



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



# Stress in America™: Our Health at Risk

RELEASED JANUARY 11, 2012 • Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist



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# METHODOLOGY

The *Stress in America*™ survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the American Psychological Association between August 11 and September 6, 2011, among 1,226 adults aged 18 and older who reside in the U.S.

In addition to the 1,226 interviews among the general population, oversamples of 300 caregivers and 1,221 people living with chronic illnesses were also included in the 2011 research. For the purposes of this report, caregivers are defined as adults currently caring for an aging or chronically ill family member. Chronically ill adults are defined as those with at least one of the following conditions: depression, type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease. In the report, the adults comprising this group are labeled as “Chronic Illness.”

The four generations noted in this report are defined as the following: Millennials (18 – 32 year-olds), Generation X (33 – 46 year-olds), Boomers (47 – 65 year-olds) and Matures (66 years and older).

National results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income to targets from the Current Population Survey. Data for the caregiver oversample were weighted to the same variables as the national sample using the Centers for Disease Control’s 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System as the population profile. Results for adults with chronic illness were weighted using the same demographic variables as compared to the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. In addition, each condition (depression, diabetes, obesity, heart disease) was weighted as an individual group and then combined, bringing each condition into their proper proportion in the population total. For each of the city reports, results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income among the entire population within the specific Metropolitan Statistical Area as designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Propensity score weighting also was used in the weighting of each group to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors

# METHODOLOGY

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with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100 percent response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. population aged 18 and older. Because the sample is based on those who were invited and agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## OUR HEALTH AT RISK\*

Researchers have long known that there is a strong link between stress and overall health. Year after year, findings from the *Stress in America*™ survey have reinforced this research. Participants' responses have revealed high stress levels, reliance on unhealthy behaviors to manage stress and alarming physical health consequences of stress — a combination that suggests the nation is on the verge of a stress-induced public health crisis. Data from the latest *Stress in America* survey suggest that the concern about stress and health is especially critical among adults 50 and older who serve as caregivers for a family member and those who have been diagnosed with obesity and/or depression.

### Caregivers Under Fire

In 2011, the first of the Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) turned 65, joining the ranks of America's older citizens. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging, the number of older Americans in the U.S. — persons 65 years or older — is expected to nearly double by the year 2030.<sup>1</sup> The nation is bracing for the impact of providing health care services to these 72 million adults, but what may be lacking is concern about the impact on caregivers.

Findings from the latest *Stress in America* survey show those who serve as caregivers — providing care to both the aging and chronically ill — for their family members report higher levels of stress, poorer health and a greater tendency to engage in unhealthy behaviors to alleviate that stress than the population at large. What's more, while lower stress levels are often associated with older adults, those older adults with caregiving responsibilities report more stress and poorer physical health than their peers.

### Caregiver Stress and Health

Caregivers can feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities that come with providing care to a family member. Caregivers report significantly higher levels of stress than the general population, believe they are doing a poor job of managing and preventing their stress, and perceive themselves to be in poor health. One-third of caregivers interviewed reported caring

<sup>1</sup> Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). Population. Retrieved from [www.aoa.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main\\_Site/Data/2010\\_Documents/Population.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/agingstatsdotnet/Main_Site/Data/2010_Documents/Population.aspx)

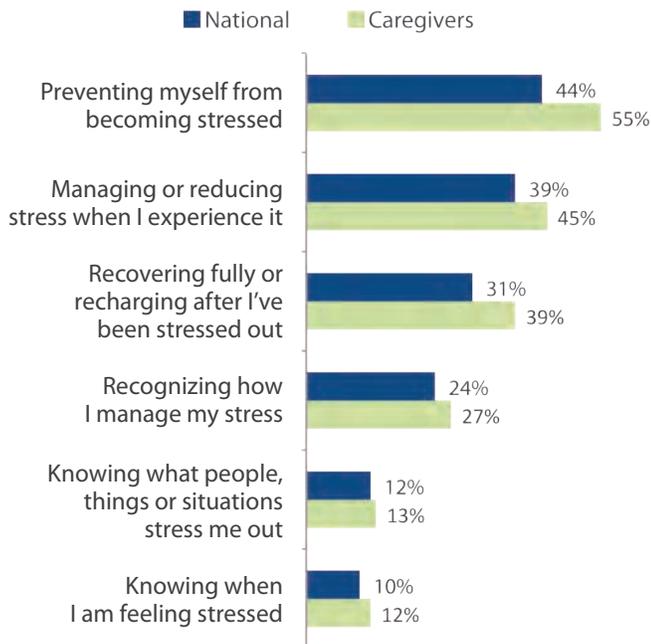


Family caregivers are at added risk for emotional and physical health problems, including increased mortality, coronary heart disease and stroke.

for a loved one, most often a parent, for at least 40 hours each week. The median age of caregivers included in the survey is 49, two years older than the median age of the survey's general population.

According to estimates from the National Alliance for Caregiving, 65.7 million Americans served as caregivers for an ill or disabled relative in the past year.<sup>2</sup> While caregiver roles may vary, the impact of stress on such a large percentage of the U.S. population is a health care concern worth noting. In fact, research shows that family caregivers are at added risk for emotional and physical health problems. For example, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, highly strained family caregivers are at risk for premature mortality.<sup>3</sup> Other studies indicate that caregivers are at risk for increased mortality, coronary heart disease and stroke, particularly under conditions of high strain.<sup>4,5</sup>

### Personal Assessment of Stress Management Skills (% Fair/Poor)



The *Stress in America* survey revealed:

- More than half (55 percent) of caregivers report that they feel overwhelmed by the amount of care their aging or chronically ill family member requires.
- Caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to report they are doing a poor/fair job at several healthy behaviors, including managing stress (45 percent vs. 39 percent) and getting enough sleep (42 percent vs. 32 percent).

<sup>2</sup> National Alliance for Caregiving. (2009). Caregiving in the U.S. Retrieved from [www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving\\_in\\_the\\_US\\_2009\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Schulz, R., & Beach, S. R. (1999). Caregiving as a risk factor for mortality: The Caregiver Health Effects Study. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 15, 2215–2219.

<sup>4</sup> Haley, W. E., LaMonde, L. A., Han, B., Burton, A. M., & Schonwetter, R. (2003). Predictors of depression and life satisfaction among spousal caregivers in hospice: Application of a stress process model. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 6, 215–224.

<sup>5</sup> Lee, S., Colditz, G., Berkman, L., & Kawachi, I. (2003). Caregiving and risk of coronary heart disease in U.S. women: A prospective study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 24(2), 113–119.

BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)  
Q7190 Please rate how well you do the following.

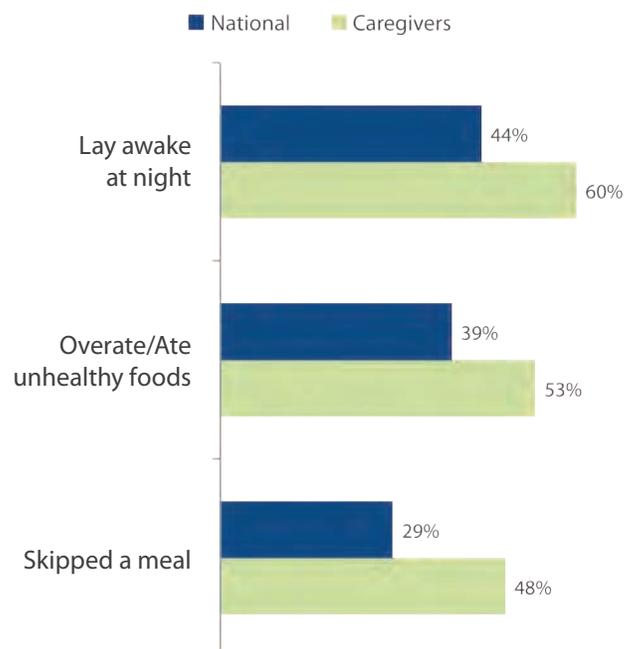
- Caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to report doing a poor/fair job in preventing themselves from experiencing stress (55 percent vs. 44 percent) and fully recovering after it occurs (39 percent vs. 31 percent).
- Caregivers are not only more likely to report stress, but also report it at a higher level than is reported by the general public. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress, the mean level of stress reported by caregivers was 6.5 as compared to 5.2 by the general public.
- Caregivers are more likely than the general public to say their stress has increased in the past 5 years (59 percent vs. 44 percent).

The latest *Stress in America* survey results show caregivers report being in poorer health than the rest of the nation, with higher rates of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, overweight/obesity and depression. Research demonstrates that older adults in caregiver roles may be particularly vulnerable because caregiving demands may tax their health and physical abilities and compromise their immune response systems; similarly, the stress associated with caregiving can exacerbate existing chronic health conditions.<sup>6</sup> And, due to the demands on their time, caregivers are less likely to engage in preventive health behaviors than non-caregivers.<sup>7</sup>

- Caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to have a chronic illness (82 percent vs.

Caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to report doing a poor/fair job in preventing themselves from experiencing stress.

## Experienced in Past Month Due to Stress (% Answering “Yes”)



**BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)**

**Q770** During the last month, did you ever lay awake at night because you were feeling stressed?

**Q785** During the last month, did you ever eat too much or eat unhealthy foods because you were feeling stressed?

**Q800** During the last month, did you ever skip a meal because you were under stress?

<sup>6</sup> Navaie-Waliser, M., Feldman, P. H., Gould, D. A., Levine, C., Kuerbis, A. N., & Donelan, K. (2002). When the caregiver needs care: the plight of vulnerable caregivers. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*, 409–413.

<sup>7</sup> Schulz, R., Newsom, J., Mittelmark, M., Burton, L., Hirsch, C., & Jackson, S. (1997). Health effects of caregiving: The Caregiver Health Effects Study: An ancillary study of The Cardiovascular Health Study. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 19*, 11–116.



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Caregivers are far more likely than the general population to lay awake at night, overeat or eat unhealthy foods, or skip a meal because of stress.

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61 percent). This trend carries through as caregivers and the general population age. Caregivers aged 50 and older are more likely than those in the same age bracket in the general population to report experiencing physical symptoms (92 percent vs. 70 percent, respectively) and non-physical symptoms (86 percent vs. 63 percent, respectively) of stress in the past month.

- Caregivers are more likely to say that their health is fair or poor (34 percent vs. 20 percent) and are also significantly more likely to cite personal health concerns as a significant source of stress (66 percent vs. 53 percent).
- Caregivers are more likely to report experiencing physical (94 percent vs. 76 percent) and non-physical (91 percent vs. 71 percent) symptoms of stress when compared to the general population. In particular, caregivers are far more likely than the general population to lay awake at night (60 percent vs. 44 percent), overeat or eat unhealthy foods (53 percent vs. 39 percent) or skip a meal (48 percent vs. 29 percent) because of stress.
- Caregivers are more likely than the general population to report that they get sick five times a year or more (17 percent vs. 6 percent).
- Caregivers are more likely than those in the general population to report that they believe their stress has a strong/very strong impact on their body/physical health (47 percent vs. 37 percent).
- Even younger caregivers, age 49 years and younger, were less likely than their counterparts in the general population to report that their overall health is excellent/very good (28 percent vs. 43 percent, respectively).

## Stress Affects Caregivers' Quality of Life More Than Their Peers

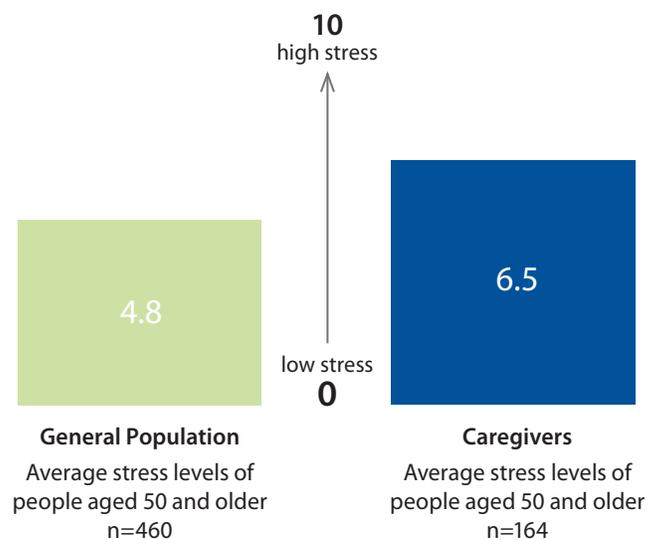
For Americans overall, getting older typically brings with it lower levels of stress. But for adults with caregiving responsibilities, stress levels remain high in the senior years. Caregivers report more stress as they age and report that it has a growing impact on their quality of life. They also report less satisfaction in their peer relationships as they age.

- At age 50 years and older, caregivers report average stress levels of 6.5, whereas those of the same age in the general population report average stress levels of 4.8. At age 49 and younger, the difference in average stress levels is narrower — 6.5 for caregivers compared to 5.4 for the general population.
- The higher levels of stress among older caregivers appear to be more chronic. Caregivers who are 50 and older are more likely than those in the same age bracket in the general population to report that their stress level has increased in the past 5 years (62 percent vs. 37 percent) and past year (60 percent vs. 38 percent).
- Caregiving may take a toll on the quality of relationships. Caregivers age 50 and older are less likely than those in the same age bracket in the general population to report they are very satisfied with relationships with their spouse or significant other (50 percent vs. 69 percent), relationships with friends (48 percent vs. 64 percent) and health (19 percent vs. 30 percent).

In addition, it appears that caregivers manage stress in less healthy ways than the general population. For example, they are more likely to report watching TV or movies for more than 2 hours a day (43 percent vs. 33 percent) and smoking (20 percent vs. 10 percent) in order to manage stress.

Caregivers tend to manage stress in less healthy ways than the general public. For example, they are more likely to report watching TV or movies for more than 2 hours a day and smoking in order to manage stress.

### Average Stress Levels, Age 50 and Older



**BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)**  
**Q605** On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means you have little or no stress and 10 means you have a great deal of stress, how would you rate your average level of stress during the past month?



Caregivers who feel adequately supported have, on average, significantly lower levels of stress than those who do not.

## Caregivers Find It Difficult to Make Improvements in Their Lives

Those who care for ill or disabled family members report they have been encouraged to make positive changes in their lives that would lead to reduced stress and improve their health. But they say they find it difficult to maintain those changes.

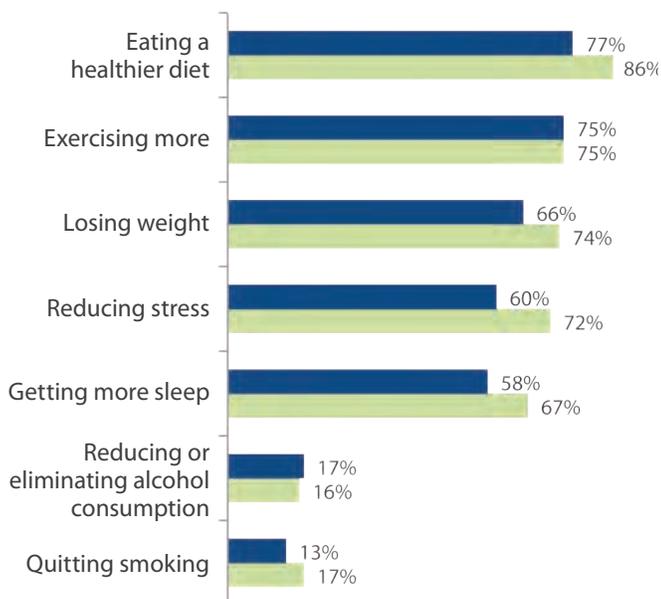
- Caregivers are more likely than the general population to report they have received recommendations to eat a healthier diet (44 percent vs. 35 percent), reduce stress (38 percent vs. 26 percent), get more sleep (32 percent vs. 24 percent) and quit smoking (20 percent vs. 13 percent).
- Caregivers who decided to make a change were less likely than the general population to report that they were successful when it came to eating a healthier diet (6 percent vs. 18 percent), exercising more (8 percent vs. 25 percent), losing weight (11 percent vs. 30 percent) and reducing stress (10 percent vs. 21 percent) for a period of 3 months.

Many caregivers handle their added responsibilities independently, but some do obtain support from family members. This additional support appears to make a substantial difference in their lives.

- Caregivers who feel adequately supported have, on average, significantly lower levels of stress than those who do not (5.9 vs. 6.9).
- Caregivers who feel supported are less likely than those who do not feel supported to report symptoms of anger/irritability (48 percent vs. 69 percent) and feeling depressed or sad (39 percent vs. 55 percent).
- Caregivers who feel supported are also significantly less likely than those who do not feel supported to report

### Tried to Make Positive Changes in the Last 5 Years

■ National ■ Caregivers

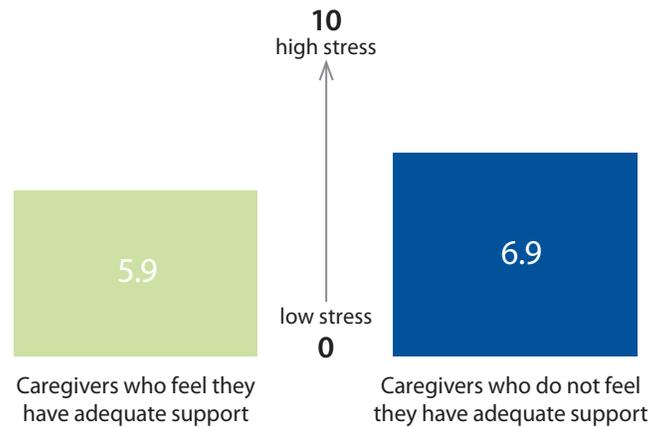


BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)  
Q7135 In the last 5 years, have you tried to make any of the following changes?

feeling a sense of loneliness and isolation (24 percent vs. 47 percent) and less likely to report that they have isolated themselves from others when feeling stressed (24 percent vs. 42 percent).

- Caregivers who feel supported are significantly more likely to report that they actively use a strategy to help themselves manage stress (97 percent vs. 82 percent).
- Caregivers who feel supported are more likely to report that they are doing an excellent/very good job at recovering fully or recharging after they have been stressed out (47 percent vs. 22 percent), recognizing how they manage stress (41 percent vs. 26 percent) and managing or reducing stress when they experience it (36 percent vs. 22 percent).

## Caregivers' Stress Levels Based on Support



BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)

Q605 On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means you have little or no stress and 10 means you have a great deal of stress, how would you rate your average level of stress during the past month?

## Stress Takes a Toll on Those with Obesity and Depression

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Currently, 68 percent of adults (age 20 years or older) in the nation are overweight or obese and 33.8 percent are obese.<sup>8</sup>

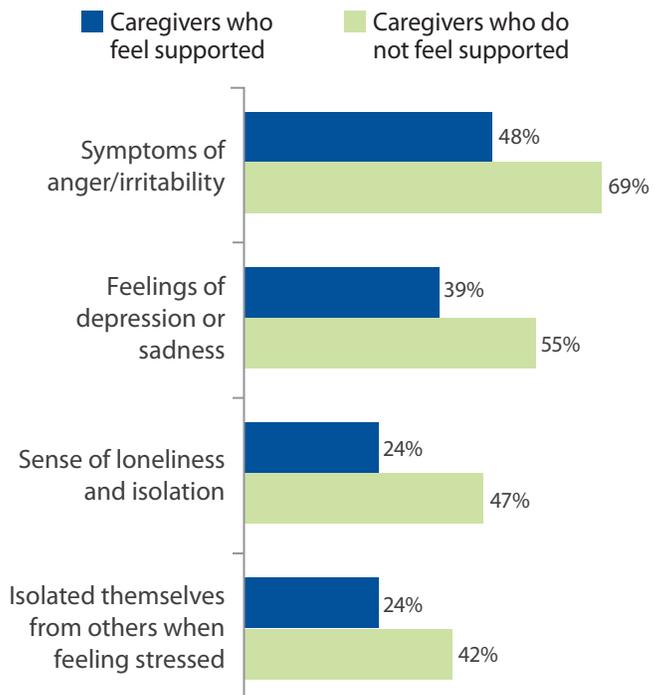
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports about one in 10 American adults suffers from depression, and that those aged 45 – 64 years are more likely than other age groups to meet the criteria for depression.<sup>9</sup>

Obesity and depression are often exacerbated by stress. Those who suffer from these conditions report that they are unable to take the necessary steps to relieve their stress or improve their health and, therefore, engage in maladaptive coping behaviors.

