

# Stressed Out

A study of public experience of stress

Commissioned by

**SAMARITANS**

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## **1. Executive summary**

### **Stress is a major part of life in the UK**

*Almost half of people in the UK are getting stressed at least once a week (47%), with three quarters of people getting stressed at least once a month (74%). The biggest cause of stress for most people is money (51%), followed by job (38%), then family (27%).*

### **Stress is clearly on the increase for the average person in the UK**

*Half of people in the UK say that they feel more stressed now compared to five years ago and since 2003 there's been a 12% increase in people getting stressed at least once a month.*

### **Different groups in society are more likely to be suffering with stress**

*The 35-44s are the age group most likely to feel stressed more than once a week (62%), as are those living in London (51%) and the South East (53%) are among the highest stressed. Women are also more likely to be stressed more than once a month in comparison to men – 55% versus 40%.*

### **Occupation has a distinct impact on feeling stressed**

*Those not in formal employment are among the most stressed – including seven in 10 homemakers (71%), 59% of students and 59% of unemployed people feeling stressed more than once a week. A higher proportion of those working in education (61%) and retail (57%) are more likely to be stressed more than once a week in comparison to other occupations.*

### **The UK is becoming tired and grumpy as a direct result of stress**

*Stress is causing significant proportions of the population to become more irritable (68%) and more tired (56%). This study also found that people feel their basic cognitive functions are affected stress, including loss of concentration (33%) and memory (32%).*

### **Stress has a major impact on the emotional state of the UK**

*A significant proportion of people say feeling stressed makes them feel depressed (61%), isolated/alone (41%) powerless (32%), and even suicidal (12%).*

### **Britons are choosing some of the worse possible ways to deal with stress**

*Watching TV or listening to music is a favourite way to relieve stress for many people in the UK (38%), and one in three say that having a drink of wine, beer or a measure of spirits helps (32%). Moreover many people in the UK just chose to ignore their stress, with 29% saying when stressed they do nothing and just get on with it.*

### **Public figures with the most control and power are rated best at dealing with stress**

*The celebrity rated most highly for dealing with stress is the Queen – by more than eight in ten of the public (81%). In second place is Alan Sugar (66%) and then Tony Blair (63%), perhaps in line findings in the study that when the public themselves report to feel in control, they are more likely to report confidence in coping with stress.*

## **2. Introduction**

*Samaritans provides confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair. The organisation is working towards a society in which fewer people die by suicide, people are able to explore and understand their own feelings and are able to acknowledge and respect the feeling of others. With this in mind, Samaritans conducts a wide range of research projects to contribute to its work and explore issues of importance and relevance. This research includes an interest in UK citizens experience of stress and feelings about the impact stress is having on their lives. In late 2006, Samaritans commissioned nfpSynergy, a research consultancy for the not-for-profit sector, to design and conduct a research study into the state of stress in the UK today.*

*The key questions explored in this study include:*

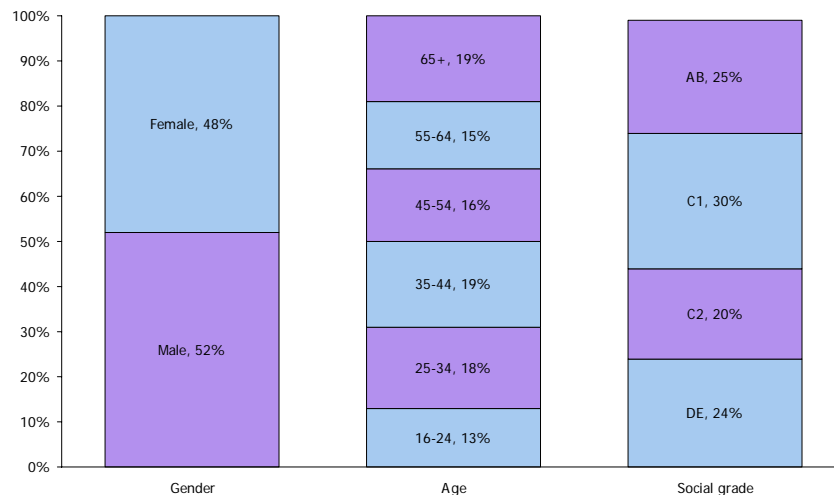
- *How stressed are people in the UK today?*
- *Have feelings of stress increased or decreased over time?*
- *Which citizens are feeling most stressed?*
- *What aspects of life are causing people to feel stressed?*
- *Do people feel confidently equipped to cope at times of stress?*
- *What mechanisms are employed to cope with or relieve stress?*
- *What public figures are respected for coping well with stress?*

*This report details the findings of this research and includes a breakdown of questions by age, gender, social grade, occupation and region.*

### 3. Methodology

An original quantitative survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults aged 16+ in the UK was conducted between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2006.

#### Demographic profile of respondents



Source: Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 1

Chart 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the sample.

Samaritans conducted a similar survey in 2003 and many of the questions were repeated in 2006 to explore how feelings of stress reported by people in the UK may have changed over time. However, one caveat must be made about the methodology. The survey in 2003 was conducted. In order to provide respondents in this survey with greater privacy when answering questions about personal feelings of stress this survey was conducted online and therefore could be completed by the respondents alone rather than with the help of an interviewer. When comparing this data with that from 2003 we must be aware that some differences may have been influenced by the change in methodology. Research fieldwork for this study was conducted by ResearchNow. However, broadly speaking there was a high degree of consistency between the 2003 and 2006 data and therefore the impact of changing methodology may not have been substantial.

