

NOVEMBER 2016

THE STRESS REPORT 2016

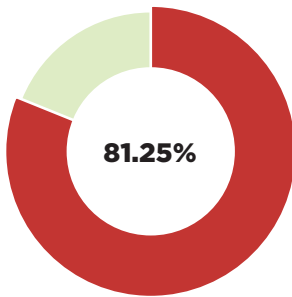
Unlocking the secrets to a
less stressful workplace

As so many HR and payroll professionals know, stress levels play an important part in employee wellbeing. This in turn can have knock on effects on productivity, staff retention and morale – ultimately causing businesses time, money and workflow problems...

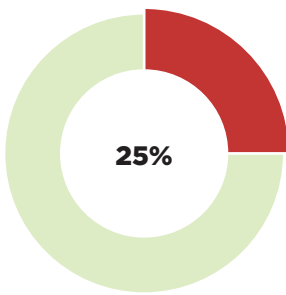
As such, here at **Cascade HR** we wanted to identify what it is exactly that makes British workers so stressed. We wanted to examine when they are more at risk of stress, how they cope with it, and what UK employers can do to provide a less stressful working environment.

For this report, **we surveyed 1,011 British adults in either full or part-time employment.** We set out to address the topics discussed above, and arm employers with the information they need in order to successfully reduce the impact stress can have in the workplace, as well as identifying those workers who may be at risk.

We hope you find the data and learnings both insightful and useful.



More than **4 out of 5** people report being stressed at work



1 in 4 struggle to sleep during the working week

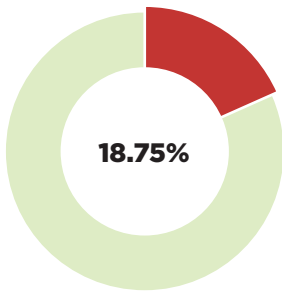
The results of the survey showed that **4 out of 5 adults were stressed for at least some of the working week.** What is more poignant is that two thirds of those surveyed felt their employers could do something to reduce stress levels.

During the working week, nearly half of respondents said Mondays were the most stressful day, closely followed by Friday. The **top 5 things that caused the most stress** were: workloads, deadlines, being understaffed, office politics and pressure to hit targets.

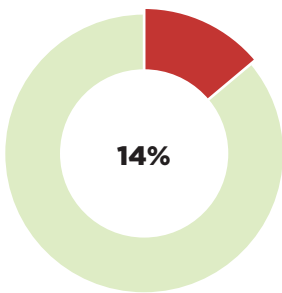
UK workers felt stressed for 7.5 working days per month on average, with **1 in 4 people struggling to sleep** during the working week. Respondents needed to use over half of the UK statutory allocation of annual leave (10.31 days), in order to unwind.

It is clear from these results that there is a significant problem with stress in the workplace. For some, this level of stress is manageable, but **for others it will affect both their professional and personal lives.**

However, there is hope for employers – many workers felt that employers could improve the situation through implementing relatively small changes, such as caring and friendly management, office drinks on Fridays, flexible working hours, and a pat on the back for a job well done.



Nearly **1 in 5** people claim to have a 'stress free' job



Over **1 in 10** suffer with stress every day











Stress is a huge problem for the UK workforce.

In addition to causing severe problems for individuals themselves, it can also give employers a serious headache – potentially damaging a business' reputation, increasing staff turn over, increasing the likelihood of a sickly workforce and causing severe productivity issues.

Work-related stress exists in a significant majority of the workforce, with 81.25% of those surveyed reporting feeling stressed at work. These aren't occasional instances of stress: according to our data, the average UK worker feels stressed for more than one and a half working weeks per month - or 7.57 working days, to be exact.

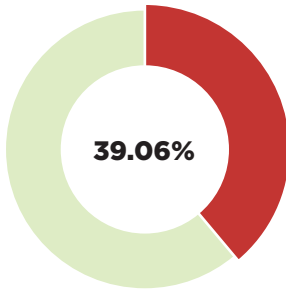
Currently, only 18.75% of workers have what they consider '*stress-free jobs*', claiming they '*never*' feel stressed at work. Indeed, 14% of workers experience stress as a particularly acute problem, reporting that they suffer with work-related stress every single day.

