

THE BUSINESS IMPACT OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Hidden Costs and Missed Opportunities.



FOREWORD

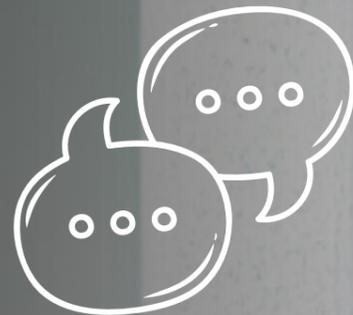
A year has passed since our initial exploration into the widespread phenomenon of imposter syndrome, and our call for it to be recognised as a diagnosable condition. During this time, the understanding of imposter syndrome's profound impact on individuals and businesses alike has only deepened.

At The Executive Development Network, we have long recognised that the effects of imposter syndrome extend far beyond personal struggles. It impacts the workplace, diminishing employee performance, hindering career progression and ultimately affecting the bottom line. This report delves into the true business cost of imposter syndrome, revealing how it silently chips away at productivity and retention.

In an environment where success often hinges on confidence and competence, the need to address imposter syndrome has never been more critical. Through comprehensive research and analysis, this report not only

highlights the challenges posed by imposter syndrome but also provides actionable strategies to mitigate its effects. These include apprenticeships in leadership, management and coaching as well as training in mental health. We hope that the insights offered here will serve as a valuable resource for leaders and managers committed to fostering a supportive and thriving workplace.

Sincerely,
Mike Worley
*Managing Director,
The Executive Development Network*



of people experience stress, anxiety or burnout due to imposter syndrome every month!

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Diminishing employee performance and growth

ADDING TO BUSINESS COSTS!
10 days lost every year



32%

Imposter syndrome impacts 32% of people's work performance



53%

Experience stress, anxiety or burnout related to imposter syndrome monthly and 27% experience it weekly – with women and individuals from the LGBTQ+ community experiencing these feelings more often



45%

Avoiding promotions or new opportunities due to imposter syndrome



10 days

For employees suffering with imposter syndrome, over-preparation and perfectionism in their work sees them spend an extra 10 days per year on tasks



1 day

Employees take 1 day per year off work on average due to stress and anxiety stemming from imposter syndrome



12%

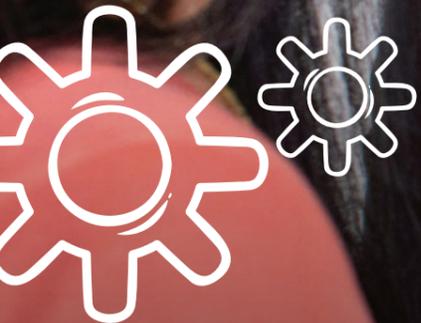
Feelings of imposter syndrome is the cause of 12% of employees quitting their roles and a factor in 26% leaving a position





A regional trend is also apparent, with the Southeast being a hotspot for the phenomenon's impact, while those in the more rural Northwest and Yorkshire & Humberside are least affected.

LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience these feelings weekly - 45% of those identifying as bisexual and 34% of individuals identifying as homosexual compared to 25% of heterosexual identified people.



Women are more likely to experience these feelings daily (13%) compared to men (9%).

MANIFESTATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Imposter syndrome commonly manifests as stress, anxiety and burnout. In fact, **53% experience stress, anxiety or burnout** related to imposter syndrome monthly and **27% experience it weekly**.



Imposter syndrome is particularly prevalent within the LGBTQ+ community, and it can significantly hinder the growth and success of LGBTQ+ professionals in the UK. Many individuals in our community have been conditioned to downplay or hide their identities in professional spaces, which only deepens these feelings of inadequacy and isolation.

"At OutBritain, we are committed to building these support networks. By encouraging LGBTQ+ professionals to 'come out' in their business roles, we not only challenge the stigma that still exists in business communities but also empower individuals to leverage their identities for greater opportunities. I believe that creating a workplace where everyone feels a sense of belonging is not just good for diversity - it's good for business.

