

UK Business Leaders Health and Wellbeing Study 2023

By The Dawn Wellness Centre and Rehab Thailand

ABOUT THE REPORT

Commissioned by **The Dawn Rehab Thailand**, this report of 1000 senior business leaders looks at how the UK's top earners manage daily work pressures, and the impact of their C-suite status on life outside the boardroom.

The report surveyed those working in senior level roles, including C-level executives, chairpersons and MDs, earning annual salaries of £75k and over.

The sobering results reveal the true cost of a high-flying career on health and wellbeing – with more than half of execs suffering panic attacks and anxiety, and over a third using recreational drugs at least once a week.

Read on for further in-depth results and analysis, plus advice from leading psychotherapist Alexandria Barley.



The study surveyed...

- 46% men, 54% women.
- Age brackets: 18-24 (4%), 25-34 (11%), 35-44 (58%), 45-54 (23%), 55 and over (4%)
- Salary breakdowns: £75,000-£124,999 (54%), £125,000-£199,999 (14%), over £200,000 (32%).

**Survey undertaken by Pollfish.*

A SPOTLIGHT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CEOS...

69%

More than two thirds of C-suite executives said they suffer with work-related stress, and over half (54%) have experienced burnout or exhaustion – with **16%** taking up to three months off work as a result.

54%

More than half (54%) cited **regular anxiety and panic attacks** and **47%** reported **physical symptoms** such as heart palpitations and headaches brought on by work stress.

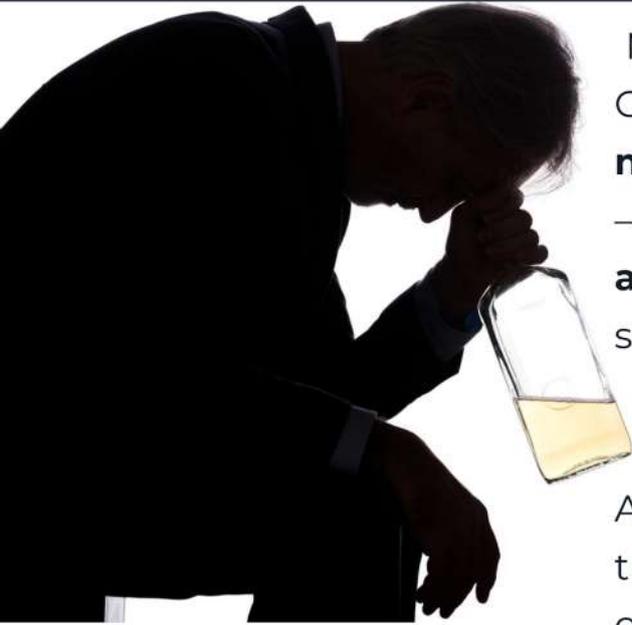
29% said they'd had **suicidal thoughts**.

72%

Three quarters of executives surveyed reported suffering from depression, with **34%** experiencing severe depression..



ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE, AND OTHER 'COPING' BEHAVIOURS



More than one third **35%** of high earners in C-suite roles said they'd experienced **alcohol misuse** or problems with alcohol consumption – this rises to **47%** of those earning **£200,000 a year** or more and **52%** of all **45-54-year-olds** surveyed.

Around **2/3** (64%) of **45-54-year-olds** admitted to **drinking during the working day**, with **55%** of the same age group saying they **drink alone**.

46% 46% of respondents have used **gambling** to cope with work stress.

63% reported **overeating** or bingeing - rising to 77% for men.

63%

57% 57% have used **shopping** to cope with work stress.

44% have used **sex** to cope with work stress, with female execs 22% more likely than men.

44%

Recreational drug use is highest among 45-54-year-old executives.

55% said they take drugs such as cannabis and cocaine **more than once a week**, with **54%** taking them when stressed.

57% admitted to taking them during the working day.

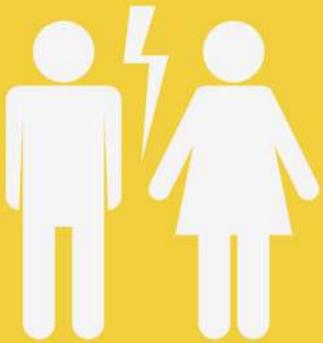
IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS AND LIFE OUTSIDE WORK

87% 

A huge 87% of respondents said work-related issues had a negative impact on their personal life.

