



 AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

STRESS IN AMERICA™

GENERATION Z

OCTOBER 2018

MEET GEN Z

Gun Violence, Immigration, Sexual Harassment Stressing America's Youngest Adults; Most Likely to Report Poor Mental Health

The American Psychological Association (APA) conducted its 12th annual Stress in America™ survey in August 2018 to understand what causes stress in Americans' lives and their strategies for coping with stress. The Harris Poll conducted the survey online on behalf of APA among 3,458 respondents ages 18+ living in the United States. In addition to the main sample, interviews among teens ages 15 to 17 (n=300) were collected.

Gun violence, family separations and high-profile sexual assaults have dominated the news over the past year. With teens and young adults becoming more vocal about these controversies, APA used this year's survey as an opportunity to evaluate the level of stress among members of Generation Z. This report provides insight into Gen Z, those between the ages of 15 and 21.

Our 2018 survey results show that high-profile issues, such as sexual harassment and gun violence, are significant stressors for Gen Z. America's youngest adults are most likely of all generations to report poor mental health, and Gen Z is also significantly more likely to seek professional help for mental health issues.



GEN Zs STRESSED ABOUT SAFETY

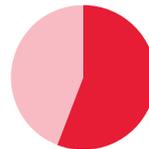
For a majority of Gen Z youth, gun violence—mass shootings and school shootings—are significant sources of stress. 75 percent of those in this age group report mass shootings as a significant source of stress, and nearly as many (72 percent) say the same about school shootings or the possibility of them occurring. Around seven in 10 Millennials¹ report similar feelings about these events (69 percent about mass shootings and 73 percent about school shootings or the possibility of one occurring).



Three in four of Gen Zs report mass shootings as a significant source of stress

A majority of both Gen Xers and Boomers (58 percent for both) said mass shootings cause stress, while around the same numbers of both say the same about school shootings or the possibility they will occur (59 percent of Gen X and 56 percent of Boomers). Though smaller percentages of older adults consider shootings a cause of stress, nearly half say that mass shootings (48 percent) and school shootings or the possibility of their occurrence (46 percent) are significant sources of stress.

Many parents report that both mass shootings and school shootings or the possibility of one cause them stress. Mass shootings are a significant source of stress for nearly seven in 10 parents (69 percent), and school shootings or the possibility of one are a significant source of stress for nearly three-quarters of parents (74 percent).



56 percent of Gen Zs who are in school say they experience stress at least sometimes when considering the possibility of a shooting at their school

More than half of Gen Zs who are in school say they experience stress at least sometimes when considering the possibility of a shooting at their school and more than one in five (21 percent) say the possibility of a shooting at their school is a source of stress either constantly or often.

Security measures taken by schools reduce the stress for some, but not most, parents and students. Around one-third (34 percent) of parents who say their child's school has implemented security measures in response to school shootings say this has reduced stress significantly or somewhat; nearly the same percentage (30 percent) say such measures have not done anything to alleviate their stress. The largest percent (36 percent) say it has actually somewhat or significantly *increased* the stress they feel about school shootings.

While slightly more than one in five Gen Z students (22 percent) say security measures in their school have somewhat or significantly *increased* their stress about school shootings, slightly more than four in 10 (41 percent) say such measures have done nothing for their stress. For just more than one-third of students (37 percent), security measures have reduced their stress significantly or somewhat about school shootings.

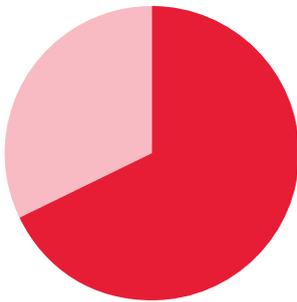
¹ For the purposes of this survey, generations are grouped as follows: Gen Zs (15–21), Millennials (22–39 years old), Gen Xers (40–53 years old), Baby Boomers (54–72 years old) and Matures or older adults (age 73 or older). When “Gen Zs” is used, it refers to the overall group (ages 15–21), unless otherwise specified (e.g., Gen Z adults meaning 18–21 or Gen Z teens, 15–17 only). Please note: where descriptions refer to Gen Z adults this means that questions were not asked of the 15–17 age group so no comparative data for that age group exists.

