American Psychological Association

PART 1

STRESS IN AMERICA

COPING WITH CHANGE

10TH EDITION

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Stress in America™ 2017 Snapshot:

Coping with Change

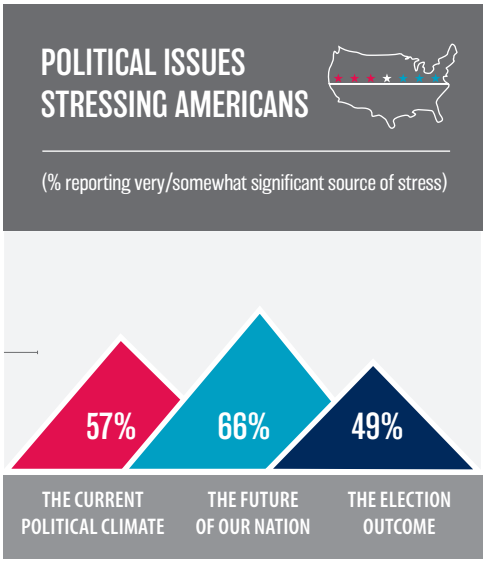
Since 2006, the American Psychological Association's (APA) *Stress in America*™ survey has examined sources of stress and its impact on the health and wellbeing of Americans living in the United States. Since that first survey, overall stress levels have gradually decreased for Americans, with results from our August 2016 poll showing the lowest overall reported stress level in 10 years. However, an additional poll conducted in early January 2017 shows more Americans reporting symptoms of stress and citing personal safety and terrorism as sources of stress.

Prior to our 2016 poll, top stressors for the American population remained steady, with Americans being most likely to report money, work and the economy as very or somewhat significant sources of stress in their lives.

During the spring of 2016, however, APA's member psychologists began reporting that their patients were increasingly concerned and anxious about the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Based on this feedback, we inquired for the first time about Americans' stress related to this issue.

APA added election-related questions to its annual poll, conducted in August 2016 by Harris Poll on behalf of APA, and in October 2016 released initial data regarding Americans' stress related to the upcoming election. The August survey found that more than half of Americans (52 percent) reported the 2016 U.S. presidential election was a very or somewhat significant source of stress. On a 10-point scale, where 1 is "little or no stress" and 10 is "a great deal of stress," those who found the election to be a very or somewhat significant source of stress reported a higher overall average stress level than those who reported that the election was not a very significant or not at all a significant source of stress (5.1 vs. 4.4, respectively).

The August survey revealed that social media conversations about politics and culture have had an impact on Americans' stress. Nearly four in 10 adults (38 percent) said that political and cultural discussions on social media caused them stress. In addition, adults who used social media were more likely than adults who did not use social media to say the election was a very or somewhat significant source of stress (54 percent vs. 45 percent, respectively).



Results from January survey

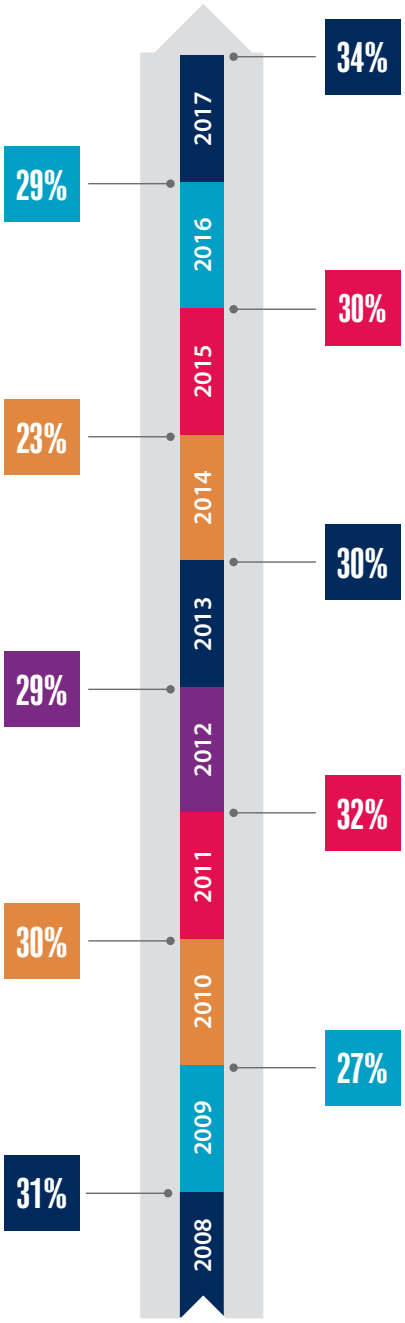
A Stressful Political Climate Continues

To better understand political stressors and assess any potential for long-term effects, APA commissioned an additional survey in early January 2017, asking Americans again to rate the sources of their stress, including the political climate, the future of our nation and the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. This new survey found that between August 2016 and January 2017, Americans' overall average reported stress level rose from 4.8 to 5.1 on a 10-point scale.

