



# AXA Stress Index 2018



## Welcome to the second year of AXA's Stress Index - an annual look at what keeps Britons awake at night and the actions we take to manage our moods.

When we started the research in 2017, our aim was to get an idea of just how stressed people are and what they do to unwind but, this year, we wanted to push the research further and understand the impact stress has on our everyday lives.\*

Last year, we found a population struggling to manage their stress and not much has changed 12 months on. An astonishing three quarters of people say they feel stressed at least some of the time, while almost one in ten admit to feeling stressed all the time.

Like 2017, Brits are still stressed about their everyday lives, with work, health and their children among their main worries, regardless of their gender and where they live. Meanwhile, despite concerns about health, many still turn to relatively unhealthy or inactive pursuits to relax, with a third watching TV, more than one in four surfing the internet and 18% using alcohol.

However, some Brits still try to stay active to keep stress at bay. According to our research, almost a quarter of people exercise to help them unwind after a difficult day and 17% tend to their gardens.

Where we have moved the dial this year is to uncover the impact of stress on people's lives. As well as feeling anxious and tense, stress is causing many Brits to feel restless and angry. Perhaps more concerning is that people are struggling to sleep, finding it difficult to focus and eating less healthily as a consequence of stress.

It is also important to place the mood of a nation in the context of what is happening around them. As well as personal concerns, this year's study paints a picture of a nation worried about much broader issues.

Our research revealed that a third are stressed about Britain leaving the European Union while a massive 60% are concerned about war and terrorism – no doubt a response to recent events in London and Manchester. Meanwhile, brought on by the increasing adoption of smart technology, more than one in five Brits are concerned about robots or artificial intelligence taking their jobs.

However, perhaps the most important thing to bear in mind is that the research does not diagnose stress or anxiety – it asks people how they feel. Our hope is that those who read the Stress Index take the time to reflect on their mood, consider how stress impacts their lives and try to do something about it.

Maybe the tips we give to relieve stress (see page 13) will help but – if not – help is available from your own GP and from the helplines provided by mental health charities such as Mind, Rethink Mental Illness and the Samaritans. If your employer provides access to an employee assistance programme, you can speak in confidence to a qualified counsellor or therapist too.

Thank you and stay healthy,

Eugene Farrell  
Mental Health Lead  
AXA PPP Healthcare

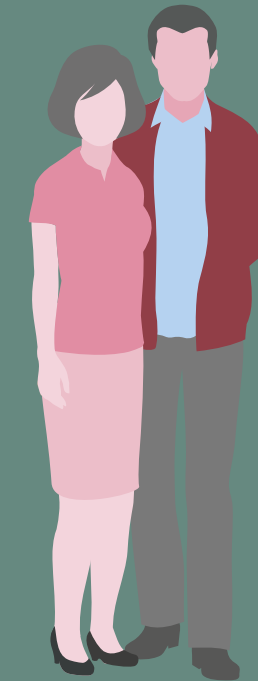
\*Online survey of 2000 UK adults undertaken for AXA September 2018 by Opinium Research.

# Who is stressed?

**72%** of people feel stressed at least some of the time



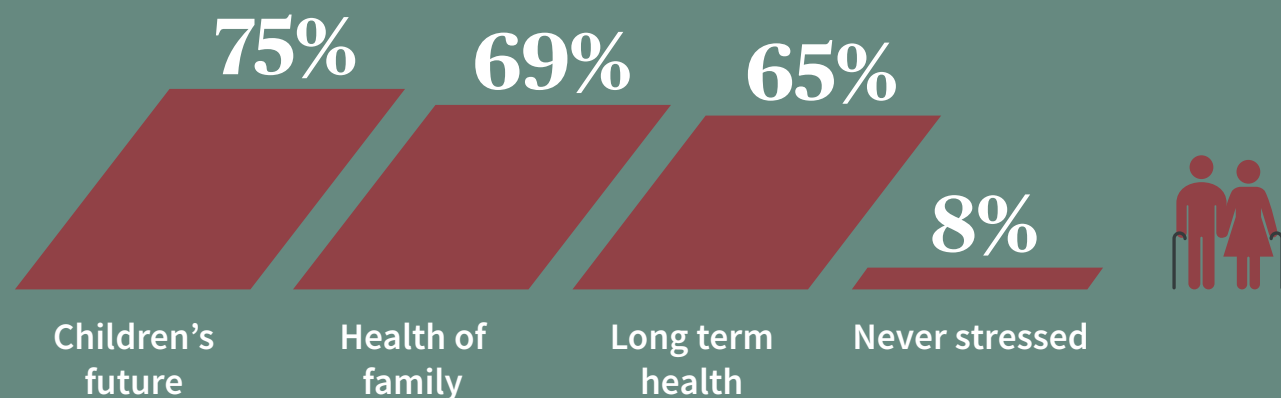
## People without children



## People with two children



## People aged 55+ are the least stressed



Figures relate to stresses of over 55's

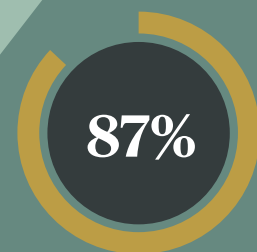
# What are people stressed about?

