

ICM ANNUAL CRISIS REPORT 2024

GLOBAL NEWS COVERAGE OF BUSINESS CRISES IN 2024

Issued June 2025

In 2024, crisis news stories returned to pre-pandemic-like results, both in numbers and in proportions we expect to see in the 16 crisis categories we follow. As usual, the data contain a few surprises. The **Institute for Crisis Management** tallied **1,134,388 crisis news stories in 2024**, a significant decrease from 2023 and a return to pre-COVID (2019) levels. **Smoldering crises reclaimed the majority at nearly 75%** of stories tracked, and **mismanagement reclaimed its title** of largest proportion of stories found. Several categories showed **significant post-pandemic reversals**, including catastrophes, environmental damage, hostile takeovers, mismanagement, sexual harassment, white collar crime and workplace violence.



CATASTROPHES

This category had the most significant decrease to just **2.21%** of stories tracked, and, absent COVID stories, returned to its 2019 level. Despite the reversal, the year was marked by natural disasters across the globe. According to an analysis by the World Weather Attribution Group, human-caused climate change made 2024 floods twice as likely to occur and 10% more intense. Data from NOAA, EM-DAT and Gallagher Re identified Hurricane Helene as the seventh most costly weather disaster in history at \$79 billion and 219 deaths. Two more

events made the ranking: Hurricane Milton (#17), at \$34 billion and 32 fatalities, and flooding in China (#19) at \$31 billion and 605 deaths. Heatwaves in Europe, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. ranked in the top 20 worst of all time with more than 13,000 deaths combined. A wildfire in Chile ranked as the fifth deadliest with 137 dead.

The deadly Saudi heatwave struck during the annual Hajj pilgrimage with temperatures exceeding 50° Celsius (122° Fahrenheit). Super Typhoon Yagi was one of the deadliest storms of the year with 460 dead in Myanmar and 345 in Vietnam. The

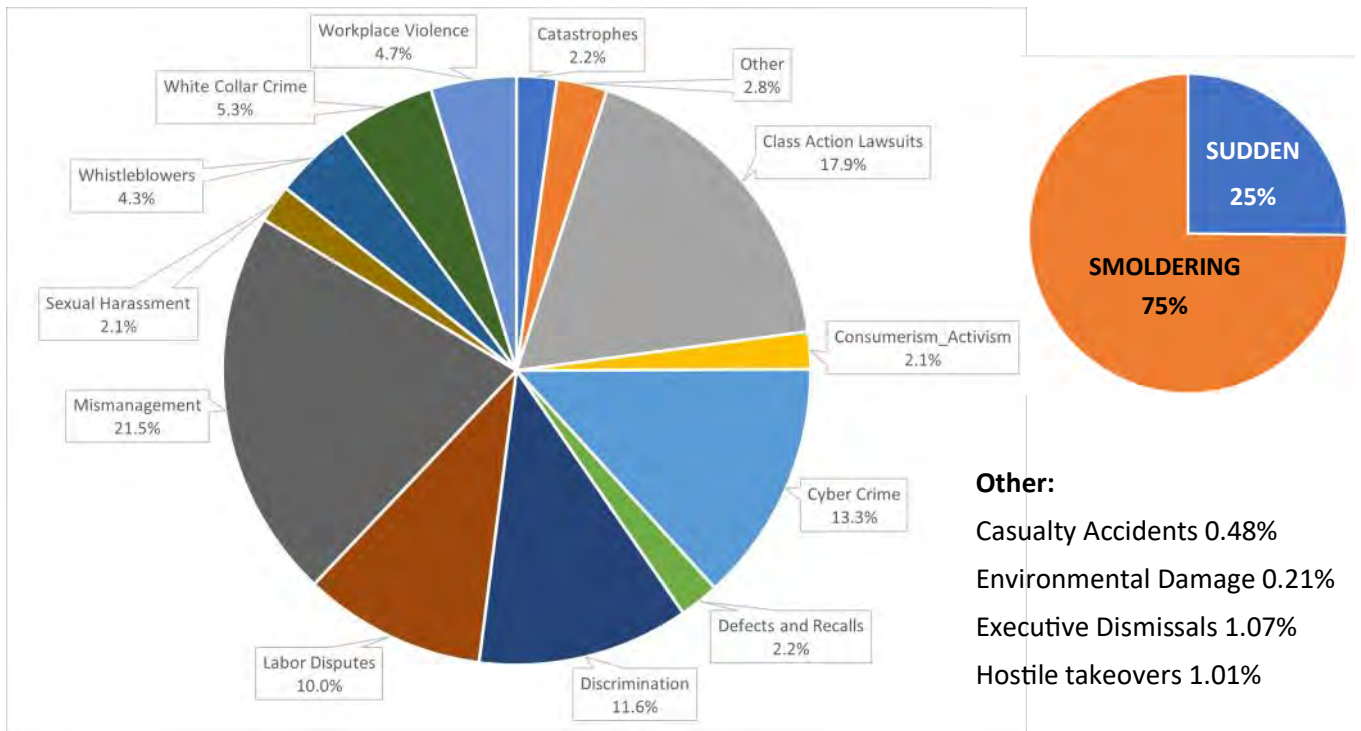
storm left a wide path of destruction across the Philippines, Thailand and China, affections millions more. African floods from July to September claimed nearly 1,000 lives. According to EM-DAT, more than a quarter of the 30 deadliest weather disasters in Africa have occurred since 2022.

