AXA Stress Index 2017

Foreword

When we started planning our research for this study earlier this year, we wanted to take the pulse of the UK and get an idea of just how stressed people are and what keeps them awake at night. Would people be worried about personal problems, societal issues or their work-life balance?

What we found was a population under pressure. According to the findings, more than four in every five people feel stressed at least some of the time during a typical week, with 8% admitting to feeling stressed constantly. And while it varies from country to country, region to region and city to city, people share a broad set of concerns; they feel overworked, underpaid and are worried about their health.

The number one concern among Brits is pressure at work, with job security and the length of time spent working the main cause of worry. This is undoubtedly a symptom of the always on culture – with 59% admitting to taking work calls and 55% checking their emails outside of regular business hours.

But, perhaps most surprising, was that the other major cause of stress was weight. More than two thirds of people were concerned about how much they weigh, and a further 29% are worried about the weight of their partner. Being focused on your weight is not bad but being excessively worried about it is.

However, while Brits are increasingly concerned about their work-life balance and their weight, that is only part of the story. We wanted to have a closer look at what people do to reduce their worries. The main stress relief for respondents was watching TV, which more than half do to unwind, which is closely followed by listening to music and browsing the internet.

And while some of the ways we look to relieve stress are not as healthy as others - almost 30% drink alcohol to relieve stress and more than one in ten smoke – it is encouraging that almost a third of Brits exercise to help combat stress. Exercise helps to reduce stress by releasing endorphins to your brain and helping you sleep and is one of the best ways of managing your mood – whether it is a spin class in the gym or a brisk walk around the block.

However, the most interesting aspect of the research is the insight it gives into the perceptions of the respondents. The Index does not measure stress as such but asks people how they feel.

My hope is that those who took the time to answer our survey are busy, challenged and sometimes feel harassed, and are experiencing the impact of excessive pressure, rather than actually being stressed. Stress at its most severe can cause serious burn out and can be debilitating, with people feeling powerless and finding it difficult to manage their problems. I would urge anyone who is feeling unable to cope to speak to a specialist to ease the burden.

Hopefully our respondents, and others reading the report, are able to relieve the pressure by taking time out of their busy lives to relax, exercise and get a good night's sleep. My full tips for managing stress can be found on page 10.

Thank you and stay healthy,
Dr Mark Winwood

Who is stressed?

82% of people feel stressed at least some of the time

76% Male **89%** Female

while **8%** feel stressed all the time

Men are stressed about...

- **41%** Work pressures
- **36%** Personal health
- **32%** Personal finance
- **30%** Pensions and future saving

55+ are the least stressed

- **45%** Personal health
- **43%** Health of family and friends
- **25%** Personal finance
- **29%** Are not stressed at all

Women are stressed about...

- **43%** Personal finance
- **41%** Health of family and friends
- **40%** Personal health
- **36%** Pensions and future saving

What are people stressed about?

38% are stressed about their work...

Respondents were also stressed about...

- **38%** Personal health
- **36%** Health of family and friends
- **29%** Work/life balance
- **36%**

Stress at work

59% take work calls outside of working hours

55% of people check their emails outside of working hours

49% are concerned about the 'always on' culture

40% are worried about automation replacing jobs

Self employed are the least stressed about work

78% Self employed (Stressed some of time)

vs

86% Full time staff

What are people stressed about?

People with two children are

92% some of the time

&

10% all of the time

more stressed than

People without children are

79% some of the time

&

6% all of the time

Stress at home (family and health)

68%

Are worried about their weight

62%

74%

39%

Worried about the weight of their partners

Financial stress

34% are worried about future savings and pensions

60% concerned about paying household bills

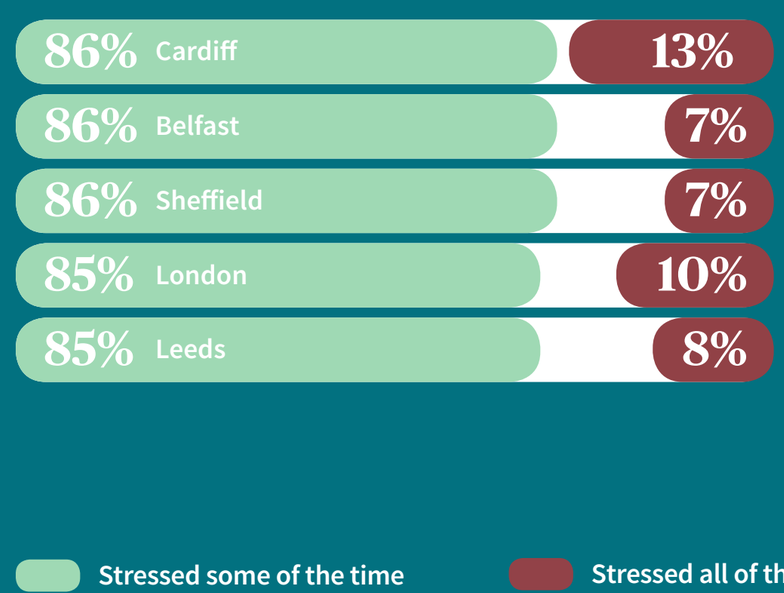
72% are concerned about pay/salary prospects

Which cities are most stressed?

