



# Attitudes to Counselling & Psychotherapy

## General Public Study

March 2015

Prepared for:



Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

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Confidential



# Introduction

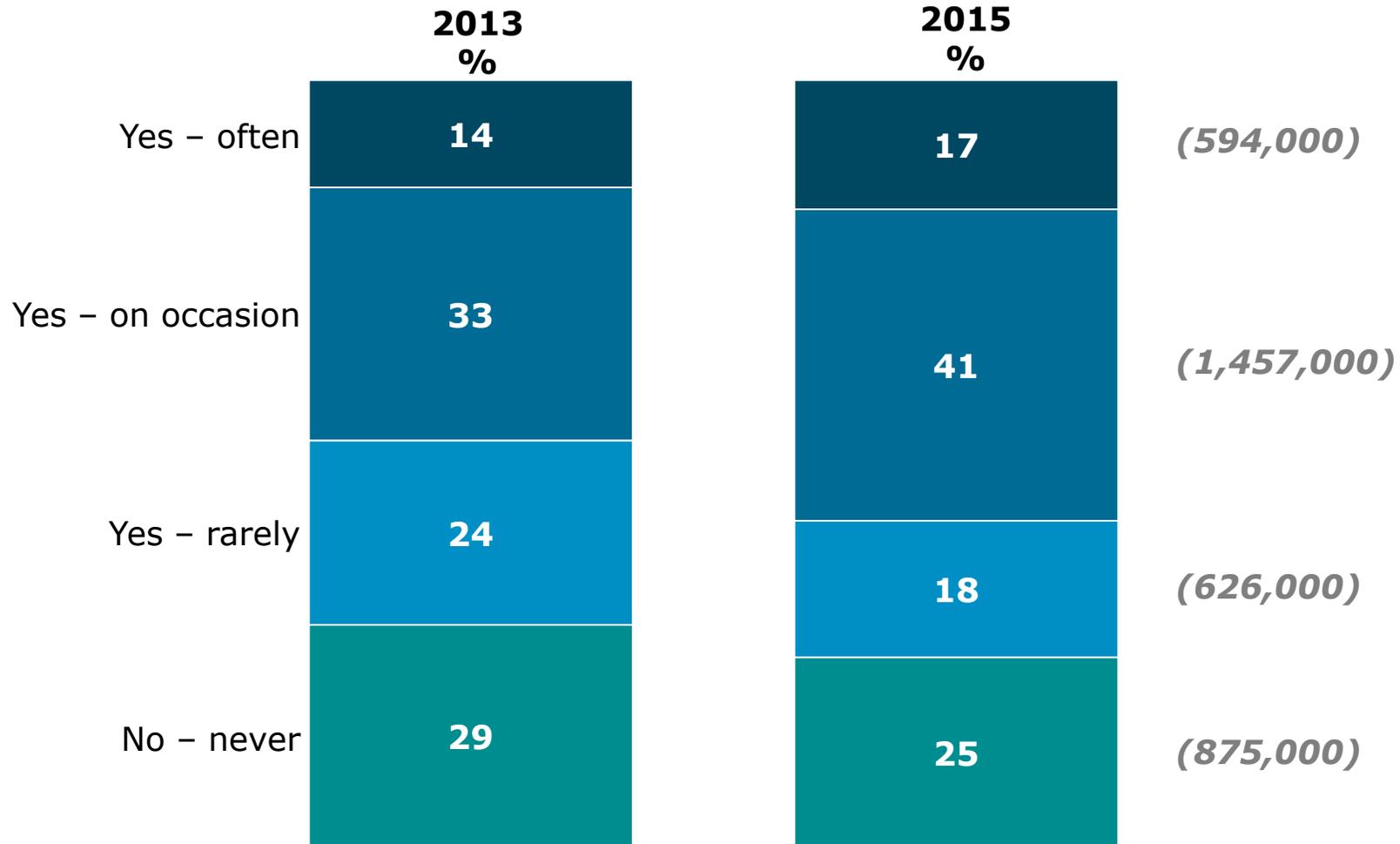
- This report details the findings from a general public survey about attitudes to counselling and psychotherapy.
- The research was undertaken for the Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, and was fielded by Behaviour & Attitudes.
- 1,016 adults aged 16 and over were interviewed as part of Behaviour & Attitudes February No.2 Barometer Survey. Barometer is undertaken face-to-face and in-home, and represents the full adult population in respect of gender, age, social class, region and area.
- In some instances, the 2015 research update questions asked on a previous survey undertaken in 2013.
- A companion project, completed at the same time but separately reported, involves a members survey undertaken among the IACP's membership. This will be reported shortly.

# Findings



# Incidence & frequency of experiencing stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016/3,551,000



The incidence and frequency of stress experience have both risen by a statistically significant margin over two years. 3 out of 4 experience stress and 1 in 6 now do so regularly.

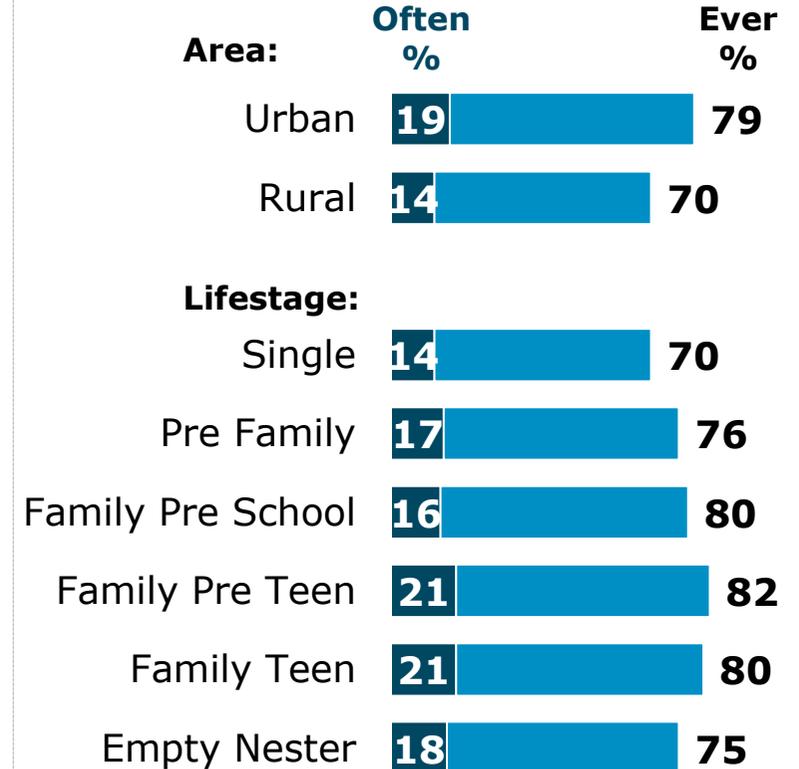
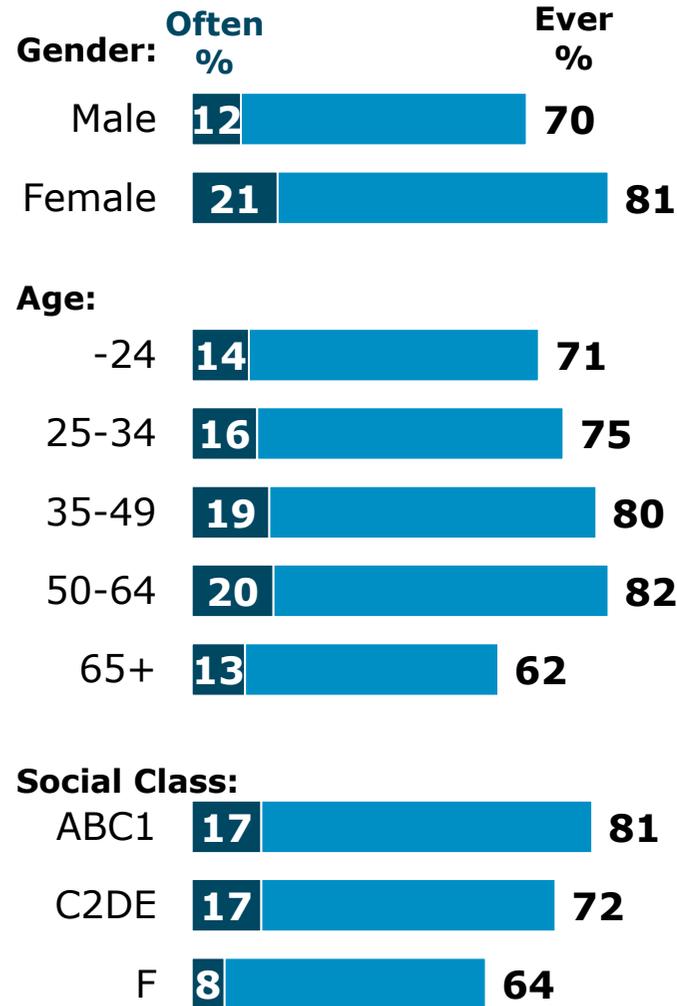
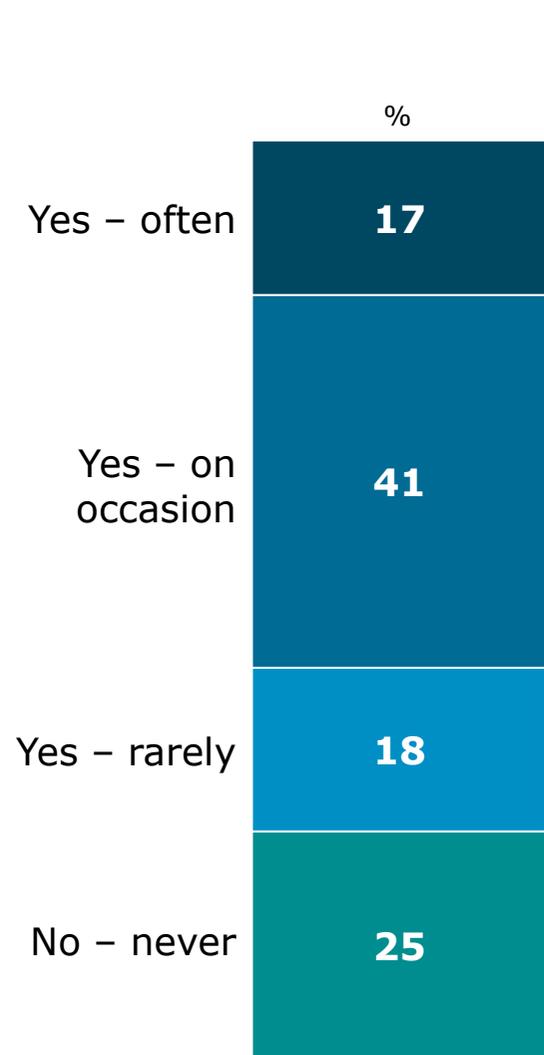


Q.1

Do you ever feel stressed?

# Stress experience x demographics

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



3 out of 4 ever experience stress, but 1 in 6 regularly encounter it. It is more pronounced female, middle class, urban and in the family lifestages.

# Segmentation by stress: key groups

20%

## Work Stress

**59% are Male**

Present from 25-64, but over indexes most **25-34s**.

24% are **Higher Professional/Managerial (AB)**.

52% **live in a home with 2 earners** (as opposed to 34% of the population).

8%

## Relationship Stress

**61% are Female**

31% under 25 (vs. 15% of population).

47% **Single** and 12% **Pre-family** (vs. 38% & 6% of population).

