2025 PRODUCTIVITY INDEX
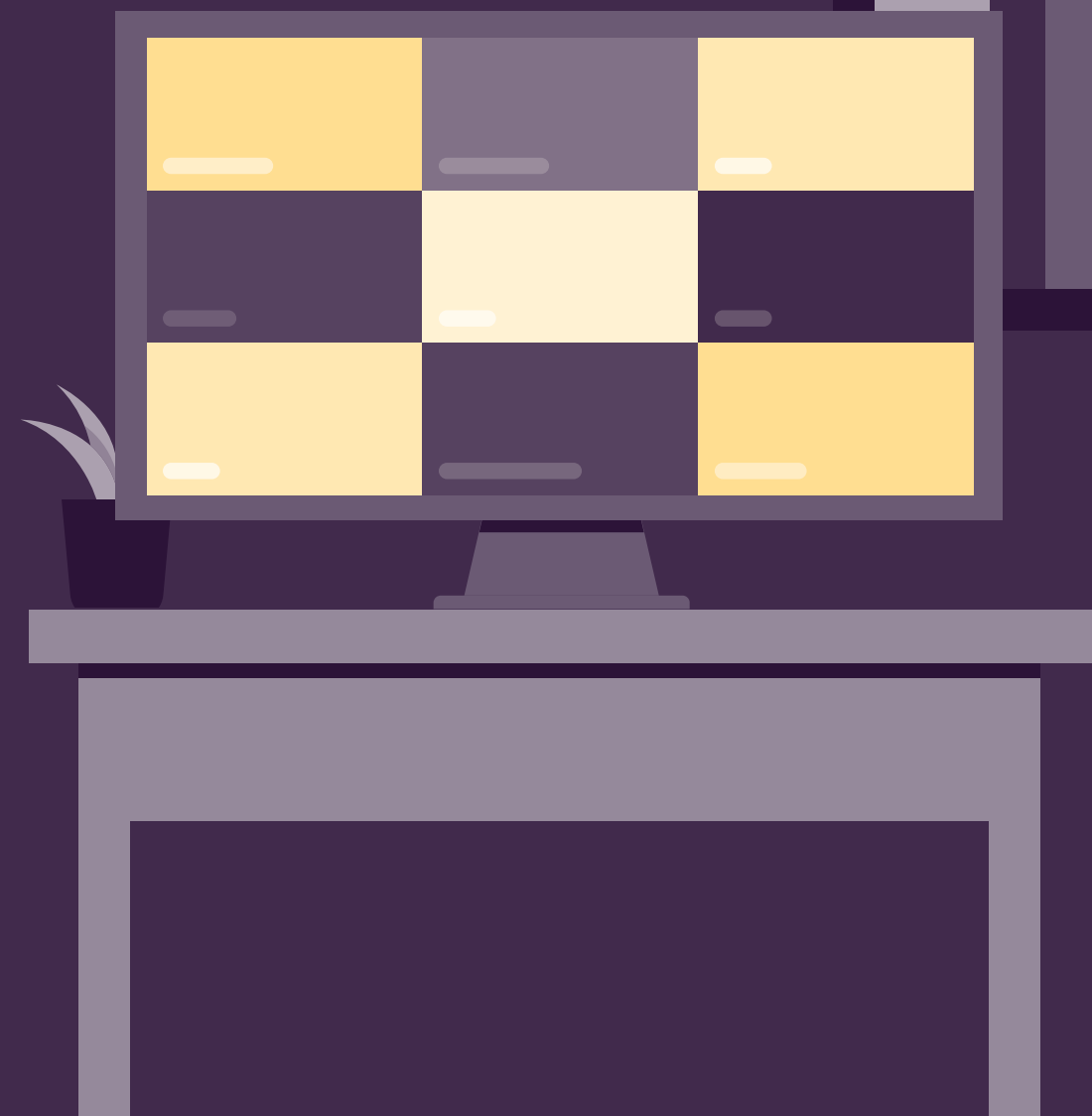
Exploring the C–Suite's contradictory approach to modern work

toggl

What's inside?
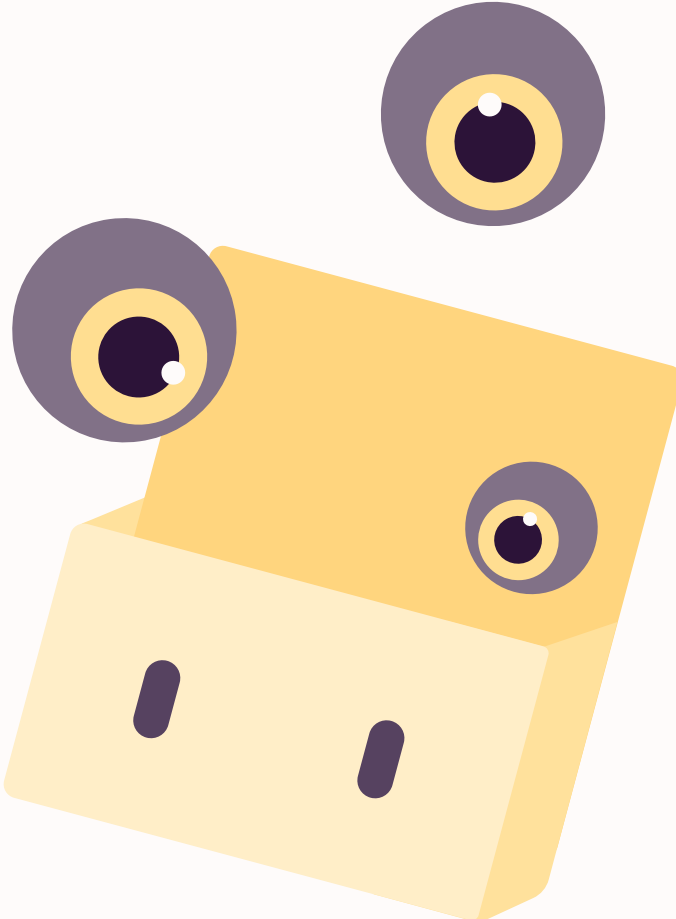
Foreword by Alari Aho

If 2024 had a slogan, it would be the year leaders played tug-of-war with our work environments.

We heard the voices of workers saying they want more control over their lives and a more flexible work environment. For those of us following along, it's clear the C-suite hasn't just resisted these calls—they've turned inward. We saw a rush to get employees back to the office, and more employers turning to monitoring software to keep tabs on their workers' every move.

The modern work environment is at an inflection point, one that is pitting the desires of workers against those of the C-suite.

To better understand how the C-suite is navigating this seismic shift in workplace culture, Toggl set out to explore how executives view and measure productivity. We wanted to know if their approach to the modern workplace was really about improving productivity—or simply about control.