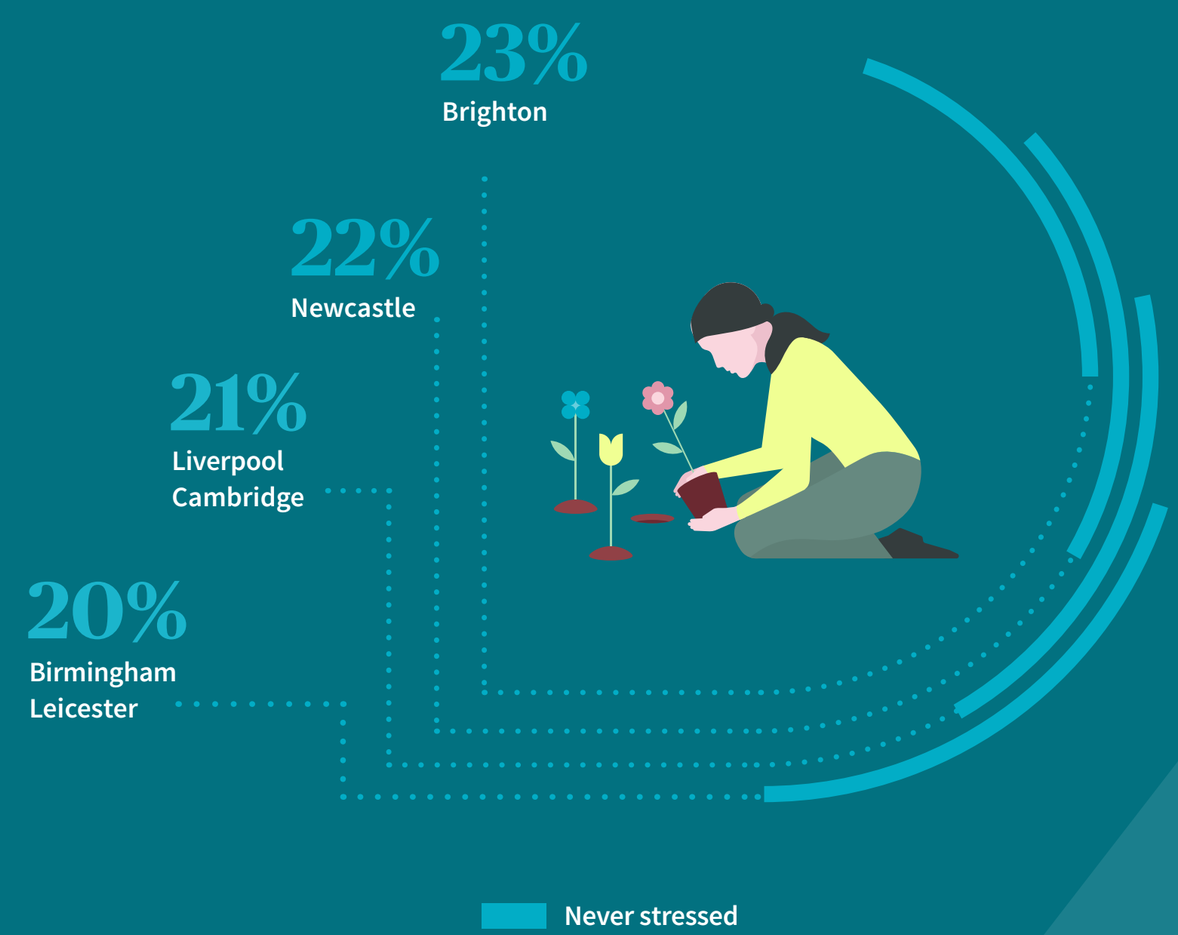
People from Cardiff are **86%** stressed some of the time

and **13%** stressed all of the time

Most stressed cities



Least stressed cities



Which cities are most stressed?

