

# PEOPLE AT WORK

2025



3  
STRESS



# WORKERS GET A BREAK

## THE INCIDENCE OF HIGH STRESS ON THE JOB HAS SLOWED, BUT TOO FEW PEOPLE ARE THRIVING

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Chronic worker stress reached a new low in 2024, with the share of people reporting daily on-the-job stress plunging from 15 percent in 2023 to 7.5 percent last year.

The decline continues a trend that began after the pandemic, with fewer people each year reporting high-frequency, negative on-the-job stress. But this relief hasn’t coincided with a boost in the share of workers who are thriving at work.

Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

### TYPES OF WORKERS

By measuring the frequency of positive and negative stress on the job, we categorize workers as:

- ✓ Thriving
- ✓ Rattled
- ✓ Overloaded

### MEASURING STRESS

ADP Research divides stress into two types.

Positive stress, or eustress, is beneficial, such as the adrenaline rush of a challenging deadline. Negative or bad stress—distress—is the opposite, the kind of pressure that leads to less productivity, not more.

By measuring the frequency of both types of stress on the job, we categorize workers as thriving, rattled, or overloaded.

Thriving workers are more likely to experience work pressure as eustress. They’re more engaged, more resilient, more productive, and less likely to quit their jobs.

Overloaded workers experience job pressure much more negatively and score lower in every category of worker well-being that we measure.

### FEWER OVERLOADED WORKERS

Everyday stress has been on the decline since the pandemic, according to the ADP Research Global Worker Survey. In 2021, 19 percent of workers we surveyed reported experiencing negative stress on the job every day. That number has been shrinking each year since.

This relief from everyday job stress aligned with the world’s emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic. But it also coincided with a global decline in unemployment.

The unemployment rate has been falling steadily since the start of the pandemic in 2020, when it hit a record 6.6 percent. In 2023 it fell to 5 percent for the first time since 1991, according to [World Bank data](#).

As society and the economy settle into a post-pandemic normal, workers are facing less uncertainty. People have greater opportunities to find desirable jobs. It all adds up to relief from stress.

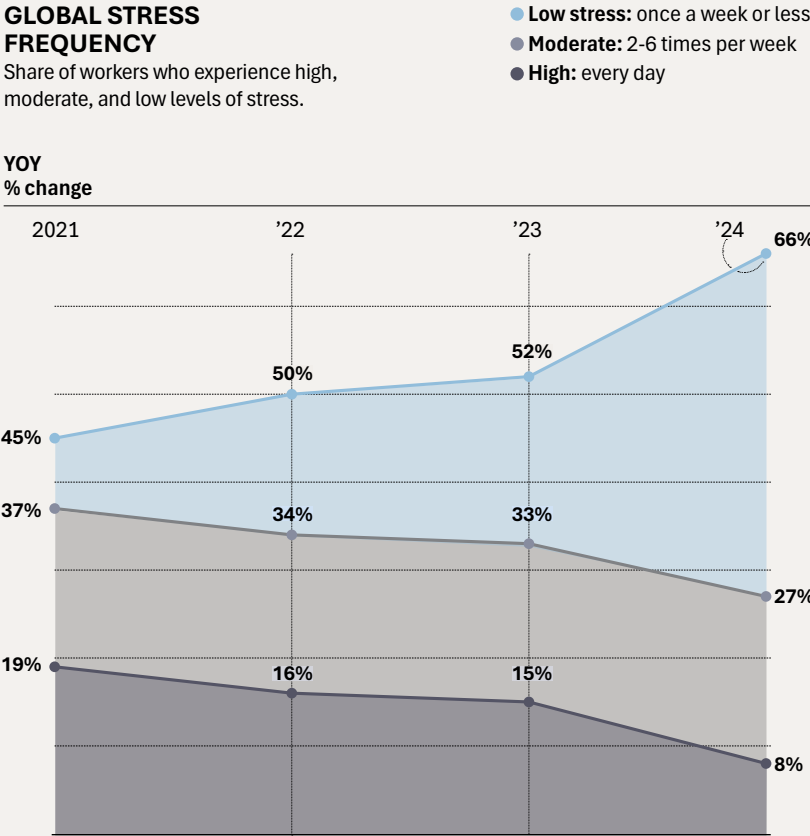
But this decline in overloaded workers hasn’t coincided with an increase in thriving workers. Bad stress is down, but too few people are finding joy on the job.

