



Insights on Stress and Anxiety

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1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction

3. Methodology and Limitations

4. Participant Profile

5. Key Findings

6. Implications

7. Conclusion / Next Steps

8. References

Executive Summary

This survey was designed to listen to and learn from people living with, or supporting someone with, stress and anxiety. By capturing their lived experiences, we aimed to uncover the most pressing needs, challenges, and gaps in current support.

The findings reveal that stress and anxiety are often persistent, moderate to severe in intensity, and affect multiple areas of life, including work, relationships, and sleep. Participants reported trying a wide range of strategies, with varying levels of success, underscoring the need for personalised, flexible approaches. These insights will guide LYEONS in developing solutions and resources that are practical, evidence-based, and directly shaped by the people they are intended to help.

Introduction

Context

Anxiety and stress are among the most common and persistent challenges affecting brain health globally. The World Health Organization (2022a) estimates that 301 million people worldwide live with an anxiety disorder, yet only about one in four receive any form of treatment. In the United States alone, nearly 1 in 5 adults, over 40 million people, experience an anxiety disorder in any given year, with lifetime prevalence approaching one-third of the population (NIMH, 2023).

These conditions are not only detrimental to individual well-being but also carry a significant societal cost, with depression and anxiety together accounting for 12 billion lost working days each year and an estimated US \$1 trillion in lost productivity (WHO, 2022b).

Stress and anxiety impact multiple aspects of life, from physical health to relationships, sleep, and workplace performance. More than half of employees report that stress affects their work performance, relationships, and quality of output, with 83% saying workplace stress carries over into home life (ADAA, 2021; OSHA, 2023).

Despite increased public discussion and awareness, many individuals still struggle to find effective, sustainable coping strategies that fit their unique circumstances (Craske et al., 2017). Addressing these challenges requires not only evidence-based interventions but also a deep understanding of lived experiences to ensure that solutions are relevant, practical, and inclusive.

Objectives

The aim of this survey was to listen to and learn directly from people living with stress and anxiety, as well as those supporting them. Specifically, we set out to:

- Understand the frequency, severity, and life impact of stress and anxiety.
- Identify the strategies and technologies currently being used, and assess their perceived effectiveness.
- Explore personal experiences, challenges, and unmet needs in managing these conditions.
- Gather insights to guide the development of LYEONS' evidence-based, personalised solutions to better support individuals and communities.

Methodology and Limitations

Responses were collected through a Google Forms survey, shared via the internet through LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, and other connections within the researchers' professional and personal networks. This distribution method meant that a significant proportion of respondents were professionals, students, and individuals from similar backgrounds. Consequently, the findings are subject to **self-selection bias** and may not fully represent the experiences of the wider population (Bethlehem, 2010).

The survey was designed to capture **initial insights** into stress and anxiety, serving as a starting point for ongoing research. Over half of participants expressed interest in continuing to follow the project and in taking

part in future surveys. This continued engagement will enable broader outreach and more diverse representation in future studies, enhancing the validity and scope of the findings.

Participant Profile

A total of 73 respondents have responded to the survey, representing a range of ages, backgrounds, and lived experiences. The largest age group was 18–26 years old (32.9%), followed by 35–44 years old (20.5%), 25–34 years old (19.2%), and 45 years old and above (27.4%). In terms of gender, 74% were female and 26% were male.

In relation to anxiety or stress, 78.1% of participants reported experiencing these conditions themselves, while 21.9% were responding on behalf of someone they knew. Among those completing the survey for another person, the relationship was most often family or friend (47%), followed by spouse or partner (29.4%), with the remainder identifying as co-workers or peers.

When asked whether anxiety or stress impacts daily life, over three-quarters (76.7%) said “Yes,” indicating a consistent and significant influence on day-to-day activities. A further 8.3% reported that it impacts them “sometimes,” while 13.7% reported no impact. One respondent commented that anxiety or stress affects both themselves and the person they care for, highlighting the **dual burden** these conditions can place on both individuals and carers (Carers UK, 2022).