What we found was a startling level of comfort in using employee surveillance software. There were also strong contradictions from C-suite leadership—many still lean on the 9-5 work playbook, but admit their workforce is demanding more flexibility.

There are also warning signs the C-suite is unwilling to relinquish their control over the workforce. Progressive leadership that empowers people to do their best work when they feel most productive was nowhere to be found. Instead, C-suite leaders are still relying on core working hour environments and people's presence at a desk over real, meaningful output.

If you're ready to dig deeper into this inflection point the C-suite and the workforce are facing—and how the struggle with productivity, flexibility and control are contributing—then keep reading.

Alari Aho
Chief Executive Officer, Toggl

The 2025 Productivity Index, Explained

A demand for remote work and the rise of bossware has left us at a critical junction in carving out the modern work environment. Toggl wanted to tap into the minds of those in the driving seat ——the employers——about how these drastic changes are impacting productivity, profitability, and workforce efficiency.

We wanted to know if there was a gap between what the C—suite says they value——productivity, performance, collaboration, and revenue——and what they actually prioritize, like rigid work hours and controlling the place of work.

To do it, we surveyed 466 C—suite leaders, ranging from CEOs to CTOs, COOs, and CFOs. Respondents were from the United States and the United Kingdom working in a range of industries including SaaS, Technology, Marketing, Professional Services, Creative Agencies, and PR.

Insights uncovered in this research include:

Productivity has changed, but the C—suite playbook hasn't.

As employees battle for more flexibility in work environments and work hours, company leaders have retreated into processes they know——the traditional 9–5 structure and a resistance to flexible work.

Companies are (way) too comfortable with control.

Most of the C—suite believes they should be able to measure employees beyond normal metrics like task completion and hours worked. The majority agree personal data, location tracking, and surveillance software should all be on the table.

There is a sliver of hope on the horizon.

The C—suite lives in a land of contradiction. Most are comfortable using employee monitoring software, but they admit it's contributing to a disengaged workforce whilst hurting retention and profitability.

The Difficulty of Proving Productivity

If you take the C–suite at their word, most have their team's productivity metrics all wrapped up in a neat dashboard.

The majority of respondents said **improving productivity was their top priority for 2025**—trumping innovation, collaboration and profitability goals. Focus on productivity also eclipsed collaboration and flexible work.
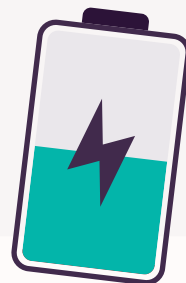
Only

2%

of all leaders said they aren't actively measuring productivity,
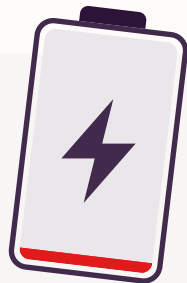
... and an impressive

46%

of leaders said they were extremely confident in how well they measure team productivity.

What are the top three values your company will focus on to improve performance in 2025?
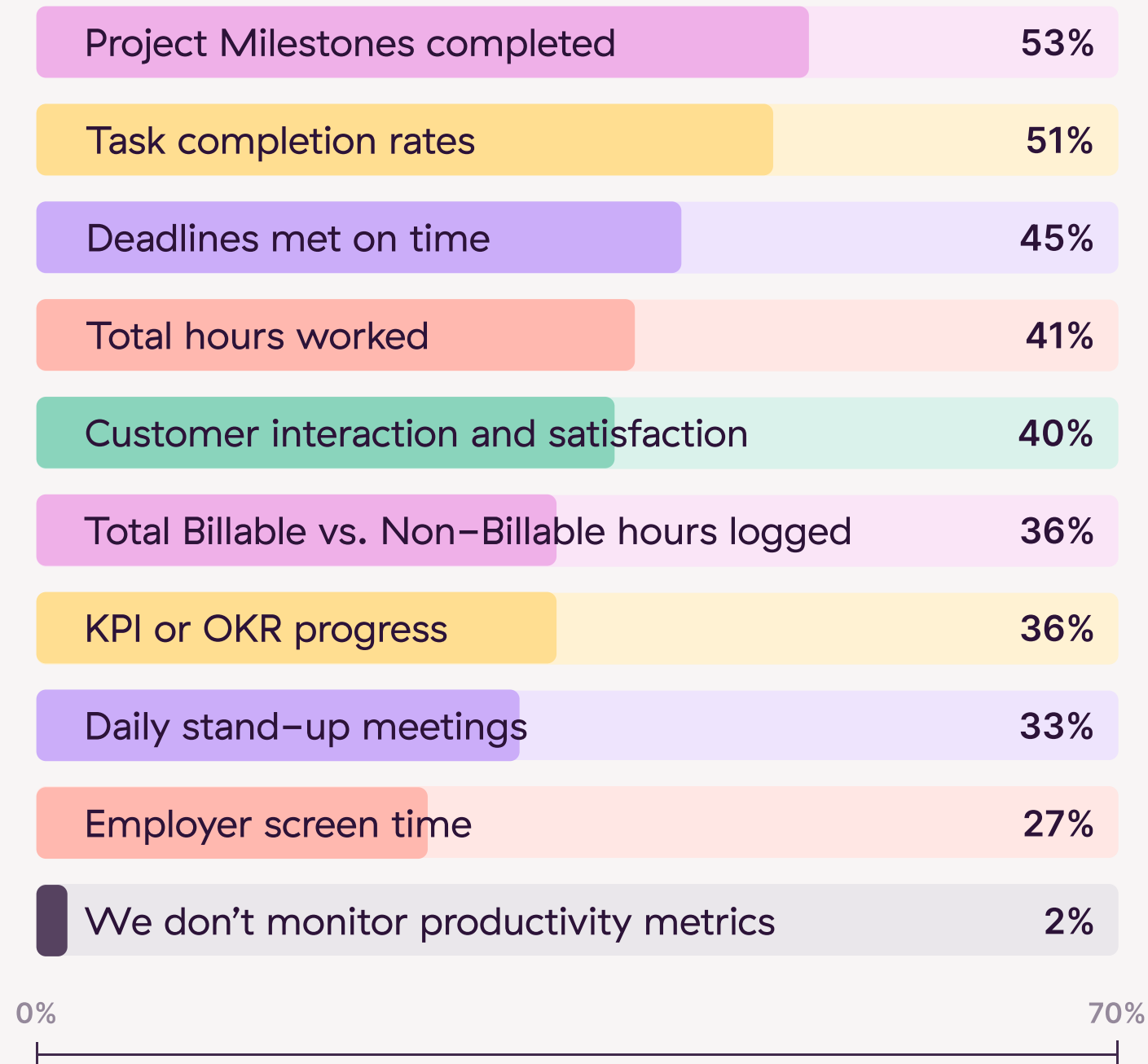
Productivity	53%
Employee Well–being	52%
Revenue Growth	47%
Innovation	44%
Profitability	36%
Collaboration	32%
Flexible Work	17%

0%   70%

Productivity is also measured in very different ways across all job roles and industries.