‘Too few people are finding joy on the job.’

We asked survey respondents the following question: In the last year, how often have you experienced (bad) stress at work? Respondents who said they experienced bad stress every day were categorized as high stress. Those who said two to six times per week were categorized as moderate stress. Those who said once a week or less were categorized as low stress.

### GLOBAL STRESS FREQUENCY

Share of workers who experience high, moderate, and low levels of stress.



Percentages might add up to more than 100 due to rounding. More information about our stress metric can be found in [Today at Work issue 4](#).

### FEWER THRIVING WORKERS, TOO

Between July 23 and August 6, 2024, our Global Worker Survey collected data from a stratified, random panel sample of nearly 38,000 working adults in 34 markets on six continents.

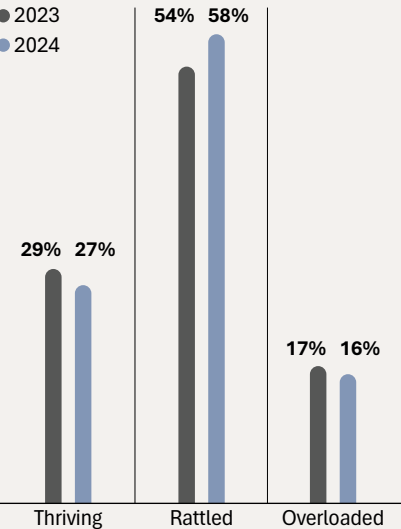
Between 2023 and 2024, as the share of overloaded workers shrank, the share of thriving workers did, too. More people fell in a middle range—rattled workers—reporting a fairly even mix of good days and bad.

Rattled workers haven’t mastered how to fill their days with more positive stress or minimize negative stress.