<sup>8</sup> Flegal, K. M., Carroll, M. D., Ogden, C. L., & Curtin, L. R. (2010). Prevalence and trends in obesity among U.S. adults, 1999–2008. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 303(3), 235–241. Retrieved from <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/303/3/235.full>

<sup>9</sup> Schulz, R., Newsom, J., Mittelmark, M., Burton, L., Hirsch, C., & Jackson, S. (1997). Health effects of caregiving: The Caregiver Health Effects Study: An ancillary study of The Cardiovascular Health Study. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 19, 11–116.

## Feelings of Caregivers, Supported and Unsupported



BASE: All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=300)

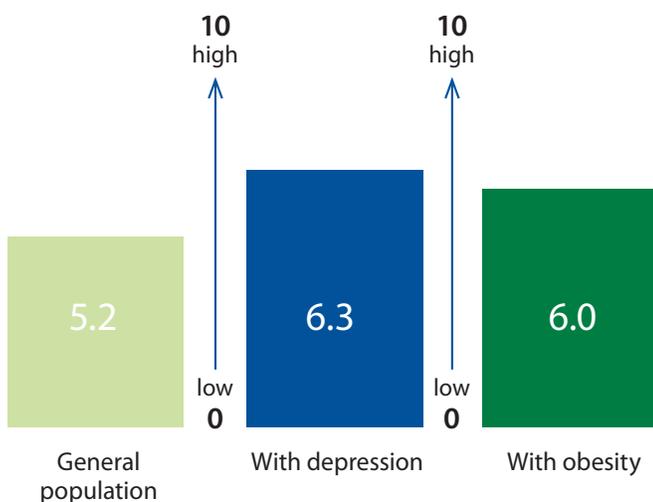
Q810, Q7170 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?



People with depression or obesity are more likely than the general population to report feeling dissatisfied in general.

- People suffering from depression (6.3) or obesity (6.0) report significantly higher average stress levels than the rest of the population (5.2).
- People with depression or obesity are more likely than others to report feeling overwhelmed (61 percent and 55 percent, respectively, vs. 34 percent general population).
- People with depression (27 percent) or obesity (24 percent) are more likely than the general population (20 percent) to report feeling dissatisfied with their lives and less likely (76 percent for the general population vs. 69 percent for those depressed or obese) to report feeling satisfied with family relationships.
- They are twice as likely as the general population to report feeling lonely or isolated (21 percent of the general population vs. 46 percent of those who are depressed and 41 percent who are obese) as a result of stress.
- Those with depression (33 percent) or who are obese (28 percent) are significantly more likely than the general public (21 percent) to say they do not think they are doing enough to manage their stress.
- As compared to the general public (11 percent), more people who are obese (34 percent) or depressed (22 percent) report that their disabilities or health issues prevent them from making positive changes in their lives (i.e., reducing stress and improving health).
- Those with obesity (87 percent) or depression (84 percent) are more likely to report having tried to eat a healthier diet in the past 5 years than the general public (77 percent) or to lose weight (73 percent depression and 90 percent obesity vs. 66 percent general population) in the past 5 years. They

## Effect of Depression and Obesity on Stress Levels



**BASE:** All respondents National (n=1226); Caregivers (n=350); Obesity (n=292)  
**Q605** On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means you have little or no stress and 10 means you have a great deal of stress, how would you rate your average level of stress during the past month?

are also more likely to report having tried to reduce their stress levels (78 percent depression; 71 percent obesity; 60 percent general public).

- Those with obesity or depression, however, are less likely to report success when eating a healthier diet (31 percent obesity; 33 percent depression; 44 percent general population) or reducing stress (28 percent obesity; 33 percent depression; 38 percent general population). Those with obesity are less likely to report successfully having lost weight (19 percent obesity vs. 30 percent general population) and reducing stress (28 percent obesity vs. 38 percent general population).
- Stress management strategies most often reported by obese adults are watching TV for more than 2 hours daily, listening to music and eating. These sedentary behaviors can exacerbate weight issues. Nearly six in 10 (58 percent) adults with obesity report they watch TV for more than 2 hours a day in order to manage their stress, more than half listen to music (53 percent) and nearly one-half of those with obesity (49 percent) report they eat to manage their stress.
- Adults with obesity or depression are significantly more likely than those in the other groups to report feeling self-conscious and embarrassed as reasons why they do not exercise more often (25 percent obesity and 18 percent depression vs. 8 percent general population).
- More than half of those with depression (52 percent) or obesity (53 percent) say that their stress level has a very strong impact on their physical health (vs. 37 percent general population).
- More than one in five adults with depression (22 percent) and nearly one-quarter of adults who are obese (24 percent)

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Adults with obesity are more likely than those in the other groups to report feeling self-conscious and embarrassed as reasons why they do not exercise more often.

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Overall, Americans appear to be caught in a vicious cycle where they manage stress in unhealthy ways, and seemingly insurmountable barriers prevent them from making the lifestyle or behavioral changes necessary for good health.

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report that their physical health is worse/much worse compared to last year.

Year after year, the *Stress in America* survey paints a picture of a nation at a critical crossroads when it comes to stress and health. Overall, Americans appear to be caught in a vicious cycle where they manage stress in unhealthy ways, and seemingly insurmountable barriers prevent them from making the lifestyle or behavioral changes necessary for good health. Findings from the 2011 survey found that several groups of people in particular — caregivers and those living with chronic illness — are at heightened risk of experiencing serious consequences of stress that is too high and appears to be taking a toll on their emotional and physical health.

As we explore the impact of stress on Americans, it is critical that we explore systemic and individual solutions that can help people better understand and manage their stress so that they can improve their quality of life.



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## THE IMPACT OF STRESS

Reported stress levels for Americans overall are continuing to drop and have reached their lowest point since 2007, when the *Stress in America*™ survey first began tracking stress levels. While stress levels appear to be balancing out, they remain high and exceed what Americans consider to be healthy. Year after year, many Americans report extreme stress (22 percent in 2011; 24 percent in 2010 and 2009; 30 percent in 2008; and 32 percent in 2007) — an 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress. These findings are indicative of a serious trend that could have long-term consequences on people's health.

Overall, people seem to recognize that stress can have an impact on health and well-being, but they do not necessarily take action to prevent stress or manage it well. Survey findings also suggest that time management may be a significant barrier preventing people from taking the necessary steps to improve their health. The good news: there appears to be a growing understanding about the impact of stress in general and an increased value placed on effectively managing it.

### Stress Continues to Be a Burden

- On a scale of 1 to 10, the mean rating for stress this year fell to 5.2, the lowest level in 5 years (5.4 for 2009 and 2010; 5.9 for 2008; and 6.2 for 2007).
- The gap between what Americans see as a healthy level of stress and their perception of their own stress level continues to exceed one point, reaching a 1.6-point differential this year (compared to 1.7 for 2008 – 2010 and 1.8 for 2007) on a scale of 1 to 10.
- More adults report that their stress is increasing than decreasing. 39 percent said their stress had increased over the past year and even more said that their stress had increased over the past five years (44 percent). Only 27 percent of adults report that their stress has decreased in the past five years and fewer than a quarter of adults report that their stress has decreased in the past year (17 percent).



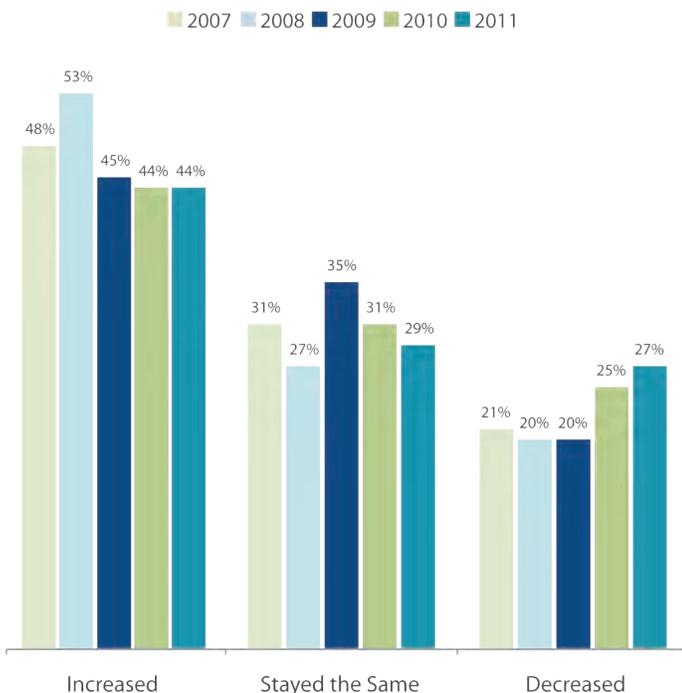
# IMPACT OF STRESS

A growing number of Americans are citing personal health and their family's health as a source of stress.

- While adults continue to fall short of their ideal when it comes to how well they are achieving key goals related to specific aspects of well-being, there does appear to be some improvement related to stress management. The gap between the importance that respondents placed on stress management and their success at managing stress shrank from 32 percent in 2010 to 26 percent in 2011.

While people's perceptions of their own personal stress may be improving, the impact of stress on their physical health and their inability to prevent stress is cause for continued concern. At the same time, while there is an awareness that stress can have a health impact, there is a disconnect when it comes to the awareness of the impact stress may have on an individual's personal health.

## Stress Over the Past 5 Years



BASE: All respondents 2007 (n=1848); 2008 (n=1791); 2009 (n=1568); 2010 (n=1134); 2011 (n=1226)  
 Q620\_54 Thinking about the past 5 years, would you say the level of stress in your life has increased over time, decreased over time, or has it stayed about the same?

- More than half of Americans reported personal health problems (53 percent) as a source of stress, roughly the same level (52 percent) as last year but up from 2009 (47 percent).
- More than half (56 percent) of adults say they are doing an excellent or very good job of knowing when they are feeling stressed, but only about half as many (26 percent) report doing an excellent or very good job at preventing themselves from becoming stressed.
- When stress occurs, only 29 percent say they are doing an excellent or very good job at managing or reducing it.
- The majority of adults (83 percent) report that they think stress can have a strong or very strong impact on a person's health.
- More than 9 in 10 (94 percent) adults believe that stress can contribute to the development of major illnesses, such as heart disease, depression and obesity, and that some types of stress can trigger heart attacks, arrhythmias and

even sudden death, particularly in people who already have cardiovascular disease (92 percent).

- Although the majority of adults understand that stress has a strong impact on a person’s health, a sizeable minority still think that stress has only a slight or no impact on their own physical health (31 percent) and mental health (36 percent).

## What’s Causing Stress in America

Money, work and the economy continue to be the most frequently cited causes of stress for Americans, as they have every year for the past 5 years. In addition, a growing number of Americans are citing personal health and their family’s health as a source of stress.

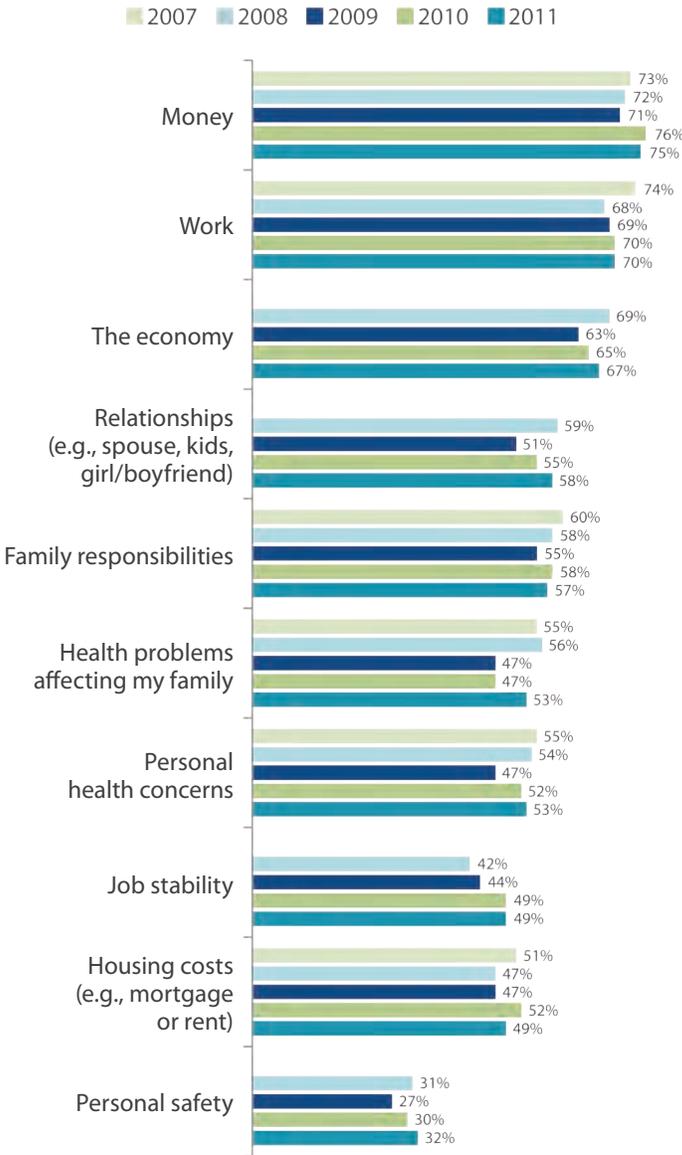
- Significant sources of stress include money (75 percent), work (70 percent), the economy (67 percent), relationships (58 percent), family responsibilities (57 percent), family health problems (53 percent), personal health concerns (53 percent), job stability (49 percent), housing costs (49 percent) and personal safety (32 percent).
- The percentage of adults reporting that family health problems are causing them stress (53 percent) increased in 2011 compared to the last 2 years (47 percent for both 2009 and 2010).

## Stress Management Strategies Rooted in Sedentary Activities

Though exercise does rank among one of the top choices for managing stress, a great many Americans continue to choose more sedentary activities to wind down.

- Adults manage their stress in a variety of ways. Some of the most common techniques include listening to music

**Causes of Stress**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)



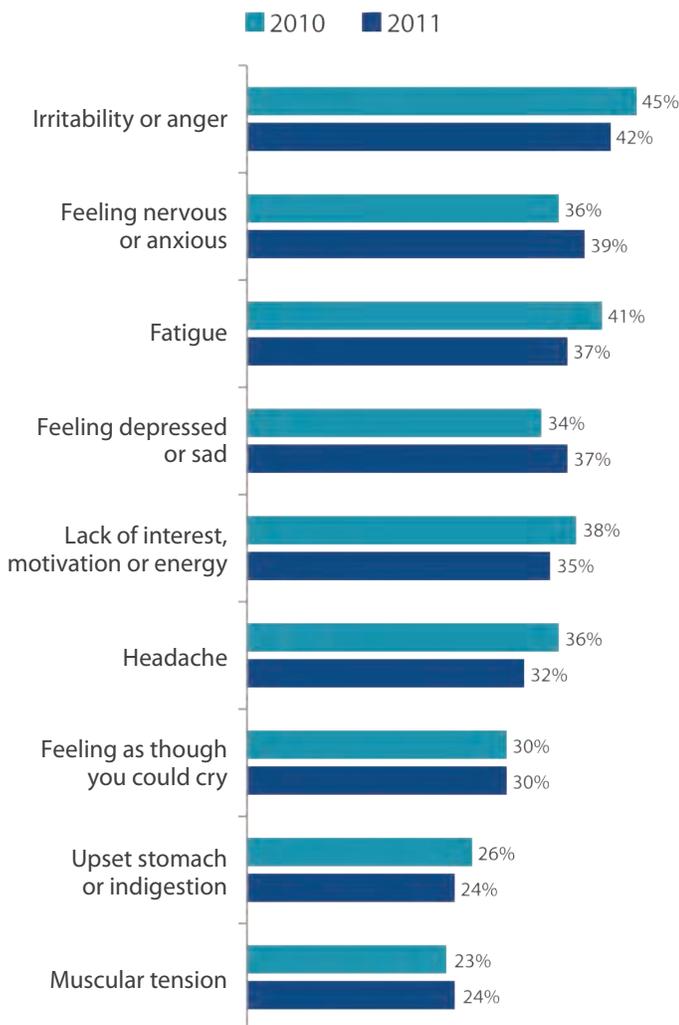
**BASE: All respondents 2007 (n=1848); 2008 (n=1791); 2009 (n=1568); 2010 (n=1134); 2011 (n=1226)**  
**Q625** Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.



# IMPACT OF STRESS

Spending time with friends or family has declined as a stress management strategy since last year.

## Physical Symptoms of Stress



BASE: All respondents 2007 (n=1848); 2008 (n=1791); 2009 (n=1568); 2010 (n=1134); 2011 (n=1226)

Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

(48 percent), exercising or walking (47 percent), reading (42 percent), spending time with friends or family (39 percent) and napping (34 percent).

- Spending time with friends or family, while ranked as important by many (76 percent reported that having good relationships with family and 60 percent reported that having good relationships with friends was extremely/very important), has declined as a stress management strategy since last year: Only 38 percent reported spending time with friends or family as a stress management technique, compared with 46 percent in 2010.
- Strategies for dealing with stress that are believed to be effective among those who use them are focusing on the positive (62 percent), managing time better (56 percent), being flexible and willing to compromise (53 percent), avoiding people or situations that are stressful (53 percent), expressing feelings instead of bottling them up (51 percent), saying “no” (50 percent) and adjusting expectations (41 percent).

## The Emotional and Physical Toll of Stress

While awareness about the impact stress can have on emotional and physical health seems to be present, many Americans continue to report symptoms of stress.

- Americans report irritability or anger (42 percent); fatigue (37 percent); lack of interest, motivation or energy (35 percent); headaches (32 percent); and upset stomachs (24 percent) due to stress. A smaller percentage report having a change in appetite (17 percent) and sex drive (11 percent).

Similar proportions of adults engage in unhealthy behaviors due to stress as did last year.

- 29 percent skipped a meal due to stress (31 percent in 2010).
- 39 percent reported overeating or eating unhealthy foods (40 percent in 2010).
- 44 percent reported lying awake at night, the same number as in 2010.

There's some indication that Americans are beginning to exercise more. The number reporting that they exercise "a few times a week" rose from 36 percent in 2010 to 41 percent in 2011; however, many continue to report barriers to being more physically active, particularly a lack of time.

- Lack of motivation seems to be a key part of why people are not exercising more frequently (41 percent), but both work and personal obligations might also be at play, with one-third (33 percent) of respondents exercising once a week or less saying they are too busy to exercise more often.
- Half (51 percent) of adults with families report that it takes a great amount or some effort to get their families to exercise.

## Finding Time for a Healthy Lifestyle

Clearly, there's still room for improvement when it comes to making changes to improve one's health. Americans continue to rank key behaviors such as exercise and eating a healthy diet as less important than other activities.

- Eating well and exercising (54 percent each) are ranked at the bottom in terms of importance when compared with other aspects of well-being, including good family relationships (76 percent), managing stress (61 percent), getting enough sleep (60 percent), good friendships (60 percent) and doing well in career or studies

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Americans continue to rank key behaviors such as exercise and eating a healthy diet as less important than other activities.

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## IMPACT OF STRESS

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Eating a healthier diet, exercising more and losing weight are the most common behavior changes adults said they have attempted in the past 5 years.

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(59 percent). These actions are also rated lowest for achievement; only 27 percent of Americans believe they are doing a very good/excellent job at performing them. However, eating a healthier diet (77 percent), exercising more (75 percent) and losing weight (66 percent) are the most common behavior changes adults reported they have attempted in the past 5 years.

