue), mid-size (\$100mn+ to \$500mn), and smaller (<\$100mn), as well.

It is the cause of business interruption that companies fear most, while cyber security resilience ranks as firms' most concerning environmental, social, and governance (ESG) challenge. It is also the top company concern across a wide range of industries, including consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, and telecommunications, to name just a few.



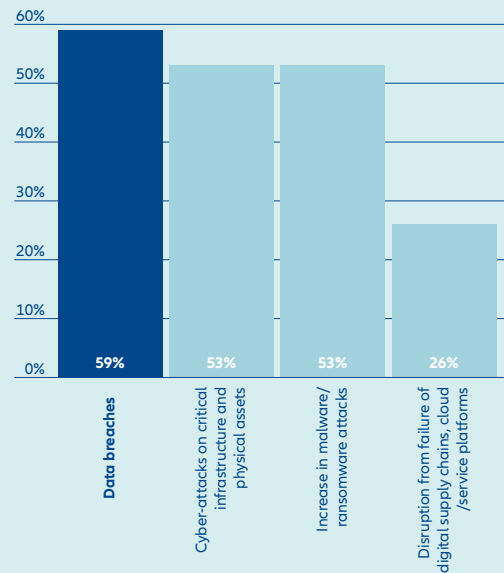
## Ransomware on the rise

By the start of the next decade, ransomware activity alone is projected to cost its victims \$265bn annually<sup>5</sup>. So called Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) kits, where prices start from as little as \$40, have been a key driver in rising activity during 2023. Gangs are also carrying out more attacks faster, with the average number of days taken to execute one falling from around 60 days in 2019 to four<sup>6</sup>. Ransomware claims activity was up by more than 50% year-on-year in 2023.

Most ransomware attacks now involve the theft of personal or sensitive commercial data for the purpose of extortion, increasing the cost and complexity of incidents, as well as bringing greater potential for reputational damage. Allianz Commercial’s analysis of large cyber losses (€1mn+) in recent years shows that the number of cases in which data is exfiltrated is increasing – doubling from 40% in 2019 to almost 80% in 2022, with 2023 activity tracking even higher.

*“Protecting an organization against intrusion is a cat and mouse game, in which the cyber criminals have the advantage,” says **Rishi Baviskar, Global Head of Cyber Risk Consulting, Allianz Commercial.** “Threat actors are now exploring ways to use artificial intelligence (AI) to automate and accelerate attacks, creating more effective malware and phishing. Combined with the explosion in connected mobile devices and 5G-enabled Internet of Things (IoT), the avenues for cyber-attacks look only likely to increase in future.”*

## Which cyber exposures concern your company most?



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 1,112. Respondents could select more than one risk. Top 4 answers.

**Data breach is the cyber exposure of most concern, according to Allianz Risk Barometer respondents, followed by cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure and physical assets and the increase in ransomware attacks. In the context of turbulent geopolitics and the ever-deepening reliance on digital devices, the potential shutdown of critical infrastructure is likely to become a much more concerning risk for businesses in future, respondents believe.**





## The power of AI (to accelerate cyber-attacks)

AI adoption brings numerous opportunities and benefits, but also risk. Threat actors are already using AI-powered language models like ChatGPT to write code. Generative AI can help less proficient threat actors create new strains and variations of existing ransomware, potentially increasing the number of attacks they can execute. An increased utilization of AI by malicious actors in the future is to be expected, necessitating even stronger cyber security measures.

Voice simulation software has already become a powerful addition to the cyber criminal's arsenal. Meanwhile, deepfake video technology designed and sold for phishing frauds can also now be found online, for prices as low as \$20 per minute.



Deepfake video technology designed and sold for phishing frauds can also now be found online, for prices as low as \$20 per minute



## Mobile devices expose data

Lax security and the mixing of personal and corporate data on mobile devices, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops, is an attractive combination for cyber criminals. Allianz Commercial has seen a growing number of incidents caused by poor cyber security around mobile devices. During the pandemic many organizations enabled new ways of accessing their corporate network via private devices, without the need for multi-factor authentication (MFA). This also resulted in a number of successful cyber-attacks and large insurance claims.

*"Criminals are now targeting mobile devices with specific malware to gain remote access, steal login credentials, or to deploy ransomware," says Baviskar. "Personal devices tend to have less stringent security measures. Utilizing public wi-fi on such devices can increase their vulnerability, including exposure to phishing attacks via social media."*

The roll-out of 5G technology is also an area of potential concern if not managed appropriately, given it will power even more connected devices. However, many IoT devices do not have a good record when it comes to cyber security, are easily discoverable, and will not have MFA mechanisms, which, together with the addition of AI, presents a serious cyber threat.

## Security skills shortage a factor in incidents

The current global cyber security workforce gap stands at more than four million people<sup>7</sup>, with demand growing twice as fast as supply. Gartner<sup>8</sup> predicts that a lack of talent or human failure will be responsible for over half of significant cyber incidents by 2025. Shortage of skilled workforce ranks joint #5 in the top concerns of the media sector and is a top 10 risk in technology in the **Allianz Risk Barometer**.

It is difficult to hire good cyber security engineers, and without skilled personnel, it is more difficult to predict and prevent incidents, which could mean more losses in the future. It also impacts the cost of an incident. Organizations with a high level of security skills shortage had a \$5.36mn average data breach cost, around 20% higher than the actual average cost, according to the IBM Cost of a Data Breach Report 2023<sup>9</sup>.

## Early detection is key

Preventing a cyber-attack is therefore becoming harder, and the stakes are higher. As a result, early detection and response capabilities and tools are becoming ever more important. Investment in detection backed by AI should also help to catch more incidents earlier. If companies do not have effective early detection tools this can lead to longer unplanned downtime, increased costs and have a greater impact on customers, revenue and reputation.

The lion's share of IT security budgets is currently spent on prevention with around 35% directed to detection and response. *"However, if undetected an intrusion can quickly escalate, and once data is encrypted and / or stolen, the costs snowball – as much as 1,000 times higher than if an incident is detected and contained early. The difference between a €20,000 loss turning into a €20mn one,"* explains **Michael Daum, Global Head of Cyber Claims at Allianz Commercial**.

*"Looking forward, detection tools will be the next logical step for most companies to invest in. Ultimately, early detection and effective response capabilities will be key to mitigating the impact of cyber-attacks, as well as ensuring a sustainable cyber insurance market going forward."*

### DEEP DIVE

- [↗ Top ESG risk trends for companies](#)
- [↗ Top risks for smaller and mid-size companies](#)
- [↗ Cyber threats and risk mitigation best practice](#)
- [↗ How AI could change insurance](#)

## SMEs the increasing sweet spot

For smaller and mid-size companies (SMEs), the cyber risk threat has intensified because of their growing reliance on outsourcing for services, including managed IT and cyber security providers, given these firms lack the financial resources and in-house expertise of larger organizations.

As larger companies have ramped up their cyber protection, criminals have targeted smaller firms. SMEs are less able to withstand the business interruption consequences of a cyber-attack. If a small company with poor controls or inadequate risk management suffers a significant incident, there is a chance it might not survive.

*"SMEs should remain vigilant and have a clear understanding of the risks involved and allocate ample resources in terms of personnel, IT infrastructure, and budget to implement the required security measures,"* says **Rishi Baviskar, Global Head of Cyber Risk Consulting, Allianz Commercial**.

*"Initiating a conversation with an MSSP [Managed Security Service Provider] can serve as an excellent initial move, allowing for the creation of an IT budget and strategy tailored to the business's specific priorities."*

Businesses can take a proactive approach to tackling cyber threats by ensuring their cyber security strategy identifies their most crucial information system assets. Then, they should deploy appropriate detection and monitoring software, both at the network perimeter and on end-points, often involving collaboration with cyber-security service partners, to uncover and nullify threats attempting to gain network access.

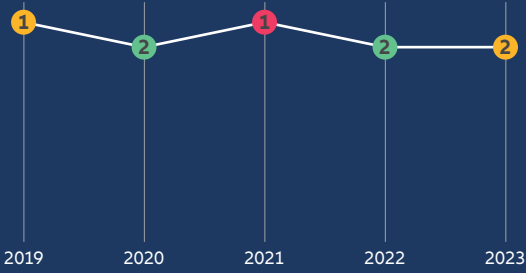
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# Business interruption (incl. supply chain disruption)

31% →

### Ranking history:

● Up on previous year ● No change  
● Down on previous year



### Top risk in:

- Canada
- Ireland
- Italy
- Malaysia
- Netherlands
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Spain
- Thailand



Companies are confident that the worst of two key disruptors of recent times, the pandemic and the energy crisis, are behind them. However, business interruption remains a key concern as firms are challenged to build resilience and diversify supply chains in a rapidly changing world.

