



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 Seattle Report

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Prepared For:  
**The American Psychological Association**

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

**October 27, 2009**

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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 200 adults aged 18 and older who reside in Seattle. In the 2008 research, 259 Seattle 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 U.S. 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 Seattle 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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**Work, the economy and money continue to be the most commonly cited causes of stress among Seattle residents; however, results indicate that stress may have tapered off for Seattle residents since 2008.**

- The percentage of Seattle residents rating common stressors as significant sources of stress decreased for all responses listed, except work, which increased to 82 percent (from 74 percent in 2008).
- While the percentage of Seattle residents reporting stress levels in the extreme range has remained about the same as last year (24 percent vs. 25 percent in 2008), those reporting levels in the lowest range has more than doubled since last year (12 percent vs. 30 percent in 2009).
- Generally speaking, fewer Seattle residents reported a variety of physical symptoms attributable to stress in 2009 than in 2008.

**Several measures suggest that Seattle workers are as or slightly more satisfied with their workplace environment than they were in 2008. Despite this, a greater proportion feels tense or stressed out at work compared to last year.**

- Overall job satisfaction has remained consistent with 2008 findings (67 percent in 2009, 68 percent in 2008).
- The percentage of Seattle workers who would recommend their workplace to others as a good place to work has increased slightly from 52 percent to 56 percent in 2009.
- Two out of five Seattle workers (42 percent) agree they typically feel tense or stressed out during their workday. This is a slight increase from the 36 percent of Seattle residents that reported feeling tense or stressed during the workday last year.
- There is an upward trend in the proportion of Seattle residents reporting that either their job demands interfered with their ability to fulfill family responsibilities (55 percent vs. 59 percent in 2009) or that their family responsibilities interfered with their ability to perform their job well (45 percent vs. 48 percent in 2009) at some point in the last three months.

**While more than one-third of Seattle residents rate their health relatively high overall, two-thirds have been told by a provider that they have a chronic condition. Among those with a chronic condition, nearly two-thirds have received lifestyle recommendations and prescription medication. One-third of Seattle residents with chronic conditions are not heeding advice to make lifestyle changes, citing a lack of willpower.**

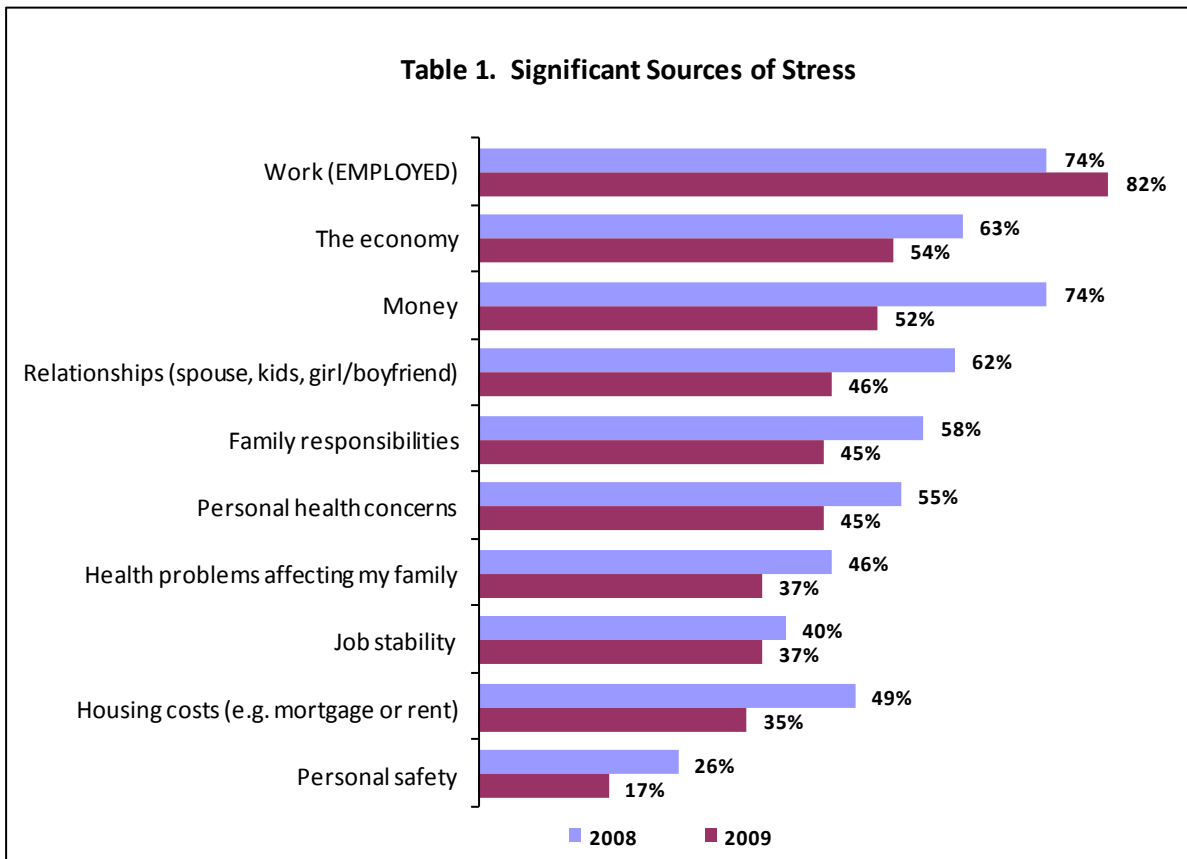
- Slightly more than one-third of Seattle residents (37 percent) view their health as excellent or very good, similar to 40 percent of Americans overall. However, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) have been told they have a chronic condition, similar to the proportion nationally (66 percent).
- Most Seattle residents have been advised by a provider to make one or more lifestyle changes (73 percent, similar to the national percentage).
- For Seattle residents, similar to those nationally, the greatest barrier to making lifestyle changes is lack of willpower (30 percent vs. 33 percent, respectively).