- Second only to willpower (27 percent), lack of time was mentioned by 26 percent of adults as a barrier preventing them from creating lifestyle and behavior changes. In fact, lack of time has been mentioned as a barrier by more adults year after year (20 percent in 2009 and 22 percent in 2010).



## STRESS AND GENDER

While both men and women\* recognize the impact stress can have on physical health, men appear to be somewhat more reluctant to believe that it's having an impact on their own health. Likewise, men put less emphasis on the need to manage their stress than women do. Men see psychologists as less helpful and are less likely to employ strategies to make lifestyle and behavior changes. Yet men are more likely than women to report being diagnosed with the types of chronic physical illnesses that are often linked to high stress levels and unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors, signaling that there may be some important gender differences when it comes to stress management.

### Who's Under More Stress?

- Men (65 percent) and women (66 percent) say that they are generally satisfied with their lives. However, there are aspects of their lives that both find troubling. Fewer than half of men and women report they are satisfied with their financial security (45 percent of men and 44 percent of women).
- Historically, women report higher levels of stress than men, and this year is no exception (5.4 vs. 4.8, respectively, on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress).
- Compared to women, men are less likely to say they are doing an excellent or very good job handling relationships (family: 50 percent vs. 62 percent; friends: 40 percent vs. 54 percent), eating healthy (27 percent vs. 37 percent) and getting enough sleep (23 percent vs. 31 percent).

### The Impact of Stress: Gender Differences

Not only do men and women manage stress differently, they also place a different level of importance on doing so. Men report being less concerned about managing stress and are more likely to say they are doing enough in this area, whereas women place more emphasis on the need to do so but feel they are not doing well enough.

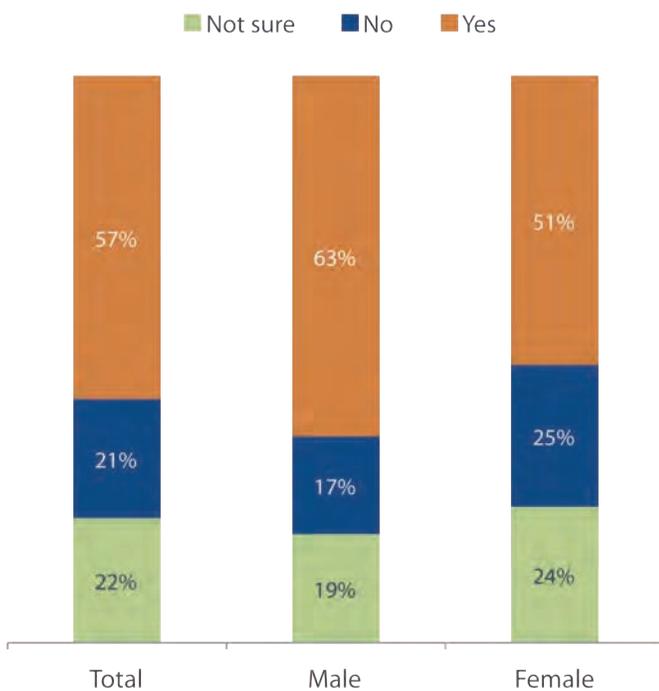


# STRESS AND GENDER

One in four women acknowledge they are not doing enough when it comes to managing stress.

## Stress Management By Gender

Do you feel you are doing enough to manage your stress?



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Male (n=539); Female (n=687)  
Q1615 Do you feel you are doing enough to manage your stress?

- Only 52 percent of men say it is very/extremely important to manage stress, compared to 68 percent of women. And 63 percent of men say they're doing enough to manage their stress, compared to 51 percent of women.
- One in four women acknowledge they are not doing enough when it comes to managing stress; only 17 percent of men feel this way.
- Women are more likely than men to report using a multitude of strategies including reading (51 percent vs. 32 percent), spending time with family or friends (44 percent vs. 32 percent), praying (41 percent vs. 22 percent), going to religious services (24 percent vs. 17 percent), shopping (18 percent vs. 10 percent), getting a massage or visiting a spa (14 percent vs. 5 percent) and seeing a mental health professional (5 percent vs. 1 percent) to manage stress.
- On the other hand, men are more likely to report relying on playing sports as a stress management technique (14 percent vs. 4 percent).
- When it comes to the things they report as important and how well they are doing achieving them, women see a larger gap in their own performance than men do:
  - Getting enough sleep, 40 percentage point gap for women vs. 24 percentage point gap for men;
  - Being physically active or fit, 33 percentage point gap for women vs. 21 percentage point gap for men; and
  - Managing stress, 33 percentage point gap for women vs. 17 point gap for men.

## Stress and Physical Illness Between the Genders

Research shows that prolonged periods of stress — which releases the hormone cortisol — can decrease proper cell function, thereby contributing to numerous emotional and physical disorders including depression, anxiety, heart attacks, stroke, hypertension and immune system disturbances that increase susceptibility to infections.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Survey results suggest that the link between stress and physical health could be harder for men to recognize. Men are less likely than women to believe that it can have any impact upon their health, despite the fact that they are more likely than women to report having been diagnosed with the types of illnesses that are often exacerbated by stress.

- Men are less likely than women to report that stress has a very strong/strong impact on a person's health (78 percent vs. 88 percent).
- Furthermore, they are more likely than women to report that their own stress has slight or no impact on their physical (36 percent vs. 26 percent) or mental health (40 percent vs. 32 percent).

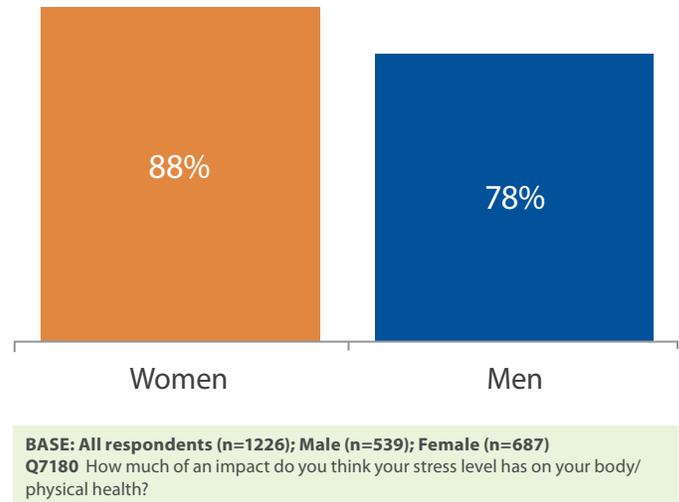
These beliefs may be why men are less willing to do anything about stress.

- Women are substantially more likely than men (70 percent vs. 50 percent) to say they have tried to reduce stress over the past 5 years.

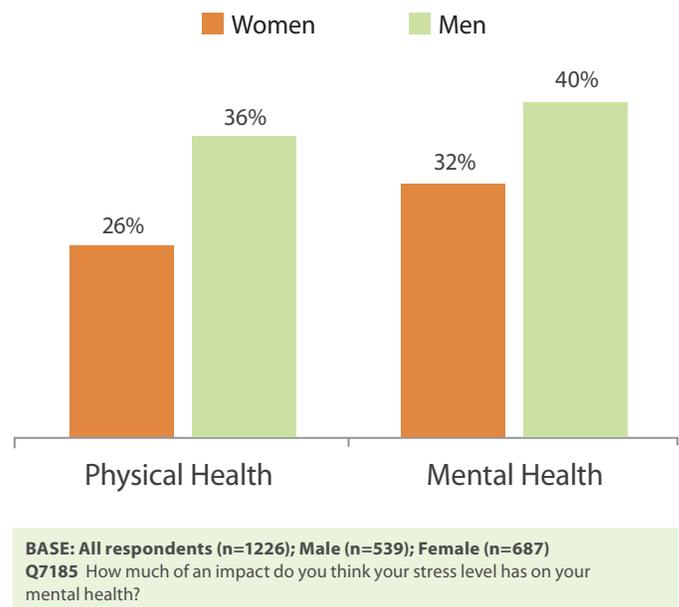
<sup>10</sup> National Institutes of Mental Health. (2009). Research Shows How Chronic Stress May Be Linked to Physical and Mental Ailments. Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2009/research-shows-how-chronic-stress-may-be-linked-to-physical-and-mental-ailments.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> The American Institute of Stress. (2011). Effects of Stress. Retrieved from <http://www.stress.org/topic-effects.htm>

**Impact of Stress on Health**  
(% Very Strong/Strong Impact)



**Effect of Stress on Physical and Mental Health**  
(% Slight/No Impact)





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Men are also less likely than women to report that they think psychologists can help with making lifestyle changes and behavior changes.

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- When adults who decided to make a lifestyle or behavior change, either independently or in response to a recommendation, were asked what strategies they used to help them make the desired changes, more men than women indicated they did not use any strategies at all (61 percent vs. 45 percent).
- Men are also less likely than women to report that they think psychologists can help with making lifestyle and behavior changes (30 percent vs. 38 percent, reporting a great deal/a lot of help) and coping with chronic illness (19 percent vs. 38 percent, reporting a great deal/a lot of help).

There may be consequences for men in not recognizing the need to address the link between stress and physical health.

- Men are more likely than women to report having been diagnosed with the following chronic illnesses: high blood pressure (32 percent vs. 23 percent), type 2 diabetes (12 percent vs. 7 percent) and heart disease or heart attack (6 percent vs. 2 percent).



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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## STRESS AND GENERATIONS

Older adults are less likely than younger generations to report that they experience high levels of stress, perhaps in part because they are also more likely to recognize the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle or have been told by a health care provider to reduce their stress.\* Indeed, they are more likely to report successfully coping with the stress they do have, according to results from the latest *Stress in America*™ survey.

- Adults are twice as likely to report increased (39 percent), rather than decreased (17 percent) stress levels over the past year. Boomers, however, (23 percent) are somewhat more likely than others to report a decline in their stress.
- Matures, who historically have lower stress than younger generations, continue to report lower stress than the other generations. On a 10-point scale where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress, Millennials average 5.4 and Gen Xers average 5.6, compared to 4.9 for Boomers and 4.5 for Matures.
- Though their average stress level increased from last year, Matures' stress differential (the difference between what they see as a healthy level of stress and where they place their own) is lower (0.7) than the other generations and at the lowest level of the past five years (tying 2008).
- Gen Xers' and Millennials' stress differentials — the difference between each generation's average personal stress level and their average perceived healthy stress level — are higher than Matures and Boomers. Gen Xers have the highest differential of 2.0, but Millennials' differential of 1.7 is the highest it has been in 5 years.
- Boomers' average assessments of their personal stress levels have declined steadily, from 6.5 in 2007 to 4.9 in 2011. Their perceptions of healthy stress levels have also shifted from 4.5 in 2007 to 3.4 in 2011. Overall, their stress differential has declined to the lowest level of the past 5 years — 1.5 — which suggests a movement toward more manageable stress.
- Overall, adults are more likely to believe that their stress levels have increased (44 percent) rather than declined (27 percent) over the past 5 years. Millennials, in particular, have noted increased stress levels during this timeframe (52 percent).

\*The four generations are defined as the following: Millennials (18 – 32 year-olds), Gen Xers (33 – 46 year-olds), Boomers (47 – 65 year-olds) and Matures (66 years and older). This section of the report primarily focuses on Millennials (2007 n=294; 2008 n=406; 2009 n=504; 2010 n=268; 2011 n=420), Gen Xers (2007 n=426; 2008 n=478; 2009 n=369; 2010 n=293; 2011 n=274), Boomers (2007 n=743; 2008 n=651; 2009 n=464; 2010 n=396; 2011 n=361) and Matures (2007 n=385; 2008 n=256; 2009 n=231; 2010 n=177; 2011 n=171) within the general population (2007 n=1,848; 2008 n=1,791; 2009 n=1,568; 2010 n=1,134; 2011 n=1,226).



# STRESS AND GENERATIONS

Millennials are less likely than older adults to be stressed by the economy.

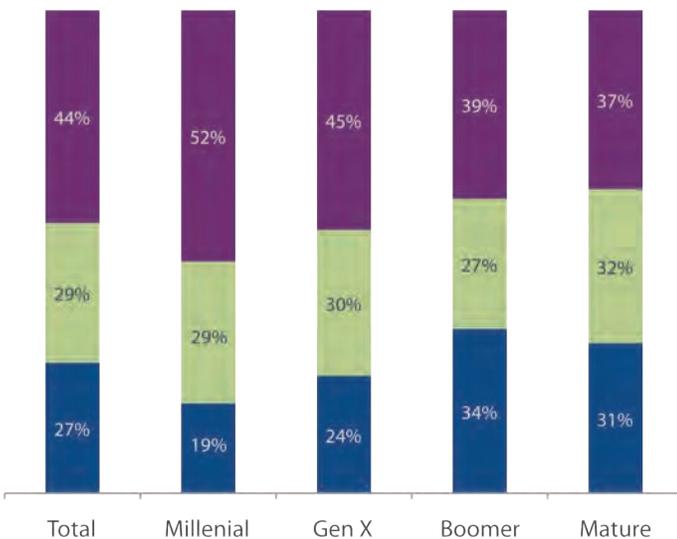
## Sources of Stress Differ Among Generations

Not surprisingly, the types of things causing stress among adults differ by generation.

- Significant stressors for Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers are money (80 percent, 77 percent and 77 percent), work (72 percent, 77 percent and 64 percent) and housing costs (49 percent, 51 percent and 54 percent). But Matures (63 percent) are more likely to cite health problems for their families as a source of stress (compared to 60 percent of Boomers, 45 percent of Gen Xers and 46 percent of Millennials).
- Millennials (54 percent) are less likely than older adults to be stressed by the economy (66 percent of Gen Xers, 76 percent of Boomers and 71 percent of Matures).
- Relationships are particularly problematic for younger adults (63 percent of Millennials and 65 percent of Gen Xers).

## Stress Over Past 5 Years

■ Decreased ■ Stayed the Same ■ Increased



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Millennial (n=420); Gen X (n=274); Boomer (n=361); Mature (n=171)  
Q620 Thinking about the past 5 years, would you say the level of stress in your life has increased over time, decreased over time or has it stayed about the same?

## Managing Stress Also Improves With Age

There are some significant generational differences in stress management techniques. Survey findings suggest that it is possible certain stress management strategies could be helping older generations achieve lower stress levels compared to younger generations, especially Millennials.

- To manage stress, Boomers are much more likely than Millennials to report being flexible and willing to compromise (46 percent vs. 33 percent) and to say that they adjust their expectations (36 percent vs. 27 percent).
- Matures are notably more likely than Millennials to report they express their feelings rather than keeping them bottled up (43 percent vs. 32 percent).

# STRESS AND GENERATIONS

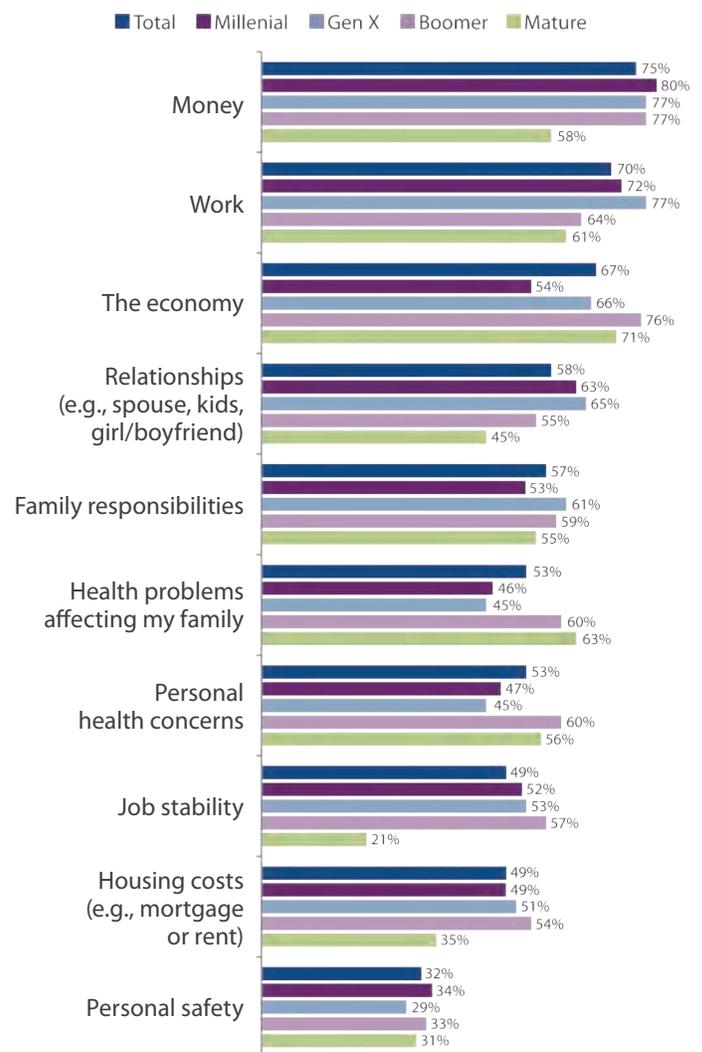
- Nearly twice as many Millennials (16 percent) than Gen Xers (10 percent) and Boomers (9 percent) report they do not rely on any commonly reported stress management strategies for dealing with stress.

There are also notable generational differences in means of coping with stress. Millennials are more likely than the older generation to engage in sedentary activities to manage stress. They are also significantly more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as drinking alcohol and smoking.

- Millennials (60 percent), Gen Xers (47 percent) and Boomers (46 percent) are more likely than Matures (32 percent) to say they listen to music in order to manage their stress.
- Millennials (44 percent) and Gen Xers (36 percent) are more likely than Boomers and Matures (25 percent each) to report playing video games or surf the Internet in response to stress.
- Gen Xers (23 percent), and to a lesser extent, Millennials (15 percent), turn to alcohol to cope with stress; considerably fewer Boomers (12 percent) and Matures (3 percent) say they do so.
- Similarly, Gen Xers (16 percent) are more likely than Millennials (8 percent) or Matures (3 percent) to report they smoke as a way of coping with stress.
- Reading is a stress management staple of the Boomer generation (47 percent), more so than the Millennial generation (38 percent).
- Boomers (39 percent) and Matures (39 percent) are notably more likely than younger generations (26 percent of Millennials, 25 percent of Gen Xers) to pray during stressful times.

Reading is a stress management staple of the Boomer generation.

**Causes of Stress by Generation**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)



**BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Millennial (n=420); Gen X (n=274); Boomer (n=361); Mature (n=171)**  
**Q625** Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.



# STRESS AND GENERATIONS

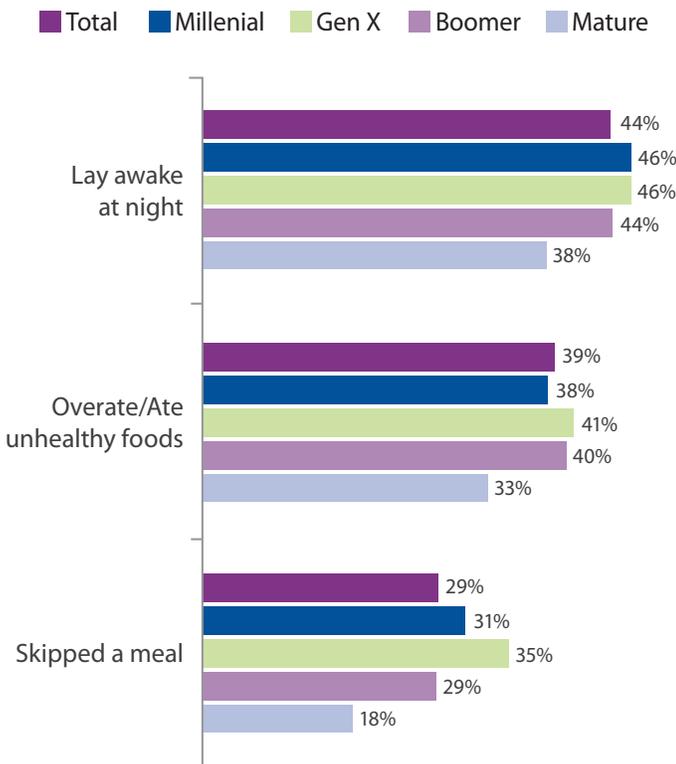
More than 4 in 10 adults report that they have lain awake at night in the previous month due to stress.

