

EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE WORKING AGE POPULATION





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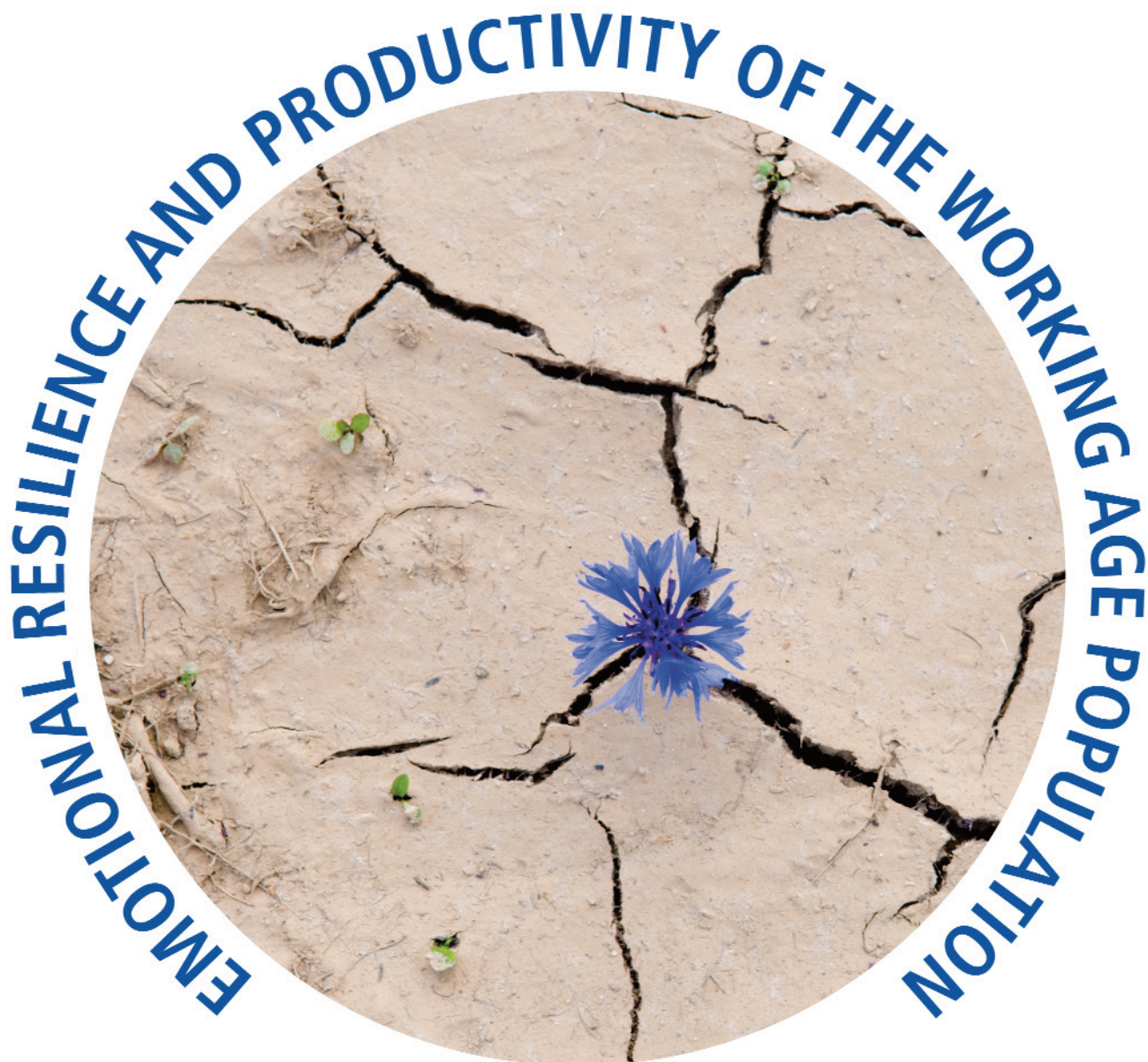
About This Document

This document was originally published in 2011, hence it uses our old branding. Despite its age, the document contains relevant and useful information. However, some specific links, case studies and statistics may be out of date.

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Executive summary

A UK-based study by **vielife** has found that high levels of emotional resilience (i.e. dealing well with stress) are related to greater effectiveness at work. This finding indicates that improving resilience is potentially an important strategy for improving work productivity in the UK. By helping employees learn emotional resilience techniques, could businesses and organisations better weather the storm of economic instability?

Between 2007 and 2008 in the UK, an estimated 13.5 million work days were lost to work-related stress, and 442,000 workers believed they were experiencing stress at a level that was making them physically ill.¹

These data, however, come from a time of relative economic prosperity. Economic downturns are unsettling for most individuals. With job uncertainty, increased work pressure and financial concerns, it is almost certain that the scale and frequency of the adverse health consequences of stress will rise even further.⁵

Although increasing efficiency in high-stress environments at first seems paradoxical, established research on emotional resilience shows that it can provide more than three times the benefit and protection as exercise, social supports and supervisor support.

The business case for health and wellness in the workplace is well established. Most employers understand that having ill and unproductive employees making products or interacting directly with customers is a business risk. Focusing on health, wellness and productivity should be a priority for organisations in times of economic uncertainty and increased stress. Emotional resilience not only improves effectiveness at work, but people with higher levels of emotional resilience also enjoy a greater immunity from certain illnesses.¹⁵

To some extent, individual differences determine a person's level of emotional resilience, but the impact of external factors such as pressure also come into play. High levels of resilience positively influence many areas of life, including health, work performance and creativity. However, this is a skill that can be developed with the right training and enables individuals to successfully cope with a range of stressors at different points in their lives.

'Emotional resilience not only improves effectiveness at work, but people with higher levels of emotional resilience also enjoy a greater immunity from certain illnesses'

The **vielife** study of UK-based employees who had completed the **vielife** Health Risk Assessment (HRA) also found gender, age, industry type and location all predicted levels of self-reported emotional resilience. Older employees and men reported higher resilience than younger workers and women. Although the exact causes for the differences are unknown, these results are consistent with other findings.^{28 & 31} Healthcare workers reported lower levels of resilience, as did workers in the Midlands and West. This study found no significant difference in reported resilience between employee positions with different levels of responsibility. Further study and analysis would be required to provide specific reasons as to why these differences exist.