Participants also identified their current life situations, with 53.4% (n=39) identifying as professionals, 30.1% (n=22) as students, and 24.7% (n=18) as business owners. Parents accounted for 20.5% (n=15), healthcare professionals 9.6% (n=7), non-professional carers 6.8% (n=5), retired individuals 2.7% (n=2), and recent graduates 1.4% (n=1).

A total of 37 respondents disclosed additional health conditions, reflecting a broad and complex health landscape. Chronic physical illnesses included gastrointestinal disorders, chronic pain, back pain, asthma, migraine, hypothyroidism, high cholesterol, lipoedema, and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS). Neurological and developmental conditions reported included ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Parkinson’s disease. Mental health diagnoses mentioned included depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), claustrophobia, panic attacks, and a history of eating disorders or alcohol addiction. Women’s health issues such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and perimenopause were also cited, alongside cancer survivorship and skin conditions such as rosacea.

Many participants were managing more than one long-term condition alongside anxiety and stress, underlining the **multifaceted** challenges faced by this group (Vos et al., 2020).

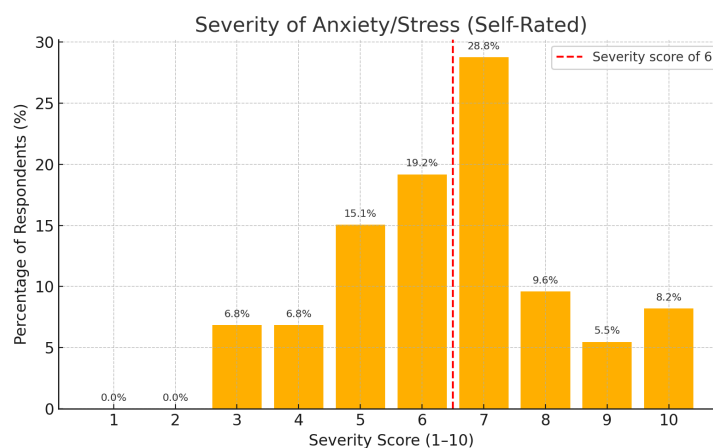
Key Findings

Frequency of Anxiety and Stress

When asked how often they or the person they care for experience anxiety or stress, 13.7% reported feeling it **all throughout the day**, while 27.4% experienced it **a few times a day**. The largest proportion, 37%, said it occurred **a few times in a week**. A further 17.8% reported experiencing anxiety or stress **a few times in a month**, and only 4.1% described such feelings as **rare**. These results suggest that for the majority of respondents, anxiety and stress are recurring, rather than occasional, experiences, highlighting the importance of consistent, rather than purely crisis-based, support strategies.

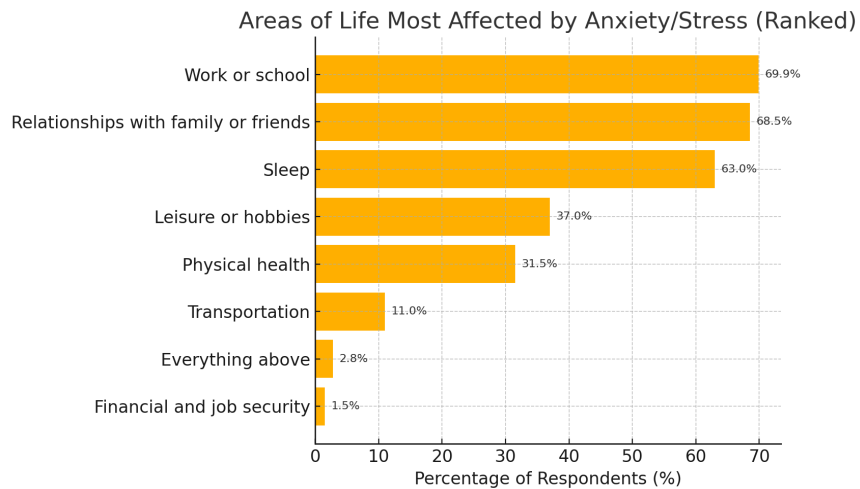
Severity of Symptoms

When asked to rate the average severity of their anxiety or stress on a scale from 1 (least severe) to 10 (most severe), responses showed a strong leaning towards higher levels of severity. When grouped, 38 respondents (over two-thirds of participants) rated their severity **above 6**, compared to only 10 respondents who rated it **under 5**. This pattern highlights that for most individuals, anxiety and stress are not only frequent but experienced at a moderate to high intensity, suggesting a need for interventions that address significant symptom burden rather than low-level stress management alone.