- Millennials (15 percent) are more likely than Gen Xers (7 percent) and Matures (8 percent) to meditate or do yoga to manage their stress.

Older adults appear to be more attuned to the impact that stress can have on one's health than younger Americans.

- Three-quarters of Millennials (76 percent) believe that stress can have a very strong or strong impact on health; this proportion rises steadily to 80 percent of Gen Xers, 87 percent of Boomers and 92 percent of Matures.

## Unhealthy Behaviors Due to Stress Done in Past Month Due to Stress



Sizeable proportions of adults report unhealthy behaviors as a consequence of the stress that they are experiencing, regardless of their age.

- More than 4 in 10 adults (44 percent) report that they have lain awake at night in the previous month due to stress. There were no significant differences for each generation.
- Four in 10 adults (39 percent) ate too much or ate unhealthy foods because they were feeling stressed in the past month. There were no significant differences for each generation.
- Three in 10 adults (29 percent) skipped a meal during the past month when they were experiencing stress. Younger adults were particularly likely to do so: roughly one-third of Millennials (31 percent) and Gen Xers (35 percent) skipped meals during periods of stress, compared with 2 in 10 Matures (18 percent).

There are also notable generational differences in how adults experience the physical and emotional symptoms of stress.

- Matures are significantly less likely than the younger generations to report irritability or anger as a result of stress in the past month (23 percent of Matures, 42 percent of Boomers, 51 percent of Gen Xers and 44 percent of Millennials).

**BASE:** All respondents (n=1226); Millennial (n=420); Gen X (n=274); Boomer (n=361); Mature (n=171)  
**Q770** During the last month, did you ever lay awake at night because you were feeling stressed?  
**Q785** During the last month, did you ever eat too much or eat unhealthy foods because you were feeling stressed?  
**Q800** During the last month, did you ever skip a meal because you were under stress?

- Similarly, Matures are less likely than other generations to report feeling depressed or sad as a result of stress in the past month (24 percent vs. 41 percent of Millennials and 38 percent of Gen Xers).
- Almost half of Gen Xers (46 percent) reported experiencing stress-induced fatigue during the past month, which is significantly higher than the proportion of Matures who reported fatigue as a symptom (28 percent).
- Stress is even taking its toll on younger adults' sex drive: 14 percent of Millennials and 17 percent of Gen Xers reported that stress had affected their sex drive in the previous month, compared with 5 percent of Matures and 8 percent of Boomers.
- Feeling nervous or anxious is a particular problem for Millennials: Almost half (45 percent) said they experienced this symptom as a result of stress in the previous month, which is significantly higher than the proportion of Matures (29 percent) who felt this way.

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Matures are less likely than other generations to report feeling depressed or sad as a result of stress in the past month.

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## All Generations Said They Could Do Better

Even though the stress differential for some generations is decreasing, adults of all generations seem to be struggling with managing stress. All generations report a considerable difference between how important they believe it is to manage stress and how well they believe they are doing in achieving that goal, a gap that is most notable among younger Americans.

- A majority of Matures (66 percent) consider managing stress important, while less than half (46 percent) rate themselves excellent or very good at this lifestyle challenge.



## STRESS AND GENERATIONS

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Almost 6 in 10 Gen Xers say they believe managing stress is important, but just one-quarter rate themselves highly on doing so.

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- Six in 10 Boomers (62 percent) think managing stress is important, but less than 4 in 10 (38 percent) do it well.
- Almost 6 in 10 Gen Xers (58 percent) say they believe managing stress is important, but just one-quarter (27 percent) rate themselves highly on doing so.
- Almost 6 in 10 Millennials (58 percent) consider stress management to be important, but only one-third (32 percent) think they are excellent or very good at it.

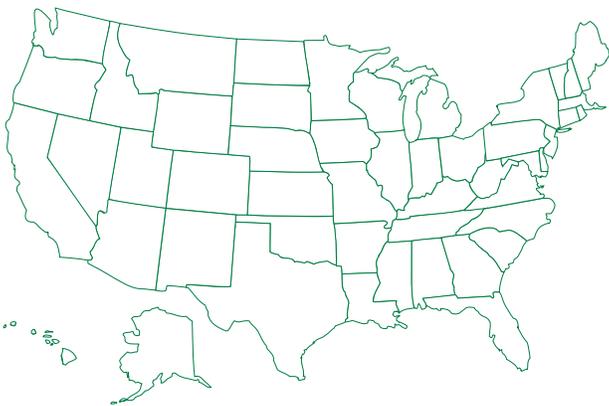


AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## STRESS AND REGION



When it comes to stress levels and how Americans manage them, where they live appears to make a difference. Regional differences\* exist in terms of how Americans rate their stress, the types of healthy — and unhealthy — behaviors they turn to in order to cope with stress and their willingness to enlist the help of psychologists.

The latest *Stress in America*™ survey results indicate that Americans living on the East Coast report the most stress. Findings also suggest those on the East Coast may be the least able to manage their stress. Midwesterners report they are feeling increasingly stressed but more likely to value help from a psychologist, Southerners do fairly well at managing their stress and Westerners report being among the healthiest and least likely to have physical manifestations of stress.

### American Stress

Most Americans (about two-thirds, across regions) are satisfied overall with their lives and feel they are doing a fair job managing their stress. But some report better progress in this area than others.

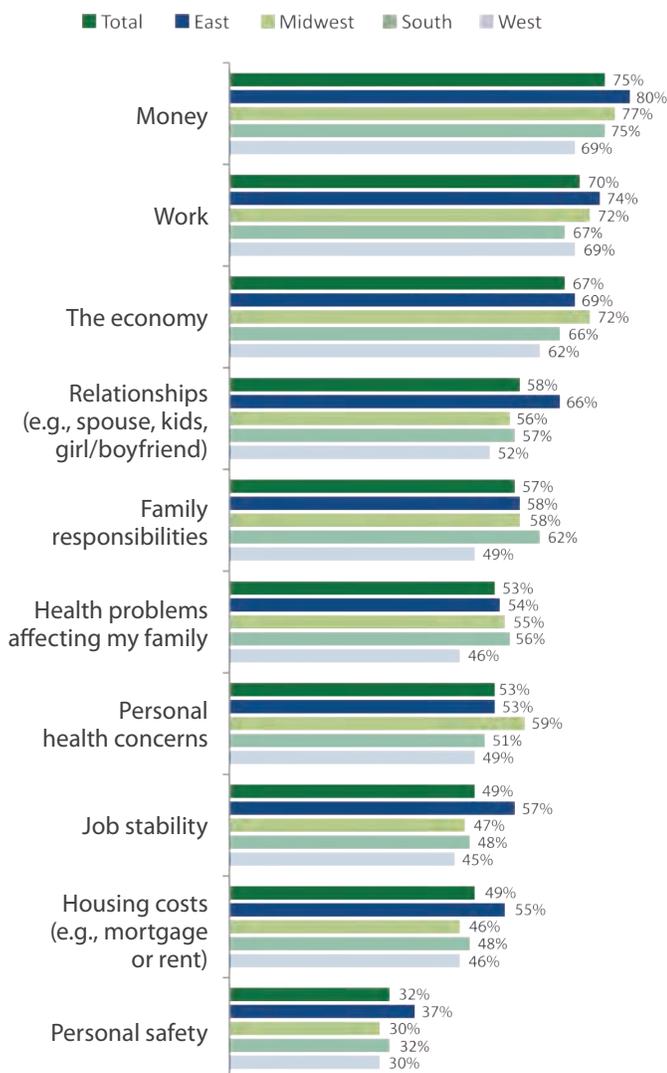
- Most regions are doing the same at managing stress this year compared to previous years, with the exception of the West, where more people this year report that they are doing an excellent/very good job managing stress (35 percent 2011 vs. 24 percent 2010).
- Money, work and the economy top the list of stressors across all four regions but there are some differences. Adults in the East are more likely than those in the West to name money (80 percent vs. 69 percent), relationships (66 percent vs. 52 percent) and job stability (57 percent vs. 45 percent) as causes of stress. And those in the South are more likely than those in the West to name family responsibilities (62 percent vs. 49 percent).



# STRESS BY REGION

Easterners are the least likely to say they have little or no stress.

**Causes of Stress By Region**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); East (n=299); Midwest (n=259); South (n=389); West (n=279)  
Q625 Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

- Residents in the West are more likely than those in the East and South to spend time with friends or family to help manage stress (49 percent vs. 28 percent and 36 percent). Those in the Midwest and South are more likely than those in the West to pray (35 percent and 38 percent vs. 24 percent), while more residents in the East than in the West drink alcohol (17 percent vs. 11 percent). Furthermore, Easterners are more likely than those in the Midwest to meditate or do yoga (15 percent vs. 6 percent).

## East Coast Stress

Adults living in the East tend to be slightly more stressed and less able to manage it than those in the rest of the United States, according to the survey results. Easterners are among the most likely to believe their stress increased in recent years, and this year unhealthy behaviors due to stress rose while frequency of exercise declined.

- Easterners report slightly higher levels of stress (5.4 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress) than Americans in other regions (5.2 in the Midwest, 5.0 in the South and 5.1 in the West), and Easterners are the least likely to say they have little or no stress (31 percent in the Midwest, 35 percent in the South and 33 percent in the West vs. 24 percent in the East).
- Residents of the East are more likely than those in the South to say that their stress has increased over the past 5 years (49 percent vs. 39 percent). A growing number of Easterners say their stress has increased over the past year (44 percent in 2011 vs. 39 percent in 2010).

Although a high percentage of people living in the East say that they are in good (43 percent), very good (34 percent) or excellent (5 percent) health, their diet and exercise habits point to the contrary. In general, unhealthy consequences of stress are up this year among adults in the East and

# STRESS BY REGION

frequency of exercise is down. They also indicate that they are more likely than the other regions to eat healthy foods rarely or never.

- Half of Easterners (50 percent, up from 40 percent last year) say they have lain awake at night in the past month due to stress, 38 percent (up from 33 percent in 2010) have overeaten or eaten unhealthy foods and 36 percent (up from 28 percent in 2010) have skipped a meal.
- Approximately 1 in 10 adults (12 percent) in the East say they eat healthy rarely or never compared to 6 percent nationwide, 6 percent in the South, 3 percent in the Midwest and 2 percent in the West.

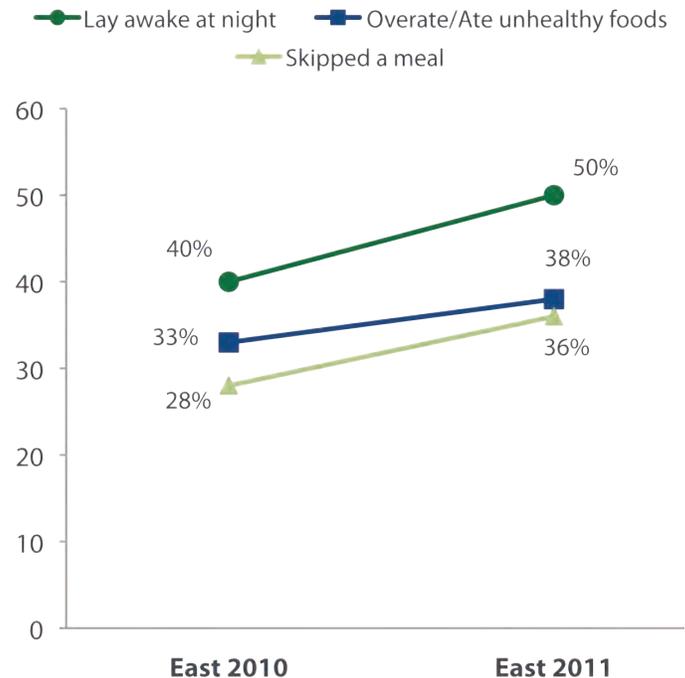
Vigorous exercise is down dramatically in the East this year; It dropped from 20 percent last year to 12 percent this year. In addition, those in the East are the least likely to report that they engage in vigorous physical activity that makes them sweat and breathe hard at least once a day. Only 12 percent of those in the East report that they engage in vigorous physical activity daily compared with 24 percent of adults in the West, 19 percent in the South, and 15 percent in the Midwest.

Compared to Americans elsewhere, Easterners are more likely to say they are too busy and too stressed to make positive changes in their lives.

- When it comes to making behavior or lifestyle changes, adults in the East and Midwest are among the most likely (16 percent each) to name being too stressed as a barrier to making desired or recommended lifestyle changes (compared to 7 percent in the West and 11 percent in the South).
- Easterners are most likely to say they don't have time to make changes (30 percent, compared to 26 percent for the Midwest and South and 23 percent for Westerners).

Compared to Americans elsewhere, Easterners are more likely to say they are too busy and too stressed to make positive changes in their lives.

## Unhealthy Behaviors Due to Stress in the East (Experienced in Past Month Due to Stress)



**BASE:** All respondents East 2010 (n=274); East 2011 (n=299)

**Q770** During the last month, did you ever lay awake at night because you were feeling stressed?

**Q785** During the last month, did you ever eat too much or eat unhealthy foods because you were feeling stressed?

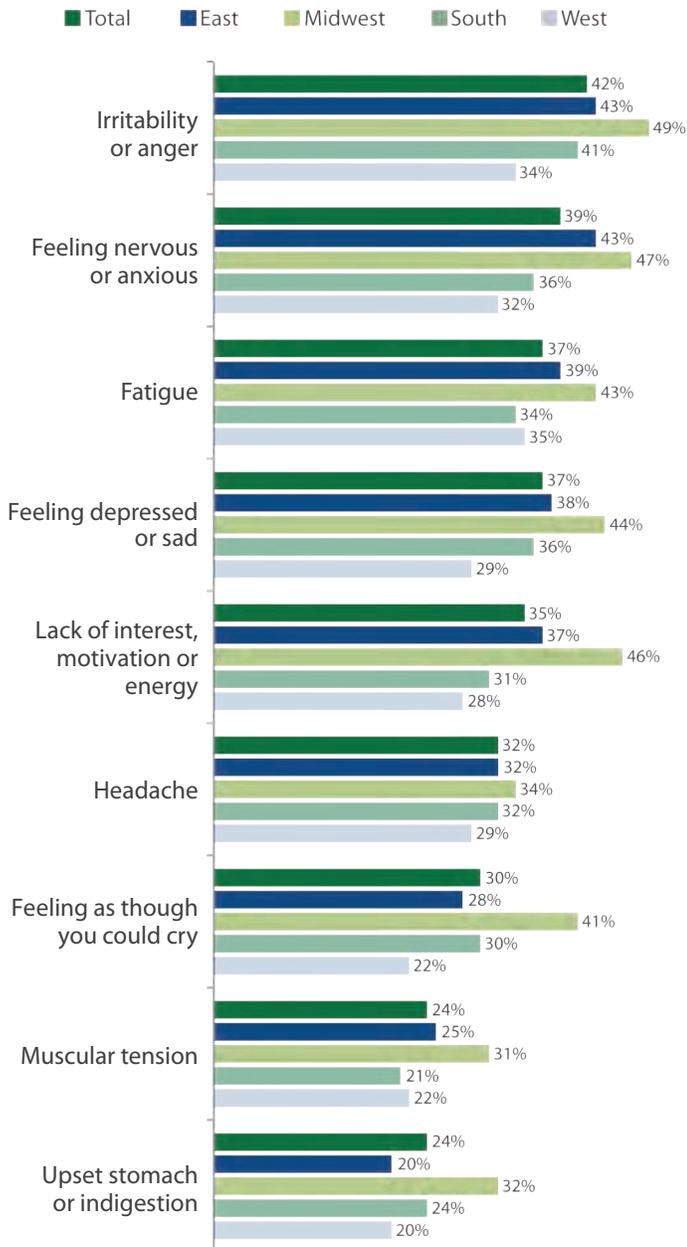
**Q800** During the last month, did you ever skip a meal because you were under stress?



# STRESS BY REGION

## Physical Symptoms of Stress By Region

Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); East (n=299); Midwest (n=259); South (n=389); West (n=279)  
 Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

- They are, however, more inclined than Westerners to recognize the link between their stress and their physical health (40 percent vs. 30 percent) and mental health (40 percent vs. 28 percent).

## Midwestern Stress

Adults in the Midwest are more likely to say that stress has increased over the past year and they are also more likely to name various physical and non-physical ways that stress manifests itself.

- A larger proportion of Midwesterners are reporting increased stress this year than last (46 percent say their stress has increased in 2011, compared to 39 percent in 2010).
- They are also the most likely region to cite a wide variety of both physical and non-physical symptoms of stress. Up to roughly half (more than any other region in each case) of Midwesterners list irritability (49 percent); nervousness (47 percent); having a lack of interest, motivation or energy (46 percent); feeling depressed or sad (44 percent); fatigue (43 percent); feeling overwhelmed (43 percent); and feeling as though they could cry (41 percent).

The occurrence of some health conditions is highest in the Midwest compared to other parts of the country and, this year, more people in the Midwest say their family does not try to be active.

- Compared to people in other regions, Midwesterners were most likely to report high cholesterol (30 percent), type 2 diabetes (14 percent), arthritis (20 percent), depression (19 percent) and anxiety disorders (14 percent).
- There was a slight uptick this year among people in the Midwest who say that their family does not try to be active at all (16 percent, up from 11 percent in 2010). Also, across

regions, Midwesterners are the most likely group, and significantly more likely than Southerners, to say that their family does not try to be active (16 percent vs. 11 percent in the East, 9 percent in the West and 7 percent in the South).

- Residents of the Midwest (44 percent) are more likely than those in other regions (35 percent in the East and 41 percent in the South) to believe that a psychologist can help manage stress a great deal or a lot. Westerners were equally as likely to believe in a psychologist's ability to help.

## Southern Stress

Adults in the South have a solid understanding of how stress can impact health, and they appear to be doing relatively well at managing their own stress.

- Nine in 10 adults in the South (89 percent) say that stress can have a very strong/strong impact on a person's health, compared to 81 percent in the Midwest, 81 percent in the West and 80 percent in the East.
- While the differential is still substantial, the South has the smallest gap between importance of stress management (60 percent) and achievement in managing stress (42 percent). They are also the most likely to say that stress has decreased over the past 5 years (32 percent, compared to 26 percent in the East, 21 percent in the Midwest and 27 percent in the West).

Emotions play a slightly more significant role in the South compared to other regions of the country when it comes to willpower and stress management.

- Those living in the South are more likely than residents of other regions to say that they lack willpower because their emotions interfere (28 percent, compared to 17 percent in the Midwest, 20 percent in the East and 21 percent in the West).

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Emotions play a slightly more significant role in the South compared to other regions of the country when it comes to willpower and stress management.

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## STRESS BY REGION

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A greater number of residents in the South and West say they are in excellent health compared to the East and Midwest.

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- Further, when it comes to stress management techniques, they are the most likely to say that they manage stress by expressing their feelings rather than bottling them up (42 percent) and by focusing on the positive (58 percent).

Stress may be impacting their own health more than they realize.

- Two in 5 adults in the South (43 percent) say they are too tired to exercise and nearly one-third (30 percent) say that the convenience of unhealthy food is a barrier preventing them from eating healthy foods more often.

### Western Stress

Westerners report that they are among the healthiest in the nation, believe they are doing an excellent job managing their stress and work hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Three-fourths (75 percent) of Westerners say they are satisfied with their health, more than any other region.
- A greater number of residents in the South and West say they are in excellent health compared to the East and Midwest (11 percent in the South and West vs. 5 percent in the East and 7 percent in the Midwest).

