



National Health Report 2014

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Introduction

Welcome to the National Health Report 2014 from Benenden Health.

This study, of 4,000 adults across the UK, benchmarks the emotional and physical wellbeing of the nation by delving into their lifestyle habits, their perception of health and wellbeing and their views on the NHS.

It also scores the respondents via eight different health indicators, which we've then compared to established national health guidelines to measure how well people in the UK look after themselves. Those eight health indicators are: sleep; portions of fruit and vegetables eaten; water consumption; cardio exercise per week; muscle workouts per week; alcohol consumed per week; cigarettes smoked per

day and finally Body Mass Index (BMI). From the data, we are able to gain a valuable insight into the way people around the UK live their lives and look after themselves. Not only are we able to map the results region-by-region, we have also brought the results to life by charting the health of the nation's 'Mr & Mrs Average'.

Benenden Health intends to carry out this health of the nation research annually, in order to measure how British people continue to look after their health and wellbeing. Over time the results of each study will enable us to build a detailed picture of the nation's changing health demographic and how the population responds to established national health campaigns and any underlying trends across the eight health indicators.



Foreword

by Dr. John Giles

Dr. John Giles,
Medical Director,
Benenden

This year has already seen unprecedented discussions in Parliament, in the media and the corridors of our health institutions around the struggles the NHS is facing.

An ageing population and advances in medical science, alongside the surge in complex chronic illnesses such as obesity, cancer and dementia mean that the National Health Service as it was is becoming increasingly threatened.

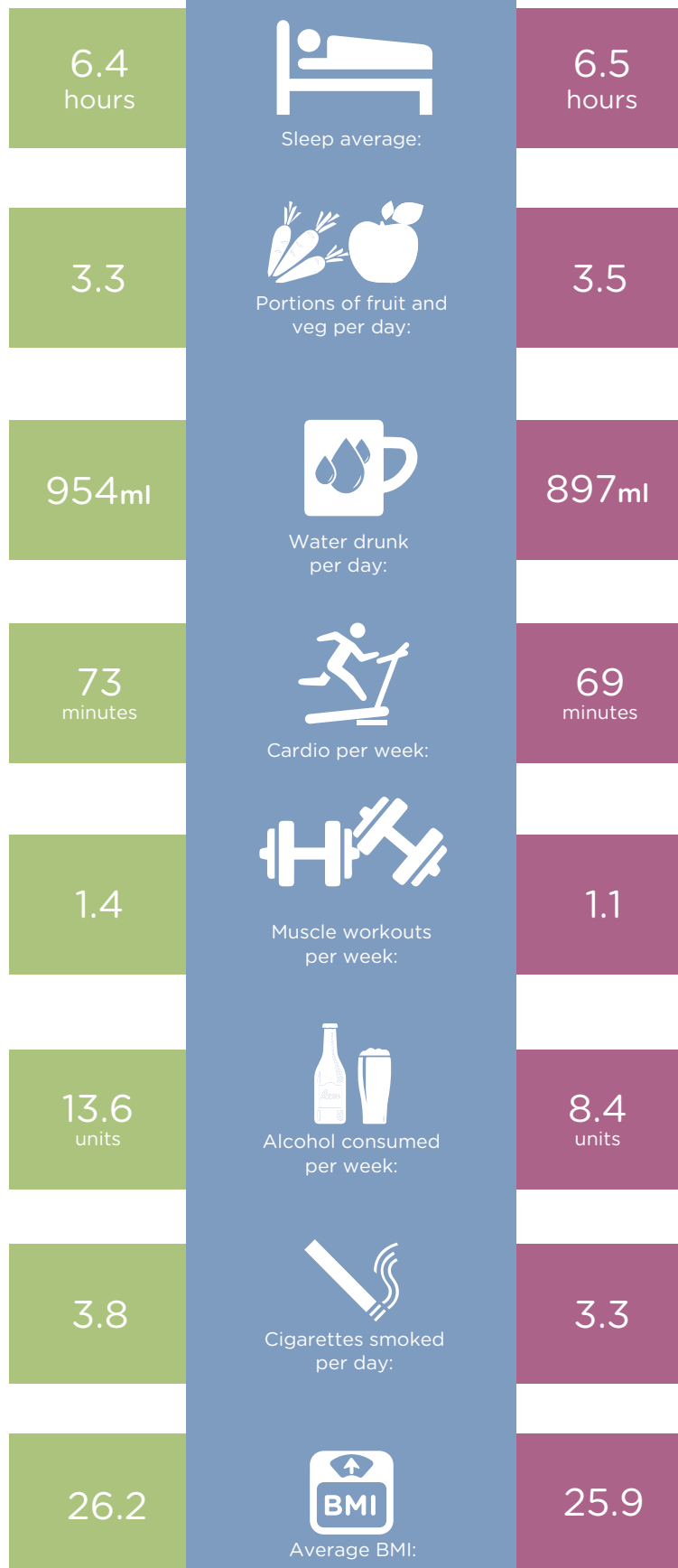
Today, 25% of all patients in England have a long-term health condition, accounting for 70% of total NHS spend, 50% of all GP appointments and 64% of all hospital outpatient appointments. Established to combat acute diseases such as tuberculosis and polio, the NHS is simply not designed to treat patients with modern, complex conditions.

Therefore I believe there should also be a greater expectation on individuals to take better care of their health: this authoritative National Health Report 2014 proves that the UK population is not taking even the most basic measures to look after themselves such as eating healthily, drinking plenty of water and getting enough sleep.