Business interruption (BI) ranks second in the **Allianz Risk Barometer**, behind the closely linked peril of cyber. It ranks among the top three risks for companies of all sizes, and is the second biggest concern in the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific and Africa and Middle East regions.

With almost all companies reliant on supply chains for critical products and services, business interruption and supply chain disruption remains at the forefront of risk, explains **Marianna Grammatika, a Head of Risk Consulting at Allianz Commercial**: *"It is the extent of the disruption that becomes the focus point. Some sectors of industry operate with supply chains that have extensive geographic footprints."*

The prominence of BI also reflects the volatile environment that companies currently operate in, according to **Alberto Barani, a Business Interruption Group Leader at Allianz Commercial**: *"We live in a very interconnected world. Despite efforts to improve resilience, the need for efficiency means many companies still run with low levels of stock and just-in-time manufacturing, which results in little margin for errors or disruption."*



## More resilient supply chains?

Covid-19 and the resulting disruption to supply chains has been a wake-up call for companies. Compared with pre-pandemic times, many companies are now much better prepared for business interruption or supply chain events.

*“Before Covid-19, companies were generally reactive to events, but now they are much more aware of critical threats and the need to diversify and protect critical points. Awareness of business interruption and supply chain vulnerabilities makes a business better prepared and able to react in a smarter and more informed manner,”* Grammatika says.

According to the **Allianz Risk Barometer** results, businesses are most likely to develop alternative suppliers (60% of responses) when taking action to de-risk supply chains, followed by improving business continuity management (42%) and identifying and remediating supply chain bottlenecks (37%).

However, smaller companies and those in specialist and high value industries are more limited in what they can do to diversify their supply chains.

*“Businesses may still have a number of options to mitigate their exposure. This may include changing the business model and if this is not viable, there may be options to reconfigure the supply chain – some sectors are heavily concentrated on a small number of suppliers or geography. For others, the cost of increasing redundancy or relocating suppliers is just too great,”* says Grammatika.





Catastrophic flooding in Slovenia impacted European car manufacturing

## Causes of most concern

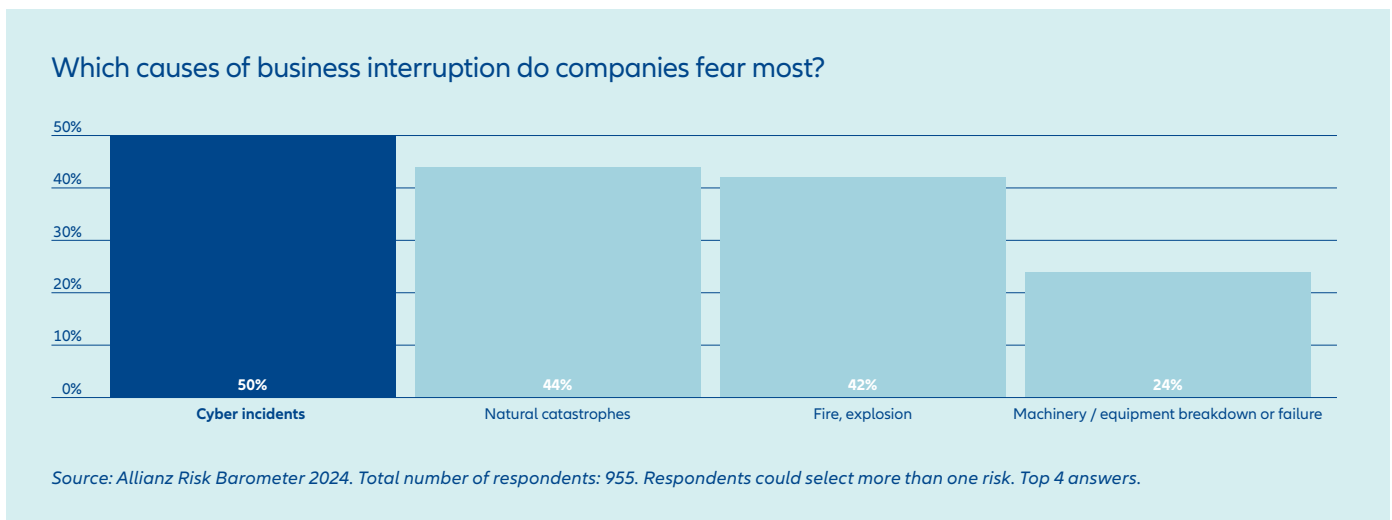
Cyber incidents and natural catastrophes are the top two causes of BI feared most by companies, followed by fire, and machinery / equipment breakdown or failure (see chart).

However, almost any peril can cause disruption. BI is closely related to many of the other top global risks in this year's **Allianz Risk Barometer**, such as climate change (#7), political risks and violence (#8), skills shortages (#10), energy crisis (#11) and the impact of new technologies (#12) to name but a few.

*“The global risk landscape is constantly changing, with climate change, digitalization, and geopolitics. Some risks lie dormant, but a significant enough change in geopolitics or events such as extreme weather patterns can very quickly change the predominant risks,”* says Grammatika.

The recent disruption in the Red Sea – a vital trade route between Europe and Asia – due to Houthi rebel attacks on vessels is the latest risk to hit supply chains. More than 400 container ships were diverted via the Cape of Good Hope around the southern tip of Africa between mid-December 2023 and the beginning of January, 2024 as a result of the attacks, prolonging journeys and causing delays to the delivery of products.

That said, natural disasters and fire and explosion are notable for their potential to generate large BI losses and supply chain disruption. Severe flooding in Slovenia in August gave rise to one of the biggest supply chain events of 2023<sup>10</sup>, causing production delays and parts shortages for European car manufacturers, while a fire at a major liquefied natural gas facility in the US earlier this year is likely to result in one of the largest BI losses for the energy sector in recent times<sup>11</sup>.



## Emerging supply chain risks

Companies also named BI as their top business concern about climate change impacts in this year’s survey (see page 39). However, BI related to climate change goes further than just physical damage from storms and floods. Extreme weather or climate events can have a widespread impact, causing economic hardship and political and social upheaval, as well as disrupting logistics and production. For example, a severe drought restricted transits through the Panama shipping canal in the last months of 2023, causing congestion and delays of up to two weeks<sup>12</sup>.

Climate change is also having an indirect effect, as decarbonization creates new supply chains.

*“Emerging supply chains linked to the energy transition have already been identified as geographically concentrated as they depend on elements which can only be found in a select number of regions in the world,”* says Grammatika. *“Countries are looking to secure critical supplies of technology and rare earth elements required to power transition technology like electric cars and enable renewable energy sources like solar panels. Political risks have the potential to cause disruption and are harder to mitigate.”*

*“Geopolitical risks are of growing concern for businesses in emerging energy and technology supply chains, as well as high value sectors like technology and artificial intelligence. Producers of rare earth elements are often found in the most underdeveloped and politically volatile areas, as well as being exposed to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risks like modern slavery, human rights, and deforestation.”*

## Mitigation – keep up to date

In a fast-changing world, companies need to maintain regular audits of systems and to test their business continuity plans.

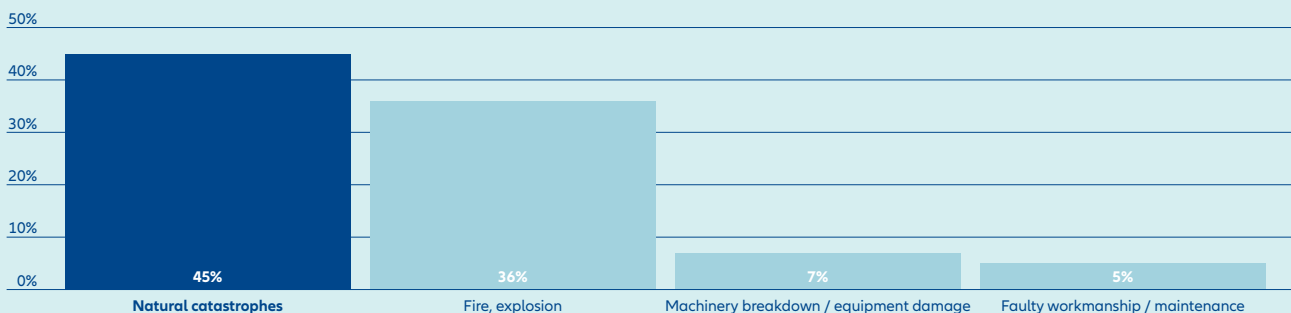
*“There are always organizational changes in companies, and people move. There needs to be systems in place to manage change,”* says Grammatika.

