The Culture
Factor
|GROUP

Global Report
Culture & Safety
2025

CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture, not systems or compliance, is what determines whether risks are spoken or silenced. In safety-critical industries, people often know when something is wrong. The question is: do they feel safe to say it?

This report shows that when safety fails, it's not just because procedures were missing, but because people didn't speak up, warnings were ignored, or rules were followed without challenge. These behaviours are shaped by culture.

We draw on data from thousands of respondents across eight high-risk and highly regulated industries, including Aviation, Oil & Gas, Pharma, Energy, Finance, and Technology. Our analysis combines two proven frameworks: the Multi-Focus Model™ of Organisational Culture and the 6-D Model of National Culture, offering a unique view of how both internal and external cultural forces impact safety behaviour.

At the centre of our findings is psychological safety: the belief that individuals can speak up, report mistakes, and challenge decisions without fear of retaliation. It is this cultural condition, not just procedures or training, that determines whether early warning signals surface or stay hidden.

However, psychological safety is not evenly distributed. It declines as hierarchy increases, as compliance structures harden, and as short-term pressure outweighs long-term thinking. High Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance cultures are especially vulnerable, people hesitate to speak up, even when safety is at stake.

The data also reveals a structural divide: smaller companies often outperform larger ones on trust and accountability, thanks to clearer ownership and closer leadership visibility. Meanwhile, larger firms, especially in compliance-heavy sectors, risk cultural rigidity that may weaken safety culture from within.

Finally, the report explores how diversity and inclusion affect safety. Homogeneous teams may feel comfortable, but diverse teams, when well led, are more likely to challenge blind spots, surface risks early, and innovate around safety practices.

This report provides leaders with the insight and tools to build cultures that don't just comply with safety standards, but actively prevent failures, enable learning, and support long-term performance.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Align Culture with Strategy
Compare Actual Culture with Optimal Culture to surface gaps that limit safety effectiveness.

Reduce Power Distance
Make it safe to challenge authority. Promote accessibility, openness, and anonymous channels.

Promote Psychological Safety
Build a culture where speaking up is normal, not brave. Embed trust and clear accountability.

Balance Control and Flexibility
Provide clear protocols, especially in high-UAI contexts, but leave space for feedback and discretion.

Encourage Professionalism
Elevate competence, not just compliance. Recognise expertise, ongoing learning, and shared ownership.
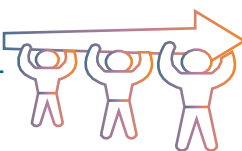
Support Long-Term Thinking
Invest in sustainable safety practices that prioritise future resilience over short-term fixes.

Embrace Open Feedback
Make feedback frequent, anonymous when needed, and visibly acted upon to build trust.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Discover how Culture impact safety related behaviours

This report explores how organisational and national culture jointly shape safety-related behaviours across industries. We combine extensive cultural data with strategic insights to help leaders understand what drives, or hinders, safe and open workplaces.

Each section builds on data from thousands of respondents across eight high-risk or highly regulated industries: Aviation, Banking/Finance & Insurance, Energy & Utilities, Mining/Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Pharma & Healthcare, Power Plant, and Tech.

We use two core frameworks to structure our findings:
- Organisational Culture Dimensions, based on the Multi-Focus Model™
- National Culture Dimensions, based on the 6-D Model of National Culture

Throughout the report, you will find:

Clear definitions of key concepts like psychological safety.	Data-driven insights from our extensive measurement base.	Sector-specific patterns highlighting cultural strengths and gaps.	Strategic recommendations that bridge culture and operational safety.

Whether you're scanning for insights or reading end-to-end, this structure is designed to help you navigate complexity, and move from understanding to action.

THE REPORT IN NUMBERS

RESPONDENTS	UNITS	COMPANIES	COUNTRIES
174765	1319	204	62

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN SAFETY

When an airline mechanic hesitates to report a concern, a power plant operator overlooks a small anomaly, or a financial analyst remains silent about unethical behaviour, disaster can follow. What if the key to preventing such crises isn't just technology or regulation, but culture?

Every year, safety failures result in catastrophic consequences: plane crashes, oil spills, mining disasters, industrial accidents, and financial scandals. Organisations invest heavily in safety protocols, training, and compliance measures, yet these efforts can falter if the workplace culture does not support open communication and proactive risk management. Culture is the unseen force that determines whether safety measures are truly effective or merely bureaucratic checkboxes.

The Role of Safety Culture in High-Risk Environments

In high-risk industries, a strong safety culture is essential to mitigating risks. Beyond regulatory compliance, embedding safety as a core value ensures that employees act proactively rather than simply following checklists.
Aviation, for example, integrates safety into every aspect of operations, from rigorous training programmes to an open-reporting culture that encourages employees to flag potential hazards without fear of retaliation. Similarly, in the oil and gas sector, as well as in energy and power plants, prioritising a safety-first culture reduces incident rates and improves crisis management.

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A culture of vigilance can prevent catastrophic failures.

</div>

Other sectors that require strict compliance, such as manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, also benefit from fostering a culture of safety. Employees who feel safe reporting hazards contribute to proactive risk management. In aviation, for instance, crew members are empowered to voice concerns about potential risks directly impacting incident prevention

and crisis response. In healthcare, where patient safety is paramount, a strong safety culture drives adherence to protocols, reduces medical errors, and fosters continuous improvement. Likewise, in mining operations, where workers face hazardous conditions daily, fostering a culture of risk awareness and accountability can significantly reduce workplace injuries.

Beyond Compliance: Ethical and Psychological Safety

Safety culture extends beyond physical hazards to ethical risk management. In banking and finance, for example, compliance failures can lead to financial crises and reputational damage. A culture of transparency and open dialogue empowers employees to report unethical practices without fear of retaliation, preventing scandals before they escalate.

However, psychological safety is not just about implementing strict protocols and ensuring adherence. It is also critical in fostering innovation. Employees in dynamic environments need the freedom to take calculated risks without fear of punishment. Tech companies that cultivate open cultures see higher creativity, engagement, and retention, critical factors in maintaining a competitive edge.

Building a Culture of Transparency and Open Communication

Industries that rely on precision and operational safety, such as aviation and healthcare, recognise that psychological safety is as crucial as physical safeguards. An open-reporting culture reduces human error and strengthens crisis response.

High-risk sectors depend on clear communication and swift decision-making to manage critical situations. Organisations with a strong safety culture report higher levels of incident disclosure and better problem-solving, reducing the likelihood of catastrophic failures.

For example, in the energy and utilities sector, a culture of transparency ensures swift responses to emergencies, minimising damage and saving lives.
Similarly, in mining and oil and gas, where environmental and safety risks are high, fostering an open culture encourages employees to report hazards early, reducing accidents and improving crisis management.

A culture of openness enhances safety, innovation, and ethical standards across all industries. Employees must feel safe reporting concerns, whether about workplace hazards, compliance breaches, or operational risks.

In finance, this prevents scandals; in technology, it fosters creativity and engagement. In pharmaceuticals, where regulatory compliance is paramount, a strong safety culture can ensure patient well-being and prevent costly recalls. Psychological safety ensures transparency, resilience, and sustained success.

Conclusion

A culture that integrates both physical and psychological safety transforms safety from a regulatory obligation into a strategic asset. For organisations in all sectors, prioritising safety culture is not just about risk mitigation, it unlocks workforce potential, resilience, and innovation.

By embedding safety into organisational values and everyday practices, companies can protect both their people and their long-term success.

For this 2025 special report, we have analysed data from eight industries, drawing on input from 204 companies and 174765 respondents to uncover meaningful cultural patterns.

The industries are: Aviation, Banking / Finance & Insurance, Energy & Utilities, Mining/Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Pharma & Healthcare, Power Plant, Tech.

Improved crisis response

Ethical conduct

Improved Regulatory compliance

Culture of Openness & Psychological Safety

Higher incident reporting

Innovation

Faster decision-making

"CULTURE IS THE UNSEEN FORCE THAT DETERMINES WHETHER SAFETY MEASURES ARE TRULY EFFECTIVE OR MERELY BUREAUCRATIC CHECKBOXES."

