



Stress in America

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

STRESS AND GENDER

Men and women* report different reactions to stress, both physically and mentally. They attempt to manage stress in very different ways and also perceive their ability to do so — and the things that stand in their way — in markedly different ways. Findings suggest that while women are more likely to report physical symptoms associated with stress, they are doing a better job connecting with others in their lives and, at times, these connections are important to their stress management strategies.

Stress on the Rise for Women

Though they report similar average stress levels, women are more likely than men to report that their stress levels are on the rise. They are also much more likely than men to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress. When comparing women with each other, there also appears to be differences in the ways that married and single women experience stress.

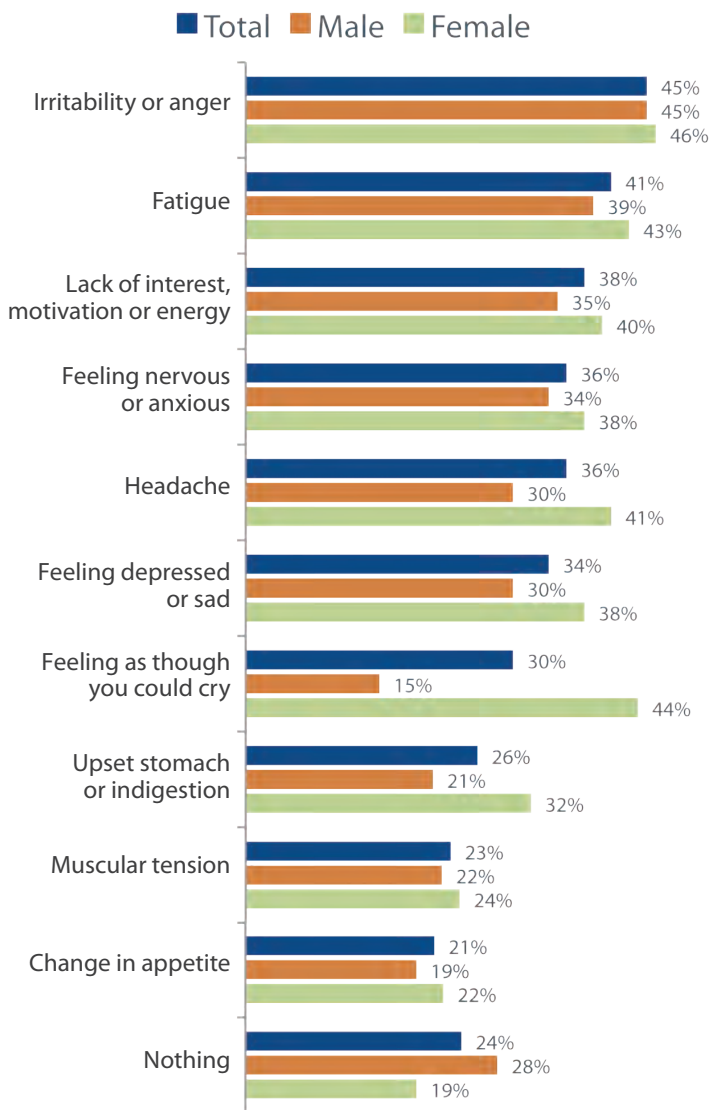
- Women are more likely than men (28 percent vs. 20 percent) to report having a great deal of stress (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale).
- Almost half of all women (49 percent) surveyed said their stress has increased over the past five years, compared to four in 10 (39 percent) men.
- Women are more likely to report that money (79 percent compared with 73 percent of men) and the economy (68 percent compared with 61 percent of men) are sources of stress while men are far more likely to cite that work is a source of stress (76 percent compared with 65 percent of women).
- Women are more likely to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress than men, such as having had a headache (41 percent vs. 30 percent), having felt as though they could cry (44 percent vs. 15 percent), or having had an upset stomach or indigestion (32 percent vs. 21 percent) in the past month.
- Married women report higher levels of stress than single women, with one-third (33 percent) reporting that they have experienced a great deal of stress in the past month (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) compared with one in five (22 percent) of single women. Similarly, significantly more married women report that their stress has increased over



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Physical Symptoms of Stress of Men and Women



BASE: All respondents (n=1134); Male (n=530); Female (n=604)
Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

the past five years (56 percent vs. 41 percent of single women). Single women are also more likely than married women to say they feel they are doing enough to manage their stress (63 percent vs. 51 percent).