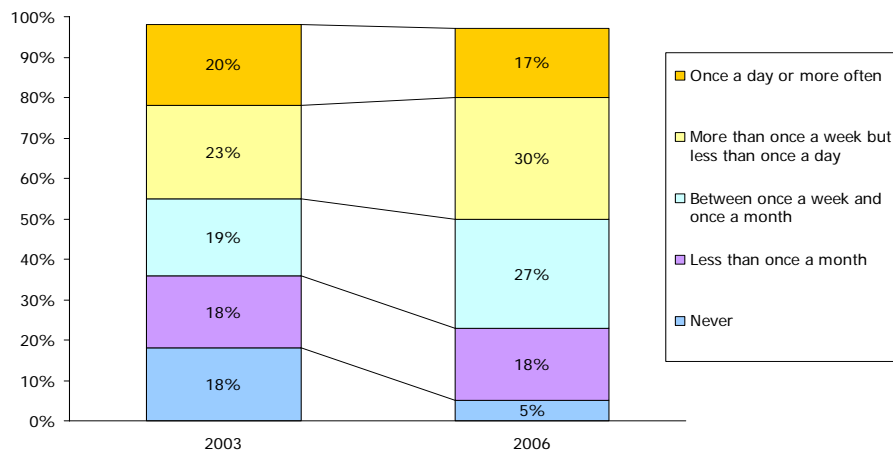
## 4. The average Briton feels stressed at least once a week

### Stressed out nation

This survey reveals that citizens in the UK today are reporting high levels of stress. Experiences of stress appear to be a common factor for almost everyone – perhaps leading to stress being considered the great unifier of modern times.

### How often people feel stressed

\*Thinking about your daily life in general, which of these describe how often, if at all, you feel stressed?\*



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 2

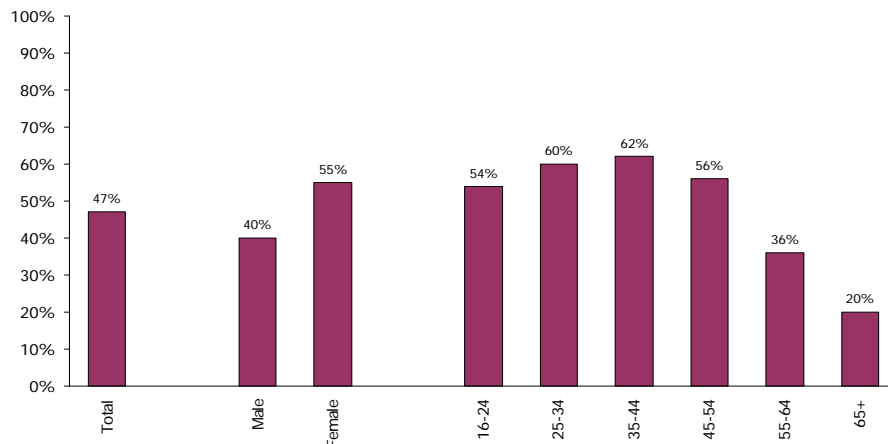
- Slightly under one in five people (17%) in the UK say they feel stressed everyday
- Almost half of all citizens (47%) feel stressed every week
- Nearly three quarters (74%) feel stressed at least once a month
- Only one in twenty citizens (5%) says they never feel stressed

Comparing these responses to the survey conducted in 2003 suggests that feelings of stress are increasing. For example, 62% of the UK population felt stressed at least once a week, but that number had risen to 74% in 2006. Furthermore, in 2003 18% of the UK population said they never felt stressed. The number of people living stress-free lives has reduced by more than two thirds to only 5% of the UK population in 2006. These findings are consistent with the responses to the question “Compared to 5 years ago, are you more stressed in your daily life, less stressed or are your stress levels about the same?” detailed in Chart 4.

### Women and people aged 35 – 54 feel most stressed out

## Gender and age differences in being stressed once a week

\*Thinking about your daily life in general, which of these describe how often, if at all, you feel stressed?: Those answering "More than once a week but less than once a day" or "Once a day or more often"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 3

*Analysing this data by sociodemographic grouping and by geographic region revealed some interesting differences. The frequency with which people feel stressed naturally varies from person to person and there is evidence of significant gender differences. For example, more than one in every two women in the UK (55%) feel stressed every week compared to two in five (40%) of men. It is difficult to know whether these findings are illustrative of gender differences in stress levels or in differences in the ability to recognise and/or express feelings of stress.*

*It is also interesting to note that the likelihood of regularly feeling stressed is heavily influenced by age. Feelings of stress are at their highest from ages 35-54 – 62% of this group feel stressed at least once a week. The majority of younger adults also feel stressed every week, 54% of 16-24 year olds state this is the case. Feelings of stress are dramatically reduced for people aged 55 and over, with 36% of people aged 55-64 feeling stressed on a weekly basis and this number is further reduced to only 20% of people aged over 65.*

## **London and the South East are the most stressed out... as are those not in formal employment**

*Reports of feeling stressed also vary dramatically by other characteristics such as region and occupation. There appears to be something of a North South divide in how frequently people get stressed; the proportion of adults feeling stressed every week is highest in London (51%) and the South East (53%). However, this proportion is significantly reduced in other regions of the UK, notably Scotland (44%) and the North East (31%).*

*There are also clear differences in occupations as illustrated in Table 1 below. It is interesting to note that although the potentially stressful elements of formal employment are increasingly being recognised by employers, in fact some groups not in formal employment are reporting the highest levels of stress. In particular, the*



pressures and demands of being a home maker make this group the most likely to report feeling stress every week. More than seven in ten home makers report this to be the case. Similarly, the majority of students (59%) and those currently unemployed (59%) feel stressed every week. In the case of people who are unemployed perhaps the stress of not having a job, of looking for a job and of making ends meet may be taking its toll.