STRESSED ABOUT THE NATION, BUT LOWEST INTENTION TO VOTE

Many Gen Zs feel stress and concern about the nation. Gen Z's reported average stress level related to the current state of the nation is 5.4 (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is "little or no stress" and 10 is "a great deal of stress"), on par with the national average for adults overall regarding the state of the nation (5.3).

While Gen Z has featured prominently in the news related to activism around issues affecting the current state of the nation, such as gun control, they are the generation least likely to go to the polls, with just more than half (54 percent) of those ages 18 to 21 saying they intend to vote in the 2018 midterm elections, well below the overall average of seven in 10 adults from all generations.

More than half of Gen Z also identify the current political climate as a source of stress (55 percent). Around two-thirds of those in this generation also say they feel very or somewhat significantly stressed about our nation's future (68 percent) and do not believe the nation is moving toward being stronger than ever (66 percent).



68 percent of Gen Z adults feel very or somewhat significantly stressed about our nation's future



Despite their stress about the present and future concerns for the country, more than seven in 10 Gen Zs (71 percent) report feeling hopeful about their own future. And three in five Gen Zs (60 percent) say they have taken some sort of action in the last year, such as signing a petition or speaking with a friend or family member to persuade them about their political or social views.

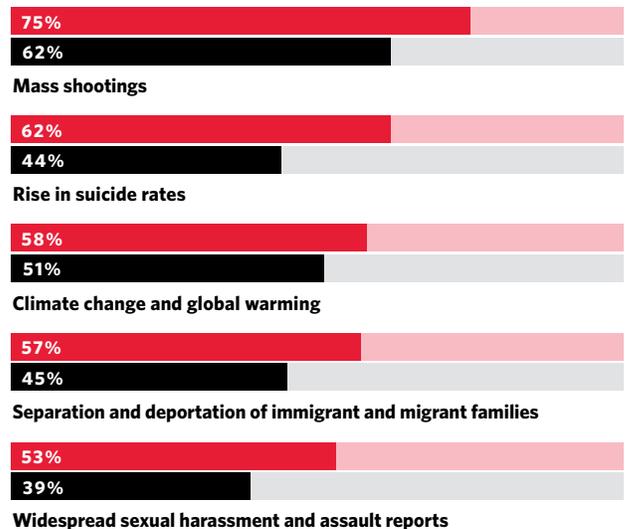
GEN Zs REPORT MORE STRESS THAN ADULTS OVERALL ABOUT ISSUES IN THE NEWS

A number of issues dominate the news cycle today, and for many Gen Z youth these issues are causing them stress, often in larger numbers than adults overall.

Nearly six in 10 (57 percent) Gen Zs say the separation and deportation of immigrant and migrant families is a significant source of stress; less than half of all adults overall (45 percent), on the other hand, consider this a stressor. The difference between Gen Zs and adults overall is evident in their stress about widespread sexual harassment and assault reports in the news, with more than half of Gen Z (53 percent) citing these reports as a significant source of stress and fewer than four in 10 of adults overall (39 percent) saying the same.

% FEELING STRESSED BY ISSUES IN THE NATIONAL NEWS GEN Zs VS ADULTS OVERALL

- GEN Zs
- ADULTS OVERALL



GEN Z MOST LIKELY TO REPORT POOR MENTAL HEALTH AND SEEK HELP

Gen Z is significantly more likely to report their mental health as fair or poor, with 27 percent saying this is the case. Millennials (15 percent) and Gen Xers (13 percent) have similar numbers reporting fair or poor mental health, while fewer than one in 10 Boomers (7 percent) and older adults (5 percent) consider their mental health fair or poor.

