



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

# STRESS IN AMERICA™ 2025

A Crisis of Connection



NOVEMBER 2025



# STRESS IN AMERICA™ 2025:

## A Crisis of Connection

### Years of Societal Division May Be Taking a Toll

In a nation grappling with polarization and uncertainty, the emotional undercurrents of daily life are becoming harder to ignore. The American Psychological Association's latest *Stress in America*™ survey revealed that societal division is a significant stressor for many U.S. adults, suggesting loneliness and emotional disconnection have become a defining feature of life in America. In the survey — conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of APA among more than 3,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older — 62% reported societal division as a significant source of stress in their lives.

Beyond this concern about societal division lies a deeper, more pervasive emotional strain: loneliness. Half or more of adults reported feeling emotionally disconnected, saying they have felt isolated from others (54%), felt left out (50%) or have lacked companionship (50%) often or some of the time.

### Half or more of U.S. adults report signs of loneliness

% who say they feel the following often or some of the time



The impact of societal division appears to intensify these feelings. Among adults who said division in the nation is a significant source of stress, 61% reported feeling isolated often or some of the time, compared with 54% of all adults and just 43% of those who did not cite division as a significant source of stress. This suggests that the stress of living in a divided society may be amplifying emotional isolation, leaving many feeling more alone in their experiences.

Adding to this burden, nearly seven in 10 adults (69%) said they needed more emotional support in the past year than they received — a slight but significant increase from 65% in 2024. This growing gap between emotional needs and available support highlights a critical challenge: Even as adults recognize their need for connection, many are struggling to find it.

## DOES SOCIETAL DIVISION DEEPEN LONELINESS?

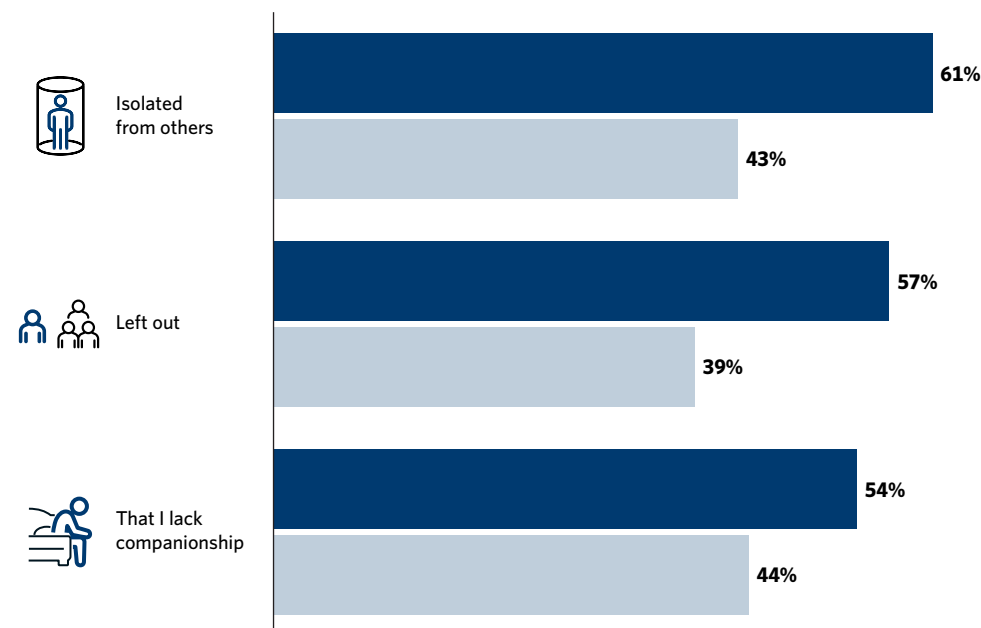
The emotional toll of societal division extends far beyond political frustration — it's deeply personal, and for many, profoundly isolating. Adults who reported societal division as a significant source of stress in their lives were not only more likely to feel emotionally strained, but also more likely to experience loneliness. Adults' levels of loneliness were based on their responses to how often they felt isolated from others, left out or that they lacked companionship — hardly ever, some of the time or often.<sup>1</sup>

Among those stressed by societal division, 54% said they lacked companionship compared with just 44% of those who were not significantly stressed by division. This gap suggests that the stress of living in a divided society may erode one's sense of connection and belonging, leaving individuals feeling more alone and disconnected, even in a crowded world.

