

PEOPLE AT WORK

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WORKPLACE
MONITORING



EMPLOYER EFFORTS TO TRACK PRODUCTIVITY MIGHT BE BACKFIRING

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Those keystroke trackers and mouse monitors that keep tabs on employee activity might be backfiring.

When ADP Research asked nearly 38,000 workers in 34 markets about being watched at work, nearly a third said that their employers constantly watched them on the job. And the group that felt watched also reported being less productive and more stressed on the job.

¹More information about our research on stress in the workplace can be found in *Today at Work Issue 4*.

Before the pandemic, when most work was done at the office or job site, it was relatively straightforward for employers to keep tabs on their employees. Just showing up each day could be considered a proxy for productivity.

When remote work took hold, it changed how organizations interacted with the employees they no longer could see in person. Demand rose for

software that could track keystrokes, grab computer screens, and monitor mouse movements.

But these efforts to ensure work is getting done instead might be reducing productivity and increasing employee stress. Years of research have established that stressed and unproductive workers are antithetical to any company's bottom line.¹

WHAT WE DIDN'T FIND

Perhaps one of our biggest worker sentiment findings is what we didn't find.

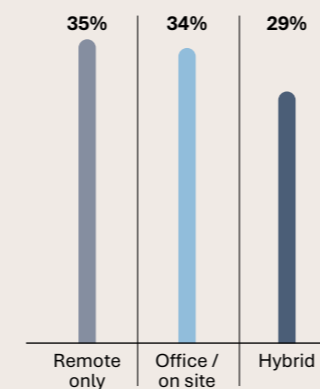
We asked people to agree or disagree with this statement: "I am constantly being watched by my employer."

We had expected to see substantially different responses based on respondents' work location. Instead, we were surprised to find only a narrow margin of difference between those who work on site every day and those who don't.

In other words, remote workers didn't seem to feel more watched than their on-site colleagues.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO SAY THEY'RE BEING WATCHED,
by work location

I am constantly being watched by my employer.



WHAT WE DID FIND

Among regions, the Middle East/ Africa had the largest share of workers who said they were being watched, at 37 percent, but this share varied widely by market. More than 40 percent of workers in Egypt, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia felt watched, compared to only 21 percent in South Africa.

Asia-Pacific showed a similar variance. India, at 64 percent, had the largest share, worldwide, of workers who said they were being watched. Japan had the smallest share, at 21 percent.

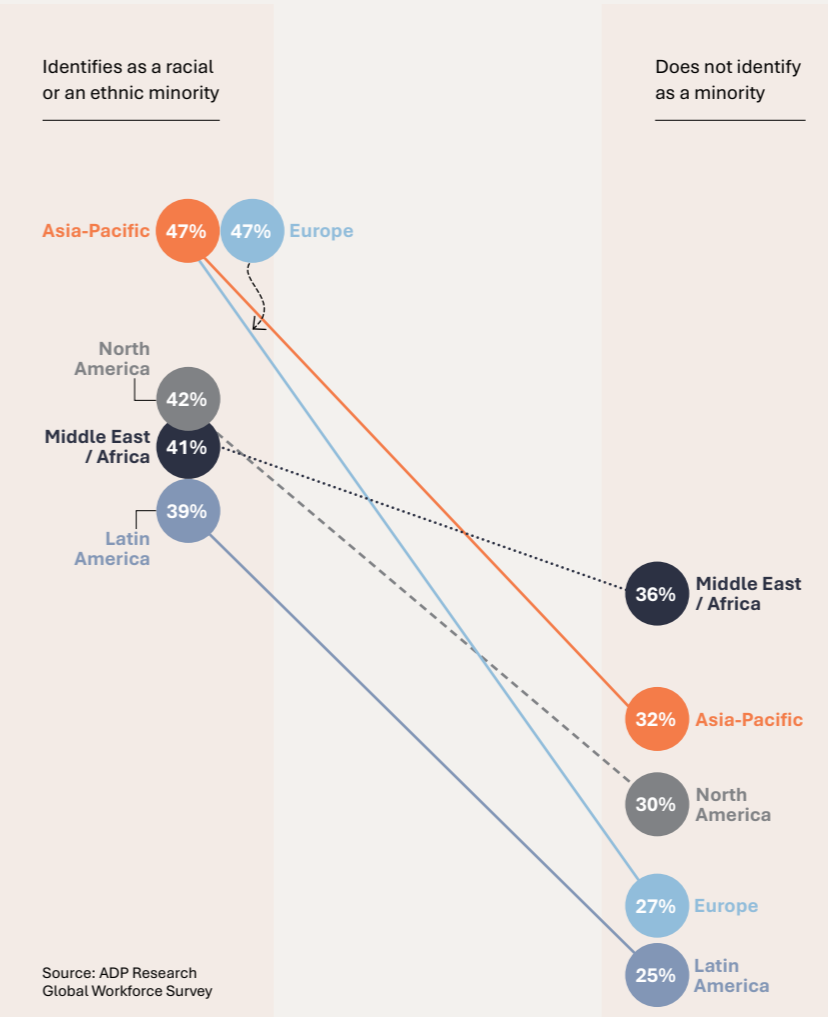
Racial and ethnic identity seemed to play a role in our workplace monitoring results. People who identify as a racial or an ethnic minority in their market were much more likely to say they were being watched (44%) than those who don't (30%).