Female Gen Zs are nearly twice as likely as their male peers to report that their mental health is fair or poor (35 percent for female vs. 18 percent for male). When it comes to seeking treatment or therapy, however, the male and female Gen Zs are equally as likely to report they have received or currently receive treatment or therapy from a psychologist or other mental health professional (36 percent for female vs. 38 percent for male).

Slightly more than nine in 10 Gen Zs between ages 18 and 21 say they have experienced at least one physical or emotional symptom due to stress in the past month, compared to around three-quarters of adults overall who say they have experienced at least one symptom. Among Gen Z adults (ages 18 to 21), common symptoms of stress include feeling depressed or sad (58 percent), lack of interest, motivation or energy (55 percent) or feeling nervous or anxious (54 percent). During the prior month, adult Gen Zs also commonly reported laying awake at night due to stress (68 percent) or eating too much or eating unhealthy food (58 percent).



91 percent of Gen Zs between ages 18 and 21 say they have experienced at least one physical or emotional symptom due to stress in the past month compared to 74 percent of adults overall

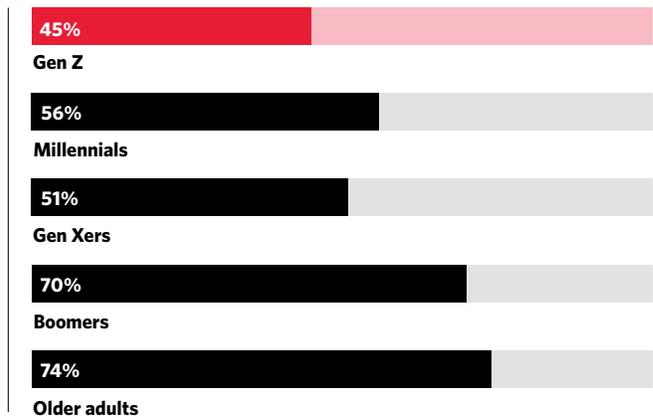
With public figures sharing mental health challenges and more open discussions in general on this topic, it may be unsurprising that members of Gen Z are more attuned to their own mental health than previous generations. Overall, the younger generations are significantly more likely to receive or have received treatment or therapy from a psychologist or other mental health professional, with more than one-third of both Gen Z (37 percent) and Millennials (35 percent) reporting they have received such help. Around one-quarter of Gen Xers (26 percent) say they receive or have received treatment or therapy, and even smaller percentages of Boomers (22 percent) and older adults (15 percent) have gotten assistance from a psychologist or mental health professional.

When it comes to specific mental health issues, adult Gen Zs are more likely than some other generations to report they have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (18 percent) and more likely than all other generations to report they have been diagnosed with depression (23 percent). While Gen Xers (15 percent), Millennials (14 percent) and Boomers (12 percent) report having been diagnosed with depression in similar percentages, only 4 percent of older adults say the same.



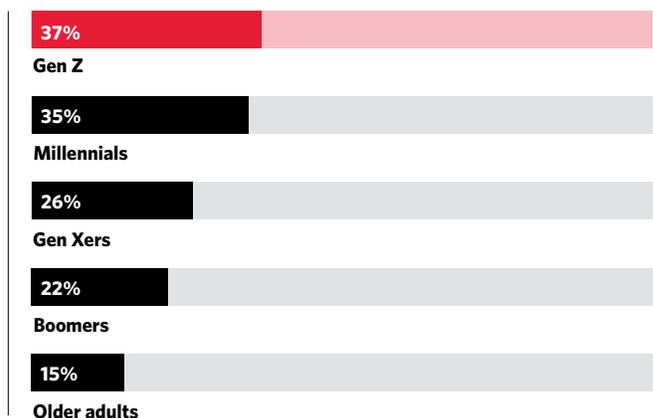
MENTAL HEALTH OF GEN Z LEAST LIKELY TO SAY THEIR MENTAL HEALTH IS EXCELLENT OR VERY GOOD