Catastrophic wildfires in Chile marked the worst disaster since 2010, and massive floods in Brazil caused nearly \$7 Billion in damage while displacing hundreds of thousands. In Spain, from late October to mid-November, a rare atmospheric phenomenon caused deadly flooding, leading to 126 dead and \$11 Billion in damages.

In the U.S., there were 27 weather disasters with losses exceeding \$1 billion each, and included flooding, severe storms, hurricanes, wildfires and winter storms.



2024 CRISIS CATEGORY RESULTS



SIX-YEAR TRENDS

| CATEGORY | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Catastrophes | 2.26% | 37.15% | 36.61% | 20.81% | 26.10% | 2.21% |
| Casualty Accidents | 0.68% | 0.06% | 0.11% | 0.13% | 0.28% | 0.48% |
| Class Action Lawsuits | 1.19% | 3.83% | 4.73% | 7.70% | 11.37% | 17.90% |
| Consumer Activism | 1.82% | 7.44% | 7.81% | 8.76% | 0.94% | 2.10% |
| Cyber Crime | 13.28% | 2.93% | 1.58% | 3.21% | 7.24% | 13.29% |
| Defects and Recalls | 2.59% | 1.03% | 1.10% | 0.83% | 1.67% | 2.19% |
| Discrimination | 11.92% | 9.73% | 3.52% | 3.44% | 7.19% | 11.63% |
| Environmental Damage | 2.26% | 0.40% | 0.07% | 0.02% | 0.47% | 0.21% |
| Executive Dismissal | 2.19% | 2.47% | 5.55% | 5.80% | 2.49% | 1.07% |
| Hostile Takeovers | 1.17% | 0.33% | 0.29% | 0.42% | 3.71% | 1.01% |
| Labor Disputes | 10.62% | 1.30% | 1.90% | 3.19% | 4.65% | 10.04% |
| Mismangement | 19.56% | 3.90% | 3.95% | 7.18% | 8.53% | 21.48% |
| Sexual Harassment | 16.43% | 3.77% | 2.98% | 6.35% | 3.09% | 2.08% |
| Whistleblower | 8.13% | 22.08% | 25.94% | 28.96% | 2.08% | 4.33% |
| White Collar Crime | 4.32% | 2.06% | 1.94% | 1.80% | 10.80% | 5.32% |
| Workplace Violence | 1.59% | 1.52% | 1.91% | 1.39% | 9.39% | 4.71% |

BUSINESS CRISIS DEFINED

A crisis is a significant event or series of events that, left unmanaged, threatens an organization's brand, reputation, operations and/or financial stability. Such events often require immediate and strategic management to mitigate damage, restore trust and confidence and ensure long term recovery.