It highlights that the UK's Mr and Mrs Average are not in average health, but are in fact tired, overweight, dehydrated and unfit. At a time when modern medicine is making consistent major breakthroughs to give us longer lives and treat illnesses that even 20 years ago were fatal, the UK population appears to be doing everything in its power to make those extra years as unhealthy and miserable as possible. What is the point of living longer if you have little quality of life?

My hope is that this study will act as a wake-up call for people who believe and expect the NHS will be there to look after them no matter how they live their lives.

Profile of Mr & Mrs Average



Established National Health Guidelines

Mr. Average	Established national health guidelines	Mrs. Average
6.4 hours of sleep	7-8 hours for men and women Source: NHS website	6.5 hours of sleep
Portions of fruit and veg per day: 3.3	5 a day for men and women Source: NHS website	Portions of fruit and veg per day: 3.5
954ml of water a day	Women 1.6 litres, Men 2 litres (According to European Food Safety Authority, from NHS Choices website) Source: NHS website	897ml of water a day
73 minutes cardio per week	At least 150 minutes cardio per week for men and women Source: NHS website	69 minutes cardio per week
1.4 muscle workouts per week	Two muscle workouts per week for men and women Source: NHS website	1.1 muscle workouts per week
13.6 units of alcohol consumed per week	Women shouldn't regularly drink more than 2-3 units of alcohol per day Men shouldn't regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day Source: Change 4 Life	8.4 units of alcohol consumed per week
3.8 cigarettes smoked per day	None Source: NHS website	3.3 cigarettes smoked per day
Average BMI 26.2	18.5 - 24.9 is healthy BMI range for men and women Source: NHS website	Average BMI 25.9

Meet Mr & Mrs Average

As a nation we are guilty of severely neglecting our health on even the most fundamental level, failing on a daily basis to meet basic health and wellbeing guidelines. Mr & Mrs Average are the reason why we are a nation in crisis, wilfully neglecting our health and expecting the already overburdened NHS to pick up the pieces.

The average person in the UK sleeps for just 6.4 hours per night, which is less than the recommended 7 to 8 hours per night. It's those aged 16-24 who are most likely to meet the recommendations (20% get 7 hours sleep per night, and 25% get 8 hours per night).

Despite an awareness of the recommendations to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day (60% of people believe that they should eat '5 a day'), the average person in the UK only manages 3.4 servings. Again, women do slightly better than men (3.5 compared to 3.3).

Mr & Mrs Average also drink roughly half of the recommended amount of water each day. The average person consumes 922ml, when the recommended amount is 1.6l for women and 2l for men.

The average person in the UK takes just 71 minutes of cardiovascular exercise per week, which is less than half of the recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week. However, there's clearly some confusion about how active they should be: the average person in the UK thinks that they need just 113 minutes of cardio exercise per week, which is 37 minutes less than the minimum recommended amount.

People in the UK aren't taking enough muscle strengthening exercise, either. Although the established national health guidelines are two sessions per week, the average person does this on just 1.2 sessions in a week.

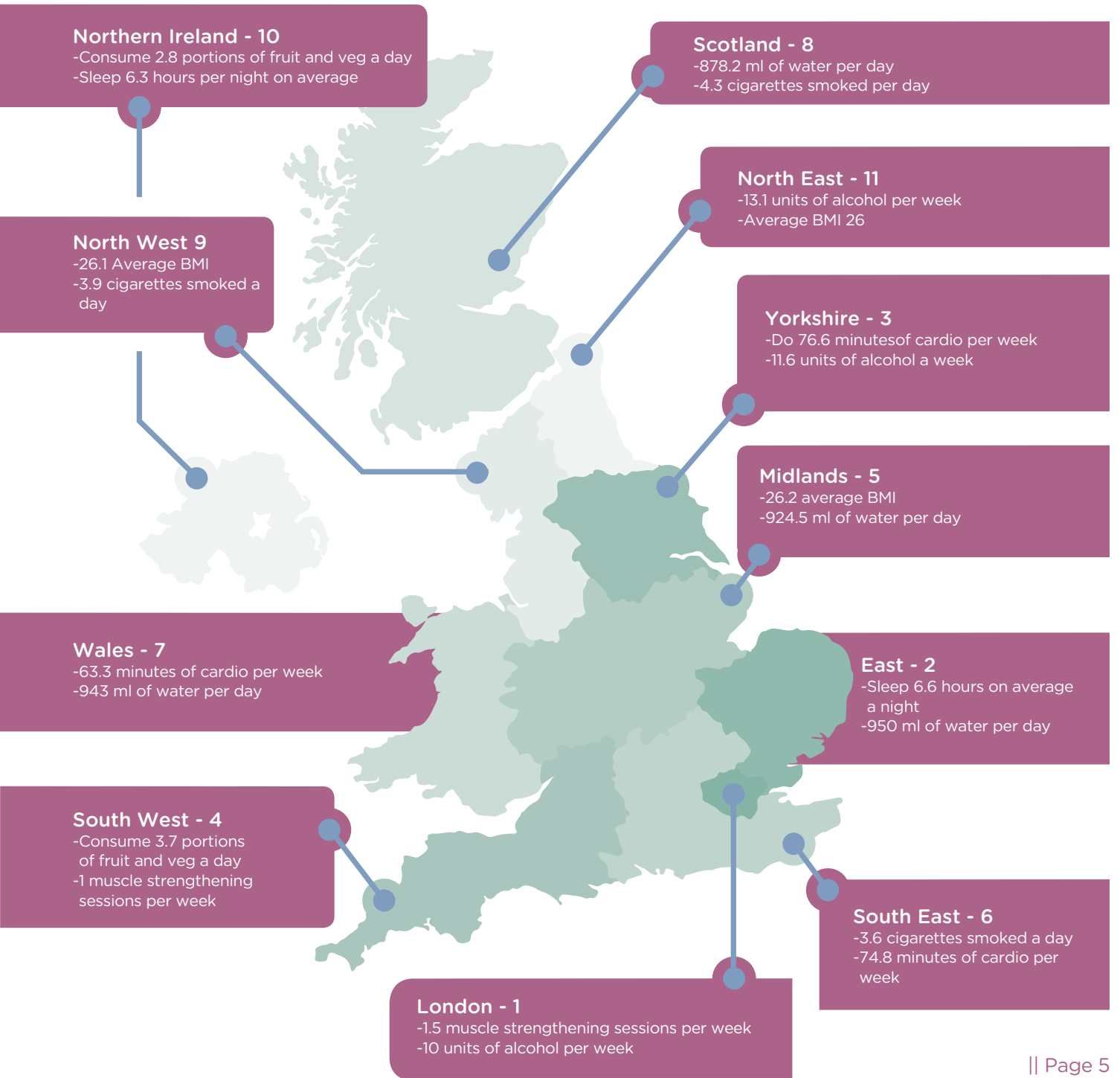
However, it appears that Mr & Mrs Average have got the message about the dangers of smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. The average person consumes 10.7 units of alcohol per week, with men drinking more than women (men drink an average of 13.6 units, women drink 8.4). More than seven out of ten people in the UK now call themselves non-smokers (72% say that they do not smoke), with women more likely to say this than men (73% compared to 70%).