*“For those that haven’t implemented business continuity management (BCM), they should carry out a business impact analysis and risk assessment in the company at least,”* adds Barani. *“For those that have already embedded BCM into the business, it is vital they regularly check, update and test these plans, otherwise they won’t be able to react when the crisis starts.”*

### DEEP DIVE

[Business interruption claims trends | Allianz Commercial](#)

### Insurance claims analysis: What are the top causes of business interruption losses?



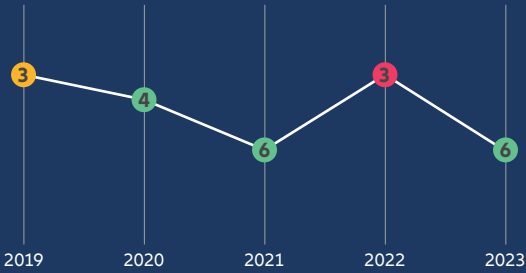
Source: Allianz Commercial. Based on analysis of 1,210 business interruption insurance industry claims worth approximately €1.38bn between 2019 and Q1, 2023.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Natural catastrophes

26% ↑

Ranking history: ● Up on previous year ● No change ● Down on previous year



Top risk in:

- Croatia
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Slovenia
- Thailand





After slipping down the rankings, nat cat has once again gained priority status after a year of headline events, many of them taking a terrible toll on human life and incurring record-breaking insurance losses.

Devastating earthquakes, catastrophic floods, record-breaking wildfires, and severe convective storms (SCS) have shunted natural catastrophe three places up the risk radar for 2024.

The year's costliest nat cat events were the M7.8 and M7.5 earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria in February, causing insured losses of over US\$6bn, as well as a tragic loss of human life<sup>13</sup>.

Total economic losses from nat cat in 2023 are estimated to be \$260bn, according to analysis by Swiss Re. A high number of low-to-medium-severity events added up to insured losses that will exceed \$100bn for the fourth consecutive year, with SCS the main contributor. Often referred to as a 'secondary' peril, SCS resulted in insured losses that reached an all-time high of \$60bn in 2023 – almost 90% more than the previous five-year average of \$32bn. The US, which is particularly prone to such storms, experienced 18 events that each incurred insured losses of \$1bn and above, with total insured losses for SCS exceeding \$50bn for the first time<sup>14</sup>.

Around the world, nat cat was the #1 risk in Croatia, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Slovenia, and Thailand, and ranked in the top three for many countries, such as the US, the UK, Australia, Japan, and Turkey.

*"It's no surprise most of the countries which rank the risk of natural catastrophes and the related peril of climate change the highest are those that sustained some of the most significant events of the year," says **Mabé Villar Vega, Catastrophe Risk Research Analyst, Allianz Commercial.** "The increasing influence of changing climate conditions boosted the development of certain events in 2023, and nat cat is now the cause of business interruption businesses fear the most (44% of responses) after cyber incidents."*

Total economic losses from nat cat in 2023 are estimated to be

**\$260bn**

Low-to-medium-severity events added up to insured losses that will exceed

**\$100bn**

Severe convective storms (SCS) resulted in insured losses that reached an all-time high

2023

\$60bn

Previous five-year average

\$32bn



From left to right: wildfires in Maui, Hawaii; the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia, Florida; flooding in Emilia-Romagna, Italy.

2023 is believed to be the hottest year on record, with heatwaves or droughts afflicting areas of southern Europe, the US, Canada, Central and South America, North Africa, and Asia. Sustained dry conditions intensified and contributed to the spread of wildfires in many regions, including Canada, which recorded its most destructive wildfire season, and Greece, where a wildfire near the city of Alexandroupolis became the largest in the European Union's recorded history. In Maui, Hawaii, the deadly Lahaina wildfire is estimated to have caused economic losses of \$5.5bn, with insured losses of \$3.4bn<sup>15</sup>.

## A year of deadly flooding disasters

Elsewhere, catastrophic flooding was recorded in many regions, including Hong Kong, China, India, Libya, the Great Lakes of East Africa, Slovenia, and Italy. Heavy rainfall in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region racked up insured losses of \$600mn, making it the costliest weather-related event in the country since 1970<sup>16</sup>. In the US, a series of 'atmospheric rivers' – regions in the atmosphere that carry water – brought heavy rain to California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah between January and March, with economic losses estimated at over \$3.4bn<sup>17</sup>.

Exceptionally warm sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic led to an above-average hurricane season, despite initial forecasts pointing to more subdued activity – 20 named storms meant this was the fourth highest total in a year since 1950<sup>18</sup>. Hurricane Idalia was the most significant event, registering insured losses of \$3.5bn<sup>19</sup>. The effects of the El Niño climate pattern contributed to intensified tropical cyclone activity in the Western North Pacific, the most significant event being Tropical Cyclone Doksuri, which caused economic losses of \$20bn in mainland China<sup>20</sup>. In the eastern Pacific, Tropical Storm Hilary affected California and Mexico, while Hurricane Otis caused widespread damage to Acapulco in Mexico.

A series of hailstorms in July set a record for the largest European hailstone – 19cm in Italy – during a number of extreme-weather events believed to have caused \$1.1bn insured losses and \$4bn economic losses<sup>21</sup>. "Hailstorms are deemed a secondary peril, but they are intensifying and can drive severe losses," says Villar Vega. "In August, Hailstorm Denis in southern Germany damaged roofs, windows and even the interiors of many properties (insured losses from this event were estimated at \$230mn<sup>22</sup>).

*"Nat cat events, particularly those related to weather and climate, are expected to increase and therefore they will have an impact on the insurance industry, from model updates to pricing and underwriting strategies. Resilience and business continuity plans must be prioritized for 2024," Villar Vega concludes.*

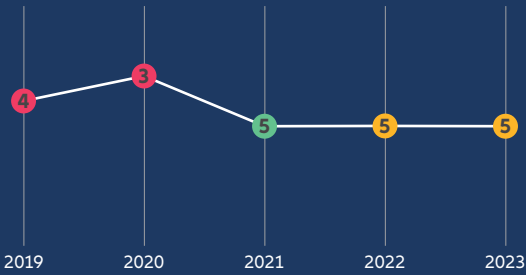
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# Changes in legislation and regulation

19% ↑

## Ranking history:

● Up on previous year ● No change  
● Down on previous year



## Top risk in:

- China
- Morocco
- Nigeria
- Romania



Companies face new rules and regulations in 2024 that will not only require a high administrative burden but could also impose real restrictions on their business activities.

Since the pandemic, the balance between the market and the state has shifted in favor of the latter, initially out of sheer necessity, to cushion the economic standstill during the lockdowns. But since then, policymakers have increasingly taken an active stance in steering economic outcomes in the direction they want. Reasons for this can always be found: the energy crisis or green transformation, national security, economic self-sufficiency, or systemic competition with China.

*“This development is a double-edged sword for companies. On the one hand, they benefit from the subsidy race between states to attract ‘strategic’ industries. On the other hand, this activism is accompanied by a large number of new restrictions on investment – protectionism has reached a new level,”* explains **Ludovic Subran, Chief Economist at Allianz.**

This is by no means only directed against Chinese companies; recently, intra-European takeovers have also been stopped. Even within the European Union (EU), the rules are not standardized, and companies are confronted with a jungle of regulations and opaque decisions. Despite assurances to the contrary, it is unlikely that this jungle will clear up in the foreseeable future; after the many elections in 2024, the signs may point to even more protectionism.

As is so often the case, these regulations have an asymmetrical effect: while large companies tend to benefit from the subsidies, the investment restrictions are a heavy (cost) burden, especially for smaller and mid-size companies (SMEs), says Subran. When it comes to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) regulation, be it the EU’s CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) or CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) or Germany’s Supply Chain Act – the effort involved in obtaining the required data is enormous and almost impossible for many smaller companies. But it’s not just the regulatee who is overwhelmed. In the case of CBAM, for example, the infrastructure for data processing and verification is still lacking on the regulator’s side in some cases. It is not only companies that are drowning in regulation, says Subran.