So how ready and willing are business leaders to focus on developing emotional resilience in the workplace? A 2008 Populus survey of business and opinion leaders found that they believe emotional resilience is very important for their organisations.ⁱ The survey also discovered that they believe the responsibility for development of emotional resilience is shared between employers and employees. Interestingly, these leaders did not feel that there was much of a role for the government or the NHS in developing resilience in their organisations.

At the individual level, techniques to improve resilience include relaxation exercises, improved time management skills, goal setting, and lifestyle modification. At the organisational level, interventions such as job design, flexible work practices, and training have an important role. Furthermore, at both levels, shared decisions, clear roles for individuals, performance appraisals, and flexible benefits are key.

Organisations can improve the emotional resilience of their workforce by creating a workplace environment which promotes resilient attitudes, coping skills and behaviour. Taking into account the variations between individuals enables interventions to be adapted and targeted towards specific groups of people. ■



Introduction

Workplace stress is on the increase and in times of economic uncertainty, it is imperative that organisations recognise the negative impact it can have on performance, productivity and creativity at work. By encouraging and enabling their workforce to learn techniques to strengthen their emotional resilience and realise their potential, businesses can help combat the effects of stress-related problems. This paper addresses the key findings of the **vielife** 2008 study showing high levels of emotional resilience are related to greater effectiveness at work.

Often characterised as 'inner strength', 'fortitude' or 'hardiness', emotional resilience refers to a set of conditions that allow individuals to adapt to different forms of adversity and various points in their life.

Definition of Emotional Resilience

A set of conditions that allow individual adaptation to different forms of adversity at different points in the life course

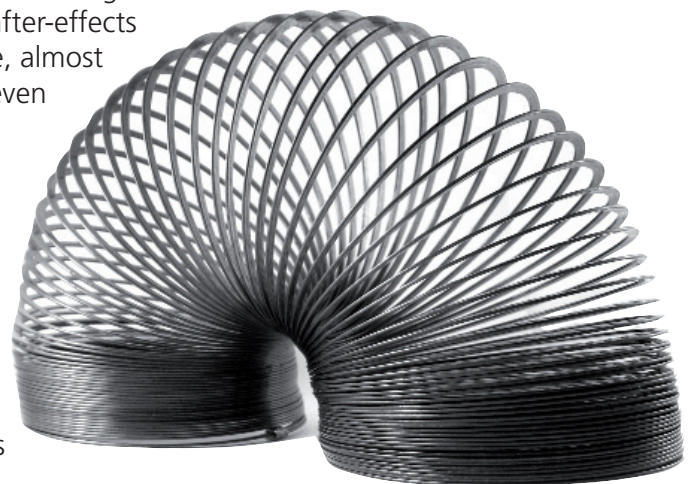
HSE definition of Stress

The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them

Between 2007 and 2008, in the UK an estimated 13.5 million working days were lost to work-related stress, making it the largest contributor to overall annual absence days from work-related ill-health.² In addition, an estimated 442,000 individuals in Britain believed that they were experiencing work-related stress at a level that was making them physically ill.³ And presenteeism also poses a risk, accounting for 1.5 times as much working time lost as absenteeism and costs more to employers because it is more common among higher-paid staff (**BITC Toolkit p. 13**). The UK economy is still evolving; now more than four out of five jobs are in the service sector.⁴ Yet because they involve more direct customer contact than more traditional roles, these jobs are typically viewed as more stressful.⁵

However, these statistics are from a time of prosperity in the UK. In the current climate of economic instability working conditions are likely to be even more stressful - many have experienced changes in job responsibilities and job security, layoffs and the need to work longer hours for less pay. Additionally, once economic recovery begins, the after-effects will continue for some time beyond that period. It is, therefore, almost certain that the adverse health consequences of stress will be even more rife in the future.⁶

For workers and organisations facing rapid change and uncertainty, emotional resilience is a valuable asset that can be developed and improved upon, with the correct measures in place. Furthermore it can positively influence many areas of life, including health, work performance and creativity, enabling individuals to successfully cope with a range of stressors at different points in their lives.^{7,8} For example, the illness prevention effects of emotional resilience are three times as strong as those of exercise and social support.¹⁵



The critical role of the workplace in promoting health is now well established, as is the business case for investing in health and well-being initiatives.^{9,10,33} Tough economic times might lead business leaders to decrease investment in workers and mental capital yet this is precisely when such investment is most needed.³

Mental capital

An individual's emotional and cognitive resources

Mental ability

The dynamic state in which someone develops their potential, productivity and creativity

The competitive climate necessitates improved business efficiency whilst at the same time workers are subjected to greater stress, adding strain to processes such as mental capital and mental wellbeing, thereby altering people's ability to cope.¹⁰ To meet market challenges, businesses cannot afford to maintain even current levels of productivity, much less any decline due to workforce health or other issues. Increasing productivity is critical, thus developing emotional resilience as a business strategy demands strong consideration. Companies need to recognise and reduce stress in the workplace, at the same time as helping their employees practise behaviours which promote wellbeing as well as effectiveness at work (**BITC Toolkit p. 36**). The key is a balance between lowering stress and raising resilience.



A different way of looking at workplace stress management

It is in understanding the balance between recognising and reducing stress in the workplace, and creating an environment which supports the development of emotional resilience.

Interventions at both the organisational and individual level are required to improve emotional resilience. At the organisational level, a key question is: how ready and willing are business leaders to focus on developing emotional resilience in the workplace? Key business and opinion leaders surveyed by Populus (2008), state that developing these skills for the workforce requires interventions at organisational and individual levels.³²

At the individual level, the nature of work in the UK is moving away from manufacturing and towards sectors such as the service sector, where value is created by knowledge, innovation, and other intangible human qualities such as personal warmth.⁹ The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing report (2008) identified suggested employer actions to assist individuals and promote mental health and wellbeing in the workplace (**BITC Toolkit p. 37**). Furthermore, demographics of the workplace are changing – women are filling jobs at a much faster rate than men, and the workforce is steadily aging.¹⁰

Prior surveys have also shown an interest in well-being in the workplace, however, lack of resources and failure in gaining senior manager support have been cited as major barriers to the development of programmes.¹² By contrast, the Populus survey indicates that business leaders not only perceive value in emotional resilience, but that they feel their organisations are key to the development of this element of well-being. These findings also suggests that tools and recommendations for improving emotional resilience in the workplace would be better received if they were developed within the business community instead of by the NHS or other government agencies.

