



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

# Stress in America

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

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
NOVEMBER 3, 2009, 9 A.M. EST**

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## **Stress in America Atlanta Report**

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Prepared For:  
**The American Psychological Association**

Prepared By:  
**Harris Interactive Inc.  
Public Affairs and Policy**

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## **Background and Objectives**

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The American Psychological Association (APA) commissioned Harris Interactive Inc. to conduct a survey to understand the perceptions of stress and its impact among the general public.

The goal of this research is to draw attention to the implications of stress and foster appreciation of the mind/body link as a key component of good overall health. This research is intended for public release to generate media interest in overall health and well-being and specifically on mental health.

## **Methodology and Sample**

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The Stress in America survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of APA between July 20, 2009, and August 4, 2009, among 1,568 adults aged 18 and older who reside in the U.S., including an oversample of 201 adults aged 18 and older who reside in Atlanta. In the 2008 research, 243 Atlanta residents were included in the oversample.

Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income among the entire population and within the specific Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSAs) for each city as designated by the US Office of Management and Budget. Propensity score weighting also was used 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 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 agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

## Notes on Reading This Report

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This report focuses only on the views of residents within the Atlanta MSA and the general population. For a review of the full topline results for additional cities please refer to the previously prepared Interview Schedule.

“Metropolitan Statistical Areas” (MSAs) are a formal definition of metropolitan areas produced by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). 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.

## Key Survey Findings

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**While a greater percentage of Atlanta residents in 2009 consider the economy to be a significant source of stress, the percentage considering all other factors significant stressors declined, and a higher percentage of Atlanta residents now report they are doing enough to manage their stress.**

- The economy, money and work continue to be the most commonly cited causes of stress among Atlanta residents.
  - Money and work are less likely to be seen as significant sources of stress compared to last year, whereas the percentage reporting the economy as a significant source of stress grew from 67 percent in 2008 to 74 percent in 2009.
- The percentage of Atlanta residents reporting an average stress level in the extreme range (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) has remained similar to last year's findings (37 percent vs. 36 percent in 2008).
- Even though Atlanta residents continue to have high levels of stress, more Atlanta residents feel they are doing enough to manage their stress compared to last year (62 percent vs. 55 percent in 2008).

**Although slightly more Atlanta residents report they are satisfied with their job compared to last year, the percentage of employed Atlanta residents indicating they feel stressed during their workday also has increased.**

- Two-thirds of employed Atlanta residents (66 percent) agree with the statement, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" in 2009, which increased from 59 percent last year.
  - Atlanta residents are also less likely to report they intend to seek employment outside of their workplace within the next year (27 percent vs. 37 percent in 2009).
- While last year 28 percent of Atlanta residents agreed that they typically felt tense or stressed out during their workday, this year the percentage increased to 40 percent.
- Also, compared to 2008, more Atlanta employees report that job demands have interfered with family responsibilities (49 percent in 2008 vs. 59 percent in 2009) and that family responsibilities have interfered with job demands (37 percent in 2008 vs. 46 percent in 2009) at some point in the past three months.

**Atlanta residents rate their health similarly to Americans overall but are more likely to have certain chronic conditions like high blood pressure and high cholesterol.**

- Over two-fifths of Atlanta residents (42 percent) view their health as excellent or very good, which is consistent with Americans overall (40 percent).
- Atlanta residents are similarly likely to report they have been told by a provider that they have a chronic condition when compared to adults nationally (67 percent vs. 66 percent nationally), but more Atlanta residents report they have high blood pressure (39 percent vs. 30 percent nationally) and high cholesterol (32 percent vs. 28 percent nationally).
- Similar to the national findings, top reasons cited for not following through with recommendations made by health care providers include lack of willpower, time, expense or being too stressed to make the changes.