The top 10 most stressed industries in the UK

-  Information and communications
-  Financial services
-  Healthcare
-  Local or national government
-  Administrative and support services
-  Transportation, leisure and travel
-  Education
-  Professional services (e.g. law)
-  Utilities and retail (joint)
-  Manufacturing

Map showing the top 10 most stressed cities in the UK

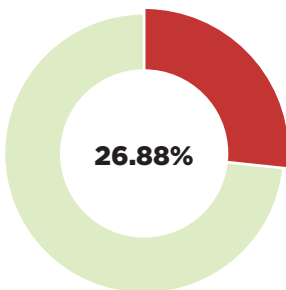




1 in 3 people reported workload as their number one stressor

Many employers argue that there will always be an element of stress to working life, which employees will have to absorb and cope with in order to work to the best of their abilities.

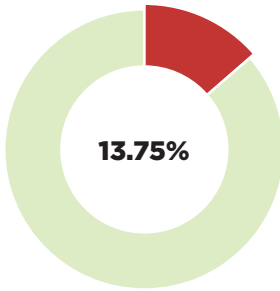
Whether this is true or not is a matter for debate, but there is some merit to identifying the most common stressors across different industries. This could allow management and HR departments to monitor and ideally contain common issues, helping to prevent serious stress from causing lasting damage.



Being understaffed was an issue for **1 in 4** employees

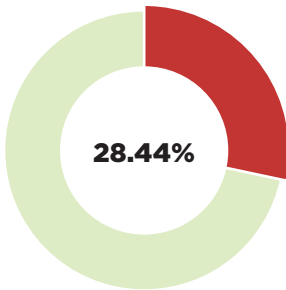
The most common stressor across all industries was, interestingly for HR and payroll professionals, resourcing.

Workload was the biggest reported problem, with 39.06% citing this as their most significant stressor. Being understaffed (26.88%) came in third, having a lack of support from colleagues and managers (17.81%) was seventh, and being asked to do work outside of job descriptions (16.25%) was eighth.