Analysing the proportion of the sample who are formally employed we find further interesting differences between different types of occupation. Frequent feels of stress (every week) are most common among people working in education (61%) and retail (57%). There may of course be seasonal elements to feelings of stress for people working retail and the fact that this survey was conducted in December may have resulted in a higher proportion of this group feeling regularly stressed.

On the other hand, there are some occupational groups where weekly experiences of feeling stressed out are somewhat less likely than others. Perhaps surprisingly, people employed in the banking/financial sector are less likely to feel frequently stressed than other occupations, with 45% of this group feeling stressed at least once a week. Furthermore, people working in the civil service were among the least likely to feel stressed every week, 36% of this group feel stressed every week.

Consistent with the findings of less frequent feelings of stress for older people in the UK, less than one in four retired respondents feel stressed every week.

Table 1  
Thinking about your daily life in general, which of these describe how often, if at all, you feel stressed?  
Those answering more than once a week

Home maker	71%
Education	61%
Student	59%
Unemployed	59%
Transport/travel	58%
Retail/wholesale	57%
Banking/ finances	45%
Manufacturing/ mining	38%
Civil service	36%
Retired	23%

### **The UK is feeling more stressed than five years ago**

A further important consideration is the feeling of a build-up of stress over time and people's perceptions about whether they feel more or less stressed today compared to five years ago. The single highest answer, cited by 50% of adults, is that they feel more stressed in 2006 than they did five years ago. The demands of life appear to be placing a greater strain on many adults in the UK. Slightly over a quarter of all adults (27%) say they feel less stressed and 22% say they feel the same levels of stressed today as in 2001. And consistent with the findings detailed earlier in this report, the biggest perceived reduction in stress is observed among adults who are retired, of whom almost half (47%) feel less stressed than five years ago.

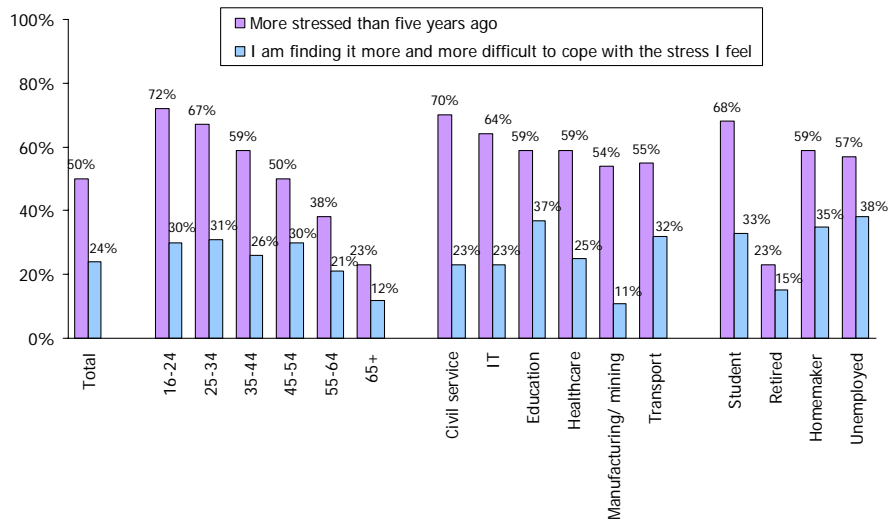


## Feeling more stressed

"Compared to five years ago you are more stressed on a daily basis, less stressed, or that your stress levels are about the same?"

"For each of the following statements, please say how strongly you agree or disagree with it?"

Those answering "strongly/slightly agree"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 4

*Digging a little deeper into the data we find some interesting differences in perceptions of whether stress is increasing or decreasing, particularly among different occupational groups. Employees in several occupational groups, including students (68%), health workers (59%), those working in education (59%) and home makers (59%) feel more stressed than five years ago. Civil servants are the group in which the highest proportion of respondents are feeling more stressed today (70%). Therefore, as discussed earlier, while many civil servants are reporting lower levels of stress than other occupational groups it appears as if the stress levels of this group are increasing significantly over time.*

*In addition to exploring adult's perspectives on whether they feel more or less stressed than five years ago it is also critical to understand whether people feel they develop more effective coping mechanisms for dealing with stress. It appears that despite relatively widespread feelings of increased stress over time, many adults in the UK are not finding it increasingly difficult to cope with stress. 47% disagree that they are finding it increasingly difficult and 28% neither agree nor disagree. However, we should not avoid the nearly one in four (24%) adults who say they are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the feelings of stress they experience. This group represents those most in need of support and assistance in dealing with stress.*

*In particular, it should be noted that students (33%), home makers (35%), those currently unemployed (38%), those working in education (37%) and transport (32%) are most likely to be finding it increasingly difficult to cope.*

## **5. Money and work are the biggest sources of stress in the UK today**

*In addition to understanding the levels of stress being experienced and the frequency with which adults in the UK are feeling stressed it is critical to explore the causes of stress. Money, jobs, family, health, and relationships are the main causes of stress according to this new survey. Within these findings there are some interesting points to note about different causes of stress depending on the age, region and occupational group.*

### **The causes of stress vary significantly by UK region**

*Money is the single largest source of stress cited by adults in this survey. 51% of adults feel that money is a source of stress in their lives. Despite disposable income increasing for most UK households (by an average of 7% since 2003 - in constant prices. National Office of Statistics/nVision), coping with increasing levels of debt, rising interest rates and increased transport fares and taxes is pushing up our stress levels.*

*58% of adults in the South East of England feel that money is a source of stress in their lives, making this group the most stressed about finances. Conversely, adults in the North East are least likely to feel stressed by money, but still 43% of this group identify finances as a source of stress.*

