

HOW BALANCED ARE YOU?

A report by

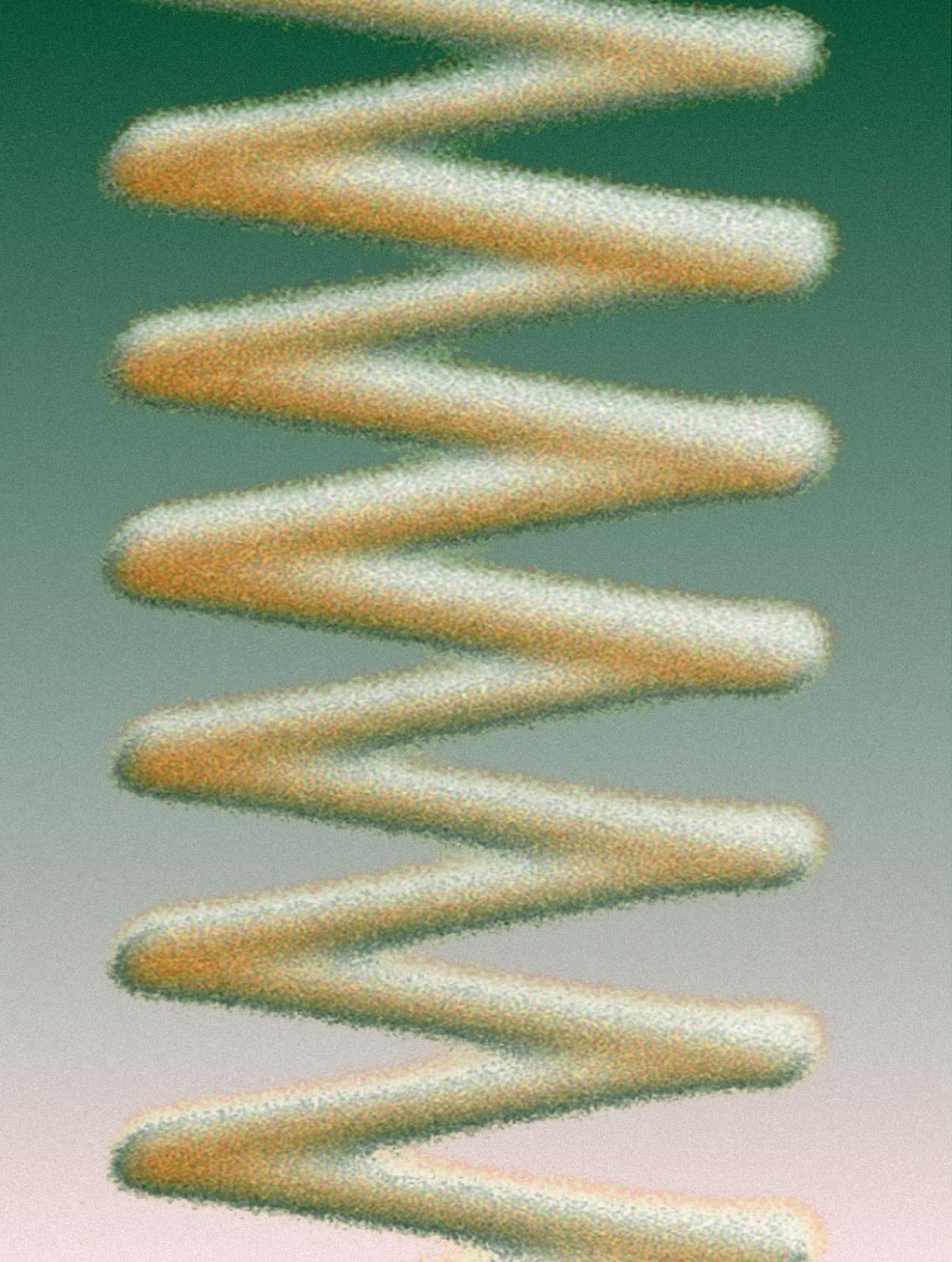
Ace & Tate + The Akin



Methodology
4

Findings
22

Observations
54



Introduction

There's a lot that can be said for mastering the balancing act of keeping life on an even keel. Be that making enough time for your significant others, drinking as much kombucha as you suggest on Instagram, or just ensuring you've got enough in the bank to keep you going till the end of the month. Living a wholesome life in 2019 sure ain't easy.

Lately, we've been fascinated by the idea of equilibrium, so we've been asking you how you manage to stay afloat in a society where you always have to be on. The following report contains all our findings, made in collaboration with The Akin: a global collective of insight, strategy and creative consultants. All the stats come from you and industry experts, sprinkled with our own little take on living harmoniously.

The Methodology

Balance

Manifesto₆

Our **Audience**₈

The **Interviewees**₁₀

The **Experts**₁₂

Defining balance₁₄

In today's world of extremes, balance is damn hard to come by. When our attention is pulled this way and that, it's easy to feel out of line. But before we go chasing that lovely equilibrium, let's first get familiar with it.

So, what is balance?

Balance is a special kind of personal harmony. For us, it requires a healthy dose of self-awareness.

It's feeling in control, without controlling things.

It's being able to say no, but not shying away from the world.

It's a night out that doesn't make you throw up in bed all the next day.

It's work and it's play.

It's both letting go and holding on.

It comes naturally, but you've got to make it happen.

Your body needs it.

Nature's already got it.

But for how much longer?

For the next couple of months, we're going to explore balance through many different lenses.

Stay tuned, maybe we'll both learn a trick or two.

Before we departed on a quest to discover the meaning of balance, we tried to define it for ourselves. On reflection, some things seem to be universal truths, whereas others are unique to us. Take a look at what we assumed about balance, before we jumped in the deep end.

Balance Manifesto

We asked you to tell us what your definition of balance is and how it impacts your life. We were blown away by the response: 1,886 people from 8 countries let us pick their brains. And, 76% already own a pair of Ace & Tate glasses. Thanks, guys ♥

Country

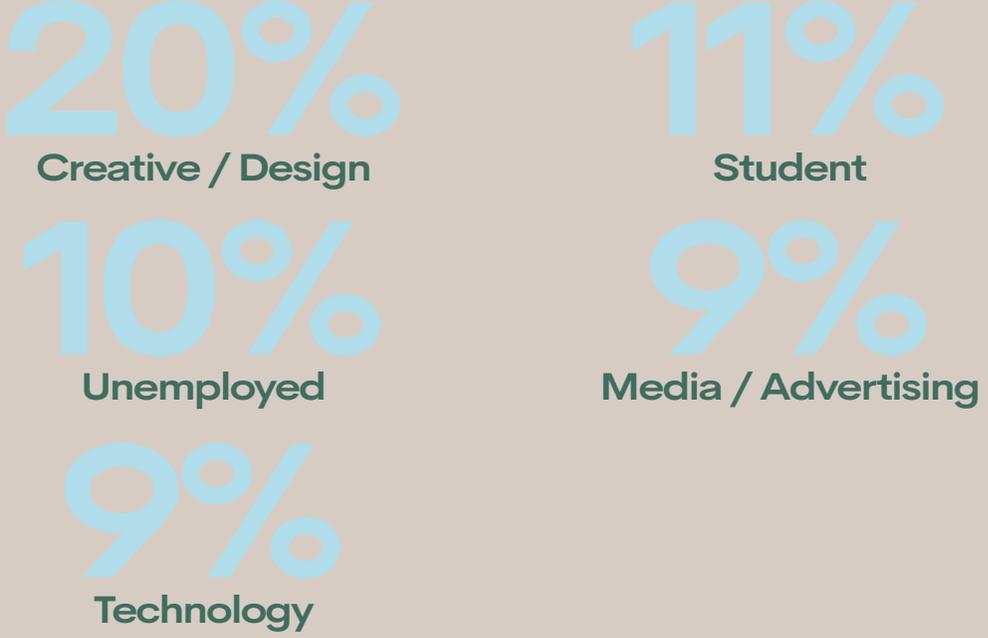


Our Audience 8

Age



Top 5 Professions



To get a bit more in-depth, we selected a guy and a girl from each of the 8 participating countries and conducted long-form interviews with them. Those selected are part of The Akin's network; early adopters of technology and lifestyle trends, they have a progressive attitude to identity, politics and society.