Europe had the largest disparity of any region. There was a 20 percentage-point difference between self-identified minorities and non-minorities when it came to workplace monitoring.

In Europe, 61 percent of workers in Italy who identify as a racial or an ethnic minority said they were being watched, compared to only 24 percent of workers there who don't identify as a minority. Of all the markets we surveyed, this was by far the largest difference between racial minorities and non-minorities.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO SAY THEY'RE BEING WATCHED,
by racial or ethnic identification

I am constantly being watched by my employer, share of workers who agree



Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

Share of workers who agree,
by market and racial or ethnic identification

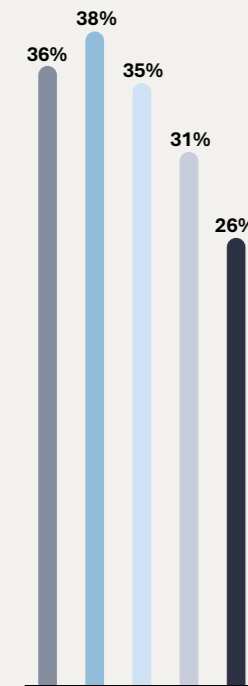
Market	Identifies as a racial or an ethnic minority	Does not identify as a minority
India	76%	58%
Thailand	62	42
Italy	61	24
Egypt	58	39
Switzerland	56	34
Nigeria	56	40
China	53	26
Saudi Arabia	52	38
Germany	51	24
Czech Republic	49	29
Poland	49	35
Philippines	49	37
Singapore	46	40
Netherlands	46	23
United Kingdom	44	25
Spain	43	27
United States	43	30
Mexico	41	26
Canada	41	30
Brazil	41	29
France	41	26
Australia	39	31
Peru	39	23
Taiwan	38	23
United Arab Emirates	36	37
Chile	36	22
Indonesia	35	31
Vietnam	34	26
New Zealand	33	28
Sweden	32	23
South Korea	31	24
Argentina	31	23
Japan	29	21
South Africa	24	19



SHARE OF WORKERS WHO SAY THEY ARE BEING WATCHED, by managerial level

- C-suite
- Upper management
- Middle management
- Frontline management
- Individual contributor

Share who agree



Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Employers that monitor workers to ensure that they're doing their jobs might in fact be eroding productivity.

Workers who said they were watched were nearly three times less likely to report a high level of productivity compared to those who didn't say they were watched. In fact, workers who felt watched were almost four times more likely to report the lowest level of productivity.

Workers who said they were watched also had higher levels of stress. They were more than three times more likely to say they experience negative stress every day. More stress tends to align with lower productivity and higher turnover.

Thirty-seven percent of workers who experience daily, negative stress said they were actively looking or interviewing for a new job, compared to only 13 percent of workers who said they experience bad stress once a week or less.²

²See *Today at Work, Issue 4*, for more information on the relationship between stress, worker productivity, and worker intent to leave.