Matt Dabrowski, Founder & CEO, OutBritain & OutScotland



ACROSS THE UK

How many times do people experience feelings of stress, anxiety and burnout related to imposter syndrome?



People in the South East experience feelings related to imposter syndrome a massive

125 TIMES A YEAR



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Imposter syndrome can also lead to people not putting themselves forward for promotions, with 45% avoiding promotions or new opportunities. People starting their careers (18-24) miss more opportunities (68%) compared to older and potentially more experienced workers (41% for ages 45-54). Line managers are also more affected, with over half (53%) avoiding opportunities compared to 35% of non-line managers.

THE CAUSES

Digging into the causes of imposter syndrome, our research identified the top three causes as:



Inadequate Training for the Role



High Pressure Work



Overworked / Burnt out

While high-pressure roles are often inherent, inadequate training and burnout can be mitigated to help employees feel supported and confident, preventing imposter syndrome from taking root.

OUR TOP THREE SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE THESE CAUSES DIRECTLY



Apprenticeships in Leadership Management



Coaching Courses for Mentors

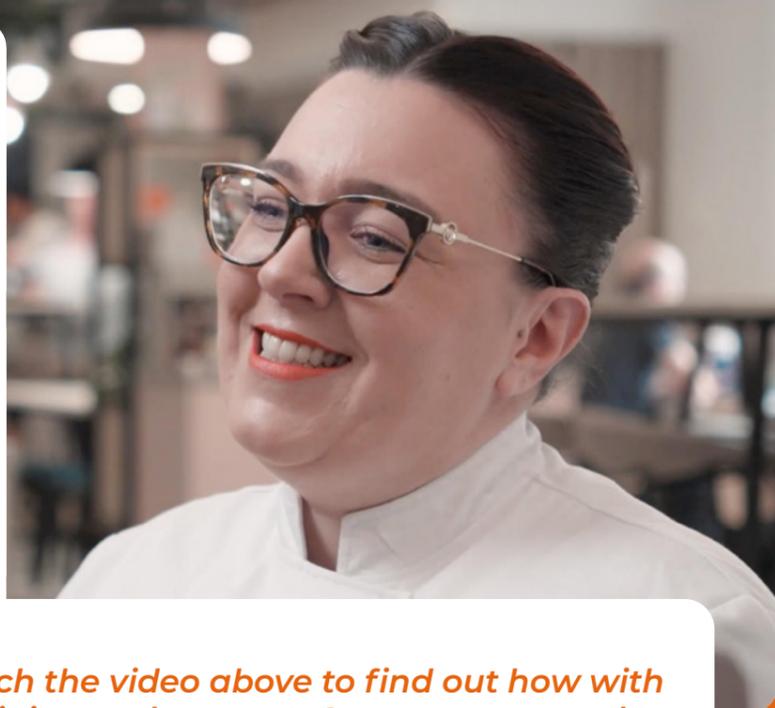


Mental Health Training

THE BUSINESS IMPACT

Imposter syndrome has a negative effect on employees – eating away at confidence, while causing increased levels of stress and anxiety that can lead to burnout. Not only can this add challenges to the day-to-day running of a business, but it also has a very real financial impact.

Gemma Evans-Hurley, Head of Culinary at Dine Contract Catering, is one of the most impressive chefs you'll meet. When we spoke to her about her career, she revealed she had been affected by imposter syndrome and self-doubt across the various roles she has been in.



Scan to watch the video above to find out how with the right training and support, Gemma managed to overcome these feelings and thrive in her career.

TIME LOST TO IMPOSTER SYNDROME



For employees suffering with imposter syndrome, over-preparation and perfectionism in their work sees them spend approximately 89 minutes extra per week on tasks.