**74%** are stressed about their work...

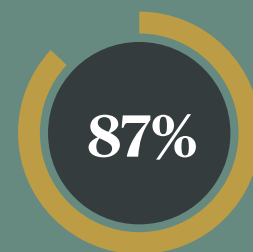
**72%** about children's future

**69%** about family's health

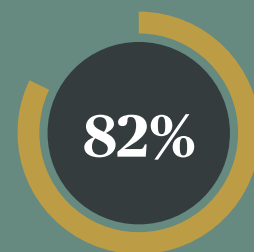
## Stress by industry



Accounting and financial services



Cleaning and domestic services



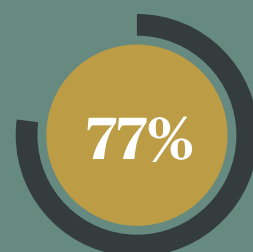
Building and construction



## Employment type stress



Part time  
(10% Always stressed)



Full time  
(11% Always stressed)



Business owners  
(16% Always stressed)

## Stress at work



61%



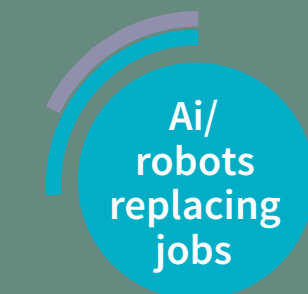
67%

42%



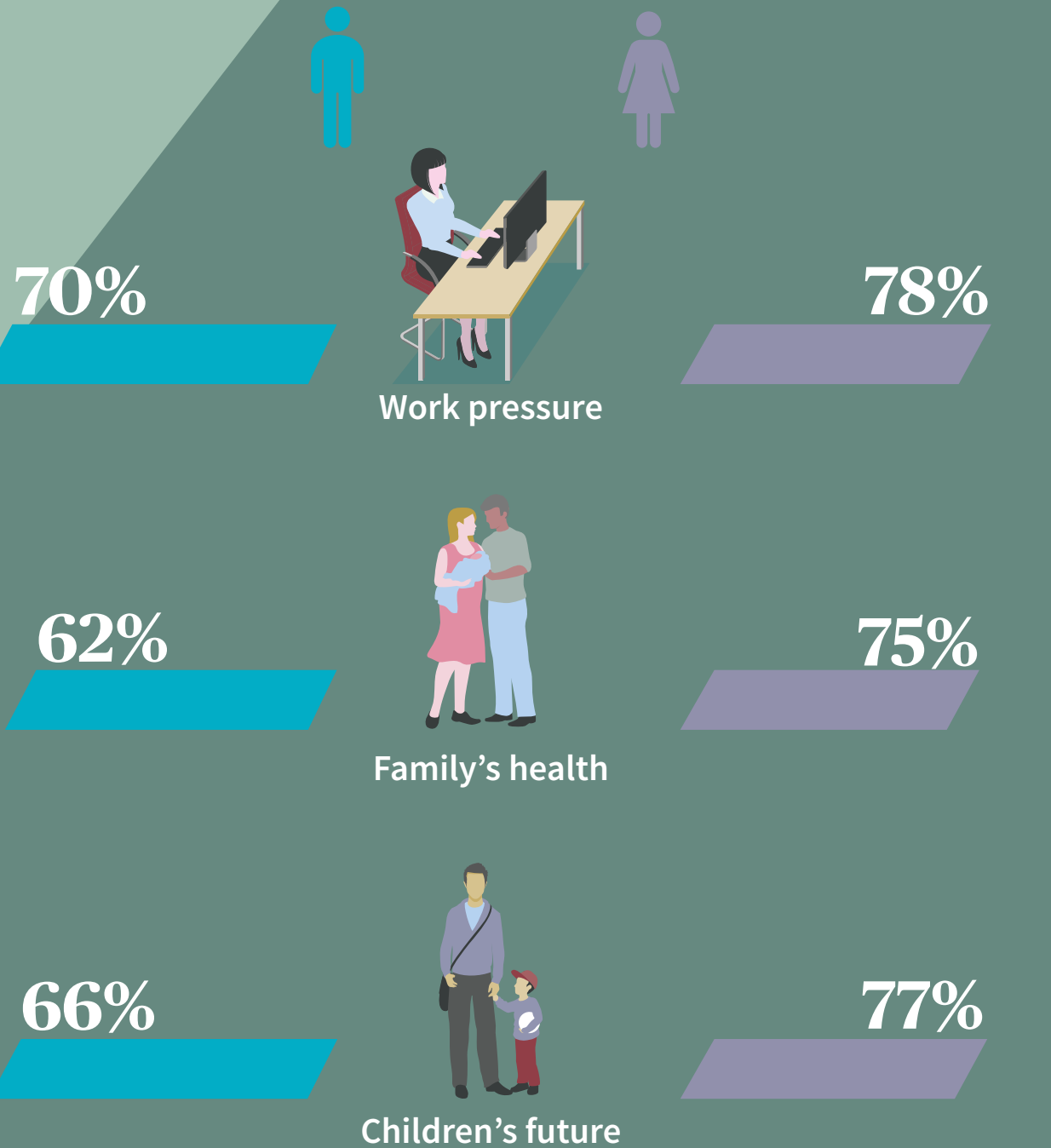
36%

26%

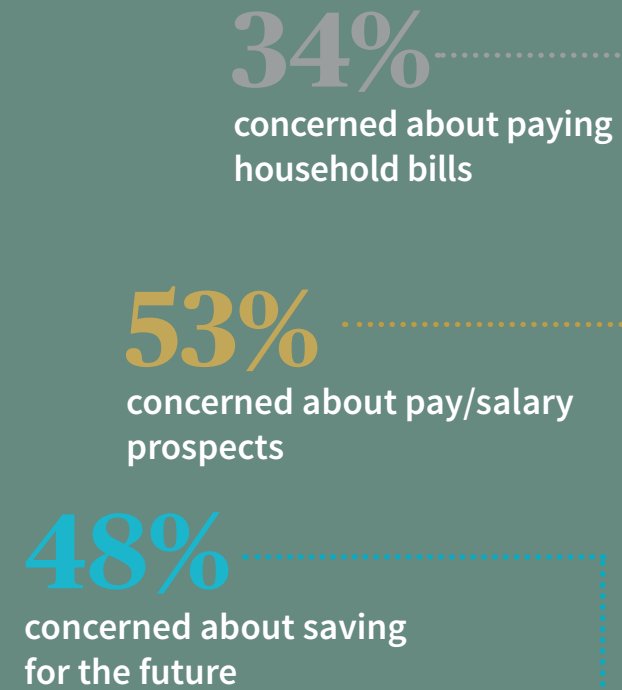


18%

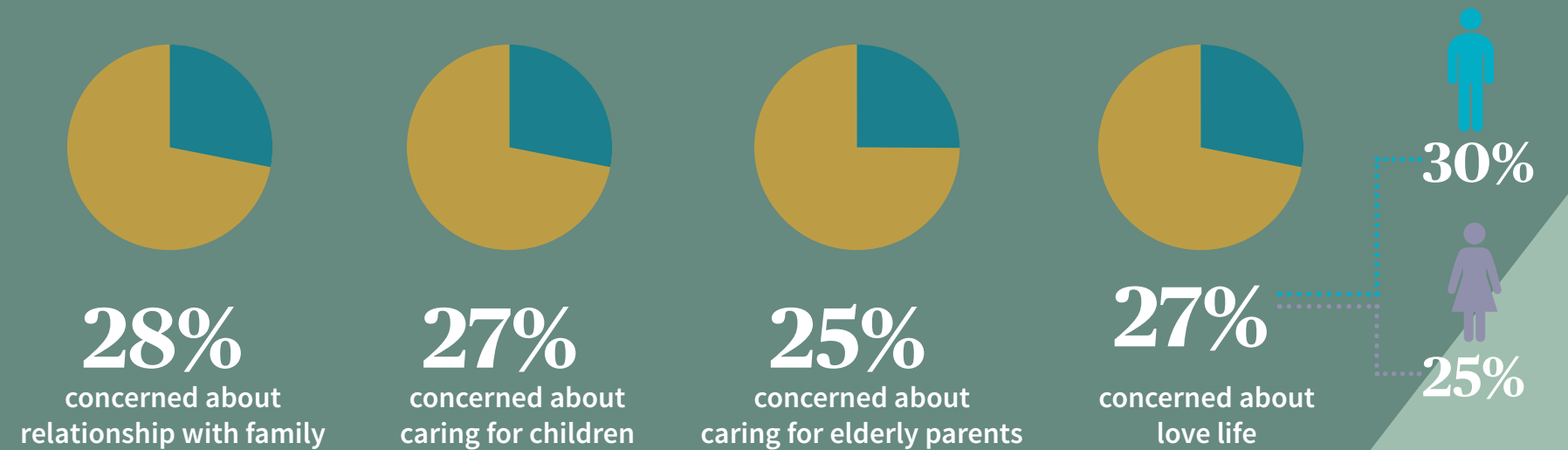
## Men and women are stressed about...



