

The Samaritans

stressed out survey

**summary results of an NOP Omnibus Survey carried out in
April 2002 on behalf of The Samaritans**

Background

Levels of contact to The Samaritans from people in emotional distress (including those who felt suicidal) in 2001 were 4.8 million, over 10% more than in 1991. In the same year, suicide still accounted for nearly as many deaths in the UK as motor accidents and it is estimated that one suicide takes place every 82 minutes in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The Samaritans vision is of a society where fewer people die by suicide because people are able to share feelings of emotional distress openly without fear of being judged.

As part of its annual fundraising and awareness week (18 – 25 May) The Samaritans commissioned a survey to assess the current levels of stress in Great Britain. The survey not only sought to benchmark stress levels compared to five years ago, but to identify common causes of stress and to outline how people deal with stress in today's society. In addition, it shows how stress can have a direct impact on people's emotional health.

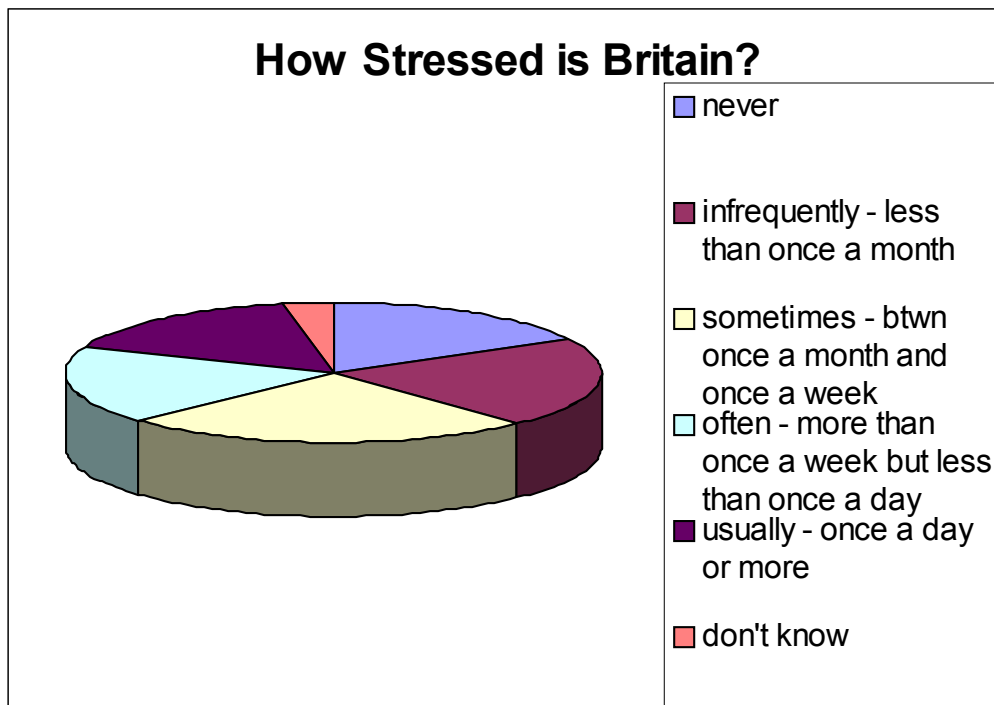
The Samaritans Stressed Out Survey will be carried out annually for the next five years. On completion it is envisaged that the work will represent a comprehensive 'emotional barometer' charting changes in stress and responses to it in 21st century Britain.

The survey, carried out by NOP in April 2002, questioned nearly 2000 people from across England, Scotland and Wales, comprising a representative sample from each standard geographical region, age group, gender and class. A full list of questions is available below at the end of the report.

