

# **The Relationship Between Stress and Personality Traits in Secondary School Teachers**

# 1.0 Introduction (600 words)

## 1.1 Background

Over the years, psychologists have investigated the impact of personality traits and stress. They have defined personality as the unique, individual characteristics that govern the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves, and have developed ideas such as the trait theory, which has been agreed that personality traits are constant, genetic-based and predictable categories defining personality. Eysenck was a popular theorist who contributed 2 personality traits to 'the big five' which were extraversion and neuroticism but he also determined that psychoticism was another category that aspects of personality could be included in. "Extraversion is defined by the general tendency to experience positive emotions, as well as by traits such as sociable, lively, and active." - Psychology of Humour, 2018. "Neuroticism is the name Eysenck gave to a dimension that ranges from normal, fairly calm and collected people to one's that tend to be quite 'nervous.'" - C.G. Boeree, 2006. The APA Dictionary of Psychology defines psychoticism as "a dimension of personality in Eysenck's dimensions characterised by aggression, impulsivity, aloofness, and antisocial behaviour, indicating a susceptibility to psychosis and psychopathic disorders". Psychoticism links has been found to link to stress and coping mechanisms as seen in a study of stress levels levels in policemen (Kaur. et al. 2013) and other occupations.

Studies have been conducted using Eysenck's theories including a study by Luo and his colleagues who looked into the correlation between genetics, personality traits and stress among twins. (Luo et al., 2016) In this study they observed twin samples from national longitudinal of adolescent to adult health and Midlife in the United States survey where they found that in the first survey there was 70% correlation between genetic influence, and personality and stress.

Many studies have been conducted on the interaction between these factors and other behavioural variables such as stress. One of these include a study in 2016 where they determined there was a partial relationship between personality and physiological stress responses. (Evans et al., 2016) In this study, they measured the presence of cortisol and heart rate levels to determine if there was a change in these and personality in adolescents but was mostly inconclusive. Another study researched the biological basis of stress in comparison to openness which expressed that higher openness (related to extraversion in Eysenck's trait theory) results in lower stress (Lü et al., 2016). Optimism (related to neuroticism and emotional stability) was found also bring life satisfaction as well as lower stress (Cabras & Mondo, 2017).

In 2016, a study was done on the sex-linked traits that help combat stress. (O'Connor et al., 2016) Females and males vary in personality traits which may also influence the results found in this study, producing some sort of basis and inspiration for this study. In many of these studies stress has been defined as the response to homeostasis (Selye, 1956) Many studies these days are directed at adolescent stress and depression but not much research seems to have been done about teachers. Teachers, especially in secondary schools, experience stress in their day to day tasks such as lesson planning, assessments and standardisation, and other factors like limited time or disruptive students have also express the increasing stress in teachers. (Feltoe et al., 2016,) Teachers who experience high stress levels and have low coping skills end up influencing their students education, such that their academic progress is lower (Herman et al., 2018).

In this study, stress was defined as the response to threats of an individual's homeostasis. The aim of this investigation was to determine the correlation between personality traits and stress in Secondary School Teachers. The purpose of investigating this population was also to determine to what degree the stress levels of secondary school teachers are influenced by their personality traits such that awareness can be raised and future teachers may understand the impacts of teaching and if they will be adequately suited for them.

It is hypothesised that secondary school teachers with high scores in neuroticism and psychoticism will present higher stress results on the survey (Appendix 2) than those who score lower in psychoticism and neuroticism. This will be determined using a non-experimental research design (correlational), with the behavioural variables being stress and the personality traits.

## 2.0 Method (300 words)

### 2.1 Participants

The participants selected will be approximately 800 Australian Secondary School Teachers between 22-65 years chosen through stratified sampling, where staff lists of all Australian schools are collected and a random sample is selected from each strata which will represent each sector of education. The selection will also take into account the male-female ratio of teachers (e.g in 2018, 28% of teachers were male and 71% were female). The education of the teachers would vary with the lowest education being a Bachelor degree and the highest level of education being a Doctorate. The average education would be a master's degree.

### 2.2 Materials

The materials needed in conducting this study include a questionnaire with section 1 based off participant identification, section 2 based of Eysenck's trait theory, inspired by similar minds survey based off his theory and section 3 on stress, inspired by psych-central's stress questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Staff lists for the schools in Australia would also be required with accompanying contact information. The drafted email is also another material required as it outlines some of the investigation and participant rights (ethics). The survey would also require participants to have electronic devices that can operate with SurveyMonkey.