### ANNUAL CHANGE IN STRESS,

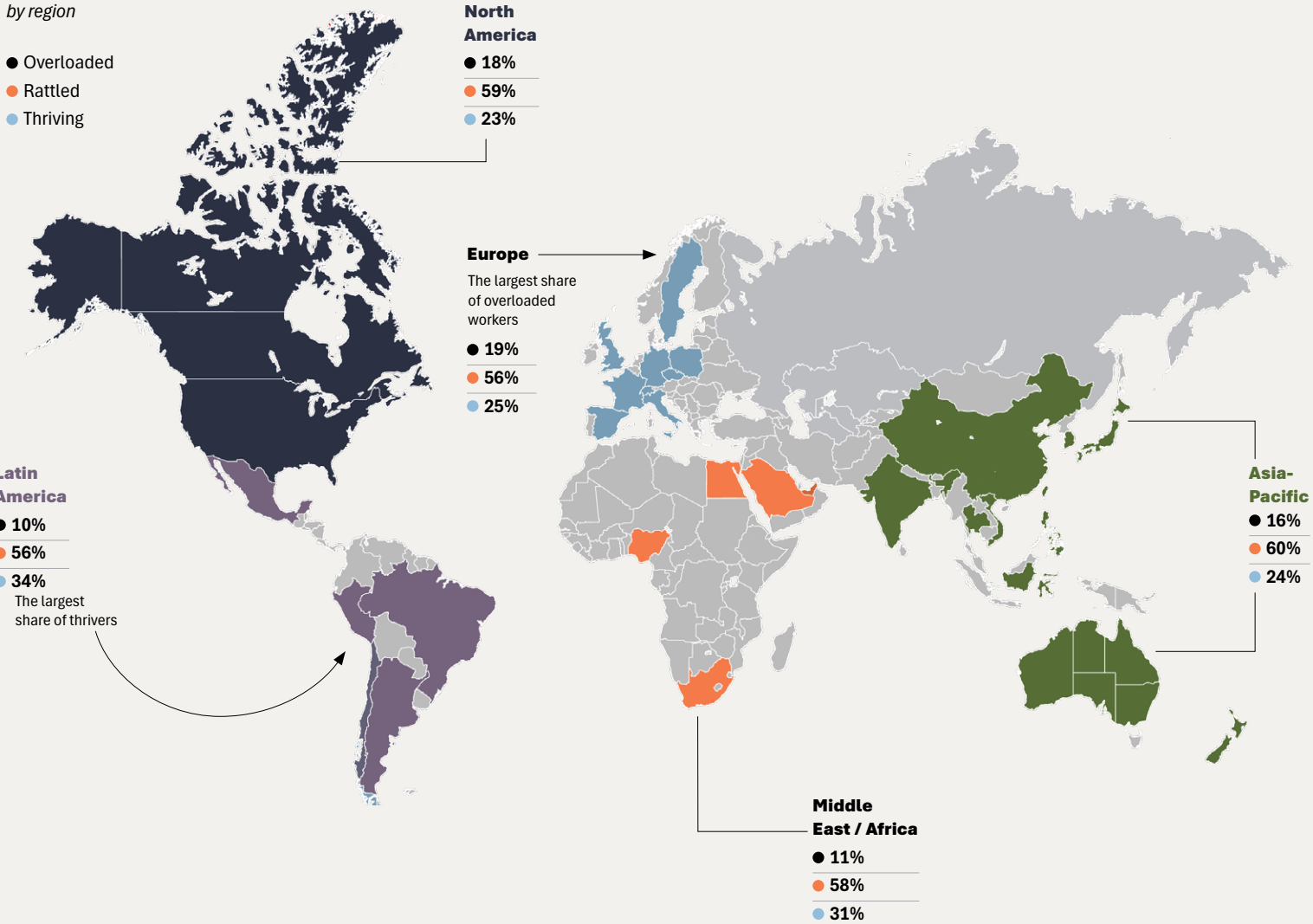
YOY percentage change, 2023-'24

Share of workers who are thriving, rattled, or overloaded.





SHARE OF WORKERS  
IN EACH STRESS  
CATEGORY,  
by region



REGIONAL  
FINDINGS

Latin America has the largest share of thrivers, at 34 percent, and the smallest share of workers who felt overloaded, at only 10 percent.

In North America, only 23 percent of workers said they were thriving, the smallest share of any region.

Of all regions, Europe has the largest share of overloaded workers, at 19 percent.

By market, 53 percent of workers in China were thriving in 2023, the largest share of any market that year. But China saw the biggest decline in thrivers in 2024, dropping 13 percentage points to 40 percent.

Still, China's share of thriving workers remains large compared to some of its regional neighbors. In South Korea, the share of thriving workers fell 4 percentage points to 15 percent, the smallest share in the Asia-Pacific region.

Singapore had the biggest increase in the share of thriving workers, up 11 percentage points to 26 percent.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO ARE...

THRIVING, by year

Market	2023	2024
Argentina	33%	31%
Australia	21	22
Brazil	49	41
Canada	26	22
Chile	N/A	31
China	53	40
Czech Republic	23	22
Egypt	43	41
France	19	20
Germany	28	23
India	22	20
Indonesia	N/A	27
Italy	32	26
Japan	19	19
Mexico	39	35
Netherlands	31	23
New Zealand	25	24
Nigeria	N/A	29
Peru	N/A	32
Philippines	N/A	30
Poland	38	32
Saudi Arabia	32	30
Singapore	15	26
South Africa	43	36
South Korea	19	15
Spain	35	31
Sweden	30	28
Switzerland	N/A	21
Taiwan	23	21
Thailand	N/A	19
United Arab Emirates	19	20
United Kingdom	21	24
United States	27	24
Vietnam	N/A	25

OVERLOADED, RATTLED OR THRIVING, by market

Overloaded	Rattled	Thriving	Market
10%	59%	31%	Argentina
23	55	22	Australia
10	49	41	Brazil
20	58	22	Canada
12	57	31	Chile
10	50	40	China
23	55	22	Czech Republic
6	53	41	Egypt
18	62	20	France
20	56	23	Germany
11	70	20	India
13	60	27	Indonesia
19	55	26	Italy
19	62	19	Japan
10	55	35	Mexico
18	58	23	Netherlands
20	56	24	New Zealand
10	61	29	Nigeria
8	60	32	Peru
7	63	30	Philippines
13	55	32	Poland
11	58	30	Saudi Arabia
15	59	26	Singapore
10	54	36	South Africa
26	59	15	South Korea
19	50	31	Spain
24	49	28	Sweden
20	59	21	Switzerland
26	54	21	Taiwan
14	67	19	Thailand
16	63	20	United Arab Emirates
20	57	24	United Kingdom
17	60	24	United States
13	62	25	Vietnam





THE STRESS OF  
BEING WATCHED—  
AND JUDGED

A large share of survey respondents reported feeling watched or judged at work. And as more people return to their offices and job sites, remote and hybrid work, even when allowed by company policy, has become tinged with negativity, our survey showed. These worker sentiments can lead to greater negative stress and, ultimately, reduced productivity.