TYPES OF BUSINESS CRISES

- Sudden
- Perceptual
- Smoldering
- Bizarre

CASUALTY ACCIDENTS

In an interesting twist, this category accounted for less than one-half of one percent at **0.48%** of stories tallied. While the raw number was only slightly higher than 2023, the proportion nearly doubled. Aviation incidents made the headlines with more than 318 deaths in 11 civilian accidents worldwide, the deadliest year for aviation since 2018. Two of the three deadliest crashes occurred at the end of the year. Capping another bad year for crisis-ridden Boeing, a South Korean Jeju Air 737-800 crashed on



December 29, killing 179. In Nepal, a CRJ-200ER crashed killing 18 of 19 aboard. Additional deadly crashes occurred in Canada, Brazil and Japan.

Rail accidents and fatalities occur far more frequently than airplane crashes. The U.S. and Canada saw slight decreases year over year, but fatalities remained high. Most U.S. fatalities occurred at rail crossings, with Texas and California most affected. Across the U.S. there were 2,252 grade-crossing collisions with 263 fatalities and 751 injuries. In Canada, 896 rail incidents were reported with 69 fatalities.

Train accident-prone India saw a major collision of the Kanchanjunga Express in June, and a Jamtara train accident in February were at least two passengers run over by another train while disembarking. In the first half of 2024, Indian railways had seven major accidents. In France, railway arson attacks led to service disruptions and injuries. A train collision in Murmansk, Russia reported injuries and disruptions.

CLASS ACTION LAWSUITS

With inverse year-over-year results, the number of stories in this category decreased by several thousand but the proportion increased to **17.90%**. The largest class-action settlement of 2024, at more than \$10 billion involved PFAS contamination claims against manufacturers of so-called “forever chemicals” that have been linked to environmental and health risks.

Securities class action settlements were a record \$4.1 billion in 2024, led by major tech companies including Intel, Snowflake and CrowdStrike. Six of the top ten settlements were in the tech sector. Major securities class actions against Dell Technologies and Wells Fargo resulted in settlements exceeding \$1 billion paid to investors.

Ongoing litigation against Johnson & Johnson continued with 58,000 pending talcum powder cases following a failed bankruptcy settlement attempt. The J&J cases are particularly disheartening given that the company has been held up as the gold standard in crisis management stemming from its 1982 Tylenol poisonings response.

The year saw a surge in data breach litigation with 1,488 class actions filed, more than twice the number from just two years earlier. The surge cemented data breaches as one of the fastest growing areas of class action torts. In one shocking case, a \$30 million class action settlement was reached over conditions in Los Angeles County (Ca.) juvenile detention facilities.

CONSUMERISM / ACTIVISM

The category accounted for **2.05%** of stories tallied, more than double its previous year’s score. The year was a big one for consumer activism, with boycotts, shareholder activism and grassroots movements impacting the global business landscape and reflecting the growing influence of collective voices. The People’s Union USA, a grassroots organization, organized “economic blackouts” across the U.S., urging Americans to refrain from spending for 24 hours to protest the influence of

large corporations and political elites. A follow-up weeklong boycott targeted Amazon. Along with Target and Walmart, Amazon also was targeted for walking back DEI policies and initiatives.

In a case that crossed categories, environmental and consumer activists won a decisive victory in a



landmark \$10.3 billion settlement against 3M over claims it contaminated U.S. water systems with toxic “forever chemicals”.

Socio-political issues were rampant during the year, with boycotts of global brands tied to the war in Gaza. The boycotts were widely organized and tracked on social media, highlighting the power of digital platforms to mobilize consumers to action. Investor and shareholder activism activities had a record year but limited success, with most campaigns focused on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. In one notable campaign, activist investor Elliott Investment Management pushed for the breakup of Honeywell International.

CYBER CRIME

This category roared past the previous year with **13.29%** of stories tracked, narrowly beating 2019’s result but with 50% more stories. This is the largest result in the category since we began tracking it in 2014. According to the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC) the U.S. alone experienced more than 3,100 data compromises, just slightly below 2023’s numbers, but with a 312% increase in the number of victim notices, which eclipsed the prior year with 1,350,835,988 (yes, that is billions). Five mega breaches accounted for most of the significant increase. Of the total breaches reported, 455 were

phishing, 188 ransomware, 48 malware and 29 credential stuffing. More than 1,700 were not specified.