24%

## Money Worries

46% have **kids** (vs. 34% of population).

25% are **Family Pre-Teen** (vs. 14% of population).

More often **part-time working housewives**, or **unemployed**.

14%

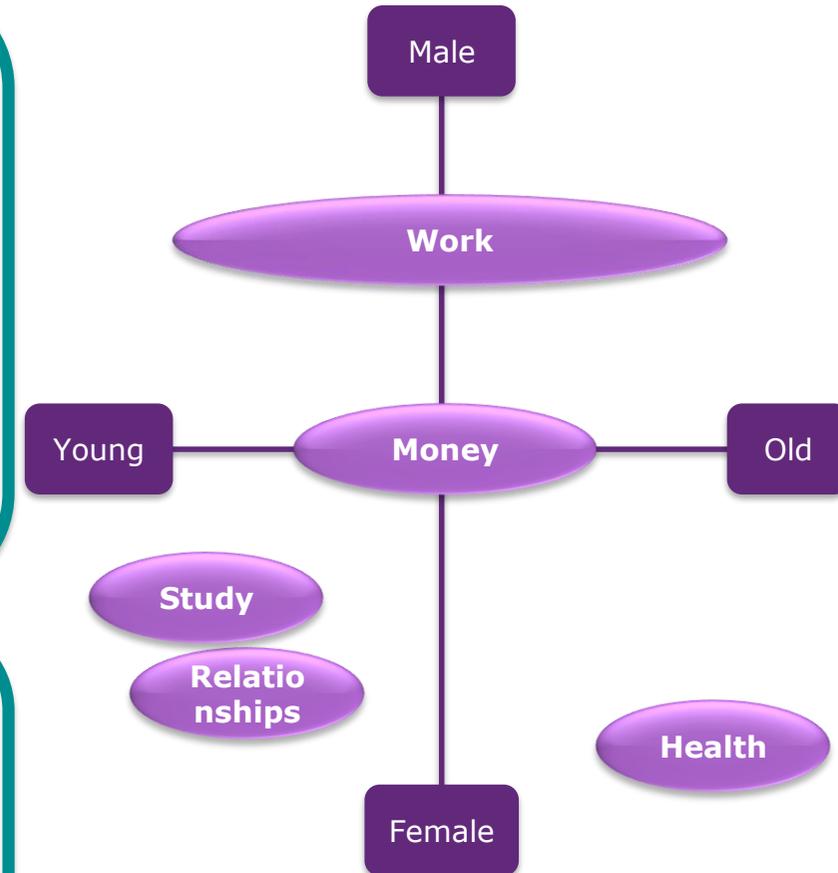
## Health Worries

**63% are female**

70% **over 50**.

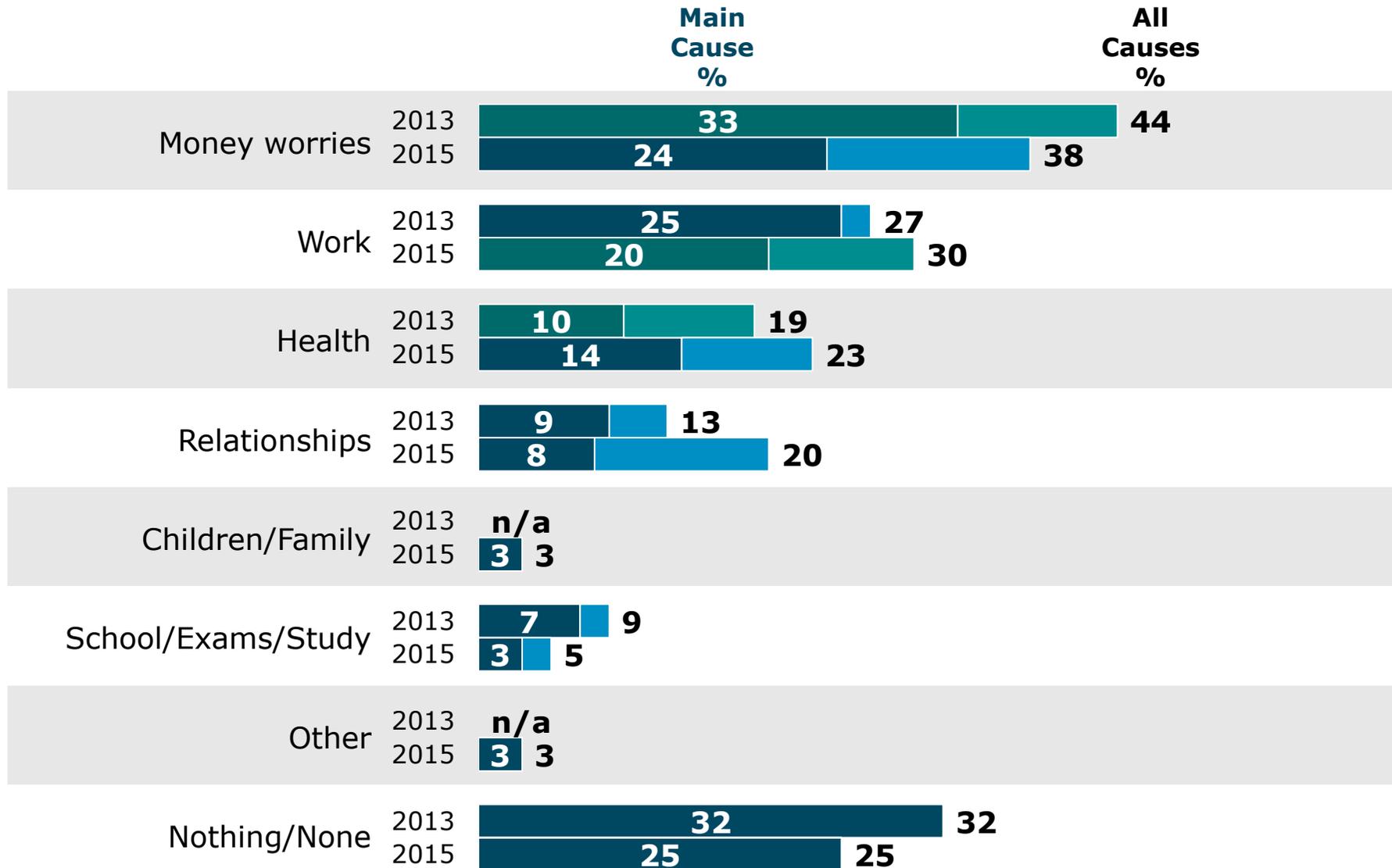
41% **Empty Nester** (vs. 25% of population).

42% **retired**.



# Causes of Stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



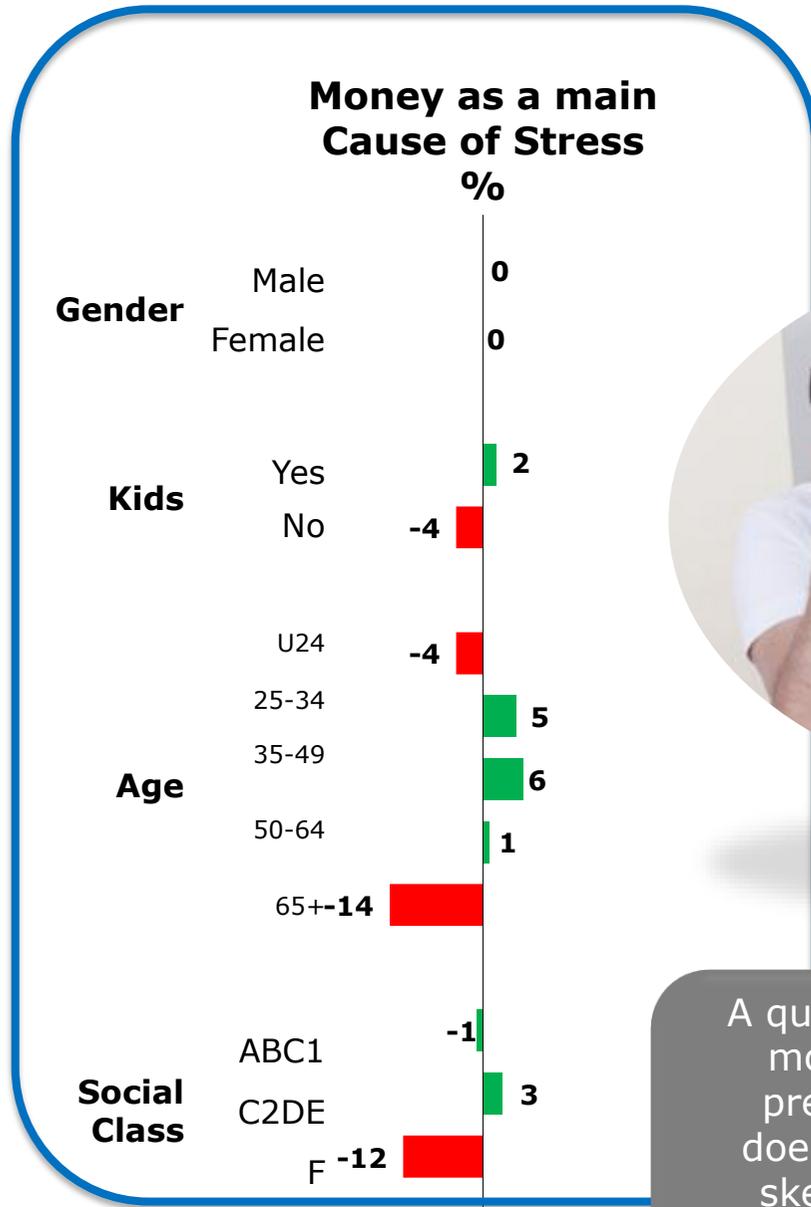
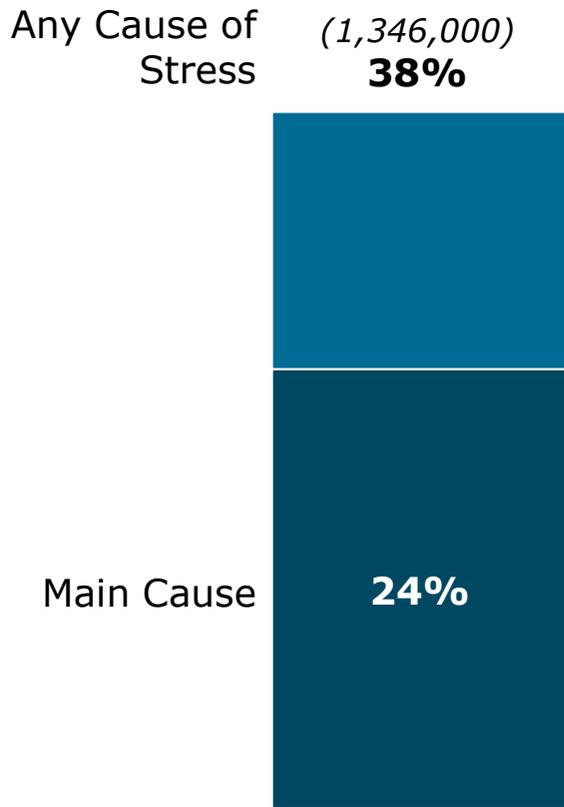
Money remains the top cause of stress, but with work, health and relationships close behind. Interestingly however, stress is less singularly attributed to issues related to money than it had been two years ago. As the recession ends other issues appear to bubble to the surface.



Q.2a Which of the following ever cause you stress?  
Q.2b And what is the main cause of stress in your life?

