



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Stress in America™

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

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Atlanta Residents Stress Still Higher than Healthy

Work and Job Stability Causing Significant Stress for Atlanta residents, APA survey says

ATLANTA, January 11, 2012 – Work and job stability are significant causes of stress for residents of the Atlanta metropolitan area, and stress in Atlanta is still higher than considered healthy, according to a survey released today by the American Psychological Association (APA) and conducted online by Harris Interactive among 279 Atlanta residents and 1,226 U.S. adults in August and September.

Although reported stress levels have dipped in Atlanta since last year, Atlanta residents still experience high stress levels, reporting an average stress level of 5.3 on a 10-point scale. This stress level is higher than what they considered healthy (3.7 on a 10-point scale). Even with lowered reported stress levels, more than three out of four (77 percent) Atlanta residents report that work is a significant cause of stress. This is at the highest level since reporting began in 2008 (compare with 70 percent in 2010, 61 percent in 2009 and 74 percent in 2008). And almost six out of ten (57 percent) Atlanta residents report that job stability is a source of stress.

More than half of Atlantans (56 percent) feel that they do an excellent or very good job of knowing when they are feeling stressed. However, fewer report that they are able to manage or reduce stress once they experience it (33 percent). To manage their stress, Atlantans report listening to music, exercising and walking, which is comparable to adults nationwide. 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 past 5 years.

Lack of willpower remains the number one barrier to change for Atlanta residents, who decided to or were recommended to make a lifestyle or behavior change —three out of 10 adults (30 percent) continue to cite this as a key barrier. Fifty-three percent of Atlantans who indicated willpower was a barrier cited needing more confidence in their ability to make changes as necessary to improve their willpower, and 31 percent believe that more flexibility in their work schedule would help improve their willpower. Atlantans are less likely to report that expense is a barrier to change compared to adults nationally (10 percent vs. 17 percent).

“While overall stress levels in Atlanta are lower than last year, the numbers of Atlanta residents who are stressed about work is alarming,” said Atlanta-area psychologist Dr. Angela Londono-McConnell the public education coordinator for the Georgia Psychological Association. “And although stress levels are lower than in previous years, they are still higher than what is considered healthy. It’s important people pay attention to this because stress can affect your physical and emotional health, especially if not managed properly.”

The national survey found that reported stress levels have stabilized from the highs of the economic crisis; however, they remain higher than what is considered healthy. Furthermore, Americans 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.

The national survey also found that people suffering from depression or obesity report higher average stress levels than the rest of the population, and are more likely to respond that they are not doing enough to manage their stress. People who are depressed or obese are more likely than the general population to try eating a healthier diet or taking other steps to reduce stress levels, but are less likely to report success when making health lifestyle changes. To read the full report on Atlanta and the United States, visit www.stressinamerica.org.

Stress in America is part of APA’s Mind/Body Health public education campaign. For additional information on stress and lifestyle and behavior, visit www.apa.org/helpcenter and read the campaign blog www.yourmindyourbody.org. Join the conversation about stress on Twitter by following @apahelpcenter and #stressAPA.

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+ who reside in the U.S. In addition, an oversample of 279 adults living in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was collected. MSAs are a formal definition of metropolitan areas produced by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. These geographic areas are delineated on the basis of central urbanized areas —contiguous counties of relatively high population density. Counties containing the core urbanized area are known as the central counties of the MSA. Additional surrounding counties (known as outlying counties) can be included in the MSA if these counties have strong social and economic ties to the central counties as measured by commuting and employment. Note that some areas within these outlying counties may actually be rural in nature. 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. To read the full methodology, visit www.stressinamerica.org.

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world’s largest association of psychologists. APA’s membership includes more than 154,000 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.

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