*Job related stress is the second highest source of stress in the UK, with 38% of all adults reporting stress resulting from this source. However, people in Northern Ireland (51%) in particular are reporting the highest levels of employment related stress in the UK with one in every two adults stating this is the case. This is considerably higher feelings of job related stress in Scotland (43%), Wales (41%) and England (37%).*

*Family worries and stresses are also relatively high on the list of sources of stress, according to 27% of adults in the UK. Adults in the North-East of England are most likely to report family as a source of stress, 35% felt this is the case, compared to 21% in London and 23% in the South East. It is also interesting to note that women in the UK are reporting higher levels of stress as a result of family life, 34% compared to 20% of men, who are more likely to be stressed by their job (45%) compared to 32% of women.*

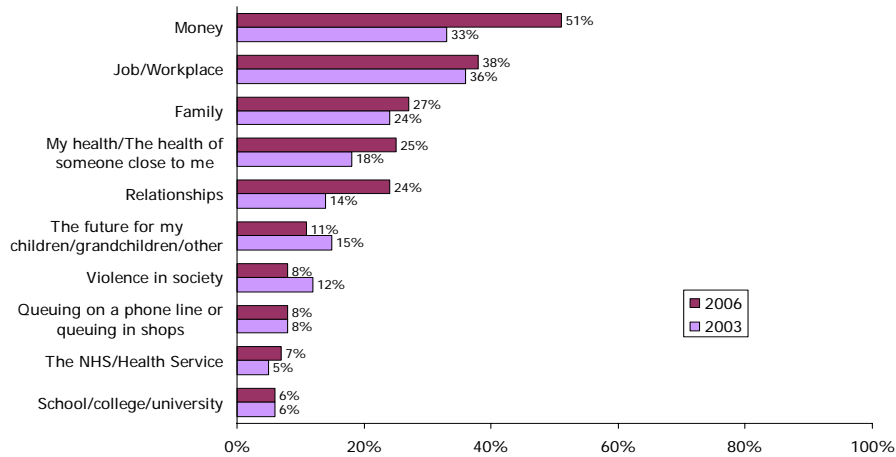
### **The causes of stress differ with age and lifestyle**

*Adults across the UK aged 65+ are considerably less stressed by money (27% compared to the average of 51% for the total sample). Perhaps unsurprisingly, health or the health of a loved one are a greater source of stress for this age group (43% compared to 25% for the sample overall).*

*At the other end of the age spectrum financial stress is being experienced in early adulthood – 57% of 16-24 year olds in the UK are stressed about money, higher than the average of 51%. Furthermore, a third of this age group also report stresses associated with school/university and they are also the most likely to feel stress as a result of relationships (34% compared to the average of 24% for the total sample). This data suggests that young people are experiencing “grown-up” stresses as much (if not more in some cases) as other adults. Perhaps the image of carefree youth is not as accurate as might have been imagined.*

## Top 10 causes of stress in the UK

\*Thinking about when you are stressed, which of the following, if any, do you feel is the BIGGEST source of stress for you personally at the moment?\*



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

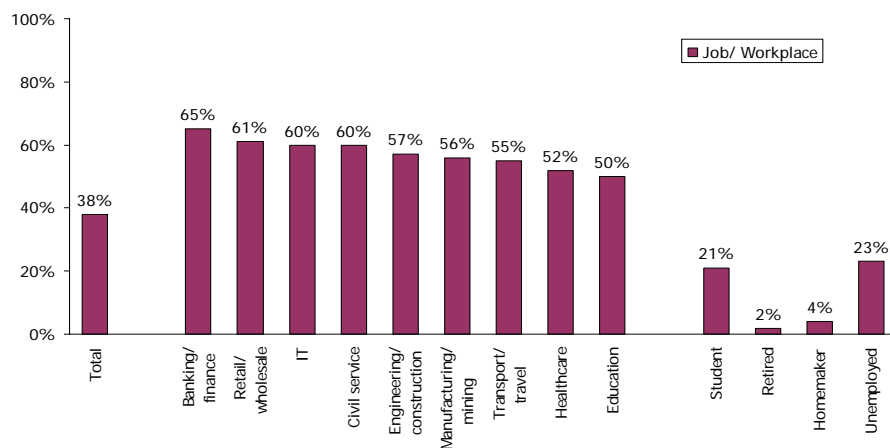
Chart 5

Chart 5 shows the biggest causes of stress are the same this year as they were in 2003. However, they appear to be affecting more and more people – in particular about half of all people (51%) feel money is their biggest cause of stress, compared to a third of people in 2003 (33%). Our job/workplace (38%) and family (27%) have also crept up slightly (2% and 3% respectively).

## Bankers and retailers are most likely to be stressed by their occupations

### Occupations feeling their job is their biggest stress

\*Thinking about when you are stressed, which of the following, if any, do you feel is the BIGGEST source of stress for you personally at the moment?\*