### Loneliness higher among adults who report societal division as a significant source of stress

% who say they have felt the following often or some of the time

■ Societal division is a source of stress   ■ Societal division is not a significant source of stress



The pattern continued when looking at feelings of exclusion. Fifty-seven percent of adults who cited societal division as a major stressor said they had felt left out in the past year — again, significantly higher than the 39% of those not stressed by division. These findings point to a troubling link between societal discord and interpersonal disconnection.

In a time when relationships are increasingly recognized as central to meaning and well-being, the impact of societal division on loneliness is a stark reminder of how deeply external stressors can shape internal experiences. It's not just about disagreement — it's about disconnection.

<sup>1</sup> Respondents' levels of loneliness were measured using the UCLA Three-Item Loneliness scale. Responses were given a numerical value of 1-3 to determine a respondent's total Loneliness Score, which was then bucketed into three groups, High (a score of 7-9), Moderate (a score of 5-6) and Low (a score of 3-4).

## THE IMPACT OF LONELINESS ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

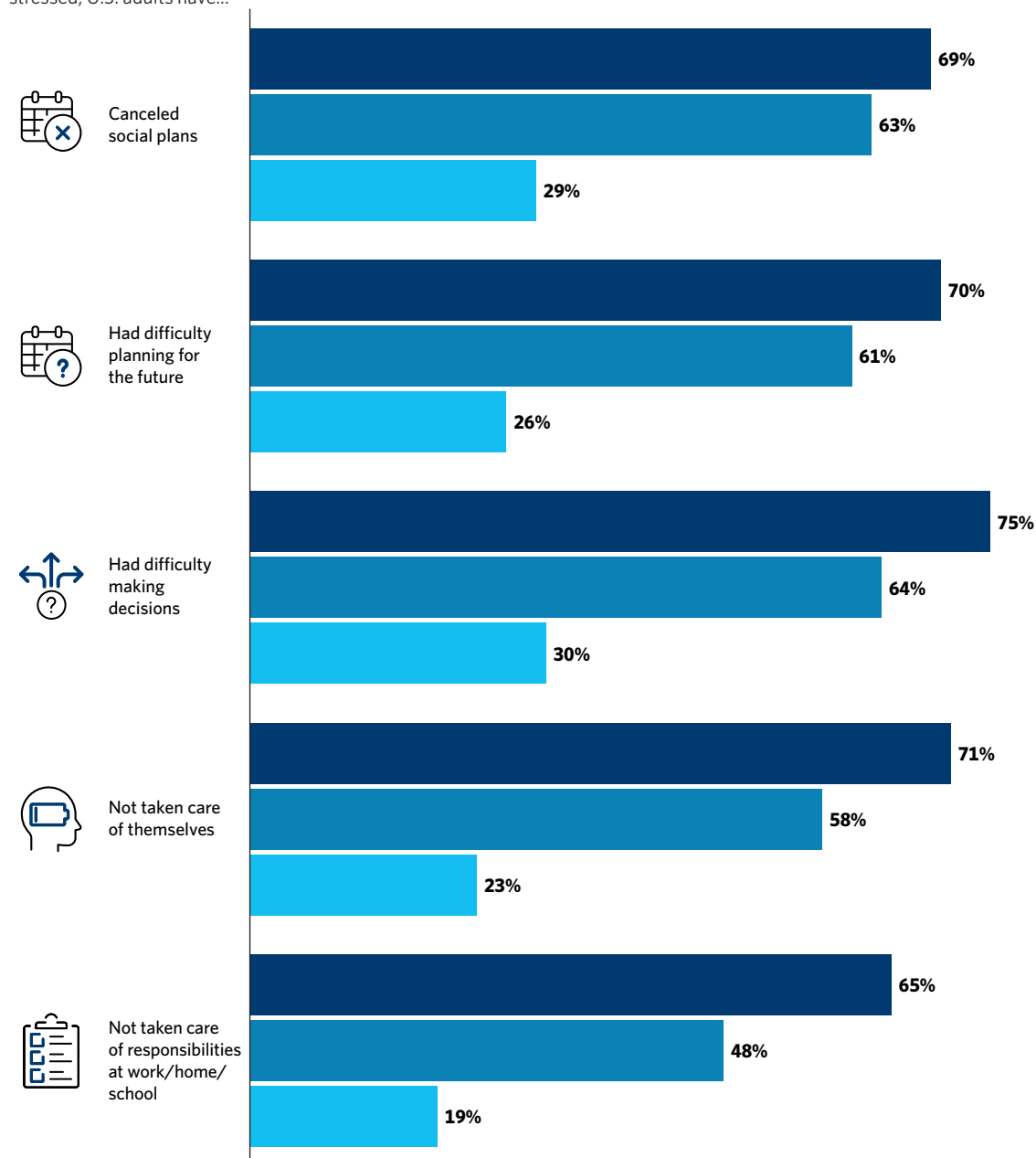
The emotional strain caused by loneliness and societal division doesn't exist in isolation — it often coincides with signs of declining health and unhealthy coping behaviors. Although more research is needed to fully understand these relationships, survey data revealed a troubling pattern: There is significant overlap between those who felt disconnected or lonely and those who struggle with their physical and mental well-being.