- Married women are more likely than single women to report they have experienced the following due to stress in the past month: feeling as though they could cry (54 percent vs. 33 percent), feeling irritable or angry (52 percent vs. 38 percent), having headaches (48 percent vs. 33 percent) and experiencing fatigue (47 percent vs. 35 percent).

Men and women report wide gaps between determining what is important and how successful they are at achieving those behaviors.

- Women are much more likely than men to say that having a good relationship with their families is important to them (84 percent vs. 74 percent). While fewer women say they are doing a good job at succeeding in this area, they outpace men (67 percent vs. 53 percent).
- Women are also more likely than men to say that having a good relationship with their friends is important to them (69 percent vs. 62 percent), even though friendship is cited less often than family for both men and women.
- Even though nearly half of all women (49 percent) say they have lain awake at night in the past month because of stress, three-quarters of women rate getting enough sleep as extremely or very important (75 percent compared with 58 percent of men).
- Across the board, men's and women's perceptions of their ability to succeed in areas that are important to their well-being are far out of line with the importance they

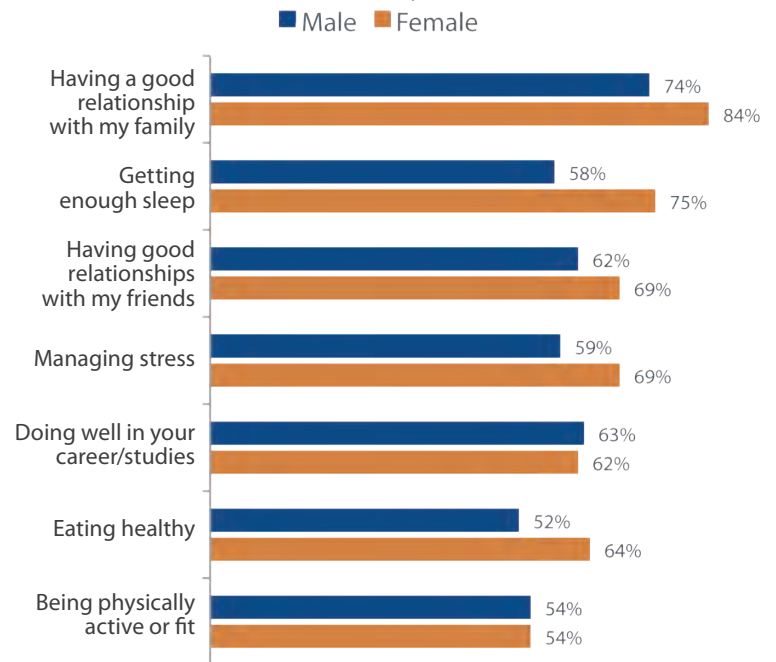
place on these behaviors. Even more so than women, men report less likelihood of success in these areas.

- Only 33 percent of women report being successful in their efforts to get enough sleep (compared with 75 percent who believe this is important); only 35 percent report success in their efforts to manage stress (compared with 69 percent who believe this is important); 36 percent report success in their efforts to eat healthy (compared with 64 percent who believe this is important); and only 29 percent are successful in their efforts to be physically active (compared with 54 percent who believe this is important).
- Only 25 percent of men report being successful in their efforts to get enough sleep (compared with 58 percent who believe this is important); only 30 percent report success in their efforts to manage stress (compared with 59 percent who believe this is important); only 25 percent report success in their efforts to eat healthy (compared with 52 percent who believe this is important); and only 26 percent are successful in their efforts to be physically active (compared with 54 percent who believe this is important).