List version:

- Questionnaire (Appendix 2)
- Staff lists
- Computers or some other sufficient device for the online survey (sources by participants)
- Researcher computers or devices with Excel for data analysis.
- Emails (Appendix 1)

### 2.3 Procedure

In this correlation study, the staff lists will be collected and sector information will be analysed. Once the sample has been chosen, emails will sent out containing information on ethics, purpose and a link to the survey. Participant data will be collected, where each participant will be numbered according to when they responded. The data will be analysed and organised so that the results can produce a personality against stress graph. The data will then be interpreted and analysed through observing a scatterplot, similar to Figure 1.

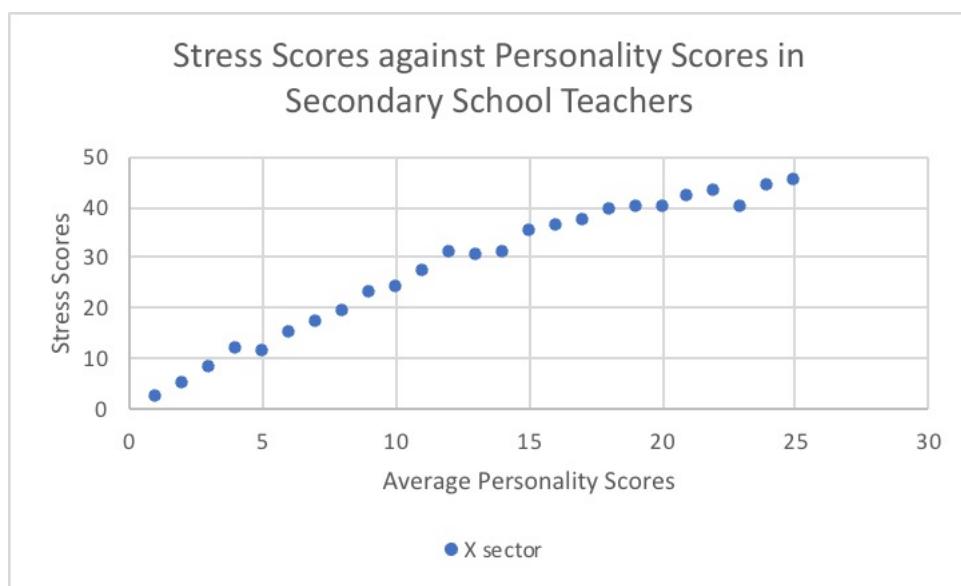


Figure 1: example of how the data will be represented for this study. (All data presented here is fictional).

## 2.4 Extraneous & uncontrolled variables

Extraneous Variables	Measured/ controlled	Uncontrolled
<b>Participant variables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Job: specified, differences could influence the data as other jobs aren't in the target population.</li> <li>- Education: fixed education required, variety of education levels influence quality of life and therefore influence stress levels.</li> <li>- Country of work: specified in sampling Australian teachers, other factors such as the type of education system may influence responses and isn't included in the target population.</li> <li>- External stress: asked about (see Appendix 2, participant section)</li> <li>- Drug or medication: asked about (see Appendix 2)</li> <li>- Health conditions: asked about (see Appendix 2)</li> <li>- Exercise: asked about (see Appendix 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family life: difficult to determine how family influences each individual.</li> <li>- Interpretation of questions: interpretation is based off experience and understanding which unique to each individual and difficult to measure.</li> <li>- Experience with stress: again based on experience which is difficult to measure due to individuality.</li> <li>- Events / Circumstances: dependent on individual factors which would change for each participant.</li> <li>- Workload: difficult to determine to what degree teachers workload influences them.</li> </ul>
<b>Situational variables</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience with computers: difficult to measure</li> <li>- Time of completion: different times benefit different individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>Experimenter bias</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The orientation of the questions: most questions are directed to measure each of the four categories directly which means, for example, that introverts may be inclined to rate the extrovert questions to satisfy the researchers or 'follow the crowd'.</li> </ul>	
<b>Demand characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All participants are told the aim and purpose of the investigation so that it limits participants trying to guess what the survey is about.</li> </ul>	

Through measuring the extraneous variables, the differences and causes for anomalies becomes easier and the data the is anomalous can be removed.

