

APA Stress in America Survey 2016

Stress and Discrimination Notes

Nearly seven in 10 adults (69 percent) in the U.S. report having experienced any discrimination, with 61 percent reporting experiencing day-to-day discrimination, such as being treated with less courtesy or respect, receiving poorer service than others, and being threatened or harassed .

Regardless of the cause, experiencing discrimination is associated with higher reported stress and poorer reported health.

For many adults, dealing with discrimination results in a state of heightened vigilance and changes in behavior, which in itself can trigger stress responses — that is, even the *anticipation* of discrimination is sufficient to cause people to become stressed.⁷ AI/AN adults are most likely (43 percent) to take care about what they say and how they say it, as well as to avoid certain situations, to cope with day-to-day discrimination. Hispanic and Black adults (31 percent and 29 percent, respectively) are most likely to say they feel a need to take care with their appearance to get good service or avoid harassment. Many adults also report trying to prepare for possible insults from other people before leaving home (25 percent of AI/AN, 23 percent of Blacks, 21 percent of Hispanics and 15 percent of Asians and Whites).

Adults who are LGBT who have experienced discrimination have average stress levels of 6.4, compared to 6.0 for LGBT adults overall. Among adults who are non-LGBT, stress levels are 5.5 for those who have experienced discrimination and 5.0 for non-LGBT adults overall. This also is seen across racial groups: Average stress levels of those reporting discrimination (6.1 on a 10-point scale for Hispanics, 5.5 for Blacks and 5.4 for Whites) were higher than for those not reporting it (5.1 for Hispanics, 3.8 for Blacks and 4.0 for Whites).

More than one in 10 adults (13 percent) say they have been treated unfairly when receiving health care, and significantly more AI/AN adults (28 percent) report experiencing discrimination when receiving health care treatment.

Adults with disabilities are more likely than those without a disability to say discrimination is a somewhat or significant source of stress (26 percent vs. 18 percent).

- Despite the stress, the majority of adults who report experiencing discrimination (59 percent) feel that they have dealt quite well or very well with it and any resulting changes or problems.

Having emotional support appears to improve the way that individuals view their coping abilities with discrimination. Sixty-five percent of adults overall who say they experienced discrimination and indicate that they had emotional support also say they coped quite or very well, compared to 37 percent of those who report not having emotional support.

All groups appear to do better when they have emotional support. Those who indicate that they did not have emotional support also report higher stress levels (6.3 average level on a 10-point scale compared to 5.0 for people with emotional support). Across population groups, average stress levels of those without support (6.8 for Hispanics, 6.3 for Blacks and 6.2 for Whites) were higher than for those with emotional support (5.7 for Hispanics, 5.1 for Blacks and 4.9 for Whites).

Adults who report being in fair or poor health have higher average stress levels than those who report being in excellent or very good health (5.9 vs. 4.6 on a 10-point scale).

The Stress in America™ survey finds year after year that money and work are the sources of stress that adults most commonly rate as significant.