All of this tells us that Mrs Average generally has a healthier lifestyle than Mr Average: she sleeps more, eats more fresh fruit and veg, and drinks and smokes less. Mr Average takes more exercise, but he's also more likely to smoke and drink, which is likely to impact upon his general health.

Regional Health Indicators

The nation was asked about a number of key health indicators ranging from how much sleep they get a night on average, to how many cigarettes they smoke a day. They were scored accordingly with the healthiest answers scored '5' and the unhealthiest responses scored '0'. These scores were then added together in order to rank the regions from the healthiest region (London) to the unhealthiest region (North East).

Map: Grading Key



A Closer Inspection of Key Health Indicators

Sleep

People from Yorkshire and Wales are the most well rested in the UK: 22% and 21%, respectively, get 8 hours sleep per night. Some people who live in the East and North East get even more sleep: 6% of people from both regions sleep for 9 hours per night, and 4% of those who live in the East get more than 9 hours per night.

Sleep deprivation is most likely to be a problem for people from Northern Ireland, where 9% of people admit to sleeping for fewer than 4 hours per night, and a further 7% manage just 4 hours.



Portions of fruit & veg

People who live in the East and South East are most likely to follow established national health guidelines and eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day (21% from both regions do this). However, some people go beyond these recommendations: 11% of people from Yorkshire say that they eat 7 portions per day.

It's clear that people from some regions struggle to meet the recommendations more than others; shockingly 7% of people from Northern Ireland and Wales don't eat any fresh fruit and veg at all. A further 20% of people from Northern Ireland only manage 1 portion per day, along with 14% of people from Wales.

A Closer Inspection of Key Health Indicators

Water per day

Although the average person in the UK fails to drink enough water to meet the established national health guidelines of 1.6l - 2l per day, those who live in Wales are most likely to do so (12%). However, a significant number of people in the UK drink less than a quarter of the recommended amount, with those from Scotland (20%), Northern Ireland (18%) and the North East (18%) drinking less than 250ml per day.

People from the South East are most likely to exceed established national health guidelines and drink more than two litres per day (10%).



Cardio per week

According to established national health guidelines, we should be undertaking cardiovascular exercise for a minimum of 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) per week. People from the South East are most likely to follow this advice, with 8% exercising for between 2 and 2.5 hours. Those from Yorkshire are most inclined to exceed this minimum requirement, with 15% exercising for more than 3.5 hours per week, along with 13% of people from Scotland.

At the other end of the spectrum, 35% of people from Wales and 32% of people from the South West and the North East admit to exercising for less than 15 minutes per week.



A Closer Inspection of Key Health Indicators

Muscle workouts per week

Although we should undertake muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days a week, barely 1 in 10 people in the UK (11%) actually manage to do so. Those who live in Northern Ireland and Scotland (16% for both regions) are most likely to meet these guidelines.

More than 6 in 10 people from the South West (62%) say that they don't do any muscle strengthening activities at all.



Alcohol consumed per week

People from the North East are UK's biggest drinkers, with 18% admitting to drinking more than 35 units of alcohol per week. Those who live in the South West and Wales are most likely to be tee-total (42% and 40%, respectively, consume 0 units per week).

In fact, most people assume that the established national health guidelines are stricter than they actually are: 23% think that they should only drink 1-7 units per week.



A Closer Inspection of Key Health Indicators

Smoking per day

More than 7 out of 10 people in the UK (72%) say that they don't smoke, with those from the South West most likely to say this (78%).

Heavy smokers, who regularly smoke over 25 cigarettes a day, are very much in the minority. They are, however, most likely to live in Northern Ireland (2%). Light smokers, who smoke up to 5 cigarettes per day, are most likely to live in London and the South East (both 3%).