# Money as a cause of stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



A quarter of all adults are stressed by money and this is generally more prevalent between 35 and 64, but doesn't have a characteristic gender skew. Parents are more financially stressed generally. Money remains the top issue but has reduced since 2013.

Year	Category	Percentage
2013	Any Cause	48%
	Main Cause	33%

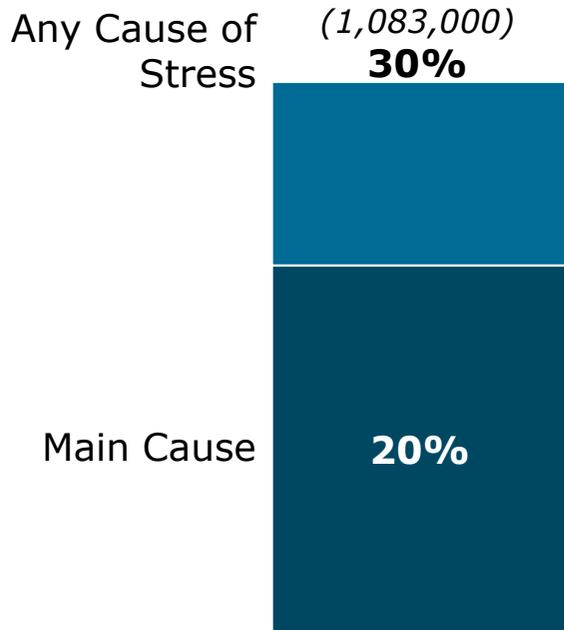


Q.2a  
Q.2b

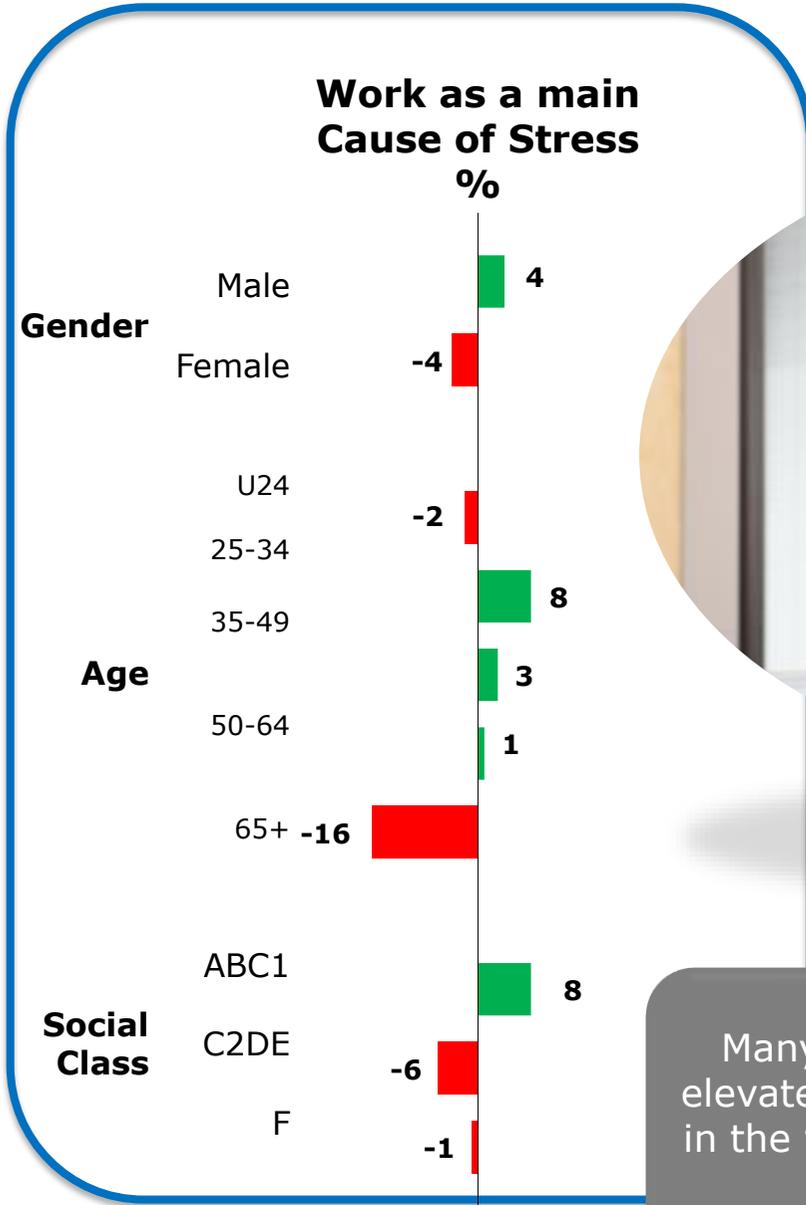
Which of the following ever cause you stress?  
And what is the main cause of stress in your life?

# Work as a cause of stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



2013	Any Cause	27%
	Main Cause	25%



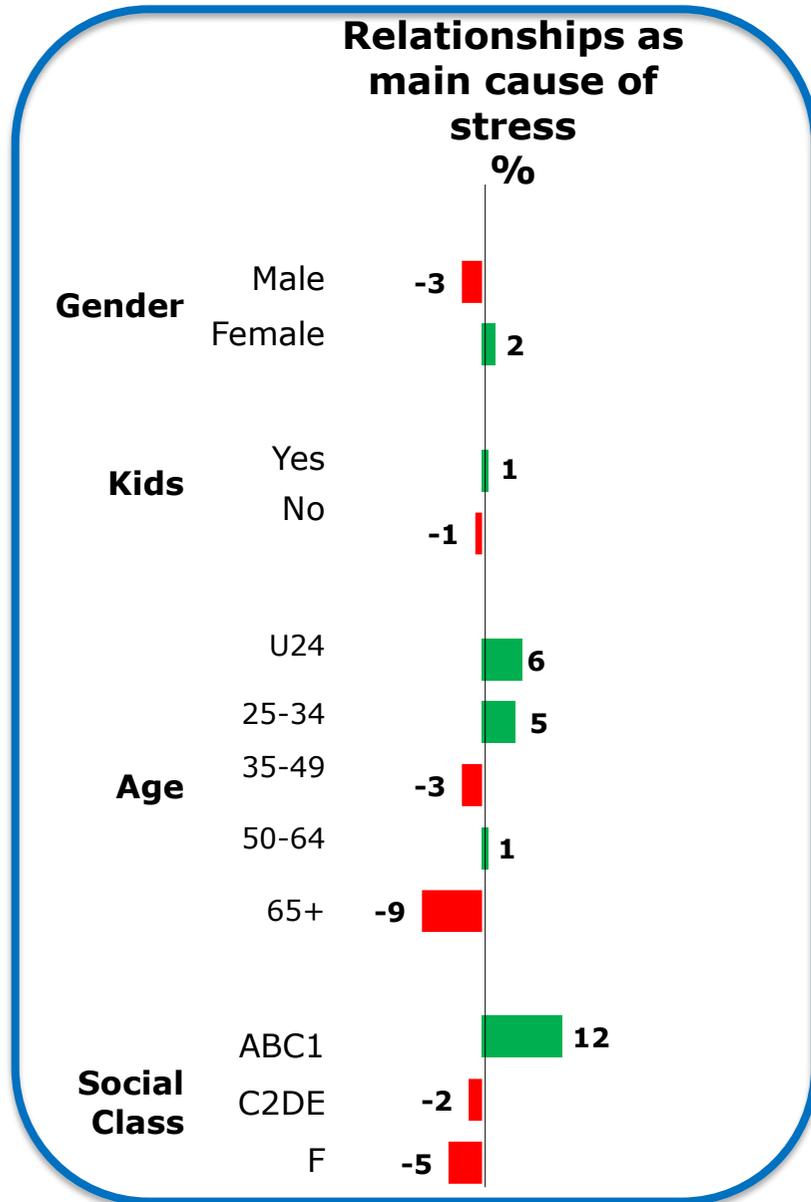
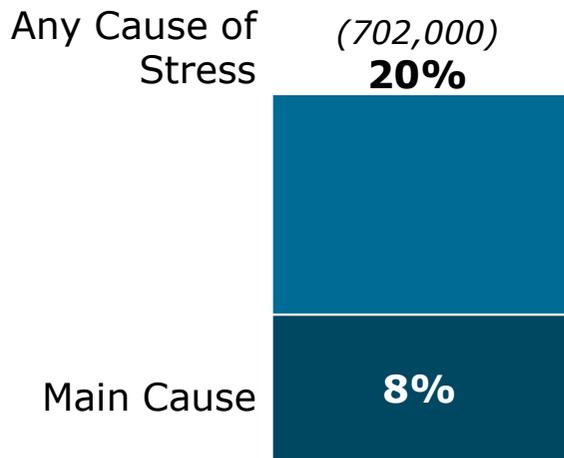
Many are stressed by work and this is elevated among those groups more active in the workforce. Much more a white than a blue collar phenomenon.



Q.2a Which of the following ever cause you stress?  
Q.2b And what is the main cause of stress in your life?

# Relationships as a cause of stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Mainly relationships are a cause of stress under the age of 35 and moreso for women. Likelihood of claiming this is much greater middle class.

2013	Any Cause	13%
	Main Cause	9%



Q.2a  
Q.2b

Which of the following ever cause you stress?  
And what is the main cause of stress in your life?

# Main causes of stress

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

	Total	Gender		Kids		Age					Social Class		
		Male	Female	Yes	No	-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+	ABC1	C2DE	F
Base:	1016	483	533	345	667	156	194	295	227	144	444	505	67
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Money worries	24	24	24	32	20	20	29	30	25	10	23	27	12
Work	20	24	16	24	18	18	28	23	21	4	28	14	19
Health	14	10	17	8	17	3	3	10	20	38	10	16	18
Relationships	8	7	10	7	9	17	7	8	6	5	9	8	10
Children/Family	3	1	4	5	2	-	2	4	3	2	3	3	-
School/Exams/Study	3	2	4	2	3	17	1	-	-	-	3	3	2
Other	3	2	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	-
Nothing/None	25	30	21	19	29	23	27	21	23	38	21	27	40