They are all highly engaged with current culture and have contemporary work/social lives. We asked them to speak a little more about their personal experiences with balance, particularly within their cultural setting. Big gratitude to those below for being so open and sharing their wisdom with us:

The Interviewees

11

- Calum
London, UK
- Shinta
Utrecht, NL
- Jenny
Stockholm, SWE
- Christine
Mödling, AUS
- Colline
Brussels, BE
- Jeroen
Brussels, BE
- George
Dublin, IRE
- Kazim
Berlin, DE
- Doan
Frankfurt, DE
- Joris
Amsterdam, NL
- Maja
Copenhagen, DK
- Robert
Stockholm, SWE
- Lauren
Folkestone, UK
- Oliver
Vienna, AUS
- Doug
Copenhagen, DK
- Anna
Dublin, IRE

Quantitative results are great, but we also needed to get some qualitative feedback from professionals to put it all into perspective. We spoke with leaders in technology, science, trend forecasting and healthcare, to get their views on things. Pretty legit stuff.

13

The Experts

Andres Colmenares

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CONSULTANT

Andres is the founder of Internet Age Media (IAM) and the annual technology festival, IAM Weekend, hosted in Barcelona. IAM is a platform for understanding the future of culture and media in the internet age. His daily job is to investigate the rather daunting question; what is the internet?



Karen Rosenkranz

AUTHOR OF CITY QUITTERS AND
TREND FORECASTER

Karen began writing *City Quitters* after bearing witness to countless friends leaving their urban lives for more rural settings, which was alien to her. They weren't doing it for traditional reasons, such as to start a family or to have a bigger house, but as a tactic to sustain their health and enjoy a slower pace of life. The big move was about protecting their work and creativity from a sea of homogeneity, often encountered in modern cities.

Sebastiaan van Zomeren

LIFE COACH

Sebastiaan is a life coach based in Amsterdam, who specialises in social issues. Working for the police force, a lot of his work involves supporting sufferers of PTSD. He also runs a private practice that focuses on 18-24-year-olds. Sebastiaan's aim is to help people find perspective and to create manageable plans for longterm change.



Julia Herzog

PSYCHOLOGIST

Julia specialises in RG experimental psychopathology. What's that, you ask? RG focuses on the investigation of disturbing mechanisms in stress-related disorders, such as Borderline Personality Disorder and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She aims to identify mechanisms of emotional dysregulation (poorly modulated emotional responses), as well as the influence of stress and trauma on cognitive functions.

12

So, we started with the mammoth task of trying to define what balance actually is. After a short while, we figured out it wasn't going to be as simple as we first imagined.

It was assuring to hear that balance is something you consider relevant. 93% of you said that feeling levelled is important to you. We kind of had a feeling that it would be.

In today's world of inescapable, 24/7 media, it's hard to see the wood for the trees. Navigating the snowballing conversations about well-being, and industries that have been born from this trend, is almost impossible. What we wanted to know is: what really makes you feel good? What make you feel not so good? And how much control do you have over both?

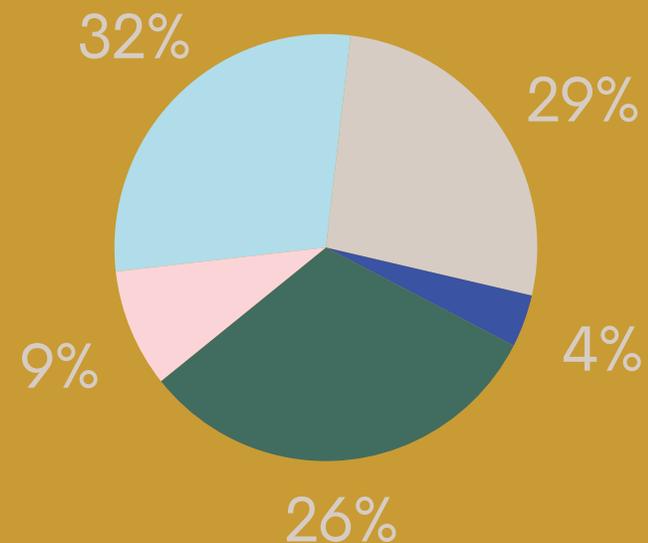
Is treading the tightrope of life the path to nirvana?

What we didn't realise is how much balance plays on your mind. 26% of you said balance is something you think about all the time. It must be *exhausting*.