In 2024, 32 percent of survey respondents said they felt judged for taking advantage of flexible working arrangements. Workers who feel judged are 3.4 times less likely to be thriving on the job.

A similar relationship exists between stress and feeling watched. Workers who feel like their manager is monitoring everything they do are 3.3 times less likely to be thriving. This matters for employers, because stressed-out, overloaded workers tend to be less productive.



The **Middle East and Africa** had the largest share of workers who felt judged for taking advantage of flexible working arrangements. The region also had the largest share of workers who felt monitored by their manager.

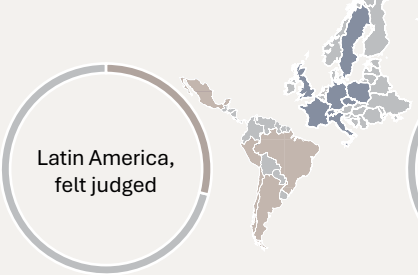


36%



42%

**Latin America** had the smallest share of workers who reported feeling judged. **Europe** had the smallest share of workers who felt monitored.



29%



31%

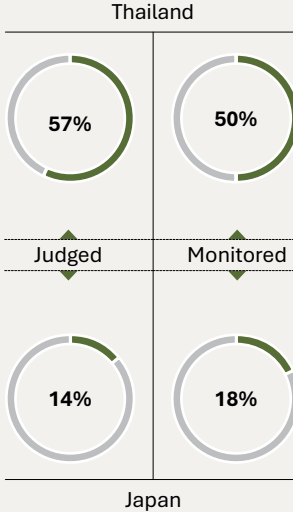
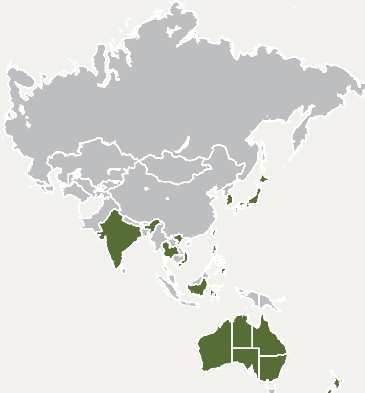
A few markets in **Asia Pacific** were particular outliers. Roughly two-thirds of workers in India felt both judged and monitored, by far the largest share globally. In **Thailand**, more than half of the workforce reported feeling judged, and half said they felt monitored. **Japan** had the smallest share of workers who felt judged or monitored.



65%



67%



Employers take note: Workers who are stressed-out and overloaded tend to be less productive.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO FEEL JUDGED  
FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Region	Share who feel judged
Middle East / Africa	36%
Asia-Pacific	33
North America	31
Europe	30
Latin America	29

Market	Share who feel judged
India	67%
Thailand	57
Singapore	48
Egypt	43
Switzerland	42
Poland	41
Nigeria	40
Saudi Arabia	39
Mexico	35
China	34
United Arab Emirates	33
Vietnam	33
Netherlands	32
Australia	31
Canada	31
United States	31

Market	Share who feel judged
Peru	30%
Brazil	30
Spain	30
Philippines	29
Germany	28
France	28
United Kingdom	28
Chile	28
Italy	27
New Zealand	26
Argentina	24
South Africa	22
Taiwan	22
Sweden	21
Indonesia	21
Czech Republic	20
South Korea	19
Japan	14

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO FEEL THEIR MANAGER  
IS MONITORING EVERYTHING THEY DO

Region	Share who feel monitored
Middle East / Africa	42%
Latin America	38
Asia-Pacific	38
North America	35
Europe	31

Market	Share who feel monitored by manager
India	65%
Thailand	50
Egypt	49
Singapore	47
Saudi Arabia	45
Nigeria	45
Peru	43
Philippines	41
United Arab Emirates	41
Mexico	40
Switzerland	40
China	40
Brazil	40
Indonesia	38
Spain	37
Vietnam	36
United States	35

Market	Share who feel monitored by manager
Chile	35%
Canada	35
Australia	33
United Kingdom	33
Argentina	31
France	31
South Africa	31
Germany	31
Czech Republic	30
Netherlands	30
New Zealand	30
Poland	29
South Korea	29
Italy	28
Taiwan	27
Sweden	23
Japan	18





People who identified as a racial or ethnic minority in their market were less likely to be thriving at work.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES EXPERIENCE STRESS DIFFERENTLY

In all 34 markets we surveyed, people who identified as a racial or ethnic minority in their market were less likely to be thriving at work. They also were more likely to experience negative stress.