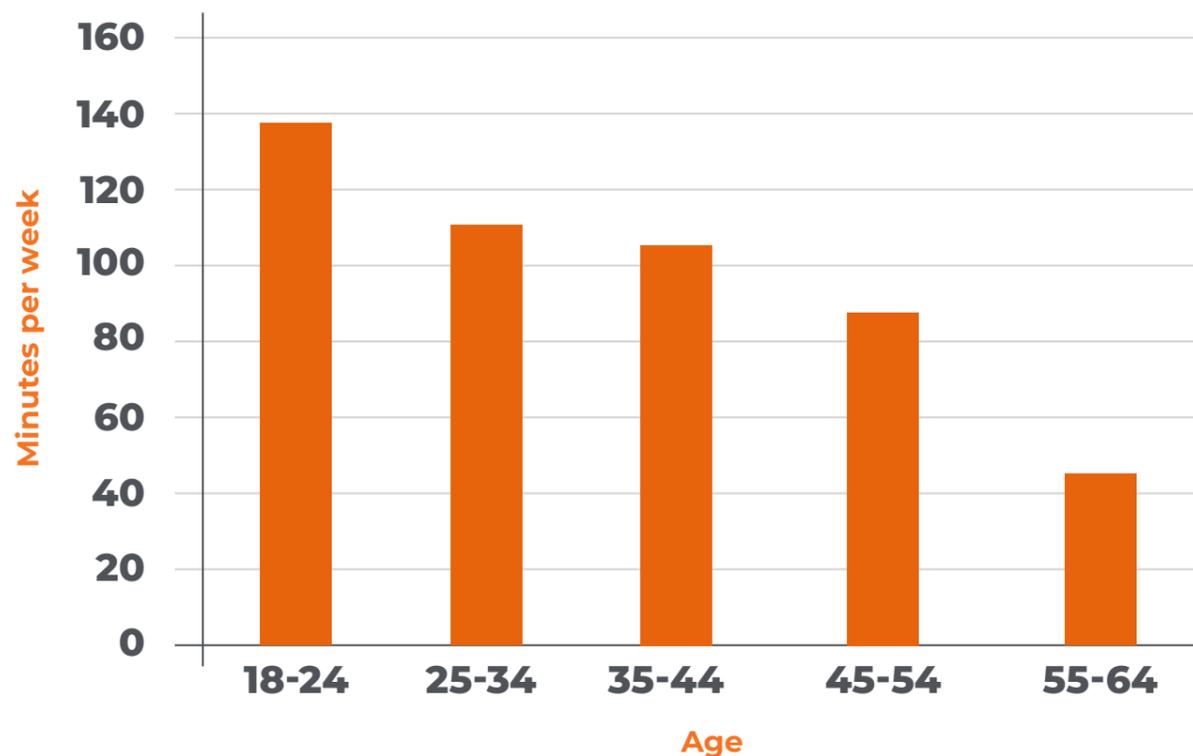
This clearly highlights the need for supporting employees in the workplace, to help prevent time wastage and improve productivity. It's particularly important for those starting their careers as people aged 18-24 spend 138 minutes each week seeking perfectionism in their tasks.

While spending additional time on tasks, employees with imposter syndrome also hesitate in asking for support due to fear of being perceived as incompetent. 14% of those surveyed felt this hesitancy each week, while 41% felt it monthly. This could not only delay activity but also fuels the anxiety and stress caused by imposter syndrome.



THE BUSINESS IMPACT

Additional time spent on tasks due to over-preparation or perfectionism related to imposter syndrome by age.



EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM

On average, employees take 1 day per year off work due to stress and anxiety stemming from imposter syndrome. This increases to 2.6 days per year for 18-24 year olds. For a single employee a day off may be manageable, but for multiple employees experiencing imposter syndrome this can quickly add up and can have a knock-on impact on team capacity and meeting customer deadlines and deliverables.

PERCEIVED INCREASE IN IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Over the past two years, imposter syndrome has noticeably increased among employees, with 16% of the UK workforce observing this rise. This trend is more pronounced among line managers, with 21% reporting an increase. Additionally, 54% believe that up to half of their colleagues exhibit behaviours indicative of imposter syndrome. If this trend continues, the business cost of imposter syndrome will grow – highlighting the importance of addressing the phenomena now.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



Sufferers from imposter syndrome question their ability to fulfil their job to an adequate level – and in some cases, this feeling is so strong it can cause people to quit their position. For line managers, imposter syndrome has played a role in 34% leaving a position compared to just 17% of non-line managers. This clearly demonstrates the importance of providing the correct training and support for line managers, so they feel confident in their roles.