Adults who reported high levels of loneliness were significantly more likely to also be experiencing chronic health issues, especially depression, anxiety disorders and chronic pain. Overall, 80% of adults with high levels of loneliness said they live with a chronic illness, compared with 66% of those with moderate loneliness levels and 68% with low loneliness levels.

### Loneliness and unhealthy behaviors

■ High loneliness ■ Moderate loneliness ■ Low loneliness

As a result of feeling stressed, U.S. adults have...



Planning for the future also proved more difficult for those who felt isolated. Seventy percent of adults with high loneliness levels said it was hard to plan for the future, compared with 61% of those with moderate loneliness levels and 26% with low loneliness levels. This sense of uncertainty and being overwhelmed extended into daily functioning:

- 75% reported difficulty making decisions (vs. 64% with moderate loneliness levels and 30% with low loneliness levels)
- 71% said they weren't taking care of themselves (vs. 58% and 23%)
- 65% admitted to neglecting responsibilities at work, home or school (vs. 48% and 19%)

Similarly, adults who identified societal division as a significant source of stress showed elevated signs of emotional and behavioral strain. Compared with those not significantly stressed by societal division, they were more likely to have done each of the following due to stress:

- Lost patience or yelled at a family member (60% vs. 49%)
- Canceled social plans (55% vs. 37%)
- Struggled to plan for the future (53% vs. 37%)

The physical toll also was evident. Eighty-three percent of those stressed by societal division reported experiencing at least one physical symptom of stress in the past month — much higher than those not significantly stressed by societal division (66%). These symptoms included:

- Feeling nervous or anxious (42% vs. 29%)
- Fatigue (40% vs. 29%)
- Headaches (39% vs. 29%)

Among those with high loneliness levels, the numbers were even more stark. Ninety-four percent reported at least one physical symptom of stress, compared with just 61% of those with low loneliness levels. The differences were especially pronounced in emotional and physical symptoms:

- Feeling depressed or sad (65% vs. 15%)
- Feeling nervous or anxious (60% vs. 24%)
- Fatigue (53% vs. 24%)
- Headaches (48% vs. 25%)

These findings highlight a powerful connection between emotional isolation, societal division and overall health, suggesting that addressing loneliness and division may be critical not just for mental well-being, but for physical health and daily functioning as well.



## SOUNDING THE ALARM: U.S. ADULTS NEED MORE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

In a time marked by growing social fragmentation and emotional strain, the need for connection and support has never been more urgent. Yet, many U.S. adults are navigating this landscape without the help they need. In fact, 69% of adults said they could have used more emotional support over the past year than they received — a notable rise from 65% in 2024. This upward trend underscores a widening gap between emotional needs and the support systems available to meet them.

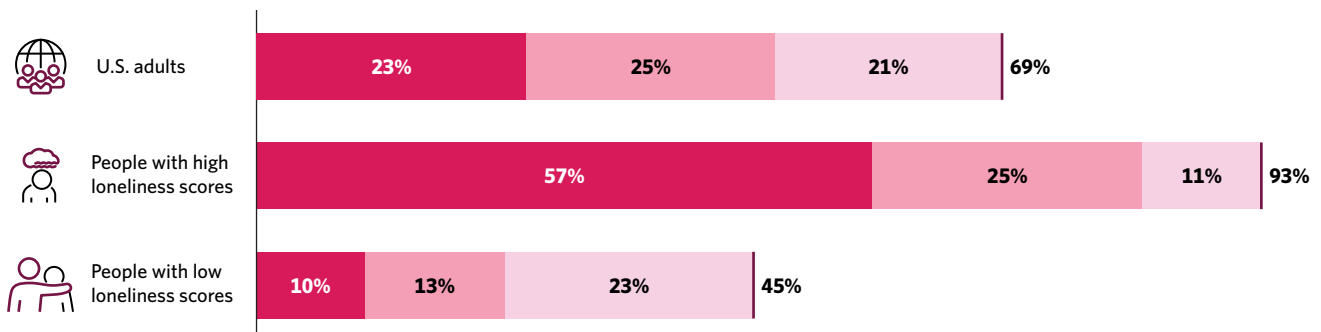
Further, among the 69% who said they could have used more support, 25% said they could have used “a lot more,” while 23% said they could have used “some more” and 21% said they could have used “a little more” emotional support.