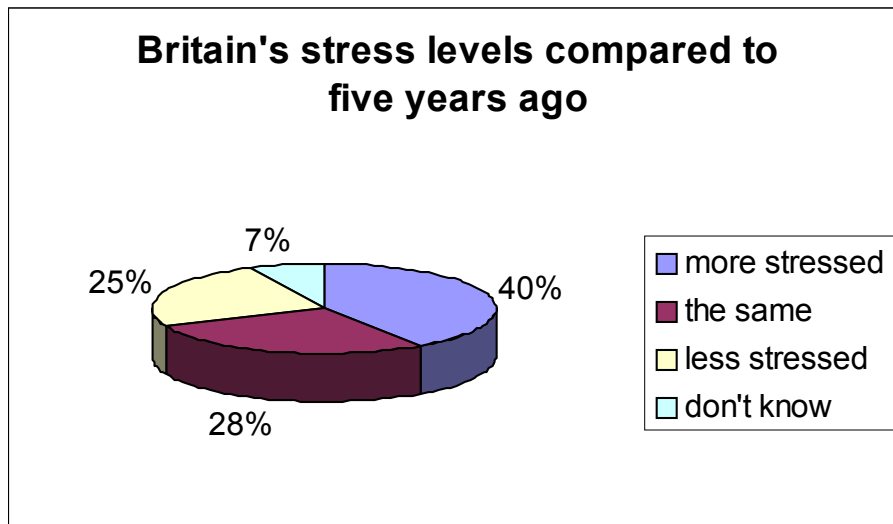
For a copy of the full results please contact s.nelson@samaritans.org/
j.nicholson@samaritans.org or call 020 8394 8348.

How stressed is the UK?

- 16% get stressed on a daily basis (more than one in six) - i.e. most of the time
- 34% are stressed more than once a week (over one third of the UK)
- The majority of the population (59%) is stressed out at least once a month or more
- Men and women suffer from roughly the same levels of stress, regardless of how much stress they suffer from - none, some, a lot
- Middle aged people are the most stressed out, with 20% of those between the ages of 35 and 54 getting wound up on a daily basis
- By contrast, those who are retired (65+) are a lot more chilled out with only 5% claiming to get stressed daily. Middle aged people are four times as likely to be stressed daily as older folks
- 17% of the population is completely laid back, claiming never to suffer from stress
- The East Midlands is the region that suffers most often from stress, with nearly one in four (22%) becoming stressed out at least once a day
- Wales and East Anglia are the most chilled out areas of the UK population since only 8% suffer daily stress in Wales, whilst a third of East Anglians never get stressed (32%)



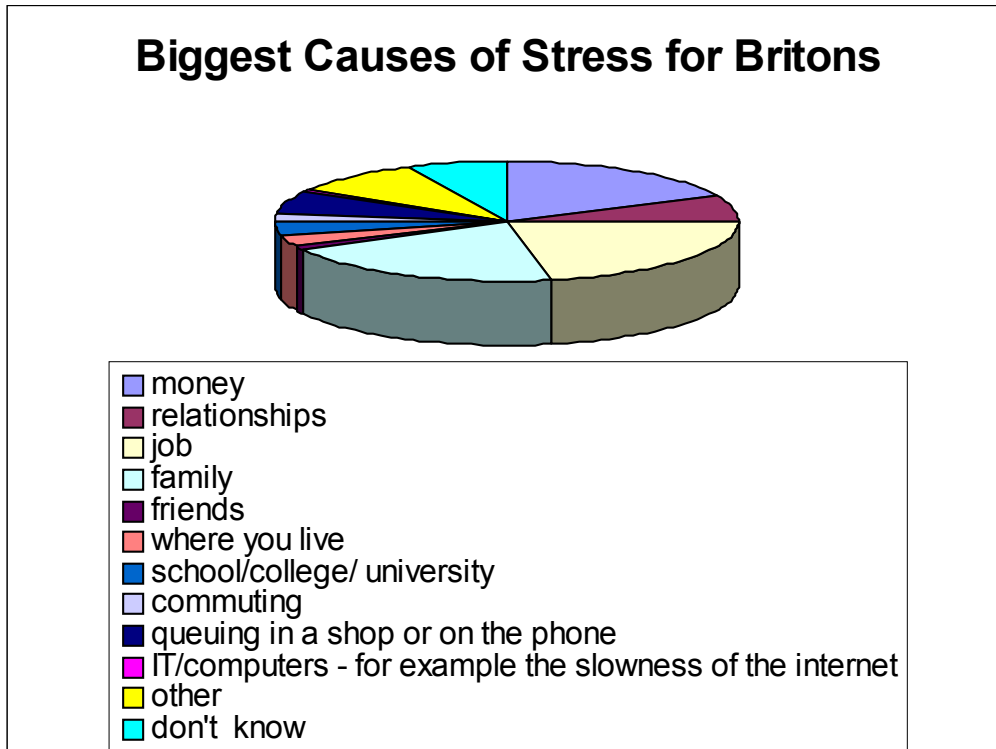
How have stress levels changed in the past five years?