1/2 

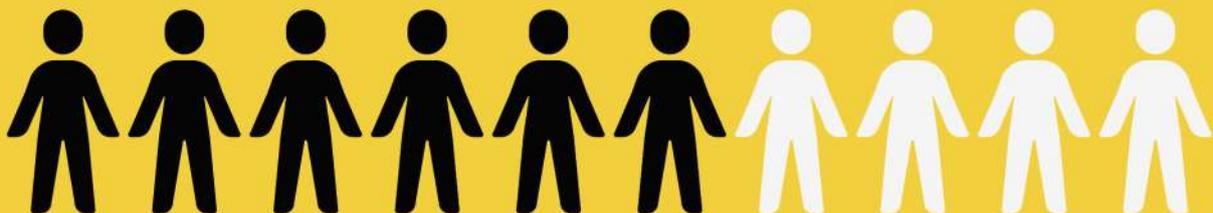
Half of those surveyed recognised they're not always 'present' with family.



For **41%** of respondents, work-related issues led to the breakdown of their relationship with their spouse or partner.



Around **one in three** (30%) said work-related issues had broken relationships with friends and family.



Nearly **two thirds** (61%) are worried about further, lasting damage to their relationships.

SEEKING HELP



85%

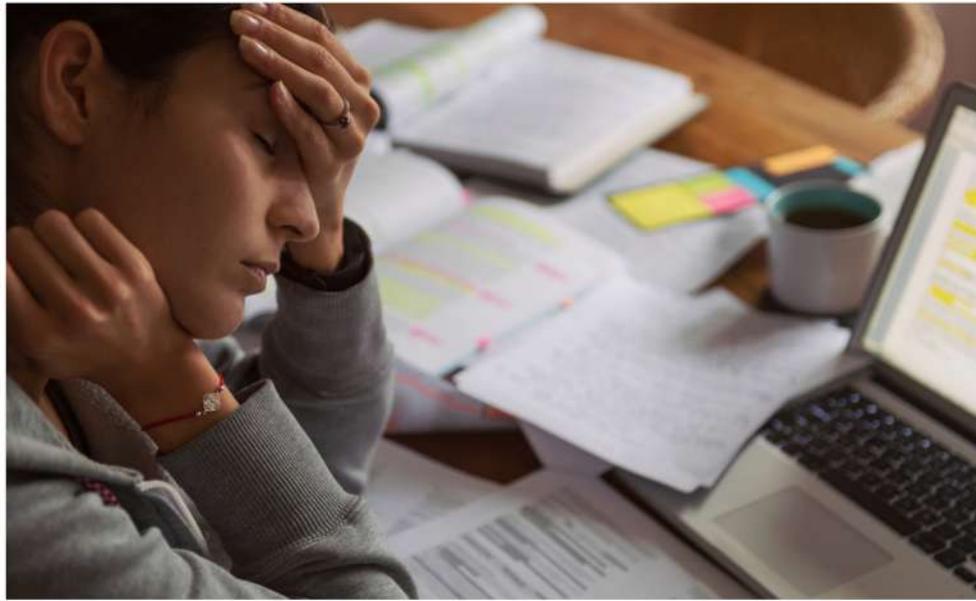
Reassuringly, 85% of executives have **sought help** for the effects of work-related stress, consulting their GP or a healthcare professional. Half of them being prescribed medication and therapy.

19%

However, almost one in five (19%) said they **haven't shared their problems with anyone else**, with 54% of those worried about damaging relationships and 47% concerned they may lose their job if they admit to mental health issues.

WIDESPREAD MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES – BUT STILL NO REGRETS?

A vast majority of **86%** of top-paid execs believe that issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, burnout, drug and alcohol misuse are '**common**' within their industry and among high-earners.



Despite the heavy impact of their jobs on health and relationships, only **39%** say they **regret the career path they've chosen**. Just over half (52%) say they dream of 'giving it all up' and living a simpler life with less money and less stress.