This unmet need for emotional support was especially pronounced among those experiencing loneliness — but it wasn’t exclusive to them. Even individuals who reported low levels of loneliness expressed a desire for more connection.

### Emotional support needs felt across the board

% who say they could have used more emotional support

■ A lot more emotional support ■ Some more emotional support ■ A little more emotional support



The emotional toll appeared to be greater among those grappling with societal division. Three-quarters of adults who reported stress due to societal division (75%) said they needed more emotional support in the past year — higher than the national average (69%). By contrast, 58% of those not stressed by societal division expressed the same need. This disparity suggests that the pressures of a divided society may be compounding emotional strain, leaving many without the support they require to cope.

## **THE MAJORITY OF U.S. ADULTS ARE MORE STRESSED ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE THAN THEY USED TO BE**

Concerns about the future of the country are weighing heavily on the minds of many across the country. Three-quarters of adults reported they are more stressed about the country's future than they used to be. This heightened anxiety is not just a fleeting sentiment — it reflects a deeper, more persistent unease about the nation's trajectory.

In fact, 76% of adults said the future of the nation is a significant source of stress, a figure that has remained steady since just before the 2024 election (77%). This enduring level of concern suggests that political and societal tensions continue to shape the emotional landscape of the country. For younger adults and parents, the impact is even more profound: Nearly two-thirds of those ages 18–34 (63%) and more than half of parents (53%) said they have considered relocating to another country due to the state of the nation.

This sense of political and societal turmoil is echoed in how U.S. adults describe their country. When asked to choose words that represent America today, respondents revealed a conflicted view. The most commonly selected terms were a mix of hope and disillusionment: freedom (41%), corruption (38%), opportunity (37%), division (36%), hope (35%) and fear (32%). These choices reflect a nation grappling with its identity — where ideals coexist with deep concerns.

And while 66% of adults said they believe they have more opportunities than previous generations, nearly as many — 64% — said they feel their generation has had to make sacrifices that others did not. This tension between perceived progress and personal cost adds another layer to the emotional complexity surrounding America's future.





## WORK STRESS RISES AS OVERALL STRESS REMAINS STEADY

While overall stress levels among adults have remained relatively consistent with previous years — averaging five out of 10<sup>2</sup> — certain groups are experiencing significantly higher levels of strain. Women (22% vs. 18% of men), adults under 65 years old (22% of ages 18-34, 27% of ages 35-44 and 22% of ages 45-64 vs. 8% of ages 65+), LGBTQIA+ adults (29% vs. 19% of heterosexual adults) and Latino/a/e adults (24% vs. 18% of Black adults and 17% of Asian adults) were more likely to rate their stress as an eight to 10. These disparities suggest that while the national average may appear unchanged, stress is not evenly distributed.

One of the most prominent sources of personal stress is work. Nearly seven in 10 employed adults (69%) identified work-related stress as a significant burden — marking the highest level reported since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic (70% in May 2020). This resurgence of work stress points to a growing disconnect between professional demands and personal well-being, perhaps especially as hustle culture continues to dominate workplace norms.

### Work stress intensifies while fulfillment languishes

% of employed adults who say the following



Yet despite its central role in daily life, work doesn't seem to offer the emotional payoff many might hope for. When asked what gives their life meaning or purpose, only 46% of employed respondents selected work — placing it closer to the bottom of the list. This contrast between the stress work generates and the limited sense of fulfillment it provides raises important questions about how adults are balancing productivity with purpose.

2 Respondents were asked to rate their average level of stress during the past month on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 meant they had “little or no stress” and 10 meant they had “a great deal of stress.”