- Two out of five people are more stressed than they were five years ago (41%)
- Over half/Nearly two thirds of those between the ages of 16 and 24 are more stressed than they were five years ago (59%)
- At least half of all those below the age of 45 are more stressed than they were five years ago, whilst less than half above the age of 45 are more stressed, suggesting stress levels peak in middle age and then begin to subside as people approach retirement
- Men and women's stress levels are rising at approximately the same rate, with 39% of men admitting an increase and 43% of women agreeing
- People's stress levels are increasing most in the North/North West, with nearly half the population (46%) saying they felt more stressed in these regions
- The areas where most people say they are less stressed than five years ago are the East and West Midlands (29%)
- Unsurprisingly, those who said they were most stressed (on a daily basis) are also those whose stress levels have risen in the past five years (79%)
- Bizarrely though, 9% of those who said they were stressed at least once a day felt that they were less stressed than five years ago...

Causes of stress

- People's jobs are the single biggest cause of stress to people, with nearly one in four/a quarter of the UK citing it as number one stressor. Of those between the ages of 25 and 44, one third see it as their biggest stress



- The second biggest cause of stress is the family - with one in five Britons experiencing problems at home (20%)
- The next biggest stressor is money, with finances making 18% or nearly one in five people stressed out
- Queuing is a major issue for the UK - with over one in 20 getting stressed by having to wait on the phone or in a shop for service (6%)- rising to 10% in East Anglia
- Impatience with the Internet or IT in general causes frustration for some, with 1% getting stressed out watching the virtual egg timer on their PCs
- Environment stresses out around one in thirty people - where they live winds them up
- Relationships cause one in fourteen people (7%) to get stressed
- Jobs stress out men twice as much as women (30% vs 14%)
- Family stresses out women three times as much as men (29% vs 9%)
- School/uni/college is the biggest cause of stress for a quarter (25%) of people between the ages of 16 and 24. Money is the part of their life most likely to stress them out next, with 23% saying it was their biggest cause of stress
- Family is the biggest cause of stress for those over the age of 65 (and 55), with nearly one third (29%(23%)) citing as their biggest stressor
- Those with menial work are least likely to worry about their job, with only 10% of those in DE class citing work as a source of stress
- Those in the North and Yorks/Humberside worry most about money out of the regions whilst East Anglia/South East worry least about it
- 7% of those in the North West find where they live to be their biggest cause of stress

- Other causes of stress for the UK include:
 - Noise or anti-social behaviour from the neighbours
 - Ill health and pain from illnesses
 - Death of a loved one
 - Crises abroad – such as the problems in Israel
 - Lack of human contact or distance from others
 - The government
 - Driving on the roads today