Relationships with managers was the lowest stressor

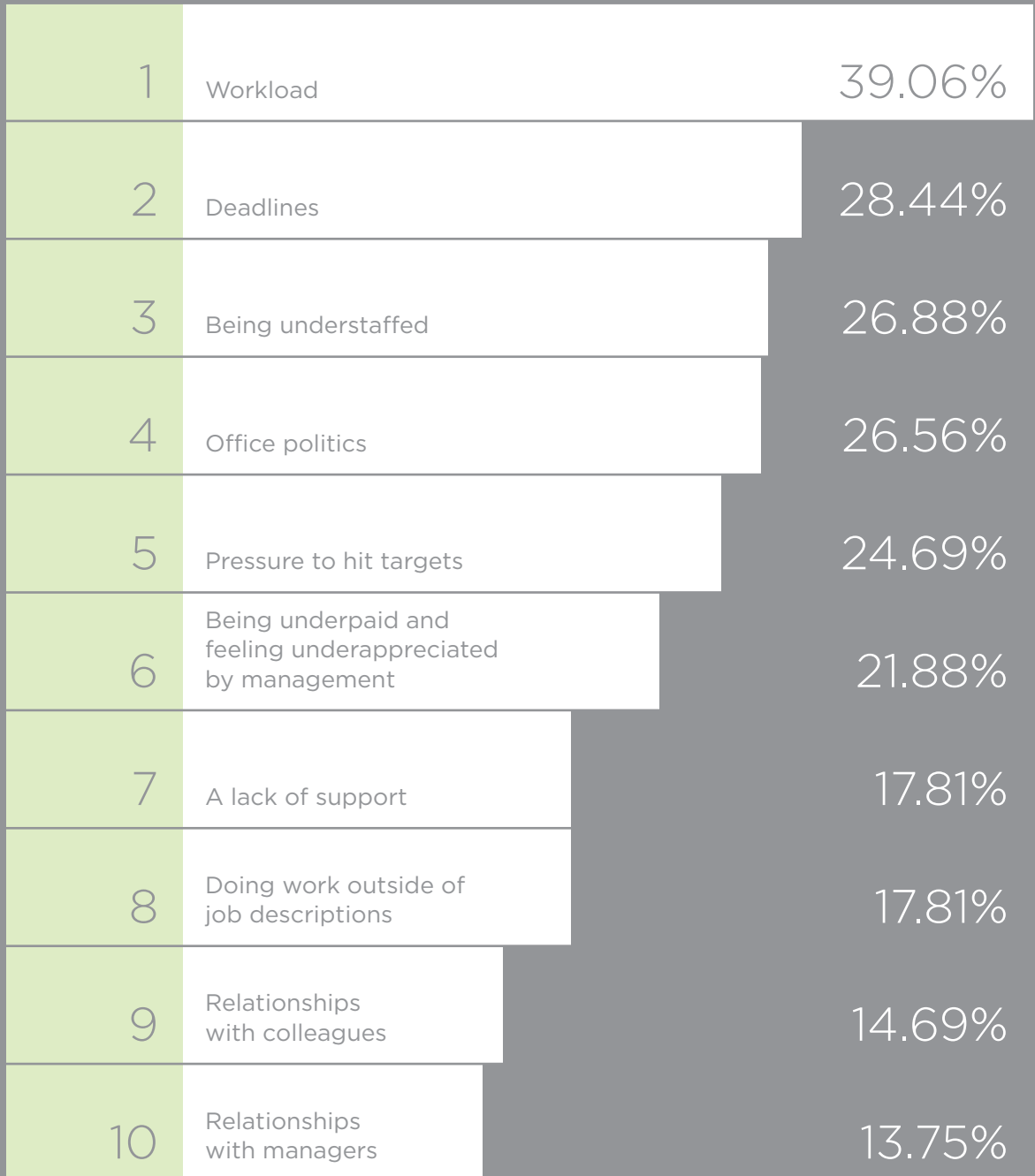
Relationships with other members of staff were also listed as a significant problem, with office politics being the fourth most stressful factor (26.56%), relationships with colleagues (14.69%) ninth, and relationships with managers tenth (13.75%).

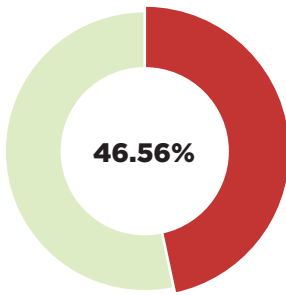


As expected - deadlines cause stress for nearly a third of employees

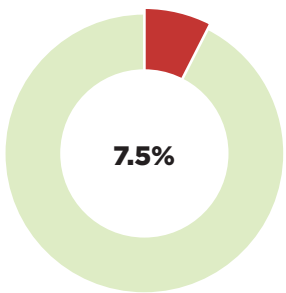
However there were some other factors which dominated that employers can do little about - deadlines (28.44%), and pressure to hit targets (26.88%) were key pain points, appearing second and fifth in the top ten.