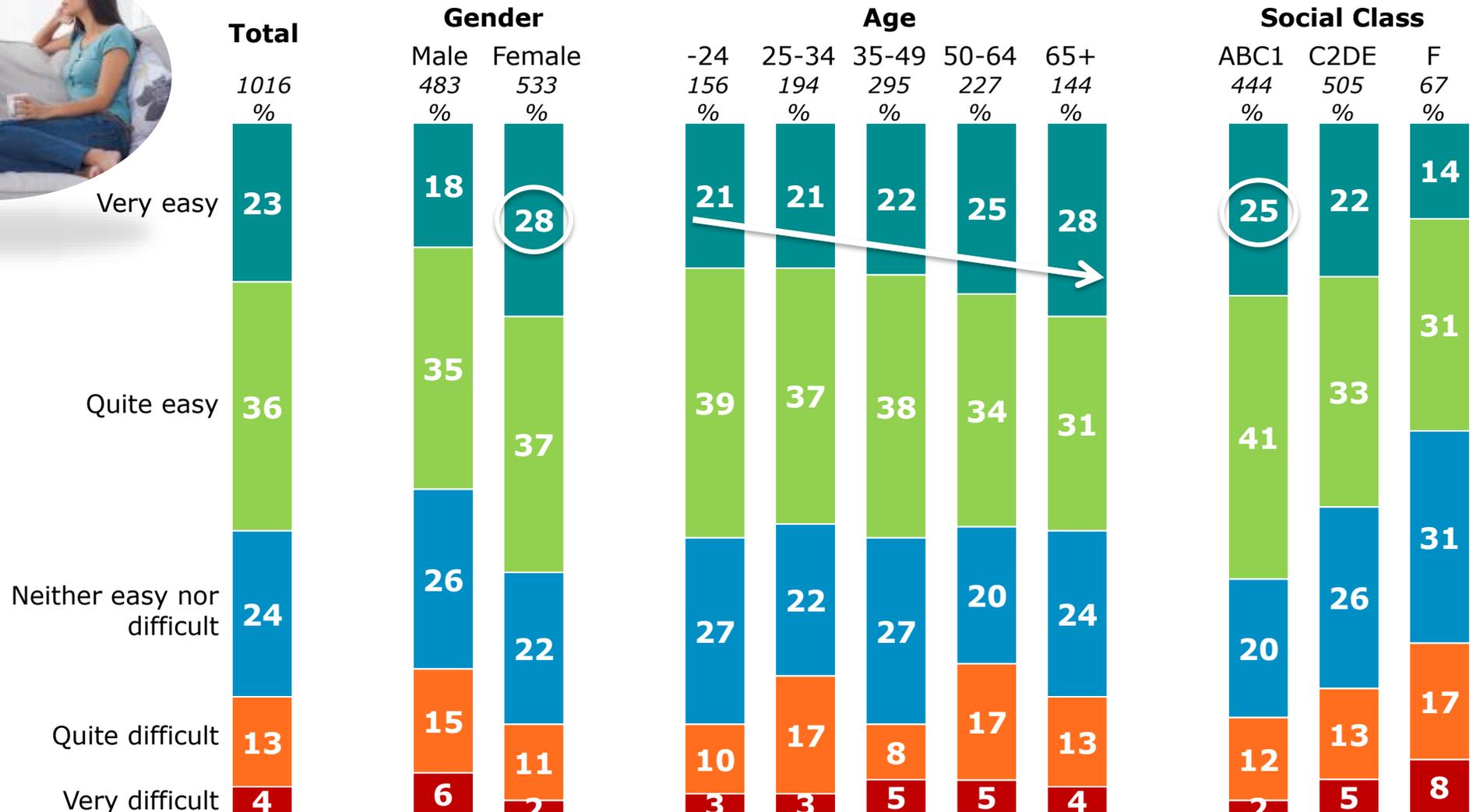
About a quarter have no significant cause of stress; these tend to be older, those without kids, and from farming backgrounds. Work and money are the key factors between 25 and 50. Relationships and study feature significantly under 25.



Q.2b And what is the main cause of stress in your life?

# Ability to discuss personal problems

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Women, older adults and those from middle class backgrounds are better able to discuss personal problems.

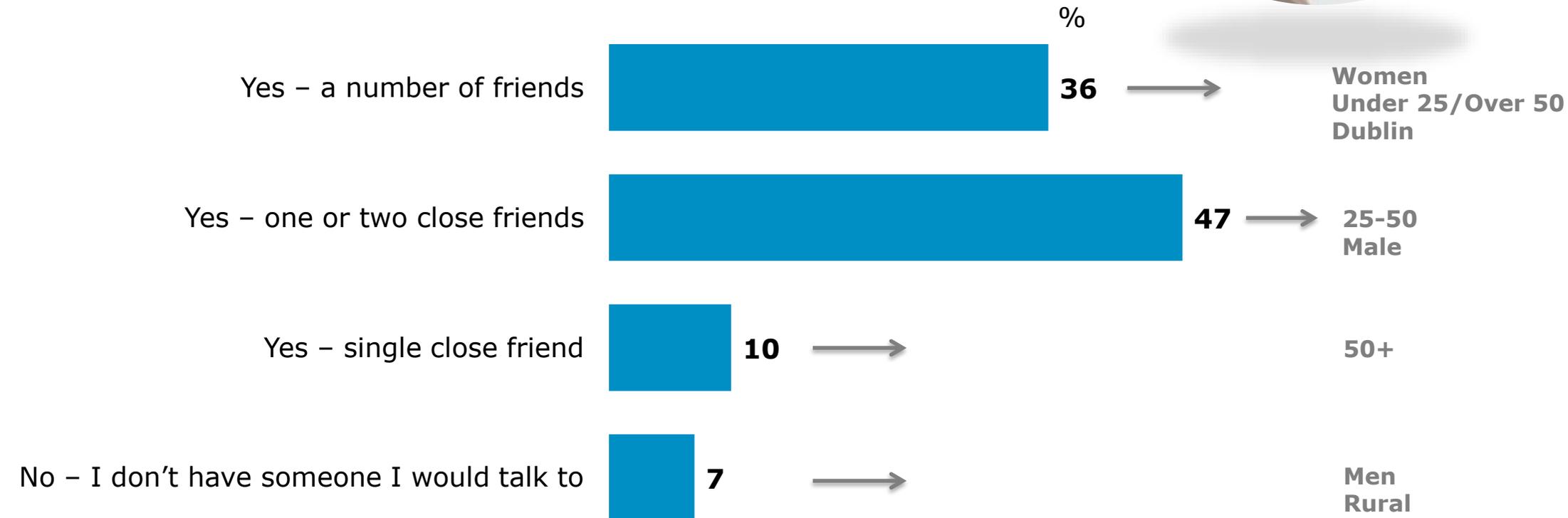


Q.3

Would you say that you are someone who finds it easy or difficult to discuss personal problems, or any worries or issues that you may be experiencing?

# Someone to share with?

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Women tend to claim a bigger circle of friends that they can talk to whereas men appear to have more limited resources.

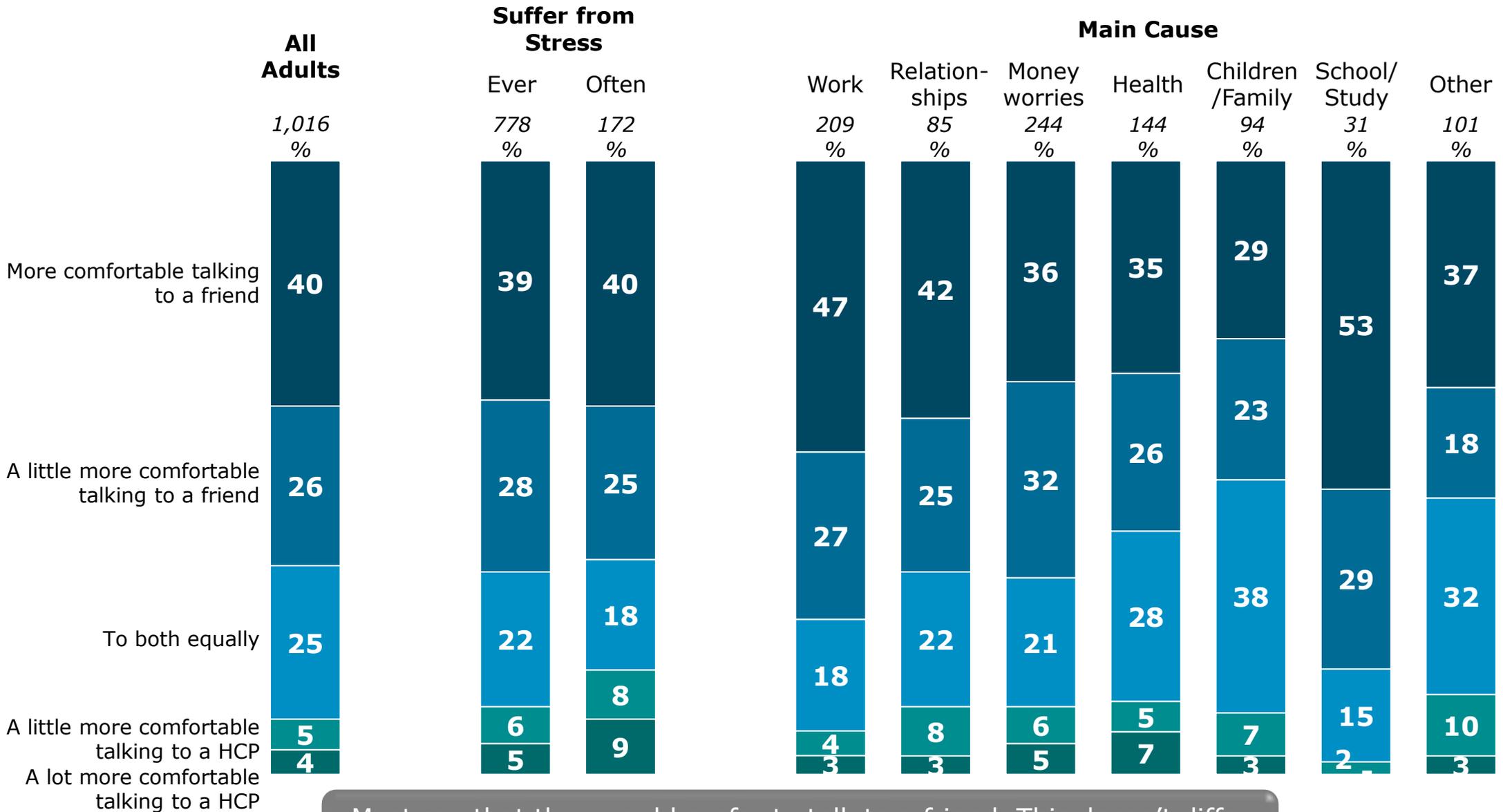


Q.4

Do you have one, or indeed more, close friends that you would open up to and confide in if you felt that you were depressed or in some way mentally low?