This may be attributable, at least in part, to survey findings that suggest Westerners exercise and eat healthy foods with a higher than average frequency.

- At least once a day, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of adults in the West engage in physical activity that makes them sweat and breathe hard. This is significantly higher than adults living in the East (12 percent), the Midwest (15 percent) and the South (19 percent).
- Though the main reason in all four regions for engaging in physical activity is to help manage weight, adults in the

West are more likely than those in the Midwest and South to do so because it makes them feel happy (42 percent vs. 27 percent and 29 percent, respectively) and are more likely than those in the Midwest to say it keeps them from getting sick (28 percent vs. 17 percent).

- Westerners are most likely to report that they “always” eat healthy foods (7 percent vs. 5 percent for the East and South and 3 percent for the Midwest) and more likely (23 percent) to say they “almost always” eat healthy than those in the East and Midwest (18 percent each).

Staying physically healthy may affect Westerners’ ability to successfully manage stress.

- They are most likely (34 percent) to say stress has little or no impact on their physical health (32 percent in the South, 30 percent in the Midwest and 24 percent in the East) and mental health (42 percent vs. 36 percent in the South, 37 percent in the Midwest and 29 percent in the East).
- They are the least likely to report their own health problems (49 percent) or those of a family member (46 percent) as a source of stress.
- Across the board, Westerners report some of the lowest levels of physical symptoms due to stress, such as irritability (34 percent), headaches (29 percent), depression (29 percent) or a change in sex drive (8 percent), though they do tend to report grinding their teeth more (18 percent) than people in any other region.

Westerners are also better at maintaining a positive attitude and avoiding stress-related unhealthy behaviors than people living in other regions of the country.

- Similar to the South, a majority focuses on the positive (53 percent) to help them manage stress.

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Westerners report some of the lowest levels of physical symptoms due to stress, such as irritability, headaches, depression or a change in sex drive.

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## STRESS BY REGION

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Similar to Southerners, a majority of Westerners focus on the positive to help them manage stress.

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- An increasing number of Westerners report they are doing an excellent/very good job of managing their stress this year, compared to last (35 percent compared to 24 percent).
- Westerners are less likely to engage in some unhealthy behaviors due to stress this year than they were last year (50 percent lay awake at night due to stress in 2010, down to 39 percent in 2011; 37 percent ate unhealthy foods, down to 34 percent in 2011; and 35 percent skipped a meal in 2010, down to 26 percent in 2011).
- Similar to those residing in the Midwest, people in the West are more likely to recognize that a psychologist can help manage stress (44 percent) than those in the East and South.



## STRESS IN ATLANTA



Atlantans\* evaluate their stress and stressors similarly to other adults nationally. However, work and job stability are of particular concern to those living in Atlanta. This year, Atlantans report the lowest stress levels since *Stress in America*™ reporting began in 2008. However, the percentage of Atlanta residents who reported that their work is a stressor is at its highest level since 2008. Work, the economy and job stability are mentioned more commonly by Atlantans than by adults nationally. Atlanta residents continue to report that being physically active is important to them.

### Perceptions of Stress and Its Sources

In 2011, fewer Atlantans reported high levels of stress compared to 2010, a downward trend that began in 2009. Atlanta residents are more likely than those across the U.S. to recognize the impact that different health and lifestyle factors can have on health; yet, they are not more likely to report that their personal health is impacted by their stress level.

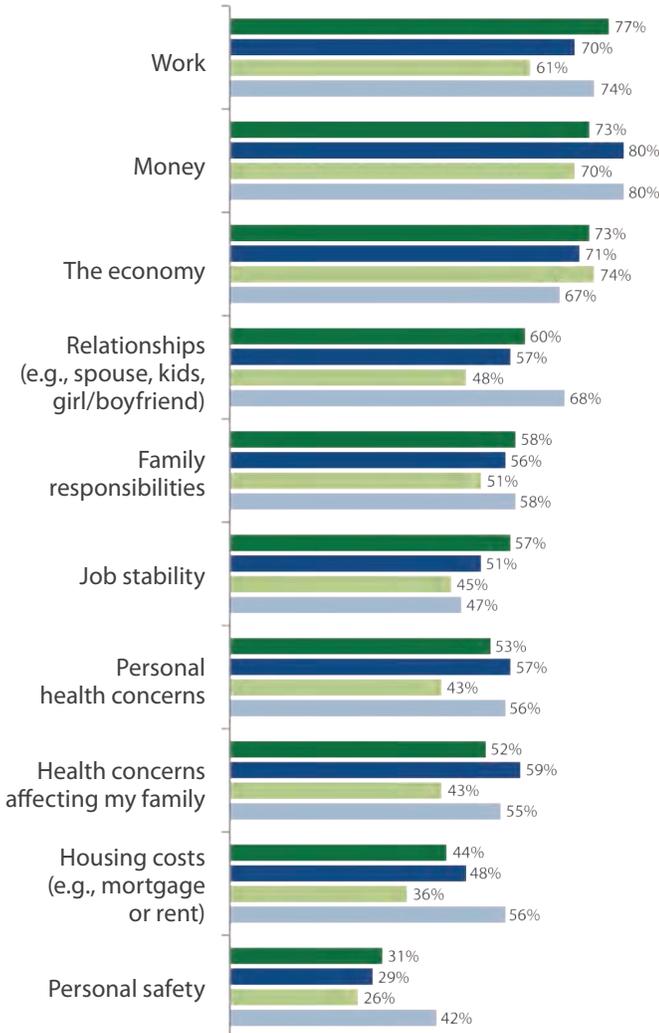
- Compared to nationwide numbers, a larger proportion of Atlantans recognize that health and lifestyle factors can strongly impact a person's health, specifically as it relates to obesity (94 percent vs. 86 percent), stress (93 percent vs. 83 percent), poor diet (88 percent vs. 81 percent), alcohol use (87 percent vs. 78 percent) and poor eating habits (87 percent vs. 77 percent).
- Yet, Atlanta residents are no more likely than adults nationally to report that their stress level has a strong impact on their physical health (35 percent vs. 37 percent).
- Atlanta residents report an average stress level of 5.3 (on a 10-point scale, where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress), similar to the 5.2 level reported nationally.
- The percentage of Atlantans reporting work as a stressor is at its highest level since reporting began in 2008 (77 percent in 2011, compared to 70 percent in 2010, 61 percent in 2009 and 74 percent in 2008).



Work and job stability are of particular concern to Atlantans as compared to Americans overall.

**Causes of Stress in Atlanta**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)

■ 2011 ■ 2010 ■ 2009 ■ 2008



BASE: All respondents 2008 (n=243); 2009 (n=201); 2010 (n=213); 2011 (n=279)  
Q625 Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

## Economic Concerns and Stress

Atlanta residents generally evaluate their stress and stressors similarly to adults nationally. However, work and job stability are of particular concern to Atlantans as compared to Americans overall.

- Work (77 percent vs. 70 percent), the economy (73 percent vs. 67 percent) and job stability (57 percent vs. 49 percent) are mentioned by Atlantans as stressors more commonly compared to their national counterparts.
- The number of Atlantans reporting that work is a source of stress is at an all-time high. This year, 77 percent of Atlanta residents said that work is a significant stressor, compared with 70 percent in 2010, 61 percent in 2009 and 74 percent in 2008.

Similarly, the number of Atlantans reporting that job stability is a significant source of stress is also at its highest level (57 percent in 2011, compared with 51 percent in 2010, 45 percent in 2009 and 47 percent in 2008).

## Stress and Well-Being

Data suggest that compared to the nation overall, Atlantans have higher levels of life satisfaction and satisfaction with the elements that contribute to quality of life. Atlantans evaluate their health similarly to adults nationwide. Atlantans recognize that stress can contribute to the development of disease and make existing health problems worse.

- Seventy-three percent of Atlanta residents report that they are very or somewhat satisfied with their lives (compared to 66 percent of Americans overall).
- Atlanta residents are more likely than adults nationwide to report that having a good relationship with their family (86 percent vs. 76 percent), doing well in their career or

studies (71 percent vs. 59 percent) and being physically active or fit (67 percent vs. 54 percent) are extremely or very important to them.

- Since 2010, more Atlantans report that being physically active or fit is important to them (67 percent in 2011 vs. 56 percent in 2010).
- There remains a gap between what aspects of well-being Atlantans find important and how well they are achieving these goals. The largest gaps between importance and achievement are getting enough sleep (44 percentage point gap between importance and achievement), being physically active or fit (35 percentage point gap), managing stress (29 percentage point gap) and eating healthily (29 percentage point gap).
- Atlantans agree that stress can contribute to the development of disease (95 percent vs. 94 percent nationally) and make existing health problems worse (87 percent vs. 81 percent nationally).
- Forty-three percent of Atlanta residents report their health as excellent or very good (similar to 41 percent, nationally).
- Atlantans are more likely than those across the nation to report that they have tried to exercise more (84 percent vs. 75 percent) and get more sleep (68 percent vs. 58 percent) in the last 5 years.
- For those Atlantans who are exercising, the primary motivators are weight management (65 percent vs. 59 percent), energy (54 percent vs. 47 percent) and stress management (51 percent vs. 44 percent).

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Atlanta residents are more likely than Americans overall to believe that obesity, stress and poor diet have a strong impact on a person's health.

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## Managing Stress

Atlantans manage their stress in ways that are similar to adults nationwide.

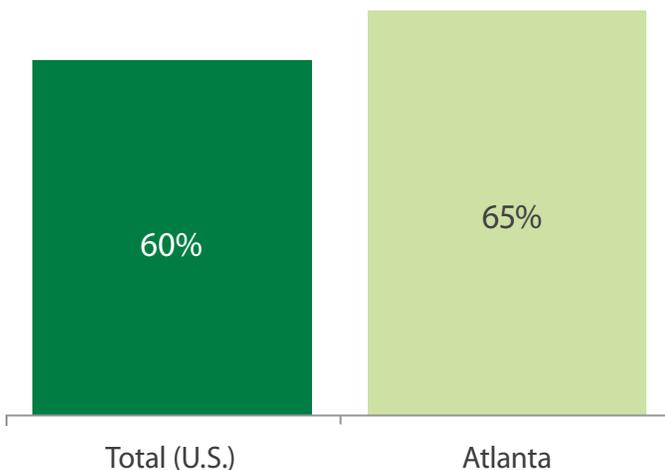


# STRESS IN ATLANTA

More than half of Atlantans do an excellent or very good job of knowing when they are feeling stressed.

- Equal proportions of adults nationally (57 percent) and in Atlanta (57 percent) say they are doing enough to manage their stress.
- More Atlanta residents report that they have tried to reduce their stress compared to U.S. adults (65 percent vs. 60 percent).
- The most common stress management techniques — listening to music, exercising or walking — are the same for Atlanta residents and adults nationwide.
- More than half of Atlantans (56 percent) do an excellent or very good job of knowing when they are feeling stressed. However, they are less able to manage or reduce stress once they experience it (33 percent).
- Atlanta residents are significantly more likely than adults nationally to believe that psychologists can help a great deal or a lot with mental health issues (63 percent vs. 52 percent). Atlantans also generally believe that psychologists can help with coping with grief (55 percent vs. 48 percent), relationship issues (50 percent vs. 42 percent) and stress management (46 percent vs. 41 percent).

**Effort to Reduce Stress in Atlanta**  
(% That Have Tried to Reduce Their Stress)



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Atlanta (n=279)  
Q7135 In the last 5 years, have you tried to make any of the following changes?

## Barriers to Change

The most common barriers to change are the same in Atlanta as they are nationwide. However, Atlanta residents report that they are less challenged by the expense associated with change. For those who view willpower as a barrier to change, Atlantans have a different view of what they need in order to change their willpower as compared to adults nationally.

- Lack of willpower is the most common barrier to change, both in Atlanta (30 percent) and nationwide (27 percent). About the same percentage report lack of time as a barrier (27 percent in Atlanta and 26 percent nationwide).

- In both Atlanta and nationwide, 71 percent of respondents believe that willpower can be learned. The most common definition of willpower is not giving in to temptation (42 percent in Atlanta and 39 percent nationwide), followed by being motivated or caring enough (31 percent in Atlanta and 30 percent nationwide).
- To improve willpower, Atlantans report that they need more confidence in their ability to make changes (53 percent vs. 40 percent) and need to feel better about themselves (49 percent vs. 36 percent).
- Compared to national numbers, fewer Atlantans report a need for more time for themselves in order to improve willpower (14 percent vs. 30 percent).
- Atlantans believe that help from a professional (30 percent vs. 22 percent) and more flexibility in their work schedule (31 percent vs. 21 percent) would help them improve their willpower.
- Atlanta residents are less likely to report that expense is a barrier to change compared to adults, nationally (10 percent vs. 17 percent).

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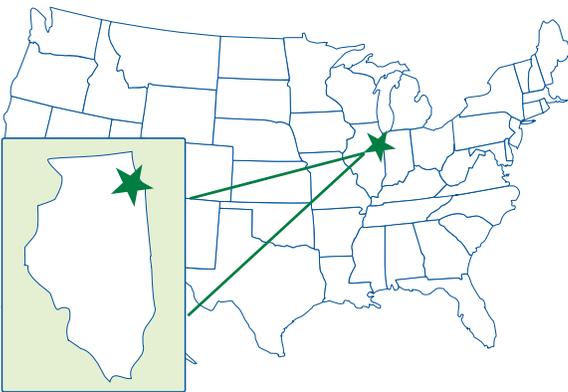
Atlantans have a different view of what they need in order to change their willpower as compared to adults nationally.

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## STRESS IN CHICAGO



Chicago residents\* believe that they are in good health and doing better at managing stress than they reported in 2010. They are also generally satisfied with their lives. However, they do find work, career and financial matters of particular concern. Although the perceived levels of overall stress in Chicago have been declining since 2009, money is now a greater stressor than it has been in previous years. Most Chicago residents believe that stress can have a strong impact on health, and the majority of Chicagoans believe that chronic stress is treatable.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

Chicagoans report moderate levels of stress, but their reported stress levels are still higher than what they consider a “healthy” stress level.

- Chicago residents’ average stress level is 5.6 (on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress), but they believe that a healthy stress level is around 3.8.
- Generally, Chicagoans are satisfied with various aspects of their lives, such as relationships with family (74 percent), spouse/partner (73 percent) and friends (72 percent).
- There has been much fluctuation in the causes of stress over time. Compared with last year, money is a stressor for more people this year (81 percent in 2011 vs. 70 percent in 2010). Family health (50 percent in 2011 vs. 59 percent in 2010) and personal health (49 percent in 2011 vs. 63 percent in 2010) are not as concerning.

### Economic Concerns and Stress

Particular areas of concern for Chicago residents are work/career and financial security. Subsequently, work and money are top stressors for them.

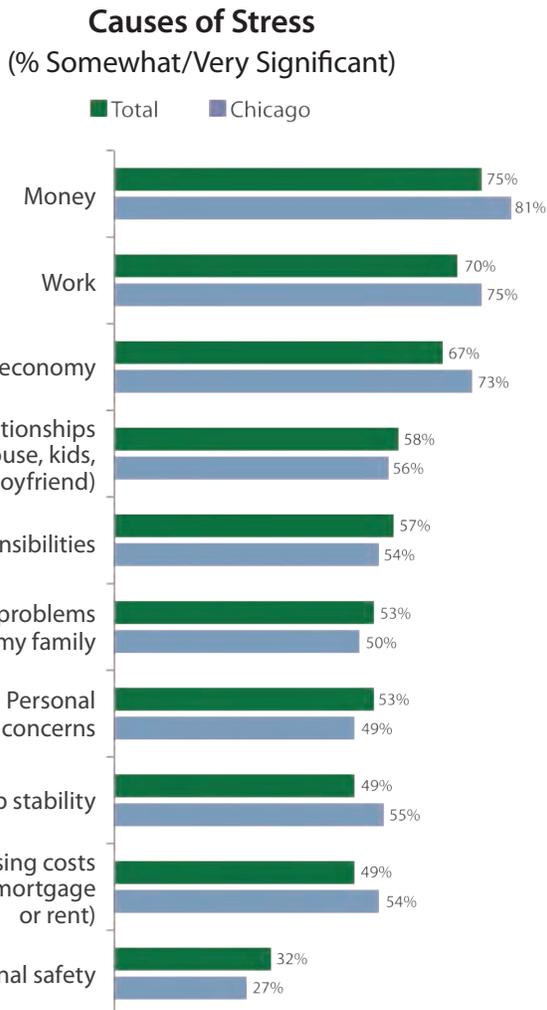
- The most significant sources of stress in Chicago include money (81 percent), work (75 percent) and the economy (73 percent). These are stressors for more adults in Chicago than the rest of the nation (75 percent, 70 percent and 67 percent, respectively).



# STRESS IN CHICAGO

More Chicagoans are dissatisfied with their work than people nationwide.

- This year, money is a greater stressor for Chicago residents than it was in 2010 (81 percent in 2011 vs. 70 percent in 2010).
- Compared to national numbers, fewer Chicago residents are satisfied with their work (31 percent in Chicago vs. 54 percent nationally) or with their financial security (39 percent in Chicago vs. 44 percent nationally).
- More Chicagoans are dissatisfied with their work (33 percent) than people nationwide (25 percent).



**BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Chicago (n=276)**  
**Q625** Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

## Stress and Well-Being

Chicago residents are generally satisfied with their lives and with the aspects that contribute to quality of life. However, they agree that stress can impact health and are feeling the impact of stress in their lives.

- Chicago residents are generally satisfied with their lives (61 percent very/somewhat satisfied).
- A majority of Chicagoans (87 percent) believe they are in good, very good or excellent health, up from 79 percent in 2010.
- Over the past 5 years, the majority of Chicago residents have tried to eat healthier (80 percent), exercise more (77 percent), lose weight (66 percent), reduce stress (65 percent) and get more sleep (60 percent).
- About 4 in 10 Chicago residents have made the changes they set out to make in managing or reducing their stress, with the most success in getting more sleep (44 percent) and exercising more (43 percent).
- Fifty-four percent of Chicagoans exercise more than once a week (up from 47 percent in 2010).
- Most Chicago residents agree that lifestyle factors can have a strong impact on health, including drug use (88 percent), obesity (84 percent) and stress (84 percent).

- Chicago residents believe that stress can have a stronger impact on their physical health (34 percent strong/very strong impact) than on their mental health (29 percent).
- Almost all Chicagoans (97 percent) believe that stress can contribute to the development of disease, and a majority (80 percent) believe that chronic stress can make existing problems worse.
- Fortunately, most Chicago residents (90 percent) believe that chronic stress is treatable. This is higher than the national average of 82 percent.
- Because of stress, 48 percent of Chicago residents reported having trouble sleeping at least once in the past month. Two in 5 (38 percent) reported having overeaten or eaten unhealthily due to stress in the past month.
- Additionally, a high proportion of Chicagoans feel overwhelmed due to stress (44 percent in Chicago vs. 34 percent nationally).

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Almost all Chicagoans agree that stress can contribute to the development of disease, and a majority believe that chronic stress can make existing problems worse.

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## Managing Stress

Chicago residents are taking steps to reduce stress, such as listening to music, exercising and reading. However, they do not believe they are good at preventing or managing stress when they do experience it.

- Compared to their national counterparts, only about half of Chicagoans believe they are doing enough to manage stress (49 percent in Chicago vs. 57 percent nationwide).
- Chicago residents agree that it is important to manage stress; however, they do not believe that they are adequately managing their stress. There is a 31-point gap between the perceived importance of stress management and how well Chicago residents believe they are doing at managing stress.
- Fifty-six percent of Chicago residents report that they know when they are stressed, and 46 percent know what their stressors are.