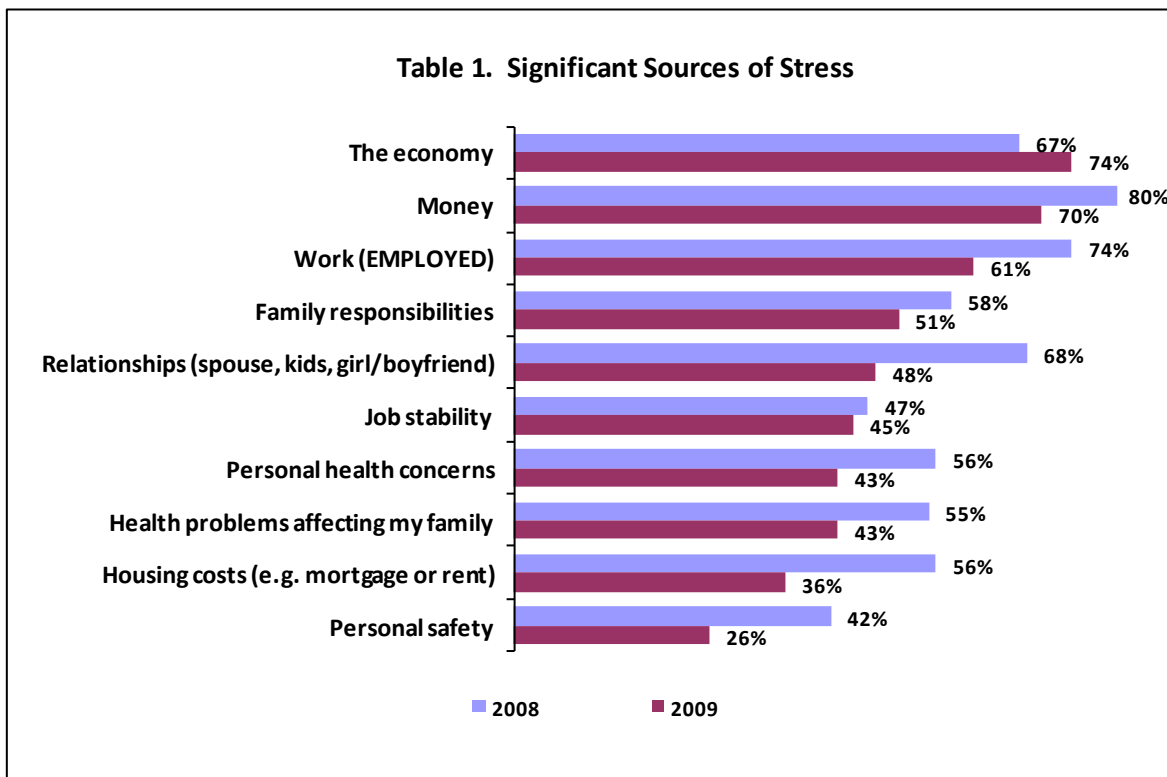
Interestingly, Atlanta residents are less likely than Americans overall to report expense as a barrier (13 percent vs. 18 percent nationally) but are more likely to report they are embarrassed to work out in a gym or public places (14 percent vs. 9 percent nationally).

## Detailed Survey Findings

### Perception of Personal Stress

The percentage of Atlanta residents rating common stressors as significant sources of stress decreased for all but one item examined in the survey. The biggest decreases were seen for relationships, housing costs and personal safety concerns.