# Prefer a friend or counsellor?

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



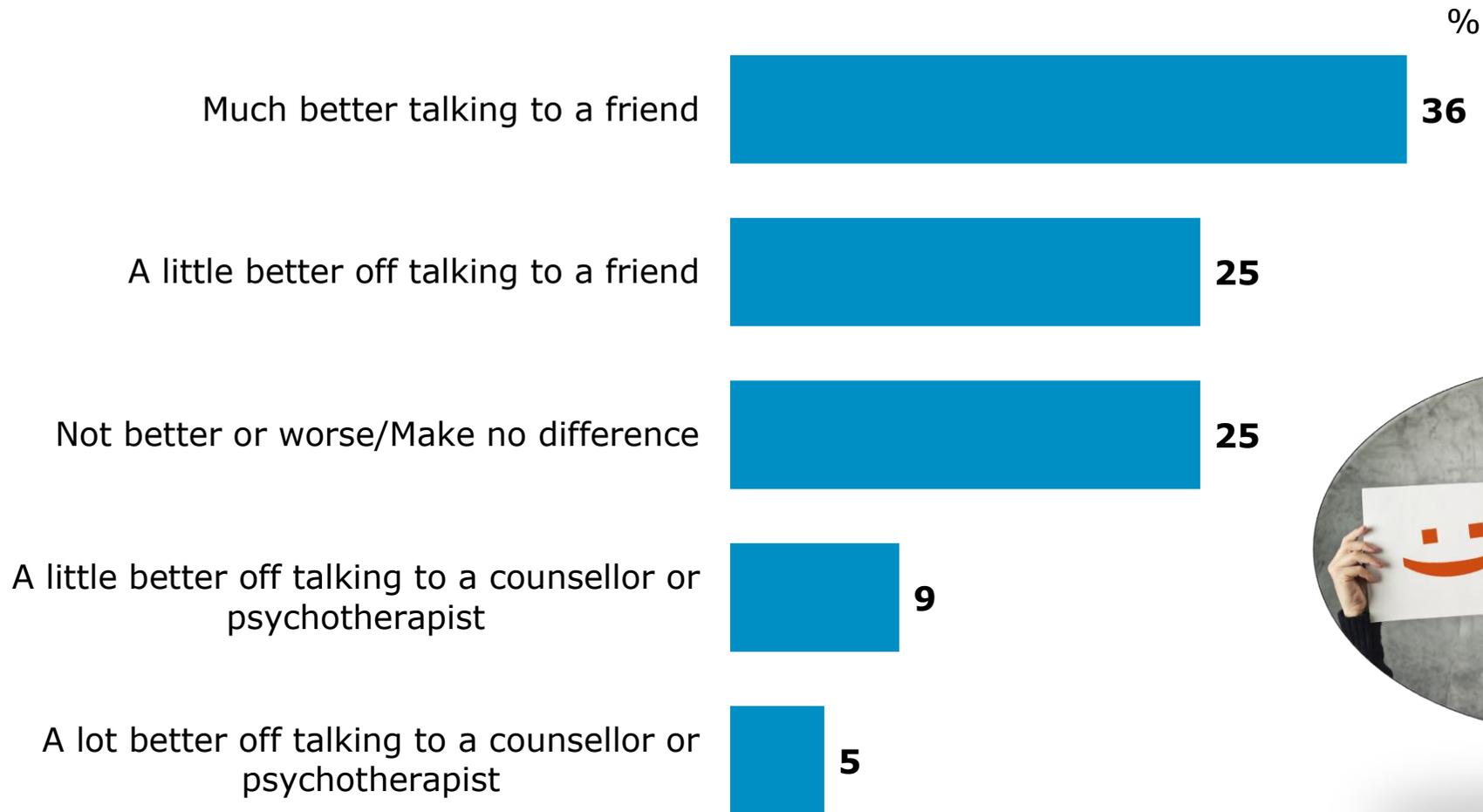
Most say that they would prefer to talk to a friend. This doesn't differ by cause or frequency of stress.



Q.5 Would you be more comfortable to talk to a friend or someone you know well, or alternatively, to a trained counsellor, in the event that you felt yourself becoming down or depressed?

# Better off talking to a friend or a healthcare professional?

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



About 14% acknowledge that they might be better off talking to a counsellor and as many as a third indicate that they might be better off, OR that it makes no difference. We can interpret this as 39% having some predisposition to talk to a healthcare professional.

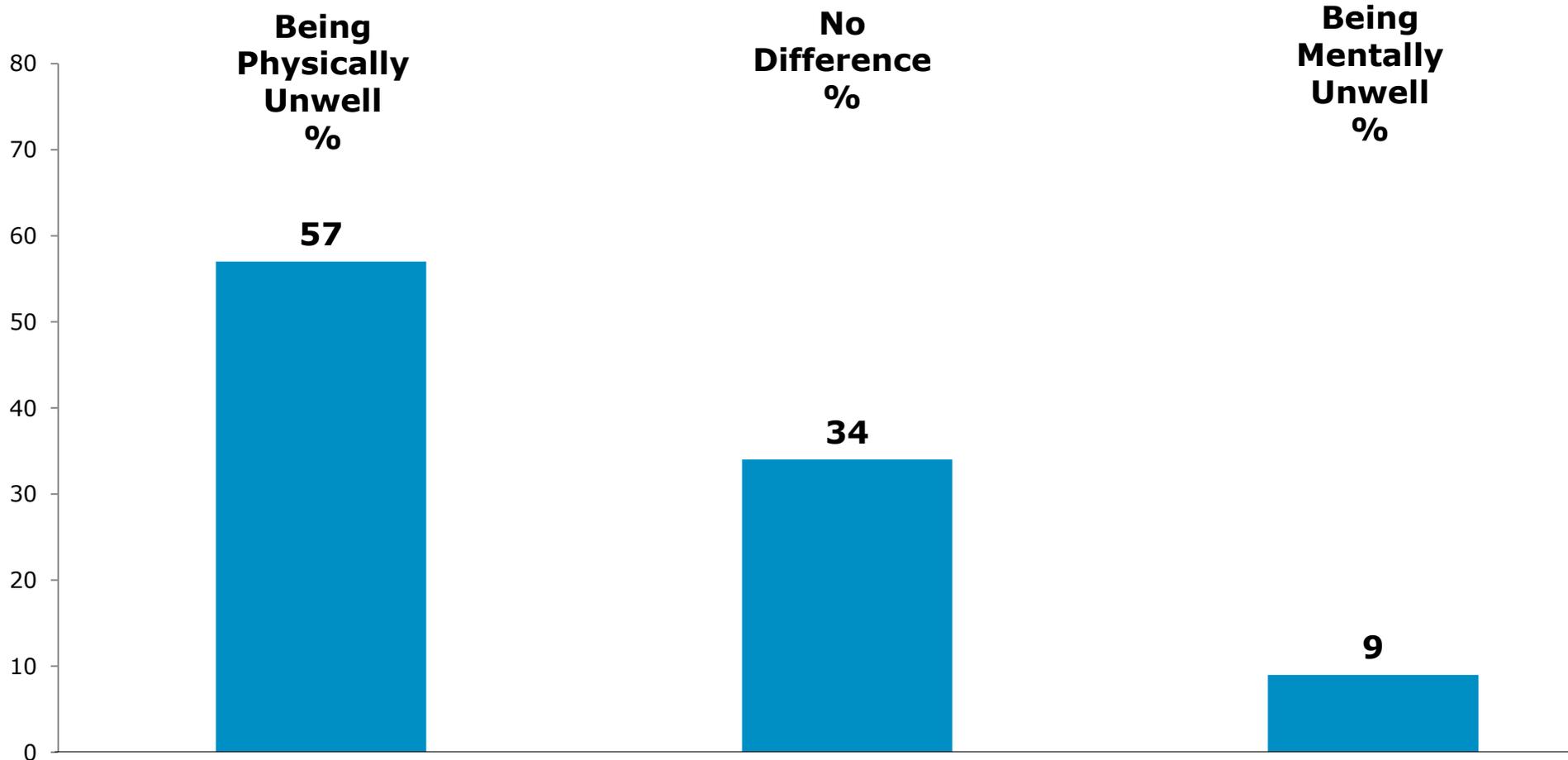


Q.6

And do you imagine that you would be better off to talk to a close friend, or alternatively to a counsellor or psychotherapist, in the event that you were down or depressed?

# What type of illness is more acceptable?

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Physical illness is a lot easier to admit to....less than 1 in 10 are comfortable with the idea of a mental illness. The margin of "preference" of physical over mental ill health is 7 to 1.



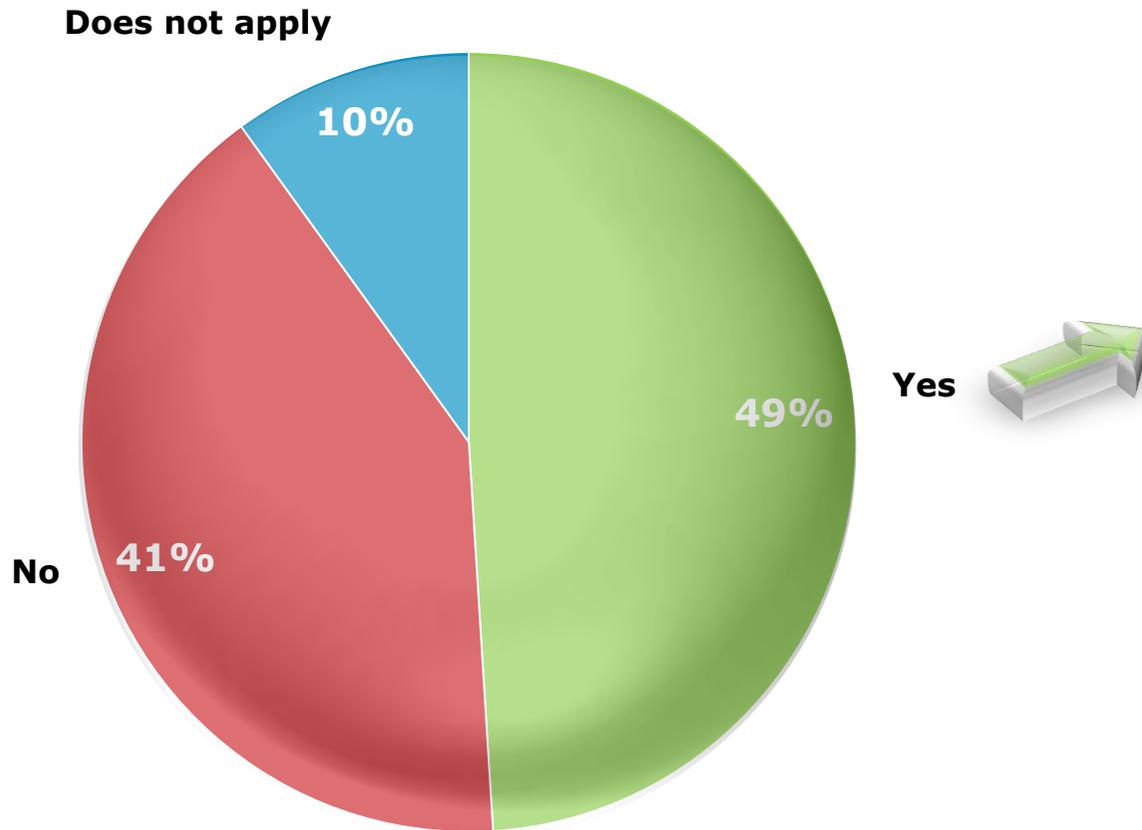
Q.7

Do you think it is easier to admit to being physically unwell or indeed to being mentally unwell?

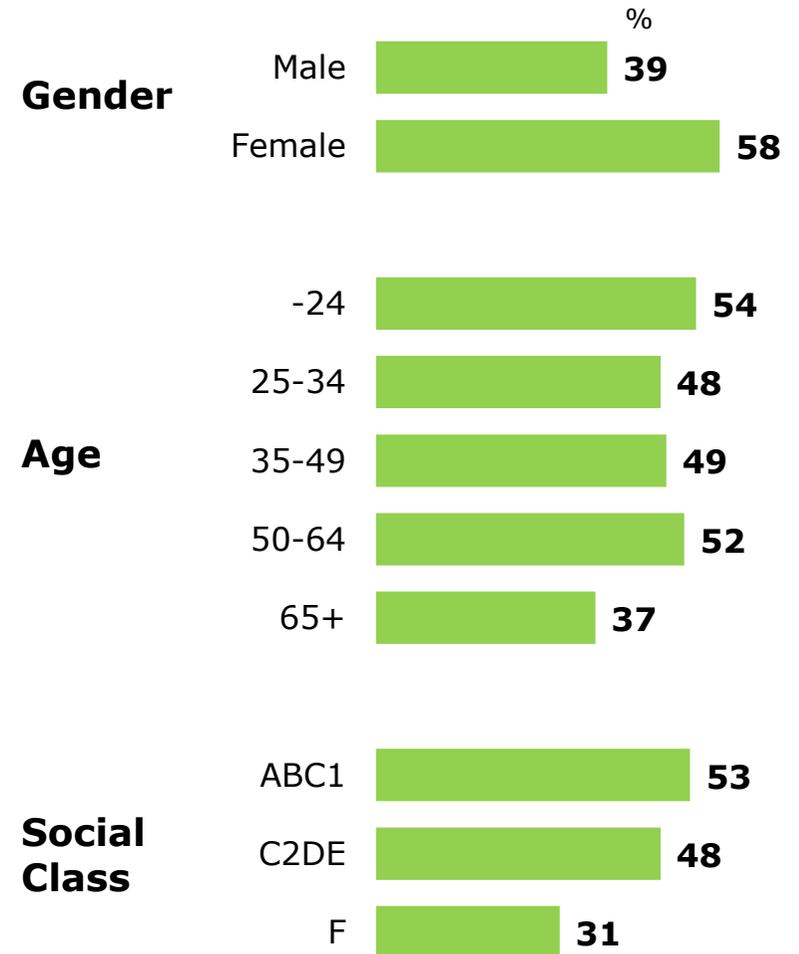
# Ever talked to friend about stress or depression

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

## Ever Told a Friend you were stressed or depressed



## Talked to a Friend



Almost half have admitted stress or depression to a friend, with women consistently more likely to have done so.