How do you measure your company's productivity?

Project Milestones completed	53%
Task completion rates	51%
Deadlines met on time	45%
Total hours worked	41%
Customer interaction and satisfaction	40%
Total Billable vs. Non-Billable hours logged	36%
KPI or OKR progress	36%
Daily stand-up meetings	33%
Employer screen time	27%
We don't monitor productivity metrics	2%

0%   70%

Many executives rely on project milestones and task completion rates to understand what their teams are doing, with total hours worked ranking fourth.

Using employee screen time to understand how productive employees are ranked last, with only 27% of leaders using it. Yet, our research found comfortability in monitoring screen time for productivity measurement—signaling a possible shift into more companies using it this year.

Despite confidence in productivity tracking, when we crunched the numbers, **the cracks started to show.**

39% of leaders said they were extremely confident in how well they measure team productivity.
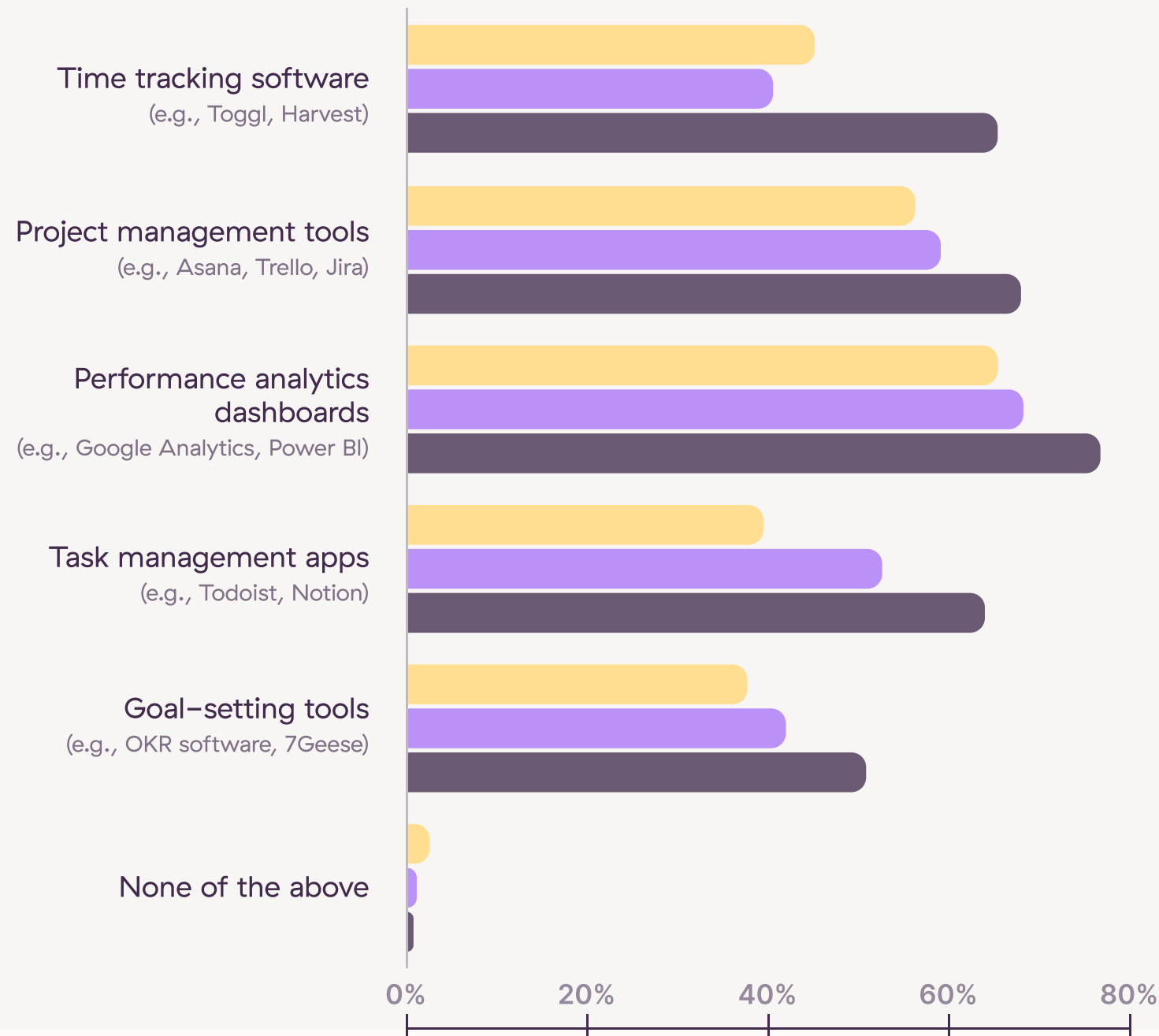
36% of leaders have difficulty defining productivity across different roles.

28% admit they have limited visibility into the what hybrid or remote employees do.

Some significant patterns also emerged between confidence in measuring productivity and the tech stacks companies use.

Tools Used to Measure Business Productivity by Company Size

Legend:
- 51–200 employees
- 201–500 employees
- 500+ employees

Chart categories (left axis):
- Time tracking software (e.g., Toggl, Harvest)
- Project management tools (e.g., Asana, Trello, Jira)
- Performance analytics dashboards (e.g., Google Analytics, Power BI)
- Task management apps (e.g., Todoist, Notion)
- Goal-setting tools (e.g., OKR software, 7Geese)
- None of the above

X-axis: 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80%

Leaders from smaller companies had basic tech stacks, leaning on task management apps to track productivity. They reported a gap in confidence around how accurately they measured productivity.

Larger companies with 500+ employees are more likely to have a wider suite of productivity tracking tools, including time tracking and project management software. This group showed the most confidence in measuring team productivity.

Marketing and creative agencies use time tracking software the least, and had the least confidence around accurately tracking productivity in their teams.

These numbers show leaders without the right tools struggle to understand how productive their teams really are. However, our research also uncovered a push–pull dynamic from leaders about what work really needs to be measured —and how far they would go to get the data they wanted.

The C–Suite Contradiction

One telling story from this year's Productivity Index is the C–suite leaders we surveyed are caught between a metaphorical rock and a hard place.