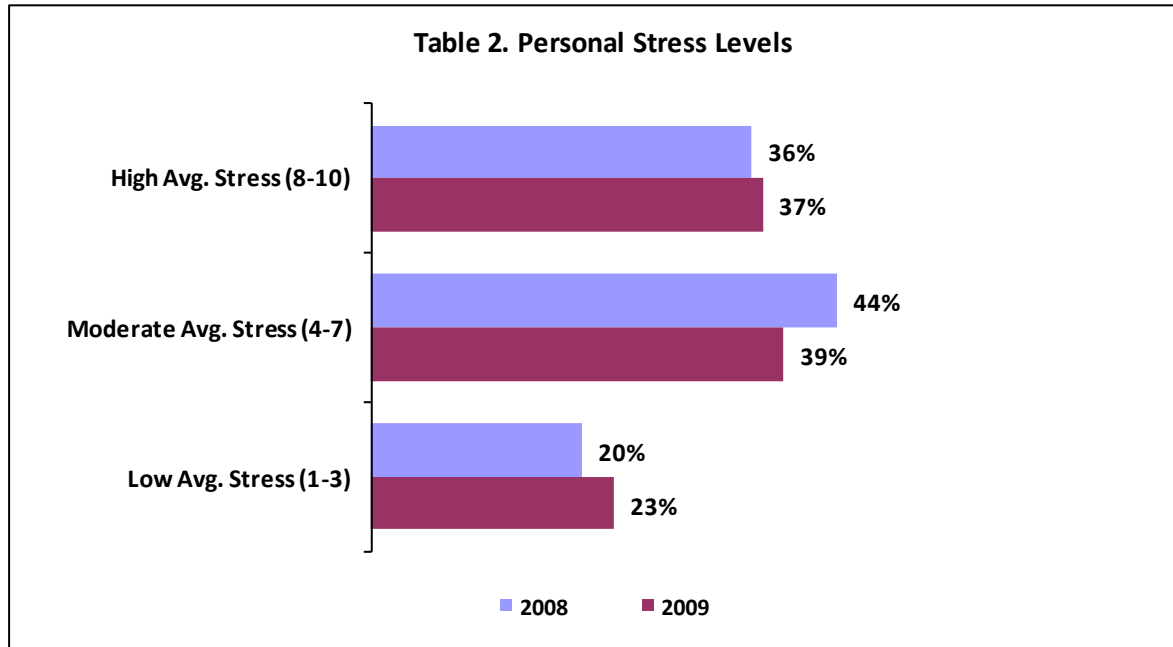
- The economy, money and work continue to be the most commonly cited causes of stress among Atlanta residents; however, money and work are less likely to be seen as significant sources of stress compared to last year.
  - The percentage of Atlanta residents indicating the economy as a significant source of stress grew from 67 percent in 2008 to 74 percent in 2009.
  - Conversely, the percentage of Atlanta residents citing housing costs as a significant source of stress saw a decline in 2009 from 56 percent to 36 percent.
  - There was also a decrease in the percentage of Atlanta residents mentioning relationships as a significant source of stress (68 percent in 2008 vs. 48 percent in 2009).



Atlanta residents are similarly likely in 2009 to rate their stress in the extreme range, compared to last year; however, a higher percentage of Atlanta residents now report they are doing enough to manage their stress.

- The percentage of Atlanta residents reporting an average stress level in the extreme range (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) has remained similar to last year's findings (37 percent vs. 36 percent in 2008). (See Table 2.)