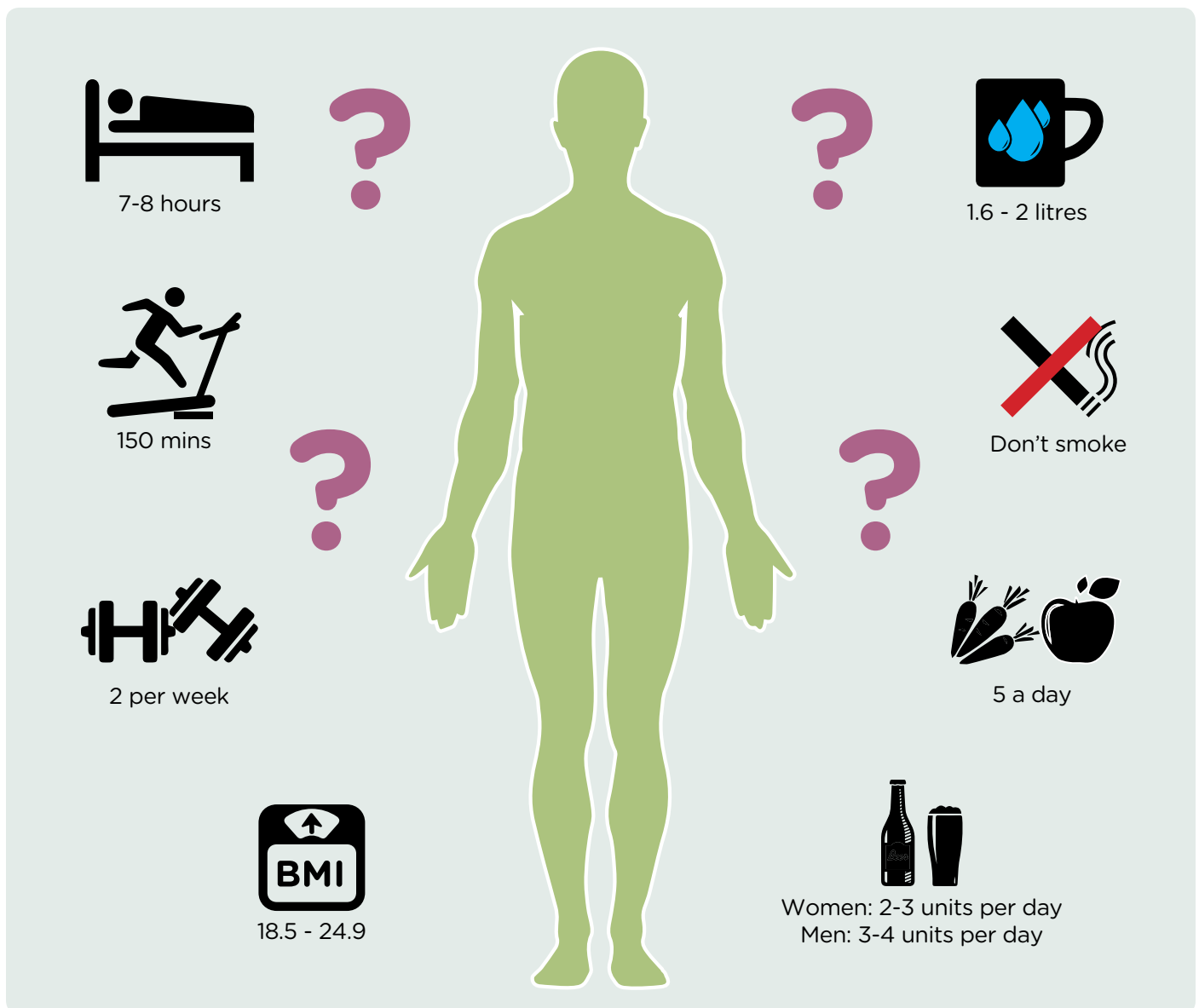
BMI

Your BMI (body mass index) is a measure of relative weight based on an individual's height and mass. More than 4 in 10 people in the UK have a BMI which falls within the healthy range of 18.5 to 24.9 (42%). People with a BMI in this range are most likely to be found in Northern Ireland (47%) and Wales (45%). A further 38% of those in the UK have a BMI of 25-30.9, which classifies them as overweight. People with a BMI in this range are most likely to live in the North East (46%).

A BMI measurement of 31-35, which classifies a person as obese, is most likely to be found in Yorkshire (14%). Those with a BMI of over 35, which is classified as morbidly obese, are most likely to be found in Wales (9%) and the South East (7%). When asked what they thought their BMI was, nearly 1 in 3 (29%) underestimated what range they were in, illustrating a lack of understanding and knowledge of BMI.