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Our definition and key insights

Psychological safety is a crucial factor in understanding how group dynamics influence individual behaviour and overall organisational effectiveness. At its core, it revolves around two key pillars: trust and accountability. When psychological safety is high, individuals feel empowered to voice their ideas, admit mistakes, and engage in open discussions, without fear of negative consequences.
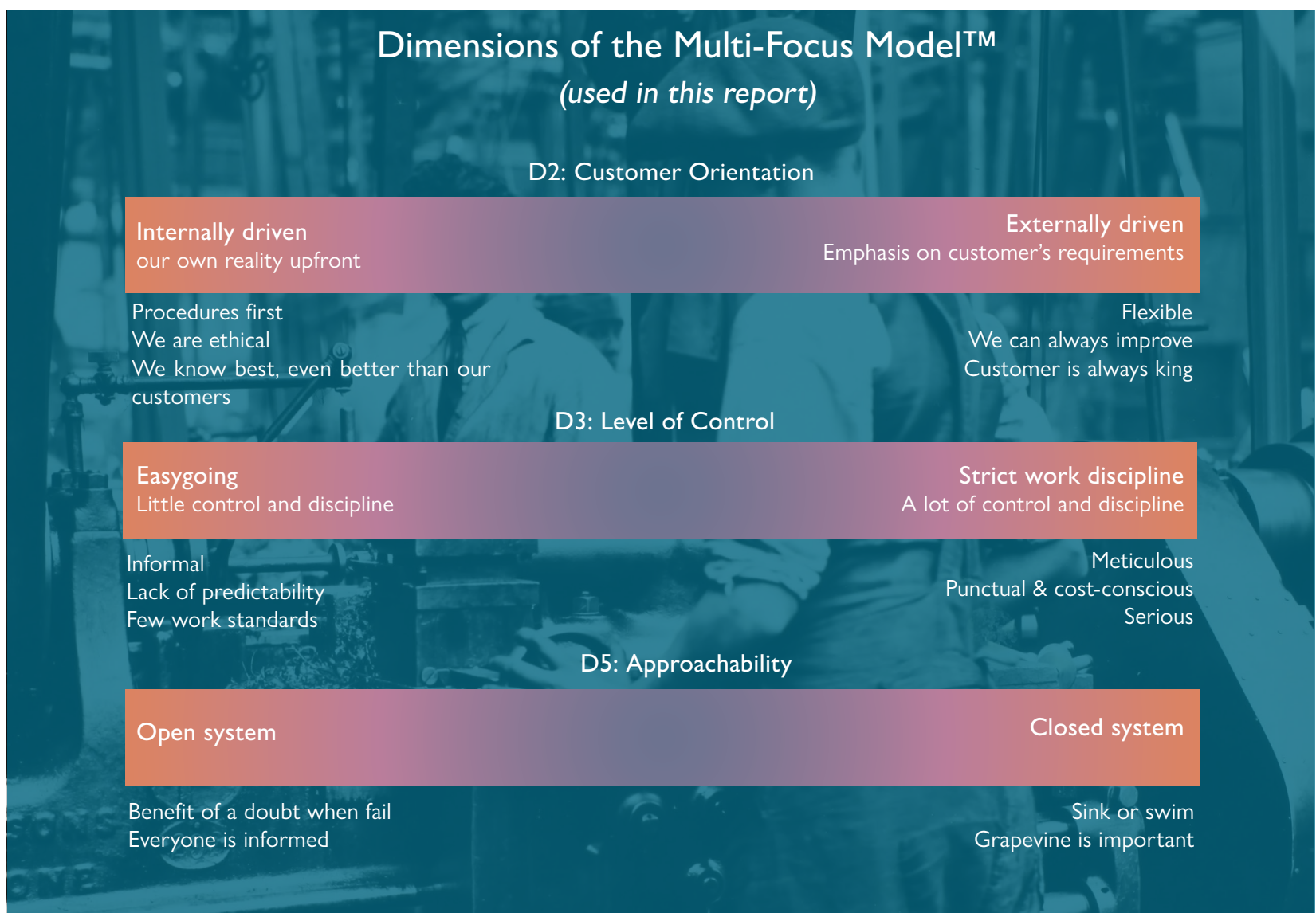
Within our Multi-Focus Model™ on Organisational Culture, trust is characterised by Openness and Approachability, enabling employees to freely express concerns, receive honest feedback, and feel valued for their contributions. Accountability, on the other hand, ensures a proactive delegation of authority and a clear distribution of responsibilities throughout the organisation. We define accountability through Dimensions 2 and 3 of organisational culture - D2

Customer Orientation, and D3 Level of Control - which together reflect:
- how strictly procedures are followed,
- how high ethical standards are upheld, and
- how cost-conscious and disciplined the organisation is in practice.

It fosters a culture where individuals have both the freedom to act and carry the responsibility for their actions.

By assessing the balance between trust and accountability across key organisational dimensions, such as goal orientation, customer focus, and control, we can measure psychological safety effectively. A culture with high psychological safety drives learning, adaptability, and performance improvement, creating the foundation for sustainable success.

Dimensions of the Multi-Focus Model™
(used in this report)

D2: Customer Orientation

Internally driven
our own reality upfront

Externally driven
Emphasis on customer's requirements

Procedures first
We are ethical
We know best, even better than our customers

Flexible
We can always improve
Customer is always king

D3: Level of Control

Easygoing
Little control and discipline

Strict work discipline
A lot of control and discipline

Informal
Lack of predictability
Few work standards

Meticulous
Punctual & cost-conscious
Serious

D5: Approachability

Open system

Closed system

Benefit of a doubt when fail
Everyone is informed

Sink or swim
Grapevine is important

UNDERSTANDING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE THROUGH TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This image maps industries along two critical cultural dimensions: Trust and Accountability. The position of each industry is based on data measured in our Organisational Culture Scans.

High Trust, Low Accountability - Energy & Utilities, Pharma & Healthcare, Aviation, Power Plants and Oil & Gas all fall here. These workplaces foster trust and open communication, but comparatively lower accountability may indicate unclear expectations or weaker performance follow-through.

High Trust, High Accountability - Tech and Banking/Finance & Insurance, and Mining/Manufacturing are all located in this quadrant. These sectors demonstrate a strong cultural balance, employees feel empowered and trusted, while clear responsibilities and performance expectations drive accountability. This combination supports both employee satisfaction and performance.
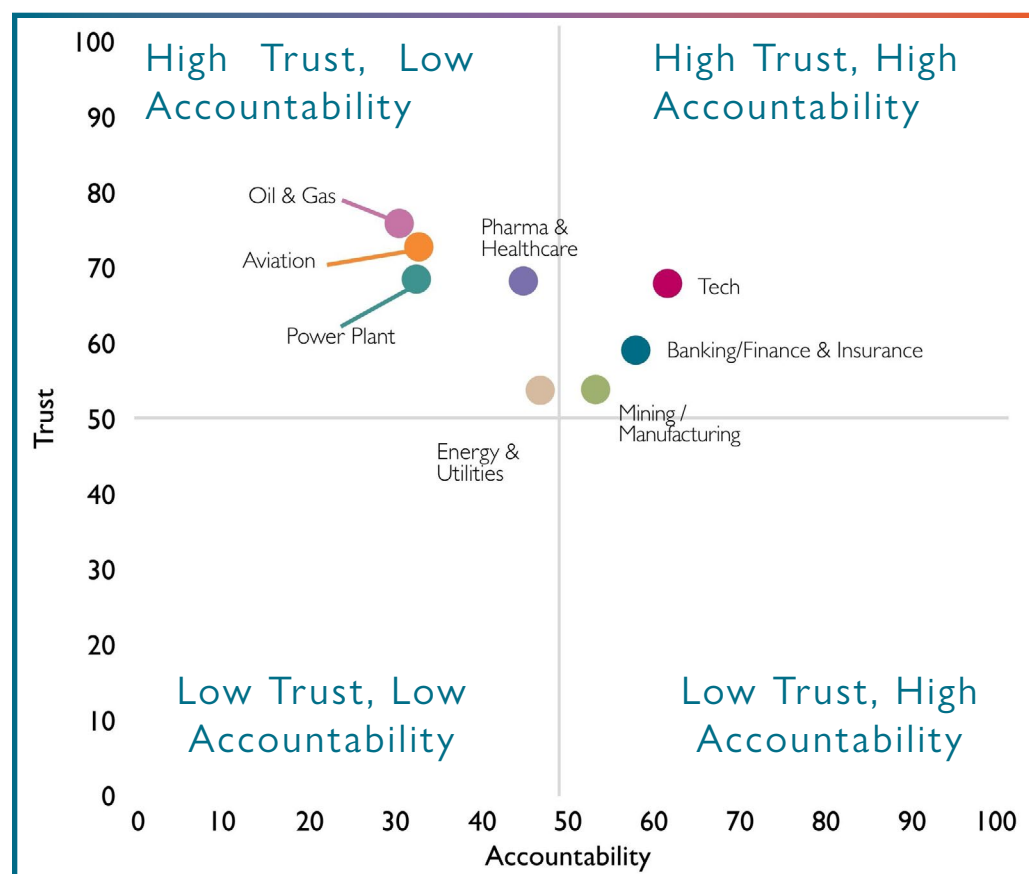

Figure 1: This image maps industries along two critical cultural dimensions: Trust and Accountability. The position of each industry is based on data measured in our Organisational Culture Scans.

Low Trust, Low Accountability - Again, none of the industries average at Low Trust and Low Accountability. This would indicate a disengaged culture with limited ownership, low transparency, and a lack of clear performance structures, all conditions that can introduce operational risk.