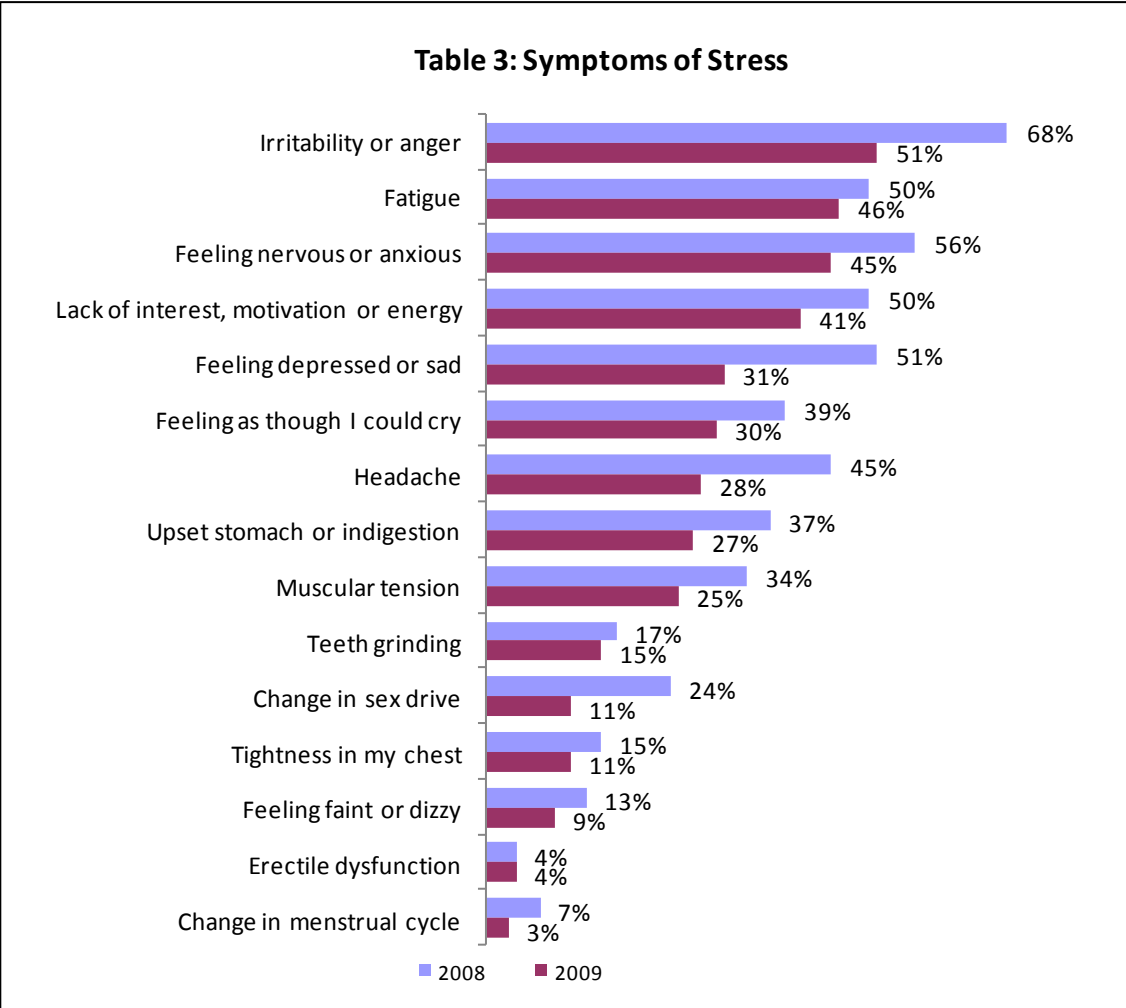
- More Atlanta residents rate their stress level in the extreme range compared to Americans overall (37 percent vs. 23 percent nationally).
- A higher percentage of Atlanta residents feel they are doing enough to manage their stress compared to last year's findings (62 percent vs. 55 percent in 2008).
- Two-in-five Atlanta residents (44 percent) say their stress has increased over the past year, consistent with the proportion who felt this way in 2008 (44 percent).



### ***Impact of Stress***

**Atlanta residents reported fewer physical symptoms attributable to stress in 2009 compared to the percentages reported in 2008.**

- Fewer Atlanta residents report they have lain awake at night because they were feeling stressed (45 percent vs. 54 percent in 2008).
- A similar percentage of adults in Atlanta reported they ate too much or ate unhealthy foods because they were feeling stressed in the past month compared to last year (51 percent in 2008; 53 percent in 2009).
  - Although the percentage of adults in Atlanta reporting overeating or eating unhealthy foods has not increased greatly, it remains higher than the percentage of Americans overall reporting similar behavior (53 percent vs. 43 percent nationally).
- Fewer Atlanta residents this year report they have skipped a meal due to stress. The decline in percentage was from 47 percent in 2008 to 36 percent in 2009.
- The percentage of Atlanta residents experiencing other physical symptoms as a result of stress fell from the 2008 levels for nearly all symptoms, particularly for experiencing irritability, feeling depressed or sad and experiencing headaches. (See Table 3.)

