# London’s 40‑somethings feel 25 while running vast budgets and swapping boozy nights for curated health routines



Everything in London still moves at break‑neck speed, even for those who have passed the milestone of forty. The Evening Standard’s feature paints a familiar portrait: people in their forties who say they feel much younger in their heads while carrying heavier responsibilities in their working lives. As one 43‑year‑old who runs an advertising agency told the paper, “I still feel in my head that I’m 25,” even as she manages teams, budgets and the expectations that come with seniority.

Behind that personal testimony sits a broader labour market reality. Census and employment data show London has a higher concentration of professional and managerial roles than other parts of the country, and middle‑aged workers disproportionately occupy these posts. That means many in their forties are not just leading teams but are accountable for substantial sums and complex decisions: government budget documents underline how departmental leaders oversee spending measured in tens or hundreds of billions of pounds, a scale that brings both authority and fiscal responsibility.

That responsibility helps explain lifestyle trade‑offs evident in the journalism: the late‑nights and heavy drinking that once marked corporate social life are being replaced by curated socialising, fitness regimes, supplements and earlier bedtimes. The Standard observed a shift from “last one standing” culture to more selective evenings out; workplace research reinforces the change, noting that employers and event organisers are increasingly expected to provide inclusive alternatives to alcohol‑centric gatherings so multigenerational teams aren’t excluded.

Longer hours and the distinct pressures of the capital amplify those choices. Reporting on Office for National Statistics figures has long shown Londoners work longer weeks than the UK average, a pattern linked to the city’s concentration of finance, tech and other high‑skill sectors, and to the high cost of living that pushes people to put in extra hours. The result is a tempo of life in which career momentum, commuting and childcare can conspire to compress personal time, nudging many towards efficient, health‑focused routines rather than open‑ended socialising.

Parenting and entrepreneurship further complicate the picture. The Standard’s piece sketches a generation balancing senior roles with family commitments and side projects; many forty‑somethings report using the weekend for family and the weeknights for brief, high‑value social interactions or exercise. Hybrid working and diverse employee needs are changing how colleagues connect outside the office: grossly alcohol‑centred events are no longer assumed to be the default, according to workplace guidance, which recommends event labelling, non‑alcoholic options and alternatives that accommodate different lifestyles and life stages.

Psychologically, the mismatch between chronological and felt age helps make sense of the behaviour. Academic work on subjective age finds adults over forty commonly report feeling substantially younger than their years, with an “attractor” feeling close to the mid‑twenties for many. That sense of youth can be energising — it supports ongoing learning, career reinvention and the pursuit of fitness — but it can also mask the cumulative strain of long working hours and managerial responsibility.

For London’s forty‑somethings the result is a paradox: a generation that feels young, acts deliberately to preserve health and social capital, and shoulders significant organisational and financial responsibility. Policymakers and employers, from boardrooms to human‑resources teams, may need to pay closer attention to that balancing act — not only to sustain productivity, but to ensure careers at the midlife stage remain healthy, inclusive and sustainable.

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## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/industryandoccupationenglandandwales/census2021), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024/autumn-budget-2024-html), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html), [[6]](https://iard.org/press/WorkplaceAlcoholPolicies)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-39516134), [[3]](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/industryandoccupationenglandandwales/census2021), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html), [[6]](https://iard.org/press/WorkplaceAlcoholPolicies), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3969748/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html), [[6]](https://iard.org/press/WorkplaceAlcoholPolicies), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024/autumn-budget-2024-html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/40-year-olds-london-lifestyles-partying-exercise-b1242439.html> - This Evening Standard feature examines how being forty in contemporary London combines career pressure, parenting and wellness trends. The piece observes that forty-somethings often juggle senior roles, entrepreneurial ambitions, intensive workouts and early bedtimes, trading excessive drinking for curated socialising, supplements and fitness. It notes the breakneck pace of London life, changing nightlife habits and a shift towards health-conscious choices and apparent youthful mindsets despite significant responsibilities, including large budget oversight. The article mixes personal anecdotes, cultural observation and lifestyle reporting to sketch a portrait of middle-class Londoners balancing professional leadership, family commitments and a desire to remain youthful energetically.
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/industryandoccupationenglandandwales/census2021> - The Office for National Statistics bulletin on Census 2021 industry and occupation presents detailed employment breakdowns for England and Wales. It reports that managers, directors and senior officials form a substantial proportion of the workforce, with London among the regions showing higher concentrations of professional and managerial occupations. In London over a quarter of workers are in professional roles and roughly fifteen per cent are managers, directors and senior officials, reflecting the capital’s concentration of higher-skilled, higher-responsibility jobs. The dataset allows users to filter by region and age, supporting analysis of how middle-aged Londoners disproportionately occupy senior positions and influence.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024/autumn-budget-2024-html> - The UK government’s Autumn Budget 2024 sets departmental expenditure limits and outlines funding priorities across public services. It documents the scale of public spending, noting that the Department of Health and NHS England operate with budgets measured in tens or hundreds of billions of pounds, showing how senior public sector leaders are accountable for vast sums. The publication includes tables of Resource and Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits by department and explains allocations across financial years, enabling readers to grasp the magnitude of funds that executives, directors and senior managers oversee. The document emphasises fiscal responsibility at senior leadership levels explicitly.
5. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3969748/> - This peer-reviewed paper analyses subjective age across the lifespan using a representative Danish sample. It finds that adults over forty report feeling younger than their chronological age, with those over forty feeling on average around twenty per cent younger proportionally. The study contrasts a lifespan-developmental view with an age denial model, showing the attractor age is approximately twenty-five and noting little proportional increase in discrepancy after age forty. Methods, regression analyses and robustness checks are described, and the authors discuss practical implications for marketing research. The article is hosted on PubMed Central and provides full open access to the manuscript.
6. <https://iard.org/press/WorkplaceAlcoholPolicies> - IARD’s press release summarises resources and findings from a Work Foundation study on workplace alcohol policies and multigenerational workforces. It notes that many employers lack formal guidance on alcohol at work and inclusive event planning, that four generations now work together, and that hybrid working and varied needs mean traditional post-work drinks often exclude some staff. The release highlights survey findings cited from Survation, offers downloadable guidance and line-manager resources, and recommends alternatives to alcohol-centric events, event labelling and provision of non-alcoholic options. The piece positions modern workplace culture as requiring new inclusive practices for socialising and wellbeing and safety.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-39516134> - BBC reporting on ONS figures explains that Londoners work on average about three weeks more per year than the rest of the UK, driven by longer weekly hours. The piece links this to London’s concentration of higher-skilled industries such as finance and technology, the capital’s younger workforce, and high living costs which encourage extra hours. It quotes experts noting presentism and explains that the average working week in London is longer than the UK average, provides context for commute pressures and stresses unique to the capital, and highlights how longer hours contribute to a faster, more pressured urban lifestyle culture.