Moreover, the prevalence of imposter syndrome impacting on employee retention highlights a key concern for business owners. With the cost of a recruitment consultant averaging £3,000 and the true business cost for replacing an employee estimated at double the paid salary for the first year of employment, recruitment costs are being increased by imposter syndrome going unaddressed in the workplace.



12%
Imposter syndrome is the cause of 12% of job quitting decisions



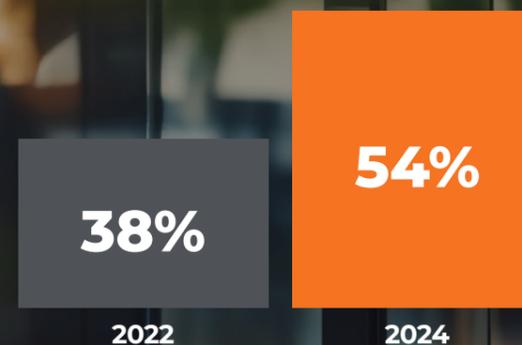
2X

The true cost for replacing an employee during the first year of employment is double the actual salary

26%
It's a factor in the decision for 26% quitting their roles



Perceived imposter syndrome



£3K
Added to the average recruitment consultant

TACKLING IMPOSTER SYNDROME IN THE WORKPLACE

Imposter syndrome is at heart a confidence issue, caused by both an individual's perception of themselves and the environment they find themselves in.

Here are our top five tips in tackling these issues in the workplace:

Provide Professional Development Opportunities

Investing in employee growth can increase confidence and competence.

Lead From the Top

Empower managers with effective training in softer skills such as mindfulness and coaching, to help them build and lead their teams effectively.

Foster a Culture of Open Communication

Encourage open and honest communication within the workplace, where employees feel comfortable discussing their feelings and asking for help.

Provide Regular Feedback and Recognition

Set realistic expectations and offer mentorship and coaching and create a supportive team environment.

Recognise Imposter Syndrome as a Legitimate Concern

Educate managers and HR teams about imposter syndrome and its effects on employees so they can better spot cases and offer support. This education should be incorporated into wider mental health training and support.

TRAINING DISPARITIES ACROSS THE UK

On average, employees attend 1.8 training sessions per year. However, access to training varies significantly by sector and region. The manufacturing and retail sectors show notable disparities, with some regions, particularly the South West, exhibiting the lowest rates of training session attendance.

These disparities suggest a need for more equitable training opportunities across different sectors and regions to ensure all employees have the resources they need to overcome imposter syndrome.