## MEANING, PURPOSE AND GOALS FOR THE FUTURE AMID TIMES OF CHANGE

As people across the nation continue to navigate a rapidly changing social and cultural landscape, many are evaluating what gives their lives meaning and purpose. The survey data confirmed the enduring importance of relationships; an overwhelming 92% of adults recognized relationships as a key source of meaning in their lives, placing them at the top of the list when asked what gives life purpose. Family emerged as the most commonly selected source of meaning (77%), followed by friendships (62%), romantic relationships (47%) and pets (39%).

Loneliness appears to play a role in shaping these perceptions. Adults with low loneliness levels were more likely to say that family (81%) and friendships (66%) gave their lives meaning, compared with 70% and 56% among those with high loneliness levels. This suggests that those who feel more connected are also more likely to derive purpose from their relationships — while those experiencing loneliness may struggle to find the same emotional grounding.

And given the emotional value placed on relationships, it's no surprise that more than half of adults (53%) identified spending time with family and friends as a goal for the future. Again, those with lower loneliness levels were more likely to prioritize this goal (56% vs. 49% with high loneliness levels), reinforcing the link between connection and aspiration.

Beyond relationships, nearly three in five adults (59%) cited health and well-being as a source of meaning, perhaps reflecting a growing emphasis on personal care and resilience. Further, goals like financial stability/security (64%) and maintaining or improving health (60%) topped the list of future dreams.