Low Trust, High Accountability - None of the industries average in Low Trust, High Accountability, but Mining/Manufacturing are getting close. High levels of accountability indicates structured processes and defined roles. Lower trust levels, however, suggest a culture where rule-following may be prioritised over open communication or initiative-taking.

KEY INSIGHTS

Industries in the upper-right quadrant are best positioned for success, combining psychological safety with high standards. For others, improving trust or accountability - depending on quadrant placement - could unlock better outcomes.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that we are now reflecting on the quadrants largely from the mid-way point of view. It is however entirely possible that a Mining/Manufacturing company would or should not be satisfied with scoring 50 in Trust, even if that is above the mid-way point of the scale.

TRUST VS. ACCOUNTABILITY

While industry averages offer valuable insights into cultural tendencies, a deeper layer of analysis reveals a significant pattern: company size matters. Within the same sector, small and large companies can display surprisingly different cultural profiles, especially when it comes to Trust and Accountability.

High Accountability, Low Bureaucracy: The Small Company Advantage?

One of the clearest patterns that emerges is that small companies, especially in highly structured sectors, tend to show significantly higher levels of Accountability than their larger counterparts.

Figure 2: Trust vs. Accountability among small companies (small circles, fewer than 250 employees) and large companies (large cicles, more than 250 employees).

Take Mining/Manufacturing, for example. Small companies within this sector report high Accountability, compared to their larger counterparts. Similar trends appear in Banking/Finance & Insurance, where small firms maintain more structured, high-responsibility cultures.

This suggests that smaller organisations may benefit from leaner structures, clearer lines of ownership, and a closer connection between decision-making and execution. High Accountability in small firms likely reflects a "hands-on" culture, where responsibilities are more visible, and results more directly traceable to individuals or teams, while larger organisations prioritise compliance and risk management.

Energy & Utilities – A Trust Gap, Not an Accountability One

A very different story emerges in the Energy & Utilities sector. Here, small companies demonstrate exceptionally high Trust (among the highest scores in our dataset), but h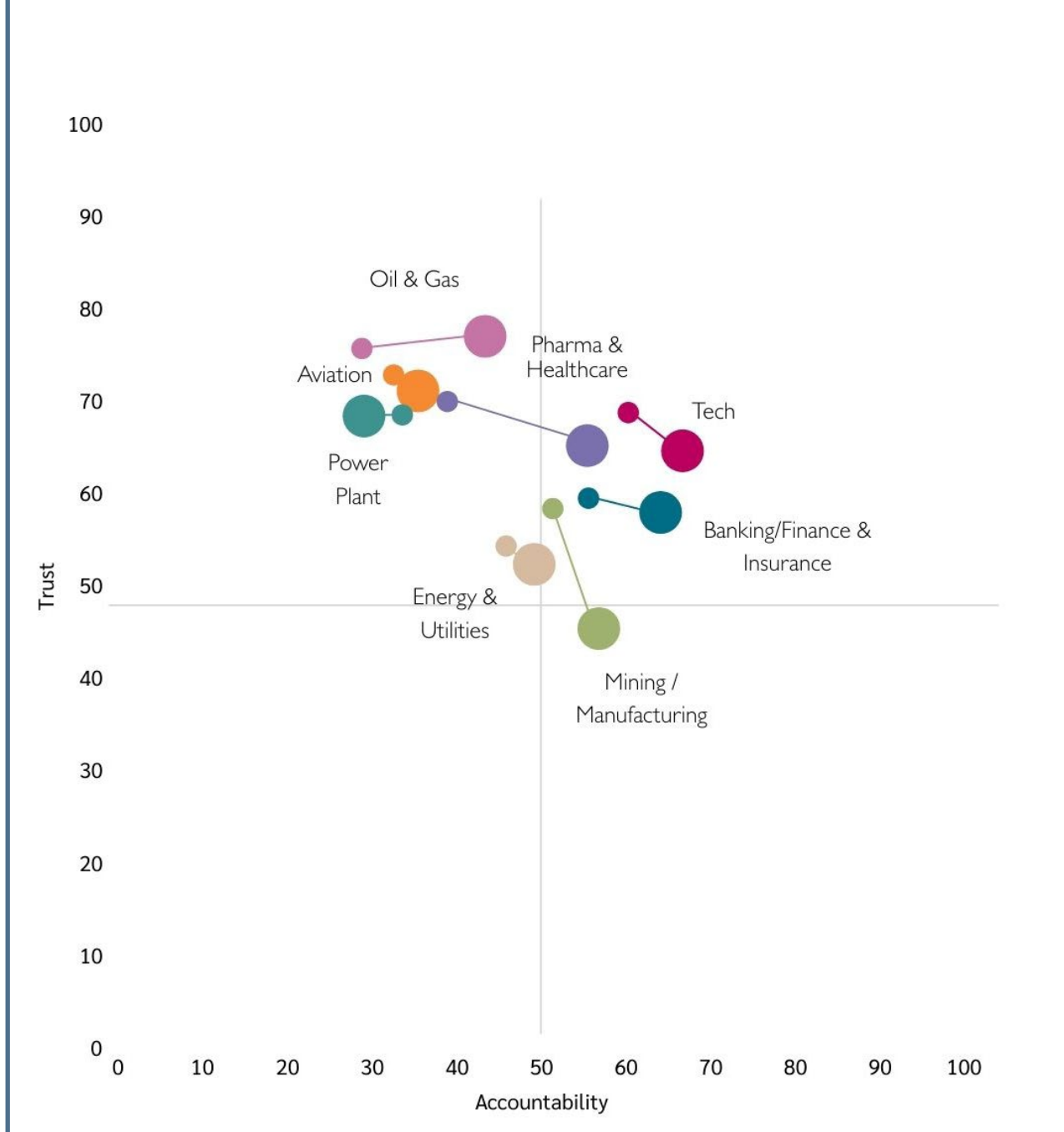ave a lower Accountability score. By contrast, large companies in this sector have significantly lower Trust, but a slightly improved Accountability.

This reveals a striking cultural divergence: small Energy & Utilities companies are psychologically safe environments, likely due to flatter hierarchies, stronger interpersonal relationships, or more accessible leadership. Employees in these organisations likely feel safe to raise concerns, suggest improvements, and admit mistakes, all essential traits in a high-risk industry.

In larger organisations, the dynamics shift. While Accountability remains relatively steady, the sharp drop in Trust may point to bureaucracy, hierarchy, or leadership distance that erodes openness and transparency. This presents a potential cultural liability for large firms: low psychological safety can hinder early risk detection and undermine crisis response.

Pharma, Power Plants: Unique Patterns

Other sectors reflect distinct patterns worth noting:

Pharma & Healthcare small companies show high Trust but lower Accountability, compared to larger firms where Trust, while still relatively high, drops compared to the smaller counterparts and Accountability improves some. The smaller firms likely prioritise care and collaboration but may lack consistent structures for responsibility.

In Power Plants, both small and large companies display low Accountability but fairly high Trust. This combination suggests environments where employees feel safe and collaborative, but where follow-through and clarity of roles may be under-developed, posing risks in critical infrastructure settings.

Quadrant Movement and Culture Strategy

From a strategic perspective, understanding how culture shifts with size is essential for grow-th-oriented companies. As organisations scale, their position in the Trust/Accountability quadrant often changes.

Mining/Manufacturing firms may start out with strong structures and role clarity, but risk slipping into rigidity and disengagement as they grow, unless efforts are made to strengthen psycholo-gical safety.

Pharma & Healthcare and Energy & Utilities firms show the opposite trend: Trust tends to erode as firms get larger, potentially compromising open communication and innovation. These industries should take deliberate steps to maintain psycholo-gical safety during growth, especially in complian-ce-heavy environments.

The tech sector illustrates how culture evolves as companies grow. Start-ups typically show high Trust and solid Accountability, reflecting their agile, open cultures. As they scale, Accountability increases, while Trust slightly declines.

This suggests that larger tech firms are building more structure without fully sacrificing openness, a healthy sign of maturing culture. Still, the dip in Trust highlights a common challenge: retaining psychological safety while formalising roles and processes.

For tech leaders, the lesson is clear, structure is necessary for scale, but it shouldn't come at the cost of transparency and innovation.

DEI AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A Balancing Act for Trust and Retention

Psychological safety, the belief that one can speak up without fear of negative consequences, is a key ingredient in any safety-focused culture. Trust lies at its core, but trust often forms more easily among individuals who perceive one another as similar.

In high-risk environments such as police forces, emergency care, and the military, this has led to recruitment practices that favour similarity. While this may build cohesion quickly, it can also limit diversity and, over time, hinder psychological safety.

Our data shows that organisational cultures that actively support DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and break down silos tend to foster stronger psychological safety. Diverse teams challenge assumptions, reveal blind spots, and normalise difference, creating environments where people feel safer to express themselves.

However, siloed structures, especially common in matrix organisations, can undermine this. Silos often promote an "us versus them" mindset, which erodes trust and reduces openness across teams or departments.