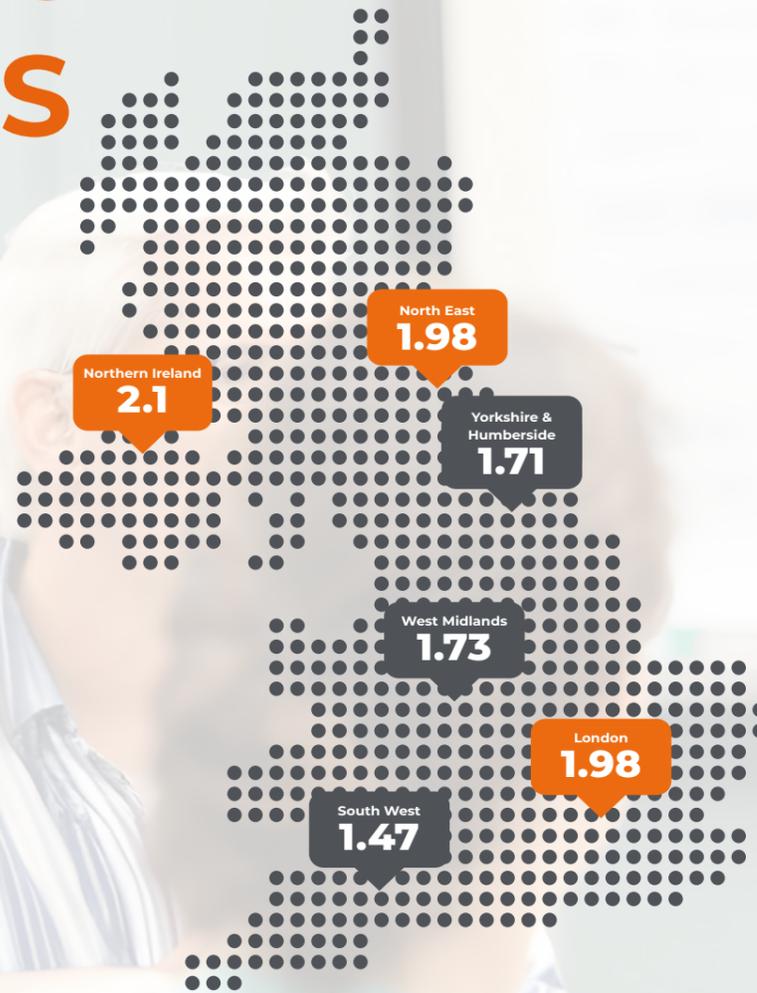


TRAINING COURSES

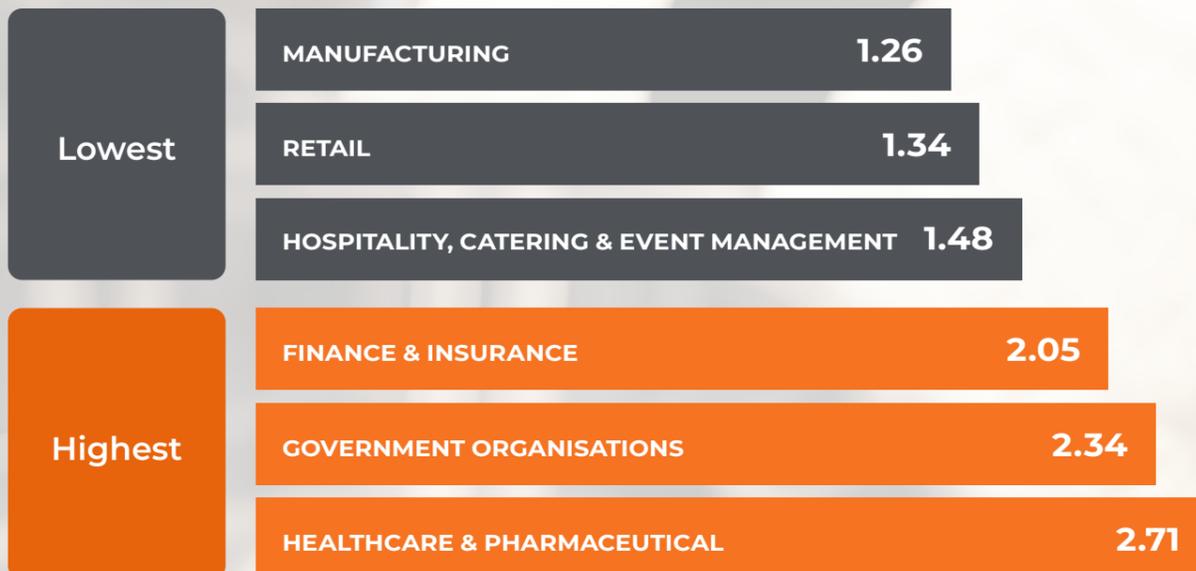


Average number of training courses individuals attend per year.

- Lowest
- Highest



Jobs with the lowest and highest level of training



WHAT TRAINING PEOPLE WANT

When asked about desired training areas to combat imposter syndrome, respondents highlighted five key areas:



Communication Skills



Leadership



Imposter Syndrome Management
(As part of mental health awareness)



Coaching



Technical Skills

This indicates a broad recognition of the multifaceted nature of imposter syndrome and the various skills that can help mitigate its effects.