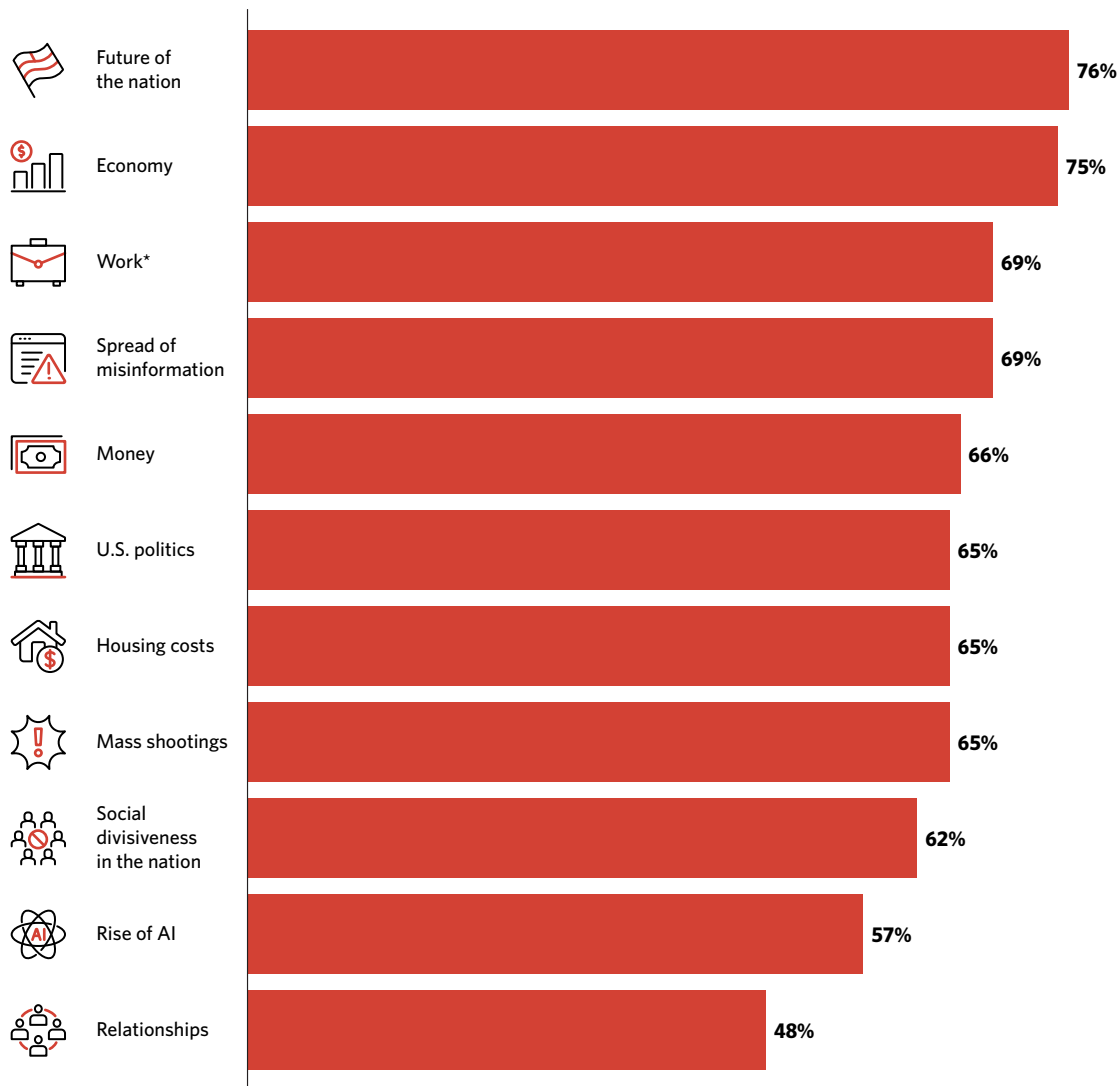


## RAPIDLY ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCES NEW STESSORS, WHILE MAINSTAYS REMAIN STEADY

As technology continues to evolve at breakneck speed, it's bringing with it a new wave of stressors. While overall stress levels have remained steady, stress related to the spread of inaccurate or misleading information and the rise of artificial intelligence have spiked.

### Stress in America 2025's significant stressors

% who rate as a significant source of stress



\*for those employed

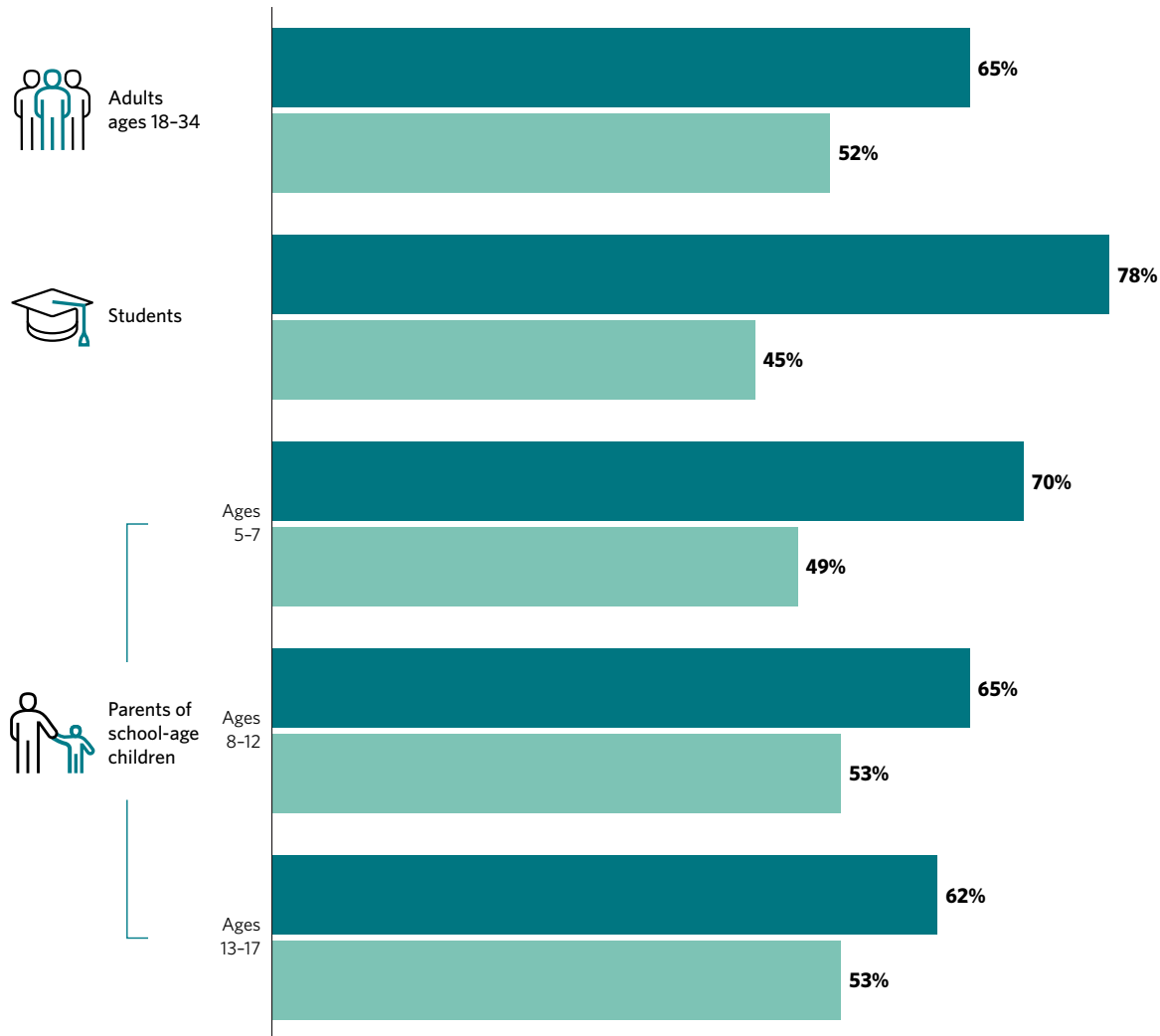
Both stressors have seen significant increases since 2024: 69% of adults cited the spread of inaccurate or misleading information as a major source of stress (up from 62%), and 57% said the same about the rise in AI (up from 49%). These numbers reflect a growing unease about the reliability of information and the implications of emerging technologies on daily life, work and society at large.