Accordingly, this paper will discuss the relationship between increased emotional resilience and work productivity; highlight variations in emotional resilience by gender, age, location and industry and look at opportunities for developing emotional resilience at both organisational and individual levels, as well as at the interface between the two. ■

Recent research on emotional resilience

Much has been learned about poor coping strategies and how they negatively impact the mind and body; essentially, what not to do when dealing with environmental stress and adversity. For example, retreating into social isolation or turning to drugs and alcohol clearly do not help, and many studies have detailed exactly why this is the case.¹² Poor coping techniques can drive a cascade of undesirable biological consequences. Researchers are discovering how, at the molecular level, persistent stress impacts the development of heart and gastrointestinal diseases, mental illnesses and many other chronic health conditions.^{13,14} However, looking at how things *do not* work has not given much guidance about how strategies *do* work and importantly how to achieve further improvements in managing workplace stress – the key being the development of emotional resilience.

Does emotional resilience impact stress levels?

Whilst it's not possible to eliminate all stresses and adversities, individuals can learn how to handle them better. Research interest in emotional resilience has grown significantly over the past two decades, and resilience has been shown to moderate the adverse effects of stress on performance.¹⁵ Research has also highlighted strategies to enhance one's abilities to not only survive adversity, but to thrive through personal and professional growth. Certain individual and external environment factors can drive the growth of emotional resilience, and several approaches to improving emotional resilience have been studied and found to be successful.

Does emotional resilience impact health?

In the context of massive regulatory changes and a 50% workforce reduction in the 1980s, job performance and personality characteristics of mid-level managers in a US telecommunications firm were studied.⁷ Whilst the overwhelming majority of managers were susceptible to illness and had rather lacklustre career trajectories, a small subgroup had fewer than expected physical and emotional illnesses and went on to have highly successful careers. Within this successful group there were three common characteristics, namely commitment, control, and challenge.

Characteristics of resilient workers

Commitment – as stresses mount, it is important to stay involved with events and people in one's life, as opposed to becoming more isolated.

Control – a belief that no matter how bad things get, one must keep trying to influence outcomes, rather than sink into a mindset of passivity, powerlessness, and reverence for the past.

Challenge – one sees stress not only as a normal part of life, but also as an opportunity to grow by learning from disruptions and failures.

People with higher levels of emotional resilience enjoy a greater immunity from certain illnesses. In individuals identified as having extremely high stress levels, researchers compared emotional resilience with regular exercise and social support as illness protective measures over a 12-month period.¹⁶ Individuals having all three protective factors were more likely to be free from symptoms of physical illness after 12 months. Only a small proportion of those who lacked all three protective factors remained healthy. Of these protective measures, emotional resilience provided more than three times the benefit and protection than exercise and social support alone.

A possible explanation of this finding is that through emotional resilience, highly stressful situations are transformed into less stressful situations of opportunity, hence diminishing the adverse impact of that event or situation for the long term. Exercise will help one deal with stress, but will not effect change in the perceived nature of the event or situation; thus only short-term relief is provided. Social supports may also provide short-term relief, or they may help boost emotional resilience through reframing of the event or situation to one of opportunity, yet the overall effect is much less.

Another study compared the illness prevention effects of emotional resilience with supervisor support. Whilst both helped decrease symptoms of physical illness, the effect of emotional resilience was again found to be about three times as powerful.¹⁷ Although this study does not suggest getting rid of supervisor support, it does point to making increased resilience a priority as a workplace intervention.

Is emotional resilience innate and unchanging, or can it be learned?

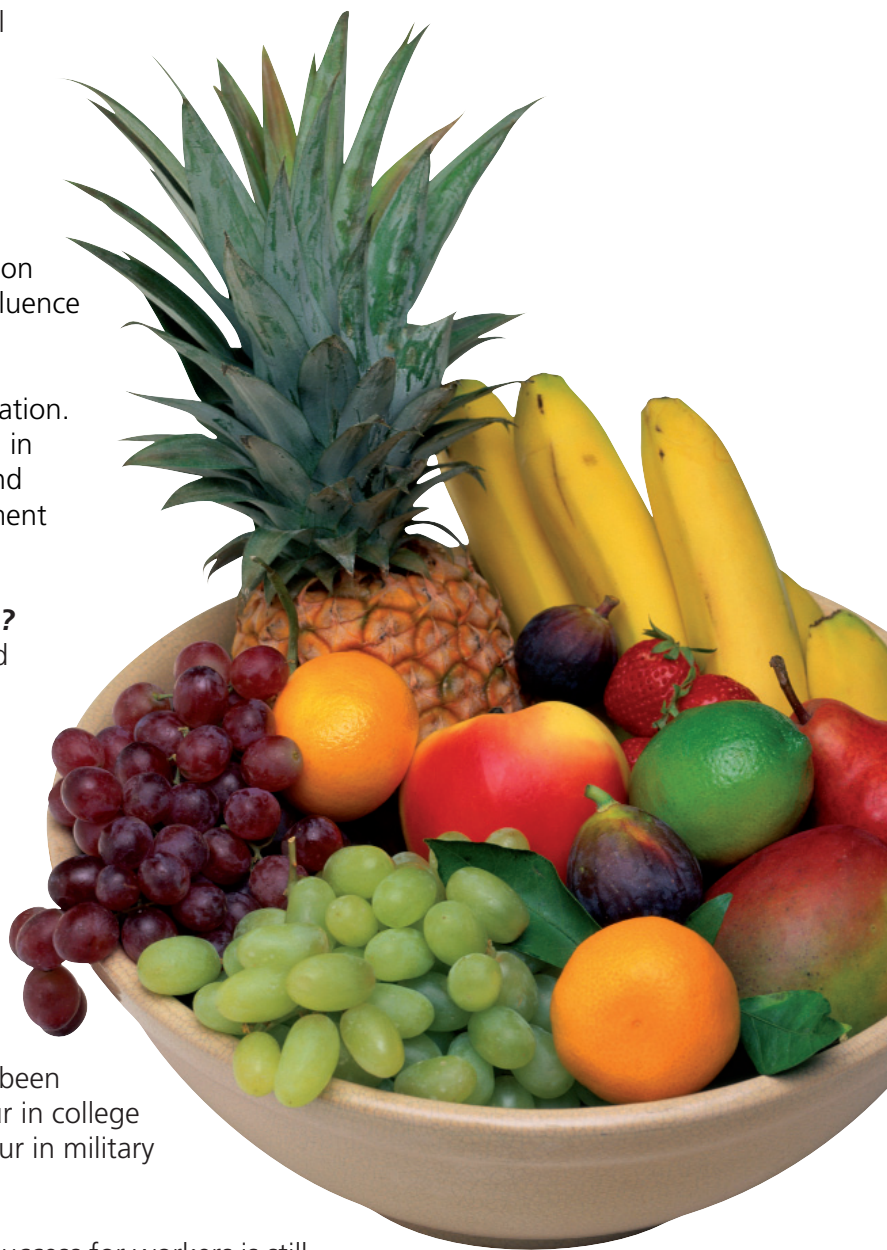
Older adults seem to notice fewer day-to-day stresses and when stressed they are less likely to have negative emotions when compared with younger adults.¹⁸ It is not entirely understood why this is so. Perhaps older people have learned to avoid certain stressors, or perhaps fewer things rise above a threshold they find upsetting.