The majority say they are comfortable measuring productivity, but their answers also show **a lack of trust in their teams.**
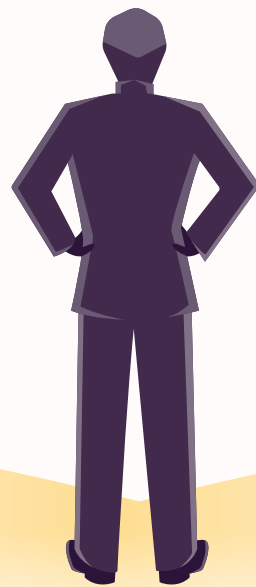
Over and over, we found glaring contradictions in how the C–suite is approaching modern work:

Companies that place employee well–being as a key focus this year were also **more likely to use screen time monitoring.**
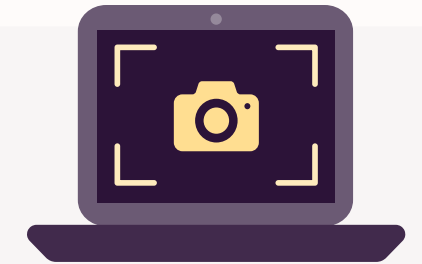
Those who were comfortable with self–reported productivity metrics also think **executives should get to track** personal employee data and monitor their screens.

The glaring disconnect in trust levels shows leaders are desperate to find ways—no matter how unpopular—to understand what their employees are doing at work. This tug–of–war around transparency into employee activity is creating a productivity power dynamic, one that has tilted in the C–suite's favor for decades. And, up until the shift to remote work, had no signs of shifting.

Leaders are leaning on a traditional (outdated) playbook

The tug-of-war also validates **what Toggl has believed** for a very long time: Employers make decisions in a vacuum when ordering employees back to the office or into a hybrid environment.

In essence, the debate around work environments is just a distraction from the bigger issue the C-suite has—**they don't trust their employees to do their jobs without big brother oversight.**
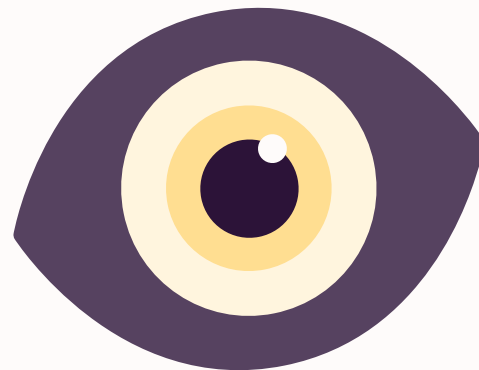
Liviu Tanase, the founder and CEO of email validation software ZeroBounce, says using surveillance software or screen monitoring for normal business operations—like marketing or support—would be incredibly intrusive and unnecessary.

> Leaders know that personal things may happen on company computers. But if you monitor your team's computers just to catch an "aha, I got you" moment, you really need to question your staff and your company's overall culture.
>
> What matters most is the intent. If you're doing it to ensure compliance or protect sensitive information, that's one thing. But if you use it to control your employees, it will erode trust and hurt retention and productivity. CEOs need to ask themselves if they are encouraging a culture of trust and autonomy or one of suspicion.

Tanase's comments mirror the clear lack of confidence the C-suite has around non-traditional work environments.
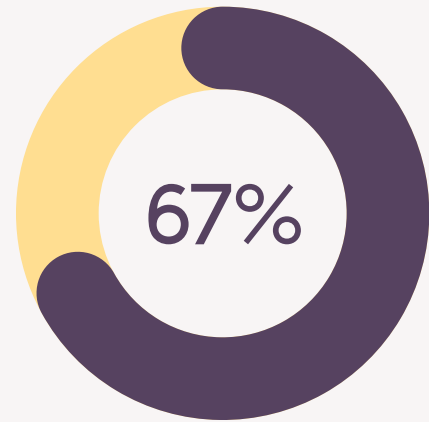
67% 67% of respondents are adamant the structure of **a 9–5 workday** (regardless of whether it happens remotely, hybrid, or in-house) **is essential** to achieving productivity and revenue goals.

But this data doesn't tell the whole story.

39% admitted they don't believe their employees work as well without oversight.

45% believe more flexibility will give people the option to work across different timezones which could impact collaboration.

38% fear their teams won't be available for crucial meetings in a more flexible environment.

(Strictly) 9 to 5

On one hand, the C-suite seems unwilling to operate outside of set working hours and locations to meet company goals. Yet other data we collected showed, deep down, the C-suite knows this rigidity isn't what most employees want—or expect—in a workplace.
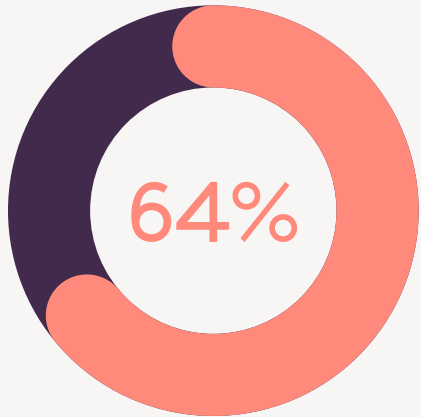
64% 64% of leaders admit implementing structured work hours or a requirement to work from a specific location is contributing to **the rise of a disengaged workforce**.

"

Employees value hybrid models and the ability to manage their schedules. They want to be measured by their contributions, not the hours spent at a desk.

We rely on tools like collaborative dashboards and clear goal–setting frameworks to track deliverables. Using surveillance software can create a culture of distrust—while it might offer short-term insights, the long-term harm to employee morale and retention is significant.

"

Arvind Rongala, CEO at Edstellar, said there has been a clear shift in employee expectations and for many, flexibility has become a non-negotiable.
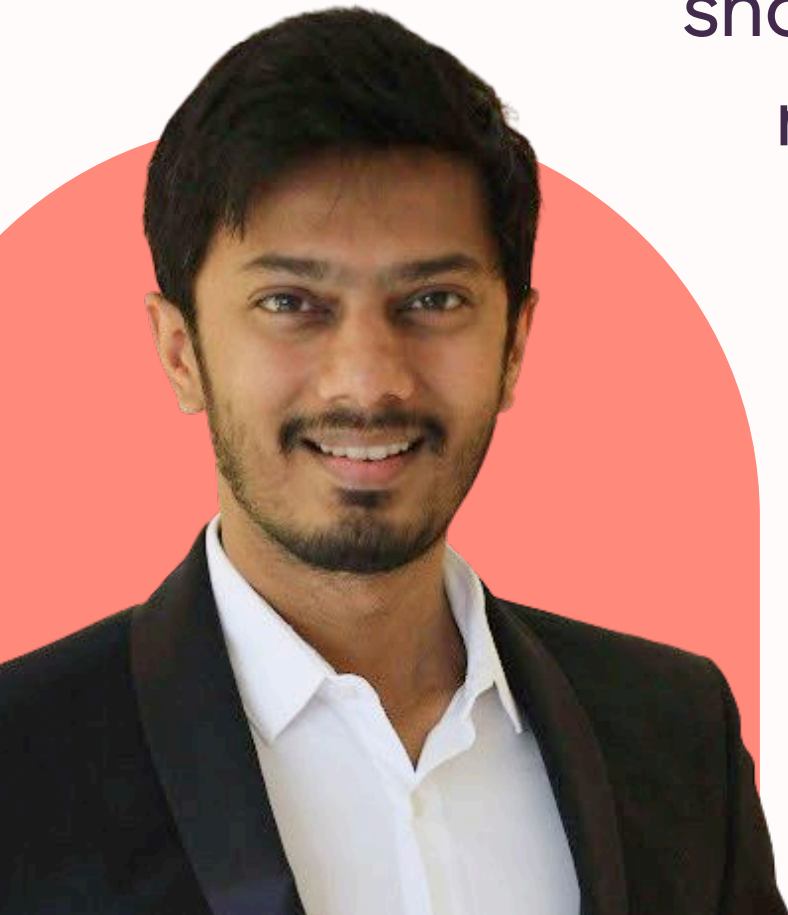
The push-pull power dynamic between leaders and their teams goes a little deeper—and a lot darker. It seems in the fight to maintain the traditional work playbook, **the C-suite is doubling down on control.**