## 3.0 Data (150 words)

### 3.1 Type of Data (100)

The type of data collected will be a fixed response, Likert, self-report survey as participants. An advantage to this type of data collection is that it is quick and easy for the participants and allows the data to be analysed easily but due to its self report quality the data is subjective. The data is also measured quantitatively, being a fixed response survey, meaning that it can be identified to what degree they present the behavioural variable. Another advantage is that it requires less time to interpret responses but it limits the ability to determine the causation of certain responses. The data is subjective and an advantage to have subjective data is that it is quick but as each participant has different standards of measuring themselves the data won't be as precise or consistent as objective research.

## **3.2 Data Collection (50)**

The data is collected through the survey (see Appendix 2) where the majority of the questions are labelled from strongly agree, which is given 5 points, to strongly disagree which is given 1 point. For each of the sections (stress, psychotism, neuroticism, and extraversion) the total is added up where the maximum for the personality traits is 25 points each and the minimum is 5 points and for stress the maximum is 45 and the minimum is 9. An average would be calculated for personality traits using this formula: Total personality score =  $\frac{Psychotism + Neuroticism + Extraversion}{3}$ , which would be plotted on the x-axis of a scatterplot graph with the stress scores on the y-axis, expressing to what degree the variables correlate.

## **4.0 Ethical considerations (150 words)**

Ethical considerations have been made throughout the survey and email (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) so that the participants are fully aware of their rights within the study. Voluntary participation was addressed through allowing participants to take the questionnaire by their own choice. Confidentiality will be achieved through numbering participants and referring to them by their number and keeping data confidential. Withdrawal rights was abided by through the repetition of saying that participants can quit the questionnaire or remove their data anytime before a certain date (the publishing date). To achieve informed consent, the emails contained the purpose and information of the study and the survey asks if the participant give consent to use their data in the research. Deception didn't occur as it was deemed unnecessary. Debriefing will occur through sending another email detailing where participants can access the research and results.

## **5.0 Reliability and Validity (100 words)**

### **5.1 Validity**

All questions specify that the stress is related to their job instead of any external factors, although they have been asked about that to determine if there is a relationship between the stress they feel at home vs. in the workplace. The internal validity has been determined to be quite high but the participants may interpret some of the questions incorrectly making the data a little bit unreliable and invalid but other than that it has been determined that only few confounding variables exist but seem to have little effect. The data would be difficult to generalise overtime as personality, stress and language changes as improvements and other factors occur. The data has strong ecological validity as the information found from this can be applied to the education systems to account for the personality traits of the teachers.

### **5.2 Reliability**

The self-report survey is in its nature, unreliable, due to its subjectivity but the sample selection and method chosen attempts to provide a more representative data sample. To ensure reliability, participants are selected from different sectors of education and a variety of states (e.g WA, ACT, NT). The data should also align with other studies on personality and stress in Australia such as the ones mentioned before. The questions have high reliability as they were specifically designed to meet the definitions of stress and so on, most of them were also based off other personality and stress surveys previously used.

## 6.0 Conclusion (200 words)

### 6.1 Limitations

- Subjectivity: it limits our ability to determine the consistency within results
- Place: Australia is a big place and it would require more time on teachers side to participate creating more stress in their lives which is not wanted.
- Time: phone calls were considered but bias may have been impacting, and anonymity of teachers is mostly appreciated as well as their restrictions on time. Also, due to teachers busy schedules, the questionnaire can't be too long otherwise it may increase stress levels of the teachers.
- Expenses: it was determined that printing surveys would cost a lot more than paying to distribute an online survey.

### 6.2 Generalisation

Through stratified sampling, every sector would be represented allowing the data to be generalised adequately. Insight into different sectors will allow more researchers to find methods for helping teachers with relevance to personality.

### 6.3 Relevance

Stress in secondary school teachers, to determine the degree it's related to personality and how stress can be combatted. Also, allows future teachers to analyse whether it would be a suitable job for them or if the stress would be too much for them. This research would also provide more data to hopefully back up research done by others such as Kaur and Feltoe. The results would allow for more paths of study such as determining what coping mechanisms are most beneficial and what system benefits the teachers the most in terms of stress reduction and self-growth.

## 7.0 References

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## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Email (appendix 1)

This is the email that would be sent to participants (Appendix 1):

 You  
To random.random@education.au 8:20 pm  
...

To 'random',  
You have been selected to participate in a study investigating stress and personality traits of Australian Secondary Teachers. The aim of the study is to raise awareness to stress in the education system and to identify common traits that lead to stress and don't lead to stress such that students who intend to become teachers understand the stress related to teaching and the personality traits linked to stress.