Other findings:

- ✓ Men were slightly more likely to say they are constantly watched (34%) than women (30%).
- ✓ Workers under 40 were more likely to feel watched (37%) than those 40 and older (27%).
- ✓ Knowledge workers (35%) were more likely than skilled-task or cycle workers (30%) to say they are watched.
- ✓ Managers and executives were much more likely than other workers to say they are constantly watched.

THE TAKEAWAY

What employers measure should matter. In shift or cycle work, for example, workers should be in control of what's measured. At a restaurant, the number of orders taken in an hour isn't necessarily up to the server. It depends on the number of guests and what they want. If there are no customers, there are no orders.

A better metric might be the time it takes to complete each order. That's in the control of the server and their team. Employers who measure performance should make sure they're focused on the indicators that are most informative. This information should be communicated to employees.

Employers can put worried workers at ease by communicating expectations openly and frequently.

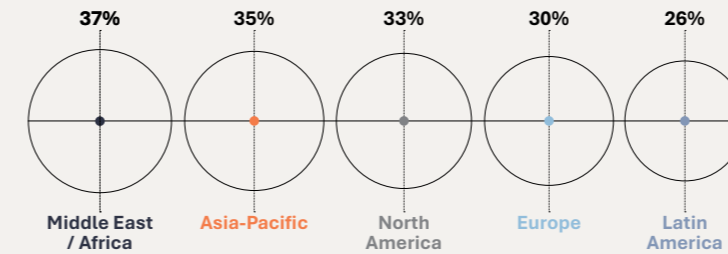
It's important to reiterate that our survey measures worker sentiment. We have no way of knowing if respondents are actually being monitored by their employers. Some employees might be making unfounded assumptions. The bottom line, though, is that when this feeling is present, the relationship to negative

outcomes is quite strong. Employers can put worried workers at ease by communicating expectations openly and frequently. Survey respondents who said they clearly understand what's expected of them at work are 3.7 times more likely to report being highly productive than those who don't; our research has shown. If productivity

concerns arise, blanket monitoring policies might do more harm than good. Instead, employers could be well advised to address specific concerns directly with individual employees as needed. This more granular approach could go a long way toward creating an environment where people feel less stressed and more equipped to do their best work each day.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO SAY THEY ARE BEING WATCHED

Share of workers who agree, By region



Share of workers who agree, By market

India	64%	China	29%
Thailand	46	Spain	29
Nigeria	46	New Zealand	29
Egypt	42	Germany	29
Singapore	41	France	28
Philippines	41	Italy	27
Saudi Arabia	41	Mexico	27
Switzerland	39	Vietnam	27
United Arab Emirates	37	Taiwan	27
Poland	36	Netherlands	27
United States	33	South Korea	26
Australia	32	Peru	25
Canada	32	Sweden	24
Indonesia	32	Chile	24
Brazil	31	Argentina	24
Czech Republic	31	South Africa	21
United Kingdom	29	Japan	21

Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

Share of workers who agree, by market and age group

	18-26	27-39	40-54	55-64
Argentina	29%	24%	23%	17%
Australia	40	44	31	20
Brazil	38	29	29	29
Canada	43	41	32	21
Chile	27	26	24	20
China	31	24	34	44
Czech Republic	27	38	30	27
Egypt	40	45	38	30
France	30	39	27	19
Germany	42	43	23	18
India	61	69	62	49
Indonesia	37	35	26	19
Italy	41	30	31	18
Japan	23	28	22	20
Mexico	27	31	26	16
Netherlands	33	34	27	15
New Zealand	35	35	26	18
Nigeria	52	46	38	37
Peru	27	28	25	20
Philippines	53	42	37	26
Poland	39	39	38	31
Saudi Arabia	48	44	32	29
Singapore	48	47	33	38
South Africa	22	25	17	20
South Korea	30	27	26	21
Spain	43	34	28	21
Sweden	27	30	23	18
Switzerland	34	51	32	22
Taiwan	31	28	27	16
Thailand	50	48	42	46
United Arab Emirates	30	40	36	37
United Kingdom	36	37	31	17
United States	48	43	32	24
Vietnam	30	27	24	25

OUR MISSION

The ADP Research mission is to make the future of work more productive through data-driven discovery.

Companies, workers, and policymakers rely on our finely-tuned data and unique perspective to make informed decisions that impact workplaces around the world.