**A high level of uncertainty calls for scenario planning, strengthening resilience and open communication with internal and external stakeholders**

But the decisive ‘regulatory battle’ is not due until 2024: what is policymakers’ attitude towards artificial intelligence (AI)? As a ‘general purpose technology’, AI is the best chance of escaping the looming low-growth regime through a sustained productivity boost. At the same time, the risks are enormous, including in geopolitical terms. There is therefore a lot at stake when it comes to regulating AI. Striking the right balance becomes a very delicate act of regulation.

Despite all the vows to reduce bureaucracy, companies will still be faced with new rules and regulations in 2024 that will not only require a high administrative burden but could also impose real restrictions on their business activities. *“Companies need a strategic response to this that goes beyond monitoring the legislative process. A high level of uncertainty calls for scenario planning, strengthening resilience and open communication with internal and external stakeholders,”* Subran concludes.

# ESG outlook

Cyber, ‘green hushing’, wellbeing, and net zero rank as the pressing areas of concern for businesses when it comes to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategies.

The repercussions of data breaches, system vulnerabilities, and the shapeshifting nature of the cyber threat have ensured cyber security resilience retains its top spot in the ESG risk trends of most concern in the **Allianz Risk Barometer**. Cyber incidents is also the #1 risk overall for businesses globally.

*“Cyber security is an important ESG issue because it affects people as well as company data,” says Funké Adeosun, Global Transition Solutions Director, Allianz Commercial. “Breaches of private data can affect people’s livelihoods, mental health, and even their safety. For individuals and companies, the loss can be reputational and financial.”*

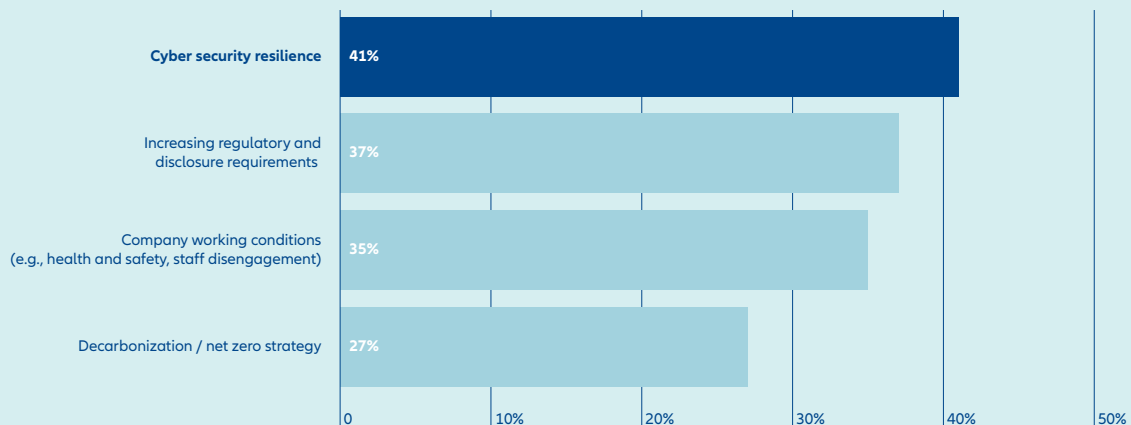
Cyber resilience measures should include mitigation and recovery plans for a data breach, as well as cyber insurance and constant adaptation to emerging threats. *“It is vital that critical information that can impact the running of societies is not lost to hostile external parties,”* says Adeosun.

## Increasing regulatory and disclosure requirements

Regulation and disclosure requirements are of increasing concern, as companies join the drive to net zero. *“Organizations communicating a strong sustainability agenda can find themselves in a bind – they can be litigation targets for groups who believe they are not doing enough to meet their climate or societal commitments, as well as those who claim they are making commitments they can’t meet,”* says Gabrielle Durisch, Global Head of Sustainability Solutions at Allianz Commercial. *“This has led to cases of ‘green hushing’, whereby companies deliberately under-report or hide their ESG credentials from public view to avoid scrutiny.*

*“The lack of transparency makes it harder to understand the true impact of sustainability strategies and investments, which could inhibit the adoption of ESG activities by other companies.”*

## Which ESG risk trends are of most concern to your company / clients?



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 3,069. Respondents could select more than one risk. Top 4 answers.

Decarbonization and net zero strategy appears as an ESG concern in its own right. Adeosun says this is not surprising: *“With regulatory changes, technological innovations, and the potential loss of investments in the picture, there is a lot at stake. Companies are having to shift decades-old strategies to align with new ESG and sustainability goals, which can lead to skepticism or resistance from some quarters. It’s important to engage all stakeholders, set realistic targets, and provide adequate investment. Getting to net zero will not be cost-free.”*

### The human factor

The human factor – or the ‘S’ in ESG – is perhaps the hardest one for organizations to contend with because it requires a broad focus on people, the workplace, and wider society. Company working conditions is an ESG issue (at #3) because, if bad, they can create a culture of low morale, increased staff turnover, and reputational damage.

*“These risks can be minimized by prioritizing health and safety, fair wages, open communication, and regulatory compliance,”* says Durisch. *“Companies should also adopt regular employee feedback surveys and take them seriously, especially if they are from marginalized society members. That way, organizations can truly build a culture where work-life balance and employee mental health are of paramount importance, which will help to fuel their ESG journey. There is always more that can be done to support local communities and society in general so this should also be a key consideration in sustainability strategies.”*

#### DEEP DIVE

[➤ The exciting road to net zero and beyond](#)



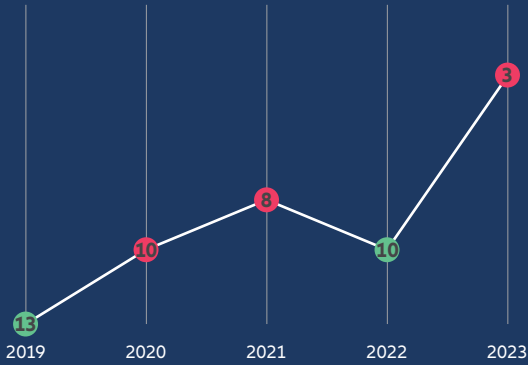
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# Macroeconomic developments

19% ↓

### Ranking history:

- Up on previous year
- No change
- Down on previous year



### Top risk in:

- Bulgaria
- Cameroon
- Ghana
- Mauritius
- Nigeria
- Turkey



2024 could see the wild ups and downs of growth, inflation and interest rates that followed the Covid-19 shock settle down. However, elections bring the potential for further upheavals.

In economic terms, 2023 had a few surprises in store, both positive and negative. In the US, the predicted recession never arrived as the economy proved to be surprisingly resilient in the face of rapidly rising interest rates. Consumers remained keen to spend, thanks to a robust labor market and pandemic-era savings (now used up). Fixed-rate mortgages shielded many households from rising rates (for now).

In China, on the contrary, the expected recovery following the reopening of the economy turned out to be surprisingly short-lived; structural weaknesses – above all the precarious situation of the real estate market – quickly regained the upper hand and dampened sentiment. The other major economy that disappointed in 2023 was Germany – although this did not really come as a surprise. It was foreseeable that the industry-heavy German economy would not recover so quickly from the energy price shock. The rest of Europe, on the other hand, fared much better thanks to stronger service sectors.

## What surprises could 2024 offer?

From today's perspective, there is much to suggest that the signs are reversing, says **Ludovic Subran, Chief Economist at Allianz**. The US will weaken (possibly even slide into recession), while China should pick up again. In China's favor is the fact that the central government has finally given up its restraint and is supporting the economy, especially the real estate market, more resolutely. And for the US, the old adage applies: postponed is not canceled. Higher interest rates eventually have a negative impact on demand and thus bring the economy to its knees, even if it took a little longer this time due to the special post-Covid circumstances.

**Allianz Research** expects only around 1% growth for the US in 2024, but 5% in China. And Europe? Here, too, growth will (further) slow due to higher interest rates. In Germany, the budget crisis puts the expected cyclical recovery in jeopardy. Therefore, growth in the major economies will remain well below 1%. Global growth is also likely to weaken: at a tad over 2%, it will undershoot the long-term average significantly.



After the pandemic and the energy crisis, the threatening rise in debt is forcing consolidation almost everywhere

*“But this lackluster growth is a necessary evil: high inflation rates will finally be a thing of the past,” says Subran. “This will give central banks some room to maneuver – lower interest rates are likely in the second half of the year. Not a second too late, as stimulus cannot be expected from fiscal policy. After the excesses during the pandemic and the energy crisis, the threatening rise in debt is forcing consolidation almost everywhere.”*

So, 2024 could become a year of transition, in which the wild ups and downs of growth, inflation and interest rates experienced since the Covid-19 shock settle down and pivot to more usual levels.