## Detailed Survey Findings

### Perceptions of Personal Stress

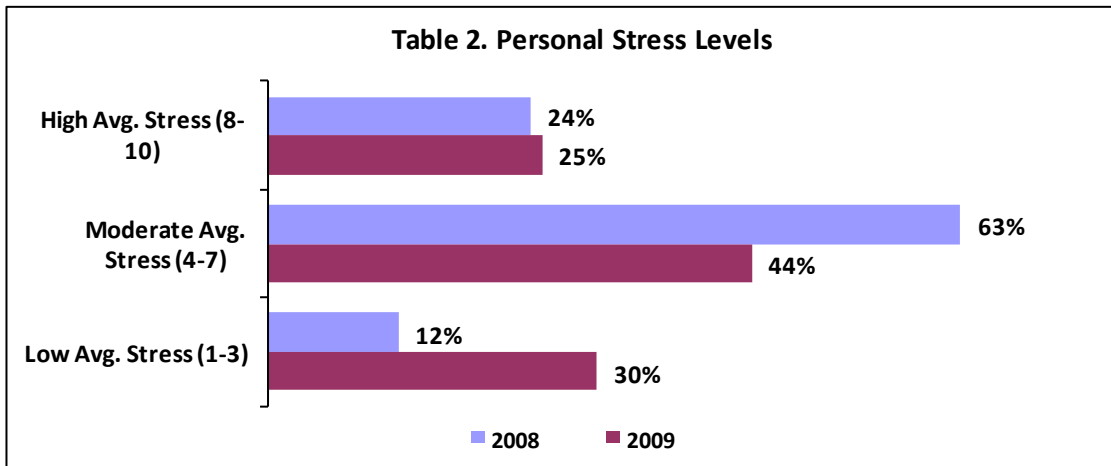
The percentage of Seattle residents rating common stressors as significant sources of stress decreased for nearly every item examined in the survey, except one; work. Among things that cause stress in their lives, the biggest decreases were seen for money, relationships and housing costs.

- Work, the economy and money continue to be the most commonly cited causes of stress among Seattle residents; however, money is far less likely to be seen as a significant source of stress than it was last year. (See Table 1.)
  - More than eight in 10 Seattle workers now cite work as a source of stress (82 percent); in 2008, 74 percent mentioned this as a stressor.
  - The percentage of respondents indicating money as a significant source of stress decreased from 74 percent in 2008 to 52 percent in 2009.
- The percentage of Seattle residents citing relationships as a significant source of stress also saw a decline from 62 percent in 2008 to 46 percent in 2009.
- Fewer Seattle residents mentioned relationships as a significant source of stress when compared to last year (46 percent vs. 62 percent in 2008).
- Fewer Seattle residents mentioned personal health concerns as a significant source of stress when compared to last year (45 percent vs. 55 percent in 2008).
- And fewer Seattle residents mentioned housing costs as a significant source of stress when compared to last year (35 percent vs. 49 percent in 2008).



