

# Money tops Americans' list of stressors

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Women, parents and younger adults most troubled, survey finds.

(HealthDay)—Money continues to be the leading cause of stress for Americans, a new survey finds.

Overall, [stress](#) in the United States is at a seven-year low, and average stress levels are declining, the American Psychological Association poll found.

But money worries continue to nag at the American psyche, despite the ongoing economic recovery, the association says in its report released Feb. 4, entitled *Stress in America: Paying With Our Health*.

Financial worries served as a significant source of stress for 64 percent of adults in 2014, ranking higher than three other major sources of stress: work (60 percent), family responsibilities (47 percent), and health concerns (46 percent).

Nearly three out of four adults reported feeling stressed about money at least some of the time, and about one in four adults said they experienced [extreme stress](#) over money during the past month, according to the report.

"Money is a very important component of establishing a secure life," said Norman Anderson, CEO and executive vice president of the American Psychological Association. "When people are financially challenged, it makes sense that their stress level would go up."

The good news is that, on average, Americans' stress levels are trending downward. The average reported stress level is 4.9 on a 10-point scale, down from 6.2 in 2007, the report found.

Despite this, the association found that Americans are living with stress levels higher than what psychologists believe to be healthy, and 22 percent say that they are not doing enough to manage their stress.

Financial stress particularly affects women, parents and younger adults, the survey found.

For instance, three out of four parents and adults younger than 50 said money is a somewhat or very significant source of stress.

Women are more likely than men to report money as a significant source of stress, 68 percent versus 61 percent.

A gap also appears to be emerging in stress levels between people living in lower-income and higher-income households, the report found.

In 2007, there was no difference in reported average stress levels between those who earned more and those who earned less than \$50,000.

But by 2014, a gap had emerged, with those living in lower-income households reporting higher overall [stress levels](#) than those living in higher-income households—5.2 versus 4.7 on the 10-point scale.

Katherine Nordal, the association's executive director for professional practice, noted that inflation and wage stagnation continue to exacerbate people's money worries, despite recent economic gains.

"Many people still feel very squeezed, just in terms of taking care of their daily needs," Nordal said. "We're still really out of balance in terms of economic improvement trickling down to really help the majority of the population."

Financial stress can affect people in direct and intimate ways, the survey found. One in five adults said they have skipped or considered skipping going to the doctor for treatment because of financial concerns. Almost one-third of adults with partners report that money is a major source of conflict between them.

To combat money stress, the association recommends seeking emotional support from family and friends. It found that people without a shoulder to lean on tend to suffer worse from stress.

For example, 43 percent of people without emotional support said their stress has increased in the past year, compared with 26 percent of those with support.

However, opening up about budget worries can be tough. "Starting conversations about money is challenging, because nearly one in five Americans believe it is a taboo subject, and more than one-third report that talking with family members about finances makes them uncomfortable," Nordal said.

Anderson recommended starting to have conversations with trusted people about [money](#), helping young people develop healthy financial behaviors early in life, and building a supportive social network that will help all its members weather the tough times.

"If you're there for others, they'll be more likely to be there for you," he said.

Some people take other steps to reduce their stress. Listening to music, exercising or watching TV were reported by at least two out of five respondents as ways they reduce stress.

The survey of 3,068 adults was conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association in August 2014.

**More information:** To read the full *Stress in America* report, visit the [American Psychological Association](#).

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