*“A nice consolation. But completely uncertain. Because what really stands out in 2024 is the large number of elections and their potential for new upheavals,” says Subran. “First and foremost, of course, is the US election – which could end with a possible return of Donald Trump to the White House. Trump II is likely to be more disruptive than Trump I, for one simple reason: eight years later, the world is a different place, fragmented and torn apart by a multitude of conflicts and wars. An isolationist America is always bad news for the rest of the world (at least for the free one), but in times like these the risks are even greater than usual.”*



# Insolvency outlook

Global business insolvencies expected to rise by +8% in 2024, according to **Allianz Trade**.

In 2024, global business insolvencies are set to record a third consecutive rise. After a small rebound in 2022 (+1%) and an acceleration in 2023 (+7%), insolvencies should jump by +8% this year. What's behind this new increase?

## Waning cash buffers and worsening profitability are putting many sectors at risk

The recession in corporate revenues is gaining traction amid lower pricing power and weaker global demand: in 2023, the revenue recession was broad-based across all regions for the first time since mid-2020. This combined with continued high costs is squeezing profitability. As a result, liquidity positions are worsening fast and are not likely to improve before 2025.

Companies still have a sizable amount of excess cash, €3.4trn in the Eurozone and US\$2.5trn in the US. But these cash buffers remain highly concentrated in the hands of large firms and in specific sectors such as tech and consumer discretionary. And in general, most companies are unable to increase their cash positions through operations in the context of lower-for-longer economic growth.

The most vulnerable corporates and sectors are caught between a rock and a hard place, with hospitality, transportation and wholesale/retail on the front line. Other sectors are catching up fast, in particular construction, where backlogs of work have been almost completed – especially in the residential segment.



Hospitality, transportation and wholesale/retail are on the insolvency front line

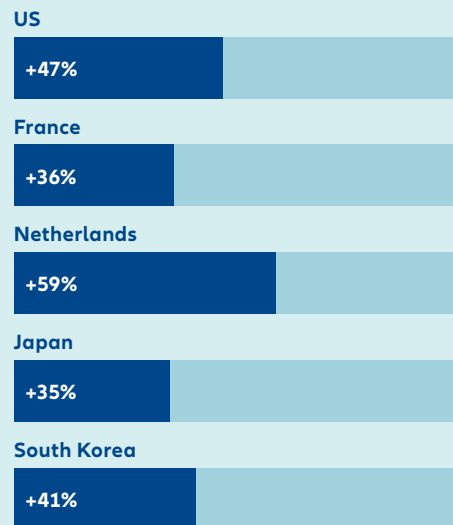
“At the same time, higher-for-longer interest rates are reducing demand in sectors such as real estate and durable goods, and will start pressuring solvency in highly indebted sectors, such as utilities and telecom, in addition to real estate, on both sides of the Atlantic,” explains **Maxime Lemerle, Lead Analyst for Insolvency Research at Allianz Trade.** “Moreover, global working capital requirements (WCR) currently stand at a record high of 86 days, more than +2 days above pre-pandemic levels. Higher interest rates also make it even more expensive for companies to finance structurally higher WCR, which poses risks for sectors such as construction and machinery and transport equipment.”

### Three out of five countries will reach pre-pandemic business insolvency levels by the end of 2024

The normalization in business insolvencies has been completed in most advanced economies in 2023. The US (+47% in 2023), France (+36%), Netherlands (+59%), Japan (+35%) and South Korea (+41%) were on the front line. Globally, Allianz Trade estimates that three out of five countries will reach pre-pandemic business insolvency levels by the end of 2024. This includes many European countries such as Germany (+9% in 2024), Netherlands (+28%) and the UK (+5%). In the US, business insolvencies are set to rise by +22% this year. On both sides of the Atlantic, GDP growth would need to double to stabilize insolvency figures, which will not occur before 2025.

“Moreover, in a context of slowing global economic growth, payment terms are likely to lengthen, adding to the rise in insolvencies in the coming quarters. Global Days Sales Outstanding already stand above 60 days for 47% of firms. One additional day of payment delay is equivalent to a financing gap of US\$100bn in the US, US\$90bn in the EU and US\$140bn in China. With bank loans already drying up for smaller and mid-size companies (SMEs), closing this financing gap could be a significant challenge,” Lemerle concludes.

### Percentage increase of insolvencies in 2023



Source: Allianz Trade



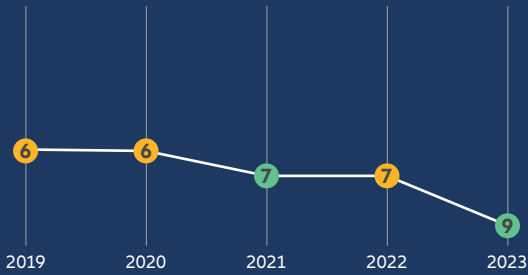
Higher-for-longer interest rates are reducing demand in sectors such as real estate and durable goods, and will start pressuring solvency in highly indebted sectors, such as utilities and telecom, in addition to real estate

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

# Fire, explosion

19% ↑

**Ranking history:** ● Up on previous year ● No change ● Down on previous year



**Top risk in:**

- Cameroon
- Colombia
- Malaysia
- South Korea



Up from #9 in 2023, few things can be more destructive to a business than a fire. Not only can it cause costly property damage, but it can also interrupt a firm’s operations indefinitely, and every industry can be impacted.

Although fire risks are well understood and typically well risk managed, fire remains a significant cause of business interruption (BI) and supply chain disruption, especially where critical components are concentrated geographically and among a small number of suppliers.

According to **Allianz Risk Barometer** respondents it is the third top cause of business interruption they fear most (after cyber incidents and natural catastrophes). Allianz Commercial analysis of more than 1,000 BI insurance claims over the past five years (worth US\$1.3bn+) shows it is the most frequent driver of these claims and accounts for over a third by value (36%).

*“The degree of disruption from fire and explosion can be very high, as it can take longer to recover from than many other perils, and the impact on suppliers can often be great,”* says **Alberto Barani, a Business Interruption Group Leader at Allianz Commercial**. *“For example, pharmaceutical and chemical sectors deal with highly flammable and explosive materials. Damaged plants can sometimes take years to rebuild and get production back up and running to full capacity.”*

Fire has also become an elevated risk with electrification and the growing prevalence of lithium-ion batteries. Inadequate handling and transportation of these batteries has been linked to several large fire incidents at sea and on land in recent years.

Regularly assessing and updating prudent fire mitigation practices, including preventative measures, fire extinguishing methods and contingency planning remain essential for all businesses to lower the risk of loss from an incident.

**Fire, explosion ranks as a top 5 global risk in the following sectors:**

**Chemicals, pharmaceuticals, biopharma**



**Engineering, construction and real estate**



**Manufacturing (other industries)**



**Marine and shipping**



**Oil and gas**



**Power and utilities**



**Renewable energy**



**Retail and wholesale**



**DEEP DIVE**

- [➤ Top risks by industry sector](#)
- [➤ ARC Real Estate Preventing Building Fires \(allianz.com\)](#)
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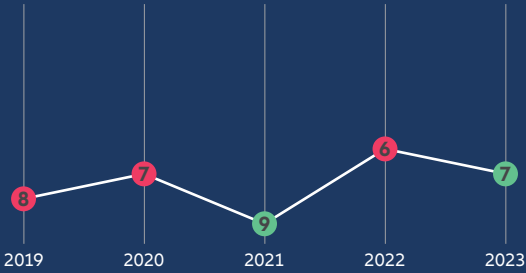
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# Climate change

18% →

## Ranking history:

● Up on previous year ● No change  
● Down on previous year



## Top risk in:

● Brazil

● Turkey



Physical risks are seen as the key threats for companies, with larger organizations leading the response by shifting to low-carbon business models and improving planning and response to climate events. Supply chain resilience is a key area of focus in 2024.

The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, ranging from wildfires in Canada to flooding in India, Libya and Slovenia, and heatwaves in the US, southern Europe, and Asia, have ensured climate change remains a top fixture on corporate risk registers, particularly among large-size companies (>€500mn annual revenue), where it ranks as the fourth top risk overall, its highest-ever position. It is also the #1 risk in Brazil and Turkey and a top #3 risk in Greece, Italy, Mexico, and Slovenia.

The risk is threefold: physical, including loss or damage to assets and business interruption; transition-related, from moves towards a more sustainable economy and regulatory and stakeholder pressures; and liability-related, from climate litigation that could lead to reputational and financial damage.

