

MAY 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered every aspect of American life, from health and work to education and exercise. Over the long term, warns the American Psychological Association, the negative mental health effects of the coronavirus will be serious and long-lasting.

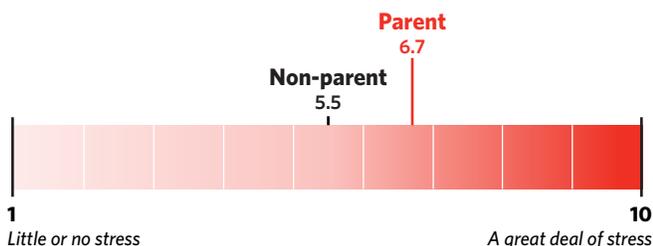
To better understand how individuals are coping with the extreme stress of this crisis, APA has adapted its annual Stress in America poll into a monthly analysis of stressors and stress levels. Taking a monthly “pulse” to understand how individuals are processing these extreme events will help health leaders and policymakers better align advice and resources to address these evolving mental health needs.

The Harris Poll conducted this survey on behalf of APA from April 24 to May 4, 2020; the online survey included 3,013 adults age 18+ who reside in the United States.

## COVID-19 STRESS IS TAKING A TOLL ON U.S. PARENTS

Many Americans are experiencing considerable stress related to the coronavirus and are also reporting higher levels of general stress than in recent years. American parents are, on average, feeling significantly higher levels of stress than adults without children. Parents report stressors related to education, basic needs, access to health care services and missing out on major milestones.

### PARENT VS NON-PARENT AVERAGE REPORTED STRESS LEVELS RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



The average reported stress level for U.S. adults related to the coronavirus pandemic is 5.9. When asked to rate their stress level in general, the average reported stress for U.S. adults is 5.4. This is significantly higher than the average stress level reported in the 2019 Annual Stress in America™<sup>1</sup> survey, which was 4.9, and marks the first significant increase in average reported stress since the survey began in 2007.

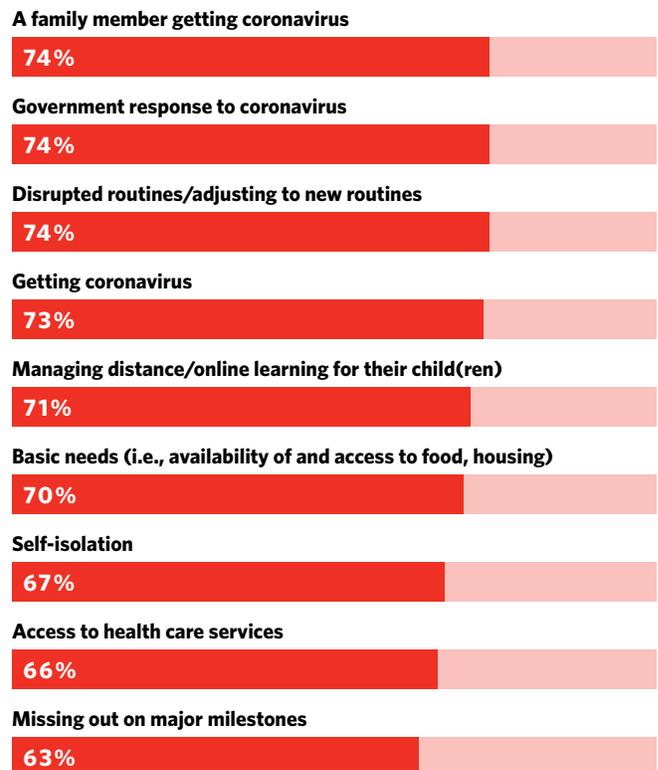
The average reported stress level over the past month related to the coronavirus pandemic for parents of children under 18<sup>2</sup> is 6.7, compared with 5.5 for adults without children, with nearly half of parents (46%) saying their stress level is high (between 8 and 10 on a 10-point scale where 1 means “little or no stress” and 10 means “a great deal of stress”), compared with 28% of adults without children who say the same.

## EDUCATION AND BASIC NEEDS ARE PANDEMIC-RELATED STRESSORS FOR THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS

The disruptions of the lives of children and teens under the age of 18 caused by COVID-19 may be having a profound effect on the stress level of American parents. More than 7 in 10 say managing distance/online learning for their children is a significant source of stress (71%).

### PARENTAL SOURCES OF STRESS

% reporting very/somewhat significant source of stress in their life



<sup>1</sup> The 2019 Stress in America™ survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association between Aug. 1 and Sept. 3, 2019, among 3,617 adults age 18+ who reside in the U.S. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

<sup>2</sup> Parents are defined as those who have at least one child under the age of 18 in their household at least 50% of the time for whom they are the parent/guardian.