SPOTTING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

The Dawn's Alexandria Barley is a Senior Psychotherapist and certified Addiction Treatment Professional (IC&RC UK&Europe). She shares advice on spotting signs of professional burnout, and recommended next steps for sufferers:

1. Continuous exhaustion

Distinct from ordinary feelings of tiredness, exhaustion from burnout doesn't go away after a period of rest. Starting to lose motivation to work, or thinking, "what's the point?", can be serious indicators of professional burnout.

2. Changes in mood

Burnout sufferers may notice themselves arguing with friends, family and colleagues more often. Note this is not about having a bad day, or even a bad week. It's a persistent quality that develops as stress accumulates.

3. Decreased effectiveness at work

Unsurprisingly, feelings of exhaustion and mood changes often have a negative impact on performance, creativity and judgement at work. As professional burnout intensifies, cognitive efficiency also deteriorates.

4. Physical symptoms

A lot of people will experience unexplainable aches and pains. Other common symptoms include loss of appetite and insomnia.

Alex says: *"So many of us go after the familiar definition of success - the impressive career, picture-perfect home life and generally a sense of 'making it'. Yet we're only human, and sometimes it's impossible to achieve everything - pushing harder and harder is only likely to have negative consequences."*



"Burnout is best treated in the long term by avoiding the problem of overwork - which can seem far easier said than done for those in the middle of it. It can be helpful to explore the source of negative feelings towards work - for example, being weighed down by responsibility and the need to constantly 'perform', or feeling misaligned with company values. For severe burnout cases, a combined approach incorporating effective, calming psychological therapy, alongside wellness activities, can often help achieve recovery much more quickly."

ABOUT THE DAWN

The Dawn Wellness Centre and Rehab Thailand is Asia's only internationally accredited (American Accreditation Commission International) behavioural health treatment centre.

Located in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, The Dawn's treatment philosophy is based in clinical evidence that people use substances or develop mental disorders, or other maladaptive coping mechanisms, as a result of trauma and/or adverse life experiences. The Dawn caters to a primarily international clientele - its largest client groups are from the UK, the USA and Australia.

Around a third of The Dawn's UK clients are **C-suite executives, professionals or business owners**, seeking help with **mental health conditions** including burnout and addiction.



SURVEY DATA

Q1. Have you personally experienced any of the following?

Experiences	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Work-related stress	69%	58%	78%	67%	61%	79%	47%	61%
Anxiety / panic attacks	54%	58%	51%	57%	45%	53%	67%	39%
Exhaustion / burnout	52%	55%	49%	52%	51%	50%	59%	47%
Physical symptoms brought on by stress	47%	58%	38%	19%	34%	40%	75%	53%
Mild to moderate depression	40%	42%	37%	29%	27%	38%	53%	37%
Severe depression	34%	35%	32%	12%	22%	32%	51%	13%
Suicidal thoughts	29%	28%	30%	7%	17%	27%	44%	29%
Alcohol misuse / problems with alcohol consumption	35%	39%	32%	17%	26%	33%	52%	24%
Drug use / problems with drugs	25%	28%	23%	10%	17%	22%	41%	16%

SURVEY DATA

Q2. If answered yes to any of the above, have you taken any time of work in the last 2 years as a result?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	85%	85%	86%	79%	70%	88%	91%	58%

Q3. If answered yes to previous question, how much time have you taken off in total?

	A week or less	1-2 weeks	2-4 weeks	1-3 months	More than 3 months
Yes	5%	36%	40%	16%	3%

Q4. How often do you feel stressed?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Constantly	24%	23%	23%	19%	20%	24%	24%	32%
Occasionally	62%	65%	60%	45%	66%	61%	68%	53%
Hardly ever	14%	12%	15%	36%	14%	14%	8%	16%

SURVEY DATA

Q5. Has work-related stress and/or work-related issues had a negative impact on your personal life?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	87%	85%	89%	83%	88%	87%	91%	55%

Q6. If answered yes to the previous question, which of the following statements do you agree with?