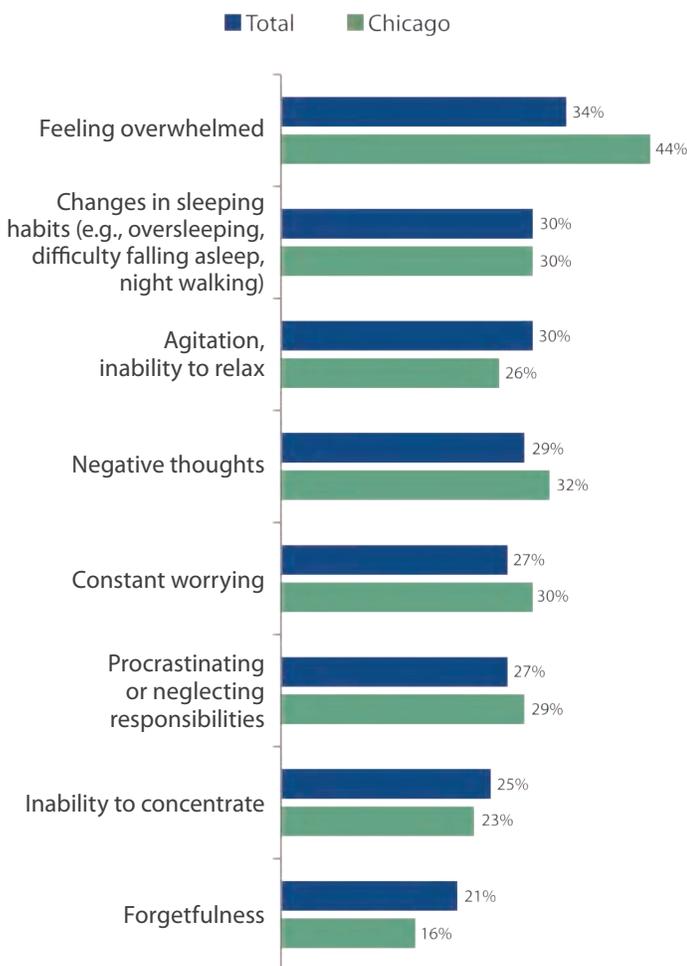


# STRESS IN CHICAGO

Forty percent of Chicago residents indicated that a lack of willpower has prevented them from making healthy lifestyle changes, compared to 27 percent nationally.

- Half of Chicago residents (51 percent) say they try to focus on the positive, while 49 percent avoid people and situations that trigger stress.
- Fewer than a third of Chicago residents believe that they are doing an excellent or very good job at preventing stress (19 percent), managing stress when they experience it (25 percent) and recovering fully after becoming stressed (31 percent).
- More than half (52 percent) of Chicagoans believe that a psychologist can help a great deal or a lot with stress management, compared to 41 percent nationally.

## Non-Physical Symptoms of Stress



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Chicago (n=276)  
Q7170 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

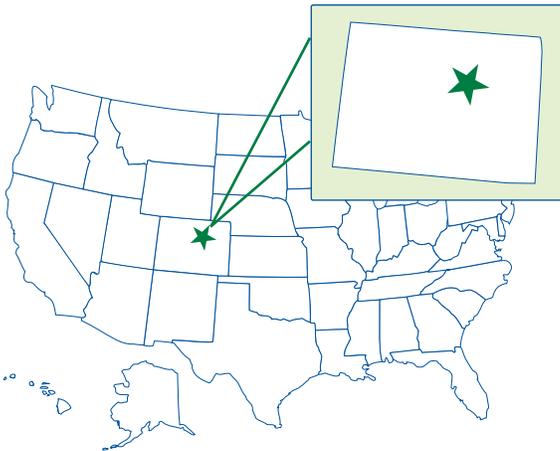
## Barriers to Change

For Chicago residents, lack of willpower is the primary barrier to change.

- Forty percent of Chicago residents indicated that a lack of willpower has prevented them from making recommended or desired healthy lifestyle changes (compared to 27 percent nationally).
- The majority of Chicagoans (76 percent) and U.S. adults (71 percent) believe that willpower can be learned. Lack of willpower is commonly defined as “giving in to temptation.”
- For those who believe that willpower is a barrier to making lifestyle changes, internal factors to increase willpower include more confidence in their ability to make a change (45 percent) and more energy (42 percent). The most important external factors for increasing their willpower include more time (42 percent) and money (39 percent).
- To improve willpower, there is a greater emphasis compared to 2010 on feeling better about oneself (37 percent), having more time for oneself (36 percent), having less stress (30 percent) and having more flexibility at work (27 percent).



## STRESS IN DENVER



Denver residents\* report experiencing less stress than they did last year, and they experience less stress than Americans overall. Over the past year, Denver residents report engaging in unhealthy behaviors less often. They also believe they are able to recognize stressful situations and manage their stress well. Denver residents engage in healthy behaviors and exercise more regularly than Americans overall. Denver residents also report greater satisfaction with their lives compared to their national counterparts.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

On average, adults in Denver are less likely than their national counterparts to report a great deal of stress and appear to be more satisfied with their personal relationships.

- Denver residents' average stress level is 4.6 (on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress), compared to the national average of 5.2.
- Although adults in Denver report less stress on average, they have about the same perception of what is a healthy level of stress as adults nationally (3.5 in Denver vs. 3.6 nationally).
- Less than half (45 percent) of Denver residents report relationships as a significant source of stress (compared to 58 percent nationally), and only 41 percent list family responsibilities as a source of stress compared to 57 percent nationally.

### Economic Concerns and Stress

Although Denver residents are generally satisfied with many aspects of their lives, work and finances are areas where they appear to be slightly less satisfied. Additionally, financial matters are significant causes of stress for adults in Denver.

- Six in 10 Denver residents express satisfaction with work (59 percent) and fewer than half (45 percent) feel the same way about their financial security.
- Compared to national averages, money, work and the economy are sources of stress for similar proportions of adults in Denver (money: 75 percent nationally vs. 79 percent in Denver; work: 70 percent nationally vs. 67 percent in Denver; and the economy: 67 percent nationally vs. 68 percent in Denver).



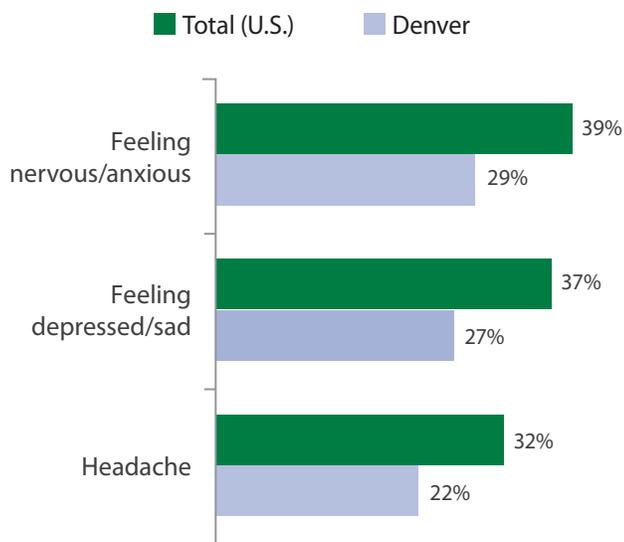
Less than half of Denver residents report relationships as a significant source of stress.

## Stress and Well-Being

Adults in Denver show high levels of awareness when it comes to factors that can impact one's health. They tend to be more physically active than their national counterparts and value strong relationships with their family and friends. They also appear to be aware of the physical and emotional health consequences associated with stress.

- Denver residents report that they are very or somewhat satisfied with life (76 percent), much higher than the national average (66 percent).
- High levels of satisfaction may be a result of the high levels of achievement Denver residents report experiencing in relationships with family and friends. About two-thirds (67 percent) of Denver residents indicate that they are excellent or very good at achieving a good relationship with their family (compared to 56 percent of adults nationwide).
- Eighty-three percent of adults in Denver believe that it is extremely or very important to have a good relationship with their family, and 68 percent believe that it is extremely/very important to have a good relationship with their friends.
- Denver residents report being in good health. About 38 percent say their health is good, 39 percent report that their health is very good and 10 percent say that their health is excellent.
- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of Denver residents exercise at least a few times a week. Those who exercise say that it helps them manage their weight (64 percent) and their stress (52 percent).
- Adults in Denver believe that the following can have a strong or very strong impact on health: drug use (90 percent), obesity (89 percent) and stress (86 percent).
- While almost all Denver residents (98 percent) believe that stress can contribute to the development of disease, less

### Physical Symptoms of Stress



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Denver (n=279)  
Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

than half of adults in Denver believe stress has a slight to no impact on their physical health (44 percent) or their mental health (39 percent).

- Fewer Denver residents report having experienced physical symptoms of stress within the last month compared to those nationwide: feeling nervous/anxious (29 percent in Denver vs. 39 percent nationally); feeling depressed/sad (27 percent vs. 37 percent) and headache (22 percent vs. 32 percent).
- Although Denver residents report that unhealthy behaviors such as having lain awake at night, overeating or skipping meals have decreased over the past year, stress still causes unhealthy behaviors in about one-quarter to one-third of adults in Denver (25 – 35 percent).

## Managing Stress

The percentage of adults in Denver who believe they are doing enough to manage their stress has increased steadily over the past 2 years. While their stress management techniques seem to be useful in mitigating stress, few Denver residents are able to recognize the feelings generated by stress before they come on.

- Sixty-two percent of Denver residents believe that it is extremely or very important to manage stress, similar to the national average (61 percent).
- Almost half of adults in Denver (48 percent) report doing an excellent or very good job at managing stress (compared to 35 percent of adults nationwide).
- Compared to national averages, more adults in Denver believe they are doing enough to manage their stress (70 percent in Denver vs. 57 percent nationally).
- Denver residents are more likely than Americans overall to exercise to manage stress (59 percent in Denver vs. 47 percent nationally).

Denver residents are more likely than Americans overall to exercise to manage stress.



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Denver (n=279)

Q7010 How well are you doing at achieving each of these: Doing well in your career/studies; eating healthy; being physically active or fit; having good relationships with my friends; having a good relationship with my family; managing stress; getting enough sleep?



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Denver residents believe that their willpower could improve if they had more confidence in the ability to make the behavior changes and if they cared more for their health.

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- About 58 percent of adults in Denver manage their stress by focusing on the positive. Fifty-one percent indicate that they avoid people or situations that cause them stress.
- While Denver residents believe they are effective at using stress management techniques, many recognize the ways in which a psychologist can help. For example, Denver adults believe that a psychologist can help a great deal or a lot in coping with grief (57 percent) and managing relationship issues (51 percent). Forty-three percent of Denver residents believe that a psychologist can help a great deal/a lot with stress management.
- For those who experience symptoms of stress, 64 percent of Denver residents become aware of their feelings and behaviors caused by stress while they are in the situation. Only 12 percent say they recognize the feelings or behaviors before the feelings come on or before engaging in the behavior.

### Barriers to Change

The greatest barriers to change for Denver residents are time and willpower.

- Denver residents indicate that they do not have enough willpower (27 percent) or enough time (27 percent) to make recommended or desired behavioral or lifestyle changes.
- Most adults in Denver believe that willpower can be learned (77 percent), and they commonly define a lack of willpower as giving in to temptation (39 percent), not being motivated enough (28 percent) and not being disciplined to make changes (26 percent).
- Denver residents believe that their willpower could improve if they had more confidence in the ability to make the behavior changes (42 percent) and if they cared more for their health (36 percent). Additionally, 41 percent of Denver residents believe that money would help them improve their willpower.

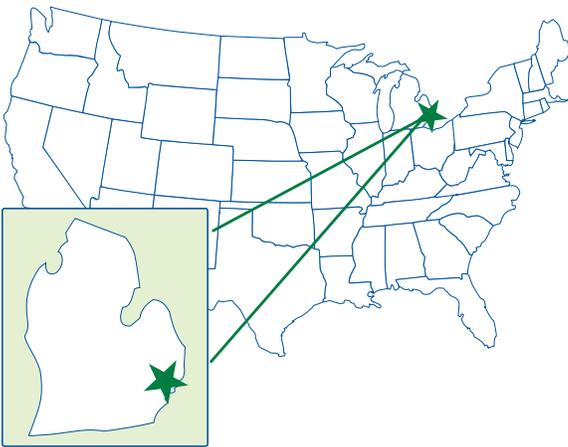


AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## STRESS IN DETROIT



Adults living in Detroit\* mirror the general population of America in many key measurements for life satisfaction, health and levels of stress. Overall health levels are virtually the same between the two populations, as are rates of chronic illness and health conditions. Detroit's population and adults nationwide both believe that managing stress is extremely or very important and some believe they are doing a very good job of managing it, but there is still a significant gap between the importance they place on managing stress and their success in doing so. Still, some differences do stand out, such as how they feel about their jobs and the economy and how stress impacts their physical health.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

Adults living in Detroit are more likely to report dissatisfaction with their jobs and appear to be slightly more stressed about the economy than Americans overall.

- A substantially greater number reported being dissatisfied with work (38 percent in Detroit vs. 25 percent nationally).
- The economy (75 percent) tops the list for more people in Detroit as a major stressor than it does nationwide (67 percent). Despite overall economic improvements, it appears to be rebounding as a major source of stress for Detroit residents, after falling in significance for several years (79 percent in 2008, 72 percent in 2009 and 70 percent in 2010).
- More than half of Detroit residents (59 percent) say that it is very important to manage stress, yet fewer than half (43 percent) report that they are doing an excellent/very good job at managing stress.

### Stress and Well-Being

Detroit residents are considerably less likely than people nationwide to report having any physical symptoms of stress.

- More people in Detroit report they do not suffer from any physical symptoms of stress (34 percent vs. 24 percent nationally).

\*This report focuses only on the views of residents within the Detroit Metropolitan Statistical Area (2008 n=235; 2009 n=207; 2010 n=214; 2011 n=223) and the general population (2008 n=1,791; 2009 n=1,568; 2010 n=1,134; 2011 n=1,226).



# STRESS IN DETROIT

The health of Detroit residents may slowly be improving. The number who report that their health is fair or poor has trended down since 2009.

- In fact, findings suggest that the health of Detroit residents may slowly be improving. The number who report that their health is fair or poor has trended down since 2009 (23 percent in 2009, 19 percent in 2010 and 16 percent in 2011), while the number of those who report that their health is very good or excellent has gone up (38 percent in 2009, 40 percent in 2010 and 45 percent in 2011).

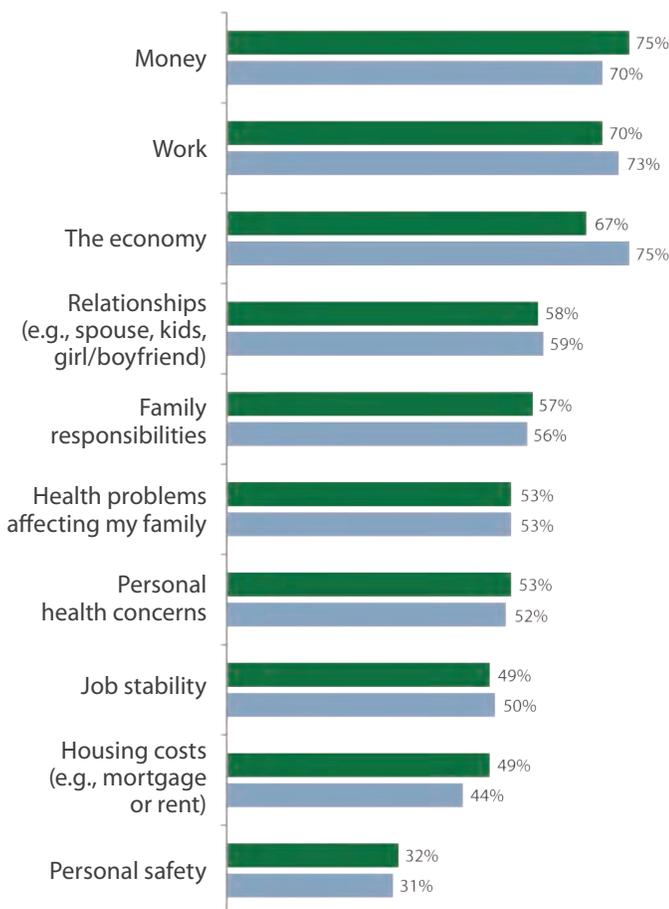
Detroit adults also report slightly higher levels of physical activity this year and slightly lower levels of stress.

- Fifty-nine percent of adults in Detroit say they exercise at least a few times a week compared to 50 percent last year.
- Among those who tried, more Detroit residents report having been successful in losing weight (41 percent vs. 30 percent nationally).
- Looking at the past 4 years, personal stress levels are down (6.2 in 2008, 6.1 in 2009, 5.4 in 2010 and 5.2 in 2011 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress).

## Causes of Stress

(% Somewhat/Very Significant)

■ Total ■ Detroit



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Detroit (n=223)  
Q625 Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

## Managing Stress

People in Detroit are nearly twice as likely as their counterparts nationwide to say they lack a strategy for managing stress. Survey findings suggest that people in Detroit are also less likely to say that stress has a strong impact on their personal physical health. Some in Detroit do take action to help manage stress and are more likely to turn to yoga and less likely to turn to food than the nation overall.

- Fifty-nine percent of adults in Detroit say they're doing enough to manage stress (vs. 57 percent nationally).
- While 12 percent of the general population reports using no strategies at all to manage stress, in Detroit the figure is 22 percent.

# STRESS IN DETROIT

- Detroit residents are more likely to use meditation or yoga (18 percent vs. 11 percent nationally) and are less likely to eat (17 percent vs. 27 percent nationally) to help manage stress. The top stress management techniques among Detroit residents are exercise or walking, listening to music, spending times with friends or family, reading and praying.
- Residents of Detroit report that the most useful strategy they have for combating stress is creating a social support network (63 percent vs. 47 percent nationally).
- Fewer Detroit residents (31 percent) than people nationwide (37 percent) believe that stress has a strong/very strong impact on their own physical health, while the majority (82 percent) believe that, in general, stress can affect physical health.

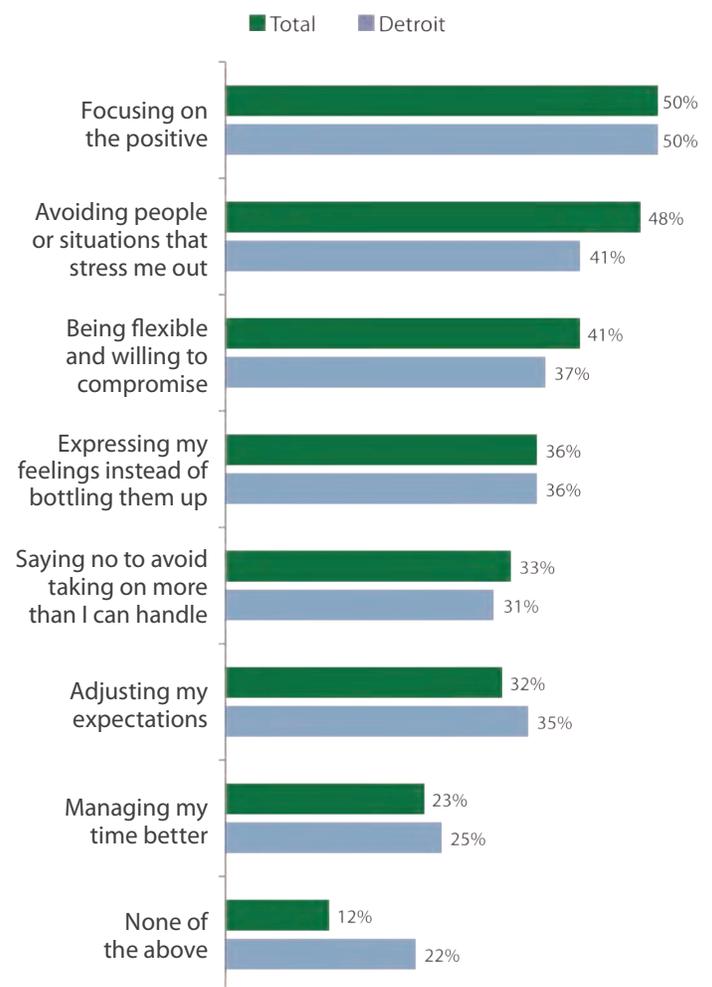
## Barriers to Change

Stress remains enough of a problem for people of Detroit that residents point to being stressed as a reason for not making positive lifestyle changes.