According to data from SonicWall, the average ransomware payment reached \$850,700 with total losses often exceeding \$4.9 million. In its annual Cyber Threat Report, SonicWall reported that it had identified 210,258 ‘never-before-seen’ malware variants.

In one of the largest incursions tracked, United Healthcare subsidiary Change Healthcare was hit with a ransomware attack by the BlackCat group, crippling healthcare payment systems, delaying patient care and exposing the data of nearly 200 million people. The attack cost the insurance giant nearly \$10 billion in response and provider assistance costs. Ransomware was reportedly used in 95% of all breaches in the healthcare sector.



Cybersecurity firms are apparently no more secure than the rest of us, as evidenced by the CrowdStrike attack which led to a major outage of Microsoft cloud services that impacted businesses and governments worldwide. Other mega-breaches included Ticketmaster, 560 million notices; Advance Auto Parts, 380 million; Demand Science by Pure Incubation, 122 million; AT&T, 110 million; and MC2 Data, 100 million.

Experts noted that system and human errors accounted for 310 incidents, and supply chain attacks were significant with 134 breaches impacting 657 entities and more than 200 million victim notices. ITRC president James E. Lee noted in its annual report that while today’s password practices can easily be compromised, passkeys cannot

be stolen and that if passkeys had been used more widely, most of the reported breaches would not have happened. He added that 94% of all devices are passkey-ready, with Amazon and Microsoft offering passkey access to all users.

A passkey is a modern, passwordless authentication method that uses public key cryptography to securely verify a user's identity. Instead of relying on passwords that can be easily compromised, passkeys use two cryptographic keys: a public key stored with the service (such as Google) and a private key that remains securely on your device.

When you log in, your device uses biometrics (like a fingerprint or face scan) or a device PIN to unlock the private key and prove your identity, without ever sharing the private key itself. This makes passkeys highly resistant to phishing, credential theft, and data breaches, as there is no password for hackers to steal or intercept.

DEFECTS AND RECALLS

In another inverse change year-over-year, this category increased to **2.19%** of stories tallied in 2024. The number of stories decreased by one-third while the proportion increased.

Major foodborne illness recalls were led by Boar's Head deli meats, linked to 61 reported illnesses and 10 deaths. As with many foodborne illness issues, the actual number of people sickened is likely higher than what is reported, as not everyone seeks medical treatment when stricken with a foodborne illness.

Undeclared allergens were the top cause of food recalls at 34%, followed by Listeria at 22% and Salmonella at 14%. Other notable food recalls included organic carrots, cucumbers, onions (namely affecting McDonald's quarter pounder sandwich) and various dairy products.

In other kinds of product recalls, Tesla's cyber-truck line experienced at least six separate recalls affecting more than 28 thousand vehicles. Automaker Kia recalled 460 thousand Telluride

SUVs due to a defect that may cause fire in the seats. Chrysler (Stellantis) recalled 1.46 million vehicles due to a software malfunction affecting anti-lock braking systems.

Among consumer product recalls were Insignia Air Fryers, with 187 thousand being recalled by retailer Best Buy for overheating, melting handles and shattering glass doors. Starbucks holiday gift sets with ceramic mugs were recalled after several



instances of the mugs overheating or breaking, resulting in injury. Two types of blenders were recalled: Blendjet recalled 4.8 million portable blenders following 329 reports of blades breaking, and Vitamix expanded a previous recall due to blender containers detaching from the blade base, causing laceration hazards and 27 injury reports.

Among several notable drug safety recalls were recalls of antidepressant duloxetine due to a cancer risk, Systane® lubricant eyedrops (safety concern not noted) and Zicam® and Orajel™ swabs for microbial contamination.