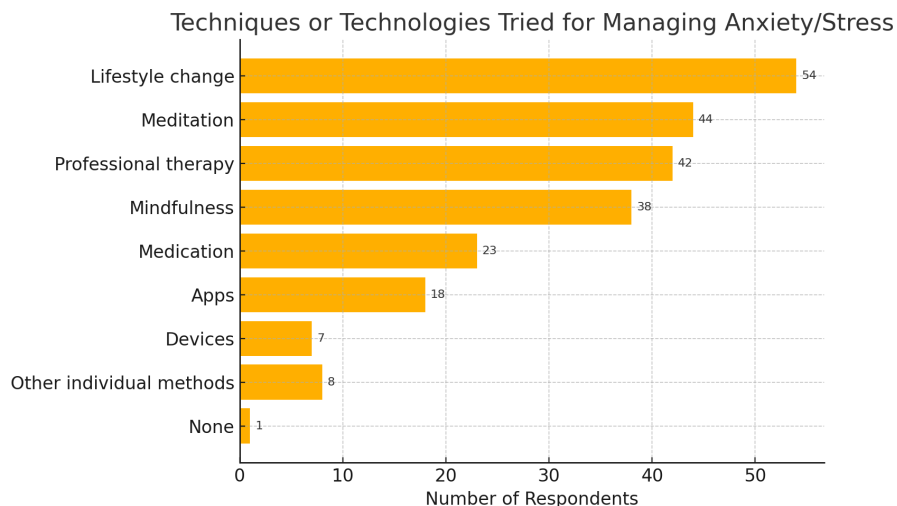
Areas of Life Most Affected

Respondents identified a range of life areas significantly affected by anxiety and stress. The most frequently mentioned was **work or school** (69.9%), followed closely by **relationships with family or friends** (68.5%) and **sleep** (63%). Other notable areas included **leisure or hobbies** (37%) and **physical health** (31.5%). Smaller proportions reported difficulties with **transportation** (11%), experiencing **all of the above** (2.8%), or concerns related to **financial and job security** (1.5%). These results suggest that anxiety and stress most commonly disrupt professional, academic, and interpersonal domains, while also affecting personal well-being and daily activities to varying degrees.



Techniques and Technologies Tried

When asked about techniques or technologies that tried to help manage anxiety and stress, the most common responses were **lifestyle changes** (54 respondents), **meditation** (44), **professional therapy** (42), and **mindfulness** (38). Other frequently mentioned approaches included **medication** (23), **apps** (18), and **devices** (7). In addition, participants listed individual strategies such as painting, reading, using herbal remedies, journaling, making plans, running, listening to music, and learning new skills. Only one respondent reported having tried no techniques at all. These findings suggest that most respondents actively engage with a combination of structured interventions and personal coping strategies, reflecting a willingness to explore multiple avenues for managing symptoms.



Perceived Effectiveness of Approaches

When asked whether the techniques or technologies they tried had been effective, **52.1%** of respondents reported that they worked, while **19.2%** said they did not. The remaining respondents gave more nuanced answers, stating that the approaches worked to varying degrees, that they sometimes worked and sometimes did not, or that they were unsure. These responses suggest that while more than half of participants

experienced a clear benefit, effectiveness can vary greatly depending on the individual, the chosen intervention, and the circumstances in which it is used.

Insights from Personal Experiences

Respondents shared a wide variety of experiences with techniques and technologies aimed at managing anxiety and stress, ranging from structured therapies to personal coping strategies. Many highlighted the benefits of **therapy, exercise, meditation, yoga, and mindfulness apps** such as Headspace and Calm. Others explored more specific or alternative methods, including breathing techniques, journaling, red light therapy, CBD oil, hypnosis, herbal sprays, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Effectiveness varied, with some describing transformative outcomes *“CBT was useful, it helped me understand my problem”* while others reported mixed results, such as *“Meditation is difficult to do when someone is already in a state of anxiety”* or *“I gave her CBD oil but it just makes her fall asleep... she can’t recognise when she’s feeling anxious.”* A few respondents expressed uncertainty or found it challenging to maintain practices over time, reflecting the highly individual nature of what works in managing anxiety and stress.

