

Comprehensive Guide: Imposter Syndrome

What is Imposter Syndrome?

[Psychology Today](#) defines Imposter Syndrome as “a psychological term referring to a pattern of behavior where people doubt their accomplishments and have a persistent, often internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud.” [Imposter syndrome](#) causes feelings of inadequacy despite obvious success. It is the [idea](#) that your success is due to other factors, like luck, and not your own talent or qualifications.

A helpful YouTube video from TED-Ed:

[What is imposter syndrome and how can you combat it? - Elizabeth Cox](#)

What does it feel like?

[Source 1](#); [Source 2](#)

If experiencing dominating feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt are present, Imposter Syndrome is in the picture. There are other linked symptoms including significant anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem. These feelings most commonly arise in professional settings, leading many to attribute their successes and accomplishments to pure luck instead of their hard work. This can make people fear that others will discover them to be a fraud.

People experience Imposter Syndrome in different ways, which can be contradicting at times. For example, while some avoid extra responsibilities, others heighten their current tasks and goals. Some individuals dealing with Imposter Syndrome might feel the need to distance themselves from any challenges and focus solely on their specific work. Others might feel inclined to overachieve in any way they can to combat the possibility of failure.

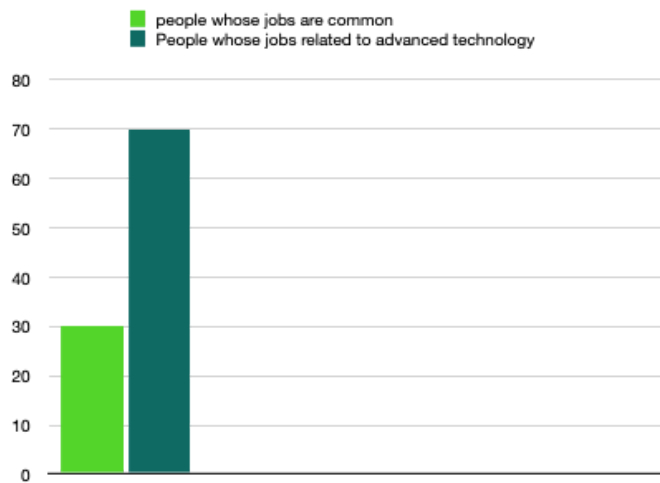
Dr. Valerie Young is regarded as being knowledgeable on this topic. She has identified different types of personas that can develop during a period of dealing with Imposter Syndrome, which further proves that the experience does not look identical when comparing one person to another. An individual might become a workaholic or as Dr. Young classifies it, a “superhero.” This person pushes themselves hard to welcome an overload of work, and eventually burns out. Dr. Young describes how one can be a “perfectionist” as well. This person struggles to be content with their work and focuses on the flaws over the positive aspects.

Imposter Syndrome does not look or feel the same for everyone. There is no immunity to be gained against these feelings, and even those deemed to be the most successful in the eyes of society cannot control it. Public figures ranging from political leaders to celebrities are not protected from this phenomenon and many have shared their struggles to overcome it. Imposter Syndrome is more common than one might think and can affect anyone, showing that no one is alone if they ever face this experience.

Significant Statistics:

Statistic #1:

70% of people who suffer from Imposter Syndrome are people whose jobs are related to advanced technology.



Statistic #2:

The rate of suffering from Imposter Syndrome is between 9% to 82%. Thus, the rate has a significant variation. The rate is commonly high among ethnic minority groups.

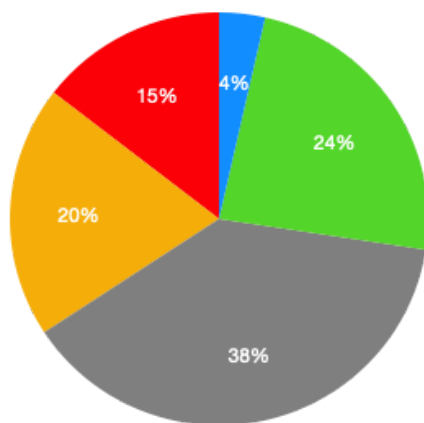
Statistic #3:

Findings from a survey of 300 college students: “ Do you think others are smarter than you?”

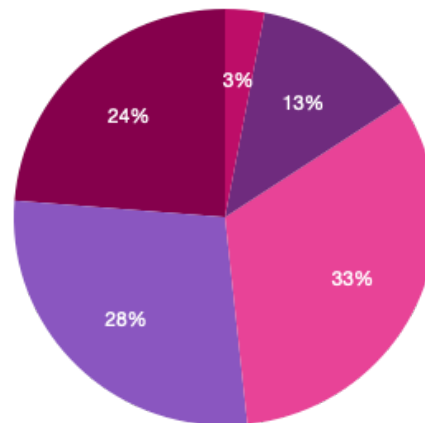
- Female college students are more likely to suffer from Imposter Syndrome.
- The percent of college students who hold the opinion that others are not smarter than them are approximately the same among the two populations.
- According to the data, male college students have more confidence, and they think that they are excellent instead of common.

● Strong disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strong agree

● Strong disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strong agree



Males



Females

How to Overcome Imposter Syndrome:

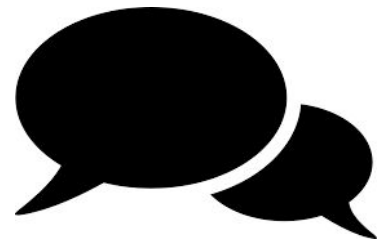
[Source 1](#); [Source 2](#)

At its root, Imposter Syndrome is about self-doubt and self-esteem.

“Impostor syndrome causes negative stress, fear, anxiety, and loss of confidence,” says co-author of *Beating Impostor Syndrome* Portia Mount. “It can knock careers off track and also harm team morale and organizational performance through micromanagement, slow decision-making, and perfectionism.”

1. Share your feelings.

Talk about your experience. Putting it out in the open is a great way to move past feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, consider that there are many others who have felt or are currently feeling a similar way that you can share your experiences with.



2. Focus on positive thinking and self-love.

Focus on the positive. Gratitude is a great way to create a more positive mindset. Tip: make a list of 5 things you are grateful for everyday. The human brain is naturally wired to focus on the negative-- help rewire it! Remind yourself of all your accomplishments and good qualities.

Acknowledge them. Take compliments to heart instead of criticisms.

Remember what you have done for others and consider your impact. Learn to reframe mistakes as learning experiences. Focus on the learning aspect.



3. Recognize contributing historical factors.

Recognize the historical context and the existence of institutional systems. If you are a person of color (POC) or identify as a woman, it can be easy to find yourself in a setting where few others look like you. These settings can be alienating or can cause self-doubt. Again, recognize your redeeming qualities and own that space!