DISCRIMINATION

The next inverse change was identified in this category, with **11.64%** of stories tallied. Again, the number of stories decreased but the category's portion of the crisis pie increased significantly. Discrimination has become more complex and persistent, with backward steps in gender rights, workplace equality and protection for minorities.

During the year, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed 110 lawsuits

across a range of issues with a focus on emerging concerns and underserved, vulnerable communities. The EEOC received 88,500 workplace discrimination allegations in 2024.

The agency's caseload during the year included numerous cases involving sexual harassment, disability discrimination and enforcement of EEO-1 reporting requirements. In August, a federal jury in Indiana awarded more than \$1 million to a Black plaintiff who was not hired due to his race in one of the largest discrimination cases of the year. In several states, attorneys general filed lawsuits challenging the EEOC's new guidance that requires employers to recognize workers' gender identity and pronouns.

Sadly, discrimination in the news was not limited to the United States. Worldwide, nearly a quarter of governments reported a backlash on women's rights, with women and girls facing increased discrimination, weaker legal protections and less funding for support programs. UN Women reported a disturbing increase in violence against women and girls, including femicide, where a woman or girl was killed on average every ten minutes by a partner or family member.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE



This category saw a significant decrease, to just **0.21%** of stories tracked. While we account for disasters like wildfires in the catastrophe category, it is important to note that some natural disasters, such as wildfires, are often human-caused. In the U.S. last year, 90% of wildfires were reportedly caused by human activity, such as discarded cigarettes and

campfires. Among the most devastating human-caused wildfires were catastrophic fires in Chile, Canada and the United States.

Oil spills dominated news stories in this category, including a notable increase in large tanker spills, with six incidents each releasing more than 700 tons of oil, primarily fuel oil. The total oil lost from tanker incidents was at its highest volume in several years. Significant spills occurred in Europe, North America, South America and Asia. These events reignited calls for improved tanker safety and the need for better global standards.

Harris County, Tex., officials in December were investigating the environmental impact of a chemical storage facility leak caused by an earlier fire at the Bluebonnet Petrochemical Solutions facility. Details were somewhat scarce but officials noted that certain stored chemicals were in unlabeled containers and were found to be unpermitted.

The Denver *Post* reported in September on toxic water leaking from thousands of abandoned mines in Colorado, turning wetlands orange and dumping toxic dissolved metals into the headwaters of several state rivers. There are more than 23 thousand abandoned mines across the state with at least 500 measurably harming nearby water quality.

EXECUTIVE DISMISSALS

News stories in this category dropped precipitously to just **1.07%** of stories tracked. However, CEO firings in 2024 reached record-breaking levels according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Through November, 1,991 U.S. CEOs departures were announced—the highest number since Challenger began tracking CEO changes in 2002, and surpassing the previous record of 1,914 exits for all of 2023. This represents a 19% increase over the same period in 2023, which itself had set a record for CEO turnover. Government and nonprofit led all sectors with 438 transitions, followed by healthcare and technology.

There were several notable departures. Intel's board of directors fired CEO Pat Gelsinger amid mounting concerns over the company's ability to regain lost market share and to compete with rivals

like Nvidia. Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun, who stepped up following the disastrous 737-MAX crashes, left the company after a series of quality control issues and poor sales performance. Boeing has been in a state of perpetual crisis, it appears, since 2018.

Automaker Stellantis, Chrysler's parent, saw CEO Carlos Tavares leave due to reported strategic realignment and performance issues. Tesla, under increasing scrutiny announced major layoffs that included the head of its new vehicles program, Daniel Ho. Gaming industry leaders Bungie and Blizzard fired top executives due to performance measures. Nike's CEO John Donahoe stepped down amid performance challenges, and Comtech, a global technology company, fired CEO Ken Peterman for undisclosed conduct-related reasons. Peloton and WW (formerly WeightWatchers) also experienced CEO transitions.

HOSTILE TAKEOVERS

This category, typically a small slice of the crisis pie, accounted for just **1.01%** of stories tallied, a significant decrease from 2023. Still, there was a resurgence of hostile tactics globally, especially in sectors like finance and technology. An increase in proxy fights reflected a broader trend toward shareholder activists seeking to replace management or force sales.