## Financial stress

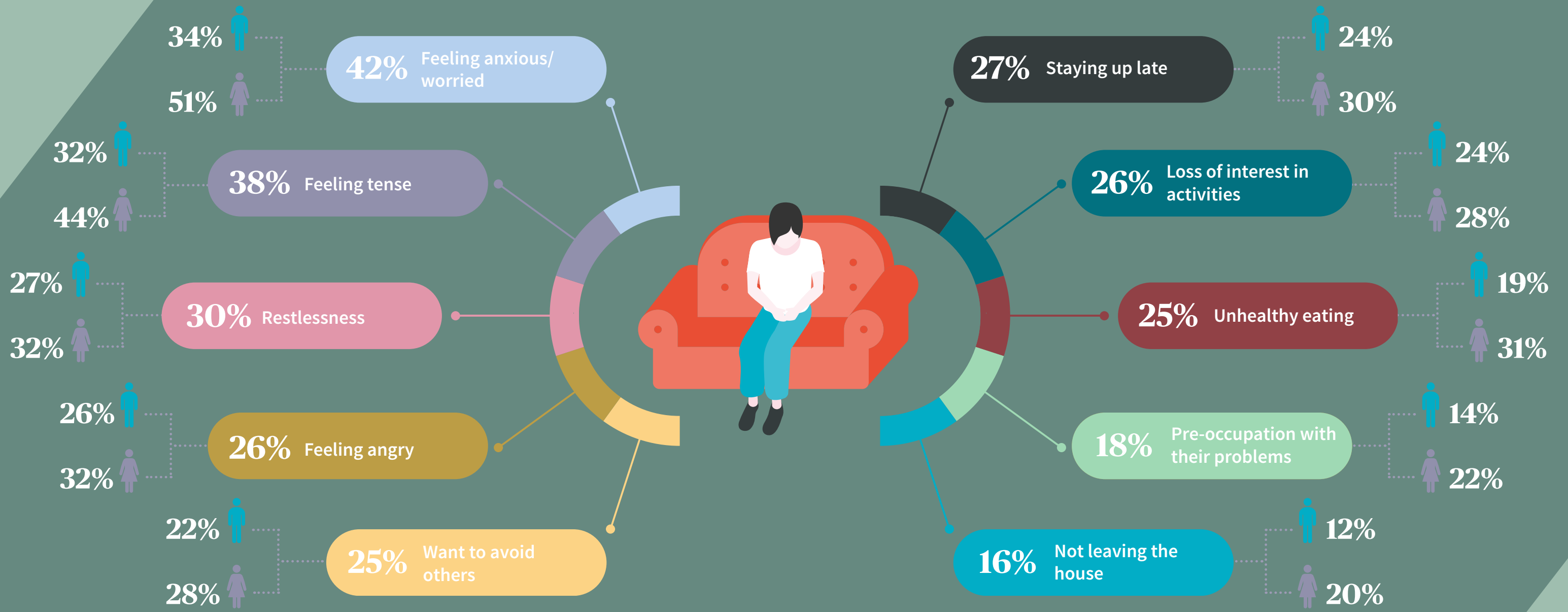


## Stress at home



Symptoms of stress

Actions of stress

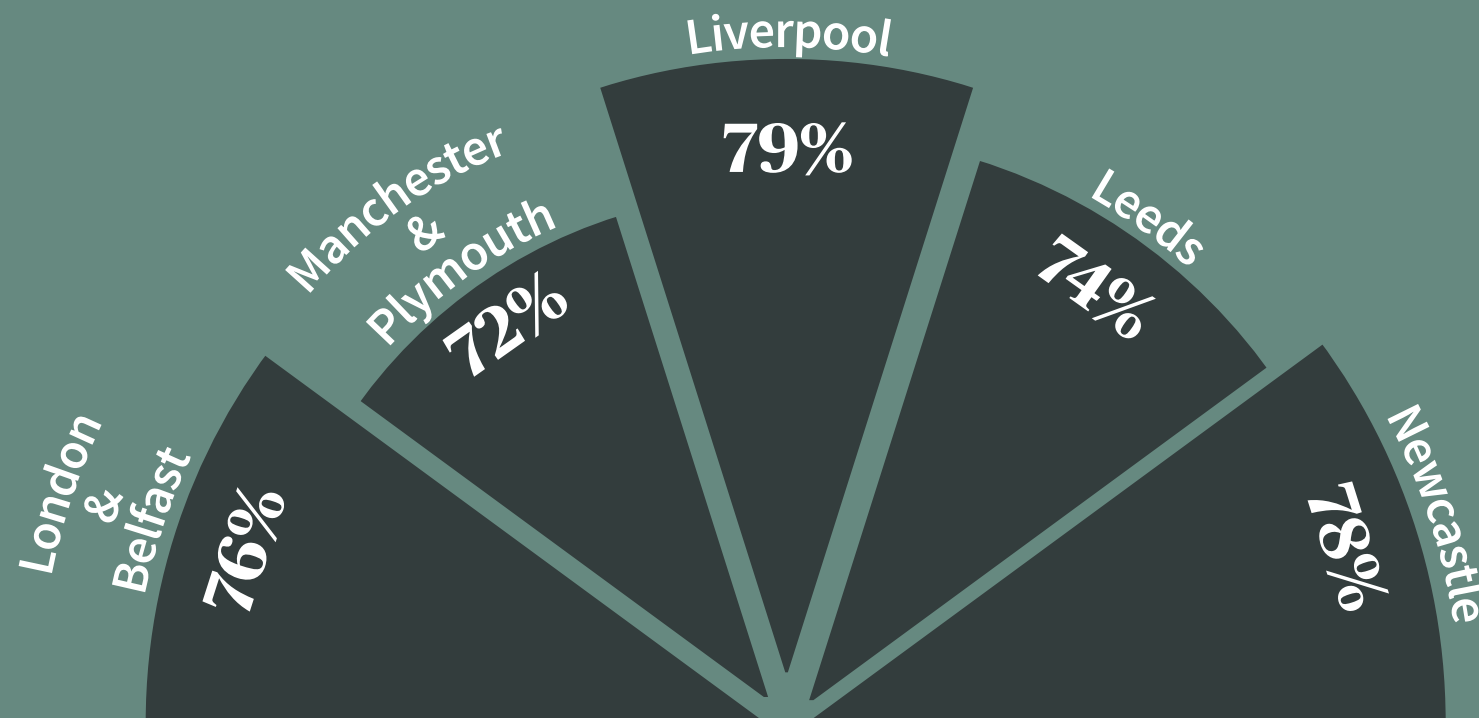


# Which cities are most stressed?

**60%** are stressed about war/terrorism

In London, the figure is **65%**

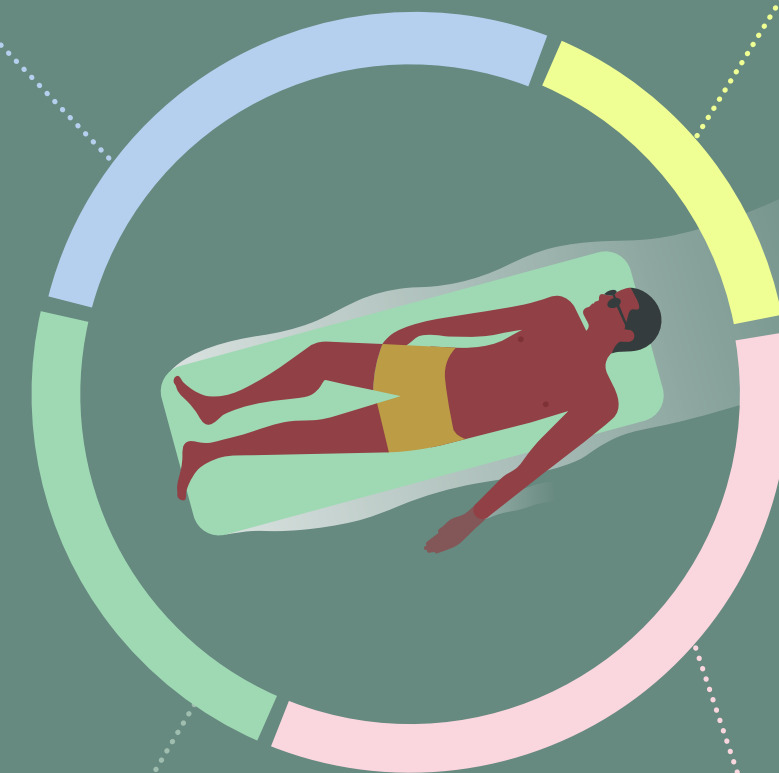