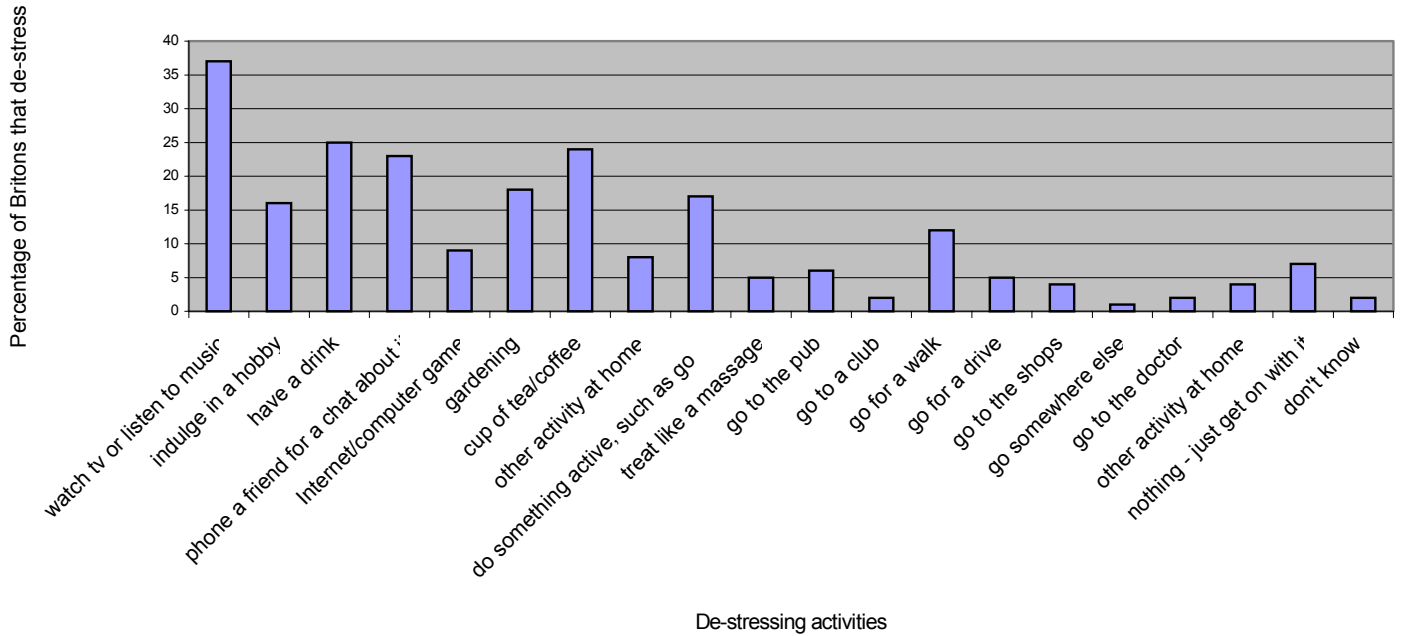
Calming down - how people unwind

The response of men and women to stress varies - this is reflected below where appropriate.

- Britons are couch potatoes - the biggest way to unwind is to watch TV or listen to music with nearly four in ten choosing to slob out (37%). Northerners are the most likely to do this - nearly half (49%), compared with just one third of East Anglian dwellers
- One quarter of Britons have an alcoholic drink (25%), whilst 24% opt for a cuppa tea or coffee. Nearly one third of men would hit the bottle (29%), whereas women are more likely to put the kettle on (28%). One third (34%) of East Anglians would have an alcoholic drink, whilst only 21% of those who live in the South East would do the same. The Welsh are the most likely to have a cup of tea/coffee with just over one third saying they would have a hot drink (34%), whilst again, those in the South East would be least likely (20%). Those who are most stressed (usually or often) are most likely to turn to drink to relieve their frustrations.
- One in three women (33%) will phone a friend to moan about the stress but a worrying 8% of men said they would just get on with it, bottling it up inside
- 17% of the population take a more healthy approach by working out their frustrations in a gym or by doing some sort of other physical activity
- Many women turn to massage or some sort of other therapy to help combat the difficulties of life - 7% or one in 14. Men are more likely to get in their car for a drive, with 6% or just over one in twenty putting their foot down - literally
- 12%, or just over one in ten choose to walk away their frustrations by getting out of the house for a stroll
- Nearly one in 20 (4%) 'comfort shop', with women being more likely to hit the mall
- 14% of 16-35 year olds relieve their stress by playing a computer game or going online - seven times as many as those who are 45+. More than one in ten of those who live in the North or South East are would do this, whilst those in the East Midlands or East Anglia would be two times less likely to go online, with only one in 20 logging on to destress.
- Nearly one in five chooses to get back to nature and do some gardening to relieve stress (18%), with middle aged people being twice as likely as younger Britons to do this (30% of 55-64 year olds)
- 12% of 16-24 year olds choose to hit the bottle outside the house by going to a bar or a pub, and one in twenty would go clubbing
- 13% of people over the age of 65 are stoical about stress and simply get on with it, doing nothing to alleviate their stress
- Only 2% of Britons would go to the doctor to get medication to help them deal with their stress
- 16% indulge in a hobby, such as cooking a meal
- Other responses to stress include:
 - smoking - either cigarettes or marijuana
 - praying or asking God for help
 - having a hot bath
 - taking the dog for a walk
 - knitting, sewing or cross-stitching
 - cookery – either making a meal or baking a cake
 - fishing
 - woodwork or carpentry
 - Go to feed one's racing pigeons
 - Play a musical instrument, such as guitar, saxophone or piano
 - DJing
 - DIY