Spanish banking giant BBVA shocked markets with a surprise takeover bid of rival Banco Sabadell, a rarity in the European banking sector. Tech and telecom saw aggressive activity in shareholder activism and proxy battles. Verizon's \$20 billion takeover of Frontier Communications, announced in September, involved ongoing disputes with prominent shareholders. In what was called the world's largest software deal of the year, Synopsys' acquisition of Ansys faced scrutiny from shareholders and regulators.

Although no deals were closed, there were several hostile takeover attempts launched in the pharmaceutical industry during the year, highlighting

the sector's aggressive M&A tactics.

LABOR DISPUTES

ICM has seen increased activity in this category over the past few years, and 2024 is no exception. The category accounted for **10.04%** of stories tallied, more than twice the proportion of the prior year. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, there were 31 major work stoppages in the U.S. last year with 271,500 workers participating. This



number reflects a decrease from 2023 but still well above average for the past two decades. The majority of idled workers, 85%, were in the service industry. Public sector strikes includes one local government and nine state government work stoppages.

In October, more than 47 thousand dock workers at 36 U.S. ports went on strike, seeking pay raises and protections against automation. Boeing, already under stress, had 33 thousand workers walk out over pay and pension issues. The 36-day strike ended with a 38% wage increase among other wins for the union.

Strikes were not limited to the U.S. In January in Northern Ireland, 150 thousand public sector workers staged the largest strike in five decades, demanding better pay and working conditions. Large-scale strikes swept through Finland in February, with workers protesting government labor market reforms and social security cuts. Elsewhere in Europe, Lufthansa and other European aviation workers staged walkouts, impacting air travel and highlighting ongoing tensions.

Canadian rail strikes disrupted supply chains across North America and caused significant delays.

In July, a six-day strike by Walmart workers in Chile demanded pay increases. Also in Chile, workers at the world's largest copper mine, Escondida, went on strike in August, impacting global copper supply and underscoring labor's leverage in key commodities. Widespread strikes broke out in Argentina in opposition to the president's austerity measures and labor reforms.

There were also work actions in the Philippines transportation sector, physician protests in India and medical worker walkouts in South Korea, and rolling worker strikes against Volkswagen in Germany. Workers in Nigeria organized a nationwide strike in response to a cost of living crisis.

MISMANAGEMENT

This category came roaring back to prominence in this year's report with a commanding **21.48%** of stories tracked, a number not seen since 2018. During the pandemic years of 2020-2023, the category had seen an exponential drop.

While many stories of mismanagement entail some sort of criminal behavior, there are plenty of examples of poor decisions and bad management that led to crises in 2024. These include examples of failures of leadership, compliance, strategy or operations. Volkswagen, another perennial crisis-prone company faced disputes with unions and criticism over its handling of electric vehicle strategy, causing operational issues and negative headlines.

Boeing, already mentioned earlier in this report, drew intense criticism with its astronaut stranding incident, with issues and scrutiny on engineering and safety protocols. OpenAI had a revolving door on the CEO's office when the board ousted founder Sam Altman, and subsequently reinstated him days later, highlighting weaknesses in the company's governance and communications.

Backlash from the public and regulators struck Qantas Airlines, citing issues over customer service failures, flight cancellations and executive compensation. Drugmaker AstraZeneca was criticized for

data privacy violations and unauthorized medication imports. Accounting giant PwC was fined \$3.35 million for failing to maintain auditor independence, particularly as related to consulting relationships with audit clients, highlighting systemic compliance and governance failures.

Engine manufacturer Cummins Diesel faced a \$2 billion fine for manipulating diesel emissions data, exposing compliance mismanagement. Other companies caught in the crosshairs for mismanagement included India's Adani Group, RTX/Raytheon, Hyundai Motor, Disney, Starbuck's, Google and Chinese tech giant Cloopen Group.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT



This category has retreated significantly since its peak in 2019, accounting for just **2.08%** of the stories tallied. The category had grown significantly during the #metoo movement, which peaked in 2019 and fizzled during COVID. On October 1, the U.S. EEOC filed three lawsuits alleging sexual harassment and retaliation against employees. Troubled Tesla settled a lawsuit with a former factory worker who alleged she was fired after complaining about sexual harassment on the job.