The difference was particularly stark in Europe, where workers who identified as a minority were 2.5 times less likely to be thriving at work than those who didn't.

In Spain, only 8 percent of self-identified minorities were thriving, compared to 33 percent of non-minorities. But the smallest share of thriving minority workers was in Singapore: Only 6 percent were thriving in 2024, compared to 37 percent of workers who didn't identify as minorities.

Few markets showed little difference between minority identification and the likelihood of thriving, all of them in the Asia-Pacific region. In Australia and Japan, the share of self-identified minorities who were thriving was only

one percentage point less than that of non-minorities; in South Korea and New Zealand, the difference was only three percentage points.

Some of this difference between those who identify as a minority and those who don't might be due to the varied feelings about workplace flexibility and constantly being watched.

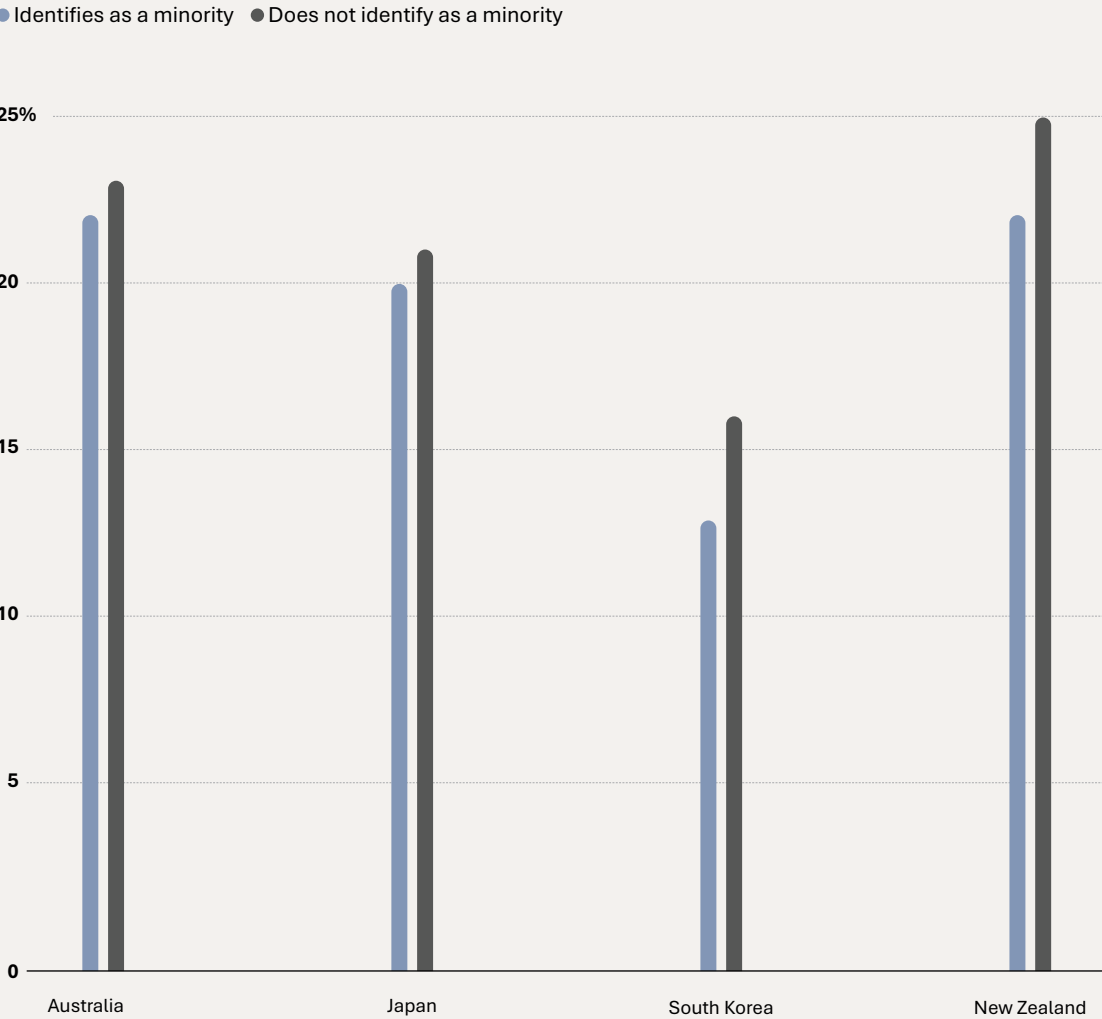
Forty-five percent of workers who identified as a minority said they feel judged for taking advantage of flexible working arrangements, and nearly half (48 percent) said they feel monitored by their manager.