% reporting excellent or very good mental health



GEN Z SEEKING HELP MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE OR HAVE RECEIVED TREATMENT OR THERAPY

% reporting receiving help from a psychologist or other mental health professional



PERSONAL LIFE STRESSORS FOR GEN Z

Money and work consistently top the list of stressors for adults overall, and both are common stressors for Gen Z as well. More than eight in 10 (81 percent) of Gen Zs between the ages of 18 and 21 report money as a source of significant stress, with nearly as many (77 percent) saying the same about work.² Nearly two in three Gen Zs ages 15 to 17 (63 percent) report their families not having enough money is a significant source of stress. For more than three in 10 Gen Zs, personal debt (33 percent) and housing instability (31 percent) are a significant source of stress, while nearly three in 10 (28 percent) cite hunger or getting enough to eat.



Gen Zs of color are more likely to report stress around certain issues more than their white peers. For around four in 10 Gen Zs of color, personal debt (41 percent) and housing instability (40 percent) are significant sources of stress, while three in 10 white Gen Zs (30 percent) say the same about personal debt and less than one-quarter (24 percent) of this demographic cite housing instability. The disparity between Gen Zs of color and their white peers is also seen in the percentages of those reporting hunger and getting enough to eat as a significant source of stress: 34 percent of Gen Zs of color vs. 23 percent of white Gen Zs.

COMMON STRESSORS

GEN Z ADULTS VS ADULTS OVERALL

- GEN Z ADULTS
- ADULTS OVERALL



WORK²



MONEY



HEALTH-RELATED CONCERNS

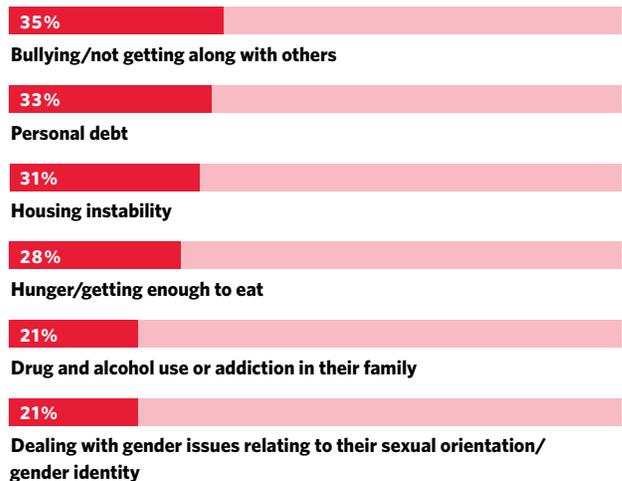


ECONOMY



ADDITIONAL PERSONAL SOURCES OF STRESS FOR GEN Z

% reporting significant source of stress



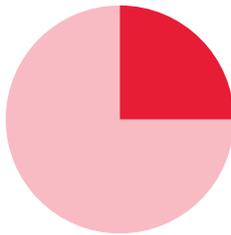
² Small base (n<100) of Gen Z adults. Results are directional in nature.

THE IMPACT OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ON GEN Z STRESS LEVELS

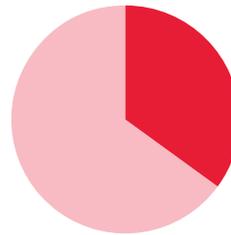
The opioid crisis is a pressing concern in the U.S., and survey results show that Gen Z feels the impact of this crisis, with nearly two in five (39 percent) reporting that the opioid and heroin epidemic is a significant source of stress, nearly the same percentage as for adults overall (42 percent).

Half of Gen Zs (50 percent) reported that at least one person they know has been told they are addicted to or have a problem with drugs and alcohol. A much smaller number (7 percent) say they have been told the same about themselves.