Q6(a). I can never switch off from work.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	30%	24%	35%	34%	22%	32%	26%	43%

Q6(b). I have missed important occasions with friends and family after prioritising work.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	68%	70%	66%	60%	72%	66%	73%	43%

SURVEY DATA

Q6(c). I am not always 'present' with my family.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	50%	50%	49%	49%	40%	47%	60%	48%

Q6(d). I snap easily at my family.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	44%	52%	38%	49%	38%	41%	54%	43%

Q6(e). I worry that work stress/work-related issues have caused lasting damage to my relationships (eg. with partner, children, wider family).

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	61%	64%	60%	51%	48%	59%	77%	43%

SURVEY DATA

Q6(f). Work stress/work-related issues have led to the breakdown of my relationship with my spouse/partner.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	41%	50%	34%	31%	24%	35%	66%	33%

Q6(g). Work stress/work-related issues have led to the breakdown of relationships with friends and/or family.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	30%	28%	32%	17%	13%	31%	38%	24%

Q7. If you answered yes to Question 1, did you consult a GP or other healthcare professional for medication or support (e.g., counselling, therapy) as a result?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	85%	84%	85%	69%	69%	88%	91%	58%

SURVEY DATA

Q8. If you consulted a GP or healthcare professional, which of the following apply to you?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
I was prescribed medication	50%	46%	53%	41%	43%	55%	42%	45%
I was prescribed counselling or other treatment / support	50%	46%	53%	41%	43%	55%	42%	45%
I sought private help	45%	51%	40%	28%	36%	39%	63%	45%
I consulted an online / telephone support group (anonymous)	53%	62%	46%	34%	40%	47%	75%	55%
I consulted a support group (face to face or virtual but not anonymous)	40%	48%	33%	31%	19%	32%	69%	18%
I attended a rehab facility	20%	18%	21%	10%	13%	20%	23%	23%

SURVEY DATA

Q9. If you have experienced any of the issues listed in Question 2, did you tell anyone (APART FROM healthcare professionals) about your condition?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	81%	77%	84%	71%	67%	80%	94%	61%

Q10. If you answered yes to the previous question, who did you share the information with?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Spouse/ partner	59%	61%	58%	30%	59%	60%	59%	74%
A friend	51%	61%	43%	47%	47%	45%	67%	52%
A family member	51%	56%	48%	53%	45%	47%	63%	43%
HR/ occupational health department at work	46%	54%	39%	23%	37%	38%	68%	48%
A colleague	43%	52%	37%	23%	30%	37%	64%	39%
Other	11%	20%	4%	3%	10%	3%	29%	17%
None of the above	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%

SURVEY DATA

Q11. If you didn't tell anyone, what was the reason for this?

I was worried about...	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Losing my job	40%	47%	33%	33%	47%	41%	31%	31%
Damaging relationships with family and friends	54%	53%	55%	33%	58%	56%	63%	38%
Damaging my reputation	45%	45%	46%	17%	39%	52%	31%	50%
What others would say/think	37%	37%	37%	42%	44%	33%	44%	44%
Other reason	15%	14%	16%	17%	11%	10%	31%	38%

Q12. How would you describe your attitudes/behaviour towards alcohol?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
I do not/I rarely drink	10%	8%	12%	26%	6%	12%	3%	21%
I drink at weekends	49%	49%	49%	17%	35%	52%	57%	37%
I sometimes drink during the week as well as weekends	45%	50%	40%	31%	37%	38%	69%	32%

SURVEY DATA

Q12(b). How would you describe your behaviour towards alcohol?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
I drink more when I'm stressed	43%	47%	41%	29%	51%	41%	50%	34%
I sometimes drink alone	39%	47%	31%	26%	36%	34%	55%	32%
I have drunk alcohol during the working day (not including events)	36%	41%	31%	10%	23%	30%	64%	21%
I believe my relationship with alcohol is problematic	25%	27%	23%	12%	11%	21%	41%	37%
I would like to reduce my alcohol intake	27%	26%	27%	5%	18%	25%	39%	24%
I have sought help for my drinking	11%	13%	10%	7%	10%	10%	14%	18%