A closer look at specific groups revealed even sharper spikes in concern, particularly around AI. Young adults ages 18–34 were among the most affected; 65% reported stress related to AI, up from 52% just a year ago. The increase was also notable among adults ages 35–44 (59% vs. 52%), employed individuals (60% vs. 51%), and both women (58% vs. 49%) and men (55% vs. 49%).

### Concern about AI has surged among parents and students

% who say they are worried about AI

■ 2025 ■ 2024



Students and parents of school-age children were especially impacted. Students reported a dramatic jump — 78% said AI is a significant source of stress, up from just 45% last year. Among parents, stress levels varied by the age of their children but remained high across the board: 70% of parents with children ages 5–7 (vs. 49% in 2024); 65% with children ages 8–12 (vs. 53%); and 62% with teens ages 13–17 (vs. 53%) all reported increased stress related to AI. These findings suggest that concerns about how AI will affect education, future job prospects and the safety of digital environments are top of mind for families.

While longstanding stressors remain, the surge in technology-related anxiety points to a new frontier in the American stress experience — one shaped not just by personal or societal pressures, but by the accelerating pace of innovation and the uncertainty it brings.



## **DESPITE OBSTACLES, AMERICAN RESILIENCE HOLDS**

Even in the face of mounting challenges — economic uncertainty, societal division, mental health struggles — people in the U.S. continue to demonstrate a remarkable sense of resilience. Despite the fact that around a quarter of adults (26%) are not sure or do not think they will achieve their dreams or goals in life and more than four in five (85%) cited obstacles that stand in the way, a strong majority of adults remain hopeful about their ability to build a fulfilling life; 84% said they believe they can still create a good life, even if it looks different from past generations.

This belief was especially strong among those who felt more socially connected. Adults with low loneliness levels were significantly more likely to express confidence in their ability to build a good life (88%), compared with those with moderate (83%) or high (77%) loneliness levels. These findings suggest that emotional connection and community play a key role in sustaining optimism and resilience.

When it comes to their own lives, most adults feel a sense of agency: 77% reported having a great deal/some control over their future. And nearly three-quarters (74%) said they believe it is possible to achieve their dreams and goals. That belief appears to be closely tied to mental health — those who said their dreams were achievable were twice as likely to rate their mental health as excellent or very good (56% vs. 27% of those who do not think it is possible to achieve their dreams). However, for those who acknowledged challenges in reaching their goals, the emotional toll was clear: 89% said their mental health was a significant source of stress.

Beyond personal aspirations, many adults also reported feeling a sense of responsibility in shaping the broader future of the country. Sixty-five percent said they feel personally responsible for helping to shape the nation's future — a sentiment especially strong among parents (72%), compared with 61% of non-parents. This sense of civic duty was paired with optimism: 73% of adults expressed confidence that they can help shape the country's future for the better.