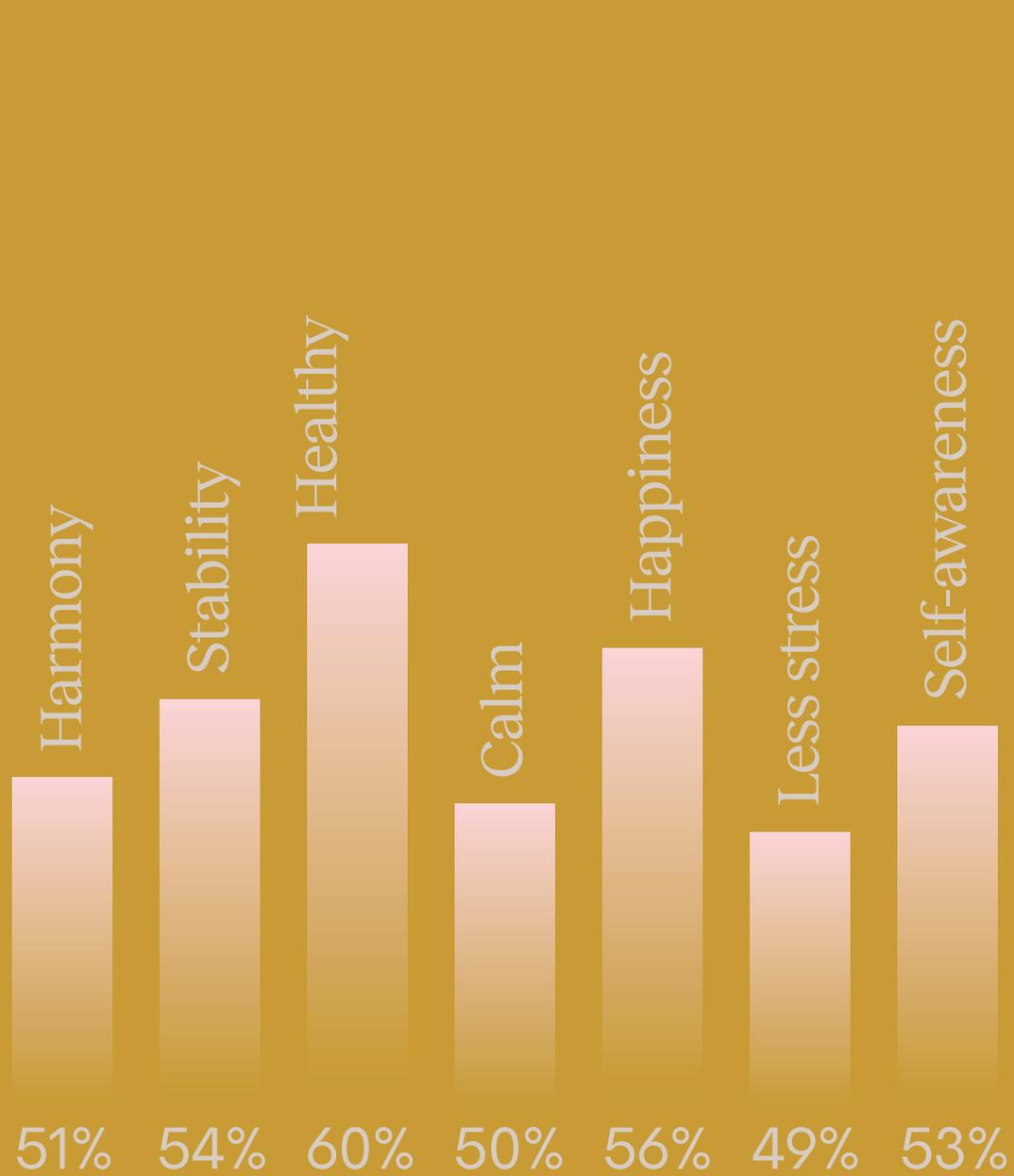
Defining Balance

14

How often do you think about balance?

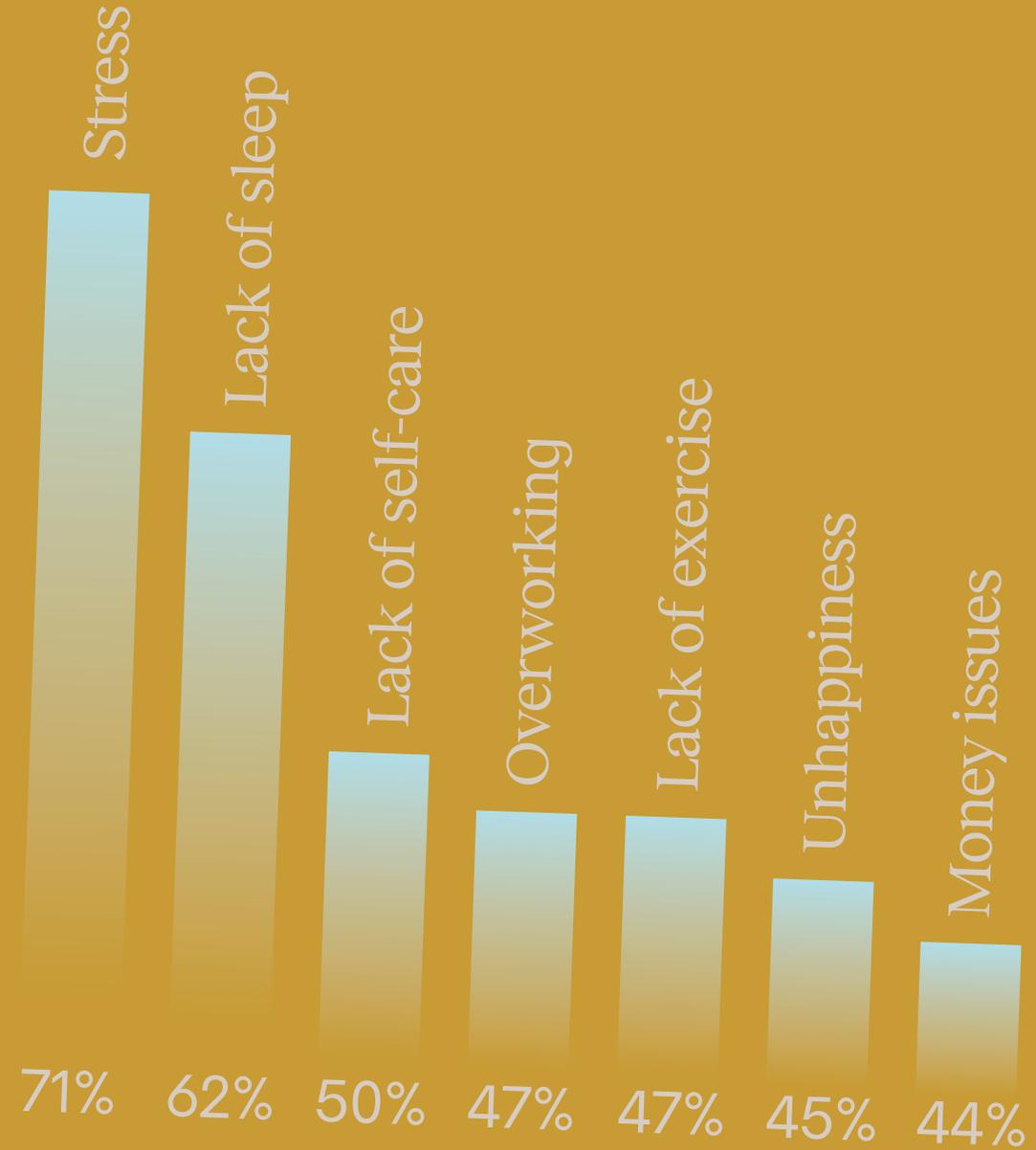


What words and feelings do you most associate with balance?



DEFINING BALANCE

The most common environmental triggers that cause imbalance?



DEFINING BALANCE

ACE & TATE:

Define

balance
for us.

Some consider balance to be a **concept**, while others describe it as a **feeling**. Context can also change its meaning. Either way, its interpretation is highly personal.

YOU:

I can't!

19

A concept

"It's a moment, a sense of stillness and peace. You have to want to find balance - it is within you. Balance is easy to intellectualise but, the reality is, it's a struggle to do it."

— JENNY, STOCKHOLM

A feeling

"For me, it's a personal feeling, when my life is a mix of everything in equal measures."

— CHRISTINE, MÖDLING

No matter how we describe it, it seems that balance is something we're all actively looking for. It's human nature.

"Balance will always call you. We are compelled to find it. It is in our nature, in our every strand of DNA. Every part of us has a counter. It is the harmony of life."

— Sebastiaan van Zomeren
LIFE COACH

We compiled a lot of information in our investigation. After sifting through everything, we pinpointed five insights that most of us seem to have in common. It's a lot of information, which can seem a bit overwhelming, but we hope you'll recognise some personal struggles in the following pages. More importantly, we just want you to know you're not in it alone. Don't miss our tips at the end of each insight, to help you gain a bit of stability back.