For those who don't identify as a minority, the share drops substantially—29 percent felt judged, and 34 percent felt monitored.

For those who identify as a minority, these differences in how they feel about their interactions with colleagues and managers might lead to higher instances of negative stress at work.

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO ARE THRIVING

A handful of markets showed little difference between minority identification and the likelihood of thriving. All of them were in the Asia-Pacific region.



SHARE OF THRIVING WORKERS BY ETHNIC OR RACIAL MINORITY IDENTIFICATION

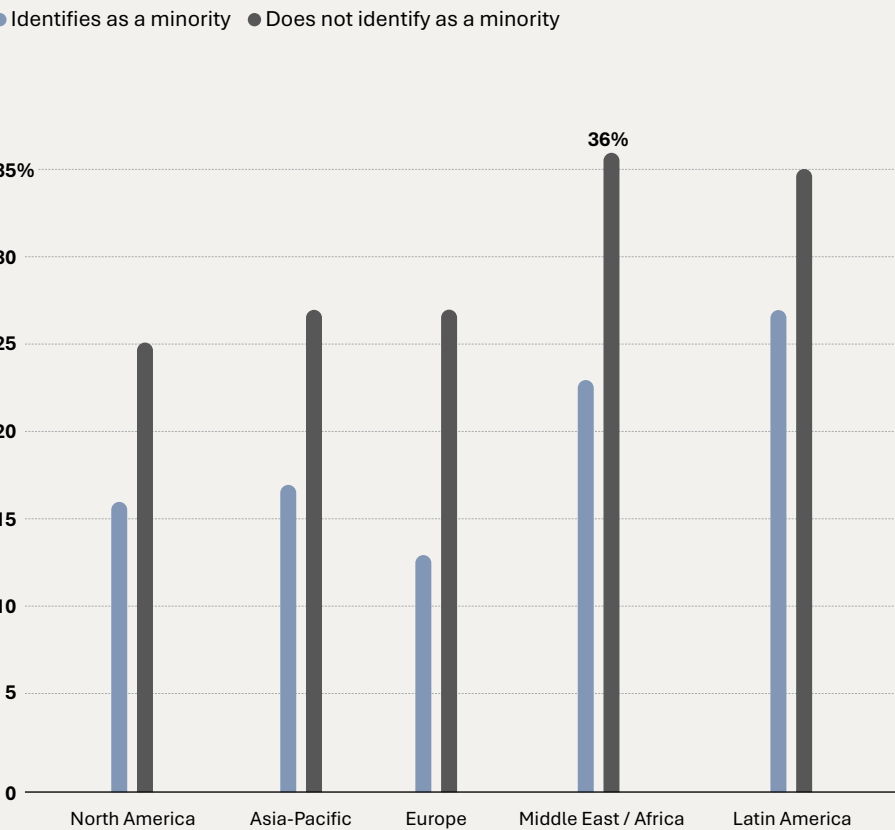
Share of workers who are thriving, by market

Market	Identifies as minority	Does not identify as minority
Argentina	25%	32%
Australia	22	23
Brazil	37	43
Canada	18	23
Chile	23	32
China	23	42
Czech Republic	13	23
Egypt	30	43
France	10	22
Germany	13	26
India	11	25
Indonesia	23	28
Italy	14	28
Japan	20	21
Mexico	19	36
Netherlands	20	24
New Zealand	22	25
Nigeria	24	33