**A greater percentage of Seattle residents in 2009 are reporting stress levels in the low range and a greater number also say their stress has decreased since last year.**

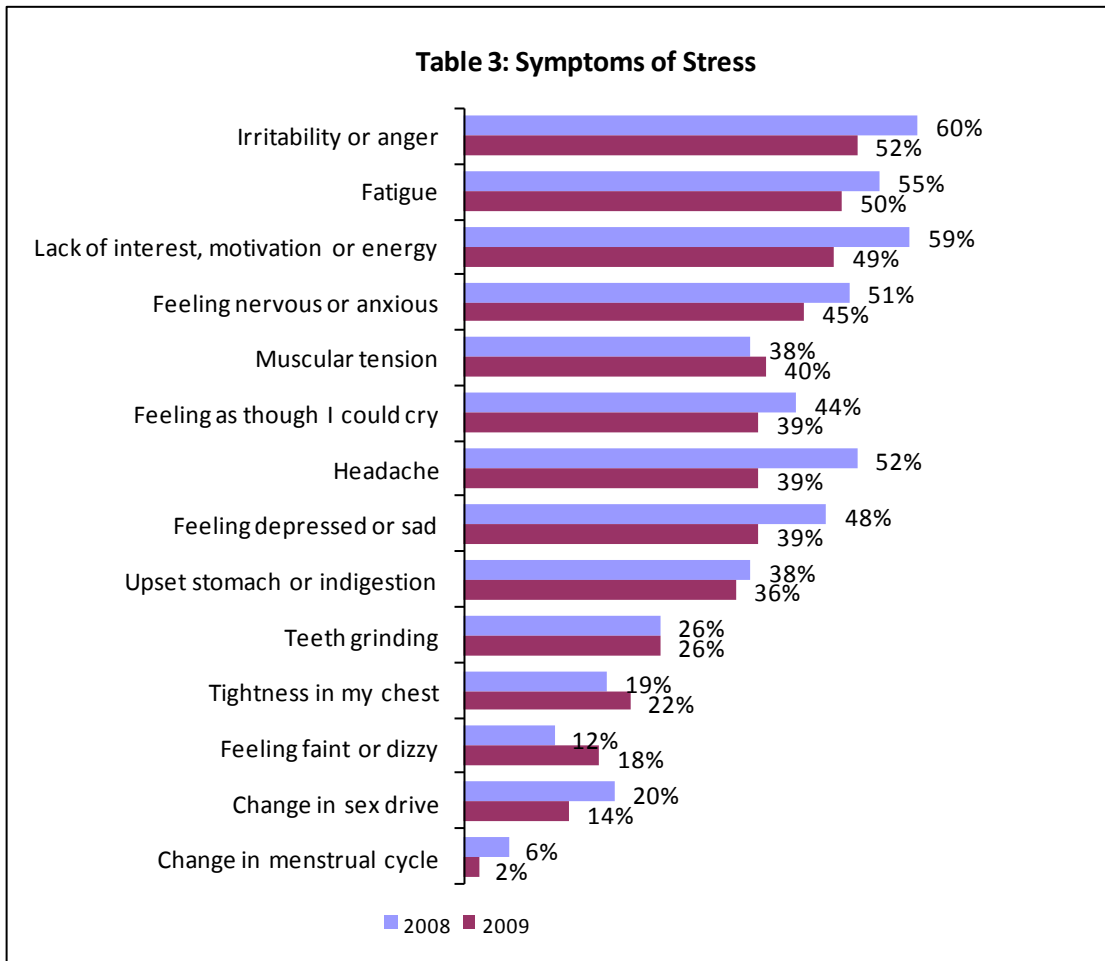
- The percentage of Seattle residents reporting stress levels in the extreme range (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) is similar to last year. However, those reporting levels in the moderate range (4, 5, 6 or 7 on a 10-point scale) have decreased since last year (44 percent vs. 63 percent in 2008) and those reporting levels in the low range (1, 2 or 3 on a 10-point scale) have increased (12 percent vs. 30 percent in 2008). (See Table 2.)
- The same percentage of Seattle residents feel they are doing enough to manage their stress compared to last year's findings (53 percent).
- One out of five Seattle residents (20 percent) say their stress has decreased over the past year, an increase in the proportion who felt this way in 2008 (12 percent).