# The Rise of Chief Surveillance Officers

Like any monumental shift in society, progression never comes without pushback. For the workplace, this monumental shift impacted us all in recent years.

When COVID−19 hit, thousands of companies were forced into a previously impossible scenario: remote work. Employees worked from home, adapted to Zoom meetings, and figured out how to collaborate asynchronously.

Now the physical world has returned to normal, workers are reluctant to resume the commute and in−house desk sitting. Yet, leaders are hesitant to mold their workplaces—physical or remote—into a more flexible environment.
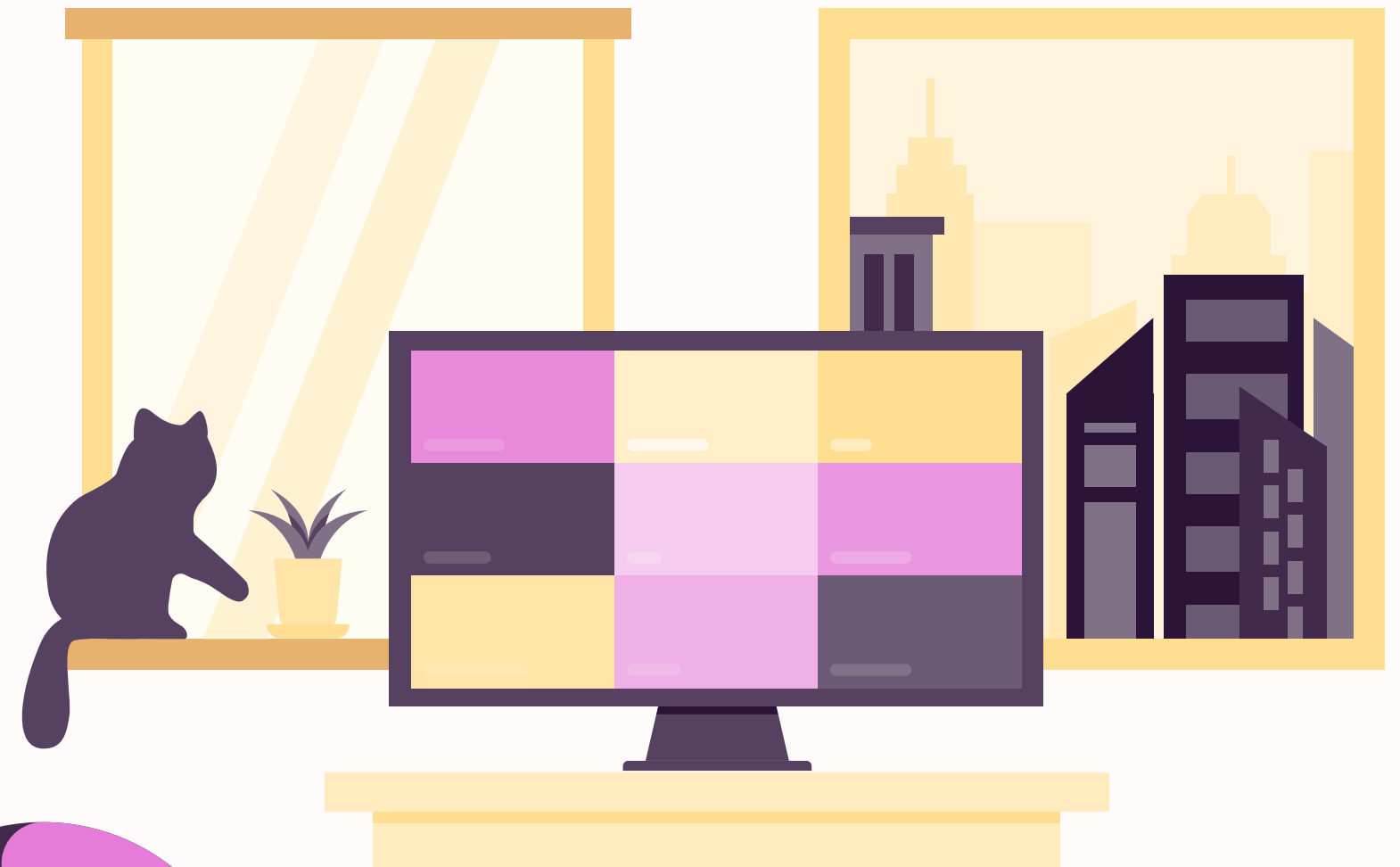
68% believe companies **should dictate the work environment** to maintain control over its operations

68%
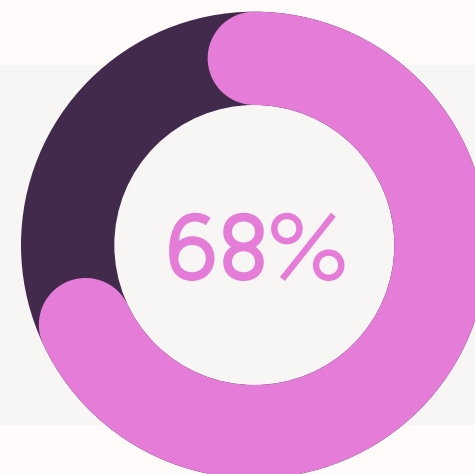
A further 68% agreed the return to office movement is driven by **a desire to know what employees are doing**, rather than productivity

Leaders seem increasingly concerned about losing control over elements that weren't uncontrollable during the seismic shift to remote work.