Physical risks are the key threat (see chart), with extreme weather events believed to be costing the US economy alone almost \$150bn a year<sup>23</sup>. The utility, energy and industrial sectors are most exposed. In 2023 wildfires in Canada cut oil and gas output equivalent to 3.7% of national production<sup>24</sup>, while in manufacturing, water scarcity is a potential threat to production and supplies of critical goods and services.



We see companies shifting to low-carbon business models, improving planning and response to climate events, and implementing physical measures to boost resilience

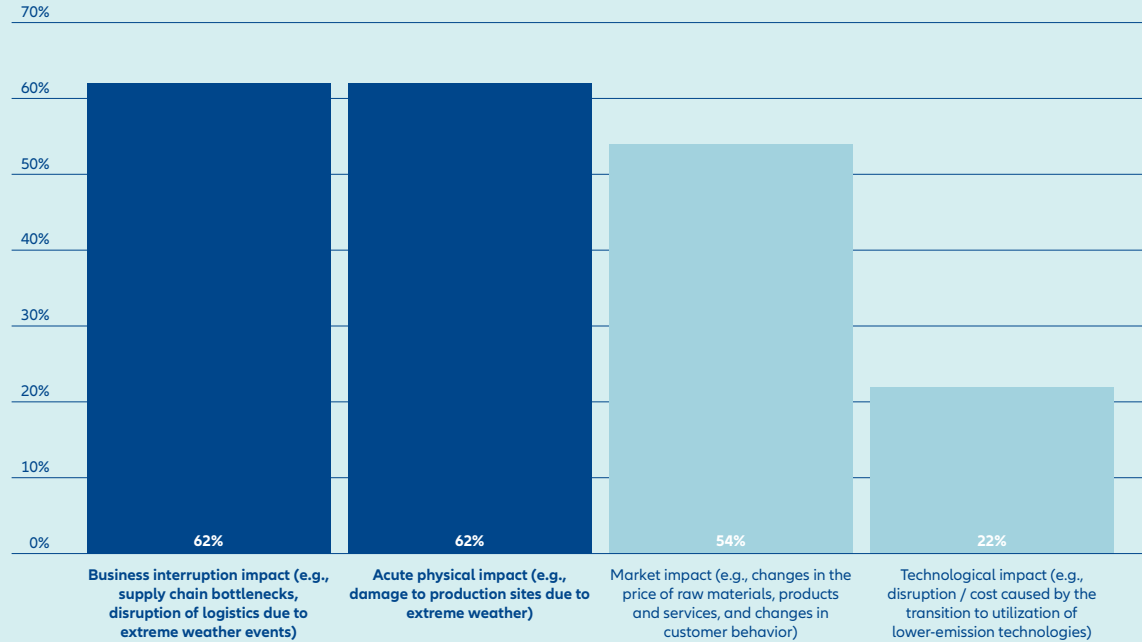
*“Although this year’s **Allianz Risk Barometer** results on climate change show that reputational, reporting and legal risks are regarded as lesser threats by businesses [ranking outside the top four concerns, see chart], many of these challenges are interlinked and we expect climate-related transition and liability risks to increase as companies invest in higher-risk, lower-carbon technologies, where bankability and insurability are a challenge,” says **Denise De Bilio, ESG Director, Risk Consulting, Allianz Commercial**. “Business will also face higher risk of greenwashing claims from stakeholder scrutiny.”*

On a more positive note, the **Allianz Risk Barometer** findings indicate businesses are focusing on net-zero commitments while building operational and financial resilience by climate-proofing their assets (see chart). **Gabrielle Durisch, Global Head of Sustainability Solutions at Allianz Commercial**, says: *“We see companies shifting to low-carbon business models, improving planning and response to climate events, and implementing physical measures to boost resilience. Some industries under regulatory scrutiny might focus on adapting to low-carbon business models and invest in clean technologies, while others might concentrate on mitigating physical loss or damage to assets and minimize supply-chain disruptions.”*

Durisch adds: *“Our research shows businesses are also seeking protection and financing mechanisms to address the growing climate insurance protection gap.”*

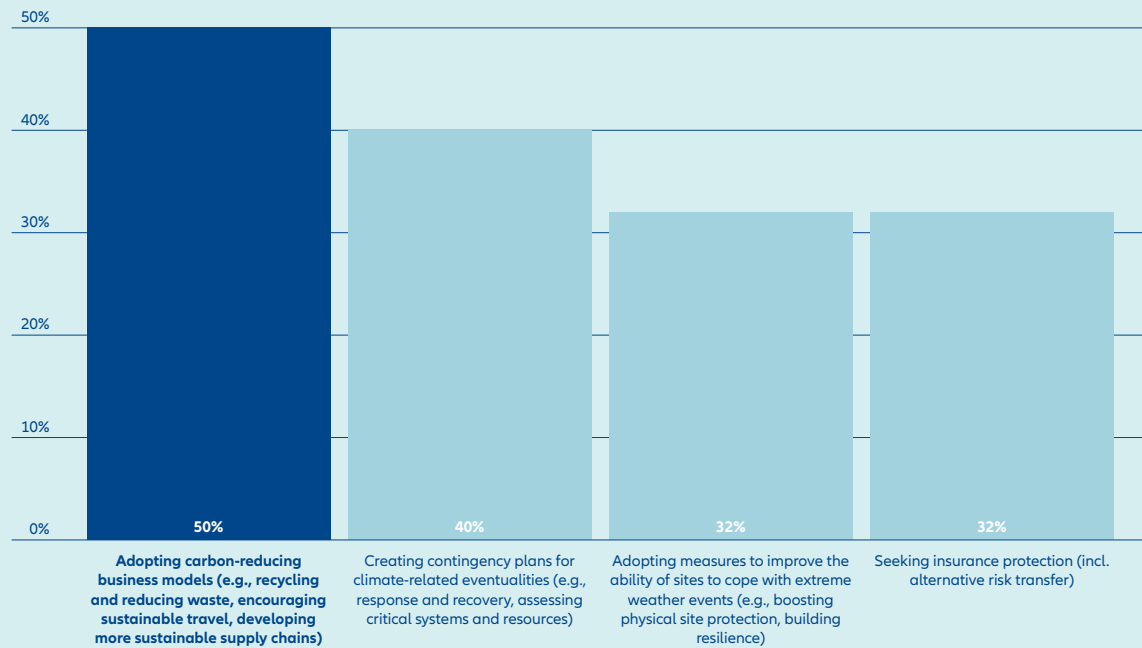
Supply chain resilience is expected to become a key focus in 2024 as companies consider the impacts of climate events on production and work closely with suppliers to identify climate risks, and share sustainability commitments and contingency plans, such as site relocations or sourcing alternatives, De Bilio notes: *“We know that socioeconomic factors, such as increasing urbanization in areas exposed to climate change, are a driver of nat cat insurance losses. With extreme weather events the new normal, companies need to invest in shoring up their supply chains. They need to focus on resilience such as flood protection and reinforcing infrastructure to reduce the vulnerability of assets, lower the risk of disruption, and increase insurability.”*

### Which impacts of climate change does your company / industry fear the most?



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 554. Respondents could select more than one risk. Top 4 answers.

### Which actions are your company taking to mitigate the direct impact of climate change?



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 554. Respondents could select more than one risk. Top 4 answers.

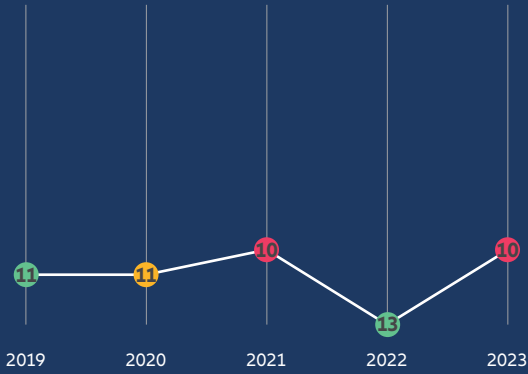
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# Political risks and violence

14% ↑

## Ranking history:

- Up on previous year
- No change
- Down on previous year



## Top risk in:

Ivory Coast





## The world was rocked by further international conflict, coups, and civil unrest in 2023 and the challenges will continue in 2024.

Businesses and their supply chains face considerable geopolitical risks with war in Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East, and ongoing tensions around the world. Political risk in 2023 was at a five-year high, with some 100 countries considered at high or extreme risk of civil unrest<sup>25</sup>. Further unrest is expected in 2024 as economic gloom continues, particularly in debt-crisis countries, while protestors calling for action about a number of different causes will aim to cause more disruptive events.