Scepticism



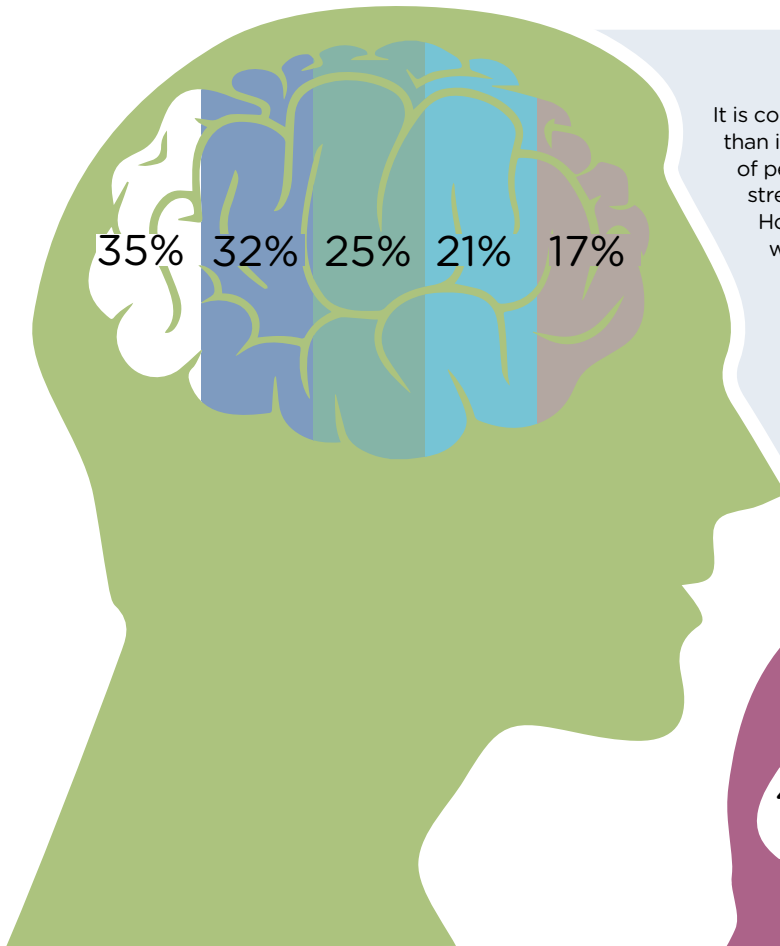
When it comes to smoking and drinking too much alcohol, it appears that most people can see the benefits and hence are in agreement with the established national health guidelines. However, surprisingly 56% of us are sceptical about BMI as a reliable way to measure obesity. This is especially worrying with regards to the younger generation with 66% of 16-24 year olds stating they are sceptical of BMI. With so many people of the UK being sceptical of it, this perhaps goes some way to explain why 29% of people in the UK underestimated their BMI.

Drinking enough water and keeping our bodies hydrated has been widely recognised medically as very beneficial for our bodies, however nearly 2 in 5 of us are sceptical of this established national health guideline. Men in general are more sceptical, with 43% stating that they were sceptical compared to 34% of women. This difference in scepticism becomes apparent again in eating '5 a day' (38% of men sceptical compared to 29% of women), getting a good night's sleep (28% of men sceptical compared to 23%) and drinking too much alcohol (29% of men being sceptical compared to 21% of women).

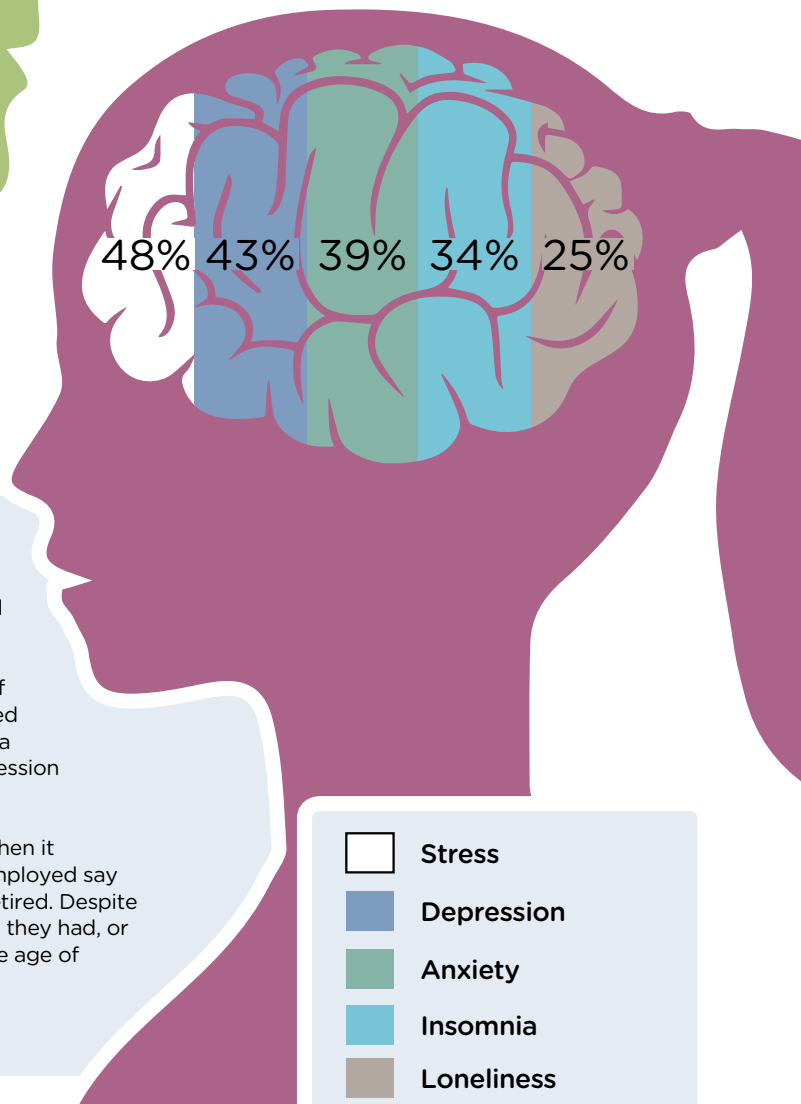
Drilling down into a regional level, Northern Ireland is the most sceptical region across the board, apart from when it comes to BMI as a health indicator for which London is the most sceptical (62% of Londoners stating this). The South East appears to be the least sceptical region with 66% not being sceptical of drinking plenty of water, 73% saying they are not sceptical of eating '5 a day' and 81% not sceptical about getting a good night sleep.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the younger generations are the most sceptical about all of the established national health guidelines; amongst the age group 16-24, 44% are sceptical of getting a good night sleep, 36% of not smoking, 38% of not drinking too much alcohol, 47% of eating '5 a day', 50% of drinking plenty of water and 66% of BMI. This significantly contrasts to those aged over 65 of which 18% said they are sceptical of getting a good night sleep, 15% of not smoking, 20% of not drinking too much alcohol, 27% of eating '5 a day', 34% of drinking plenty of water and 50% of BMI. This is a worrying contrast as this generation arguably has had the most education when it comes to nutrition and health; however it is clear from this that they either do not believe in all they have been told or choose to ignore this established health advice.