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 6

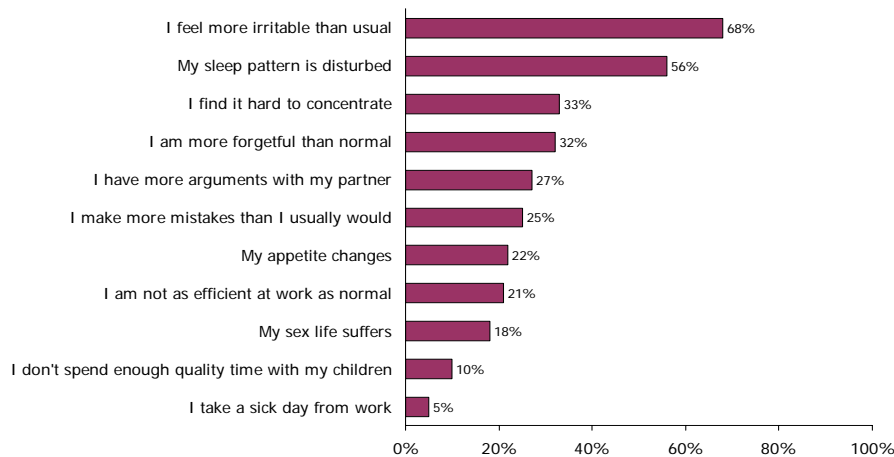
*The majority of adults surveyed who work in banking/finance (65%) and those working in retail (61%) cite their employment as a source of stress in their lives. While this group is likely to report lower levels of stress compared to other occupations they are more likely to feel that their employment is a significant source of stress in their life. Therefore, bankers and retailers are the most likely to feel stress as a result of their occupation.*



## 6. Stress is causing the UK to be tired and grumpy

### Manifestations of stress

"How, if at all, does stress manifest itself in your life?"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 7

*The experience of stress is in many respects a common denominator for adults across the UK. Many people feel higher levels of stress and/or feel stressed more often than they used to. Having established these facts this study then sought to understand what, if any, impacts stress is having on the lives and quality of life of citizens in the UK. The results from this survey demonstrate that the impacts of stress are perceived to be considerable and wide ranging – affecting all spheres of life including work, relationships, home life, the health and the emotional wellbeing of people in the UK.*

### **Stress is impacting on basic mental functioning for many people in the UK**

*Stress may be turning the UK into a grumpy nation - just under seven in ten people in the UK feel that stress makes them more irritable than normal. Perhaps related to this, the majority of UK adults (56%) find that stress disturbs sleep patterns and interferes with quality of sleep. The direct impacts of stress extend beyond mood and quality of sleep to people's ability to function effectively in their daily life. A third of all adults (33%) find that stress impacts their ability to concentrate and 32% find that they are more forgetful than normal. These pillars of cognitive functioning, memory and concentration, are being negatively impacted by the stresses and strains experienced as part of day to day life. This point is further emphasised by the fact that one quarter of adults state that they make more mistakes than they usually would because of stress and 22% say their appetite is affected.*

### **Stress is affecting the quality of our relationships and sex life**

*The impacts of stress are not limited to factors that could be considered to fall under the heading of quality of life. Stress also appears to be having an impact on the quality of relationships for a significant proportion of people in the UK. In particular,*

more than one in four adults (27%) say that stress directly results in a greater number of arguments with their partner. Almost one in five people (18%) say that their sex life suffers as a result of stress and one in ten adults state that quality time with their children is reduced as a result of stress

### **Stress may be having a negative impact on UK productivity**

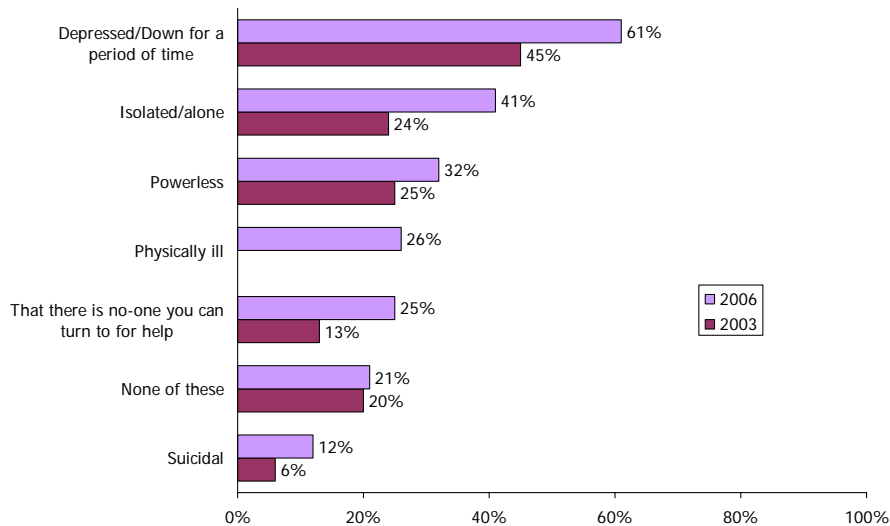
In addition to quality of life and relationships, it appears that the negative impacts of stress extend into the workplace and may be having a direct impact on the productivity of UK employees and perhaps the UK economy overall. More than one in five of those in formal employment (21%) say that they are not as efficient in work as normal as a result of stress. It is fair to say that for organisations of any size, the impact of reduced productivity for one in three employees could be dramatic. At its most extreme, 5% of working adults in the UK report that they take a sick day from work when they feel stressed.

### **The emotional strain of stress is alarming**

A fortunate 21% of adults say report that across many measures stress has not had a dramatic impact on their emotional health or wellbeing. However, this group appears to be the minority. For the rest of the population, stress appears to be, on some levels, impacting their emotional health. 61% of the population report that they have felt depressed as a result of being stressed. A further 32% of all adults in the UK have felt powerless and 41% have felt isolated/alone as a direct consequence of feeling stressed.

### **The emotional impact of stress**

*"Which, if any, of the following have you ever personally felt as a result of being stressed"*



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 8

Compared to 2003 data there have been significant increases in the numbers of people saying felt depressed as a result of stress (61% in 2006 compared to 45% in 2003) and a significant increase in the numbers saying they feel isolated/alone (41% in 2006 compared to 24% in 2003).