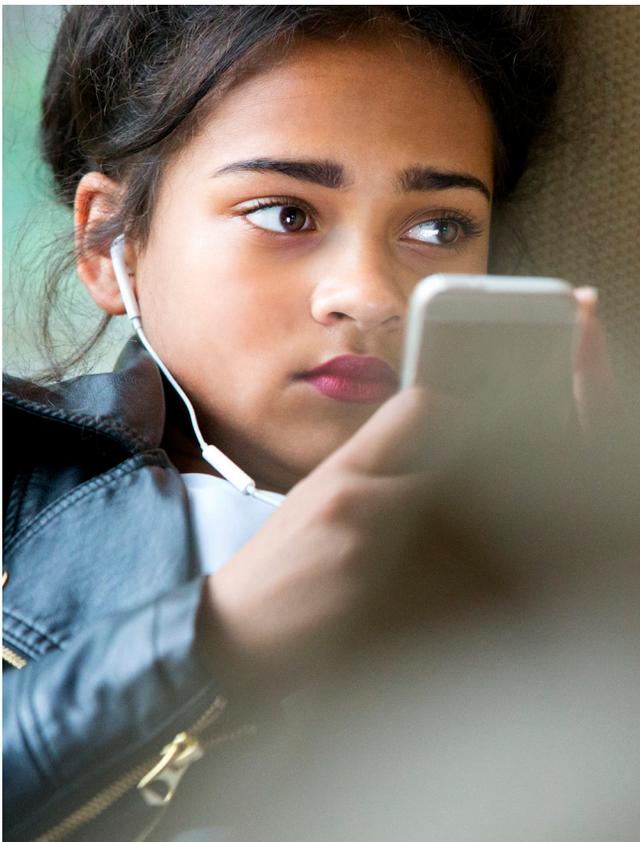
For those experiencing a substance use problem, or who have a family member or friend who does, finding help can be a challenge. One in four Gen Zs say they would *not* know where to find help if they had a problem with drugs or alcohol, and a larger percentage (35 percent) would *not* know how to get help for a family member or friend facing this problem.



25 percent of Gen Zs say they would *not* know where to find help if they had a problem with drugs or alcohol



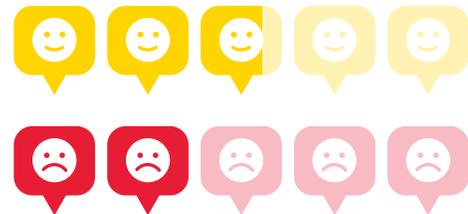
35 percent of Gen Zs say they would *not* know how to get help for a family member or friend facing this problem



HOW GEN Z COPES WITH STRESS

Despite high percentages of Gen Zs feeling stress from different causes, only half (50 percent) feel they do enough to manage their stress; one in four Gen Zs (25 percent) say they do not feel they do enough. Additionally, nearly three-quarters in this generation (73 percent) say they could have used more emotional support in the past year.

It's clear that social media is an enormous part of Gen Zs' lives, and for more than half of them (55 percent), it provides a feeling of support. The flipside, however, is that nearly half say social media makes them feel judged (45 percent), and nearly two in five (38 percent) report feeling bad about themselves as a result of social media use.



While more than half of Gen Zs say social media provides a feeling of support, nearly two in five of Gen Zs report feeling bad about themselves as a result of social media use

