

# Productivity faces decline as young workers threaten to 'act their wage'

A new new poll from recruiter, Robert Walters, has revealed that 40% of workers under the age of 30 have admitted they will only do the 'bare minimum' of their job requirements should their pay or career progression not change.



Image source: Andriy Popov – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

## Survey highlights

- Silent movement of quiet quitters: Half of under 30s will do the 'bare minimum' in roles unless a pay increase or progression is on the cards.
- Under 30s productivity slowing: 51% of managers claim that they have to take on extra work due to 'quiet quitters'.
- Pay has become the leading cause of the dip in output in the face of increased cost of living.
- Remote working favours 'quite quitters': one-third of managers say flexible and hybrid working models make it difficult to measure output.

The new phenomenon – termed 'quiet quitting' – sees young professionals performing the bare minimum in their jobs, thus bringing no further initiative, creativity or betterment to not only the position but the company as a whole.

Samantha-Jane Gravett, director for Robert Walters Africa, comments: "This behaviour isn't something entirely new. There have always been less motivated individuals in the workplace. However, the real concern here is that unlike those few workers who tend to consciously be less productive at work, 'quiet quitting' is often a subconscious act borne out of frustrations toward the workplace.

"It is easy for managers to pull their employees up on lack of productivity, but unless they get to the bottom of the 'why', then quiet quitting could well become a silent movement that will have a damaging effect on businesses productivity and profitability."

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## Young workers ‘acting their wage’

According to recruiter, Robert Walters, the leading reason for young workers choosing to ‘quit quietly’ is none other than pay.

Whilst we have seen record pay increases in [2022], particularly with those moving to a new job and getting increases of about +25%, as well as those remaining at their current company receiving between 7-10% increases, this, unfortunately, does not match the approved 18.65% increase in Eskom tariffs for the 2023/24 financial year.

The inability for wages to match the cost of living is creating a culture of younger workers ‘acting their wage’ - younger workers suddenly feel heavily underpaid for their role due to rising costs and inflation and some are therefore refusing to do more outside the parameters of their job description.

Gravett adds: “In all cases of economic hardship, it is the young workers who are low-income earners that feel the financial burden more. It is a combination of their lack of experience – exasperated further by the pandemic – that puts them in a much weaker position than their older and more experienced counterparts, particularly when trying to bargain for higher pay.

“Employers are unable to increase salaries to match the rate of inflation – that’s a fact. However, this is where softer perks and benefits really have a chance to make a difference. For example, we see an increasing number of employers offering benefits such as utility vouchers, travel cards as well as streaming subscriptions to prospective employees.



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## Remote working a breeding ground for quiet quitters

During a survey conducted among managers, more than half feel that they are taking on more workload due to a dip (suggestion: plunge) in productivity from younger workers.

According to the poll, 39% of managers stated that hybrid and remote working makes it difficult to measure the output of their team. A further 24% stated that the flexibility to choose differing work patterns and hours means that there is no universal indicator for productivity, making it easier for 'quiet quitters' to go under the radar.

Gravett comments: "Quiet quitting creates a real imbalance in the team. Employees who go the extra mile often find themselves picking up the slack or dealing with the lack of output from their disengaged colleagues. This causes tension and frustration among the team members and can result in burnout among those committed and engaged workers."

"Business leaders cannot allow 'quiet quitting' to become a norm and accountability plays a central role in this. If 'quiet quitters' are benefitting from being 'out of sight, out of mind', then employers should not hesitate to make more office facetime mandatory."

"As much as we learned new ways of working in the pandemic, we also had some great working habits before Covid. These more traditional structures and systems should not be overlooked."

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