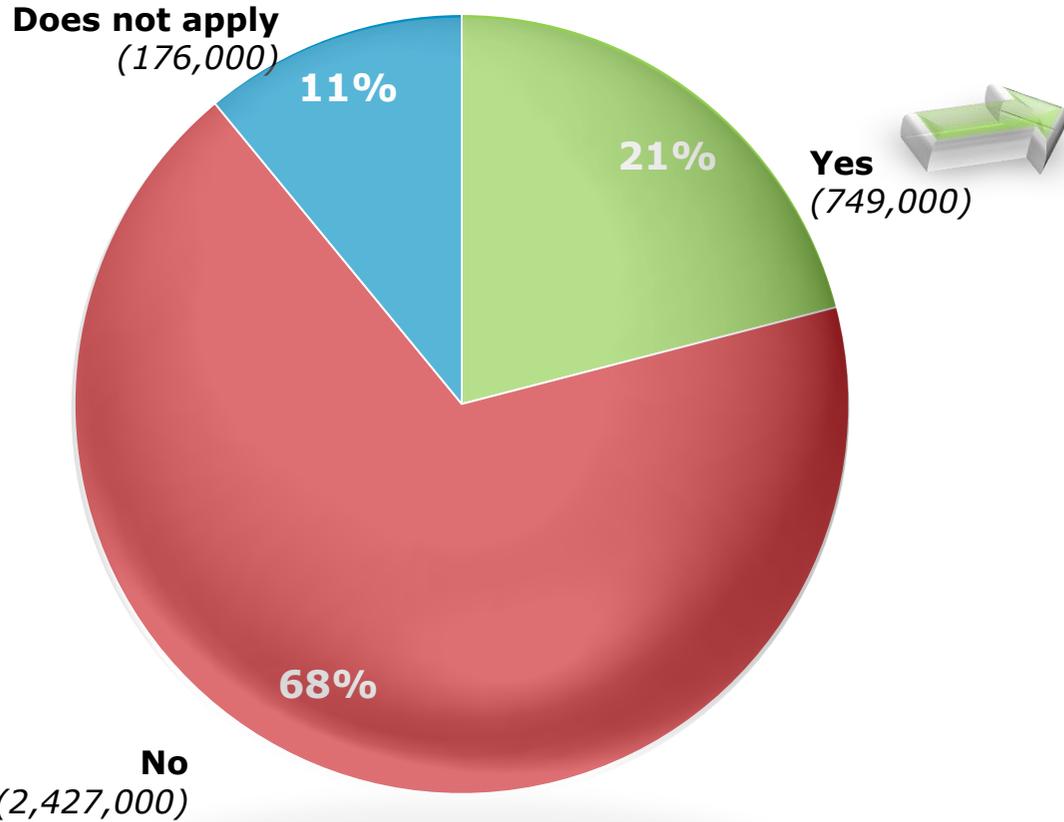


Q.8a Have you ever talked to a friend and told them you were stressed or depressed?

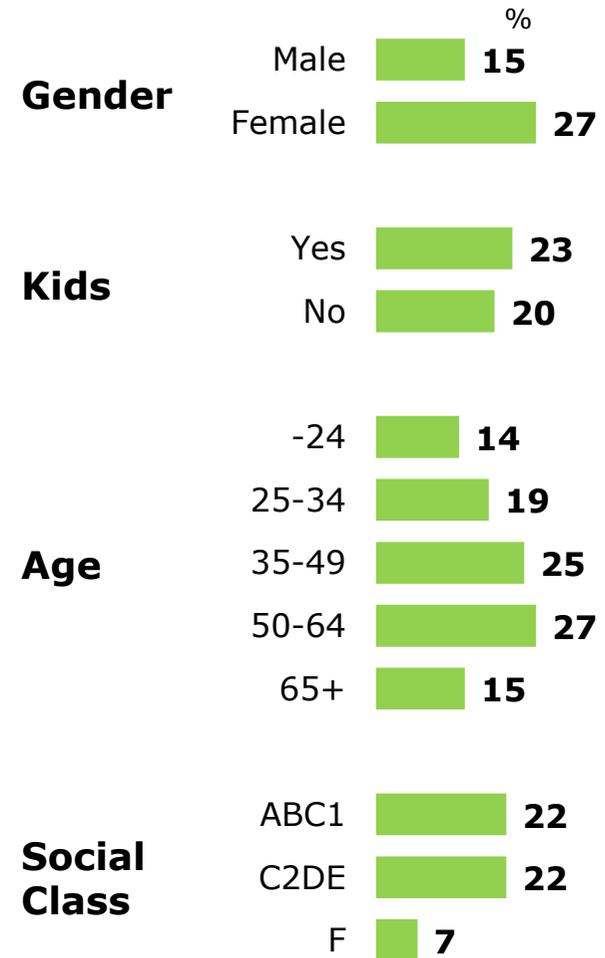
# Ever talked to doctor about stress or depression

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

Ever Told a Doctor you were stressed or depressed



Talked to a Doctor



Far fewer, just a fifth, say they have admitted depression or stress to a Doctor.

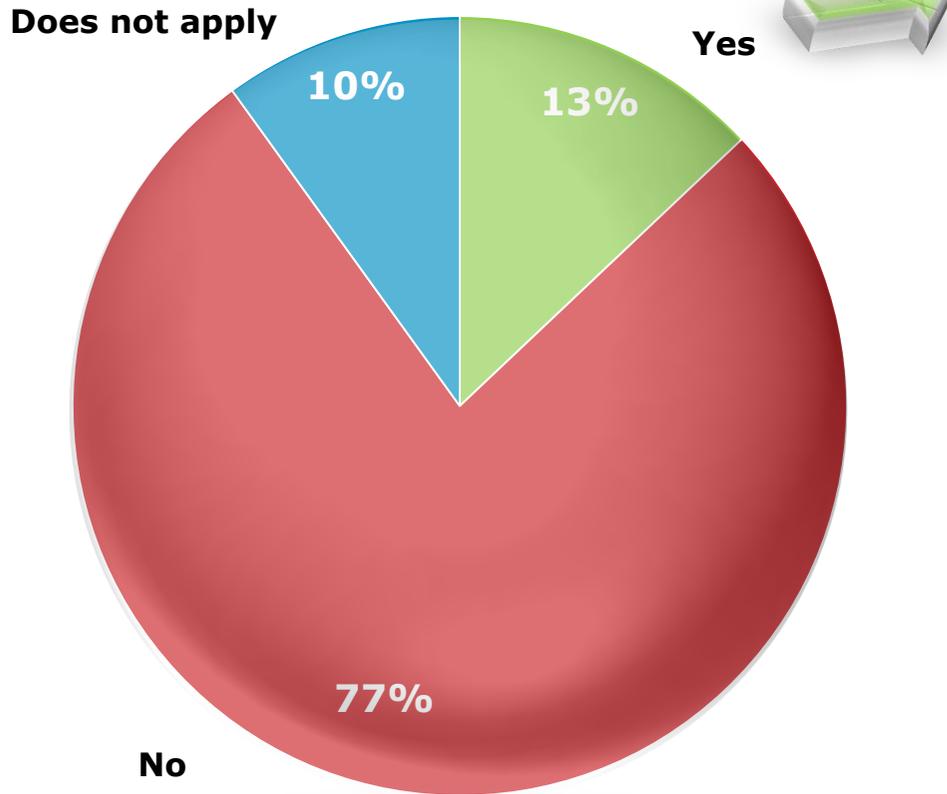


Q.8b Have you ever talked to a doctor because you were feeling stressed or depressed?

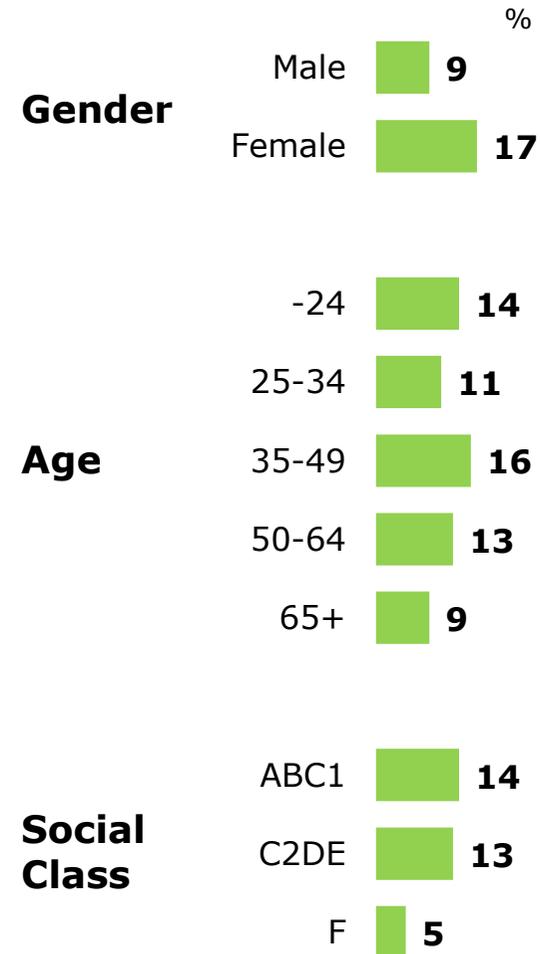
# Visited a counsellor or psychotherapist

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

Visited a Counsellor or Psychotherapist because you were stressed or depressed



Ever Visited a Counsellor or Psychotherapist

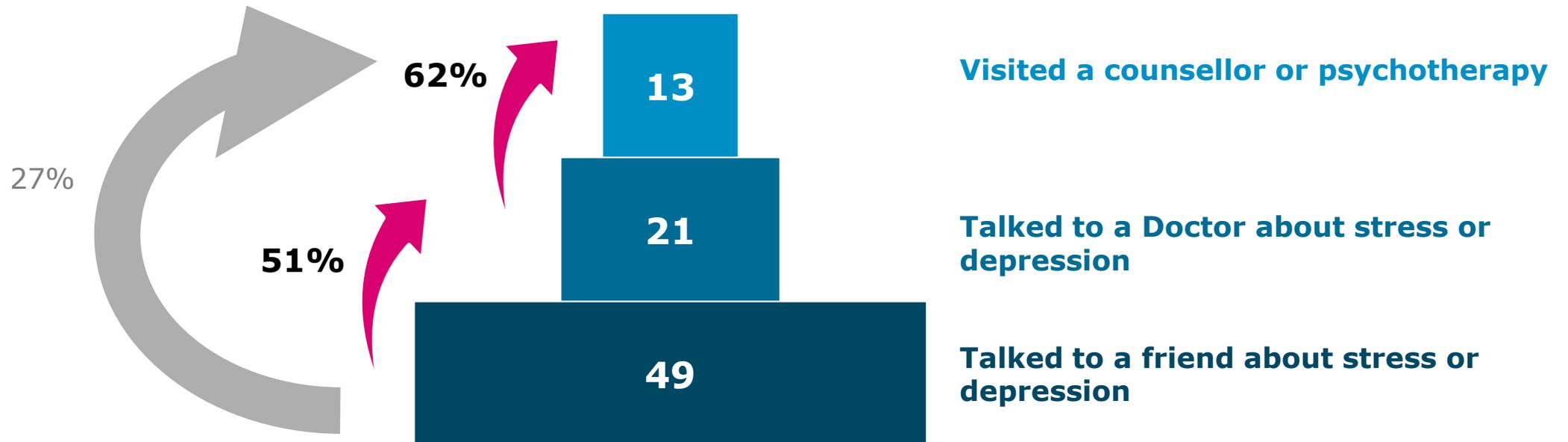


One in eight have been to a professional as a result of depression or stress.