In addition, in the January 2017 survey, more than half of Americans (57 percent) report that the current political climate is a very or somewhat significant source of stress. Two-thirds (66 percent) say the same about the future of our nation, and nearly half (49 percent) report that the outcome of the election is a very or somewhat significant source of stress.

STRESS BECAUSE OF PERSONAL SAFETY

(% reporting very/somewhat significant source of stress)



While Democrats were more likely than Republicans (72 percent vs. 26 percent) to report the outcome of the 2016 presidential election as a significant source of stress, a majority of Republicans (59 percent) said the future of our nation was a significant source of stress for them, compared to 76 percent of Democrats.

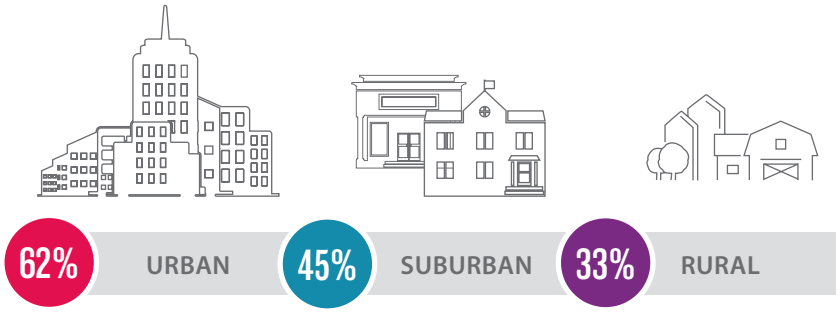
Election Outcome Concerns Vary Among Demographic Groups

In the January survey, almost seven in 10 (69 percent) Blacks, 57 percent of Asians, 56 percent of Hispanics of any race (hereafter, Hispanics, and also included in survey as people of color) and 42 percent of non-Hispanic Whites (hereafter, Whites), said that the outcome of the election was a very or somewhat significant source of stress. Stress differed among age demographics as well: More than half (58 percent) of Millennials, 48 percent of Matures[1], 45 percent of Boomers and 39 percent of Gen Xers consider the election outcome as a very or somewhat significant source of stress.

Among education levels, 53 percent of those with more than a high school education reported very or somewhat significant stress related to the election outcome, compared to 38 percent of those with a high school education or less. Additionally, a greater percentage (62 percent) of Americans who reside in urban areas said the same, compared with those who live in suburban (45 percent) and rural (33 percent) areas.

ELECTION OUTCOME STRESS ACROSS GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

(% reporting very/somewhat significant source of stress)