**Impact of Stress**

**Overall, fewer Seattle residents reported physical symptoms attributable to stress in 2009 than they did last year.**

- The proportion of adults who lay awake at night because of stress (52 percent in 2009, 55 percent in 2008), overate or ate unhealthy foods (46 percent in 2009, 29 percent in 2009) or skipped a meal (37 percent in 2009, 38 percent in 2008) because of stress has remained fairly consistent over the two years.
- The percentage of Seattle residents reporting headaches because they were feeling stressed decreased from 52 percent in 2008 to 39 percent this year.
- Compared with last year, fewer reported feeling irritable or angry (60 percent vs. 52 percent in 2009), feeling fatigue (55 percent vs. 50 percent in 2009), or having a lack of interest, motivation or energy (59 percent vs. 49 percent in 2009) because of stress. (See Table 3.)

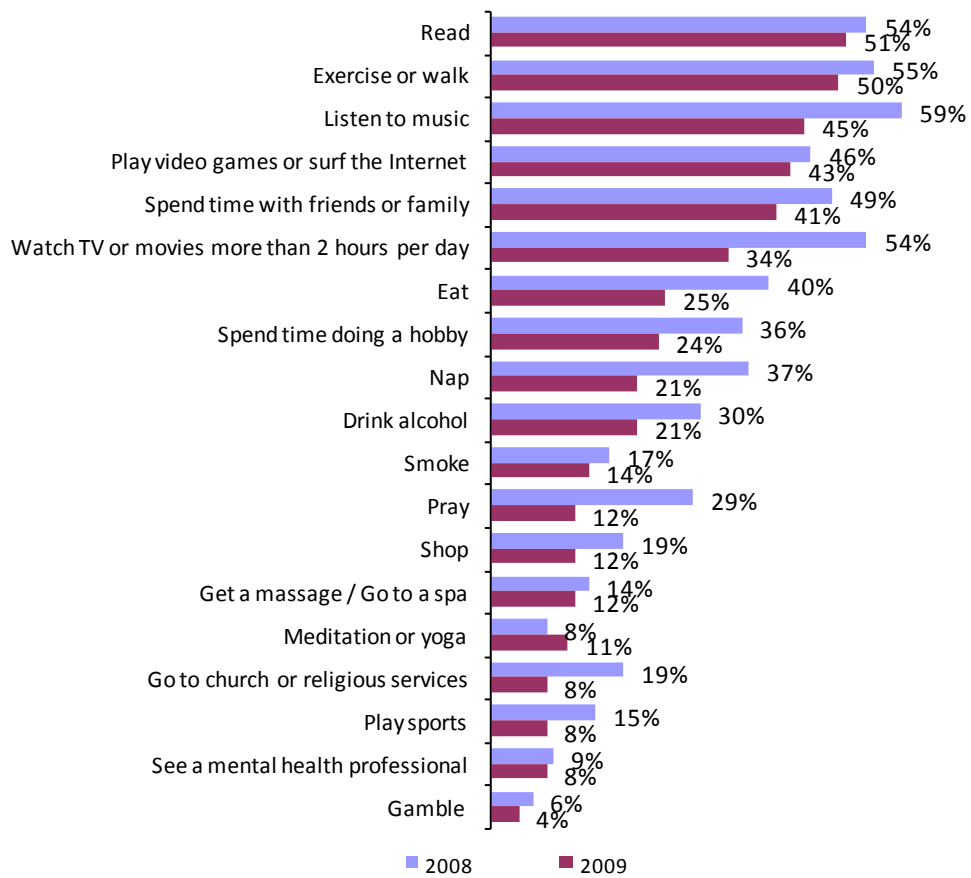


### ***Managing Stress***

**When it comes to managing stress, Seattle residents employ a host of methods. The percentage of those reporting stress management activities decreased for nearly every item examined in the survey, except meditation or yoga. The top three activities are reading, exercising or walking and listening to music.**

- Similar to last year, Seattle residents are likely to rely on methods of stress management such as reading (51 percent vs. 54 percent in 2008) or exercising or walking (50 percent vs. 55 percent in 2008). (See Table 4.)
- The proportion of those who listen to music to reduce stress has decreased from 59 percent in 2008 to 45 percent this year.
- Fewer Seattle residents are watching television or movies for more than 2 hours per day this year than last (34 percent vs. 54 percent in 2008).