37%
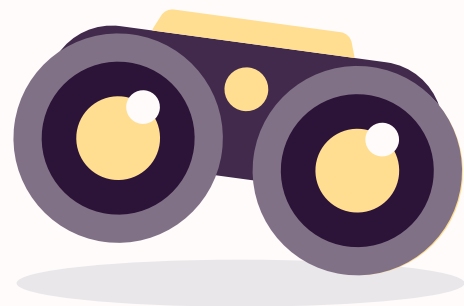are concerned they will lose control over projects and deadlines

31%
worry their team's productivity will be negatively impacted

20%
say there would be no way to track how many hours people actually worked

The shift has also resulted in the C–suite taking on new job roles as Chief Surveillance Officers.

Chief Surveillance Officers (CSOs) are leaders who increasingly turn to invasive tools like screen monitoring and activity tracking rather than trusting their employees to deliver results.

How comfortable are you using surveillance software for remote work tracking?

Very comfortable

45%

Somewhat comfortable

25%

12% Very uncomfortable

9% Somewhat uncomfortable

9% Neutral
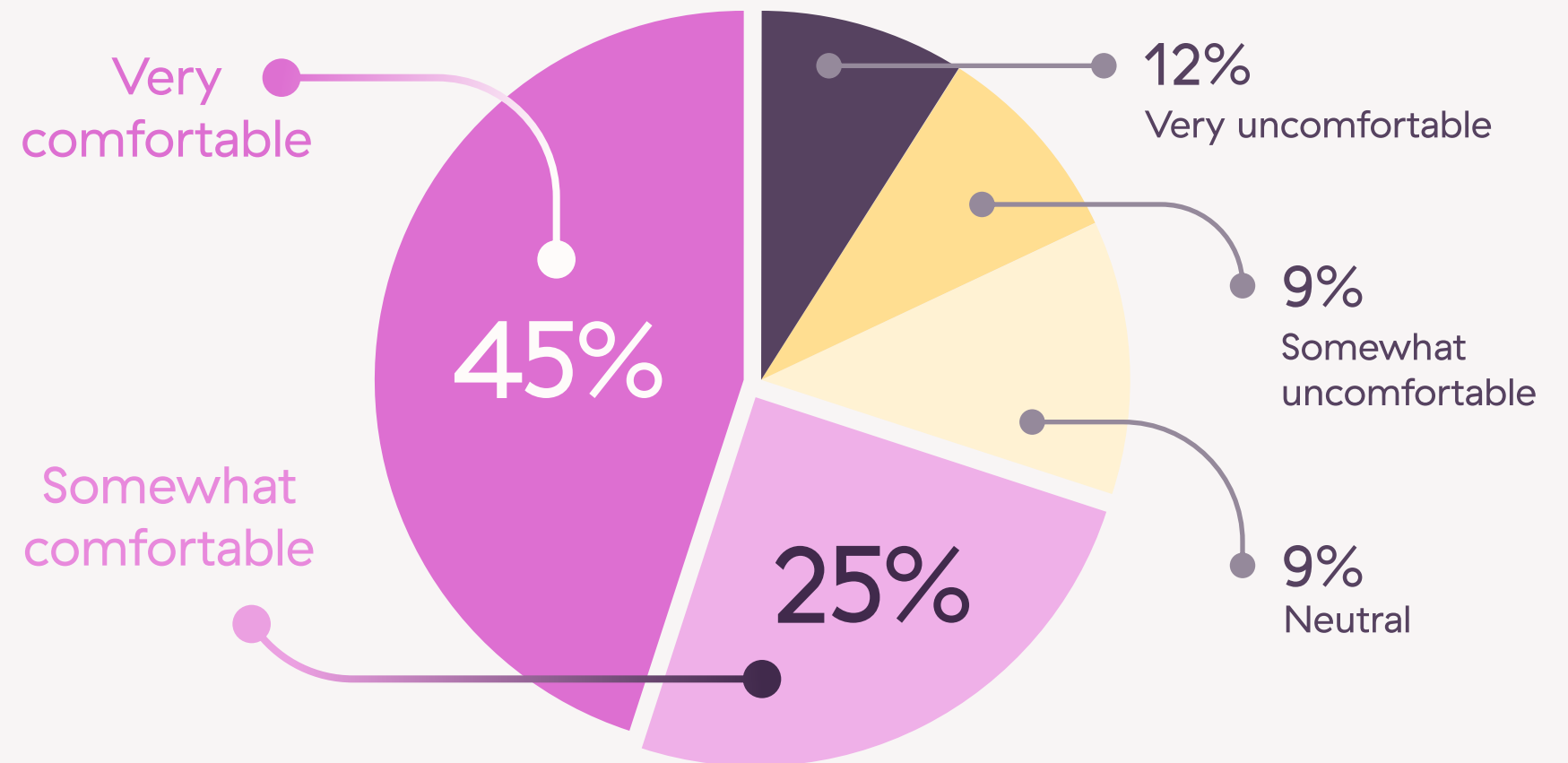
There was similar agreement amongst the CSOs we surveyed about the level of surveillance they're comfortable with.

67%

agree they should have access to employees' personal data (like location tracking and screen activity) to ensure productivity in any work environment.

76%

believe they should have access to detailed data like activity tracking and screen monitoring at any time to ensure employees are working efficiently.

75%

agree that if they are responsible for company performance, they should have the right to track every employee's activity to ensure they are delivering results.

The irony is, most of these CSOs know this isn't the way to build a sustainable workplace—75% acknowledge this type of excessive monitoring hurts retention and morale within a team.

"Rather than surveilling your team, you should measure team performance by progress and the quality of work produced as opposed to keeping tabs on what your team is doing 24/7.

Build a culture of transparency and clear expectations, and check in with your employees regularly to track progress and work through challenges together that are getting in the way of efficiency."

Elisa Montanari, Head of Organic Growth at Wrike, says surveillance software is a short−sighted solution which threatens the very trust people work so hard to build within a team.

Surveillance software is just a band-aid for poor productivity tracking

How helpful surveillance software data is to CSOs is anyone's guess. The reason why they collect it in the first place may be a side effect of every scaling business: how can a company ensure growth is sustainable and employees stay productive?

Leaders are betting on different values to improve team performance this year. For smaller companies, it was focusing on employee well-being. Yet larger corporations were putting all their chips on measuring revenue growth and productivity.