The year was marred by multiple protests in France against pension reforms and the murder of teenager Nahel Merzouk, which led to intense violence, property damage and looting. The continued rise of populist and far-right parties in Europe resulted in electoral success in the Netherlands and Slovakia, reinforcing the political shift of 2022, when Italy elected a party with neofascist roots, Hungary re-elected Viktor Orbán, and the far-right Sweden Democrats took over 20% of the votes in a general election.

Turmoil has also been seen in numerous African countries, notes **Srdjan Todorovic, Head of Political Violence and Hostile Environment Solutions at Allianz Commercial**, driven by the September 2022 coup in Burkina Faso, and further successful coups in Niger and Gabon in 2023. While these coups have been relatively peaceful, Sudan is rapidly escalating into civil war, mainly in its capital Khartoum. Economic difficulties are challenging many countries, in particular Tunisia, which teetered on the edge of violence as President Saied continued to rule through decree and without a Parliament.

Latin America is a region that commonly sees big shifts in politics and pre- and post-electoral violence, and 2023 was no exception. Brazil experienced an attack on its National Congress building after the re-election of the leftist Lula da Silva and ousting of Jair Bolsonaro, while Argentina saw mass protests against the newly elected populist, Javier Milei. In contrast, Guatemala saw supporters of the president elect, Bernardo Arévalo, protesting against institutions halting his inauguration. While these are mostly intra-state issues, potential cross-border violence could be ignited with Venezuela's territorial dispute with Guyana.

### Defining moment

The defining moment of 2023 was the Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent war in Gaza. This has not only led to thousands of innocent deaths in Gaza but has also increased pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli protests globally. The conflict has quickly escalated beyond its defined borders with the pro-Hamas entities attacking shipping and launching drones and ballistic missiles towards Israel.

Amid all this conflict, 2024 is also a record-breaking election year, when as much as 50% of the world's population could go to the polls, including in India, Russia, the US, and the UK. So many elections raise concerns about the fueling of populism and polarization which may manifest in increasing civil unrest activity. Disillusionment with ruling incumbents and concerns over the fairness of elections, fueled by social media, could also ignite unrest in certain territories.

*"We anticipate continued challenges to come," says Todorovic. "In addition to increased risk of election-related SRCC [strikes, riots and civil commotion], we see clear trends in increased risk of terrorism in Western Europe and North America. This is primarily driven by the Israel and Gaza war leading to a radicalization of certain parts of the population in these regions. Further, with more states or governments asserting their territorial claims over others, as well as claims of border insecurity, the risk of pre-emptive cross-border wars is increasing in certain regions through 2024."*



So many elections raise concerns about the fueling of polarization which may increase civil unrest

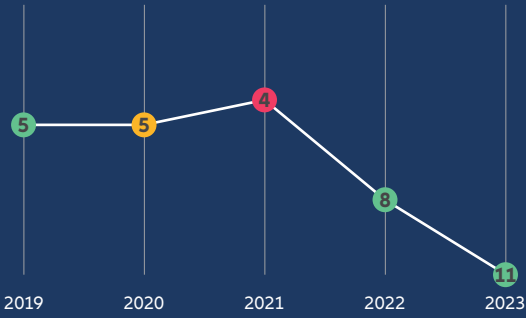
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# Market developments

13% ↑

## Ranking history:

- Up on previous year
- No change
- Down on previous year



## Top risk in:

- Cameroon
- Senegal



It is no surprise that market developments are worrying more companies again. It is increasingly clear that markets are on the threshold of a new era. Uncertainty is correspondingly high. Three paradigm shifts can be identified.

Firstly, the end of comprehensive globalization. Protectionism no longer only affects flows of goods, but increasingly money and capital, information and data, as well as people and know-how. In the name of national security, the world is being covered with a network of investment restrictions and sanctions. For companies, access to new markets, new ideas and new employees is thus considerably restricted. Accelerated consolidation is likely to be the result.

Secondly, the end of cheap labor. For a long time, globalization was synonymous with a steady expansion of access to production factors, especially labor. This is no longer the case. Demographic change means a shortage of (skilled) labor worldwide. The war for talent is reaching a new level. Medium-sized companies in particular will find it difficult to survive here. While large companies are favored by their brand and benefits, smaller businesses can score with their greater self-determination and entrepreneurial spirit. Stuck in the middle is the worst place to be.

Thirdly, the end of innocent technology. There have always been warnings about the negative consequences of new technologies. And with regard to the internet and social media, many fears have now unfortunately materialized. With artificial intelligence (AI), however, the potential danger has reached a new dimension. As a general-purpose technology, AI will fundamentally change every industry and area of life. The contours of AI-powered societies and economies remain unclear at this stage; consequences are difficult to assess. But if last year's market development is any indication, one mundane conclusion can be drawn: AI is likely to lead to greater market concentration as the upswing in the US stock market in 2023 was mainly driven by a handful of tech giants – fueled by the AI fantasy about their profits.

*“These three drivers have a simple message for the majority of SMEs: market challenges will multiply in the new age. Worries are not misplaced,”* says **Ludovic Subran, Chief Economist at Allianz.**

**Market developments ranks as a top 5 global risk in the following sectors:**

**Aviation, aerospace, defense**



**Chemicals, pharmaceuticals, biopharma**



**Consumer goods**



**Media**



**Professional services (e.g., legal)**



These three drivers have a simple message for the majority of SMEs: market challenges will multiply in the new age. Worries are not misplaced

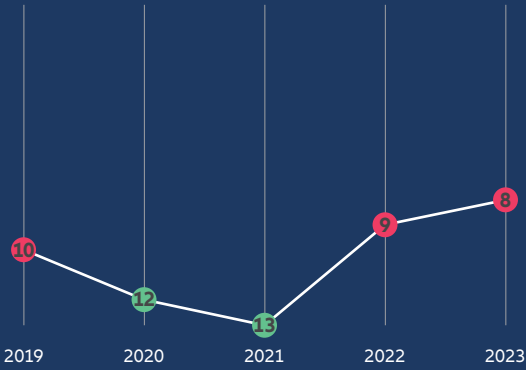
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Shortage of skilled workforce

12% ↓

## Ranking history:

- Up on previous year
- No change
- Down on previous year



Talent and workforce issues fall two places year-on-year to #10, although demographic change still means a shortage of skilled labor in many sectors worldwide.

**Allianz Risk Barometer** respondents rank talent shortage as a top five risk concern in Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, as well as in the UK.

Clearly, attracting and retaining skilled workers remains challenging – a Manpower Group survey<sup>26</sup> noted that 75% of companies globally had reported talent shortages and difficulty hiring over the past year, the second highest total in the past decade. Employers in the healthcare and life sciences industry reported the most difficulty, while IT and data skills were seen as the most challenging to find regardless of industry and geography.

Meanwhile, a recent European Commission report<sup>27</sup> acknowledged that labor shortages not only exist in various sectors and occupations across all skills levels but could grow further, driven by the creation of new jobs and the need to replace workers who retire. The working age population is projected to decline from 265 million in 2022 to 258 million by 2030.

Company working conditions also rank highly on the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risk list, according to the **Allianz Risk Barometer**. Issues such as staff engagement rank as the third top ESG risk trend of most concern to companies (35% of responses), behind only cyber security resilience and increasing regulatory and disclosure requirements (see chart on page 29).

These risks can be minimized by prioritizing health and safety, fair wages, open communication, and regulatory compliance. Companies should also adopt regular employee feedback surveys and take them seriously, especially if they are from marginalized society members.

**Shortage of skilled workforce ranks as a top 5 global risk in the following sectors:**

Media



Government, public services (incl. healthcare)



\*Tied with critical infrastructure blackouts

**The working age population is projected to decline from**

**265 million**

in 2022 to

**258 million**

by 2030

# Top risks for smaller and mid-size companies

Whether cyber-attack or flood, loss events tend to hit smaller companies much harder, with longer periods of disruption. Yet, mid-size and smaller firms risk being left behind as large companies up their investments in resilience and risk awareness.

The top three risks of concern for large, mid-size and smaller companies in this year's **Allianz Risk Barometer** are broadly aligned, with cyber, business interruption and natural catastrophes in the top three spots.

Cyber incidents replaces business interruption in the top spot for both large and mid-size companies and remains the top risk for smaller firms. Natural catastrophes climbs the risks of most concern for all three company sizes and ranks second and above business interruption for smaller firms.