Respondents described a wide variety of experiences with approaches to managing anxiety and stress.

- **Most commonly valued strategies**
 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), psychotherapy, exercise, meditation, mindfulness, and apps such as Headspace and Calm were frequently mentioned as helpful. Many participants emphasised the importance of combining approaches over time: *“The older you get the more it’s about the entire toolbelt.”*
- **Mixed or negative experiences**
 Some found certain methods ineffective or even counterproductive, particularly in acute anxiety: *“Meditation is pointless. Only exercise helps me”* and *“Meditation was the worst... it worsened my inability to connect to my own emotions.”* Others reported that tools often brought temporary relief without resolving underlying causes: *“Maybe these were temporary fixes, or a means to distract for a moment.”*
- **Personalised coping styles**
 Participants described deeply individual routines, from strict scheduling and goal setting to spiritual practices such as Christian meditation and prayer, and creative outlets like music, writing, and philosophy.
- **Perspectives on medication**
 Some valued medication as essential for stability, while others preferred holistic or lifestyle-based strategies to avoid dependency.

Overall, the comments demonstrate that there is no single “best” approach. Success depends on a tailored mix of strategies, the individual’s circumstances, and the nature of their anxiety or stress.

Additional Suggestions and Reflections from Respondents

Seventeen respondents provided closing thoughts and suggestions for supporting anxiety, stress, and overall brain health. Several expressed interest in the role of diet, vitamins, and lifestyle changes in reducing anxiety, while others emphasised the need for strategies to address technology overuse and the constant sense of urgency in modern life, noting that *“our brain needs time to calm down and recharge.”* Many called for more research, public talks, and campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of brain health, alongside promoting self-awareness, open communication, and growth mindset education to reduce stigma and improve

understanding. Some respondents highlighted the importance of tackling the lack of social interconnectedness as a foundation before targeting individual anxiety and stress. Personal reflections included difficulty quantifying anxiety, living with global aphantasia, and planning for future changes in medication. Overall, these comments reflect a mix of practical suggestions, calls for education and community building, and personal insights, underscoring the value of a multi-faceted and socially connected approach to brain health.

Several also offered encouragement and a willingness to support LYEONS' mission, sharing messages such as *"Keep up the good work team LYEONS!"* and *"Let's keep building!"*. We thank all participants for their time, openness, and valuable contributions to this research.

Implications

The findings from this initial survey demonstrate the high prevalence and significant severity of anxiety and stress among respondents, with impacts extending across multiple domains of daily life including work, relationships, sleep, and physical health.

For the wider brain health and well-being sector, these results highlight a demand for interventions that not only address symptoms but also integrate into daily life, support co-existing health conditions, and recognise the influence of social connection, lifestyle, and environmental factors (McEwen, 2017).

For LYEONS, these findings reinforce the relevance of our mission to create innovative, evidence-based tools that support autonomic nervous system regulation and improve overall brain health. They validate the need to continue developing technology that is both grounded in science and adaptable to individual needs, while fostering a community platform that encourages shared learning and support.

Conclusion / Next Steps

This survey represents an important first step in mapping how anxiety and stress are experienced across different demographics and life situations. The strong interest from participants in staying engaged, with over half expressing willingness to take part in future research, provides a valuable foundation for deeper, longitudinal studies.

Next steps will involve:

- Expanding the survey to reach more diverse populations beyond the immediate network.
- Conducting targeted research into the effectiveness of specific sensory modulation interventions.
- Collaborating with clinicians, researchers, and technology partners to refine and validate potential solutions.
- Building a community platform to share knowledge, research updates, and practical tools for anxiety and stress management.

We invite collaboration from researchers, healthcare professionals, industry partners, and those with lived experience who share our vision of accessible, personalised, and effective approaches to brain health. Together we can develop and deliver innovations that not only ease symptoms but help people build resilience, regain balance, and thrive.

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Appendix

We continue to collect response [Insight on Stress and Anxiety](#)