

JULY 2020

It has been four months since the first stay-at-home orders were issued related to the COVID-19 pandemic. To better understand how individuals are coping with the uncertainty and extreme stress of this crisis, APA has offered a monthly analysis of the nation’s stressors and stress levels. This report is the third “pulse check” of the nation’s stress and mental health amid a record rise in domestic COVID-19 daily infections, civil unrest, economic and education consequences, and an increasingly hostile political environment. The Harris Poll conducted this survey on behalf of APA from June 23 to July 6, 2020; the online survey included 3,010 adults age 18+ who reside in the United States.

MAJORITY OF DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS REPORT COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES ARE REASSURING; CITE CURRENT STRESSORS

While COVID-19 prevention continues to be highly politicized, when it comes to behaviors for protecting themselves from coronavirus, 82% of U.S. adults say they have been taking preventive measures like wearing masks and physical distancing.

Despite the polarizing conversations around the pandemic, adults across party affiliation agree with certain sentiments about preventive measures. A majority of Republicans (65%) and Democrats (88%) say they find preventive measures like wearing masks and physical distancing to be reassuring, and many agree it is stressful to be around others when they do not take these preventive measures (87% Democrats, 66% Republicans).

MAJORITY OF DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS AGREE ON SENTIMENTS ABOUT COVID-19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

I find preventive measures like wearing masks and physical distancing to be reassuring.

% AGREE

Democrats



Republicans



It’s stressful to be around others when they don’t take preventive measures like wearing masks and physical distancing.

% AGREE

Democrats



Republicans



There is also general consensus among both parties that people are acting as if the coronavirus pandemic is over (86% Democrats, 75% Republicans). Although around two-thirds or more Democrats (66%) and Republicans (71%) say they are confident they can protect themselves from coronavirus once the U.S. reopens, more than half of U.S. adults (58%) wish they had more information about how to keep themselves and/or their family healthy as the U.S. reopens.

Meanwhile, the unpredictability in our nation is causing stress across the aisle. Most adults from both parties say the current amount of uncertainty in our nation causes them stress (76% Democrats, 67% Republicans), and similar proportions cite the current political climate as a significant source of stress in their life (77% Democrats, 62% Republicans).

UNPREDICTABILITY IS CAUSING STRESS ACROSS THE AISLE

The current amount of uncertainty in our nation causes me stress.

% AGREE

Democrats



Republicans



The current political climate is a significant source of stress in my life.

% SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF STRESS

Democrats



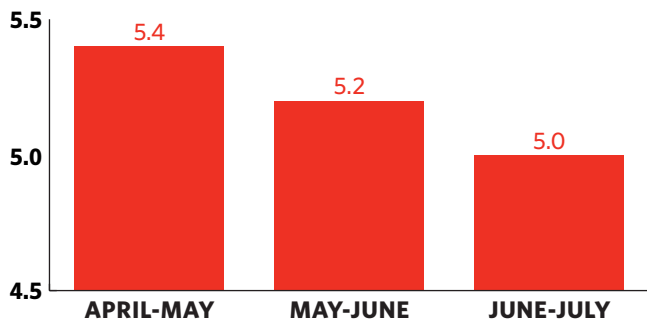
Republicans



AMERICAN STRESS LEVELS RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC HOLD STEADY, BUT FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION, FEAR AND ANGER ARE RISING

Despite infection rates rising in a majority of states, reported stress levels have remained generally consistent. When asked to rate stress related to the coronavirus pandemic during the past month, the average reported stress level is 5.7, generally on par with the levels reported over the past three months (5.6 in May–June and 5.9 in April–May). Further, the average general stress level reported during the past month is 5.0, which is significantly lower than the level reported just three months ago (5.4 in April–May) and slightly lower than that reported last month (5.2 in May–June).

AMERICANS' AVERAGE REPORTED STRESS LEVEL IS LOWEST IT HAS BEEN IN THREE MONTHS



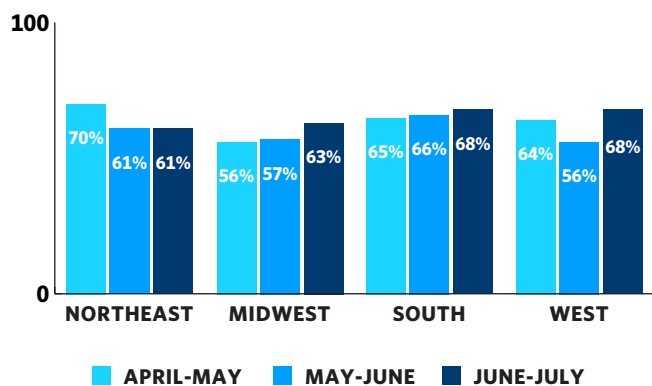
Certain stressors also have been decreasing slightly over the past three months — notably, the economy (61% June-July, 63% May-June, 70% April-May) and money (58% June-July, 61% May-June, 63% April-May).