Among formal training programmes for emotional resilience, the 'Penn Resiliency Program' has been perhaps most thoroughly studied. It was developed for use as a group intervention for late elementary and middle school students in the US, teaching cognitive-behavioural and social problem-solving skills.^{19,20} Central to this training is the notion that an individual's beliefs about events greatly influence the resulting emotions and behaviour. Students learn techniques for assertiveness, negotiation, decision making, social problem solving, and relaxation. The skills taught in the programme can be applied in many areas, including relationships with friends and family, work or school performance, and achievement in other activities.

Does emotional resilience affect performance?

As noted, during a period of significant job-related stress, higher levels of emotional resilience predict better than average performance and a successful career path.⁷ However, emotional resilience is related to good performance even during stable times. For example, it has been found to be the strongest predictor of job and career satisfaction, and higher levels of resilience can decrease employee turnover whilst maintaining high levels of motivation and commitment in workers.^{21,22} Business consultants who rated higher on emotional resilience measures had more billable hours and better client relationships.²³ It has also been shown to correlate with more innovative behaviour in college students and to more effective leadership behaviour in military cadets.^{20, 24}

Exactly how emotional resilience leads to greater success for workers is still being discovered, but the process of 'reframing' situations is likely to play a large role.²⁵ Greater levels of resilience may enable an individual to step back from an 'impossibly stressful' situation and look at it in a completely new and more positive way, thereby finding opportunity for a creative approach. As the perception of a situation moves from being 'impossible' to 'possible but simply challenging', the resilient person feels less external stress and becomes more engaged in working out a resolution. Over time, those with more emotional resilience gain a mastery over their immediate situations and more confidence in unusual or 'out of the box' solutions.



Cognitive or emotional resilience has been described as an important factor of mental capital.²⁶ When resilience is low, chronic stress can lead to a decline in mental capital, with a closely related decline in health and work performance. However, when emotional resilience is combined with good nutrition and physical activity, mental abilities can be preserved through to retirement and beyond. When these factors are further combined with workplace initiatives such as flexible working, managing interpersonal conflict, and creating a culture of learning and empowerment, very substantial growth in mental capital can result, with related improvements in health and productivity.¹⁰

Is there too much stress or too little emotional resilience in the workplace?

Stressors within the workplace exist and are increasing. However, it is the individual's subjective perception of the stressor which determines how they react to and cope with pressurised circumstances. People with high levels of emotional resilience will perform better. Research indicates boosting emotional resilience in the workplace requires three levels of intervention: the individual level, the organisational level, and the level of interface between the two.^{27,28} Individual-level interventions are the most common organisational responses to deal with stress in the workplace, and they aim to give workers the skills and resources to cope with stressful conditions. These interventions often include training in relaxation techniques, time management skills, goal setting, lifestyle modification and other 'life' skills.

Interventions at the organisational level are based on an understanding of the strong relationship between working conditions and employee health. Strategies typically focus on the physical and social environments that can produce stress. For example, job redesign efforts such as job sharing and working remotely alter conditions at this level. Changes in workplace design and organisational development programmes can also improve emotional resilience at the organisational level (**BITC Toolkit p. 28**).

At the interface between the individual and a larger group, successful interventions target issues such as role ambiguity, relationships at work, person–environment fit and employee involvement in decision making. Strategies to improve resilience at this level include participatory decision-making programmes, peer support groups, and processes to improve definitions and understandings of individuals' roles in the organisation. Efforts to minimise stressors that span work and home life, such as childcare issues, can also have a positive impact on resilience.

Interventions and factors that can boost emotional resilience

Individual: *relaxation techniques, exercise, time management skills, goal setting, lifestyle modification*

Organisational: *job design, flexible work practices, training.*

Individual–organisational interface: *shared decision making, role clarity, performance appraisals, flexible benefits, support.* ■

'People with high levels of emotional resilience will perform better. Research indicates boosting emotional resilience in the workplace requires three levels of intervention: the individual level, the organisational level, and the level of interface between the two.'

A study of emotional resilience in the UK

Methods

To better understand emotional resilience trends in the UK working population, Health Risk Assessment (HRA) data collected over the past 2 years were pooled. The HRA, developed by **vielife** is a validated tool used to measure an individual's health and well-being, and assesses how this might impact work productivity and performance.^{29,33} It was self-administered either online or on paper, and on completion 13 sub-scores and an overall score were provided to the user.

