Top 5 trends in innovation safety in 2021

A year of change in many ways, 2020 introduced new approaches to innovation safety. Based on a survey from UL conducted in the final weeks of 2020, here are the top trends in innovation safety.

1 COVID-19 changed everything

Forced to innovate, reinvent and improvise, companies in all industries made significant changes to deliver to customers in the middle of a global pandemic. The lessons learned have reshaped their approaches to innovation.

61% of companies have **changed their approach** to safe innovation based on lessons learned from COVID-19.
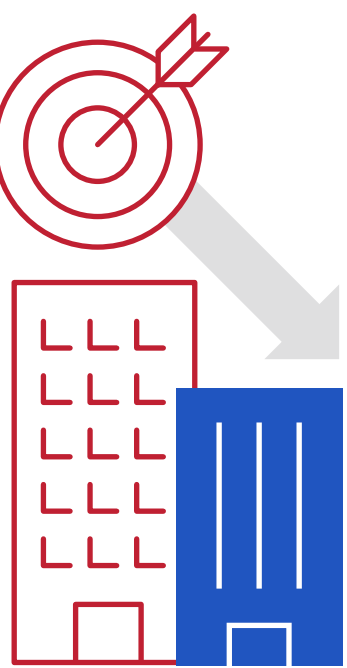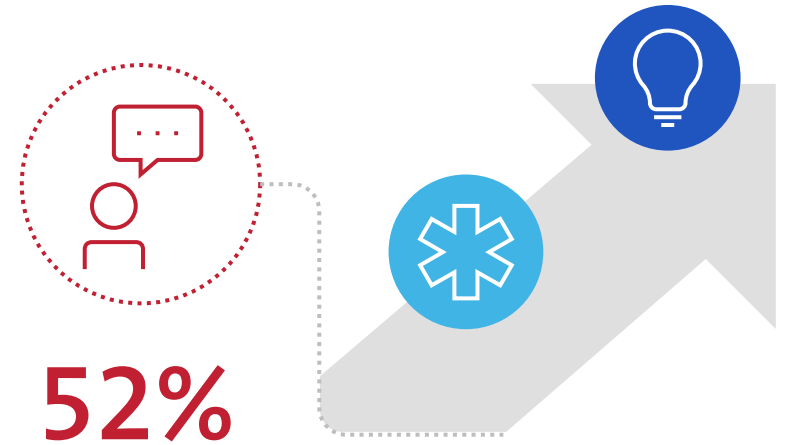
2 Expanded definition of safety

The global pandemic changed how both consumers and companies view safety and accelerated innovation to combat the spread of disease.

30% of companies said their new definition of "safety" now includes **protecting humans from global pandemics** as a core pillar.

3 Customer expectations still a top driver of innovation safety

For the third year in a row, customer expectations continued to rank as the No. 1 driver of innovation safety.

52% of respondents said **customer expectations** are a significant driver of innovation safety.

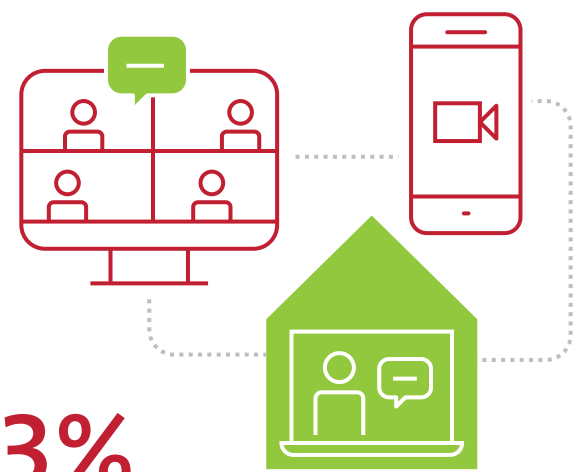## 4 Confidence in innovation approaches declined

The events of 2020 put companies' abilities to innovate to the test. Whether launching new product lines to meet emerging needs or deploying technologies to enable operation in a contactless world, companies' abilities to innovate with speed and agility were tested, leaving many to understand areas of improvement.

In 2019, 46% of companies thought their approach to innovation **met current market needs** versus only **38%** in the 2020 survey.

5 Distanced collaboration tools: a critical technology

Respondents indicated that distanced collaboration tools had the most significant impact on delivering innovation and safety in 2020. Other technologies like AI and IoT, previously identified as critical to enabling innovation safety, ranked lower in importance than a year ago. This may indicate that these technologies have not yet been fully deployed and optimized.

73% of respondents said **distanced collaboration tools** had a significant impact on delivering safety innovation throughout 2020.

Source: UL Innovation Safety Survey, December 2020.

Explore more trends in innovation safety at **UL.com/Insights.**