Understanding the underlying culture is essential to addressing this. In our Multi-Focus Model™ the key Dimension regarding this is Dimension 4 - Local vs Professional. On the lower end of this dimension, loyalty is all about personal loyalty, whereas on the higher end, loyalty is all about professional loyalty.

Figure 3: D4 (Local/ Professional) and Psychological safety in 8 industries.

Professionalism

This dimension reflects how loyalty and identity are formed in an organisation:
Local: Loyalty stems from personal relationships. Individuals are valued for who they are.
Professional: Loyalty is rooted in expertise and role. Individuals are valued for what they contribute.

While a professional culture can enhance performance and development, it may also create a more transactional atmosphere. If employees feel valued only for their output, not as individuals, this can reduce emotional connection and increase the likelihood of them seeking opportunities elsewhere. However, this is not a given. A professional culture that combines development opportunities with inclusive leadership can still foster strong commitment and psychological safety.

THE CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANISATIONAL SAFETY

Organisational safety is often approached through the lens of compliance and procedural control. But just as critical, and often overlooked, are the cultural norms that shape how people perceive risk, authority, and accountability. This section explores how national culture influences psychological safety: the belief that individuals can speak up, make mistakes, or challenge established practices without fear of negative consequences.

Drawing on findings from our Organisational Culture Scan, a data-driven tool that measures actual cultural preferences and behavioural norms across industries, we examine how dimensions like power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance influence safety-related behaviours.

These insights highlight that creating a truly safe organisation means more than setting rules, it means designing culturally aligned environments where people feel empowered to contribute, challenge, and learn.

When we refer to cultural dimensions such as Power Distance, Individualism, or Uncertainty Avoidance in a specific industry (e.g., Aviation or Finance), we are not assigning these values to the industry itself. Instead, we are reporting the average national culture scores of the people working in that industry, based on individual responses collected through our Organisational Culture Scan. These scores reflect the national cultural values of the respondents, not the industry as a whole.

Figure 4: Power Distance and Psychological Safety in 8 industries.

POWER DISTANCE & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Power Distance (PDI), one of the six dimensions in the 6-D Model of National Culture, describes the extent to which unequal power distribution is accepted within a society or organisation. It has a notable influence on how employees interact with authority and, by extension, how safe they feel to speak up at work.

In cultures or contexts with high PDI, such as those in India, China, or Saudi Arabia, hierarchical structures are generally seen as normal and necessary. In these settings, employees may be less likely to question authority or raise concerns, which can negatively affect both physical safety, through underreporting of risks, and psychological safety, by discouraging open dialogue.

In contrast, low PDI cultures, such as Denmark or Sweden, tend to support flatter hierarchies and more participatory leadership styles. In these environments, employees are generally more willing to share ideas, flag issues, or admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences.

Findings from Our Data

We ran a trend line analysis exploring the relationship between PDI and Psychological Safety across eight industries. Statistically, there is no strong or consistent trend across the dataset. However, practical patterns are still worth noting:

We observed that in industries where employees tend to have relatively higher PDI preferences, such as Aviation, where average PDI scores are in the 50+ range, reported levels of psychological
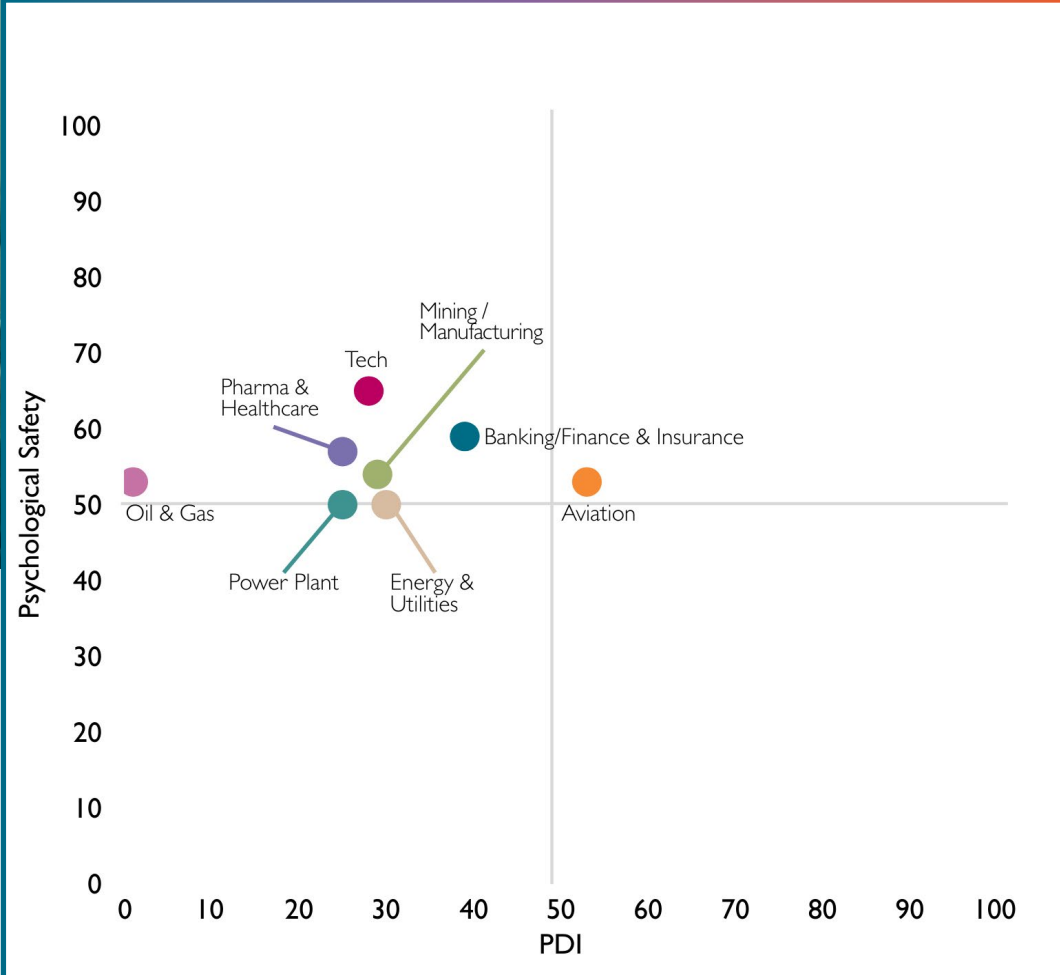
safety tend to be moderate rather than high. This suggests that when employees expect strong hierarchies, they may also be less inclined to speak up or challenge authority.

By contrast, sectors with lower average PDI preferences among employees, such as Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Healthcare, and Oil & Gas, tend to report higher psychological safety. These industries often emphasise collaboration and open communication, supported by employees who expect flatter hierarchies and more open communication.

Several industries, such as Banking, Insurance, and Manufacturing, fall into a mid-range PDI cluster (30–50). In these sectors, reported levels of psychological safety are moderate, indicating a balance between structure and openness.

Energy, while slightly below this PDI range (~29.6), shows a similar psychological safety level, hinting that factors beyond hierarchy may influence perceptions of safety in this sector.

PDI - POWER DISTANCE
The extent to which the less powerful members of society accept that power is distributed unequally.
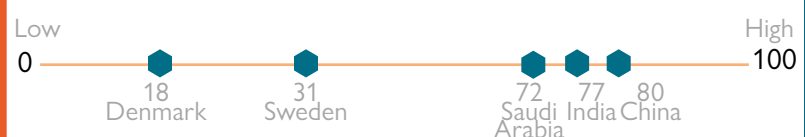
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

POWER DISTANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Organisations where the workforce exhibits higher PDI preferences can take specific steps to improve psychological safety, including:

01.
Introducing anonymous feedback or reporting systems.

03.
Providing leadership training focused on listening and psychological safety.

02.
Promoting inclusive leader-ship practices, and open door policies.

KEY INSIGHTS

In lower-PDI contexts, existing openness can be reinforced through regular feedback loops and cross-level communication.

For industries falling within a mid-range PDI (30-50), evaluate organisational factors (such as team dynamics and communication protocols) beyond hierarchy, to better support open dialogue and trust building.

Efforts to reduce the perceived power distance, through leadership behaviours and structural mechanisms, can support a more psychologically safe environment. This, in turn, fosters better communication, stronger team learning, and improved decision-making.

Figure 5: Individualism and Psychological Safety in 8 industries.

INDIVIDUALISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The second dimension in the 6-D Model of National Culture, Individualism (IDV), describes how people relate to group membership and responsibility. In high IDV cultures, individuals are expected to look after themselves and express their views openly. In low IDV cultures, group loyalty and harmony take precedence, often shaping how decisions are made and how responsibility is shared.

These cultural values have clear implications for psychological safety, the sense that employees can speak up, offer feedback, or admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences.

In high-IDV environments, such as the United States or the UK, psychological safety is often supported by open communication, individual accountability, and direct feedback. This can encourage employees to speak up and contribute ideas. However, when performance is overly individualised, it may also foster blame in the event of failure, which can erode psychological safety over time.