Loss events like a ransomware incident or a flood tend to be more impactful for mid-size and smaller companies.

*"A cyber or extreme weather incident can hit a small company disproportionately hard,"* explains **Nikolaus Breitenberger, Global Head of Business Solutions and Transformation, Risk Consulting at Allianz Commercial.** *"They are much less likely to have mitigating measures in place like offsite backups or flood response plans and can easily end up paralyzed or even out of business."*

Business interruption impact can usually be far greater as these companies do not have the scale and diversification strategies of large companies. Mid-size and smaller firms are more likely to be overly exposed to a single large customer or supplier and typically do not have the resources to invest in business continuity planning and carry out risk assessments.

*"Smaller firms and family-driven companies just do not have the time and the resources to spend on these risks,"* says Breitenberger. *"Unlike large companies, they do not have dedicated people or departments working on 'what if' scenarios to get an overview of their exposure and prepare. So, when a loss occurs, they are unable to respond quickly and take longer to get the business back up and running."*

## Mind the gap

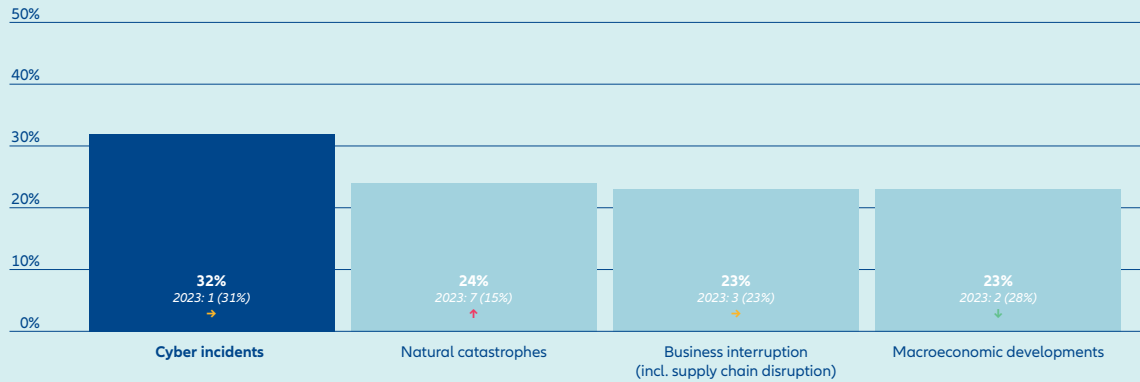
The resilience gap between large and smaller companies is widening, as bigger firms take lessons from the pandemic and apply them to risks like cyber and natural catastrophes.

*"Among large companies, risk awareness has grown since the pandemic, and there has been a notable drive to bolster resilience,"* says Breitenberger. *"Big companies are typically much more risk aware and invest more in loss prevention and mitigation than smaller companies."*

As the resilience gap widens, mid-size and smaller companies become more reliant on insurance to protect themselves. However, in a world of complex and changing risks they will also need more risk management support to mitigate the business impact of surprise events.

### Top 4 risks for smaller companies in 2024

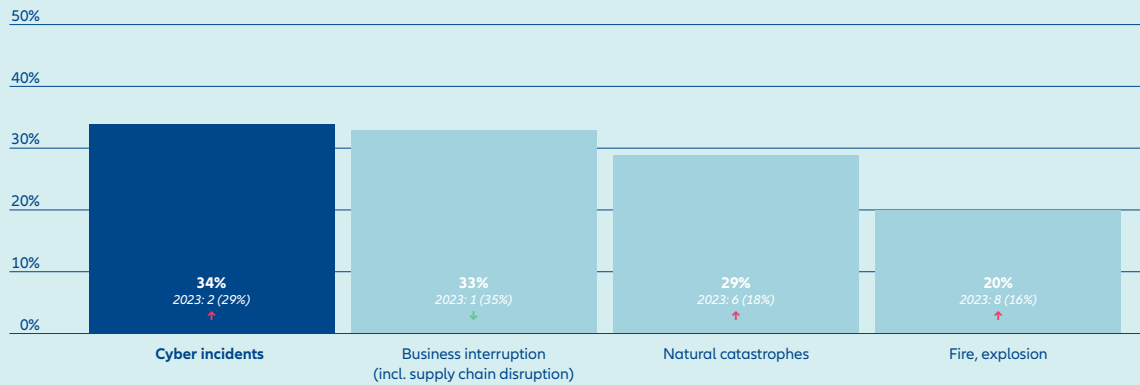
<US\$100mn annual revenue



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 937. Respondents could select more than risk. Top 4 answers.

### Top 4 risks for mid-size companies in 2024

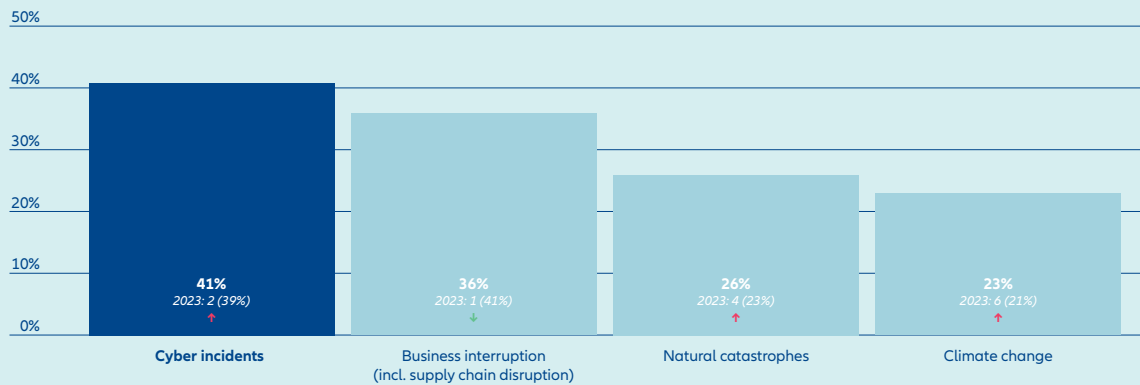
US\$100mn+ to US\$500mn annual revenue



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 792. Respondents could select more than risk. Top 4 answers.

### Top 4 risks for large companies in 2024

>US\$500mn annual revenue



Source: Allianz Risk Barometer 2024. Total number of respondents: 1,340. Respondents could select more than risk. Top 4 answers.



## SMEs are much less likely to have mitigating measures in place



*“Insurers can help to create awareness, educate, train, partner with, and proactively support these companies with insights and risk management services, in addition to insurance products,” says Breitenberger. “Helping them prepare for risks, whether that be a cyber-attack or climate change is beneficial for us both. If we create more awareness and support companies to prevent and mitigate losses, we are both less likely to face surprises.”*

### Bigger picture vs. day-to-day concerns

The survey also reveals that big picture concerns, like climate change and political risks, are of greater concern for large companies, with smaller firms more preoccupied with more immediate perils.

For example, macroeconomic risks, such as the impact of high inflation or interest rates, and market developments relevant to specific industries, such as intensified competition or stagnation, are of greater concern for smaller firms, ranking #4 and #7 respectively. For larger companies, macroeconomic developments only ranks #6 with market developments not in the top 10.

Climate change rises two places to #4 in the large company rankings, its highest ever position, and three positions to #6 for mid-size firms. In contrast, it drops one place to #9 for smaller companies. And while political risks and violence is unchanged at #8 for large companies and up one place for mid-size firms at #9, it does not feature in the top 10 for smaller firms. However, small businesses in industries such as hospitality and retail can easily be adversely impacted by civil unrest incidents, which have been increasing around the world.

*“Smaller and mid-size companies are not insulated from global events. They often have bigger dependencies on external markets than they realize and can still be affected by events in faraway countries. We have seen in the past how companies and supply chains in Europe and the US have been impacted by floods and earthquakes in Asia or even by a ship being grounded,” says Breitenberger.*



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Powered by the employees, financial strength, and network of the world's #1 insurance brand, [as ranked by Interbrand](#), we work together to help our customers prepare for what's ahead: They trust us to provide a wide range of traditional and alternative risk transfer solutions, outstanding risk consulting and multinational services as well as seamless claims handling.

The trade name Allianz Commercial brings together the large corporate insurance business of Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty (AGCS) and the commercial insurance business of national Allianz Property & Casualty entities serving mid-sized companies. We are present in over 200 countries and territories either through our own teams or the Allianz Group network and partners. In 2022, the integrated business of Allianz Commercial generated more than €19 billion gross premium globally.

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