Gender Differences



It is commonly said that life today is more complicated than in the past, but what are the impacts of this? 42% of people say they do suffer or have suffered from stress, 38% from depression and 33% from anxiety. However, it appears that women's emotional wellbeing is more at risk with more women admitting to suffering from certain emotional wellbeing issues than men. The biggest difference between men and women is with regards to anxiety for which 25% of men said they do or had suffered from it, compared to 39% of women.



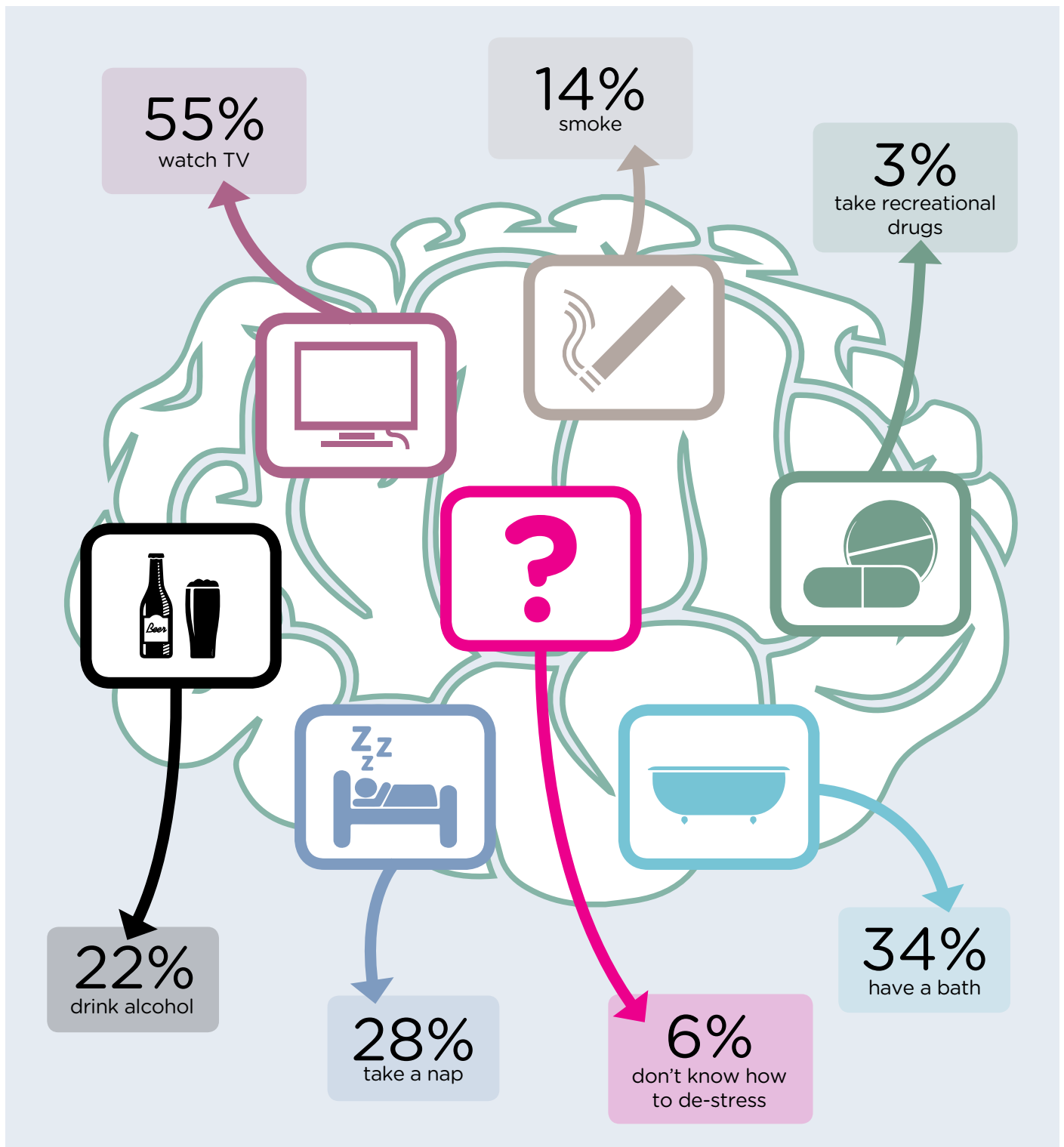
When it comes to recognising the signs of stress, constant worrying was identified as the top sign of stress (69% stated this) followed by anxious thoughts (67%). Nearly 41% of women stated that they thought nausea was a sign of stress compared to only 27% of men. This was true in most signs of stress with more women correctly identifying them compared to men - 71% of women said an inability to concentrate was a sign compared to 57% of men and 63% of women said depression compared to 58% of men.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, employment status has an impact when it comes to emotional wellbeing. 48% of those who are self-employed say they suffer from stress compared to 31% of those who are retired. Despite recent media interest, only 14% of those who are retired said they had, or have ever, suffered from loneliness with 11% of those over the age of 65 agreeing with this.