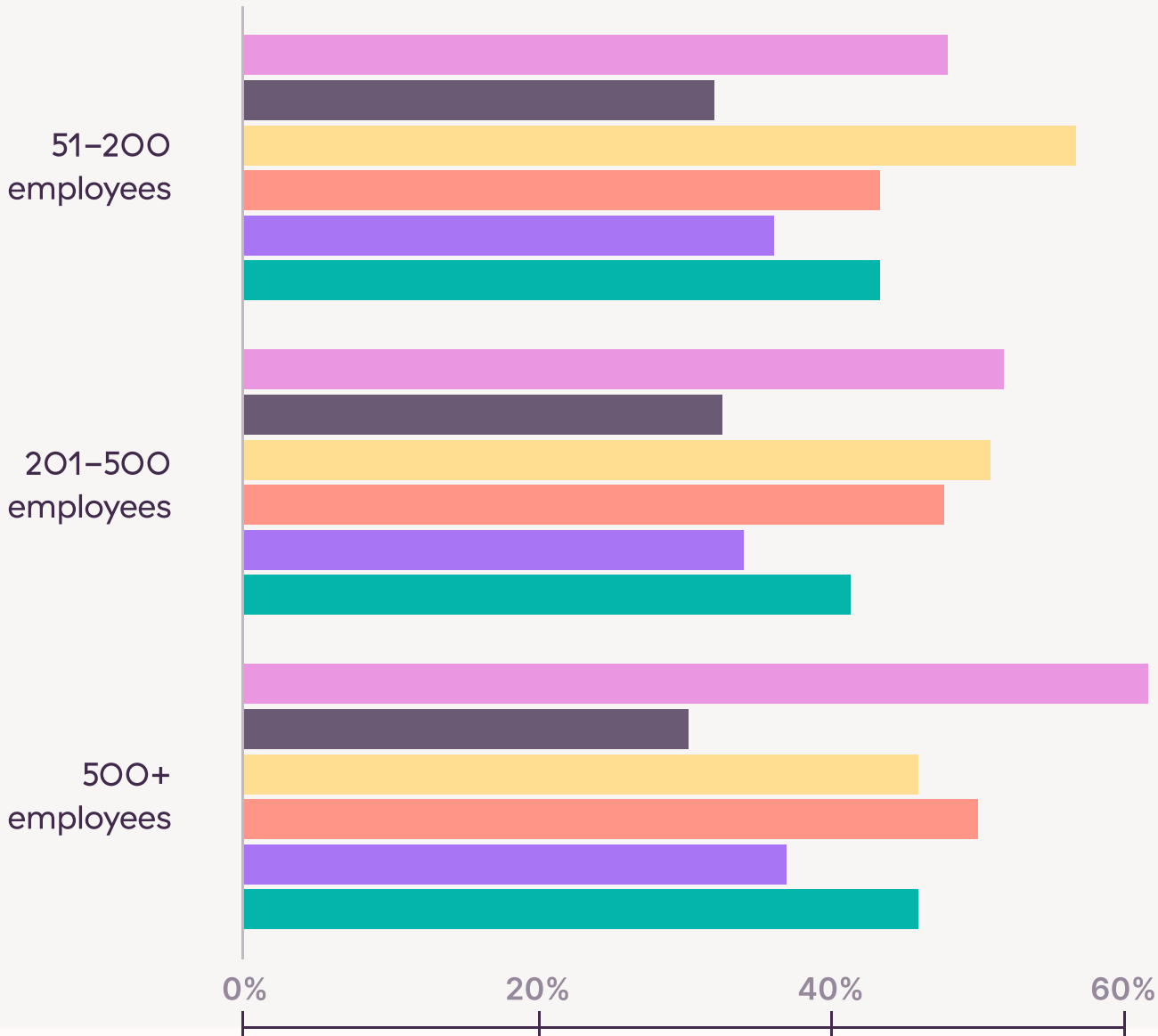The path to reaching these goals may lie in the tech stack.

Companies using **time tracking software were more likely to have extreme confidence in their productivity metrics** compared to those using only project or task management apps.

It shows measuring employees on what tasks and projects they get done is important. Attaching granular time data to these activities gives leaders confidence their team is delivering real results— efficiently.

Top values companies are focusing on to improve performance for 2025

- Productivity
- Collaboration
- Employee well-being
- Revenue growth
- Profitability
- Innovation

51–200 employees

201–500 employees

500+ employees

0%   20%   40%   60%

An Inflection Point For Modern Work

Leaders still have some major roadblocks to overcome to move away from their CSO mindset. Yet grumblings from our Productivity Index data shows the C–suite agree change is necessary, especially around work environments.
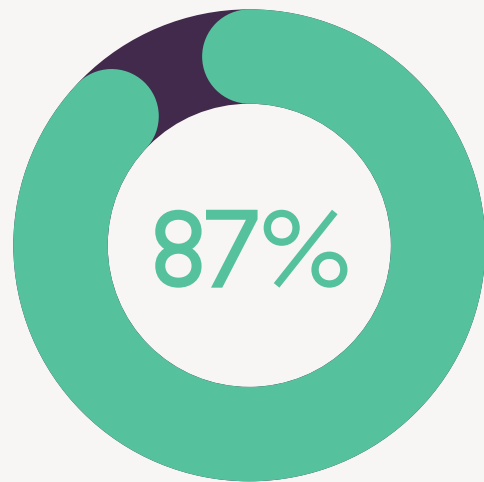
87% say focusing on measurable productivity rather than on where employees work **would positively impact revenue growth.**

What "measurable productivity" looks like is still a sticking point in the workplace.

Most of the C–suite is **weirdly comfortable with using unpopular methods** like surveillance software, location tracking and monitoring screen activity to measure performance.

This mindset may be the reason they are hitting a brick wall with their teams to measure productivity more effectively.
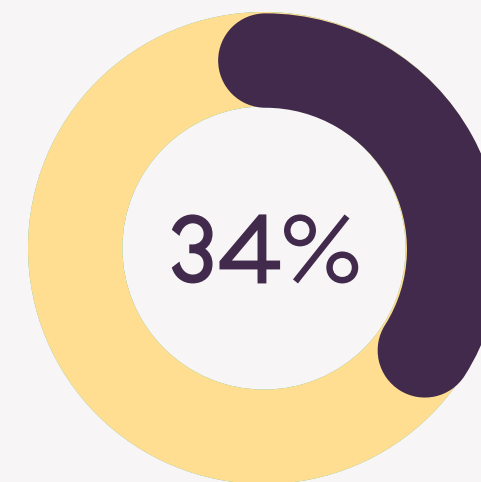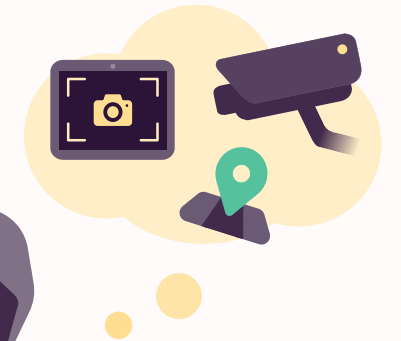
34% of leaders say **resistance from employees** about productivity tracking is the biggest challenge in measuring company productivity.

Breaking down this brick wall will require switching gears in the approach to productivity tracking. Our data uncovered **a strong association** between the tools used to measure productivity and the amount of confidence they gave leaders around their team's activities.