Our Findings

The PRESSURE *for* PROGRESS²⁴

LOOKING OUT *for* NUMBER ONE³⁰

SCREEN *it* ALL BEFORE³⁶

COMFORT *ain't* COOL⁴²

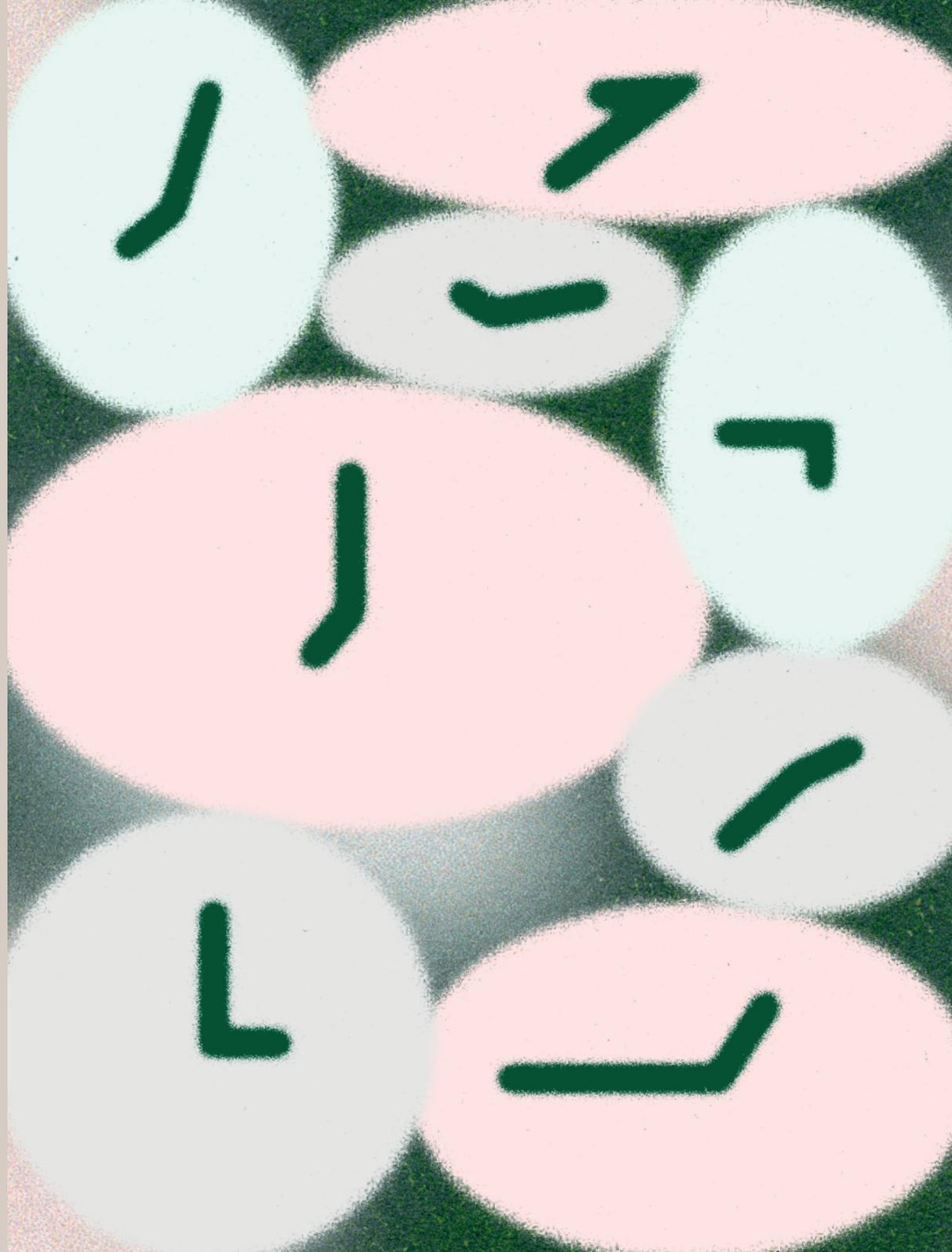
The HEALING POWER *of* NATURE⁴⁸

Insight One



72% of us say stress
is the biggest cause of unbalance.

THE
PRESSURE
FOR
PROGRESS



Perhaps not surprising to hear, but it seems we're all a little bit stressed. We're very, very busy people these days, leading intense lives that are often dictated by our careers. Maybe we thrive on the adrenaline? A whopping 93% of us agreed that we live in a cult of busyness.

It's not only our work, but also the amount of responsibilities we have to juggle alongside it; relationships, childcare, technology, etc. We find it hard to detach when we're not working and when we are, we're often thinking about a side hustle. A staggering 73% of us feel a sense of guilt when we're not working. We need to learn to switch off.

"Busyness is a trap and it's toxic. Feeling you need to be constantly productive isn't realistic."

— KAZIM, BERLIN

Personal growth is something that plays on our minds a lot, too. Our careers can be a competitive ladder, that we feel compelled to be climbing at speed: 92% of us agreed to feeling pressure from society to always be progressing.

That same fast-paced culture is playing havoc with our health. Workplace burnouts, officially recognised by the World Health Organisation, are upsettingly more common than most would assume. 65% of us have had, or nearly experienced, a burnout.

"I have never worked with people that are not overloaded and super exhausted, and that's a big issue. Mental health is something that is still a taboo topic in the workplace."

— SHINTA, UTRECHT

Making mistakes is also something that we're (unsurprisingly) reluctant to admit to, which negatively affects our mental health in a culture of success. If we were all a bit more honest about our failures, it might make us a little less afraid and eventually, lead to our successes being that much sweeter.

"I think it's important to talk about failures, because only by accepting what went wrong can you grow as an individual."

— JEROEN, ANTWERP

This pressure to grow and achieve isn't just confined to work. Many are also under the burden of the biological clock too, in a race to get married and build a family.

"Success to me is family. There is a lot of pressure on this. I am recently single and am already being asked about my love life!"

— DOAN, FRANKFURT

What did the Experts say?

“In contemporary society, success is defined by a growth narrative. To grow, you need to produce more. To do that, you need people to work more. This definition of success and its embedded logics need to be questioned.”

— Andres Colmenares
STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CONSULTANT

ACE & TATE SUGGESTS

ONE

Leave work on time at least twice a week. And **ignore** any out of hours emails - Sandra from accounts will have to darn well wait for that invoice.

TWO

Remove your job title from your social media bios, please. Our jobs don't have to define who we **are** around the clock, ok? Tell your followers something they don't know. Just not that you're vegan. Everyone knows that.

THREE

Have you noticed a colleague who is particularly busy at the moment? Talk to them. Get out of the office environment for a minute and offer them **support**. Let's beat burnout culture.

FOUR

Read **Failed It!** by Erik Kessels: a book about the art of making mistakes and how to turn them into your biggest successes.

Insight Two

31

40% of us find balance in saying 'no!'

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

Socialising with mates is a great way to wind down, but it's ok to say 'no, thank you' if you've got a lot on your plate. 52% of us regularly make time for ourselves, because being alone is cool too.

"I think I gather energy from time alone. It's clear to me when I haven't had enough of it. This has changed with age - I used to be on the scene a lot, which wasn't good!"

— JENNY, STOCKHOLM

Where do we seek our me-time? 32% of us enjoy spending time alone at home. It can be confronting to be alone with your own thoughts... in a good way.

"It's easy to be a person at work. It keeps you distracted, you feed off the stress and self-importance. But it's harder to be at home, when you're quiet or bored. You learn about the things that really drive you."

— ROBERT, STOCKHOLM

It's okay to use your time selfishly (in moderation) and give yourself time to recharge your social batteries. Don't let FOMO dictate your agenda or bow to peer pressure when you're really better off sitting this one out. 72% of us describe ourselves as more selfish than selfless.

"I say no all the time, as I know I know when I won't be good company! Sometime I need to go and take care of myself."

— CALUM, LONDON

As we already know, we're busy. So busy that we have a tendency to over promise and eventually drop out. 90% of us confess to regularly double-booking ourselves. Technology only aids our flippant attitude to commitments: 87% of us agree that technology makes it easier for us to cancel plans at short notice.

"We are generation flake, but we also have more social events to attend than ever. We overbook ourselves. My mum really complains about it!"

— JORIS, AMSTERDAM

All this solitude? Boring, we hear you all cry. But maybe boredom is the new busy?

"I love being bored because it can be a really pleasant state, a deeper state, which often sparks new ideas. I used to be a really lazy child, it's part of my personality."

— OLIVER, VIENNA

Sometimes, we just need to zone the hell out to give ourselves some much needed peace. Netflix binge, but barely watching? Intergalactic comic strips? So-bad-it's-good reality TV? Treat yo' self!