The top 10 most stressful aspects of working life





Nearly **half** of staff say Monday is the most stressful



Less than **1 in 10** said Thursday was the most stressful day

Stress by Days of the Week

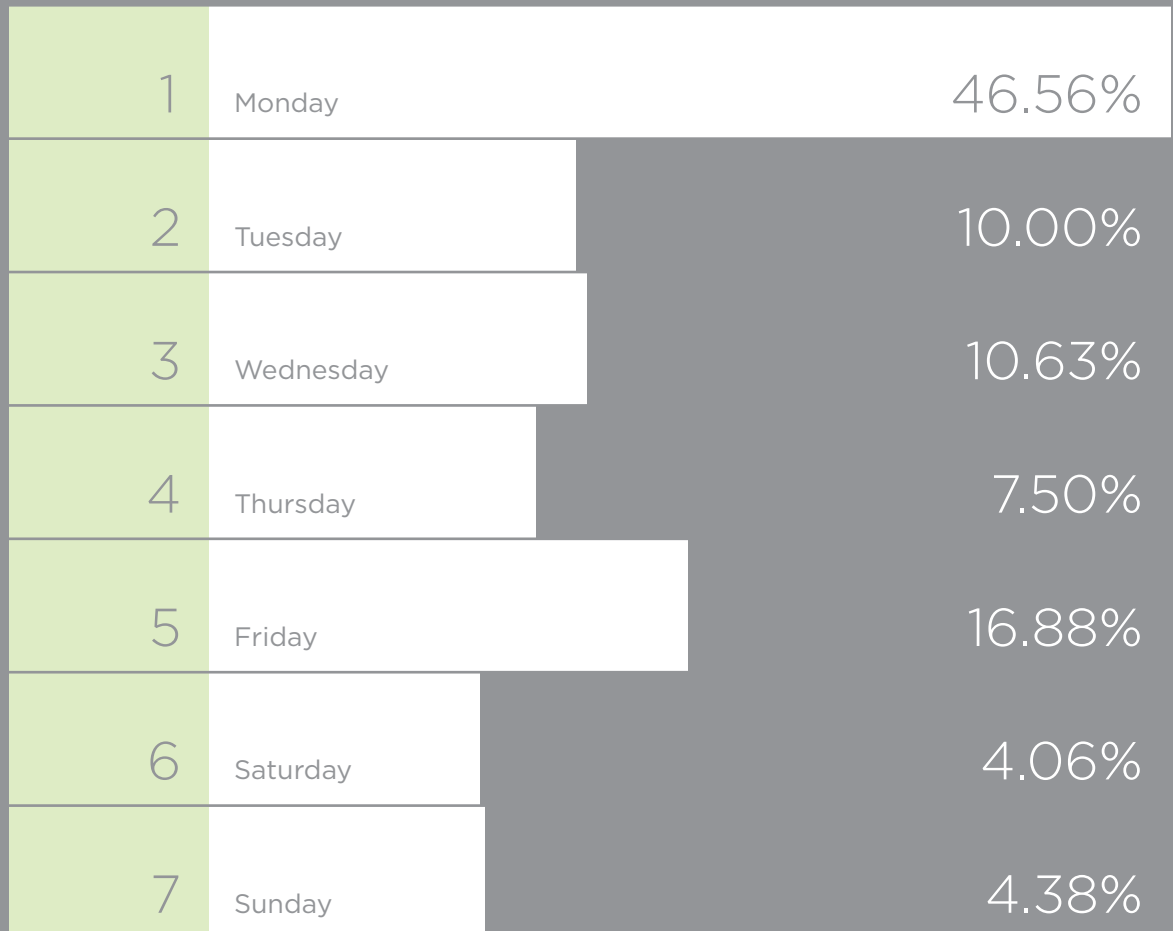
Mondays are universally renowned as one of the worst days of the week, but our data has also revealed that they are considered the most stressful too.

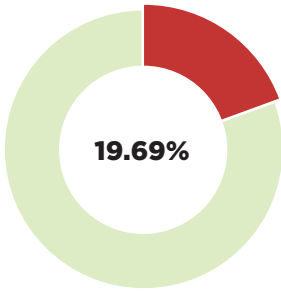
The first day in the conventional working week was voted the day workers find the most stressful, with almost 1 in 2 (46.56%) reporting this to be the case.

The factors British workers most commonly cite contributing to this include; having to do more work on this day of the week (39%), feeling more tired on a Monday (29.09%), having to deal with more difficult people (28.13%), having deadlines which fall on this day (25.94%), and often working longer hours (19.69%).

Paradoxically, the last day in the conventional working week - Friday - was also cited as a particularly stressful day for many, with 16.88% citing it as their most stressful day at work. This could be due to needing to complete any urgent work ahead of the weekend. Thursdays were identified as the least stressful day (7.50%) in the working week.

Which day in your working week do you find the most stressful?

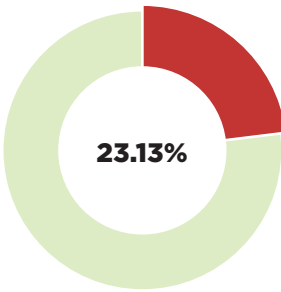




Almost a **fifth** of staff carry work stress home with them

The work/life balance does not just relate to the hours spent physically present at work, but also by how much work interrupts employees personal lives.

