

# Poll finds health most common major stressful event in Americans' lives last year

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A new NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) poll released today that examines the role of stress in Americans' lives finds that about half of the public (49%) reported that they had a major stressful event or experience in the past year. Nearly half (43%) reported that the most stressful experiences related to health.

More than half of those who experienced a great deal of stress in the past month say too many overall responsibilities and financial problems were contributors (54% and 53% respectively). More than a third of those with a great deal of stress say the contributors include their own [health problems](#) (38%) and [health](#) problems of family members (37%).

"It is not widely recognized how many Americans have a major [stressful event](#) over the course of a year, or how often health problems are the cause," says Robert J. Blendon, Richard L. Menschel Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis at HSPH.

"Stress touches everyone. Unfortunately, many of those feeling the most stress get trapped in cycles that can be very unhealthy. If we are going to build a culture of health in America, one big step we can take is recognizing the causes and effects not just of our own stress and the stress of those closest to us, but of others we encounter in our day-to-day lives. That recognition can go a long way in helping us create healthier environments in our homes, workplaces and communities," says Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO.

## High levels of stress in the last month

About a quarter reported having a "great deal" of stress (26%) over just the past month. People in poor health are more than twice as likely as the public as a whole to report a great deal of stress in the past month (60%).

People who are disabled are also much more likely to report a great deal of stress (45%). Other groups likely to report a great deal of stress include those with a chronic illness (36%), those with low incomes (

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