"Due to my job, I analyse and read large amounts of complex content. I need low-brow content to offset this! There is only so much you can fill your brain with."

— ANNA, DUBLIN

What did the Experts say?

“I think being selfish is a good thing in the sense that if you work on yourself you are able to help others. It’s important to **tell** people what it is you want or need, but you can’t expect that others will fulfil that want or need and that’s something that you have to keep in mind all the time.”

— Julia Herzog
PSYCHOLOGIST

34

ACE & TATE SUGGESTS

ONE

Say hello to the ‘me-kend’. Its a regular weekend, but one designed just for you. No unwanted social plans. You, a book, some bubble bath - whatever you fancy. We prescribe at least one ‘me-kend’ per month.

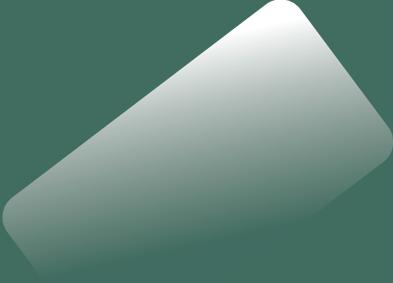
TWO

Learn to be transparent with friends when making plans. You’re nodding and saying yes, but you’re really not up for attending the launch of your mate’s techno club night, are you? Say you’re not up for it now, but suggest meeting for coffee later in the week. Honesty is the best policy and good friends usually understand.

THREE

Make a list of everything you’ve got coming up in the next week. Figure out what you really need to get done and what you’ve forgotten altogether. Chill, the world’s not going to end if you don’t organise the contents of your fridge by colour.

Insight Three



58% of us attest to having an unhealthy relationship with our phones.

SCREEN IT ALL BEFORE

37

Mobile, laptop, TV, repeat. Ever feel like your eyes are constantly fluttering between a myriad of hazy blue screens and you just can't tear them away? Let's face it, we're addicted to our devices.

"I think we've all got so used to getting a hold of one another, at any time, so I now find it rude if people don't answer me. We're expected to be available all of the time."

— MAJA, COPENHAGEN

We know that social media is usually the trigger to pick up our phones, despite the fact that 52% of us confess that social platforms make us feel unhappy. Instagram has seduced us into a world of filters and falsery, where we're always seemingly *#livingourbestlives*. It's all fake and you're not the only one lying: 86% of us feel that our Instagram accounts depict a shinier version of our real life.

"Social media makes us perform our identities. It is regressive. It gives us no permission to explore without judgement. It creates barriers for people. We don't share our failings as we are scared of being vulnerable in a culture of perfection and productivity."

— ANNA, DUBLIN

We're aware of it though, and acknowledging our demons is step one of any withdrawal process, right? From now on, let's make an effort to log in less, post less and switch off from the damaging digital world, even for a little bit.

"I relax by unplugging, closing my computer and going offline. I even got a second sim card, with the same phone number, and have put it into a really shitty old phone. I take that out to stop me from answering emails or going on social media."

— OLIVER, VIENNA

SCREEN IT ALL BEFORE

We are all responsible in moderating the culture of social media transparency. Not only what we post, but how often we do so can affect the way we feel about ourselves and those around us.

“I don’t really post regularly now. I have realised the happier I am, the less I post. It feeds narcissism and anxiety.”

— LAUREN, FOLKESTONE

So how do we engage our brains sans technology, you ask? Take it back to the old-school. Printed materials, be that a fresh-off-the-press magazine or an old novel collecting dust on your shelf. Go and sniff a book, it gets your synapses going, right? 39% of us find balance in having a good read.

“I much prefer physical media. It has no distractions and makes me feel more present. I’m more fulfilled than when I spend time online.”

— GEORGE, DUBLIN

Maybe you’re too 2019 for books? Podcasts or audio-books are popular alternatives. 68% of us enjoy podcasts, due to the fact that they don’t involve a screen.

“I like that podcasts fill my house with voices. They let me be part of a conversation that I might be too socially anxious to participate in IRL. I like the ones with group chats, since it’s like I’m there. It replicates the same feelings and emotions.”

— CALUM, LONDON

“We give into these technologies, which are tools with too much power. We treat them like Gods, while their creators are shaping our realities without many of us even realising. Their design is to addict us, a bit like the sugar industry, but the cost to our health is invisible. We must learn to not be **manipulated**, to put our devices down, to act more like citizens that have responsibilities and power and less like users. We are at a point where we can’t imagine existing without technology and that is scary.”

— Andres Colmenares
STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CONSULTANT

ACE & TATE SUGGESTS

ONE

Make social media off limits until **11am**, everyday. We won't tell you again!

TWO

Assign one social media **blackout day** per week. 24 hours without cute puppies and Kanye memes - you've got this.

THREE

Turn off all **notifications** (except calls). That WhatsApp group thread can wait.

FOUR

Need stimulating? Download **'Career Girls'**, Ace & Tate's podcast exploring women, work & winning.

Insight Four

87% of us believe that challenges

make us think outside of the box.

COMFORT AIN'T COOL

43

Breaking news: Balance and comfort aren't one and the same. It's pretty easy to imagine the ultimate state of equilibrium is being snuggled on the sofa, surrounded by loved ones, with a newborn puppy tenderly licking your cheek. But, no, not true! At least, not for everyone. Feeling comfortable is not a place some of us aspire to be.

"For me, experiencing comfort is a slight fear. I associate comfort with irrelevance, which would be an issue in my profession."

— KAZIM, BERLIN

Some people find harmony in deliberately pushing the status quo, feeling their most determined in polarising situations, like a new job, or exploring a city without a map. 72% of us believe that discomfort leads to self-growth. Making ourselves uneasy can help us to live life more fully and try things we never thought we were capable of.

"I am looking for discomfort in radical places and experiences. Life is often too easy in the western world."