EFFECTIVENESS OF COACHING AND MENTORING

The survey revealed a strong agreement on the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring in combating imposter syndrome. 52% of respondents overall, and 66% of line managers, acknowledged the positive impact in overcoming feelings of imposter syndrome. This underscores the importance of these programmes in addressing the psychological challenges that many face.



AVAILABILITY OF COACHING AND MENTORING PROGRAMMES

Despite their recognised effectiveness, almost half (49%) of respondents noted that their businesses do not have established coaching or mentoring programmes. This gap highlights a significant area for improvement in workplace support systems. Implementing and promoting such programmes could be a strategic move for businesses aiming to foster a more confident and productive workforce.

The Executive Development Network and the Chartered Management Institute have a long-standing relationship of developing industry leading Leadership and Management training courses. CMI has endorsed EDN's Inclusive Leadership training programmes.



Imposter syndrome is something many people deal with, no matter their level. As managers, we play a key role in helping employees navigate it by creating an open, supportive environment where they feel comfortable sharing their doubts. It's about giving regular feedback and recognising their achievements so they can see the value they bring. We need to remind them that self-doubt is a normal part of growth, and their work is genuinely valued.

"At CMI, we focus on continuous learning and development. Encouraging employees to take on new challenges or get involved in mentorship really boosts their confidence. By building an inclusive culture where it's okay to admit to doubts and learn from mistakes, we're helping everyone feel more equipped to succeed."

**Cathryn Moses-Stone, Head of Policy and Impact,
Chartered Management Institute (CMI)**



THE REAL IMPACT OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

In response to the growing concern over imposter syndrome, managers have implemented several strategies to support affected employees. These responses show key methods that other businesses should undertake to tackle imposter syndrome.



Mentoring Programmes

Establishing mentoring programmes where experienced employees or external experts can provide guidance and support to those struggling with imposter syndrome. These relationships help mentees gain confidence through shared experiences and practical advice.



Reward and Recognition

These programmes are aligned to each company's strategic objectives, values and expected behaviours, to fairly and effectively reward the right people for doing the right things. Initiatives range from small kudos to meatier financial rewards that recognise core behaviours and values.



Wellbeing Sessions

These sessions, which often encompass mindfulness practices, stress management techniques, and shared mental health resources, are being offered to help employees manage their stress levels and improve overall mental health.



Upskilling Managers

Managers are seeking out training to develop their skillset, not only to help themselves deal with imposter syndrome but also their wider workforce. In response, line-managers are also increasing their regular, informal support to employees to build trust within teams.



THE SOLUTION

The Executive Development Network (EDN) has created a solution to tackle imposter syndrome directly. We have recently launched an inclusive leadership apprenticeship. The new programme aims to empower leaders to develop strategies for creating a diverse, inclusive and modern workplace culture.

Our team of dedicated trainers bring a wealth of experience in leadership and management. We are passionate about helping you

succeed by providing meaningful and high-quality apprenticeship programmes that deliver exceptional learning experiences and outcomes.

The training gives leaders throughout all levels of a business the skills and strategies to tackle the challenges of their teams and understand the importance of inclusivity and dealing with difficult situations they may have not had experience in before.



TOP 3 STRATEGIES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Structured Mentoring Programmes

Implementing formal mentoring programmes to provide consistent and reliable support to employees. These programmes create a safe space for employees to discuss their challenges and receive constructive feedback, providing regular informal support.

Imposter Syndrome Workshops as part of Mental Health Training

Conducting specialised workshops that focus on identifying and managing imposter syndrome. These workshops provide practical tools and strategies for employees to combat self-doubt and build self-confidence.

Leadership and Coaching Training

Offering training that equips managers with the skills to recognise and address imposter syndrome within their teams. This training emphasises the importance of empathy, active listening, and creating an inclusive workplace culture.



READY TO TACKLE IMPOSTER SYNDROME IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

CONTACT US TODAY

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