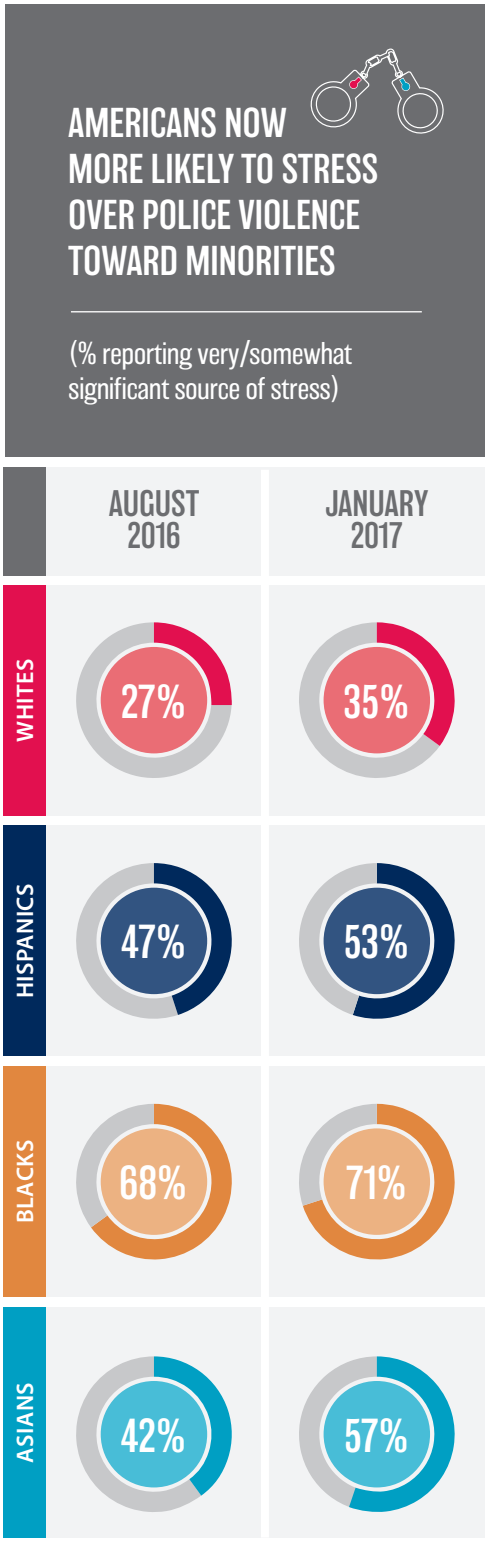


Results from January survey

Concerns About Safety Also On the Rise

The January survey also found an increase in the percentage of Americans reporting stress related to safety and the future. Since August, the percentage of Americans saying personal safety is a very or somewhat significant source of stress increased from 29 percent to 34 percent — the highest percentage noted since the question was first asked in 2008.

[1] Note: Small base. Results are directional in nature.



In addition, the percentage of Americans saying acts of terrorism are a very or somewhat significant source of stress increased from 51 percent to 59 percent from August 2016 to January 2017.[2] The percentage of Americans saying police violence toward minorities was a very or somewhat significant source of stress also increased from 36 percent to 44 percent in the same five-month period. Among White Americans, the percentage for whom this is a significant source of stress increased from 27 percent to 35 percent. Slight increases were also seen among non-White Americans during the same time period (Hispanic rose from 47 percent to 53 percent; Black rose from 68 percent to 71 percent; Asian rose from 42 percent to 57 percent).[3]

Increased Stress Raises Health Concerns

The additional stress is also affecting our health. The percentage of Americans who reported experiencing at least one symptom of stress over the past month rose from 71 percent in August 2016 to 80 percent in January 2017. This includes physical and emotional symptoms such as headache (34 percent), feeling overwhelmed (33 percent), feeling nervous or anxious (33 percent), or feeling depressed or sad (32 percent).

"We know that chronic stress can take a toll on a person's health. It can make existing health problems worse, and even cause disease, either because of changes in the body or bad habits people develop to cope with stress. The bottom line is that stress can lead to real physical and emotional health consequences," **said Katherine C. Nordal, PhD, APA's executive director for professional practice.**

Stress Snapshot: Looking Back; Looking Forward

The results of the January 2017 poll show a statistically significant increase in stress for the first time since the survey was first conducted in 2007. Average reported stress levels declined between 2007 and 2012. Although reported stress levels increased slightly in 2013 and again in 2015 the increases were not statistically significant.

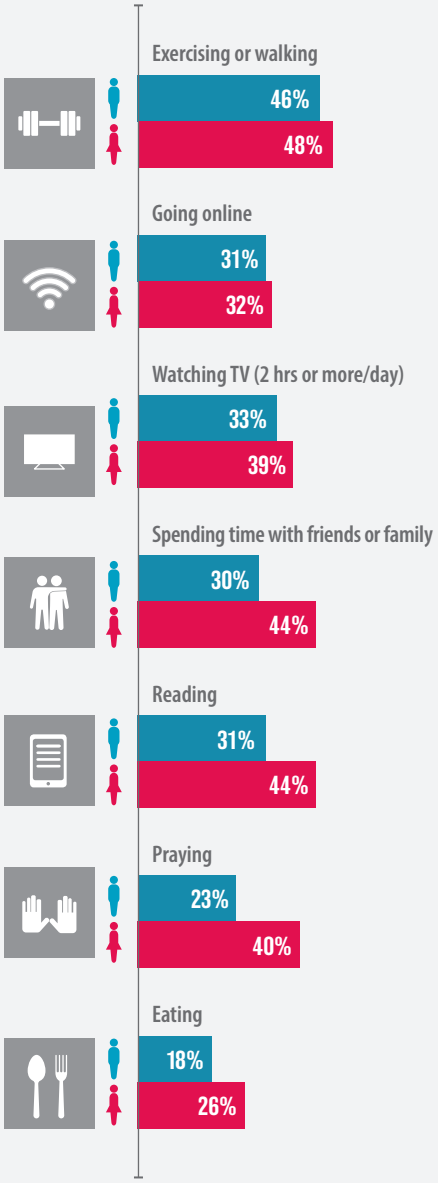
In the August survey, three in 10 Americans (31 percent) say that their stress has increased in the past year and a sizeable proportion (20 percent) reported experiencing extreme stress (a rating of 8, 9 or 10 on the 10-point scale).