By contrast, in low-IDV contexts, such as Nigeria or Mexico, psychological safety may be reinforced through group support and shared responsibility. Yet, these benefits can be offset if social harmony or deference to authority prevents employees from expressing dissent or raising concerns.

Findings from Our Data

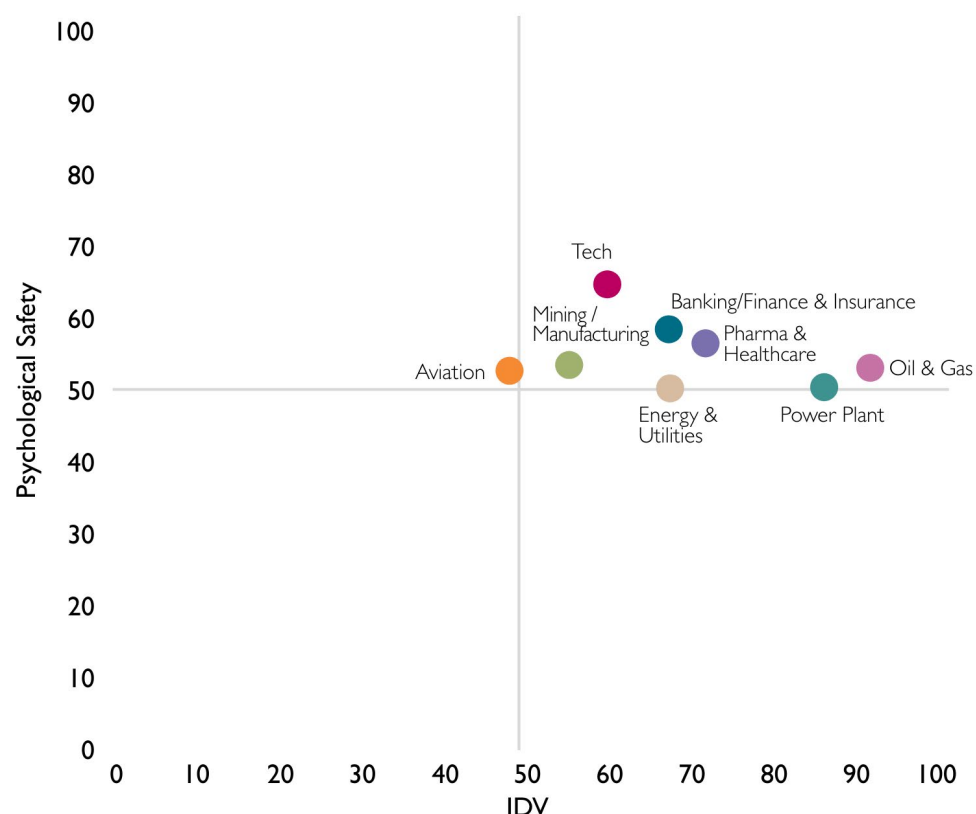We ran a trend line analysis exploring the relationship between IDV and Psychological Safety across eight industries. Statistically, there is no strong or consistent trend across the dataset. Observed patterns and theoretical expectations still provide valuable context:

Sectors with higher IDV preferences, including Technology and Banking/Finance & Insurance, show stronger psychological safety outcomes. These industries often encourage initiative and direct dialogue, aligning with individualist norms.

Sectors where employees hold relatively lower IDV values, such as Aviation, and Mining/Manufacturing, report moderate to low psychological safety. This may reflect reluctance to challenge group norms or hierarchical authority.

Power Plants and Oil & Gas are interesting outliers that, despite high IDV, show comparatively lower psychological safety. This may reflect procedural or regulatory norms that constrain open communication, even in environments with high individualism.

IDV - INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism: People only look after themselves and their immediate family. Collectivism: People belong to in-groups who look after them in exchange for loyalty.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INDIVIDUALISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

To build psychological safety, organisations must align their approach with the cultural preferences of their workforce:

01.
In individualist settings, support autonomy, encourage candid feedback, and foster environments where learning from failure is normalised. These environments tend to benefit from clear personal accountability and open channels for idea-sharing.

02.
In collectivist contexts, promote inclusive dialogue, provide anonymous feedback channels, and train leaders to manage dissent constructively.

KEY INSIGHTS

Across all contexts, leaders should remain aware that individualism alone may not determine psychological safety outcomes. Organisational structure, leadership behaviour, and communication norms all play important roles and should be adapted accordingly.

Figure 6: MAS and Psychological Safety in 8 industries.

MOTIVATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Motivation Towards Achievement and Success (MAS), one of the six dimensions in the 6-D Model of National Culture, reflects the extent to which individuals value assertiveness, achievement, and competition versus modesty, well-being, and consensus.

In higher MAS cultures, such as the United States or Japan, employees may place high importance on performance and success. In such environments, people might be reluctant to admit mistakes or speak up about concerns for fear of appearing weak or underperforming. This can lead to reduced psychological safety and lower openness in communication.

By contrast, in lower MAS cultures where people tend to prioritise collaboration, quality of life, and group harmony, for example, the Netherlands or Norway, communication tends to be more transparent and psychologically safe. Employees in such cultures are often more willing to raise concerns or give feedback, even when it's difficult.

Findings from Our Data

Our data shows a negative correlation (although weak) between MAS and psychological safety. In other words, where MAS scores among employees are higher, reported psychological safety tends to be lower.

Banking / Finance & Insurance are an outlier, scoring more assertive compared to other sectors, yet also reporting higher levels of psychological safety compared to other industries. Could this be a consequence of consecutive banking crises and increased accountability since the banking crises of 2008?
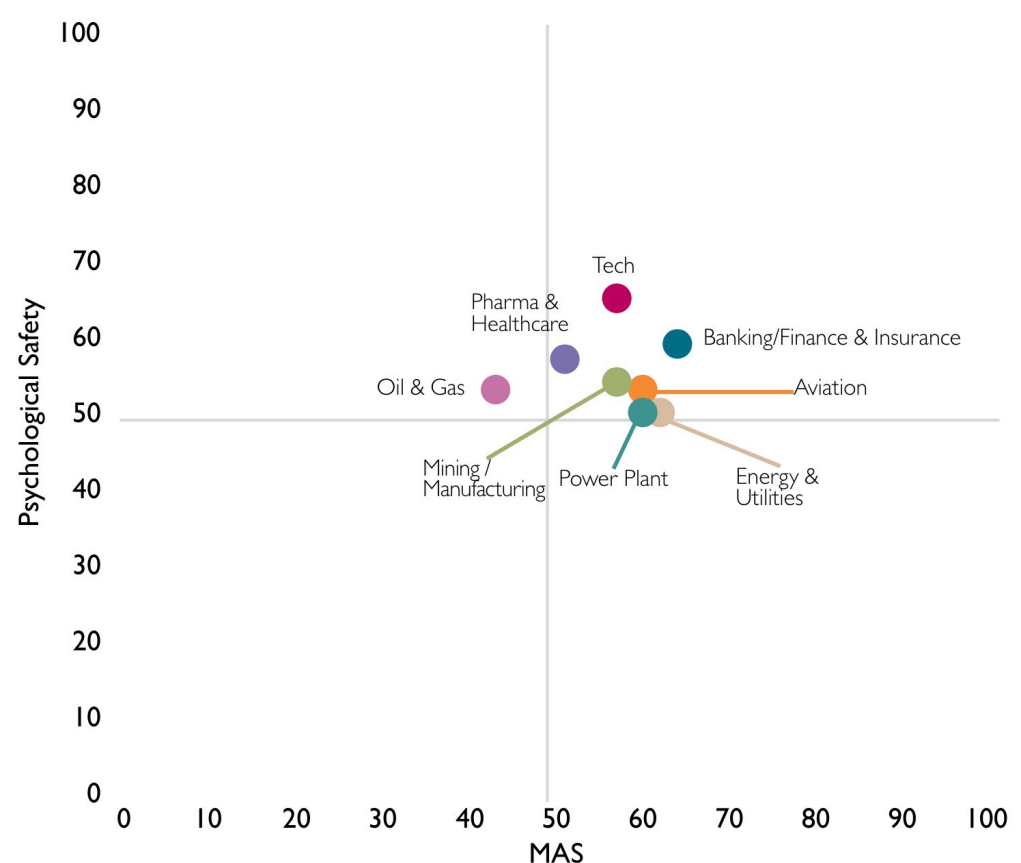
In sectors such as Aviation and Energy and Utilities, with higher MAS scores among employees and lower psychological safety, patterns may reflect strongly hierarchical or target-driven environments where speaking up carries perceived risk. The emphasis on targets and assertiveness may contribute to a culture of silence around mistakes or uncertainty.

In sectors like Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare, and Mining/Manufacturing, both MAS and psychological safety tend to sit around the mid-range, suggesting a modestly assertive but supportive culture. The emphasis on care and ethical responsibility may promote open dialogue, even where performance orientation exists.