Market	Identifies as minority	Does not identify as minority
Peru	18%	35%
Philippines	26	33
Poland	25	33
Saudi Arabia	13	36
Singapore	6	37
South Africa	34	40
South Korea	13	16
Spain	8	33
Sweden	12	31
Switzerland	7	27
Taiwan	16	23
Thailand	9	22
United Arab Emirates	9	28
United Kingdom	15	26
United States	14	26
Vietnam	17	27

SHARE OF WORKERS WHO ARE THRIVING, by region

People who identify as a racial or ethnic minority in their market were far less likely to be thriving at work.



THE TAKEAWAY

Unbalanced stress leads workers to report being less productive on the job. These same people are more likely to be looking for a new place to work. Thriving workers, on the other hand, are less likely to be job-hunting.



HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS RESEARCH

ADP Research divides stress into two types: Positive stress, or eustress, is beneficial, such as the adrenaline rush of a challenging deadline. Negative stress, or distress, is the opposite, the kind of pressure that leads to less productivity, not more.

By measuring the frequency of stress on the job, we categorize workers as thriving, rattled, or overloaded.

Thriving workers are more likely to experience work pressure as eustress. They’re more engaged, more resilient, more productive, and less likely to quit. They also show higher levels of motivation and commitment.

Overloaded workers experience job pressure much more negatively and score lower in every category of worker well-being that we measure.

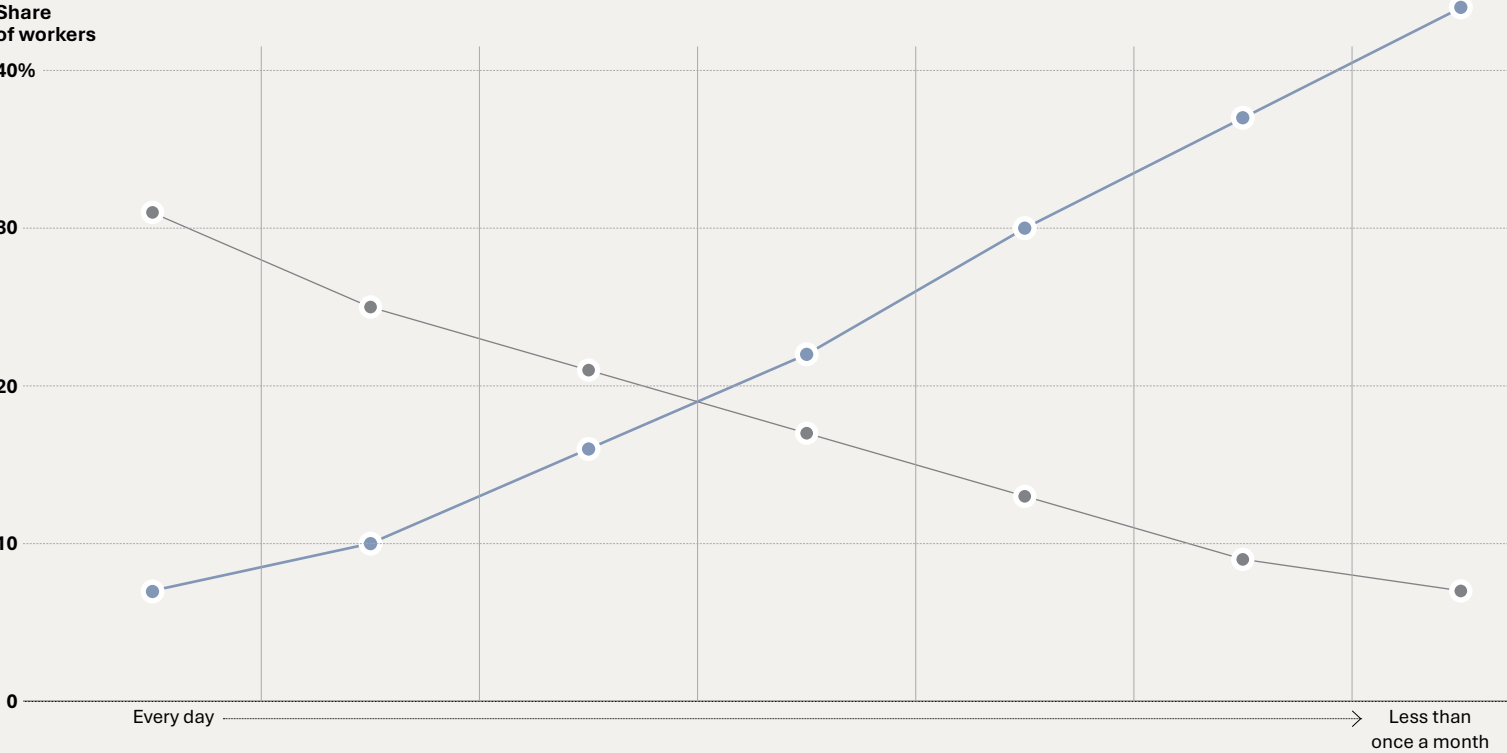
Rattled workers fall in the middle. They experience stress and might not particularly like it, but they cope, perhaps at somewhat lower levels of productivity than they might achieve if they were thriving.