While people's short-term stress levels may have increased, reducing stress in the future continues to be a priority for some.

[2] The January 2017 survey was conducted before President Donald J. Trump's executive order, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" issued Friday, January 27, 2017

[3] The base size for Native Americans was too low to report. .

STRESS MANAGEMENT METHODS ACROSS GENDERS



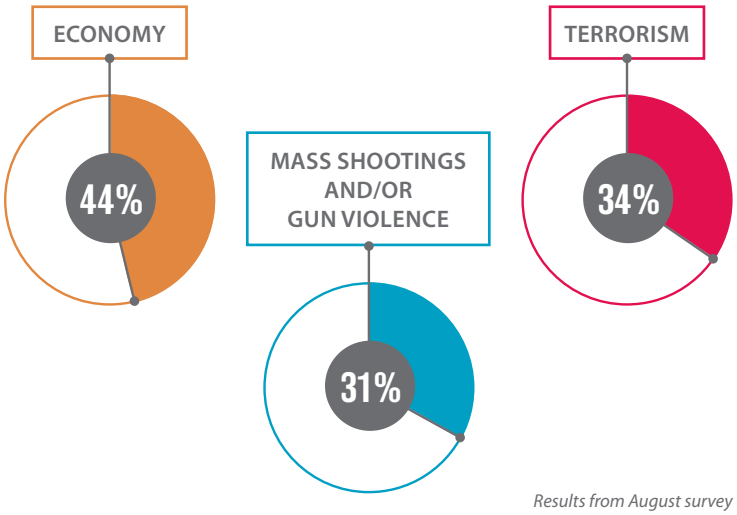
Results from August survey

The August survey asked people to reflect on the past and think about the future, and three in 10 Americans (31 percent) wish they had spent less time worried or stressed in the past 10 years. Even more (36 percent) report that reducing stress is a priority over the next several years.

Money, Work and Economy Remain Consistent Stressors

Additional top causes of stress in 2016 were similar to those of past years, as Americans report money, work and the economy as very or somewhat significant sources of stress in their lives (61 percent, 58 percent and 50 percent, respectively).

MOST COMMONLY REPORTED FACTORS ADDING TO STRESS IN THE PAST 10 YEARS



Results from August survey

When asked about topics that have added to their stress levels over the past decade, Americans are most likely to cite the economy (44 percent), terrorism (34 percent) and mass shootings and/or gun violence (31 percent).

In August, the majority of Americans said they anticipate that money (62 percent), the economy (58 percent), personal health concerns (58 percent) and health problems affecting family (57 percent) will be somewhat or very significant sources of stress in the next several years.

Still Struggling with Stress Management

Despite myriad stressors, in August survey, four in 10 Americans (41 percent) say that they are doing significantly or somewhat better at managing their stress compared to 10 years ago, with a nearly equal proportion (39 percent) reporting that their ability to manage stress has stayed the same. One-quarter (25 percent) concede that they wish they managed stress more effectively over the past 10 years.

Consistent with 2015 results, seven in 10 Americans (70 percent in 2015 and 71 percent in 2016) say that they have someone they can ask for needed emotional support, but they still need more. Half (51 percent) say they could have used at least a little more emotional support than they received.

"The role that a lack of social support plays in a person's health is often underestimated. Loneliness has been associated with a wide variety of health problems including high blood pressure, diminished immunity and heart disease," **Nordal said.** *"In fact, low levels of social support have even been linked to increased risk of death from heart disease, infectious diseases and cancer."*

Gender Gap Remains

Women and men report similar, but slightly lower average stress levels than last year, but there remains a gender gap, with women consistently reporting higher levels of stress (5.0 vs. 4.6 in 2016 and 5.3 vs. 4.9 in 2015). While the August survey showed women and men were statistically equally likely to find the presidential election a significant source of stress (51 percent and 52 percent, respectively), women were more likely to report acts of terrorism as a significant source of stress (56 percent vs. 46 percent). Women were also more likely than men to report money and family responsibilities as significant forms of stress (64 percent vs. 57 percent for money and 56 percent vs. 42 percent for family responsibilities).