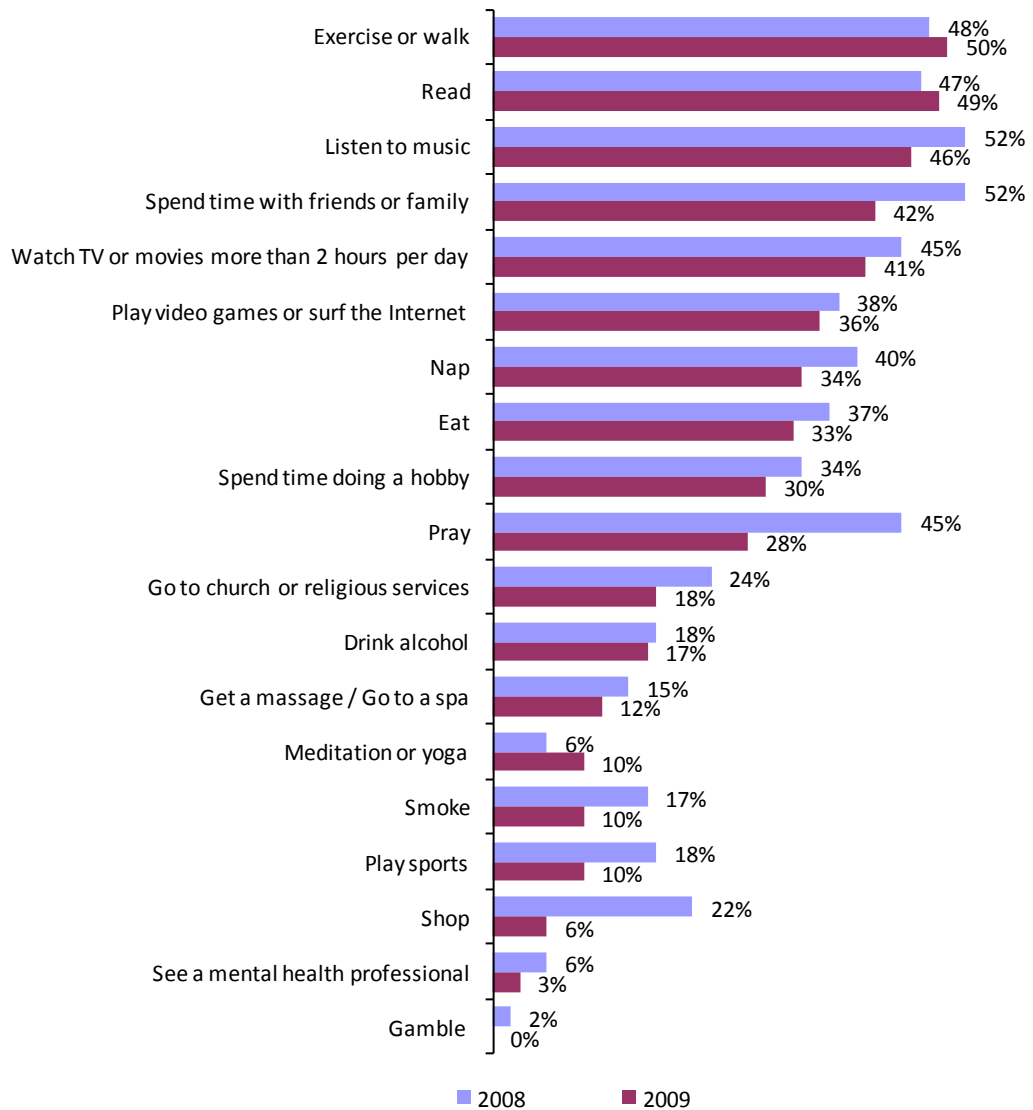


**Managing Stress**

**When it comes to managing their stress, Atlanta residents are most likely to exercise or walk, read or listen to music.**

- This year, Atlanta residents are as likely to rely on methods of stress management such as exercising or walking and reading and less likely to say they shop, spend time with friends or family or pray than they were in 2008. (See Table 4.)