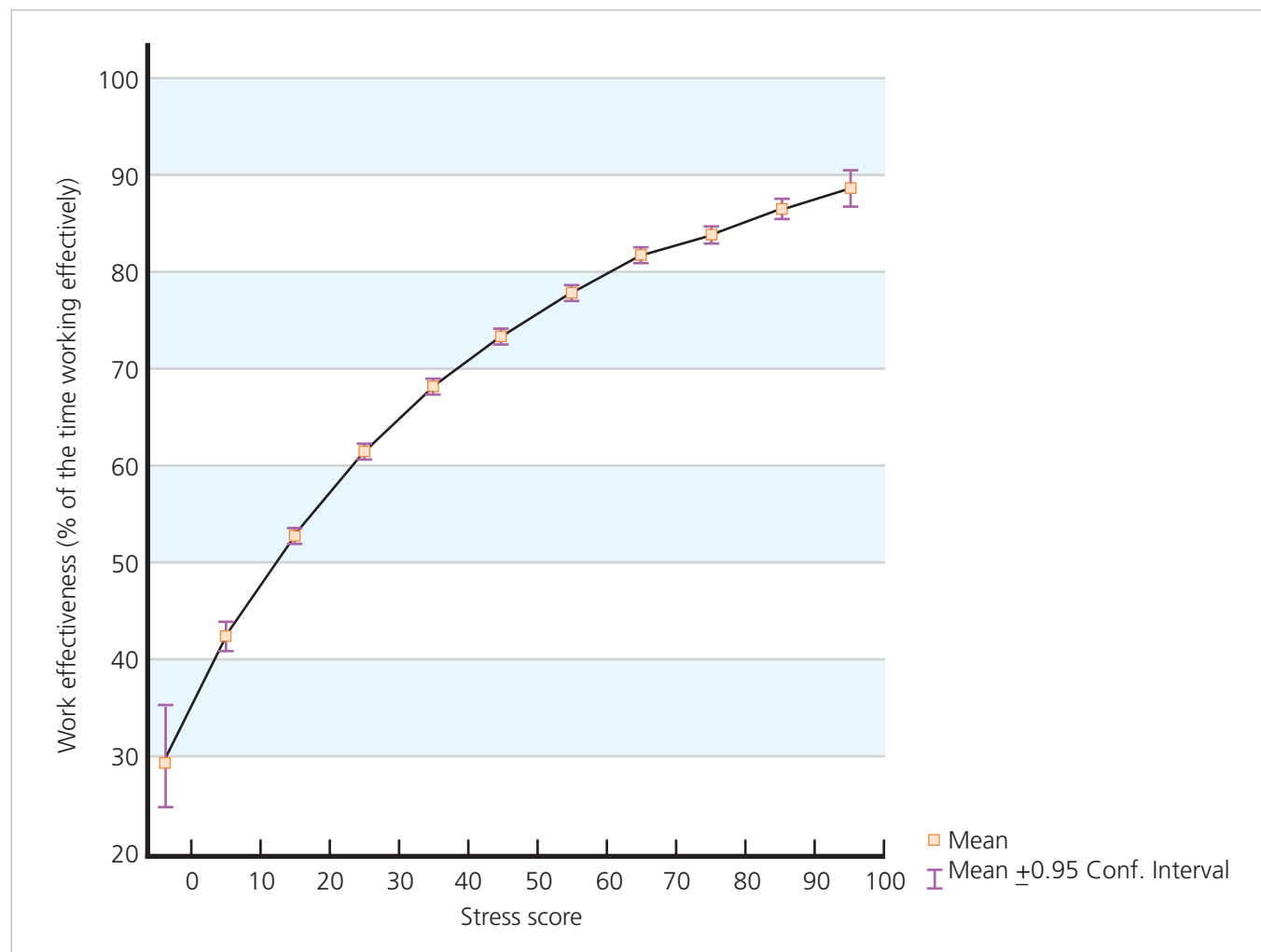
Between 1 November 2006 and 31 October 2008, 39,837 individuals working in the UK completed the HRA for the first time. These data were used for the analysis. The sample pool generally reflected the industry profile and geography of the UK. The population sample was 43% male and 57% female, and the mean age was 37 years with a median of 35 years (**Table 1, appendix**). The data set was broken down into six UK geographical regions according to the work locations of the HRA completers (**Table 2, appendix**). Age and gender split were very similar across the different geographical regions, with the exception of age for the respondents from the North West (**Table 3, appendix**). The North tended to have marginally more females in their HRA completer population than other areas.

The HRA sub-score 'Stress' measured the user's subjective appraisal of how well s/he was dealing with stresses from work, relationships and other life circumstances, as well a self-prediction of how well things would go in the future (**see appendix for questions**). This score has been shown to correlate very closely with the output from the GHQ-12 questionnaire, a gold standard psychological distress measure. The higher the score out of 100, the better able the individual felt to deal with stresses effectively and hence the higher level of resilience. For this study, the 'Stress' score is used as a proxy measure for emotional resilience. A 'Stress' score of 30 or below reflects an individual is at 'high risk' for illness or productivity decline due to low resilience. Another subscore of the HRA, 'Work effectiveness', measured self-reported productivity, and it has been shown to be highly correlated with measured work performance in a call centre.



Analysis: drivers of work performance (productivity)

The relationship between emotional resilience and effectiveness at work was studied across the whole population. A very clear and statistically significant relationship was observed between higher levels of resilience and better work performance.



In order to determine what, if any, effects age, sex, geographic location or company position had on work performance, a multiple linear regression model was designed to determine the relative importance of each. On average, female employees from the North West in senior positions had work effectiveness scores that were 1.1 points better than others. However, when the 'Stress' score was added to the regression model, this effect disappeared, indicating differences in work effectiveness are primarily driven by baseline emotional resilience.

Emotional resilience appears to be the most influential factor in predicting performance in UK workers.

Analysis: demographics

The mean 'Stress' score for the total study population was 40.7 out of a possible 100, with one out of three workers classified as high risk for health or productivity issues (i.e. a 'Stress' score of 30 or less). This finding corroborates data from organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive, and indicates there is a large target group for interventions aimed at boosting emotional resilience.