**Table 4: Stress Management**

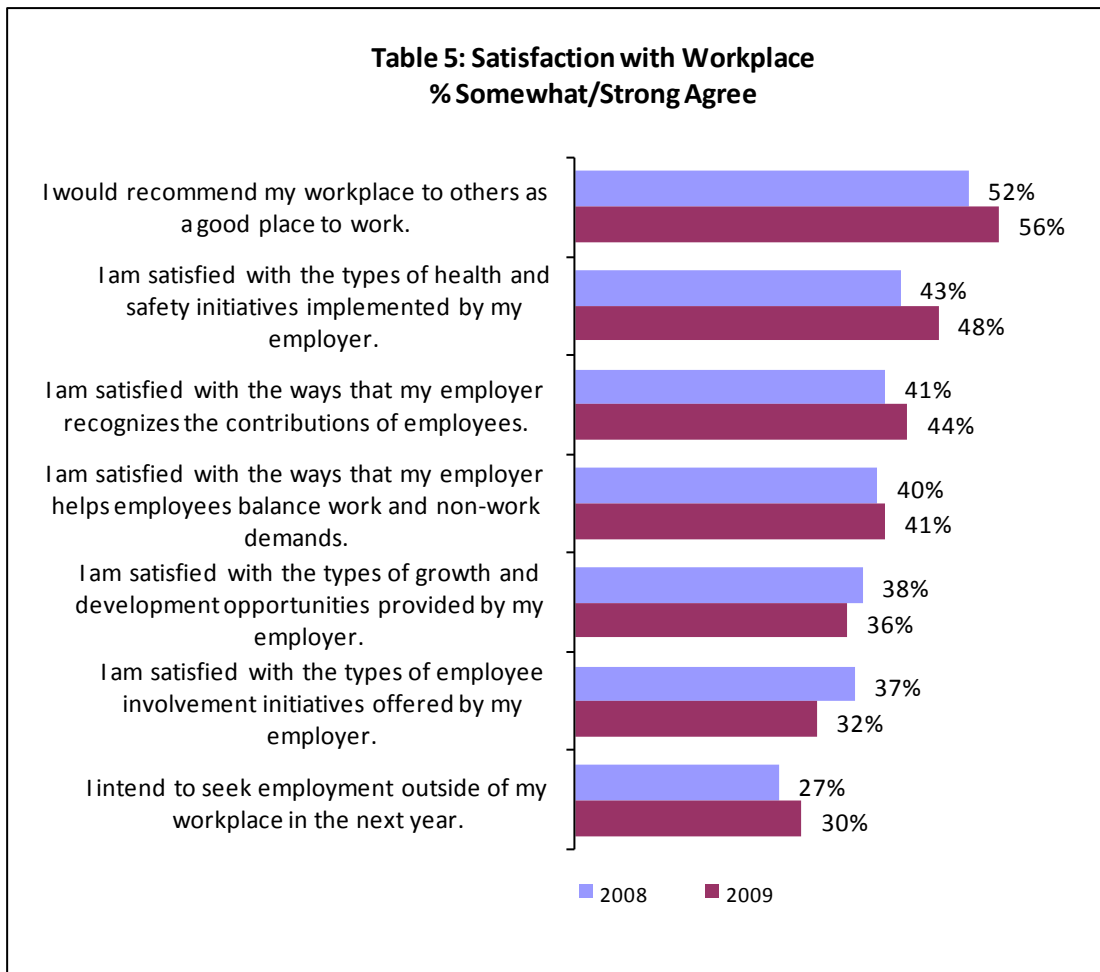


## Stress in the Workplace

### Workplace Environment

Although some measures of workplace satisfaction have trended upward since last year for Seattle workers, overall job satisfaction is the same. A greater proportion of workers say they typically feel tense or stressed out during their workday.

- As in 2008, two-thirds of Seattle workers are satisfied with their job (67 percent in 2009, 68 percent in 2008).
- Slightly more than half of Seattle residents would recommend their workplace to others as a good place to work (56 percent) and about half are satisfied with the types of health and safety initiatives implemented by their employer (48 percent). (See Table 5.)
- Two out of five Seattle workers (42 percent) agree they typically feel tense or stressed out during their workday. This is a slight increase from the 36 percent of Seattle workers that reported this last year.