- Stress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Loneliness

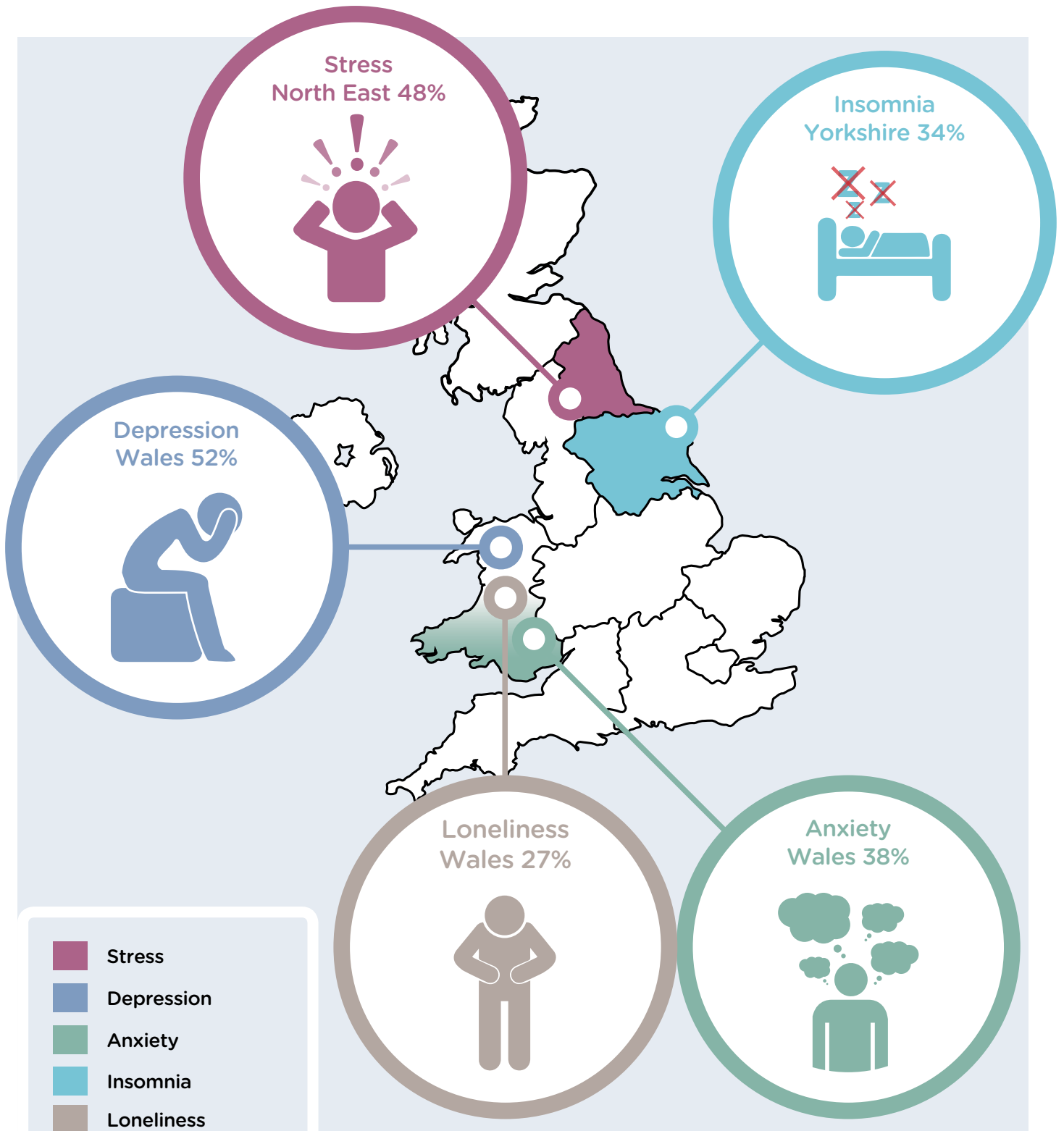
Methods Used to De-stress

In the modern day, many would say learning how to de-stress is very important and across the nation it appears we use a range of methods and activities to do so. The majority of us will watch TV (55%) however women are more likely to use friends as a way to de-stress with 36% of women saying they would spend time with their friends compared to only 26% of men. Worryingly, just over 1 in 5 (22%) of people in the UK drink alcohol to de-stress, rising to 27% for men compared to 18% of women. However, perhaps the most concerning finding is that 3% admit to taking recreational drugs to de-stress.



Regional Emotional Wellbeing

Focusing in on the regional differences, Wales comes out as the region with the lowest emotional wellbeing with the highest amount of people compared to the other regions admitting to having suffered from or currently suffering from depression (52%), anxiety (38%) and loneliness (27%). However, the North East appears to be the most stressed region with 48% of people saying that they have suffered from stress.



Historical Perceptions of Health

We asked the UK to rate how healthy they thought the UK was in the past, now and in the future.