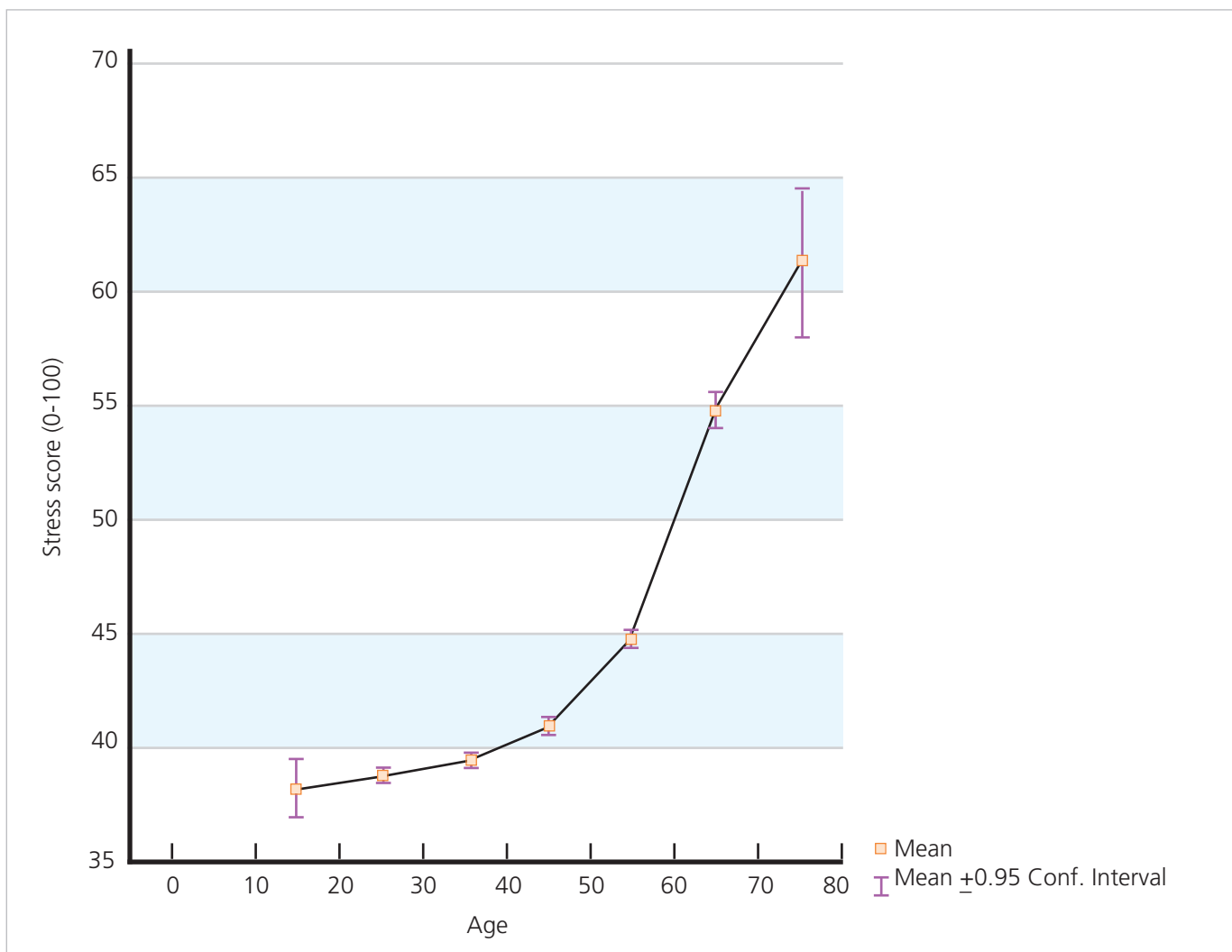
32% of the UK working population have low levels of resilience to stress.

- **Gender**

Men on average scored 22% higher on the 'Stress' score than women, possibly indicating they have higher levels of resilience. Such sex-related differences have been noted across many different populations and reported with other surveys measuring perceptions of stress.³⁰ It is not understood why women appear to have less emotional resilience. Possibly women completing the HRA are both working and attending to the needs of their families, and they simply have more tasks to juggle in an average day than men. Alternatively, women in general might be more in tune with their emotions and better able to report when feeling overwhelmed. Another possibility could lie in biologically or culturally determined differences between men and women in how positively or negatively stress is perceived.

- **Age**

The graph below shows a clear and statistically significant relationship between age and emotional resilience. Again this finding is consistent with other research findings.²⁸ As discussed above, the reasons behind an age advantage are not well known; nevertheless, to some extent age appears to confer a degree of wisdom regarding coping with life's adversities and stresses.



This research is in keeping with other findings, but further study and analysis would be required to provide significant reasons as to why these differences exist. ^{28,31}

Analysis: geography

The table below shows a breakdown of average stress scores derived from the HRA and the percentage of the respective populations classified as high risk by geographical region.

Region	Mean stress score (/100)	% at high risk
North West	43.1	31
South East	40.9	32
North	39.6	34
West	39.9	33
Midlands	38.6	38
Scotland	40.9	31

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed statistically significant 'Stress' score differences between geographical locations. However, as age and sex are known to significantly impact 'Stress' scores their influence must be accounted for. A multiple linear regression model was applied, but there were still differences in emotional resilience between geographical locations despite accounting for age and sex. Individuals from the North West had higher resilience (on average 2.7 points higher) and individuals from the West and the Midlands had lower scores, 1.4 points and 1.9 points respectively.



Analysis: industry sector

Of the 39,837 individual HRA completers used for the analysis, information on employer and sector was available for 34,212 (86%). Ten different sectors were used for the analysis (**Table 4, appendix**).

As different industries may have older or younger workforces with either a greater or lesser percentage of women, industry differences needed to be 'corrected' by accounting for the influence age and sex have on 'Stress' scores. After applying another multiple linear regression model, the only sector significantly different from the others was healthcare. Individuals in the healthcare sector scored about 6% lower on the 'Stress' scale than individuals working in the other sectors, either indicating a significantly lower level of resilience or higher amount of job-related stress than in other sectors of the workforce.