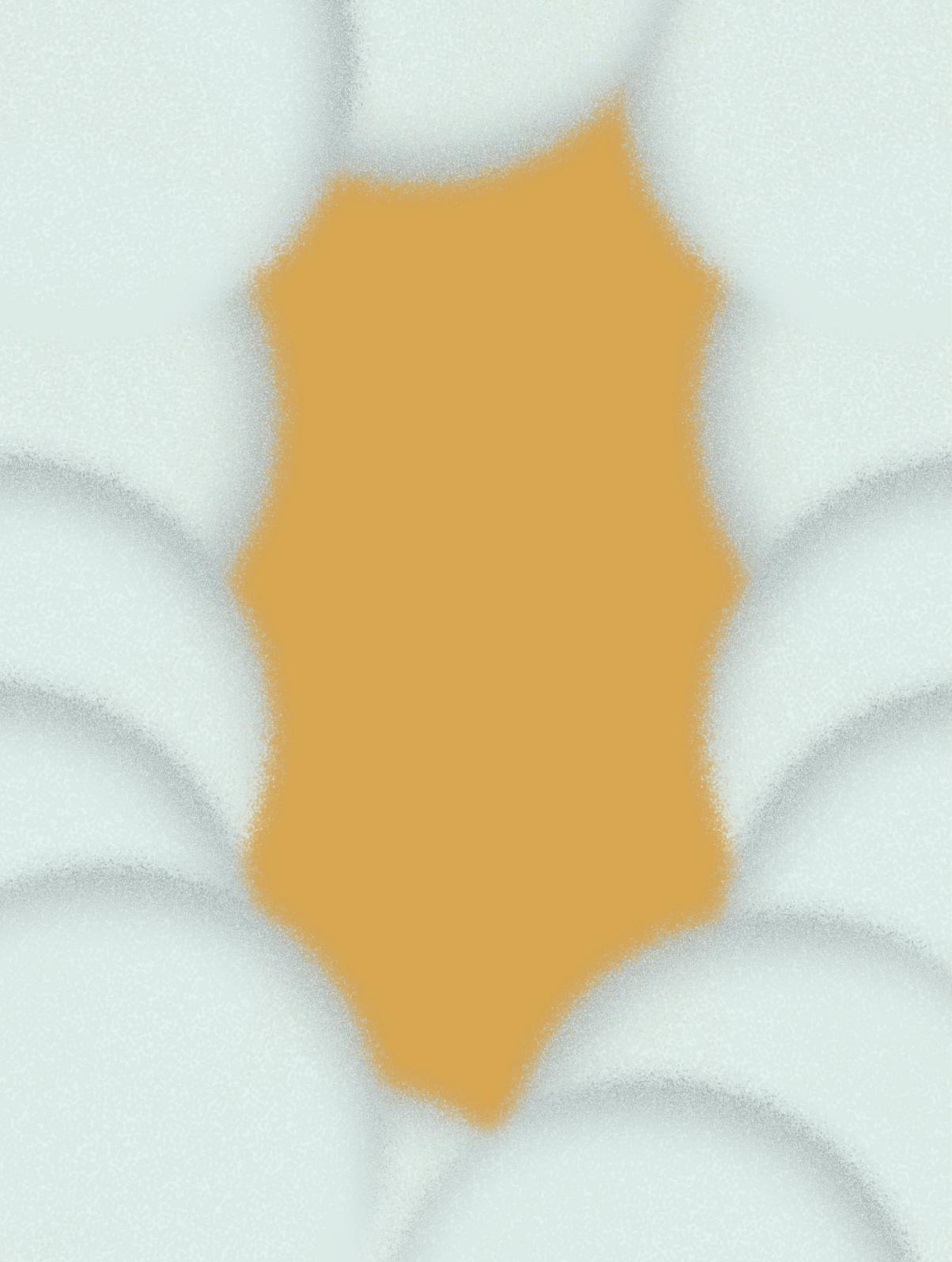
— DOUG, COPENHAGEN

Comfort and creativity aren't friends, either. Working to tight deadlines, no-show deliveries, spanners in the works: these are the moments when our creative juices are really put to the test. We do recognise that comfort is a privilege though, and having it allows us to be more risky in our approach to life:

"To me success is ever evolving, it isn't a linear journey. At the moment security and comfort aren't inspiring to me. Though they do make me feel more confident to take risks, as I know I am safe to make mistakes."

— ROBERT, STOCKHOLM

COMFORT AIN'T COOL



45

What did the Experts say?

“We have to be comfortable with discomfort and being thrown off balance sometimes. If we can’t cope with that, we can’t be a functioning adult. Life is hard, unexpected things happen and **we grow from those moments of challenge.**”

— Sebastiaan van Zomeren
LIFE COACH

ACE & TATE SUGGESTS

ONE

That thing you've always wanted to try, but never dared to? **Do it.** Sign up today, ask the burning question, get that haircut. Throw caution to the wind a little more.

TWO

Write down five places you'd like to visit this year, five places you'd like to visit next year, and five places you'd like to visit in the next three years. Go to **all** of them.

THREE

We've all got our favourite takeaway, place for an after work drink, or fitness class at the gym. But routine is a little dull sometimes, huh? Have a **week** of doing things differently and be someone new for a while.

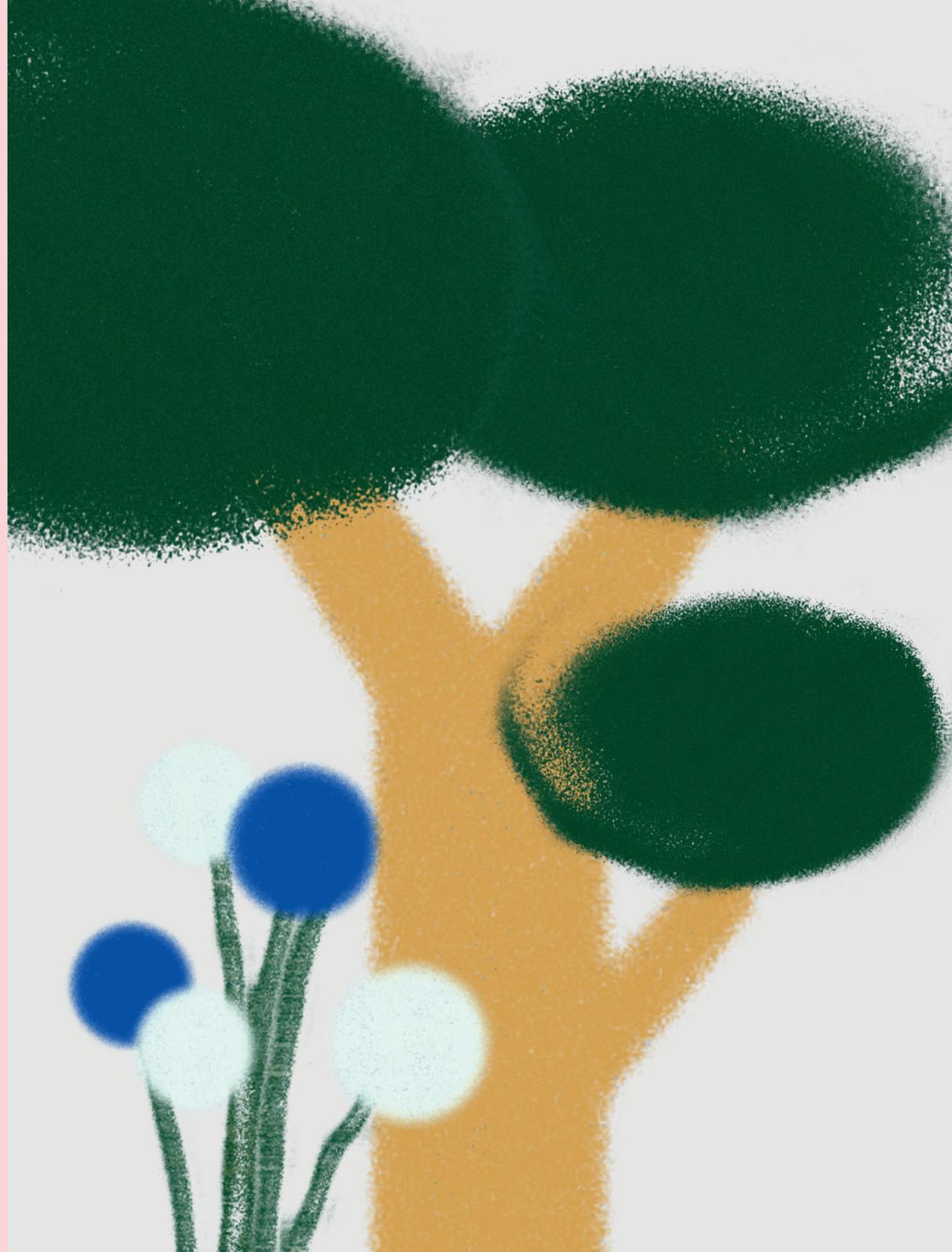


Insight Five

85% of us like to be in and amongst nature, regularly escaping our urban environments.



THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE



We love our metropolitan lives: the convenience, the chaos, the craziness. In fact, **over 90% of you live in a city or town**. Sometimes we miss the countryside or coastline though, where the grass actually is greener.

"I used to get FOMO from not going out. Now I get it from missing the sunshine."