According to the nation, we are at the tipping point with our health, with many predicting that we will be healthier in the near future and reminiscing that we were healthier in the past. The research shows that we seem to believe that gradually the health of the UK is set to improve as we move forward in the future. When looking at a timeline of 50 years ago through to 20 years in the future, it appears many people now feel we are currently at the most unhealthy point as a nation along that timeline.

1994 - 2004

70% of people believe that the UK was healthy back in the early 1990s with 65% of those aged 16-24 agreeing with this compared to 72% of those aged 55 to 64. According to the research, between 1994 and 2004, there was a perceived decline in the UK's health with a drop of 20% to only 50% believing that the UK was healthy 10 years ago. Again women appear to have a more negative view on the UK's recent health with 73% of women saying that they thought the UK was healthy 20 years ago compared to only 51% stating the same for 10 years ago, a reduction of 22%.

2019

Looking forward, 35% of people said they think that the UK will be healthy in 5 years' time. Those aged 16-24 are one of the most optimistic age groups with 45% saying they think the UK will be healthy in 5 years' time; London is also the most optimistic region with 43% saying they think that the UK will be healthy in 5 years' time.

1964

It appears that even though we arguably had less access to information about our health, fitness and nutrition 50 years ago, 72% of people believe we were healthy compared to only 29% who feel that we are healthy nowadays. With 75% of women believing that the UK was healthy 50 years ago compared to only 26% of women who believe the UK is healthy now, this begs the question were we actually healthier back then or are we looking at this through rose-tinted spectacles? Interestingly, this difference is not as clear from a male perspective with 66% of men believing that the UK was healthy 50 years ago compared to 32% of men who think that the UK is healthy now.

2014

The view of the UK's health is currently bleak with half of people surveyed think the UK is not very healthy and about 1 in 5 (21%) think the UK is not at all healthy. Those in Northern Ireland are the most positive about our current health outlook with 14% stating they think that the UK was very healthy.

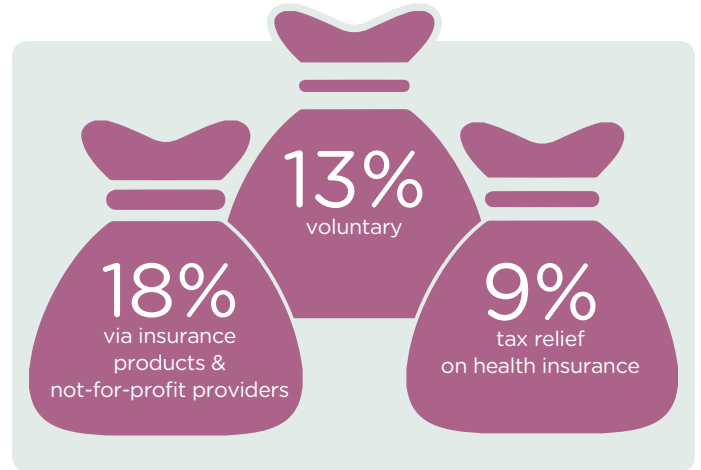
2034

Fast forward 20 years and 48% believe that the UK will be healthy with London again being the most optimistic with 55% agreeing with this. However the South West are the most negative with 62% of people still saying they think the UK will be unhealthy.

The Future of our Healthcare

Two thirds of people (66%) now believe that the public should pay more in order to support the NHS. More than a third (34%) believe this is necessary in order to continue to provide the basic healthcare expected in the UK, and a further 31% believe this should happen because we have an ageing population to support.

Almost 1 in 5 people think that not-for-profit healthcare providers could save the NHS: that's 18% who think the public should make compulsory payments via insurance products and not-for-profit providers, and a further 13% think that these payments should be voluntary, by making a contribution to a not-for-profit provider for some services.



More than one in five people (22%) believe that individuals should pay different amounts for health services, depending on how they actively manage their health. However, the nation is divided when it comes to supporting people who are obese, excessively drink alcohol, take recreational drugs or smoke: 49% think that the NHS shouldn't fund people who smoke; 48% think that the NHS shouldn't fund people who are obese; 49% think that the NHS shouldn't fund people who drink excessively; and 49% think that the NHS shouldn't fund people who take recreational drugs.



Fortunately, most people do actively take care of their health: 47% see their GP 1-2 times per year, and 25% see their GP 3-5 times per year. More than four in ten (41%) will normally accept the advice/diagnosis of their GP, but will question them if they are unsure, 35% will research their symptoms on the internet, and 13% will ensure that their doctor checks all their symptoms in great detail. If they are not happy with the care provided, one in ten people will ask to see a different doctor.



About Benenden Health

Benenden Health is a mutual, not-for-profit friendly society run for members, providing access to a range of discretionary healthcare services to a UK-wide membership.

We aim to complement, not replace, basic NHS provision – and work to provide a holistic solution to members' healthcare needs, where appropriate.

Benenden Health was founded in 1905, 42 years before the NHS, and has always relied on members' contributions to improve the range of services we offer.

Over the last 100 years, Benenden has evolved and whilst the services will adapt, the ethos will never change because our members are at the heart of what we do.

Benenden Health helps you when you need it most, and others when you don't.

www.benenden.co.uk

About the Research

The research was conducted by Opinion Matters using an online fieldwork methodology. Opinion Matters surveyed 4,123 UK adults between 13 and 25 of June 2014. Respondents were invited to participate from a nationally representative online access panel. All research carried out adhered to the latest Market Research Society Codes of Conduct and is fully compliant with the Data Protection Registrar, ensuring respondent anonymity.

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