Stress Equalizes Across Races and Ethnicities

Contrary to past years, overall average stress levels have equalized across races and ethnicities (Hispanics), 5.0; Whites (hereafter, Whites), 4.7; Blacks, 4.7; Asians, 4.7; Native Americans, 5.1). However, minorities are more likely than Whites to report common sources of stress included in the survey as very or somewhat significant, specifically money. About 7 in 10 (72 percent) Native Americans, 71 percent of Hispanics, 70 percent of Blacks, 68 percent of Asians and 57 percent of Whites report money is a significant stressor in their lives.

Regarding future stressors, more than half of Americans believe that acts of terrorism will be a very or somewhat significant source of stress in the next several years (55 percent). Police violence toward minorities is also a major concern for communities of color. Approximately seven in 10 (69 percent) Blacks believe this will be a very or somewhat significant source of stress in the next several years, along with 48 percent of Hispanics, 44 percent of Asians, 40 percent of Native Americans and 30 percent of Whites.

Younger Americans Still Feeling the Pinch

Similar to recent years, in the August survey, younger Americans (Millennials and Gen Xers) report higher average stress levels (5.6 Millennials, 5.4 Gen Xers, 4.1 Boomers and 2.7 Matures) and are more likely to say their stress has increased in the past year compared with Boomers and Matures (38 percent of Millennials, 36 percent of Gen Xers, 25 percent of Boomers and 18 percent of Matures).

Millennials are also worried about police violence toward minorities (49 percent of Millennials, 29 percent of Gen Xers, 33 percent of Boomers and 22 percent of Matures say this is a very or somewhat significant source of stress for them). A greater share of Millennials also think this will be a very or somewhat significant source of stress in the next few years (49 percent of Millennials, 34 percent of Gen Xers, 35 percent of Boomers and 24 percent of Matures).

Overall, Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers are more likely to say they engage in stress management techniques (88 percent of Millennials, 93 percent of Gen Xers and 88 percent of Boomers compared to 78 percent of Matures). However, Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely to say they do not feel they are doing enough to manage their stress (30 percent of Millennials, 25 percent of Gen Xers, 13 percent of Boomers and 5 percent of Matures).

Lower Incomes Mean Higher Stress

Higher stress is disproportionately reported by Americans with lower incomes. Survey findings from August show that Americans whose total 2015 reported household income before taxes was less than $50,000 have an average stress level of 5.1, compared to 4.6 for Americans whose households made $50,000 or more. In addition, those with a total 2015 household income before taxes of less than $50,000 reported a higher percentage than their counterparts regarding not doing enough to manage stress (25 percent compared to 19 percent).

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2016 STRESS IN AMERICA SURVEY METHODS

Stress in America™ 2017 Snapshot:

Survey Methods

The 2016, *Stress in America*™ survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) between August 5 and 31, 2016, among 3,511 adults ages 18+ who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English (n=3255) and Spanish (n=256).

APA commissioned Harris Poll to conduct an additional survey in January 2017 specifically about the results of the 2016 presidential election. The follow-up survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of APA between January 5 and 19, 2017, among 1,019 adults ages 18+ who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English (n=957) and Spanish (n=62).

Respondents for these surveys were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. Data are weighted to reflect their proportions in the population. Weighting variables included age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. Propensity score weighting also was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. In addition to the demographic variables listed, data from Hispanic respondents were weighted for acculturation, taking into account respondents' household language as well as their ability to read and speak in English and Spanish.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, which most often are not possible to fully estimate and control, 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 Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for unweighted, random samples with 100 percent response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls — whether conducted by telephone or online — come close to the ideal probability sample given the sources of error previously noted. Because the sample is based on those who were invited and agreed to participate in an online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Sample Size and Key Sample Definition

Sample Size

Throughout this report different segments of adults are discussed. Demographic sub-groups of adults are defined below:

2016 Main Survey (n=3511 total)

- Gender: Male (n=1466); Female (n=2027)
- Race/Ethnicity: White (n=1117); Hispanic (n=822); Black (n=803); Asian (n=522); Native American or Alaska Native (n=201)
- Generation: Millennials (18-37 years old) n=1306; Gen Xers (38-51 years old) n=746; Baby Boomers (52-70 years old) n=1194; Matures (age 71 or older) n=265
- Poverty level: At or below 200 percent of the annual federal poverty guidelines (n=1135); More than 200 percent of the annual poverty guidelines (n=2102)
- Urbanicity: Urban (n=1334); Suburban (n=1514); Rural (n= 663)
- Emotional support: Yes (n=2538); No (n=648)

2017 Follow-up Survey (n=1019 total)

- Gender: Male (n=456); Female (n=557)
- Race/Ethnicity: White (n=449); Hispanic (n=210); Black (n=201); Asian (n=100); Native American or Alaska Native (n=50)
- Generation: Millennials (18-37 years old) n=340; Gen Xers (38-51 years old) n=222; Baby Boomers (52-70 years old) n=368; Matures (age 71 or older) n=89
- Poverty level: At or below 200 percent of the annual federal poverty guidelines (n=282); More than 200 percent of the annual poverty guidelines (n=675)
- Urbanicity: Urban: (n=373); Suburban: (n=464); Rural: (n=182)

Race/Ethnicity Definition

Harris Poll's methods for asking about and categorizing race and ethnicity are in accordance with the approach taken by the U.S. Census Bureau[4] which treats race and ethnicity as two separate and distinct categories, examined in two separate questions. Per the Census' framework, ethnicity is categorized as either 'Hispanic or Latino' or 'not Hispanic or Latino.' Race is comprised of five categories: White, Black/African-American, Asian, Native American/Alaska Native, Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander. The Census further describes that the concept of race reflects self-identification by people according to the race or races with which they most closely identify and that people who report themselves as Hispanic can be of any race.

Using the framework described above and the questions below, if a respondent identified as Hispanic at Q1, for the purposes of this research they were included in the Hispanic sub-group, regardless of their responses to the subsequent questions that examined race. All other groups were identified based solely on their answers to Q2. Very few indicated they were of mixed race or some other race. Those who did are included in the total sample but have been excluded from the racial/ethnic analysis as there were too few to analyze separately (1percent of the total sample).

BASE: U.S. RESPONDENTS

Q1 Are you of Spanish or Hispanic origin, such as Latin American, Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban?

1 Yes, of Hispanic origin
2 No, not of Hispanic origin
4 Decline to answer

[4] (2013, April 12). Hispanic Origin - Frequently Asked Questions - People and .... Retrieved February 3, 2017, from https://www.census.gov/population/hispanic/about/faq.html

BASE: U.S. RESPONDENTS

Q2 Do you consider yourself…?

1 White
2 Black
4 Native American or Alaska Native
5 Mixed racial background
6 Other race
7 Hispanic
8 African American
9 First Nation/Native Canadian
10 South Asian
12 Chinese
13 Korean
14 Japanese
15 Other Asian
16 Filipino
17 Arab/West Asian
18 Pacific Islander
94 Decline to answer

BASE: OTHER RACE (Q2/6)

Q3 What other race do you consider yourself?

_____

BASE: MIXED RACIAL BACKGROUND (Q2/5)

Q4 You indicated that you consider yourself of a mixed racial background. With which of the following racial groups do you most closely identify? Please select all that apply.

1 White
2 Black
4 Native American or Alaska Native
5 Mixed racial background
6 Other race
7 Hispanic
8 African American
9 First Nation/Native Canadian
10 South Asian
12 Chinese
13 Korean
14 Japanese
15 Other Asian
16 Filipino
17 Arab/West Asian
18 Pacific Islander
94 Decline to answer

Poverty Level Definition

The proportion of respondents in poverty is calculated based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines: https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-research. The calculation takes into account annual household income, as well as the number of persons living in the household. For the purposes of this research, poverty was defined as being at or below 200 percent of the federal annual poverty guidelines. For example, a family of 4 is considered to be living in poverty if their annual household income is $48,600 or less.

Emotional Support Definition

Emotional support was defined using the question below from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Respondents who said "Yes" to the question below were categorized as having emotional support and those who said "No" were categorized as not having emotional support. Those who said "I do not need help" were not included in analyses examining the impact of emotional support.

Is there someone you can ask for emotional support if you need it, such as talking over problems or helping you make a difficult decision?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't need help