A relationship takes shape when we look at how often workers report experiencing bad stress on the job, and where they land on our eus-

MORE STRESS, FEWER THRIVING WORKERS

There is a strong relationship between the frequency of bad stress and being overloaded or thriving. We looked at how often workers report experiencing bad stress on the job and the occurrence of thriving workers.

● Overloaded ● Thriving



tress/distress scale.

Those who report bad stress on a daily basis are much more likely to feel overloaded.

But as the frequency of bad

stress decreases, the share of overloaded workers drops and the likelihood of thriving rises.

Despite this relationship, the simple absence of bad

on-the-job stress doesn’t guarantee that workers will thrive. Other factors, such as workplace discrimination, a lack of trusting relationships

with one’s coworkers or leaders, or feelings of limited freedom and flexibility within the workplace might also be at play.

WORKPLACE STRESS, share of workers, by market

● High: every day

● Moderate: 2-6 times per week

● Low stress: once a week or less

Market	High stress	Moderate stress	Low stress	Market
Japan	14%	38%	48%	Japan
Thailand	12	28	60	Thailand
France	11	25	64	France
Argentina	11	27	62	Argentina
Taiwan	10	32	59	Taiwan
United States	9	27	64	United States
Germany	9	32	58	Germany
Australia	9	23	68	Australia
Poland	9	19	72	Poland
Czech Republic	9	23	69	Czech Republic
India	9	28	63	India
Italy	9	27	65	Italy
Mexico	9	35	56	Mexico
Canada	8	27	64	Canada
Chile	8	26	66	Chile
Saudi Arabia	8	26	66	Saudi Arabia
Brazil	8	20	72	Brazil
Philippines	7	29	63	Philippines
South Korea	7	31	61	South Korea
Peru	7	30	62	Peru
Nigeria	7	31	62	Nigeria
United Kingdom	7	25	68	United Kingdom
Spain	7	23	70	Spain
Sweden	6	25	69	Sweden
Vietnam	6	24	70	Vietnam
New Zealand	5	26	68	New Zealand
Switzerland	5	36	59	Switzerland
Egypt	5	35	60	Egypt
United Arab Emirates	5	38	57	United Arab Emirates
Netherlands	5	21	74	Netherlands
Indonesia	4	14	82	Indonesia
Singapore	4	28	68	Singapore
South Africa	3	18	79	South Africa
China	3	20	77	China

WORKPLACE STRESS, share of workers, by region

Region	High stress		Moderate stress		Low stress	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
North America	8%	10%	23%	31%	70%	59%
Asia-Pacific	7	8	26	27	66	65
Europe	6	9	25	27	69	64
Middle East / Africa	6	5	30	29	64	66
Latin America	7	10	25	31	68	59

OF ALL REGIONS WORKERS AGED:

27 to 39 in North America had the largest share of people experiencing **high stress**.

11%

27 to 39 in the Middle East / Africa had the smallest share of people experiencing **high stress**.

5%

18 to 26 in North America had the largest share of people experiencing **moderate stress**.

43%

55 to 64 in Europe and Latin America had the smallest share of people experiencing **moderate stress**.

18%

55 to 64 in Latin America had the largest share of people experiencing **low stress**.

75%

18 to 26 in North America had the smallest share of people experiencing **low stress**.

50%

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## 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.