Interestingly, Technology and Oil & Gas present contrasting dynamics. Technology, with a moderately high MAS score, shows the highest levels of psychological safety, indicating that assertiveness can coexist with openness in innovation-driven environments.

Meanwhile, Oil & Gas reports only moderate psychological safety despite a low MAS score. This suggests that, beyond individual cultural values, structural and sector-specific factors, such as risk management and hierarchy, may significantly shape how safe employees feel to speak up.

MAS - MOTIVATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS
High: The dominant values in society are achievement and success. Low: The dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MOTIVATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Organisations with employees who express higher MAS values can take concrete steps to improve psychological safety:

01.
Train leaders to respond supportively to feedback and create space for open dialogue.

02.
Implement safe feedback mechanisms, including anonymous channels a structured team reflections.

03.
Recognise not only individual performance but also collaboration and support behaviours.

04.
Promote a culture where learning from mistakes is normalised and not penalised.

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KEY INSIGHTS

In environments where MAS values are lower, existing strengths in collaboration and transparency can be reinforced, particularly when working across cultural or regional boundaries.

Figure 7: UAI and Psychological Safety in 8 industries.

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), one of the six dimensions in the 6-D Model of National Culture, describes the extent to which people feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. These preferences can influence how individuals react to risk, feedback, and non-standard ideas, factors that directly affect psychological safety.

In environments where employees show higher UAI values, such as in cultures like France, Japan, or Germany, there is often a strong preference for clear structure, formal protocols, and risk reduction. While this can enhance operational safety, it may also suppress openness. Employees may be hesitant to question procedures or raise concerns if doing so is seen as disruptive or non-compliant.

By contrast, in contexts where lower UAI values are more common, such as in the U.S. or Singapore, employees are often more comfortable with ambiguity and change. These environments typically foster greater psychological safety by encouraging open communication and a learning-oriented mindset. However, too little structure can sometimes undermine consistency or compliance.

Findings from Our Data

Our data reveals a slightly positive, though not statistically significant, correlation between Uncertainty Avoidance and Psychological Safety. Psychological safety scores tend to increase marginally as UAI values rise. This may reflect the benefits of predictability, clear boundaries, or protocol-driven safety in certain contexts.

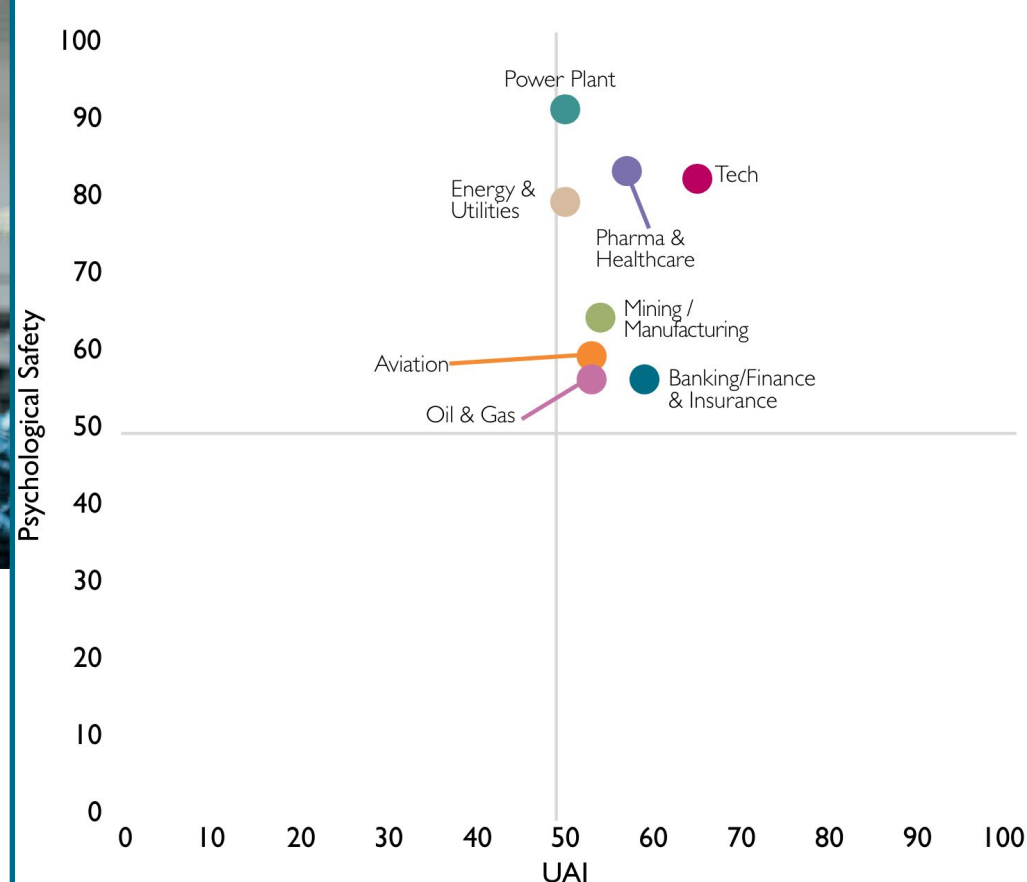In sectors such as Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare,

Energy & Utilities, Aviation, and Power Plants, we see higher UAI scores alongside lower psychological safety. These environments may lean heavily on procedure and compliance, which can unintentionally restrict openness, especially when deviation is seen as risky.

In Banking/Finance & Insurance, employees show relatively lower UAI and report higher psychological safety. These sectors often foster innovation, agility, and a speak-up culture that embraces change.

Mining/Manufacturing and Oil & Gas fall into a mid-range cluster for both UAI and psychological safety. This suggests that balancing formal structure with openness can support both compliance and communication.

Interestingly, the Technology sector, despite its high UAI score, reports the highest psychological safety. This challenges assumptions that only low-UAI environments foster openness, suggesting that psychological safety can flourish in structured contexts, particularly when innovation is actively supported.

UAI - UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

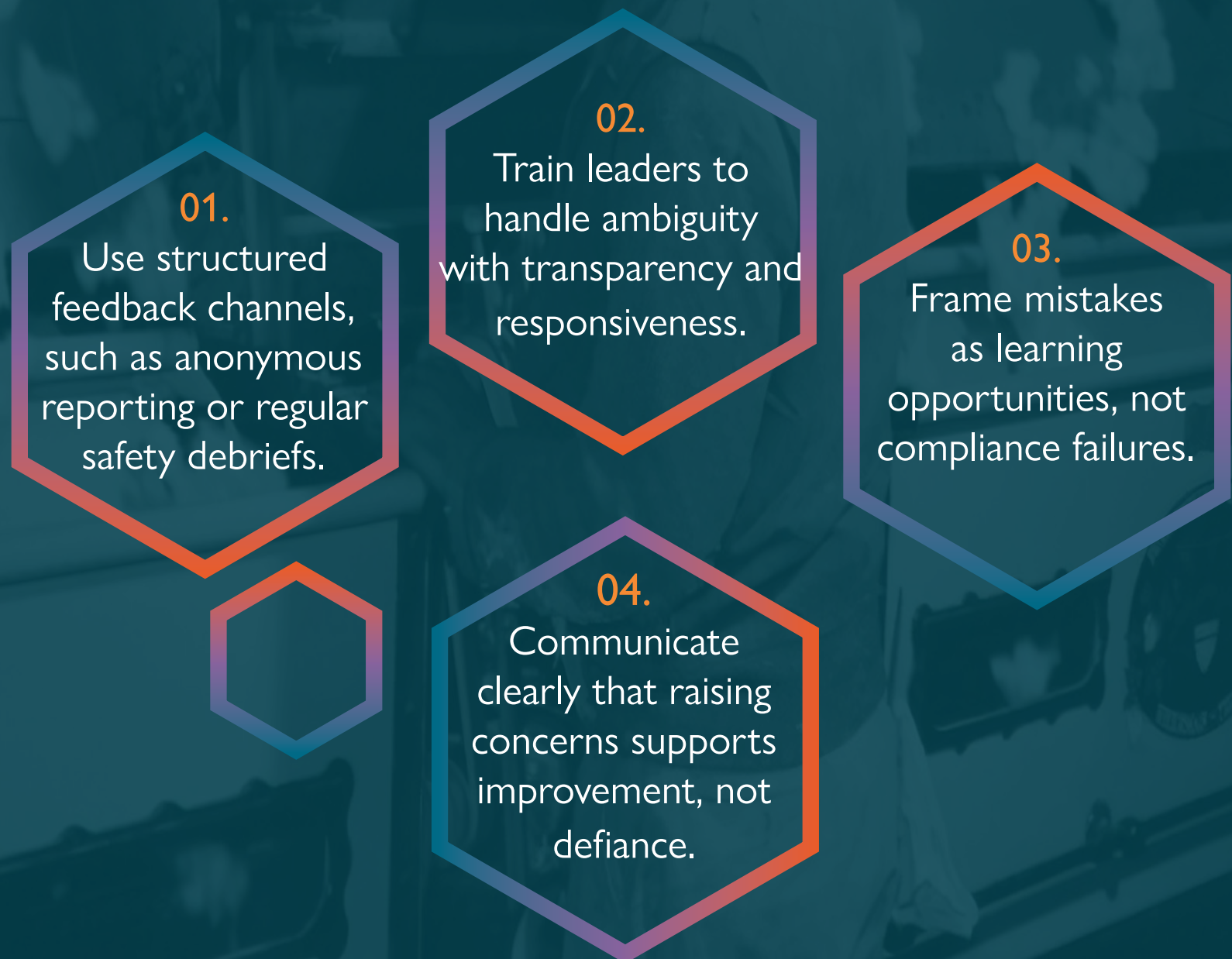The extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity, and try to avoid such situations.