SURVEY DATA

Q13. How would you describe your attitudes/behaviour towards drugs, including 'recreational' drugs such as cannabis and cocaine?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
I've never taken drugs or haven't since I was much younger	26%	31%	22%	81%	31%	27%	9%	47%
I have taken drugs in the last two years	45%	39%	50%	7%	28%	46%	59%	26%
I have taken drugs recreationally	28%	31%	25%	5%	17%	24%	47%	16%
I take recreational drugs once a week or more	37%	34%	40%	7%	20%	36%	55%	21%
I take drugs when I am stressed	33%	36%	30%	2%	27%	29%	54%	21%
I have taken drugs during the working day	31%	33%	30%	2%	20%	26%	57%	13%
I believe my drug use is problematic	22%	23%	20%	2%	13%	17%	39%	32%
I believe I have a problem with prescription drugs specifically	28%	27%	28%	0%	14%	26%	47%	18%
I have sought help for my drug taking	8%	10%	6%	5%	10%	5%	14%	18%

SURVEY DATA

Q14. Have you ever used any of the following to help cope with work stress?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Gambling	46%	40%	50%	17%	30%	54%	41%	32%
Food (e.g. overeating, bingeing)	63%	77%	51%	50%	58%	55%	88%	55%
Shopping	57%	66%	50%	50%	59%	48%	81%	53%
Sex	44%	32%	54%	38%	40%	54%	22%	37%

Q15. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Q15(a). I dream of 'giving it all up' and living a simpler life with less money and less stress.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	52%	46%	58%	33%	39%	55%	52%	58%

Q15(b). I feel trapped by my job and status.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	48%	60%	37%	33%	39%	41%	72%	47%

SURVEY DATA

Q15(c). I never feel truly content.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	46%	50%	43%	38%	40%	41%	66%	39%

Q15(d). I regret the career path and/or lifestyle I've chosen.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	39%	45%	35%	10%	19%	36%	64%	32%

Q15(e). I wish I'd chosen a more meaningful job.

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	29%	30%	28%	40%	32%	27%	64%	26%

SURVEY DATA

Q16. Do you feel issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, burnout, drug and alcohol misuse common within your industry and/or among high earners?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Yes	86%	84%	87%	76%	72%	89%	90%	58%

	Business, consulting, management	Accountancy, banking, finance	IT	Education	Engineering, manufacturing
Yes	96%	58%	84%	97%	94%

SURVEY DATA

Q17. If you answered yes to the previous question, which of the following do you think are common?

	All	M	F	18-24 year olds	25-34 year olds	35-44 year olds	45-54 year olds	Over 55 year olds
Work-related stress	69%	56%	80%	75%	63%	82%	40%	68%
Anxiety/panic attacks	48%	56%	42%	50%	41%	42%	66%	45%
Exhaustion or burnout	51%	57%	46%	56%	62%	47%	54%	73%
Physical symptoms brought on by stress	41%	52%	32%	6%	28%	32%	74%	27%
Depression	48%	52%	45%	38%	38%	47%	57%	45%
Problems with alcohol	38%	46%	31%	22%	35%	30%	61%	32%
Problems with drug use	31%	31%	31%	6%	15%	30%	47%	5%
Gambling problems	26%	29%	23%	16%	18%	22%	42%	9%
Issues with food	18%	16%	19%	9%	14%	17%	22%	14%

SURVEY DATA

Q17(b). If you answered yes to the previous question, which of the following do you think are common?

	Business, consulting, management	Accountancy, banking, finance	IT	Education	Engineering, manufacturing
Work-related stress	70%	70%	84%	72%	78%
Anxiety/panic attacks	29%	48%	73%	48%	41%
Exhaustion or burnout	28%	55%	74%	57%	65%
Physical symptoms brought on by stress	22%	23%	69%	53%	26%
Depression	23%	44%	74%	50%	78%
Problems with alcohol	20%	37%	71%	32%	37%
Problems with drug use	15%	17%	60%	33%	62%
Gambling problems	13%	19%	54%	28%	25%
Issues with food	6%	19%	22%	22%	48%



Issued on behalf of The Dawn by The Tonic Communications

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