

PEOPLE AT WORK

2025



5

DISCRIMINATION



DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE: THE COST TO EMPLOYERS

WORKERS WHO EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION ON THE JOB ARE LESS
CONNECTED TO THEIR EMPLOYERS. THEY'RE PROBABLY LESS PRODUCTIVE, TOO.

Contributors

Mary Hayes, Ph.D.
Research director,
People and Performance

Jared Northup
Research analyst
People and Performance

Nela Richardson, Ph.D.
Chief economist
ESG Officer,
Head of ADP Research

Hiring, supporting, and retaining talent can be difficult. Of the three parts of this puzzle, getting workers in the door might be the easiest to solve. Efforts to support and retain top workers, by contrast, can be undermined in quiet and insidious ways.

Workplace discrimination is one such element. It not only inflicts harm on individuals; it also can impose costs on companies through reduced productivity and higher employee turnover.

Between July 23 and August 6, 2024,

the ADP Research Global Workforce Survey collected data from a stratified, random panel sample of nearly 38,000 working adults in 34 markets.

The share of workers who say they experience discrimination at work has hovered around 19 percent for the past three years, but varies widely across and within regions in our sample.

Employers should pay heed. Workers who feel discriminated against are less likely to feel productive, and many are actively looking for new employment.

DEFINING DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination, in broad terms, is the act of treating similarly situated people or groups differently based on factors unrelated to their rights or abilities. It can mean different things to different people.

The Global Workforce Survey doesn't define discrimination, nor does it ask respondents to elaborate on it. Workers can say they experience discrimination, but we can't know whether they've reported inappropriate behavior or have valid complaints. What we do know is how they feel, and people who feel discriminated against are less likely to feel productive and much more likely to be actively looking for a new job.

THE PREVALENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

The sentiment was strongest in the Middle East/Africa region, where 33 percent of workers said they were experiencing discrimination in 2024. In Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, nearly half of workers reported feelings of discrimination.

Feelings of discrimination were less prevalent in Latin America, affecting only 1 in 10 workers. There was little variation among markets in this region.

Several markets have seen a substantial change in discrimination sentiment over the last three years. The United Arab Emirates had one of the largest groups of workers experiencing discrimination in 2024, at 46 percent, but that share has dropped 20 percentage points since 2022. Singapore, too, has seen a large decline over the last three years, falling 19 points to 33 percent.

Conversely, the Netherlands has seen the largest increase in discrimination sentiment, with the share of affected workers rising from 10 percent in 2022 to 18 percent in 2024.

SHARE OF WORKERS EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION

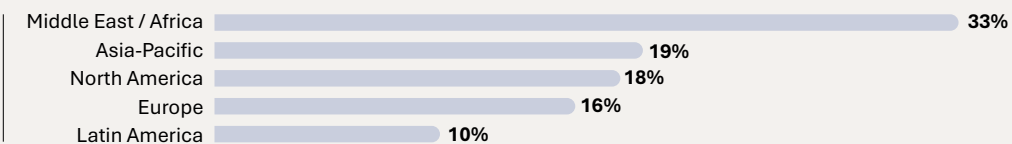
Global share, 2022-'24



By market, 2022-'24

	2022	'23	'24
Argentina	10%	7%	8%
Australia	12	11	15
Brazil	5	6	10
Canada	10	10	17
China	14	8	11
Czech Republic	12	15	15
Egypt	46	60	50
France	9	14	13
Germany	10	10	14
India	37	38	37
Italy	15	15	17
Japan	11	9	15
Mexico	6	8	10
Netherlands	10	12	18
Poland	11	9	15
Saudi Arabia	46	40	44
Singapore	52	25	33
South Africa	17	12	10
South Korea	21	18	22
Spain	12	12	15
Sweden	19	15	17
Taiwan	13	11	13
United Arab Emirates	66	50	46
United Kingdom	10	10	15
United States	13	10	19

By region, 2024



By market, 2024

Middle East / Africa	Egypt	50%
Middle East / Africa	United Arab Emirates	46
Middle East / Africa	Saudi Arabia	44
Asia-Pacific	India	37
Asia-Pacific	Thailand	35
Asia-Pacific	Singapore	33
Europe	Switzerland	25
Asia-Pacific	South Korea	22
North America	United States	19
Asia-Pacific	Philippines	18
Europe	Netherlands	18
Europe	Sweden	17
Europe	Italy	17
North America	Canada	17
Middle East / Africa	Nigeria	16
Europe	Czech Republic	15
Asia-Pacific	Japan	15
Asia-Pacific	Australia	15
Europe	United Kingdom	15
Europe	Spain	15
Europe	Poland	15
Europe	Germany	14
Europe	France	13
Asia-Pacific	Taiwan	13
Asia-Pacific	Vietnam	13
Asia-Pacific	New Zealand	13
Latin America	Chile	11
Asia-Pacific	China	11
Latin America	Peru	11
Latin America	Mexico	10
Latin America	Brazil	10
Middle East / Africa	South Africa	10
Latin America	Argentina	8
Asia-Pacific	Indonesia	7

Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

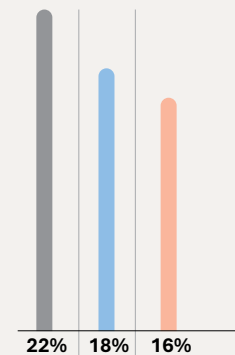


We asked:
Are you currently experiencing discrimination in the workplace?