Low UAI   High UAI

0 ────────●──────────●──────●────────●──── 100

8   46   65   86
Singapore USA   Germany   France
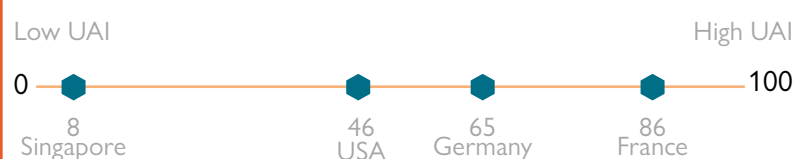
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

To strengthen psychological safety in high-UAI contexts, organisations can leverage structure as a foundation for openness. To improve psychological safety in high-UAI contexts:

01.
Use structured feedback channels, such as anonymous reporting or regular safety debriefs.

02.
Train leaders to handle ambiguity with transparency and responsiveness.

03.
Frame mistakes as learning opportunities, not compliance failures.

04.
Communicate clearly that raising concerns supports improvement, not defiance.

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KEY INSIGHTS

In lower-UAI environments, where openness comes more naturally:
Preserve flexibility and innovation, but reinforce accountability and risk awareness to avoid lapses in standards or clarity.

Ensure that open dialogue is paired with clear guidance to help teams navigate uncertainty constructively.

Figure 8: LTO and Psychological Safety in 8 industries.

LONG-TERM ORIENTATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Long-Term Orientation (LTO), one of the six dimensions in the 6-D Model of National Culture, reflects the degree to which people value perseverance, future planning, and sustainable growth versus a preference for short-term results and immediate rewards. In organisational settings, understanding how employees orient themselves toward time can help leaders anticipate how teams respond to change, development, and feedback, key factors in shaping a speak-up culture.

In higher LTO cultures, such as China, Japan, or Germany, there is often an emphasis on consistency, learning, and long-term outcomes. These settings tend to support ongoing employee development, ethical leadership, and transparent decision-making. This future-focused mindset is typically conducive to creating environments where open dialogue and improvement are encouraged over quick wins.

Conversely, in lower LTO cultures, like the U.S., Nigeria, or the Philippines, immediate performance and visible outcomes may be prioritised. While this can drive efficiency, it may also create pressure to deliver quickly, leaving less room for experimentation or voicing concerns that could slow progress.

Findings from Our Data

The data reveals a statistically significant negative correlation between Long-Term Orientation (LTO) and Psychological Safety. In other words, as LTO increases, reported psychological safety tends to decrease. It should be mentioned, though, that most of these industries show relatively low LTO and moderately high psychological safety values.
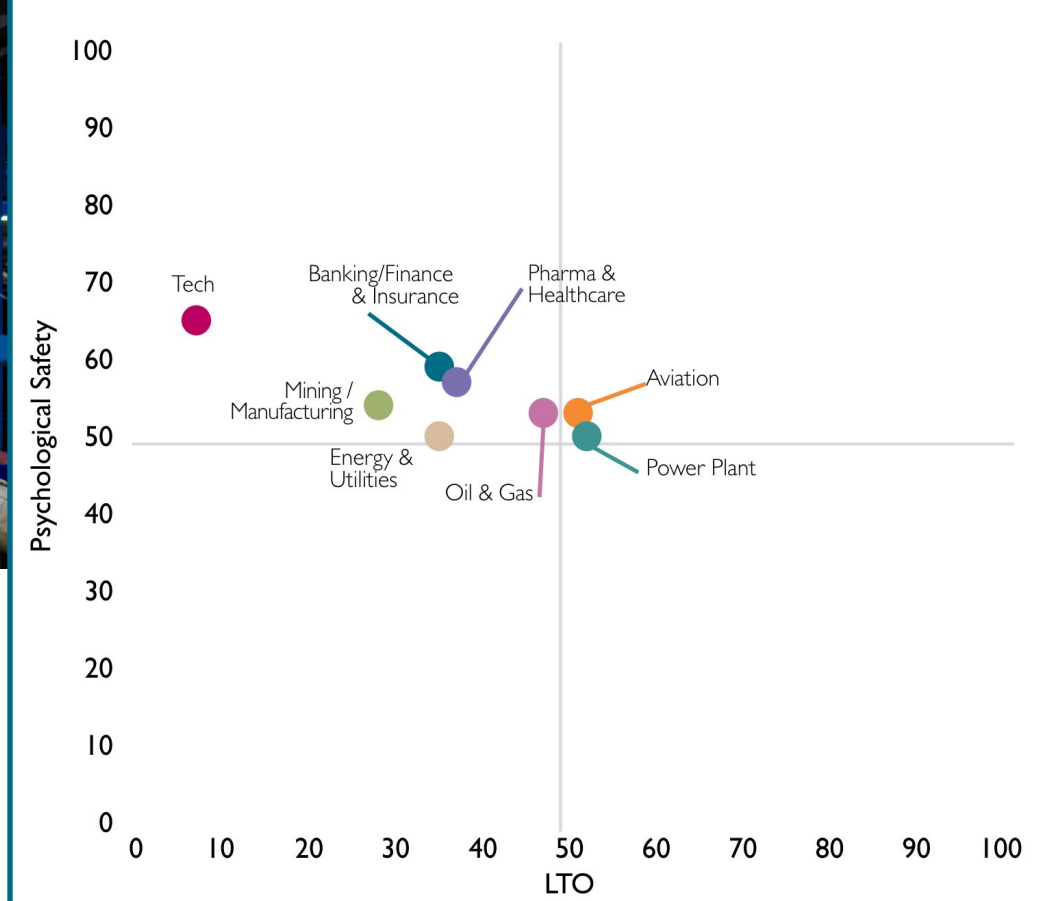
Notably, the Technology sector, with the lowest LTO score among all industries and the highest psychological safety, exemplifies how short-term adaptability, innovation, and open dialogue may go hand-in-hand. In such contexts, psychological safety appears to thrive in cultures where quick feedback, iteration, and transparency are prioritised.

Industries such as Power Plants and Oil & Gas exhibit higher LTO and lower psychological safety, reinforcing the trend. Aviation, while showing moderate LTO and moderate psychological safety, may reflect a more balanced dynamic where hierarchical structures coexist with some degree of openness.

Mining and Manufacturing, despite showing a relatively low LTO score, reports a moderate level of psychological safety. This highlights how other workplace or cultural dynamics may buffer against long-term orientation pressures, suggesting a more nuanced relationship between time orientation and safety.