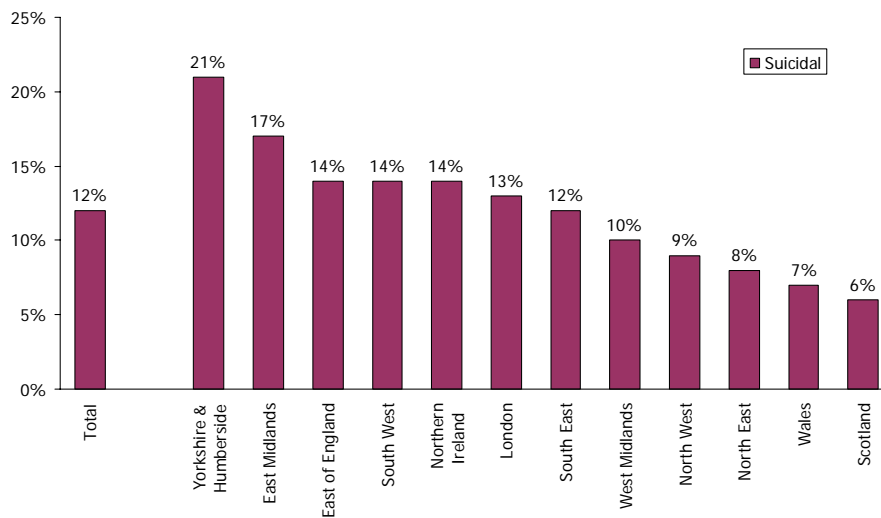
The negative impacts of stress on emotional wellbeing are felt most deeply by women, home makers and those currently unemployed in the UK. Across many measures a higher proportion of these groups are reporting feelings of depression,

*isolation and powerlessness than the average citizen. Furthermore, people living in London are more likely than most others to feel isolated as a result of stress (50% compared to the average of 41% for the total sample).*

*At its most extreme and worrying, a quarter of adults in the UK feel that there is no-one they can turn to for help, a direct consequence of feelings of stress. For 12% of adults in the UK, stress has directly resulted in suicidal feelings. This study uncovers evidence of quite dramatic regional differences in suicidal feelings as a result of stress. Respondents in Yorkshire & Humberside are almost twice as likely as the national average to feel suicidal as a result of stress (21% compared to 12%) and are three times more likely than people in Wales (7%).*

## Regional differences in feeling suicidal

*"Which, if any, of the following have you ever personally felt as a result of being stressed"*



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 9

*Citizens in the UK are reporting that stress is having widespread impacts on quality of life, on relationships, on performance and productivity and on the emotional wellbeing of people in the UK.*

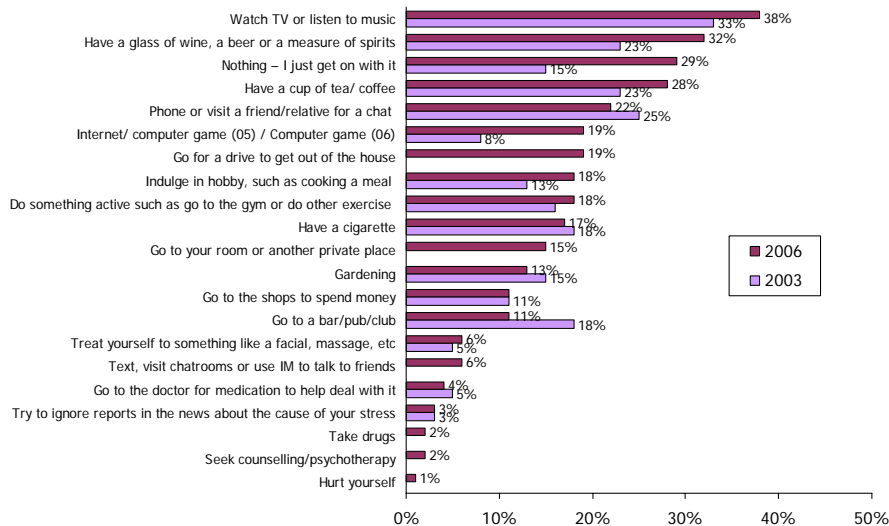


## 7. Stress increases unhealthy behaviours in the UK

The next section of this study focused on exploring how people in the UK cope with particularly stressful times. Watching TV/listening to music and having a glass of wine/beer are favourite sources of stress relief in the UK.

### Coping with stress

"Which, if any, of the following would you be likely to do to help make you feel less stressed?"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 10

### Watching TV/listening to music is the favourite form of stress relief

The most popular answer to the question "which, if any, of the following would you be likely to do to help make you feel less stressed?", according to 38% of adults, was to watch TV or listening to music. This approach is particularly favoured in London (42%), the South East (42%), East England (44%) and also Northern Ireland (47%). TV and music as a source of stress relief are also more common in younger ages (54% of 16-24 year olds) and slowly decreases with age (to 30% of 65+s). A further 19% of adults surf the internet or play computer games to relieve stress.

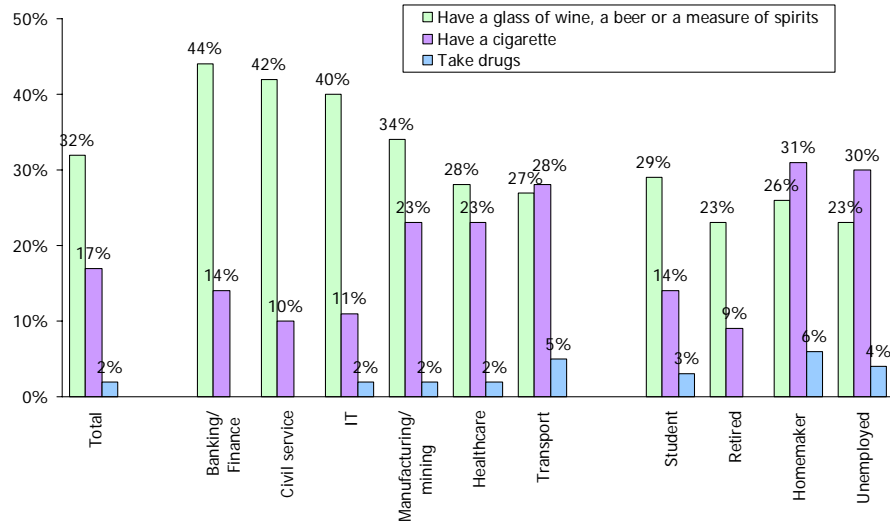
### Drinking, smoking and taking drugs are also employed as sources of stress relief