ALL GENERATIONS—NOT JUST GEN Z—FEELING STRESSED

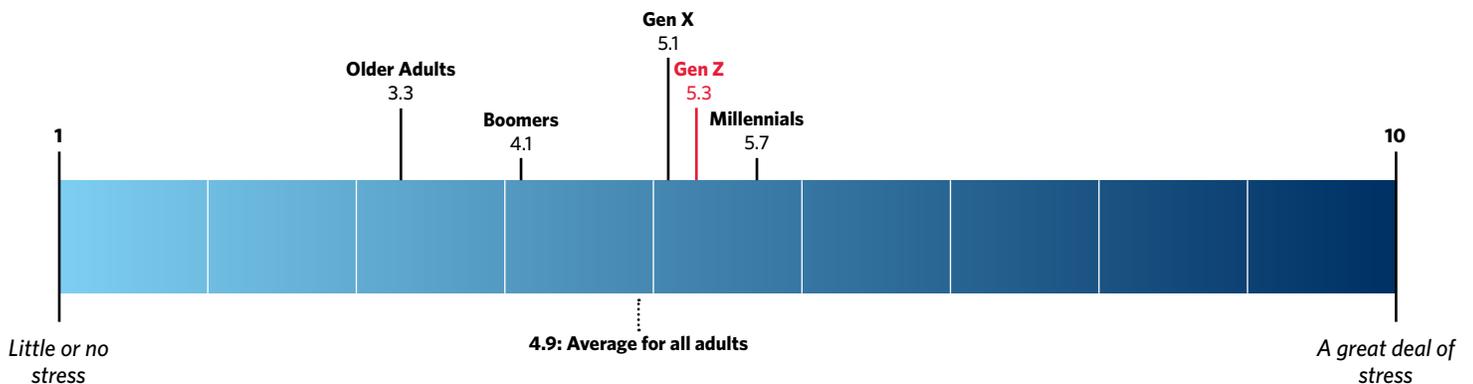
Gen Z is not the only generation feeling stressed; the same can be said for all adults, with the average reported stress level being 4.9 (on a scale of 1 to 10). Gen Z's average reported stress level (5.3) is higher than the overall average, as are the reported stress levels for Millennials, who have the highest average (5.7), and Gen X (5.1). In contrast, Boomers and older adults fall well below the average stress levels (4.1 and 3.3, respectively).

When asked to consider a healthy level of stress, the average perceived healthy level increased significantly over the past year, from 3.7 in 2017 to 3.9 in 2018, which could signal an increased tolerance for stress. Nearly three-quarters of adults (74 percent) say they have experienced at least one symptom of stress in the

past month, which is the same as reported in last year's survey (75 percent). Almost half (45 percent) say they lay awake at night due to stress, the same percentage as last year. About one-third of adults (37 percent) eat too much or eat unhealthy food due to stress, a comparable number to the 2017 survey (38 percent).

Work and money are consistently cited as sources of significant stress, and this year's survey reveals they continue to top the list, with nearly two-thirds of Americans (64 percent) naming each of these as a stressor. Adults also consider health-related concerns (63 percent in 2018 compared to 59 percent in 2017) to be a significant source of stress.

AVERAGE STRESS LEVELS



Stress About the State of the Nation

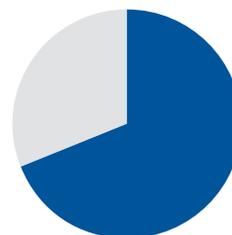
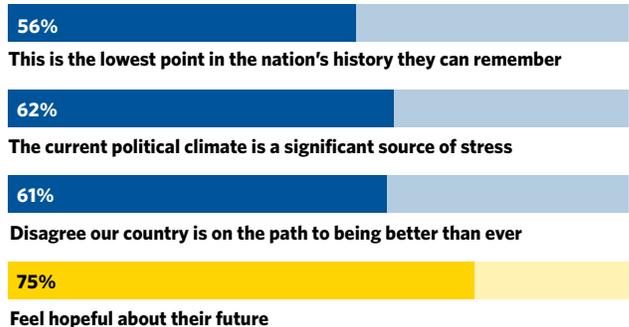
Millennials report the highest average stress level of all generations overall (5.7 on a scale of 1 to 10). Their stress levels are also high when thinking about the current state of our nation (5.6 on the 1 to 10 scale). Gen X (5.5), Gen Z (5.4) and Boomers (5.0) are similarly stressed about the state of our nation. But older adults report the lowest level of stress when thinking about the nation (4.1).

One cause of stress is the current political climate, which more than six in 10 Americans (62 percent) report is a significant stressor. More than half of adults (56 percent) also say this is the lowest point in our nation's history that they can remember.