Q.8c Have you ever visited a counsellor or psychotherapist because you were feeling stressed or depressed?

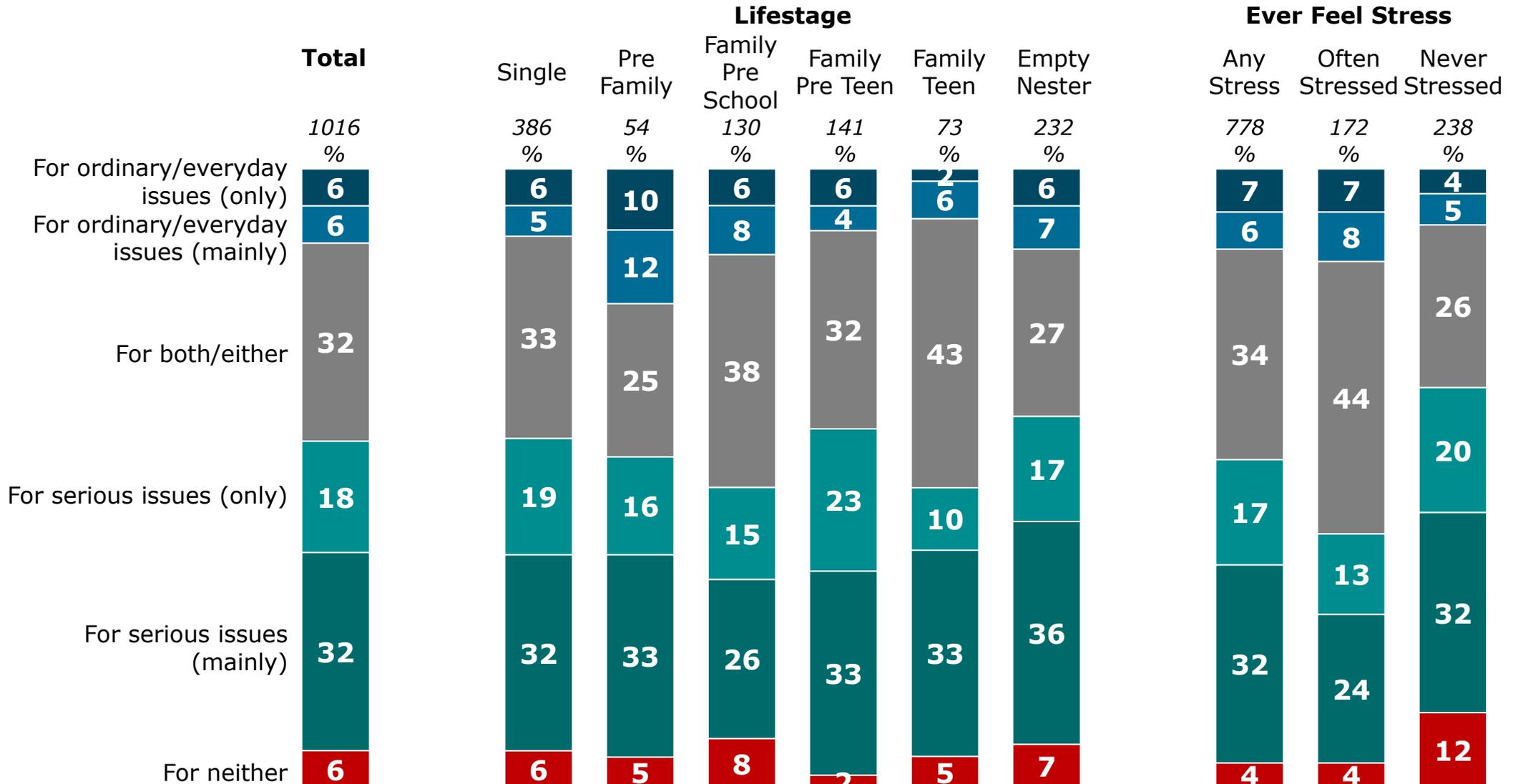
# Conversion rates



About half have brought up stress or depression experience with a friend: half of these have ultimately talked to a Doctor or GP and the majority of that group (ie: 62%) have gone on to undertake counselling. Of those who first raised it with a friend slightly more than a quarter (27%) went on to see a counsellor.

# Focus of counselling or psychotherapy

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Most believe that counselling is for serious issues more so. This doesn't differ much by lifestage or other factors.



Q.9

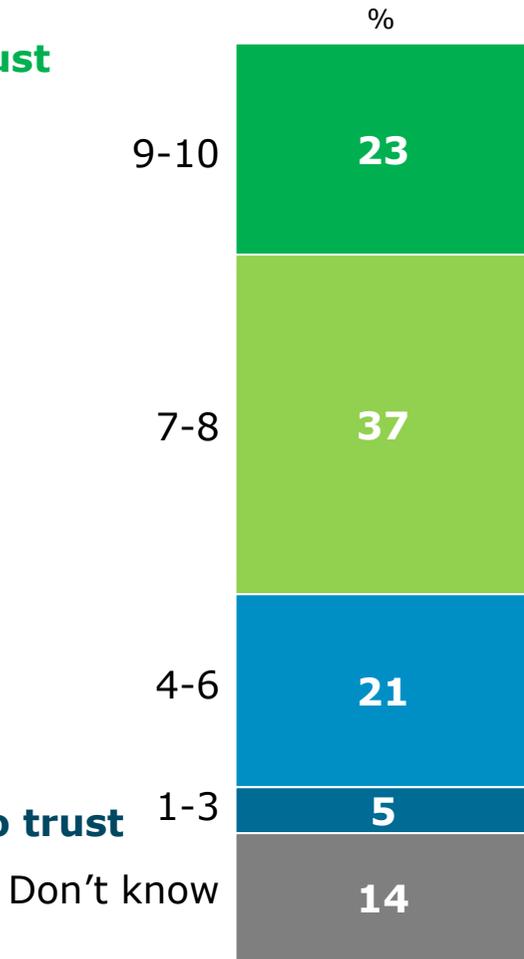
Do you think that counselling and psychotherapy is potentially useful for ordinary and everyday issues, or is it more for serious issues, or would you see it as being appropriate for either?

# Trust in the input of a counsellor or psychotherapist

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

A lot of trust

Little or no trust



Average

7.27

## Gender:



## Age:



## Social Class:



Trust is evidently not an issue and most say that they would trust a counsellor or psychotherapist. Trust is more strongly expressed by women and by middle class respondents.



Q.10 Would you place a lot of trust (10) or little or no trust (1) in the input of a counsellor or psychotherapist?

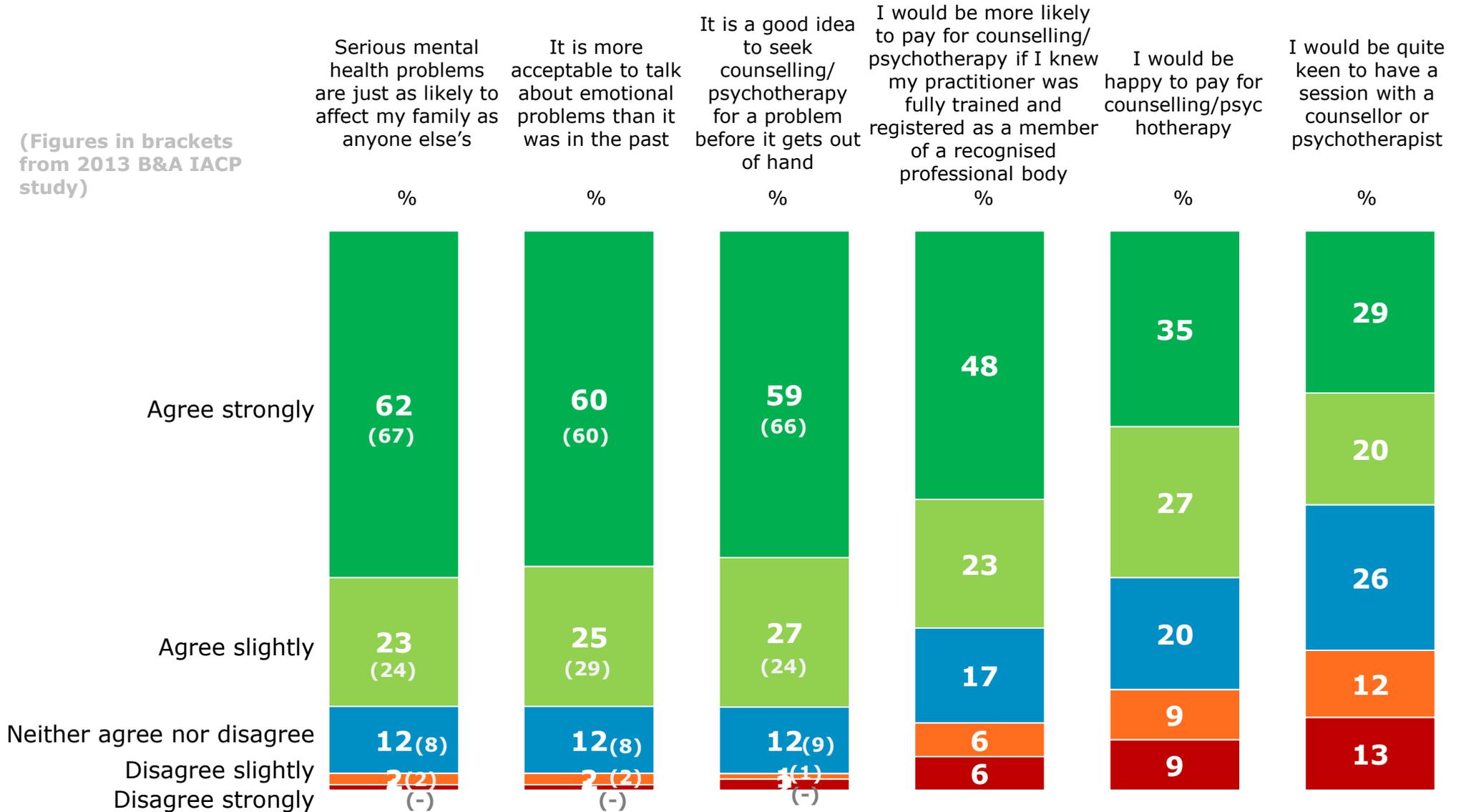


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# Attitudes to counselling summary