## Most stressed cities



## Least stressed cities

**31%**  
Nottingham

**30%**  
Bristol & Cardiff

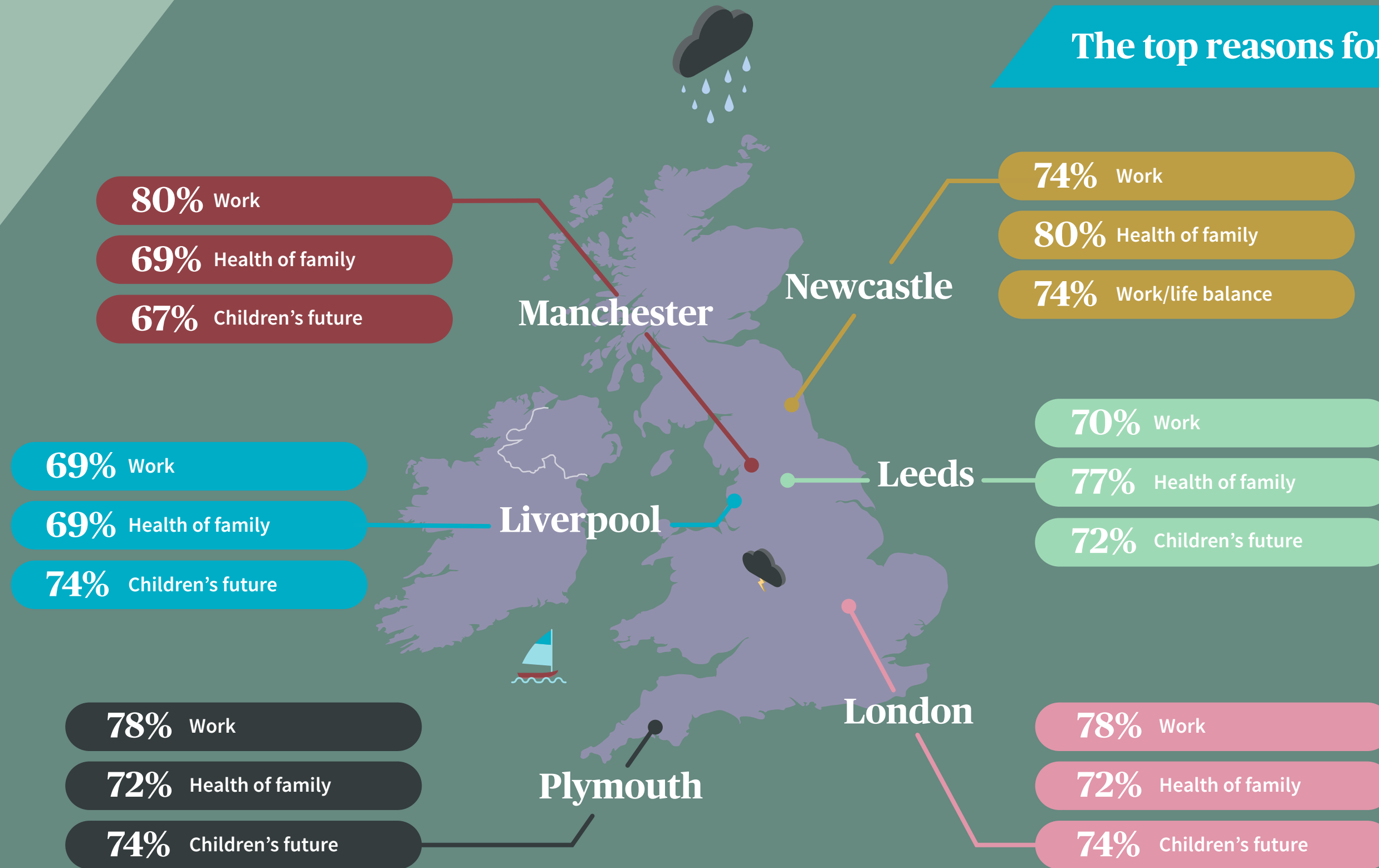


**34%**  
Birmingham

**37%**  
Brighton & Glasgow

# Which cities are most stressed?

## The top reasons for stress

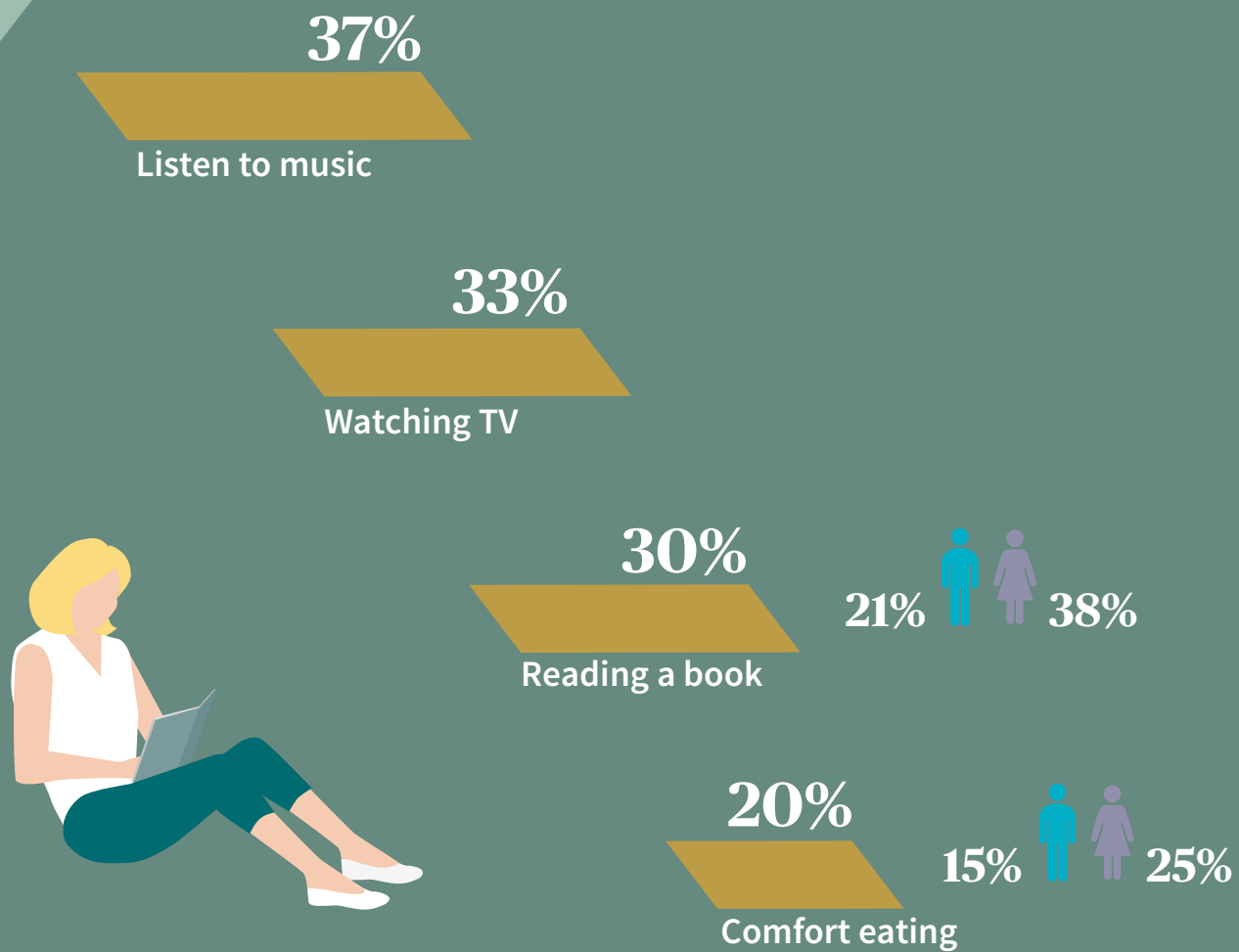




# How do people relieve stress?

**9%** have sex to relieve stress **8%** masturbate to relieve stress

## Overall stress reliefs



## Top male stress reliefs

**35%**  
Watch TV

**40%**  
Listen to music

**28%**  
Browse the internet



**32%**  
Watch TV

**38%**  
Read a book

**33%**  
Listen to music

## Top female stress reliefs

# How do people relieve stress?



## Top cities that use exercise to relieve stress

- 41% Cardiff
- 31% Plymouth
- 27% Nottingham
- 26% Birmingham | Glasgow | Leeds | Southampton

## Top cities that use comfort eating to relieve stress

- 28% Norwich
- 27% Southampton
- 25% Liverpool | Nottingham
- 23% Glasgow | Cardiff