When asked to consider the nation's future, more than two-thirds of Americans (69 percent) report that it causes them significant stress, a significant increase from those who said the same in 2017 (63 percent). What may contribute to many adults' stress about the future is that most Americans (61 percent) disagree that our country is on a path to being stronger than ever.

Despite their stress and concerns about the present and future, however, three-quarters of Americans (75 percent) do feel hopeful about their futures.

STRESSED ABOUT THE PRESENT BUT HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE



69 percent of Americans report that considering the nation's future causes them significant stress, a significant increase from those who said the same in 2017 (63 percent)

Newly Assessed Sources of Stress

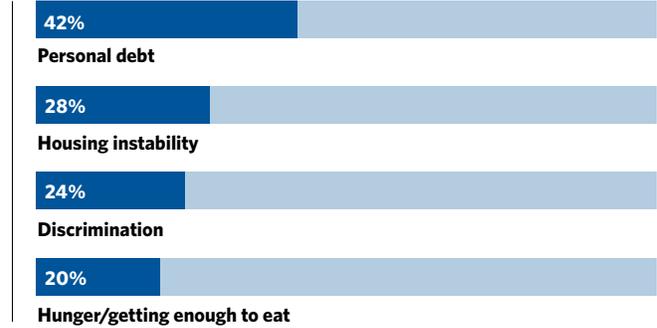
Discrimination was included in the survey as a significant source of stress for the first time in 2015, when one in five (20 percent) adults cited it as a stressor. In 2018, nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of adults identify discrimination as a significant source of stress, the highest percentage since its inclusion in the survey. Black adults (46 percent) and Hispanic adults (36 percent) both report discrimination as a significant source of stress, compared to 14 percent of white adults.

This year's survey listed additional options for adults to consider when reporting significant sources of stress. One newly mentioned stressor, personal debt (such as student loans and credit card debt), is a significant source of stress for more than two in five adults (42 percent).

Though they are not cited as frequently, housing instability (28 percent) and hunger or getting enough to eat (20 percent) also cause stress for a sizable number of Americans.

EMERGING SOURCES OF STRESS³

% reporting significant source of stress

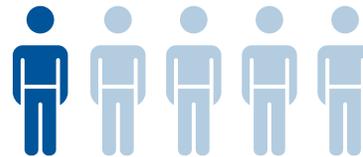


STRESS MANAGEMENT IN AMERICA

In Need of More Support

Most adults (64 percent) feel they do enough to manage their stress, but one in five (20 percent) feel they do not, which is consistent with the past few years of the survey.

When coping with stress or other problems, friends are the most commonly reported source of emotional support (48 percent), with significant others (44 percent), other family members (31 percent) and parents (24 percent) providing support as well. Despite these support systems, more than half of Americans feel they needed more emotional support in the past year (56 percent).



One in five adults feel they do not do enough to manage their stress

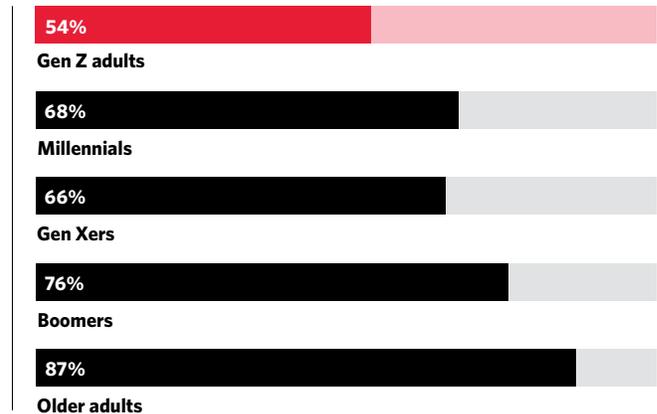
Taking Action to Support the Nation

With many adults feeling stressed about the country and its future, the majority do plan to take some form of action. While seven in 10 adults overall (70 percent) plan to vote, the number is slightly lower for Millennials (68 percent) and Gen X (66 percent) and lowest for Gen Z (54 percent). More than three-quarters of Boomers (76 percent) and nearly nine in 10 older adults (87 percent), however, do plan to cast a vote in the upcoming midterm elections.