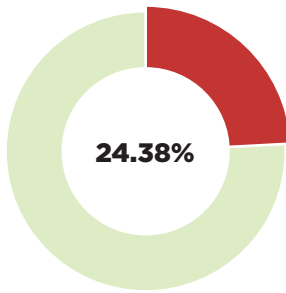
As such, it is important for employers to consider how readily staff are able to mentally switch off from work during their free time.



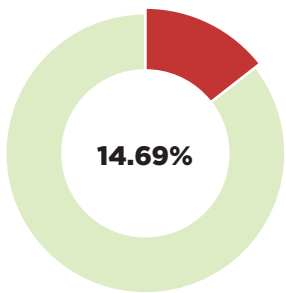
Nearly **1 in 4** people have to work during the weekend

Unfortunately, this can be a sore subject for many. **Indeed, 1 in 5 (19.69%) confess that they carry work stress home with them,** with many doing so quite literally; 16.56% state that they work late into the evening, 23.13% at the weekend, and 15.31% routinely work during bank holiday weekends.

Similar numbers say that work stress affects relationships and life outside of work, with **17.19% saying it intrudes into their home life generally,** and 15.31% specifically citing their relationships with their family, partner and children.



1 in 4 workers forget about work once they leave for the day



Over **1 in 10** take work home with them

Data collected revealed that at the end of the working day, the majority of workers do manage to relax, with 24.38% saying they unwind and forget about work immediately once they finish for the day.

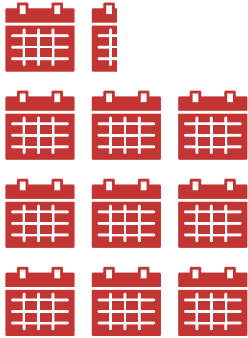
However, many do experience a void between the end of their working day and the start of their free time, during which they do not relax and continue to think about work. On average, this period lasts for 1 hour 39 minutes.

Many of those surveyed will also take work home, which can not only further delay the time workers get to relax, but will also make doing so more difficult. **Indeed, 14.69% say they often take work home with them,** which means they feel they never fully unwind.

A similar number - 15% - say the hours they work mean they never entirely forget about work or relax when away from the office.

Top 10 ways workers unwind and forget about work

| | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 1 | Watching TV | 54.69% |
| 2 | Spending time with friends and family | 40.31% |
| 3 | Reading | 39.38% |
| 4 | Going for a walk | 38.44% |
| 5 | Going out for a meal | 34.38% |
| 6 | Drinking alcohol | 34.06% |
| 7 | Taking a long bath | 23.13% |
| 8 | Socialising | 22.81% |
| 9 | A mini break, e.g. leaving the town/city I live and work in | 21.88% |
| 10 | Going to the cinema or theatre | 21.56% |



It can take over **10 days** for people to 'switch off'

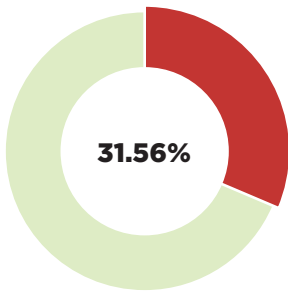
Work-related stress does not just impact employees' free time after work and at weekends, but can also spill over into time spent on annual leave.

UK workers claim that it takes them an average of 2.63 days of annual leave for them to entirely forget about work and relax. However, with modern technology meaning workers can easily be reached, or can access their emails at the touch of a button, how long does it take people to sufficiently switch off when away from the office?

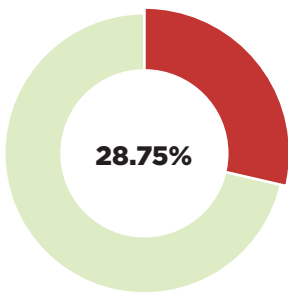
Our data tells us that it can take **just over half of the UK's statutory allocation of annual leave per person**, or around 10.31 days to be exact.

The inability of workers to switch off from work or relax in their free time needs to be taken seriously by employers, not least because it can foster a culture of poor morale, ill health and low productivity.

Unhappy workers often speak to others about their employers and working conditions, which can then potentially contribute to poor employer reputations, increased absences and low morale. Eventually, a high proportion of stressed and unhappy workers can significantly contribute to low staff retention figures and increased recruitment activity, costing employers both time and money.



