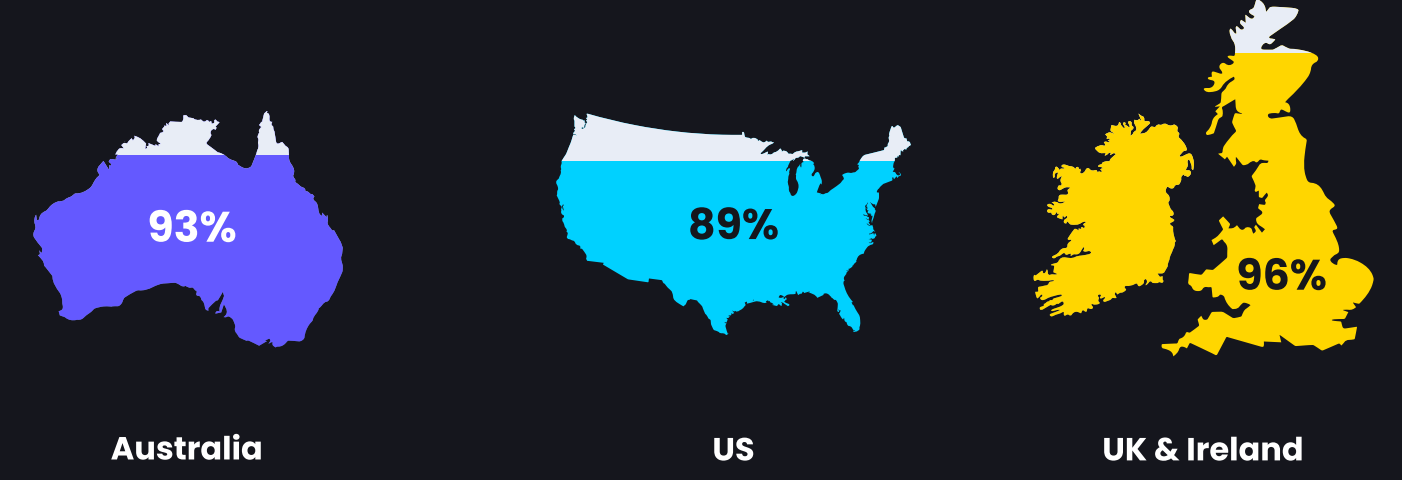


What managers in retail told us



93% of middle managers have frustrations in their role today.



Middle managers are losing, on average, an estimated **5.13 hours** per week on low-value tasks that don't benefit their work, their team or customers.

- Australia 5.14 hrs per week
- US 4.97 hrs per week
- UK 5.62 hrs per week
- Ireland 4.02 hrs per week

Time spent on low-value tasks equates to an estimated **USD \$20.9bn** a year across the retail industry globally*.

- Australia AUD \$2.5bn
- US USD \$14.3bn
- UK GBP £3.3bn
- Ireland EUR €348m

The **most common** low-value tasks taking up middle managers' time:

1. Correcting others' mistakes (31%)
2. Email overload and unnecessary communication (28%)
3. Meetings that could have been an email (27%)

Top response by region:

- Australia Duplicating data entry across systems/manual admin (28%)
- US Correcting others' mistakes (43%)
- UK Meetings that could have been an email (39%)
- Ireland Meetings that could have been an email (39%)

50% of middle managers have had an idea for improvement implemented in their organization.

- Australia 61%
- US 46%
- UK 41%
- Ireland 41%

The **top impacts** of implemented improvement ideas, according to these middle managers:

1. More efficient operations (51%)
2. Saved worker time (46%)
3. Improved workflow (41%)

Top response by region:

- Australia More efficient operations (50%)
- US More efficient operations (50%)
- UK More efficient operations (54%)
- Ireland More efficient operations (54%)

Almost one-third (30%) of middle managers have had an improvement idea dismissed.

- Australia 26%
- US 29%
- UK 34%
- Ireland 34%

As a result of having an **idea dismissed**, impacted middle managers claim:

1. Certain processes remain wasteful or inefficient (48%)
2. They feel disempowered (42%)
3. They don't put ideas forward (36%)

Top response by region:

- Australia Certain processes remain wasteful or inefficient (41%)
- US Certain processes remain wasteful or inefficient (51%)
- UK Certain processes remain wasteful or inefficient (51%)
- Ireland Certain processes remain wasteful or inefficient (51%)

The **most common** reason an idea from a middle manager wasn't taken on board:

1. It wasn't seen as a priority (42%)
2. Senior leadership aren't receptive to ideas from middle managers (34%)
3. The value wasn't considered strong enough (29%)

Top response by region:

- Australia The value wasn't considered strong enough (50%)
- US It wasn't seen as a priority (47%)
- UK It wasn't seen as a priority (38%)
- Ireland It wasn't seen as a priority (38%)

Amongst middle managers impacted by their organization's **continuous improvement programs**, the top frustrations are:

1. They are driven by people who don't understand how the work is done (37%)
2. They create additional workload without clear benefits (35%)
3. They feel like a tick-box exercise by senior management (32%)

Top response by region:

- Australia They feel like a tick-box exercise by senior management (28%)
- US They create additional workload without clear benefits (40%)
- UK They are driven by people who don't understand how the work is done (51%)
- Ireland They are driven by people who don't understand how the work is done (51%)

Methodology

We surveyed 760 middle managers aged 18 years and older in small, medium, and large retail businesses in Australia, the US, the UK, and Ireland (excluding sole traders).

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov. Fieldwork was undertaken between 28 August - 9 September 2025. The survey was carried out online. The figures are unweighted results.

*The cost of low-value tasks

This figure was calculated by YouGov based on the average local weekly wage, estimated average hours lost on low-value tasks as reported by survey respondents, and the estimated number of middle managers in the specified frontline industry.

Local wage estimates were sourced from national statistical agencies, and the number of worker estimates were sourced from YouGov Profiles.