As Americans express concerns about the nation's present and future, many are taking action to effect change. Because of the state of the nation, nearly half of Americans (45 percent) feel more compelled to volunteer or support causes they value. And nearly six in 10 Americans (57 percent) have taken action in some way in the past year, with signing a petition (26 percent) and speaking with a family member or friend about political views (23 percent) being two commonly cited activities.

GEN Z IS STRESSED ABOUT THE COUNTRY BUT WILL THEY VOTE?

% reporting intention to vote in the 2018 midterm elections



³ Respondents were asked about stress related to discrimination in a different question from the other emerging sources listed here.



METHODOLOGY

The 2018 Stress in America™ survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) between July 27, 2018, and August 28, 2018, among 3,458 adults ages 18 and older who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. In addition to the main samples, interviews among teens ages 15 to 17 (n=300) and oversamples of Black and Hispanic Gen Z (ages 15 to 21) (n=792) were collected.

Data were weighted to reflect their proportions in the population based on the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS) by the U.S. Census. Weighting variables for the adults ages 18+ included education, age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, household income and time spent online. Hispanic adults were also weighted for acculturation, taking into account respondents' household language as well as their ability to read and speak in English and Spanish. Country of origin (U.S./non-U.S.) was also included for Hispanic and Asian subgroups. Propensity score weighting was used for the adults to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. A propensity score allows researchers to adjust for attitudinal and behavioral differences between those who are online versus those who are not, those who join online panels versus those who do not, and those who responded to this survey versus those who did not. Weighting variables for the teens ages 15 to 17 included parents' education, age by gender, race/ethnicity, region and size of household. Weighting variables for the Gen Z groups (ages 15 to 21) included education, age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, household income, size of household and employment status. Country of origin (U.S./non-U.S.) was also included for Gen Z Hispanic subgroups.

Because the sample is based on those who were invited and agreed to participate in online research panels, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

STRESS IN AMERICA

American Psychological Association

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD	APA Chief Executive Office and Executive Vice President
Jaime Díaz-Granados, PhD	Chief Education Officer
Jared L. Skillings, PhD, ABPP	Chief of Professional Practice
Alicia Aebersold	Chief Communications Officer
David W. Ballard, PsyD, MBA	Assistant Executive Director for Organizational Excellence
Lynn F. Bufka, PhD	Associate Executive Director, Practice Research and Policy
Luana Bossolo	Associate Executive Director, Communications
Alissa Fogg, PhD	Assistant to CEO, Policy Program Analysis
Bevin Johnston	Creative Director
Callie Strobel	Graphic Designer
Kim Mills	Senior Communications Advisor
David Nygren	Senior Director, Marketing & Branding, Publications & Databases
Amber Story, PhD	Associate Executive Director, Scientific Affairs
C. Vaile Wright, PhD	Director, Research and Special Projects
Sophie Bethune	Director, Public Relations and Special Projects
Jewel Edwards-Ashman	Member Communications Manager
Elizabeth Lewan	Communications Program Coordinator
Dorothy L. Espelage, PhD	Professor of Psychology at the University of Florida

Harris Poll

Aimee Vella Ripley	Research Manager
Heather Layton	Senior Research Analyst
Gabriel Rozenwasser	Research Analyst

Vanguard Communications

Brenda K. Foster, MPA	Senior Vice President
Sangeetha Sarma	Account Supervisor
Wendy Rubin, MA	Writer

To Cite This Report:

American Psychological Association (2018).
Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey.

Copyright © 2018 by the American Psychological Association. This material may be reproduced and distributed without permission provided that acknowledgment is given to the American Psychological Association. This material may not be reprinted, translated, or distributed electronically without prior permission in writing from the publisher. For permission, contact APA, Rights and Permissions, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242.



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**

apa.org