- One in 6 (15 percent) Detroit residents who desired to make a lifestyle change say they are too stressed to do so, up considerably from 4 percent in 2010.
- Regarding barriers to exercising, Detroit residents who exercise once a week or less often are less likely to blame being too busy than their counterparts nationwide (19 percent in Detroit vs. 33 percent nationally).
- However, they are more likely to report that someone has recommended they eat a healthier diet (42 percent) over the past 5 years than the population overall (35 percent).

Residents of Detroit report that the most useful strategy they have for combating stress is creating a social support network.

## Stress Management Techniques



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Detroit (n=223)  
Q7195 Which of these strategies do you use to manage your stress?



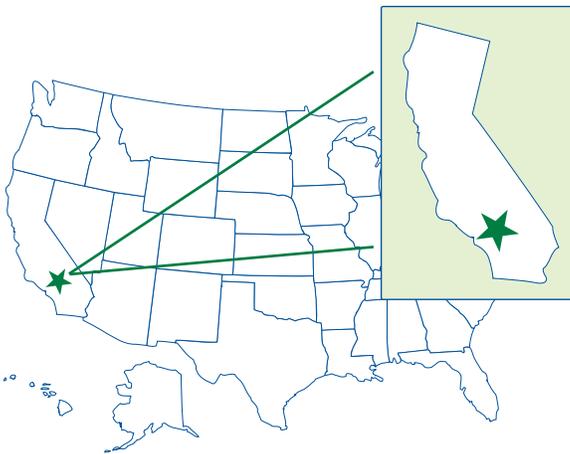


AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## STRESS IN LOS ANGELES



Adults in Los Angeles\* consider a higher stress level to be healthy in comparison to the rest of the nation. Unlike Americans overall, fewer report a decrease in their stress over the past 5 years. However, they are more likely to consult a psychologist for help managing their stress and are more likely than the rest of the nation to report successfully making lifestyle changes such as having a healthier diet, exercising more and losing weight.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

Adults in Los Angeles, similar to Americans nationwide, report higher levels of stress than what they consider to be healthy and those in Los Angeles consider a healthy stress level to be higher than what the rest of the nation believes. Unlike the rest of the nation, fewer people report diminishing stress over the past 5 years.

Although 43 percent of Los Angeles adults report an increase in stress levels over the past 5 years, physical symptoms of stress appear to have gone down during the same time period. More than half of Los Angeles residents report that they're doing enough to manage stress. They list exercise, listening to music and reading as top strategies for managing stress. They are also more likely than Americans overall to believe that a psychologist can help with stress management (51 percent vs. 41 percent).

- Los Angeles residents report a similar average level of stress than adults nationwide (5.3 vs. 5.2 nationally on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress).
- For Los Angeles residents, overall stress levels are continuing to level off since the high levels seen in 2008. But 4 in 10 adults in Los Angeles say that over the past 5 years their level of stress has increased, which is similar to what Americans nationwide report.



# STRESS IN LOS ANGELES

## Stress Over the Past 5 Years

■ Decreased ■ Stayed the Same ■ Increased



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Los Angeles (n=281)  
Q620 Thinking about the past 5 years, would you say the level of stress in your life has increased over time, decreased over time, or has it stayed about the same?

- While the rest of the nation is seeing a growing number of adults report diminishing stress, the opposite is true in L.A. In 2011, only 22 percent said stress levels had decreased over the past 5 years, compared to 25 percent last year and 31 percent in 2009. Nationally, 27 percent said their stress had decreased over the past 5 years.
- Money (74 percent), work (73 percent) and the economy (64 percent) top the list of items that cause stress for the largest numbers of L.A. residents. This is similar to the causes of stress nationally (75 percent, 70 percent and 67 percent, respectively).

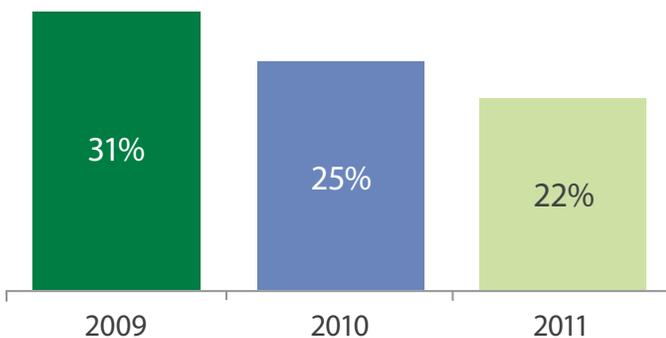
## Stress and Well-Being

Los Angeles adults recognize the link between stress and their health. Furthermore, they are willing to get help from others and work to make positive changes in their lives. They are somewhat more successful than those nationwide in making some, but not all, of those changes.

- Four in 10 (42 percent) Los Angeles adults (vs. 37 percent nationally) say that stress has a very strong or strong impact on their body or physical health. A similar proportion of adults in Los Angeles (43 percent) believe that stress has a very strong or strong impact on their mental health, larger than 35 percent nationally.
- Though a slightly larger percentage of adults in Los Angeles report being very or somewhat satisfied with their health (73 percent vs. 70 percent nationally), they are somewhat more likely to report having been told to exercise more (49 percent vs. 44 percent nationally), lose weight (42 percent vs. 37 percent), and eat a healthier diet (43 percent vs. 35 percent).
- Among those who attempted to make a lifestyle change, a greater number of adults in L.A. than those nationwide say they have been successful at eating a healthier diet

## Residents Who Say the Level of Stress in Their Life Has Decreased Over the Past 3 Years

Los Angeles Trend



BASE: Los Angeles 2009 (n=205); 2010 (n=211); 2011 (n=281)  
Q620 Thinking about the past 5 years, would you say the level of stress in your life has increased over time, decreased over time, or has it stayed about the same?

(48 percent vs. 44 percent), exercising more (45 percent vs. 39 percent) and losing weight (39 percent vs. 30 percent). However, 34 percent say they have not been successful at reducing stress (vs. 38 percent nationally).

## Managing Stress

Adults in Los Angeles are more likely than adults nationally to see a mental health professional to help manage stress and are more likely to say that a psychologist can help when it comes to a number of issues or problems experienced in life.

- More than half of Los Angeles residents (55 percent) and Americans overall (57 percent) believe that they are doing enough to manage their stress.
- Reflecting national trends, listening to music or exercising top the list of activities that Los Angeles residents are doing the most to help manage their stress.
- In addition, more Los Angeles residents than Americans overall say that they see a mental health professional to help manage their stress (7 percent vs. 3 percent).
- More adults in Los Angeles than nationally believe that a psychologist can help them cope with mental health issues (68 percent vs. 52 percent), cope with grief (59 percent vs. 48 percent), manage their stress (51 percent vs. 41 percent), make lifestyle and behavior changes (45 percent vs. 34 percent), strike a work/life balance (34 percent vs. 25 percent) and plan for their career (25 percent vs. 13 percent).

## Barriers to Change

A lack of strategies for making behavior changes, along with insufficient willpower and time, appear to be hindering L.A. residents' ability to reduce stress.

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More Los Angeles residents than Americans overall say that they see a mental health professional to help manage their stress.

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## STRESS IN LOS ANGELES

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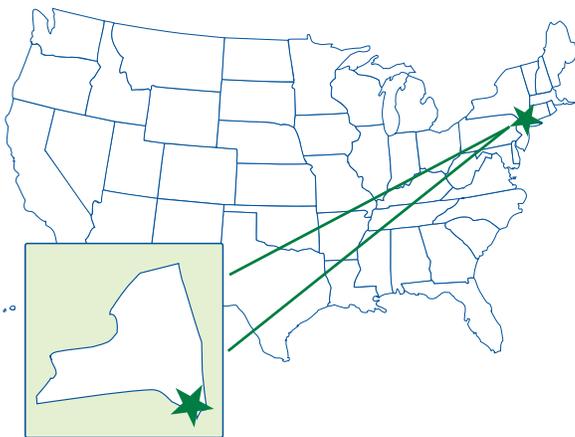
Lack of willpower and lack of time are the top two barriers that prevented L.A. residents from accomplishing the lifestyle changes they had decided to make.

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- Only one-third of adults in Los Angeles (34 percent) and nationally (38 percent) who attempted to reduce their stress have been successful in doing so.
- Lack of willpower (31 percent) and lack of time (29 percent) are the top two barriers that prevented Los Angeles residents from accomplishing the lifestyle changes they had decided to make.



## STRESS IN NEW YORK CITY



New Yorkers\* are generally satisfied with their lives, in keeping with the rest of the nation, but they are more likely to report a drop in their stress levels than Americans on average. New Yorkers cite personal health, job stability and housing costs as sources of stress more often than those across the country. While satisfaction is high in New York, and stress appears to be on the decline for some, New Yorkers continue to struggle when it comes to making lifestyle and behavior changes, and they are challenged to succeed in areas that are important to them.

### Perceptions of Stress

- Two-thirds (67 percent) of New Yorkers report being satisfied with life in general, comparable to the national number of 66 percent.
- Though they report similar stress levels as other Americans (5.3 compared to 5.2 nationally on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress), New Yorkers (24 percent) are more likely than Americans overall (17 percent) to say their stress has decreased in the past year.
- Clearly, some are doing better than others: 32 percent of New Yorkers said their stress had gone up since 2010.
- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of New Yorkers say personal health concerns are a cause of stress for them, significantly more than the 53 percent who say the same nationally. This is similar to the 63 percent of New Yorkers who cited personal health last year, but a large uptick from 2009 when just 49 percent said the same.
- Six in 10 (60 percent) New Yorkers cite job stability as a stressor, well above the 49 percent national average.
- Two-thirds (66 percent) of New Yorkers say that housing costs are a cause of stress, which is higher than the 49 percent who say the same nationally.
- New Yorkers are also more likely than Americans in general to cite personal safety as a cause of stress (44 percent vs. 32 percent nationally).



More New Yorkers than those nationally think stress has an impact on their mental health.

## Stress and Well-Being

Nearly all New Yorkers recognize the link between stress and health, which may be related to the priority status New Yorkers give to managing stress and staying physically active.

- Nearly nine in 10 (87 percent) New Yorkers say that stress has at least a strong impact on personal health. More New Yorkers than those nationally think stress has an impact on their mental health (42 percent vs. 35 percent).
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of New Yorkers say that managing stress is important, roughly the same as last year (68 percent) and more than the 61 percent nationally who say the same.

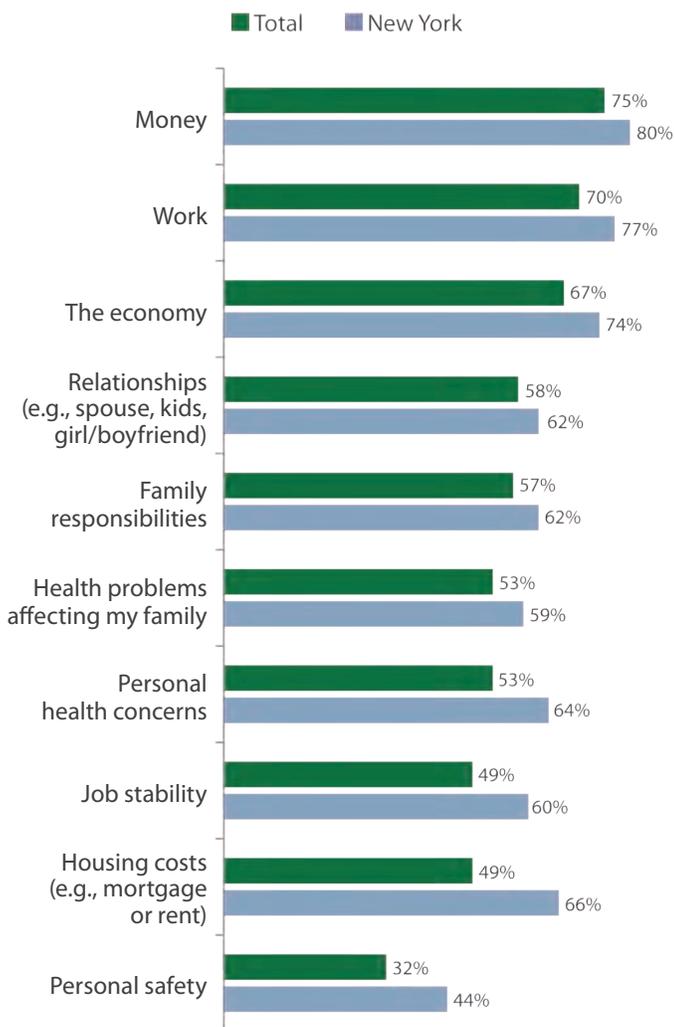
However, New Yorkers, like the rest of the country, have a difficult time meeting their goals for keeping stress under control.

- Two in 5 (40 percent) New Yorkers report doing a very good or excellent job at managing their stress, compared with 35 percent nationally.

They also struggle when it comes to making lifestyle changes, though the data suggest they are doing better than Americans overall.

- A substantially larger number of New Yorkers say being physically active is important (65 percent vs. 54 percent nationally).
- Among those who decided to or were recommended to make a change, more New Yorkers report success at eating a healthier diet (52 percent vs. 44 percent nationally), exercising more (46 percent vs. 39 percent nationally) and losing weight (39 percent vs. 30 percent nationally).
- Despite their success, New Yorkers report a lack of willpower (32 percent vs. 27 percent nationally) and say that making lifestyle and behavior changes requires too much effort (17 percent vs. 13 percent nationally). The willpower problem appears to have grown since last year, when only 25 percent of New Yorkers cited it as a barrier.

**Causes of Stress**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)



**BASE:** All respondents (n=1226); New York (n=243)  
**Q625** Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.

In addition to feeling less stressed, New Yorkers also report feeling less irritable due to stress than the rest of the nation. Overall, they are less likely to report having experienced a number of negative physical symptoms due to stress than those nationally, and fewer report some common stress-related symptoms as compared to last year.

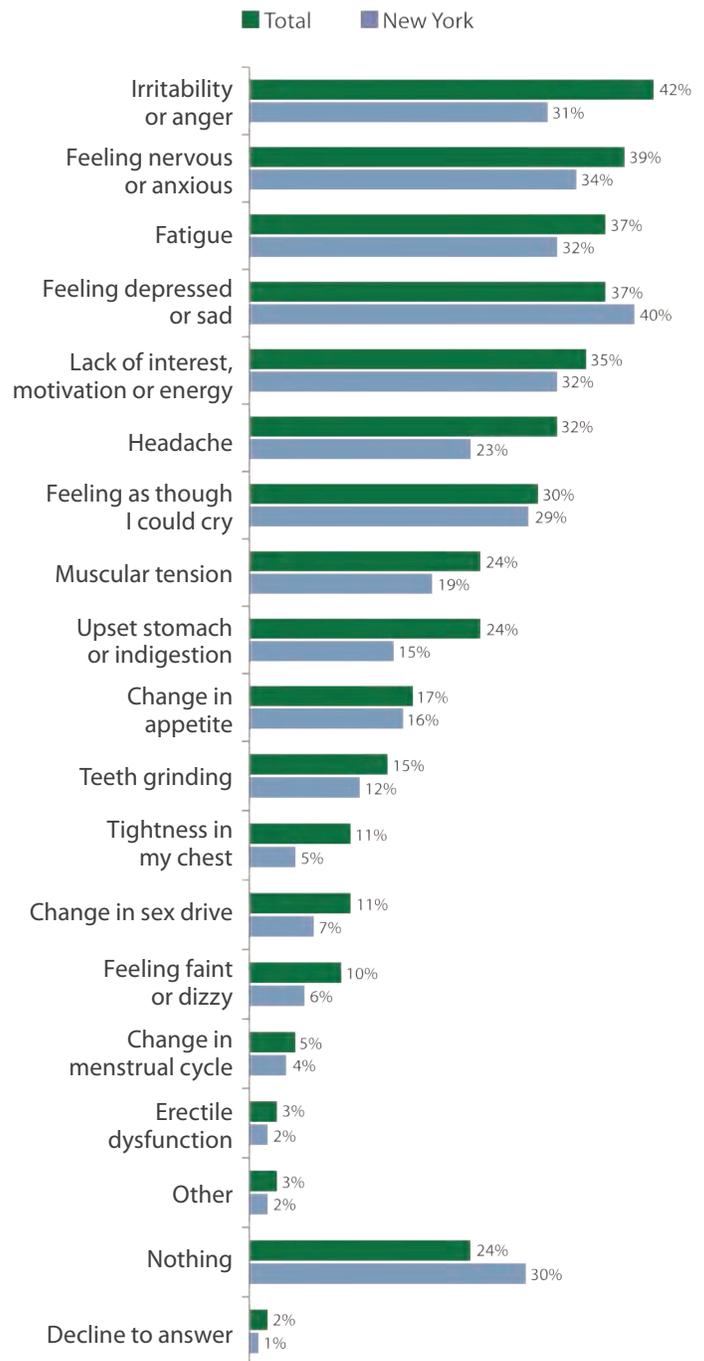
- Nearly one-third (31 percent) of New Yorkers report irritability or anger in the past month due to stress, lower than the 42 percent nationally who say the same; 23 percent report headaches, compared to 32 percent nationally; and 15 percent report indigestion, well below 24 percent nationally.
- The 31 percent who report irritability/anger is much lower than the 45 percent of New Yorkers who reported the same in 2010, and the 23 percent who report headaches is a drop from 33 percent who said the same last year.

## Managing Stress

A majority of New Yorkers continue to feel positively about doing enough to manage stress. For managing stress, New Yorkers are more likely than Americans overall to turn to music or a mental health professional and less likely to turn to more spiritual measures.

- More than half (55 percent) of New Yorkers say they are doing enough to manage stress, virtually unchanged from 56 percent last year and 55 percent in 2009.
- Just over three in five (61 percent) New Yorkers listen to music to help manage their stress, compared to 48 percent of those nationwide.
- Also, 9 percent of New Yorkers report seeing a mental health professional to help manage stress, more than the 3 percent who say the same nationally.
- Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of New Yorkers use prayer to manage stress, less than the 32 percent who say the same nationally, and 11 percent report attending church/religious

## Physical Symptoms of Stress



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); New York (n=243)  
Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?



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More New Yorkers than Americans nationwide say lifestyle or behavior change require too much effort.

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services to manage stress, less than the 21 percent who report the same nationally.

- Three in five (61 percent) New Yorkers say that they focus on the positive to deal with stress, which is more than the 50 percent nationally who report doing the same.
- For those who say they express feelings instead of bottling them up, 68 percent of New Yorkers find this strategy effective, more than the 51 percent nationally who find this effective.
- New Yorkers are more likely than those nationwide to believe a psychologist is able to help a great deal or a lot: 62 percent of New Yorkers believe that a psychologist is helpful in coping with mental health issues (vs. 52 percent nationally), 55 percent with relationship issues (vs. 42 percent nationally), 39 percent with chronic illness (vs. 29 percent nationally), 35 percent with work/life balance (vs. 25 percent nationally) and 21 percent with career planning (vs. 13 percent nationally).