Some **43%** of Leeds residents say work is the main cause of their stress,

while **39%** are worried about the health of their family and friends and

and **38%** are concerned about their personal finances

The top reasons for stress

Edinburgh
- 47% Pensions, future savings
- 40% Work
- 39% Personal finance

Glasgow
- 40% Health of family & friends
- 39% Personal finance
- 34% Personal health

Leeds
- 43% Work
- 39% Health of family & friends
- 38% Personal finance

Sheffield
- 41% Personal finance
- 37% Personal health
- 36% Health of family & friends

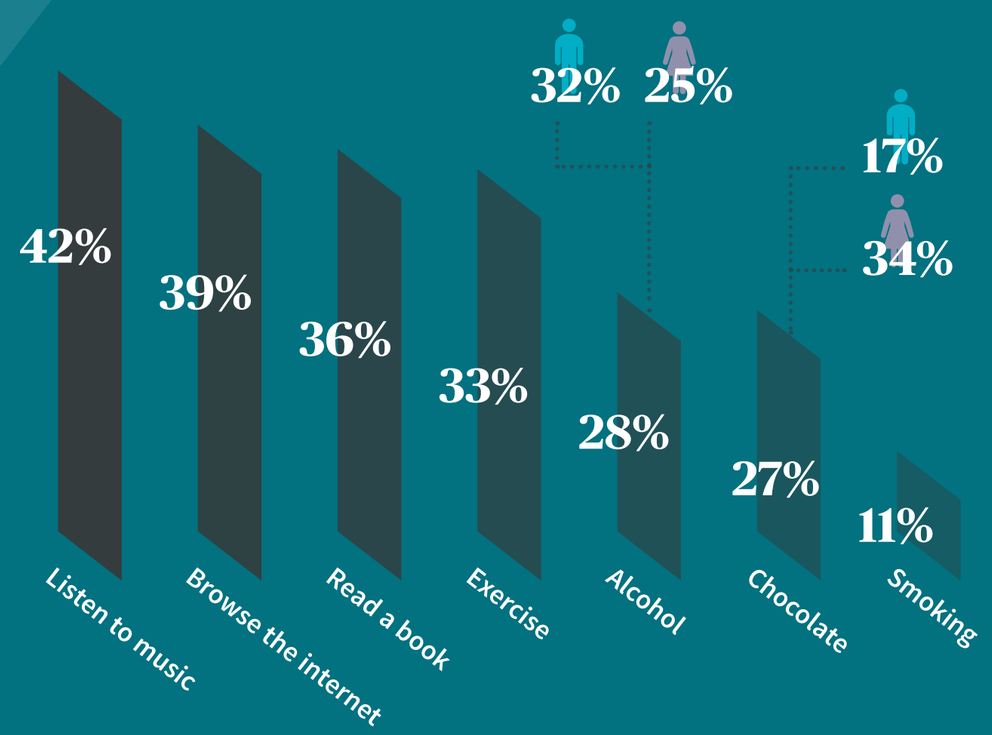
Cardiff
- 40% Personal health
- 40% Personal finance
- 37% Work

London
- 47% Work
- 35% Personal health
- 33% Personal finance
- 33% Pensions

How do people relieve stress?

51% of people watch TV to relieve stress

People also...



Top male stress reliefs

Top female stress reliefs

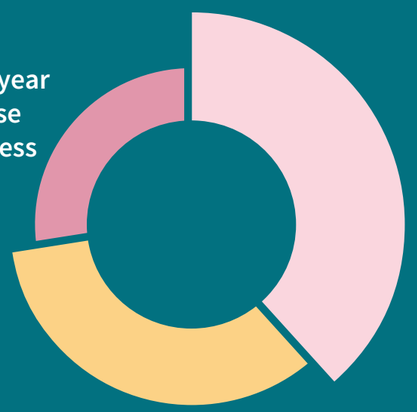
Drinking, smoking and exercise

Belfast is Britain's smoking and drinking stress release capital

34% **32%**

exercise to relief stress

34%
of 18 to 24 year olds exercise to relief stress



38%
of 35 to 44 year olds exercise to relief stress – the most of any age group

27%
of 55+ exercise to relief stress – the least of any age group

Top 5 cities that use alcohol to relieve stress

33%	Belfast | Edinburgh | Glasgow
32%	Leeds
31%	Manchester | Plymouth

Top 5 cities that use smoking to relieve stress

16%	Belfast
14%	Bristol | Leeds
13%	Glasgow | London | Manchester | Norwich

Exercise stress relief league table

39% Manchester	36% London	33% Newcastle | Belfast
37% Cardiff	31% Bristol | Plymouth | Edinburgh | Liverpool	31% Cambridge

Five top tips

1. Rest, sleep and eat well

Stress can be better managed by making sure you're awake, alert and have the energy to deal with life's challenges. Sleep well, take the time to unwind and make sure you eat properly and healthily.

2. Exercise is vital

Regular exercise helps reduce stress by releasing endorphins to your brain, and also helps you sleep. Even if you can't get to the gym, a brisk walk around the block will help.

3. Put your devices away before bedtime

The inability to switch off from your mobiles, tablets and laptops can seriously affect you sleep. Putting your devices away well before you go to bed can help cut your stress levels and help you sleep.

4. Watching TV is good in the right doses

Many people find watching TV relaxing and use it as a way to combat stress. However, too much TV can mess with your body clock, especially if you are watching late into the evening.

5. Seek help from a specialist

There is a difference between being stressed and being busy through challenges. Stress can cause serious burn out and can be debilitating, if you are struggling to function, speak to a specialist.