By gender	
	Yes
Men	20%
Women	17

By minority status	
Minority	36%
Non-minority	14

By worker type



- **Knowledge worker**
Level of freedom to use their expertise to create something new.
- **Skilled task worker**
Level of expertise to solve similar problems each day.
- **Cycle worker**
Does similar repetitive tasks each day.

THE INDUSTRY WITH THE LARGEST SHARE OF WORKERS REPORTING DISCRIMINATION WAS MINING, QUARRYING, AND OIL & GAS EXTRACTION



Share of workers reporting discrimination in other industries:

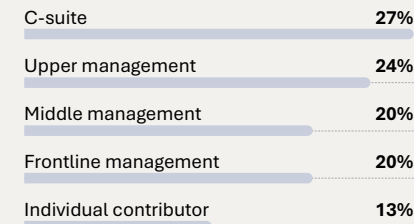
Finance and insurance	20%	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	16%	Transportation and warehousing	15%
Construction and related trades	20	Retail/wholesale trade	16	Health care and social assistance	15
Information	18	Technology services	16	Educational services	14
Manufacturing	18	Administrative/support services and waste management/remediation	15	Real estate and rental and leasing	14
Other personal services	17	Public administration and services	15	Professional, scientific, and technical services	12
Accommodation and food services	17				

WHO IS REPORTING DISCRIMINATION?

- Men were slightly more likely to say they're being discriminated against than women (20 percent compared to 17 percent).
- People who identify as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group in their market were far more likely to say they're experiencing discrimination (36 percent compared to 14 percent of those who don't identify).
- The higher a person's position within an organization, the more likely they were to report discrimination. More than 1 in 4 people in executive roles say they're experiencing discrimination, double the share of individual contributors (13 percent).
- The younger the worker, the more likely they are to say they're experiencing discrimination.

Share of workers experiencing discrimination

Organizational level, 2024



Source: ADP Research Global Workforce Survey

THE COST TO EMPLOYERS

With 19 percent of workers globally claiming to experience discrimination on the job, we wanted to investigate the potential cost to employers. To this end, we asked survey respondents to judge their own work output and respond to questions designed to measure their attachment to their employers. People who felt discriminated against were less likely to feel productive, and many said they were actively looking to jump to a new employer.

PRODUCTIVITY

We asked survey respondents to rate the quantity and quality of their work output and their commitment to getting the job done. Based on their answers, we sorted workers into three categories of productivity: High, moderate, and low.

Workers who say they're experiencing discrimination are much more likely to fall into the low-productivity category than those who don't.

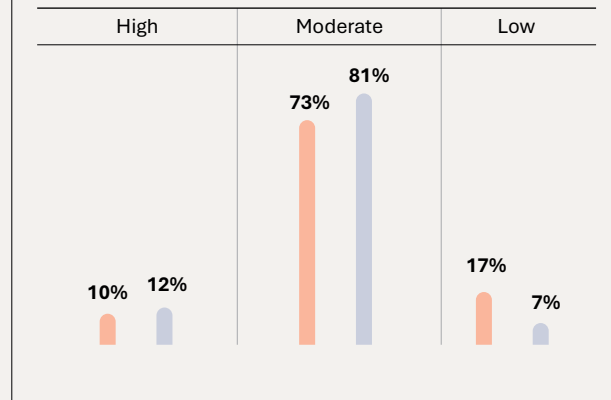
We expected to see a similar pattern at the other end of the productivity scale but didn't. In most markets, workers experiencing discrimination were as likely to report high productivity as workers who weren't.

North America was a major outlier. Workers in Canada and the United States who said they're experiencing discrimination were 3.5 times less likely to report high productivity.

Differences between demographic groups were negligible. Workers experiencing discrimination, regardless of gender, age, or racial background, reported similar levels of low productivity.

● Experiencing discrimination ● Not experiencing discrimination

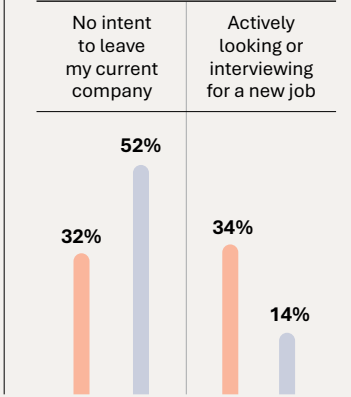
Discrimination by productivity, 2024



RETENTION

People who feel discriminated against were far more likely to be actively seeking a new job—34 percent compared to 14 percent of people who didn't report discrimination. Once again, demographics and geography made little difference. When workers say they're experiencing discrimination on the job, regardless of their background, they're more likely to be headed for the exit.

Discrimination by intent to leave, 2024



THE TAKEAWAY

Discrimination can manifest in myriad ways and for a variety of reasons, both personal and institutional. What we know is that people who feel discriminated against, regardless of their background, are less productive and more likely to be looking for their next job. Employers who can build a place where all workers feel like they belong might be rewarded with higher productivity, a more stable roster of employees, and an improved bottom line.



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.