In an interesting case involving digital misconduct, a male employee was fired for sexual harassment after he took and shared photos of a female coworker with inappropriate comments in group chats. Fast-food giant McDonald's continued to defend itself against a class action alleging systemic sexual harassment, emphasizing persistent challenges in the fast-food industry. Also in the food

industry, the United States' largest food retailer, Kroger/Ralphs faced multiple lawsuits and settlements related to sexual harassment, including a wrongful death claim tied to alleged bullying and harassment.

In a high profile case, utility company Southern California Edison was found to have sexually harassed a female employee and others for years, resulting in a \$1.58 million arbitration award. According to recent data, Alaska leads the U.S. with the number of reported sex offenses per capita, followed closely by Utah, Montana and North Dakota.

WHISTLEBLOWER

In another interesting inversion year-over-year, this category accounted for **4.33%** of stories tracked, more than twice the previous year's portion of the crisis pie with fewer stories. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission is primarily responsible for regulating publicly traded securities. In fiscal year 2024, the SEC reported receiving nearly 25 thousand whistleblower tips, a significant increase from 18,354 in FY2023. In FY2024, the agency awarded more than \$255 million to 47 individual whistleblowers, the third highest in the program's history. This amount included \$98 million split between two individuals.

In the largest standalone civil penalty, J.P. Morgan Securities LLC agreed to pay \$18 million for using settlement agreements that impeded hundreds of clients from reporting potential securities law violations. In September, the SEC settled charges against seven public companies for using employment, separation and other agreements that violated whistleblower protection rules.

In other cases, whistleblower disclosures led to TD Bank pleading guilty and paying \$3.1 billion in penalties for money laundering and Bank Secrecy Act violations, the largest penalty ever imposed under the BSA. The Indiana Community Health Network paid an additional \$135 million for Stark Law violations, adding to earlier False Claims Act

violations with total settlements reaching \$480 million. Defense contractor fraud was exposed at Raytheon resulting in a \$950 million settlement in the second largest qui tam case ever. A whistleblower alleged fraudulent Medicare Advantage billing at Independent Health Association resulting



in a \$98 million settlement. A former Cigna executive came forward revealing how Wall Street practices drive up U.S. healthcare costs, sparking national debate on insurance industry transparency and pricing.

WHITE COLLAR CRIME

This category experienced a precipitous decline from the previous year, coming in at **5.32%** of stories tallied. The proportion dropped by half year-over-year while the number of stories dropped by 75%.

The U.S. Department of Justice secured \$2.3 billion, closing high profile cases of bribery, corruption and fraud. In one of the most publicized and swiftest downfalls ever, crypto "bro" Sam Bankman-Fried, founder of FTX and Alameda Research was convicted, sentenced to 25 years in prison and ordered to pay \$11 billion in forfeiture for misappropriating billions in customer funds and defrauding investors and lenders.

In another crypto case, attorney Mark Scott was convicted for laundering \$400 million from OneCoin Crypto using shell companies and offshore accounts. Bitcoin Fog operator Roman Sterlingov was sentenced to 12 years for running the darknet's largest bitcoin money laundering service.

In a stunning embezzlement case, former attor-

ney Robert Kowalski was sentenced to 25 years for embezzlement and fraud tied to the collapse of Washington Federal Bank for Savings in Chicago. In the sports world, former Jacksonville Jaguars employee Amit Patel was sentenced to 6 years for embezzling \$22 million through fraudulent use of the team's virtual credit card program.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

In our last surprising decrease year-over-year, this category dropped to just **4.71%** of stories tallied, down from nearly ten percent in the previous year. The year saw increased violence against healthcare workers, who account for nearly three-



quarters of all nonfatal workplace violence injuries.