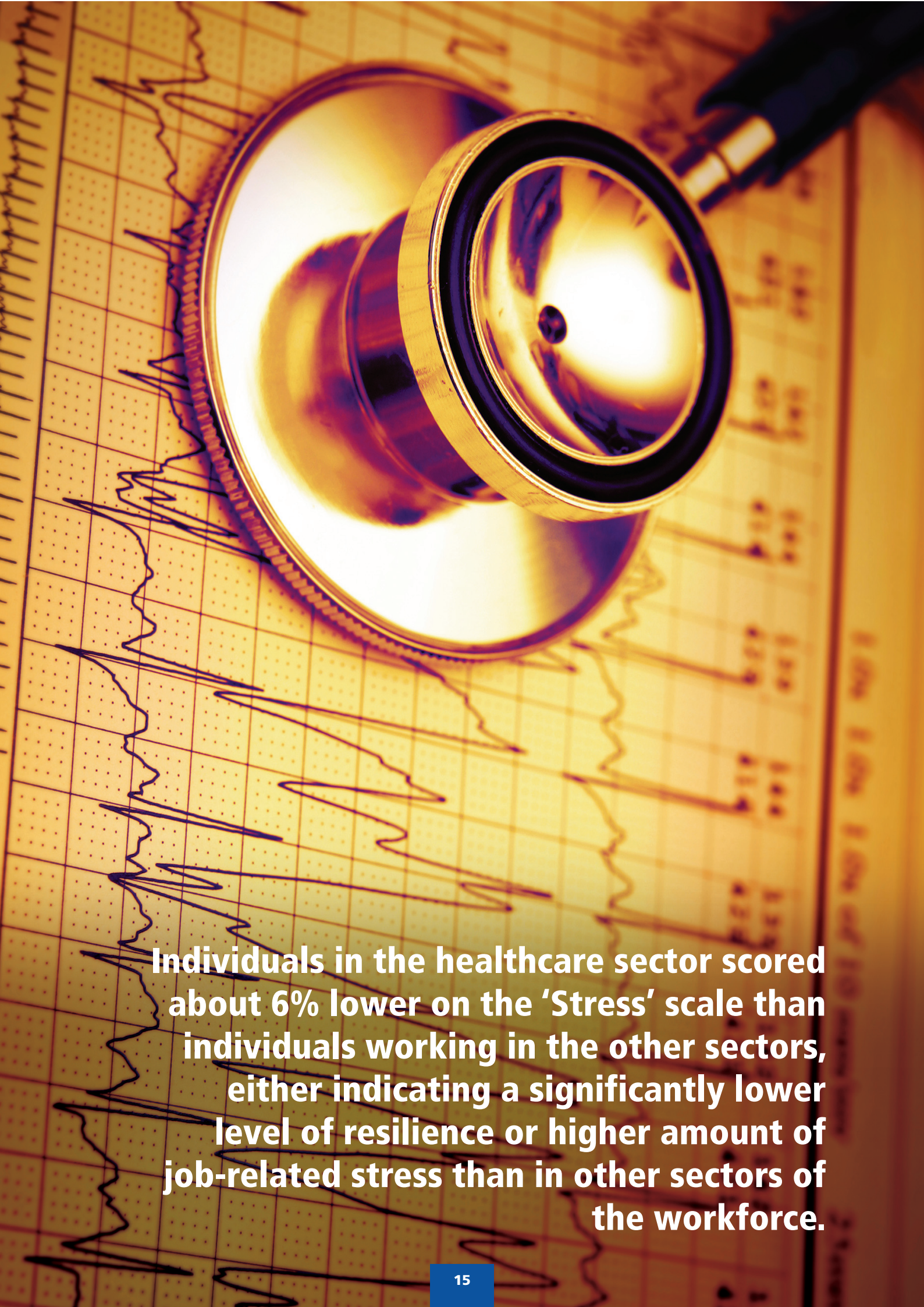
Analysis: position in company

Data on company position were available for 36,967 individuals (93% of total sample). Each individual was categorised as either senior, middle grade or junior (**Table 5, appendix**). After correcting for age and sex using a multiple linear regression model as above, no significant differences in emotional resilience between the three different company positions were found.

This finding stands in contrast to what one might think regarding career seniority and resilience, and to findings from studies on the Whitehall II cohort.³¹ As people gain more senior positions, they tend to have more control over their job roles and aspects of their work environment, and this control could have a mitigating effect on stress. Perhaps additional stresses accrue as one ascends the ranks of organisations; however, it is possible that the perceived amount of control remains constant despite career advancements. ■



Develop and support emotionally intelligent management to maintain a resilient workforce in challenging times.

A close-up, high-angle shot of a stethoscope resting on a yellow grid background. A black line, resembling a heartbeat or ECG, runs across the grid. The stethoscope's chest piece is prominent in the upper half of the frame, with its two circular lenses reflecting light. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by yellows and oranges.

Individuals in the healthcare sector scored about 6% lower on the 'Stress' scale than individuals working in the other sectors, either indicating a significantly lower level of resilience or higher amount of job-related stress than in other sectors of the workforce.

A study of emotional resilience in the UK

Methods

In order to ascertain how closely opinions of business leaders matched with research findings regarding resilience to stress, Populus conducted a survey of 152 business leaders and opinion formers between October 30 and 12 November, 2008.³² The by-industry breakdown of respondents is shown in Table 6. Four questions were asked of each interviewee and a rating scale of 1 to 5 applied to each answer (1= not important, 5 = extremely important).

Definition of emotional resilience used for the survey:

'The attitude, fortitude and skill set of an individual that enables one to cope with efficiency and effectiveness in periods of change and stress. An emotionally intelligent individual has the ability to both recognise and harness their own emotions and recognise the emotions of others and their potential impact on any given situation.'

Findings

From questions one and two (*How important to do you think emotional resilience is to achieving the goals of your own organisation? How important to do you think emotional resilience is to achieving the goals of any organisation?*), the overwhelming majority of survey respondents felt emotional resilience is extremely or very important for their own or any organisation (**80% of those surveyed: Table 7**). This finding indicates an understanding among these leaders that stress adversely impacts their organisations, and more importantly a workforce with strong emotional resilience is a valuable asset.



Encourage employees to be curious, catch sight of the beautiful and remark on the unusual.

In response to question three (*To what extent do you think your organisation has a role in helping staff become more resilient?*), more than 50% of opinion formers responded with a score of 4 or 5, meaning they regard their organisation as having an important or extremely important role in developing their staffs' emotional resilience (**Table 8, appendix**). Again, emotional resilience is seen as a worthwhile investment of organisational resources.

Responses to question four (Where does the responsibility for the development of emotional resilience lie? (i)The individual, (ii) senior management, (iii) line management, (iii) family & friends, (iv) staff representatives and (vi) NHS / government (**Table 9, appendix**) demonstrate a strong consensus among respondents that the responsibility for development of emotional resilience resides in both the individual and organisational management. Leaders did not feel there was much of a role for government (including the NHS), staff representatives or even family and friends in helping strengthen emotional resilience.

The 2008 UK survey indicated that there appears to be ownership among business leaders for the development of emotional resilience in the workplace.

Prior surveys have also shown an interest in well-being in the workplace; however, lack of resources and failure in gaining senior manager support have been cited as major barriers to the development of programmes.³³ By contrast, this survey indicates that business leaders not only perceive value in emotional resilience, but that they feel their organisations are key to the development of this element of well-being. These findings also suggests that tools and recommendations for improving emotional resilience in the workplace would be better received if they were developed within the business community instead of by the NHS or other government agencies.

Summary

Emotional resilience was closely correlated to work effectiveness on self-report measures. Any differences found in work effectiveness across demographics, industry and geography are primarily driven by emotional resilience. The key finding indicated that improving emotional resilience is an important strategy for improving work productivity.

In the UK working population, age, gender, industry type and location all predict levels of emotional resilience. Older employees and men tend to have higher levels of resilience, a result that is consistent with research findings elsewhere. As an industry sector, healthcare workers showed significantly lower levels of resilience than workers in other industry sectors. Individuals working in the North West tended to have better stress management profiles, whereas individuals working in the Midlands and the West tended to have worse profiles. A somewhat surprising finding was that there was no significant difference in levels of emotional resilience by company position. Further research and data analysis would be required to expand on this.