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

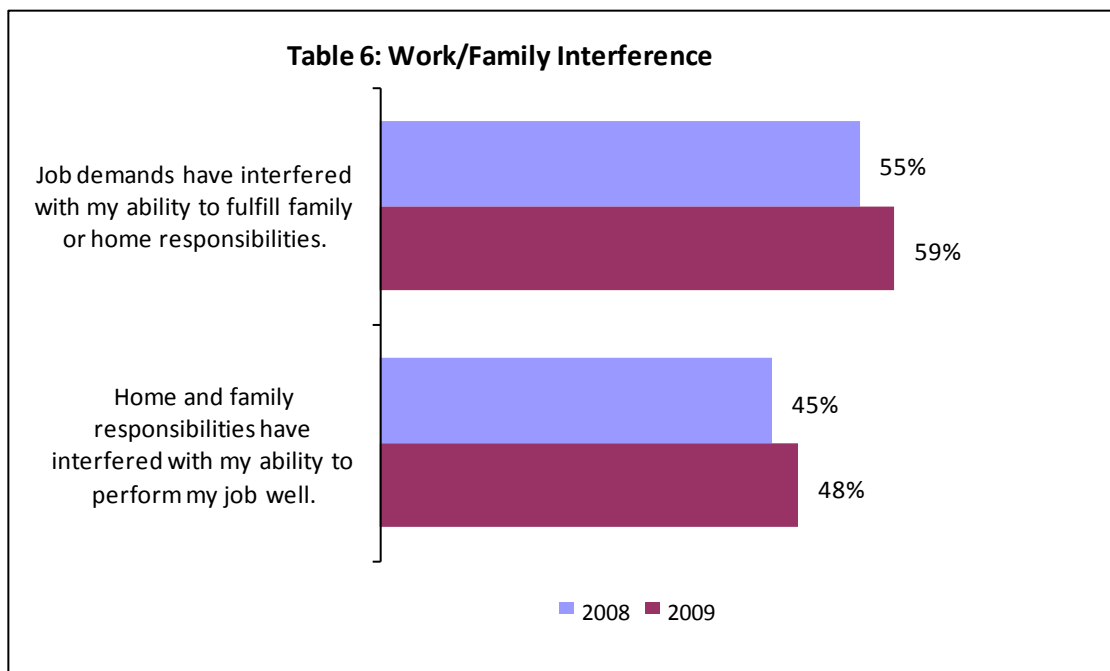
**Compared with 2008, fewer Seattle employees report missing work because of stress and fewer report lost productivity once at work because of stress.**

- The percentage of employed Seattle residents reporting they missed at least one day of work due to stress in the past year decreased slightly since last year's survey (27 percent vs. 31 percent in 2008).
- Once at work, fewer employees say they have lost productivity due to stress in 2009 (56 percent vs. 66 percent in 2008).

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

**Seattle workers continue to struggle with balancing work and family life.**

- Job demands have interfered with family responsibilities at least once in the past three months for six in 10 Seattle residents (59 percent); 55 percent said this in 2008.
- Somewhat fewer report that family responsibilities have interfered with their ability to perform their job well in the past three months, though somewhat more than in 2008 do report this (48 percent in 2009, 45 percent in 2008).