Nurses and doctors, particularly in emergency and trauma department settings reported record levels of verbal abuse, threats and physical assaults. More than 80% of nurses have reported at least one violent incident. For the first time, surgeons became frequent targets of violence in civilian hospitals. One survey reported that 91% of emergency physicians had been victims of workplace violence, with more than one-third reporting multiple assaults in the past year. Staffing shortages have also contributed to increased violence risk.

Female-dominated jobs, including healthcare, education and library occupations saw more violence last year, in trends linked to both staff shortages and demographic shifts in the workplace.

Mass shootings continue to make headlines, as well, although the U.S. recorded a small decrease in mass shootings and gun deaths in 2024. There were approximately 490 mass shootings in the U.S. in 2024. Mass shootings are defined as an incident where four or more people are injured or killed, not including the shooter. In Birmingham, Ala., four people were killed and seventeen wounded when multiple shooters opened fire on a crowded line outside a hookah bar. In Madison, Wis., in December a 15-year-old student at a private Christian school killed a teacher and another student and injured six others before taking her own life. Also in December, nine people were fired upon in a minivan outside a funeral home in Maryland. In Indianapolis, Ind., a woman was killed and five others wounded during an afternoon neighborhood holiday gathering.

TAKEAWAYS

- The total number of crisis news stories in 2024 decreased significantly compared to 2023, returning to pre-COVID (2019) levels.
- "Smoldering crises" returned to their usual prominence, making up nearly 75% of all 2024 stories, with mismanagement regaining its position as the most common crisis type.
- Several categories, including catastrophes, environmental damage, and sexual harassment experienced notable trend reversals compared to previous years.

The bottom line? *Failing to plan is planning to fail.* The investment in crisis planning, preparedness and training is more important than ever! The dollars invested are small compared to the cost—both in dollars spent and reputation lost—of trying to manage a crisis absent strategy and well executed plans.

We continue to urge leaders to:

Involve your board in crisis management planning and preparedness. They have a fiduciary duty and

a vested interest in engaging in this important work.

Prepare and prevent: assess your organization's weaknesses and areas of vulnerability, and develop strategies to mitigate them.

Dust off the crisis plan (if there is one), update it, better yet, digitize it with a leading crisis management software platform (*we can help!*), and bring in the ICM experts to facilitate training exercises that will build muscle memory and prepare your management teams for the inevitable.

***Not sure where to start?
Give us a call, we can help!***

ABOUT THE ANNUAL CRISIS REPORT

This is **ICM's 35th annual crisis report**, and my eleventh as CEO. Since its founding, ICM has been a leader in crisis management and communication planning and training. Our annual crisis report has become a go-to resource for professionals and academics worldwide. We're proud to share our insights with the thousands of people across numerous industries and professions who have downloaded our report, learned from and shared it since 1990.

We continue to use our proprietary database to gather statistics on the number of stories in each of the crisis categories we track. Our data include only news items published in English. Much of the narrative in the report over the years has come from time-consuming work of digging through the stories to find interesting news. This year, for the first time, we took advantage of AI models like Perplexity to help us identify the most notable and interesting crisis stories that made headlines. Using multiple prompts for each category and refining the results each time, we found a rich variety of credible source material to supplement the many resources we already rely on to inform our report.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Hileman, SCMP® FCSCE CCMC has been CEO of the Institute for Crisis Management since 2014. She is a **globally certified** corporate crisis management (CCMC) and strategic communication management professional (SCMP®), business leader, trainer, coach and consultant with more than 35 years' experience across numerous industries and organizations, both public and private, education, church and government entities and numerous nonprofits. She is a FEMA trained incident commander and a Fellow of the Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence (FCSCE).



Known as an objective voice of calm in chaos, Ms. Hileman has earned a reputation as a **trusted strategist and advisor** to board members, C-Suite executives, operations leaders and other stakeholders. She has trained hundreds of professionals, teaching them to think on their feet and manage through tough situations before, during and after crisis.

An avid writer and speaker on business communication topics, she has **delivered training and lectures at several leading universities**, including Notre Dame, Marquette, Cornell, and the Universities of Chicago, Kansas and Miami. She is **vice chair of the U.S.-based Global Communication Certification Council®**, the only ANAB/ISO Accredited global certification program for communication professionals.

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