Parents are more likely than those who are not parents to say basic needs—such as access to food and housing—are a significant source of stress (70% compared with 44%). Other significant stressors for parents include access to health care services (66% vs. 44%) and missing major milestones, such as weddings and graduation ceremonies (63% vs. 43%).

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF STRESS FOR NEARLY 7 IN 10 ADULTS

Many Americans point to the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a significant source of stress in their lives. The survey finds that almost 7 in 10 Americans (67%) say the government response to coronavirus causes them stress. Parents again are more likely than those without children under the age of 18 to say this is a significant source of stress (74% of parents vs. 63% non-parents).

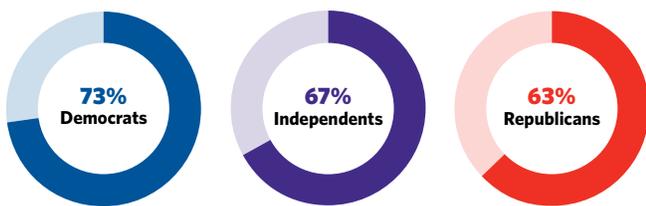


Nearly 7 in 10 Americans (67%) say the government response to coronavirus is a significant source of stress.

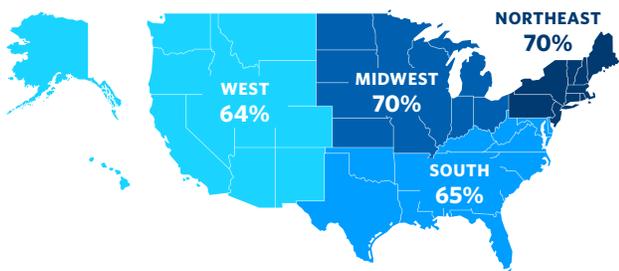
### STRESS ABOUT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE CROSSES PARTY AND GEOGRAPHIC LINES

Nearly two-thirds of Republicans (63%) and nearly three-fourths of Democrats (73%) report that the government response to COVID-19 is a significant stressor, with 67% of registered independents also citing this as a significant source of stress.

% reporting that the government response to COVID-19 is a significant source of stress



The government response as a source of stress is similar across geographic regions of the country, reported by the majority of residents in the Northeast (70%), Midwest (70%), South (65%) and West (64%).



### STRESS RELATED TO ECONOMY AND WORK INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY DURING THE PANDEMIC COMPARED WITH 2019

The economy and work have become significant stressors for more Americans. The economy is reported as a significant source of stress by 7 in 10 adults (70%). For comparison, the percentage of Americans indicating that the economy is a significant source of stress is on par with the previous Stress in America-reported high of 69% during the recession in 2008. This is higher than the proportion of adults who cited the economy as a considerably higher stressor during the 2019 Stress in America™ Survey (46%).

Similarly, 7 in 10 employed adults (70%) say work is a significant source of stress in their lives, which is also higher than the proportion of adults who cited this as a stressor in the 2019 survey (64%).

#### ECONOMY

May 2020



August 2019



#### WORK

May 2020



August 2019



Note: “Work” is among those who are employed

### PEOPLE OF COLOR MORE LIKELY TO REPORT HIGHER STRESS RELATED TO COVID-19

Pandemic-related stress seems to be having a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Slightly more than 2 in 5 Hispanic adults (41%) say their average level of stress related to the coronavirus pandemic during the past month was between 8 and 10. Hispanics are also most likely to say they constantly or often feel stress as a result of the pandemic (37%), as compared with white (32%), black (32%), Native American (31%), and Asian (28%) adults.

Specifically, people of color are more likely than white adults to report significant stressors in their life as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, namely getting coronavirus (71% vs. 59%, respectively), basic needs (61% vs. 47%), and access to health care services (59% vs. 46%).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Wave 1 of the COVID Tracker was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) between April 24 and May 4, 2020, among 3,013 adults age 18+ who reside in the U.S. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Data were weighted to reflect their proportions in the population based on the 2019 Current Population Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. Weighting variables included age by gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income and time spent online. Hispanic adults also were weighted for acculturation, taking into account respondents' household language as well as their ability to read and speak in English and Spanish. Country of origin (U.S./non-U.S.) also was included for Hispanic and Asian subgroups. Weighting variables for Gen Z adults (ages 18 to 23) included education, age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, household income and size of household. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. Because the sample is based on those who were invited and agreed to participate in research panels, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.