**Table 4: Stress Management**

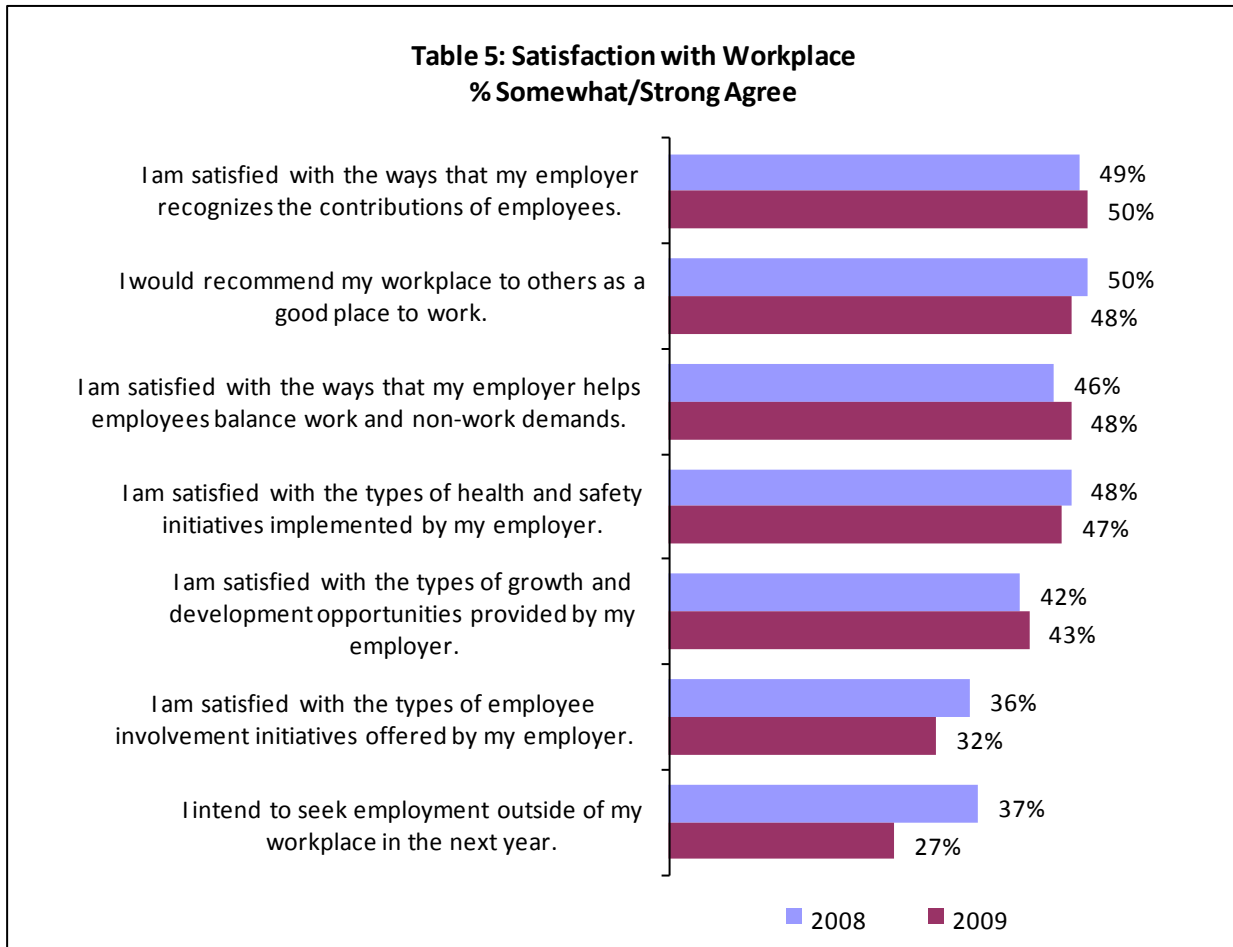


## Stress in the Workplace

### Workplace Environment

Although more Atlanta residents report they are satisfied with their job compared to last year, the percentage of employed Atlanta residents indicating they feel stressed during their workday also has increased.

- Two-thirds of employed Atlanta residents (66 percent) agree with the statement, “All in all, I am satisfied with my job” in 2009. Last year, 59 percent agreed with this statement.
  - The percentage of Atlanta workers satisfied with the ways their employer helps them balance work and non-work responsibilities has remained consistent with last year (46 percent to 48 percent in 2009). (See Table 5.)
  - Fewer Atlanta residents indicated this year that they intend to seek employment outside of their workplace within the next year (27 percent vs. 37 percent in 2009).
- Last year, 28 percent of Atlanta residents agreed they typically felt tense or stressed out during their workday. This year, the percentage increased to 40 percent.