# What effect does Brexit have on stress?

**39%** are stressed about Brexit

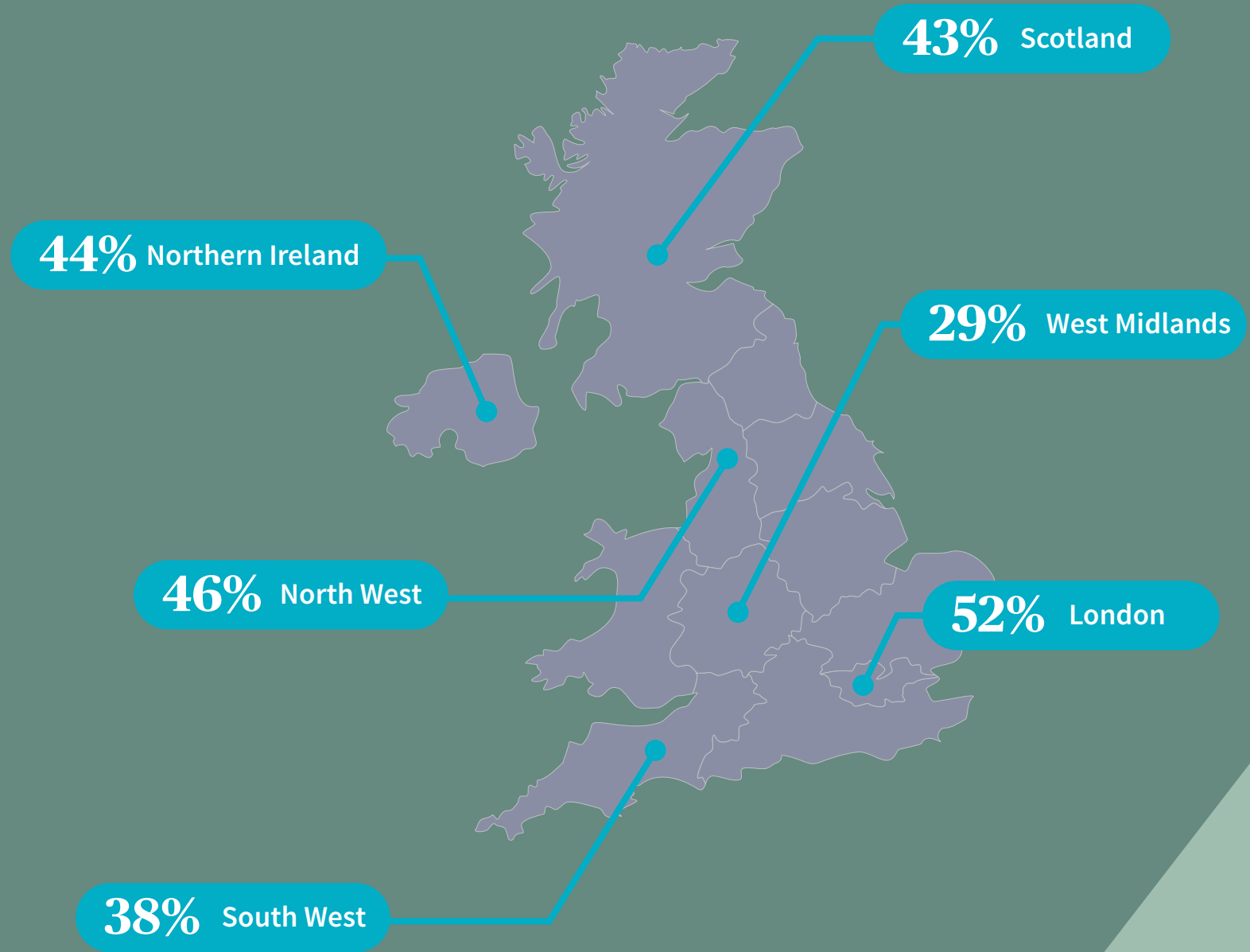


**42%**  
of men

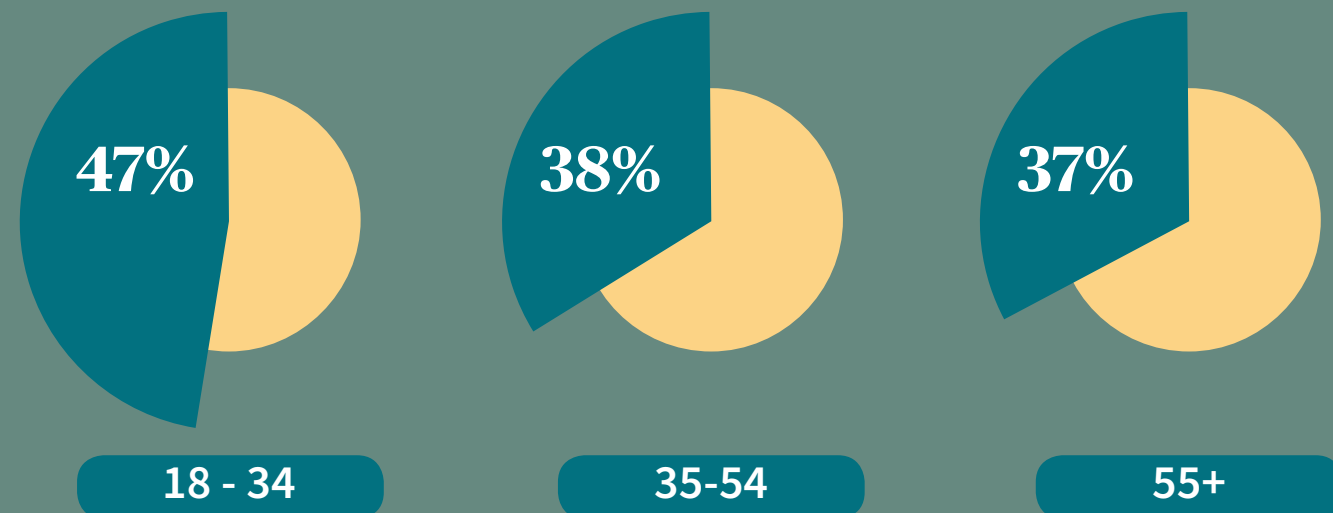


**38%**  
of women

## By region



## Age groups stressed about Brexit



# Five top tips



## 1. Stay fit and healthy

Exercise releases endorphins that make us feel good. Find an exercise that you enjoy, and try to do it at least once a week.

## 2. Stay connected

Maintain your connections with family, friends and work colleagues. We are social and being with others helps us retain a sense of belonging.

## 3. Eat well, drink less

Good nutrition is important for our body to function. Try and maintain a balanced diet without comfort eating. Meanwhile, alcohol, while a short-term stress relief is not a long-term solution.

## 4. Live to laugh

Laughter is good for us. Watch a comedy and keep things around you that make you smile. Spend time with others and have fun.

## 5. Try to maintain a sensible work-life balance

Try to balance your time between work and home, allowing time for family, friends and exercise. Work to live not live to work.