Care should be taken in interpreting these data as it is possible that confounders not accounted for in the current analysis, could impact the variations observed for resilience. Further work is required to investigate these areas. ■

Conclusions

Though the field of emotional resilience is rather new, research strongly supports its relationship to good health, productivity, career satisfaction and creativity. Within the UK working population, analysis shows that emotional resilience is closely tied to work productivity. About one in three workers measured low enough levels of emotional resilience to place them at high risk for illness or productivity problems. Significant differences in levels of resilience were noted by sex, age, geography and industry.

Emotional resilience can be learned, and several evidence-based approaches to its development exist. Successful interventions to increase emotional resilience in the workplace should involve programmes aimed at both individuals and organisations.

Working women had lower levels of emotional resilience than men. Over the next several years as women continue to outpace men in gaining new jobs, the urgency for addressing the resilience gap will become even greater. Older workers appear more resilient than younger workers, and employees in the Midlands and West had worse resilience profiles. As an industry, healthcare stood out as having the lowest emotional resilience profile. These findings could inform future resilience development programme designs.

Business leaders' opinions in the UK are aligned with these current research findings. Leaders feel emotional resilience is important, and they see a clear role for their organisations to help staff become more resilient. Leaders also feel the responsibility for developing emotional resilience lies in the individual workers and their own organisations, and not with government or other outside agencies. In the past, buy-in from senior management has been cited as a major barrier to implementing resilience improvement programs. This study suggests that to have adequate credibility, programs and tools developed for improving emotional resilience should come from the business community.

Improving emotional resilience in business organisations is not only possible, it makes good sense. Indeed, all evidence points to the need to support emotional resilience in individuals and have workplace environments conducive to its development. The excuse of not knowing better is no longer valid. Employers who take the emotional welfare of their staff seriously and synchronise corporate values and beliefs can effectively support staff in mitigating workplace pressures.

Next steps should include the development and deployment of a set of tools and recommendations for organisations to use to improve levels of emotional resilience in the workplace. These should go beyond interventions at the individual level and include recommendations for changes at organisational level and at the interface of the organisation and the individual. As a result Business Action on Health have produced an emotional resilience toolkit designed to give organisations practical guidance in promoting the resilience of individuals and teams, as part of an integrated health and wellbeing programme (www.bitc.org.uk/health). Women, younger workers, and individuals in the healthcare sector appear to have lower emotional resilience levels, and these groups may require additional resources. ■



Well planned emotional resilience initiatives help ensure employees are healthy, alert and productive at work.

Appendix

HRA questions within the 'Stress' section

How much time during the last three months have you felt calm and peaceful?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Moderate amount
4. Most of time
5. All of time

How much time during the last three months have you had a lot of energy?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Moderate amount
4. Most of time
5. All of time

How much time during the past three months have you felt depressed or sad?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Moderate amount
4. Most of time
5. All of time

During the last three months how much of the time have you felt overwhelmed with pressure or stress from responsibilities, circumstances or relationships?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Moderate amount
4. Most of time
5. All of time

Table 1: Age range within the sample pool completing HRA

Age range (at time of completing HRA; years)	Percentage of study population
0 – 20	3
>20-30	32
>30-40	31
>40-50	20
>50-60	11
>60	3

Table 2: UK regions according to the work locations of the HRA completers

Region	Number of HRA completers	Percentage of total sample
North West	6,280	16
South East	15,261	38
North	5,851	15
West (incl Wales)	3,083	7
Midlands	4,270	11
Scotland	5,092	13

Table 3: Age and gender split

Region	Mean age (years)	Median age (years)	Male (%)	Female (%)
North West	42.3	40	42	58
South East	35.6	33	43	57
North	36.7	35	39	61
West (incl Wales)	36.5	35	46	54
Midlands	35.9	34	43	57
Scotland	35.7	34	44	56

Table 4: Industry sector analysis (10 industries)

Sector	Number in sector (% of total population)	Mean age	Mean 'Stress' score	Proportion at high risk (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Local government	1018 (3%)	42.0	42.4	28	29	71
SME	874 (3%)	39.1	42.5	30	53	47
Healthcare	4357 (13%)	46.0	43.9	31	36	64
Housing / construction	1518 (4%)	38.8	42.2	29	55	45
Financial / banking	7353 (22%)	36.0	40.4	33	47	53
Insurance	2802 (8%)	35.9	43.9	27	35	65
Consulting	2124 (6%)	33.2	39.8	33	45	55
Telecommunications	2118 (6%)	32.8	36.9	40	77	23
Health and fitness industry	10671 (31%)	34.0	37.9	38	37	63
IT and engineering	1376 (4%)	38.5	43.6	26	67	33

Table 5: analysis of position in company (senior, middle grade or junior)

Position	Number in sector (% of total population)	Mean age	Mean 'Stress' score	Proportion at high risk (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Senior	11112 (30%)	36.7	40.8	32	44	56
Middle	9252 (25%)	37.5	40.1	35	43	57
Junior	16603 (45%)	36.6	40.7	32	43	57

Table 6: Breakdown of survey respondents by industry sector (UK based Populus survey)

	Count	Proportion (%)
Total	152	100
Public Sector	20	13
Politics and NGOs	31	20
Media and Communications	54	36
City and Business	47	31

Table 7: In response to questions one and two of the Populus survey:

How important to do you think emotional resilience is to achieving the goals of your own organisation?
 How important to do you think emotional resilience is to achieving the goals of any organisation?

	All	Public Sector	Politics and NGOs	Media and communications	City and business
Important for own organisation	4.06	4.35	4.07	4.02	3.98
Important for any organisation	3.97	4.18	4.00	3.94	3.91

Table 8: In response to question three:

To what extent do you think your organisation has a role in helping staff become more resilient?

All	Public Sector	Politics and NGOs	Media and communications	City and business
3.40	3.76	3.39	3.30	3.36

Table 9: In responses to question four:

Where does the responsibility for the development of emotional resilience lie? (i)The individual, (ii) senior management, (iii) line management, (iii) family & friends, (iv) staff representatives and (vi) NHS / government

Responsibility lies with	All	Public Sector	Politics and NGOs	Media and communications	City and business
With the individual	1.88	1.75	2.20	1.91	1.71
With senior management	2.71	2.56	2.64	2.61	2.91
With line management	2.97	2.69	2.92	3.10	2.98
With family and friends	3.40	3.75	3.83	2.95	3.44
With staff representatives	4.50	4.81	4.29	4.50	4.51
With the NHS or other relevant government agencies	5.37	5.31	5.00	5.46	5.50

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