The second most popular form of stress relief for adults in the UK is to have a glass of wine or beer, according to 32% of respondents. An additional 17% of adults reach for the cigarettes to relieve the stress they are feeling and 2% of adults report to take drugs to reduce feelings of stress.

In terms of age, drinking and smoking both correlate with groups most frequently experiencing stress – both are more likely in the middle age groups are the most likely to engage in these behaviours and older groups the most.

## Drinking and smoking to help with stress

"Which, if any, of the following would you be likely to do to help make you feel less stressed?"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 11

Chart 11 shows that different occupations vary in their propensity to drink or smoke in response to stress. Those working in banking/finance and civil servants are the most likely to have a drink if stressed (44% and 42% respectively) but these are occupations less likely to experience stress as frequently as rest of the population. However, they are slightly less likely than the average person to smoke in response to stress (14% and 10%).

Conversely, healthcare and transport workers are less likely to report drinking to feel less stressed (28% and 27%) compared to the average but much more likely to be smoke in response to stress (23% and 28%).

There are also gender differences in turning to alcohol or cigarettes when stressed – men are slightly more likely to drink (35%) than women (29%), whereas women are slightly more likely to smoke (21%) than men (14%).

Drinking is notably higher than average in Northern Ireland (45%) and are also the region most likely to take drugs (8%), though are no more inclined to smoke in response to stress (14%), indeed there is not much regional difference in this response.

## A wide range of other coping mechanisms are employed to reduce stress

While almost one third of the sample (29%) said they do not take any action when they feel stressed, the majority of adults employ one of a range of techniques to help cope with the difficulties of feeling stressed and any resulting challenges they may be facing.

- More than one in five (22%) people phone or visit a friend/relative for a chat
- 19% of people go for a drive to get out of the house
- 18% of people indulge in a hobby
- 18% go to the gym or engage in other forms of exercise

- 6% *treat themselves with a facial, massage etc.*
- 4% *consult their G.P.*

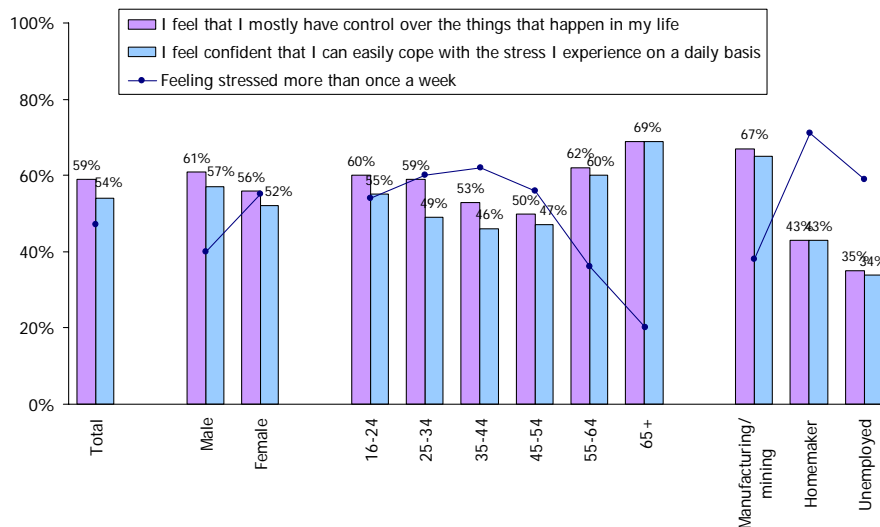


## 8. The nation is even stressed about stress

The next section of this report details the findings to questions on the subject of whether people in the UK are concerned about their levels of stress. Quite a mixed picture emerges from these questions. While 54% of the population feel confident that they can cope with the stress they face on a daily basis, 15% disagree and 25% neither agree nor disagree.

### Coping and feeling in control

\*For each of the following statements, please say how strongly you agree or disagree with it?  
Those answering "strongly/slightly agree"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 12

There appears to be an important relationship between how much control people feel they have in life and how confident they are in coping, and how frequently they feel stressed. Chart 12 illustrates that those most likely to say they have control over their lives are the most likely to say they can cope with their stress and report to experience it less frequently in the first place. For example, in terms of age, the 65+s stick out as feeling most in control of life and also the most confident in coping with stress. This is also the age group least likely to feel stressed on a weekly basis. Whereas, 35-54 year olds feel least in control over things in their life, least likely to feel able to cope with the stress they experience on a daily basis and is the group most likely to report feeling stressed at least once a week. The youngest age groups are in the middle.