Nearly a **third** of people said that music helps with stress



Over a quarter of staff enjoy a 'chill out' space

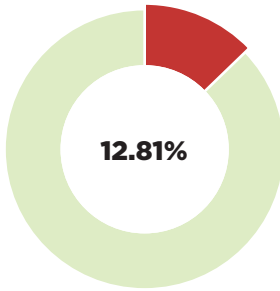
Whilst the core reasons workers cited for feeling stressed at work related to working practices, **it is widely acknowledged that the physical environment people work in can impact mental health and wellbeing.**

According to the data, creating a less stressful environment need not involve paying for expensive mindfulness classes or overhauling the entire appearance and layout of an office.

Indeed, when workers were asked what they felt their employer could do to decrease how stressful their working environment was, the most popular response was merely keeping the workplace clean and tidy (34.38%).

31.56% also felt that simple environmental enhancements – such as having music playing – would help to keep their stress levels in check.

And simply having a space away from their desks in which to chill out (cited by 28.75%), or even in which to simply eat (27.19%), would be an improvement for many.



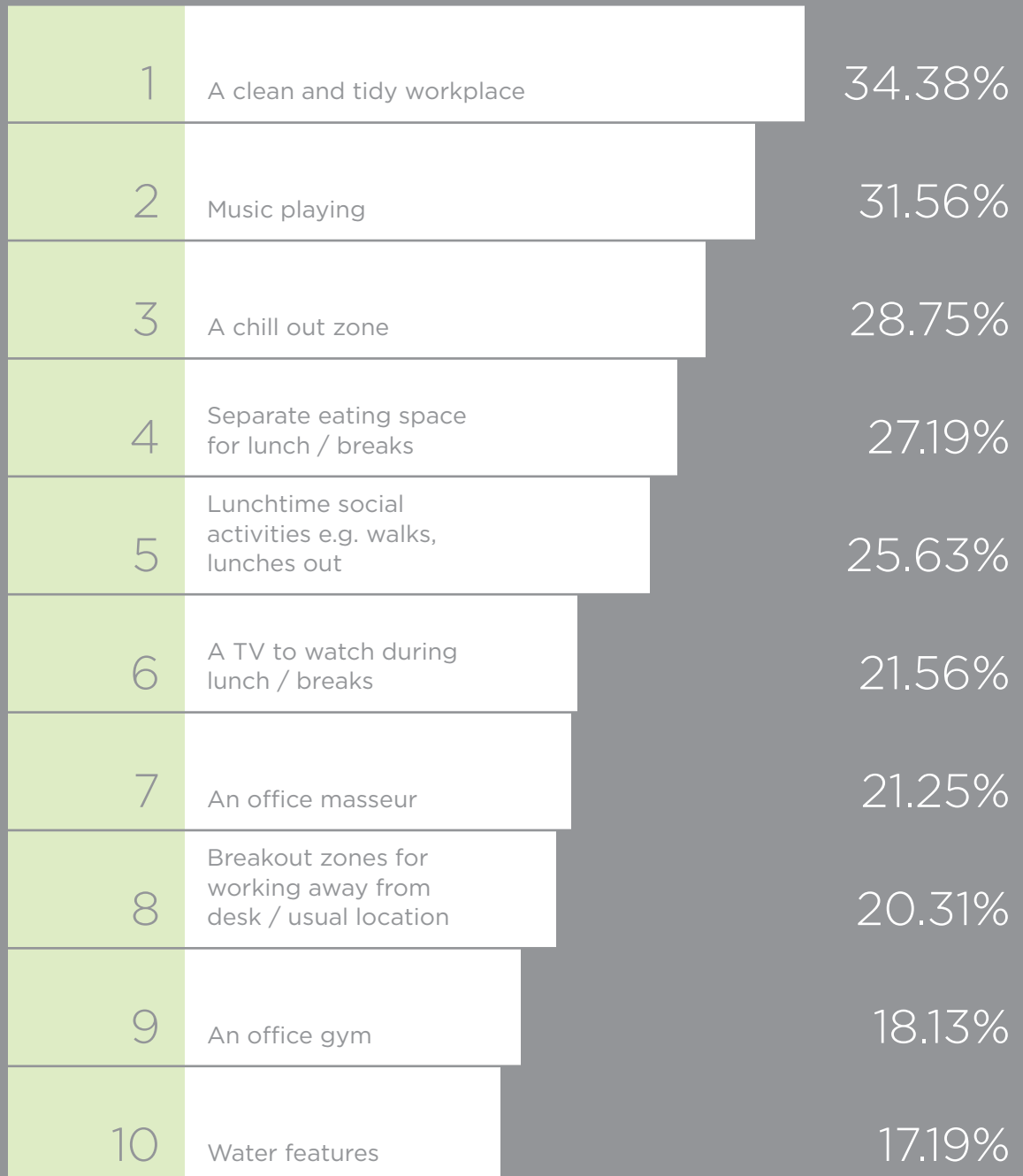
Yoga classes scored the lowest in our survey