### ***Managing Workplace Stress***

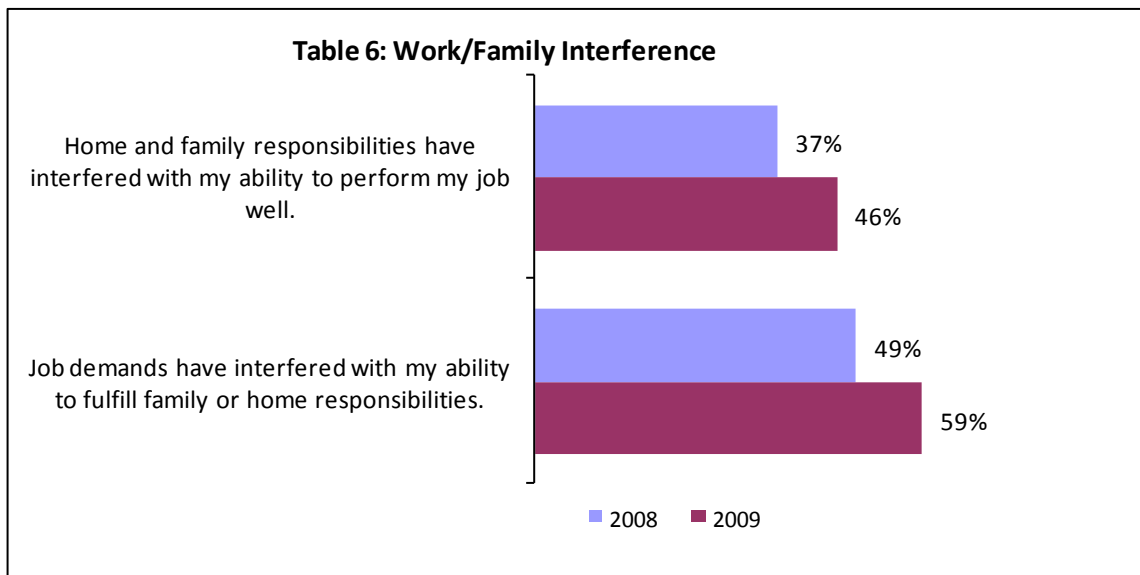
**Compared to 2008, fewer Atlanta workers report missing work due to stress, and fewer Atlanta workers than last year report losing some degree of work productivity because of stress.**

- The percentage of employed Atlanta residents reporting they missed at least one day of work due to stress in the past year has decreased since last year's survey (17 percent vs. 29 percent in 2008.)
- Fewer Atlanta workers report losing some work productivity due to stress than in 2008 (58 percent vs. 69 percent in 2008).

### ***Balancing Work and Family***

**Compared to 2008, Atlanta workers more commonly report that job demands have interfered with family responsibilities and that family responsibilities have interfered with job demands at some point in the past three months.**

- Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) Atlanta residents report that their job demands have interfered with their ability to fulfill family or home responsibilities during the past three months (compared to 49 percent who reported this in 2008). (See Table 6.)
- There also has been an increase in the percentage of adults in Atlanta indicating that family responsibilities have interfered with their ability to perform their job well (46 percent in 2009 vs. 37 percent in 2008).