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

(Figures in brackets from 2013 B&A IACP study)



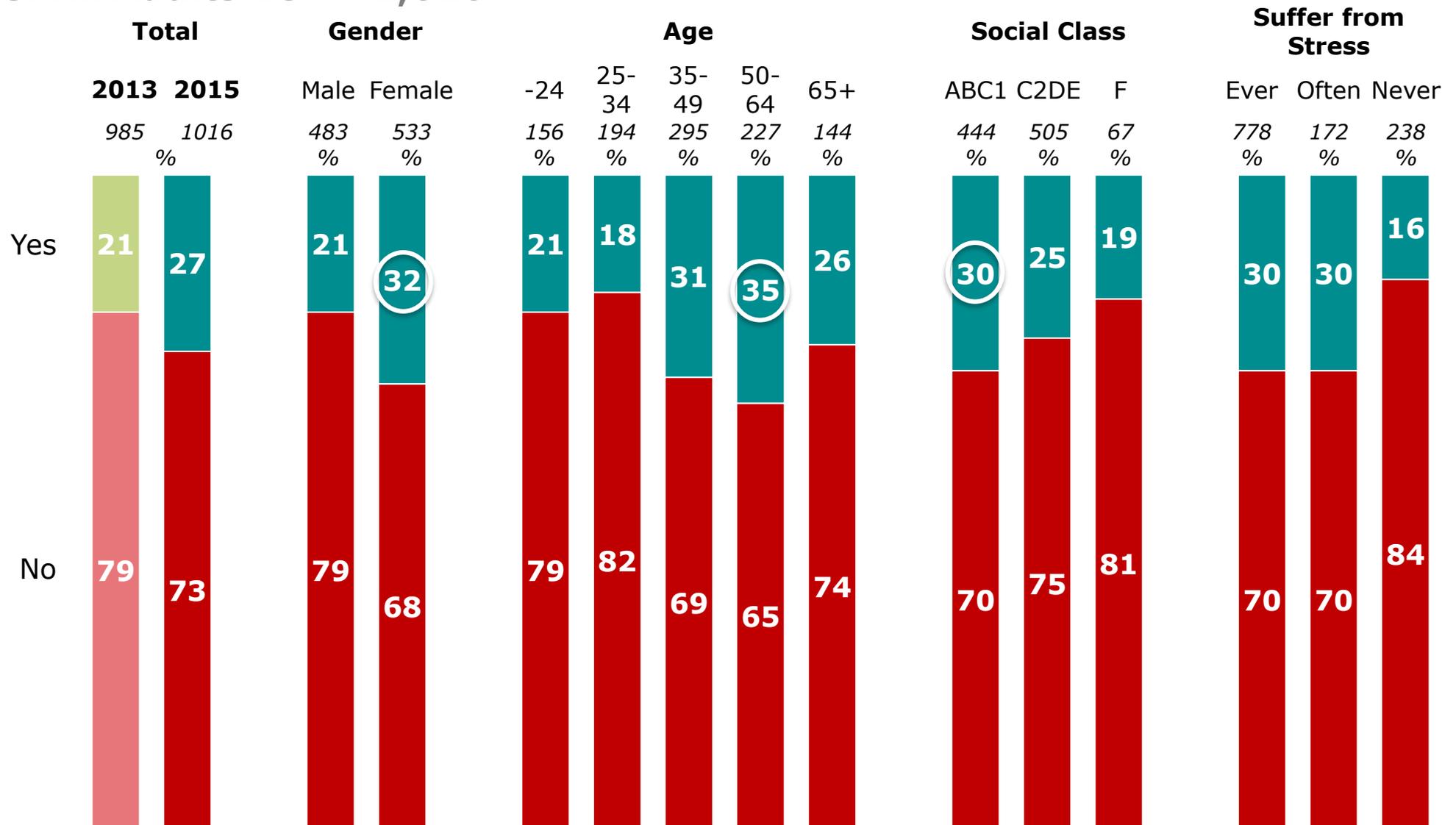
Attitudes to counselling seem very positive, with 3 in 10 saying they would be keen to have a session with a counsellor or psychotherapist.



Q.11 To what extent would you personally agree or disagree ...

# Ever heard of IACP

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016



Awareness has grown at a substantial pace with more than a quarter now aware of the IACP. Greater awareness apparent among groups with more experience of stress.

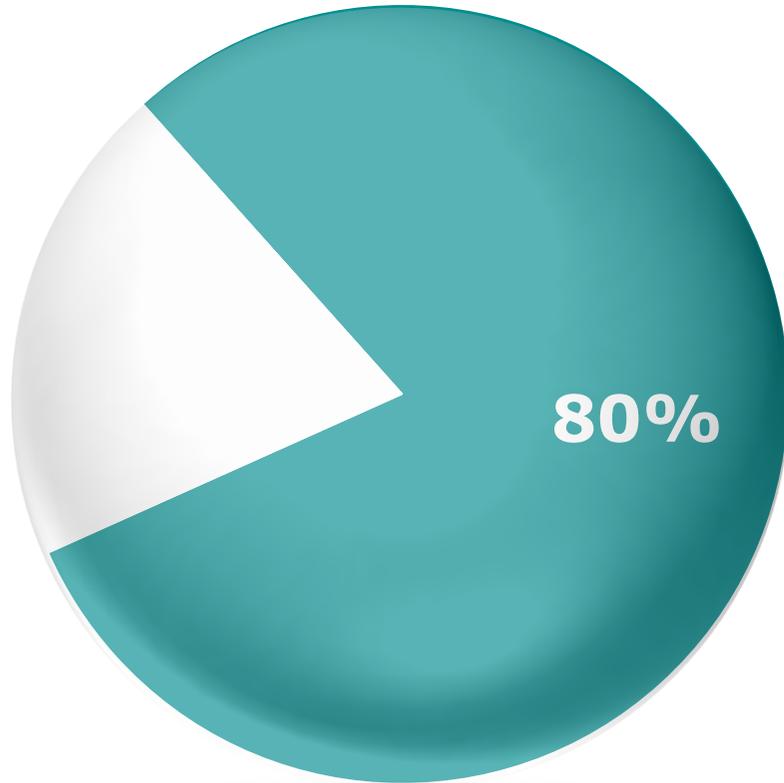


Q.12 Have you ever heard of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP)?

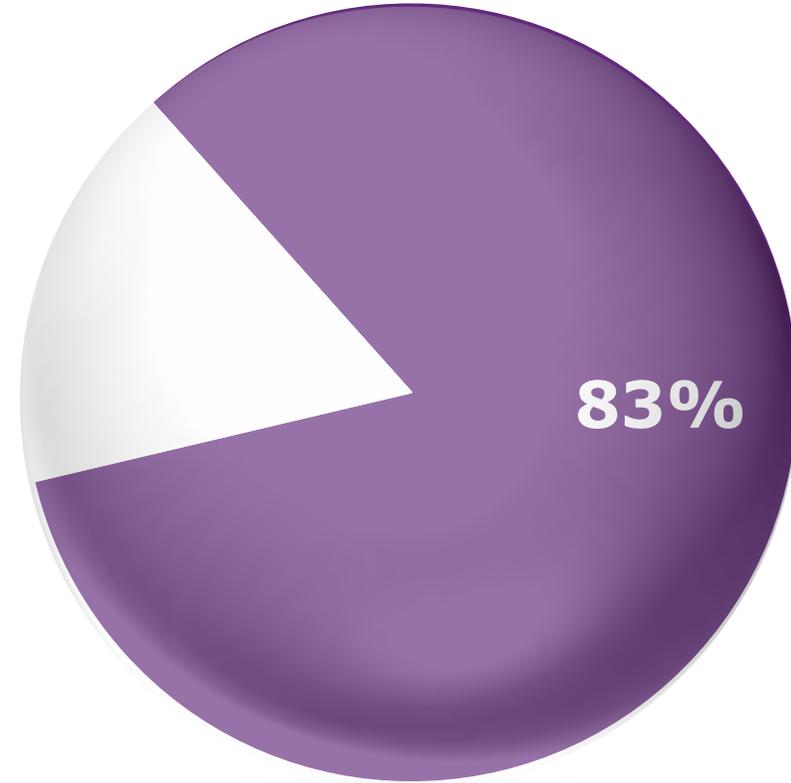
# In Favour of Regulation

Base: All Adults 18+ - 1,016

2013



2015



5 out of 6 are in favour of State regulation of counselling/psychotherapy.



Q.13

In your opinion do you think that counselling/psychotherapy should be regulated by the State, or not?

# Summary



# Summary

- Three quarters of Irish adults experience stress on some basis, with one in six now claiming to be often stressed. This equates with almost 600,000 Irish adults and there has been a notable growth since 2013.
- Those that are stressed are more likely to be middle aged, from the family lifestages and slightly more likely to be middle class and urban. There is a decided gender difference with only 12% of men often stressed in comparison with 21% of women.
- Money remains the primary cause of stress, although the number nominating it as their main issue has dropped to 24% from a high of 33% in 2013. Work, health and relationships are other significant causes of stress and there are notable differences by lifestage, as well as by gender.
- Six in ten adults indicate that it is relatively easy to discuss personal problems, with one in six considering it to be difficult. Women are much more likely to consider it easy, whereas men predominantly make up the group that finds it harder. Older adults tend to find it easier, as do middle class adults.
- It is generally notable that men are more likely to have fewer people to share personal problems with, and to be less comfortable with the idea of sharing problems at all.
- When presented with the choice of talking to a friend or a healthcare professional about feeling down or depressed, 66% would rather talk to a friend and just 9% to a healthcare professional. Likewise, 61% feel that they would be 'better off talking to a friend', whereas 14% believe that they would be better off talking to a counsellor or psychotherapist. Another 25% feel that they might be as well off talking to either.

# Summary

- 57% would rather be physically unwell, whereas 9% believe it is easier to be mentally unwell. About a third feel that it makes no difference, but there is ultimately a seven to one 'preference' of physical over mental ill health.
- Despite a reticence around stress and depression, 49% indicate that they have ever talked to a friend about it and 21% suggest that they have ever talked to a Doctor about it. Ultimately 13% of the adult population claim that they have visited a counsellor or psychotherapist because they were stressed or depressed.
- There is a tendency to regard visiting a counsellor or psychotherapist as being indicative of a serious, rather than an ordinary or everyday, problem.
- Despite reticence to consult with medical professionals, the vast majority indicate that they would have substantial levels of trust in counsellors or psychotherapists.
- There is an almost universal view that it is more acceptable to talk about emotional problems nowadays than it was in the past. Equally, a vast majority believe that it is a good idea to seek counselling or psychotherapy for a problem before it gets out of hand.
- 62% of the population agree that they would be happy to pay for counselling or psychotherapy, and 49% say that they would be quite keen to have a session with a counsellor or a psychotherapist. However, the groups that agree strongly with either sentiment are 35% (in relation to paying) and 29% (in relation to having a session with a psychotherapist at all) of the population respectively.

# Summary

- A quarter (27%) of the adult population now claim to have heard of the IACP, a substantial increase over the 21% recorded two years ago. In effect, the numbers aware of the IACP have increased by almost a third. Awareness is more pronounced among women and those in late middle age and from middle class backgrounds. Three in ten of those who suffer from stress on any sort of regular basis indicate that they have heard of the IACP.
- 83% of all adults are now in favour of counselling and psychotherapy being regulated by the State, constituting a slight increase over the 80% level recorded two years ago.



**THANK YOU**

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