— LAUREN, FOLKESTONE

Nature is powerful and we want to feel it. It's not an orchestrated machine powered by humans; feeling vulnerable amongst nature can be pretty exhilarating.

"Nature is the best teacher. It is wise and powerful, volatile but not violent. It has no conscience and we can't rule it. Visiting it connects us to something much bigger than us. These moments of awe give perspective on how insignificant we are."

— JENNY, STOCKHOLM

Fresh air, plus zero distractions equal a clear head. A clear head equals creative capacity. **59%** of us agree that rural spaces make us feel more creative.

"I need to be alone in nature, usually mountains. I don't have an internal monologue, so being in the city doesn't help. I find that, when I get out, I write so much more. I try to hike or camp regularly and, when I travel, I find a new sense of space to reinvent myself or to reflect."

— DOUG, COPENHAGEN

51



Maybe it's to do with how darn quiet it can be when you're stood in the middle of nowhere?

"Silence in nature is what helps me the most. The under-stimulation helps me reset."

— DOAN, FRANKFURT

So, will we be a generation of city slaves who flock to the countryside when we find a spare weekend, for years to come? Maybe not. **47%** of us shared that we have plans to move out of the city in the future. The future is bright, the future is green. Or blue, depending on how close you live to the sea.

50

THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE



What did the Experts say?

“People making the effort to reconnect with their body cycle is **not a fad**. We are so often disconnected with nature in the modern world.”

— Karen Rosenkranz
AUTHOR AND TREND FORECASTER



52

ACE & TATE SUGGESTS

ONE

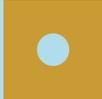
Get **out** of town. Use your next week-end to escape the city, whether it's just a day or an overnight retreat. Run through a forest of pine trees, walk barefoot on a sandy coastline, scream at the top of your lungs. And, exhale.

TWO

While you're there, get creative baby. Take a pen and paper, your acoustic guitar or analogue camera. Just no screens, remember? Translate those calming vibes in to creative material.

THREE

The gym in the summer? No, thanks. You might not live amongst an oasis of rolling green hills (Netherlands, we're looking at you), but we've all got a city park or sports field not too far from us. Put your sneakers on and take your next workout outdoors - let's work with what we've got.



Some

Observer—

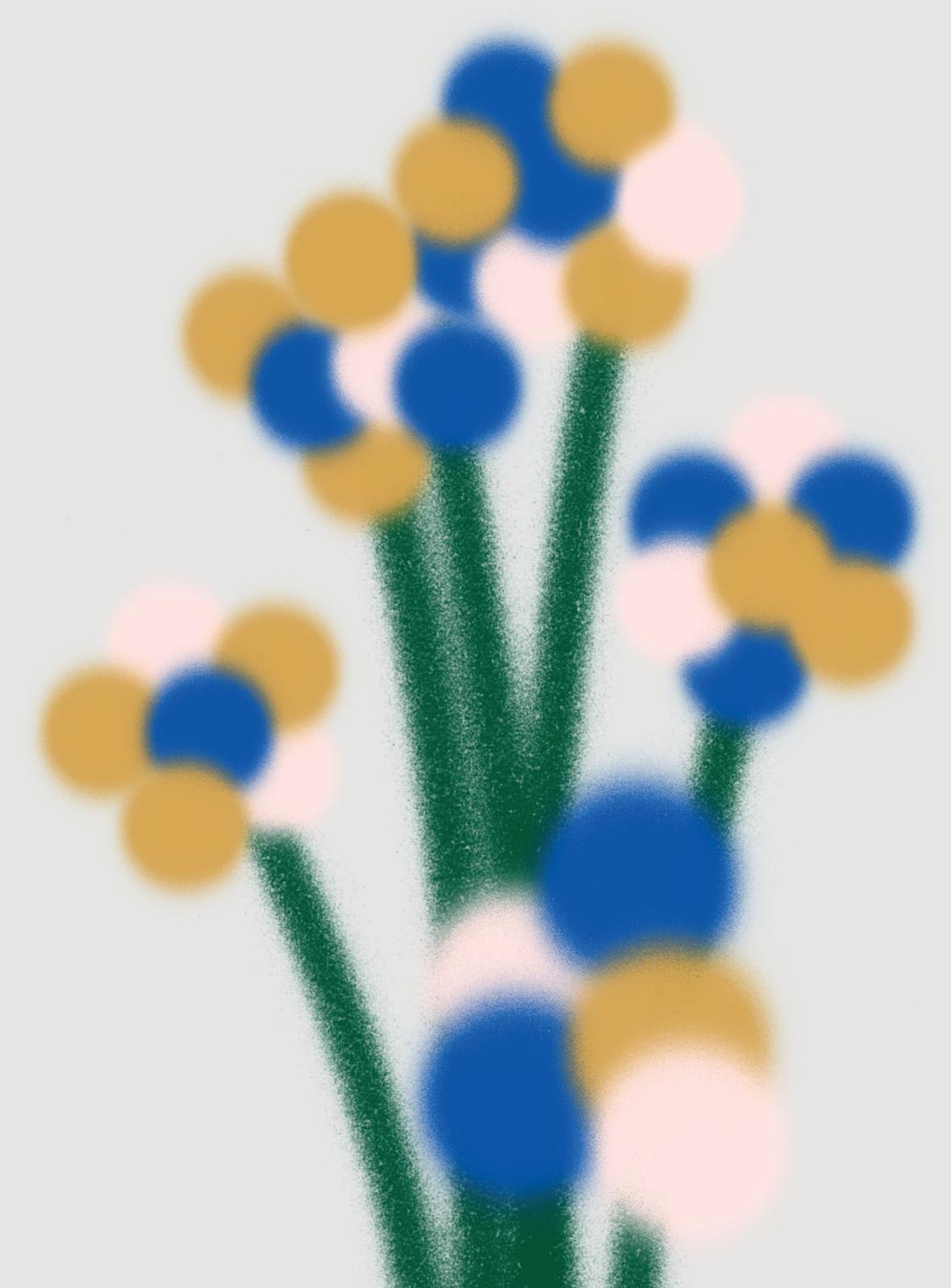
Balance & You ⁵⁷

Country Observations ⁶²

Age Observations ⁶⁴

Conclusion ⁶⁶

•
vations



57

So yeah, balance is important to us. We can't really describe it, we find it hard to control, but we want it. So bad! We've let you know the main insights we've drawn from our research, but there were a few tidbits we felt were too good to leave out.

Balance & You

45% of you confidently consider yourself to be mentally balanced. 41% of you said the same about feeling physically balanced. It seems there's some work to do.

In which aspects of our lives does it creep up? When are we confronted with the decision or opportunity to be more balanced? And when do we employ behaviours or tactics to feel that glorious state of zen? It seems we're all on our own journey.

"It is a hope, to find that equilibrium that is right for me. It's a highly personal, subjective path."

— JENNY, STOCKHOLM

BALANCE & OTHERS

Relationships were unanimously ranked as the most important factor of balance across all countries that participated (average 66%).

43% of us socialise as a means to stay chilled, with 41% talking to friends, family or professionals. Isn't it good to just let it all out?

17% of us use sex to moderate our sense of balance. Sex peaked highest amongst our Danish participants (24%), and lowest amongst our Irish (11%). No judgement here.

BALANCE & BODY

60% of us consider health as one of the most important lifestyle considerations for balance, while 57% of us exercise to feel good. We knew Zumba was still alive and kicking!

49% of us have a healthy diet, but our mental health is important too, with 62% actively working on the relationship between our mental and physical wellbeing.

92% of us say we listen to our body's natural cycles (e.g. hormonal, circadian or seasonal rhythms), but only 41% of us have a good sleep pattern. It seems we need to learn how to listen better.