Comparison of Key Metrics: Time Tracking vs No Time Tracking

Those using tools like time tracking software **were significantly more confident in measuring high–value activities** within their team. Time tracking data also gave leaders more confidence that these activities were driving revenue.

It's a clear sign companies don't have to use invasive tracking to get the data their leaders are searching for.

Shifting focus from surveillance to a more empowering form of productivity tracking isn't just about employee morale——it'll also improve a company's bottom line.
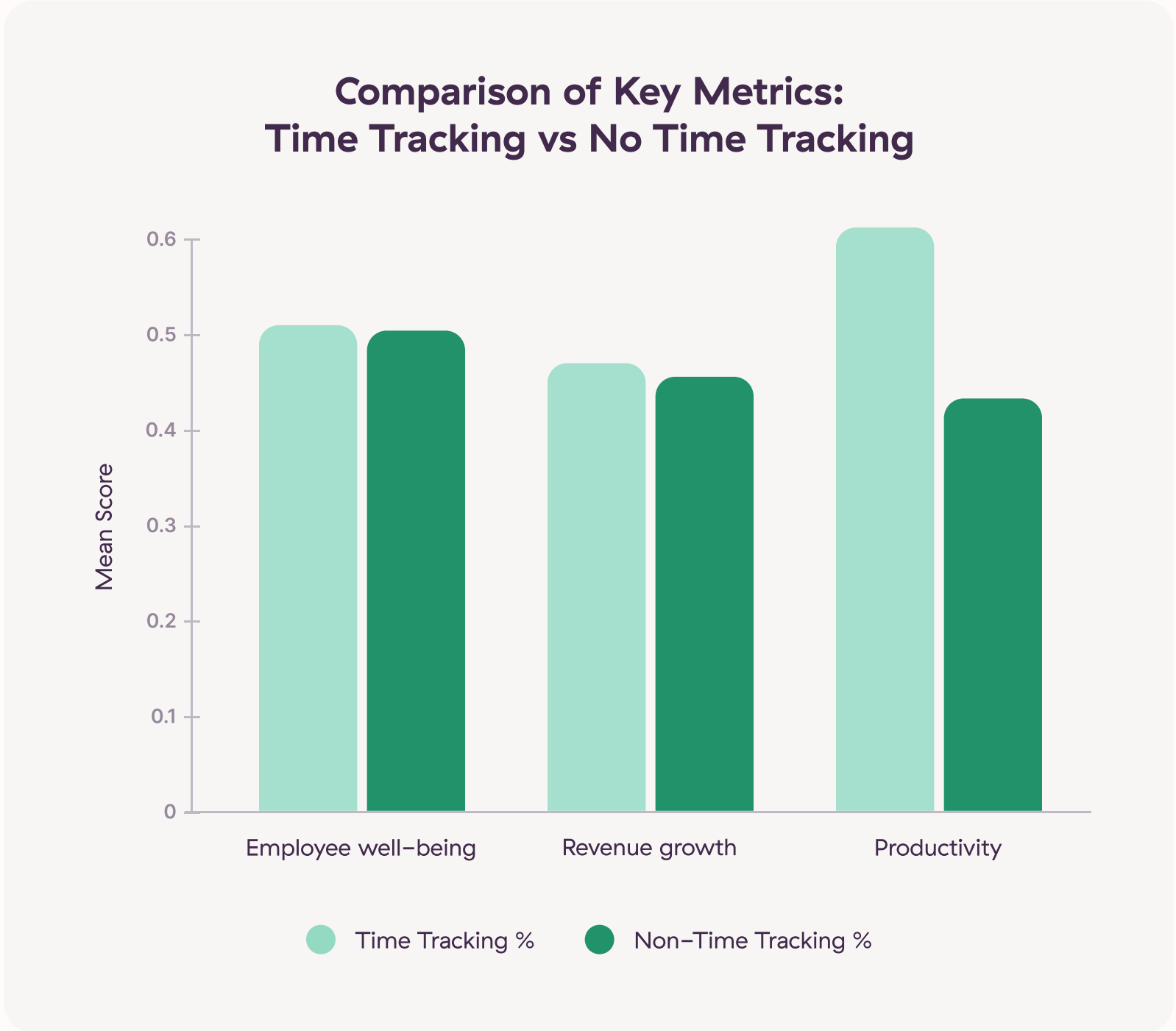
All revenue roads lead back to productivity

Time is money—especially in the modern workplace. **80% of C-suite leaders believe shifting their approach to productivity in 2025 could increase company revenue by up to 20%.**

Tracking tasks, projects, and deliverables can only tell leaders so much. **Andrew Wray, Chief Revenue Officer at Toggl,** believes shifting the focus to how much time teams spend on high-value activities can truly give leaders the information they seek into productivity.

> Thousands of companies are navigating non-traditional environments, and leaders are clearly struggling to balance employee well-being without sacrificing productivity. Most productivity tools lack the meaningful data leaders need to understand what employees are really working on.
>
> Leaders, especially those in charge of revenue, must be hyper-focused on productivity and how it ties back to direct business results this year. And it'll take more than monitoring if employees are at their desks. Meaningful metrics cannot be measured through software that only tracks keystrokes and screenshots.
>
> **Linking your team's time to tasks and projects is the only way to really measure their productivity—this is what leaders must do to win this year.**

Toggl's Closing Thoughts

toggl track

Improving productivity isn't just about profits. It's about creating workplaces where **employees can do their best work**, whether that's at home or at the office. And tracking productivity metrics isn't about control—it's simply gathering data around your team's most impactful work.

If there is one takeaway from this year's Productivity Index, it's this.

Leaders don't have to turn into Chief Surveillance Officers and monitor their employee's every move to get productivity data they actually need. The **right time tracking software** can gather key data into projects, tasks, and valuable team inputs without all the other noise.

This inflection point to modern work is an opportunity for C-suite leaders to rewrite the playbook around productivity, and make 2025 the year they focus on work that truly matters.
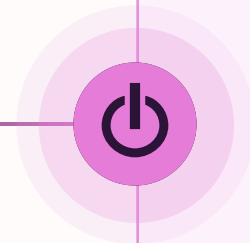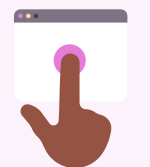
About Toggl Track

Toggl Track is an industry leader in time management and productivity software.

70,000+ companies trust Toggl Track to give leaders full transparency into their team's workloads. As the only time tracking software that builds custom reports from time data, Toggl Track offers growing teams an easy-to-use time tracking system with the features and integrations of an enterprise-level tool to maximize productivity.

Toggl Track's time tracking software is compatible with web, desktop, mobile app and browser extensions so your team can track time from anywhere.

Book a demo