If you would like to participate, a short questionnaire has been attached to this email containing questions based on personality and stress. It would be greatly appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire as accurately as you can.

At any point, you may withdraw from the investigation without any consequences, including the withdrawal of data by the (date) of (month), (year) which is the intended release date of the report. All data will be kept confidential and if needed the data will be referred to by participant numbers.

**Link for survey:** [https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/?sm=x\\_2Fb4a6hZf6mcDuUUVH3jtY4tuZz5BTweeBbDD4RxoE\\_3D](https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/?sm=x_2Fb4a6hZf6mcDuUUVH3jtY4tuZz5BTweeBbDD4RxoE_3D)

Stress is a major issue and taking care of your mental health is very important where strategies like talking to someone about stress can relieve you of your stress. This can be done by talking to family members or calling headspace and other mental awareness organizations, as linked below:

Health direct: <https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjUmNrb7vTqAhXazTgGHYzPAwUQFjAAegQIABxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthdirect.gov.au%2Fstress&usg=AOvVaw1E4WP1nlkE7AH9PPmWvIVJ>

Lifeline: <https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjUmNrb7vTqAhXazTgGHYzPAwUQFjACegQIBBAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lifeline.org.au%2Fget-help%2Ftopics%2Fstress&usg=AOvVaw1SP9cB-rSzW1mtQ>

Beyond Blue: [https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj06Yid7\\_TqAhVNxTgGHT8SCRkQFjAAegQIA\\_RAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbeyondblue.org.au%2F&usg=AOvVaw1FXiUy4JVTxmd25GWMisOB](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj06Yid7_TqAhVNxTgGHT8SCRkQFjAAegQIA_RAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbeyondblue.org.au%2F&usg=AOvVaw1FXiUy4JVTxmd25GWMisOB)

Headspace: [https://www.googleapis.com/pagead/aclk?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwjSkK-37\\_TqAhUSqpYKHX\\_xB\\_8YABAAGgJ0bA&ohost=www.google.com.au&cid=CAESQeD2njUECTBtK1bMy\\_cVpNz608rqcNI0BRVUIRQCMmfPpFhScjUPAr\\_txHbmt6tsCl8jOKDOfyEdLjxtWtQF4sV0t&sig=AOD64\\_1sZou1Kgy9GIL4wjD58LmXNO6RuA&q=&ved=2ahUKEwj6j6W37\\_TqAhVMzjgGHV0SCv0Q0Qx6BAggEAE&adurl="](https://www.googleapis.com/pagead/aclk?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwjSkK-37_TqAhUSqpYKHX_xB_8YABAAGgJ0bA&ohost=www.google.com.au&cid=CAESQeD2njUECTBtK1bMy_cVpNz608rqcNI0BRVUIRQCMmfPpFhScjUPAr_txHbmt6tsCl8jOKDOfyEdLjxtWtQF4sV0t&sig=AOD64_1sZou1Kgy9GIL4wjD58LmXNO6RuA&q=&ved=2ahUKEwj6j6W37_TqAhVMzjgGHV0SCv0Q0Qx6BAggEAE&adurl=)

Thank you for your participation,  
Sincerely,  
Kelly Tempest

## 8.2 Questionnaire (appendix 2)

Appendix 2:

For a better presentation go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/> then go to 'login':

email= [kelly.tempest@student.education.wa.edu.au](mailto:kelly.tempest@student.education.wa.edu.au)

password= Psychology1

Then go to 'my surveys' in the top left corner.

### Personality and Stress of Secondary School Teachers

#### Participant information

The purpose of this page is to see other correlations and to identify the sample representation.

1. What area of study do you teach?

- Science
- Maths
- English
- Arts (Drama, Music, Art...)
- Technology (Textiles, Woodwork...)
- Other (please specify)

2. How many years of experience teaching do you have?

- 0-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50

3. What is your biological gender/sex?

- Female
- Male

4. What is your age?

- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60+

5. How much exercise do you do in a normal week?

- 0-2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 10+ hours

6. Do you frequently (at least once a month) use drugs or alcohol? (Non-prescribed)

- Yes
- No

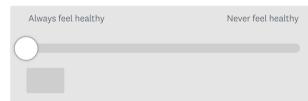
7. Do you take any prescribed drugs?