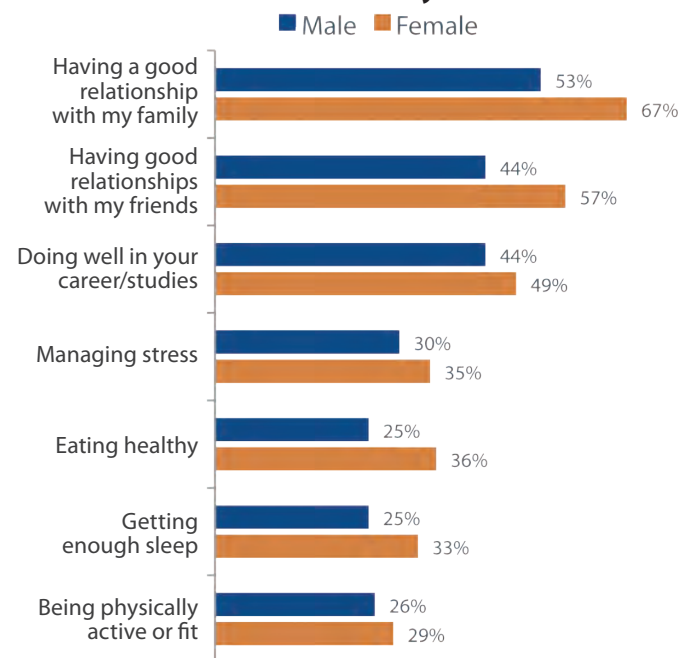
Strategies for Managing Stress

Regardless of their sources of stress and the physical and emotional symptoms of stress that men and women report, both groups say they manage their stress in very different ways. In general, though, both men and women tend to choose sedentary activities like reading, listening to music and watching television to manage their stress over healthier behaviors like seeing a mental health professional or exercising.

Importance by Gender



Achievement by Gender



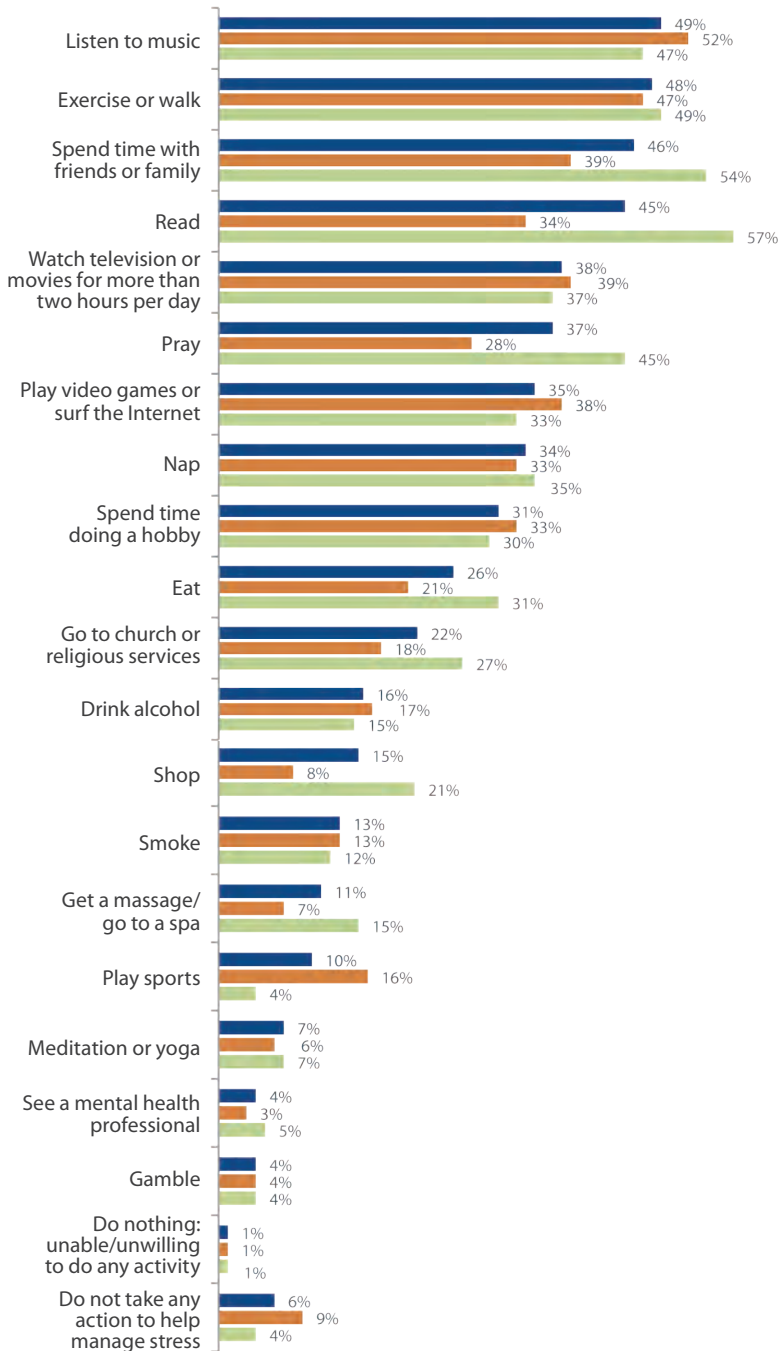
BASE: Male (n=530); Female (n=604)
 Q7005 How important are each of the following to you?
 Q7010 How well are you doing at achieving each of these?