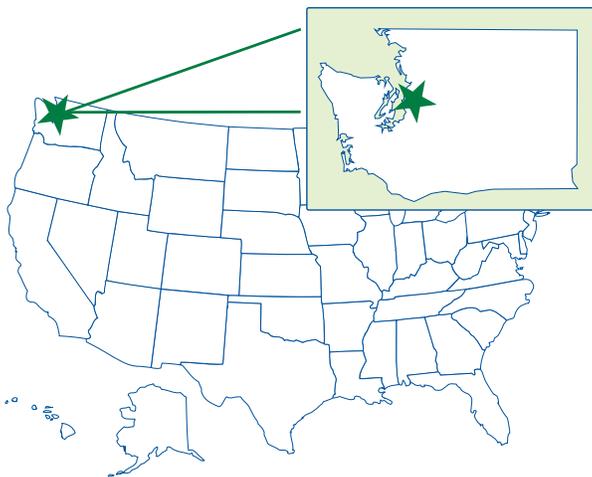
### Barriers to Change

New Yorkers report that willpower is a leading barrier to making the lifestyle changes that may be necessary to reduce their stress. They are also more likely than Americans nationwide to say lifestyle or behavior change require too much effort.

- Adults in New York (32 percent) are more likely than those nationally (27 percent) to say that willpower prevents them from making the lifestyle changes that they decided to make or have been recommended to improve their health.
- New York residents also point to a lack of time (24 percent) and requiring too much needed effort (17 percent) as barriers to change.
- The number of New Yorkers (24 percent) who cited a lack of time as a leading barrier to change rose 9 points over 2010 (15 percent).



## STRESS IN SEATTLE



Managing stress is more of a priority for the rest of the nation than it is for people in Seattle\*, where the latest *Stress in America*™ survey results suggest stress levels are declining and people are more satisfied with their lives than the general population.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

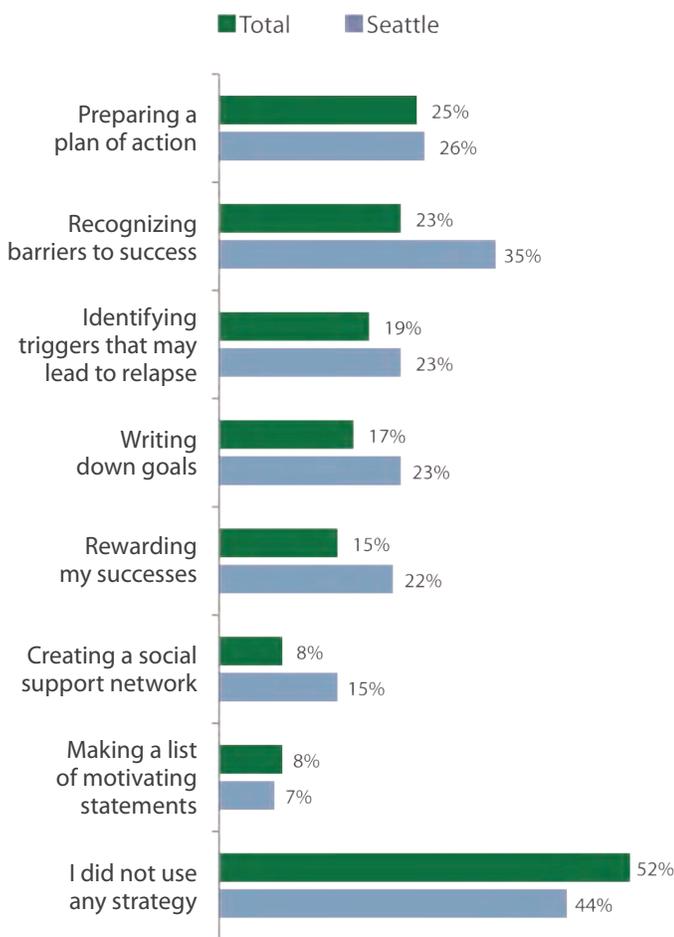
Though stress over job stability has increased significantly over the past year, stress levels overall have been declining in Seattle, and the vast majority of people are satisfied with their lives.

- Seattle residents are more satisfied with life in general than the general population (75 percent are somewhat/very satisfied in Seattle vs. 66 percent nationwide).
- On average, the reported overall stress levels of adults in Seattle have gone down over the last 4 years (6.1 in 2008 vs. 5.0 in 2011 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress).
- Many Seattle residents, however, report that their stress has increased over the past 5 years (41 percent), while only one in four (25 percent) say their stress has decreased.
- Like adults nationwide, work (73 percent), money (70 percent) and the economy (66 percent) are the top three stressors for adults in Seattle.
- Stress about job stability has increased in Seattle over the last year (50 percent somewhat/very significant vs. 39 percent in 2010).



On the whole, Seattle residents say that healthy eating has fallen somewhat since 2010.

## Strategies Used When Making a Change



BASE: Decided to Make a Change (n=1142); Seattle (n=206)  
Q7140 Have you used any of the following strategies when you tried to make the change(s) you mentioned?

## Stress and Well-Being

The negative impact of stress is felt regularly among Seattle adults; 3 in 4 report physical manifestations of stress in the past month. However, Seattle residents report that they exercise more.

- Seattle residents are more likely than the general population to experience muscle tension (33 percent vs. 24 percent nationwide).
- Seattle residents manifest non-physical symptoms of stress slightly differently than the general population. They are more likely to have negative thoughts (38 percent vs. 29 percent nationwide) and less likely to experience nervous habits like nail biting (8 percent vs. 16 percent nationwide).
- More Seattle residents are exercising a few times a week or more than in 2010 (64 percent in 2011 vs. 53 percent in 2010).
- In 2011, Seattle residents who exercise regularly are more likely to cite enjoyment as a reason for exercise (58 percent vs. 41 percent in 2010).

But healthy eating habits are on the decline, possibly related to the economy.

- On the whole, Seattle residents say that healthy eating has fallen somewhat since 2010 — there was a significant drop in those reporting healthy food consumption very often, almost always and always (52 percent in 2011 vs. 65 percent in 2010).
- The percentage of Seattle residents citing cost as a barrier to healthy eating is up in 2011 from a year ago (31 percent vs. 18 percent in 2010).

## Managing Stress

Managing stress is less of a priority to people in Seattle than elsewhere, though most people continue to rank it as important.

- Three in 5 (62 percent) Seattle residents rate stress management as somewhat/very important to their well-being, but only about 1 in 3 (36 percent) believe that they are managing stress very/extremely well.
- Managing stress is the second most important aspect of well-being for the general population, but only the fifth most important (out of seven) for Seattle residents; the ranking in Seattle remained steady from 2010 to 2011.

Seattle residents also make slightly different choices about activities that help them to manage stress than their national counterparts. They are more likely to turn to music and less likely to turn to religion, and they are more open to meeting with a psychologist for stress management.

- Three in 5 adults in Seattle listen to music to manage their stress, more so than adults nationwide (58 percent vs. 48 percent nationally).
- A significantly higher percentage of Seattle residents believe that a psychologist can help a great deal/a lot with coping with mental health issues (64 percent vs. 52 percent nationally), coping with grief (60 percent vs. 48 percent nationally), relationship issues (57 percent vs. 42 percent nationally) and coping with chronic illness (40 percent vs. 29 percent nationally).

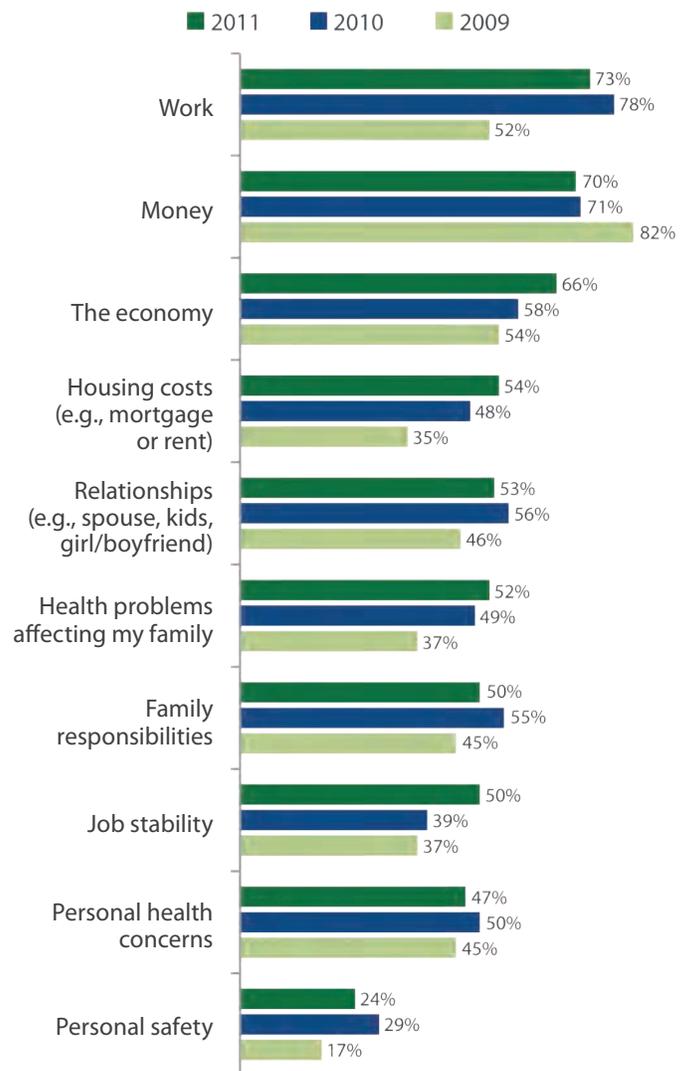
## Barriers to Change

Of those Seattle residents who identify a barrier to making the behavior changes that may be necessary to reduce their stress, willpower is most often cited. Still, many report that no specific barrier prevents them from making those changes.

- More adults in Seattle (35 percent) than nationally (27 percent) say that willpower prevents them from making the lifestyle or behavior changes that have been recommended to them.

Three in 5 adults in Seattle listen to music to manage their stress, more so than adults nationwide.

**Causes of Stress in Seattle**  
(% Somewhat/Very Significant)



BASE: All respondents 2009 (n=200); 2010 (n=214); 2011 (n=224)  
Q625 Below is a list of things people say cause stress in their lives. For each one, please indicate how significant a source of stress it is in your life.



## STRESS IN SEATTLE

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Seattle residents said they don't have enough time and it's too expensive to make behavior changes.

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- Seattle residents (29 percent) also said they don't have enough time and it's too expensive (14 percent) to make behavior changes.
- Thirty-three percent of Seattle adults say that nothing has prevented them from making lifestyle or behavior changes.



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America™

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

## STRESS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



Washington, D.C.-area\* residents report a high level of satisfaction with their lives and with the aspects that contribute to quality of life, such as home life and relationships with family and friends. D.C.-area residents generally believe they are in good health and many have tried to adopt healthier behaviors. They also believe that stress can have a strong or very strong impact on a person's health. However, the number who believe they are doing enough to manage stress is at its lowest since 2008.

### Perception of Stress and Its Sources

Overall, D.C.-area residents report high levels of satisfaction with their lives. D.C.-area residents are also significantly more satisfied with their health, finances and work than those nationwide.

- D.C.-area residents report an average stress level of 5.3 (on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is little or no stress and 10 is a great deal of stress), similar to the 5.2 level reported nationally. However, they believe that the optimal stress level is around 3.8.
- The top three causes of stress are the same for D.C.-area residents and adults nationwide — work, money and the economy.
- D.C.-area residents are generally more satisfied with their lives (72 percent) than those nationally (66 percent).
- They are also satisfied with various aspects that contribute to quality of life, such as relationships with family (80 percent), relationships with friends (81 percent) and home environments (79 percent).
- D.C.-area residents are significantly more satisfied with their health (79 percent) than those nationally (70 percent).



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The majority of D.C.-area residents believe that they are in good health, and they are generally proactive in adopting healthier behaviors.

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### Economic Concerns and Stress

While the top causes of stress for D.C.-area residents is in line with stressors for the rest of the nation — work, money and the economy — issues related to work and finances are of concern to fewer D.C.-area residents than the rest of the nation.

- Fewer D.C.-area residents say that money is a source of stress than those nationwide (68 percent vs. 75 percent nationally).
- Compared to those nationally, D.C.-area residents are more likely to be satisfied with their work (69 percent vs. 54 percent nationally) and financial security (56 percent vs. 44 percent nationally).

### Stress and Well-Being

The majority of D.C.-area residents believe that they are in good health, and they are generally proactive in adopting healthier behaviors. D.C.-area residents also agree that lifestyle choices and stress can have a strong or very strong impact on a person's health. Further, they agree that stress can contribute to the development of disease.

- About 42 percent of D.C.-area residents believe they are in very good or excellent health, similar to the national average of 41 percent.
- Most D.C.-area residents exercise on a regular basis, with 62 percent exercising more than once a week.
- The majority of D.C.-area residents agree that lifestyle factors can have a strong impact on health, particularly obesity (91 percent), drug use (90 percent) and stress (83 percent).
- D.C.-area residents believe that stress can have a stronger impact on their mental health (37 percent strong/very strong impact) than their physical health (29 percent).

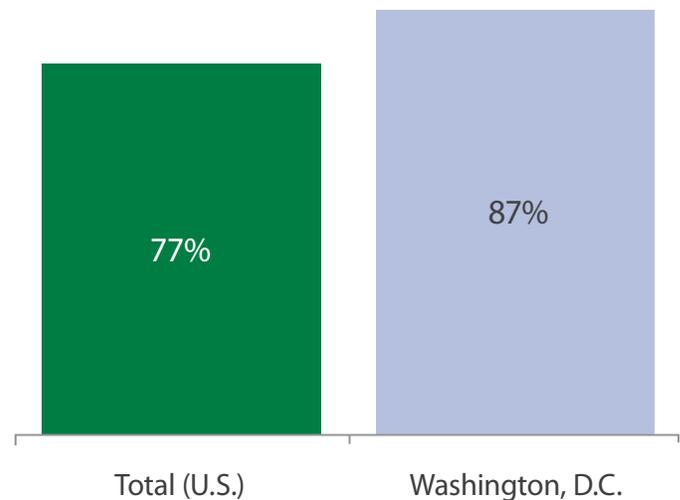
# STRESS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

- Almost all D.C.-area residents (97 percent) agree that stress can contribute to the development of major illnesses, and a majority believe that it can make existing problems worse (81 percent).
- Interestingly, D.C.-area residents are significantly more likely than the general population to believe that stress can be beneficial in terms of providing drive and energy to get through certain situations (87 percent in the D.C.-area vs. 77 percent nationally).
- About 85 percent of D.C.-area residents believe that chronic stress is treatable with therapy or medication.
- Almost half (48 percent) of D.C.-area residents report having been irritable or angry at least once in the past month due to stress. Additionally, many report having been nervous/anxious (38 percent), fatigued (35 percent) and depressed/sad (36 percent) in the last month due to stress.
- More so than nationally, D.C.-area residents feel overwhelmed as a result of stress (40 percent vs. 34 percent nationally).
- The top three changes that D.C.-area residents have tried to make in the last 5 years include eating healthier (87 percent), exercising more (82 percent) and losing weight (72 percent).
- When making changes to their health, the top two strategies for D.C. residents are preparing a plan of action (25 percent) and recognizing barriers to succeeding (25 percent).
- Yet, they are still less successful than the general public in making certain changes, such as getting more sleep (29 percent vs. 36 percent nationally).

Almost half of D.C.-area residents report having been irritable or angry at least once in the past month due to stress.

## Beneficiality of Stress

(% That Feel That Stress Can Be Beneficial in Terms of Providing Drive and Energy)



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Washington, D.C. (n=262)  
Q7205 Please read the statements below and indicate whether you think it is true or false.

## Managing Stress

Many D.C.-area residents are using a variety of techniques to manage their stress. Although more than half of D.C.-



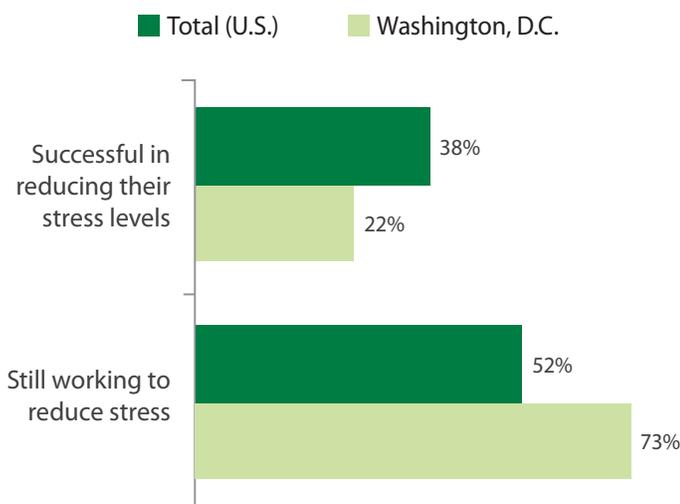
# STRESS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

For stress management methods, D.C.-area residents are most likely to listen to music, exercise and read.

area residents (54%) believe they can gauge when they are stressed, they do not believe that they are good at preventing or managing that stress.

- About 56 percent of D.C.-area residents believe they are doing enough to manage stress, the lowest level since 2008 (62 percent in 2010, 61 percent in 2009 and 58 percent in 2008).
- Although 54 percent of D.C.-area residents say they do an excellent or very good job of recognizing when they are stressed, only about 26 percent believe they are doing an excellent or very good job of managing stress when they experience it.
- D.C.-area residents are significantly less likely to have reduced their stress levels (22 percent) compared to those nationally (38 percent), but they are significantly more likely to still be working to reduce stress (73 percent) than their national counterparts (52 percent).
- For stress management methods, D.C.-area residents are most likely to listen to music (55 percent), exercise (55 percent) and read (48 percent). They also try to focus on the positive (52 percent) and avoid people and situations that trigger stress (50 percent).
- Sixty percent of D.C.-area residents believe that a psychologist can help them cope with mental health issues, and 46 percent believe that a psychologist can help them with stress management.

## Stress Reduction



BASE: All respondents (n=1226); Washington, D.C. (n=262)  
Q7150 You mentioned you decided to make a lifestyle change. Did you successfully make the change?

## Barriers to Change

For D.C.-area residents, the greatest barriers to change are time and willpower.

- About 31 percent of D.C.-area residents believe that a lack of time has prevented them from making desired or recommended health changes, compared to 26 percent

nationally. Another 30 percent of D.C.-area residents indicated that a lack of willpower is the main barrier.

- While the number of D.C.-area residents citing willpower as a barrier is consistent with last year's numbers (30 percent in 2011 vs. 31 percent in 2010), there is an increase in the proportion who believe that lack of time is a barrier (31 percent in 2011 vs. 23 in percent 2010).
- Most D.C. residents believe that willpower can be learned, similar to those nationally (74 percent in the D.C.-area vs. 71 percent nationally). Lack of willpower is generally defined as giving in to temptation (44 percent in the D.C.-area vs. 39 percent nationally) or not being disciplined enough to make changes (34 percent in the D.C.-area vs. 27 percent nationally).
- For those who believe that willpower is a barrier to making lifestyle changes, internal changes required to increase willpower include more confidence in their ability to make a change (46 percent) and more energy (45 percent). The most important external change to increase willpower is more flexibility over when, where and how much they work (38 percent).
- This need for flexibility over when, where or how much to work is more pronounced for D.C.-area residents than for Americans overall (38 percent vs. 21 percent nationally).

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The need for flexibility over when, where or how much to work is more pronounced for D.C.-area residents than for Americans overall.

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### **About the Stress in America™ Survey**

Since 2006, the American Psychological Association has commissioned an annual nationwide survey as part of its Mind/Body Health campaign to examine the state of stress across the country and understand its impact. The *Stress in America*™ survey measures attitudes and perceptions of stress among the general public and identifies leading sources of stress, common behaviors used to manage stress and the impact of stress on our lives. The results of the survey draw attention to the serious physical and emotional implications of stress and the inextricable link between the mind and body.

### **For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist**

APA's Mind/Body Health campaign educates the public about the connection between psychological and physical health and how lifestyle and behaviors can affect overall health and wellness. This multifaceted social marketing campaign addresses resilience and the mind-body connection through the Internet, social media, strategic partnerships and a nationwide grassroots network of psychologists offering free educational programs in local communities.

### **About the American Psychological Association**

The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 150,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare.