- Yes but it doesn't alter my personality.
- Yes and it alters my personality.
- Yes and it helps with stress.
- Yes but I'm unsure if it does alter stress levels or personality.
- No

8. How much experience do you have with surveys and questionnaires?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

9. How would you rate your health?



Next

Powered by  
SurveyMonkey  
See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

#### Personality Traits

This section looks at the personality traits of the participants in a Likert-survey format.  
On this page \* are from: <http://similarminds.com/cgi-bin/eysenck.pl> which was inspired by Eysenck's personality trait theory.

10. You enjoy teaching small classes.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. You are NOT calm when students are disruptive or rude.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. When you see a student is upset, you will directly ask what's wrong.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. Outside of work, you enjoy hanging around with large groups of people.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. You are the life of the party.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. Your mood changes quickly sometimes, especially in stressful situations.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16. Your students and you become friends easily.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

17. You can be egocentric.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. You don't behave according to the social norms.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. You suffer from anxiety.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20. You frequently worry.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

21. You can be very moody.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. You don't respect authority.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

23. You like to be intimidating.\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24. You are very impulsive.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Prev

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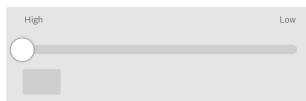
## Stress

This page investigates participants stress. Questions with \* on this page are questions from: <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/stress-test/>

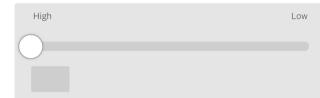
25. How would you rate your overall life stress?



26. How much does your life outside of school and student education affect your stress?



27. How would you rate your stress levels due working as a teacher?



These following questions further analyse stress levels and apply to the average stress levels in a week due to the participants job:

28. In this week, I have felt highly stressed due to my job...

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. In this week, I have felt strongly annoyed...

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. In this week, I have felt frustrated due to my job...

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. In this week, I have felt strained due to my job...\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. In this week, I have felt inadequate due to my job...\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. In this week, I have felt overextended due to my job...

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. In this week, I have felt overwhelmed due to my job...\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

35. In this week, I have felt powerless due to my job...

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. In this week, I have felt overcommitted due to my job...\*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Stress is a major issue and taking care of your mental health is very important where strategies like talking to someone about stress can relieve you of your stress. This can be done by talking to family members or calling headspace and other mental awareness organizations, as linked below:

### Health direct:

<https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjUmNrb7vTqAhXazTgGHYzPAwUQFjAAegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthdirect.gov.au%2Fstress&usg=AoVawI4WPtnlkE7AH9PPmVvIVJ>

**Lifeline:** <https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjUmNrb7vTqAhXazTgGHYzPAwUQFjACegQIBBA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lifeline.org.au%2Fget-help%2Ftopics%2Fstress&usg=AoVawISP9cB-rSzwlmtqq>

### Beyond Blue:

[https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj06Yid7\\_TqAhVNxTgGHT8SCRkQFjAAegQIARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbeyondblue.org.au%2F&usg=AoVaw1FXiUy4JVTxmd25GMmisOB](https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj06Yid7_TqAhVNxTgGHT8SCRkQFjAAegQIARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fbeyondblue.org.au%2F&usg=AoVaw1FXiUy4JVTxmd25GMmisOB)

### Headspace:

[https://www.googleapis.com/page/d/ack?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwjSKK-37\\_TqAhUSqpYKH\\_xB\\_8YABAAGgJ0bA&ohost=www.google.com.au&cid=CAESQeD2njUECTBtK1bMycVpNz608rqcNI0BRVUIRQCmPpPhScjUPAr\\_txHbmt6tsClbjOKDOfyEdJxtWtQF4sV0t&sig=AOD64\\_1sZou1Kgy9GIL4wjD58lmXN06RuA&q=&ved=2ahUKEwj6jW37\\_TqAhVMzjgGHV0SCvOQ0Qx6BAggEAE&adurl="](https://www.googleapis.com/page/d/ack?sa=L&ai=DChcSEwjSKK-37_TqAhUSqpYKH_xB_8YABAAGgJ0bA&ohost=www.google.com.au&cid=CAESQeD2njUECTBtK1bMycVpNz608rqcNI0BRVUIRQCmPpPhScjUPAr_txHbmt6tsClbjOKDOfyEdJxtWtQF4sV0t&sig=AOD64_1sZou1Kgy9GIL4wjD58lmXN06RuA&q=&ved=2ahUKEwj6jW37_TqAhVMzjgGHV0SCvOQ0Qx6BAggEAE&adurl=)

Thank you for your participation.  
The report outlining this study will be accessible on this website: xxxx on the dd/mm/yyyy.

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