Indeed, the more elaborate enhancements – such as water features (17.19%), yoga classes (12.81%), and guided meditation (14.59%) were the least popular.

So, what can employers do to ensure that workspaces and premises are not adding to the occupational stress endemic?

The survey findings reveal the answer to be: not a great deal.

Top 10 environmental factors employers can introduce for a less stressful environment

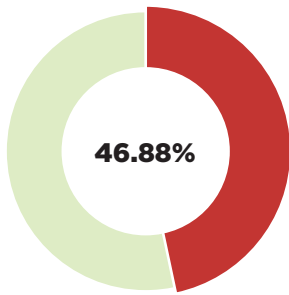


Given the amount of money and resources it can take to deal with extreme stress levels, if employers are in a position to alleviate common workplace gripes, then it would make financial sense to do so. **Whilst it is difficult to eradicate a company-wide stress endemic overnight, there are a number of things which employers can do to reduce it.**

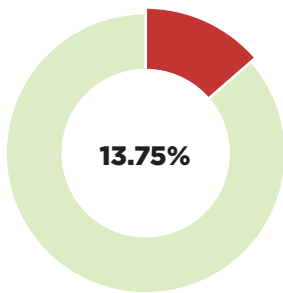
As the research findings have indicated, many main stress sources for employees relate to working practices and the people around them, such as colleagues, customers and management.

Taking this into account then, what cultural improvements can companies introduce to help to reduce workers' stress levels?

Answers seem to lie predominantly in elements of flexible working, facilitating a friendly and sociable workforce, and acknowledging a job well done.