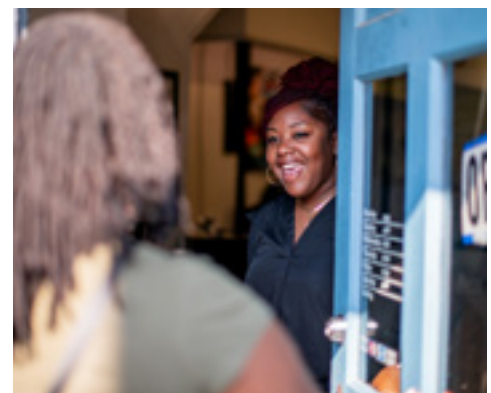
Taken together, these findings paint a picture of a population that, while burdened by stress and uncertainty, continues to hold fast to hope, agency and a belief in progress — both personal and collective.

## A NATION IN EMOTIONAL FLUX

The findings from this year's *Stress in America*™ poll revealed a nation where resilience persists, but not without cost. Beneath the surface of steady stress levels and enduring optimism lies a more complex reality: People in the U.S. are navigating a landscape shaped by division, disconnection and shifting definitions of purpose.

Loneliness, once considered a private experience, now emerges as a public concern — intertwined with societal stressors and reflected in both emotional and physical health. The data paints a picture of a population that is not only feeling the weight of external pressures but struggling to maintain internal equilibrium. Yet, amid these challenges, many still believe in the possibility of a good life, even if it looks different from before.

This evolving emotional terrain calls for a deeper understanding of how people are coping, connecting and redefining what it means to thrive. It also invites reflection on the systems and relationships that support — or fail to support — our collective well-being. As the nation continues to confront uncertainty, the need for empathy, connection and meaningful support has never been more urgent.



## METHODOLOGY

The 2025 *Stress in America*<sup>™</sup> survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) between August 4-24, 2025, among 3,199 adults ages 18+ who reside in the U.S. that serves as a nationally representative sample. In addition to the national sample, oversamples were collected to allow for subgroup analysis by race/ethnicity groups. Sample sizes across the oversamples were as follows: 800 Black, 809 Latino/a/e or Latinx and 800 Asian. The total sample also included 81 individuals who identified as only Native American or Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, which falls below the standard threshold for reporting ( $n \geq 100$ ). For Latino respondents interviews were conducted in English or Spanish.

Data was weighted where necessary to reflect its proportions in the population based on the March 2024 Current Population Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, PEW NPORS 2024 (for frequency of internet use and political party affiliation) and PEW 2021 (for language use). Weighting variables included age by gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income, frequency of internet use and political party affiliation to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Latino/a/e or Latinx adults also were weighted for acculturation, taking into account respondents' household language as well as their ability to read and speak English and Spanish. Country of origin (U.S./non-U.S.) also was included for Latino/a/e or Latinx and Asian subgroups.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris' surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within  $\pm 2.5$  percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

- The sample data for the Black sample is accurate to within  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points using a 95% confidence level.
- The sample data for the Latino/a/e or Latinx sample is accurate to within  $\pm 5.2$  percentage points using a 95% confidence level.
- The sample data for the Asian sample is accurate to within  $\pm 5.1$  percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate — including, but not limited to, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

This survey included data quantifying loneliness using the UCLA Three-Item Loneliness Scale. Adults' levels of loneliness were based on their responses to how often they felt isolated from others, left out or that they lacked companionship — hardly ever, some of the time or often. Responses were given a numerical value of 1-3 to determine a respondents total Loneliness Score, which was then bucketed into three groups, High (a score of 7-9), Moderate (a score of 5-6) and Low (a score of 3-4).

## STRESS IN AMERICA

### American Psychological Association

Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD	Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President
Alicia Aebersold	Chief Communications Officer
Lynn F. Bufka, PhD	Head of Practice
C. Vaile Wright, PhD	Senior Director, Health Care Innovation
Nadika Paranamana, PsyD	Director, EDI Implementation and Evaluation
Alissa Fogg, PhD	Senior Advisor to the CEO
Kim I. Mills, MA	Senior Director, Strategic External Communications and Public Affairs
Sophie Bethune	Director, Strategic Communications Initiatives
Katherine Novak	Manager, Strategic Communications
Callie Strobel	Senior Graphic Design and Brand Manager

### Harris Poll

Aimee Vella Ripley	Vice President
Emily Morton	Senior Research Analyst

### Vanguard Communications

Brenda K. Foster, MPA	Senior Vice President
Maria Enie	Director
Camille Jewell	Account Manager
Catie Carreras	Senior Editorial Manager

### To Cite This Report:

American Psychological Association (2025).  
*Stress in America™ 2025: A Crisis of Connection.*

Copyright © 2025 by the American Psychological Association.



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

apa.org