STRESS AND GENDER

Stress Management

■ Total ■ Male ■ Female



BASE: All respondents (n=1134); Male (n=530); Female (n=604)
 Q965 Do you do any of the following to help manage stress? Please select all that apply.

- Women are far more likely than men to say they read to manage stress (57 percent vs. 34 percent for men) and overall, tend to report more stress management activities that connect them with other people, like spending time with friends or family (54 percent vs. 39 percent) and going to church or religious services (27 percent vs. 18 percent).
- Men are more likely than women to say they play sports (16 percent vs. 4 percent) and listen to music (52 percent vs. 47 percent) as a way of managing stress. They are also more likely than women to say they do nothing to manage their stress (9 percent vs. 4 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to report that they eat as a way of managing stress (31 percent vs. 21 percent). Similarly, women also report having eaten too much or eaten unhealthy foods because of stress in the past month far more often than men (49 percent of women vs. 30 percent of men).
- Significantly more women (35 percent) than men (24 percent) exercise only once a week or less. When asked why they don't exercise more often, they are more likely than men to say they are just too tired (39 percent vs. 26 percent).
- Men are more likely to say they exercise because it gives them something to do (34 percent vs. 23 percent), keeps them from getting sick (29 percent vs. 18 percent) and is something they are good at (19 percent vs. 11 percent).

The things that men and women say prevent them from taking better care of themselves differ greatly as well.

- While both genders cite lack of willpower as the No. 1 barrier to change, women are more likely than men to cite lack of willpower as a barrier preventing them from making the lifestyle and behavior changes recommended by a health care provider (34 percent vs. 24 percent).
- Women are far more likely than men to say that lack of willpower also has prevented them from changing their eating habits (15 percent vs. 1 percent).
- When asked what they would need to change in order for their willpower to improve, women were more likely than men to say less fatigue/more energy (56 percent vs. 44 percent) and more confidence in their ability to improve their willpower (60 percent vs. 38 percent).
- Men are less likely to say they need encouragement from friends or family in order to improve their willpower (28 percent vs. 42 percent) and slightly more likely to say they need more money (43 percent vs. 39 percent). Women are more likely to say they need more time (37 percent vs. 29 percent).
- Six times as many women as men say that having more help with household chores would allow them to improve their willpower (23 percent vs. 4 percent).

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