BALANCE & SELF—MEDICATING

Sometimes, we need a little help to reach the right mindset. 17% of us have tried drugs for self-medicating, such as CBD products. 23% are open to trying some kind of drugs for stability (or, just the opposite), with the Austrians topping the poll for experimentation (27%). 60% of us don't use any drugs at all.

Alcohol is also popular, with 42% getting drunk in order to unwind. If you're Danish, alcohol is to be the vice of choice for 53% of you. It must be those long winters.

BALANCE & PRACTICES

34% of us do some form of meditation daily, while 59% want to try meditation. The Dutch ranked top (40%) as the most frequent meditators. Cycle, sleep, reflect, repeat!

51% of us have attended, or are currently undertaking therapy, while another 44% would consider it. Respondents from the UK ranked highest, at 59%. So much for the Brits and their 'stiff upper lip' reputations?

BALANCE & BANKING

We know it all too well: 71% of us struggle to manage our finances and even worse, 46% of us are scared to look at our bank balances. *Impending feeling of dread*.

But it seems we know our shortcomings. A respectable 45% of us have a financial plan in place. Don't splash the cash before checking your Excel Sheet.

Without getting too political about things (cough, Brexit, cough), we're all one big family right? There's a lot of mutual respect amongst us all, no matter what country we might reside in.

However, we all have our little quirks. Those funny little nuances that make us unique as nations. The Germans are punctual, the Dutch are matter-of-fact and the British love to queue. Well, this report certainly highlighted some more of those.

Country Observations

Sweden

32% of you said that climate change concerns put a spanner in your works (average 23%). May we all be as progressive in responsible living as you guys.

50% of you said their health is something you struggle to balance (average 35%). We don't doubt that it's a lack of healthy living. Maybe your health is just more front-of-mind, than most?

Austria

You must be very friendly people. 43% of you say that a lack of socialising makes you feel imbalanced, as opposed to 31% of the rest of us antisocial lot.

19% of you feel that you have a very good relationship with technology (average 5%). Now we know who'll be safe when the robots take over.

63

Germany

You find balance in travelling the world. 44% of Germans enjoy giving in to the sense of wanderlust (and marking your territory with the habitual towel on sunbed), compared with 36% of the rest of us.

It seems safe to assume that the German workplace is a good place to be, with only 50% of you experiencing burnout symptoms (average 65%). Another plus for German efficiency.

Ireland

You're less susceptible to stress (63%, vs. a 72% average), but only 15% of you push yourselves to extremes, unlike 53% of the rest of us. The good life.

50% of you said your diet is something you struggle to balance (average 36%). Too much Supermac's, perhaps?

United Kingdom

27% of you signified politics as a factor that can throw you out of balance, over a 16% average across other markets. Maybe it's got something to do with Boris Johnson?

Possibly a bi-product of the above, but 40% of you Brits admit that overindulging knocks you off kilter, vs. a 23% average. The 'Boozy Brit' reputation lives on.

The Netherlands

We're pretty impressed with you, as you seemed the most zen of us all. Most of you focus on exercise (56%), self care (58%) and saying no (46%) to find joy.

61% of you say social media generally makes you happy against a 48% average. Netherlands, we bow down to you.

Denmark

45% of you said that too much screen time has a negative effect on you (31% average), as does social media (41%, vs. a 26% average). Woke Danes.

25% of you said a lack of sex makes you feel a bit wonky (average 18%). What is it about the Danes and sex? Hey, we're just jealous.

Belgium

You definitely love to please others. You're less likely to say no, with only 31% of you putting your foot down, vs. a 40% average.

A mere 35% of you feel like you have money troubles (average 44%) and only 37% of you are worried about overworking (average 47%). Belgium, what's your secret?

We don't want to perpetuate any stereotypes, here, but we definitely noticed some trends amongst different age groups in our survey. We love that such a broad range of people opened up to us and have learned that even in this increasingly fluid society, we do tick some traditional demographic boxes, after all.

65



Our youngest age group is full of social butterflies, with 46% of you focusing a lot on your social lives, in contrast with a 38% average. But, not all contact is proving to be positive, with 33% (vs. 26% average) struggling to balance social media consumption.

The benefits of youth also mean that only 14% of you struggle with your health, as opposed to a 35% average. Maybe it's because you lot focus more on self care than any other group, at 56%, compared to 50% for the rest of us.



People in their 30s' main concern is work, with 56% of you actively trying to improve your job/life balance. 55% of you are affected heavily by overworking, compared to 47% of the rest of us.

Counteracting this stress is mostly done by exercise (65% vs 57% average), or reading (47% vs. 39% average). Active or not, good on you for focusing on yourselves.



They say, with age comes wisdom, not that we're calling you old. 68% of you are concerned with your health and 52% consider family a vital focus in your lives.

Bucking the trend, social media is a force for good in your lives, with 63% saying it makes you happier (average 48%). Maybe it's because you also use it a lot less than others, with only 14% struggling to contain your social media use, against a 26% average. 40-plussers, please, teach us your ways.

Age Observations

CONCLUSION



Thanks for sticking with us. Balance is kind of a broad and varied topic, huh? We started with our Balance Manifesto and jeez, have we learned a lot, digging deep into the ins and outs of equilibrium. Most importantly, it's not a blanket term: it's ongoing and constantly changing per person and context.

We think it's fair to admit that there are no concrete answers. Balance is not one thing. It's a way of life for some; a rolling adventure of tasks and challenges to be overcome. For others, it's a warm and tingly feeling in your toes, belly or between your ears.

Balance is not always good, either. It can lead to stagnation and dare we say it, be a little dull. We've had our minds blown more than a number of times during our exploration into balance. You might call them home truths, but they're definitely things we have to pay more attention to.

We're putting ourselves under a lot of strain these days. We work harder than we really ought to, often putting our careers before our relationships, hobbies and health. Society has bred a produce-or-die mentality, in which we feel we must always be scrambling the mountain of success at colossal speed. We need to take our foot off the gas and slow it down. We need to wallow in self love, enjoy some downtime and appreciate our support networks.

Technology is dictating the way we live and who can blame us for falling down the rabbit hole we call the internet? True, it's not directly our fault, but we need to take more responsibility in fighting the war against digital domination. Even if we feel immune to social media's happy-washing, we most likely have a friend or family member who compares themselves to the unachievable standards of others. Let's post a little less, filter less, over-exaggerate less, overcompensate less. Let's be content with less.

Speaking of restraint, let's try to live more simply. Take ourselves out of our concrete playgrounds and enjoy the fruits of Mother Nature's labour. We've all agreed that immersion in fields of green allows us to be more relaxed, more creative and just more joyful in general. Don't we all owe it to ourselves to be happy? Take a trip to pastures new and remind yourself what it's like to feel alive.

The world can be a scary place and we'll forever be encountering hurdles that try to knock us down. If we find those little pockets of solace, we just might make it through. The fact of the matter is that we're all in it together, so let's be kind to one another. Let's be kind to ourselves. More of the good stuff, less of the bad.

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The Akin is a global collection of consultants and network of changemakers, based in London and Berlin. We believe futures are plotted through cultural anthropology, exploring current realities and people creating change.

The Akin acts as a connector between businesses and changemakers, by uncovering human truths and provoking possibilities using research and strategic thinking.

RESEARCH
Sarah & Anna



SPECIAL THANKS

*To everyone who took the time to answer our questions,
understanding balance is understanding yourself.*

“The universal truth is, as long as our society keeps increasing its inherent instability on multiple planes and realities, humans will always seek **balance.**”

— Andres Colmenares
STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CONSULTANT