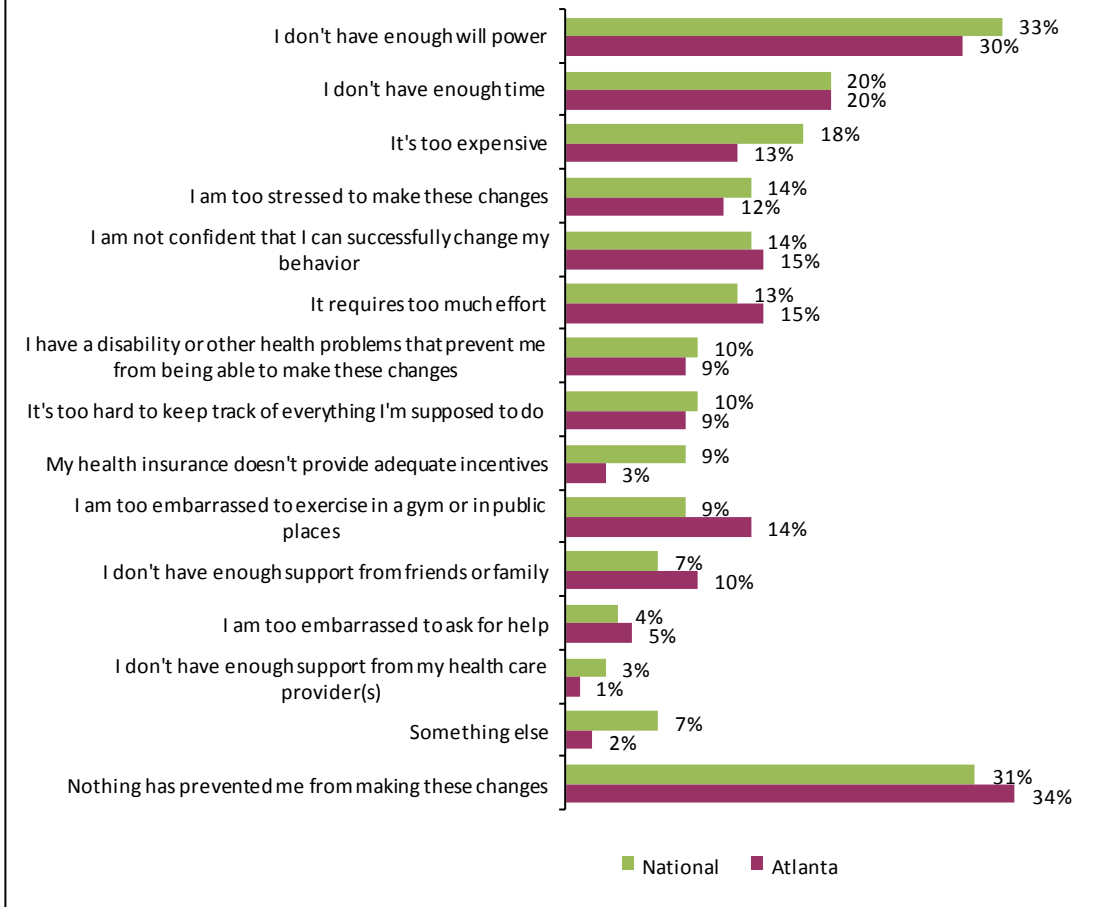


## ***Health Behaviors and Provider Intervention***

**Atlanta residents rate their health similarly to Americans overall and have had similar experiences with providers regarding lifestyle recommendations, though providers in Atlanta appear more likely to have followed up with their patients.**

- More than four in 10 Atlanta residents (42 percent) view their health as excellent or very good. This is consistent with Americans overall (40 percent).
- While Atlanta residents are similarly likely to report that they have been told by a provider that they have a chronic condition as adults nationally (67 percent vs. 66 percent nationally), more Atlanta residents say they have high blood pressure (39 percent vs. 30 percent nationally) and high cholesterol (32 percent vs. 28 percent nationally).
  - Conversely, Atlanta residents are less likely to report depression (10 percent vs. 17 percent nationally) and chronic pain (5 percent vs. 11 percent nationally) than Americans overall.
- Nearly six in 10 Atlanta residents who have been told they have a chronic condition (59 percent) have had a health care provider recommend both prescription medications and lifestyle changes. These findings are consistent with the 57 percent of Americans with chronic conditions who indicated that a health care provider recommended both prescription medications and lifestyle changes.
  - Most Atlanta residents have been advised by a provider to make one or more lifestyle changes (70 percent, the same as the national percentage).
- Nearly two-thirds of Atlanta residents (62 percent) reported their health care provider explained the reason for the recommendation and 35 percent said they were offered advice or techniques to help make the changes.
  - Fewer Americans nationally (46 percent) were given an explanation for the recommendation but the same percentage (35 percent) was offered advice by their health care provider.
  - Additionally, six in 10 Atlanta residents (60 percent) reported that after the recommendation was given, the physician followed up or checked in on their progress. This is higher than the findings of Americans nationally (48 percent).
- Seven in 10 Atlanta residents (70 percent) whose health care providers gave them advice on lifestyle changes found the recommendation somewhat or very helpful, compared to slightly more than three-quarters (76 percent) of Americans overall who found the recommendation somewhat or very helpful.
- Nearly a third of Atlanta residents (30 percent) say they were prevented from following through with lifestyle change recommendations due to a lack of willpower. Similar to the national findings, other top reasons cited for not changing include time, expense or being too stressed to make the changes. (See Table 7.)
  - Atlanta residents are slightly less likely than Americans overall to report expense as a barrier (13 percent vs. 18 percent nationally) but are more likely to report they are embarrassed to work out in a gym or public places (14 percent vs. 9 percent nationally).

**Table 7: Barriers to Lifestyle Changes, National vs. Atlanta**



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