Even with consistent levels of stress related to the pandemic, the proportion of Americans reporting certain negative feelings as a result of the coronavirus pandemic has increased over the past three months. Americans are more likely to report feeling frustrated (40% June-July, 31% May-June, 31% April-May), scared (24% June-July, 16% May-June, 19% April-May), and angry (18% June-July, 13% May-June, 12% April-May) than they were three months ago.

AS COVID-19 MOVES WEST AND SOUTH, SO DO HIGHER STRESS LEVELS ABOUT THE VIRUS

Around 2 in 3 Americans (66%) say getting coronavirus is a significant source of stress in their life, which is significantly more than said the same in May-June (61%). Looking regionally, this stressor has decreased in the Northeast (61% June-July vs. 70% April-May), but generally increased elsewhere (Midwest: 63% June-July vs. 56% April-May; South: 68% June-July vs. 65% April-May; West: 68% June-July vs. 64% April-May).

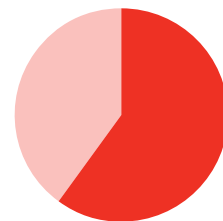
PROPORTION OF ADULTS CITING GETTING CORONAVIRUS AS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF STRESS WANING IN NORTHEAST BUT RISING EVERYWHERE ELSE



Adults in various U.S. regions differ on how they feel because of the pandemic, as well. Adults in the Midwest are most likely to say they feel frustrated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (47% vs. 35% Northeast, 37% South, and 42% West), and are significantly more likely than adults in other regions to report feeling angry (27% vs. 15% South, 16% Northeast, and 18% West).

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF RACIAL INJUSTICE SPUR STRESS ... AND ACTION

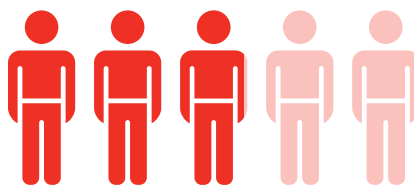
Among all U.S. adults, police violence and events related to the death of George Floyd are commonly reported as sources of stress. Three in 5 U.S. adults (60%) say police violence toward minorities is a significant source of stress in their life. Fewer than 2 in 5 (36%) said the same when APA first started tracking this data point during the 2016 Annual Stress in America Survey.¹ While 3 in 5 U.S. adults (60%) say the protests following the death of George Floyd are a significant source of stress, nearly two-thirds (64%) report that the government response to the protests is a significant source of stress.



60%
of U.S. adults say police violence towards minorities is a significant source of stress in their life.

Discrimination continues to be a source of stress for the majority of Black Americans. Two in 3 Black adults (67%) cite discrimination as a significant source of stress in their life, compared with 55% of Black adults who cited this in May-June. More than 3 in 4 Black adults (78%) agree that being their race is difficult in today's society.

MANY ADULTS REPORT TAKING ACTION AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE



Around 3 in 5 U.S. Adults (59%) say they have taken action against racial injustice.

Despite the stress they report feeling, many Americans foresee meaningful change, and they report taking action in response to racial injustice. More than 3 in 5 U.S. adults (63%) agree the current movement against systemic racism and police brutality is going to lead to meaningful change in America, and the majority of U.S. adults (59%) say they have taken action against racial injustice. Most commonly, Americans report engaging in meaningful conversations about it with friends or family (31%), learning more about the subject (24%), and/or voting/planning to vote for a candidate because of his or her position on racial injustice (21%).

¹ The 2016 Stress in America™ survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association between Aug. 3 and Sept. 1, 2016, among 3,511 adults age 18+ who reside in the U.S. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

METHODOLOGY

Wave 3 of the COVID Tracker was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association between June 23 and July 6, 2020, among 3,010 adults age 18+ who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Data were weighted to reflect their proportions in the population based on the 2019 Current Population Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. Weighting variables included age by gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income and time spent online. Hispanic adults also were 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.) also was included for Hispanic and Asian subgroups. Weighting variables for Gen Z adults (ages 18 to 23) included education, age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, household income and size of household. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.