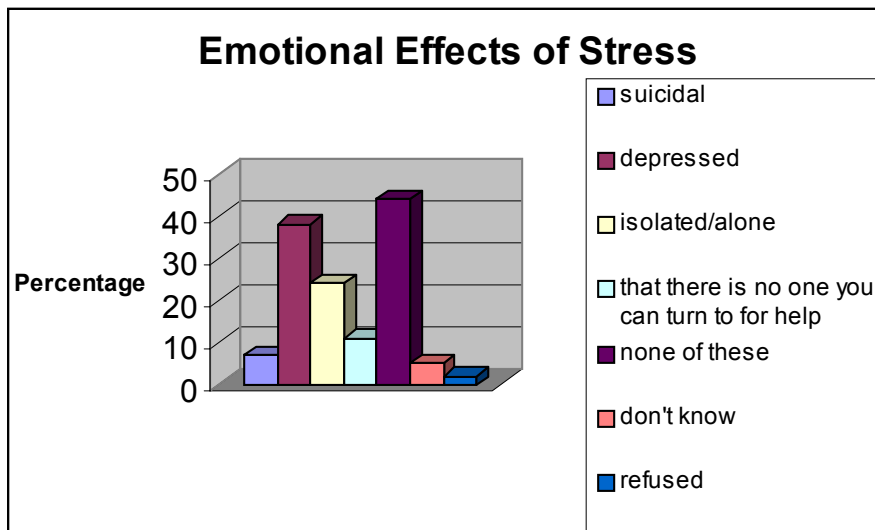
- Read a book
- Flower arranging
- Research family tree

De-stressing: How Britain deals with it



The Emotional Effects of Stress

- 66% of people have experienced negative emotional effects due to stress, ranging from isolation and depression to suicidal thoughts



- 38% of people have felt depressed as a result of stress
- One in 14 people in Great Britain has felt suicidal as a consequence of stress (7%)
- Nearly one quarter of people have felt isolated or alone due to the stress they have experienced
- 11% of people (just over one in ten) has felt like there is no one they can turn to for help
- In general, women have experienced more negative emotional effects as a consequence of stress, although slightly more men than women have felt suicidal due to stress
- Emotional reactions to stress also varies with age and by region:
 - Young people between the ages of 16 and 34 are the most likely age group to have felt suicidal at some point due to stress - one in seven (14%). In general young people seem to be more negatively affected by stress, with only one third having experienced no negative emotional feelings from stress
 - Older people over the age of 65 are least likely to feel they have experienced negative emotional feelings due to stress - over half (52%) said they had experienced no negative feelings from stress
 - Those living in Wales are the most likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts due to stress - 11% admitted to having felt suicidal due to stress. By contrast, those living in the South East were only half as likely to have experienced suicidal feelings (5%)
 - Feelings of isolation varies regionally - from 19% in the north to 7% in Yorks/Humber
 - Experience of depression due to stress also varies regionally - from 44% in the North West to 33% in the South and South East

Survey information

The survey, carried out by NOP, questioned nearly 2000 people from across England, Scotland and Wales, comprising a representative sample from each standard geographical region, age group, gender and class.

Five questions were asked of each person, with the opportunity to provide freeform answers if their response did not match any of the suggested options:

1. Firstly, thinking about your daily life in general, using the following statements, how often, if at all, do you feel stressed?
 - Never
 - Infrequently – less than once a month
 - Sometimes – between once a month and once a week
 - Often – more than once a week but less than once a day
 - Usually – once a day or more
 - Don't know

2. And would you say you are more or less stressed, or are your stress levels the same generally on a daily basis compared to five years ago?
 - More stressed
 - The same stress levels as five years ago
 - Less stressed
 - Don't know

3. Thinking about when you are stressed, which of the following, if any, is the biggest cause of stress for you?
 - Money
 - Relationships
 - Job
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Where you live
 - School/college/university
 - Commuting
 - Queuing on the phone/in shops
 - IT/Computers
 - Other (please specify)
 - Don't know

4. And still thinking about when you are stressed, please tell me which of the following would you be likely to do to make you feel less stressed?
 - Watch TV or listen to music
 - Indulge in a hobby
 - Have a glass of wine, a beer or a measure of spirits
 - Phone a friend for a chat
 - Go on to the internet or play a computer game
 - Gardening
 - Have a cup of tea/coffee
 - Other activity at home (specify)
 - Do something active (some form of exercise)
 - Treat yourself to something (paid therapy)
 - Go out to a bar/pub
 - Go out to a club
 - Go for a walk to get out of the house

- Go for a drive to get out of the house
 - Go to the shops to spend money
 - Go somewhere else
 - Go to the doctor for medication to deal with it
 - Other
 - Nothing – just get on with it
 - Don't know
5. Still thinking about when you may have been stressed in the past, has this stress ever made you feel any of the following?
- Suicidal
 - Depressed
 - Isolated/alone
 - That there is no one you can turn to for help
 - Don't know
 - Refused to answer