LTO - LONG TERM ORIENTATION

The extent to which people show a future-oriented or pragmatic perspective rather than a normative or short-term point of view.
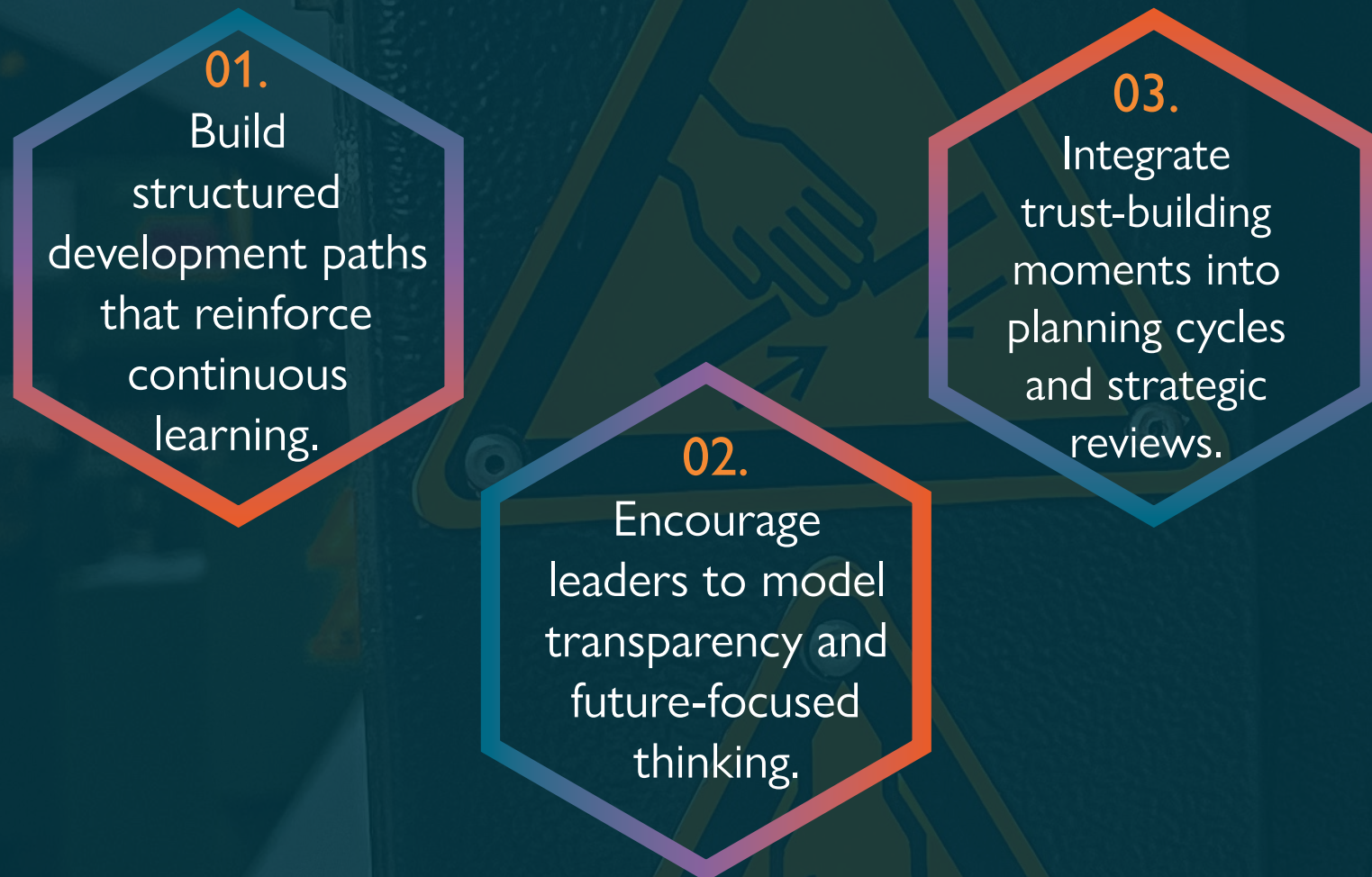
Short Term Orientation — Long Term Orientation

0 — 100

8 Nigeria | 46 Philippines | 57 Germany | 77 China | 100 Japan
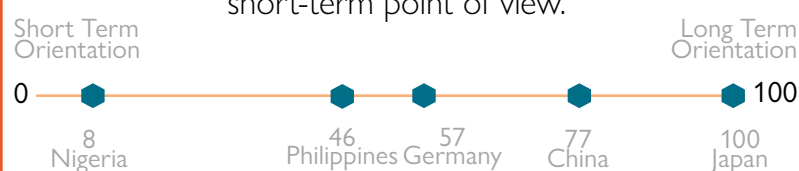
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LONG-TERM ORIENTATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

To strengthen open dialogue in long-term-oriented environments:

01.
Build structured development paths that reinforce continuous learning.

02.
Encourage leaders to model transparency and future-focused thinking.

03.
Integrate trust-building moments into planning cycles and strategic reviews.

KEY INSIGHTS

In more short-term-focused environments:
Create intentional space for feedback, even under tight deadlines.
Link rapid execution with learning loops and opportunities for reflection.

TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

By aligning national culture dimensions, like Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, with organisational culture dimensions such as Control, Professionalism, and your organisational strategy, leaders can create a culture that not only meets compliance standards, but also fosters an environment where employees feel safe to speak up and take proactive measures

Our data shows that while National Culture can influence preferences for authority, uncertainty, and feedback, it does not strongly determine Psychological Safety outcomes. Psychological Safety can be intentionally built across any National Culture, highlighting Organisational Culture as a decisive factor in achieving safety goals.

When cultural values and organisational practices reinforce each other, employees are more likely to speak up, take responsibility, and actively manage risk.

Here are seven actions you can take to move from insight to impact:

Align Culture with Strategy
Ensure that your Actual Culture (how things are currently done) aligns with your Optimal Culture (the practices that best support your strategy). This alignment improves both cultural coherence and safety performance.

Reduce Power Distance
Encourage open-door policies and transparent decision-making. When employees feel safe to challenge authority or raise concerns, early warning signs are more likely to surface.

Promote Psychological Safety
Create a culture of trust and accountability by fostering open communication and removing the fear of blame when reporting safety issues. Psychological safety is essential for proactive behaviour.

Balance Control and Flexibility
Maintain clear, structured safety protocols, especially in high-Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) environments, while also allowing space for employee feedback and adaptive responses in complex situations.

Encourage Professionalism
Promote a culture that values expertise and continuous learning in all areas related to safety. This supports consistent, competent decision-making at all levels of the organisation.

## Support Long-Term Thinking
Invest in sustainable safety practices that prioritise future resilience over short-term fixes. This includes leadership development, employee training, and systems that evolve with your organisation.

Embrace Open Feedback
Implement regular, anonymous feedback mechanisms to identify and address safety concerns effectively.
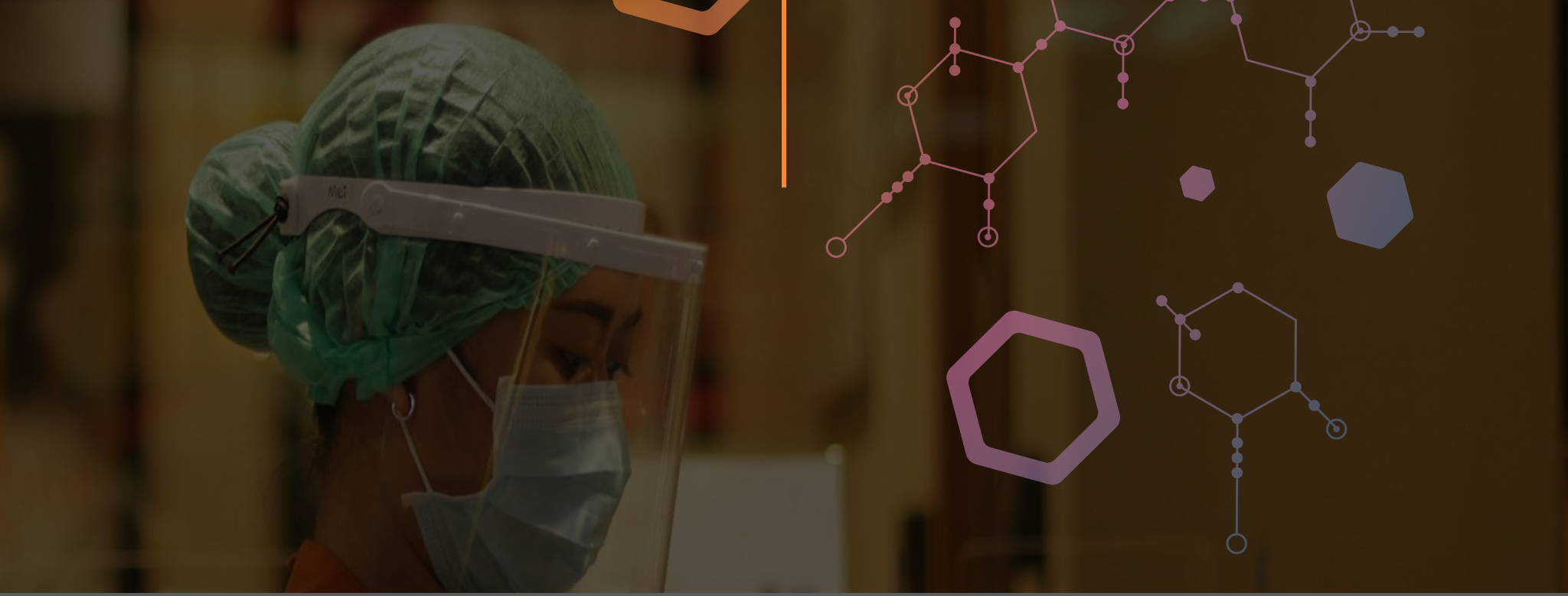
TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

After gaining insights into how culture shapes security, your next step is to dive deeper into understanding your organisation's unique challenges and opportunities.
Here's how you can continue your journey.

GO FURTHER WITH THE WEBINAR

Culture and Security:
Insights from the Global Report

June 03 2025

This interactive webinar will walk you through the key findings of our latest report. Join us as we explore how culture shapes safety beyond procedures and compliance. We'll reveal how national and organisational culture impact risk perception, decision-making, crisis response, and the most critical factor of all whether people feel safe to speak up.

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