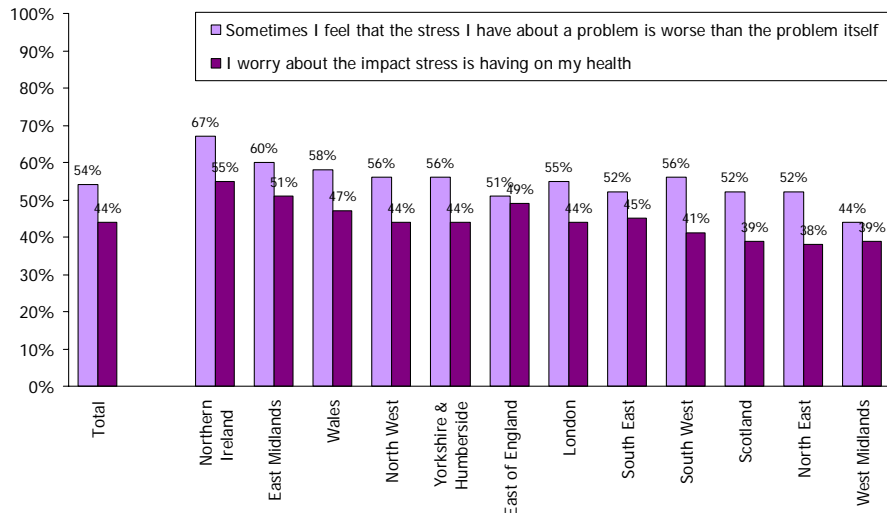
The case is similar for gender – women are less likely to feel in control, more likely to be stressed and less likely to feel they can easily cope in comparison to men.

### Worrying about stress

Stress is clearly an issue of concern to many adults in the UK today. Indeed, while stress is likely to have been prompted by a particular issue (work, relationships, money etc.) many people worry that the stress they feel actually becomes worse than the issue which prompted it. 54% of the general public of the UK worry that their stress becomes worse than the problems which cause it. In addition, a further 44% are concerned about the effect stress is having on their health.

## Regional differences worries about stress

\*For each of the following statements, please say how strongly you agree or disagree with it?  
Those answering: "Strongly/slightly agree"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 13

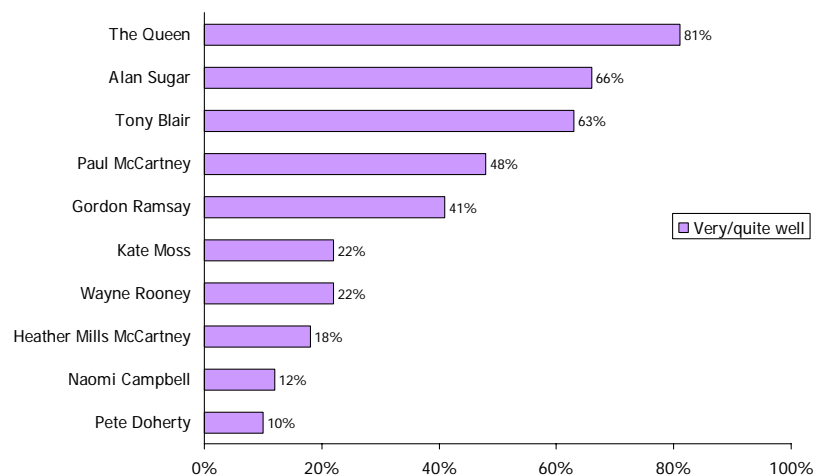
*Just over half of the public (54%) think that stress they have is actually worse than the problem itself! And 44% of the public are worried about the effect stress is having on their health. Chart 13 shows that these concerns are particularly so for those in Northern Ireland (67% & 55%), bankers (65% & 52%), home makers (62% & 57%) and unemployed people (59% & 54%).*

## 9. The Queen, Alan Sugar and Tony Blair are best at dealing with stress

The final section of this research project explored which, if any, public figures are perceived to cope well with stress. In fact, are the general public able to differentiate between how well celebrities cope with their stress. From a prompted list of 10 celebrities, the UK population appeared to find it relatively easy to differentiate.

### Celebrities are who best at dealing with stressed

"Please rate how well you think each of the following celebrities deals with stress"



Source: The Samaritans/nfpSynergy  
Base: 2,000 adults 16+ UK, 2006

Chart 14

The public figure that most of the UK population feels deals well with stress is the Queen. 81% of this nationally representative sample identified the Queen as coping well with the challenges she faces. The second and third highest figures are Alan Sugar (66%) and Tony Blair (63%).

It seems that the public recognise that being in a position of power does not necessarily equate to being stressed. On the contrary it is those with the most control over their lives who are the least likely to feel stressed.

The next highest rated celebrity is Paul McCartney, of whom 48% of the UK population feel copes well with stress. It is interesting to note that Heather Mills McCartney is perceived to cope considerably less well with stress, with only 18% of the public feeling that she copes well. In fifth place is Gordon Ramsey, although those working in restaurants, hotels or catering are the least likely to rate him well (28% compared to the average of 41%). From the prompted list of 10 celebrities Pete Doherty is evaluated the celebrity who copes least well with stress. Only one in ten members of the public suggesting that he copes well.

## 10. Conclusion

*This study demonstrates how stress is now as major part as ever of life in the UK. All indications show that stress is on the increase and the effects it has on people's emotional wellbeing should not be dismissed.*

*Certain sectors of society stand out as consistently reporting to be less stressed, feel less negative consequences and are more able to cope with stress, namely 65+ and those doing more manual occupations such as manufacturing, engineering and construction. Conversely the middle age groups, home makers and the unemployed seem to be the groups most affected by stress, followed by those working in education, health care and retail.*

*Wide ranging impacts suggest that the issue of stress should be of concern to everyone – from policy makers to employers to people in relationships*

*There is something of a North South divide in the experience of stress in the UK. The North East consistently reported to be the least affected by stress in terms of how much they experience, its impacts and the difficulty they have in dealing with stress. Whereas down South London and the South East get stressed more than average, find it difficult to cope and suffer with problems such as isolation. However, the exception to the rule is Northern Ireland, who by far appear to have the biggest problems with stress and coping with stress.*