Flexible working hours rated highly as a stress reliever



Over **1 in 10** said Friday drinks were important

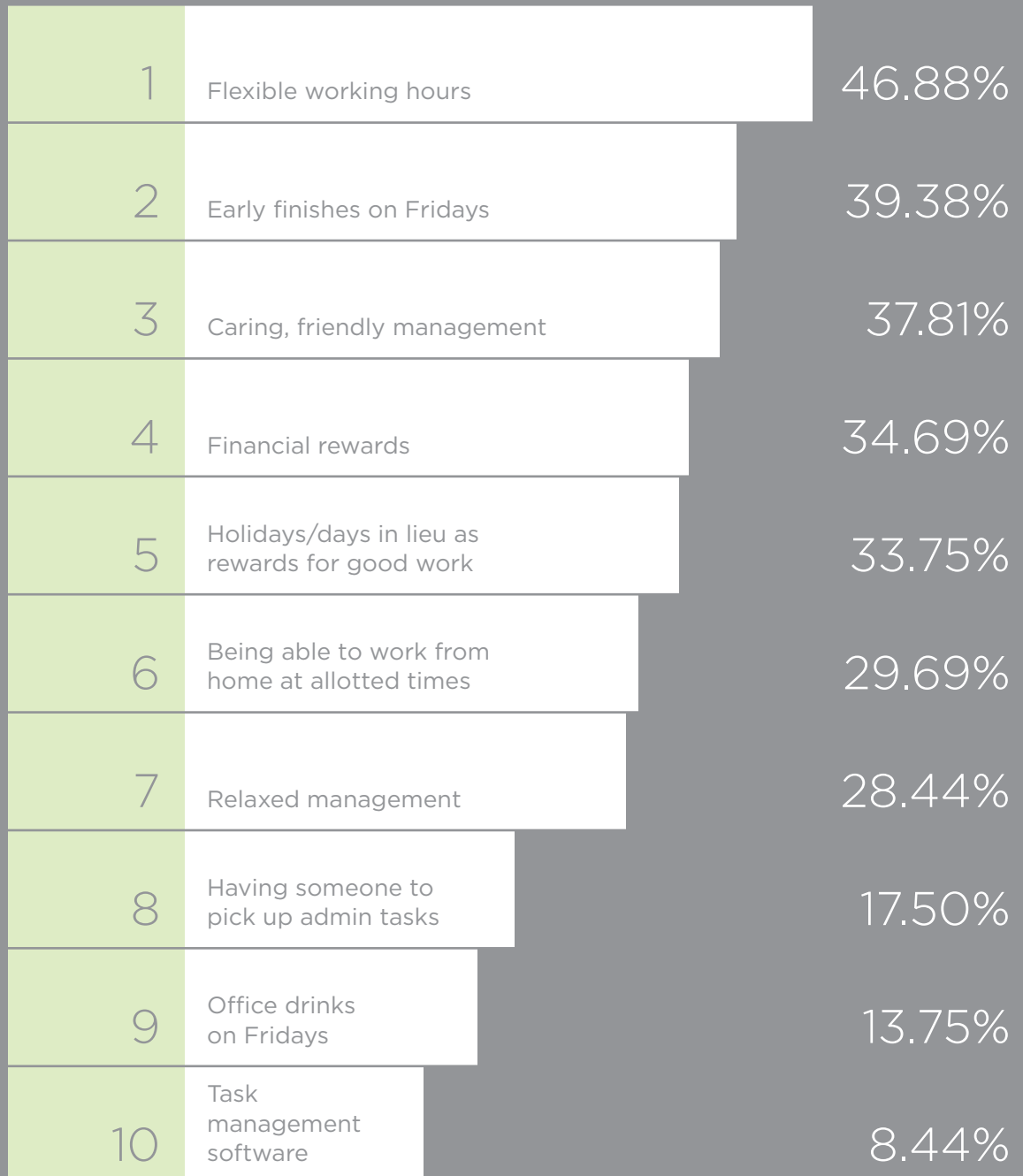
Flexible working, which allows workers a better work/life balance and can relieve pressures on individuals in their private lives, was the measure the majority (46.88%) felt employers could take.

This was echoed in a desire for designated hours for home working (29.69%). Introducing a more sociable culture was also key for many, with caring, friendly management (37.81%), and office drinks on Fridays (13.75%) cited as important to many.

Generally, introducing a less pressured culture was also an important measure for 28.44%, who said they would like to see more relaxed management.

Receiving tangible rewards and recognition for hard work was also a popular method of reward, with 34.69% requesting financial rewards such as cash bonuses, and 33.75% favouring holidays in lieu.

Top 10 cultural factors to create a less stressful working environment:



The survey we have conducted has uncovered a significant problem, helping to shine a light on the true scale of workers currently dealing with stress caused by the workplace.

For some workers, this is perhaps a manageable amount, but the data suggests that for many, this isn't the case. **Many workers cite work stress as a serious issue within their personal lives, affecting everything from sleep to relationships to the ability to enjoy time off.**

Although the issue of stress is a UK and industry-wide issue across the workforce, the report has uncovered some manageable tactics that employers can introduce into their businesses and workplaces, with the aim of boosting employee morale whilst they attempt to tackle any bigger issues.

The data has also provided a useful checklist of workplace stress triggers, which could be circulated internally to managers, team leaders and department heads. This list could then be used to assess just how many of a company's working practices and cultures are likely to be provoking stress in the workforce.

Whilst some of the stress-prevention tactics highlighted may involve a degree of cultural change within the workplace, **the report also highlights several short-term or easier options which employers can implement quickly and effectively.**

We hope that our survey and the findings displayed here have, in some small way, added to your arsenal of HR tools needed for creating a happy and motivated workforce!