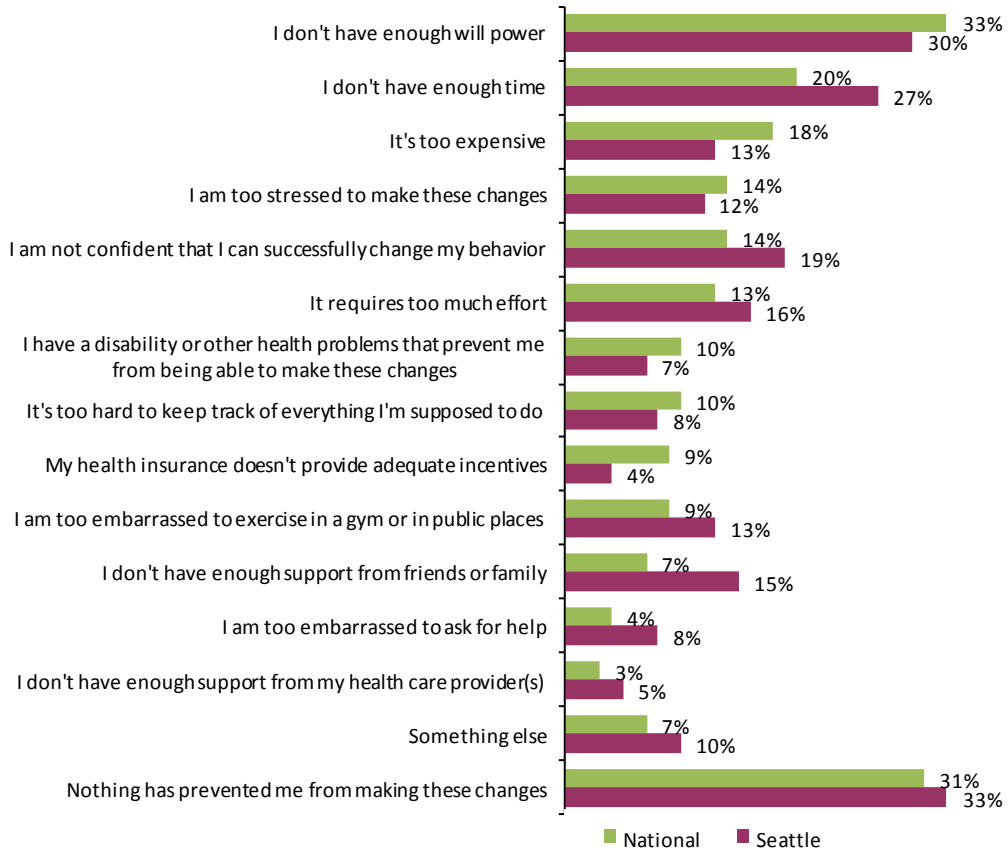


### ***Health Behaviors and Provider Intervention***

**Seattle residents are no different than Americans overall in how they rate their health. Similar to adults nationally, about the same percentage has been told by a provider that they have a chronic condition and have received lifestyle recommendations. However, compared to adults nationally, Seattle residents report they have more difficulty following through with lifestyle change recommendations due to a lack of support from family and friends.**

- Similar to Americans overall, slightly more than one-third of Seattle residents (40 percent vs. 37 percent respectively) view their health as excellent or very good.
- Seattle residents are about as likely as adults nationally to report that they have been told by a provider that they have a chronic condition (70 percent vs. 66 percent nationally).
- Compared with national figures, Seattle residents report slightly lower percentages for having high blood pressure (26 percent vs. 30 percent nationally) and similar percentages for high cholesterol (28 percent vs. 28 percent). However, Seattle residents are more likely to report that they are overweight or obese (31 percent vs. 25 percent nationally), depressed (29 percent vs. 17 percent nationally) or have an anxiety disorder (15 percent vs. 8 percent nationally).
  - Nearly two-thirds of Seattle residents (64 percent) who have been told they have a chronic condition have had a health care provider recommend both prescription medications and lifestyle changes.
- Most Seattle residents have been advised by a health provider to make one or more lifestyle changes (73 percent, similar to the national percentage).
  - More Seattle residents say that over the past five years they have been told to reduce stress when compared to Americans nationally (32 percent vs. 23 percent nationally).
- Although three out of five (61 percent) Seattle residents said that their health care provider explained the reason for the change in lifestyle recommendations, less than half (44 percent) reported that they were offered advice or techniques to help make the changes.
  - Fewer Americans overall were offered an explanation about lifestyle changes (46 percent). Similarly, fewer Americans overall were offered advice or techniques to help make the changes (35 percent).
  - Additionally, slightly less than half of Seattle residents (47 percent) reported that after the recommendation was given, the physician followed up or checked in on their progress. This is consistent with the findings of Americans nationally (48 percent).
- The majority of Seattle residents (85 percent) whose health care providers gave them advice on lifestyle changes found the recommendation somewhat or very helpful, more so than Americans overall (76 percent).
- Similar to adults nationally (33 percent), about one-third of Seattle residents (30 percent) say they were prevented from following through with lifestyle change recommendation(s) due to lack of willpower. In addition, Seattle residents are twice as likely to report that they were prevented from following through with lifestyle change recommendation(s) because they don't have enough support from friends or family (15 percent vs. 7 percent nationally).

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



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